

# Media Approaches to Shakespeare's Language



## A Midsummer Night's Dream Romeo & Juliet

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# Stop! Read me!

## 1. What does this EMCdownload publication include?


This EMCdownload publication includes two separate PDFs.

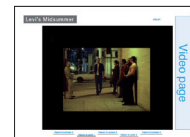
– A PDF called Intro\_Shakes\_Print.

This PDF includes the full publication in a **print-friendly form** for your reference or to use as worksheets for students. The A4 printable activity pages look like this:



– A Video PDF called Intro\_Shakes\_Screen.

This Video PDF includes the video clip referred to in the activities. Activities which use a video clip are indicated with this icon in the screen version:  Clicking on this icon in the screen-friendly Video PDF will take you directly to the video page.




The Video PDF also provides a **screen-friendly version of the publication** for showing on a whiteboard via your computer and data projector. The screen-friendly versions of the activity pages look like this:



## 2. How do I play the video clips?

First make sure you have saved the file to your desktop.

To play the video clips you need to open the file in Adobe Reader 9 or above. NB: The video files will not display or play if you open the PDF in Adobe Reader 8 or below. You can download this free application by clicking here. 

Follow the instructions to install the latest version of the Adobe Reader program. Once it is installed and you have agreed the license, open the program.

Go to 'File – Open' and navigate your way to the Video PDF you have downloaded: Intro\_Shakes\_Screen.

Move your cursor onto the video image. Click and the video will begin to play within the page.

To play the video clips to a class you will need a computer, data projector and screen.

## 3. How can I play the video clips full screen?

Position the cursor on the video image. On a PC: right click. On a Mac right click or 'Control+click'.

## 4. How do I stop the video clips playing?

Either move to another page in the PDF or click the Play/Pause button on the control panel, as shown here. NB: The control panel is visible only when you move your cursor over the video image.

## 5. What do I do after the video clip has finished playing in full screen mode?

To exit full screen mode, press the escape button on your computer.

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# Media Approaches to Shakespeare's Language

This activity has been one of EMC's most successful multimodal strategies on courses over the last few years. It seems to bring out the inner 'creative advertising genius' in both teachers and students, tends to provoke great hilarity and entertainment, but also requires a really close attention to the language, imagery and rhythm of the text, and, as such, is extremely memorable. Now we are making it available as a digital download.

## The activity at a glance

- Pupils view and analyse the Midsummer Levi's ad, which transposes a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the 21st-century streets of LA to position Levi's 501s as the blue-jean equivalent of the Shakespearean canon. They explore editorial changes to the language and meanings of the original text, and the use of wordplay and intertextuality.
- They apply the same processes to the ballroom scene of *Romeo and Juliet* by adapting the original text for a TV ad for a range of suitable products. In groups, they identify and brand the product, edit and then storyboard the text, selecting appropriate camera shots, music and sound effects.
- Each group presents their ad as a persuasive pitch in no more than two minutes, and explains exactly how they have used the language and imagery of the text to emphasise the USP of their product.

## What it can do for you

The activity can be undertaken in the following ways:

- **An introduction to Shakespeare's language**  
During or after reading the play, over a single lesson – to unpick the language and imagery of the scene.
- **As a more extended Media activity**  
During or after reading, over two or three lessons as a production activity (particularly where Media and English activities are integrated in the curriculum) with worked-up storyboards and director's notes – or even a low-tech video production using digital stills or video.

Although this is primarily a literature rather than a Media Studies activity, it also develops students' ability to use creatively moving-image and TV advertising techniques.

The same process can be adapted for a range of other Shakespeare scenes, or other literary extracts with complex imagery and language.

## Suggestions for classroom organisation

- No more than four students per advertising group.
- Provide each group with a pack of stickies for storyboarding individual frames. This is a good way of avoiding artwork-phobia since it allows shots to be discarded, re-sequenced or inserted without destroying tidy sequences. You could also provide A3 paper for mounting storyboards or any other visual material.

## Further information about the Levi's Midsummer ad

- This campaign, which launched on Valentine's Day 2005, cost £21 million.
- It was intended to reverse a seven-year decline in sales. Since then, sales have declined by another 19%.
- Bottom is played by the brother of actress Jessica Alba, while Titania is played by the daughter of disco diva Donna Summer.
- The ad was dubbed into Italian, French, Spanish and German, and sub-titled for Scandinavian countries.
- Outside the UK, it was titled: *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

# Midsummer

## Watching Midsummer

You will be watching a filmed adaptation of a scene from one of Shakespeare's best-known comedies: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

1. Before you watch, think about the title of the play. Jot down:
  - any ideas suggested to you by the title. What sorts of images, scenery or stories might you expect to see in this play?
  - three or four features you would expect to see and hear in the production of a Shakespeare scene on film. For example, actors dressed in 'olden days' or period costume.

Put your notes to one side so you can compare them with what you are about to see.

2. What do you already know about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Share any knowledge you already have. If you have not seen the play before it might help to know the following:

In Shakespeare's text, Bottom is one of a group of rather silly and argumentative labourers who provide the comic scenes throughout the play. The group, often called The Mechanicals, have been rehearsing a play to perform to the Duke Theseus on his wedding day. Bottom plays the role of the hero in the play. A mischievous fairy called Puck has cast a spell on Bottom which has given him the head of a donkey (or ass). He is unaware of this. Meanwhile Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, has been charmed into sleep in the forest by her husband King Oberon, who in a jealous rage has sprinkled a magic potion on her eyelids; when she wakes, she will fall in love with whoever she first sees – which happens to be Bottom, complete with ass's head ...

An extract from this scene is included on page 4.

3. Read this extract carefully.
4. Now watch the scene on screen.
5. After watching, think and talk about these questions.



- How far was this scene what you expected? Did it throw up any surprises?
- Why do you think the scene was shot
  - in this location
  - with these actors
  - using these camera angles?

The scene begins and ends with the on-screen text, shown in the screenshots on the page 5.

6. What connections can you find between the two bits of text?

## Midsummer Night's Dream: Act 3 Scene 1

SNOUT O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

BOTTOM What do you see? you see an ass head of your own, do you?

*(Exit SNOUT. Enter QUINCE)*

QUINCE Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. *(Exit)*

BOTTOM I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. *(Sings)*

The ousel cock so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill, –

TITANIA *[Awaking]* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM *[Sings]* The finch, the sparrow and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay;–

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

TITANIA I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:  
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;  
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

A Midsummer Night's Dream.  
Act 3. Scene 1.



By now you will have realised that the film adaptation of the scene is actually an advert for Levi's jeans which launched on Valentine's Day 2005 and aired worldwide.

7. Watch the scene again, bearing in mind the following questions.
  - What do you notice about the way Shakespeare's text has been adapted for the screen?
  - What has been added to the scene which was not there in the original?