



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2016 Volume I: Shakespeare and the Scenes of Instruction

Struck to the Soul: Discovering Shakespeare by Directing

Guide for Curriculum Unit 16.01.07
by Barbara Anne Sasso

The quotation in the title of this unit is from the speech where Hamlet concludes that the only way for him to reveal something unspeakable is through the art of theater. This unit proposes that students, too, can discover the ineffable life lessons in Shakespeare by taking on the role of director: the one who sees things from above, who incarnates the setting and the actors, and the one who needs to understand the complex human problems Shakespeare's characters face. In this unit, students will provide stage directions that Shakespeare never wrote. The words are guidelines for what characters experience, but "the eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report" what exactly it is that motivates characters to love, to hate, to commit suicide or indeed, to forgive each other. But the director will. Students will analyze characters, describe how particular lines should be delivered, and justify how staging, props and costumes might portray what words scripted by themselves do not. By doing so, students will understand the human motive and heartbeat beneath the iambic pentameter rhythms of Shakespeare.

(Developed for English 2, AP Literature and Composition, grades 10-12; recommended for English Language Arts, grades 9-12)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>