

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

2017 STUDY GUIDE

Study guide written by Gina Braswell & Dr. Amanda Giguere. This program is made possible with funding from the CU Boulder Outreach Committee, the Boulder Arts Commission, White Wave Foods, Haynes and Boone LLC, the Dorothy and Anthony Riddle Foundation, and several anonymous donors.

About this study guide

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival will send actors to your school soon as part of a Shakespeare and Violence Prevention project. This study guide is a resource for you, whether you are an administrator, counselor, teacher, or student. Our program is most successful when schools have prepared in advance, so we encourage you to use this study guide to connect the material to your curriculum. Shakespeare offers a wonderful opportunity to explore meaningful questions, and we encourage you and your students to engage deeply with those questions.

What is this project?

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival partners with CU Boulder's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) and the Department of Theatre & Dance to create a touring program that increases awareness of Shakespeare and violence prevention.

Our actors will visit your school to perform an abridged three-actor version of *The Comedy of Errors* that explores the cycle of violence, using research from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. In this 30-minute performance, we draw parallels between Shakespeare's world and our own. We recommend the performance for grades 3 through 5.

Theatre is about teamwork, empathy, and change. When your students watch the play, they will observe mistreatment, cruelty, humiliation, and reconciliation. They'll see examples of unhealthy and destructive relationships, as well as characters who become "upstanders"—people who make the choice to help. This play is intended to open up the dialogue about the cycle of violence and mistreatment—and to remind us all that change is always possible.

The post-show classroom workshops use theatre activities to increase your students' ability to work as a team and be upstanders. We employ empathy-building and team-building activities, key elements in creating a positive school environment.

Our short visit to your school aims to inspire your students with live, professional theatre, but the work does not end when our actors depart. We encourage you to continue this conversation after our visit in order to create positive change in your own school setting.



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For more information:

**Colorado Shakespeare Festival
Education Programs**

www.coloradoshakes.org/education
csfedout@colorado.edu

(303) 735-1181

**Center for the Study and
Prevention of Violence**

www.colorado.edu/cspv
(303) 492-1032

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival is coming to my school.

WHAT DO I DO?

Teacher Check List

How do I prepare my students for the play?

- ☐ Watch the [CSF Upstander video](#) with your class
- ☐ Review characters and plot and the “look-for” section—also available in a [Prezi](#) (page 3-4)
- ☐ Define bullying with your students (page 4)
- ☐ Additional activity ideas (pages 5-8)
- ☐ Discuss appropriate theatre etiquette

How do I prepare for post-show workshops?

- ☐ Be ready to participate and co-facilitate with our teaching artist. The more involved you are, the more your students learn!
- ☐ Talk with class about the upcoming actor-led theatre workshop. Set expectations about trying new things and respecting one another.
- ☐ Have desks/chairs pushed to the side

What should I do after the actors leave?

- ☐ Take this survey to let us know what you thought: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/69KFZ8V>
- ☐ Have a follow-up discussion with your students
- ☐ Find ways to integrate the performance and workshop in your units throughout the year by tying your lesson plans back to the visit from the CSF actors

Three-Person Cast

In this play, two sets of twins are mistaken for one another. Staging the play with three actors presents a challenge: how can three actors portray four twins? In CSF’s touring version, two actors will each play one set of twins, differentiating characters with a colored costume piece.

Gender-Swapping

In Shakespeare’s original play, both sets of twins are men. In this production, the male Antipholus twins are now women, named Antiphola—and the wife, Adriana, is now a husband, Adriano.

Bilingual Shakespeare

In this production, one character (Adriano) speaks almost entirely in Spanish. Whether or not you speak Spanish, how does this choice impact the way you listen to the play? We hope it encourages you to lean in and hear these words afresh. Shakespeare belongs to all of us, and we hope that when you see a Spanish-speaking character, or a woman playing a role written for a man, this helps you see Shakespeare’s ability to cross boundaries and connect people of all kinds.

Why this play?

The Comedy of Errors shows many characters choosing violence or a verbal attack when faced with a conflict. How would things change if the characters thought before they reacted? We all have a choice in how we respond when the going gets tough—and this play highlights plenty of those moments of choice.

Ready to get started?

Meet the Characters

Antiphola of Syracuse was separated from her twin sister when they were only babies during a terrible storm. Now that she is an adult, she decides to travel the world in search of her lost twin sister. She finds herself wandering through Ephesus, accompanied by her servant, Dromio...

Dromio of Syracuse, Antiphola's servant, was raised with her in Syracuse. He is witty, funny and always trying to make Antiphola laugh. When he was a baby, he was also separated from his twin in the same terrible storm. His brother is...

Antiphola of Ephesus, the twin sister of Antiphola of Syracuse. She doesn't realize she has a twin wandering through her town. She was raised in Ephesus with Dromio of Ephesus and has made a home and family for herself here. She is married to...

Dromio of Ephesus, the lost twin brother of Dromio of Syracuse. He has no idea his twin is wandering through his town. He grew up in Ephesus, and works hard to please both of his bosses, Antiphola of Ephesus and her husband Adriano. He knows that if they are unhappy, he will be mistreated. Dromio of Ephesus serves...

Adriano, Antiphola of Ephesus' husband. He doesn't know that his wife and servant have twins. When the twins from Syracuse come to Ephesus, Adriano is confused, thinking that these two look-alikes are the wife and servant he has always known. When Antiphola and Dromio of Syracuse do not recognize or seem to remember him, he is sure they are both crazy and calls for help from...

Doctor Pinch, a doctor in Ephesus who attempts to bind Antiphola and Dromio of Ephesus and cure them of their "madness". The two escape just as Antiphola and Dromio of Syracuse enter. Pinch attempts to capture them but they are protected by...

Antiphola of Ephesus, her husband, Adriano and their servant Dromio of Ephesus argue about the confusion of the day while the Abbess hides their twins away in her home. Will the twins ever be reunited? Will the confusion ever be cleared up?

The Abbess, who protects Antiphola and Dromio of Syracuse in her house and sends Adriano away. Adriano runs into his true wife and servant, Antiphola and Dromio of Ephesus, who are angry with Adriano for sending Pinch after them.

This page is available in a Prezi for your class:

http://prezi.com/wbns2eve-lgp/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

When you see the play, LOOK FOR...

- ▶ A gut reaction (acting on an impulse without stopping to think)
- ▶ A boss mistreating an employee
- ▶ Someone asking for help
- ▶ Someone using violence or meanness instead of kindness to get what they want
- ▶ A bystander who chooses not to help
- ▶ A power imbalance
- ▶ An act of kindness

After the play, WHEN DID YOU SEE...

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NOTE: This production only has three actors to play all of the roles! Pay attention to how an actor switches characters. Can you find connections between the characters played by one actor?

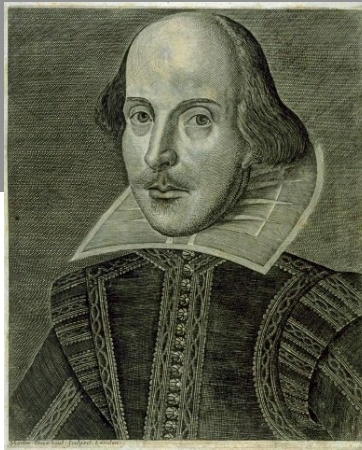
What is Bullying Behavior?

Before you see the play, review the definition of bullying:

1. There is an intention to harm (they MEAN to do it)
2. It is repeated over time (and often escalates)
3. There is a power imbalance (when one person has more power than another)

As a class, discuss what this means. How is bullying different from other kinds of conflicts? Could some bullying be prevented if we paused to think before acting? What do you do when you see bullying behavior?

William Shakespeare



(1564 - 1616)

William Shakespeare grew up in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. Shakespeare eventually moved to London and made his living as an actor, poet, and playwright. He was a partial owner in a theatre company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

Shakespeare's company performed at the outdoor Globe Theatre and the indoor Blackfriar's Theatre. His plays were very popular in his time. Shakespeare wrote between 37-39 plays, and probably co-wrote even more. His plays are still performed all over the world today.

Discussion Questions for the Class

- Why do you think actors are still performing the plays of Shakespeare? Do the stories have something to teach us today?
- In Shakespeare's original play, *The Comedy of Errors*, the two sets of twins are men. The CSF production switched the gender of the leading set of twins: Shakespeare's male Antipholus twins are now female "Antiphola" twins. We also swapped the gender of the Ephesus spouse: Adriana, the wife, is now Adriano, the husband. Why do you think CSF made this change? (Did you know that in Shakespeare's time, only men were allowed to be actors?)
- What is empathy? Why is it important? Was there ever a time when you "stepped into someone else's shoes?" What did it teach you?
- Why is theatre important and what can it do? When you see a play performed by live actors, how do you understand a story differently than when you read it in a book?
- Actors use teamwork to trust one another when they are onstage. How is teamwork useful in school?
- How do the characters change from the beginning of the play to the end? Have you ever noticed a change in your own behavior?

Introductory Mini-Lesson Plan

Elementary Students

Rationale: This is a mini-lesson that you can use with your students to prepare them to view and discuss Colorado Shakespeare Festival's touring production of *The Comedy of Errors*. This lesson will provide your students with basic information about the plot of the play, introduce them to some of the key ideas of this production, and prepare them to take part in a Shakespeare & Violence Prevention workshop with one of CSF's actors after the show.

Objective: Students will be able to propose alternative behaviors for characters in *The Comedy of Errors* by drawing on their own experiences to evaluate the consequences of acting out of anger. Students will analyze how they would react if they were bystanders to the events in this play in order to brainstorm positive solutions to confrontational situations.

Standards Specifically Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B: Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

Learning Experience Sequence:

Introduction: Use any relevant information from the study guide to introduce some of the plot points and themes of *The Comedy of Errors* to your students. If you wish to use it, we have composed a Prezi with a basic summary of the plot and some of the key ideas we will explore in our production: http://prezi.com/wbns2eve-lgp/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

Anticipation Guide: Hand out and explain the graphic organizer (on the next page), which asks students to imagine themselves in some of the circumstances of the play and share what they would do if they were a character or a bystander in that situation. Be available to assist students as they complete the graphic organizer. After the students have completed their work, allow them to share their answers in pairs or create a class brainstorming session on alternative ways to handle confrontational situations.

NAME: _____

Before You See *The Comedy of Errors*...

Actors from the Colorado Shakespeare Festival will be putting on a play for you called *The Comedy of Errors*. Answer the following questions, and remember your answers as you watch the play.

1. In the play, Antiphola of Syracuse comes to a new land where she doesn't know anyone. When characters in the play mistake her for her twin sister she becomes confused and angry, so she takes her anger out on her servant, Dromio. We have all felt angry or confused before and sometimes when we are angry, we act or speak before we think. Below, draw a picture of Antiphola's mistreatment of Dromio.



2. Look at your picture. How would the picture look different if Antiphola took the time to pause and think before reacting in anger?

3. If you were standing nearby when Antiphola was mistreating Dromio, what is one way you might be able to help as a bystander?

If I saw Dromio being mistreated, the way I would help is... _____

I would do this because _____



Tips from the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

- ### How to help a victim of bullying
- ▶ Refuse to join in if the bully tries to get you to taunt and torment someone.
 - ▶ Get a teacher, parent, or other responsible adult to come help. This isn't snitching. You are saying that you don't think bullying is acceptable and don't want anyone to get hurt.
 - ▶ Try to get the child being bullied to tell his/her parents or a trusted teacher. Tell the victim that you will go with them.
 - ▶ Tell a trusted adult yourself if the victim is unwilling to report the bullying. Do not let the bully know so that he or she does not become aggressive toward you.

School Climate Surveys

One of the most important components of a safe school is a climate where youth feel secure and supported in their learning environment. The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence has developed online student, staff, and parent school climate surveys that are free to any Colorado school. These assessment tools are anonymous and available free online, through a secure website. Using core questions on school climate, bullying, violence, alcohol, tobacco and drug use and protective factors, schools can gain a better understanding of their specific violence prevention and safety needs and develop a strategic plan to meet those needs. For more information, contact SafeSchools@colorado.edu



How to report:
1 (877) 542-7233
safe2tell.org
or download the mobile app!

Safe2Tell is an anonymous tip-line for reporting bullying and other inappropriate behavior. You can use your voice to make the life of someone else better. Sometimes if you don't speak up for someone, no one else will. You can make a difference. When you make a call or go online to report bullying, no one will ever be able to know that you are giving the tip. No names are asked, and phone calls to Safe2Tell cannot be traced. It is completely anonymous.

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If music be the food
of love, play on...
—Shakespeare



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