

# Shakespeare: Text and Performance

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This curriculum guide focuses on three plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*. The reading list covers three genres (tragedy, comedy, romance) and leads from very familiar to less familiar works by Shakespeare. I use Artstor images to build out Shakespeare's world and the worlds depicted in the plays; to explore themes from mythology and literature drawn on in these plays; to provide insight into subsequent stage history; and to inspire students' own scenographic imaginations.



Gustav Klimt, *Burgtheater* (Vienna, Austria); *Death of Romeo and Juliet*, 1884-1887. Image and original data provided by Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y., artres.com

## Section 1: Introduction to Shakespeare: Shakespeare and Renaissance Performance Spaces

This section uses images to explore the architecture of the Globe; other performance spaces and practices of the period; the mythos of Elizabeth I; and the layered, image- and affect-rich character of the Renaissance calendar.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

## Section 2: *Romeo and Juliet*:

Images are used to establish Verona as a locale in northern Italy. Introduce the classical source of the play, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, through Renaissance art, especially home décor (plates, boxes, cassoni). Also highlighted are some of the staging choices made by eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century directors and designers.

- a. Verona and the Renaissance City

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

- b. Pyramus and Thisbe, a Classical Source with a Medieval Afterlife

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

- c. Staging *Romeo and Juliet*

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

## Section 3: *Romeo and Juliet* in Love:

Use images to illustrate a number of themes and features in *Romeo and Juliet*, including Shakespeare's pharmacy / plant world; the Franciscans; Petrarchism and love imagery; and nurses and procuresses.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

## Section 4: Twelfth Night: Themes and Variations

Twelfth Night features several key themes, including ships and shipwrecks and music. The title refers to Christmas revels. View Jan Steen's Depiction of 12th Night Christmas celebration—to what milieu in Shakespeare's play does it most resemble? Cakes and ale associated with 12th night revels are shown in Jean Baptiste-Greuze's Twelfth Night Cake. What is mood here?

a. Christmas Revels

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

b. Renaissance Ships and Shipwrecks

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

c. If Music be the Food of Love...

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

## Section 5: The Bedroom in Cymbeline

In the most famous scene of this play, the chaste wife Innogen is voyeuristically spied upon by the machinating Iachimo, who hides in a trunk in order to enter her room. He reports back incriminating details to her husband Posthumus, listing all of her furnishings as well as a mole on her breast. These material signs convince her husband of her infidelity. This image gallery attempts to reconstruct what her bedroom and its furnishings might have looked like. Explore the stories depicted on her luxury furnishings, including Antony and Cleopatra, Lucretia and Tarquin, and Diana and Actaeon. In a second lecture, look at Renaissance interiors in paintings from Annunciations to genre scenes, as well as aristocratic women as designers and curators of interior space (Isabella d'Este and Bess of Hardwick.)

a. [View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

b. [View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)