

In the last week, I have visited all of our participating schools to deliver workshops to Year 9 students designed to get them excited about Shakespeare and to remove some of the fear and intimidation that comes with studying Shakespeare's plays in school.

As a former English teacher myself I am all too aware of the pressure that comes with the compulsory study of Shakespeare in the English classroom. Most classroom spaces don't lend themselves to the physical performance of the text - which is so important for engagement and understanding. Also, the time frame for study often means there isn't ample time to direct scenes and build upon understanding through repetition and dramatisation. I always did my best to allow students to 'act out' parts of the text, read aloud and to explore and interpret the imagery through physicality but there was never time to do it this way for every lesson.

As a result, it has been great to be given time with students that has been dedicated to active approaches to Shakespeare through drama. Students worked together to devise a performance of the Prologue from *Romeo And Juliet* and had lots of ideas from their drama lessons. They used physicality and choral reading and were soon presenting the text and had forgotten about any hang ups they had with the language.

Students were also keen to chat after the workshop and there was much speculation about who might be selected to make up the cast of Henry V.

*Shakespeare: Henry V*, adapted by Daniel Hill, forms part of the Road To Agincourt project. Shakespeare gives Year 9 students from local secondary schools the opportunity to work together under the direction of The Berry Theatre's Drama Development team and mentored by Barton Peveril College performing arts students to create a reduced version of a Shakespeare play.

*Shakespeare: Henry V* is being staged at The Berry Theatre, Wildern Lane, Hedge End, on November 20th.

For more details about the production, click [here](#)

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