EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE
Dear Educators,

*Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's bloodiest play. There is no getting around the blood, gore, and violence in a story about the cycle of violence! This winter, we're embracing that violence in the more familiar and campy style of grindhouse cinema — disreputable films being shown at a cut-rate price.

*Titus Andronicus* was one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, and likely his first tragedy. It has more similarities to the revenge plays that were popular before Shakespeare than to his later tragedies, though there are hints of his future characters present in this play. The character of Titus is reminiscent of *King Lear*. Tamora could be a proto Lady Macbeth. Aaron is like vicious Iago. Lavinia reminds us of other much-abused daughters to come, particularly Ophelia, Desdemona, and Cordelia.

As you watch this play, the killing and maiming are the most obvious features. However, it can also be a fascinating study in Shakespeare’s early career, and an easy entry point for those who have never seen Shakespeare. It’s got nonstop action and a wicked cycle of revenge, but it also contains some of Shakespeare’s most beautiful language, particularly as spoken by Marcus Andronicus. Have your students on the lookout for Shakespeare’s genius poetry, tucked in among some of his most gratuitous bloody moments.

Best,
Michelle Burce
*Education Director*

[www.seattleshakespeare.org/education](http://www.seattleshakespeare.org/education)
206-733-8228 ext. 251 or education@seattleshakespeare.org
CONTENTS

Plot Synopsis ........................................... 1

Characters ............................................. 2

Dates and Sources ..................................... 2

Tit for Tat / Chaos Characters ...................... 3
A look at where our instinct for revenge comes from and how systems for maintaining fairness can go wrong.

Themes in Titus Andronicus ......................... 4
An examination of major themes in the play.

In and Out of Taste ...................................... 4
A history of the changing popularity of Titus Andronicus.

Placing the Production ............................... 5–6
Take a look inside the director’s inspiration and thoughts for the production.

Reflection and Discussion Questions ............. 7
Students consider themes in pre-show reflection questions, and think about the production in post-show discussion questions.

ACTIVITIES

Decision Alley ........................................... 7
Students explore motives behind character choices for crucial moments in the play.

Titus Talk Show. ....................................... 8–9
Students take on the perspective of characters by participating in a talk show.
Meanwhile in Rome, Titus's behavior suggests that he has gone insane. Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius visit Titus's house, disguised as the spirits of Revenge, Murder, and Rape. Tamora, in her Revenge guise, says she will grant Titus revenge on his enemies if he convinces Lucius to postpone the attack on Rome. Titus agrees and says he will have a reconciliatory feast for Lucius, Saturninus, and Tamora. Tamora and her sons are about to leave, when Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus kills Tamora, Saturninus kills Titus, and Lucius kills Saturninus. Lucius is proclaimed Emperor. He orders that Saturninus be given a proper funeral, Tamora's body be thrown outside the city to be eaten by wild animals, and Aaron to be buried up to his neck to die slowly.

Aaron protecting his son from Chiron and Demetrius in Act 4, Scene 2; engraved by J. Hogg, 1799.

Meanwhile in Rome, Titus's behavior suggests that he has gone insane. Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius visit Titus's house, disguised as the spirits of Revenge, Murder, and Rape. Tamora, in her Revenge guise, says she will grant Titus revenge on his enemies if he convinces Lucius to postpone the attack on Rome. Titus agrees and says he will have a reconciliatory feast for Lucius, Saturninus, and Tamora. Tamora and her sons are about to leave, when Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.

The feast day comes. While they eat, Titus asks Saturninus if a father should kill his daughter if she has been raped. When Saturnius says he should, Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus calls for Chiron and Demetrius, and Titus reveals that they have been baked into the pie Tamora has been eating. In the flurry of violence that follows, Titus insists that "Rape" and "Murder" stay with him. After Tamora leaves, Titus cuts Chiron and Demetrius's throats and drains their blood into a bowl held by Lavinia. Titus then reveals his plan to grind the bodies up and serve them to their mother in a pie.
**SEATTLE SHAKESPEARE COMPANY: EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE**

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Names in red denote characters killed during the play.

**TITUS ANDRONICUS**, a famous Roman general

- **LUCIUS**: Titus’s eldest son
- **YOUNG LUCIUS**: Lucius’s son, Titus’s grandson
- **LAVINIA**: Titus’s only daughter, Bassianus’s fiancée
- **QUINTUS**: Titus’s son
- **MARTIUS**: Titus’s son
- **MUTIUS**: Titus’s son
- **MARCUS ANDRONICUS**: Titus’s younger brother, a Tribune
- **PUBLIUS**: Marcus Andronicus’s son
- **CAIUS**: Titus’s kin

**SATURNINUS**: the late Emperor of Rome’s eldest son, Bassianus’s brother

**BASSIANUS**: the late Emperor of Rome’s son, Saturninus’s brother, Lavinia’s fiancé

**TAMORA**: Queen of the Goths, Aaron’s lover

- **ALARBUS**: Tamora’s eldest son
- **DEMETRIUS**: Tamora’s son
- **CHIRON**: Tamora’s youngest son
- **AARON**: a Moor captured with the Goths, Tamora’s lover
- **NURSE**: serves Tamora
- **GOTHS**: a northern people in military conflict with Rome
- **AEMILIUS**: a Roman noble
- **TRIBUNES**: elected officials in the Roman government
- **GUARDS, SERVANTS, MESSENGERS**

**DATES AND SOURCES**

_Titus Andronicus_ is one of Shakespeare’s earliest plays and, as such, there is less evidence to pinpoint when it was written than is available for later works. At best, scholars are able to suggest plausible dates, taking evidence from the writings of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, clues about performance history in publications of the script, and comprehensive analysis of interconnected influences between works of Elizabethan theatre and literature. With no single date of authorship agreed on, proposed dates range from 1582 to 1593.

To add more complication to the matter of dating _Titus Andronicus_, we have two other surviving versions of the story. One is written in prose and was published between 1736 and 1764. Some scholars believe that this work was originally penned in Shakespeare’s time and, like many of Shakespeare’s own plays, published at a later date. The second version of the story is a ballad called _Titus Andronicus’s Complaint_. While the earliest surviving publication of the ballad is from 1620, it can be dated much earlier thanks to a mention of the ballad by printer John Danter in 1594. Because there are not definitive dates for any of the three versions, putting them in chronological order is impossible unless further evidence comes to light.

Shakespeare’s late Roman plays are each anchored to a period in history — _Coriolanus_ in the early Roman Republic and _Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra_ at the transition from Republic to Empire. In contrast, _Titus Andronicus_ is vaguely set in the late Roman Empire, with no major characters or events having historic counterparts.

While Roman history did not provide the content of _Titus_, Roman literature furnishes the play with some of its most heinous moments. The rape and mutilation of Lavinia, as well as her solution for identifying Chiron and Demetrius, are conflated from several episodes in Ovid’s _Metamorphoses_. Titus’s ultimate revenge against Tamora, the unwitting cannibalism of her own children, combines another story from _Metamorphoses_ and with Seneca’s _Thyestes_.

But setting wasn’t much of a concern to Shakespeare and his original audiences. It was common in Elizabethan England for plays to be performed in current dress, regardless of when the story was set. It wasn’t until the Victorian era that the idea of performing Shakespeare in historical dress came into vogue.
Watching the body count in *Titus Andronicus* climb, one might ask what purpose revenge serves when it comes at such a high cost. The need to see moral transgressions punished is a deeply rooted trait, one that humans share with our closest relatives. Group species, like our own, depend on cooperation for survival, and reciprocity — both positive and negative — is the foundation of social relationships.

Behavior that threatens cooperation lights up a hardwired instinct for punishment. Such intolerable offenses, common between humans, chimpanzees, and bonobos, include excessive violence (especially toward a member of lower rank), failure to come to an ally’s aid during a fight, rape, greed, and lack of positive reciprocation.

The ventromedial prefrontal cortex, especially the right side, is the key player in the neurobiology of morality. This area of the brain activates during moral reasoning as well as when viewing morally charged imagery such as acts of charity or cheating. Damage to this part of the brain can cause “acquired sociopathy” and the loss of moral instinct.

Retaliation itself is not necessarily as immediate as the internal reaction to wrongdoing. Just like humans, chimpanzees may nurse a grudge until an opportunity for revenge comes about, even feigning reconciliation to lower a rival’s guard for a surprise attack. If the original offender is too formidable to act against directly, the target of retribution can be a lower ranking friend or younger relative. Starting to sound like Shakespeare?

Of course, this system has a serious risk for escalation. If a punishment is out of proportion with the original wrong, the punished party may feel entitled to their own retribution. While civilization has progressed beyond it, the original function of “an eye for an eye” in legal codes was to prevent over-retaliation. When the cycle of revenge gets out of hand for chimps and bonobos, a third party (either the leader or a segment of the group) breaks up the conflict and encourages reconciliation. This peace-keeping function of leadership was still in place at the beginning of recorded history.

Unfortunately, our evolved moral checks and balances don’t easily apply to the scale of human civilization. Especially when the powers engaged in a feud are the upper strata of society with no third party “alpha” to step in (as the Prince does in *Romeo and Juliet*) a cycle of revenge can run loose.

Aaron in *Titus*, Edmund in *Lear*, Iago in *Othello*. They’re all characters who stir the pot and create chaos. Just as the moral framework for maintaining group cooperation is not unique to humans, individuals who intentionally strain the peace can also be found in our close relatives.

Georgia, a high-ranking chimpanzee at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center, became so proficient at inciting troop-wide brawls that she had to be removed from the group for an extended period of time. Her tactics included slapping children in front of their mothers, mating with low-ranking males in plain view of high-ranking males (both severe and punishable offenses), and moving innocently among other chimps with a secret mouthful of water which she would spit in the face of an unsuspecting peer.
THEMES OF *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

**REVENGE**

*Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare’s earliest tragedy. It was written several years before his second tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, and about eight to ten years before his famous tragedies *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*. Since the play was written very early in his career, *Titus* more closely resembles popular revenge plays of the time than the great tragedies that Shakespeare wrote later in life. Revenge is an ongoing theme in the play, from the first scene until the last. The main events of the play are set into motion by Lucius’s suggestion to sacrifice Tamora’s oldest son in order to avenge Titus’s sons who died in battle against the Goths. Tamora, in turn, takes revenge for her son, which then causes Titus to take further vengeance against her.

At the end of the play, as both the Andronicus family and Tamora’s family are destroyed, Shakespeare reveals revenge to be tempting and alluring, but ultimately futile and harmful to everyone involved.

**VIOLENCE AND JUSTICE**

*Titus Andronicus* pushes violence to the limits of what can be portrayed onstage, and what audiences can endure over the course of the play. Not only are there numerous murders, but children are killed in front of their parents, killed by their parents, and a newborn sentenced to death by its mother. Lavinia is raped and mutilated, Titus has his hand chopped off, and Tamora’s sons are served to her in a pie. Yet throughout this bloody play, all of these acts are committed in the name of justice. Even as Titus kills his daughter, Lavinia, he considers it justified as an act of mercy.

At the end of the play, Lucius asks, “Have we done aught amiss?” It is clear that each act of violence was done out of a sense of justice, even though there is no justice by the end. Is the audience’s sense of justice any more correct than that of these characters? How can a series of acts in the name of justice lead to a violent and senseless ending, as they do in *Titus Andronicus*?

**CHILDREN**

Lineage and children are a major factor in this play, and in how the main characters act through the play. Titus is so hurt by the death of his sons in war, that he feels he must inflict the same pain on Tamora by sacrificing her oldest son. Lineage determines who will be the next Emperor of Rome, despite Bassianus being more virtuous than his brother. Tamora is so upset by the death of her son that she vows revenge on Titus and his family. The value of children is very high in this play, and they are the focus of all tenderness and all violence.

Children are also treated as bargaining chips, and as mere extensions of their parents. When Titus feels wronged, he kills his own son Mutius and tries to give his daughter to someone she does not want to marry. And despite how much Tamora and Titus value their own children, they still slaughter each others’ children mercilessly to settle their disputes. Because of their value, they are used as pawns.

**IN AND OUT OF TASTE**

*Titus Andronicus* has survived a pretty bad reputation. Graphic violence and disturbing content made the play unstageable in its original form for three centuries — but during Shakespeare’s lifetime, *Titus* was one of his most popular works.

Written in Shakespeare’s late twenties, *Titus* was an instant hit. Historic records show five stagings of the play within six months of the first confirmed performance! The script was frequently republished, and a popular contemporary ballad mirrored the plot.

*Titus* faced its first rewrite in 1678 at the hand of Edward Ravenscroft, who described the original as “the most incorrect and indigested piece in all [Shakespeare's] works; it seems rather a heap of rubbish than structure.” Two more adaptations came in 1839 and 1848. Both took major liberties reducing violent and morally disturbing content for Victorian audiences. The latter omitted all violence toward Lavinia and portrayed Tamora as chaste, Aaron as noble, and Chiron and Demetrius as dutiful children!

In 1923, Shakespeare’s original *Titus Andronicus* was staged for the first time in more than 300 years. Even then, the once beloved title still had an uphill battle to regain popularity and respect. T.S. Eliot wrote that *Titus* was “one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written, a play in which it is incredible that Shakespeare had any hand at all.” Following World War II, stagings of *Titus* became increasingly frequent and the play finally earned serious critical consideration at the end of the twentieth century.
PLACING THE PRODUCTION

During Shakespeare’s time, *Titus Andronicus* was a very popular play, and we have records of it being performed many times. Tragedies centered on revenge were in style during this time, and Shakespeare did his best to outdo the genre with an over-the-top play of blood and revenge, and he recognized the entertainment value of horrible people doing bad things. Then, as now, violence sells at the box office.

Director David Quicksall has taken this idea of a popular — but cheap — form of entertainment, and transferred *Titus Andronicus* to the world of grindhouse cinema, adding the veneer of a drive-in horror/ slasher film to the already brutal world. This gives the play an over-the-top feel, setting it in a genre where we are more familiar with these things happening, and the story is about how the characters cope with the horror.

Shakespeare’s idea of a revenge tragedy matures significantly during his career. Any revenge tragedy is the story of a "lesser" person, one who is not in power, trying to get revenge against someone with higher status who is in power. In *Titus*, this revenge is taken throughout the play, with endless action resulting in a high body count. Later in his career, he explores revenge in *Hamlet*, where very little action is taken as Hamlet debates whether or not he should enact his revenge. Finally at the end of his career, Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, which has all of the makings of a revenge tragedy, but ends instead in forgiveness.

Quicksall was inspired by the simple staging of Shakespeare’s plays during his time, when sets were rarely built and the action — as opposed to the setting — told the story of the play. This production will be playing fast and loose with time and place, with both ancient and modern elements to the design. It will have a cinematic quality to it, and it will have plenty of practical blood elements — in addition to our set, lighting, sound, and costume designers, we also have a blood designer working on this show!
PLACING THE PRODUCTION

SET MODEL AND INSPIRATION IMAGES

RENDERINGS FOR RAPE, REVENGE, AND MURDER

GOTH SOLDIER
PRE-SHOW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Before watching the show, have students reflect on the following questions, either in a large group, small group, or individually in a journal.

Do different people in different countries or different periods in history have different senses of justice? What examples can you think of?

If someone does something intentionally hurtful toward you, what do you think is the right response? What response do you feel brings a criminal to justice?

Do you believe in “eye for an eye” justice? Or do you think that “an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind”?

In this play, parents both love their children and sacrifice them to maintain their own honor. What is a parent’s responsibility to their children? Are parents supposed to serve their children’s needs and wishes to help them in the world, or are children supposed to serve their parents’ needs? Where is the balance?

POST-SHOW REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Here are some questions to discuss with students after the play. Answers may vary and students are encouraged to come up with their own interpretations of the play. There are many correct answers, as long as they are backed up by events from the play.

Is there a time in this play when the cycle of violence could logically have stopped? Or was it doomed to end in tragedy from the beginning?

• The cycle of violence could have stopped at the very start of the play. Titus could have shown mercy to Tamora and not sacrificed her oldest son, but instead been satisfied with his victory in the war.
• It could have stopped when Tamora married Saturninus and became empress of Rome. She could have decided not to kill Bassianus, but be satisfied with Titus killing Mutius.
• It could have stopped if the punishments or revenges had fit the crime, but instead each act of revenge was more intense than the last.
• There is no time that the violence could end. Each crime was more heinous than the last, and characters felt they each needed justice.

Is there anyone in this play that you feel was innocent or blameless? Is there anyone you feel pity for?

• Lavinia was blameless. She insulted and threatened Tamora which added fuel to the dispute between their families. However, her rape and mutilation was far more heinous of a revenge than anything she was involved in.
• Marcus Andronicus was blameless. He was not involved in the wars, the sacrifices, or the major disputes, but he felt all of the sadness that Titus felt for their family.
• You can feel pity for both Bassianus and Saturninus. Bassianus did steal Lavinia away, but he felt he was justified and yet was killed for that. Saturninus did a lot of bad stuff right away, but then was largely duped by Tamora and Aaron into killing Titus’s sons and continuing the feud.
• No one is blameless. Everyone contributed to the cycle of violence in some way, by taunting, tricking, killing, maiming, and convincing others to sacrifice and kill.

Compare Titus Andronicus to Shakespeare’s other tragedies. How are they similar? How is Titus different?

• There are several characters in other tragedies that are similar to characters in Titus. Tamora is like Lady Macbeth. Titus is like King Lear. Aaron is like Iago.
• Madness and murderous revenge come into play in several of Shakespeare’s other tragedies.
• Titus is different, in that it sensationalizes a lot more of the violence. There is more mutilation and onstage killing than in his other plays.
• Shakespeare’s other tragedies focus more on the humanity of the tragic hero, and the fatal flaw which brought them down.

In Titus Andronicus, the Goths are described as “barbarous.” Were they more barbaric than the Romans in this play? Why?

• Yes, the Goths were more barbaric — they took it as sport to kill off Titus’s family.
• No, the Goths and Romans were equally barbaric, both engaging in the cycle of gruesome revenge.
• No, the Romans were more barbaric. They committed heinous acts in the name of religion or revenge, and seemed to convince themselves that they weren’t so bad.
ACTIVITY: DECISION ALLEY

TIME: 10–15 minutes

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Present claims and findings
- Evaluate the soundness of reasoning

There are many important decisions that characters must make in this play. Sometimes they make what we, the audience, can see is a good decision and sometimes they make one that leads to their ruin. But there are reasons in favor and against just about every decision. In this activity, students will be coming up with many arguments on both sides of several big decisions in the play.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have students line up shoulder-to-shoulder in two equal lines facing each other. The gap in between the lines will be known as "Decision Alley," and should be wide enough for someone to walk comfortably down the alley.

2. In turn, have students choose a character from the play facing a big decision. Have them ask their question out loud, and then begin to slowly walk down the alley.

3. Assign each side of the alley as "Yes" or "No." As the decision-maker walks down the alley, those nearest have the opportunity to shout out a reason in favor of or against the decision. Remember — those at the end must wait until the decision-maker is approaching them to speak, so that not everyone is talking at once (but there will be lots of overlap).

4. Once the decision-maker gets to the end of the alley, they should make a decision, and join the side that they agreed with. Then a new decision-maker should start over from the beginning with a new question. Note: The decisions these characters make do not need to be the same as the ones made in the play.

5. Have the decision-maker identify which one or two arguments were most persuasive when they made their decision.

SAMPLE DECISIONS

Here are some examples of decisions that characters must make in the play:

Decisions for Titus:
- Should I sacrifice Alarbus to appease the gods?
- Should I support Saturninus — the elder brother — as the new emperor?
- Should I make my daughter marry the emperor?
- Should I send my hand to Saturninus to ransom my sons?
- Should I let Lavinia live at the end of the play?

Decisions for Tamora:
- Should I keep Aaron around now that I’m married to Saturninus?
- Should I continue to exact revenge on Titus’ sons?
- Should I leave my sons with Titus to make him believe me?
- Should I hide my baby so that Saturninus doesn’t find out?

Have students pose as different characters from the play (Lavinia, Marcus, Saturninus, Bassianus, etc.) and ask the Decision Alley other moral quandaries from the play.
ACTIVITY: TALK SHOW TITUS

TIME: 60 minutes

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Participate effectively in collaborative discussions
- Integrate multiple sources of information
- Evaluate a speaker’s point of view
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says

Titus Andronicus is an over-the-top play about family drama, backstabbing, and revenge. What better way to explore the characters than through a tabloid talkshow! In this activity, either the teacher or another student acts as the talk show host — think Jerry Springer, Maury, or Giraldo — and the students act as the characters from the play who are guests on a no-holds-barred, in-your-face talk show.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Either assign characters from Titus Andronicus to students, or let them choose which character they want to be. Hand out the character questions, and give students time to think and make notes about each one. Encourage students to ask for help if they are having trouble answering all of the questions.

2. Choose five students to join the “talk show” as Titus, Tamora, Saturninus, Aaron, and Bassianus. Bring them up to sit at the front of the classroom, and have the rest of the class act as the studio audience. Encourage the audience to think of additional questions to ask.

3. Have each “guest” introduce themselves and say one introductory fact about themselves. Have the host — likely played by the teacher — ask follow-up questions to help students get into character.

4. Choose two or three of the guests and ask questions from their character sheets. Ask the other guests to respond. For example, if you ask Titus about his most hated character and he says Tamora, she can respond that he started the feud by sacrificing her son, and he can reply that she started it by killing off his sons in war.

5. If the guests are getting into it, give them a few moments to hurl accusations at each other. If they are more hesitant, ask the audience if they have questions for them. The host can also continue to ask questions from the character sheets.

6. (Optional) Announce a “secret guest” who is waiting off stage, and bring on a student to play William Shakespeare. Have him give his opinion on the series of events, and why he wrote them that way. Ask the characters to respond.

7. (Optional) Swap out guests for another student to play the same character. Bring on additional characters, including Lavinia, Chiron, and Marcus Andronicus.

After the talk show concludes, discuss the following questions:

- Which character did you feel the most sympathy for? Why?
- How did hearing from the characters help you understand their perspectives?
- Were there any characters that you changed your opinion of during this activity? Why or why not?
- Can you imagine a situation in which these dysfunctional families works out its problems in the end? Or are they doomed to misery?

(Student worksheet on next page)
WORKSHEET: TALK SHOW TITUS

CHARACTER QUESTION SHEET

Your Name: ______________________________________

Character: ______________________________________

1. Whom do you hate most out of all the other
characters in the play? Why do you hate them so much?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Which character would you defend with your
life? Why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. If your character dies during the course of the
play, how do you feel about that?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. If your character lives, how do you feel about
the world that is left at the end of the play?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you feel like things could have been resolved
differently if you or another character had made
different choices?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Do you regret anything you did during the play?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7. Do you feel sorry for any of the other characters?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8. Do you feel like you got even? Or do you feel like
you were harmed more than you harmed others?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Mission Statement
With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama through the vitality, immediacy and intimacy of live performance and dynamic outreach programs.

ABOUT US
Seattle Shakespeare Company is the Puget Sound region's year-round, professional, classical theatre. The company’s growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the time-tested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights along with a commitment to artistic excellence on stage. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works.

Our combined programs — which include indoor performances, free outdoor productions, regional tours, educator and youth programs — reach across barriers of income, geography, and education to bring classical theatre to Washington State.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In-School Residencies, Matinees, and Workshops
- In-School Residencies bring active, customized curriculum into schools across Washington State. Professional teaching artists plan with teachers to tailor each residency to fit the needs and objectives of the classroom. Seattle Shakespeare Company residencies inject vibrant, active exercises into lessons that unlock the text, themes, and actions of a Shakespeare play.
- Student Matinees bring over 3,000 students annually to our mainstage productions in the Seattle Center. Teachers are provided free study guides, and student groups are invited to stay after the show for a free Q&A session with the cast.
- Pre-show and post-show workshops can be booked to accompany mainstage matinees. These workshops include an introduction to the play itself, student activities, and insights into direction and design choices of our specific production.

Touring Productions
- Fresh and accessible 90-minute productions tour across Washington State each Spring, reaching more than 14,000 students and adults. These nimble productions perform as easily in school gymnasiums as professional theatre facilities. Teachers are provided free study guides and students enjoy free post-show Q&A sessions with the cast.
- Schools have the opportunity to book accompanying in-school residencies with touring productions, led by members of the touring cast and additional teaching artists.

Camps and Classes
- Our summer “Camp Bill” series in Seattle and Edmonds offers young actors a variety of camps to choose from or combine. Camps range from a One-Week Introduction to a Three-Week Production Intensive, with many options in between.
- In our Fall and Spring after-school “Short Shakes” programs, young actors develop their skills and gain hands-on performance and production experience.
- Seattle Shakespeare Company occasionally offers adult classes and workshops to our community featuring guest artists who work on our stage.