TWELFTH NIGHT
CURRICULUM GUIDE
FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS
A companion to the Folger Shakespeare Library Edition

Folger SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY  www.folger.edu
Advancing knowledge & the arts
INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Shakespeare is for Everyone!
  Overview from Folger Education
- Twelfth Night Synopsis
- Characters in Twelfth Night
- From One Classroom Teacher to Another
- Tips for Teaching Shakespeare
- Teaching Shakespeare FAQs
- 2 Lesson Plans
- Famous Lines and Phrases from Twelfth Night
- Twelfth Night Fact Sheet
- Suggested Additional Resources
- About the Folger

ON THE COVER:
Geoffrey Sobelle (Sebastian) and Holly Twyford (Viola)

See more images of Twelfth Night from the Folger collection at www.folger.edu/digitalcollection.

Shakespeare isn’t an antiquated art form. His plays are full of explosive family situations, complex relationships, and deep emotions that today’s students can—and do—relate to. At the Folger Shakespeare Library, we love to see students take Shakespeare and make it their own. We believe that Shakespeare is for everyone and that students of all ability levels can successfully engage with his works.

The best way to learn Shakespeare is to do Shakespeare. What does this mean? Put simply, it is getting students up on their feet and physically, intellectually, and vocally engaging with the text. We believe that students learn best using a performance-based methodology and that performance can build a personal connection with the text that traditional teaching methods may not.

Performance—which is not the same thing as “acting”—activates the imagination. Active learning invigorates the mind and stays with the learner. Shakespeare’s genius with language, his skill as a dramatist, and his insight into the human condition can instill even the least academically motivated student with a passion not only for Shakespeare but also for language, drama, psychology, and knowledge.

The Lesson Plans and Tips for Teaching Shakespeare included in this Curriculum Guide provide practical, classroom-tested approaches for using performance-based teaching techniques. We have also included a Synopsis, a Fact Sheet, and Famous Lines and Phrases from the play and interesting facts to share with students.

Remember that enthusiasm is more important than expertise. There is always more for everyone to learn, so enjoy the ride with your students!

Robert Young
Director of Education
Folger Shakespeare Library
Duke Orsino, the ruler of Illyria, is sick with love for the Lady Olivia. She is grieving for her dead brother and refuses to entertain any suitors. A young woman named Viola survives a shipwreck and comes ashore in Illyria. Afraid that her twin brother has drowned, Viola believes that she will be safer in a strange country if she disguises herself as a man and calls herself “Cesario.” Viola goes to Orsino’s court, where the Duke quickly decides to send her to woo Olivia for him. Viola agrees to be his messenger although she herself has fallen in love with Orsino. Olivia invites Viola (in the disguise of Cesario) to deliver the duke’s message and believing that Cesario is a man, falls in love with him. Meanwhile, Maria, Olivia’s waiting gentlewoman, enlists Sir Toby Belch, Olivia’s kinsman, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, another of Olivia’s suitors, to convince Malvolio, Olivia’s steward, that Olivia is in love with him. Malvolio falls for the trick and begins to plan how he will marry Olivia. Olivia declares her love to Cesario, who reacts with confusion. An angered Sir Andrew Aguecheek challenges Cesario to a duel.

Viola’s twin brother Sebastian survived the shipwreck and has secretly arrived in Illyria in the company of a sea captain named Antonio and goes to visit Orsino’s city. Malvolio declares his love to Olivia. Believing that he has gone mad, Olivia sends him away, where he is tormented by Maria and Sir Toby. Sir Toby forces Sir Andrew and Cesario to duel. Antonio, believing that Cesario is Sebastian, intervenes in the duel to rescue his friend, but is immediately arrested by city officials. Antonio is angry when the man he believes is Sebastian denies their friendship, but Viola is happy because Antonio has given her hope that her brother may be alive.

Olivia, thinking Sebastian is Cesario, once again declares her love. A delighted Sebastian agrees to marry her. Orsino arrives at Olivia’s house, along with Antonio, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, and Viola, who is still disguised as Cesario. The scene is chaotic, with many accusations of trickery and wrongdoing. Sebastian arrives and gradually helps to explain the confusion. Viola sheds her manly disguise and Orsino asks her to become his wife.
Let Shakespeare teach Shakespeare. Concentrate on the text and let whatever madness happens happen.

Dear Colleagues,

QUESTION:
Why should middle-school or high-school teachers spend their Shakespeare chip on Twelfth Night?

ANSWER: It’s great comedy. Students will laugh at moonstruck lovers, gender jokes, mismatched couples, practical jokes, fops and fools, goofy costumes, comic revenge, wacky swordfights, and more.

The idea is to help seventh-through-twelfth-grade students experience Illyria, a place where you can find parking places right in front of the building and where when you kiss somebody, hair does not get in your mouth. It’s also a place where a winter mood can blow in, where clowns can be sad, and aristocrats lonely.

Let Shakespeare teach Shakespeare. Concentrate on the text and let whatever madness happens happen. Let students get close to Shakespeare’s words through performance—reading the whole play together, moving, acting out the words. After classroom performances, students can reread the scene and reflects on the words and ideas by answering contemplative questions.

Enjoy this excursion to Illyria.

Martha Harris
North Community High School
Minneapolis, MN
**Tips for Teaching Shakespeare**

**Performing Shakespeare**—even at the most rudimentary level, script in hand, stumbling over the difficult words—can and usually does permanently change a student's relationship with the plays and their author.

At the Folger, we believe that **Shakespeare is for everyone.** We believe that students of all ability levels, all backgrounds, and at all grade levels can—and do—successfully engage with Shakespeare’s works.

**Why?** Because Shakespeare, done right, inspires. The plays are full of explosive family situations and complex relationships that adolescents recognize.

Performance is particularly crucial in teaching Shakespeare, whose naked language on the page may be difficult to understand. “Performance” in this sense does not mean presenting memorized, costumed, fully staged shows, although those can be both satisfying and educational. Performance means getting students up on their feet, moving around a classroom as characters, and speaking the lines themselves.

**Remember:**

1. Enthusiasm is more important than expertise—there is always more for everyone to learn, so enjoy the ride with your students!
2. Trust Shakespeare’s original language, but don’t labor over every word.
3. Pick out key scenes that speak most clearly to your students. You do not have to start with Act 1, Scene 1.
4. Use the text to explain the life and times, not vice versa.

The following two Lesson Plans will give you practical ways to get started using this approach in your classroom.

**Want More?**
Folger Education’s Shakespeare Set Free Toolkit is a comprehensive resource for teaching Shakespeare, with lesson plans, activity guides, podcasts, videos, and other teaching tools. Learn more at www.folger.edu/toolkit.
How long does it take to teach a play?
A Shakespeare unit can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, depending on your students. You may want to spend a few days to introduce the play's major characters and themes, or you could spend a couple of weeks exploring several scenes, key ideas, and multiple interpretations. Full play units, such as the ones in Shakespeare Set Free, can take up to six weeks to teach. You do NOT need to start with Act 1, Scene 1 and you do NOT need to labor over every word.

Do I need to teach the entire play?
Sometimes it is better to do just part of a play rather than the whole play. Or you might opt for a Shakespeare sampler, using several scenes from different plays.

Which edition of the play is best to use with students?
The Folger Shakespeare Library paperback editions are relatively inexpensive, and easy to use, with the text on one page and footnotes and scene summaries on the facing page. Be aware that Shakespeare plays in literature anthologies often edit out some of the more bawdy content—content which students often love. They are also very heavy to carry around when students are performing scenes.

You can install the Free Electronic Shakespeare Reader on your hard drive on any Windows computer at www.shakespeare.ariyam.com. This is a downloadable piece of software that allows you to have all of Shakespeare’s 38 plays instantly at your fingertips. Once you have it, there is no Internet connection required. It also provides in-depth full-text searching to all of Shakespeare’s plays. You can also download the text online from sites such as www.opensourceshakespeare.org.

Should I start with the movie?
One disadvantage with watching a film version first is that students equate this version with the play and have difficulty realizing that scenes and lines can be interpreted and enacted in many different ways. One way around this is to start with one scene which your students read and perform. Follow this strategy by showing clips from several film versions of the same scene. This strategy enables allow for some meaningful discussion about possible interpretations.

What if I have never read the play before?
Learn along with your students—model for them the enthusiasm and excitement that comes with authentic learning.

Do I need to teach about the Globe Theatre or Shakespeare’s Life?
The simple answer is “No.” While telling students that Shakespeare had three children and that he and Anne Hathaway had to get married might be interesting, it really doesn’t help them understand the plays. It’s much better to integrate some facts about Elizabethan life when they come up in the plays. So when Francis Flute protests, “Let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming” in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, that’s the perfect opportunity to explain the Elizabethan stage convention of young men playing the female parts.

Are student projects helpful?
Designing Globe Theatres out of sugar cubes and Popsicle sticks, designing costumes, creating Elizabethan newspapers in the computer lab, doing a scavenger hunt on the Internet, or doing a report on Elizabethan sanitary conditions has nothing to do with a student’s appreciation of Shakespeare’s language. If you want to give students a project, have them select, rehearse, and perform a scene.

What is a “trigger scene”?
A trigger scene is a short scene from a play that introduces the students to key characters and plot elements. Most important, the trigger scene shows students that they can uncover the meaning of Shakespeare’s texts as they “put the scene on its feet.”

Tried and true trigger scenes for beginning Shakespeare:

- **Twelfth Night**, 2.2
  (Malvolio returns ring to “Cesario”)

- **Othello**, 1.1
  (Iago rudely awakens Brabantio)

- **Julius Caesar**, 3.3
  (Cinna the poet is attacked by mob)

- **Hamlet**, 1.1
  (Ghost appears to soldiers)

- **Macbeth**, 1.3-38 onwards
  (Macbeth meets the witches)

- **A Midsummer Night’s Dream**, 1.2
  (The rustic actors are introduced)

- **Much Ado About Nothing**, 4.1
  (Beatrice urges Benedick to kill Claudio)

- **Romeo and Juliet**, 3.5
  (Juliet angers her parents)

- **The Taming of the Shrew**, 2.1
  (The two sisters quarrel)

Want More?
Folger Education’s Shakespeare Set Free Toolkit is a comprehensive resource for teaching Shakespeare, with lesson plans, activity guides, podcasts, videos, and other teaching tools. Learn more at www.folger.edu/toolkit.
Character Found Poems: Investigating Language in *Twelfth Night*

Jaime Wong
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School
Sudbury, MA

Play/Scenes Covered
*Twelfth Night*, 1.1–5

Meeting the Standards
This lesson plan covers NCTE Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12.

What’s On for Today and Why
The language that Shakespearean characters use is key to understanding their motivations, preoccupations, and desires. In this lesson, students will analyze and review the characters after reading Act 1 of *Twelfth Night* by creating a found poem from the character dialogue. Students will be able to identify, compare, and analyze key imagery and the kinds of language that the characters use.

This lesson will take two class periods.

What To Do

Day 1
1. Ask students to choose (or assign) one of the following characters from *Twelfth Night*, Act 1: Duke Orsino, Viola, Sir Toby Belch, Maria, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Feste (Clown), Olivia, or Malvolio.

2. Explain the concept of a found poem: a poem composed of words and phrases that come from another text. Students will be able to identify, compare, and analyze key imagery and the kinds of language that the characters use.

3. Distribute the handout “Character Key Words and Phrases.” Have each student select and record 40–50 words from their character’s dialogue. Encourage the students to find words or phrases that reveal something important about the nature of their characters.

Alternative idea: Choose phrases that a character uses to describe him or herself, and phrases that others use to describe that character. The result is a found poem portrait.

4. Ask students to share the words/phrases they have selected with the class and allow some discussion.

5. Building on the discussion, challenge students to narrow down their word choices to 20–25 words.

6. Have students organize the remaining words to create a draft of their found poem on the handout. Encourage them to structure the poem with a clear beginning, middle, and end. They may change tense, possessives, and punctuation as necessary to allow the poem to make sense.

7. Choosing a partner with a different character, have students read their found poems out loud to one another to test for “sound quality”.

8. After reading aloud, students may add up to three words to improve the flow of their poems.

Day 2
1. Have students who worked on the same character group up.

2. Have students share their found poems with their group and discuss similarities. Have them identify any words or phrases that appear in several or all of their poems.

3. Have each group share one representative poem with the rest of the class.

4. After each group shares a poem, have students discuss what they learned about their character’s personality based on his/her language. For example, which words did many of the group choose in their found poems? What do we know about the character based on word choices? Can the students identify the kind of language (slang, formal, etc) the character uses? Does this fit or not fit with the character’s class and background?

What You Need

Folger Edition of *Twelfth Night*
Character Key Words and Phrases Handout

How Did It Go?
Did the students identify key words and phrases to use in their found poems? Did they discuss conclusions they were able to make about their characters based on the language their characters used?

Taking it to the Next Level
Students can continue the lesson by creating an illumination of their found poem using Photostory or iMovie or creating a mural or bulletin board display of actors who might play their character, or images that they now associate with their character. Students can reference these visuals for the remainder of the play to explore how a character might change or remain the same.

Want more?
Find more ideas and resources on teaching *Twelfth Night* at www.folger.edu/teachingtwelfthnight.
Your character:

Key Words and Phrases (50 Maximum)

Found Poem draft:

Sample found poem for Viola:

Illyria.
Poor brother silent.
Duke Orsino governs, music
Flames pain on inconstant love.
Honorable lady’s beauty, divinity
Disguise cruelest negligence.
My suffering, pity
Swears a secret.
"O Time, thou must untangle this": Tangling up the Love in *Twelfth Night*

Rebecca Rufo
East Side Middle School
New York, NY

Play/Scenes Covered
*Twelfth Night*

Meeting the Standards
This lesson plan covers NCTE Standards 2, 4, 6, and 12.

What's On for Today and Why
Part of teaching middle school and high school students is dealing with lovelorn, love obsessed, and lovesick teenagers. While reading *Twelfth Night*, students will discover that the characters in the play have as much trouble with love as they do—and often times, more! This lesson allows students to toy with the theme of love and explore the different characters’ opinions on love before they begin the play. Students can play with language, engage in performance, and grow excited about the play before their study of it begins.

This activity will take at least two 50-minute class periods.

What To Do
1. Break students into groups of five.
2. Each member of the group should receive a copy of the attached “Love Speeches in *Twelfth Night*” Handout with the following speeches: Orsino, 1.1.1–15; Viola 2.2.18–26 and 33–41; and Olivia, 3.1.152–164.
3. Ask students to read each speech several times, circling any words or phrases that they find confusing.
4. Lead a class discussion with the students. Ask them to consider possible meanings for any words that seem confusing.
5. Pass out one “Connecting Love Speeches in *Twelfth Night* Group Presentation” Handout to each group. Explain to students that, in their groups, they will break up the lines into one-to-four-line sets that seem to convey a single idea or seem to want to stand on their own. Then, after the group has broken all of the speeches up into pieces, the students must find a creative way to merge all three speeches into a performance. This can be done in countless ways. For example, pick students to play each character and read that character’s lines, and then have the other students act out the scenes silently. The only requirements are that all five members be involved in the presentation and that the lines from the three speeches be intertwined in some way, so that the parallels between the speeches are clear.
6. After each group has performed, ask students to write a response addressing the following questions: Describe each of the following characters in two to three sentences based on the speeches you read: Orsino, Viola, Olivia. How do you think these characters are connected to each other in the play? Which of the presentations did you find most effective? Why? What questions remain in your mind after today’s activity?
7. Extension activity: Have students revisit their written response as they read the play, adding in insights and opinions of the characters.

What You Need
Folger edition of *Twelfth Night*
Love Speeches in *Twelfth Night* Handout
Connecting Love Speeches in *Twelfth Night* Group Presentation Handout

How Did It Go?
Did the students pick out different ideas and themes in each speech? Did they connect the three speeches together? Did they formulate initial impressions about each character? Did they become more comfortable with Shakespeare’s language?

Want more?
Find more ideas and resources on teaching *Twelfth Night* at www.folger.edu/teachingtwelthnight.
TWELFTH NIGHT HANDOUT | LESSON PLAN 2

LOVE SPEECHES IN TWELFTH NIGHT

Orsino, 1.1.1–15

If music be the food of love, play on.
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall.
O, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor. Enough; no more.
‘Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe’er,
But falls into abatement and low price
Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.

Viola, 2.2.18–26 and 33–41

Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her!
She made good view of me, indeed so much
That methought her eyes had lost her tongue,
For she did speak in starts distractedly.
She loves me, sure! The cunning of her passion
Invites me in this churlish messenger.
None of my lord’s ring? Why, he sent her none!
I am the man. If it be so, as ‘tis,
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.

... My master loves her dearly,
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him,
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.
What will become of this? As I am man,
My state is desperate for my master’s love.
As I am woman (now, alas the day!),
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!
O Time, thou must untangle this, not I.
It is too hard a knot for me t’untie.
Olivia, 3.1.152–164

O, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of his lip!
A murd'rous guilt shows not itself more soon
Than love that would seem hid. Love’s night is noon. —
Cesario, by the roses of the spring,
By maidhood, honor, truth, and everything,
I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride,
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide.
Do not extort thy reasons from this clause,
For that I woo, thou therefore hast no cause;
But rather reason thus with reason fetter:
Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.
ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW
With your groups, break up the lines of each speech into sets of 1-4 lines. These sets should convey a single idea or should be a line that just seems to want to stand on its own. After your group has broken all of the speeches up into pieces, find a creative way to merge all three speeches into a performance.

STEPS TO TAKE
1. Read Orsino’s speech together.
Separate lines that convey a single idea. It is best to do this in pencil in case you change your mind later. Here is an example: (Remember, this is JUST an example! There are many ways this can be done.)

ORSINO
If music be the food of love, play on.
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.

That strain again! It had a dying fall.

0, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor.

Enough; no more.
‘Tis not so sweet now as it was before.

O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe’er,
But falls into abatement and low price
Even in a minute.

So full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.
2. Now separate Viola’s speech and Olivia’s speech into sets of lines.

3. Next, try and find sets of lines BETWEEN THE THREE speeches that sound like they go together because they are about the same idea, they have the same tone, or they play off each other in some way. Interweave these speeches. You should put a big number “1” next to the set of lines that you think should be first. Then put a number “2” next to the set of lines that should be second. Keep going until all of the sets of lines have been numbered. Make sure everyone in the group writes it down!

4. Decide on a creative way to present your intertwined speech. You may wish to have one reader for Orsino’s lines, one for Olivia’s, and one for Viola’s while the two other members of your group act out a silent scene. Or, you may wish to divide the lines up between all of the members of your group and create a skit where characters of your own creation speak the lines to each other. Be as creative as you wish. The only requirements are:
   a) You must include all lines from each speech.
   b) You must interweave the lines in some way (in other words, you can’t just read each speech one at a time).
   c) Everyone in the group must perform in some way.

5. Rehearse together at least once in order to prepare to present for the class. (Be prepared to answer questions on why you chose to break the lines up the way you did and why you chose to present them in a certain way.)

6. Complete the following for homework: Describe each of the following characters in 2–3 sentences based on the speeches you read: Orsino, Viola, Olivia. How do you think these characters are connected to each other in the play? Which of the presentations did you find most effective? Why? What questions remain in your mind after today’s activity?
Scholars believe Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* in 1601–02, shortly after he finished *Hamlet* and about the same time that he was writing the tragedy *Othello* and the comedy *All’s Well That Ends Well*.

British pop singer Samantha Fox recorded a song entitled “If Music Be the Food of Love,” which takes its title and lyrics from one of Orsino’s speeches.

“Twelfth Night” refers to the twelfth night after Christmas, the last night of what used to be the extended period of celebration of the Christmas season.

The plot of the teen film *She’s the Man* is based on *Twelfth Night*.

Illyria was an ancient region on the Adriatic Sea that includes parts of modern-day Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro.

When *Twelfth Night* was first performed in 1602, female characters were usually played by boys or young men. So the character of Viola would have been played by a boy playing a girl pretending to be a boy!

In *Twelfth Night*, Antonio refers to an inn called “The Elephant” in Illyria; in Shakespeare’s day, “The Elephant” was a pub close to the Globe Theatre in London, where many of his plays were performed.

Learn more at www.folger.edu/shakespeare.
Did you know you’re quoting Shakespeare when you say…

If music be the food of love, play on.
Orsino—1.1.1

What great ones do the less will prattle of.
Captain—1.2.34

Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage.
Feste—1.5.19

O Time, thou must untangle this, not I.
It is too hard a knot for me t’ untie.
Viola—2.2.40–41

Not to be abed after midnight is to be up betimes...
Toby—2.3.1–2

Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?
Toby—2.3.114–15

I have no exquisite reason for ‘t, but I have reason good enough.
Andrew—2.3.143–44

I am all the daughters of my father’s house, and all the brothers too.
Viola—2.4.132–33

She never told her love, But let concealment, like a worm i’ th’ bud, Feed on her damask cheek.
Viola—2.4.122–24

…like Patience on a monument…
Viola—2.4.126

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon ’em.
Malvolio—2.5.149–50

Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere.
Feste—3.1.40–41

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction.
Feste—3.1.136–37
Shakespeare Set Free

The Shakespeare Set Free series offers innovative, performance-based approaches to teaching Shakespeare from the Folger Shakespeare Library, the world’s leading center for Shakespeare studies. This volume includes unit plans on Othello and Twelfth Night and day-by-day teaching strategies that successfully immerse students of every grade and skill level in the language and the plays themselves—created, taught, and written by real teachers in real classrooms.

Available at the Folger Gift Shop 202–675–0308, or www.folger.edu/shop.

Shakespeare Set Free Toolkit

Think of it as Shakespeare in a box! Everything you need to teach Shakespeare, all in one place: the Doing Shakespeare Right guide to getting started; Shakespeare Set Free curriculum guide; two-line scene cards; a flash drive with instructional videos, podcasts, handouts, scripts, and images; The Play's the Thing DVD that follows a 5th grade class preparing for a festival; and the Macbeth Edition DVD, which includes a film of the smash 2008 Folger Theatre/Two River Theater Company production.

Available at the Folger Gift Shop 202–675–0308, or www.folger.edu/shop.

Play-by-Play: Twelfth Night

Folger Education’s “Play-by-Play” website section contains resources on each of the most commonly taught plays, all in one place. Find Twelfth Night lesson plans, podcasts, videos, and more.

Learn more at www.folger.edu/teachingtwelfthnight.

Making a Scene: Shakespeare in the Classroom

Folger Education’s blog features new ideas, tips, and resources for teaching Shakespeare. With the teaching community commenting, Folger educators explore what works and what doesn’t in today’s classroom. Join the conversation!

Learn more at www.folger.edu/edblog.

Bard Notes

A monthly update just for teachers with our newest classroom activities, lesson plans, teacher workshops, and more for K–12 educators.

Learn more at www.folger.edu/enews.
Folger Shakespeare Library is a world-renowned center for scholarship, learning, culture, and the arts. It is home to the world’s largest Shakespeare collection and a primary repository for rare materials from the early modern period (1500–1750). The Folger is an internationally recognized research library offering advanced scholarly programs in the humanities; an innovator in the preservation of rare materials; a national leader in how Shakespeare is taught in grades K–12; and an award-winning producer of cultural and arts programs—television, music, poetry, exhibits, lectures, and family programs. By promoting understanding of Shakespeare and his world, the Folger reminds us of the enduring influence of his works, the formative effects of the Renaissance on our own time, and the power of the written and spoken word. A gift to the American people from industrialist Henry Clay Folger, the Folger—located one block east of the U.S. Capitol—opened in 1932.

Our Folger Education division is a leader in how Shakespeare is taught today. It provides online resources to millions of teachers and students in grades K–12 each year, trains teachers across the country in performance-based teaching of Shakespeare, hosts student Shakespeare festivals and family programs, and publishes the groundbreaking Shakespeare Set Free series and the Folger Editions, the leading Shakespeare texts used in American classrooms today.