

COMEDY OF ERRORS

A STUDY GUIDE

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Life's a beach party
for two sets of
long-lost twins!



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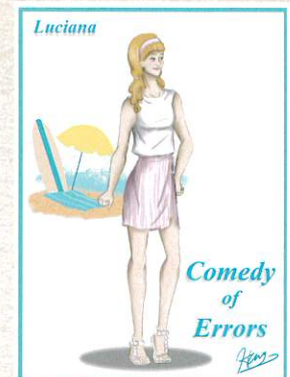
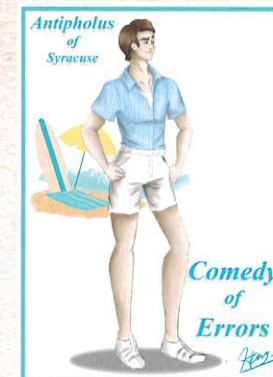
Autographs and Answers

SYNOPSIS

Aegeon is a Syracusan merchant who gets in trouble in Ephesus. He is condemned to die for breaking the law unless he can pay one hundred marks—but he has no way to do so! To gain sympathy, Aegeon tells Duke Solinus of Ephesus his sad story.

A long time ago, Aegeon and his wife Aemilia, along with their twin baby boys (and twin servants) were separated in a tragic shipwreck. Aemilia and one son and servant were rescued by one boat; Aegeon and the other son and servant were rescued by a different boat headed to Syracuse. Eighteen years later, Antipholus, who was raised in Syracuse, took his servant Dromio to find his long-lost twin brother. Later, Aegeon left to look for Antipholus and Dromio, risking a trip to Ephesus where, because of a feud, any Syracusan found there would be sentenced to death—unless they could pay a very high ransom.

Duke Solinus feels so bad when he hears this story that he gives Aegeon until sunset to find the money to get his freedom. Meanwhile, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant Dromio land on the beach in Ephesus, still searching for Antipholus's brother. Little does Antipholus know, his brother lives right there in Ephesus with his wife Adriana and his servant Dromio! And this is where the funny mistakes begin! Confusion, beatings, accusations, and romantic declarations follow, leading ultimately to the arrest of Antipholus of Ephesus. Eventually, everyone finds themselves in the presence of the Duke to sort things out. Aegeon is released from his death sentence and reunited with his wife and sons, and all is put right.



On the rare occasion that two sets of identical twins who are also excellent actors DON'T audition for a production, then it's up to the (non-twin) actors and the costume designer to help tell the story of *Comedy of Errors*. For this show, Hannah Liberatore, our costume designer, decided to give the audience clues about the characters in their costume colors, and to create "twins" using nearly identical shape and design. A fun challenge in designing this show was deciding what Shakespeare's characters would wear if they could go to a 1960s beach party; each character had to be unique, so I could design anything from high-waisted shorts to tacky Hawaiian shirts. What do you learn about the characters through their costume design?



Comedy of Errors is the earliest of Shakespeare's plays, written around 1594. It was first performed during the reopening of London playhouses after they had been closed due to plague outbreaks.

The Globe Theatre, where much of Shakespeare was performed, is on the banks of the Thames river. It opened in 1599 (sadly, not in time for the premiere of *Comedy of Errors*!). Because it is circular in structure, royalty or those in the higher classes usually sat on the sides, where they couldn't see the show very well but where everyone in the theatre could see them. "Groundlings" were the lower, working class audience members who stood during the show and watched while standing on the ground at stage level.

Do you think *Comedy of Errors* was a good play for Shakespeare to write as theatres opened again following the plague?



As we looked for fun ways to introduce Shakespeare to young audiences, we discovered there were many similarities between the *Comedy of Errors* world and the classic teen beach movie world. Here are just a few similarities to look for!

Silly physical comedy (sometimes called slapstick) is important in both worlds. Watch for funny physical moments in this production.

Comedy of Errors performed just following a massive plague epidemic. The teen beach movies of the 1960s were released during the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.

Comedy of Errors has many stock characters familiar to Elizabethans: young lovers, clever servants, a wise nobleman, etc. In the beach movies, Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello played the stock characters: young teenagers in love.

ADAPTATION GAMES

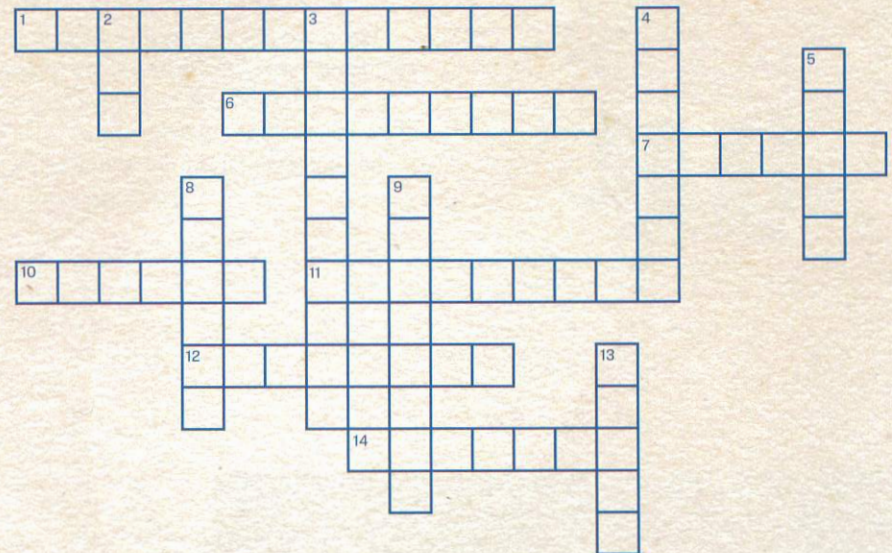
MATCH THE MOVIE ON THE LEFT TO ITS
SOURCE PLAY BY SHAKESPEARE ON THE RIGHT.

1. 10 Things I Hate About You (1999)
2. Lion King (1994)
3. She's the Man (2006)
4. West Side Story (1961)
5. Big Business (1988)
6. A Thousand Acres (1997)
7. My Own Private Idaho (1991)
8. Throne of Blood (1957)
9. Forbidden Planet (1956)
10. A Double Life (1947)

- A. King Lear
- B. Twelfth Night
- C. Henry IV and Henry V
- D. Othello
- E. Taming of the Shrew
- F. The Tempest
- G. Macbeth
- H. Hamlet
- I. Comedy of Errors
- J. Romeo and Juliet

QUESTION:
Do you know any
other movies that
are adaptations of
Shakespeare?

Taking a play by Shakespeare and putting his story in a different setting is part of a process called "adapting." When you adapt a story, you keep the basic story but change some elements to make it unique. There are many ways to adapt Shakespeare: you can simply change the setting (like we did) but keep the language; you can update the language to make it modern; or you can use the story to inspire your own retelling.



Beach-themed clues are found in blue; Shakespeare-themed clues are found in white.

ACROSS

1. Rescue ring
6. Annette
7. Two-piece swimming suit
9. Castrated male chicken
10. Frankie
11. Ocean Plank
12. Cheating and fraud
14. To invoke evil upon; curse

DOWN

2. Expression of disgust
3. Eye shades
4. Combined spear and battle axe
5. A council or assembly
8. Shelter or screen from weather
9. Necklace of gold and jewels
13. Beach blanket

AUTOGRAPHS



DOWN
1. Fie
2. Sunglasses
3. Halberd
4. Synod
5. Sconce
6. Carcanet
7. Towel
8. Beshrew

ACROSS
1. Life Preserver
2. Funicello
3. Bikini
4. Capon
5. Avalon
6. Surfboard
7. Cozenage
8. Beshrew

COMING SOON

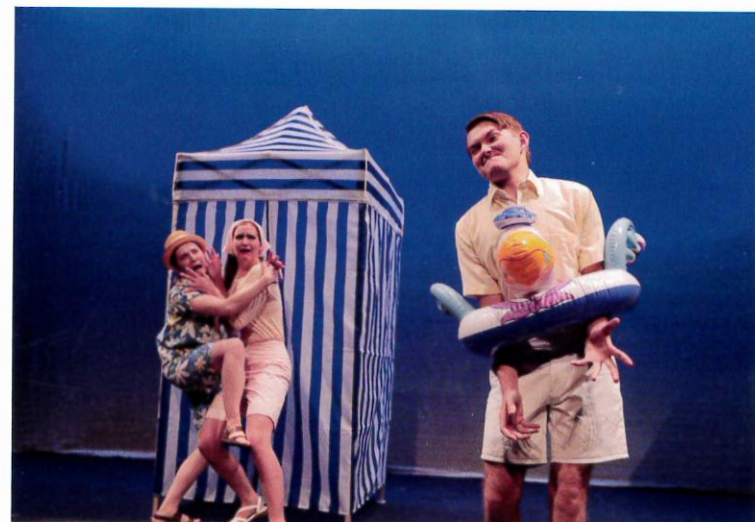
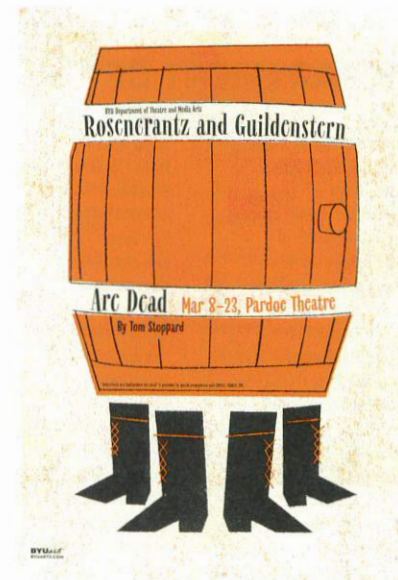
ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

March 8-9, 12-16, 20-23, 7:30 p.m.

March 9, 16, 2:00 p.m.

Pardoe Theatre

This Tony Award-winning modern masterpiece follows the classic story of Hamlet as seen through the eyes of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two minor characters in Shakespeare's play. Sometimes funny, sometimes tragic, and always philosophical, Stoppard's most popular work forces us to confront the power of life and the meaning of death.



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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants, and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction, and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

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