ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
EDUCATION TOUR CURRICULUM GUIDE
Welcome to Shakespeare Festival St. Louis.

This collection of resources was developed to accompany our 2015 Education Tour production of ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA. It contains information and activities you can use in your classroom to prepare your students for the performance, and to follow up with them afterwards.

The goal of all Festival education programs “In the Schools” is to deepen our community’s appreciation for and connection to Shakespeare, providing only the highest quality theatre education to inspire people of all ages - to creatively engage, explore, and delight in the works of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s poetry and plays are a primary element in any process of lifelong learning. In the 2013-14 season, more than 40,000 students in area schools and community venues experienced Shakespeare through the Festival’s education programs. We welcome as many as 66,000 people annually to our mainstage production in Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park.

Through the Festival’s education programs, students are challenged and engaged while enhancing their ability to read, watch, and perform Shakespeare.

Thank you for bringing the Festival to your school!

JENNIFER WINTZER
Director of Community Engagement & Education
William Shakespeare, the “Bard of Avon,” was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. Since no birth records were kept, tradition holds that he was born approximately three days before baptism, and that he died on his birthday, but this is perhaps more romantic myth than fact, as April 23 is St. George’s Day, named for the patron saint of England.

His parents were John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. John was a glover by trade, but also held the offices of alderman and later bailiff in Stratford (equivalent to a present-day mayor). William was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to the King’s New School (now Edward VI Grammar School), presumably because of his father’s position as bailiff. This would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin, rhetoric, logic, and literature.

On November 27, 1582, 18 year-old William married 26 year-old Anne Hathaway. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born six months later. Three years after Susanna, the Shakespeares bore twins, Hamnet & Judith, but Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. It’s unclear how the young Shakespeare first came to London or to the stage. One theory holds that he was arrested as a poacher and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford; another holds that he joined a company of traveling players called Lord Strange’s Men, where he learned theatrical arts as an apprentice.

However, it is clear that between 1582 and 1592, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Shakespeare became involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright. By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in one of the most popular acting companies in London: the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Led by Richard Burbage, one of the most famous Elizabethan actors, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performed at the Rose Theatre, an outdoor stage on the banks of the Thames River. Around 1599, they constructed the Globe Theatre, perhaps the most recognizable Elizabethan playhouse. When King James I was crowned in 1603, he favored Shakespeare and the Chamberlain’s Men so much that the company was renamed the King’s Men. In 1608, the King’s Men leased the indoor Blackfriars Theatre in London, which served as their winter playhouse. The Globe Theatre stood until 1613, when it burned down during a performance of Henry VIII. Shakespeare retired to Stratford not long after, where he died on April 23, 1616, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church two days later.

In the years since Shakespeare’s death, he has become one of the most celebrated writers in history. His plays were not published until the 1623 First Folio, seven years after his death, compiled by John Heminges and Henry Condell, former players in the King’s Men. However, in the 1800s, his plays became so popular that many refused to believe that a glovemaker’s son from Stratford (with no university training) had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the true author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward Devere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Christopher Marlowe, a fellow playwright, penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While speculation still runs rampant, what isn’t disputed is that William Shakespeare was the “Soul of the Age.”
November 17, 1558  
Accession of Queen Elizabeth
April 26, 1564  
William Shakespeare’s Baptism
September 4, 1568  
Election of John Shakespeare as Bailiff of Stratford

November 27, 1582  
Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway
May 26, 1583
Susanna Shakespeare’s Baptism
February 2, 1585
Hamnet & Judith Shakespeare’s Baptism
May 30, 1593
Death of Christopher Marlowe
August 11, 1596
Burial of Hamnet Shakespeare
October 20, 1596
John Shakespeare Granted Coat of Arms
May 4, 1597
Shakespeare Buys New Place in Stratford
1599
Opening of the Globe Theatre

February 8, 1601  
Essex Rebellion against Elizabeth I
September 8, 1601
Burial of John Shakespeare
March 24, 1603
Death of Queen Elizabeth I
May 19, 1603
King James I creates The King’s Men
November 5, 1605
Gunpowder Plot to Destroy Parliament
June 5, 1607
Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall
September 9, 1608
Burial of Mary (Arden) Shakespeare
1608
King’s Men buy Blackfriars Theatre
1609
Publication of Shakespeare’s Sonnets
June 29, 1613
Fire at the Globe Theatre
February 10, 1616
Marriage of Judith Shakespeare to Thomas Quiney

March 25, 1616  
William Shakespeare Signs his Will
April 23, 1616
William Shakespeare Dies
April 25, 1616
Burial of William Shakespeare
November 1623
First Folio Published by John Heminges & Henry Conell

1589-90
HENRY VI, PARTS 1 - 3

1590-94
EDWARD III

1592-94
RICHARD III
THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
TITUS ANDRONICUS
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

1594-97
ROMEO AND JULIET
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

1595
RICHARD II
LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST

1595-96
KING JOHN
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM

1596
SIR THOMAS MORE

1596-97
HENRY IV, PART 1
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

1598
HENRY IV, PART 2
HENRY V
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

1599
AS YOU LIKE IT
JULIUS CAESAR

1600-03
HAMLET
TROIILUS AND CRESSIDA
TWELFTH NIGHT
ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

1604
MEASURE FOR MEASURE
OTHELLO

1605-06
KING LEAR
MACBETH

1607-08
CORIOLANUS
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA
TIMON OF ATHENS
PERICLES

1609
SONNETS
CYMBELINE

1610-11
THE WINTER’S TALE
THE TEMPEST

1612-14
HENRY VIII
THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN
**THE CHARACTERS**

*Antony and Cleopatra* is packed with Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians all vying for power, but sometimes it can be difficult to sort out which characters are friends and enemies. This color-coded diagram (and the synopsis on the following page) will help you keep track of characters’ relationships throughout the play.

**The Second Triumvirate**

- **OCTAVIUS CAESAR**
  - Caesar’s Followers
    - OCTAVIA
    - MAECENAS
    - AGrippa
    - TAURUS
    - DOLABELLA
    - THIDIAS
    - GALLUS
    - PROCULEIUS
- **MARCUS LEPIDUS**
- **MARK ANTONY**
  - Antony’s Followers
    - SEPTUS POMPEY
    - DOMITUS ENOBARBUS
    - DEMETRIUS
    - PHILo
    - VENTIDIUS
    - SILIUS
    - EROS
    - CANIDIUS
    - SCARUS
    - DECRETAS
- **CLEOPATRA**
  - Queen of Egypt
    - Cleopatra’s Attendants
      - CHARMIAN
      - IRAS
      - SELEUCUS
      - ALEXAS
      - MARDIAN
      - DIOMEDES

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**ACTIVITY: CHARACTER CONNECTIONS**

In this activity, middle school and high school students will use their creativity, artistic abilities, and imaginations to explore the character relationships in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

After students have seen the performance or read the play, give them the list of characters from above. Ask students to choose ten characters and create a visual project that illustrates the characters and their relationships to each other. This can be done using a character web, a diagram, in the style of a family tree or photo album, or abstractly. Students can use different colors, textures, craft materials, magazine images, cartoons or symbols, to represent the characters and how they are interconnected. Use the diagram above as an example. Each visual project should be accompanied by an “Artist’s Essay,” a brief written summary that explains what inspired their artistic choices.
Antony, Rome’s finest general, idles away his days far from home. Seduced by the good life in Egypt—the feasting, the parties, and above all by Cleopatra, his lover and Egypt’s queen—he is a shadow of the man he was. Such at least is the view of Caesar and his councilors, who are eager to have Antony back in Rome to deal with the threat of rebellion from Pompey, all to no avail. But when Antony hears of his wife Fulvia’s death, he realizes that he can delay no longer. Cleopatra is dismayed that he is returning to Rome, and although she eventually agrees, cannot get him out of her mind. In the meantime, though, a soothsayer has predicted that the fortunes of the world’s most glamorous couple are waning.

ACT 2

“Though it be honest, it is never good / To bring bad news...”
- Cleopatra (Act 2, Scene 5)

At Pompey’s camp, the news that Caesar has assembled an army is not well-received; worse, Antony has returned. Meanwhile, Rome’s three rulers are locked in argument: Antony is criticized for Fulvia’s erstwhile rebellion but denies undermining Caesar. Agrippa suggests that in order to strengthen their alliance and be reconciled, Antony should marry Caesar’s sister Octavia. Both agree, but it isn’t long before Antony longs to return to Egypt. News of Antony’s conduct has already reached Cleopatra, however, and she is devastated. And although the threat of civil war is averted when Pompey agrees to cease his campaign, it becomes clear at the peace dinner that his intentions are far darker than anyone realizes.

ACT 3

“She tongue will not obey her heart, nor can her heart / Inform her tongue.”
- Mark Antony (Act 3, Scene 2)

Rome’s campaign against the Parthians has been successful, but old wounds rapidly re-open as Antony, on the way to Athens with new wife Octavia, criticizes Caesar’s renewal of hostilities with Pompey. Octavia is sent to Rome to mediate, but it is soon reported that Antony has returned to Egypt without Octavia’s knowledge, and that he has promised the eastern empire to Cleopatra. Caesar, fresh from his trouncing of Pompey, intends to fight. And Antony, accompanied by his lover, is showing dangerous lapses of judgment: spurning the advice of their military advisors, they prepare for an ill-fated sea assault. As predicted, they lose. Antony begs for peace and to retire into private life with Cleopatra, but Caesar rejects those terms and attempts to turn Antony and Cleopatra against each other.

ACT 4

“TI’s the god Hercules, whom Antony loved, / Now leaves him.”
- Second Soldier (Act 4, Scene 3)

Having had his challenge of single combat roundly rejected by Caesar, Antony hopes for swift victory in a second battle. Though the omens are not good—Enobarbus has deserted and his soldiers are convinced that Hercules has deserted them—the first day’s fighting goes well for Antony and he returns to Cleopatra in triumph. But catastrophe strikes the next day when the Egyptian ships suddenly surrender. Antony, watching from land, blames Cleopatra and threatens to murder them both. When Cleopatra responds by sending news of her own feigned suicide to Antony, he takes it seriously and attempts to kill himself. Fatally wounded, he is carried off to see her one last time.

ACT 5

“No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous.”
- Octavius Caesar (Act 5, Scene 2)

When Antony dies, Cleopatra sees death as the only option, but she is prevented from stabbing herself by Caesar’s soldiers. When Dolabella reveals that Caesar intends her to be paraded through Rome, Cleopatra is appalled and resolves to die at once. Placing asps to her chest and arm, she predicts reunion with Antony in the afterlife. Caesar, discovering her body, arranges for the lovers to share a tomb.

Charles Coghlan, Lilly Langtry in Antony and Cleopatra, The Princess Theatre, 1890
Taking inspiration from The Reduced Shakespeare Company’s hilarious and brief The Compleat Wrks of Wllm Shakespeare (Abridged) we present our own very concise version of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra.

1. Make eleven photocopies of this handout—one each for Antony, Cleopatra, and the nine other actors.

2. Have eleven volunteers take their places at the front of the room. Assign roles and let the actors read through the script once, for rehearsal. Then get out your stopwatch and see if your students can make or break the 30-second record. When the script indicates that a character dies, the actor must drop to the floor.

3. Then select eleven more volunteers to see if the second group can beat the first group’s record. Again, give them a practice run before timing, and cheer for the winners.

4. If you wish, ask your students, in groups, to create their own 30-second versions of one act from Antony and Cleopatra. Along with selecting short and punchy lines to highlight the plot, they need to pick the characters that they want to include in their scripts. For example, in “The 30-second Antony and Cleopatra,” Actors 1-9 are, respectively, Philo, the Soothsayer, Agrippa, Menas, Enobarbus, Eros, and the three Guardsmen.

**30-SECOND ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**

**ACTOR 1:** The triple pillar of the world transformed into a strumpet’s fool.

**CLEOPATRA:** As I am Egypt’s queen,

**ANTONY:** Let Rome in Tiber melt

**ACTOR 2:** I make not, but foresee.

**CLEOPATRA:** O, never was there queen so mightily betrayed!

**ACTOR 3:** Rare Egyptian! Royal wench!

**ACTOR 4:** Wilt thou be lord of all the world?

**ANTONY:** If I lose mine honor, I lose myself

**CLEOPATRA:** I will not stay behind.

**ANTONY:** O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt?

**ACTOR 5:** I am alone the villain of the earth. *(dies)*

**ACTOR 6:** Farewell, great chief. *(dies)*

**ANTONY:** Let him that loves me strike me dead.

**ACTOR 7:** Not I. *(exit)*

**ACTOR 8:** Nor I. *(exit)*

**ACTOR 9:** Nor anyone. *(exit)*

*(Antony dies)*

**CLEOPATRA:** I will not wait pinioned at your master’s court. *(dies)*
DUTY vs. DESIRE

“His captain’s heart... reneges all temper / And is become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy’s lust.” - Philo (Act 1, Scene 1)

Philo’s criticism of Antony introduces a tension between duty and desire that runs throughout the play. If, according to Roman popularity, Antony is the military hero and disciplined statesmen that Caesar and others believe him to be, then he seems to have happily abandoned his duty in order to pursue his desire. The play, however, is more concerned with the battle between duty and desire than the triumph of one over the other, and this battle is waged most forcefully in the character of Antony. At one moment, he is the vengeful war hero whom Caesar praises and fears. Soon thereafter, he sacrifices his military position by unwisely allowing Cleopatra to determine his action. Although Antony dies believing himself a man of honor, discipline, and reason, our understanding of him is not nearly as straight-forward. In order to come to terms with Antony’s character, we must analyze the aspects of his identity that he ignores. He is, in the end, a man ruled by desire as much as by duty.

FATE vs. FREE WILL

“The gods best know...” - Mark Antony (Act 1, Scene 3)

Were the suicides of Antony and Cleopatra a predetermined fate, or did they willingly take their own life? Religious belief was central to Roman culture; they believed that their fate was predetermined, and the gods influenced every area of their lives. They looked to gods like Jupiter, Juno, etc. because they believed them to have power over every area of daily life, and the Romans went to great lengths to gain their favor and approval. Romans attempted to please the gods by following an elaborate and specific set of rituals, including prayers and sacrifices, and some even claimed to speak for the gods (such as the Soothsayer in the play), but ultimately, their fate was unknown, raising the frequent debate between fate and free will. For example, the Soothsayer predicts that Antony’s fortunes are declining, and Octavius later defeats him. If the Soothsayer said nothing, would Antony’s fate still be to lose the Battle of Actium, or did his own actions cause his defeat? It’s a debate that is frequently referenced in many of Shakespeare’s plays, and one that we continue to ponder as a people.

HONOR

“It wounds thine honor that I speak it now...” - Octavius Caesar (Act 1, Scene 4)

Throughout the play, characters define honor several different ways, and often in ways that are not intuitive. As Antony prepares to meet Caesar in battle, he determines that he “will live / Or bathe [his] dying honour in the blood / Shall make it live again.” Here, he explicitly links the notion of honor to that of death, suggesting the latter as a surefire means of achieving the former. The play bears out this assertion, since, although Antony and Cleopatra kill themselves for different reasons, they both imagine that the act invests them with honor. In death, Antony returns to his identity as a true, noble Roman, becoming “a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished” (Act 4, Scene 16), while Cleopatra resolves to “bury him, and then what’s brave, what’s noble, / Let’s do it after the high Roman fashion” (Act 4, Scene 16). At first, the queen’s words seem to suggest that honor is a distinctly Roman attribute, but Cleopatra’s death, which is her means of ensuring that she remains her truest, most uncompromised self, is distinctly against Rome. In Antony and Cleopatra, honor seems less a function of Western or Eastern culture than of the characters’ determination to define themselves on their own terms. Both Antony and Cleopatra secure honorable deaths by refusing to compromise their identities.
It’s an epic saga of noble heroes fighting for honor, of political corruption and conspiracy, of a Republic becoming an Empire. It sounds a lot like Star Wars, doesn’t it? This is Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra. But the fact that these two plays can be described in the same terms as one of the most popular film franchises of our day is testimony to the continuing relevance and perennial power of Shakespeare’s work. In Julius Caesar, written in 1599, Shakespeare portrayed the last days of the Roman Republic, a community that at its best upheld a common good and expected its citizens to participate actively in political life. The conspirators assassinated Julius Caesar because they believed he was destroying this way of life and ushering in a new era of rule by a single man, which would replace the republican virtues with the decadence of empire—just what Shakespeare went on to portray in Antony and Cleopatra, written some years later in 1606.

The mention of Star Wars also reminds us that Shakespeare was not averse to one of the most basic Hollywood formulas—the sequel. Is Antony and Cleopatra a sequel to Julius Caesar? They do share several characters (Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus), the action of the second is roughly continuous with that of the first, and there are many references to Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and others in Antony and Cleopatra. Some object to the fundamental inconsistencies between the two plays, above all, in the character of Mark Antony. In Julius Caesar, he comes across as a master politician, able to manipulate the mob in Rome and defeat Caesar’s assassins in the public forum and on the battlefield. By contrast, in Antony and Cleopatra, he appears to be politically ineffective, frittering away his share of imperial command for the sake of his sensual indulgence with the Egyptian enchantress, Cleopatra. Which is the real Antony—the General of the West or the Ladies’ Man of the East? And yet, comparing the two plays allows us to grasp Shakespeare’s underlying sense of how differing political circumstances work to shape character and even alter a man’s destiny.

Already in Julius Caesar, Antony appears as something of a pleasure-seeker, foreshadowing his role in the later play. Caesar himself says that he prefers the fun-loving Antony to men obsessed with politics like Cassius: “He loves no plays, / As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music.” In Antony’s bitter confrontation with the conspirators before the battle of Philippi, Cassius harks back to his reputation as “a reveller.” In fact, the conspirators fatally underestimate Antony’s political capacity precisely because of his rakish image. In deciding not to kill Antony along with Caesar, Brutus dismisses his political importance: “...he is given / To sports, to wildness, and much company.” This sounds like the Mark Antony we know from Antony and Cleopatra.

It’s actually the politically effective Antony of Julius Caesar who is “out of character.” What, then, transforms Antony into the powerful political force we see in the center of the play? The assassination of Julius Caesar. The memory of Caesar gives Antony a cause worth fighting for, and, if need be, dying for. To Antony, Julius Caesar was “the noblest man / That ever lived in the tide of times.” Antony and Cleopatra chronicles his desperate search for another such moment when could find a cause as noble as Julius Caesar for which to die: Cleopatra.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is Cleopatra a worthy cause for Antony to give his life?
- Is the character of Mark Antony consistent between the plays *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*?
- Do you think Shakespeare intended to make *Antony and Cleopatra* a sequel to *Julius Caesar*?

ACTIVITY: ALLY / ENEMY

The lives of Antony and Cleopatra are filled with allies who became enemies, and enemies who become allies. This activity will explore and help the students understand these allegiances.

1. Students nonverbally walk around the room. They must not communicate with others.

2. After a couple minutes, instruct the students to silently select a person in the room who will be their personal “ally.” They silently continue to move around the room.

3. Instruct the students to silently select a person in the room who will be their personal “enemy.” Students continue to silently move around the room.

4. Tell the students that their goal is to keep their defender between themselves and their enemy at all times. After a few minutes, put different levels of importance on the circumstance.

5. Encourage them to get their whole bodies involved and connect with the circumstances:

   - Does your enemy annoy you? Owe you money? Did they steal something from you? Are they an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend? Is their enemy trying to kill them?
   - What was the experience like?
   - How did the circumstances change the way you felt or moved?
The legendary Queen of Egypt has been immortalized in Western culture since her death almost 2000 years ago. The historical figure Cleopatra VII has inspired works across almost every artistic mediums: painting, sculpture, literature, music, ballet, opera, poetry, film, television, comic books, video games, and yes, plays. There is even an asteroid named for her: 216 Kleopatra. But the true history of Cleopatra is arguably as intriguing as the fictional works she inspired.

She was born in the Egyptian capital of Alexandria in 69 BCE, the seventh of her name, which means “glory of the father.” A queen of the Ptolemaic (or Hellenistic) dynasty, Cleopatra descended from Ptolemy I, one of the generals under Alexander the Great. However, she did not rule alone, but rather as joint monarch with one of her younger brothers, Ptolemy XIII. The sibling rulers came to power in 51 BCE, when Cleopatra was only 18 and Ptolemy was a mere 10 years old. What began as sibling rivalry escalated into nationwide conflict, as Cleopatra had no intention of sharing power with her younger brother. She dropped his name from official documents, and minted coins with only her face on them, which broke the tradition of female co-rulers being subordinate to males. A few years later, however, Cleopatra was overthrown and exiled.

Meanwhile, Rome was embroiled in a civil war, with Julius Caesar fighting against his former ally, General Pompey, who suffered a defeat and fled to Alexandria for sanctuary in 48 BCE. Ptolemy XIII was keen to please Caesar, so he had Pompey beheaded upon the general’s arrival in Alexandria. But this only enraged Caesar, because Pompey had been married to his late daughter, Julia. As a result, Egypt fell under Caesar’s direct control, he reinstated Cleopatra as co-ruler, and declared himself arbiter between the two young monarchs.

Cleopatra took advantage of Caesar’s anger with her brother, and smuggled herself into the palace to meet Caesar, rolled inside a carpet that a Sicilian named Apollodorus carried. Afterward, she became Caesar’s mistress, giving birth to a son, Caesarion, in 47 BCE. This resulted in Caesar supporting Cleopatra for control of Egypt. He defeated Ptolemy XIII, who drowned in the Nile River. Caesar returned to Rome, leaving Cleopatra chiefly ruling Egypt alongside her son Caesarion and another younger brother, Ptolemy XIV.

The Queen’s relationship with Julius Caesar was the source of great scandal in Rome, as the Roman dictator was already married to Calpurnia. Even when Cleopatra wished to name their son Caesarion as the heir to Rome, Caesar refused, instead choosing his grandnephew, Octavius.

As depicted in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, the charismatic dictator was assassinated on the Ides of March, 44 BCE. This led to Cleopatra also taking drastic action: legend has it she poisoned her brother Ptolemy XIV, leaving only herself and her son as rulers of Egypt, but that has never been definitively proven. She then allied with Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar, and Marcus Lepidus (collectively known as the Second Triumvirate), who were waging a vengeful war against the chief assassins, Brutus and Cassius.

After the triumvirate defeated the assassins and established power in Rome, Antony strengthened his relationship with Cleopatra, even after he married Octavius’ sister, Octavia. In fact, Antony also married Cleopatra and fathered three children with her: the twins Alexander Helios & Cleopatra Selene II, and Ptolemy Philadelphus. The former general divided the eastern regions of the Roman Empire amongst his children, and named Cleopatra the “Queen of Kings.”

In 31 BCE, the relationship between Antony and Octavius deteriorated entirely, and the new Caesar invaded Egypt, officially capturing Alexandria on August 1, 30 BCE. As popularized by Shakespeare and many others, Antony and Cleopatra each committed suicide and might have been buried together in a tomb that has yet to be discovered, but the exact chain of events is unclear. Shakespeare’s own source, the Greek historian Plutarch, didn’t write of Cleopatra until some 130 years after her death. However, Cleopatra was certainly the last of all Egyptian pharaohs, as Octavius (who would later become the first Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus) declared all of Cleopatra’s children illegitimate and executed Caesarion after his mother’s suicide.

The Bard of Avon used at least 15,000 different words in his plays and poems (some theorize close to 30,000), compared to the King James Bible, which used only 8,000. In addition, as Michael Macrone, author of the book *Brush Up Your Shakespeare!* explains, it's difficult to figure out who first coined a word or phrase, but the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) credits Shakespeare with coming up with over **500 original words**.

You can find a great list of Shakespeare’s “Frequently Encountered Words” on the *Shakespeare's Words* website: [http://www.shakespeareswords.com/FEW](http://www.shakespeareswords.com/FEW)
Understanding the way Shakespeare structured his verse can be a great tool when trying to unlock more about a character's emotional state, mood, and intentions. Also, like a musical score, the structural choices Shakespeare made help the reader and/or speaker to naturally feel the tempos and rhythms of the language. There was very little time to rehearse in Shakespeare's days, so this was a quick way for actors to get inside the minds and hearts of his characters.

Today we speak in what is called prose, “regular” speech that doesn't have a specific pattern or rhythm to it. While Shakespeare sometimes wrote in prose (Act 1, Scene 2, Antony's first scene with Enobarbus, is in prose), most of Antony and Cleopatra is written in a specific type of verse (or poetry), called blank verse. Blank verse is unrhymed iambic pentameter—a line of ten syllables that has a rhythm like a heartbeat. The first syllable (or beat) is unstressed and the second is stressed; this particular pair is called an “iamb.” Here’s a line of unrhymed iambic pentameter from Antony and Cleopatra (note the marks of scansion):

\[ \tilde{\text{The people}} \quad \tilde{\text{love}} \quad \tilde{\text{me}}, \quad \tilde{\text{and}} \quad \tilde{\text{the sea}} \quad \tilde{\text{is}} \quad \tilde{\text{mine...}} \]

While this is the basic structure of unrhymed iambic pentameter, Shakespeare loved to break his own “rules,” and did so intentionally to indicate a heightened emotional state. For example, one of Cleopatra's final lines before dying in Act 5, Scene 2, Shakespeare adds a syllable, giving it what is called a “feminine ending” (eleven beats instead of ten):

\[ \tilde{\text{As}} \quad \tilde{\text{sweet}} \quad \tilde{\text{as}} \quad \tilde{\text{balm}}, \quad \tilde{\text{as}} \quad \tilde{\text{soft}} \quad \tilde{\text{as}} \quad \tilde{\text{air}}, \quad \tilde{\text{as}} \quad \tilde{\text{gentle—}} \]

Some questions to consider when analyzing a line like this with students could be:

- Why do you think Shakespeare chose to end the line with an unstressed syllable? (A “feminine ending?”) What does that tell us about how Cleopatra feels?
- Shakespeare also ends the first line of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” speech from Act 3, Scene 1 with a feminine ending. How are these two speeches similar?
- If iambic pentameter represents a normal heartbeat, how do you think Shakespeare’s language changes when a character is terrified, excited, depressed, angry, etc. (Helpful hint: have students imagine what happens to their heartbeat when they experience these emotions.)

**LITERARY DEVICES IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**

**SIMILE**: a comparison of two different things that often uses “like,” “than,” or “as.”

“…those his goodly eyes, / That o'er the flies and musters of the war / Have glowed like plated Mars…” – Philo; 1.1

**METAPHOR**: a “condensed” comparison that expresses a complex idea in a precise way.

“His legs bestrid the ocean, his reared arm / Crested the world…” – Cleopatra; 5.2

**ANTITHESIS**: setting one idea against another.

“All men's faces are true, whatso'mery their hands are.” – Menas; 2.6

**DRAMATIC IRONY**: a kind of irony that occurs when the meaning of the situation is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the play.

“Since Cleopatra died, / I have lived in such dishonor that the gods / Detest my baseness.” – Antony; 4.14

**FORESHADOWING**: an indication of what is to come.

“You shall be more beloved than beloved.” – Soothsayer; 1.1

**ALLITERATION**: Repeated consonant sounds.

“It should be better he became her guest…” – Enobarbus; 2.2

**PERSONIFICATION**: Giving human characteristics to an abstract idea or something which is not human.

“My very hairs do mutiny, for the white / Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them / For fear and doting.” – Antony; 3.11

**IMAGERY**: Describing offstage action, encouraging audiences to use their imagination.

“Then in the midst a tearing groan did break / The name of Antony…” – Mardian; 4.14
In this activity, students will explore one of Antony’s soliloquies from both a scholarly and theatrical perspective. This soliloquy can be found in Act 4, Scene 14 of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is also available online here: [http://bit.ly/1ymHfqi](http://bit.ly/1ymHfqi)

**SOLILOQUY**: a speech delivered to the audience instead of other characters, usually alone on stage, in which the speaker explores their thoughts and feelings.

**ANTONY**

I will o’ertake thee, Cleopatra, and  
Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now  
All length is torture. Since the torch is out,  
Lie down and stray no farther. Now all labor  
Mars what it does; yea, very force entangles  
Itself with strength. Seal, then, and all is done.—  
Eros!—I come, my queen.—Eros!—Stay for me.  
Where souls do couch on flowers, we’ll hand in hand,  
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.  
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,  
And all the haunt be ours.—Come, Eros, Eros!

Independently, have students:
• Read the speech aloud.  
• Circle any words or lines they don’t understand.  
• Examine the action of the play leading up to this speech.

Working in small groups of 3–4, have students identify and discuss any words and lines that have been circled.

Have each group member take turns reading the speech to their peers:
• First Person—take a slight pause each time they reach punctuation marks.  
• Second Person—pace back and forth throughout the whole speech.  
• Third Person—stay completely still.  
• Fourth Person—shout one line of the speech while doing the rest in a whisper.

Discuss how these different vocal & physical choices affect the speech’s meaning & rhythm.

**DISCUSSION TOPICS**
• In a couple sentences, describe what is happening in the speech.  
• What is Antony trying to work out in the speech? What does he decide? What discoveries does he make, if any?
PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

• Does history repeat itself? How?

• Have you ever had to give up something you wanted for the good of the group?

• How do you react when you don’t get something you feel you deserve?

• What power do words have?

• Have you ever taken responsibility for someone else’s mistake?

• How does a personal or private decision affect the world around you?

• What do you have to gain or lose by being loyal?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

• How have you seen “fate” defined in this play?

• Can you think of a time when you made a decision that had unexpected consequences?

• How do the quick scene changes affect the plot?

• Contrast Cleopatra and Octavia. How is each representative of her culture?

• Contrast Antony and Caesar. What qualities allow Caesar to win the war?

• What is the Roman perception of Egypt? Can you think of modern-day similarities?