Shakespeare Course Objectives

This course deeply explores one of the most influential authors of the Western canon and provides students with an opportunity to experience his works in a Readers Theatre setting. Students study Shakespeare’s plays in a dynamic discussion-based environment, and take the written words of plays and incarnate them in the manner intended by Shakespeare. The reading list includes eleven of Shakespeare’s plays, as well as Aristotle’s Poetics. Students will explore the nature of story and narrative, and will be deeply immersed in the culture, history, and politics of Elizabethan England. The class reinforces critical thinking and rhetorical skills and places emphasis on repeated reading of the text, discussion, and rhetoric. We recommend that parents and independent study programs count this class as meeting the requirements for ten units of high school fine arts credit. This course also supplements the world literature studied in other Torrey Academy classes.

Students will analyze and interpret drama in both written and spoken form, in collaboration with others. They will

- identify the organization of Shakespearean drama, using Aristotle’s Poetics as a framework
- identify, explicate, and respond to key themes and elements in Shakespearean drama, as presented in both written and spoken form

Students will develop rhetorical skills and demonstrate the connection between written and spoken word. They will

- explicate the relationship between written and spoken word in the context of drama
- interpret a written play and actively choose how to verbally and physically present the character and content
- identify and implement various methods of elocution and rhetoric
- prepare for and perform selections from Shakespearean plays in a Readers Theatre format

Students will examine and analyze Elizabethan culture and its influence on the West both creatively and philosophically. They will

- research and present the historical context, and authorial information for a specific Shakespearean text
- explicate the effect that drama has on the understanding of ideas and the ethos of a culture, specifically Shakespeare’s effect on the whole of the West

Students will contribute in intellectual discussion confidently, critically, and charitably. They will

- Ask relevant, critical questions about texts and ideas
- Distinguish between good and bad arguments
- Recognize, imitate, and produce sound, compelling, and logical arguments
- Assess multiple perspectives with fairness and precision in reading, discussion, and writing
- Assert opinions and beliefs with courteous and reasonable arguments
- Respond to opposition to opinions and beliefs with courteous and reasonable rebuttals

Course objectives will be realized through intensive reading, writing, discussion, and performance. The discussion and the writing assignments in the form of reflection questions will serve as the evaluative tools to assess the student’s progress toward the set objectives. Student notebooks serve as a catalog of the student’s progress through the course of the academic year, and the performance and related writing assignment is equivalent to a final exam.