

Online Lesson Plans for History and Literature Classrooms from the Making Publics Project at McGill

Making Publics in Shakespeare's Playhouse

Online now: www.makingpublics.mcgill.ca/schoolshome.html

This six-part lesson plan invites students to consider what it was like to go to the theatre in Shakespeare's London and the contours of the community this activity created. Using *Hamlet* as a window to the world of the early modern stage, students are asked to take on the roles of actors playing Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Horatio, Laertes and others, and of playgoers (lords, ladies, labourers, students, posers, puritans, pickpockets) to recreate the 'public' of the play and consider how the performance was achieved and received in its original context. The lessons also provide background on the social, economic and religious worlds of Renaissance London, ask students to consider competing historical and literary analyses and suggest ways in which the past can inform the present (what do Shakespeare and the skateboard have in common?). Teachers are provided with preparatory materials, guides for in-class exercises, and suggestions for modes of evaluation for each unit, and the lesson plan has been designed so that teachers may choose to adopt all or part of the curriculum.

Heretics, Scientists and Spies: Exploring the Renaissance Underworld

Coming spring 2008

This lesson plan (also in six parts) invites students to study a range of peripheral or clandestine networks that developed across sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Nonconformist religious groups, amateur scientists, political subversives, and even criminals built webs of association that created new communities that were both secret and public. By nature they were fluid groups that continued to attract new members, and for members, they helped create identity. But the fear of subversion they (sometimes unwittingly) inspired among more orthodox or traditional contemporaries was also very real. In response, authorities supported inquisitors and spymasters whose job it was to root out the potentially anarchic. Lessons focus on primary sources that offer clues to the organization of or response to these groups, invite students to debate the impact of these sorts of secret societies on the development of early modern society as a whole, and consider parallels between these historical 'publics' and modern social phenomena like MySpace.

Access to the online lesson plans is free, but the site is password-protected. Separate passwords for teachers and students allow different levels of access (students cannot see the pages for teachers' preparation). To receive the passwords, write to maps.schools@mcgill.ca.

Teachers' Workshop at the University of Toronto

Public Players & Secret Agents: Shakespeare, Spies and Public Life in Renaissance Europe

Friday, 30 May 2008; University of Toronto

Public and private secondary school teachers are warmly invited to join members of the Making Publics Team to consider how theatre and the clandestine contributed to the development of renaissance society and explore teaching strategies for the high school classroom. Teachers should write to maps.schools@mcgill.ca to join the free workshop.

Making Publics: Media, Markets and Association in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700

Project Director: Professor Paul Yachnin, McGill University; www.makingpublics.mcgill.ca

The Making Publics Project is funded by a \$2.5 million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, with members from major institutions across Canada, the USA and Britain, representing a broad spectrum of humanities disciplines. The purpose of the project is the investigation of the formation and function of 'publics' in early modern Europe, broadly defined as voluntary associations borne of common interests, ideals or concerns that exist beyond the normal and normative contemporary social structures. One of our objectives is to investigate and implement innovative classroom strategies that incorporate new scholarship and technologies and to interpret the work of the project for a high school audience. We are working on a third lesson plan focusing on Renaissance Venice as a hub of cultural exchange, to be launched in 2009. In addition to collaborating with high school teachers, the Project will also host two public festivals, *Playing in the Streets*, in Toronto (2008) and Montreal (2010).