

Selected and annotated by Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, CCB volunteer

The play's the thing! William Shakespeare (1564-1616) has been a beloved source for appropriation, retelling, and reworking since at least the nineteenth century, and the frequency with which he has been adapted in literature adds to the cult-like popularity of his plays and poems. Shakespeare himself borrowed, adapted, and was inspired by literary sources, so it is only fitting—indeed, it is a great tribute—that his own work should become fodder for future generations of writers. This is by no means an exhaustive list; it is merely a curated sample platter, if you will, of recent books that engage with the Bard.

**Anderson, Lily.** *The Only Thing Worse than Me Is You.* St. Martin's Griffin, 2016. 352 p. Gr. 9-12.

Harkening back to classic teen Shakespeare movies such as *10 Things I Hate about You*, this is an update of *Much Ado About Nothing* set at an overachieving prep school. When their best friends start dating, can deathly rivals Beatrice “Trixie” Watson and Ben West learn to live with each other? Co-starring charged banter, endless Doctor Who references, and the world's most ill-advised mustache.

**Bosch, Pseudonymous.** *Bad Magic*; illus. by Gilbert Ford. Little, Brown, 2014. 393 p. Gr. 4-6.

A production of *The Tempest* led by an overenthusiastic language arts teacher is just the beginning of Clay's troubles. One mysterious incident after another lands him at a camp for troubled youth on a remote volcanic island, and only his knowledge of Shakespeare may avert disaster. The problem is, there are parts of *The Tempest* that Clay really, *really* doesn't like...

**Caine, Rachel.** *Prince of Shadows: A Novel of Romeo and Juliet.* New American Library, 2014. 351 p. Gr. 9-12.

This richly textured, supernatural-historical take on *Romeo and Juliet* brings Benvolio Montague and Rosaline Capulet out of the shadows and onto the stage. In gorgeous prose that seamlessly incorporates Shakespearean lines, Caine weaves a tale of love and hate, hope and despair, passion and duty. As a period-faithful retelling rife with the characters' need to define themselves against their families and a literal curse “on both your houses,” this is simply stunning.

**Foster, Thomas C.** *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: for Kids*. Harper/HarperCollins, 2013. 168 p. Gr. 5-7.

In Chapter 6 (“When in Doubt, It’s from Shakespeare...”), Foster provides an overview of some of the ways Shakespeare is taken up by later writers and in popular culture. Foster shares some excellent insights into how young readers can bring their own knowledge of Shakespeare to experiences of other texts. Best of all, though, is the cover art by the incomparable Kate Beaton, featuring (among others) a mutually swooning Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet engaged in a distressing *tête-à-tête* with (alas!) poor Yorick.

**Hodge, Rosamund.** *Bright Smoke, Cold Fire*. Balzer + Bray, 2016. 448 p. Gr. 9-12.

Runajo (Rosaline) and Paris star in Hodge’s magical post-apocalyptic reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*. In Viyara, the last surviving city in the world, Juliet is magically compelled punish those who harm her family. Romeo, as the murderer of Tybalt, must die. But Juliet refuses to kill him, and her actions unleash civil and magical havoc in the already precarious city. Paris, tasked with guarding Juliet, finds himself bound instead to Romeo, while Runajo is determined to protect the city at all costs. And oh, there will be costs.

**Hutchison, Dot.** *A Wounded Name*. Carolrhoda Lab, 2013. 314 p. Gr. 9+.

In a hierarchical boarding-school world of propriety, dignity, and restraint, Ophelia is haunted by the death of her mother and the call of the *bean sidhe*. The headmaster’s death shatters this fragile, deceptively rigid world and precipitates a spiral of unrelenting betrayal, hypocrisy, and doom. As his despairing son’s demands of Ophelia become all-consuming and increasingly toxic, so too the lure of the uncanny becomes too strong for her to ignore.

**Janeczko, Paul B., comp.** *The Death of the Hat: A Brief History of Poetry in 50 Objects*; illus. by Chris Raschka. Candlewick, 2015. Gr. 5-9.

Janeczko and Raschka team up in this anthology of chronologically organized poems. A portion of Mercutio’s “Queen Mab” speech from *Romeo and Juliet* represents Shakespeare; the carefully selected verse lines emphasize the physical descriptors of the diminutive fairy queen. Raschka’s airy watercolors place the tiny queen on the very summit of a sleeper’s nose amid a vast doublespread. The liberal use of white space further emphasizes the small scale and concrete qualities of Mab, contrasted with the vaguer outlines of the stubbly sleeper’s face and increasingly indistinct background colors.

**Lendler, Ian.** *The Stratford Zoo Midnight Revue Presents Macbeth*; written by Ian Lendler; art by Zack Giallongo; colors by Alisa Harris. First Second, 2014. 74 p. Gr. 4-6. (Not reviewed by the BCCB)

The denizens of the Stratford Zoo come together for a night of revelry, pageantry, and... *Macbeth!* Will commentary (and peanuts) from the peanut gallery derail the whole production? Will the littlest monkeys be traumatized? Will they make it through the play without Macbeth's actor actually eating anybody? Lendler's clever story, with lively panel art by Giallongo and vibrant colors by Harris, makes for a highly metafictional, tongue-in-cheek Shakespearean production.

**Mitchell, Sandra** (ed). *Defy the Dark*. HarperTeen, 2013. 480 p. Gr. 7-10.

Tessa Gratton reimagines the romance between Hal (Hamlet) and O. (Ophelia) in "This Was Ophelia," an exquisite story of cross-dressing and moonlit flirtation in the midnight alleys of Jazz Age New York. O. craves the freedom of male attire, the glamour of cigars and club girls, and the flirtatious possibilities of the night—of which Hal is the most delectable and the most addictive. This story is short, bittersweet, and darkly delicious.

**Quick, Matthew.** *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock*. Little, Brown, 2013. 278 p. Gr. 7-10.

Inspired by Hamlet (the literary idol of sensitive, angry teen boys everywhere), Leonard Peacock has decided that the answer to his existential dilemma is "not to be." He plans out his last day—his eighteenth birthday—in carefully orchestrated detail. But things and people go awry, and through a journey that veers wildly between tragic and tragicomic, Leonard comes to realize that the answer he needs is, after all, "to be."

**Shakespeare, William.** *Macbeth*; ad. and illus. by Gareth Hinds. Candlewick, 2015. 152 p. Gr. 7-12.

Hinds's latest graphic novel adaptation of Shakespeare brings the Scottish tragedy to the page with his trademark soft lines and subtly modified dialogue. The palette of grays, blues, and greens evokes a misty Scottish landscape, contrasted with the oranges and reds that delineate a domestic space increasingly tainted with bloodshed. Red-haired and green-gowned, Hinds's Lady M. is clearly modeled on John Singer Sargent's iconic portrait of Ellen Terry. Historical and textual notes invite the reader into the illustration and adaptation process.

**Stanley, Diane.** *The Chosen Prince*. Harper/HarperCollins, 2015. 357 p. Gr. 4-6.

In a cursed kingdom, Prince Alexos is destined to be Athene's chosen champion and save his people. But being a hero is fraught with loss and grief, and—now crippled—Alexos finds himself on a tiny, magical island inhabited by an old man and his daughter... and Alexos's long-lost younger brother. *The Tempest* meets Greek mythology in this classically-inspired tale of love, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

**Stone, Phoebe.** *The Romeo and Juliet Code.* Levine/Scholastic, 2011. 304 p. Gr. 5-7.

A family secret, a mysterious boy upstairs, and *Romeo and Juliet* are almost enough to distract London-born Felicity "Flissy" Bathburn Budwig from wondering why her parents have returned to WWII-torn Europe, leaving her in the care of her American relatives. Flissy quickly becomes an integral part of the small town of Bottlebay, Maine. But then she discovers a cache of letters from her parents—written in code. What do the letters say? Why all the secrecy? And why have her parents disappeared?

**Taub, Melinda.** *Still Star-Crossed.* Dial, 2013. 352 p. Gr. 7-10. (Not reviewed by the BCCB.)

Romeo and Juliet are dead, and civil unrest in Verona grows worse by the day. Prince Escalus has the bright idea of marrying the remaining eligible scions of Capulet and Montague—Rosaline and Benvolio—to each other. Nothing can go wrong! It is a genius plan! Except Rosaline and Benvolio can't stand each other. But if they can stop the violence, they reason, surely they won't have to marry. So they join forces to figure out who is inciting discord in Verona. They bicker! They cross-dress! They fight crime! And maybe they can learn to live with each other while they're at it.

**West, Jacqueline.** *Dreamers Often Lie.* Dial, 2016. 368 p. Gr. 7-10.

Jaye is determined that nothing—not a skiing accident, not hospitalization, not Shakespearean hallucinations—is going to keep her from playing Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But poisonous memories of her family history refuse to be repressed, Shakespeare and his most famous characters begin haunting Jaye in the halls of her high school, and Romeo insists on being physically, tangibly real. Even as the show must go on, Jaye becomes entangled in a web of memory and hallucination, past and present, reality and dream.

**Winters, Cat.** *The Steep and Thorny Way.* Amulet, 2016. 352 p. Gr. 8-12.

Elsinore is a sleepy town in Prohibition-era Oregon, Claudius might be a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and Hamlet is a biracial sixteen-year-old girl in this deeply atmospheric, haunting mystery.

Hanalee Denny and her father's alleged killer Joe Adder join forces to expose the truth about her father's death. A ghost story, a love story, a friendship story—all wrapped in evocative prose.

Bonus:

**Nayeri, Daniel.** *Another Faust*; by Daniel and Dina Nayeri. Candlewick, 2009. 400p. Gr. 9-12.

Christopher “Kit” Marlowe was the preeminent tragedian of the Elizabethan stage before his early and mysterious death in 1593. His work is today often overshadowed by what George Bernard Shaw called the “bardolatry” of Shakespeare. Marlowe is rarely adapted in youth literature, so I couldn't resist including one dissonant note to my own Shakespeare celebration. *Doctor Faustus* meets *Gossip Girl* in this cheeky, darkly clever interpretation of Marlowe's best-known play. Desperate teens at an elite Manhattan prep school bargain with the sinister Madame Vileroy for talents that will allow them to fulfill their ambitions. But for every gift, there is a price. What gift—what achievement—what ambition is worth the price of their souls?