

THE PLAY'S THE THING

It's hard enough to turn kids onto reading, much less reading Shakespeare, but here are a few books that will do both.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE: A POP UP BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE by Michael Bender (Chronicle Books, \$14.95). Intricate paper engineering takes kids right into the world of 16th century drama, with biographical notes framing each centerpage popup. Ages 8-adult.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE GLOBE written and illustrated by Aliko (HarperCollins, \$15.95) uses Shakespeare's very own five act play structure to teach kids not just his life, but the heart and soul of each of the major plays. Lots of intricate illustrations (Aliko's hallmark) will keep older kids reading this oversized handsome volume that blends Aliko's love of literature with her gift of illustrating even the most complex subjects in a way kids can understand. Ages 6-15.

THE BARD OF AVON: THE STORY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema, illustrated by Diane Stanley (Mulberry Books, \$5.95) is a concise biography that gives kids basic facts about the bard,

explicates his times and explains the political and economic underpinnings of theater. The niftiest feature is the list of modern phrases that come directly from the plays themselves! Includes a selective bibliography. Ages 4-11

TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE: SEVEN PLAYS

PRESENTED BY MARCIA WILLIAMS (Candlewick, \$16.99) immerses the reader in the world of the Globe Theatre, from the groundlings' comments shouted up to the actors and the gallery spectators to the actors performing highly abbreviated scenes in Shakespeare's own words. Marcia Williams' comic book panel-style format has a "regular" English text that runs underneath each panel which presents a scene. Included in this accessible collection are Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. It's a great introductory text, sure to entice readers into longer and longer versions of each of the plays. Ages 5-adult

ONSTAGE BACKSTAGE AT THE NIGHT OWL

THEATER by Ann Hayes, illustrations by Karmen Thompson (Harcourt Brace, \$15) is a basic guide to the inner workings of a play. The duties and delights of the actors, director, prop master, publicity person are all included along with theater terms and definitions that will make even the youngest theater-goer feel very knowledgeable indeed. (This author/illustrator

team also collaborated on Meet The Orchestra).

If you take an hour to prepare young kids for their first real theater experience, the rewards will be rich: they'll love the show, they'll feel like insiders and they'll want to go back again and again.

©2005 Gwynne Spencer, PO Box 121, Mancos, CO 81328,
gwynnespencer@aol.com, reprint rights available.