

**The School of Night**

by Peter Whelan

Directed by Bill Alexander

October 30 – December 21, 2008

Mark Taper Forum

# Teaching Instructions



# How to Use the Discovery Guide

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## TO THE TEACHER

The Discovery Guide for *The School of Night* has been developed as a prompt-book for a standards-based unit of study appropriate for grades 9 through 12. The specific learning activities in Theatre Arts can be readily integrated with other content areas, particularly Language Arts and History/Social Sciences, to accelerate teaching and learning.

**The Discovery Guide is a starting point.** Please adapt the material and extend the learning activities to meet the needs of your particular community of learners. Our hope is that the structure and content of this guide will not be merely functional, but inspiring – and that teachers and students will share the thrill of learning through theatre arts.

## HOW TO USE THE DISCOVERY GUIDE

**The Discovery Guide is not designed as an independent workbook.** It is a resource for learners to develop skills in storytelling, literary analysis and collaboration that are essential in Theatre Arts, Language Arts, History/Social Sciences and other content areas. Oral discussion and writing prompts are designed so that students may relate key ideas to their personal experiences and the world around them. Teachers are encouraged to adapt or extend the prompts. Teachers may choose some prompts for small group discussion and others for the whole group.

## Writing Applications

Many of the prompts in the Guide are easily adaptable to match writing objectives your class might already be studying. Written responses to the prompts may range from short expository answers in complete sentences to formal, five-paragraph persuasive essays.

In any case, teachers at all grade levels are encouraged to design at least one rigorous, standards-based written performance assignment in conjunction with their unit on *The School of Night*.

## Oral Applications

Peter Whelan's *The School of Night* weaves together theories concerning the death of Christopher Marlowe and the authorship of William Shakespeare. The language of Elizabethan theatre alone provides an opportunity for oral exercises with your students, whether reciting existing text, creating their own or trying their hand at Elizabethan expressions. The ongoing debate associated with the mysteries and conspiracies alleged in *The School of Night* present another clear opportunity for oral presentations in your classroom. Several exercises in the Discovery Guide are designed to give your students an opportunity to create persuasive arguments of their own, and to share those positions in oral presentations. The Discovery Guide outlines the essential tools for students to prepare and deliver well-crafted arguments in defense of their positions.

## Scope and Sequence of the Lessons

In order to provide a comprehensive and sequential unit of study, we suggest that students have the opportunity to explore the whole variety of lessons in the Discovery Guide.

## The activities are designed to be completed in sequence.

The activities on pages 4 through 12 are to be completed before the students see the production of *The School of Night*. The discussion and writing prompts on pages 13 through 15 and the Resources on the back cover are intended to stimulate reflection, analysis and further inquiry after students attend the play.

# How to Use the Discovery Guide

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## THE GOALS

Regardless of grade level, the unit is designed to teach *enduring understandings* that students will take with them for life. The ability to construct a persuasive argument (as well as to appreciate the craft of a well-constructed argument) will inform every aspect of an individual's life, whether applied to academics, social situations, work-related tasks, electoral concerns – or even a car purchase. Similarly, the ability to prepare and to perform an oral presentation provides an essential life skill with applications across the board. *The School of Night* examines the Elizabethan era in detail: its politics, society, theatre, oppression, censorship and espionage. The work further provides an opportunity to consider historical fiction as a genre and to draw parallels between espionage in the Elizabethan era and today. This examination will certainly enhance a student's appreciation for history, the dramatic arts, literary arts and contemporary politics. Charted here are some essential questions that can be raised before, during and after students' experience at the performance to guide them toward the enduring understandings.

	THEATRE	Historical/Social/Literary
Enduring Understandings	Artists can be considered dangerous because of their influence on public opinion.	The right to privacy cannot be assumed and is subject to change according to the socio-political climate of the day.
Essential Questions	<p>What is the role of an artist in society?</p> <p>Should artists challenge or reflect the accepted ideas and customs of their time?</p>	<p>Should leaders have the power to acquire intelligence and censor information?</p> <p>What impact did the Queen's network of spies have on the social and literary life of Elizabethan England?</p> <p>How do contemporary privacy policies impact the social and literary lives of Americans today?</p>

# How to Use the Discovery Guide

## THE STANDARDS

Teachers should “bundle” one of the recommended theatre focus standards with a focus standard from another content area to help design their classes’ integrated unit of study.

For instance, you might be able to “bundle” one of the recommended History/Social Sciences focus standards with a focus standard from Theatre Arts and another content areas such as Language Arts, to help design the classes’ integrated unit of study.

### English-Language Arts

Literary Response and Analysis: Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g. internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot. (9-10)

3.8 Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies and incongruities in a text. (9-10)

Writing Applications

2.4 Write persuasive compositions. (9-10)

2.1 Write fictional, autobiographical or biographical narratives. (11-12)

Listening and Speaking Strategies: Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1.4 Use rhetorical questions, parallel structure, concrete images, figurative language, characterization, irony and dialogue to achieve clarity, force and aesthetic effect. (11-12)

1.7 Use appropriate rehearsal strategies to pay attention to performance details, achieve command of the text and create skillful artistic staging. (11-12)

Speaking Applications

2.5 Deliver persuasive arguments. (9-10)

### History-Social Science

Historical Literacy: Understand the importance of religion, philosophy and other major belief systems in history.

Ethical Literacy: Understand that the ideas people profess affect their behavior.

Cultural Literacy: Recognize that literature and art shape and reflect the inner life of a people.

### Theatre

Artistic Perception: Development of the Vocabulary of Theatre

1.1 Students observe theatrical productions and respond to them, using the vocabulary and language of the theatre.

Creative Expression: Creation/Invention in Theatre

2.2 Write dialogues and scenes, applying basic dramatic structure: exposition, complication, conflict, crises, climax and resolution.

### Vocabulary

Familiarity with the following words will enhance students’ appreciation of the play and these supporting materials. Review the vocabulary with the students. Discuss the meaning of each word by asking for examples to gauge students’ comprehension of the concept.


<b>Libertine</b>	n.	One who acts without moral restraint; one who defies established religious precepts; a freethinker
<b>Blasphemy</b>	n.	A contemptuous or profane act, utterance, or writing concerning God or a sacred entity
<b>Atheism</b>	n.	The doctrine that there is no God or gods
<b>Pejorative</b>	adj.	Having an insulting or critical sense

I no longer believe that William Shakespeare the actor from Stratford was the author of the works that have been ascribed to him.

– Sigmund Freud

# Before the Play

Welcome to *The School of Night*



Center Theatre Group  
C.A. House (donated)  
Alhambra Theatre  
Mark Taper Forum  
Kris Douglas Theatre  
600 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California

**Discovery Guide**

Doug Cooney, Discovery Guide Writer  
Rachel Kipps, Managing Editor  
Christine Mantilla, Proofreader  
Christopher Gattuso, Graphic Designer  
Discovery Guide Feedback: [cd@centertheatregroup.org](mailto:cd@centertheatregroup.org)  
The School of Night  
Tickets & Information: [www.CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://www.CenterTheatreGroup.org)

Doug Cooney, Discovery Guide writer, is a playwright and novelist for young people. His youth musical *Nobody's Perfect*, adapted from his novel co-written with actress Marie Marlin, premiered at the Kennedy Center and will embark on a national tour in 2010. *Imagine*, a new youth musical, premiered at South Coast Rep in Costa Mesa, CA, in June 2008.

**At first glance, Peter Whelan's *The School of Night* appears to be a whodunit mystery**

about the murder of celebrated British poet and dramatist Christopher Marlowe. In truth, however, we already know Marlowe is dead and we know who did it — so what do we care whodunnit? Actually, *The School of Night* is more of a who-did-it. Events surrounding Marlowe's murder are couched in mystery. The official story is that Marlowe got stabbed in the eye during a bar fight and died of a wound. But this short-and-sweet version is unsettling for a great many people who point out the suspicious circumstances — something about the story smells.

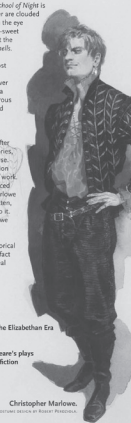
Like what? For starters, Marlowe, the dead guy, was the most important writer of his day — a flamboyant, eccentric and shockingly progressive writer at a time when the ruling power didn't like to be shocked or progressed. Marlowe was also a former spy for the Queen and a supposed holder of dangerous secrets. Even more curious, the case was quickly closed and Marlowe's body was rushed into an unmarked grave. Everything was handled a little too fast.

And then — more curious still — Shakespeare shows up. After Marlowe's death with his play after his play, tragedies, histories, romances, comedies: the greatest playwright in English times. Skeptics argue that a man of Shakespeare's limited education and social experience could never have imitated the body of work. A group of literary buffs known as "Marlovians" are convinced that Marlowe is the rightful author — and even though Marlowe was pronounced dead long before the great play were written, the Marlovians have figured out how he still managed to do it. They theorize that maybe Marlowe didn't die; maybe Marlowe lived on; maybe Marlowe escaped to Italy and wrote a lot.

In *The School of Night*, playwright Whelan spins all the historical mysteries and modern-day theories in a fascinating mix of fact and fiction. Watch the play and gauge for yourself what's real and what's not. ●

**OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE**

- Illuminate the historical events and political climate of the Elizabethan Era
- Consider the cultural phenomenon of conspiracy theory
- Introduce Christopher Marlowe, the man and his work
- Raise the question as to who actually authored Shakespeare's plays
- Examine the interplay of fact and invention in historical fiction



Christopher Marlowe,  
Illustration by Robert Peckham

a *The School of Night*

## Page 2: Welcome to *The School of Night*

**Rationale:** Students will be able to optimize their learning if they have a clear understanding of the layout of the Discovery Guide and objectives of the exercises contained in the unit. This will help them describe their learning process.


**Exercise:** Read and discuss the objectives of the Discovery Guide with the class.

**Exercise:** Have the students identify the name of the Discovery Guide writer and graphic designer.

**Exercise:** Read and discuss the quotation on page 3 by Mary, Queen of Scots. Ask the students if they understand, identify or agree with the statement. Ask why or why not.

## WELCOME TO THE SCHOOL OF NIGHT: Page 2

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Rosalinda.  
Illustration by Robert Peckham.

**"Spies**  
are men of doubtful  
credits who make a  
show of one thing  
and speak another."  
—Mary Queen of Scots

CENTER THEATRE GROUP (Discovery Guide 3)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS: Page 3

# Before the Play

Before the Play

## The Spy Who Loved Me

Elizabeth I enjoyed a long and successful reign in England. Her (Protestant) Church sought to protect its power by blocking the rise of Protestant sects, like the Lutherans and the Calvinists. Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, had broken from the Catholic Church to form the Church of England, in order to get a divorce. As a Protestant Queen, Elizabeth was vulnerable to attack by the Catholic powers, particularly Spain and Italy, which both wanted to overthrow Elizabeth and install a Catholic monarch. Additionally, as an unmarried woman with no heir, Elizabeth was mindful of her reputation as the "Virgin Queen" and the likelihood of challenges to her throne within her own kingdom.

To protect her power, Elizabeth founded the British Secret Service, naming Sir Francis Walsingham as the Queen's Spy Master. He employed a sizeable network of men, often recruited while students at Oxford and Cambridge, to root out Catholics. The royal assignment empowered men to gather intelligence by any means — to eavesdrop, entrap, even torture — all "in good service to the Queen." While it was not illegal to be a Catholic (unless you were a Catholic priest), it was almost impossible to practice Catholicism.

The state fined those who failed to attend the Church of England and kept a particularly close watch on professed Catholics. In this manner, the British Secret Service exposed several plots to overthrow Elizabeth — most famously the Spanish campaign involving her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots.

"In the name of Dog the Sire,  
Dog the Whelp and Dog the  
Holy Hound!"

—Christopher Marlowe in *The School of Night*

The Queen and her council kept tight control over any expression of radical ideas — whether coming from the theatre, literature, science, universities or newspapers — anything any thought that might destabilize the monarchy. Censorship was common. While Elizabeth favored the theatre and promoted great freedom of expression, her council was also quick to cut lines or entire scenes that contained offensive political content, social criticism or unparagonic themes. The same policy applied to cracks made at overseas enemies or allies. (Shakespeare himself cut a gag about a German and Spanish dress from *Much Ado About Nothing* in response to royal concerns.

about foreign policy.) Playwrights didn't toy with the Queen's approval; it was completely within her right to order executions, and Elizabeth wasn't shy about imprisonment, torture and beatings.

Naturally, this oppression created an atmosphere of paranoia, suspicion and distrust. The prevalence of spies gave rise to double-agents, trading information on both sides. Personal enemies could be dispatched with a single flourish to the authorities. No one was as good as their word, and no one knew whom to trust.



*Veni vobis excepti dominus mythena Christi  
Egerant, quique a furebris Chironas Janice  
Lancea Etilio, videtur, et una mala  
Diffractum interius dno, cruciatibus ante*

Religious propaganda was produced by both sides. Here a Catholic priest is tortured on the rack.

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME: Page 4

## Pages 4–7: The Spy Who Loved Me

**Rationale:** Students will be better positioned to appreciate the context of *The School of Night* if they arrive with prior knowledge regarding the degree of oppression, censorship and espionage in Elizabethan England. It is important that the students be familiar with the reasons behind the charged atmosphere of distrust among the characters in the play. Students should also be familiar with the parallels that might be drawn between Elizabeth's reign and the modern-day "War on Terror." It bears mention that Catholics were considered inherently suspicious in Elizabethan England. Elizabethans were as freaked out by the mere presence of Catholics as contemporary Americans were freaked out by the presence of Muslims in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

### Additional Notes on History

**The Royal Schism:** Henry VIII was a devout Catholic married to Catherine of Aragon when he grew frustrated with his queen's inability to produce a male heir. Unable to secure a papal dispensation to dissolve his marriage, Henry famously split from the Roman Catholic Church and forged the Church of England, freeing himself to divorce Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn, who eventually gave birth to a daughter named Elizabeth, who would one day ascend the throne as Elizabeth I. Because of tensions created by the Royal Schism and the resulting hostility of Catholic nations, all the characters in *The*

*School of Night* appear to be nervous and distrustful regarding their relationships to the Queen and their alliances with each other.

**Succession:** American Presidents are chosen by public election, but the British monarchy abides by a policy of succession according to a familial blood line, governed by common law and statute. Traditionally, the crown is passed to older sons (and their offspring) before younger sons (and their offspring), and sons — and their offspring (regardless of age) — all succeed before daughters (and their offspring.) By statute, British royal succession also stipulates that the monarch must be Protestant at the time of accession and that the monarch must enter into communion with the Church of England after accession to the throne. To this day, Roman Catholics, or those who have married Roman Catholics, are barred from ever succeeding to the crown. Succession is extremely important to characters in *The School of Night* because it impacts their power-base. Their actions, tactics and alliances are based not only on allegiance to the Queen and Church of England, but also on potential or prospective allegiance to a particular successor.

# Before the Play



"I saw her once, just once, I was in a group, bowing low...And suddenly I had an undisturbed view of her skirts. On the top layer...there was a border of little embroidered human eyes...The eyes of majesty that see all!"  
—Christopher Marlowe referring to Elizabeth I in *The School of Night*

The Rainbow Portrait by Isaac Oliver shows Queen Elizabeth's gown decorated with eyes and ears — she knows all.  
Credit: © 1998 Marlowe on Facebook

### Dangerous Minds

...Black is the badge of hell  
The hue of dungeons and the School of Night.  
—William Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost*, Act IV, Scene 3

The School of Night, led by Sir Walter Raleigh among others, was a secret society of Elizabethan mathematicians, astronomers, writers, adventurers, chemists, philosophers and poets that dared to address bold (sometimes eye-rolling) Marlowe was also a member. Group discussions among these men likely covered blasphemous topics, such as the theory that the Sun and not the Earth was the center of our galaxy or the alchemist's conviction that common metal could be turned into gold.

Members of the School of Night were labeled alchemists, a dangerous slander in Elizabethan times, connoting immoral and degenerate traits. Since the Queen was the head of the Church of England, any act of social or political defiance was charged as blasphemy or atheism. Critics went so far as to accuse the School of Night of harboring Satanists who made blood sacrifices — and since it was a secret society, who really knows?

Queen Elizabeth I probably knew about the School of Night; she knew about everything else. Even so, the existence of the School of Night never erupted into a full-blown scandal. Historians suggest that it might have received some royal protection due to Elizabeth's intimate relationship with Raleigh. ●

The Skiffington's eyes (or iron) hold a prisoner in a tight crouching position, often causing severe cramping. A violation allowed the torturer to compress the knees to the chair, resulting in broken ribs and spine.  
—*Skiffington's Eyes*, by Peter Whelan, 2014  
Illustration by Peter Whelan



CENTER THEATRE GROUP Discovery Guide

DANGEROUS MINDS: Page 5

**King James:** Under the ordinary laws of succession, Elizabeth I's cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots was next in line for the throne – but her resolute Catholicism put an end to that possibility. During her reign, many Catholics felt that Elizabeth's claim to the throne was illegitimate (altogether rejecting Henry VIII's schism with the Catholic Church, his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and Elizabeth I's ascension to the throne). Mary, Queen of Scots, of course, was implicated in plots to assassinate Elizabeth and beheaded. Many Catholics continued to maintain that Mary's son, James, should rightfully have been seated on the throne of England in place of Elizabeth. Elizabeth I ruled under the specter that her throne would be challenged. Many years later, upon Elizabeth I's death, King James did ascend to the throne. In *The School of Night*, playwright Whelan suggests that Audry Walsingham was in favor of James while Raleigh and Marlowe were not.

**Exercise:** Read and discuss the quotation on page 5 by Marlowe in Peter Whelan's *The School of Night*, referring to Queen Elizabeth I. Ask students to reflect on the quotation in relation to the portrait of Queen Elizabeth on the same page of the Discovery Guide. Ask the students if they understand, identify or agree with the statement. Ask why or why not.

**Exercise:** Read the article “The Spy Who Loved Me.” Ask students if they are familiar with Elizabeth I from recent movies and television-programs based on her life. Discuss the nature of the perceived threats against Elizabeth's reign. Students should be aware of Elizabeth's motivations in creating the “Queen's Spy Master” and the British Secret Service. Teachers will want to clarify why Catholics were targeted for scrutiny by Elizabeth's administration and why the practice of Catholicism was repressed. Teachers should also address the role of censorship in a government's ability to maintain control.

**Exercise:** Read the sidebar on the School of Night, titled “Dangerous Minds.” *The School of Night* is packed with associative references to events and episodes that occurred during Elizabethan England. Since the School of Night functions as background information to the forward-motion of the plot, students should be familiar with its existence in advance. In particular, students should be informed that the School of Night was the self-appointed title of a secret society founded by university students, dedicated to freedom of expression and progressive thought. Secondly, students should be aware that prestigious successful Elizabethans may well have perceived themselves at risk if their college involvement with the School of Night was to be exposed.






# Before the Play

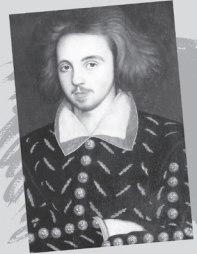
## Shock and Awe

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**Christopher "Kit" Marlowe** Celebrated playwright and libertine  
**Thomas Walsingham** Noblesman; Marlowe's patron; cousin of Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen's Spy Master  
**Audley Walsingham** His wife, with an agenda of her own  
**Ingram Frizer** Agent of the Walsinghams  
**Tom Stone** Staining actor  
**Rosalinda Bennett** Mixed-use actress from Italy  
**Thomas Kyd** Marlowe's former roommate; a notable playwright  
**Sir Walter Raleigh** Marlowe's old friend; noted explorer of the Americas; the Queen's lover  
**Ralegh's Policy** Agent of the British Secret Service  
**Nicholas Skewes** Agent of the British Secret Service



**Sir Walter Raleigh**  
COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON



**Elizabethan Rockstar**

Christopher Marlowe blazed to fame as a truly great Elizabethan playwright (not over the course of his brief years — from 1587 to 1593) — with four landmark plays written right off his college days at Cambridge: *Tamburlaine the Great*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward the Second*. Never heard of him?

Marlowe's legacy has largely been overshadowed by William Shakespeare, his notable contemporary. Academics hold that Marlowe was the bold innovator who made Shakespeare possible. "Marlowe was way ahead of his time," says director Bill Alexander. He was a provocative and deliberately scandalous writer whose ideas would have been shocking to an Elizabethan public accustomed to class from the pulpit. By contrast, Alexander continues, "Shakespeare, the greater theatrical genius, was right in his time, with no ideological principles other than to comment on the form and body of the time." Alexander views his role as *The School of Night's* director to be to "give a contemporary American audience some sense of how outrageous Marlowe was."

Known as "Sweet Kit Marlowe" to friends, Marlowe was a "trendy, glib, gay son to hang out with but known for his violent temper." A portrait believed to be Marlowe depicts him as a young, slender man with a very small — but he was also confident and aggressive about his preference for sex with men. Even by today's standards, Marlowe pushed a lot of buttons.

**Christopher Marlowe**  
COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

*It The School of Night*

## SHOCK AND AWE: Page 8

WHAT HAPPENS	WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
<p><b>Act One, Scene One:</b> Marlowe has worked through the night. In the morning, he prays to "God" — and experiences a vision of his own death. Marlowe rehearses a love scene with Tom Stone and Rosalinda Bennett. He has tweaked the scene to tease his former friend Sir Walter Raleigh.</p>	<p><b>Act One, Scene One:</b> Marlowe is a defiant atheist, living large at the estate of Sir Walsingham. Marlowe likes to shock people with his plays — and his lifestyle. Everyone subtly tries to determine neocomeer Stone's loyalties and affiliations.</p>
<p><b>Act One, Scene Two:</b> Marlowe's scene teases about Raleigh's infidelity to the Queen. It teases Raleigh is deeply offended. Marlowe tries to repair things with Raleigh by recalling the good of days and asking him to restart the School of Night.</p>	<p><b>Act One, Scene Two:</b> This is a dangerous rumor: Raleigh has been unfaithful to the Queen if she finds out, he's done. If infidelity wasn't funny, the School of Night is even worse: the Queen and her counsel would freak.</p>
<p><b>Act One, Scene Three:</b> Thomas Kyd clues Tom Stone in on everything that went down the night before. It comes out that Tom Stone is actually William Shakespeare, the other "hot" playwright in London. Marlowe is angry at being deceived.</p>	<p><b>Act One, Scene Three:</b> Almost everyone here has spied for the Queen, Marlowe included. Trust no one in this time of spies. Hiding your identity is highly suspicious. Who is Stone working for?</p>
<p><b>Act One, Scene Four:</b> Marlowe crashes Rosalinda's bedroom and grills her about her new lover, Stone, and then suggests a threesome. Marlowe boasts about not being afraid of the Queen — and then he gets a little metaphysical about his destiny.</p>	<p><b>Act One, Scene Four:</b> Marlowe thinks he's untouchable because he knows too much; on the other hand, his knowledge combined with his recklessness are precisely what put him at risk. Note the suggestion that his death might be at the Queen's command.</p>
<p><b>Act One, Scene Five:</b> The Queen's police raid Kyd's rooms and find papers written long ago by Marlowe, containing dangerous ideas and opinions.</p>	<p><b>Act One, Scene Five:</b> Kyd and Marlowe used to be roommates — and probably lovers — so we can assume Marlowe is the target of the raid. Ingram's presence implicates the Walsinghams.</p>
<p><b>Act Two, Scene One:</b> Rosalinda performs an Italian commedia scene for Marlowe, Stone and the Walsinghams. The Queen's police arrive to arrest Marlowe; he goes peacefully.</p>	<p><b>Act Two, Scene One:</b> The commedia "play within the play" offers ironic comment and foreshadowing of Marlowe's death.</p>
<p><b>Act Two, Scene Two:</b> Raleigh visits Marlowe in prison and offers protection in exchange for the written records of the School of Night. The Walsinghams post bail.</p>	<p><b>Act Two, Scene Two:</b> Marlowe feels Raleigh fishing for information and doesn't trust him.</p>
<p><b>Act Two, Scene Three:</b> Marlowe hides at the Rose Theatre with Stone and Rosalinda. Walsingham and Ingram arrive with plans to whisk Marlowe to exile in Italy where he can continue to write under the name Shakespeare. Stone thinks it's a bad idea; Marlowe doesn't know what to think.</p>	<p><b>Act Two, Scene Three:</b> Walsingham's plan could be a setup for Marlowe; then again, maybe not. Walsingham has shown his trustworthiness throughout the play, but he also works for the Queen. Is there a double-cross in motion?</p>
<p><b>Act Two, Scene Four-Six:</b> Stuff happens. Watch the play.</p>	<p><b>Act Two, Scene Four-Six:</b> No spoilers.</p>

CENTER THEATRE GROUP Discovery Guide 3

## SHOCK AND AWE: Page 9

### Pages 8–9: Shock and Awe

**Rationale:** Peter Whelan's *The School of Night* is a complex and multi-layered script that will most likely challenge and confound your students unless they are already specialists in Elizabethan history. The play boldly recreates certain historical events and fancifully imagines others. The dialogue crackles with literary allusions, historical references and prickly details culled from various conspiracy theories. In addition, the playwright has liberally decorated his play with snippets of theatre history, ranging from the traditions of Elizabethan theatre to Italian commedia. We have attempted to breakdown the plot to its essentials

– and have provided corresponding things-to-know that will further elucidate the nuanced complexities of Whelan's drama.

**Exercise:** Review the synopsis. Here is a simple way to introduce the play to the students. The characters are listed in advance so that students might familiarize themselves with the main characters and the supporting characters in the story. The synopsis is divided into two columns: "What Happens" and "What You Need to Know." "What Happens" presents a skeletal understanding of the events in the play. "What You Need to Know" categorizes underlying themes, dramaturgical commentary and historical background that will be helpful in fully understanding the play. Simply stated, the play focuses on unraveling the mystery of who killed Christopher Marlowe and why. A separate issue in the play

concerns the authorship of William Shakespeare – and whether Marlowe might be the true author of what we know as Shakespeare's Collected Works. In addition, the play highlights the atmosphere of espionage and oppression that dominated Elizabethan England.

Use the synopsis of the play in the *Discovery Guide* and discuss the breakdown, scene by scene, as they read. Have students identify the main characters and supporting characters. Identify the main character's objectives and conflicts that arise in the plot.

**Note:** There are many more intricacies to the plot than those we have identified here. We fear further explanation will serve only to muddy the waters. With the information provided, students will be able to understand the play.

Director Bill Alexander is considering changing where the act break falls in the action. At the time of this printing, he had not yet made a final decision. The choice hinges on the audience's perception of the passage of time. In purely historical terms, the raid on Kyd's rooms (Act 1, Scene 5) took place several months after Raleigh's arrest (Act 1, Scene 4). The atmosphere had settled and everyone was feeling safer when Kyd was arrested. As written, the play suggests one event follows hard on the heels of the other. Like Shakespeare, Whelan really doesn't want the audience to concern themselves with timeline. *more...*

# Before the Play

Exercise

### The Me Nobody Knows

Playwright Whelan took an “outrageous” historical figure (Christopher Marlowe) and brought him to life as a living, breathing person on stage. Choose a historical figure you like or one that you happen to know a lot about. Answer the following questions about that person. If the item seeks information that you don’t know and can’t find out, make it up — but keep it believable. Find the character’s voice in your responses; respond in the words the person you’re inventing might use.

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

When I look at myself, I see: \_\_\_\_\_

When other people look at me, they see: \_\_\_\_\_

Every day, I always try to: \_\_\_\_\_

When I kick back, I go somewhere and: \_\_\_\_\_

You don’t want to be near me when: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends tease me about: \_\_\_\_\_

Enemies criticize me for: \_\_\_\_\_

I keep promising myself to quit: \_\_\_\_\_

The saddest thing that ever happened to me is: \_\_\_\_\_

The best advice I can give someone is: \_\_\_\_\_

If I wasn’t doing what I do, I’d probably be: \_\_\_\_\_

After I die, people will always be able to say that I: \_\_\_\_\_

© The School of Night



Talk Like an Elizabethan

Don't say...	Say...
Hello	Good morrow; God save you; How now? (To Elizabethans, "hello" was an exclamation of surprise.)
Okay	Very well; 'Tis done; As you will; Many shall I.
You	Thou; thou
Yours	Thy; thine
Why?	Wherefore?
Wow!	Marry! 'Tis wonderful! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! God's Death! What a fool!
Wait	Stay!
Excuse me	Forgive me; Pardon; I crave your forgiveness; By your leave
Please	Pray; if you please; An thou please; An it please you; By your leave
Thank you	Gramercy; I thank thee; My thanks; God-reward thee
Goodnight!	God Save you!
Bathroom	Privy; Jakes; Ajac; Little room of office
No	Nay; I shall not; Nay; it is not so; (Don't say nay.)

period – both from this guide and other classes they have taken – how do students expect Marlowe would be received by his contemporaries? Discuss with the class whether Marlowe reminds them of any current celebrities. His behavior? His politics? His popularity? His arrogance? His passions?

**Exercise:** Review the sidebar entitled “Talk like an Elizabethan.” It might surprise students to learn that the highfalutin tone of Shakespearean language wasn’t a conceit of the theatre or the upper crust – but was the common speech employed everyday on the streets. (Of course, no one spoke in iambic pentameter or rhyming couplets, the heightened language of the theatre. But the arch and seemingly formal framework of the language was everyday speech in Elizabethan England.) In addition to the phrases sampled in the table, you might note the following rules:

- 1) One says “How art thou?” but never “how are thee?”;
- 2) Use “thy” when the next word starts with a consonant and “thine” before a vowel. (e.g. “I like thy face.” “I applaud thine effort.”);
- 3) Toss an “-est” onto verbs used with “thou” but never “thee.” (e.g. “Wither thou goest, I will go.” “I did go with thee.”)
- 4) The “-eth” ending on verbs applies to he, she, and it. (“He loveth best that loveth well.”)

### Additional Exercise: Spy like an Elizabethan.

To avoid detection by spies, Elizabethans would write each other

in code – which simply obligated the spies to decipher and decode messages. Today, cryptic abbreviated language has become a commonplace practice in text messaging and e-mails. Instruct students to write a message to someone else in the class, using a code of their own invention. Direct the recipients to attempt to decipher the code they receive – and come up with a reply in code.

### Exercise: The Me Nobody Knows

Review the instructions and encourage your students to pick a historical figure from their curriculum, their own reports, popular culture or current events. (Discourage them from choosing a living person or someone actually present in the room.) Allow time for library or Internet research so that students may gather knowledge about the historical figure’s personal and professional life. Walk your students through each of the character-profile questions and remind them to write their responses in the person’s “voice.” Students may have access to their notes or history books during the writing exercise but their responses should not sound like an encyclopedia entry; instead the goal is to write responses that sound like a real person talking. Encourage students to rely on their imagination to fill in any gaps in their research in order to respond directly to the more personal questions. Teachers might create a “game” by having the students share their responses out loud and attempt to guess the name of the historical figure being described.

THE ME NOBODY KNOWS: Page 10

...continued

Alexander, however, is toying with the idea of putting the intermission between these scenes to give a sense of the passage of time.

This possible change creates an opportunity to discuss the fluidity of historical fiction and the way writers use the facts to serve their dramatic needs. It is also an opportunity to discuss the many choices that go into producing a play – only the text is set (and even then, many directors make cuts or discuss changes with the playwright). Everything else, *everything* is carefully chosen by the director with the help of the creative team.

**Exercise:** Read the sidebar on Christopher Marlowe called “Elizabethan Rockstar.” From what they know about the Elizabethan

# Before the Play

## Once More, With Feeling

Historical fiction is a broad title that applies to any fictional story that occurs during an event or period from the past. Typically, the fictional story takes one of two approaches:

- 1) the story uses a historical event as a backdrop to add credence and depth to an imaginary tale peppered with historical figures; or
- 2) the story breathes life into prominent people from history and blends them with newly-invented characters to consider actual events from the perspective of people who lived during that time.

Landmark literary examples that use history as a backdrop for fictional characters include Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (set in Russia during the Napoleonic Wars), Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (set in London and Paris during the French Revolution), and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (set during the American Civil War). Plays that dramatize the lives of historical figures include many plays written by Marlowe and Shakespeare (e.g., *Bombardier*, *The Conqueror*, *The Henry Plays*, *Richard III*). History has also been a popular source of inspiration for the television and movies of today. The list includes: *The Italian Job* series, *The Tudors*, *Downton Abbey*, *Madam*, *The Other Boleyn Girl* and on and on.



Historical fiction should not be mistaken for an accurate chronicle of history. Academic historians are of two minds. On the one hand, the genre is enormously engaging in its approach to history. Many students would never develop an interest in the Civil War, for example, if not for *Gone with the Wind*. On the other hand, writers of historical fiction freely employ artistic license to reinvent history — what's true and what's not can be blurred in many different ways — and to cultivate empathy for the personal lives of their characters. As a result, their historical accounts are loaded with the author's singular perspective and an unrelentingly entertaining blend of truth and fiction.

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## The Dark Lady

*I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.*  
—William Shakespeare, Sonnet 142

Whelan blends fact with fiction in suggesting the identity of the "Dark Lady of the Sonnets," a woman described as "coloured" (i.e., whose skin is "black") (a dull, grayish brown color). Some literary scholars contend that the description of the "black woman... on her head" suggest that the Dark Lady was of African descent. Others assert that the Dark Lady is merely a fictional concept, that her "darkness" is not literal but instead suggests the "dark" tones of physical lust. What is remarkable about the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's love poetry is that a woman of fair hair and pale skin was considered the ideal beauty of the day.

Whelan's *The School of Night* clearly positions Rosalinda Bennett, a fictional character, as the source that inspired Shakespeare's real poetry. Rosalinda, a commedia actress from Italy, of African descent, certainly qualifies as a "dark lady" — but does her relationship with Shakespeare inspire love poetry? ●

CENTER THEATRE GROUP Discovery Guide 11

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING: Page 11

## Pages 11–12: Once More, With Feeling

**Rationale:** Students will be better positioned to appreciate the particular perspective offered by Peter Whelan in *The School of Night* if they arrive with prior knowledge regarding the nature of historical fiction. It is important that the students be familiar with these concepts in order to be able to discuss their responses to the balance of historical facts and creative fictions in *The School of Night* after attending the performance.

**Exercise:** Read the essay entitled “Once More with Feeling.” Teachers should discuss the two different approaches to historical fiction with students: 1) a fictional story about original characters in which history serves as a backdrop; or 2) a fictional account of real historical figures. Review the examples of each approach offered in the essay and ask students to analyze how these examples function as historical fiction. Ask students for additional examples from books, television, movies or even video games. Discuss whether students appreciate the difference between historical fiction and accurate historical accounts. Teachers might ask students to come up with examples in which historical fiction “got it wrong.” (e.g. the depiction of African-Americans in *Birth of A Nation*, the depiction of Native-Americans in early western films, the romantic depiction of the aristocratic South in *Gone With The Wind*, etc.)

**Note:** Apparently, a film-project is in development about the mystery associated with Marlowe’s murder, starring Johnny Depp as Marlowe and Jude Law as Shakespeare. For an example of historical fiction gone horribly wrong, see *The New York Times* review of *Marlowe*, the rock musical, found at the end of these instructions.

**Exercise:** Review the sidebar entitled “Dark Lady.” Discuss how this is an example of historical fiction. You might encourage students to read a Shakespeare sonnet that references the Dark Lady – or have a student

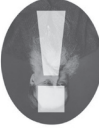
read the sonnet aloud to the class (#127-154; note most are of a sexual nature – choose with care). What does the sonnet suggest to them about this woman? Students could construct a collage of images from magazines, presenting a modern-day suggestion of who Shakespeare’s “Dark Lady” might be. After the play, ask students if their imagining of the *Dark Lady* was anything like Whelan’s.

127  
In the old age black was not counted fair,  
Or if it were it bore not beauty’s name:  
But now is black beauty’s successive heir,  
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame,  
For since each hand hath put on nature’s power,  
Faireing the foul with art’s false borrowed face,  
Sweet beauty hath no name no holy bower,  
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.  
Therefore my mistress’ eyes are raven black,  
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem,  
At such who not born fair no beauty lack,  
Slandering creation with a false esteem,  
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,  
That every tongue says beauty should look so.

# Before the Play

**Exercise** **Artistic License: A Learner's Permit**

Take the historical figure in your character sketch and place him/her in a scene with another character, either real or imagined. Write a page of dialogue between these two people in which the historical figure receives information that he/she takes to be bad news. (Not slightly bad news — but seriously bad news.) How does your historical figure cope with the news? What action might your historical figure take to protect him/herself? What about damage control? Is there anything to be done to "handle" the bad news? As with the character sketch, anything you don't know, you are freely encouraged to invent.



© The School of Night

ARTISTIC LICENSE: A LEARNER'S PERMIT:  
Page 12

## Exercise: Artistic License: A Learner's Permit

Review the instructions. Instruct students to return to the historical figure researched in response to the exercise entitled “*The Me Nobody Knows*.” Using this same figure, have students imagine a scene in which this character receives dramatically bad news. The dialogue between the character and the messenger who delivers the bad news should include the delivery of the message, the historical figure’s reaction to the news, a deepening understanding of the implications of the news and some effort to take decisive action in response to the news. Students should be encouraged to make the “bad news” worthwhile and true to the role that their historical figure played in real or imagined events. Students will find “prompts” for their historical figure’s reaction to bad news and what the news itself might be in the responses they wrote for character-profile items such as “you don’t want to be near me when,” “the saddest thing,” or “enemies criticize me for.” Teachers might monitor this exercise by offering verbal-commentary as students write. (“You are waiting for important news. Where are you? A messenger arrives. Maybe the messenger is your employee; or maybe your friend. The messenger delivers bad news. How bad is it? Do you lose your cool or do you take it well? What does the bad

news mean? What are you going to do about it?”) Students can respond to the task with comedy and humor as long as the fundamental exercise is handled in a respectful manner. Students may write their dialogue in script or story form, as they prefer.

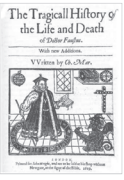
The life of William Shakespeare is a fine mystery and I tremble every day lest something should turn up.  
– Charles Dickens

# After the Play

After the Play

## A Full House

The Elizabethan era was the first time that theatre was attended by an audience ranging from the upper ranks, seated in the balconies, down to the common working class known as "the groundlings" that stood in the pit before the stage. Elizabethan playwrights spoke to the full breadth of society and, as Bill Alexander, the director of *The School of Night*, contends, "created such a new and vibrant focus on people's lives that it changed a whole society's way of looking at the world and at itself."



Doctor Faustus was first published in 1616. The title page of this strip version features an engraving of the good doctor making his deal with the devil.

So how did those playwrights hook both the high-brow and the low-brow? They invented new ways to tell the story: an aggressive hook into the story; multiple plots and subplots that merge at the end; globe-trotting locations, filthy rich characters as well as dirt-poor; laughter and tears, comedy and violence; a quirky play-within-a-play; and the ultimate showdown between good and evil.

Exercise

### The Play Within The Play

Choose three characteristics of Elizabethan plays listed at left, and write three separate paragraphs describing how playwright Peter Whelan incorporated that element into his modern-day play, *The School of Night*. Identify specific moments in the play to make your case and describe the moments in detail.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

CENTER THEATRE GROUP Discovery Guide '13

A FULL HOUSE: Page 13

## Page 13: A Full House

**Rationale:** Students will be better positioned to appreciate the underlying historical and literary values of *The School of Night* if they arrive with some context for the particular achievements of Elizabethan theatre. This brief essay shares a perspective on the cultural impact of Elizabethan drama, as well as some of the literary devices employed by Elizabethan playwrights in order to rise to the occasion.

**Exercise:** Read the essay entitled “A Full House.” Students’ appreciation of *The School of Night* will be enhanced by an understanding of the particular energy and impact of Elizabethan theatre on its time. The power that playwrights acquired during this time was partly due to the expansive reach of their audience; everybody went to the theatre. Teachers might draw a comparison to contemporary sports stadiums, detailed in the note below. Playwright Whelan’s work also deliberately references specific elements of Elizabethan theatre. A short list of these dramatic devices is included in the essay. Students who are familiar with Shakespeare should be able to identify where these elements occur in plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* or *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. A more considerable list of dramatic devices accompanies the notes on the “Play Within the Play” exercise, below.

**Additional Historical Note:** Theatre of the Elizabethan era was a spectator sport for the masses. Elizabethan theaters held several thousand

people from all walks of life and, like the sports stadiums of today, had a reputation for brawls, congested traffic and public drunkenness. Those who could afford it were seated in the balconies, or even in chairs onstage (the Elizabethan equivalent of sky-boxes or seats on the 50 yard line.) Different rules applied for women. They attended plays, although noble women wore masks to disguise their identity. It was unseemly for women to act on the stage, however, and women’s roles were always portrayed by young men or boys.

Elizabethan theatre was serious business. To “sell” the production to the masses, theatre managers promised celebrity appearances, comedy, love, sex, political intrigue, suspense, fights, fencing and a really good death. Despite its broad popularity, Elizabethan theatre was decried by the Church as immoral and degenerate. Religious folk argued that it was sacrilegious for boys to play women’s roles in female clothing. An outbreak of the plague was often construed as the wrathful retribution of God for the licentious indulgence of theatre. City ordinances forbade the construction of theaters – which is why the famous theatres of the day were located across the Thames, outside city limits.

Fortunately, theatre had a loud and outspoken proponent in Queen Elizabeth. Companies of actors “belonged” to the Queen and found protection by the highest nobles in the land. A lengthy run of a play could find protection by characterizing its performances as extended rehearsals for a future royal performance.

# After the Play

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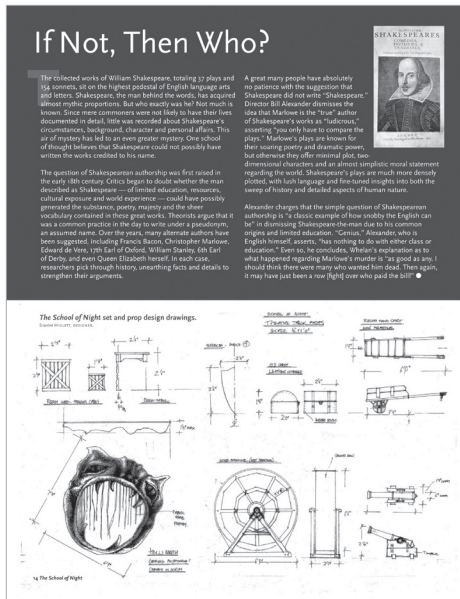
## Exercise: The Play Within the Play

Review the instructions to the exercise. Ask students to articulate their ideas as to how *The School of Night* functions according to the conventions of Elizabethan theatre. Once students run through the more obvious parallels, ask them to identify subtler comparison. (The showdown at the Rose Theatre, for example, could be perceived as a “play within a play” because all the characters are forced into roles on a stage. Historically, what unfolds here is speculation and conjecture – but the playwright brings it to life in this “play within the play,” if you will.) Students might also be engaged in a discussion as to the ongoing popularity of Elizabethan dramatic conventions in popular Hollywood movies of today. (e.g. sex, violence, action, multiple locations, etc.) A more comprehensive list of dramatic conventions of Elizabethan theatre follows below:

- An immediate hook into the story;
- A chronological sequence of events;
- Several independent plots/subplots that somehow merge by the end;
- Several critical confrontations;
- Emotions ranging from laughter to tears;
- Passions ranging from ardent to violent;
- A sweeping tale that changes locations and advances in time;
- Multiple characters ranging from rich to poor;
- A play-within-a-play;
- A rich use of language encompassing elegant prose, bawdy wit and philosophical musing;
- Popular source material re-worked as a new play;
- A struggle between good and evil; and
- A fixed sense of morality.

Shakespeare couldn't have written Shakespeare's words ... if Shakespeare was possessed of the infinitely divided star-dust that constituted this vast wealth, HOW did he get it, and WHERE and WHEN?  
– Mark Twain, “*Is Shakespeare Dead?*”

# After the Play



IF NOT, THEN WHO?: Page 14

## Pages 14–15: If Not, Then Who?

**Rationale:** The issue of Shakespearean authorship is situated in tandem with the mystery of Christopher Marlowe's murder in Whelan's *The School of Night*. While students are likely to be more familiar with Shakespeare, the question of authorship raised here might be altogether new to them. Indeed, in the high-tech world of Internet accessibility and word processing, "authorship" alone is a concept that might be new to students.

**Exercise:** Read "If Not, Then Who?" Introduce the question of Shakespearean authorship to your students. In addition to discussing the points raised in the essay, teachers might reference the standard encyclopedia entry regarding Shakespeare to point out how little is known about the writer. Students should appreciate the wealth of knowledge contained in Shakespearean plays: English history, ancient history, politics, legal affairs, geography, philosophy, poetry, multiple languages. Teachers might draw specific examples from different Shakespearean plays. Students should be aware that some who question Shakespeare's authorship contend that one man could not hold all this knowledge and still be a skilled dramatist and a keen and insightful commentator on the human spirit as well. Teachers might display the bulk of Shakespeare's *Collected Works*, 37 plays written in thirteen years – and ask students, "could one man have written all this?" On the other hand, students

should also be familiar with reasons why many believe Shakespeare is the author of Shakespeare's plays. Review the arguments made by Bill Alexander, the director of *The School of Night*, in the essay. Teachers might poll students for their gut response to the question of Shakespearean authorship. *The School of Night* makes its own argument as to why Christopher Marlowe is considered a likely alternative author of Shakespeare's plays, although ultimately the playwright discards the idea. Teachers should introduce students to the existence of other possible candidates, Sir Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby.

Teachers might also introduce students to the concept of "authorship." In the digital age, the practices of "cut and paste," "sampling," "downloading" and "file-sharing" have obscured the original author's stake in intellectual property. Students should be able to share pop culture examples of incidents when creative ideas have been stolen or authorship of one song or script has been claimed by two separate individuals.

# After the Play



**What I Heard Was...**

Marlowe's murder was faked. That is, the Apollo Moon landings were actually shot in the Nevada desert or a Hollywood sound stage. John F. Kennedy was shot by the Mafia. Princess Diana was murdered by British intelligence services. Another scientist Bruce Levin was killed and murdered by the FBI. Each of these assertions is classified as a conspiracy theory, a term applied to any effort to blame an event (or its coverage) on a secret plot by powerful and influential people or organizations.

Conspiracy theories are derived from the belief that things are not as they appear, that all of history is driven by conspiracies, that nothing is haphazard or coincidental, that negative forces always gain on the greater good of society and that world events are driven by power, money, sex and fame. Because of the somewhat cynical aspect of these convictions, the term conspiracy theory has acquired a pejorative edge and often used to dismiss claims that are considered undeniably rational or extreme. Social commentator Christopher Hitchens dismisses conspiracy theories as "the exhaust fumes of democracy"—the unavoidable consequence of too much information circulating among too many people.

Even so, psychologists have indicated that conspiracy theories have considerable power just by their simple existence. The mere fact of a conspiracy theory will get people to question their perspective on a particular event, without weighing the merits or strength of the theory itself. And not all conspiracy theories are crazy; certain theories have been proven accurate, like the Watergate burglary, the plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln, the Iran-Contra scandal or the Charles Manson murders. ●



**Elizabeth Smackdown: Choose Sides and Bring It On**

**Exercise**

Traditionalists maintain that William Shakespeare was certainly a great playwright and an actor who authored the Collected Works of Shakespeare. "Marlovians" insist that Christopher Marlowe, alive or dead-in-life, is a much more likely candidate. What do you think? Did Shakespeare write Shakespeare? Or was it Marlowe—traveling through Italy with long hair and wicked ways in an Elizabethan witness protection program?

Conduct an Elizabethan debate. Divide into Shakespearians and Marlovians. Use the arguments gleaned from the play and additional research. Construct your arguments using the structure of a well-crafted argument, as you did in your response to the exercise titled "Knock, Knock" on page 7, and debate the authorship of Shakespeare. The careful not to mistake historical fiction for fact!

Bonus points if you talk like an Elizabethan. Double bonus points if you manage to quote Shakespeare or Marlowe.

**Concluding Remarks**

We hope this guide has enhanced your experience of *The School of Night* by offering context for Christopher Marlowe, Elizabethan England and the question of Shakespearean authorship, as well as the thrill of conspiracy theories. Although they have been challenged as a worthwhile area of study in the public school curriculum, the arts remain important to our culture for many reasons, including the ability to explore a variety of perspectives on world events and as a useful tool in persuading others to share a certain perspective.

CENTER THEATRE GROUP *Shakespeare* Guide 15

WHAT I HEARD WAS: Page 15

## Additional Historical Note:

The Marlovians, members of the International Marlowe Society, a modern-day group of scholars and Elizabethan enthusiasts, are still passionately debating these issues today. They suspect that Marlowe's death was actually faked, in order to permit him to flee Elizabeth's reach and to live as an exile in Italy, where he continued to write plays under an assumed name – William Shakespeare. It might sound like an outrageous theory but it receives serious consideration in academic circles – so serious, in fact, that Calvin Hoffman, who originated the theory, was granted permission from the British government to open the tomb of Sir Thomas Walsingham in order to search for Marlowe's original play manuscripts that he believed were buried there. He did not find any manuscripts in Walsingham's crypt, but that setback did not deter his campaign to unearth the true author of Shakespearean text.

**Exercise:** Review the sidebar entitled "What I Heard Was." *The School of Night* raises two controversies: the mystery of Marlowe's murder and the question of Shakespearean authorship. The effort to unravel these issues might be seen as examples of conspiracy theory, the practice of fixing blame for significant cultural events on secret and undisclosed plots by groups or individuals. Students may well be familiar with any number of popular conspiracy theories in circulation – but not familiar with the concept of conspiracy theory as

a social phenomenon. Ask students to identify conspiracy theories they know or to chime in regarding theories referenced in the essay. Do students believe any conspiracy theories? Do students engage in dialogues regarding conspiracy theories? Or do students reject conspiracy theories out-of-hand?

**Additional Note:** Other popular and contemporary conspiracy theories include:

- 9/11
- Aliens on Earth: UFO's/Roswell/Area 51
- The Oklahoma City Bombing
- Pan Am Flight 103
- The Waco Massacre
- Marilyn Monroe's death
- The Jonestown Massacre
- Anastasia: The Czar's Daughter
- AIDS is a man-made disease
- Murder of Tupac Shakur
- Murder of Notorious B.I.G.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Assassination
- Malcolm X Assassination
- Heath Ledger
- The Illuminati Run the World
- New World Order
- DB Cooper
- Andy Kaufman being alive
- Paul is Dead Beatles thing
- Anna Nicole Smith
- Katrina/The Day the Levees Broke

It really has to be an open question on the evidence.  
 – Mark Rylance, contemporary Shakespearean actor and Artistic Director of *The Globe Theatre* in London, on Shakespearean authorship



# After the Play

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## **Exercise: Elizabethan Smackdown**

Divide the class into separate teams, identified as “Shakespeareans” and “Marlovians” to debate the pros and cons of Shakespearean authorship vs. Marlowe’s candidacy as the true author of Shakespeare’s works. Students can rely on research included in the guide, other resources, as well as Whelan’s *The School of Night* to craft their arguments. Students should use the same framework of a well-crafted argument, included as “Creating a Persuasive Argument,” presented in connection with the exercise entitled “Knock, Knock –.”

Encourage students to rely on the library or Internet to find facts that support their position, as well as an expert statement. Teachers might share the quotations from great authors relating to the issue of Shakespearean authorship enclosed in these instructions. Enlist the teams to brainstorm their arguments and their presentation as a group effort. Ask students to identify the counter-arguments and then to craft a response to each argument. Remind students that Elizabethan language and selected quotations from Shakespeare and Marlowe will result in bonus points.

Schedule time for students to present their debate in the classroom. Allow a classroom audience to determine the winner of the debate based on each group’s presentation. (You might invite students from a separate classroom to attend the presentation as objective judges.) Students should have an opportunity to ask the judges about their response to the debate. For example, students might ask listeners if they were more inclined, unchanged or less inclined to change their opinions on the subject of Shakespearean authorship. (e.g. Did you learn something you didn’t know before? Are there two sides to the argument?) Students might also ask listeners to identify sections of the argument that were stronger or more memorable than others.

# After the Play

**Resources**

**Websites**

[www.john.org/eng/papers/robertson/robertson.html](http://www.john.org/eng/papers/robertson/robertson.html)  
 "Much Ado About Something", a fascinating comparison on the authorship debate between Shakespeare and Marlowe, including a useful quiz and a terrific teacher's guide.

[www.shakespeareauthorship.com](http://www.shakespeareauthorship.com)  
 A website dedicated to the proposition that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare.

[www.italianonline.com/eng/robertson](http://www.italianonline.com/eng/robertson)  
 "You are there": Everything you want to know about Elizabethan England!

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/tudors\\_launch\\_gems\\_spying.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/tudors_launch_gems_spying.shtml)  
 Elizabethan Spy Games: How to be behind!

[www.wired.com/wired/story/15519/](http://www.wired.com/wired/story/15519/)  
 The best conspiracy theories

**Books**

**The Murder of the Man who was Shakespeare**  
 by Colin Burrow (Oxford U. Press, 2014)  
 The Marlowian Bible

**The Rehearsal: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe**  
 by Charles Nichol (Penguin, 2012)  
 A fresh analysis of the conspiracy theory concerning Marlowe.

**A Dead Man in Oxford?**  
 by Anthony Burgess (Doubt, 1971)  
 A celebrated novelist spins the myth of Marlowe.

**Elizabet**  
 directed by Shekhar Kapur (Universal Studios, 1998)  
 Starting with Marlowe and Geoffrey Rush as Queen Elizabeth I and San Francisco Washington, the Queen's Spymaster.

**Elizabeth: The Golden Age**  
 directed by Shekhar Kapur (Universal Studios, 2007)  
 Starting with Marlowe and Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh.

**Elizabet: Much Ado About Something**  
 (PBS Home Video, 2007)  
 PBS Frontline documentary on the authorship debate between Shakespeare and Marlowe.

**Shakespeare in Love**  
 directed by John MacLean (Miramax, 1998)  
 Robert Ebert appears briefly as Christopher Marlowe in the popular historical fiction based on the life of William Shakespeare.

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## Pages 15–16: Concluding Remarks, Resources and About P.L.A.Y.

**Rationale:** Students can be motivated to use skills and knowledge gained from *The School of Night* to extend their learning in other curricular areas.

### Exercise: Beyond the Performance

- 1.) Read the Concluding Remarks aloud to the class.
- 2.) Encourage students to list new insights or questions raised relating to Christopher Marlowe, the man and his work, the issue of Shakespearean authorship and Elizabethan England. Post their responses on the board.
- 3.) Encourage students to list new insights relating to the contemporary questions of privacy and conspiracy theory. Post that list on the board.

**Exercise:** After the students have seen the play, have them write a letter using one or more of the following elements of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, response to literature or persuasive. Mail their responses to:

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**Center Theatre Group Education**  
 601 West Temple Street  
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

# The New York Times

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**THEATER: 'MARLOWE,'  
A ROCK MUSICAL  
By Frank Rich**

WHEN everything goes right in a musical, the audience feels a rush of exhilaration that is the quintessence of Broadway. And what happens when everything goes wrong? Well, when everything goes wrong, another kind of giddiness sets in – that same slaphappy feeling that comes when Laurel and Hardy send a grand piano crashing down a flight of stairs.

Such is the perverse pleasure offered by "Marlowe," a wholly ridiculous show that is much more fun to sit through than many merely mediocre musicals. Like such famous Broadway fiascos as "Kelly," "Rachel Lily Rosenbloom" and "Rockabye Hamlet," this one has the courage to meet vulgarity far more than halfway. If "Marlowe" isn't quite a classic of its kind, that's a matter of size, not content. Tacky-looking and sparsely populated, this show lacks the Titaniclike splendor and expenditure of Broadway's all-time fabulous wrecks.

Connoisseurs of theatrical disaster will still find much amusement in the self-described rock musical that opened last night at the Rialto. In attempting to give us a song-and-dance account of that madcap Elizabethan playwright, Christopher (Kit) Marlowe – the one who had "the devil market cornered" – the

co-authors, Leo Rost and Jimmy Horowitz, have left no folio undefaced. The insanity begins with the opening scene, in which Queen Elizabeth I (Margaret Warncke) dispatches a lover with the line, "Don't forget your codpiece!"

A little later, there's a musical number in which Marlowe, "Willy" Shakespeare and Richard Burbage get stoned on marijuana provided by Sir Walter Raleigh - who has passed it on from his good friend Pocohantas. Act II reaches its peak when the hero (Patrick Jude) returns from the grave on a cloud of dry-ice smoke. Wearing a silver lame jumpsuit - tight enough to reveal a bulky microphone battery-pack above his navel – he imparts the evening's message in a song called "The Madrigal Blues": "Make love to life, and you will find death a friend."

Though it pays lip service to Marlowe's renegade anticlerical views, the libretto is principally concerned with his love life. As the authors have it, their hero stole a woman, Emelia Bossano (Lisa Mordente), from Shakespeare - and never mind the other characters' conjecture that Marlowe tended to "prefer the boys." According to the Playbill, "the story of this drama is essentially true and accurate, except for minor adjustments in time for dramatic purpose." This may come as a surprise to some scholars, who will discover, in addition to the other "minor adjustments," that the authors have changed the generally accepted location and perpetrator of Marlowe's murder.

Don Price, the director, has assembled the very cast the material demands. With his open shirt, glittery vest and leopard boots, the pelvis-thrusting Mr. Jude would be the toast of any small-town shopping-center disco. The rumpled, miniskirted Miss Mordente has two expressions to go with Mr. Jude's one, and she reacts to her lover's death with all the sorrow of a 16-year-old who's discovered a small run in her stocking. Lennie Del Duca, Jr.'s spurned Shakespeare – "I've sweated sonnets for you," he tells Miss Mordente – is so retiring and slow-witted that we always believe the authors' contention that he was the Globe's foremost nerd.

The scraggly chorus of Elizabethan "chroniclers," wearing Day-Glo tights, performs dance routines that might be ragged run-throughs for a Jordache jeans commercial. They inhabit a balconied set that suggests just how 16th-century England might have looked had cellophane, aluminum foil and Con-Tac paper only been invented back then. The sound-alike "rock" songs recall high-school band improvisations, circa 1965. Because of the acoustical feedback, static and rumbles, the lyrics are often garbled. The few that do surface – "Good guys and bad guys couldn't deny / Marlowe was king of the gadflies" – make one regret the loss of even a single verse.