

Scenario: Student Guide

This Guide discusses the following topics:

- Getting Started
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- About the Characters and Costumes

Getting Started

This is a brief introduction to *Scenario*. More detailed Help files are also available from within the program.

Follow these steps to start blocking a scene from one of the three plays.

1. Double click on the icon for Scenario to start the program.
2. In the **Project Information** dialog box, enter the details of your project. If you cannot see the dialog box, choose New Project from the **File** menu to display it. Into it you should enter:
 - your name
 - the name of the person who will review your project
 - a summary of your aims in the project (you may choose to enter this later, when you have finished)
3. Import the script of the scene you have chosen to block. In the main window, you will see a **Script** button; click on this, and the **Script** window will appear on the screen. Then select **Import Script** from the **File** menu, and select the file that contains the script you want: for example, "Act1Sc1.rtf" is the script for Act 1 Scene 1.
 - If you do not see a list of the scripts, you can navigate to it in the usual way: you will find them in directories (folders) inside the "Scenario" directory.
4. Select a section of the script to work with. It is usually best to work with small segments of the scene, creating it step by step.
 - Select the text you want to keep with the mouse, then choose **Crop Text (Keep Selected)** from the **Edit** menu, and you will see just the passage you selected. Note that this process allows you to "cut" the scene if you choose to do so. You might explain your reasons in the Notes window (see below).

The program will remember the whole script when you move to the next stage.

5. Create your first "frame" by choosing the necessary characters from the **Director's palette**. If you don't see the palette, click on the button **Direct** at the bottom of the stage in the main window.
6. You can now drag the characters around the stage, and manipulate many of them by changing the way they face, or making them sit or lie down.
7. You may wish to add props or a sound from the **Director's palette**.
8. You can comment on the reasons for the choices you have made in blocking this section of the scene by entering text in the **Notes** window. Click on the button **Notes** at the bottom of the main window to open the window.

9. When you have created the frame to your satisfaction, click on the forward button at the bottom of the main window, and the program will create a new frame. Characters will be in the same spot ready to move, and the full script will be loaded ready for you to make your next selection.
10. Save your work when you have finished (you will find the **Save** command in the usual place in the **File** menu). Give your file a descriptive name, using your name as a part, so that your Reviewer knows who it is from.

Note: The file name **MUST** end with .shk (even if you are using a Macintosh), or the program will not be able to read it.

The program has extensive “help” files built in. Consult these if you have a problem.

About the Stage

The graphic for the stage is based on the design of the New Globe in London, which in turn is based on extensive research into the documents that tell us about Shakespeare’s theatre. You can visit their site to see the background of research at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/globe>, and can explore the section of *Shakespeare’s Life and Times* that looks at the same evidence.

One possibly surprising quality of the reconstruction of the Globe is its ornate quality, yet there are contemporary descriptions of the theatre that indicate very clearly that the acting company created a lavish and luxurious appearance as part of the sense of holiday that the theatre inspired.

The two main doors at the rear of the stage are perhaps the most important device in the shaping of scenes acted on it. Actors can enter from one door while those from the previous scene are exiting from another (see the sample scene created as part of the *Life and Times*). The central curtained entrance in the middle of the rear wall was probably less often used. It was the “discovery-space” where Polonius hides when he is eavesdropping, or where Romeo hides from his pursuers after the masque where he meets Juliet. The curtain can be opened or closed.

The two pillars on the stage, holding up the roof above it, can also be used for overhearing, or for other occasions when characters withdraw from the action; characters can be moved behind the pillars.

The “balcony” was probably partly used by high-paying spectators, with the central area part of the acting space when needed. According to the original stage direction, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet appears from a “window” rather than a balcony (the term “balcony scene” developed in the Victorian period when stage sets were elaborate and romantic). The upper level was also used for scenes where characters appear on the “walls” of a castle or city. In *Scenario*, the whole upper level is available for characters, who will appear to be behind the railing when they are placed there.

The roof of the stage was called the “heavens” and was probably decorated with images of the major constellations; in this reconstruction the design is kept deliberately simple so that it distracts less from the characters on stage. The texture of the stage itself is designed to look like the rushes that were strewn there to reduce the sound of footsteps on the wooden surface of the stage.

The art work for the image of the Globe stage was created by Chris Chong.

About the Characters and Costumes

Blocking is one of the first steps in creating an actual performance: the actors themselves flesh it out in rehearsal. For this reason, the characters in the plays are represented as stylized images rather than fully formed images, in order to emphasize that the program is designed to sketch the actors' movements, rather than to create a full animation of the scene. While the program uses some of the tricks of computer games to activate the students' interest, it is intended to focus on the conditions of the early stage rather than the tricks of the modern computer.

An interesting topic for discussion is the extent to which costume will change how we respond to a play. There are some excellent examples of variations in costume and setting in recent films of Shakespeare; the Renaissance costuming of Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* contrasted with the very modern setting of Baz Luhrmann's 1998 film; the medieval costuming of Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (starring Mel Gibson) contrasted both with Kenneth Branagh's nineteenth-century setting, and the recent Almereyda film with Ethan Hawke, set in very modern New York. Scenario offers three periods in the three plays: *Romeo and Juliet* is costumed in Italian medieval / early Renaissance style; *Hamlet* in full Renaissance costume (implying that Shakespeare's company would have used what then was modern dress), and medieval Scottish costume for *Macbeth*.

The evidence from Shakespeare's time is that they would have used a rather eclectic mix of costume. The early sketch of a performance of *Titus Andronicus* suggests that the central characters would have been costumed in something approximating historical costume (in this case Roman), while subordinate characters would have worn their usual modern (Renaissance) costume. The reason for this is clear enough: economy. It would have been simply too costly to have provided full period costumes for all actors. Only the extravagant and expensive performances of masques at Court would have involved the creation of special costumes for all performers.

The design of most of the costumes is based on those in the book of Renaissance costumes by the Italian Cesare Vecellio (*Vecellio's Renaissance Costume Book*. New York: Dover Publications, 1977).

Hamlet

Although *Hamlet* is set in early medieval Denmark, the costumes chosen for this production are those of Shakespeare's time. The probability is that this is how Shakespeare's company would have staged it. Shakespeare's early Denmark coexists with the much later University of Wittenberg where Hamlet studies, and the clearly articulated conflict between Christian and pre-Christian views of revenge in the play set it in an intellectual and religious climate much closer to Shakespeare's day than the original story.

Hamlet is dressed in black as he is still in mourning, and refers to his "inky cloak." The Ghost is in armour, as described by Horatio, and Horatio is shown as if he were studying for the Church. The text is not specific on this point, but it suits his character, as he is always on the fringe of the action not in the centre.

Romeo and Juliet

The general period of the costumes in *Romeo and Juliet* is early Italian early Renaissance. Thus the young male characters wear tights rather than breeches; the intention is to emphasize their youth. Servants for the Capulets and Montagues are essentially the same figures with different

“liveries” or uniforms; they are apparently opposed to each other, but behave in the same manner, so are made to look alike.

Macbeth

Traditional Scottish dress has changed little over the years, so most characters wear kilts, sporrans, and many of them carry staves. The witches are not taken from the contemporary sketch in Shakespeare’s source (see the section in the *Life and Times*), where they appear like rather elegantly dressed ladies. It is clear that Shakespeare imagined them very differently.

