

The Folger Method

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A Revolutionary Way to Teach and Learn Complex Texts

WHAT IS THE FOLGER METHOD?

The Folger Method is all about ***possibilities***:

- What's possible when you turn the learning over to your students.
- What's possible when students, *all* students, realize they can do hard things on their own.
- What's possible in a complex text—all the questions, interpretations, and connections yet to be offered, all the knowledge and experiences any given reader will bring to that text.
- What's possible when we put students in direct contact with the real thing, whether it's the original language of Shakespeare, a centuries-old primary source, or difficult conversations about race, identity, and difference.
- What's possible when every single voice is honored in the adventure we call reading.
- What's possible in our world when we create generations of thinkers and doers who know how to use the humanities as a force for good.

The Folger Method is also about ***principles*** and ***practices***.

It all started in a high school English classroom, which is why the Folger Method has resonated so deeply and widely with teachers for four decades. If you're like us, you're probably eager to get to the step-by-step, practical stuff that explains how to “do” the Folger Method. Don't worry—that's here and all over *Folger Teaching*. First, though, we have found that the best “doers” of this way of teaching have a profound, almost visceral, understanding of the following 8 principles, which form the foundation of this whole approach to literature:

8 FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. **Shakespeare's language is not a barrier but a portal.** The language is what enables students to discover amazing things in the texts, the world, and themselves.
2. **All students and teachers deserve the real thing:** the original language of complex texts, archival materials, truthful and complete history, and honest conversations about hard questions raised in literature.
3. **The Folger Method is a radical engine for equity.** Every single student can learn this way, and every teacher can teach this way. Use our tools to help all students read closely, interrogate actively, and make meaning from texts.

4. **Give up Shakespeare worship.** If your Shakespeare lives on a pedestal, take him down and move him to a space where he can talk to everyday people...and other great writers like Toni Morrison and Julia Alvarez, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Azar Nafisi, James Baldwin and Homer, Frederick Douglass and Joy Harjo, Jane Austen and Pablo Neruda, Amy Tan and George Moses Horton.
5. **Throw out themes, tidy explanations, the idea of a single right interpretation.** Together with your students, embrace the questions.
6. **The teacher is not the connector or explainer** but rather the architect. Set up the interactions through which your students and Shakespeare discover each other.
7. **Amplify the voice of every single student.** Shakespeare has something to say to everybody, and everybody has something to say back to Shakespeare. The future of the humanities—and our world—depends on the insights and contributions of all our students.
8. **Set students on fire with excitement about literature.** When students learn this way, these things improve: their ability to read closely, their ability to cite evidence from the text, and their confidence in tackling the next challenge.

The Folger Method follows an arc of 9 essential learning routines that get students connecting directly and deeply with literary language. Beginning with single words and lines, students learn to read closely and critically and eventually tackle longer pieces of text such as speeches, scenes, and whole texts. The 9 Folger essentials are student-centered, language-focused practices that work with a wide range of texts (not just plays!) and units of study. Below are simply their names. To see how each essential practice works, explore the many lesson plans and on-demand professional development videos right here on *Folger Teaching*.

9 ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

1. **Tone & Stress**
2. **Tossing Words and Lines**
3. **Two-line Scenes**
4. **20-Minute Plays**
5. **Choral Reading**
6. **3-D Shakespeare/3-D Literature**
7. **Cutting a Text**
8. **Promptbooks**
9. **Group Scenes**

The Folger Method unleashes the potential of every student to connect directly with complex texts and make their own real insights into literature. We are honored and excited to work with you on a way of teaching and learning that thousands have called “**transformative.**” Let’s do this!