

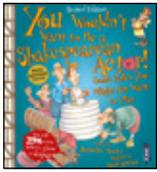
# Shakespearean X Factor

This play imagines a talent show set in London in 1601, judged by famous people of the day. The young contestants are all hoping to win a main part in Shakespeare's newest play.

Parts:	Kate	a young actor who has to pretend to be a boy
	Oliver	a young actor who has to act being a woman
	Dudley	an older actor who thinks he is very good
	Mrs Burbage	the theatre manager's wife
	Queen Elizabeth 1st	her royal highness
	William Shakespeare	the playwright (1564-1616)

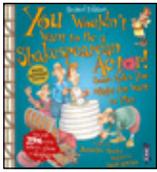
*Backstage (in the tiring house) of The Globe Theatre*

- Kate: I am so nervous. What if the judges realise I'm really a girl?
- Dudley: (*Very much the 'grand actor'*) Then you will be thrown out into the street. Quite right, in my opinion. We don't have females in the Elizabethan Theatre. You might offend the old queen.
- Oliver: Really? Dudley, you're wearing a lot of make-up on your face. Which part will you be playing in tonight's Shakespearean X Factor Finals?
- Dudley: Well isn't it obvious with me dressed like this? The most important character in William Shakespeare's latest play, of course.
- Kate: Would that be the Fool?
- Dudley: I would never degrade my art by playing a clown. My audition for the play 'Twelfth Night' is Duke Orsino. Don't I look and sound like a grand duke? "If music be the food of love..."



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- Oliver: Then you'd better go on a diet! I would love to play the part of Sir Toby Belch but because I'm only a boy, I've got to play the part of a woman. I'm putting on lots of make-up to make my face pale.
- Dudley: It's hard to get that stuff off. It's made of powdered hogs bones mixed with poppy oil, you know.
- Kate: Yuck!
- Dudley: Normally I wear deadly poisonous white lead and vinegar. This job is high risk.
- Oliver: To play the part of Countess Olivia I've got to wear an uncomfortable corset and an itchy wig all night.
- Dudley: It suits you. But what about our girl imposter? Whoever are you hoping to play in Twelfth Night?
- Kate: Well, it's very complicated. I've only just read the script and Mr Shakespeare's ink was still wet. But I want to play the part of Viola.
- Dudley: Viola has to be played by a boy. How can a girl play a girl?
- Kate: In the play Viola dresses up as a boy. So I shall be a girl pretending to be a boy playing a girl pretending to be a boy.
- Dudley: I'm lost already!
- Oliver: How long have we got till the show starts? Is the theatre still closed?
- Dudley: Aah – never say a theatre is closed or the plague will strike. We say the theatre is 'dark'. Quick, make a wish and turn round



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three times – and take that peacock feather out of your hat! A peacock feather onstage will cause bad luck. We actors are very superstitious, you know.

Kate: Aaah! I just saw a rat in the costume box.

Dudley: Only one is good luck! There are usually hundreds of them. Being an actor is full of hardships and dangers. I have performed all over the country but just lately I've fallen on hard times as an actor.

Kate: It's just a STAGE you're going through! Get it?

Dudley: No, now pass me my make-up and practise your lines.

Oliver: A flag is now flying above this theatre to show it is open.

Dudley: Is it white for comedy, red for history or black for tragedy?

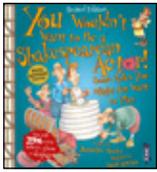
Kate: All three! My knees are shaking so much. I get terrible stage fright.

Dudley: Just remember, the audience can soon turn nasty and throw things on stage. I know an actor who was knocked out by a flying leg of pork.

Kate: Maybe that's where the term 'ham actor' comes from!

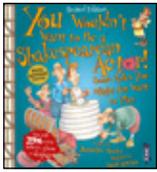
Dudley: Oh no, did I just hear thunder or was it the roar of applause for tonight's judges?

Oliver: Let's hope it doesn't rain like last week. Some of the audience got soaked – especially the commoners who paid a penny to watch. They're called groundlings because they have to stand on the ground.



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- Dudley: Last summer in the heat we called them stinkards – for obvious reasons. Sometimes the straw on the ground stinks and attracts rats.
- Oliver: I'm not sure I want to be a Shakespearean actor after all.
- Kate: I really want to impress the judges out there tonight. I wonder who they will be.
- Dudley: Haven't you heard? One is the Bard himself – William Shakespeare. The other is Mrs Burbage, the grumpy old wife of the famous theatre manager and you will never guess who tonight's special guest is....
- Oliver: It can't be...
- Kate: Surely not...
- Dudley: Her royal highness herself – Queen Elizabeth. She adores the theatre. If she doesn't like you, you'll never act on a stage again.
- Kate: I've changed my mind. I don't want to be a Shakespearean actor. It's hard work, very scary, high risk and you can get booed off the stage.
- Oliver: It's too late now – we're on. The stage manager is calling me to go on stage. This is it! (Sound of cheers and applause as he walks on stage)
- The three judges sit at a table facing the stage, with a rowdy audience behind them
- Mrs Burbage: Ladies and gentlemen, please be quiet for the first contestant...
- Oliver: (*As Olivia*) 'Well, come again to-morrow: fare thee well:



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A fiend like thee might bear my soul to hell.

Queen

Elizabeth: Speak up, dear. Your voice is too squeaky.

Mrs Burbage: You must give Mr Shakespeare's words much more drama.

William: 'Tis such a strain to write in rhyme  
And be dramatic all the time.  
Now go off stage and learn more of my text...  
And meanwhile we shall listen to the next.

Kate: (As Viola) 'O Time, thou must untangle this, not I;  
It is too hard a knot for me t' untie.'

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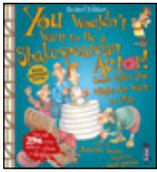
Dudley: (As Orsino and very over-the-top)  
'I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love,  
To spite a raven's heart within a dove.'

Queen

Elizabeth: Methinks this actor looks too comical to play such a serious part.

Mrs Burbage: Methinks he hath too much a funny face.

William: In that case, good sir, go change thy gown



# Shakespearean X Factor

And come back hither dressed more as The Clown  
We wish to see you play a comic part...  
Return back hence and give it all your heart.  
You will not know my words so now invent your own  
Improvise with friends and make your clowning shown.  
*(Dudley exits, looking appalled)*

Queen

Elizabeth: Methinks this could be so much fun...

Mrs Burbage: Our Shakespearean X Factor Show is nearly done...

*(Dudley returns in jester clothes, with Oliver & Kate dressed likewise)*

Dudley: It isn't very funny being a clown!  
Acting all day long, it gets me down.  
All the time I have to jest - and never get a moment's rest.

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: I just don't find it funny, all this work for little money,  
Keeping up my strength to clown around.  
It's so much more than acting – and stage-fright's so distracting,

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: It isn't very funny being a clown!  
Acting on the stage all round the town,  
When people shout abuse or hurl tomato juice,

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: While audiences chuckle, my confidence can buckle  
But still I must perform and not break down  
It really is abysmal - people laugh when I feel dismal...



# Shakespearean X Factor

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: It isn't very funny being a clown!  
Acting in green tights and sparkly gown,  
How can I be inspiring when my acting is so tiring?

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: In Shakespeare's plays I tremble, when such rowdy  
crowds assemble  
And all I want to do is just lie down.  
But I have to learn the script – no sentence can be skipped

All 3: No, it isn't very funny being a clown.

Dudley: It isn't very funny being an actor  
In the very first Shakespearean X Factor  
The pressure's so intense and I'd hate to cause offence

All 3: But YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A SHAKESPEAREAN  
ACTOR!

Shakespeare: How dare you! I am most offended (*stomps off*)

Mrs Burbage: Now look what you've done. You've upset the Bard. For that  
you'll all lose a week's pay. And be warned – in his next play  
you'll need earplugs when a cannon goes off on stage. If you  
don't like it, you'll be fired! Ha ha.

Queen: Which all goes to show YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE A  
SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR in Elizabethan England... EVER!