

RSC

ROYAL
SHAKESPEARE
COMPANY

TIMON
OF
ATHENS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

TEACHER PACK

ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2018 production of *Timon of Athens*, directed by Simon Godwin.

The activities provided in this pack are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students attending the performance and studying *Romeo and Juliet* in school.

CONTENTS

About this Pack	Page 2
Exploring the Story	Page 3
Friendship and Loyalty	Page 5
Money and Greed	Page 6
Resources	Page 9

These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



WRITE

A classroom writing or discussion activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses and research tasks

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The 2018 production of *Timon of Athens*, directed by Simon Godwin, is set in a modern urban landscape. The play itself was co-authored by Shakespeare and contemporary playwright Middleton and opens as a city comedy, popular at the time, before becoming a tragedy exploring Timon's fall from idealism. In this production Timon is played by Kathryn Hunter, and throughout this pack Timon is referred to as 'she' and 'her', although the role is traditionally male.

Take a look at the below images of the set as it appears during the opening banquet and then during Timon's exile in the second half of the play. How has the change in Timon's circumstance been shown? Does it feel like the shift between comic beginnings and tragic ends is clear on stage?



The company in the 2018 production of *Timon of Athens*. Photo by Simon Annand ©RSC



Kathryn Hunter in the 2018 production of *Timon of Athens*. Photo by Simon Annand ©RSC

EXPLORING THE STORY



SYNOPSIS

A full synopsis of the play is available at:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/timon-of-athens/the-plot>

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

Simon Godwin, director of the 2018 production, and the company made a number of changes to the script. Some of these choices were made before rehearsal, combining characters and moving the text slightly to create a clear story for a modern audience, and some were made in the room with the actors.



ACTIVITY 1: THE STORY IN 10 SCENES

The following activity will introduce students to the play and ensure that the whole group is familiar with the story. It is also an opportunity to introduce some of the key questions that will be explored in more depth in later activities. This activity is based on the story in the 2018 production, with the changes Simon and the company made.

- Divide students into small groups of four or five.
- Using the 'Story in 10 Scenes' resource in this pack, assign each group one or two scenes each, making sure all ten scenes have been distributed.
- Ask each group to create tableaux or freeze frames for their scenes.
 - Encourage them to narrate their scenes, explaining what happens in each scene before we see it and using the lines they have been given from the play to bring some of the freeze frames to life for 30 seconds.
- Ask the whole class to form a circle and invite each group into the middle to share their scene or scenes, in the order they happen in the play.
- Explain to students before they perform that the play is often seen as a play of two halves, as well as two writers. As they watch the scenes play out, encourage them to think about where this shift happens.
- Reflect with students on what changes for Timon during the course of the play. Do they have any sympathy for Timon? Was Timon wrong to be so generous with her friends? Did she deserve the situation she found herself in by the end of the final scene or is she a character they can empathise with? Why do you think she hides the gold and refuses to use it?
- Encourage students to think about the themes in the play, thinking about what they think the play is about. Once you have a list of things it might be about, select one or two and ask students to think about whether or not they have ever experienced those things themselves, in a different way. For example, have they ever experienced greed, or being left out, or let down by friends.

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

During the rehearsal process, Simon Godwin worked with the company to think about the different themes in the text and what personal experiences they had which related to those themes. The company also did a lot of improvisation exploring some of those themes, including what it would feel like to give someone a gift and how it would feel to ask someone for money, depending on how they responded.



ACTIVITY 2: CHARACTER MOTIVATIONS

As students work through the following exercise on the characters in the play, encourage them to think about each character's attitude towards Timon and towards money. In this version of the play, Timon's servants are loyal throughout and understand her generosity, but the people who rely on her patronage and money, like Sempronius, are very quick to take money from her and give nothing in return.

- Divide students into pairs, and ask them to label themselves 'A' and 'B'. Invite the 'A's to imagine they are giving the 'B's a gift. Ask them to improvise this moment twice, with the 'B's reacting in two different ways:
 - First – as though they are grateful and accept it
 - Second – as though they don't want it and turn it down
- Ask each pair to swap over and to improvise another moment, in which one of them has to ask the other for money, or help in difficult situation. Allow them to try this twice again with the 'A's reacting in two different ways:
 - First – as though they say yes and are glad to help out
 - Second – as though they say 'no' and will not help
- Reflect with pairs on what it felt like to have someone let you down. Was it comfortable asking for money or help in the first place, how did it make them feel? Explain that the company did this exercise as well, thinking about how Timon must have felt as a very rich woman, going to her friends to ask for help. How would it feel to have your friends turn you down when you have been generous?

- Provide each pair with the Character Fact slip for one of the characters.
- Arrange the room so that there is a box of gold or something which represents wealth and money in the centre of it.
- Ask each pair to create a sculpture of their character, with one person directing and moving the other into position. They should use the information on their slip to help them create the sculpture.
- Invite each pair to then recreate their sculpture in the centre of the room, positioning their character around the box of gold or representation of wealth, using it to help show that character's relationship with money.
- Encourage them to think about the other characters' closeness to the character in the centre, in terms of their importance and influence as well as how close they seem emotionally. Allow students to do this one pair at a time so that the group can see them all before asking students to move into position at the same time, thinking about who is closer to the money, who wants it but can't have it, who is the gate keeper of it and who is furthest from it. They may need to adjust their positioning in relation to each other as well.
- Consider with students how Timon's relationship to wealth changes throughout the play, being a gatekeeper in the first half of the play but then overspending and finally choosing not to accept wealth when she finds it. What lesson do they think Timon learnt and is it as simple as that?

FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY

Talk to students about what loyalty and friendship mean to them. Are these things that can be bought? Would you expect someone to whom you were generous, and who you helped, to be generous back to you? For example, in the previous activity would they expect the person who received their gift to say yes when they then asked for money?

- Ask students to think about these ideas and list the qualities and attitudes they would expect from someone they thought was their friend.
- Discuss with students how Timon refers to the artists and associates she gives money to as her 'friends'. How would they feel if their own friends refused to help them when they needed it most?

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

The opening scene of the play, at Timon's banquet, felt really crucial to Simon and the company. They were keen to create a real sense of the friendship between Timon and her 'friends'. This meant that several of the roles were changed, so that Timon goes back to the same people when seeking money later in the play. The scene also introduces a lot of characters at once and the company spent time in rehearsal playing games like word tennis to help them focus on who they were aiming their lines at, helping them to create a scene that was easy for the audience to follow.



ACTIVITY 4: TIMON'S JOURNEY

- Divide the class into groups of four or five.
- Provide each group with the text scraps which describe Timon's relationship with money and her friends at the start of the play and then after Timon discovers her friend's betrayal and she decides to seek revenge.
- Ask each group to create a short performance, using the text scraps, which shows how Timon and her friends are at the start of the play. This should last no more than 30 seconds and end in a final freeze frame.
- Encourage students to then expand on this, by creating a second half to their performance, using the remaining text scraps, which shows how Timon and her friends are after their betrayal. This second part should also last no more than 30 seconds and should finish with a final freeze frame.
 - Explain to students that there will not be time for them to use all of the extracts in the text scraps, so as part of their rehearsal they should look at key words or lines and make a choice about which of the extracts best help them to show the situation between Timon and her 'friends'
- Invite groups to perform their two pieces, one after the other, and share them with the rest of the group.
- Allow students to reflect on the transformation they have seen. The following activity then explores the moment of Timon's realisation and her change.

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

The company worked together to create a montage of the friends' responses to Timon's request for money and explored these speeches in the rehearsal room. The team set up a table, with all three characters and the servants who visited to request the money around it, and took turns to continue with their speeches, changing scene each time Simon clapped his hands. This eventually helped the company to build a scene that cuts between the three reactions. They also experimented in moving Timon's speeches around so that Timon could be seen deciding to leave Athens immediately after the second banquet.



ACTIVITY 3: PATRONS AND DEBTORS

In *Timon of Athens* there are a number of characters who are in debt. Timon has spent more money than she has and is in debt to lenders and the artists and poets and 'friends' to whom she has lent money owe her for their success and prosperity. When Timon requests money from those 'friends' to help her pay off her unexpected debts, three of them deliver speeches explaining why they cannot help. The following activity explores some of their reasons.

- Arrange students into groups of four and provide each of them with one of the speeches from Timon's 'friends', making sure at least one group has each of the three 'friends'.
- Ask each group to read through the edited speech together, clapping whenever they think the 'friend' makes an excuse for why they shouldn't or can't give Timon any money.
- Allow each group some time to reflect on how many excuses their character offers. Are they believable? Do they make sense and what do they make them think of the character.
- Ask each person to choose a different one of the excuses their group has identified and to work together to create a movement for that excuse, so that each person in the group has a different excuse and a different movement or gesture that they are all happy with.
- Invite each group to find a space in the room and to stand together.
- Identify one student to play Timon and ask them to walk through the room, going to each of the groups for money. As Timon moves around the space, ask each group to respond using their excuses and their gestures or movements that they have developed, responding to Timon as she seeks money and help from them.
- Explain that Timon has to stay with the same group until you clap your hands, and then she must move and seek help elsewhere.
 - You may want Timon to work with other students, to represent her faithful servants, reflecting on whether or not students think the friends would have used the same responses if they had been talking to Timon face to face. Why do you think she sends servants? Would it have changed the outcome if she hadn't?
- Offer the student playing Timon the chance to reflect on how the activity has made them feel and what response Timon might have expected from her 'friends'. How does this compare?
- Discuss with the group why Timon might want revenge after this. How would they seek revenge? Would they?

MONEY AND GREED

In the final acts of the play Timon decides that she wants to destroy the city and let animals rule, exacting revenge on all mankind for her treatment. When she uncovers a wealth of gold and then talks to Apemantus, Timon forms an alliance with Apemantus who goes into the city to let everyone know where to find the gold driving men against each other. As other people realise what she is hiding, several characters seek Timon out to get their hands on the new gold, as Timon uses greed to carry out the plot she has hatched.

Timon also gives part of her gold away to Alcibiades to help fund the campaign in Athens, which in this production is a protest against usury and the governance of Athens.

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

The relationship between Timon and Apemantus was seen as particularly crucial to the play between the company. Apemantus is aware of the double standard of Timon's friends from the start and, while these two characters can be played as being very aggressive and unfriendly, the company felt that there was an underlying humour to the way they insult one another, particularly in the second half of the play. This led to them exploring the characters' connection and Apemantus' part in driving Timon's plan to use the gold and create division in Athens.



ACTIVITY 5: TIMON'S GOLD

- Organise students into a circle.
- Provide each student with the speech from Act 4 Scene 3 in which Timon talks about the nature of money and ask them to read the speech out loud together, taking turns to read around the circle until everyone has spoken and the speech has been read at least twice.
- Divide students into smaller groups and provide them with one or two lines from the speech.
- Ask each group to identify the image/s used in their line/s to depict money and wealth.
- Ask each group to create a freeze frame for their line, without talking, in no more than 10 seconds.
- Allow groups to swap lines and repeat this until each group has looked at every line.
- Challenge each group to remember all their freeze frames, for each line of the speech, and to pull the together into a performance.
- Invite each group to perform their sequences, asking the audience to identify each one and collectively remembering what the images and language used in the speech was.
- Discuss with students how Timon feels about money in this speech and why. What do they think the images reveal about Timon's state and what has happened to her by this point in the play? This speech has been edited for the 2018 production and some of the lines removed. Which lines do you think are most crucial to understanding how Timon feels at this point in the play?



Kathryn Hunter in the 2018 production of Timon of Athens. Photo by Simon Annand ©RSC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: RSC Education" at the address below.

The Royal Shakespeare Company
3, Chapel Lane
Stratford on Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6BE
www.rsc.org.uk

RESOURCES

THE STORY IN 10 SCENES

1. The Athenian noble, Timon, gives lavish gifts to her friends and acquaintances and helps them when they need money.

*I am not of that feather to shake off
My friend when he must need me. I do know him
A gentleman that well deserves a help,
Which he shall have. I'll pay the debt and free him.*

2. Timon ignores the advice from her loyal steward, Flavius, and the cynical philosopher, Apemantus, that her reckless spending and generosity will lead to ruin and bankruptcy.

*No care, no stop, so senseless of expense
That she will neither know how to maintain it
Nor cease her flow of riot.*

3. Timon's money runs out and her creditors demand payment.

*My dear lady,
Though you hear now, too late, yet now's a time:
The greatest of your having lacks a half
To pay your present debts.*

4. Timon asks her friends for money to help her out but they all refuse.

*This was my lady's best hope, now all are fled
Save only the gods. Now her friends are dead,*

5. Timon invites his "friends" to a party only to curse them and throw stones at them for their lack of generosity.

*Be it not in thy care.
Go, I charge thee, invite them all, let in the tide
Of knaves once more: my cook and I'll provide.*

6. Disgusted with the world, Timon goes off to live in a cave, cursing all of humanity.

*Henceforth be no feast,
Whereat a villain's not a welcome guest.
Burn, house, sink city, henceforth hated be
Of Timon man and all humanity!*

7. While digging for roots to eat, Timon discovers gold.

*—What is here?
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?
No, gods, I am no idle votarist—
Roots, you clear heavens!*

8. Timon gives the gold to Alcibiades, a general who is going to attack Athens in revenge for his unjustified exile.

*There's gold to pay thy followers—
Make large confusion and, thy fury spent,
Confounded be thyself. Speak not, be gone!*

9. Timon writes her epitaph bitterly condemning humankind.

*Then, Timon, presently prepare thy grave:
Lie where the light foam the sea may beat
Thy gravestone daily; make thine epitaph,
That death in me at others' lives may laugh.*

10. Upon hearing of Timon's death, Alcibiades vows to enter Athens in a spirit of forgiveness, rather than revenge.

*Dead
Is noble Timon: of whose memory
Hereafter more. Bring me into your city,
And I will use the olive with my sword,
Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
Prescribe to other as each other's leech.*

CHARACTER FACTS

- Timon : A lady of Athens who generously lends money to others until she runs out and others refuse to help her.
- Alcibiades : Captain of a military brigade who are revolutionaries in Athens and good friend to Timon.
- Apemantus: A philosopher and churl who sees the negative in Timon's friends behavior and advises her not to lend money to her friends so freely.
- Flavius : Timon's chief Steward and a loyal follower of Timon's.
- Flaminius : One of Timon's servants, who she sends on her behalf to request money from others.
- Servilius : One of Timon's servants, who she sends on her behalf to request money from others.
- Lucilius : One of Timon's servants, who she sends on her behalf to request money from others.
- Ventidius : One of Timon's 'friends' who is in debtors' prison because they owe so much money.
- Lucullus : One of Timon's 'friends' who Timon supports financially, and then refuses to lend Timon money. (Lucullus is also a senator in the 2018 production)
- Lucius : One of Timon's 'friends' who Timon supports financially, and then refuses to lend Timon money. (Lucius is also a senator in the 2018 production)
- Sempronius : One of Timon's 'friends' who Timon supports financially, and then refuses to lend Timon money. (Sempronius is also a senator in the 2018 production) He is Timon's most jealous "friend".
- Poet and Painter : artists who seek Timon's patronage and who claim to be her friend but later try and find her to get her money.

There are additional characters, such as servants and the jeweler and merchant, that have not been included here. The senators in this production have been significantly cut and have been combined with the three 'friends' – Lucullus, Lucius and Sempronius

TIMON'S JOURNEY

TIMON AT THE START

My lovéd lord

my most worthy master

your unmatched mind

You shall perceive how you mistake my fortunes; I am wealthy in my friends.

Ne'r speak, or think, That Timon's fortunes 'mong his friends can sink

TIMON AFTER HER BETRAYAL

When man's worst sin is, he does too much good!

Who, then, dares to be half so kind again?

monstrous friends

As the moon does, by wanting light to give:

But then renew I could not, like the moon;

There were no suns to borrow of.

Who had the world as my confectionary,

THE FRIENDS' REFUSALS

LUCULLUS

Thy lady's a bountiful gentlewoman, but thou art wise and thou knowest well enough, although thou comst to me, that this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship without security. Here's three solidares for thee; good girl, wink at me, and say thou sawest me not. Fare thee well.

LUCIA

What a wicked beast was I to disfurnish myself against such a good time, when I might ha' shown myself honourable! How unluckily it happened that I should purchase the day before for a little part and undo a great deal of honour! Servilius, now before the gods, I am not able to do—the more beast I, I say—I was sending to use dear Timon myself, these gentlemen can witness. But I would not for the wealth of all I had done't now. Commend me bountifully to her good ladyship, and I hope her honour will conceive the fairest of me, because I have no power to be kind. And tell her this from me: I count it one of my greatest afflictions, say, that I cannot pleasure such an honourable gentlewoman. Good Servilius, will you befriend me so far as to use mine own words to her?

SEMPRONIUS

How! Have they denied her,
Has Ventidius and Lucullus denied her
And does she send to me? Three—hmm?
It shows but little love or judgment in her.
Must I be her last refuge? Her friends, like physicians,
Thrive, give her over—must I take th'cure upon me?
She's much disgraced me in't: I'm angry at her,
That might have known my place. I see no sense for't
But her occasion might have wooed me first,
For in my conscience I was the first man
That ere received gift from her—
And does she think so backwardly of me now
That I'll requite its last? No;
So it may prove an argument of laughter
To th'rest, and 'mongst lords I be thought a fool.
I'd rather than the worth of thrice the sum
Had sent to me first, but for my mind's sake,
I'd such a courage to do her good. But now return
And with their faint reply this answer join:
Who bates mine honour shall not know my coin.

ACT 4 SCENE 3 EXTRACT

TIMON

O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce
'Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed! thou valiant Mars!
Thou ever young, fresh, loved and delicate wooer,
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
That lies on Dian's lap! **thou visible god,**
That solder'st close impossibilities,
And makest them kiss! that speak'st with
every tongue,
To every purpose! O thou touch of hearts!
Think, thy slave man rebels, and by thy virtue
Set them into confounding odds, that beasts
May have the world in empire!