



I Want My Shakespeare TV: Ten Feature-packed DVDs

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[Poor Yorick Shakespeare Catalogue](#)

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Now that many schools are purchasing DVD players with less trepidation than they purchased Laser Disc players in the early '90s, Shakespeare teachers need to start placing their orders. DVDs come packed with extra features that can deepen students' understanding of the filmmaking process or subject matter. Plus, their interactive nature makes them perfect for creating a dynamic learning environment. Teachers have discovered how these extras can enhance the study of a Shakespeare play.

There are a few things to consider when choosing a film on DVD:

- **Rating:** Some schools have strict guidelines about PG-13 and R rated films in the classroom.
- **Region coding:** DVDs are coded according to geographic region. Region 1 DVDs serve North

America (the US and Canada), Region 2 serves Japan, Europe and the Middle East, and so forth. You can buy an all-region DVD or an all-region DVD player, but since their capabilities can be complicated, make sure you check with your supplier before you buy.

- **Format:** DVDs often come in either widescreen or standard formats or both. Widescreen means that on a normal TV you will see a black bar at the top and bottom so the image will have the same shape, or aspect ratio, as the original theatrical version. Standard formats have been modified to fill the entire TV screen, but parts of the original image layout will be lost. This can be important if you are discussing filmic elements such as mise-en-scene. Also, watch out for dual layer discs, which have the widescreen version on one side and the standard format on the other. These discs will usually indicate the version in small red letters around the center hole.

As the proprietor of the Poor Yorick Shakespeare Catalogue, I have immersed myself in the Shakespeare video business for some time now. So here are my 10 favorite films on DVD:

10) [*The Taming of the Shrew*](#) (1967, Columbia Tristar) This frolicking Elizabeth Taylor/Richard Burton classic comes in widescreen, with digitally remastered audio, interactive menus, production notes and a

talent file. And it's great for ESL students, with subtitles in Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Korean and Thai. (Rated G)

9) [O](#) (2001, Columbia Tristar) This modern-language adaptation of *Othello* is set in an exclusive private school. The DVD includes cast and crew interviews, deleted scenes with optional commentary, a comprehensive analysis of key basketball scenes, and the 2-disc DVD Deluxe Edition comes with the complete and restored 1923 silent *Othello*. (Rated R)

8) [Hamlet](#) (2001, Artisan Entertainment) Campbell Scott stars and directs in this made-for-Hallmark TV video, with post-Civil War dress. The DVD comes in original full screen format and includes behind-the-scenes footage, interactive menus and scene selections. (Not Rated)

7) [Richard III](#) (1995, MGM) Starring Ian McKellen, this brilliant film version is set within the WWII Weimar/Nazi conflict. The special features include a collectible booklet and the original theatrical trailer, and the DVD comes with both widescreen and standard format options. The DVD format highlights the stunning visuals of this film perfectly, making this a must-have title. (Rated R in US, 14A in Canada)

6) [*Hamlet*](#) (1964, Image Entertainment) Directed by Sir John Gielgud and starring Richard Burton, this live theater archive film was thought to have been destroyed years ago. The DVD does not include many features, but Burton is a treat. It does include a rare interview with Burton. (Not rated)

5) [*Much Ado About Nothing*](#) (1993, MGM) Recently reissued with additional features, this lively romp now includes a "Making Much Ado" featurette and the original trailer. It comes in widescreen. (Rated PG-13)

4) [*Love's Labour's Lost*](#) (2000, Miramax) Granted, LLL did not have "Much Ado's" success, but this quirky and flawed film comes packed with interesting features, including behind-the-scenes vignettes, out-takes, and deleted scenes which give a rare glimpse of Branagh at work. (Rated PG)

3) [*Henry V*](#) (1944, Criterion) Digitally remastered film and audio, audio commentary by a noted film historian, a chronology of kings, stills gallery and production photos round out this delicious package. (Not Rated)

2) [*Titus*](#) (2000, 20th Century Fox) This 2-disc version of *Titus Andronicus* comes

packed with optional commentary by director Julie Taymor and conductor Elliot Goldenthal, or scene-specific commentaries by Anthony Hopkins and Harry Lennix. The second disc contains a 49-minute documentary, a Q&A with Taymor, a costume gallery and more. (Rated R)

1) [**Romeo and Juliet Special Edition**](#)
(1996, 20th Century Fox) Love it or hate it, the Baz Luhrmann film comes loaded with extras. Commentary by Luhrmann or a variety of crew members, cinematographer, director and design galleries, cast and crew interviews, production stills, music videos, and a DVD-ROM screenplay comparison study will keep you entertained and informed. (Rated PG-13)

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