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During Nast's era, Shakespeare's plays were an inherent part of the school curriculum. In addition to reading and writing, Shakespeare was used to help teach history, civics, elocution and ethics. Even relatively uneducated people were attracted to Shakespearean theatre after their schooling ended.

Nast idolized Shakespeare and referenced 23 of his 37 plays in more than 100 cartoons — sometimes with just a recognizable line or two, but generally with pictorial content. Thirteen of his plays are indexed below.

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