

UC Merced

UC Merced Previously Published Works

Title

Shakespeare as Environmental Writer

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2fb4q0qd>

Authors

Brokaw, Katherine Steele

Curington, Abrian

Publication Date

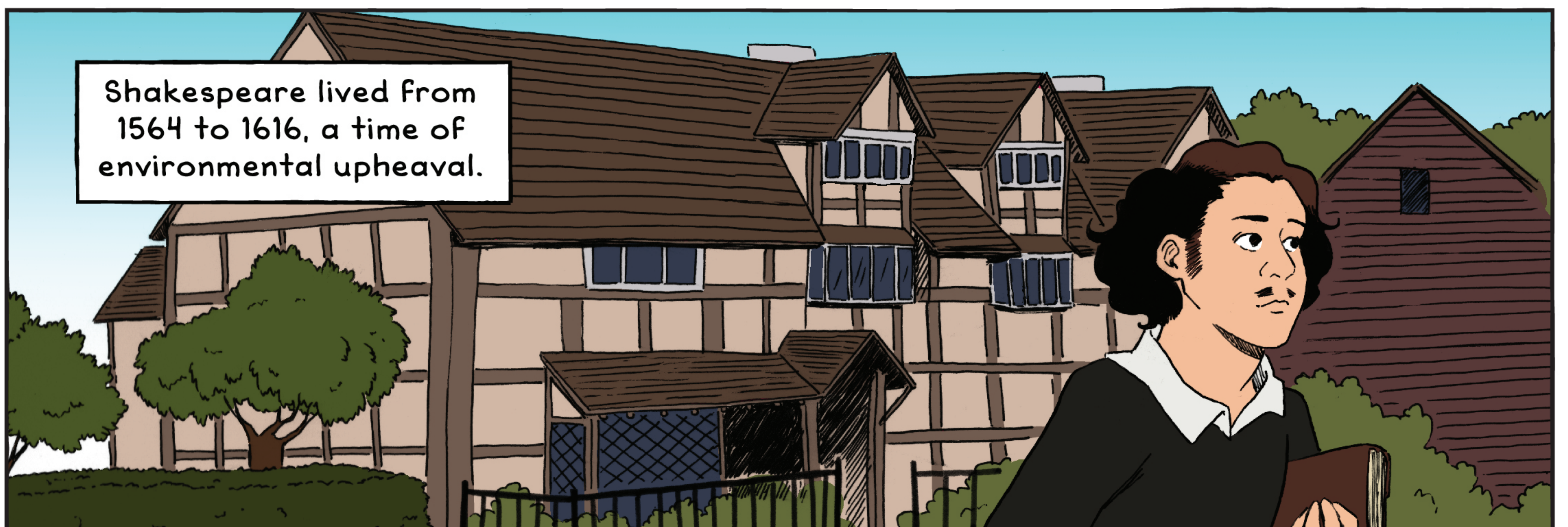
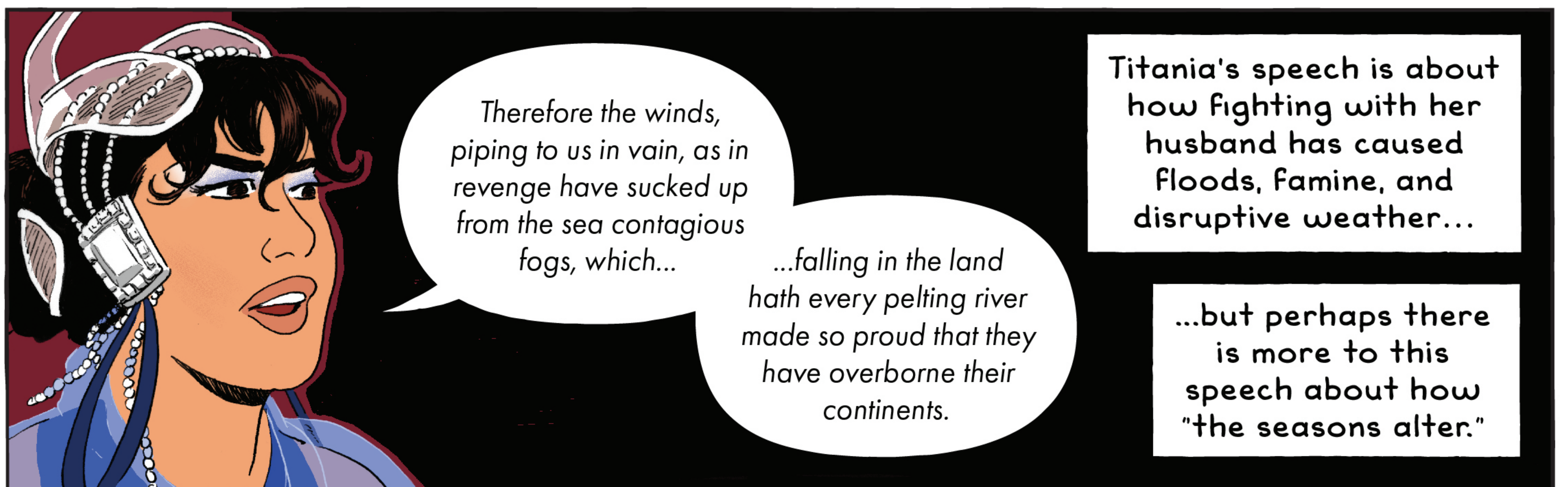
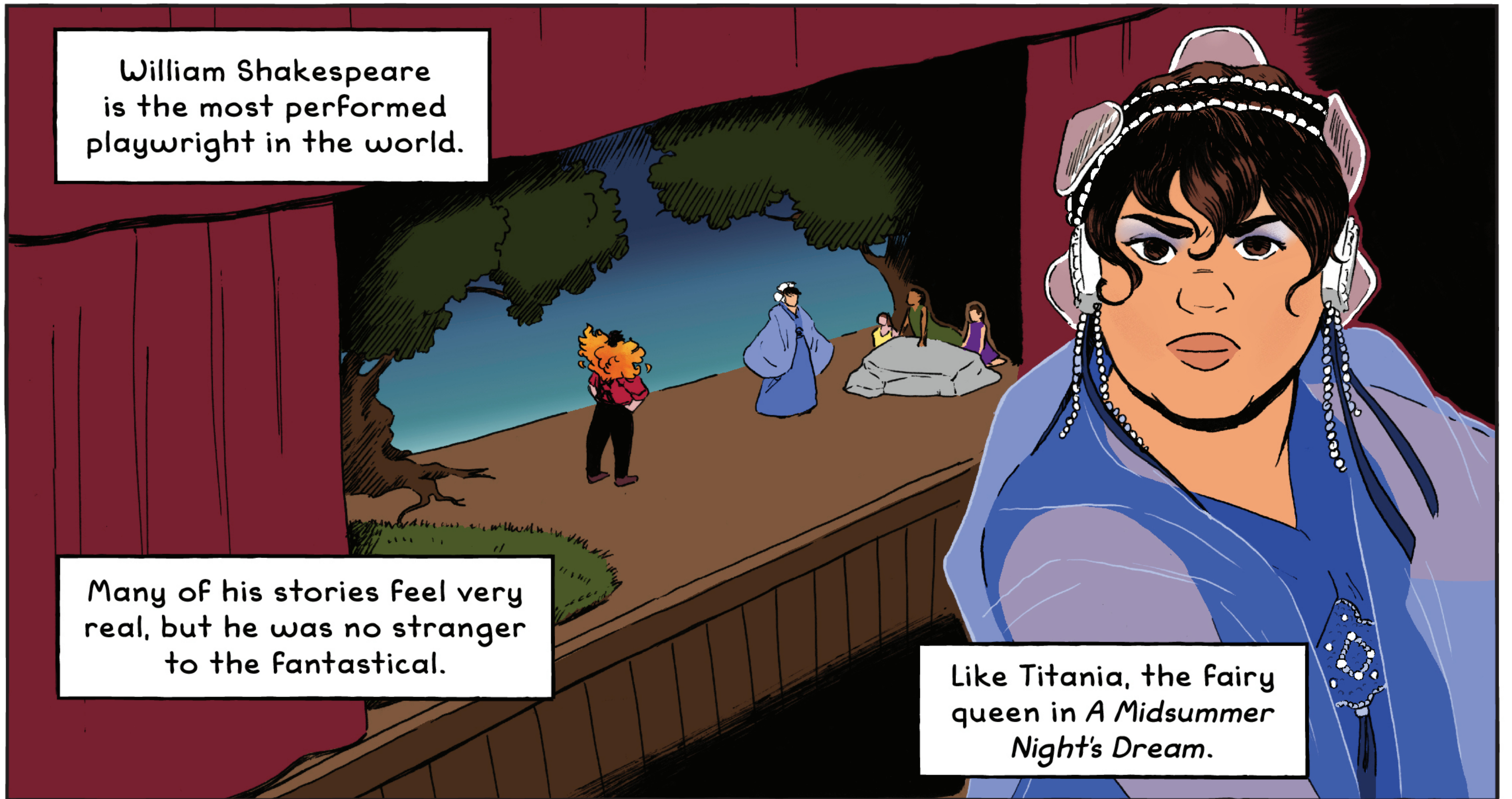
2024-10-01

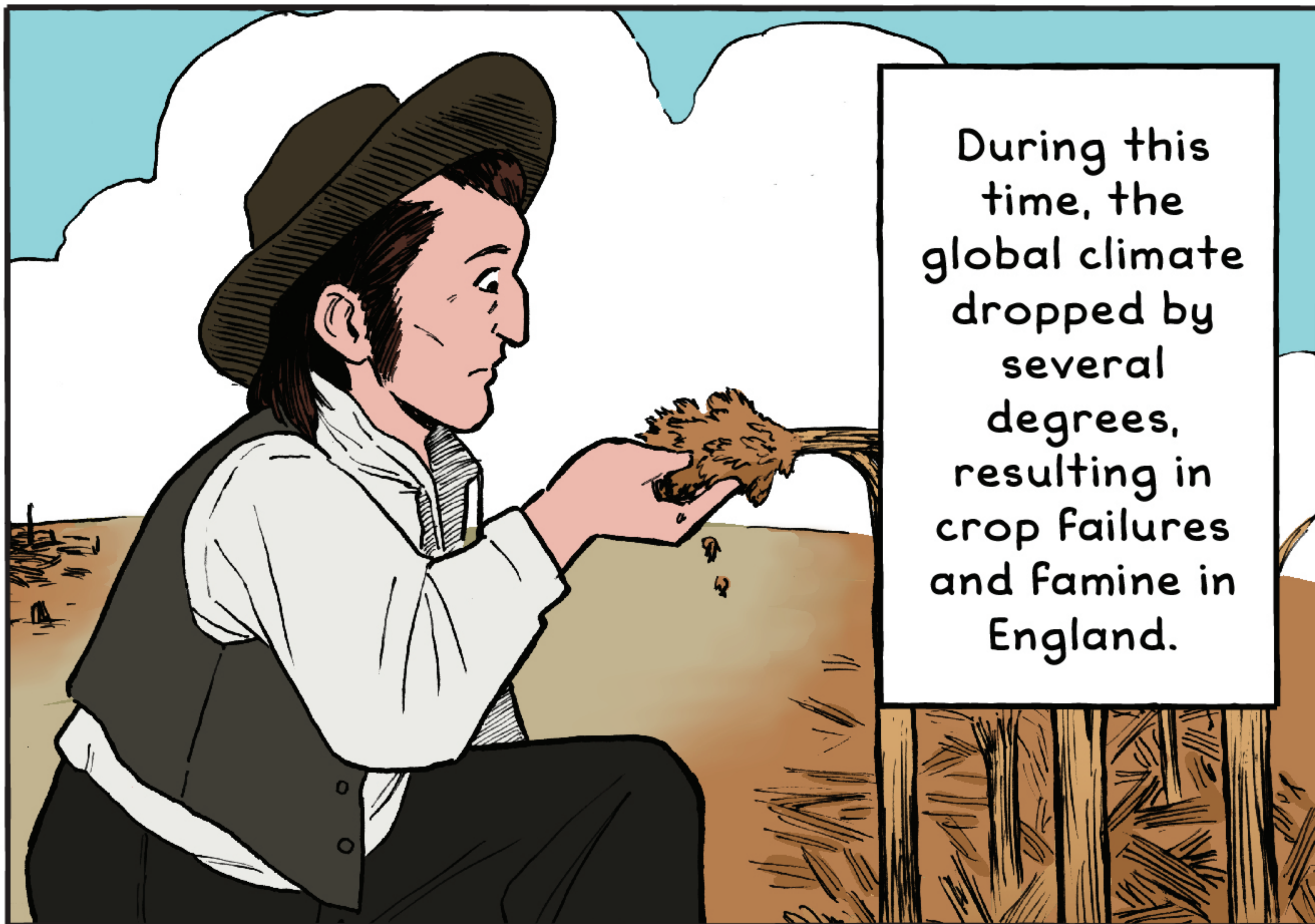
Shakespeare as Environmental Writer

Bobcat Comics, UC Merced Center for the Humanities, 2024

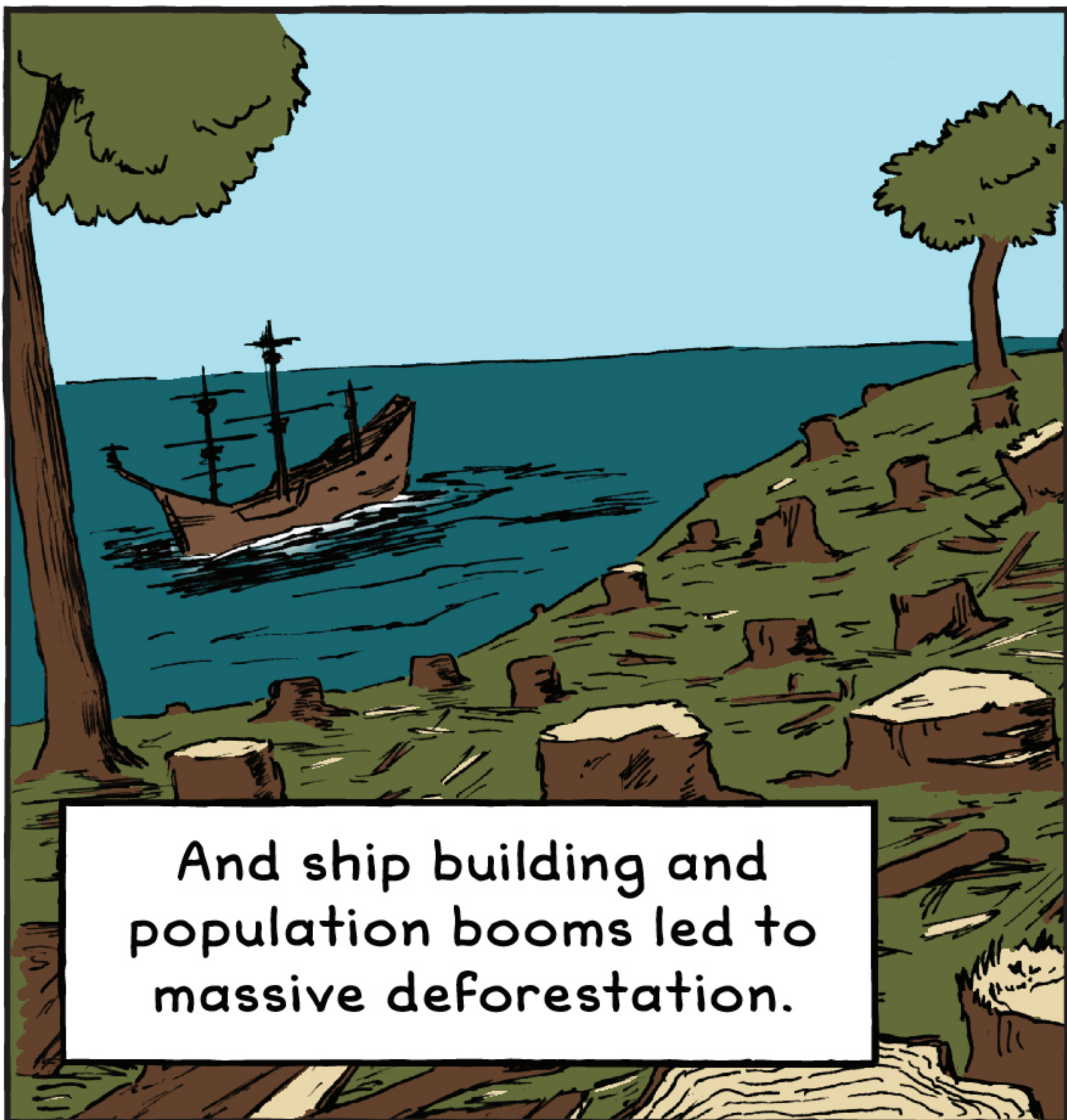
Writer: Katherine Brokaw

Artist: Abrian Curington





During this time, the global climate dropped by several degrees, resulting in crop failures and famine in England.



And ship building and population booms led to massive deforestation.



Perhaps Titania's speech was a complaint against the unnatural changes rapidly degrading British landscapes.



One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,

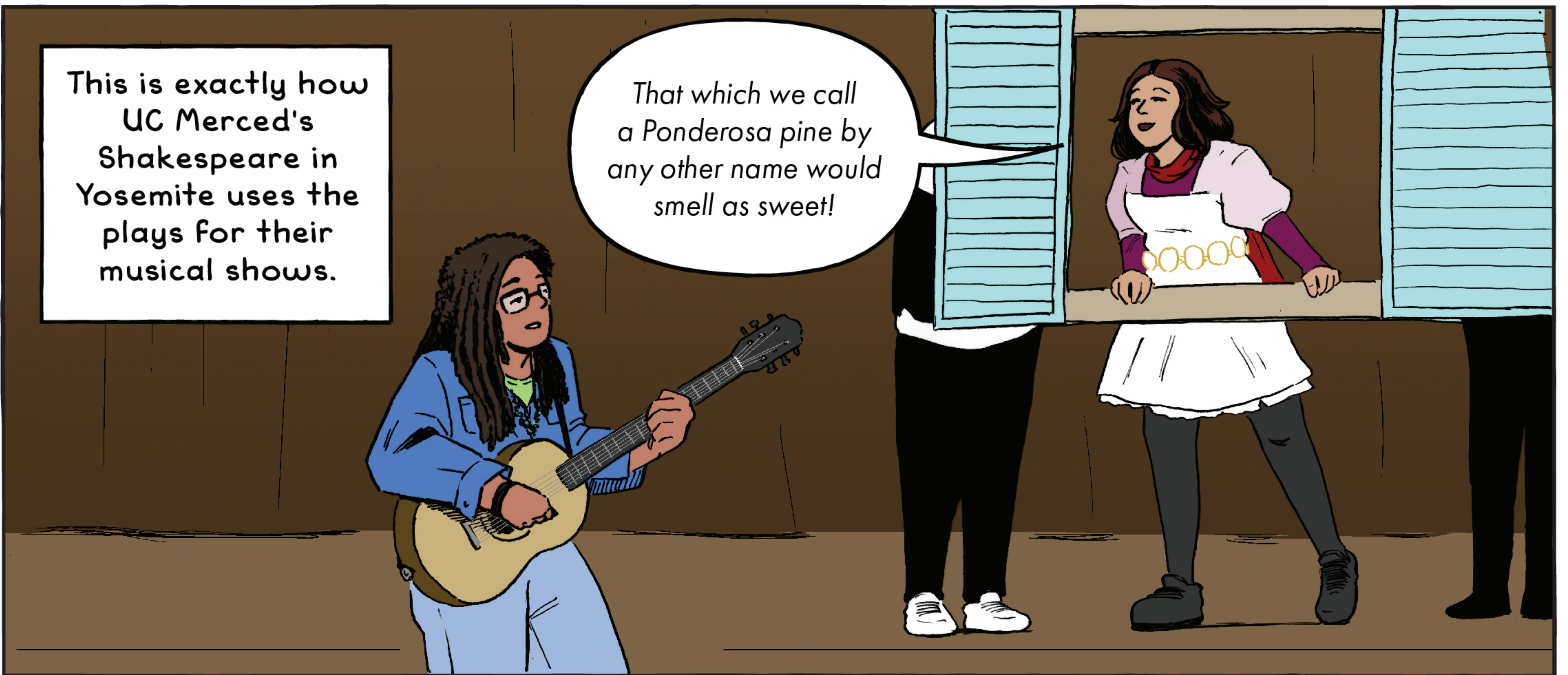
Many of Shakespeare's texts speak to a changing environment. And because they aren't in copyright, artists today can adapt them to make them more relevant.

In this way, Shakespeare's plays become a renewable cultural resource: without damaging the plays, we can alter them to speak to our community's own ecologies.



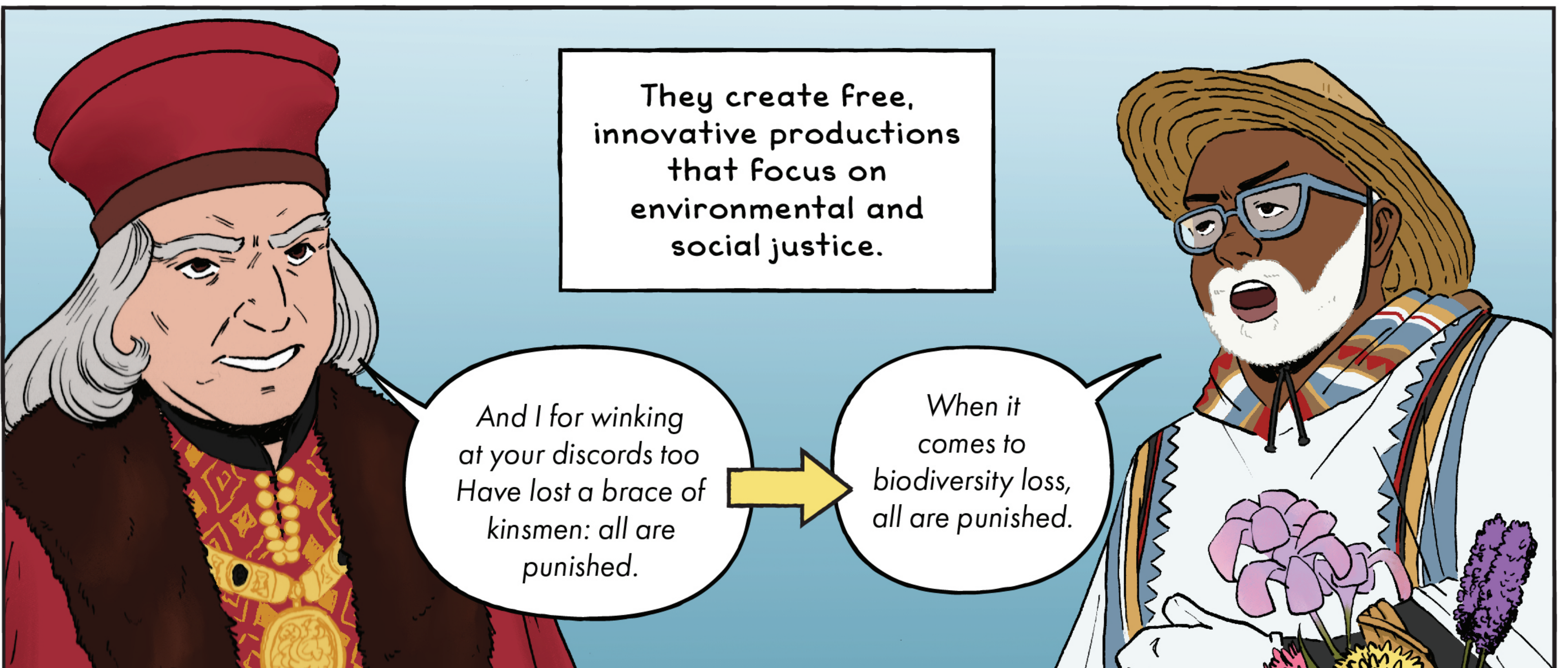
The Tempest, directed by Elizabeth Freestone for the Royal Shakespeare Company (2023)

This is exactly how UC Merced's Shakespeare in Yosemite uses the plays for their musical shows.



That which we call a Ponderosa pine by any other name would smell as sweet!

They create free, innovative productions that focus on environmental and social justice.



And I for winking at your discords too Have lost a brace of kinsmen: all are punished.

When it comes to biodiversity loss, all are punished.



All I want, is to be in a world with you..

Their hope-filled *Romeo and Juliet in Yosemite* (2023) shows fires and floods, and instead of dying, Montagues and Capulets work together to reintroduce the red-legged frogs to Yosemite's ecosystem.

The youth will make known: we are people such that mend the world.

The fires are like nothing you would remember from ninety years ago.

Imogen in the Wild (2021) is their film adaptation of *Cymbeline*, focused on connections between misogyny and the exploitation of the natural world.

I have taken too little care of these things.

Midsummer Yosemite's Dream (2024) focuses on a fairy world of 1934 colliding with the present, and reflects on how choices have consequences for future generations.

Shakespeare's work allows us to consider our planet's past, represent its present...



... and imagine a more just future for all its creatures.