

BARD BASICS

AN OVERVIEW OF SHAKESPEARE AND HIS WORLD



A LOOK AT THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

IN 1576, A CARPENTER NAMED JAMES BURBAGE BUILT THE FIRST THEATRE IN ENGLAND, WHICH HE CALLED, SIMPLY, THE THEATRE, THE FIRST TIME THE WORD WAS USED TO A BUILDING SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR THE STAGING OF PLAYS. UP TO THIS TIME, PLAYS HAD BEEN PERFORMED IN INN YARDS AND BEARBAITING ARENAS. FOLLOWING SEVERAL YEARS OF COMPLAINTS AND PROBLEMS WITH LANDLORDS AND OBJECTIONS TO THE RAUCOUS CROWDS, THE THEATRE WAS DISMANTLED AND ITS TIMBER FERRIED ACROSS THE THAMES TO BE USED TO BUILD A THEATRE THAT WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AS THE GLOBE. IT IS HERE THAT SHAKESPEARE MADE HIS HOME, HIS FORTUNE, AND HIS NAME AS A GREAT PLAYWRIGHT.

GLOBE FACTS:

- The playhouse may have had as many as twenty sides, giving it a circular appearance
- It was an open-air theatre that held about three thousand spectators
- Performances were given every day but Sunday, and plays ran from two to five in the afternoon, so that sunlight wouldn't bother the audience and the players.
- Since the London council considered play-going immoral, they prohibited city managers from advertising. Managers triumphed over this by raising a flag before the performance: black signified tragedy; white, comedy; and red, history.
- As people entered the theatre they would drop their admission into a box (hence box office). Ticket prices depended on the location of the seat, or lack of one. Spectators could sit on cushions with the gentry in the cockpit or stand elbow-to-elbow with the mob in the back. The most exclusive patrons sat on the stage.
- Vendors offered beer, water, oranges, nuts, gingerbread, and apples, all of which were occasionally thrown at the actors. Hazelnuts were the most popular theatre snack, the Elizabethan equivalent of Raisenets.
- There was not one restroom for all three thousand spectators. Nor were there any intermissions. The playhouses thus smelled of urine as well as

ginger, garlic, beer, tobacco, and sweat (few Elizabethans bathed).

- There was no producer or director; the actors were in complete control of the production.
- There were three tiers (levels) to the stage, corresponding to earth, heaven, and hell. Villians fell through a trapdoor.
- Behind the stage were the tiring (attiring), or dressing rooms.
- Scenery and props were minimal. Actors described the setting through dialogue called scene painting.
- Costumes were extravagant, spangled, affairs of gold, lace, silk, and velvet.
- Since women were forbidden to act on the public stage, female roles were played by young boys — one reason why there's so little actual sex in the plays. Bawdy language and sensuous poetry were often used in substitutes for the real thing.
- Rehearsal time was minimal. Actors learned their parts in about a week: a leading man might have to memorize eight hundred lines a day. According to one theatre historian, a leading man would learn and retain over seventy different roles in three years.
- The Elizabethan audience craved variety, so the repertory was made up almost entirely of new plays. There was a quick turnover: some plays had only one or two performances, while a hit could run for six months. A single company gave one hundred fifty performances of over thirty plays.
- Plays belonged to the acting company and not to the playwright. Shakespeare didn't own or have any right to publish his own plays.

USEFUL SHAKESPEARE TERMS

Aside: A speech in which the speaker turns away from the other characters and reveals his true feelings to the audience.

Banter (sexual): Perhaps the most famous sexual banter occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*:

Petruchio: Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?
In his tail.

Katherina: In his tongue.

Petruchio: Whose tongue?

Katherina: Yours, if you talk of tails, and so farewell.

Petruchio: What, with my tongue in your tail? (II.1.213-17)

Blank verse: Unrhymed iambic pentameter, a form that is ideal for drama because it gives the speaker greater freedom of tone and expression.

Comedy: Simply put in Shakespeare's terms, a comedy ends happily and no one dies. Comedies begin with things going all awry (feuding, misunderstandings, and obstacles), and ends with dancing, music, and marriage (of the hint of one to soon happen)

Foil: The term refers to a character who by contrast illuminates the hero's qualities.

Iambic Pentameter: The standard metrical form that Shakespeare uses. Each line contains ten syllables, or five feet (a foot is a unit of poetic rhythm) consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one: "Shall I compare thee to a summer day?" is an example of iambic pentameter.

Soliloquy: A speech in which the speaker is alone with his private thoughts. It is designed to inform the audience what he is really thinking.

Sonnet: A fourteen line poem, that is generally composed of two stanzas one of eight lines (an octave), and another of six lines. The rhyme scheme that Shakespeare prefers is: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

Tragedy: Usually follows a hero of high status who has a tragic flaw which results in his demise. Shakespearean tragedy exposes the dark impulses that lie below life's smooth surface.

USEFUL SHAKESPEARE TERMS II

Great Chain of Being: This refers to the elaborate system of parallels and correspondences that governed the orthodox Renaissance view of the cosmos. The underlying principle of the universe is harmony. Everything, from the heavens to man and all things on earth, work according to the principle of hierarchical order. When this order is disturbed, the entire world is in chaos until it is restored.

Humors: According to Elizabethan physiology, a humor was one of the four elemental bodily fluids — phlegm, black bile, blood, and yellow bile — each relating to a specific temperament or mood. When one humor dominates, a person is unbalanced, exhibiting one mood or quirk to the exclusion of others. A person suffering from an excess of phlegm is sluggish, pale, and slow; the sanguine or choleric person is quick to anger and unmerciful; the sanguine person is excessively jovial and lusty; and the melancholic person is maudlin, lovesick, and languid.

Vice: An allegorical personification of evil and temptation, the Vice was a prominent character in medieval morality plays. The manner in which he ingeniously ensnared victims, as well as the way they succumbed to his blandishments was often hilarious.

No Holds Bard: A GLOSSARY OF SEXUAL SLANG

There's no denying it: Shakespeare was not merely bawdy — the usual term used to convey full-blooded Elizabethan lustiness — he was stunningly vulgar. And his audience loved it. Bodily functions, secretions, smells, references that we would consider tasteless or private, were to them the pinnacle of wit. Privacy, particularly concerning personal hygiene, is a relatively modern idea, and the Elizabethan were far less squeamish than we are today. Here are some useful terms:

Arise: To have an erection: “flesh stays no farther reason/ But, rising at thy name,
doth point out thee / As his triumphant prize.”

Bottom: buttocks, or ass.

Cod: A common pun referring to the male organ. But anything to do with fish — of any species — was automatically suggestive and could start the audience laughing merely by association. “Here’s Romeo without the roe.”

Codpiece: A fashionable piece of clothing, resembling a jockstrap worn over a man’s jove instead of beneath it.

Count: Often used for its similarity to the English vernacular for the female genitalia. When Hamlet, with his head on Ophelia’s lap, tells her he is thinking of “country matters,” he pointedly stresses the first syllable.

Die: Sexual intercourse or orgasm. The most common sexual pun in Elizabethan literature. According to Elizabethan physiology, each act of sexual intercourse shortened the lover’s life by about a minute or so, owing to the discharge of “animal fluids.”

Green: Connote virility and potency.

Hell: Slang often used in passages of sexual nausea to indicate a woman’s genitals.

Leaping House: A brothel.

Naught: Wickedness, with implications of sexual intercourse — usually adulterous.

Pricks and Bowls: Pricks referred to a game of archery, bowls to bowling, but both words are frequently used to suggest other games; games were often metaphors for sex.

Quaint, Queynt, or Coynt: Female genitalia. When a man said he “made” a woman’s “acqueyntance,” he meant he knew her very well indeed.

Thing: A penis.

Whore: Elizabethan English had dozens of words to describe a prostitute, and Shakespeare seems to have used them all: beef, wench, jade, baggage, punk, slut, Winchester goose, taffeta punk, guinea-hen, bawd, quean, laced mutton, fish, stale, and doxy.

Will: Not only a pun on Shakespeare’s name, but also a reference to sexual desire, as well as the male and female genitals: “Wilt thou who will is large and spacious, / Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?”

Source: The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein

SHAKESPEARE'S PLOTS

“Bad poets borrow, good poets steal.”

Shakespeare was the prince of thieves. Casting his eye over world literature, from epics of the Greeks to contemporary prose romances, he liberally helped himself to whatever he liked and made use of it in fashioning his plots. With the exception of *Love's Labour Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*, not one plot is completely of Shakespeare's own invention. Today such “borrowing” is considered plagiarism; an artist's work, no matter how bad, is sacrosanct, a unique expression of his or her individuality.

Shakespeare not only stole plots; at times he lifted whole passages from other works. One of his most famous speeches, the astonishingly beautiful description of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, derives from North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*.

To condemn Shakespeare for his literary crimes is to miss the metamorphosis that happened with these stories once he had molded them to the Elizabethan stage. His plays are inevitably his own creations for they possess his own unique touch, despite his open thievery.

ON ENJOYING COMEDIES

A comedy is distinguished from a tragedy in that it ends happily and no one dies. Comedies begin as potential tragedies, but through the pluck of the heronie or the grace of the gods, disaster is averted. Shakespeare's romantic comedies begin with feuding, misunderstandings, and obstacles and end with dancing, music, and marriage.

Because comedies rely on “fancy-meeting-you-here” coincidences and unrealistic plot devices, people tend to dismiss them as frothy confections inferior in depth and substance to tragedy. You indulge in comedy but suffer with tragedy. Shakespearean comedy, however, raises the same issues as tragedy, only in a different key and, or course, with a different.

Appreciation depends upon entering the comic world and accepting its artifice, no matter how improbable. On one level, you can uncritically accept the comedies, simply enjoying them for their silliness; on another, you can look further and see how Shakespeare uses comis absurdities to suggest profound human values and concerns.

The comic world, with its fortuitous encounters, is a well-orchestrated community where everyone is potentially a brother or a sister. Similarly, their concluding marriages are not simply forced happy endings but a reflection of the human need to solemnize experience.

HUMOR IN SHAKESPEARE

You're at the theatre, watching, say *As You Like It*, when suddenly it seems the entire audience is laughing uproariously over what seems to you, and only you, a completely unintelligible remark. Don't despair. Others probably don't get it either. People sometimes laugh not because Shakespeare is funny but because he's *supposed* to be funny. Sometimes it's not important that the audience actually understand the joke so long as they understand that something *was* funny.

Verbal Humor

The Elizabethans loved wordplay such as puns and quibbles, and they went to the theatre just as much to hear the words as to see the action. Shakespeare especially loved puns — the worse the better. Shakespeare finds puns so irresistible that he even slips on in during a tragic moment: as Mercutio lies dying, he gasps, “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find a grave man.”

Running Gags

Theories of comedy note that when you see something once it is funny; when you see it the third time it is funnier still; and, when you see it a seventh time it is even funnier still. Regardless of whether this theory is actually true, Shakespeare knew that running gags and jokes often proved for quick and easy humor. Whether it is an internal gag or one which is based on customary situations (such as a chase, or the cuckolding of a husband), Shakespeare had great success with the continued repetition of gags.

Quibbles

Patrons in Elizabethan pubs and taverns often engaged in word quibbling, a form of verbal arm wrestling in which each opponent tries to squeeze as many meanings out of one word. Often one association will lead to another as the battle continues to go back and forth. Just as all eyes at a tennis match intently following every serve and rally, so the Elizabethan spectator followed the volly of words and the tortuous arguments issuing from each opponent's mouth.

Topical Humor

Shakespeare, like comics today, relied on topical jokes, such as puns that depend on archaic pronunciations, in-jokes, and hidden allusions to celebrities long forgotten. Think about any stand-up comic that you have found funny: how much of it will be comprehensible five hundred years from today?

Source: The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein

IT'S JUST TRAGIC

Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Macbeth. Shakesperarean tragedy involves solitary men struggling with the most basic fact of all: human existence. Any literary handbook will include Aristotle's definition of tragedy and lofty rhetorical terms such as "denouement," "hamartia," and "catastrophe." But for now, simply allow yourself to be moved: tragedy is defined not by what it does but by what it does *to* use. We watch comedy, but we experience tragedy.

In comedy, the parade of human folly is presented through the wrong end of the binoculars, from a perspective of detached amusement. But with tragedy, the binoculars are turned the other way: everything is up close, intense, and immediate. Shakespeare, like Hamlet, "considers" life "too curiously," exposing everything to minute scrutiny, and he takes his examination to the furthest, most terrible limit. In tragedy we are stripped of the defences that keep us from looking at life's dark underside. In the process of watching tragedy, we momentarily forget the details of everyday life, and a world of absolutes — mortality, time, death, decay, good and evil — is revealed.

Shakespearean tragedy exposes those dark impulses that lie below life's smooth surface; Shakespeare seems to take an X-ray of the soul. The heroes of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies are pushed to the furthest limits of human endurance. His heroes unlike the everyman of a play by Sam Shepard or Arthur Miller, are lofty figures, princes or other noblemen who live life to the fullest — and fall due to a fatal flaw in their otherwise perfect nature.

QUALITIES OF TRAGEDY

unny.

Catharsis

The violence of tragedy must be transformed into the sublime, the most horrific suffering given a strange beauty. The nature of tragedy dictates that it do more than just depict agony and death; if adversity does not lead to redemption, the play becomes a pointless succession of cruelties, and we leave the theatre depressed rather than uplifted. So the hero's anguish must find release — or, at least, the relief of self-acceptance. At the end, when the hero has lost everything, he must find himself; all gain an insight that allows them to transcend their immediate situation. The tragic paradox is that the hero rises to emotional and spiritual heights only as his earthly fortunes plum-

SHAKESPEARE IN DRAG

Shakespeare never heard the now-fashionable terms “sex roles” or “gender reversal,” yet he nevertheless delights in exploring what it means to be feminine or masculine — but in a manner more pleasing than that of today’s humorless sociologists.

Cross-dressing implies that Shakespeare is advising us not to take sex, or life, so seriously. In the comedies, gender is a role one can adopt and remove at will; and for Shakespeare’s original audience, comic transvestism had a special meaning: it was a witty visual pun that transcended art and revealed something about the nature of theatrical illusion. Since women were not allowed to appear on stage, all female roles were played by prepubescent and adolescent boys. Elizabethan England was unique among the nations of Europe in forbidding women to appear on the public stage. Boy actors lived with the adult members of the company and received rigorous training in dancing, music, singing, elocution, memorization, weaponry, and, as an acting manual stated, “pregnancie in wit.”

Shakespeare’s audience entered into the illusion that a young man was a desirable woman, while the actor’s gender and the playwright’s hints reminded them that “she” was really a “he.” Shakespearean disguise invited the audience into a confused world where the line between actor and role, illusion and reality, became blurred. Paradoxically, while he asked the audience to participate in the mass delusion of theatre, Shakespeare never let them forget that they were watching a play.

When women were finally permitted on stage, in 1660, the relationship between audience and actor irrevocably changed. Theatricality — the idea that the actors were aware of their parts and enjoying a subtle joke with their audience — was diminished. Since a woman now *was* playing a woman, theatre became more realistic. After 1660, plays didn’t call as much attention to their own artificiality and were more concerned with simply telling a tale.

Of course, when women began acting, a whole new dimension was added to theatre-going. When an actress disguised herself as a boy, the men in the audience got to see a tantalizing bit of a real female’s leg — which is why these roles were called “breech parts.”

PROSE AND VERSE

*“When I read Shakespeare I am struck with wonder
That such trivial people should muse and thunder
In such lovely language.”*

Shakespeare basically uses two kinds of language, prose and verse. As a general rule, prose is reserved for ordinary conversation and common folk, while verse is usually spoken by kings and other seriously talkers. One character may use both verse and prose, depending upon the situation, his social status, and whom he's addressing.

Some people are alienated by Shakespearean dialogue because no one really talks like that. To them verse sounds stilted and artificial, particularly when it takes the form rhymed couplets, which has capacity to make the most elevated thought sound like a jingle for laundry detergent.

Speaking in rhyme is not natural to us, but it was to the Elizabethans, so we have to understand what language meant to them, and what language does *not* mean to us today. If you were an Elizabethan and you wanted to impress your lover, you wouldn't send flowers. You would come and woo your lover at his or her feet and recite a sonnet that you had written just for him or her — no matter how bad it was. Elizabethan England was a world where people sang, talked, and breathed language, and it is only natural that Shakespeare uses it as he does.

Source: The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein

READING SHAKESPEARE ALOUD

“The Elizabethans were an audience of listeners. They would say, I’m going to ‘hear’ a play, not I’m going to see a play. The Elizabethan audience would pick up on words and their various meanings that we wouldn’t.”

- First, and most important, figure out what the words mean, and you’ll almost instinctively know how to say them. At the same time, allow yourself to be swept along by the sound, the music of a line, and you’ll find you understand more than you think. Shakespeare used rhythm to help his actors and audience. Rhythm — whether a line is fast or slow, irregular or smooth — will help you know what a character is saying. For instance, Juliet’s impassioned “Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds” recreates the swift regularity of hoofbeats and thus expresses the urgency of her passion. Macbeth’s weary “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” is slow and repetitious, suggestive of the speaker’s deadened state and his sense of life’s monotony. Shakespeare usually places the punch, the word that should be emphasized at the end of a line.
- The director John Barton of the Royal Shakespeare Company advises his actors to pause slightly at the end of each verse line; Shakespeare, he notes, gives his actors an evocative image at the end of the line, which is continued much more strongly first three words of the next line.
- For the novice, it’s usually best to begin by using punctuation as a guide. If the line ends with a period, give it a full stop; a comma takes a half stop, and if the line runs on, keep reading. You’ll be surprised at the difference it makes.
- One final note: an accent mark over the suffix “ed,” as in “perfumèd,” indicates that it should be pronounced as an extra syllable. Perfumèd in Elizabethan English has three, not two syllables.
- Those rich sounds we hear on stage in that plummy British accent are nothing like the sounds the playwright’s audience would have heard. Scholars who have reconstructed Elizabethan diction say that the closest approximation today would be the English spoken by hillbillies in Appalachia.

HINTS ON READING SHAKESPEARE ALOUD

“Speaking in rhyme is not natural to us, but it was to the Elizabethans page 219

Shakespeare basically uses two kinds of language, prose and verse. As a general rule, prose is reserved for ordinary conversation and common folk, while verse is usually spoken by kings and other seriously talkers. One character may use both verse and prose, depending upon the situation, his social status, and whom he's addressing.

Some people are alienated by Shakespearean dialogue because no one really talks like that. To them verse sounds stilted and artificial, particularly when it takes the form rhymed couplets, which has capacity to make the most elevated thought sound like a jingle for laundry detergent

ON QUOTING SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare was a dramatist of note;
He lived by writing things to quote.

— H.C. Brunner

A man can be forgiven a lot if he can quote Shakespeare in an economic crisis.

The following are some of William Shakespeare's most famous quotations and the plays that they are taken from. Some of these expressions have become "household words" (Henry V by William Shakespeare)

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark (Hamlet, I.4.90)

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears (Julius Caesar, III.2.74)

Once more unto the breach (Henry V, III.1.1)

All the world's a stage (As You Like It, II.7.43)

A horse! A horse! my kingdom for a horse! (Richard III, V.4.13)

Parting is such sweet sorrow (Romeo and Juliet, II.2.185)

The following are some of common phrases, words, and everyday expressions. Can you decide which ones are Shakespeare's and which ones are not. For an added challenge can you name the play.

Household words
Bated breath
More in sorrow than in anger
Brevity is the soul of wit
Neither rhyme nor reason
The primrose path
Laughing stock
Devil incarnate
Simple minds
We have seen better days
What's done is done
A fool and his money
Full of sound and fury
What the dickens
Every rose has its thorn
One fell swoop
Eaten me out of house and home
Dead as a doornail
Honey tongued
An eye-sore
Foregone conclusion
Bag and baggage
Let's kill all the lawyers
History repeats itself
A lean and hungry look
Hungry like the wolf
Such stuff dreams are made on
I was not born yesterday
Wear my heart on my sleeve

The green-eyed monster
Hoodwinked
Kissing cousins
Fortune's fool
The apple of her eye
Innocent disguise
Pomp and circumstance
Frailty, thy name is woman!
Sweets to the sweet
Hell's bells
As white as driven snow
Jack of all trades
Too much of a good thing
Neither a borrower nor a lender be
Lily white
Stony-hearted villains
Budge an inch
Tall tales
Into thin air
Unseen danger
The game is afoot
The game is up
Strange bedfellows
The naked truth
Penny pincher
Guilty conscience
Ay, there's the rub
Knock, knock! Who's there?
For goodness' sake

What a piece of work is man
Sharper than a serpent's tooth
Unsex me here
star-crossed lovers
The be-all and end-all
Good riddance
Good night, ladies
The rest is silence

Shakespearean Vocabulary

It's estimated that Shakespeare used between 25,000 and 29,000 different (the King James Bible is made up of only 6,000 different words)

One out of every dozen or so words was a new one that Shakespeare would never repeat in any play or poem.

The longest word in all Shakespeare is honorificabilitudinitatibus. It means quite simply "honorableness."

Although it's been attributed to

ON QUOTING KEY

Shakespeare was a dramatist of note;
He lived by writing things to quote.

— H.C. Brunner

A man can be forgiven a lot if he can quote Shakespeare in an economic crisis.

The following are some of William Shakespeare's most famous quotations and the plays that they are taken from. Some of these expressions have become "household words" (Henry V by William Shakespeare)

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark (Hamlet, I.4.90)

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears (Julius Caesar, III.2.74)

Once more unto the breach (Henry V, III.1.1)

All the world's a stage (As You Like It, II.7.43)

A horse! A horse! my kingdom for a horse! (Richard III, V.4.13)

Parting is such sweet sorrow (Romeo and Juliet, II.2.185)

The following are some of common phrases, words, and everyday expressions. Can you decide which ones are Shakespeare's and which ones are not. For an added challenge can you name the play.

Household words - Shakespeare (bold)

Bated breath
More in sorrow than in anger
Brevity is the soul of wit
Neither rhyme nor reason
The primrose path
Laughing stock
Devil incarnate
Simple minds
We have seen better days
What's done is done
A fool and his money
Full of sound and fury
What the dickens
Every rose has its thorn
One fell swoop
Eaten me out of house and home
Dead as a doornail
Honey tongued
An eye-sore
Foregone conclusion
Bag and baggage
Let's kill all the lawyers
History repeats itself
A lean and hungry look
Hungry like the wolf
Such stuff dreams are made on
I was not born yesterday
Wear my heart on my sleeve

The green-eyed monster

Hoodwinked
Kissing cousins
Fortune's fool
The apple of her eye
Innocent disguise
Pomp and circumstance
Frailty, thy name is woman!
Sweets to the sweet
Hell's bells
As white as driven snow
Jack of all trades
Too much of a good thing
Neither a borrower nor a lender be
Lily white
Stony-hearted villains
Budge an inch
Tall tales
Into thin air
Unseen danger
The game is afoot
The game is up
Strange bedfellows
The naked truth
Penny pincher
Guilty conscience
Ay, there's the rub
Knock, knock! Who's there?
For goodness' sake

What a piece of work is man

Sharper than a serpents tooth
Unsex me here
star-crossed lovers
The be-all and end-all
Good riddance
Good night, ladies
The rest is silence

Shakespearean Vocabulary

It's estimated that Shakespeare used between 25,000 and 29,000 different (the King James Bible is made up of only 6,000 different words)

One out of every dozen or so words was a new one that Shakespeare would never repeat in any play or poem.

The longest word in all Shakespeare is honorificabilitudinitatibus. It means quite simply "honorableness."

Although it's been attributed to

WHO WAS THIS BARD?

MARK TWAIN COMPARED THE CREATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S BIOGRAPHY TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A DINOSAUR FROM A FEW BITS OF BONE STUCK TOGETHER WITH PLASTER. THE FACTS IN THIS CASE ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN AND REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL OF CONJECTURE.

- Shakespeare was born to John and Mary in the township of *Stratford-on-Avon*, and was christened on April 26, 1564. Since it was traditional to baptize a child three days after its birth, Shakespeare's birthday is placed on April 23, 1564.
- There are no records of Shakespeare having gone to school, but he must have studied somewhere to give him his knowledge of Latin and language.
- He was married at age 18 to Anne Hathaway, age 26, in 1582.
- There are no records of Shakespeare from 1585 to 1592. It is thought he could have done that following: a moneylender, gardener, sailor, scrivener, tutor, coachman, soldier, printer, schoolmaster, lawyer, and clerk.
- At one point Shakespeare ended up in London where he began to work as an actor and playwright.
- Shakespeare's first plays were: *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Comedy of Errors* somewhere during 1589-94.
- The plague closes the theatres in London, allowing Shakespeare time to write poetry and his famous sonnets.
- 1594 The Lord Chamberlain's men is formed, and for the next ten years it is London's premier acting company. Shakespeare is then both the playwright and an actor in the company.
- Shakespeare prospers quite well and steadily amasses a small fortune in real estate.

- 1597 Shakespeare purchases the second largest house in Stratford.
Unlike other London dramatists, Shakespeare maintains connections with his family and pays regular visits to his wife and children.
- 1599 Shakespeare is made a shareholder in The Globe (rare for a playwright) thus establishing himself as a successful businessman.
- 1599-1608: Shakespeare's greatest period during which he writes *Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Anthony and Cleopatra*.
- 1603: Queen Elizabeth dies and James I becomes king. He gives royal patent to Shakespeare's company who become known as the King's Men. It performs twelve times a year at court.
- 1610-11: Shakespeare permanently leaves the London stage and retires to his home in Stratford, where he is an important member of the local gentry.
- 1616 Shakespeare dies, the date conveniently placed on the same day of his birth, April 23, fifty-two years later.
- 1623: The First Folio (a collection of Shakespeare's plays) is published by Shakespeare's fellow actors Heminge and Condell.

SHAKESPEARE INSULTS, INVECTIVES, AND CURSES

WITH A PARTNER, READ THROUGH THE FOLLOWING INSULTS FROM VARIOUS PLAYS BY SHAKESPEARE. FILL IN THE BLANK WITH THE APPROXIMATE MESSAGE OF THE INSULT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST. YOU MAY USE THEM AS MANY TIMES AS THE NUMBER INDICATES: ALL PURPOSE INSULT (5), CURSES (2), GET LOST (3), IMPUGNING MASCULINITY (2), OBESITY (2), PERSONAL HYGIENE (4), STUPIDITY (3), THREATS (3), UGLINESS (3), WOMANKIND (3)

1. _____ Were I like thee I'd throw away myself. (*Timon of Athens*, III.4.100)
2. _____ You are as a candle, the better part burnt out. (*Henry IV, Part 2*, I.2.158-59)
3. _____ Thou slander of thy mother's womb! (*Richard III*, I.3.230-31)
4. _____ The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon! (*Macbeth*, V.3.11)
5. _____ More of your conversation would infect my brain.... (*Coriolanus*, II.1.88-89)
6. _____ Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!/You tallow face! (*Romeo and Juliet*, III.5.157-58)
7. _____ I thank you for your company, but, good faith, I had as lief been myself alone. (*As You Like It*, III.2.246-47)
8. _____ Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.356)
9. _____ Paint till a horse may mire upon your face. / A pox of wrinkles! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.148-49)
10. _____ You are the musty chaff, and you are smelt / Above the moon.
11. _____ Thou has pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle. (*King Lear*, I.4.183)
12. _____ Go thou, and fill another room in hell. (*Richard II* V.5.107)
13. _____ Zounds, an I were now by this rascal I could brain him with his lady's fan. (*Henry IV, Part I*, II.3.23-24)
14. _____ She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.120-21)
15. _____ Thou loathèd issue of thy father's loins! (*Richard III*, I.3.231)
16. _____ She sweats a man may go overshoes in the grime of it. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.107-8)
17. _____ ...he has not so much brain as ear-wax. (*Troilus and Cressida*, V.1.49-50)
18. _____ God has given you one face and you make yourselves another. (*Hamlet*, III.1.144-45)
19. _____ [She's so fat] I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Polland winter. [Tallow means grease and seat.] (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.101-2)
20. _____ ...I do smell all horse-piss, at which my nose is in great indignation. (*The Tempest* IV.1.199-200)
21. _____ ...his face is the worst thing about him. (*Measure for Measure*, II.1.48-49)
22. _____ Guard thy head; for I intend to have it ere long. (*Henry VI, Part 1*, I.2.127)
23. _____ Let me go grind their bones to powder small / And with this hateful liquor temper it; / And in that paste let their vile heads be bakes. (*Titus Andronicus*, V.2.198-200)
24. _____ I'll unhair thy head! / Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stew'd in brine, / Smarting in lingering pickle! (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.5.66-68)
25. _____ Whoreson: Similar to SOB
26. _____ ...such a dish of skim milk... (*Henry IV, Part 1*, II.3.34)
27. _____ Ajax: I shall cut out your tongue. Thersites: 'Tis no matter; I shall speak as much as thou afterwards. (*Troilus and Cressida*, II.1.109-11)(*Coriolanus*, V.1.32-33)
28. _____ The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. (*Coriolanus*, V.4.17)
29. _____ I never can see him but I an heart-burned an hour after. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II.1.5)
30. _____ Her beauty and her brain go not together. (*Cymbeline* I.2.24-25)

SHAKESPEARE INSULTS KEY

WITH A PARTNER, READ THROUGH THE FOLLOWING INSULTS FROM VARIOUS PLAYS BY SHAKESPEARE. FILL IN THE BLANK WITH THE APPROXIMATE MESSAGE OF THE INSULT FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST. YOU MAY USE THEM AS MANY TIMES AS THE NUMBER INDICATES: ALL PURPOSE INSULT (5), CURSES (2), GET LOST (3), IMPUGNING MASCULINITY (2), OBESITY (2), PERSONAL HYGIENE (4), STUPIDITY (3), THREATS (3), UGLINESS (3), WOMANKIND (3)

1. A.P.I. Were I like thee I'd throw away myself. (*Timon of Athens*, III.4.100)
2. A.P.I. You are as a candle, the better part burnt out. (*Henry IV, Part 2*, I.2.158-59)
3. A.P.I. Thou slander of thy mother's womb! (*Richard III*, I.3.230-31)
4. Curses The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon! (*Macbeth*, V.3.11)
5. Curses More of your conversation would infect my brain.... (*Coriolanus*, II.1.88-89)
6. Get Lost Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!/You tallow face! (*Romeo and Juliet*, III.5.157-58)
7. Get Lost I thank you for your company, but, good faith, I had as lief been myself alone. (*As You Like It*, III.2.246-47)
8. Pers. Hy. Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.356)
9. Womankind Paint till a horse may mire upon your face. / A pox of wrinkles! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.148-49)
10. Pers. Hy. You are the musty chaff, and you are smelt / Above the moon.
11. Stupidity Thou has pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle. (*King Lear*, I.4.183)
12. Get Lost Go thou, and fill another room in hell. (*Richard II* V.5.107)
13. Imp. Masc Zounds, an I were now by this rascal I could brain him with his lady's fan. (*Henry IV, Part I*, II.3.23-24)
14. Obesity She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.120-21)
15. A.P.I. Thou loathèd issue of thy father's loins! (*Richard III*, I.3.231)
16. Pers. Hy. She sweats a man may go overshoes in the grime of it. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.107-8)
17. Stupidity ...he has not so much brain as ear-wax. (*Troilus and Cressida*, V.1.49-50)
18. Womankind God has given you one face and you make yourselves another. (*Hamlet*, III.1.144-45)
19. Obesity [She's so fat] I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Polland winter. [Tallow means grease and seat.] (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.101-2)
20. Pers. Hy. ...I do smell all horse-piss, at which my nose is in great indignation. (*The Tempest* IV.1.199-200)
21. Ugliness ...his face is the worst thing about him. (*Measure for Measure*, II.1.48-49)
22. Threats Guard thy head; for I intend to have it ere long. (*Henry VI, Part 1*, I.2.127)
23. Threats Let me go grind their bones to powder small / And with this hateful liquor temper it; / And in that paste let their vile heads be bakes. (*Titus Andronicus*, V.2.198-200)
24. Threats I'll unhair thy head! / Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stew'd in brine, / Smarting in lingering pickle! (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.5.66-68)
25. A.P.I. Whoreson: Similar to SOB
26. Imp. Masc. ...such a dish of skim milk... (*Henry IV, Part 1*, II.3.34)
27. Ugliness Ajax: I shall cut out your tongue. Thersites: 'Tis no matter; I shall speak as much as thou afterwards. (*Troilus and Cressida*, II.1.109-11)(*Coriolanus*, V.1.32-33)
28. Ugliness The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. (*Coriolanus*, V.4.17)
29. Ugliness I never can see him but I an heart-burned an hour after. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II.1.5)
30. Womankind Her beauty and her brain go not together. (*Cymbeline* I.2.24-25)

SHAKESPEARE INSULTS, INVECTIVES, AND CURSES

ALL PURPOSE INSULT

- Whoreson: Similar to SOB
- Thou slander of thy mother's womb! (*Richard III*, I.3.230-31)
- Thou loathèd issue of thy father's loins! (*Richard III*, I.3.231)
- Were I like thee I'd throw away myself. (*Timon of Athens*, III.4.100)
- You are as a candle, the better part burnt out. (*Henry IV, Part 2*, I.2.158-59)

CURSES

- The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon! (*Macbeth*, V.3.11)
- More of your conversation would infect my brain.... (*Coriolanus*, II.1.88-89)

GET LOST!

- Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!/You tallow face! (*Romeo and Juliet*, III.5.157-58)
- I thank you for your company, but, good faith, I had as lief been myself alone. (*As You Like It*, III.2.246-47)
- Go thou, and fill another room in hell. (*Richard II* V.5.107)

IMPUGNING MASCULINITY

- Zounds, an I were now by this rascal I could brain him with his lady's fan. (*Henry IV, Part 1*, II.3.23-24)
- ...such a dish of skim milk... (*Henry IV, Part 1*, II.3.34)

OBESITY

- She is spherical, like a globe. I could find out countries in her. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.120-21)
- [She's so fat] I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Polland winter. [Tallow means grease and seat.] (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.101-2)

PERSONAL HYGIENE

- ...I do smell all horse-piss, at which my nose is in great indignation. (*The Tempest* IV.1.199-200)
- You are the musty chaff, and you are smelt / Above the moon. (*Coriolanus*, V.1.32-33)
- Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.356)
- She sweats a man may go overshoes in the grime of it. (*The Comedy of Errors*, III.2.107-8)

STUPIDITY

- ...he has not so much brain as ear-wax. (*Troilus and Cressida*, V.1.49-50)
- Thou has pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle. (*King Lear*, I.4.183)
- Ajax: I shall cut out your tongue.
Thersites: 'Tis no matter; I shall speak as much as thou afterwards.
(*Troilus and Cressida*, II.1.109-11)

THREATS

- Guard thy head; for I intend to have it ere long. (*Henry VI, Part 1*, I.2.127)
- Let me go grind their bones to powder small / And with this hateful liquor temper it; / And in that paste let their vile heads be bakes. (*Titus Andronicus*, V.2.198-200)
- I'll unhair thy head! / Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stew'd in brine, / Smarting in lingering pickle! (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.5.66-68)

UGLINESS

- The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. (*Coriolanus*, V.4.17)
- ...his face is the worst thing about him. (*Measure for Measure*, II.1.48-49)
- I never can see him but I an heart-burned an hour after. (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II.1.5)

WOMANKIND

- Paint till a horse may mire upon your face. / A pox of wrinkles! (*Timon of Athens*, IV.3.148-49)
- Her beauty and her brain go not together. (*Cymbeline* I.2.24-25)
- God has given you one face and you make yourselves another. (*Hamlet*, III.1.144-45)

ELIZABETHAN LANGUAGE

VERBS

art	are	“Why art thou sleeping in class?”
wert	were	“Thou wert supposed to be paying attention.”
dost (doth)	do	“Thou does thyself harm by sleeping.”
	does	“Mimi dost not liketh liver.”
hath (hast)	has	“Harold hath a toothache.”
wast	was	“There wast a fly in my soup.”
canst	cannot	“I canst convince him to leave.”
wilt	will	“wilt thou taketh thy foot off mine hand?”
exuent	all exit the stage	
holp	helped	“I holp her to fix her car.”
bade	called forth or asked	“I bade her hurry up.”
beseech	beg	“Linus beseeched Snoopy to lend him some money.”
owe	own	“He owes a houseful of rabbits.”
fetch	go and get	“Fetch the newspaper from the roof.”
discourse	conversation	“They had discourse for an hour on the music of U2.”

CONTRACTIONS

‘tis	it is	“Tis a pity thou art late.”
ope	open	“Ope the door, Richard.”
o’er	over	“Rolleth o’er, Beethoven.”
gi’	give	“Gi’ me all thy money.”
ne’er	never	“Ne’er looketh a gift horse ‘n the mouth.”
i’	in	“Ne’er looketh a gift horse ‘n the mouth.”
e’er	ever	“Don’t e’er eateth thy peas with a knife.”
oft	often	“He oft neglecteth to doeth his homework.”
a’	he	“A’ hath a case of measles.”
e’en	even	“Tess Tube hath an e’en dozen socks in her locker.”

PRONOUNS

ye	you	“Gather ye together to party.”
thou	you (subject)	“Thou hadst better getteth it together.”
thee	you (object)	“I love thee very much.”
thy	your	“Watcheth thy step.”
mine	my	“Don’t steppeth on mine foot.”
thine	yours	“What’s mine is thine.”

ELIZABETHAN LANGUAGE

EXCLAMATIONS

aye	ah! or yes	“Aye! I see thou hast found the restroom.”
How!	What!	“How! Thou hast not done thy homework yet?”
Marry!	By God!	“Marry, this is a delicious sandwich!”
soft	Shhhh!	“Soft, or thou wilt waketh the baby.”
sirrah	used to address servant or animals	“Sirrah, wilt thou picketh up the crumbs from the floor?”
in good time	how lucky	“In good time, I found gold.”
tut	now, now	“Tut, you can’t expect to win all the time.”
godden	good afternoon	“Godden to you.”
nay	no	“Nay. I dosta not wanteth my tooth pulled.”
anon	soon or hurry up	“Anon, or we’ll be late for the show.”
alack	alas	“Alack, I looketh not well in purple.”

MISCELLANEOUS

whither	where	“Whither hast mine money gone?”
hither	here	“Come hither so I can seest thou better.”
fortnight	two weeks	“I will be home in a fortnight.”
visage	face	“Hideth thy visage with a visor.”
wherein	in which	“My mouth is full wherein you will find thy donut.”
measure	a tune or short piece of music	“Tis a beutiful measure by Megadeth.”
wherefore	why	“Wherefore hast thou not done thy homework?”
henceforth	from now on	“Henceforth I shan’t be home.”
mad	insane	“Thou must be mad to not study for thy test.”
passing	very	“Arnold is a passing basketball player.”
bid	ask	“I canst bid thou in to see mine new video.”
Coz	cousin	“I’ll talketh to thee later, Coz.”
hence	here	“Get thee hence to the baseball field.”
whence	where	“Whence hast thou left mine scissors?”
shrift (shrive)	church confessions	“Talking to thy parents if likened to a shrift.”
kinsmen	relatives	“Invite all thy kinsmen to the party.”
morrow	day	“Good morrow to you, too, my friend.”
naught	nothing	“I’ve naught but the clothes on mine back.”
an	if	“An I don’t finish, I’ll returneth tomorrow.”
withal	with	“There withal mine best friend I saw my girlfriend.”
ere	before	“Don’t counteth thy chickens ere they’re hatched.”

DECIPHERING THE BARD PART I

1. A plethora of individuals with expertise in culinary techniques vitiate the potable concoction produced by steeping certain comestibles.
2. Eleemosynary deeds have their incipience intramurally.
3. Male cadavers are incapable of yielding testimony.
4. Ingest twin tablets compounded of a crystalline derivative of salicylic acid and communicate with me during an ensuing matutinal hour.
5. A moiety of a farinaceous rectangularly moulded mass subjected to adequate heat is preferable to nullity.
6. A solitary ornithological migrant does not constitute an festival season.
7. Individuals who make their abode in vitreous edifices would do well to refrain from catapulting petrous projectiles.
8. Neophyte's serendipity.
9. Rodents tergiversate when a nautical structure submerges.
10. Deviation from the established moral code is the cachet of mere mortals, whereas absolution is numinous.

DECIPHERING PART I KEY

1. A plethora of individuals with expertise in culinary techniques vitiate the potable concoction produced by steeping certain comestibles.
Too many cooks spoil the broth.
2. Eleemosynary deeds have their incipience intramurally.
Charity begins at home.
3. Male cadavers are incapable of yielding testimony.
Dead men tell no tales.
4. Ingest twin tablets compounded of a crystalline derivative of salicylic acid and communicate with me during an ensuring matutinal hour.
Take two aspirins and call me in the morning.
5. A moiety of a farinaceous rectangularly moulded mass subjected to adequate heat is preferable to nullity.
Half a loaf is better than none.
6. A solitary ornithological migrant does not constitute an festival season.
A single bird (swallow) does not a spring make.
7. Individuals who make their abode in vitreous edifices would do well to refrain from catapulting petrous projectiles.
People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
8. Neophyte's serendipity.
Beginner's luck.
9. Rodents tergiversate when a nautical structure submerges.
(Like) rats from a sinking ship.
10. Deviation from the established moral code is the cachet of mere mortals, whereas absolution is numinous.
To err is human, to forgive divine.

DECIPHERING THE BARD PART II

1. Exclusive dedication to neccessitous chores without interludes of hedonistic diversion renders John a hebetudinous fellow.
2. A revolving lithnic conglomerate accumulates no congeries of a small, green bryophitic plant.
3. There is universal participation in a dialogue about meteorological phenomena but there is no intiative in terms of ameliorative procedures.
4. To be infinitessimally off target is tantamount to an interval of 1,609.344 meters.
5. The person presenting the ultimate cacchination possesses thereby the optimal cacchination.
6. Not infrequently a contretemps may eventuate on the journey from the chalice to the periphery of one's oral orifice.
7. Permit the amercement to coincide with the malfeasance.
8. Abstention form any aleatory undertakings precludes a potential escalation of a lucrative nature.
9. A vocable to the sapient is adequate.
10. Missles of ligneous or petrous consistency have the potential of fracturing my osseous structure, but appellations will eternally remain innocuous

DECIPHERING PART II KEY

1. Exclusive dedication to neccessitous chores without interludes of hedonistic diversion renders John a hebetudinous fellow.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

2. A revolving lithnic conglomerate accumulates no congeries of a small, green bryophitic plant.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

3. There is universal participation in a dialogue about meteorological phenomena but there is no intiative in terms of ameliorative procedures.

Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it.

4. To be infinitessimally off target is tantamount to an interval of 1,609.344 meters.

Missed by a mile.

5. The person presenting the ultimate cacchination possesses thereby the optimal cacchination.

He who laughs last laughs loudest.

6. Not infrequently a contretemps may eventuate on the journey from the chalice to the periphery of one's oral orifice.

7. Permit the amercement to coincide with the malfeasance.

Let the punishment fit the crime.

8. Abstention from any aleatory undertakings precludes a potential escalation of a lucrative nature.

No risk, no gain.

9. A vocable to the sapient is adequate.

A word to the wise.

10. Missles of ligneous or petrous consistency have the potential of fracturing my osseous structure, but appellations will eternally remain innocuous

Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me.