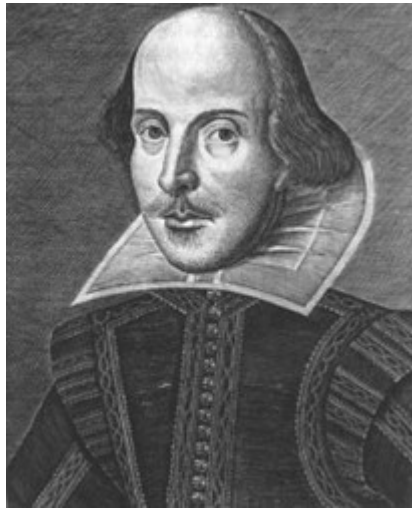


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Ms. Baulch  
English 9

# Understanding Shakespeare's Language: A study packet



*Avaunt ye, thou unspeaking sot, thou most credulous  
lackey, and pigeon-liver breeder of fools!*

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## Notes: The Nature of Blank Verse

**Blank verse** is used in most Elizabethan drama. Blank verse is unrhymed verse written in **iambic pentameter** (one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable is an iamb and 5 beats in a measure is pentameter).

1. “So foul and fair a day I have not seen.”
2. Blank verse follows the natural easy rhythm of English speech; it also mimics the rhythm of the human heartbeat.
3. Blank verse is scanned using the following symbols:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?*

*O What a rogue and peasant slave am I!*

4. Try to scan the following lines of blank verse:

*She loved me for the dangers I had passed*

*A man he is of honesty and trust.*

**Note:** Occasionally, a poet will introduce a metrical foot of **two** accented syllables in order to vary the meter. This is called **spondee**. Two unaccented syllables may also be used. This is called **pyrrhic**. Luckily, you don’t have to deal with this yet, but you may have to in college!

**Note:** There are also other metrical foot measurements such as **tetrameter** (4 beats) *Had we /but world/ enough/ and time* (Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress”) and **trimeter** (3 beats) *Down to/ a sun-/less sea.* (Coleridge, “Kubla Khan”)

**Prose** is the ordinary language used in writing or speaking. It is different than poetry because its rhythm is closer to everyday speech.

**Practice:** Scan the following lines to determine if they are in blank verse or prose.

And hear the sentence of your movéd prince.

I strike quickly, being moved.

No, ‘tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

Where the devil should this Romeo be?

## Notes: Reading Shakespeare's Plays: Word Arrangement

### Language

Before you start to read Shakespeare's plays, you will want to take a look at some of the language uses that might stand in your way of understanding the script. In his book, *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*, Randal Robinson breaks the language barriers into three main categories: Shakespeare's Unusual Arrangements of Words, Shakespeare's Troublesome Omissions & Words Not Quite Our Own.

### Unusual Word Arrangements

Many of my students have asked me if people really spoke the way they do in Shakespeare's plays. The answer is no. Shakespeare wrote the way he did for poetic and dramatic purposes. There are many reasons why he did this--to create a specific poetic rhythm, to emphasize a certain word, to give a character a specific speech pattern, etc. Let's take a look at a great example from Robinson's *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language*.

I ate the sandwich.  
I the sandwich ate.  
Ate the sandwich I.  
Ate I the sandwich.  
The sandwich I ate.  
The sandwich ate I.

Robinson shows us that these four words can create six unique sentences that carry the same meaning. When you are reading Shakespeare's plays, look for this type of unusual word arrangement. Locate the subject, verb, and the object of the sentence. Notice that the object of the sentence is often placed at the beginning (the sandwich) in front of the verb (ate) and subject (I). Rearrange the words in the order that makes the most sense to you (I ate the sandwich). This will be one of your first steps in making sense of Shakespeare's language.

**PUZZLE OF THE DAY:** Put these inverted sentences in "normal" order.

( SUBJECT    →    VERB    →    OBJECT)

(VERB    →    OBJECT    →    ADJECTIVE)

1. "If this be known to you."
2. "Gone she is."
3. "If she in chains of magic were not bound."
4. "To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear."
5. "My Desdemona must I leave to thee."
6. "What say'st thou?"
7. "What from the cape can you discern at sea?"
8. "The ship is here put in."
9. "Look you to the guard tonight."
10. "When this advice is free I give and honest."
11. "When devils will the blackest sins put on..."
12. "These letters give, Iago, to the pilot."
13. "...the souls of all my tribe defend from jealousy."
14. "I humbly do beseech you of your pardon/ For too much loving you."
15. "If after every tempest comes such calms..."

### **Shakespeare Line Interpretation – Part 1**

DIRECTIONS: Write the meaning of each of the following quotes in your own words.

1. What's gone and what's past help should be past grief.

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2. There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

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3. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

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4. Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

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5. Although the last, not least.

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6. Nothing will come of nothing.

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7. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft'interred with their bones.

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8. Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend.

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9. Alas that love, so gentle in his view, should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

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## Shakespeare Line Interpretation – Part 2

DIRECTIONS: Write the meaning of each of the following quotes in your own words.

1. What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.”

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2. “For you and I are past our dancing days.”

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3. “Dreams are the children of an idle brain.”

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4. “What great ones do the less will prattle of.”

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5. “”O how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!”

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6. “It is a wise father that knows his own child.”

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7. “Speak low if you speak love.”

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8. “You taught me language; and my profit on’t is I know how to curse.”

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9. “Things without all remedy would be without regard; What’s done is done.”

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## **PUZZLE OF THE DAY:** Translating Shakespeare's Language

### **Translate the following sentences from Shakespeare's Language to Modern Language:**

- Prithee, let us repair post-haste to yonder tavern for a pot of sack and some capon.
- Yon wench seems in a choler. Her humour hath been thus sith days of yore.
- I'faith, the caitiff hath been justly punished for cozening divers townsfolk.
- Yon jade hath not the worth of a groat, so it is bootless to parley further.
- Con this page for divers conceits.

### **Translate the following sentences from Modern Language to Shakespeare's Language:**

- Honestly, I think your face has the look of a worn-out horse.
- Go away! I've had enough of this quarrelling between you two.
- Honestly, I cannot drink this unpleasant wine.
- Let's make our way to the pub and have a talk about this terrible business immediately.
- I suspect you've got some terrible burden on your mind. It's pointless to worry over it.
- That wretched coward has cheated you. I would be inclined to testify how he has treated you in a harmful manner.

### **GLOSSARY:**

Avaunt - go away!

Betimes - soon

Bootless - useless

Caitiff - cowardly wretch

Capon - chicken

Choler - irritable temper

Con - study; to know

Conceit - idea

Cozen - cheat

Divers - various

Drab - an immoral person

Entreat - beg, plead

E're - before

Enow - enough

Fain - inclined to

Fardel - burden

Fell - terrible

Forsooth - truly, honestly

Groat - a small coin

Humour - mood

Husbandry - maintenance

I'faith - honestly (literally, "in faith")

Jade - worn out horse

Jakes - lavatory; toilet

Lest - unless

Lief - prefer ( I had as lief)

Methinks - I think

Naught - nothing

Noisome - harmful

O'er - over

Parley - talk

Pate - head

Post-haste - great haste (right away)

Prithee - I beg you

Quaff - drink

Repair - make your way to

Riggish - playful

Rude - rough

Sack - wine

Sith - since or because

Taper - candle

Varlet - low class rogue

Visage - face

Welkin - young woman

Wench - young woman (often negative connotation)

Yore - ago or time gone

Zounds! - God's wounds! (a curse)

## Glossary Continued

- acknown:** aware.  
**agnize:** acknowledge.  
**anters:** caves.  
**a patient list:** the limits of patience  
**bark:** a small ship  
**betimes:** at once.  
**bootless:** useless; vainly.  
**caitiff:** wretch (term of endearment).  
**certes:** assuredly. (for certes means "for certain")  
**closet:** bedroom  
**collied:** darkened.  
**compliment extern:** outward appearance  
**continue:** uninterrupted.  
**court of guard:** headquarters  
**cozen:** cheat  
**crossed:** opposed  
**crush a cup:** a common colloquial expression in Elizabethan English comparable to "crack open a bottle"  
**cry you mercy:** beg your pardon  
**daws:** jackdaws, or fools  
**denotement:** careful observation  
**dilate:** tell fully  
**do my duties:** voice my loyalty  
**encave:** hide  
**enchafed:** angry  
**endues:** brings  
**engluts:** devours  
**ensteeped:** submerged  
**envy:** hatred; malice.  
**enwheel:** encompass  
**fat:** amiable and satisfied.  
**fopped:** duped  
**fordid:** destroyed  
**frieze:** rough cloth  
**gauntlet:** armored glove flung down as a challenge  
**grise:** degree  
**groundlings:** the poorer and less critical section of the audience who stood in the pit  
**gull:** deceive and trick  
**guttered:** jagged  
**heave the gorge:** vomit  
**horned man's:** cuckold's (a man whose wife cheats on him)  
**import:** concern  
**indign:** unworthy  
**ingraft:** habitual  
**lown:** rascal  
**mazzard:** head  
**might not but:** must  
**moo:** more  
**mountebanks:** quack medicine  
**odd-even:** between night and day  
**out of warrant:** unjustifiable; unfair  
**plume up:** gratify  
**portance:** behavior  
**practicing upon:** plotting against  
**puddled:** muddied; dirtied  
**put on:** incite  
**rank garb:** gross manner  
**seel:** blind, close  
**self-bounty:** inherent goodness  
**sequestration:** separation  
**swag-bellied:** loose-bellied  
**trimmed:** dressed up  
**unbend:** relax  
**unbitted:** uncontrolled  
**unhoused:** unrestrained  
**unprovide:** unsettle  
**yerked:** stabbed  
**yon/yonder:** that one over there  
**thou, thee:** YOU (subjective, objective)  
**thy:** YOUR  
**thine:** YOURS  
**mays't:** may  
**owes't:** owns  
**whilst:** while

**Now you can make your own Shakespearean insults!**

To make a Shakespearean insult, combine a word or phrase from each of the five columns.  
For example: Away I say, thou artless beetle-headed bladder!

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Away I say	thou	artless	addlepated	apple-john
Bathe thyself		bawdy	base-court	baggage
Be not deaf		beslubbering	bat-fowling	barnacle
Behold thy mirror		bootless	beef-witted	bladder
Beware my sting		cankorous	beetle-headed	boar-pig
Clean thine ears		churlish	boil-brained	bugbear
Drink up eisel		clouted	clapper-clawed	clotpole
Eat a crocodile		craven	clay-brained	coxcomb
Eat my knickers		droning	common-	codpiece
Fie upon thee		fawning	kissing	death-token
Forsooth say I		fool-born	crook-pated	dotard
Get thee gone		frothy	dismal-	flap-dragon
Get thee hence		goatish	dreaming	flax-wench
Grow unsightly warts		gorbellied	dizzy-eyed	flea
Hear me now		ill-nurtured	elf-skinned	flirt-gill
Hear this pox alert		impertinent	fly-bitten	foot-licker
I'll see thee hang'd		incurable	folly-fallen	gudgeon
Lead apes in hell		infectious	fool-born	haggard
Methinks you stinks		loggerheaded	foul-practicing	hedge-pig
My finger in thine eye		lumpish	guts-gripping	horn-beast
“Phui”; I say		mangled	half-faced	hugger-mugger
Remove thine ass hence		paunchy	hasty-witted	jolthead
Resign not thy day gig		puking	hedge-born	knave
Sit thee on a spit		puny	hell-hated	lewdster
Sorrow on thee		qualling	idle-headed	lout
Swim with leeches		rank	ill-breeding	maggot-pie
Thou dost intrude		reeky	ill-nurtured	measle
Thy mother wears armor		roguish	knotty-pated	minnow
Trip on thy sword		rump-fed	mad-brained	nit
Tune thy lute		ruttish	milk-livered	nut-hook
Why, how now putz		saucy	motley-minded	pignut
Wipe thy ugly face		spongy	onion-eyed	pumpion
		surly	pox-marked	ratsbane
		tottering	reeling-ripe	rudesby
		unmuzzled	rough-hewn	scut
		vain	rude-growing	skainsmate
		venomed	rump-fed	strumpet
		warped	swag-bellied	varlot
		wayward	toad-spotted	vassal
		wretched	weather-bitten	wagtail

## SONNET 29

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,  
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least:  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee,--and then my state  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings'.

## SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come:  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

### **SONNET 18**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

### **SONNET 72**

O, lest the world should task you to recite  
What merit lived in me, that you should love  
After my death, dear love, forget me quite,  
For you in me can nothing worthy prove;  
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,  
To do more for me than mine own desert,  
And hang more praise upon deceased I  
Than niggard truth would willingly impart:  
O, lest your true love may seem false in this,  
That you for love speak well of me untrue,  
My name be buried where my body is,  
And live no more to shame nor me nor you.  
For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,  
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.