

Shakespeare on Trial



A Comedy by Jeremy Webb

Off the Leash

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Study Guide for Middle & High School Students

prepared by Gina Gambony

Shakespeare On Trial by Jeremy Webb Study Guide

Dear Teacher,

First, congratulations for taking the time and making the effort to take your students to the theater! Nowadays, the majority of students visit the theater for the first time under the direction of their teachers in elementary school, and many will not see a live, professional theatrical production again until they are adults. Theatrical productions that are appropriate for upper level students are rare, and this production of *Shakespeare on Trial* is a wonderful opportunity for your school.

Shakespeare is a daunting subject for teachers and students alike. While the themes, characters, and situations in Shakespeare's plays are easily recognizable to the modern audience, the language is the greatest deterrent for students and the most difficult barrier for teachers. Aside from the fact that Shakespearean language uses high-level vocabulary, much of the vocabulary is itself out of use in modern times. Further complicating the work is the way the language is constructed. Even words the average student can recognize are often arranged in unfamiliar ways.

Shakespeare's plays were created to be performed, not read. The plays were not published in written form until after Shakespeare's death; it was only after publication that scholars began to study them as literature. The Shakespearean actor brings to life the words on the page in a way that greatly increases audience comprehension.

Still, for modern students, being familiar with Shakespearean language before seeing a production will give the student some bearings and help create preliminary mental scaffolding for comprehension. This study guide has been constructed with the aim to provide students with an interesting, brief, and meaningful introduction in the production and acquaint them with the type of language they will hear.

All of the materials within are related to concepts in the production in the following order:

Shakespearean Vocabulary

Shakespearean Insults

Common Shakespearean Phrases (“You've Probably Heard This Before”)

Just the Facts (brief histories of Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre)

Primary vs. Secondary Resources (addressing research on Shakespeare)

Shakespeare on Trial: 4 Plays (introductory information on the 4 plays addressed in this production)

Iambic Pentameter

Answer Key

I hope you and your students will find this information useful and engaging. While some students will struggle with the academic approach to Shakespeare's work herein, seeing the live performance will be the moment when Shakespeare's work feels most alive and comfortable for everyone. *The play's the thing.*

Sincerely,

Gina Gambony
Arts Integration Specialist

Shakespearean Vocabulary

The Oxford Dictionary cites nearly 3,000 words that first appeared in the works of Shakespeare. Here are a few (of hundreds) that are still in modern use.

- I. Use each of these words in a sentence that indicates you know the meaning of the word.
- II. Old words are altered and new words are created constantly in every living language. Looking at this list of words, imagine how these were created from words that already existed. Choose 5 words from this list and describe how they were possibly constructed.
- III. Create 5 new words using roots/suffixes/prefixes that are not normally joined. Provide a definition for each

accused	laughable
amazement	majestic
assassination	mimic
champion	negotiate
circumstantial	obscene
compromise	rant
critic	torture
deafening	undress
frugal	worthless
generous	zany

Shakespearean Vocabulary-Lost Words

While many words that were used and arose during Shakespeare's time are still in use, there are many that have fallen out of use and are deemed archaic. Some words look the same as they did then, but their meanings have changed. Try to match the following words with the definitions provided.

Vocabulary

1. Alack
2. Beseech
3. Gramercy
4. Meed
5. Soft
6. Sooth
7. Verily
8. Wherefore

Definitions

Merit, worth, excellence.

Truth; fact.

Why.

Thanks, thank you.

Truly, in truth; really.

Implore, beg, ask.

Stop, wait, be quiet.

Expression of dismay or sorrow.

Shakespearean Insults

Here is a brief selection of harsh words spoken by characters in various plays by Shakespeare. One of the delightful qualities of Shakespearean drama and poetry is the unparalleled use of metaphorical language to express love, pain, anger and disgust. You may need to read some of these a few times to grasp a good meaning.

Answer the questions at the end.

From *King Lear*

Thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood.

From *Hamlet*

They have a plentiful lack of wit.

From *Troilus and Cressida*

Thou sodden-witted lord! Thou hast no more
brain than I have in mine elbows.

From *Henry IV*

'Sblood, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried
neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish!
O for breath to utter what is like thee! you tailor's-
yard, you sheath, you bow-case; you vile
standing-tuck!

That trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of
beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that
huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of
guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with pudding in
his belly, that reverend vice, that grey Iniquity,
that father ruffian, that vanity in years?

From *Henry VI*

I had rather chop this hand off at a blow,
And with the other fling it at thy face.

From *Cymbeline*

Thy tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile.

From *All's Well That Ends Well*

Methink'st thou art a general offence and every
man should beat thee.

From *As You Like It*

Your brain is as dry as the remainder biscuit after
voyage.

From *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

If you spend word for word with me, I shall make
your wit bankrupt.

From *Coriolanus*

There is no more mercy in him than there is milk
in a male tiger.

From *The Comedy of Errors*

He is deformed, crooked, old, and sere,
Ill faced, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind;
Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.

**Use context clues in these selections to
determine the meaning of the following words:**

sodden neat carbuncle dropsy sere tuck

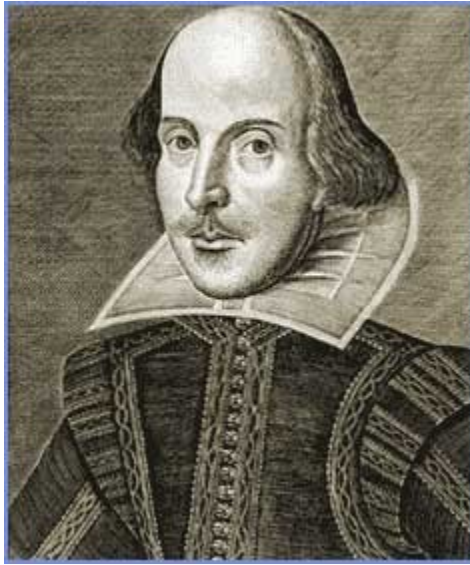
1. _____ A painful localized bacterial infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissue that usually has several openings through which pus is discharged.
2. _____ A slender sword; a rapier.
3. _____ An excessive accumulation of fluid in tissue spaces or a body cavity.
4. _____ A cow or other domestic bovine animal.
5. _____ Expressionless, stupid, or dull, especially from drink; unimaginative.
6. _____ Withered, dry.
7. Discuss the meanings of these quotes in small groups. Identify which are the most difficult to interpret. Share your interpretations with the class.
8. Two of the quotes here are insults about size; which two?

You've Probably Heard This Before

Here we have a small collection of phrases that were coined or popularized by Shakespeare. Which are your favorites? Which make no sense to you?

A fool's paradise	Fair play	Pound of flesh
A foregone conclusion	Fancy free	Primrose path
A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse	Fie, foh, and fum, I smell the blood of a British man	Rhyme nor reason
A plague on both your houses	Fight fire with fire	Salad days
A rose by any other name would smell as sweet	For ever and a day	Screw your courage to the sticking place
A sea change	Frailty, thy name is woman	Send him packing
A sorry sight	Foul play	Set your teeth on edge
All corners of the world	Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears	Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
All one to me	Good riddance	Short shrift
All that glitters is not gold	Green eyed monster	Shuffle off this mortal coil
All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players	He will give the Devil his due	Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em
All's well that ends well	Heart's content	
As cold as any stone	High time	
As dead as a doornail	His beard was as white as snow	Star crossed lovers
As good luck would have it	Hot-blooded	Stony hearted
As merry as the day is long	Household words	Such stuff as dreams are made on
As pure as the driven snow	How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child	The course of true love never did run smooth
At one fell swoop	I have not slept one wink	The Devil incarnate
Bag and baggage	I will wear my heart upon my sleeve	The game is afoot
Beware the ides of March	In a pickle	The game is up
Brevity is the soul of wit	In my mind's eye	There's method in my madness
But screw your courage to the sticking-place	In stitches	Thereby hangs a tale
But, for my own part, it was Greek to me	In the twinkling of an eye	This is the short and the long of it
Come the three corners of the world in arms	Lie low	To be or not to be, that is the question
Come what come may	Like the Dickens	Too much of a good thing
Comparisons are odorous	Love is blind	Truth will out
Dash to pieces	Make your hair stand on end	Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
Discretion is the better part of valour	Milk of human kindness	
Double, double toil and trouble, fire burn, and cauldron bubble	Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows	Up in arms
Eaten out of house and home	Much Ado about Nothing	Vanish into thin air
Et tu, Brute	My salad days	We few, we happy few, we band of brothers
Even at the turning of the tide	Neither a borrower nor a lender be	We have seen better days
	Night owl	Wear your heart on your sleeve
	Now is the winter of our discontent	When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions
	Out of the jaws of death	Wild goose chase
		Woe is me

Just the Facts about William Shakespeare



The Droeshout Engraving

It is very unlikely that the artist of this engraving ever saw Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare lived, performed, and wrote over 500 years ago. Records from this time period were not kept with the same diligence and technological tools available now, so it is difficult to piece together historical records of that time. Still, hundreds of books have been written about Shakespeare. Some of these books are interpretations or critiques of his vast body of work, while others focus on more personal aspects of his life. On the internet, hundreds of websites claim to present historical information about Shakespeare, his work, and his life.

Students should be very careful when researching information about Shakespeare. If you look carefully at a handful of articles you find, you will discover many inconsistencies and conflicting statements presented as facts. It is often difficult to determine the source of the information presented and how many of the “facts” are merely theories developed by the author.

The following brief readings are about Shakespeare (taken from the BBC), the Globe Theatre (taken from the Globe Theatre), and research information that is essential to understand any research you perform (acquired from the Princeton University Library). Questions follow.

Brief History of William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's reputation as dramatist and poet actor is unique and he is considered by many to be the greatest playwright of all time, although many of the facts of his life remain mysterious.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire and was baptised on 26 April 1564. His father was a glovemaker and wool merchant and his mother, Mary Arden, the daughter of a well-to-do local landowner. Shakespeare was probably educated in Stratford's grammar school. The next documented event in Shakespeare's life is his marriage in 1582 to Anne Hathaway, daughter of a farmer. The couple had a daughter the following year and twins in 1585. There is now another gap, referred to by some scholars as 'the lost years', with Shakespeare only reappearing in London in 1592, when he was already working in the theatre.

Shakespeare's acting career was spent with the *Lord Chamberlain's Company*, which was renamed the *King's Company* in 1603 when James succeeded to the throne. Among the actors in the group was the famous Richard Burbage. The partnership acquired interests in two theatres in the Southwark area of London, near the banks of the Thames - the Globe and the Blackfriars.

Shakespeare's poetry was published before his plays, with two poems appearing in 1593 and 1594, dedicated to his patron Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Most of Shakespeare's sonnets were probably written at this time as well. Records of Shakespeare's plays begin to appear in 1594, and he produced roughly two a year until around 1611. His earliest plays include *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Richard II* all date from the mid to late 1590s. Some of his most famous tragedies were written in the early 1600s including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. His late plays, often known as the Romances, date from 1608 onwards and include *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare spent the last five years of his life in Stratford, by now a wealthy man. He died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. The first collected edition of his works was published in 1623 and is known as "the First Folio."



Shakespeare's Funerary Monument

Likely completed within 6 years following his death.

Brief History of the Globe Theatre

During the first years of Elizabeth's reign, the English playing companies used inns, inn yards, college halls and private houses for their performances. It was not until 1576 that the actor-manager James Burbage built the Theatre in Shoreditch, the first purpose-built playhouse in London. Shakespeare joined the resident troupe at the Theatre in the 1580s and the company (later known as the Chamberlain's and then the King's Men) flourished there for 20 years.

In 1596 a dispute arose over the renewal of the lease and negotiations were begun to acquire a disused hall in the precincts of the old Blackfriars priory to use as an indoor theatre. James Burbage died in February 1597; in April the lease expired, but the dispute continued for two years, during which time the company performed at the nearby Curtain playhouse. In Christmas 1598 the company sought a drastic solution: they leased a plot near the Rose, a rival theatre in Southwark, demolished the Theatre and carried its timbers over the river. To cover the cost of the new playhouse, James Burbage's sons Cuthbert and Richard, offered some members of the company shares in the building. Shakespeare was one of four actors who bought a share in the Globe. By early 1599 the theatre was up and running and for 14 years it thrived, presenting many of Shakespeare's greatest plays.

In 1613, during a performance of *Henry VIII*, wadding from a stage cannon ignited the thatched roof and the theatre burned to the ground 'all in less than two hours, the people having enough to do to save themselves'. The theatre was quickly rebuilt, this time with a tiled roof. Shakespeare may have acted in the second Globe, but he probably never wrote for it. It remained the home for Shakespeare's old company until the closure of all the theatres under England's Puritan administration in 1642. No longer of use, it was demolished to make room for tenements in 1644.

The Old Globe...



and the New Globe.



Brief Note about Research: Primary & Secondary Resources

A **primary source** is a document or physical object which was written or created during the time under study. These sources were present during an experience or time period and offer an inside view of a particular event. Some types of primary sources include:

- ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS (excerpts or translations acceptable): Diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records
- CREATIVE WORKS: Poetry, drama, novels, music, art
- RELICS OR ARTIFACTS: Pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

Examples of primary sources include:

- Diary of Anne Frank - Experiences of a Jewish family during WWII
- The Constitution of Canada - Canadian History
- A journal article reporting NEW research or findings
- Weavings and pottery - Native American history
- Plato's Republic - Women in Ancient Greece

What is a secondary source?

A **secondary source** interprets and analyzes primary sources. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes or graphics of primary sources in them. Some types of secondary sources include:

- PUBLICATIONS: Textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias

Examples of secondary sources include:

- A journal/magazine article which interprets or reviews previous findings
- A history textbook
- A book about the effects of WWI

Questions

1. Considering all the sources available for historical information, why do you think the BBC, the Globe Theatre, and Princeton University were chosen as the sources for the information presented here?
2. In the brief histories about Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre, find 5 examples of statements presented as facts. What primary sources may have supplied these facts?
3. Through research in books and on the internet, list at least 4 primary sources that are used by researchers for Shakespearean scholarship.

Topics for Further Research

1. The Globe Theatre, the theatre Shakespeare is most strongly associated with, was rebuilt and opened in 1997. Present information on the process of reconstructing this historic monument. Do you believe it was an important achievement? Explain.
2. There are many researchers who have claimed that Shakespeare did not author all of the work attributed to him. In the fall of 2011, Sony Pictures is releasing a film centered on this issue: *Anonymous*. Present the various facets of this debate as framed by the movie-makers at their

website: anonymous-movie.com. Based on the information presented here, what is your opinion?

3. Shakespeare is an icon of the Elizabethan era. Research this era and present information about the political and artistic climate. How is life different for modern-day authors and actors living in London?
4. Based on information about the latter part of Shakespeare's life, including his Last Will and Testament, some researchers are critical of Shakespeare's conduct. Research these opinions, the information they are based upon, and make your own judgment. How important are the details of an artist's personal life in understanding or appreciating his or her art?
5. The two images of Shakespeare contained here are considered authentic renditions of him, but it is not known if any image was created of him while he lived. Take a brief tour of photos online that may or not may not be Shakespeare.



Is that Shakespeare?

Shakespeare On Trial: The 4 Plays

The performance you will see, *Shakespeare on Trial*, will make reference to four very popular Shakespeare plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*. Here is a brief introduction to these works. For the first three, you are provided with descriptions of major characters in the plays followed by brief excerpts. You will match the excerpts to the play and character. For *Hamlet*, you will study an excerpt and answer questions.

***Romeo and Juliet*: Major Character Description**

Romeo A handsome, sensitive, intelligent boy, approximately 16 years old, of the Montague family. He is idealistic, impulsive, and somewhat immature. He is in love with a girl named Rosaline at the start of the play, but forgets her completely when he lays eyes on Juliet. His family, the Montague's, are in a bitter rivalry with Juliet's family, the Capulet's. This rivalry forbids Romeo from associating with Juliet; this does not dissuade him in the least.

Juliet The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. Juliet is only 13 years old and has not had interest in love or marriage until she meets Romeo. Her love for Romeo brings out a courageous nature beyond her years. Her closest friend and confidant is her nurse, who has taken care of her since birth. Romeo is the first person to replace her nurse as the most important person in her life.

The Nurse Juliet's nurse. She is somewhat crude, often making inappropriate remarks. She is very sentimental and loves Juliet deeply; she remains loyal and even acts secretly as an intermediary between Romeo and Juliet until they have a disagreement near the end of the play.

***The Tragedy of Macbeth*: Major Character Description**

Actors consider it bad luck to say "Macbeth" in a theater, except as part of reading, rehearsing, or performing a line that contains the word. The play is therefore commonly referred to as "The Scottish Play." Many actors refer to Macbeth as "The Scottish Play" wherever they are just to be on the safe side.

Macbeth, Thane of Glamis

Macbeth is the Thane of Glamis and a general in King Duncan's army. After his valiant performance in battle, Macbeth is also named the Thane of Cawdor by King Duncan. Macbeth is not an explicitly malicious villain. His first crime (regicide) results from prophecies made by the Weird Sisters, his weak character, and his ambition, sharply fueled by his wife's lust for power. After killing the king, he commits further crimes in an attempt to hide his misdeeds and maintain power.

Lady Macbeth, Macbeth's wife

Lady Macbeth's ambition, combined with her husband's spineless character, is the driving force behind the tragedy. She seems to have no moral compass. She uses her manipulative power to convince Macbeth to kill King Duncan and assists by framing Duncan's guards as the murderers. She loses her sanity, seemingly haunted by her misdeeds, and commits suicide.

Banquo, Thane of Lochaber

A general in Duncan's army and an ally to Macbeth at the beginning of the play. Macbeth later has

Banquo killed in order to protect his seat on the throne. Banquo appears to Macbeth as a ghost following this murder.

Duncan, King of Scotland

A kind and sensitive man, King Duncan is like a father figure to his country and his army. His character is balanced and virtuous; his murder sets forth the undoing of the natural order.

The Weird Sisters (Three Witches)

The witches provide the basis for the overall supernatural feeling of the play. They speak to Macbeth and Banquo, predicting the former will be king and the latter will father a line of kings. The first prophecy plants the seed in Macbeth's mind for the murder of King Duncan; the second encourages the murder of Banquo and the failed attempt to murder Banquo's son. The Witches also predict the downfall of Macbeth.

Siward, Earl of Northumberland

Brother of King Duncan. He leads the English army against Macbeth. His army disguises itself with branches from Birnam Wood, thereby fulfilling the witches' prophesy that Macbeth will fall only when "Birnam Wood remove to Dunsinane."

Othello, the Moor of Venice: Major Character Description

Othello

A Moor, and an officer in the Venetian military. He falls in love with Desdemona and marries her without approval from her family. He is a courageous warrior and a good man; his downfall comes from the manipulations by Iago to make him believe Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio.

Desdemona

Othello's wife, a young Venetian woman of high birth. She is virtuous, kind, bold, and outspoken. She is not as meek as perhaps Othello would like.

Cassio

Othello's lieutenant. A very courteous Venetian courtier, admired by Othello. Cassio is the main object of Iago's spite and manipulations; Iago wants to take his place.

Iago

Othello's ensign, and passed over for the lieutenant position in favor of Cassio, inflaming his jealousy. Iago is young and treacherous. He uses Roderigo to aid in the undoing of Cassio and ends up killing him when he is longer useful. He is immoral, perceptive, keen, and very skilled at manipulating people into believing falsehoods.

Roderigo

Lusts after Desdemona. Iago uses him to help destroy Cassio's reputation and Othello's marriage. Iago promises Roderigo that he shall have Desdemona's love in return for his help (and money); Roderigo actually ends up being killed by Iago.

Text Excerpts: Soliloquies

The soliloquy is a device often used in drama to relate internal thoughts by characters onstage. Soliloquies are speeches made by characters when no one else is around. No one can hear the soliloquy except the audience. It is as if the audience has special access into the character's mind.

Below are 3 soliloquies and one small speech by character's from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. **Based on your understanding of the characters and situations in these plays, determine which plays these are from and which character is speaking. Choose one of the soliloquies to translate into modern English.**

1.

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

Play: _____ Character: _____

2.

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse:
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe.
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor:
And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if't be true;
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man: let me see now:
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery—How, how? Let's see:—
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose

To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose As asses are.
I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

Play: _____ Character: _____

3.

The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;
In half an hour she promised to return.
Perchance she cannot meet him: that's not so.
O, she is lame! love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over louring hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinion'd doves draw love,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me:
But old folks, many feign as they were dead;
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.

Play: _____ Character: _____

4.

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

Play: _____ Character: _____

The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play. It has complex characters and contains some of the most powerful philosophical examination of life in any written work. Hamlet was one of Shakespeare's most popular plays during his time and remains so in modern times.

Hamlet is troubled from the onset of the play because his father, King Hamlet, was murdered; his father's ghost appears and relates that his own brother, Claudius, killed him. This is particularly difficult news because Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, married Claudius very soon after her husband's death. We have a situation where Hamlet's uncle is now married to his mother, and a ghost has related that the uncle was his father's murderer.

The play continues to develop as Hamlet struggles with this difficult situation and contemplates what to do. The following soliloquy is spoken by Hamlet toward the beginning of the play. Questions follow.

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--
Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!--
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she--
O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer--married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month:
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

References

Hyperion: a Titan god

Satyr: a lowly half-man, half-goat creature

Beteem: to allow, permit

Niobe: from Greek mythology, a woman who was in such sorrow that she continued to cry even after she was turned to stone

Hamlet Questions

1. Identify specific lines in this soliloquy that show Hamlet's feelings. Is there any indication that he is suicidal?
2. How did Hamlet's father feel about his wife (Hamlet's mother)? What words show this?
3. How did Hamlet's mother feel about her husband (Hamlet's father)? What words show this?
4. What specific criticisms is Hamlet aiming at his mother?
5. What comparison does Hamlet make between his father and his uncle?



Is the pen mightier than the sword? (Incidentally, this adage was not coined by Shakespeare. For extra credit, find out the who did coin this adage.)

Iambic Pentameter

Iambic pentameter is particular rhythm used in writing verse. Shakespeare employs this specific rhythm (among many other rhythms) in his writing.

Specifically, this rhythm describes an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For instance, the word “trapeze” is an iamb; the first syllable of the word (trap) is unstressed, while the second syllable (eze) is stressed. Other iambic words are “attempt,” “compose,” and “peruse.” An iamb is also formed by putting two words together, each of one syllable, with the first unstressed and the second stressed.

The term “pentameter” describes that there are 5 iambs in a line. Therefore, a proper line of iambic pentameter will have 10 syllables. The first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth syllables will be unstressed, while the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth syllables will be stressed.

An example from Shakespeare (Romeo):

But, **soft!** // what **light** // through **yon**//der **win**//dow **breaks?**

This is a proper line of iambic pentameter. The stressed syllables are in bold and the “feet” are separated with //.

The proper construction is not always followed. Here is an example of an approximate line of iambic pentameter with an additional unstressed syllable at the end. This is called a weak ending. A writer may also insert an inverted iamb in the middle of a line; this is called a caesura.

From Shakespeare (Hamlet):

To **be** // or **not** // to **be**: // **that** is // the **que**//stion:

In this case, the first 3 feet are proper; “**that is**” is an inserted inversion (caesura); “the **que**” is proper, but has the weak ending syllable “stion.”

Iambic pentameter is said to be the most natural way to speak, following the breath and the rhythm of the heart.

Here is a sonnet by Shakespeare. Underline the stressed syllables in each line. Are there any points where the meter is breached?

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 dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

Off the Leash and Jeremy Webb

The play *Shakespeare On Trial* was written, produced, and performed through *Off the Leash*, a company based in Canada that produces theater, film, literature, photographs, and events. *Off the Leash* was founded by Jeremy Webb, who also wrote and performed in *Shakespeare On Trial*.

Webb grew up in Cambridge, UK and trained at The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. In 1998, he moved to Canada. He has written, adapted, and performed a variety of works for youth and for adults.

Webb moved to Canada, from his native UK, in 1998. He grew up in Cambridge and trained at The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Recent performances by Webb in Canada include “Beowulf” in *Beowulf*, “The Wizard” in *The Wizard of Oz*, “Friar Laurence” in *Romeo & Juliet*, “Milo Tindle” in *Sleuth*, “Duncan” and “The Porter” in *MacBeth*, “Iago” in *Othello*, “Peter Quince” in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and “Maurice” and “Cogsworth” in *Beauty and The Beast*. In addition to directing and performing onstage, Webb is also busy with television, radio, comedy, and film. In March 2009, he won a Best Actor Merritt Award for his portrayal of “Iago” in *Othello*. He won the 2010 *Mayor’s Award for Achievement in Theatre*, and *The Coast Best Theatre Actor Award* in 2007, 2009 and 2010.



Webb as “Beowulf”
Two Planks and a Passion, 2011



Webb was awarded the Best Actor Merritt Award
for this portrayal of “Iago”
Shakespeare by the Sea, 2009

Answer Key

Shakespearean Vocabulary

Various responses for this section.

Lost Words:

1. Expression of dismay or sorrow.
2. Implore, beg, ask.
3. Thanks, thank you.
4. Merit, worth, excellence.
5. Stop, wait, be quiet.
6. Truth; fact.
7. Truly, in truth; really.
8. Why.

Shakespearean Insults

1. carbuncle
2. tuck
3. dropsy
4. neat
5. sodden
6. sere
7. (various responses)
8. Both quotes from *Henry IV* are insults aimed at size. The first refers to thinness, the second to weightiness.

Shakespeare, the Globe, & Research Sources

Answers will vary in this section.

Text Excerpts: Soliloquies

1. *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth
2. *Othello*, Iago
3. *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet
4. *Macbeth*, the Witches or Weird Sisters

Hamlet

1. Many of the lines show his feelings, so answers can vary. There is indication that Hamlet feels suicidal: He wishes his “too solid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew” and that God was not opposed to “self-slaughter.” The world seems “weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,” a garden “unweeded” and only disgusting things grow.
2. Hamlet expresses that his father loved his mother and treated her well. “So loving to my mother that he might not beteem the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly.”
3. Hamlet indicates the love her mother showed her father while he was alive and the dramatic sorrow she expressed when he died. “She would hang on him, As if increase of appetite had grown By what it fed on.” When he died, Hamlet compares her sorrow to Niobe with an endless stream of tears-but this sorrow did not seem to last long.
4. Hamlet is criticizing his mother for mourning the death of his father so briefly and for choosing

- an unworthy and inappropriate partner to replace him (his father's brother).
5. Hamlet calls his father “Hyperion” while he calls his uncle “a satyr.” He says his uncle is “no more like my father than I to Hercules.”

Sonnet 18

This sonnet is considered a perfect example of iambic pentameter, although students may note that “owest” and “growest” push their containing lines to 11 syllables. These words can be spoken as one syllable: “owst” and “growst.” There is also a natural inclination to emphasize the first two syllables in the last two lines for effect (“So long”).

It is important to explain to students that in performing (or even just reading aloud) any sonnet or speech written in iambic pentameter, emphasis used for meaning and emotional effect surpasses the dictates of the meter. Understanding the meter is part of the analysis, but does not give the best effect for performance.

Photo Question

The pen is mightier than the sword.

This exact quote is from Edward Bulwer-Lytton in the play *Richelieu; Or the Conspiracy* (1839).

The notion was expressed previously in Greek, Hebrew, Islam and other texts—most notably for our purposes in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* thus: “Many wearing rapiers are afraid of goosequills.”

Web Connections

Off the Leash website: www.offtheleash.ca

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre: <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com>

One of many Shakespeare insult generators. This one includes many direct quotes and provides sources: <http://www.pangloss.com/seidel/Shaker/index.html>

A fantastic site with online text of Shakespeare's work. You can search character lines, specific text, sonnets, and other poems: <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org>

David Tennent performs Hamlet's speech contained in the study guide:

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1473795626/>