

ЗАКАРПАТСЬКИЙ УГОРСЬКИЙ ІНСТИТУТ ІМЕНІ ФЕРЕНЦА
РАКОЦІ ІІ
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« ЛІТЕРАТУРА ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ »
(ПОСІБНИК)

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Посібник з британської літератури (драма) призначений для студентів III курсу Закарпатського угорського інституту імені Ференца Ракоці спеціальності 014 Середня освіта (мова і література (англійська)) переважно заочної форми навчання з метою організації самостійної роботи з курсу "Британська література".

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A Brit irodalom (dráma) jegyzet, a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola, III. éves, angol nyelv és irodalom szakos, elsősorban levelezős hallgatóinak készült, a Brit irodalom c. tantárgy alaposabb tanulmányozásának és elsajátításának megkönnyítése céljából.

Az adott főiskolai jegyzet a brit dráma kialakulásának legfontosabb irodalomtörténeti mérföldköveit mutatja be, valamint William Shakespeare drámáiból emel ki néhány különösen ismert és népszerű művet. Megtalálhatóak benne az előadások jegyzetei és a kötelező olvasmányokhoz kapcsolódóan egy-egy mintafeladat, melyek segítenek a témazáró dolgozatokra való felkészülésben. A jegyzet törekszik a tantárgyköziség megteremtésére azáltal, hogy áttekintést ad az adott kor történelmi háttéréről valamint sok országismereti, kultúraismereti információt is tartalmaz. A jegyzet különösen alkalmas összefoglaló, rendszerező tanulásra és ismételésre, a különböző szakirodalmi művek kivonatos ismertetésének köszönhetően.

A jegyzet, az irodalomtörténeti folyamatok ismertetésénél kronológiai sorrendet igyekszik követni.

A jegyzet nagymértékben törekszik a definíciók és fogalmak magyarázatára, melyet a könnyebb érthetőség és a tanulás megkönnyítése céljából az adott fejezetben is ismertet és definiál valamint a jegyzet végén egy fogalomtár is található a vizsgára való felkészülés megkönnyítésére.

A "Brit irodalom, Dráma" című tantárgy segédanyagának szánjuk.

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The History of British Drama

Drama is a literary composition involving conflict, action, crisis and atmosphere designed to be acted by players on a stage before an audience. (This definition may be applied to motion picture drama as well as to the traditional stage).

Drama had its origin in the country of Greece around 500 B.C. Drama, as a literary genre, is an art form that is meant to be performed.

Evolution of Drama

Plays are written for performance (if we think of them as literature only, if we see them simply as words to be read, we miss their essence). It has to be performed if it is to be fully appreciated and understood. When we read a play, we must always think of it in action. Drama is a living art form. It is about human existence but it is fiction. It is the mirror of existence, the reflection of human life so re-created as to be meaningful and significant to the audience. A good play poses highly significant questions about life, but a bad play does not. That is why drama is always social: it raises the key questions being asked within the community for which it is written. Theatre is the art form of the play process. It satisfies a fundamental human need because it poses the key questions of life. One play gives a particular answer, and a second provides a different solution.

Plays are meant to be seen. However, there are justifications for reading a play:

- It is better to know some masterpieces by reading them than never to know them at all;
- Reading allows fuller use of the imagination;
- It allows one to study at leisure;
- It allows for review;
- It permits one to see the original intent of the author without intervention by a director.

Drama combines aspects of all three literary genres (prose, poetry, drama). Drama shares many of the common literary elements like plot, setting, characterization, and dialogue.

Poetry - many plays are written in verse (for example, "Oedipus Rex" and "Othello")

Three Major Characteristics of Drama

1. It has a direct, immediate impact.

- Advantages:

- Simultaneous impressions occur;
 - Performance can be more expressive than a reader's imagination.
 - Disadvantages:
 - Limited to one viewpoint—objective (dramatic);
 - Writers try to overcome this by using the soliloquy and the aside to accomplish what the omniscient viewpoint achieves in the short story genre.
2. Drama effectively commands the spectator's attention.
- Advantage: The playwright's power extends beyond words alone.
 - Disadvantage: The materials one can use on stage are limited.
3. The experience of watching a play is communal.
- Advantage: Impact is intensified.
 - Disadvantages: There is a need for brevity, swift movement of plot, and intermissions.

Drama and Shamanism

Before Homo sapiens appeared, Neanderthal man acted ritual ceremonies in caves. He sacrificed bears, arranged their bones in ceremonial order, and pierced holes in their skulls to extract and eat their brains. They believed this helps to “take over” the powers of the animal – within a dramatic act.

When Homo sapiens appeared (c.40 000 B.C.), he created superb cave paintings, drawings, carvings, and figurines that showed he was a master symbolizer. These were made in the service of a ritual drama which attempted to control existence.

The History of Western Drama is Rooted in Ancient Greece

The Greek Theatre or Greek Drama is a theatrical tradition that flourished in ancient Greece between c. 550 and c. 220 B.C. in Athens. Athens was the centre of ancient Greek theatre. Tragedy (late 6th century B.C.), comedy (~486 B.C.) and satyr plays were some of the theatrical forms to emerge in the world. Greek theatre and plays have had a lasting impact on Western drama and culture.

The earliest dramas were designed to worship to gods and goddesses, specifically Bacchus and Dionysus. The Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were performed annually at the spring festival of Dionysus, god of wine and inspiration.

Ancient Greek theatre developed as part of religious festivals. A “choric hymn” called the dithyramb was composed in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. The hymn was sung by a chorus of 50 men. Over time, Thespis, the first actor, added dialogue between one actor and the chorus. When the Dionysian festivals changed to drama competitions, Thespis was the first winner. Tragedy (the group word “tragoidia” began with the introduction of an actor, who played various roles by changing masks, whose actions the chorus commented on in song.

Thespis according to Themistius’s account was the first “actor” and usually credited with “inventing” drama as we know it (actors speaking lines) –thus actors are now known as Thespians.

- *Aeschylus (around 484 B.C.)*
 - Changed the dithyramb into drama;
 - Added a second actor;
 - Added props and scenery;
 - Reduced the chorus from 50 to 15.
- *Sophocles*
 - Added a third actor;
 - Changed the focus from interactions between humans and the gods to interactions between humans;
- *Euripides*
 - Reflects modern attitudes;
 - Writes about all real people, not just royalty;
 - Plays have a realistic flavour.

Physical Conventions of Greek Theatre

Semi-circular tiers of seats hollowed out of the hillside. Seated up to 17,000 spectators. Orchestra - 60 ft. in diameter with altar at centre. This is the place where the chorus performed. Performances occurred in daylight. Chorus consisted of 15 people. Sang and danced in response to the actors.

Chorus - forerunner of our divisions of plays into acts and scenes. Function in telling story:

- converses with main character(s);
- sometimes comments on the action;
- offers words of warning, advice;

- voices reactions of spectators.

Actors - maximum of 3 with speaking roles. Could double, triple their roles. Only men could perform, women were not allowed. Wore masks and buskins (elevator boots to increase stature).

Other Characteristics of Greek Drama:

- Some unhappy endings;
- Few or no horrible scenes on stage;
- Female roles played by men;
- Simple stage props;
- Religious in origin and spirit;
- Romantic love not important;
- Employed Aristotle's classical unities;

Aristotle's Rules and Purpose for Ancient Drama

Classical Unities

- Unity of time (action must occur within 24 hours);
- Unity of place (action takes place in one location);
- Unity of action (single plot).

Catharsis - socially acceptable purging of emotions such as anger, fear, or grief

Two Main Types of Greek Drama with sub-genres

- Tragedy
 - Melodrama
- Comedy
 - Farce

Characteristics of Greek Tragedy

- Displays human greatness;
- Emphasizes human freedom;
- Exposes the nobility of man;
- Presents challenges to the vision of human possibility;
- Adheres to Aristotle's classical unities;

Characteristics of the Tragic Hero

- Overpowering individual;
- Usually named in the play's title;
- Judged by moral standards;
- Isolated;
- Lofty and noble;
- Has a tragic flaw;
- **Melodrama**
 - A sub-genre of tragedy;
 - Attempts to arouse feelings of fear and pity;
 - Uses crude means;
 - Oversimplified conflict;
 - Emphasis on plot;
 - Good triumphs over evil;
 - Happy ending;
 - Usually escapist;

Characteristics of Comedy

- Emphasizes commonness of the group;
- Protagonist tends to be a type;
- Protagonist is judged by social standards;
- Plots are less likely to have organic unity;
- Usually happy ending;
- **Farce**
 - A sub-genre of comedy;
 - Aims at explosive laughter;
 - Crude means;
 - Violent, usually physical conflicts;
 - Emphasis on plot, improbable situations, coincidence;
 - Coarse wit, practical jokes, physical action;
 - Usually escapist;

Roman Performance in Britain

Roman soldiers arriving in Britain found hunters, herdsman, and farmers. These Celtic and Teutonic peoples had religious performances similar to others all over Europe: fertility

processions, ritual fires on behalf of the sun to combat winter, sacrifices, sexual rites, animal worship, and so on. The Romans brought two forms of drama: theatrical performances and their own ritual myths. The Romans built theatres and amphitheatres. The best preserved theater is at Verulamium (St. Albans). Amphitheatres suitable for chariot races and large spectacles have been found; they influenced the production of later medieval Cycles. Rome, like other early cultures, had a world peopled by gods. Roman religion centred around family or clan gods, with other gods for gates, boundaries, or specific problems. On this basis was built the state religion with a calendar full of ritual festivals. These festivals were the appropriate occasions for drama because they promoted fertility, and each was surrounded by magic and taboos.

Toward the end of the 4th century A.D., the Roman legions went home, and by 410 Rome was sacked.

From c.350 the Anglo-Saxons from northeast Europe had plundered the south and east coast of England.

About 450 they began to settle along the great rivers and conquered most of England.

They met with a pagan culture much like their own in its rituals. Celtic Christians in Ireland and Wales were isolated. It was not until c. 590 that St. Columba began his progress of conversion, while in 597 St. Augustine began to Christianize the country.

Decline of Drama

Drama went into a period of decline around A.D. 400 (Roman Empire) Due to the Power of Christians acting has been deemed at times to be unchristian, idolatrous and depraved or, worse, boring. Actors themselves have frequently been seen to be one of the humbler classes, and only towards the end of the 19th century did their status start to improve.

Ancient Ritual in Britain

Despite the work of the early Church, Britain remained fundamentally heathen with three types of performance:

1. rites, like those of the ancient shamans, to increase the fertility of game (wild animals);
2. rituals, like those of the ancient Near East, to make the crops grow;
3. and presentations by mimes who travelled the country poking fun at all forms of power.

Much of modern folklore derives from those days.

Fertility semi dramas and the mimes continued through the Middle Ages, although the Catholic Church thundered against them

However, it was from the Church itself that a genuine form of drama flowered: from the liturgy during the festivals of Easter and Christmas.

Revival of Drama

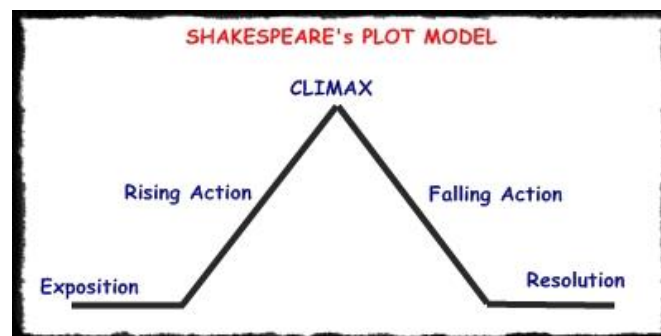
A. D. 900-1500 - Medieval Drama, when it emerged hundreds of years later, was a new creation rather than a rebirth. The drama of earlier times having almost no influence on it. The reason for this creation came from a quarter that had traditionally opposed any form of theatre: The Christian church

Dramatic Terminology - Literary Terms

Acts and Scenes - Subdivisions in the play when the time or place usually changes

Acts – in Shakespeare plays usually 5 Acts

Scenes – smaller units within acts (usually one or two per act)



Aside - A dramatic device in which a private thought is spoken aloud. It is intended for the audience alone – not other characters in the play. Contributes to dramatic irony – (the audience knows something other characters in the play do not).

Comedy - A type of drama in which the characters experience reversals of fortune, usually for the better. In comedy, things work out happily in the end, usually in marriage.

Tragedy - A type of drama in which the characters experience reversals of fortune, usually for the worse.

Dialogue - Conversations among characters.

Drama - One of the three main types of literature; it tells a story through the words and actions of a character.

Intermission - A break in the performance of the play.

Monologue - A speech delivered by one person.

Playwright - The author of a drama.

Props - Articles or objects that appear on stage during a play.

Script - The written version of the play.

Stage directions - Instructions to the performer and the director; usually written in italics or parentheses.

Staging - The effect the play has on its audience – including the position of actors, the scenic background, the props and costumes, and the lighting and sound effects.

Subplot - An additional or minor or parallel plot in a play or story that coexists with the main plot.

Thespians - Actors and actresses.

Medieval Drama and Theatre

Introduction

Timeframe: from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the beginning of Renaissance (5th century till the middle of the 16th century).

Secular theatre died in Western Europe with the fall of Rome. Most Roman theatre had been spectacle rather than literary drama. Most medieval theatre is religious in nature. But they are not well documented due to a lack of surviving records and texts.

Roman Spectacle:

- Gladiatorial combats;
- Naval battles in a flooded Colosseum;
- “Real-life” theatricals;
- Decadent, violent and immoral.

All theatrical events were banned by the Church when Rome became Christianized. The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) with its capitol at Constantinople (today’s Istanbul) flourished until 1453. The Byzantines kept Greek and Roman theatrical pieces alive and saved manuscripts and records of classical playwrights.

Theatre in the Dark Ages (500-1000 AD)

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church banned theatrical performances as barbaric and pagan. Small groups of travelling performers – minstrels, jugglers, acrobats, bards, mimes, puppeteers - went from town to town entertaining. They performed in taverns and at festivals for the commoners and at court for the nobility. Festivals usually contained both pagan and Christian elements (e.g. Halloween). These were the only entertainment for the time. They were also precursors of Commedia Dell’Arte in France and Italy and today’s circuses.

The Dramatic World View

A dramatic view of the world grew in the early Middle Ages. St. Augustine (c.600) saw the world as a theatre where mortal man acted out his brief life before the audience of God, His Angels, the Saints, and Martyrs.

Later in the Middle Ages the society divided in:

1. Roman Catholic church, which dominated religion, education and often politics.
2. The feudal lords, who owned the land and the serfs.

3. Serfs, who paid taxes and served in the military whenever needed.

Drama in the 10th century

Important to note that the Roman Catholic Church who shut down classical theatre also took part in the rebirth of the theatre in the 10th century.

All Europe had been converted to Christianity. Perhaps the church had little choice – it couldn't stop the pagan rites – too popular – so many aspects of pagan rites found their way into Christian ceremonies. The Church needed ways to teach illiterate parishioners. Art developed: cathedrals, stained glass windows, sculpture, painting and drama

The congregation was illiterate, so for them Christ's passion was recreated by the priest as both a religious and educational medium.

Example:

When a new church building was consecrated, two verses of Psalm 24 were given dramatic force. The bishop rapped three times on the closed door, declaiming:

„Lift up your heads O ye gates and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory shall come in.“

One of the clergy, hidden behind the door, cried: „Who is the King of glory?“

There was a general cry of: „Even the Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory!“

At this, the hidden man (imitating the spirit of evil) flung open the door and rushed wildly out – cast out, as it were, by the bishop (the spirit of good).

From such ideas drama and theatre could grow.

Types of Medieval Drama

Liturgical tropes: gospel dramatizations;

Mystery plays: Biblical plays;

Miracle plays: saints' lives;

Morality plays: allegories;

Interludes and farces: secular plays;

Folk plays: pagan and folklore elements.

Liturgical Drama (925-975 A.D)

Religious rituals (the Mass, baptism, etc.) embody theatrical elements. Priests began to incorporate such elements into the gospel lessons of the mass. The first short plays were

called tropes. Written in Latin, these tropes were performed by the clergy during the mass. The trope drama appeared at Church festivals while the mimes were still working.

Example: *Quem Quaeritis Trope* - "*Whom do you seek?*"

Easter gospel lesson: the three Marys come to the tomb of Christ seeking to anoint his body and are greeted by an angel. (Text in Latin from the *Regularis Concordia* of Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, ca. 967-75.)

From about 950 to 1250, the performances moved from the chapel to the nave and from there to the exterior of the church. This was a natural development. Previously some ceremonials, such as the marriage ceremony, had taken place in the porch. So there was nothing strange when the religious plays were performed in front of the west door, in the churchyard, or by procession through the town.

Religious Vernacular Drama

Vernacular: everyday speech.

Roman Catholic clergy switched from Latin to the languages of the people they served to. As the plays became more elaborate, they were moved from the altar of the church to the church yard. As more roles were added, commoners were used as amateur actors.

The Religious Vernacular Plays were performed in cycles. They aimed to reinforce Church doctrine

The three M's of Religious Vernacular Drama

Mystery plays: Biblical stories.

Miracle plays: saints' lives.

Morality plays: allegories.

Mystery (cycle) plays (Mystery: from French *mystere*): secret.

The term could refer to Biblical truths or to the secrets of the crafts held by the guilds who were responsible for producing the plays. In England, these Biblical plays were produced in cycles: a series of plays depicting Biblical history from the Creation to the Last Judgement. (also known as Cycle Plays). The cycles were usually performed at the religious festival of Corpus Christi - in the spring or early summer.

Mystery (cycle) Plays

While the plays were written by the clergy and overseen by the Church, the performances were produced by the guilds of each town and mostly performed by amateur actors.

Productions were considered a religious duty, and each guild invested considerable resources into productions.

Plays were often assigned to guilds associated with the subject matter of the play and became a kind of “advertisement” (The Flood was organised by shipbuilders or barrel makers; the last supper: bakers; the Magi: goldsmiths).

Dramatic techniques

English mystery plays incorporate a combination of high seriousness and low comedy:

- *High seriousness*: the Biblical stories of the Old Testament and Jesus’ life and mission.
- *Low comedy*: the plays incorporate almost slapstick sketches of contemporary medieval daily life.

The plays are set in contemporary settings with recognizable contemporary characters: the truth of the Biblical stories is timeless - the divine truths revealed in the Bible are still true “today”.

Theatre was performed in found spaces: town squares, taverns, churches, banquet halls - no specifically designated theatres.

Theatre was intimate - audience interacted with performers. There were elaborate special effects. Characterization was often dependent upon costume and makeup. In France even women were allowed to perform.

English Cycle Plays

Each cathedral town had its own cycle:

- York;
- Chester;
- Wakefield;

The cycles were very popular amongst commoners and nobility: records show that both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I attended performances.

The Protestant Reformation brought a halt to the presentation of cycle plays as they incorporated Roman Catholic theology. Cycles were performed every 2-10 years.

Some became huge spectacles. “The Acts of the Apostles” performed at Bourges, France in 1536 lasted 40 days and involved over 300 performers.

The English Mystery Cycles

Cycles were religious in subject and inspiration. They reflect the unity of Biblical history in which God has declared His purpose for mankind.

The dramatic material varied from area to area, though some subjects were common. Each cycle of between thirty and forty plays contained the main subjects like the Creation and Noah.

Modern Productions - Staging

Mansions - small scenic structures for indicating location. In more complex plays, there were many mansions.



Scenery for the Valenciennes Mystery Play, 1547.
BnF MS Français 12536 f. 1v-2.

A drawing of a Medieval Mystery play, including multiple stages, a water feature

Platea – open acting space, adjacent to the mansion. The church structure usually served as the mansions (the choir loft, for instance, could serve as heaven; the altar might be the tomb of Christ). Machinery was also used: to fly Christ up to heaven, have angels come down, etc.

Costumes were probably ordinary church vestments.

Processional staging - Pageant wagons would travel a set route and perform at several locations: like a parade or would be set up around a town square and the audience would travel from one wagon to the next to see the performances

Stationary staging - Mansions or a series of stages would be set up around the town square. They were anchored at either end by Heaven and Hell. Elaborate special effects such as floods, flying and fiery pits were very popular.

Pageant Wagons - The term "pageant" is used to refer to the stage, the play itself, and the spectacle. Platform on wheels - pulled by men - small enough to fit down narrow streets. May have had second platform, pulled behind.

Morality Plays

- Theme: how to live a Christian life and be saved.
- Allegory - a story told on two levels: the literal and the symbolic;
- Plot: a journey through life or to death;
- Emphasis switches from Biblical and saintly protagonists to the common man:
 - o Everyman, Mankind
- Focus on free will;
- First major use of professional acting companies.

Miracle Plays

- Miracle plays were similar to mystery plays in dramatic techniques.
- Dramatized the lives of Roman Catholic saints (in order to become a saint, a person had to perform 3 documented miracles).
- The most popular subjects were the Virgin Mary (plays usually written in Latin), St. George (dragon slayer and patron saint of England) and St. Nicholas (associated with Christmas festivities).

Interludes and Farces

- Combined elements of allegory, classical myth, and courtly entertainment: music, dance, spectacle.
- Interludes were short plays performed between courses at court banquets.
- Farces were longer plays ridiculing such human follies as greed and dishonesty.
- As the mysteries, miracle and moralities were censored by Protestant authorities, secular drama became more important to all levels of society.

The Decline of Medieval Theatre

Increased interest in classical learning – affected staging and playwriting.

Social structure was changing – destroyed feudalism and "corporate" nature of communities.

Dissension within the church led to prohibition of religious plays in Europe (Queen Elizabeth, the Council of Trent, 1545-1563 – religious plays outlawed.)

By late 16th century, drama of medieval period lost its force.

Everyman

The *Somonyng of Everyman* (The Summoning of Everyman), usually referred to simply as *Everyman*, is a late 15th-century English morality play.

Everyman uses allegorical characters to examine the question of Christian salvation and what Man must do to attain it. The premise is that the good and evil deeds of one's life will be tallied by God after death, as in a ledger book.

The play is the allegorical accounting of the life of *Everyman*, who represents all mankind. In the course of the action, *Everyman* tries to convince other characters to accompany him in the hope of improving his account.

All the characters are also allegorical, each personifying an abstract idea such as Fellowship, (material) Goods, and Knowledge. The conflict between good and evil is dramatized by the interactions between characters.

Everyman is being singled out because it is difficult for him to find characters to accompany him on his pilgrimage. *Everyman* eventually realizes through this pilgrimage that he is essentially alone, despite all the personified characters that were supposed necessities and friends to him. *Everyman* learns that when you are brought to death and placed before God all you are left with is your own good deeds.

Sources of *Everyman*

Written in Middle English during the Tudor period, the identity of the author is unknown. Although the play was apparently produced with some frequency in the seventy-five years following its composition, no production records survive.

There is a similar Dutch (Flemish) morality play of the same period called *Elckerlijc*. Scholars have yet to reach an agreement on whether *Everyman* is a translation of this play, or derived independently from a Latin work named *Homulus*.

Setting of *Everyman*

The cultural setting is based on the Roman Catholicism of the era. Everyman attains afterlife in heaven by means of good works and the Catholic Sacraments, in particular Confession, Penance, Unction, Viaticum and receiving the Holy Eucharist.

Morality Plays: Everyman

Pre-Reading Exercise:

1. What is the significance of the name Everyman?

Everyman: O Jesu, help, all hath forsaken me!

Good Deeds: Nay, Everyman, I will bide with thee,
I will not forsake thee indeed;
Thou shalt find me a good friend at need.

Everyman: Gramercy, Good Deeds; now may I true friends see;
They have forsaken me every one;
I loved them better than my Good Deeds alone.
Knowledge, will ye forsake me also?

Knowledge: Yea, Everyman, when ye to death do go:
But not yet for no manner of danger.

Everyman: Gramercy, Knowledge, with all my heart.

Knowledge: Nay, yet I will not from hence depart,
Till I see where ye shall be come.

Everyman: Methinketh, alas, that I must be gone,
To make my reckoning and my debts pay,
For I see my time is nigh spent away.
Take example, all ye that this do hear or see,
How they that I loved best do forsake me,
Except my Good Deeds that bideth truly.

Good Deeds: All earthly things is but vanity:
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion, do man forsake,
Foolish friends and kinsmen, that fair spake,

All fleeth save Good Deeds, and that am I.

Everyman: Have mercy on me, God most mighty;
And stand by me, thou Mother and Maid, holy Mary.

Good Deeds. Fear not, I will speak for thee.

Everyman: Here I cry God mercy.

Good Deeds: Short our end, and minish our pain;
Let us go and never come again.

Text Analysis

1. Which of Everyman's companions accompanies him into the grave? Which have deserted him?
2. Interpret the allegorical meaning of this situation in terms of Christian theology.
3. How does the author use rhyme to enhance the effect? Is there a regular rhyme scheme?

The English Renaissance **1485-1625**

The Renaissance Period

Italian Renaissance - occurred between 1300-1550 A.D.

- Marked as high time in art (Michelangelo, Donatello, Raphael, Leonardo)
- Authors: Petrarch (sonnets) and Castiglione (courtier book)
- Influenced the English Renaissance Period

The Beginnings of an Awakening

Renaissance in England happened much later than in Italy, due to:

- Hundred Years' War (ended 1453);
 - England vs. France;
- War of the Roses (ended 1485);
 - Lancaster family vs. York family;
 - Tudor family is accepted as ruler by both.

English Renaissance

- Occurred between 1400-1600 A.D.
- Began with Henry VIII and ended with King James I;
- Highest point occurred during Queen Elizabeth I's reign;
- High time in literature: Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare;
- Courtiers were very important;
- Social classes were strictly enforced;
- Theatres thrived but were considered low-class.

Social Mobility

During this time period, it was nearly impossible to rise above your birth — if you were born a peasant, you died as a peasant. Family name and nobility were very important. One way to try and rise above your birth was through the practice of patronage — though how far you could rise was pre-determined by your family name.

Key Characteristics of the Renaissance

The Renaissance was a flowering of literary, artistic and intellectual development that began in Italy in the fourteenth century. It was inspired by the arts and scholars of ancient Greece and Rome, which were rediscovered during the Crusades.

Religious devotion of the Middle Ages gave way to interest in the human being's place on this earth. Universities introduced a new curriculum, the humanities, including history, geography, poetry, and languages. Invention of printing made books more available. More writers began using the vernacular language.

Figures of the Renaissance

Mostly Italians:

- Dante, author of The Divine Comedy;
- Petrarch, wrote lyric poetry in the form of sonnets;
- Leonardo Da Vinci, a painter, sculptor, architect, and scientist;
- Da Vinci typifies a Renaissance man — a person of broad education and interests whose curiosity knew no bounds.

The Age of Exploration

Renaissance thirst for knowledge led to a great burst of exploration. Crusades opened routes to Asia soon monopolized by Italian merchants. Explorers from other nations searched for all-sea routes aided by compass and advances in astronomy. It culminated in Columbus's discovery of the New World in 1492 – colonization.

England in the Age of Exploration

1497 - Italian-born John Cabot reached Newfoundland (an island off the coast of Canada) and perhaps the mainland. Cabot laid the basis for future English claims in North America.

The Protestant Reformation: Questioning the Catholic Church

A growing sense of nationalism led many to question the authority of the church.

Complaints:

- the sale of indulgences;
- payment to the church (like taxes);
- church leaders favoured Mediterranean powers over northerly countries;
- the educated questioned the Church teachings and hierarchy.

Erasmus - Dutch thinker, whose edition of the New Testament raised questions about standard interpretations of the Bible. He focused attention on issues of morality and religion. Morality and religion became the central concerns of the English Renaissance.

Martin Luther - Erasmus paved the way for the split in the Roman Catholic Church in 1517. German monk Martin Luther nailed a list of dissenting beliefs ("ninety-five theses) to the door of a German church. The intent was to reform the Catholic Church, but actually divided the church and introducing Protestantism.

Results of the Protestant Reformation

- Swept through Europe;
- Frequent wars between rulers with different beliefs;
- Persecution of Catholics and Protestants;
- Division of Protestants—Lutherans and Calvinists (Puritans and Presbyterian sects).

Tudor England

Tudor dynasty ruled from 1485-1603. It was a time of stability and economic expansion. London was a metropolis of 180,000 people. Many saw the changes as a threat to the old familiar ways. People feared new outbreaks of civil strife (War of the Roses).

Henry VII - First Tudor monarch

- Inherited an England depleted by civil war;
- Before his death in 1509, he rebuilt the treasury and established law and order;
- Henry VII restored the prestige of the monarchy and set the stage for his successors.

Henry VIII

- Catholic (even wrote a book against Luther);
- Relationship with the Pope did not last;
- Marriage to Catherine of Aragon produced no male heir;
- Henry tried to obtain an annulment to marry Anne Boleyn;
- The Pope refused, but Henry married anyway.
- Had SIX wives:
 - o Catherine of Aragon(divorced),
 - o Anne Boleyn (beheaded),

- Jane Seymore (died),
- Ann of Cleves (divorced),
- Kathryn Howard (beheaded),
- Katherine Parr (survived)

Henry's Break with the Church

Henry's defiance led to an open break with the Roman Catholic Church. The Act of Supremacy (1534) gave Henry full control of the Church in England and severed all ties with Rome. Henry became the head of the Anglican Church (the new Church of England). He seized Church property and dissolved the monasteries.

The Aftermath

Henry used ruthless measures to suppress opposition. He even had his former friend and advisor, Thomas More, executed, because More refused to renounce his faith. His first two marriages (Catherine and Anne) produced two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. His third wife, Jane Seymour, bore him a son, Edward, who was still a frail child when Henry died in 1547.

Edward VI

- Became King at 9, died at 15 (1553);
- Parliamentary acts during his reign changed England's religious practices and sent England on its way to becoming a Protestant nation.
- English replaced Latin in church.
- The Anglican prayer book, Book of Common Prayer, became required in public worship.

Bloody Mary

- Mary I, Edward's half sister; a Catholic.
- Mary restored Catholic practices and papal authority to the Church of England.
- Mary married her Spanish cousin, Phillip II, making England a part of the powerful Spanish state. (During this period of nationalism, many found her acts unpatriotic).
- Mary also persecuted Protestants: she ordered the execution of some 200 Protestants during her reign, strengthening anti-Catholic sentiment in England.
- After Edward's short reign and early death, Mary took the English throne.

- Devoutly Catholic and looking to vindicate her mother (Henry's first wife), Mary vowed to wipe out Protestantism.
- Ordered the mass execution of Protestants to restore the Catholic faith.

Elizabeth I

- After Mary's five year reign, her half-sister, Elizabeth came to the throne.
- Elizabeth was the last of the Tudors, dying unmarried and childless.
- Elizabeth received a Renaissance education, became a patron of the arts, and Elizabethan came to describe the English Renaissance at its height.
- She ended the religious turmoil.
- Re-established the monarch's supremacy in the Church of England;
- Restored the Book of Common Prayer;
- Instituted a policy of religious moderation;
- "Bastard" Queen, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn;
- Was both acknowledged and disowned by her father when he was alive;
- "Virgin Queen"—never married, used her feminine wiles to gain and maintain power;
- The art of flirtation became a lucrative enterprise during her reign;
- Encouraged poetry and theatre;
- Powerful, wise, and important monarch.

Foreign Affairs

France and Spain, England's two greatest rivals, often worked with Catholic factions in England. Both nations fought to dominate England. Elizabeth and her counsellors played one side against the other, using offers of marriage as bait. This cleverness allowed England a period of peace and allowed commercial and maritime interests to prosper.

Mary, Queen of Scots

Elizabeth's Catholic cousin, Mary Stuart; queen of Scotland by birth and next in line to the British throne (granddaughter of Henry VII). Catholics did not recognize Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother, and considered Mary Stuart the queen. Mary was a prisoner of England for 19 years and the centre of numerous plots on Elizabeth's life. Eventually Mary was convicted of plotting to murder Elizabeth and went to the block in 1587, a Catholic martyr. "In my end is my beginning"—Mary's death led Catholic Spain to declare war on England.

England vs. Spain

Spain rejected English claims in America and resented the fact that English privateers had been attacking and plundering Spanish ships. Privateers like John Hawkins and Francis Drake operated “on their own,” but were really under the authority of Queen Elizabeth.

After Mary’s execution, King Phillip II prepared a Spanish armada of 130 warships to attack England. In 1588, English sailors defeated the Armada in the English Channel. This event marked the decline of Spain and the rise of England as a great sea power

From Tudors to Stuarts

Elizabeth’s death marked the end of the Tudor dynasty. To avoid civil strife, Elizabeth named King James VI of Scotland her successor (son of Mary Stuart). James was a Protestant. The reign of James I (1603-1625) is now known as the Jacobean Era.

King James I

- Strong supporter of the arts;
- Furthered England’s position as a world power;
- Sponsored the establishment of the first English colony in America—Jamestown;
- Believed in “divine right” monarchy and had contempt for Parliament (power struggle);
- Persecuted Puritans (House of Commons)—James’s persecution prompted a group of Puritans to establish Plymouth colony in 1621;
- Was Queen Elizabeth’s Godson, inherited her throne.
- Patron of theatre—Shakespeare’s King’s Men were his favourite acting troupe.
- Solidified the Protestant faith with the creation of the King James Bible.

The English Renaissance

Architects designed beautiful mansions. Composers wrote new hymns for Anglican service and popularized the English madrigal. Renaissance painters and sculptors moved to England (Hans Holbein the Younger was court painter to Henry VIII). Opened public schools (like private secondary schools today).

What does this have to do with Shakespeare?

Elizabethan Poetry

- Perfected the sonnet and experimented with other poetic forms;
- Philip Sidney wrote the first Elizabethan sonnet cycle (a series of sonnets that fit together as a story)—Astrophel and Stella;
- Edmund Spenser wrote a long epic, *The Faerie Queen*, in complex nine-line units now called Spenserian stanzas;
- Christopher Marlowe popularized pastoral verse (idealizes the rural life).
- The Poetry of William Shakespeare - Shakespeare changed the pattern and rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan sonnet, creating the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet.

Elizabethan Drama

- Reintroduced tragedies —plays in which disaster befalls a hero or heroine;
- Reintroduced comedies — plays in which a humorous situation leads to a happy resolution;
- Began using blank verse;
- Christopher Marlowe was the first major Elizabethan dramatist.
- Marlowe may have rivalled Shakespeare as England’s greatest playwright had he lived past thirty.

“He was not of an age but for all time.”

Shakespeare began his involvement with the theatre as an actor.

By 1592, he was a popular playwright whose works had been performed at Elizabeth’s court. After the Globe Theatre was built in 1599, many of his plays were performed there. Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays: nine tragedies, several comedies, ten histories, and a number of plays classified as tragic comedies.

Elizabethan and Jacobean Prose

Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesie* is one of the earliest works of English literary criticism. Thomas Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveler*, a fictional adventure, was a forerunner of the novel.

Walter Raleigh wrote his *History of the World* during his confinement in the Tower of London (was beheaded for allegedly plotting against James I). The leading prose writer of the time was Francis Bacon.

The King James Bible

- The most monumental prose achievement of the English Renaissance;

- Commissioned by King James on the advice of Protestant clergymen;
- Took fifty-four scholars three years to complete;
- Is now among the most widely quoted and influential works in the English language.

Important Dates

1485: Thomas More publishes Utopia;
 1534: Church of England established;
 1535: Thomas More executed;
 1549: The Book of Common Prayer issued;
 1558: Elizabeth I becomes Queen;
 1563: 20,000 Londoners die in Plague;
 1564: Shakespeare is born;
 1594: Shakespeare writes Romeo and Juliet;
 1599: The Globe Theatre opens;
 1603: Queen Elizabeth I dies; James I becomes King of England;
 1606: Guy Fawkes executed for Gunpowder Plot;
 1607: Royal Colony of Jamestown established;
 1611: King James Bible published;
 1620: Pilgrims land on Plymouth Rock;
 1625: King James I dies.

The English Renaissance and William Shakespeare

The most famous writer in history was just as influenced by the culture he was born into as he influences modern culture. In learning about his life and reading his works, we learn about ourselves and about human nature.

Brief Biography of William Shakespeare

April 23, 1564-April 23, 1616

The Five Provable Facts about Shakespeare:

- He was baptized on April 26, 1564. There were no such things as birth certificates at this time. However, babies were usually baptized three days after their birth—hence Shakespeare’s birth date of April 23, 1564.

- He was married at the age of 18 to 26 year old Anne Hathaway (she was pregnant).
- He fathered three children (two girls, one boy). His son died young.
- He was part owner of the Globe Theater
- He died on April 23, 1616.

It is a Mystery . . .

Everything else that is “known” about the world’s greatest writer is speculation, best guesses, and agreed upon facts. Due to the lack of actual evidence of Shakespeare’s life, many people have questioned whether he really existed or not. The collections of works credited to him are all too similar to be the works of more than one person. Others argue that Shakespeare could not have been smart enough to write such important literature. Pure genius is often misunderstood

Educated Guesses on the Rest of Shakespeare’s Biography

William Shakespeare was one of seven children born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon. His family was respected and wealthy—but not noble.

He attended grammar school and learned Latin. There is no evidence of further education beyond this. By the early 1590’s Shakespeare had left his wife and three children in Stratford-upon-Avon and travelled over 100 miles away to London to pursue his acting and writing career. He lived there for most of his adult life. His marriage was not great—he rarely went home to visit his wife and upon his death, he willed Anne his second-best bed. Everything else went to his daughters. He became very wealthy in his life time which afforded him the chance to buy his family’s coat of arms (a sign of nobility) and the largest estate in Stratford. His patrons included Sir Henry Wriothesley and King James I.

Shakespeare’s Career

Wrote 37 plays: comedies, tragedies, histories, and romances. Also wrote 154 sonnets and several narrative poems all dedicated to Sir Henry Wriothesley. He was an actor, writer, director, and business man. Became known for his imaginative use of language and timelessness.

Elizabethan Drama

A Movement from Religious to Secular within the Theatre

Previously, most of the drama done was in the church in order to help educate the people about their religion. Cycle plays were used to reenact history:

- Creation by God;
- Human's fall to Satan;
- Life during the Old Testament times;
- Redemption by Christ;
- Final judgment at the end of the world.

In the 14th century the plays began to move out into the town courtyards where they began to take on a more secular tone.

What is going on with Theatre?

Miracle and mystery plays - used to teach stories from the Bible;

Moralities - used to show people how they should live and die;

Interlude (one-act plays) - some used the framework of the Moralities, others were written for entertainment and could be quite farcical.

Writing and Developing Plays

Scholars and writers were viewing the world with a more humanistic view (they were no longer focusing all their attention on studying of the divine). Though the views were more humanistic medieval practices and conventions dominated English theatre through most of the 16th century. Playwrights were constantly intertwining secular and ecclesiastical stories. Mixed both comic and serious. Many bloody plots were used during this time.

King Henry VIII created the Church of England and the secular writing was more common.

Tragedy and Tragic Heroes

Elizabethan Tragedy - a dramatic form in which a character of high rank is involved in a struggle that ends in disaster.

Elizabethan Tragic Hero - main character with a tragic flaw (usually excessive ambition, pride, jealousy, or some other human frailty).

Catharsis – purging of emotion, usually pity or fear.

Fatal Flaw (Hamartia or Tragic Flaw) – a fatal weakness in the character that causes this person to become enmeshed in events that lead to his or her downfall.

Hubris – excessive pride or self-confidence

Iambic Pentameter- five sets of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

E.g. Shall I comPARE thee TO a SUMmer’s DAY?

Blank Verse - unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter. Usually spoken by the noble characters, or when someone is being very serious.

Soliloquy - longer speech in which a character — usually alone on stage — speaks as if to him/herself.

Monologue - a long uninterrupted speech by one character that others can hear.

Aside - a brief comment a character makes to reveal his/her thoughts to the audience or to one other character.

Shakespeare on Stage

- Public theater: roofless courtyards (daylight only);
- Globe Theater (reconstructed);
- No scenery; barest minimum of furniture, described in dialogue;
- Elaborate costumes;
- Scenes occurred rapidly: colorful, fast-paced; about two hours.
- Like Greece, only men and boys acted on the Elizabethan stage (it was considered “immoral” for women to act!).
- Elizabethan playwrights (especially Shakespeare) broke the Greek Tragedy “rules” of time, place, and action.
- Violence could be shown on stage—and it was!

Elizabethan Theaters

- They were round and open to the air;
- Higher-class people sat along the sides in seats;
- The lower classes stood on the ground in front of the stage (groundlings);
- There were costumes, but no elaborate sets;

Elizabethan Society and Drama - refers to when Elizabeth I ruled (1558-1603). Until she became Queen, almost no English drama was being produced.

Most drama companies came to England composed of adult men or schoolboys, who performed in children’s companies. The children’s companies performed mostly Latin plays (ancient, Roman and modern interpretations). All companies wished to perform for the Queen and her courtiers. Adult companies actively sought playwrights who could appeal to court

tastes. In the 1530's, English drama was dominated by a group of playwrights known as the University Wits, who utilized a variety of genres including classic literature, academic drama, morality plays, contemporary Renaissance literature from Italy and France.

Shakespeare shows up in the 1590's. He writes tragedies, comedies and history plays, each of which have subcategories and are influenced by various playwrights.

Shakespearian Tragedy

Shakespeare's tragedies are mostly influenced by Seneca. One type of tragedy is known as the Revenge play. Shakespeare drew upon the Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd as an example for Hamlet. The other type of tragedy is actually a style of non-rhyming poetry called blank verse. For this type of tragedy, Shakespeare looked to Christopher Marlow's Tamburlaine. Examples of blank verse tragedy are Macbeth, King Lear and the Roman Plays (Julius Caesar, etc.).

Shakespearian Comedy

One type is the Romantic comedy. This often deals with young love. Two prime examples are: Much Ado About Nothing and As You Like It. Another type is the Comedy of Humors, ridiculing contemporary behavior. Lastly, there is the Court Comedy, written for the aristocracy. These usually involved mythological or classical subjects. An example is Love's Labor's Lost.

Shakespearian History

The history play is very similar to the morality play, teaching the audience a "lesson." The most popular morality play of the time was "Everyman." Shakespeare got his material from The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland written by Holingshed.

The Globe Theater

Remember, in this society, the play was a place to be seen, not a place to see a play. Nevertheless, all classes had the opportunity and funding to see a play at the Globe.

Attendees to the Globe - groundlings were poor and paid the cheapest admission. They sat in the pit area of the theater. When it rained, they got wet and muddy! The most expensive seats were on the stage; balcony seating was also very expensive.

- A flag was hoisted and a trumpet sounded to announce a performance.
- Plays began at 2 p.m. so they could finish before nightfall.
- Plays generally lasted about two hours.

- There was no curtain; actors simply walked out on stage and began.
- Between acts there was another shorter, silly play being performed.

The Players

All roles were performed by men since women were considered inferior performers.

Children's companies - all boys.

Adult companies - men played men; boys played girls. This situation led to some humorous episodes. This practice was ended in 1660 when both Puritans and non-Puritans agreed that the rule was “immoral.”

Features of Elizabethan theatre - 12 features of the theatre form

1. Pace - plays were performed quickly - not garbling and rushing off the stage but without the long breaks to change scenes.
2. Actors would have had to use their voices and bodies expressively to convey mood and meaning.
3. ‘Good’ Acting - good acting was natural but ‘big’, with a lot of energy and sexuality. The acoustics in theatres meant that actors did not necessarily have to shout to be heard, but they would need to speak clearly.
4. Times of Performances - plays were performed in the afternoon as there was no lighting for night performances.
5. The Stage stages were round or polygonal and open to the sky although there was usually a canopy over the stage.
6. Two doors at the back of the stage lead to the dressing rooms.
7. There were no curtains, the audience could see everything.
8. Costumes were likely to be fashionable and contemporary (at the time) They were used to indicate the character’s status or profession.
9. Special effects were a part of the performances. In particular, a bladder filled with pigs blood was used (concealed under a tunic) if someone was to be stabbed and could therefore ‘bleed.’
10. Fireworks were also used to replicate lightning and give fights on stage more emphasis.
11. Stage Directions - Shakespeare gave many of the stage directions in the actual text of his plays. Consider Hamlet’s speech to the players... “speak the speech I pray you”
12. Acting Style - actors had to capture and hold the attention of the audience, therefore their actions and gestures needed to be a lot larger than what we see today.

Language and Delivery

Shakespeare wrote in these styles:

- iambic pentameter (10 syllables to the line, with 5 strong and 5 weak beats). This mirrors a heartbeat.
- Blank verse
- Rhyming verse

Some of the text is in prose. In order to make sense, the text should be read to the punctuation, not to the end of a line.

The Dramatists – Predecessors of Shakespeare

Theatre

As the public became more demanding and the art of theatre developed, old plays were considered too primitive. They did not deal sufficiently with the problems of the time. The necessity for new plays became obvious.

The University Wits - Academic Dramatists

Some university graduates answered the demands of the time. They belonged to the middle class or gentry. Actually, they were the first professional authors in England who earned their living by writing. Among them were Thomas Kyd, George Peele, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe.

Thomas Kyd

Thomas was born in London in 1558. His father was Francis Kyd a scrivener and his mother was Anna Kyd. He was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School, of which Richard Mulcaster, was head master. Thomas was baptized in the church of St Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street, London on 6 November 1558. As baptisms were carried out at that time 3 days after birth, it is assumed that Kyd's birth date was 3 November.

Evidence suggests that in the 1580s Kyd became an important playwright, but little is known about his activity. Francis Meres placed him among "our best for tragedy" and Heywood elsewhere called him "Famous Kyd". Ben Jonson mentions him in the same breath as Christopher Marlowe (with whom, Kyd at one time shared a room, in London) and John Lyly in the Shakespeare First Folio. Thomas's most popular play is *The Spanish Tragedy*. He wrote it from 1582-1592.

The Spanish Tragedy

The Spanish Tragedy established a new genre in English Theatre, the revenge play or revenge tragedy. Its plot contains several violent murders and includes as one of its characters the personification of Revenge. *The Spanish Tragedy* was often referenced (or parodied) in works written by other Elizabethan playwrights, including William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe.

Many elements of The Spanish Tragedy, such as the play-within-a-play used to trap a murderer and a ghost intent on vengeance, appear in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Thomas Kyd is frequently proposed as the author of the hypothetical Ur-Hamlet (the first Hamlet) that may have been one of Shakespeare's primary sources for Hamlet.

Around 1591 Christopher Marlowe also joined the service of 4th Earl of Sussex, and for a while Marlowe and Kyd shared lodgings, and perhaps even ideas.

On 11 May 1593 the Privy Council ordered the arrest of the authors of "divers lewd and mutinous libels" which had been posted around London. The next day, Kyd was among those arrested; he would later believe that he had been the victim of an informer, under torture, he implicated Marlowe, who died gruesomely on 30 May.

Thomas Kyd was buried on 15 August in London; 30 days traditionally lapsing before burials putting his death date on 16 July. He was only 35 years of age.

In December of that same year, Kyd's mother legally renounced the administration of his estate, probably because it was debt-ridden.

Ur-Hamlet

A lost play written before 1589. Critics claim Shakespeare's Hamlet is based on Kyd's Ur-Hamlet. There are many similarities between Hieronimo and Hamlet. This suggests that Shakespeare read Kyd's plays.

The Spanish Tragedy - Plot Overview

The Spanish Tragedy begins with the ghost of Don Andrea, a Spanish nobleman killed in a recent battle with Portugal. Accompanied by the spirit of Revenge, he tells the story of his death: he was killed in hand-to-hand combat with the Portuguese prince Balthazar. After falling in love with the beautiful Bel-Imperia and having a secret affair with her. When he faces the judges who are supposed to assign him to his place in the underworld, they are unable to reach a decision and instead send him to the palace of Pluto and Proserpine, King and Queen of the Underworld. Proserpine decides that Revenge should accompany him back to the world of the living, and, after passing through the gates of horn, this is where he finds himself. The spirit of Revenge promises that by the play's end, Don Andrea will see his revenge.

Andrea returns to the scene of the battle where he died, to find that the Spanish have won. Balthazar was taken prisoner shortly after Andrea's death, by the Andrea's good friend Horatio, son of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal of Spain. But a dispute ensues between

Horatio and Lorenzo, the son of the Duke of Castile and brother of Bel-Imperia, as to who actually captured the prince.

The King of Spain decides to compromise between the two, letting Horatio have the ransom money to be paid for Balthazar and Lorenzo keep the captured prince at his home. Back in Portugal, the Viceroy (ruler) is mad with grief, for he believes his son to be dead, and is tricked by Villuppo into arresting an innocent noble, Alexandro, for Balthazar's murder. Diplomatic negotiations then begin between the Portuguese ambassador and the Spanish King, to ensure Balthazar's return and a lasting peace between Spain and Portugal.

Upon being taken back to Spain, Balthazar soon falls in love with Bel-Imperia himself. But, as her servant Pedringano reveals to him, Bel-Imperia is in love with Horatio, who returns her affections. The slight against him, which is somewhat intentional on Bel-Imperia's part, enrages Balthazar. Horatio also incurs the hatred of Lorenzo, because of the fight over Balthazar's capture and the fact that the lower-born Horatio (the son of a civil servant) now consorts with Lorenzo's sister. So the two nobles decide to kill Horatio, which they successfully do with the aid of Pedringano and Balthazar's servant Serberine, during an evening rendez-vous between the two lovers.

Bel-Imperia is then taken away before Hieronimo stumbles on to the scene to discover his dead son. He is soon joined in uncontrollable grief by his wife, Isabella. In Portugal, Alexandro escapes death when the Portuguese ambassador returns from Spain with news that Balthazar still lives; Villuppo is then sentenced to death. In Spain, Hieronimo is almost driven insane by his inability to find justice for his son. Hieronimo receives a bloody letter in Bel-Imperia's hand, identifying the murderers as Lorenzo and Balthazar, but he is uncertain whether or not to believe it. While Hieronimo is racked with grief, Lorenzo grows worried by Hieronimo's erratic behavior and acts in a Machiavellian manner to eliminate all evidence surrounding his crime.

He tells Pedringano to kill Serberine for gold but arranges it so that Pedringano is immediately arrested after the crime. He then leads Pedringano to believe that a pardon for his crime is hidden in a box brought to the execution by a messenger boy, a belief that prevents Pedringano from exposing Lorenzo before he is hanged.

Negotiations continue between Spain and Portugal, now centering on a diplomatic marriage between Balthazar and Bel-Imperia to unite the royal lines of the two countries. Ironically, a letter is found on Pedringano's body that confirms Hieronimo's suspicion over Lorenzo and Balthazar, but Lorenzo is able to deny Hieronimo access to the king, thus making royal justice unavailable to the distressed father.

Hieronimo then vows to revenge himself privately on the two killers, using deception and a false show of friendship to keep Lorenzo off his guard.

The marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar is set, and the Viceroy travels to Spain to attend the ceremony. Hieronimo is given responsibility over the entertainment for the marriage ceremony, and he uses it to exact his revenge. He devises a play, a tragedy, to be performed at the ceremonies, and convinces Lorenzo and Balthazar to act in it. Bel-Imperia, by now a confederate in Hieronimo's plot for revenge, also acts in the play. Just before the play is acted, Isabella, insane with grief, kills herself.

The plot of the tragedy mirrors the plot of the play as a whole (a sultan is driven to murder a noble friend through jealousy over a woman). Hieronimo casts himself in the role of the hired murderer. During the action of the play, Hieronimo's character stabs Lorenzo's character and Bel-Imperia's character stabs Balthazar's character, before killing herself. But after the play is over, Hieronimo reveals to the horrified wedding guests (while standing over the corpse of his own son) that all the stabbings in the play were done with real knives, and that Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia are now all dead. He then tries to kill himself, but the King and Viceroy and Duke of Castile stop him. In order to keep himself from talking, he bites out his own tongue. Tricking the Duke into giving him a knife, he then stabs the Duke and himself and then dies.

Revenge and Andrea then have the final words of the play. Andrea assigns each of the play's "good" characters (Hieronimo, Bel-Imperia, Horatio, and Isabella) to happy eternities. The rest of the characters are assigned to the various tortures and punishments of Hell.

Themes and Motifs

A long time dispute among scholars has been the moral status of revenge. Because revenge is the most obvious theme of the play, a lot of debate has been made over it. One can make judgments on the morality of Hieronimo based on his revenge-focused goals but the question many scholars face is whether the fault of his intentions is truly his. Steven Justice theorises that the judgment of the play falls less on Hieronimo than on a society in which the tragedy results from a way of life.

It is argued that Kyd used the revenge tragedy to give body to popular images of Catholic Spain. Kyd tries to make Spain the villain in that he shows how the Spanish court gives Hieronimo no acceptable choice. The court turns Hieronimo to revenge in pursuit of justice, when in reality it is quite different. Some critics claim that Hieronimo's attitude is what central Christian tradition calls the Old Law, the Biblical notion of an "eye for an eye".

Hieronimo's passion for justice in society is revealed when he says, "For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge, / Be satisfied, and the law discharg'd" (III.vi.35–36).

The nature of murder and death, performed and as natural phenomena, is also questioned. Smith considers the decade of the play relevant to the use of hangings, murders, and near deaths throughout the play. Multiple characters are killed or nearly killed throughout the play. Horatio is hanged, Pedringano is hanged, Alexandro is nearly burnt at the stake, and Villuppo is assumed tortured and hanged.

Kyd consistently refers to mutilation, torture, and death, beginning early in the play when the ghost of Don Andrea describes his stay in the underworld:

"And murderers groan with never killing wounds, / And perjured wights scalded in boiling lead, / And all foul sins with torments overwhelmed" (I.i.68–70).

He vividly describes in these lines as well as others the frequency of murder and torture in the underworld. Murder and death make up the tragedy theme that holds true through the last scene of the play.

The central theme is essentially revenge. The given title explains that there is some sort of harm that has been put on the main character to make him want to seek revenge. Revenge, however, is not the only theme. One key theme is that of Wealth and Power. This theme is clear in the sole actions of Balthazar. He kills Horatio in the beginning to gain power that in turn gives him wealth. This is also clear with the character of Lorenzo. Toward the end of the play he tries to convince the king to get rid of Hieronimo. Lorenzo knows that in the absence of Hieronimo, he will become more powerful and closer to the king.

The play also has a theme of revenge in historical context. The play in a way re-enacts the conflict between Spain and England. Kyd takes this opportunity to patronise the Spanish Armada and to make a political joke. This is very popular in Elizabethan and Greek tragedies. The play is used as a sort of defence mechanism for the English.

Christopher Marlowe

1564-1593

He precedes Shakespeare a little bit - chronologically and in reputation - just by a few years. They knew each other. He was kind of the go-to guy for tragedies for a long time in London. He was also a crazy fascinating person. His biographical details are muddled, which is just perfect because it makes people able to fight about him today. What kind of things do they argue about? There's tons of accusations and illicit information about Marlowe. Some of it is confirmed; some of it is not at all confirmed. People say that he was a spy for England, that he was a traitor, that he was an atheist, that he was a homosexual.

A few people even think that Marlowe was Shakespeare, or that Shakespeare was Marlowe. They claim that Marlowe faked his own death and then continued to write as Shakespeare, or that Shakespeare found fame under the assumed name before he used his own. There's all sorts of crazy accusations about that. Those are probably not true, but he and Shakespeare are enigmatic enough figures that you can say things like this and no one can really say that you're wrong.

Here's what we do know: Marlowe was baptized in Canterbury in 1564, so he was born some time around then. He got a Bachelor of Arts degree, and then a master's, from Corpus Christi College in Cambridge. When he was there, we know that he served the English government in some secret capacity because there's a letter from Elizabeth's administration that was written to the school about his master's degree. What he actually did, we don't know, but lots of people think he was a spy.

Regardless of his other employments, he was an incredibly popular and influential playwright. He wrote in blank verse, which is just unrhymed iambic pentameter. Only two of his works were actually published during his lifetime; everything else was published posthumously. In addition to plays, he wrote some poems and translations of Latin works.

His Plays

Dido, Queen of Carthage (1587)

This is believed to be Marlowe's first performed play, although record-keeping was not so good back then, so we can never be sure. It's based on three early books of the Roman poet Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*. It's about a crazy queen who falls in love with Virgil's hero, Aeneas,

and, when he spurns her to continue on his mission, she commits suicide. We can already see that Marlowe didn't really shy away from racy and offensive themes - he just dove right in. This was first performed by a company of young boy actors sometime between 1587-1593.

Tamburlaine the Great (1587)

This is Marlowe's first proper London production, probably in 1587. This again takes on classical source material; Tamburlaine is about an Asian emperor Timur the Lame (which sounds a lot like Tamburlaine). He kind of clawed his way up from being a shepherd to being a ruler. Scholars celebrate this play as a turning point in Elizabethan drama because it introduces rich language, complex plotting, and complex themes - things that hadn't really been seen before on the London stage.

It was so successful that it was followed by a sequel, and these two plays were the only ones that were actually published during his lifetime.

The Jew of Malta (1592)

This was first performed in 1592. It tells the tale of a merchant, the titular Jew named Barabas, who basically plots revenge against Malta, which is the country where he lives, because they made him penniless. They stole all of his belongings. It's got these political and ethical complications that make one of Marlowe's favorite themes - ambiguous protagonists - super relevant to this play.

His good characters aren't always good - they don't always seem to be perfectly good - but we sympathize with them anyway, even if they're Jewish. This one's one of those ones that's hard to read - we're not sure what audiences would have made of it then or what Marlowe intentions really were with this character. What we do know is that it definitely influenced Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, which is also about a Jewish merchant getting his revenge.

The Massacre at Paris (1593)

Another great title - his titles really let you know what they're going to be about. This one's about the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris in 1572. Given its violent political topics, the play was actually thought to be dangerous, so there aren't actually any complete editions of the work that were published or reproduced. People thought it was a little too political. Segments drawn from memory is all the evidence that we have of it.

Doctor Faustus (1592)

The story itself is made more famous by the German writer Goethe, but Marlowe is the first one to actually bring it to the stage. Big surprise, this story is about a guy who sells his soul to the Devil in order to get knowledge, power, and a visitation from Helen of Troy. This was another controversial Marlowe work. Some folks were uneasy with its questions about the then-popular doctrine of predestination and also about its unapologetic presentation of sin and demons and whatnot.

The play also presents difficulties for modern scholars because it's edited after Marlowe's death, most likely. There's two versions of the play - we don't really know which is the right one. There's a lot of teasing apart that they have to do to figure out what was really Marlowe's intention behind this.

Like much of his life, the death of Christopher Marlowe is a huge mystery wrapped in an enigma. We know he was stabbed to death in 1593; that's what the coroner said. But the whys and wherefores of this are pretty questionable. The death came at the hands of a known government spy and con-man just a couple days after Marlowe was arrested for heresy. He was never actually found guilty of heretical acts, but this might have been a way for the government to exact their punishment anyway.

Or it might have been a bar fight that escalated - that was the official report.

Or maybe Marlowe wasn't dead at all and faked it to get the government off his back.

Or maybe he's still not dead. Or maybe he was Shakespeare!

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Summary & Analysis

Plot Summary

Doctor Faustus, a respected German scholar, is bored with the traditional types of knowledge available to him. He wants more than logic, medicine, law, and religion. He wants magic. His friends, Valdes and Cornelius, begin to teach him magic, which he uses to summon a devil named Mephistophilis. Faustus tells Mephistophilis to return to his master, Lucifer, with an offer of his soul in exchange for twenty-four years of having Mephistophilis, and all his knowledge of magic, at his beck and call.

Mephistophilis returns to Faustus with a contract for his soul, which Faustus signs in his own blood. As soon as he signs the contract, words appear on his arm, which give him doubts about what he has just done. Mephistophilis calms Faustus' doubts by giving him valuable gifts and a book of spells to learn.

Later, Mephistophilis answers all Faustus' questions about the nature of the world, and refuses to answer only when Faustus wants to know who created the universe. This sets off yet another series of doubts in Faustus, but Mephistophilis and Lucifer quiet those doubts by bringing in the seven deadly sins in human form to dance for Faustus.

Mephistophilis then takes Faustus on a wild chariot ride through the heavens, landing in Rome, where Faustus torments Pope Adrian for his passing judgment on a rival pope by making himself invisible and stealing Pope Adrian's food and smacking his ears. He becomes famous for this and is invited to visit the German Emperor, Charles V, who is the enemy of Pope Adrian. Faustus impresses the emperor by conjuring up an image of Alexander the Great. One of the emperors' knights sneers at Faustus' magical powers and Faustus punishes him by making antlers sprout from his head.

Meanwhile, Robin, the clown of Faustus' servant, Wagner, has picked up some magic on his own and, with a stable hand named Rafe, uses his new magical skills to get free booze, and even summons Mephistophilis, who threatens to turn them both into animals. Their misadventures add the comic relief to the play.

Faustus travels to England, where he sells an enchanted horse to a horse dealer. When the man rides his new horse over water, it turns into a bale of straw. The Duke of Vanholt hears about this and invites Faustus to visit him and his wife, the duchess. The horse dealer shows up, along with Robin and Rafe, vowing to get even. Faustus casts a spell of silence on them so that they cannot speak of his wrongs, and sends them on their way, which amuses the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt.

As the end of his contract approaches, Faustus begins to dread his impending doom, and has Mephistophilis call up Helen of Troy so that he might impress a group of his colleagues. An old man urges Faustus to repent and turn back to God, but he sends Mephistophilis to torment the old man, and drive him away. Faustus then summons up Helen again so that he might immerse himself in her ancient beauty. But time grows short. Faustus, filled with dread, confesses his misdeeds to a group of his colleagues, who vow to pray for him.

On the final night of his life, Faustus is overcome by fear and remorse. He begs for mercy, but it is too late. The clock strikes midnight and a group of devils enter Faustus' study to claim his soul. The next morning, his colleagues find his body torn limb from limb, and decide to give him a proper burial.

Major Characters

Faustus

Faustus is the protagonist and tragic hero of Marlowe's play. He is a contradictory character, capable of both profound intellectual thought and a grandiose ambition, yet prone to blindness and a willingness to waste the powers he has gained. He imagines piling up wealth from the four corners of the globe, reshaping the map of Europe, and gaining access to every scrap of knowledge about the universe. He represents the spirit of the Renaissance, with its rejection of the medieval, God-centered universe, and its embracing of scientific inquiry and human possibility.

Mephistophilis

Mephistophilis is a character with mixed motives. He acts as an agent of Faustus' damnation, witnesses Faustus' pact with Lucifer, and steps in whenever Faustus considers repentance to convince him in staying loyal to hell. But he himself is damned and speaks freely of the horrors of hell. There is a sense that a part of Mephistophilis does not want Faustus to make the same mistakes that he made. But, of course, Faustus does so anyway, making him and Mephistophilis kindred spirits.

Themes

Themes are the fundamental ideas explored in a literary work.

In the medieval era that came before the Renaissance, the focus of scholarship was on God and religion; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the focus turned toward the study of humankind and the natural world, leading to the birth of modern science. Likewise, while classical and medieval literature typically focused on the lives of the great and famous, the main character in this play is an ordinary man, born to humble parents. The message is clear:

in the new world of the Renaissance, an ordinary man like Faustus is as important as any king or warrior, and his story is just as worthy of being told.

By cutting himself off from the creator of the universe, Faustus is condemned to mediocrity. He has gained the whole world, but he does not know what to do with it. Everything is possible to him, but even as he decides, in full Renaissance spirit, to accept no limits, traditions, or authorities in his search for knowledge, wealth, and power, he must resign himself to performing tricks for kings and noblemen and playing practical jokes. This suggests that true greatness can be achieved only with God's blessing, and that the new, modern spirit of the Renaissance, though ambitious and glittering, will lead only to a Faustian dead end.

Symbol

A symbol is an object used to represent an idea.

Blood plays several symbolic roles in the play. When Faustus signs away his soul, he signs in blood, symbolizing the permanent and supernatural nature of his pact with the devil. His blood hardens on the page, however, symbolizing his own body's revolt against what he is doing. Meanwhile, Christ's blood, which Faustus says he sees running across the sky during his terrible last night, symbolizes the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross, opening the way for humankind to repent its sins and be saved.

Allegory

An allegory is a literary device in which abstract concepts are given concrete form as people or objects.

Dr Faustus uses a type of allegory that was very common in medieval plays; sins and virtues being represented by actual people, using a literary technique called personification. Those people are the 'seven deadly sins' and the 'old man,' who personify Faustus' internal debate about whether or not he is truly damned.

Summary

Remember, Faustus is the protagonist and tragic hero of Marlowe's play. He represents the emerging individuality and scientific inquiry of the Renaissance, and its rejection of the religious, God-centered universe of the medieval world. Mephistophilis, while encouraging Faustus' damnation, speaks freely of his own damnation. The theme that represents the modern spirit of the Renaissance in the play is that an ordinary man is as important as those who are great and famous with a story that is just as worthy of being told. The theme that represents the medieval world in the play is that the new, modern spirit of the Renaissance, however appealing it may be, will lead only to eternal damnation. Blood is a symbol of the

permanence of Faustus' signing away of his soul to the devil, his body' rejection of his pact, and the chance of redemption and forgiveness in the blood of Jesus in the sky as his death and damnation approach. 'Dr. Faustus' uses a literary device called personification in which sins and virtues are represented by actual people; the 'Seven Deadly Sins' and the 'Old Man,' who personify Faustus' struggles with whether or not he is truly and inevitably damned.

Faustus's Last Soliloquy
(Act V, Scene II)

FAUSTUS: Ah, Faustus.

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
O, I'll leap up to my God!--Who pulls me down?--
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!--
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on him: O, spare me, Lucifer!--
Where is it now? tis gone: and see, where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

No, no!

Then will I headlong run into the earth:

Earth, gape! O, no, it will not harbour me!

You stars that reign'd at my nativity,

Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,

Now draw up Faustus, like a foggy mist,

Into the entrails of yon labouring clouds,

That, when you vomit forth into the air,

My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,

So that my soul may but ascend to heaven!

[The clock strikes the half-hour.]

Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon.
O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransom'd me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!
O, no end is limited to damned souls!
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.
Curs'd be the parents that engender'd me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of heaven.

[The clock strikes twelve.]

O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!

[Thunder and lightning.]

O soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!

[Enter Devils.]

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!

Read more at http://www.monologuearchive.com/m/marlowe_008.html#Oh3iF493K5tosGDZ.99

Text analysis

1. After the strategic reading of Faustus's Last Soliloquy fill in the following paraphrase of Faustus's desires as he waits for the devil to collect him.

Faustus wants:

- a) time to stand still so that _____
- b) a drop of Christ's blood to _____
- c) the mountains and hills to _____
- d) to run into the earth but _____
- e) the stars of his birth to _____
- f) so that his soul can _____
- g) or at least a limit to _____
- h) He wishes that he did not have a _____
- i) or that his _____ was not immortal so that he could change into a _____ and be _____.
- j) He wants his soul to change into _____
- k) so that _____
- l) and _____
- m) His final offer is to _____

2. Faustus has had what he wanted for the last twenty-four years and now his time is up. Do you think it is right that he should be forced to give his soul up to the Devil? Would you forgive him? Give reasons for your answer.

What did Shakespeare look like?

Option 1.

Richard Plantagenet Temple Nugent Brydges Chandos Grenville, second Duke of Buckingham and Chandos – came into a lot of money in 1839. He did not have an interesting life. After inheriting his titles and one of England's greatest estates, he managed to lose every penny of his inheritance in just nine years. Bankrupt and humiliated, in the summer of 1848 he fled to France, leaving Stowe and its contents to his creditors.

The auction that followed became one of the great social events of the age. Such was the richness of Stowe's furnishings that it took a team of auctioneers from the London firm of Christie and Manson forty days to get through it all. Among the lesser-noted disposals was a dark oval portrait, 22 inches (55,8cm) high by 18 (45,7cm) wide, purchased by the Earl of Ellesmere for 355 guineas and known ever since as the Chandos portrait. The painting had been much retouched and was so blackened with time that a great deal of detail was (and still is) lost.

It shows a balding but not unhandsome man of about forty who sports a trim beard. In his left ear he wears a gold earring. His expression is confident, serenely rakish.



The Chandos Portrait

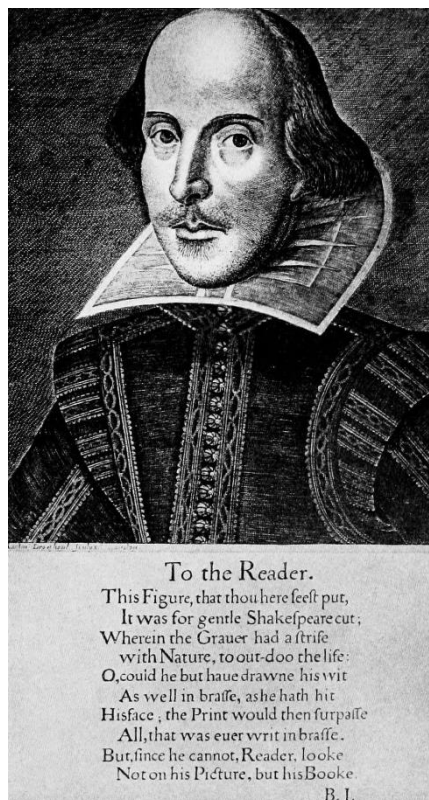
Although nothing is known about the origin of the painting or where it was for much of the time before it came into the Chandos family in 1747, it has been said for a long time to be of William Shakespeare. Certainly it looks like William Shakespeare—but then really it ought to, since it is one of the three likenesses of Shakespeare from which all other such likenesses are taken.

In 1856, shortly before his death, Lord Ellesmere gave the painting to the new National Portrait Gallery in London as its founding work. As the gallery's first acquisition, it has a certain sentimental prestige, but almost at once its authenticity was doubted. Many critics at the time thought the subject was too dark-skinned and foreign looking—too Italian or Jewish—to be an English poet, much less a very great one.

Option 2.

If the Chandos portrait is not genuine, then we are left with two other possible likenesses to help us decide what William Shakespeare looked like. The first is the copperplate engraving that appeared as the frontispiece of the collected works of Shakespeare in 1623—the famous First Folio.

The Droeshout engraving, as it is known (after its artist, Martin Droeshout), is an arrestingly—we might almost say magnificently—mediocre piece of work. Nearly everything about it is flawed... One eye is bigger than the other. The mouth is curiously mispositioned. The hair is longer on one side of the subject's head than the other, and the head itself is out of proportion to the body and seems to float off the shoulders, like a balloon. Worst of all, the subject looks diffident, apologetic, almost frightened—nothing like the gallant and confident figure that speaks to us from the plays.



The Droeshout Engraving

Despite its many shortcomings, the engraving comes with a poetic endorsement from Ben Jonson, who says of it in his memorial to Shakespeare in the First Folio:

*O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then surpasse
All that was ever writ in brasse.*

It has been suggested, with some plausibility, that Jonson may not actually have seen the Droeshout engraving before penning his generous lines. What is certain is that the Droeshout portrait was not done from life: Shakespeare had been dead for seven years by the time of the First Folio.

Option 3.

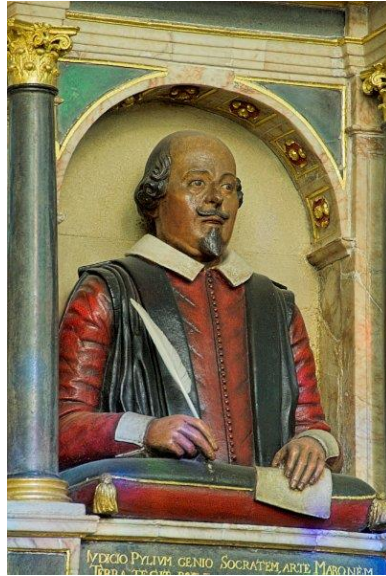
That leaves us with just one other possible likeness: the painted, life-size statue that forms the centerpiece of a wall monument to Shakespeare at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he is buried.

Like the Droeshout, it is an indifferent piece of work artistically, but it does have the merit of having been seen and presumably passed as satisfactory by people who knew Shakespeare.

It was executed by a mason named Gheerart Janssen, and installed in the chancel of the church by 1623—the same year as Droeshout’s portrait.

Janssen lived and worked near the Globe Theatre in Southwark in London and thus may well have seen Shakespeare in life—though one rather hopes not, as the Shakespeare he portrays is a puffy-faced, self-satisfied figure, with (as Mark Twain memorably put it) the “deep, deep, subtle, subtle expression of a bladder.”

We don’t know exactly what the effigy looked like originally because in 1749 the colors of its paintwork were “refreshed” by some anonymous but well-meaning soul. Twenty-four years later the Shakespeare scholar Edmond Malone, visiting the church, was horrified to find the bust painted and ordered the churchwardens to have it whitewashed, returning it to what he wrongly assumed was its original state. By the time it was repainted again years later, no one had any idea of what colors to apply.



The statue of Shakespeare

The matter is of consequence because the paint gives the portrait not just color but definition, as much of the detail is not carved on but painted. Under whitewash it must have looked rather like those featureless mannequins once commonly used to display hats in shopwindows.

Conclusions

So we are in the curious position with William Shakespeare of having three likenesses from which all others are derived: two that aren't very good by artists working years after his death and one that is rather more compelling as a portrait but that may well be of someone else altogether.

The paradoxical consequence is that we all recognize a likeness of Shakespeare the instant we see one, and yet we don't really know what he looked like. It is like this with nearly every aspect of his life and character: He is at once the best known and least known of figures.

Hamlet

Publication

Written during the first part of the seventeenth century (probably in 1600 or 1601), Hamlet was probably first performed in July 1602. It was first published in printed form in 1603 and appeared in an enlarged edition in 1604.

Setting

The story takes place in the country of Denmark in the late medieval period.

The Story

The raw material that Shakespeare appropriated in writing Hamlet is the story of a Danish prince whose uncle murders the prince's father, marries his mother, and claims the throne. The prince pretends to be feeble-minded to throw his uncle off guard, then manages to kill his uncle in revenge.

Philosophically minded prince

Shakespeare changed the emphasis of this story entirely, making his Hamlet a philosophically minded prince who delays taking action because his knowledge of his uncle's crime is so uncertain. Shakespeare went far beyond making uncertainty a personal quirk of Hamlet's, introducing a number of important ambiguities into the play that even the audience cannot resolve with certainty.

Hamlet's uncertainties

- For instance, whether Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, shares in Claudius's guilt;
- whether Hamlet continues to love Ophelia even as he spurns (elutasít) her, in Act III;
- whether Ophelia's death is suicide or accident;
- whether the ghost offers reliable knowledge, or seeks to deceive and tempt Hamlet;
- and, perhaps most importantly, whether Hamlet would be morally justified in taking revenge on his uncle.

Characters of the Drama

Hamlet - The Prince of Denmark, the title character, and the protagonist. About thirty years old at the start of the play, Hamlet is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet, and the nephew of the present king, Claudius. Hamlet is melancholy, bitter, and cynical, full of

hatred for his uncle's scheming and disgust for his mother's sexuality. A reflective and thoughtful young man who has studied at the University of Wittenberg, Hamlet is sometimes indecisive and hesitant, but at other times prone to rash and impulsive acts.

Claudius - The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, and the play's antagonist. The villain of the play, Claudius is a calculating, ambitious politician, driven by his sexual appetites and his lust for power, but he occasionally shows signs of guilt and human feeling—his love for Gertrude, for instance, seems sincere.

Gertrude - The Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother, recently married to Claudius. Gertrude loves Hamlet deeply, but she is a shallow, weak woman who seeks affection and status more urgently than moral rectitude or truth.

Polonius - The Lord Chamberlain of Claudius's court, a pompous, conniving old man. Polonius is the father of Laertes and Ophelia.

Horatio - Hamlet's close friend, who studied with the prince at the university in Wittenberg. Horatio is loyal and helpful to Hamlet throughout the play. After Hamlet's death, Horatio remains alive to tell Hamlet's story.

Ophelia - Polonius's daughter, a beautiful young woman with whom Hamlet has been in love. Ophelia is a sweet and innocent young girl, who obeys her father and her brother, Laertes. Dependent on men to tell her how to behave, she gives in to Polonius's schemes to spy on Hamlet. Even in her lapse into madness and death, she remains maidenly, singing songs about flowers and finally drowning in the river amid the flower garlands she had gathered.

Laertes - Polonius's son and Ophelia's brother, a young man who spends much of the play in France. Passionate and quick to action, Laertes is clearly a foil for the reflective Hamlet.

Fortinbras - The young Prince of Norway, whose father the king (also named Fortinbras) was killed by Hamlet's father (also named Hamlet). Now Fortinbras wishes to attack Denmark to avenge his father's honor, making him another foil for Prince Hamlet.

The Ghost - The specter of Hamlet's recently deceased father. The ghost, who claims to have been murdered by Claudius, calls upon Hamlet to avenge him. It is not entirely certain whether the ghost is what it appears to be, or whether it is something else. Hamlet speculates that the ghost might be a devil sent to deceive him and tempt him into murder, and the question of what the ghost is or where it comes from is never definitively resolved.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern - Two slightly bumbling courtiers, former friends of Hamlet from Wittenberg, who are summoned by Claudius and Gertrude to discover the cause of Hamlet's strange behavior.

Themes - Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Theme of Certainty

What separates Hamlet from other revenge plays (and maybe from every play written before it) is that the action we expect to see, particularly from Hamlet himself, is continually postponed while Hamlet tries to obtain more certain knowledge about what he is doing. This play poses many questions that other plays would simply take for granted.

Questions

- Can we have certain knowledge about ghosts?
- Is the ghost what it appears to be, or is it really a misleading fiend?
- Does the ghost have reliable knowledge about its own death, or is the ghost itself deluded?

More questions moving to more earthly matters:

- How can we know for certain the facts about a crime that has no witnesses?
- Can Hamlet know the state of Claudius's soul by watching his behavior?
- If so, can he know the facts of what Claudius did by observing the state of his soul?
- Can Claudius (or the audience) know the state of Hamlet's mind by observing his behavior and listening to his speech?
- Can we know whether our actions will have the consequences we want them to have?
- Can we know anything about the afterlife?

Theme of Uncertainty

Many people have seen Hamlet as a play about indecisiveness, and thus about Hamlet's failure to act appropriately. It might be more interesting to consider that the play shows us how many uncertainties our lives are built upon, how many unknown quantities are taken for granted when people act or when they evaluate one another's actions.

Theme of Action

Directly related to the theme of certainty is the theme of action. How is it possible to take reasonable, effective, purposeful action? In Hamlet, the question of how to act is affected not only by rational considerations, such as the need for certainty, but also by emotional, ethical, and psychological factors.

Acting Recklessly

Hamlet himself appears to distrust the idea that it's even possible to act in a controlled, purposeful way. When he does act, he prefers to do it blindly, recklessly, and violently. The other characters obviously think much less about "action" in the abstract than Hamlet does, and are therefore less troubled about the possibility of acting effectively. They simply act as they feel is appropriate. But in some sense they prove that Hamlet is right, because all of their actions miscarry.

Acting Foolishly

Claudius possesses himself of queen and crown through bold action, but his conscience torments him, and he is beset by threats to his authority (and, of course, he dies). Laertes resolves that nothing will distract him from acting out his revenge, but he is easily influenced and manipulated into serving Claudius's ends, and his poisoned sword is turned back upon himself.

Death

In the aftermath of his father's murder, Hamlet is obsessed with the idea of death, and over the course of the play he considers death from a great many perspectives.

Aftermath of Death

Hamlet ponders both the spiritual aftermath of death, embodied in the ghost, and the physical remainders of the dead, such as by Yorick's skull and the decaying corpses in the cemetery.

Throughout, the idea of death is closely tied to the themes of spirituality, truth, and uncertainty in that death may bring the answers to Hamlet's deepest questions, ending once and for all the problem of trying to determine truth in an ambiguous world.

Revenge

Since death is both the cause and the consequence of revenge, it is intimately tied to the theme of revenge and justice—Claudius's murder of King Hamlet initiates Hamlet's quest for revenge, and Claudius's death is the end of that quest.

Suicide

The question of his own death plagues Hamlet as well, as he repeatedly contemplates whether or not suicide is a morally legitimate action in an unbearably painful world. Hamlet's grief and misery is such that he frequently longs for death to end to his suffering, but he fears that if he commits suicide, he will be consigned to eternal suffering in hell because of the Christian religion's prohibition of suicide.

“To be or not to be”

In his famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy, Hamlet philosophically concludes that no one would choose to endure the pain of life if he or she were not afraid of what will come after death, and that it is this fear which causes complex moral considerations to interfere with the capacity for action.

Motifs - Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Motif of Misogyny

Shattered by his mother's repugnant decision to marry Claudius so soon after her husband's death, Hamlet becomes extremely cynical, even neurotic, about women in general, showing a particular obsession with what he perceives to be a connection between female sexuality and moral corruption.

“Frailty, thy name is woman”

This motif of misogyny, or hatred of women, occurs only sporadically throughout the play, but it is an important inhibiting factor in Hamlet's relationships with Ophelia and Gertrude. He urges Ophelia to go to a nunnery rather than experience the corruptions of sexuality and exclaims of Gertrude, "Frailty, thy name is woman"

Motif of Ears and Hearing

One facet of Hamlet's exploration of the difficulty of attaining true knowledge is slipperiness of language. Words are used to communicate ideas, but they can also be used to distort the truth, manipulate other people, and serve as tools in corrupt quests for power. Claudius, the shrewd politician, is the most obvious example of a man who manipulates words to enhance his own power.

Use of Words

The sinister uses of words are represented by images of ears and hearing, from Claudius's murder of the king by pouring poison into his ear to Hamlet's claim to Horatio that "I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb".

The poison poured in the king's ear by Claudius is used by the ghost to symbolize the corrosive effect of Claudius's dishonesty on the health of Denmark. Declaring that the story that he was killed by a snake is a lie, he says that "the whole ear of Denmark" is "Rankly abused....".

Symbols - Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Yorick's Skull

Hamlet is not a particularly symbolic play, at least in the sense that physical objects are rarely used to represent thematic ideas. One important exception is Yorick's skull, which Hamlet discovers in the graveyard in the first scene of Act V.

Different Aspects of Death

As Hamlet speaks to and about the skull of the king's former jester, it becomes a symbol of several different aspects of death, including its inevitability and its disintegration of the body.

Hamlet urges the skull to "get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come"—no one can avoid death. He also traces the skull's mouth and says, "Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft," indicating his fascination with the physical consequences of death.

Decay of the Human Body

This latter idea is an important motif throughout the play, as Hamlet frequently makes comments referring to every human body's eventual decay, noting that Polonius will be eaten by worms, that even kings are eaten by worms, and that dust from the decayed body of Alexander the Great might be used to stop a hole in a beer barrel.

Important Quotation No 1.

"That it should come to this!" (Act I, Scene II)

What does it mean? Just after speaking to his mother Gertrude and uncle (and step-father) King Claudius, Hamlet has his first of five soliloquies. When Hamlet exclaims, "[t]hat it should come to this," he'd just finished describing how the world has gone to fodder. Then Hamlet goes on to say how he cannot believe his mother would marry his father's brother (i.e., Hamlet's uncle). This quote shows Hamlet's fury and shock at his mother's remarriage. In Hamlet's mind, the world is in chaos and the remarriage is the apex of things spiraling out of control. Soliloquies allow the audience to see into a character's inner thoughts. The soliloquy

as a whole belays the reasons for Hamlet's initial deep melancholy and confusion that persists for much of the play.

Important Quotation No 2.

"Frailty, thy name is woman!" (Act I, Scene II)

What does it mean? Hamlet is still speaking in his first of five soliloquies. The "woman" he specifically refers to is his mother. Hamlet felt she was weak, or not strong enough to mourn his father longer. Hamlet goes on further to say that not even an animal or beast, who has no reasoning skills, would have abandoned the mourning so quickly. All in all, this shows how angry and confused Hamlet is by his mother's remarriage.

Important Quotation No 3.

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be; For loan oft loses both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry." (Act I, Scene III)

What does it mean? Here Polonius is giving his son, Laertes, sound advice before Laertes returns to Paris. Polonius is really saying loaning money to other people is dangerous. Often, people don't pay you back and you use a friend because of the failed transaction. On the flip side, it is distasteful to borrow money because it is impolite and usually indicates you are living outside of your means.

Important Quotation No 4.

"This above all: to thine own self be true." (Act I, Scene III)

What does it mean? Again, Polonius is doling out sage advice to his son, Laertes. Simply put, Polonius is telling his son "be yourself." In the context of the play, Polonius is also telling Laertes to be a gentleman and not "false to any man" (line 80). Overall, Polonius's advice helps reveals a theme of irony that threads throughout the play. Neither Polonius nor Laertes heeds the advice that Polonius gives in this scene, and both perish due to their lack of adherence.

Important Quotation No 5.

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." (Act I, Scene IV)

What does it mean? At the end of Scene IV, a guard, Marcellus, says these famous words to Horatio. After Hamlet follows the ghost, Marcellus and Horatio know they have to follow as well, because Hamlet is acting so impulsively. Marcellus's words are remarking on how

something evil and vile is afoot. This moment could be interpreted as foreshadowing of the impending deaths of most of the principle characters.

Important Quotation No 6.

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't." (Act II, Scene II)

What does it mean? At this point of the play, Hamlet and Polonius are interacting onstage, but this quote is technically spoken by Polonius to the audience, in an aside. What Polonius is saying is that, even though Hamlet is talking crazy, it actually makes sense, or it has a "method." Polonius's assertion is ironic because he is right and wrong. Polonius believes Hamlet is acting "mad" because Hamlet's love of Ophelia has driven him to such. While Polonius is correct to think that there is reason behind Hamlet's actions, he is incorrect as to the cause. Hamlet is purposefully acting mad to disguise his true mission to avenge his father's murder.

Important Quotation No 7.

"To be, or not to be: that is the question." (Act III, Scene I)

What does it mean? In the beginning of his fourth, and best known, soliloquy Hamlet muses about the conundrum of suicide. He wonders if one route is "nobler" than the next. At this point in the play, Hamlet has been unable to act upon his motives for personal revenge, and this frustrates him. Which is better, suffering as he has been or ending it all? The tone of Hamlet's soliloquy is more meditative than angry, but he does seriously consider suicide. He relates his personal struggle to the struggles that all of mankind shares. Given that you don't know what happens after you die, Hamlet realizes that death wouldn't be the ideal escape he craves.

Important Quotation No 8.

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks." (Act III, Scene II)

What does it mean? Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, says this famous line while watching *The Mousetrap*. Gertrude is talking about the queen in the play. She feels that the play-queen seems insincere because she repeats so dramatically that she'll never remarry due to her undying love of her husband. The play-queen, in fact, does remarry. It is unclear whether Gertrude recognizes the parallel between herself and the play-queen; Hamlet certainly feels that way. This moment has an irony that is shown throughout the play.

More Quotations

A little more than kin and less than kind! Hamlet; I.1

This above all else: to thine own self be true. Polonius, I.3

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right! Hamlet, I.5

... brevity is the soul of wit. Polonius, II.2

...there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. Hamlet, II.2

What a piece of work is a man! Hamlet, II.2

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Hamlet, II.2

The play's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. Hamlet, II.2

To be or not to be, that is the question. Hamlet, III.1

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven... Claudius, III.3

The lady doth protest too much methinks. Gertrude, III.2

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. Hamlet, V.1

Now cracks a noble heart. Horatio, V.2

Hamlet's Soliloquy

A monologue from the play by William Shakespeare

Hamlet seems unable to pursue the revenge that this situation would require. He transforms his doubts into a brooding monologue on the nature of existence.

Pre-Reading Exercise

1. Hamlet's soliloquy is perhaps the best known speech that Shakespeare wrote. What kind of reasons do you think would lead to a playwright to employ a soliloquy at a crucial moment?

1 HAMLET: To be, or not to be--that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings¹ and arrows of outrageous² fortune 1. slings: missiles; 2. outrageous: shocking

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

5 And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--

No more--and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to³. 'Tis a consummation⁴ 3. is heir to: inherits; 4. consummation: satisfaction, end

Devoutly⁵ to be wished. To die, to sleep-- 5. devoutly: with religious feeling; sincerely

10 To sleep—perchance⁶ to dream: ay, there's the rub⁷, 6. perchance: perhaps; 7. rub: problem

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off⁸ this mortal coil⁹, 8. shuffled off: removed; 9. mortal coil: the pain and trouble of life

Must give us pause. There's the respect¹⁰ 10. respect: consideration

That makes calamity of so long life¹¹. 11. makes calamity of so long life: makes man live disastrously long

For who would bear the whips and scorns¹² of time, 12. scorns: bad treatment

Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely¹³ 13. contumely: insults

The pangs¹⁴ of disprized¹⁵ love, the law's delay, 14. pangs: pains; 15. disprized: undervalued

The insolence of office, and the spurns¹⁶ 16. spurns: insults

That patient merit of th' unworthy¹⁷ takes, 17. unworthy: undeserving

When he himself might his quietus¹⁸ make 18. quietus: death, literally a release from an obligation

With a bare bodkin¹⁹? Who would fardels²⁰ bear, 19. bodkin: dagger; 20. fardels: burdens, loads, bundles

To grunt²¹ and sweat under a weary²² life, 21. grunt: make a noise of suffering;

22. weary: tiring and unsatisfying

But that the dread²³ of something after death, 23. dread: fear
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn²⁴ 24. bourn: frontier
No traveller returns, puzzles the will²⁵, 25. will: volition
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience²⁶ does make cowards of us all, 26. conscience: sense of right and wrong
And thus the native hue²⁷ of resolution 27. native hue: natural colour, that is a sanguine or rosy complexion
Is sicklied o'er²⁸ with the pale cast²⁹ of thought, 28. sickled o'er: made ill, of a sickly pallor; 29. cast:
shadow
And enterprise of great pith³⁰ and moment³¹ 30. pith: gravity; 31. moment: importance
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

Post-Reading Exercises

1. What is the main problem that Hamlet poses himself in the first line?
2. What is the alternative expressed in lines 2-4?
3. What advantage does death bring?
4. What difficulty does Hamlet, however, see after death? (lines 10-14)
5. Paraphrase in your own words the catalogue of life's sufferings in lines 15-19.
6. Why do people tolerate this unpleasantness? (lines 23-27)
7. What analysis of human nature does Hamlet make in lines 28-33? How is this related to his own personal dilemma?
8. Consider the 'coil' image in line 12. This image operates on many levels. Give at least two different interpretations of the significance of this metaphor.
9. The apparition of his father's ghost is specifically referred to in this speech. Where?
10. Comment on the rhetorical construction of the speech. Do long or short phrases predominate? Are questions or statements or negations prevalent? What is the overall effect of this?
11. Would you describe the speech as a whole as optimistic or pessimistic?

King Lear

Date of Composition and Source

- Most difficult play to pin down.
- Written after Hamlet and Othello.
- Winter of 1605-1606.
- "Leir" a folk legend king who never actually existed.
- Published during his lifetime.

Lear and European History

- One of the few plays to take place in Britain.
- Similar to other tragedies – nobility;
- Believed to be during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453);
- France loses the battle;

The Plot and Subplot: Two Parallel Stories

- Lear and his daughters: main plot
- Edgar and his father and brother: subplot
- Parallel stories: their closeness in plot and direction render them mirrors of each other.
- Both Lear and Gloucester have faith in the wrong child and reject the right one.

Hook: begins in medias res (in the middle of things) Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund enter stage already in conversation.

Aristotelian Hamartia

Hamartia - is a word most famously used in Poetics, where it is usually translated as a mistake or error in judgment. In modern discussions of tragedy, hamartia has often been described as a hero's "tragic flaw or fatal flaw."

Poetics - tragic hero is one who is guilty of hamartia, and perhaps hubris;

Hamartia - error of judgment.

Hubris - excessive pride.

Lear is guilty of both!

Characters

King Lear - Aging king of Britain.

Cordelia - Lear's youngest daughter, disowned for refusing to flatter him.

Kent - Nobleman who is loyal to Lear, but outspoken.

Gloucester - Nobleman to Lear, suffers a parallel fate.

Edgar - Gloucester's older legitimate son

Fool - Lear's court jester who gives important advice.

Characters - Evil

Edmund - Gloucester's Bastard Son who resents his position; cunning in his schemes.

Regan (wife of Cornwall) and **Goneril** (wife of Albany) - Lear's daughters who are interested in power and do not care about their father.

King Lear

Lear, king of Britain, a petulant and unwise old man, has three daughters:

- Goneril, wife of the duke of Albany;
- Regan, wife of the duke of Cornwall;
- and Cordelia, for whom the king of France and duke of Burgundy are suitors.

Intending to divide his kingdom among his daughters according to their affection for him, he bids them say which loves him most. Goneril and Regan make profession of extreme affection, and each receives one-third of the kingdom. Cordelia, self-willed, and disgusted with their hollow flattery, says she loves him according to her duty, not more nor less. Infuriated with this reply, Lear divides her portion between his other daughters, with the condition that himself with 100 knights shall be maintained by each daughter in turn. Burgundy withdraws his suit for Cordelia, and the king of France accepts her without dowry. The earl of Kent, taking her part, is banished. Goneril and Regan reveal their heartless character by grudging their father the maintenance that he had stipulated for, and finally turning him out of doors in a storm.

The earl of Gloucester shows pity for the old king, and is suspected of complicity with the French, who have landed in England. His eyes are put out by Cornwall, who receives a death-wound in the affray. Gloucester's son Edgar, who has been traduced (megráalmaz) to his father by his bastard brother Edmund, takes the disguise of a lunatic beggar, and tends his father till the latter's death.

Lear, whom rage and ill treatment have deprived of his wits, is conveyed to Dover by the faithful Kent in disguise, where Cordelia receives him. Meanwhile Goneril and Regan have both turned their affections to Edmund. Embittered by this rivalry, Goneril poisons Regan, and takes her own life. The English forces under Edmund and Albany defeat the

French, and Lear and Cordelia are imprisoned; by Edmund's order Cordelia is hanged, and Lear dies from grief. The treachery of Edmund is proved by his brother Edgar. Gloucester's heart has "twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, / Burst smilingly."

Albany, who has not abetted Goneril in her cruel treatment of Lear, takes over the kingdom.

Theme - themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

King Lear is not only a tragedy of an individual, but also a tragedy of a society, with wide significance and profound impact. It depicts a great social upheaval. The miseries of Lear disclose the essence of a corrupt society, in which each is ready to prey on the other. No images are more frequently met with in the play than the images of animals and beasts. This is a reflection of the jungle law of the age of primitive accumulation.

This play also shows Shakespeare's affirmation of national unity and royal responsibility. The root of Lear's tragedy lies in his irresponsibly dividing up his kingdom owing to his folly and his mistaking flattery for true love. The playwright here seems to point out that the king, however great he might be, should be responsible to the people. If he can't, history will punish him.

Justice

King Lear is a brutal play, filled with human cruelty and awful, seemingly meaningless disasters. The play's succession of terrible events raises an obvious question for the characters — namely, whether there is any possibility of justice in the world, or whether the world is fundamentally indifferent or even hostile to humankind.

But, in the end, we are left with only a terrifying uncertainty—although the wicked die, the good die along with them, culminating in the awful image of Lear cradling Cordelia's body in his arms.

There is goodness in the world of the play, but there is also madness and death, and it is difficult to tell which triumphs in the end.

Authority versus Chaos

King Lear is about political authority as much as it is about family dynamics. Lear is not only a father but also a king, and when he gives away his authority to the unworthy and evil Goneril and Regan, he delivers not only himself and his family but all of Britain into chaos and cruelty. As the two wicked sisters indulge their appetite for power and Edmund begins his own ascension, the kingdom descends into civil strife, and we realize that Lear has destroyed not only his own authority but all authority in Britain.

Reconciliation

Darkness and unhappiness pervade King Lear, and the devastating Act 5 represents one of the most tragic endings in all of literature. Nevertheless, the play presents the central relationship—that between Lear and Cordelia—as a dramatic embodiment of true, self-sacrificing love. Rather than despising Lear for banishing her, Cordelia remains devoted, even from afar, and eventually brings an army from a foreign country to rescue him from his tormentors. Lear, meanwhile, learns a tremendously cruel lesson in humility and eventually reaches the point where he can reunite joyfully with Cordelia and experience the balm of her forgiving love. Lear's recognition of the error of his ways is an ingredient vital to reconciliation with Cordelia, not because Cordelia feels wronged by him but because he has understood the sincerity and depth of her love for him.

Motifs - motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Madness

Insanity occupies a central place in the play and is associated with both disorder and hidden wisdom. The Fool, who offers Lear insight in the early sections of the play, offers his counsel in a seemingly mad babble. Later, when Lear himself goes mad, the turmoil in his mind mirrors the chaos that has descended upon his kingdom. At the same time, however, it also provides him with important wisdom by reducing him to his bare humanity, stripped of all royal pretensions. Lear thus learns humility. He is joined in his real madness by Edgar's feigned insanity, which also contains nuggets of wisdom for the king to mine. Meanwhile, Edgar's time as a supposedly insane beggar hardens him and prepares him to defeat Edmund at the close of the play.

Betrayal

Betrayals play a critical role in the play and show the workings of wickedness in both the familial and political realms—here, brothers betray brothers and children betray fathers. Goneril and Regan's betrayal of Lear raises them to power in Britain, where Edmund, who has betrayed both Edgar and Gloucester, joins them.

However, the play suggests that betrayers inevitably turn on one another, showing how Goneril and Regan fall out when they both become attracted to Edmund, and how their jealousies of one another ultimately lead to mutual destruction. Additionally, it is important to

remember that the entire play is set in motion by Lear's blind, foolish betrayal of Cordelia's love for him, which reinforces that at the heart of every betrayal lies a skewed set of values.

Symbols - symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Storm

As Lear wanders about a desolate heath in Act 3, a terrible storm, strongly but ambiguously symbolic, rages overhead. In part, the storm echoes Lear's inner turmoil and mounting madness: it is a physical, turbulent natural reflection of Lear's internal confusion. At the same time, the storm embodies the awesome power of nature, which forces the powerless king to recognize his own mortality and human frailty and to cultivate a sense of humility for the first time. The storm may also symbolize some kind of divine justice, as if nature itself is angry about the events in the play. Finally, the meteorological chaos also symbolizes the political disarray that has engulfed Lear's Britain.

Blindness

Gloucester's physical blindness symbolizes the metaphorical blindness that grips both Gloucester and the play's other father figure, Lear. The parallels between the two men are clear: both have loyal children and disloyal children, both are blind to the truth, and both end up banishing the loyal children and making the wicked one(s) their heir(s). Only when Gloucester has lost the use of his eyes and Lear has gone mad does each realize his tremendous error. It is appropriate that the play brings them together near Dover in Act 4 to commiserate about how their blindness to the truth about their children has cost them dearly.

King Lear – The Division of the Kingdom

Pre-Reading Exercise

1. Why might this „love-contest” not be a good idea?

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.
Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age;
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,--
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,--
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

GONERIL

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

CORDELIA

[Aside] What shall Cordelia do?

Love, and be silent.

LEAR

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issue
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

REGAN

Sir, I am made
Of the self-same metal that my sister is,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short: that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Which the most precious square of sense possesses;
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.

CORDELIA

[Aside] Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's
More richer than my tongue.

KING LEAR

To thee and thine hereditary ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,

Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA

Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR

Nothing!

CORDELIA

Nothing.

KING LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

KING LEAR

How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA

Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:

Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

KING LEAR

But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA

Ay, good my lord.

KING LEAR

So young, and so untender?

CORDELIA

So young, my lord, and true.

KING LEAR

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist, and cease to be;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime daughter.

Text Analysis

1. Why has Lear decided to divide the kingdom?
2. How does Goneril describe her love for her father?
3. What is the significance of Cordelia's first aside?
4. Is Regan's speech any different from her sister's?
5. Explain Cordelia's second aside.

6. Does Lear show any preference between Goneril and Regan?
7. How can we tell that Cordelia is actually Lear's favourite daughter?
8. What is the impact of the fivefold repetition of the word 'nothin'?
9. Explain Cordelia's description of her love in your own words. What adjectives would you use to describe her attitude?
10. What is Lear's reaction? Can you sympathize with him?
11. What impression do we get of Lear's character? What features of the language he uses help us to form this impression?
12. There are numerous parallels and repetitions which give the passage a ritual feel. Give some examples.

Othello

Tragedy - a serious play representing the disastrous downfall of the hero. Achieves a catharsis by arousing pity and terror in the audience. Hero is led into fatal calamity by hamartia (tragic flaw or error) which often takes the form of hubris (excessive pride leading to divine retribution).

Tragic effect depends upon audience's awareness of the admirable qualities of the hero which are wasted in the disaster.

Classical Tragic Hero

The tragic hero is a good man, important to society. The hero suffers a fall brought about by something in his nature. The fall provokes the emotions of pity and fear in the reader. The tragic character comes to some kind of understanding or new recognition of what has happened.

Tragic Flaw – Defect of character that leads to the hero's disastrous downfall.

Othello Terminology:

Moor - Muslim person of Arab and Berber descent from northwest Africa. Moors invaded Spain and established a civilization in Andalusia lasting from the 8th - 15th centuries. Term Moor comes from the Greek word *mauros* meaning dark or very black. In Renaissance drama, Moors often symbolized something other than human - and often, indeed, something devilish. Cuckold - a man whose wife is unfaithful to him. Represented with horns growing out of his forehead

*“That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves!”*

(3.3.197-200)

“I have a pain upon my forehead, here” (326).

Othello: A Tragedy

It was written in 1604. One of the major tragedies - after Hamlet and before King Lear and Macbeth. It is about fascination with evil. Studies the devastating effects of the deadly sins of the spirit: ambitious pride, ingratitude, wrath, jealousy and vengeful hate.

Setting:

- Journey from Venice, Italy to Cyprus
- Venice = order, rule of reason ?
- Cyprus = disorder, rule of passion ?

Poetic Images

Most important pattern – contrast of light and dark, black and white;

One cluster is domestic and animal: goats, monkeys, wolves, baboons, guinea hens, wildcats, spiders, flies, asses, dogs, horses, sheep, serpents, and toads.

Other images include green-eyed monsters, devils, poisons, money purses, tarnished jewels, music untuned, and light extinguished.

Othello: the Villain

Delights in evil for its own sake. Conscienceless, sinister, and amused by his own cunning.

Related to Vice, the figure of personified evil, from the medieval morality play whose role is to win Humankind away from virtue and corrupt him with worldly enticements.

Takes audience into his confidence, boasts in soliloquy of his cleverness, exults in the triumph of evil, and improvises plans with daring and resourcefulness.

Othello: Thematic Ideas

- Nature of love and marriage;
- Nature of jealousy;
- Nature and use of language;
- Male mistrust of women;
- Deception / Honesty;
- Importance of reputation.

The Plot

A man, disappointed of promotion which he thought he had a right to expect, determines on revenge and in part secures it. By a series of careful moves he persuaded the General (Othello) of the adultery of the General's wife (Desdemona) with the lieutenant (Cassio) who has been promoted ahead of him. As a result, the general first kills his wife then himself, but the ensign (Iago) fails in the second part of his design, since the plot is disclosed.

Cassio receives yet a further promotion and Iago is left facing trial and torture. The plot "scheme" is concerned with one of the strangest and most distressing of human emotions - jealousy - and this is what makes the plot powerful.

Themes

- The play's central theme is love;
- destruction of love = hate;
- love and hate together arouse jealousy.

The central conflict is between men and women and this is presented through a series of parallel and contrasting couples.

Desdemona/Othello, Emilia/Iago, Bianca/Cassio and a number of fantasy couples: Roderigo/Desdemona, Cassio/Desdemona, Othello/Emilia.

A deep exploration of the central issues in Othello

Source material

Shakespeare's Othello was based on Giraldi Cinthio's Gli Hecatommithi. The main plot was derived from Cinthio's short story, but Shakespeare adapted it drastically. Gli Hecatommithi major theme was that mixed-race marriages cannot work. Othello has more complex characterization and deals with many other issues.

Publication history

- The first printed copy of Othello came in 1622, called the First quarto.
- The Second quarto was printed in 1630.
- The Second folio was printed in 1632.

Central issues in Othello

- Race
- Gender and sexuality
- Class

Historical context of race

In the 1560's some seamen actively participated in slave trade. Queen Elizabeth in 1601 issued an edict expelling Africans from the country for taking jobs away. During the Elizabethan era there was a blend of cultural experiences that hadn't previously been

experienced which led to a fear of Africans and other foreigners. Shakespeare was able to transform the fear into plays of great social significance.

In the late 16th century Africans function in three different ways to society

- 1: Household servants
- 2: Prostitutes
- 3: Court entertainers

Historical context of race—defining racial terms

Moor—Originally: a native or inhabitant of ancient Mauretania, a region of North Africa corresponding to parts of present-day Morocco and Algeria. Later usually: a member of a Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent inhabiting north-western Africa (now mainly present-day Mauritania), who in the 8th cent. conquered Spain. In the Middle Ages, and as late as the 17th century, the Moors were widely supposed to be mostly black or very dark-skinned, although the existence of ‘white moors’ was recognized.

Black—Having an extremely dark skin; strictly applied to negroes and negritos, and other dark-skinned races; often, loosely, to non-European races, little darker than man Europeans.

(Definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary)

More on the Moor

Etymologically, Moors were people native of Mauritania—a region in ancient Morocco. Often pertained to people from Africa. Moors other times are referred to as Arabians, Turks, and Spaniards. Moor also could signal religious affiliations, not just race and regional affiliations. During Shakespeare's time, not coincidentally, Moors became very complex, not fitting one single mold but carrying signs of many cultural traditions.

Race as it pertains to Othello. What race should we suppose Othello to belong?

Shakespearean experts believed that Othello was Oriental as recently as 1941. Elizabethans did not make careful distinctions between Moors and Negroes. The term Moor was applied to Arabs, Berbers, Syrians and Negroes in Shakespeare's time.

Race

Othello's appearance is regularly and consistently described as though he's black or of African descent. Other passages do not describe his appearance, but they help show his racial identity: Barbantio accuses Othello of using magic, and Elizabethans associated Moors with witchcraft.

Iago calls Othello the devil, Barbary Horse and Lascivious Moor.

In *Titus Andronicus*, a Shakespeare play, Aaron is black and referred to as a Moor.

Elizabethan's thought devils took the form of Moors and Negroes. Barbary Horses are from Northern Africa. Lascivious Moor: people born in hot countries.

Racist attitudes toward Othello

Characters in *Othello* rarely refer to Othello by his real name; they instead call him the Moor or some racist variation.

Iago: refers to Othello as the Moor more than 20 times, by name only 5.

Roderigo: does not refer to Othello by name, calling him the Moor twice and thicklips once.

Brabantio and Emilia also never refer to Othello by name, calling him the Moor instead.

Othello's Africanness becomes essential to the play because he is perceived by other characters as an other. A deeper look into these characters and how they refer to Othello further supports their racist attitudes.

Iago's attitude toward Othello

Refers to Othello in racist terms constantly:

"an old black ram" (I.i.111)

"the devil" (I.i.91)

"Barbary horse" (I.i.111)

He also says that Othello marrying Desdemona is making *"the beast with two backs"* (I.i.115-116) it is a euphemistic metaphor for two persons engaged in sexual intercourse.

Roderigo's attitude toward Othello

Desdemona's marriage to Othello is a *"gross revolt" (I.i.134)*.

Their marriage is also *"gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (I.i.126)*.

Roderigo and Iago confirm the Elizabethan stereotypes, implying that Othello's blackness connotes ugliness, lust, bestiality, treachery, and the demonic.

Brabantio's view of his new son-in-law.

Brabantio has a positive relationship with Othello until he elopes with his daughter. He does not want a black man marrying his daughter. Accuses him of being a "foul thief," "damned," and of attracting Desdemona through witchcraft.

Being a bond slave and pagan (I.ii.99)

Calls Othello a thing, not a person.

Lodovico also calls Othello a thing when he demands his corpse to be hid at the end of the play.

Emilia's subtle racist attitude

Emilia does not seem to have any racist attitudes toward Othello throughout the entire play until the end — when Othello tells her he murdered Desdemona, Emilia snaps with racial fiery: *“O, the more angel she, and you the blacker devil!”* (V.ii.129-131).

This quote implies that she always thought of Othello as a devil, now he is a blacker devil. Her accusation of him being a blacker devil implies that being black is negative in her view.

Desdemona's view on her husband's race

Although Desdemona is married to him, she makes it clear that it is not because of his physical appearance: *“I saw Othello's visage in his mind”* (I.iii.252).

She marries him because of his stories and his mind, so she was able to overlook his blackness. This still shows she has a racist attitude.

Love and Marriage — historical context

Family during Elizabethan and Jacobean England and its three major traits:

- Matrix of procreation and education of the young;
- Focus on economic activity—production and consumption;
- Site for the exercise of patriarchal authority and the reproduction of age and gender hierarchies.

In a rapidly growing metropolis, additional freedom and wider circle of acquaintances that London society offered wives and husbands created temptation the tested sexual morals to the limit. There was an obsession with chastity of women. There was anxiety and violence engendered in men because of the regulation of women's sexuality. In any society where women are constructed as others by men, jealousy and paranoia will be present.

Women in Shakespeare's work

Women were mistreated during the time of Shakespeare, and these rules applied to all women other than aristocratic women:

- Women were excluded from universities and learned professions;
- Married women lost the right to their own property.
- Wife beating was accepted and often used to solve a domestic dispute.

- A man who was beaten by his wife failed to live up to his patriarchal expectations, and he was looked down upon.

Often in Shakespeare's work, men marginalize women to privilege their manly virtues. Also, women and men mistreat whores to privilege the feminine virtue of chastity. Othello's love for Desdemona, and vice versa, is pure, but as the play progresses Othello's love gets tarnished. Emilia mediates between wife and whore; between Desdemona and Bianca.

Morality is legislated by property owner

If you own the world—as men do—you can make the rules, so men define right as what they do and wrong as what women do. Roderigo and Iago speaking of marriage and money at the beginning of the play instantly defines Desdemona as a prize.

Desdemona ultimately gives in, not because of Othello's manliness and strength, but rather because of her true love for Othello.

Love in Othello

A core element in Othello is an intense focus on the sexual relationship between a man and a woman (Othello and Desdemona). Many readers think Desdemona is too good to be true—she's too innocent to be a wife, but she's too wifely to be innocent. When Desdemona explains her transfer of feeling from her father to husband, shows in archetypal terms how a girl becomes a woman. The marriage of an old man and a young woman was generally used in a farce, but Shakespeare inverts expectations and intensifies the response.

Women's voices in Othello

A revealing conversation between Desdemona and Emilia comes when Desdemona prepares for bed in Act V. The women talk about men and women. The women are alone when they have this talk, so their private freedom makes them feel protected from men. The conversation here reveals Desdemona's naive purity and Emilia's pragmatism. The women talk about this subject because their husbands simply will not listen to them about it.

Order and class

Ideas about the nature of mankind, government, the society organization and the inferiority of women were widely debated. Standards prescribed for political order did not always meet social realities. Man had an ability to recognize virtue was an endowment from God. The inferiority of women was 'proved' through passages from the Christian Bible.

Military class

There was a surge of social mobility that occurred at the boundaries between ruling and subject classes in late 16th century England. A commander's lieutenant is a sign of his powers. By choosing a subordinate captain, the captain is choosing a replacement for himself, so it's an important role. Iago makes clear from the beginning of the play that he covets Cassio's lieutenancy position.

Religion

Shakespeare was Christian, wrote for a predominately Christian audience, and Othello had a Christian setting. The play has been interpreted with Othello representing God, Cassio is the figure of Adam, Desdemona is Christ and Iago is Satan.

Many of the speeches in the play have a Christian ring:

"I would not kill thy unprepared spirit" V.ii.31

"I am not what I am"

"sorrow's heavenly. /It strikes where it dot love" V.ii.20

Otherness in a play about an other

- Othello is considered an other in the play for a variety of reasons.
- He has to assimilate to Christianity;
- He is of different race;
- Iago plays on his race and uses stereotypes to distance Othello and make him seem an outsider to other characters.

It has often been debated whether or not Othello should be played by a black actor. He sometimes was played by a white actor whose face was painted black:

Iago's Motives

- Ambition
- Envy of Cassio's promotion
- Sexual jealousy of Othello
- Profit from robbing Roderigo
- Pleasure of deceiving Roderigo and Othello
- Sexual jealousy of Cassio
- Love for Desdemona
- Hatred of Cassio's handsomeness

- Hatred of Othello

Iago: intelligent, cunning, capable of tempting and controlling characters around him. He is a villain without conscience. Diabolically evil while appearing to be honest, trustworthy. Reduces human nature to its least attractive traits.

Suspicious view of human nature - allows him to locate weakness in others; encourage its dominance of whole personality.

Iago's Techniques for Deception

- Instigates others to act.
- Pretends to speak only out of the best motives.
- Works through insinuation rather than through explicit lies.

Othello

- Greatness
- Tragic hero
- Virtues carried to excess
 - Loves - "too well"
 - Trusts - too much
 - Great sense of moral virtue - punishes sin
 - Sensitive nature - vivid fantasies
- "Free and open nature"
- "Constant, loving, noble nature"
- Energetic
- Desire for perfection
- Trusting

Othello's Insecurities

1. His Blackness –a moor (North Africa). Negative stereotyping by other characters.

- Lascivious
- Unnatural mate for white woman
- Practitioner of black magic

2. His Lack of Sophistication

- Not a native of Venice
- At home on battlefield, not in sophisticated Venetian society
- Lacks self-confidence
- Trusts Iago's view

3. His Age

- Older than Desdemona
- Iago plays on this insecurity

Desdemona

- Admirable
- Self-contained
- Speaks forcefully and to the point when she confronts her father
- Speaks playfully with Iago while waiting for Othello's ship
- Is known for her innocence, purity
- Can plead for Cassio - but not for herself
- Dutiful, obedient
- Can be regarded as model Elizabethan wife

Themes

The Incompatibility of Military Heroism and Love

Before and above all else, Othello is a soldier. From the earliest moments in the play, his career affects his married life. Asking "fit disposition" for his wife after being ordered to Cyprus (I.iii.234), Othello notes that "the tyrant custom . . . / Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war / My thrice-driven bed of down" (I.iii.227–229). While Desdemona is used to better "accommodation," she nevertheless accompanies her husband to Cyprus (I.iii.236). Moreover, she is unperturbed by the tempest or Turks that threatened their crossing, and genuinely curious rather than irate when she is roused from bed by the drunken brawl in Act II, scene iii. She is, indeed, Othello's "fair warrior," and he is happiest when he has her by his side in the midst of military conflict or business (II.i.179). The military also provides Othello with a means to gain acceptance in Venetian society. While the Venetians in the play are generally fearful of the prospect of Othello's social entrance into white society through his marriage to Desdemona, all Venetians respect and honor him as a soldier. Mercenary Moors were, in fact, commonplace at the time.

Othello predicates his success in love on his success as a soldier, wooing Desdemona with tales of his military travels and battles. Once the Turks are drowned—by natural rather than military might—Othello is left without anything to do: the last act of military administration we see him perform is the viewing of fortifications in the extremely short second scene of Act III. No longer having a means of proving his manhood or honor in a public setting such as the court or the battlefield, Othello begins to feel uneasy with his footing in a private setting, the bedroom. Iago capitalizes on this uneasiness, calling Othello's epileptic fit in Act IV, scene i, "[a] passion most unsuited such a man." In other words, Iago is calling Othello unsoldierly. Iago also takes care to mention that Cassio, whom Othello believes to be his competitor, saw him in his emasculating trance (IV.i.75).

Desperate to cling to the security of his former identity as a soldier while his current identity as a lover crumbles, Othello begins to confuse the one with the other. His expression of his jealousy quickly devolves from the conventional—"Farewell the tranquil mind"—to the absurd:

*Farewell the plum'd troops and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!"*

(III.iii.353–359)

One might well say that Othello is saying farewell to the wrong things—he is entirely preoccupied with his identity as a soldier. But his way of thinking is somewhat justified by its seductiveness to the audience as well. Critics and audiences alike find comfort and nobility in Othello's final speech and the anecdote of the "malignant and . . . turbaned Turk" (V.ii.362), even though in that speech, as in his speech in Act III, scene iii, Othello depends on his identity as a soldier to glorify himself in the public's memory, and to try to make his audience forget his and Desdemona's disastrous marital experiment.

The Danger of Isolation

The action of *Othello* moves from the metropolis of Venice to the island of Cyprus. Protected by military fortifications as well as by the forces of nature, Cyprus faces little threat from external forces. Once Othello, Iago, Desdemona, Emilia, and Roderigo have come to Cyprus, they have nothing to do but prey upon one another. Isolation enables many of the

play's most important effects: Iago frequently speaks in soliloquies; Othello stands apart while Iago talks with Cassio in Act IV, scene i, and is left alone onstage with the bodies of Emilia and Desdemona for a few moments in Act V, scene ii; Roderigo seems attached to no one in the play except Iago. And, most prominently, Othello is visibly isolated from the other characters by his physical stature and the color of his skin. Iago is an expert at manipulating the distance between characters, isolating his victims so that they fall prey to their own obsessions. At the same time, Iago, of necessity always standing apart, falls prey to his own obsession with revenge. The characters *cannot* be islands, the play seems to say: self-isolation as an act of self-preservation leads ultimately to self-destruction. Such self-isolation leads to the deaths of Roderigo, Iago, Othello, and even Emilia.

Motifs

Sight and Blindness

When Desdemona asks to be allowed to accompany Othello to Cyprus, she says that she “saw Othello’s visage in his mind, / And to his honours and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate” (I.iii. 250–252). Othello’s blackness, his visible difference from everyone around him, is of little importance to Desdemona: she has the power to see him for what he is in a way that even Othello himself cannot. Desdemona’s line is one of many references to different kinds of sight in the play. Earlier in Act I, scene iii, a senator suggests that the Turkish retreat to Rhodes is “a pageant / To keep us in false gaze” (I.iii.19–20). The beginning of Act II consists entirely of people staring out to sea, waiting to see the arrival of ships, friendly or otherwise. Othello, though he demands “ocular proof” (III.iii.365), is frequently convinced by things he does not see: he strips Cassio of his position as lieutenant based on the story Iago tells; he relies on Iago’s story of seeing Cassio wipe his beard with Desdemona’s handkerchief (III.iii.437–440); and he believes Cassio to be dead simply because he hears him scream. After Othello has killed himself in the final scene, Lodovico says to Iago, “Look on the tragic loading of this bed. / This is thy work. The object poisons sight. / Let it be hid” (V.ii.373–375). The action of the play depends heavily on characters *not* seeing things: Othello accuses his wife although he never sees her infidelity, and Emilia, although she watches Othello erupt into a rage about the missing handkerchief, does not figuratively “see” what her husband has done.

Plants

Iago is strangely preoccupied with plants. His speeches to Roderigo in particular make extensive and elaborate use of vegetable metaphors and conceits. Some examples are: “Our

bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme . . . the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills” (I.iii.317–322); “Though other things grow fair against the sun, / Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe” (II.iii.349–350); “And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand, / Cry ‘O sweet creature!’, then kiss me hard, / As if he plucked kisses up by the roots, / That grew upon my lips” (III.iii.425–428). The first of these examples best explains Iago’s preoccupation with the plant metaphor and how it functions within the play. Characters in this play seem to be the product of certain inevitable, natural forces, which, if left unchecked, will grow wild. Iago understands these natural forces particularly well: he is, according to his own metaphor, a good “gardener,” both of himself and of others.

Many of Iago’s botanical references concern poison: “I’ll pour this pestilence into his ear” (II.iii.330); “The Moor already changes with my poison. / Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons, / . . . / . . . Not poppy nor mandragora / Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world / Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep” (III.iii.329–336). Iago cultivates his “conceits” so that they become lethal poisons and then plants their seeds in the minds of others. The organic way in which Iago’s plots consume the other characters and determine their behavior makes his conniving, human evil seem like a force of nature. That organic growth also indicates that the minds of the other characters are fertile ground for Iago’s efforts.

Animals

Iago calls Othello a “Barbary horse,” an “old black ram,” and also tells Brabantio that his daughter and Othello are “making the beast with two backs” (I.i.117–118). In Act I, scene iii, Iago tells Roderigo, “Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon” (I.iii.312–313). He then remarks that drowning is for “cats and blind puppies” (I.iii.330–331). Cassio laments that, when drunk, he is “by and by a fool, and presently a beast!” (II.iii.284–285). Othello tells Iago, “Exchange me for a goat / When I shall turn the business of my soul / To such exsufflicate and blowed surmises” (III.iii.184–186). He later says that “[a] horned man’s a monster and a beast” (IV.i.59). Even Emilia, in the final scene, says that she will “play the swan, / And die in music” (V.ii.254–255). Like the repeated references to plants, these references to animals convey a sense that the laws of nature, rather than those of society, are the primary forces governing the characters in this play. When animal references are used with regard to Othello, as they frequently are, they reflect the racism both of characters in the play and of Shakespeare’s contemporary audience. “Barbary horse” is a vulgarity particularly appropriate in the mouth

of Iago, but even without having seen Othello, the Jacobean audience would have known from Iago's metaphor that he meant to connote a savage Moor.

Hell, Demons, and Monsters

Iago tells Othello to beware of jealousy, the "green-eyed monster which doth mock/ The meat it feeds on" (III.iii.170–171). Likewise, Emilia describes jealousy as dangerously and uncannily self-generating, a "monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (III.iv.156–157). Imagery of hell and damnation also recurs throughout Othello, especially toward the end of the play, when Othello becomes preoccupied with the religious and moral judgment of Desdemona and himself. After he has learned the truth about Iago, Othello calls Iago a devil and a demon several times in Act V, scene ii. Othello's earlier allusion to "some monster in [his] thought" ironically refers to Iago (III.iii.111). Likewise, his vision of Desdemona's betrayal is "monstrous, monstrous!" (III.iii.431). Shortly before he kills himself, Othello wishes for eternal spiritual and physical torture in hell, crying out, "Whip me, ye devils, / . . . / . . . roast me in sulphur, / Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!" (V.ii.284–287). The imagery of the monstrous and diabolical takes over where the imagery of animals can go no further, presenting the jealousy-crazed characters not simply as brutish, but as grotesque, deformed, and demonic.

Symbols

The Handkerchief

The handkerchief symbolizes different things to different characters. Since the handkerchief was the first gift Desdemona received from Othello, she keeps it about her constantly as a symbol of Othello's love. Iago manipulates the handkerchief so that Othello comes to see it as a symbol of Desdemona herself—her faith and chastity. By taking possession of it, he is able to convert it into evidence of her infidelity. But the handkerchief's importance to Iago and Desdemona derives from its importance to Othello himself. He tells Desdemona that it was woven by a 200-year-old sibyl, or female prophet, using silk from sacred worms and dye extracted from the hearts of mummified virgins. Othello claims that his mother used it to keep his father faithful to her, so, to him, the handkerchief represents marital fidelity. The pattern of strawberries (dyed with virgins' blood) on a white background strongly suggests the bloodstains left on the sheets on a virgin's wedding night, so the handkerchief implicitly suggests a guarantee of virginity as well as fidelity.

The Song "Willow"

As she prepares for bed in Act V, Desdemona sings a song about a woman who is betrayed by her lover. She was taught the song by her mother's maid, Barbary, who suffered a misfortune similar to that of the woman in the song; she even died singing "Willow." The song's lyrics suggest that both men and women are unfaithful to one another. To Desdemona, the song seems to represent a melancholy and resigned acceptance of her alienation from Othello's affections, and singing it leads her to question Emilia about the nature and practice of infidelity.

Othello - Identify the Quotation

Identify the following quotations by answering these questions:

- * Who is the speaker of the quote?
- * What does it reveal about the speaker's character?
- * What does it tell us about other characters within the play?
- * Where does it occur within the play?
- * What does it show us about the themes of the play?
- * What significant imagery do you see in the quote, and how do these images relate to the overall imagery of the play?

1. O good Iago,

What shall I do to win my lord again?

Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,

I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:

If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love

Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,

Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense

Delighted them in any other form,

Or that I do not yet, and eve did,

And ever will, (though he do shake me off

To beggarly divorcement) love him dearly,

Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much;

And his unkindness may defeat my life,

But never taint my love.

2. Rude am I in my speech,

And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace;

For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith

Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used

Their dearest action in the tented field;

*And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle;
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself.*

3. O beware, my lord, of jealousy!

*It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts — suspects, yet strongly loves!*

*4. Thanks, you the valiant of this warlike isle.
That so approve the Moor! O, let the heavens
Give him defense against the elements,
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea!
. . . His bark is stoutly timbered, and his pilot
Of very expert and approved allowance;
Therefore my hope, not surfeited to death,
Stand in bold cure.*

Macbeth

Macbeth is a dark, relentless tale of a good and brave Scottish general who, encouraged by the dark prophesies of three evil witches and by his own wife, murders Duncan, king of Scotland. Macbeth then becomes king and brings about his own destruction. Shakespeare wrote the play for James I, England's new king, who had been king of Scotland. To please James, Shakespeare set the play in Scotland, used many characters who were James' ancestors, and included witches, a subject that James had written about. The play is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, probably because King James often fell asleep during performances. Shakespeare's source for the story of Macbeth was *The History and Chronicles of Scotland* (1526), written by Hector Boece, a Scottish historian and humanist. (Many scholars question the factual reliability of Boece's work, and point out that Shakespeare took liberties with Macbeth's history for dramatic purposes.)

The Historical Background

The King of England in 1606 was James I, a Stuart. There was no Tudor successor to the throne of England. Therefore, Elizabeth I chose James VI of Scotland to succeed her. After her death in 1603, James VI of Scotland became James I of England. Elizabeth I had been instrumental in the death of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, who was beheaded. On her deathbed, Elizabeth wanted to ease her way into Heaven, so she chose Mary's son James to become the next King of England.

The appointment of James I was a good political move, unifying England and Scotland under one King.

Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in 1606, during King James' reign. King James was a devout advocate of the "Divine Right of Kings."

The setting is Scotland, King James' homeland. Banquo was an ancestor of James and is shown in the play to be a virtuous person. James believed himself to be an expert on witchcraft. James had an interest in faith healing.

Shakespeare demonstrated the Elizabethan belief that the country is stable only if the King is good and virtuous. Elizabethans believed that evil occurs in darkness, which is a recurring theme in *Macbeth*. Shakespeare included a lot of blood and murder, which the Elizabethans expected to see in a play.

The play was considered a thriller – a threat to an anointed King and the perceived evil behind the threat.

History & Macbeth

Macdonwald's rebellion and the invasion of Sweno took place at different times - Shakespeare combined them.

Duncan is supposed to have been killed by four hired servants - Shakespeare has Macbeth commit the murder.

History represents Banquo as equal in guilt with Macbeth—Shakespeare whitewashes Banquo's character as a compliment to King James.

History makes no mention of Lady Macbeth—her character is almost wholly the creation of Shakespeare.

In history, Macbeth fled before Macduff—Shakespeare shows Macbeth bravely fighting.

Used Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, & Ireland as historical reference for his plays.

Before the Curtain Opens

When the play begins, there are two wars in progress:

- Civil War - King Duncan vs. Macdonwald's rebels
- National War - Scotland, led by King Duncan, against invading Norway, led by King Sweno

Setting

- King Duncan is the King of Scotland.
- Edward the Confessor is the King of England.
- The time period is the eleventh century (1000-1099).
- Shakespeare used poetic license to bend some of the historical information.

The Scottish Play

It is believed to be bad luck to even squeak the word 'Macbeth' in a theatre. Legend has it you will lose all your friends involved in the production—horribly.

Macbeth: The Plot Overview

Macbeth is an interesting character to follow. As you read, you can see how he has changed. We first meet Macbeth as a brave soldier and later find him as a murderer who kills everyone who is in his way of the throne.

Lady Macbeth is also a well-developed character.

She is conniving and ruthless, though she does seem to have some human qualities.

The play opens in Scotland. Macbeth and Banquo have defeated their enemies in battle, leading King Duncan to give the title of thane of Cawdor to Macbeth (who doesn't know this yet).

Next, Macbeth and Banquo encounter three chanting witches. The witches speak to Macbeth as thane of Glamis, thane of Cawdor, and king hereafter. They also tell Banquo that though he will not be king, he will beget kings (i.e., his sons will be kings).

Macbeth wonders about this prediction as the king's messenger arrives. He tells him that he has been appointed thane of Cawdor. Macbeth is momentarily tempted to kill the king in order to fulfill the prophesy, but he decides not to.

Lady Macbeth, however, urges her husband to kill the king. Since the king is staying at their castle overnight, that must be when they kill him. She plans the whole thing, making the king's guards drunk. By using their daggers to kill the king and putting the king's blood on them, Lady Macbeth will frame the guards. It is now time for Macbeth to stab the king. Though he has bad visions and feelings, Macbeth kills the king. Afterwards, he is troubled. "I am afraid to think what I have done; Look on 't again I dare not," he says.

The next morning, the murder is blamed on the guards. Macbeth kills them before they can protest, explaining that he killed them out of rage. The king's sons, however, are still fearful for their lives and run away. Macbeth is crowned king. Macbeth knows that Banquo is suspicious of him. When Macbeth learns that Banquo and his son are out riding, he sends men out to kill them. They are only half successful in their job, and Banquo's son, Fleance, escapes. Meanwhile, at Macbeth's ball, the seat for Banquo is empty (because he's dead). In the empty seat, the ghost of Banquo appears, frightening Macbeth badly.

Macbeth also learns that King Duncan's son Malcolm and Lord Macduff are attempting to kill him. Unsure of what to do, Macbeth visits the three witches again. The witches, along with their queen Hecate, have planned what they will tell Macbeth in order to destroy him. They prepare a brew, singing, "Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble." When Macbeth arrives, they give him false hope, telling him three things. First, beware of Macduff. Second, "None of woman born shall harm Macbeth." Third, Macbeth will not be conquered until Birnam wood comes to the hill of Dunsinane. They also tell Macbeth that Banquo's descendents will become kings.

Macduff has left for England, so Macbeth sends people to kill his wife and children. In England, Macduff befriends the dead king's son, Malcolm, after they are sure of the other's loyalty.

Lady Macbeth has begun sleepwalking because her conscience weighs too heavily on herself. She tells about her crimes and the murder of the king, unaware that her doctor and waiting woman are watching her. She later dies, possibly from suicide.

The invaders from England have come to defeat Macbeth. The soldiers carry boughs from Birnam Wood in order to camouflage themselves. So, the witch's prophesy of defeat when "Birnam forest come to Dunsinane" starts to become true. Macbeth then faces Macduff, but isn't really scared. He has been told that he will not die from anyone woman born. But then Macduff tells him that he was not woman born; he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd". When Macbeth realizes that he has been tricked, he gives up and is killed. Macduff decapitates him, and King Duncan's son becomes the new king of Scotland.

Themes

The Corrupting Power of Unchecked Ambition

The main theme of *Macbeth*—the destruction wrought when ambition goes unchecked by moral constraints—finds its most powerful expression in the play's two main characters. Macbeth is a courageous Scottish general who is not naturally inclined to commit evil deeds, yet he deeply desires power and advancement. He kills Duncan against his better judgment and afterward stewes in guilt and paranoia. Toward the end of the play he descends into a kind of frantic, boastful madness. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, pursues her goals with greater determination, yet she is less capable of withstanding the repercussions of her immoral acts. One of Shakespeare's most forcefully drawn female characters, she spurs her husband mercilessly to kill Duncan and urges him to be strong in the murder's aftermath, but she is eventually driven to distraction by the effect of Macbeth's repeated bloodshed on her conscience. In each case, ambition—helped, of course, by the malign prophecies of the witches—is what drives the couple to ever more terrible atrocities. The problem, the play suggests, is that once one decides to use violence to further one's quest for power, it is difficult to stop. There are always potential threats to the throne—Banquo, Fleance, Macduff—and it is always tempting to use violent means to dispose of them.

The Relationship between Cruelty and Masculinity

Characters in *Macbeth* frequently dwell on issues of gender. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband by questioning his manhood, wishes that she herself could be “unsexed,” and does not contradict Macbeth when he says that a woman like her should give birth only to boys. In the same manner that Lady Macbeth goads her husband on to murder, Macbeth provokes the murderers he hires to kill Banquo by questioning their manhood. Such acts show that both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth equate masculinity with naked aggression, and whenever they converse about manhood, violence soon follows. Their understanding of manhood allows the political order depicted in the play to descend into chaos.

At the same time, however, the audience cannot help noticing that women are also sources of violence and evil. The witches’ prophecies spark Macbeth’s ambitions and then encourage his violent behavior; Lady Macbeth provides the brains and the will behind her husband’s plotting; and the only divine being to appear is Hecate, the *goddess* of witchcraft. Arguably, *Macbeth* traces the root of chaos and evil to women, which has led some critics to argue that this is Shakespeare’s most misogynistic play. While the male characters are just as violent and prone to evil as the women, the aggression of the female characters is more striking because it goes against prevailing expectations of how women ought to behave. Lady Macbeth’s behavior certainly shows that women can be as ambitious and cruel as men. Whether because of the constraints of her society or because she is not fearless enough to kill, Lady Macbeth relies on deception and manipulation rather than violence to achieve her ends.

Ultimately, the play does put forth a revised and less destructive definition of manhood. In the scene where Macduff learns of the murders of his wife and child, Malcolm consoles him by encouraging him to take the news in “manly” fashion, by seeking revenge upon Macbeth. Macduff shows the young heir apparent that he has a mistaken understanding of masculinity. To Malcolm’s suggestion, “Dispute it like a man,” Macduff replies, “I shall do so. But I must also feel it as a man” (4.3.221–223). At the end of the play, Siward receives news of his son’s death rather complacently. Malcolm responds: “He’s worth more sorrow [than you have expressed] / And that I’ll spend for him” (5.11.16–17). Malcolm’s comment shows that he has learned the lesson Macduff gave him on the sentient nature of true masculinity. It also suggests that, with Malcolm’s coronation, order will be restored to the Kingdom of Scotland.

The Difference Between Kingship and Tyranny

In the play, Duncan is always referred to as a “king,” while Macbeth soon becomes known as the “tyrant.” The difference between the two types of rulers seems to be expressed

in a conversation that occurs in Act 4, scene 3, when Macduff meets Malcolm in England. In order to test Macduff's loyalty to Scotland, Malcolm pretends that he would make an even worse king than Macbeth. He tells Macduff of his reproachable qualities—among them a thirst for personal power and a violent temperament, both of which seem to characterize Macbeth perfectly. On the other hand, Malcolm says, “The king-becoming graces / [are] justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness, / Bounty, perseverance, mercy, [and] lowliness” (4.3.92–93). The model king, then, offers the kingdom an embodiment of order and justice, but also comfort and affection. Under him, subjects are rewarded according to their merits, as when Duncan makes Macbeth thane of Cawdor after Macbeth's victory over the invaders. Most important, the king must be loyal to Scotland above his own interests. Macbeth, by contrast, brings only chaos to Scotland—symbolized in the bad weather and bizarre supernatural events—and offers no real justice, only a habit of capriciously murdering those he sees as a threat. As the embodiment of tyranny, he must be overcome by Malcolm so that Scotland can have a true king once more.

Motifs

Hallucinations

Visions and hallucinations recur throughout the play and serve as reminders of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's joint culpability for the growing body count. When he is about to kill Duncan, Macbeth sees a dagger floating in the air. Covered with blood and pointed toward the king's chamber, the dagger represents the bloody course on which Macbeth is about to embark. Later, he sees Banquo's ghost sitting in a chair at a feast, pricking his conscience by mutely reminding him that he murdered his former friend. The seemingly hardheaded Lady Macbeth also eventually gives way to visions, as she sleepwalks and believes that her hands are stained with blood that cannot be washed away by any amount of water. In each case, it is ambiguous whether the vision is real or purely hallucinatory; but, in both cases, the Macbeths read them uniformly as supernatural signs of their guilt.

Violence

Macbeth is a famously violent play. Interestingly, most of the killings take place offstage, but throughout the play the characters provide the audience with gory descriptions of the carnage, from the opening scene where the captain describes Macbeth and Banquo wading in blood on the battlefield, to the endless references to the bloodstained hands of Macbeth and his wife. The action is bookended by a pair of bloody battles: in the first, Macbeth defeats the invaders; in the second, he is slain and beheaded by Macduff. In between is a series of

murders: Duncan, Duncan's chamberlains, Banquo, Lady Macduff, and Macduff's son all come to bloody ends. By the end of the action, blood seems to be everywhere.

Prophecy

Prophecy sets *Macbeth*'s plot in motion—namely, the witches' prophecy that Macbeth will become first thane of Cawdor and then king. The weird sisters make a number of other prophecies: they tell us that Banquo's heirs will be kings, that Macbeth should beware Macduff, that Macbeth is safe till Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and that no man born of woman can harm Macbeth. Save for the prophecy about Banquo's heirs, all of these predictions are fulfilled within the course of the play. Still, it is left deliberately ambiguous whether some of them are self-fulfilling—for example, whether Macbeth wills himself to be king or is fated to be king. Additionally, as the Birnam Wood and “born of woman” prophecies make clear, the prophecies must be interpreted as riddles, since they do not always mean what they seem to mean.

Symbols

Blood

Blood is everywhere in *Macbeth*, beginning with the opening battle between the Scots and the Norwegian invaders, which is described in harrowing terms by the wounded captain in Act 1, scene 2. Once Macbeth and Lady Macbeth embark upon their murderous journey, blood comes to symbolize their guilt, and they begin to feel that their crimes have stained them in a way that cannot be washed clean. “Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?” Macbeth cries after he has killed Duncan, even as his wife scolds him and says that a little water will do the job (2.2.58–59). Later, though, she comes to share his horrified sense of being stained: “Out, damned spot; out, I say . . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?” she asks as she wanders through the halls of their castle near the close of the play (5.1.30–34). Blood symbolizes the guilt that sits like a permanent stain on the consciences of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one that hounds them to their graves.

The Weather

As in other Shakespearean tragedies, Macbeth's grotesque murder spree is accompanied by a number of unnatural occurrences in the natural realm. From the thunder and lightning that accompany the witches' appearances to the terrible storms that rage on the night of Duncan's murder, these violations of the natural order reflect corruption in the moral and political orders.

Macbeth Quiz

1. Who kills Macbeth?
(A) Macduff
(B) Banquo
(C) Lady Macbeth
(D) Malcolm
2. How many men reign as king of Scotland throughout the play?
(A) 1
(B) 2
(C) 3
(D) 4
3. Whom does Lady Macbeth frame for the murder of Duncan?
(A) Malcolm and Donalbain
(B) Duncan's drunken chamberlains
(C) The porter
(D) Macbeth
4. Who kills Banquo?
(A) Macduff
(B) Fleance
(C) Macbeth
(D) A group of murderers hired by Macbeth
5. Which of the following best describes Lady Macbeth's death?
(A) She dies offstage.
(B) She sleepwalks off of the palace wall.
(C) She declares her own guilt and stabs herself with a knife.
(D) Macduff slays her in revenge for his own wife's murder.
6. Who discovers Duncan's body?
(A) Lennox
(B) Ross
(C) Macduff
(D) Donalbain
7. Whom does Macbeth see sitting in his chair during the banquet?
(A) himself
(B) Banquo's ghost
(C) Duncan's ghost
(D) Lady Macbeth
8. What vision does Macbeth have before he kills Duncan?
(A) He sees a floating head urging him to spill blood.
(B) He sees a bloody axe lodged in Duncan's brow.
(C) He sees a pale maiden weeping in the moonlight.
(D) He sees a floating dagger pointing him to Duncan's chamber.
9. With whom are the Scots at war at the beginning of the play?

- (A) Norway
- (B) Denmark
- (C) Poland
- (D) Finland

10. Which nation's army invades Scotland at the end of the play?

- (A) Norway
- (B) France
- (C) England
- (D) Finland

11. Who is the goddess of witchcraft in the play?

- (A) Aphrodite
- (B) Hecate
- (C) Minerva
- (D) Mordred

12. Who kills Donalbain?

- (A) Macbeth
- (B) Malcolm
- (C) A group of murderers hired by Macbeth
- (D) No one

13. What happens to Lady Macbeth before she dies?

- (A) She is plagued by fits of sleepwalking.
- (B) She is haunted by the ghost of Duncan.
- (C) She sees her children killed in battle.
- (D) She sees her children killed by Macbeth.

14. Who kills Lord Siward's son?

- (A) Duncan
- (B) Lennox
- (C) Macbeth
- (D) Ross

15. Where are Scottish kings crowned?

- (A) Edinburgh
- (B) Scone
- (C) London
- (D) Dunsinane

16. Why is Macduff able to kill Macbeth despite the witches' prophecy?

- (A) He kills the witches first.
- (B) He receives a charm from Grinswindle.
- (C) He is a powerful warlock himself.
- (D) He was born by cesarean section.

17. Where is Duncan killed?

- (A) In the battle with Norway
- (B) In his bedchamber at Macbeth's castle

- (C) In his bedchamber at Forres
- (D) At Birnam Wood

18. Who flees Scotland to join Malcolm in England?

- (A) Donalbain
- (B) Ross
- (C) Macduff
- (D) Lennox

19. What was the weather like the night Duncan was murdered?

- (A) Stormy and violent
- (B) Calm and placid
- (C) Foggy and ominous
- (D) It was a night like any other night, according to Lennox

20. Who kills Lady Macbeth?

- (A) Macbeth
- (B) Macduff
- (C) Lady Macduff
- (D) Lady Macbeth

21. Who flees Scotland immediately after Duncan's death?

- (A) Macbeth
- (B) Malcolm and Donalbain
- (C) Fleance
- (D) Lennox

22. Who jokes that he works at "hell gate"?

- (A) Macbeth
- (B) Macduff
- (C) The porter
- (D) Duncan

23. What title is Macbeth given after his victory described in Act 1?

- (A) Thane of Cawdor
- (B) Thane of Ross
- (C) King of Scotland
- (D) Prince of Cumberland

24. Who tells Macduff that his family has been killed?

- (A) Donalbain
- (B) Macbeth
- (C) Lady Macduff
- (D) Ross

25. How does Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane?

- (A) By magic
- (B) Through an earthquake
- (C) It doesn't
- (D) Malcolm's army hides behind cut-off tree branches

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet is one of Shakespeare's best-known tragedies and one of the most famous love stories of all times. It was written around 1594-95 in the first phase of his career: the years of apprenticeship.

With Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare invented a new type of tragedy: the lyrical tragedy. In fact he was the first dramatist to put love at the centre of the tragedy as the real cause of the tragic events.

Tragedy - Romeo and Juliet's love seems destined to end in death.

Lyrical - it is built on the language and images that are typical of Renaissance love poetry (balcony scene).

The story is set in Verona and is about two young lovers, Romeo and Juliet, who fall in love with each other at the Capulet's feast. However they soon discover they belong to two opposing houses. So they decide to marry but this choice will be followed by two deaths: Romeo's best friend, Mercutio, is killed by Tybald who in turn is killed by Romeo. After this crime Romeo will be exiled to Mantua. Meanwhile, Juliet's father orders Juliet to marry Paris. In order to escape Juliet takes a drug given to her by friar Lawrence to put her in a deathlike trance, so Romeo will be able to rescue her. But Romeo won't be warned and thinking Juliet is dead, he will kill himself with a fatal poison. Waking from her trance, Juliet sees Romeo dead, so she takes his dagger and she kills herself. When the Capulets and Montagues discover the tragedy, they'll become reconciled.

Characters: The Montagues

Romeo Montague is one of the main characters of the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet". He is the only child and heir of the Montague, an eminent and noble family of Verona.

Romeo is a sixteen-year old , beautiful, intelligent and sensitive boy, although he is impulsive and immature. He has skills in fighting with the sword; he also reads poems and during his research for the ideal love, he tries to emulate and take inspiration from the typical sonnets, talking about true love and the perfect woman.

The name Romeo, in popular culture, has become nearly synonymous with "lover". The power of Romeo's love, however, often obscures a clear vision of his character, which is far more complex. In fact Romeo's deep capacity for love is merely a part of his larger capacity for intense feeling of all kinds. To put it in another way, it is possible to describe Romeo as

lack of moderation. Such extreme behavior dominates Romeo's character throughout the play and contributes to the ultimate tragedy that befalls on the lovers.

He is intelligent, quick-witted, fond of verbal jousting, loyal, and unafraid of danger.

The character of Romeo is quite similar to Pyramus, the main character of an ancient babylonian myth, which was well-known in the Roman and Greek society. Pyramus was madly in love with Tisbe. However, due to the hate of the respective families, the two lovers had to plan an escape. The plan failed and Pyramus, thinking that Tisbe was dead, stabbed himself. Later the girl came and after seeing her dead lover, she stabbed herself as well.

Mercutio is one of the most memorable characters in all of Shakespeare's works. He's a close friend to Romeo. Though he constantly puns, jokes, and teases, Mercutio is not a mere jester or prankster. Mercutio believes that specific people (the Montague and the Capulets) are responsible for his death rather than some external impersonal force.

Friar Lawrence occupies a strange position in Romeo and Juliet. He is a kindhearted cleric who helps Romeo and Juliet throughout the play. He performs their wedding and gives generally good advice. He is the sole religious figure in the play. But Friar Lawrence is also the most scheming and political of the characters in the play: he marries Romeo and Juliet as a part of a plan to end the civil strife in Verona.

Characters: The Capulets

Juliet Capulet is the main character of the tragedy "Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare. She is the only daughter of the Capulets, wealthy merchants of Verona. Juliet is nearly 14 years old. Juliet is sweet, romantic and naive. She hasn't experienced yet feelings of love for a man. She will fall in love with Romeo, the son of the Montagues, the enemy of the Capulets. Her parents want Juliet to marry a high-ranking noble man, but she refuses and, after some arguments and hostile events, commits suicide.

Having not yet reached her fourteenth birthday, Juliet is of an age that stands on the border between immaturity and maturity. At the beginning of the play she seems merely an obedient and naive child. When Lady Capulet mentions Paris's interest in marrying Juliet, Juliet dutifully responds that she will try to see if she can love him.

Juliet's first meeting with Romeo propels her full-force toward adulthood. Though profoundly in love with him, Juliet is able to see and criticize Romeo's rash decisions and his tendency to romanticize things. After Romeo kills Tybalt and is banished, Juliet does not follow him blindly.

When she wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she does not kill herself out of feminine weakness, but rather out of an intensity of love, just as Romeo did.

Juliet's suicide actually requires more nerve than Romeo's: while he swallows the poison, she stabs herself through the heart with a dagger.

Juliet's development from a innocent girl into a self-assured, loyal, and capable woman is one of Shakespeare's early triumphs of characterization. It also makes one of his most confident and rounded treatments of female character.

Juliet's nurse is the woman who breast-fed Juliet when she was a baby and has cared for Juliet her entire life. A vulgar and sentimental character, the Nurse provides comic relief with her frequently inappropriate remarks and speeches. The nurse is Juliet's faithful confidante and loyal intermediary in Juliet's affair with Romeo. The nurse believes in love and wants Juliet to have a nice-looking husband, but the idea that Juliet would want to sacrifice herself for love is incomprehensible to her.

Tybalt - He's Juliet's cousin from her mother's side. He becomes easily aggressive, violent, and quick to use his sword, especially when he feels his pride has been injured. He loathes the Montagues. He's killed by Romeo, after he killed Mercutio.

Themes

Fate and chance

The mechanism of fate works in the whole story of the two lovers: the hate between their families; the horrible series of accidents that ruin plans; and the tragic timing of Romeo's suicide and Juliet's awakening. These events are not mere coincidences, but rather manifestations of fate that help bring about the unavoidable consequence of the young lovers' deaths.

There are three interpretations:

- In its first address to the audience, the Chorus states that Romeo and Juliet are “star-crossed”—that is to say that fate (a power often vested in the movements of the stars) controls them.
- As a force determined by the powerful social institutions that influence Romeo and Juliet's choices.
- As well as fate as a force that emerges from Romeo and Juliet's very personalities.

Love

Romeo and Juliet has become forever associated with love. The play has become an iconic story of love and passion, and the name "Romeo" is still used to describe young lovers. Shakespeare's treatment of love in the play is complex and multifaceted. The play describes

the chaos and passion of being in love, combining images of love, violence, death, religion and family.

- Fickle love

Some characters fall in and out of love very quickly in the play. Romeo is in love with Rosaline at the start of the play, and this is presented as an immature infatuation.

Paris' love for Juliet is born out of tradition, not passion. He has identified her as a good candidate for a wife.

- Romantic love

Our classic idea of romantic love is represented in Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare presents this as a force of nature, so strong that it transcends societal conventions. Perhaps Romeo and Juliet's love is fate, their love is given cosmic significance which can therefore overturn the social boundaries of Verona. Their love is prohibited by the Capulet and Montague households, and Juliet is to marry Paris. But, they inevitably find themselves drawn to each other.

- The Forcefulness of Love

The play focuses on romantic love, specifically the intense passion that emerges at first sight between Romeo and Juliet. In Romeo and Juliet, love is a violent, ecstatic, overpowering force that annuls all other values, loyalties, and emotions. In the course of the play, the young lovers are driven to defy their entire social world: families, friends, and ruler.

- Love as a cause of violence

The themes of death and violence permeate Romeo and Juliet, and they are always connected to passion, whether that passion is love or hate. The connection between hate, violence, and death seems obvious.

The passionate love between Romeo and Juliet is connected to death from the moment of its birth. From that point on, love seems to push the lovers closer to love and violence, not farther from it. In the play, love emerges as an amoral thing, leading as much to destruction as to happiness.

- Love as a friendship

In the tragedy of Romeo Juliet is also stressed the important relationship between Romeo and his best friend Mercutio. The two boys are linked by indissoluble

friendship, in the first act their relation consists of jokes and teasing; with the death of Mercutio instead their relationship turns into a thirst for vengeance on the part of Romeo who wants to avenge the death of his friend.

Duality (light/dark)

One of the play's most consistent visual themes is the contrast between light and dark, often in terms of night/day imagery.

The idea of the night, however, in this tragedy is different from the traditional idea of night in the Renaissance poetry.

In fact, the night is no longer seen as the time of day when evil prevails, but it is at night that Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love. On the contrary, the day becomes the scene of fighting between the two families.

Time

Time plays an important role in the language and plot of the play. Both Romeo and Juliet struggle to maintain an imaginary world void of time in the face of the harsh realities that surround them.

Romeo and Juliet fight time to make their love last forever. In the end, the only way they seem to defeat time is through a death that makes them immortal through art.

Symbols

Poison

Friar Lawrence remarks that every plant, herb, and stone has its own special properties, and that nothing exists in nature that cannot be put to both good and bad uses. Thus, poison is not intrinsically evil, but is instead a natural substance made lethal by human hands.

Poison symbolizes human society's tendency to poison good things and make them fatal, just as the senseless Capulet-Montague feud turns Romeo and Juliet's love to poison.

Thumb-biting

The buffoonish Samson begins a battle between the Montagues and Capulets by flicking his thumbnail from behind his upper teeth, an insulting gesture known as biting the thumb.

Thumb-biting, as an essentially meaningless gesture, represents the foolishness of the entire Capulet/Montague feud and the stupidity of violence in general.

Queen Mab

Mercutio delivers a speech about the fairy Queen Mab, who rides through the night on her tiny wagon bringing dreams to sleepers.

Queen Mab and her carriage do not merely symbolize the dreams of sleepers, they also symbolize the power of waking fantasies, daydreams, and desires. Through the Queen Mab

imagery, Mercutio suggests that all desires and fantasies are as nonsensical and fragile as Mab, and that they are basically corrupt. This point of view starkly contrasts with that of Romeo and Juliet, who see their love as real.

The Moral Teaching

Romeo and Juliet is the story of a true and unprejudiced love. The two lovers love each other even if they belong to two enemy families that prevent their love. Before a great love, all the prejudices must be overcome. Unfortunately the parents of Romeo and Juliet realize it too late. It will be the death of the two young people which will bring peace between Montagues and Capulets.

The Original Story of Romeo and Juliet

Masuccio Salernitano was the first author to write the original version of Romeo and Juliet in 1476. It was set in Siena and the lovers' names were different.

Luigi da Porto, in 1530, published a modified version of the lovers' story. The names of the two protagonists were changed into Romeo and Juliet and the story was set in Verona.

Matteo Bandello, after Luigi da Porto, published his own version of Romeo and Juliet, which inspired William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's improvements

Time of the action: he compresses the time of the action from 9 months to 4 days and nights. In this way he stresses the dramatic tension: things happen very fast and quickly.

Romeo and Juliet's death: in the previous version Juliet wakes up from the tomb when Romeo is still alive, while in Shakespeare's story Romeo kills himself before Juliet wakes up; time and fate are hand to hand in the fatal ending of the lovers' death.

Contrast between young and old: Shakespeare outlines the generation gap between parents and children, old and young. The young lovers' death are seen as a necessary sacrifice to stop the parents' feud. The two lovers are generous and disinterested against the old people presented as tyrannical and cruel.

Why was Romeo and Juliet so successful?

Romeo and Juliet stretches across all generations and cultures in terms of theme. Artists have made endless paintings and prints illustrating the work. Composers have written musical suites and operas and ballets set to the theme. There are also a number of filmed versions of the play. The fact that the play is seemingly read in every junior-high and high-school undoubtedly adds to its "fame".

The dueling families, the teenage quest to interpret the difference between infatuation and love, the role of a family friend or mentor and how to deal with the blows that life brings

you are themes of the human condition. People may deal with these issues at different times in their lives, but almost everyone deals with at least one of these issues if not all.

Romeo and Juliet – The Balcony Scene

Pre-Reading Exercise

1. What kind of sentiments do you expect the two young lovers to express? Read the passage and see if you were right.

Scene II. Capulet's Garden

Romeo.

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

[Juliet appears above at a window.]

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east and Juliet is the sun!

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief

That thou her maid art far more fair than she.

Be not her maid, since she is envious;

Her vestal livery is but sick and green,

And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

It is my lady, O, it is my love!

O that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?

Her eye discourses, I will answer it.

I am too bold: 'tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,

As daylight doth a lamp. Her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand

O that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

Juliet.

Ay me!

Romeo.

She speaks.

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-puffing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

Juliet.

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Romeo.

[Aside.] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

Juliet.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

Romeo.

I take thee at thy word.

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptis'd;

Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

Text Analysis

1. Summarize the gist of Romeo's monologue and Juliet's. At what point does she notice his presence?
2. What imagery regarding night and day is used in this text? What is the effect of this?
3. At the beginning of his speech, Romeo moves from a fairly conventional mood to a more direct one. Where does his language become more spontaneous and direct?
4. What is the significance of Romeo's line 'Call me but love, and I'll be new baptis'd'?
5. Line 11 breaks the regularity of the pentameter, for there are two missing feet. What is the effect of this pause?
6. What is Romeo's reaction when Juliet begins to speak?
7. What does Juliet want Romeo to do?
8. How do Romeo and Juliet transform social conventions?
 - a) Name versus self
 - b) Family ties
 - c) Personal identity

Glossary of Drama Terms

Allegory

A symbolic narrative in which the surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory often takes the form of a story in which the characters represent moral qualities. The most famous example in English is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the name of the central character, Pilgrim, epitomizes the book's allegorical nature. Kay Boyle's story "Astronomer's Wife" and Christina Rossetti's poem "Up-Hill" both contain allegorical elements.

Alliteration

The repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words. Example: "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy."

Antagonist

A character or force against which another character struggles. Creon is Antigone's antagonist in Sophocles' play *Antigone*; Teiresias is the antagonist of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

Aside

Words spoken by an actor directly to the audience, which are not "heard" by the other characters on stage during a play. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago voices his inner thoughts a number of times as "asides" for the play's audience.

Assonance

The repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or a line of poetry or prose, as in "I rose and told him of my woe." Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" contains assonantal "I's" in the following lines: "How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, / Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself."

Catastrophe

The action at the end of a tragedy that initiates the denouement or falling action of a play. One example is the dueling scene in Act V of *Hamlet* in which Hamlet dies, along with Laertes, King Claudius, and Queen Gertrude.

Catharsis

The purging of the feelings of pity and fear that, according to Aristotle, occur in the audience of tragic drama. The audience experiences catharsis at the end of the play, following the catastrophe.

Character

An imaginary person that inhabits a literary work. Literary characters may be major or minor, static (unchanging) or dynamic (capable of change). In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Desdemona is a major character, but one who is static, like the minor character Bianca. *Othello* is a major character who is dynamic, exhibiting an ability to change.

Characterization

The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss Emily in Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" through what she says, how she lives, and what she does.

Chorus

A group of characters in Greek tragedy (and in later forms of drama), who comment on the action of a play without participation in it. Their leader is the choragos. Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King* both contain an explicit chorus with a choragos. Tennessee Williams's *Glass Menagerie* contains a character who functions like a chorus.

Climax

The turning point of the action in the plot of a play or story. The climax represents the point of greatest tension in the work. The climax of John Updike's "A & P," for example, occurs when Sammy quits his job as a cashier.

Comedy

A type of drama in which the characters experience reversals of fortune, usually for the better. In comedy, things work out happily in the end. Comic drama may be either romantic--characterized by a tone of tolerance and geniality--or satiric. Satiric works offer a darker vision of human nature, one that ridicules human folly. Shaw's *Arms and the Man* is a romantic comedy; Chekhov's *Marriage Proposal* is a satiric comedy.

Comic relief

The use of a comic scene to interrupt a succession of intensely tragic dramatic moments. The comedy of scenes offering comic relief typically parallels the tragic action that the scenes interrupt. Comic relief is lacking in Greek tragedy, but occurs regularly in Shakespeare's tragedies. One example is the opening scene of Act V of Hamlet, in which a gravedigger banters with Hamlet.

Complication

An intensification of the conflict in a story or play. Complication builds up, accumulates, and develops the primary or central conflict in a literary work. Frank O'Connor's story "Guests of the Nation" provides a striking example, as does Ralph Ellison's "Battle Royal."

Conflict

A struggle between opposing forces in a story or play, usually resolved by the end of the work. The conflict may occur within a character as well as between characters. Lady Gregory's one-act play *The Rising of the Moon* exemplifies both types of conflict as the Policeman wrestles with his conscience in an inner conflict and confronts an antagonist in the person of the ballad singer.

Connotation

The associations called up by a word that goes beyond its dictionary meaning. Poets, especially, tend to use words rich in connotation. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" includes intensely connotative language, as in these lines: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

Convention

A customary feature of a literary work, such as the use of a chorus in Greek tragedy, the inclusion of an explicit moral in a fable, or the use of a particular rhyme scheme in a villanelle. Literary conventions are defining features of particular literary genres, such as novel, short story, ballad, sonnet, and play.

Denotation

The dictionary meaning of a word. Writers typically play off a word's denotative meaning against its connotations, or suggested and implied associational implications. In the following lines from Peter Meinke's "Advice to My Son" the references to flowers and fruit, bread and wine denote specific things, but also suggest something beyond the literal, dictionary meanings of the words:

To be specific, between the peony and rose
Plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;
Beauty is nectar and nectar, in a desert, saves
and always serve bread with your wine.
But, son, always serve wine.

Denouement

The resolution of the plot of a literary work. The denouement of Hamlet takes place after the catastrophe, with the stage littered with corpses. During the denouement Fortinbras makes an entrance and a speech, and Horatio speaks his sweet lines in praise of Hamlet.

Deus ex machina

A god who resolves the entanglements of a play by supernatural intervention. The Latin phrase means, literally, "a god from the machine." The phrase refers to the use of artificial means to resolve the plot of a play.

Dialogue

The conversation of characters in a literary work. In fiction, dialogue is typically enclosed within quotation marks. In plays, characters' speech is preceded by their names.

Diction

The selection of words in a literary work. A work's diction forms one of its centrally important literary elements, as writers use words to convey action, reveal character, imply attitudes, identify themes, and suggest values. We can speak of the diction particular to a character, as in Iago's and Desdemona's very different ways of speaking in Othello. We can also refer to a poet's diction as represented over the body of his or her work, as in Donne's or Hughes's diction.

Dramatic monologue

A type of poem in which a speaker addresses a silent listener. As readers, we overhear the speaker in a dramatic monologue. Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" represents the epitome of the genre.

Dramatis personae

Latin for the characters or persons in a play. Included among the dramatis personae of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* are Willy Loman, the salesman, his wife Linda, and his sons Biff and Happy.

Exposition

The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, for instance, begins with a conversation between the two central characters, a dialogue that fills the audience in on events that occurred before the action of the play begins, but which are important in the development of its plot.

Fable

A brief story with an explicit moral provided by the author. Fables typically include animals as characters. Their most famous practitioner in the west is the ancient Greek writer Aesop, whose "The Dog and the Shadow" and "The Wolf and the Mastiff" are included in this book.

Falling action

In the plot of a story or play, the action following the climax of the work that moves it towards its denouement or resolution. The falling action of *Othello* begins after Othello realizes that Iago is responsible for plotting against him by spurring him on to murder his wife, Desdemona.

Fiction

An imagined story, whether in prose, poetry, or drama. Ibsen's *Nora* is fictional, a "make-believe" character in a play, as are Hamlet and Othello. Characters like Robert Browning's Duke and Duchess from his poem "My Last Duchess" are fictional as well, though they may be based on actual historical individuals. And, of course, characters in stories and novels are fictional, though they, too, may be based, in some way, on real people. The important thing to remember is that writers embellish and embroider and alter actual life when they use real life

as the basis for their work. They fictionalize facts, and deviate from real-life situations as they "make things up."

Figurative language

A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words. Examples include hyperbole or exaggeration, litotes or understatement, simile and metaphor, which employ comparison, and synecdoche and metonymy, in which a part of a thing stands for the whole.

Flashback

An interruption of a work's chronology to describe or present an incident that occurred prior to the main time frame of a work's action. Writers use flashbacks to complicate the sense of chronology in the plot of their works and to convey the richness of the experience of human time. Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" includes flashbacks.

Foil

A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story. Laertes, in Hamlet, is a foil for the main character; in Othello, Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

Foot

A metrical unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, an iamb or iambic foot is represented by ~', that is, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. Frost's line "Whose woods these are I think I know" contains four iambs, and is thus an iambic foot.

Foreshadowing

Hints of what is to come in the action of a play or a story. Ibsen's A Doll's House includes foreshadowing as does Synge's Riders to the Sea. So, too, do Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" and Chopin's "Story of an Hour."

Fourth wall

The imaginary wall of the box theater setting, supposedly removed to allow the audience to

see the action. The fourth wall is especially common in modern and contemporary plays such as Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Wasserstein's *Tender Offer*, and Wilson's *Fences*.

Gesture

The physical movement of a character during a play. Gesture is used to reveal character, and may include facial expressions as well as movements of other parts of an actor's body. Sometimes a playwright will be very explicit about both bodily and facial gestures, providing detailed instructions in the play's stage directions. Shaw's *Arms and the Man* includes such stage directions. See Stage direction.

Hyperbole

A figure of speech involving exaggeration. John Donne uses hyperbole in his poem: "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star."

Iamb

An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in to-DAY. See Foot.

Image

A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea. Imagery refers to the pattern of related details in a work. In some works one image predominates either by recurring throughout the work or by appearing at a critical point in the plot. Often writers use multiple images throughout a work to suggest states of feeling and to convey implications of thought and action. Some modern poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, write poems that lack discursive explanation entirely and include only images. Among the most famous examples is Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro":

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

Imagery

The pattern of related comparative aspects of language, particularly of images, in a literary work. Imagery of light and darkness pervade James Joyce's stories "Araby," "The Boarding House," and "The Dead." So, too, does religious imagery.

Irony

A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens

and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters. Flannery O'Connor's short stories employ all these forms of irony, as does Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."

Literal language

A form of language in which writers and speakers mean exactly what their words denote.

See Figurative language, Denotation, and Connotation.

Metaphor

A comparison between essentially unlike things without an explicitly comparative word such as like or as. An example is "My love is a red, red rose,"

From Burns's "A Red, Red Rose." Langston Hughes's "Dream Deferred" is built entirely of metaphors. Metaphor is one of the most important of literary uses of language. Shakespeare employs a wide range of metaphor in his sonnets and his plays, often in such density and profusion that readers are kept busy analyzing and interpreting and unraveling them.

Meter

The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems. See Foot and Iamb.

Metonymy

A figure of speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. An example: "We have always remained loyal to the crown." See Synecdoche.

Monologue

A speech by a single character without another character's response.

Narrator

The voice and implied speaker of a fictional work, to be distinguished from the actual living author. For example, the narrator of Joyce's "Araby" is not James Joyce himself, but a literary fictional character created expressly to tell the story. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" contains a communal narrator, identified only as "we."

Onomatopoeia

The use of words to imitate the sounds they describe. Words such as buzz and crack are onomatopoeic. The following line from Pope's "Sound and Sense" onomatopoeically imitates in sound what it describes:

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labors, and the words move slow.

Most often, however, onomatopoeia refers to words and groups of words, such as Tennyson's description of the "murmur of innumerable bees," which attempts to capture the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing.

Parody

A humorous, mocking imitation of a literary work, sometimes sarcastic, but often playful and even respectful in its playful imitation. Examples include Bob McKenty's parody of Frost's "Dust of Snow" and Kenneth Koch's parody of Williams's "This is Just to Say."

Pathos

A quality of a play's action that stimulates the audience to feel pity for a character. Pathos is always an aspect of tragedy, and may be present in comedy as well.

Personification

The endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities. An example: "The yellow leaves flaunted their color gaily in the breeze." Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" includes personification.

Plot

The unified structure of incidents in a literary work. See Conflict, Climax, Denouement, and Flashback.

Point of view

The angle of vision from which a story is narrated. See Narrator. A work's point of view can be: first person, in which the narrator is a character or an observer, respectively; objective, in which the narrator knows or appears to know no more than the reader; omniscient, in which the narrator knows everything about the characters; and limited omniscient, which allows the narrator to know some things about the characters but not everything.

Props

Articles or objects that appear on stage during a play. The Christmas tree in *A Doll's House* and Laura's collection of glass animals in *The Glass Menagerie* are examples.

Protagonist

The main character of a literary work--Hamlet and Othello in the plays named after them, Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Paul in Lawrence's "Rocking-Horse Winner."

Quatrain

A four-line stanza in a poem, the first four lines and the second four lines in a Petrarchan sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.

Recognition

The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is. Sophocles' Oedipus comes to this point near the end of *Oedipus the King*; Othello comes to a similar understanding of his situation in Act V of *Othello*.

Resolution

The sorting out or unraveling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story.

Reversal

The point at which the action of the plot turns in an unexpected direction for the protagonist. Oedipus's and Othello's recognitions are also reversals. They learn what they did not expect to learn.

Rising action

A set of conflicts and crises that constitute the part of a play's or story's plot leading up to the climax.

Satire

A literary work that criticizes human misconduct and ridicules vices, stupidities, and follies. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a famous example. Chekhov's *Marriage Proposal* and O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," have strong satirical elements.

Setting

The time and place of a literary work that establish its context. The stories of Sandra Cisneros are set in the American southwest in the mid to late 20th century, those of James Joyce in Dublin, Ireland in the early 20th century.

Simile

A figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using like, as, or as though. An example: "My love is like a red, red rose."

Soliloquy

A speech in a play that is meant to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on the stage. If there are no other characters present, the soliloquy represents the character thinking aloud. Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech is an example.

Stage direction

A playwright's descriptive or interpretive comments that provide readers (and actors) with information about the dialogue, setting, and action of a play. Modern playwrights, including Ibsen, Shaw, Miller, and Williams tend to include substantial stage directions, while earlier playwrights typically used them more sparsely, implicitly, or not at all.

Staging

The spectacle a play presents in performance, including the position of actors on stage, the scenic background, the props and costumes, and the lighting and sound effects. Tennessee Williams describes these in his detailed stage directions for *The Glass Menagerie* and also in his production notes for the play.

Stanza

A division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form--either with similar or identical patterns or rhyme and meter, or with variations from one stanza to another. The stanzas of Gertrude Schnackenberg's "Signs" are regular; those of Rita Dove's "Canary" are irregular.

Style

The way an author chooses words, arranges them in sentences or in lines of dialogue or verse, and develops ideas and actions with description, imagery, and other literary techniques.

Subject

What a story or play is about; to be distinguished from plot and theme. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is about the decline of a particular way of life endemic to the American south before the civil war. Its plot concerns how Faulkner describes and organizes the actions of the story's characters. Its theme is the overall meaning Faulkner conveys.

Subplot

A subsidiary or subordinate or parallel plot in a play or story that coexists with the main plot. The story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern forms a subplot with the overall plot of Hamlet.

Symbol

An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself. The glass unicorn in *The Glass Menagerie*, the rocking horse in "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the road in Frost's "The Road Not Taken"--all are symbols in this sense.

Synecdoche

A figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole. An example: "Lend me a hand."

Syntax

The grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue. The organization of words and phrases and clauses in sentences of prose, verse, and dialogue. In the following example, normal syntax (subject, verb, object order) is inverted:

"Whose woods these are I think I know."

Tercet

A three-line stanza, as the stanzas in Frost's "Acquainted With the Night" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The three-line stanzas or sections that together constitute the sestet of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet.

Theme

The idea of a literary work abstracted from its details of language, character, and action, and cast in the form of a generalization. See discussion of Dickinson's "Crumbling is not an instant's Act."

Tone

The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work, as, for example, Flannery O'Connor's ironic tone in her "Good Country People."

Tragedy

A type of drama in which the characters experience reversals of fortune, usually for the worse. In tragedy, catastrophe and suffering await many of the characters, especially the hero. Examples include Shakespeare's Othello and Hamlet; Sophocles' Antigone and Oedipus the King, and Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman.

Tragic flaw

A weakness or limitation of character, resulting in the fall of the tragic hero. Othello's jealousy and too trusting nature is one example.

Tragic hero

A privileged, exalted character of high repute, who, by virtue of a tragic flaw and fate, suffers a fall from glory into suffering. Sophocles' Oedipus is an example.

Understatement

A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker says less than what he or she means; the opposite of exaggeration. The last line of Frost's "Birches" illustrates this literary device: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

Unities

The idea that a play should be limited to a specific time, place, and story line. The events of the plot should occur within a twenty-four hour period, should occur within a give geographic locale, and should tell a single story. Aristotle argued that Sophocles' Oedipus the King was the perfect play for embodying the unities.

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