

WHY DOES IT
SEEM SO HARD
TO READ?

1. It was originally written for the stage not the page." (Ralph Alan Cohen)
2. Shakespeare had the same love of reforming and rearranging words as seen in such places as hip-hop and sports casting today. His plays reflect an excitement and inventiveness about language.
3. Different people speak in different ways and this is reflected in the language used.

Station 1: What can I do to make Shakespeare easier to understand?

1. Read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark, rather than reading one line at a time. Sentences often stretch over several lines.

STATION 2. SHAKESPEARE OFTEN USES METAPHORS TO DESCRIBE THINGS IN UNIQUE WAYS. THE WORDS USED ARE FIGURATIVE AND OFTEN DON'T LITERALLY REFLECT MEANING.

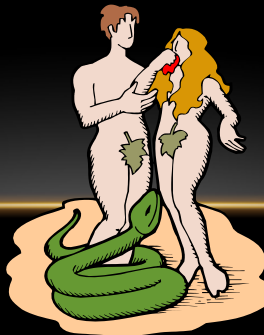
BELOW, THE KING COMPARES MACBETH TO A TREE HE CAN PLANT AND GROW:

“ I HAVE BEGUN TO PLANT THEE, AND WILL LABOUR TO MAKE THEE FULL OF GROWING.”

2. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

STATION 3. SHAKESPEARE USES MANY ALLUSIONS – REFERENCES TO PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS NOT DIRECTLY EXPLAINED BY THE WRITER. SOMETIMES, NOT BEING FAMILIAR WITH THE REFERENCE CAN CAUSE CONFUSION.

4.



Station 4. Watch for inverted sentence structure:

If you can determine what Yoda is saying, you can figure out Shakespeare's inverted sentences.

“Never was seen so black a day as this:”

-Romeo and Juliet IV, v can be rearranged to

A day as black as this was never seen.

Practice inverting with Yoda's Quotes:

Patience you must have....



Station 5

Watch out for Word Play

- Puns – achieve humor or emphasis by playing off ambiguities - vagueness – which definition of that word did he mean?
- Double entendres – puns based on words that have second meanings - sometimes sexual in nature
- Malapropisms – these occur when one word is confused with another word. He was at the pineapple of success rather than - He was at the pinnacle of success.

Kate. I pray you, sir, is it your will

To make a stale of me amongst these mates?

Hortensio. Mates, maid? How mean you that? No mates for you

Unless you were of gentler, milder mold.—(I, i, 57-60) [p. 59]

Often the banter has bawdy (sexual) tone:

Petruchio. Myself am moved two woo thee for my wife.

Kate. Moved! In good time, let him that moved you hither

Remove you hence. I knew you at the first You were a movable.

Petruchio. Why, what's a movable?

Kate. A joint stool.

Petruchio. Thou has hit it; come sit on me.

Kate. Asses are made to bear and so are you.

Petruchio. Women are made to bear and so are you..—(II, i, 194-201) [p. 85]

Characters can deliberately misunderstand each other:

This is about knocking on a door, not hitting someone.

Petruchio. Here, sirrah Grumio, knock, I say.

Grumio. Knock, sir? Whom should I knock? Is there any man has rebused your worship?

Petruchio. Villain, I say, knock me here soundly.

Grumio. Knock you here sir? Why, O sir, what am I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir?

Petruchio. Villain, I say, knock me at this gate. And rap me well or I'll knock your knave's pate.—(I, ii, 5-12) [p. 67]

Station 6. Asides—Shakespeare's characters often make comments to each other or to the audience the other characters never hear.

These asides usually comment on the action. For example:

- Hortensio. I promised we would be contributors and bear his charge of wooing, whatsoe'er.
- Gremio. And so we will, provided that he win her.
- Grumio. [Aside] I would I were as sure of a good dinner.—
(I, ii, 214-217) [p. 74]

Station 7. Soliloquy—Speeches in which characters think out loud, alone on stage, for the benefit of the audience. Sometimes they are talking directly to the audience, sometimes not. Petruchio does this prior to his first meeting with Kate:

I'll attend her here
And woo her with some spirit when she comes.
Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly washed with dew.
Say she be mute and will not speak a word,
Then I'll commend her volubility
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks
As though she bid me stay by her a week.
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day
When I shall ask the banns and when be married.
But here she comes, and now, Petruchio, speak.—(II, i, 168-181) [p. 84]

Station 8: Changes in Vocabulary



See station 8 translation activities And the crossword puzzle at the

Back of your notes handout.

Familiar looking words may have unfamiliar meanings.

Archaic words may no longer be used, but are familiar enough to be easily understood.

Obsolete words are words that are no longer used.
Check the book for help with these.

STATION 8: BE
FAMILIAR WITH
COMMON ARCHAIC
WORDS.

Dost thou know the
meaning of these
words?

Prithee

Thane

Kanve

Sirrah

Wherefore

Woo

Station 9. Counting on Contractions:

Matching activity in notes packet

Contractions are words that leave letters out.
See if you can figure out the meaning of these contractions:

Be't

on't

wi'

Do't

t'

'sblood

'gainst

ta'en I'

'tis

e'en

'bout

Know'st

'twill

Ne'er

o'

o'er

**Station 10: Even worse than
changing the meaning of words,
using words no one ever uses any more
rearranging the order of words
making contractions out of lots of words**

Sometimes, Shakespeare completely
left words out.

This is a figurative device called an ellipsis.

“I neither know it nor can learn of him.”

I neither know (the cause of) it,
nor can (I) learn (about it from) him.

Station 11 Scenes which take place offstage—description of offstage action:

Tell thou the tale. But hadst thou not
crossed me thou shouldst have heard how her
horse fell and she under her horse. Thou shouldst
have heard in how miry a place, how she was bemoiled,
how he left her with the horse upon her,
how he beat me because her horse stumbled, how
she waded through the dirt to pluck him off me;
how he swore, how she prayed that never prayed
before; how I cried, how the horses ran away
—(Grumio, IV, i, 68-80) [pp. 110-111]

Types of language used —Prose is generally reserved for servants or other low-born characters.

Sly, when he believes that he is himself, speaks in prose, but when he thinks he is nobility, he speaks in poetry.

Good for figuring out what social class a character is.

Station 12: The conventions of the Elizabethan stage

a. The play-within-a-play—A play performed as part of the story for some dramatic purpose. For example, in *Hamlet*, Hamlet asks a group of players to perform a play with a plot similar to what he suspects are the actual events of his father's murder. The main action of *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play-within-a-play.

Station 12 con't:

- b. The use of disguises—A character puts on a disguise to hide, trick, or spy on others. Shakespeare's audience accepted the fact that none of the other characters ever recognized the person disguised.
- c. Love at first sight—This is a common device in romantic comedies.
- d. Fluid action—Shakespeare's stage used little in the way of set or props; everything was portable. Modern critics called Shakespeare's plays filmic, since the action can move quickly from one locale to another in much the same way a movie script can. The action of this play shifts between various locations in Padua and Petruchio's house.