



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

Shakespeare Studies

Postgraduate Programme in
English Language & Literature



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

COURSE CODE: M21EG02DC

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Shakespeare Studies

Course Code: M21EG02DC

Semester-I

Master of Arts English Language and Literature Self Learning Material

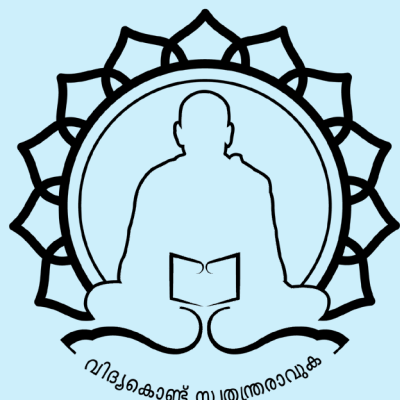


SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Documentation



**SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Printed and published on behalf of Sreenarayanaguru Open University by Registrar, SGOU, Kollam.

www.sgou.ac.in



ISBN 978-81-961194-1-6



Academic Committee

Dr. P.P. Ajayakumar

Dr. B.S. Jamuna

Dr. Lal C.A.

Dr. Premkumar K.P.

Dr. Meena T. Pillai

Dr. C.S. Biju

Dr. Indu B.

Dr. R. Premkumar

Dr. Anitha Ramesh K.

Dr. Promod K. Nayar

Dr. Sujakurup P.L.

Dr. S. Nagesh

Dr. Fathima E.V.

Dr. K. J. Vargheese

Dr. Habeeb C.

Dr. Sreehari A.C.

Development of the content

Dr. Anupriya Patra, Mahaswetha Devi P. S.,

Tomson Thomas, Dr. Sucheta Sankar V.

Review

Content: Dr. Tommy John

Format: Dr. I.G. Shibi

Linguistic: Dr. R. Premkumar

Edit

Dr. Tommy John

Scrutiny

Dr. Vincent B. Netto, Dr. Anupriya Patra, Dr. Sucheta Sankar V., Aravind S.G., Anfal M., Erfan K.

Co-ordination

Dr. I.G. Shibi and Team SLM

Design Control

Azeem Babu T.A.

Production

November 2022

Copyright

© Sreenarayanaguru Open University 2022

Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual Modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities. The PG programme in English Language and Literature is benchmarked with similar programmes of other state universities in Kerala. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

The University is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The Self Learning Materials have been drawn up with a very clear prescription. It recognizes the autonomy of an adult learner and a journey through the treasures of the curriculum structured with provisions for interactive learning, interrogative reflections on the content and didactic discussion through illustrative scenarios. The University takes a strong position that the learner is to be engaged in a dialogue with the content and the materials are shaped to elicit reflections in the form of questions. The questions of the learner are considered to be the vital milestones in the pedagogy of the system of the University as well as the trajectory of the learner's progression. I would like to request you to bestow your personal attention in generating questions after having an intense dialogue with the content, as it has connection with the internal assessment.

Feel free to write to us about anything that seems relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

21.11.2022

Contents

BLOCK-01	Socio-political and Literary Background	01
Unit 1	Elizabethan England and William Shakespeare	02
Unit 2	Senecan Influence	29
Unit 3	Major Classifications of Shakespearean Plays	45
Unit 4	Shakespearean Criticism and Poetry	61
BLOCK-02	Poetry and Drama	87
Unit 1	Plays (Detailed Study)	88
Unit 2	Poetry (Detailed Study)	143
Unit 3	Poetry (Detailed Study)	155
Unit 4	Drama (Non- Detailed Study)	165
BLOCK-03	Modern Adaptations and Re-workings of Shakespeare	202
Unit 1	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead	203
Unit 2	Shylock is My Name	222
Unit 3	Ran	231
BLOCK-04	Critical Responses	246
Unit 1	Revisiting Shakespeare	247
Unit 2	Critiquing Shakespearean Drama	260
Unit 3	Reading the Shakespearean Sonnet	273
Unit 4	Studying Shakespearean Adaptations	287



Socio-political and Literary Background

BLOCK-01

Block Content

Unit 1 Elizabethan England and William Shakespeare

Unit 2 Senecan Influence

Unit 3 Major Classifications of Shakespearean Plays

Unit 4 Shakespearean Criticism and Poetry



Unit 1

Elizabethan England and William Shakespeare

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ examine and comprehend Shakespeare's contributions to the world of English language and literature
- ▶ comprehend and interpret the political, cultural, and theatrical contexts of Shakespeare's time
- ▶ enhance the understanding of Shakespearean creativity and thought
- ▶ develop an overview of Shakespearean criticism

Background

Shakespeare is a name that most people, regardless of academic level, have at least heard of. You could be aware that he was an English playwright and poet who lived a very long time ago, but is well-known even today. Hope you are probably aware that kids frequently learn about him in class. At least *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, as well as possibly *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*, are titles of his plays that you probably recall. You may be familiar with a handful of the lines, such as "To be or not to be, that is the question," "Nothing can come of nothing" "I am a man more sinned against than sinning," and "Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt," though you may not be entirely sure which play they are from. You may have heard about the rumour that Shakespeare was a forger and that someone else—likely an aristocrat—wrote his plays for him while they were visiting the Tudor home in Stratford-upon-Avon known as Shakespeare's birthplace.

You may have been required to memorise speeches from Shakespearean plays, such as those beginning "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," "We know what we are, but know not what we may be," or "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" among others. You might have been required to participate in a class reading or perform a scene from one of the plays in front of your classmates. You may have gone to watch a play



performed by amateurs, by a professional group, or on a movie, and you may have found it to be more enjoyable than you had anticipated.

As you grew older, you may have gone on to become scientists, lawyers, artisans, businessmen, nurses, or shop assistants, and you may have come to believe that Shakespeare was, at most, a memory from your schooldays - something you occasionally read about in the news or avoided when it was on television. But after that, perhaps something occurred to pique your curiosity. You might have gone to see a Shakespeare's play or movie like *Kaliyattam*, which is an adaptation of *Othello*, to keep someone's company or because a famous actor or actress was acting in it, and you might have been pleasantly surprised to discover that you understood and even liked it more than you had anticipated. You might have met someone who had a passion for Shakespeare. You might have felt a little out of the loop because a kind of entertainment that obviously means a lot to others was off limits to you. Their interest might have created a spark of curiosity in you.

The purpose of this unit is to provide you an overview of William Shakespeare, the famous writer and literary genius and the age he lived in. He was an English poet and dramatist who is regarded as one of the greatest writers to have ever lived. He continues to be relevant even today, thanks to his excellent writing. We can see clear traces of his generation's political, cultural, linguistic and literary traits. We can understand the historical context of the moment, despite the fact that he had altered some of the episodes. For literary students today, the bard's life and times are essential subjects that cannot be avoided for any number of reasons.

Keywords

Elizabethan period, Social and political conditions, Biographical details, Plays, Theatre, Actors Classification of plays, Character types, Criticism, Poetry, Sonnets



Discussion

1.1.1 Social and Political Conditions in Elizabethan England, and its Reflection in Shakespeare's Plays

- Shakespeare was a product of transformations that took place in Elizabethan England

It is simple to imagine Shakespeare as a distinct genius with a unique view of the world. Shakespeare, however, was a significant byproduct of the profound cultural changes that were taking place in Elizabethan England at the time of his life. He was active in the theatre while England was at the height of the Renaissance movement. Shakespeare's plays represent the new humanism and openness of the age.

- Renaissance ideals were prominent
- The supremacy of God was questioned

In general, the Renaissance is used to refer to the time when Europeans began to reject the constrictive beliefs of the Middle Ages. The dominant philosophy of the Middle Ages, which was upheld by the powerful Roman Catholic Church, placed a strong emphasis on the supremacy of God. Beginning in the 14th century, individuals began to reject this notion. The artists and intellectuals of the Renaissance period did not always reject the concept of God. However, they asked some questions about the relationship between humanity and God.

- Renaissance fostered a unique culture
- Changes in the social hierarchy
- Emphasis on humanity

The established social hierarchy underwent significant upheaval as a result of this inquiry. It was also a result of the extreme upheaval in all spheres of economic and social life brought about by the demise of the old feudal system and its production method and the subsequent emergence of capitalist relations typical of the primary accumulation era. This movement swept almost everywhere, having emerged in England and later sweeping into the southern European nations. It was influenced by particular regional circumstances, which gave the English culture at the end of the sixteenth century a unique character. The factors that led to the formation of New England had an impact on many aspects of socioeconomic life. The renewed emphasis on humanity gave writers, thinkers, and artists a newfound freedom to be curious about the world. They frequently took their cues from the more humanist classical literature and artwork of ancient Greece and Rome.

England experienced the Renaissance relatively



- ▶ Shakespeare was born during the time of Renaissance

late. Shakespeare was born at the height of England's Renaissance, at the conclusion of the larger European Renaissance. He was among the first playwrights to introduce the fundamental principles of the Renaissance to the English theatre.

Shakespeare exhibited the following Renaissance-inspired traits:

- ▶ Changes in social system influenced Shakespeare too
- ▶ He created psychologically complex characters

- ▶ Shakespeare was able to examine the richness and compassion of every character, regardless of their social standing, owing to the upheaval in the social system. Even kings and queens were depicted as having human feelings and being able to make catastrophic errors, as portrayed in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.
- ▶ Shakespeare rewrote pre-Renaissance play in a straightforward, two-dimensional manner. He concentrated on developing sophisticated and psychologically nuanced human personalities. Perhaps the most well-known instance of this is Hamlet.
- ▶ When composing his plays, Shakespeare drew on his familiarity with the Greek and Roman canon. These writings were banned by the Catholic Church before the Renaissance.

- ▶ Recusancy Acts were passed

In contrast to the Middle Ages, a new type of religious tyranny prevailed in Elizabethan England. When Queen Elizabeth I ascended the throne, she imposed the Recusancy Acts, which forced conversions and pushed existing Catholics behind. Citizens were obligated by these rules to attend services in Anglican churches. Catholics risked harsh punishments or possibly death if they were identified.

Shakespeare did not seem intimidated to write about Catholicism or to portray Catholic characters favourably in spite of these regulations. Historiographers speculate that Shakespeare was secretly Catholic based on the influence of Catholicism in his writings.

Shakespeare's writing demonstrates a profound understanding of Catholic traditions. Whatever he might have been doing in secret, he continued to present himself as an Anglican in public. He was buried and christened in



- Shakespeare's writing demonstrates his understanding of Catholic traditions

the Protestant Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. He wrote about numerous historical occurrences, and his experiences on the decline of feudalism, the dissolution of the Catholic Church, and the emergence of England as a successful nation-state during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

1.1.2 Shakespeare's Biography



Fig 1.1.1 William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

- Regarded as the greatest writer in English Literature
- Plays have been translated into many languages
- Born in Stratford-upon-Avon

Nobody in Shakespeare's era seems to have been curious to learn about the personal lives of the playwrights. It was a time when all actors were seen as vagabonds by the public, and playwrights and actors were presumed to be belonging to the same category. While Londoners were avid theatregoers and extremely proud of their excellent plays, they were content to hear about the playwrights only via town rumours, which were transmitted from person to person. There were other lives that were much more interesting to read about. English

- Nobody, during the period, was interested in the personal details of the writers

seafarers were exploring every ocean and returning with amazing tales. English soldiers were assisting the Dutch people in achieving freedom and were returning with many tales of valiant actions. The more serious readers and thinkers at home were drawn to significant political, religious and scientific movements. Therefore, it is not surprising that the authors of plays, whose two most thrilling incidents were bar fights or imprisonment for their disdainful attitude towards the government, failed to find a biographer. Additionally, the theatre quickly lost its reputation after Shakespeare's death, and many interesting tales about the playhouse were forgotten since they were considered impolite to discuss.

- Even the personal details of Marlowe and Fletcher are unknown

Provided these facts, it is inexplicable that we know so little about Shakespeare and have to rely on public archives, court records, and book registers to educate ourselves. However, we know a lot more about Shakespeare than we do about the majority of his contemporaries who were playwrights and actors due to the diligence of modern researchers. Shakespeare's famous precursor Christopher Marlowe's biography is mostly forgotten, and nothing is known about Shakespeare's great contemporary and successor John Fletcher, including whether he ever married or when he first started writing plays. However, Fletcher's father was the Bishop of London and was well-liked by Queen Elizabeth. We should be more amazed at the good fortune that has preserved for us, a continuous record of William Shakespeare's life from infancy to death, despite the fact that it is sparse in details or lacking in the authority of its sources.

- Shakespeare was born on April 26, 1564
- Known as "The Bard" and "The Bard of Avon"

We only have a baptismal record about Shakespeare's baptism taking place on April 26, 1564, which stands as a source for his birthdate information. He was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. The infant was probably baptised when he or she was just two or three days old. Shakespeare's tombstone notes that he was 52 years old when he passed away on April 23, 1616. If this is literally true, the poet's birthday cannot be earlier than April 23, 1564, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. There is an unfounded rumour that the poet passed away on his birthday. He is regarded as one of the greatest authors of English literature. His plays have been translated into more than fifty different languages. His nicknames include "The Bard" and "The Bard of Avon."



- ▶ Shakespeare was the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden
- ▶ He married Anne Hathaway

Shakespeare was the son of distinguished farmer and landlord Mary Arden and alderman John Shakespeare. He was the eldest of their eight children. He attended grammar school for academic purposes, and as of right now, there is no evidence that he ever attended a university. Shakespeare, who was 18 years old, married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 years old and pregnant, in 1582. Six months later, Hathaway gave birth to the couple's first child, a daughter called Susanna; the twins Hamnet and Judith were born two years later, in 1585. Hamnet passed away at the age of 11 for undetermined reason.

- ▶ The 'Lost Years' of Shakespeare

Shakespeare's 'Lost Years' are the seven years between 1585 and 1592 for which there are no available records. He started performing on the London stage in 1592. Between June 1592 and April 1594, theatres in London were frequently shuttered as a result of the pandemic. Shakespeare's patron Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his first two poems, "Venus and Adonis" (1593) and "The Rape of Lucrece", are likely to have provided him with some revenue during that time (1594). The first poem was a lengthy narrative one that portrayed Adonis' rejection of Venus, his death, and the ensuing loss of beauty in the world. Although the poem's exaltation of sensuality was criticised by conservatives, it was extremely popular and was reprinted six times in the nine years after its initial release. Shakespeare wrote his sonnets between 1593 and 1601, but they were not made public until 1609.

- ▶ Shakespeare owned the Lord Chamberlain's Men

During his lifetime, he distinguished himself as a playwright. By 1594, only a company owned by a group of players known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which rose to become London's top company, staged his plays. Shakespeare was a shareholder in the company. Shakespeare's company built their own theatre in 1599 and named it the Globe Theatre, which is located on the River Thames. He amassed much fortune and stayed in London most of the time. Shakespeare's renown was established by 1598 when the first known quartos of his plays were produced. This built his career as a playwright and theatre performer, and his name was listed on the title page of his plays.

1.1.3 Production of Plays

The fact that Shakespeare is mentioned in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* implies that by 1592, he was a well-known figure on the London theatrical scene. The government had great control over the profession. Before England had any permanent theatre structures, a proclamation from 1559 stated that plays dealing with “matters of religion or the governance of the estate of the commonwealth” should not be performed. This had a significant and long-lasting impact on playwrights' ability to directly address religious or political issues in their works. It goes without saying that some authors were able to subtly express their opinions, but the government made an effort to enforce its laws through censorship in 1581 when it mandated that all plays should be performed for Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels, before being made available to the general public. Tilney and his department had a lot of duties related to how plays would really be performed in court. He held the position until 1610, during which time he and his successors both saw and censored trial performances based on written texts.

- By 1592, Shakespeare was a well-known figure

Some plays dealt with politically sensitive material, even though it had little to do with contemporary affairs. The episode in Shakespeare's *Richard II* showing the deposition of the King was reportedly left out when the play was first printed in 1597, and also presumably when it was staged as a result of this. It was later added back to the printed text after the issue had been settled by James I's accession in 1603.

- Many plays dealt with politically charged topics

Language could also be restricted. To prevent an actor from “jestingly or profanely” using the names of God or Jesus Christ, the “Act to Restrain Abuses of Players” from 1606 imposed a fine of the sizeable sum of £10. Ingeniously, any member of the public who reported the offence received half of the fine. The texts of various Shakespearean plays reflect the ramifications of this law. Over fifty oaths were toned down in the more dramatic texts compiled in the First Folio of 1623.

- Freedom was restricted on using languages
- Fines were imposed

Governmental interest and control also extended to actors' socioeconomic standing. This label applied only to entertainers of many different kinds, such as circus performers, tightrope walkers, and those engaged in



- The government's attention and control extended to the socioeconomic status of the actors

bear baiting, cock and dog fighting, along with travelling actors, unless they were not affiliates of an organised company that had the support of an aristocracy, or of the Queen herself. It is not completely accurate, as is occasionally claimed, that all actors were classified as rogues and vagabonds. Shakespeare and several of his fellow performers also became successful and well-respected members of the society. Some noblemen treated acting troupes as full-time members of their houses, while others gave more or less token patronage to troupes whose members performed under their auspices.

- Shakespeare was hired to the acting company when one of the actors died

A group that was hand-picked from other companies and given royal support in 1583 first performed plays in London, then starting in 1594, went on tour across the English counties. A few years after the birth of Shakespeare's twins, in the summer of 1587, this group, the Queen's Men, paid a visit to Stratford. Shakespeare is rumoured to have replaced one of the actors who had recently been killed in a fight in nearby Thame, Oxfordshire; however, it seems unlikely that the nation's premier acting company would want to hire a young man without any prior experience as an actor or writer, no matter how promising he might be. *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, and *King Leir* were the four plays in their repertory that dealt with subjects Shakespeare would later address in his drama career, so there is good reason to believe he was involved with this company early in his career.

1.1.4 Sources

Shakespeare did not create the plots of his plays, with a few obvious exceptions. He occasionally employed old tales, as in *Hamlet* and *Pericles*. He used well-known stories in plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, and also lesser-known ones, such as from relatively recent Italian authors like Giovanni Boccaccio in plays like *Othello*. In *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare borrowed popular prose novels written by his contemporaries. He mostly took inspiration for his historical plays from Edward Hall and Holinshed's English historical chronicles as well as Sir Thomas North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and*

Romans for the plays based on Roman history. Some plays like *King Lear*, *Cymbeline*, and *Macbeth* explore somewhat distant and legendary past. The same material had occasionally been employed by dramatists in the past. In the case of *Hamlet*, it has been convincingly argued that an old play that was known to have existed was simply an early version of Shakespeare's own. However, many plays from Shakespeare's era have been lost, making it impossible to be sure of the relationship between an earlier or lost play and Shakespeare's surviving one. Shakespeare was likely too busy to devote much time to studying. When he needed them, he had to read the books he could. His huge vocabulary could only have come from a mind that responded quickly to both spoken and written words. What libraries he had access to is unknown. He resided in London with the Mountjoys Huguenot family, who most likely had French books. Additionally, he appears to have cherished a fascinating relationship with the London book trade. According to an apprenticeship document, the Richard Field who published *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* written by Shakespeare in 1593–1594 appears to have been the “son of Henry Field of Stratford-upon-Avon in the County of Warwick, tanner.” John Shakespeare, a glover, was one of the three people chosen to evaluate Henry Field the tanner's possessions after his death in 1592. Shakespeare and Field's son, a bound apprentice in 1579, were probably of a similar age. He steadily built a reputation as a printer of important literature beginning in 1587, particularly of North's translation of Plutarch (1595, reprinted in 1603 and 1610).

- Even folk tales and historical chronicles were sources for Shakespeare's plays

There is no concrete proof that Field and Shakespeare were close friends. The fact that one of the most significant printers and publishers in London at the time was a personal friend and classmate of Shakespeare in Stratford, that he was the son of John Shakespeare's close friend, and that he published the playwright's first poems cannot go unnoticed. Shakespeare had access to a large number of literary contacts and had easy access to a large number of books.

- Field published Shakespeare's first poems

Gerard Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), which was originally published in the 17th century, provided a brief overview of the sources used by



- Shakespeare was regarded as an extraordinary “natural” writer

Shakespeare to create several of his plays. Shakespeare was thought to be an exceptional “natural” writer during the 17th century, with his academic background being of relatively little value. John Dryden stated in 1668 that Shakespeare was “naturally learn’d; he needed not the glasses of books to read nature.” However, it was clear that Shakespeare’s writings had a high level of intellect and displayed a remarkable capacity for insight. Particularly the Roman plays provided evidence of meticulous reproduction of the ancient world.

In the 18th century, Charlotte Lennox assembled the first collection of primary sources that could be read and closely compared with Shakespeare’s plays. In particular, John Payne Collier’s collections *Shakespeare’s Library*, written in 1843, are among the more comprehensive ones that later emerged. These earlier collections have been replaced by Geoffrey Bullough’s seven-volume work, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957–72).

The origin of Shakespeare’s theatrical plays has become increasingly more apparent. By excluding unimportant material, he was able to accomplish compression and economy. Mercutio, Touchstone, Falstaff, and Pandarus were the characters he created based on minor hints in his source; other characters he created include the Dromio brothers, Beatrice and Benedick, Sir Toby Belch, Malvolio, Paulina, Roderigo, and the fool in *King Lear*. He changed the order of the events in the plots of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *As You Like It* in order to create more potent character contrasts, climaxes and resolutions. The works of *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, and *Troilus and Cressida* presented a broader philosophical perspective. The earlier work was modified everywhere by an increase in dialogue intensity and a significantly greater calibre of inventive writing.

- Shakespeare’s works were modified

Apart from signs of the plays’ inspirations, it is not difficult to form a realistic idea of Shakespeare as a reader who nourished his own creativity by a modest familiarity with the literary accomplishments of other men and of earlier eras. In *As You Like It*, he mentions Christopher Marlowe, a contemporary of his own. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare casually alludes to Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*,

- He borrowed sources from Ovid, Homer, Montaigne, etc

which Thomas Underdown had translated in 1569. He read Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which appeared in seven editions between 1567 and 1612. He was inspired by George Chapman's forceful translation of Homer's *Iliad*, even though he used some of the material in *Troilus and Cressida* in a fairly cynical manner. From one of Montaigne's works, Shakespeare derived the satirical description of an ideal republic in *The Tempest*. When he was composing *King Lear*, he remembered interesting portions from Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostors*, which he had read at least in part. He must have read *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser or other romantic works, as the first words of *Sonnet 106* reveal.

- Shakespeare's style and allusion repertoire have been influenced by the Bible

He was keenly aware of the various poetic idioms that distinguished the writing of other authors. In the later years of the 16th century, when poets like John Donne were composing love poems combining astronomical and cosmogenic imagery with scepticism and moral dilemmas, he wrote a beautiful short sonnet for Prince Hamlet (Act V, scene 2, line 115). *Pericles'* eight-syllable verses in an archaic manner, which were written for the poet John Gower of the fourteenth century, display his understanding of that poet's *Confessio Amantis*. Shakespeare's compositions frequently reflect the influence of the renowned author Sir Philip Sidney, whose 1590 novel *Arcadia* was read widely for years. Finally, it is important to recognise how crucial the *Bible* is to Shakespeare's style and allusion repertoire. A significant number of references to passages in "Ecclesiasticus" suggest a personal interest in one of the deuterocanonical books. His writings demonstrate a pervasive acquaintance with the passages designated to be read in church on each Sunday throughout the year.

1.1.5 The Actors

Companies were formed out of the actors who performed in these theatres, and they were always supported by influential people. All were men; until the monarchy was restored in England in 1660, women actors were not involved in the professional theatre. A company typically had twelve to fourteen actors on a full-time contract, with the option to add more "hired men" (freelancers) as needed. Shakespeare's early



- Only male actors were there until monarchy was restored.

comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for example, only has thirteen named characters (plus a dog) in it. But frequently, he used remarkable cleverness to write his plays so that one actor would portray two or more roles simultaneously. Between seventy and eighty distinct characters may be identified in the early historical play *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, also known as *Henry the Sixth, Part Two*. As players struggled to recall who they were playing and what to wear to set themselves apart from the other roles they were portraying, the backstage space must have been in complete disarray.

- Richard Burbage was the founder of Lord Chamberlain's company

Many performers remained with the same company for the majority or the entirety of their careers. Richard Burbage, the leading man of the Lord Chamberlain's company, joined as a founding member in 1594 and remained with the company until his death in 1619. The major performers in Shakespeare's plays, who performed various roles spanning Romeo to Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and Lear to Prospero, may be ageing at the same time as him for this reason. Actors undoubtedly have their areas of expertise. For instance, Will Kemp, a member from 1594 until the turn of the century, was largely an actor in comedic roles.

- Shakespeare wrote plays keeping various performers in mind

Shakespeare frequently wrote keeping individual performers in mind. This is evident from the text of *Much Ado About Nothing*, which was published in 1600 in his own manuscript and in which he occasionally substituted Kemp's and Abraham Cowley's names for the names of the characters Dogberry and Verges. And he was aware of both the weaknesses and the qualities of his performers. Burbage is obliged to duel and fight in a number of roles that he played, but he never sings other than in *Much Ado About Nothing* with comedic stupidity as Benedick. As a musician, Robert Armin, who succeeded Kemp, is more likely to have taken on roles of singers like Feste in *Twelfth Night*, the Fool in *King Lear*, and Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*.

Boys were cast in every female role. They were frequently promoted to the stage from choir schools; their talent as singers and their training as performers would have been advantageous. It may be difficult to pinpoint the precise moment of a boy's transition from

- Boys and young men played the roles of women

a boy to a man, but in terms of theatre, it happens when his voice develops what Arviragus in *Cymbeline* refers to as “the mannish crack” and when his appearance and demeanour are no longer acceptable as those of a woman. In any case, there is no proof that a male actor older than twenty has ever played the role of a woman. Shakespeare’s female characters do have some challenging humorous and tragic roles, but there are not many of them, and few of them are played by older women. In *The Tempest*, there is only one named female character, along with a few goddesses; in *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, there are only two identified female characters; in *Othello* and *Coriolanus*, there are three; and in *Romeo and Juliet*, there are four.

1.1.6 Theatres

- The earliest theatres were with impromptu settings

Before the emergence of theatres specifically built for plays, companies in London and on tour performed in impromptu settings, including royal palaces for court entertainment, ballrooms, inn courtyards, guildhalls like Stratford’s, town halls and occasionally even churches. If there was no trap to serve as Ophelia’s grave or there was no upper level for Juliet’s window, for example, the system must frequently have needed last-minute adjustments to the texts of the plays they were delivering.

- The first theatre in England was the Theatre
- It was built in 1576

The construction of the Theatre in 1576 was a significant occasion that signalled the beginning of the English theatre and the heyday of drama. The theatre was situated in Shoreditch, far from the City of London’s administrative boundaries, where theatrical plays were frowned upon. This was partially due to the fact that the Puritans among them saw playhouses as dens of vice where boys impersonated ladies, important subjects were treated lightly, and comedy was frequently vulgar.

- Theatres were built in the playhouses

Understandably, the authorities were concerned that crowds of people would draw criminals and prostitutes and transmit disease during the time of pandemic. Due to this, they only allowed playhouses to be built with many restrictions imposed, which were areas beyond the city borders. Most of them were built in Southwark, a parish on the south side of the Thames. The Rose was there from 1587—the only theatre whose significant remnants have been unearthed thus far—the Swan from 1595—which provides the only image of a playhouse interior from the



time—and the Globe, next to the Rose, from 1599. There were a lot of inns, bull and bear baiting rings (some of which served as playhouses), and brothels in this area as well.

The type of plays that were created to be played in those theatres was greatly influenced by the design of the latter. Public playhouses were typically three stories tall, round or multi-sided, and open to the air, with a stage projecting into the yard from the lowest gallery. This was not always the case, however, and it changed with time. The cost of standing room right in front of the stage would be one penny for spectators. These were the people who would pay one penny for a slot in the front row of the stage, and they were known as the “groundlings,” as Hamlet refers to them. The term is not complimentary because the original meaning of the word was a little fish that lived in muck at the bottom of a stream or river. Customers had to pay an additional dime to sit in one of the seats of balconies that encircled the yard. The Lords’ Room, which was near the stage and had seating for musicians and more affluent theatregoers, was also there.

- There were one penny seats and the Lords’ Room in the theatres

A trap door and a roof or canopy, which may be supported by pillars, would be on the stage itself. For Jupiter’s or the goddesses’ ascent in *The Tempest* or *Cymbeline*, it might contain flying apparatus. The back of the stage would have two left and right openings from which players could enter and exit, as well as a larger central opening that could be utilised for mass entrances and for props like Desdemona’s bed in *Othello* and Polonius’ hiding place in *Hamlet* before being murdered. There was a higher level above this where Juliet would have appeared. Actors could access the top floor from the main stage through the stairs. The “attiring” house, where actors would change into costumes and props, would be located behind the stage. A trumpeter would announce upcoming performances from a hut high up on the Globe’s third level, and a flag would fly above that to indicate that a play was already in progress.

- There were many additional settings on the stage for various scenes

Although there was no modern-day setting, clothing and other props were elaborate. The Lord Admiral’s Men, who appeared at the Rose, including Edward Alleyn as their star performer, have the most thorough archives

of any Elizabethan theatre company existing now. They were the main competitors of the theatre to which Shakespeare would devote the majority of his career.

The University Wits—John Lyly, Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe, George Peele, Thomas Nashe, and Robert Greene—as well as Thomas Kyd, author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, who is not known to have been a University man, made up the first big wave of writers for these theatres. Shakespeare quickly followed in their footsteps, picking up tips from them and even working alongside and emulating some of them. He must have seen a lot of plays, especially in his early years in London when he was both an actor and a writer, and he undoubtedly assimilated ideas from those he read, watched on stage, and participated in. The theatre-lovers who used to watch plays at the Rose were presented with Shakespeare and Peele's *Titus Andronicus*, *Harry the Sixth* (presumably *Henry VI, Part One*, currently thought to have been written by Shakespeare with Thomas Nashe), Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay* by Robert Greene, although some of these plays failed to survive the test of time. Marlowe's plays were best received during the period.

- ▶ The Theatre, the Globe, the Rose
- ▶ The theatres during the time had special features including trap doors, and attiring houses

1.1.7 Collaborators

Shakespeare, like the majority of playwrights of his time, occasionally collaborated on his works. Although the actual number is uncertain, several of his surviving plays are collaborative or have undergone revisions by others after being written. Recent research has given reasons to believe that some of the plays that have been attributed to Shakespeare are actually by other writers. Some of the following attributions, such as *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, have well-attested contemporary documentation. Others, such as *Titus Andronicus*, depend on linguistic analysis by modern scholars. The name of the collaborator is sometimes known, sometimes there is academic agreement, and sometimes it is uncertain or contested. Shakespeare attribution studies are the field that deals with these disputes. Shakespeare's career saw the majority of his collaborations at its inception and end. Popular collaborations include those with Wilkins, Middleton and Fletcher.

- ▶ The main collaborators of Shakespeare were Wilkins, Middleton and Fletcher



1.1.8 Audience



Fig 1.1.2 A representative image of Shakespeare's play

The very wealthy, upper middle class, and lower middle class made up Shakespeare's audience. The lower middle class were known as groundlings, and they paid a penny to enter the yard, where they stood on the ground with the stage roughly at eye level. For access to the galleries with covered seating at the sides, the wealthy had to pay two pennies. To sit in the top galleries, which offered a better view of the play, the wealthy paid three pennies each. The private galleries in the lords' rooms, which are close to the stage, had the best seats.

Shakespeare's audience were not very polite people. Due to the length of the play, these people frequently got up from their seats to eat and drink or to socialise with friends. Some theatregoers, especially those who had saved money to watch the play, were very irritated if they could not hear the actors, and they would ask boisterous spectators to calm down. Shakespeare's acting company was invited to appear in royal courts and noble homes later in his career; the audience there was considerably more courteous and attentive to the play.

- The audience were from all walks of life
- They were uncouth

1.1.9 Structure of the Shakespearean Plot

The five-act Elizabethan framework, which originated from the Greek form, was frequently used by Shakespeare.

Act I: Inciting Action

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* begins with the spirit of King

Hamlet telling his son, Prince Hamlet, of his brother Claudius' deceit. The story starts at this point. Hamlet feels obligated to find out the truth about his father's passing. This episode sets the stage for the rest of the narrative. Exposition that describes the drama's setting, characters, and history is also included in the first act.

Act II: Turning Point

Shakespearean plays can have many critical moments. Act II often features at least one pivotal moment for the main character. The turning point in Act II of *Hamlet* occurs when Hamlet understands that Claudius and his mother are using Rozencrantz and Guildenstern against him. Act II is where he plans to "capture the conscience of the king" through a play within a play.

Act III: Climax

Act III is where Hamlet learns that he must act quickly against Claudius. The "climax" or "crisis choice" refers to this. Act III opens with the well-known soliloquy "To be or not to be," in which Hamlet muses over the course of action he should follow to make up for what Claudius and his mother have caused to his father.

Act IV: Falling Action

Additional turning points can be found in a Shakespearean play's falling action. Tension rises when the effects of action in Act III start to materialise, and this is frequently when new character growth takes place. The reader or viewer is made to feel as though there is still hope for the main character in a tragedy like *Hamlet*. In a comedy, the protagonist's or heroine's situation only gets worse.

Act V: Resolution

The conflict is resolved in the concluding act, either by disasters or moments of glory. The disaster that results from the climactic events in a tragedy is known as the resolution, and it typically emphasises the demise of the protagonist. In a comedy, the happy ending frequently involves the marriage of all the main characters.

- Shakespeare followed the Five Act Elizabethan framework



1.1.10 Editions and Emendations

Folios and Quartos

- Printed copies of the plays

The plays written by William Shakespeare and other playwrights of his era were not intended for publication. The possibility for a play to make money from stage performances was reduced if it was printed and sold as a book, allowing competitors' acting groups and theatregoers access to the script.

- Publisher's dishonesty

However, dishonest players who had received a handwritten copy of the play or had written it down from memory on occasion sold copies of the play to equally dishonest publishers. On rare occasions, a publisher would watch a play and copy the script while the actors were on stage.

- Printing of poetry under Shakespeare's name

The printing of scripts with numerous flaws was a common outcome of these means of obtaining a copy. In order to maintain a play's integrity, the performing company that owned the script would occasionally make its own arrangements for publication. Consequently, there were various printed copies of the play in use, some of which were genuine and others not. Shakespeare's poetry also came in a variety of forms. At least once, a printer reportedly published poetry by other writers under Shakespeare's name in an attempt to profit off the allure of his byline.

- Shakespeare's works were published as folios and quartos

Shakespeare's works were published in quarto and folio editions. Their sizes were different from one another. A folio page measured 12 inches wide by 19 inches high, while a quarto page was roughly 9½ inches wide and 12 inches high.

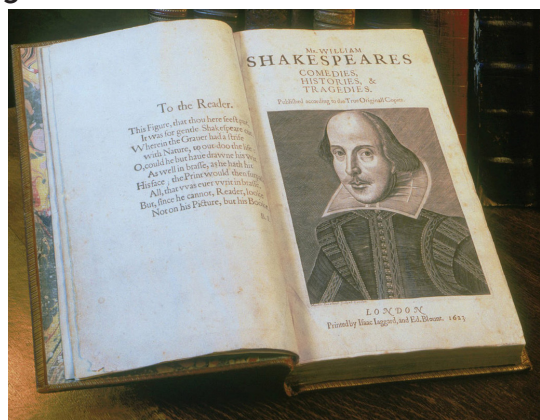


Fig 1.1.3 The compiled book of Shakespeare's plays printed in 1623

- A quarto is made by folding a paper once

Four pages were made by folding the printing paper once. Place a piece of typing paper in front of you so you can see the pages. Fold the paper across by placing the lower edge against the top edge. Next, set the folded sheet in front of you with the left-hand crease facing up. The first page is the square one you are currently viewing. The second and third pages will appear when you flip the sheet to the left. The fourth page can be found by turning the third page to the left. Now the right will have the crease. Next, visualise folding additional sheets of paper in the same manner to create a book with 64 pages. There would be a total of sixteen folded sheets of paper. The second folded sheet would then be placed on top of the first one after they were completely opened, followed by the third and fourth sheets, and so on.

- The First Folio was published in 1623

Despite some decent copies being published in this format, the plays with problems were often in quarto form. Shakespeare's companions and admirers put together a very accurate compilation of thirty-six of his plays in a folio edition with more than nine hundred pages in 1623. *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* was the name of this collection. It is unknown how extensively the plays' original versions had been modified. With the help of his son Isaac, William Jaggard served as both printer and publisher. The First Folio is the name given to this edition. Later publishers used this collection to print copies of the plays because it was thought to be authentic. There were further folios printed in 1632, 1663 and 1685. The first edition of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* was printed in 1664 as part of a second printing of the 1663 folio.

1.1.11 Heminges and Condell

- The First Folio was edited by Heminges and Condell

Shakespeare's first collected edition, often known as the First Folio, was put together and edited by John Heminges and Henry Condell, two men who were well-known for their work. They are frequently cited in publications about Shakespeare and have been reprinted in many contemporary versions of the plays. Their dedication to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery and their preface, "To the Great Variety of Readers," are also included in the reprinted versions.



- The First Folio is the first book to preserve nearly half of Shakespeare's plays

Heminges and Condell's introduction to the work is noteworthy for a number of reasons, including the fact that it is the preface to possibly one of the most well-known books in history and the explicit advice it gives readers to buy the book rather than merely reading it. Undoubtedly one of the most significant books in English literature history is the First Folio, since it preserved approximately half of Shakespeare's plays in print for the first time. Although Heminges and Condell were longtime players and friends of Shakespeare, they were also highly intriguing men in their own right, and they should be commended for their efforts in preserving the legacy of their "friend and fellow" Shakespeare. During one of London's most exciting eras in its history, they were also active participants in city life. Although none of them were born in London, they both managed to amass fortune there through a combination of various means and their theatrical endeavours.

1.1.12 Later Editions

- More works were added in the Third Folio

The arguments made on Shakespeare's behalf in the First Folio were convincing. Shakespeare's theatrical works were published three more times in the same format and order over the duration of the 17th century; these publications are now referred to as the Second, Third and Fourth Folios. The Third Folio proclaimed the addition of new plays by Shakespeare, although the majority of these pieces are now thought to be by other playwrights.

- Every publisher incorporated changes to their editions.

Shakespeare's reputation as a playwright was altered by the succeeding folios, which also added new plays and gradually made thousands of changes to the contents of the First Folio. Every new folio's publisher made changes to fix glaring faults from earlier printings and to modify wording that had lost its meaning as the language and culture evolved. The Folios took part in a process that has never failed, altering Shakespeare's writings while preserving his standing as a highly esteemed author. Shakespeare was reformatted, reframed, and rewritten in order to maintain his reputation and impact across time.

1.1.13 Literary Elements

When a writer appears to have invented some novel literary approach over the ages of literature, a closer look

► Shakespeare's use of literary elements

reveals something intriguing: Shakespeare has already utilised that style in one of his works. Shakespeare, for instance, used what is referred to as “stream of consciousness,” a method that James Joyce used in *Ulysses* to great effect. Or, we refer to Harold Pinter's use of cryptic language punctuated by pauses and silences as “Pinteresque.” Many authors have copied it. Shakespeare regularly used such phrasing. After killing Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have a frenzied discourse that is unmistakably “Pinteresque.”

The most significant and most essential literary devices as well as poetic devices employed by Shakespeare are listed below:

► Allusion is a statement that refers to someone, somewhere, or an event without explicitly mentioning them

Allusion: This is a hint which refers to someone, somewhere, or some event, usually without explicit naming. References to mythology, the Bible, historical occasions, geography, tales, or other literary works are examples of allusions. Allusion is frequently used by writers to generate a mood, make an implicit relationship, compare two things or persons, create an unexpected juxtaposition of allusions, or transport the reader to a different reality than that which the text itself can offer. Biblical allusions are frequent in literature from all eras. Shakespeare usually bases his stories on myths and real-life incidents, which are also only alluded to in other plays. Shakespeare loved to use mythological allusions, and *Antony and Cleopatra* is one of his best examples of this because the earthly lovers are regularly compared to Roman gods. The imagery in the play reflects and clarifies the idea that the lovers go beyond the bounds of typical earthly romantic love.

Dramatic Device: Shakespeare did not develop dramatic techniques; Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries used them in their plays. However, Shakespeare was a master of the dramatic device, which is one of the reasons his plays are so engrossing and exciting. Anything that propels the action is a dramatic device. Shakespeare's plays are sequential, with each one closely building on the one before it. For instance, in the play *Macbeth*, the witches instil in Macbeth the desire to rule, which prompts him to discuss it with his wife, who compels him to kill Duncan, which he does. To begin with, there are two dramatic devices. Another is Duncan's



- Shakespeare was a genius in using dramatic device

arrival at Glamis. The murder of Duncan follows, which is a major dramatic device that sparks a lot of movement. And so it continues, one after another, with each one having the effect of the one before it, propelling the action ahead until the very last minute of drama.

- When the reader is aware of things about the present or future that the character is not, dramatic irony arises

Dramatic Irony: Dramatic irony occurs when the reader is aware of facts about the present or the future that the character is unaware of. In *Macbeth*, for instance, when Duncan's dead body is discovered, Macbeth acts as though he is outraged at the alleged murderers, but the audience is aware that he is actually the one who committed the crime. This is dramatic irony.

Monologue: Shakespeare's plays are replete with monologues, which are prolonged speeches delivered in front of other characters. A monologue is heard by the other characters, unlike a soliloquy.

- A monologue is heard by other characters, while a soliloquy is not

Soliloquy: A speech in which a character, who is often by themselves on stage, speaks loudly. It is a highly helpful method since it enables the author to immediately communicate to the reader a character's most private thoughts and feelings. The custom is to let the audience hear what the character is thinking. Instead of speaking, he or she is pondering. Shakespeare frequently employs soliloquies, and some of his best works are written in this style, such as the *Hamlet* soliloquy "To be or not to be."

Symbolism: One of Shakespeare's strongest and most defining traits is his use of symbolism. It is the frequent usage of terms, locations, characters, or items that have deeper meanings beyond their literal meanings. If a writer uses the word "blood" just once, for instance, its meaning will only apply to that specific passage. However, when a term is used frequently, as it is in plays like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, it reflects some important thoughts. A term is used multiple times in various settings to communicate a number of interconnected ideas. Blood in *Romeo and Juliet* relates to the following themes and more: violence, youth, passion and familial relationships. This method is especially well-developed in *King Lear*. The harsh and terrible way in which the younger generation treats its elders is reflected in one line of imagery that uses ferocious beasts with sharp teeth, talons, and claws to convey the suffering experienced by Lear and Gloucester.

- Deeper meanings are hidden in symbols

Summarised Overview

The socio-political conditions of England and its influence can be seen clearly in the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was born in Stratford upon Avon in 1556. He was the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. He married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. The details of his life during some years have not been found out. Hence they are known as the Lost Years. He derived the inspiration for his plays from even folk tales. The Shakespearean theatre had very unique stage settings. There were 'one penny seats' in the theatre for the audience. The audience were from all strata of the society, and most of them were unruly. Shakespeare followed the five-act Elizabethan framework for his plots. There were many editions of Shakespearean plays. They were published in folios and quartos. He used various literary elements in his plays to add effects.

Assignments

1. Write an essay on the literary elements used in Shakespeare's plays.
2. Comment on Shakespearean theatre.
3. What are folios and quartos? Explain.
4. Elucidate on the political and social conditions of Shakespearean England.
5. Write notes on the structure of The Shakespearean plot.

Suggested Readings

1. Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton UP, 2012.
2. Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. Picador, 2008.
3. Berryman, John. *Berryman's Shakespeare*. Ed. John Haffenden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
4. Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. Penguin, 1991.
5. Eastman, Arthur. *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism*. Random House, 1968.
6. Engle, Lars. "William Empson." *Great Shakespeareans: Empson, Wilson, Knight, Barber, Kott*. Ed. Grady, Hugh. Continuum, 2012.



7. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
8. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Norton, 2004.
9. Hubler, Edward. *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Hill and Wang, 1962.
10. Joseph, Sister Miriam. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. Columbia UP, 1947.
11. Kennedy, William J. "Shakespeare and the Development of English Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge UP, 2007. 14-32.
12. Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
13. Landry, Hilton. *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. University of California Press, 1963.
14. McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945-2000*. Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
15. Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. 1957. New ed. Routledge, 2001.
16. Spurgeon, Caroline F. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. Read Books, 2013.
17. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
18. Taylor, Gary. "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Tandon. Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
19. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.
20. Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Harvard UP, 1997.



References

1. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
2. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
3. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 2

Senecan Influence

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ get an idea about the major influences on the works of Shakespeare.
- ▶ appreciate the importance of using disguise in plays during the period.
- ▶ understand the role of supernatural characters in the play of Shakespeare.
- ▶ acquire knowledge on the character types that Shakespeare frequently used in his works.

Background

In this unit, you will get a comprehensive view on how the plays of Shakespeare were, as was most of the plays of other dramatists during the time, influenced by the tragedies of Seneca. If you have read *The Merchant of Venice*, you may have noticed that Portia disguises as Doctor Balthazar. The use of disguise recurs in many of his plays. And what about the roles of women? It was the Renaissance period, how were women treated then? We will discuss all these things in this unit.

Keywords

Seneca, Women, Supernatural, Blank verse, Imagery, Irony, Disguise



Discussion

1.2.1 Senecan Influence on Shakespeare's Works

- The Senecan dramas were inspiration for the 16th century writers

In the sixteenth century, writers and the general populace were influenced by the Senecan dramas. The English playwrights and dramatists at the period struggled to give their plays the ideal structure. Tragedies of Seneca were based on a noble example. They were a collection of nine closet dramas composed by the Roman philosopher Seneca and intended more for reading than for performance.

- The Elizabethan audience loved the Senecan themes, which were of violent nature

The Elizabethan audience was more amenable to the Senecan themes of violence and vengeance. Shakespeare's moral maxims and sententious ideas have also captured the interest of the audience and gained him reputation throughout time. Tragedies of Seneca feature Greek mythology. In his plays, Seneca also incorporated mystical and magical aspects. Moreover, Seneca made an effort to address the audience directly so that they might experience their lives on stage. Shakespeare was also inspired by all of these facts. Significant influence can be seen on Shakespearean tragedies including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Titus Andronicus*.

- Most of Shakespeare's tragedies are inspired by Senecan plays

The lofty aspirations of *Richard III* and *Macbeth* can likewise be seen as a Seneca-inspired feature. Shakespeare has adapted Senecan tactics, as seen in his use of them in the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as his tragedies.

1.2.2 Character Types in Shakespearean Plays

Shakespeare is unique in that he rarely uses the same character kinds, although other playwrights like Moliere have been guilty of creating such characters, with minor differences in their characteristics. Shakespeare, however, writes plays that are endlessly different, each one like a distinct cosmos with its own unique cast of characters. That is, Shakespeare did not simply use the same character kinds again and again. Despite this, a few generic character types frequently resurface again, though in countless variations.



- ▶ The protagonist is the main character of the play

- ▶ The antagonist not only opposes the protagonist in some way, but is also the source of the majority of the problems

- ▶ There is a best friend in most of the plays
- ▶ The clown adds humour to the plays

- ▶ The dupe acts as a foil to the protagonist
- ▶ Heroines are significant in Shakespearean plays

1. The Protagonist: The primary problem-solver in the play; he or she must attempt to solve the issue at hand, or perish in the process. Despite the fact that Macbeth transitions from being a hero to a villain, he is also included in the problem. However, compared to other characters, the protagonist's point of view continues to be more important to the audience.

2. The Antagonist: This character not only opposes the protagonist in some way or the other, but also causes most of the trouble. This character will be present throughout the play. Iago, the villain, talks more than Othello in the play. Shylock, despite having some potential for sympathy, is the adversary of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. Although they are villains, it is noteworthy of Shakespeare's antagonists that they have some kind of redeeming qualities.

3. The Best Friend or Advisor: Ariel in *The Tempest*, Benvolio and Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, and others have this character, though not all plays have.

4. The Clown or Fool: Shakespeare's favourite archetype might be this one. Even in the most tragic of stories, there is frequently some sort of clown figure to add humour, offer ironic comments on the situations, or both. In different parts of *Henry IV* plays, Falstaff, plays the role of both the advisor as well as the clown. There is a fool in *King Lear*. The gravedigger plays a role similar to that of a fool in *Hamlet*.

5. The Dupe: The dupe appears both in tragedies as well as in comedies. This may be a person with a melancholic appearance as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, or someone like Roderigo who acts as a foil to Othello in the play *Othello*.

6. The Heroine: Despite the fact that they had to use teenage boys in Shakespeare's days, there is nearly always at least one significant female character in every play. Women are only given tiny supporting roles in a very small number of plays, as seen in plays like *Julius Caesar*.

1.2.3 Women in Shakespearean Plays

According to Ruskin, "Shakespeare has no heroes,



- Shakespeare's female characters are noteworthy than male characters

he has only heroines." Shakespeare's women are more noteworthy than his male characters. Most commentators are tempted by Shakespeare's wide range and variety of female characters to claim that he has accurately depicted every type of woman in his plays and that no other depiction of a woman has ever come close. Additionally, critics have gone to considerable lengths to categorise his heroines. It is possible to accept Mrs. Jameson's classification as being shorter and less complicated than most others.

- The women in his plays are witty and assertive, loving, imaginative, and powerful and aggressive

The sensible description, however, would be to distinguish them as witty and assertive characters like Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. The loving and imaginative nature like in Juliet, Helena, Viola, Ophelia, and Miranda form the group. The tragic heroines Desdemona and Cordelia, as well as the hero and heroine from *Much Ado About Nothing*, would be in the third category. The final group would be made up of powerful and aggressive characters like Lady Macbeth, Goneril, and Regan.

- Women characters' intelligence

The most popular Shakespearean heroines are those that stand out for their intelligence, aggressiveness, and ability to survive the conflicts they are involved in. These could include Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as Viola, Beatrice, and Rosalind from some of Shakespeare's best comedies. These sparkling, attractive, and funny heroines command the stage's front row at all times. They succeed in their goal thanks to their pragmatic wisdom and focus. Mrs. Jameson notes that Beatrice is not merely a girl full of vitality and wit; she is also womanly in her tenderness and love for both Hero and Benedick.

The deeper and more refined aspects of Beatrice's nature are on exhibit in the play's closing scene. Viola from *Twelfth Night* is Shakespeare's heroine who is next most endearing.

The loving Viola is not the Viola of the sentimental critics, who sees her as someone who just lets time and events carry her along to happiness in the end. The lovely Viola is more like the role that the great Ellen Terry is rumoured to have played during her peak. Instead of almost revealing herself in her encounters with Orsino,

she deftly drops hints. “I am all the daughters of my father’s house,” is the most overt example.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet is steadfastly devoted and selfless. She has matured due to love. But she is in no way less pure or meek because of the physical foundation of her loves. Even Portia, who has acknowledged Bassanio as her lord and master in *The Merchant of Venice*, gives up everything to him. Even Brutus’ wife Portia, who is incredibly anxious for fear of spilling what Brutus has informed her, kills herself when she sees her husband’s fortunes are hopeless and is unable to stand her separation from him. Similar to the hero in *Much Ado*, Ophelia in *Hamlet* exhibits passive love and pitiful powerlessness. Such female characters support the claim made by certain critics that Shakespeare’s female characters are inferior compared to his male characters.

- Shakespeare has created a variety of women characters

Desdemona in *Othello* is full of extraordinary innocence, whereas Cordelia is endowed with passivity combined with pride. She exerts her powerful nature over others. However, she is generous, and she does not consider her own losses and gains when making decisions.

Among Shakespeare’s violent and nasty female characters, Lady Macbeth stands out as the Clytemnestra of English tragedy among them. She has a terrifyingly strong determination and an iron sense of steadiness. But in the end, this is what destroys her. She is superior to Macbeth in intelligence and self-reliance, just as Portia is to Bassanio and Rosalind is to Orlando. She hesitated to kill Duncan in his sleep at the last minute because she recognised her father’s face in him, displaying her womanliness. In contrast to Goneril and Regan, she stands out because she experiences compulsive visits from nature. Shakespeare, however, seems pleased to confirm that there are genuinely wicked people when he defines the characters of Goneril and Regan. They are highly realistic. They speak in a manner that their father desires from them. Cleopatra, the daughter of Ptolemy, is the last of Shakespeare’s female characters to be discussed here, though she is by no means the least. Her deft wit and feminine adaptability are what allow her to draw and keep men like Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Antony.

- There are violent women characters also



1.2.4 Use of the Supernatural in Shakespearean Plays

- The people of Elizabethan period were highly superstitious

Shakespeare's time was marked by significantly higher levels of superstitious belief than ours. In those days, everyone believed in the existence and power of the unknown elements. Popular books including Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, King James' *Demonologie*, and Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* were all well-known in Elizabethan England.

- Supernatural elements are predominantly seen in Shakespeare's plays

Shakespeare, who admittedly harboured some supernatural beliefs, was unable to ignore them in his plays, which, if anything, are imitations of real life. Five of his plays - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Richard III*, and *The Tempest* - involve a significant amount of the supernatural. The fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, particularly Puck, cause trouble for humans but are not malicious. The ghost in *Hamlet* has far more strength, but it is unable to accomplish its goal.

- There are supernatural elements in *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Tempest*

The witches in *Macbeth* are more likely to turn wicked. But because evil already exists in Macbeth's heart, they ultimately bring him to his death. In *Julius Caesar*, invisible forces serve as signposts for disasters and omens of death. The unseen forces in *The Tempest* are totally under Prospero's control and work for the betterment of mankind.

- The supernatural elements are purposefully kept away from people

Shakespeare takes pains to give the supernatural occurrences in his plays the characteristics of popular superstition so that his audience can easily accept them. Shakespeare takes care to keep his otherworldly creatures as far away from people as possible. They only make a few appearances in the plays. Only a small number of people occasionally interact with them. Only at the beginning and in one scene midway through the play do the witches of *Macbeth* make an appearance. In *Julius Caesar*, the horrific supernatural occurrences only take place the night before Caesar is killed. Only Brutus witnesses the ghost of Caesar twice. However, it is implied that the ghost is less objective and more subjective. Nobody else hears or sees the ghost.

Bottom, the weaver, is the only person the fairies interact with in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The others



remain unaware of their good deeds or suffer as a result of their wickedness.

- Various types of supernatural creatures

Shakespeare used fairies in another significant play, *The Tempest*. Prospero in *The Tempest* has complete authority over all supernatural creatures. Ariel possesses superhuman abilities, but he can only use them with Prospero's permission. Although Caliban is a terrible and malevolent being, Prospero employs him as a servant to carry out all the laborious tasks. Ariel resembles fairies like those in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in many ways.

- Superstition and supernatural elements are predominantly seen in *Julius Caesar* also

However, the supernatural element is most prominently present in *Julius Caesar*. Superstition is thought to have been a belief of Julius Caesar's. When he is competing in the Lupercal race, he asks Calpurnia to touch Antonius' clothes. Caesar thought that by touching a runner's robe, Calpurnia, who was infertile, would become fertile. The night before Caesar was assassinated was filled with supernatural horror. Rome's streets catch fire from the storm. Cassius is glared at by a lion, who then strides off without hurting him. An image of a slave's hand on fire without his hand being unharmed is presented. More odd and horrific occurrences are depicted, terrifying the populace.

1.2.5 Shakespeare's Use of the Blank Verse

- Blank verse was the dominating verse form during the period
- Unrhymed poetry in iambic pentameter

Since the middle of the sixteenth century, blank verse has dominated English dramatic and narrative poetry. It is unrhymed poetry that is typically written in iambic pentameter. Italian Renaissance authors transformed ancient works into blank verse, which later became the preferred format of playwrights like Ludovico Ariosto, Torquato Tasso and Battista Guarini. The poet Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, introduced blank verse into English literature from Italy by translating Book II and Book IV of the *Aeneid* by Virgil and introducing it to theatrical application in *Gorboduc*. The so-called University Wits continued to refine it until Marlowe used it to create magic music and write his magnificent and tremendous sentences. Shakespeare was a true student of Marlowe, the master of blank verse, in this regard, and the overt and covert Marlovian rhetorical influences can be seen throughout many of his early works. But Shakespeare's brilliance also found a home in blank verse, turning it into a strong tool for the emergence of



the finest drama in English literature. He changed the inflexible form of blank verse into a flexible tool that is particularly equipped to portray speech patterns and emotional undertones.

Shakespeare was quite consistent in his use of blank verse as we see in his use of the form in a brand-new genre in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In actuality, *Love's Labour's Lost* is a feast of words that entrap the poet-dramatist with their allure. He advanced gradually as he learned to take more artistic licence with his blank verse and, in the end, liberated himself from the verbal dazzle to achieve his sense of beauty. His blank poetry had been the continuous weapon in this struggle of that all-encompassing spirit seeking beauty. He frequently exceeds the standard of ten syllables, which leads to an increase in the frequency of double or feminine endings. Hexameter is created by stretching pentameter, and vice versa. The typical line of blank verse is frequently shortened, and this serves a useful purpose. Words were pleasures sought for their own reason when Shakespeare took the stage. Nearly all of his contemporaries were verbal craftsmen, and the young Shakespeare definitely took note of this. Thus, one of the oldest Shakespeare's plays, *Love's Labour's Lost*, is discovered to be entirely filled with words, with the mixture of styles taken both from a story and poetry.

- Shakespeare used blank verse as a strong weapon in his works

Curiously, the first noticeable shift in Shakespeare's usage of blank verse occurs about the time his works transition from using simple words to dramatic action. As a result, his early histories, which are significantly different from his earlier plays, show a fresh vigour in his blank verse. The youthful playwright lacked Marlowe's rhetorical prowess, searching the heavens and the earth for analogies and declarations. Shakespeare's poetry is quiet and modest, but the poet-dramatist is clearly conscious of the role poetry plays in drama: poetry should support the action of the play, not dominate it. Shakespeare's simple verse is therefore more flexible and potent as a theatrical vehicle than Marlowian eloquence ever was.

- Predominant form during the sixteenth century.
- The basic pattern of language in Shakespeare's plays are formed by blank verse

1.2.6 Imagery

When something is described using figurative language, such as by using words to create an image, it is called an imagery. Imagery is the practise of creating

images in the mind, and pictures with strong emotional undertones. In a theatrical presentation, imagery can increase emotional intensity and compactness. It can help in quickly accomplishing deeper emotional exposition or thorough development of a character or theme. Shakespeare frequently used metaphors and similes to explore and emphasise a particular idea in his plays. His imagery was conventional and was frequently borrowed from popular literary representations of Elizabethan England. He drew inspiration for his imagery from things he had seen throughout the course of his life, which made the audience or readers feel the situation more closely. His imagery aided in the development of the theme. The reader is drawn in by his images and feels as though he is a part of the character. Shakespeare uses images to set the mood for the characters and the broader setting of the play in several of his plays, including *Macbeth*. Shakespeare uses clothing, darkness, and blood imagery in the play. Each imagery contains symbols from the play that either explain a particular section or form the play's overarching theme. When Duncan is killed, the mixture of blood and sleep imagery in *Macbeth* creates a horrifying atmosphere that adds to our perception of Macbeth's escalating insanity. In this way, the blood imagery in Lady Macbeth's final scene emphasises how guilty she is. Shakespeare's plays make use of imagery to link the audience's dread to the play. We can see that he frequently uses certain groups of imagery in his plays, and these images help us to understand the issues the play covers. Through the play's imagery, the devilish Iago is commonly associated with the concept of hell, where Iago swears by the 'divinity of hell' (Act II, Scene III, line 341). Throughout the play, the contrast between good and evil is emphasised using images of heaven and hell.

- Imagery is the description of something using figurative language

1.2.7 Quibbles

A quibble is a storytelling device that uses an obscure technicality to resolve or create a conflict in a story. It is a plot device used in fiction to fulfil the precise verbal requirements of an agreement in order to evade the intended meaning. Quibbles are frequently employed in formal agreements in fiction, and in agreements that are magically enforced. Shakespeare used quibbles in many of his plays. Portia's argument in *The Merchant of Venice*



- A quibble is a plot device that uses an obscure technicality to solve or create a dilemma in a story

that the contract required a pound of flesh but no blood, and that Shylock may only collect if he loses no blood - which is not physically possible - saved Antonio in court, and the incident that Macbeth is killed by Macduff despite the fact that it is stated that “none of women born” shall be able to defeat him, are the examples of quibbles used by Shakespeare.

1.2.8 Soliloquy and Aside

- When a person speaks to himself, it is called a soliloquy

A soliloquy is a conversation with oneself. Although it frequently refers to specific things outside the self, it is a form of self-analysis using the introspective technique of psychology, and as such, it aids in explaining the episodes, thoughts and hidden meanings in a play. During the Elizabethan era, soliloquies were regarded as a common yet useful method of informing the audience or advancing the plot of a play.

- In Greek drama, the chorus served the purpose of soliloquy

The Chorus of the Greek tragic drama served as the basis for the soliloquy. In ancient Greece, the chorus was used to convey specific information in the form of the essence or core of a play’s central theme. In Greek tragedies, the chorus served as a nexus between the past and the present and between the latter and the former. Initially, there were several members in the Greek Chorus. However, in a soliloquy, only one character — typically the lead in the play — utters the soliloquy. When giving a speech, the main character would often educate the audience of something that was not possible to depict on stage. The Chorus has been substituted in contemporary theatre by an actor who reads aloud a letter to the audience to provide information.

- A soliloquy reveals the inner thoughts of a character

The true purpose of a soliloquy is self-revelation and self-analysis, through which a play’s hero or any other prominent character’s innermost feelings are revealed. Shakespeare’s tragedies are rich with the deeper emotions and the more secret springs of the human beings, so tragedies are where heroes and villains typically indulge in soliloquies. Shakespeare’s soliloquies are meant to exalt, explain, and also tell us things that would otherwise be impossible to reveal through dialogue or circumstance.

The best example is found in *Hamlet*’s soliloquies. *Hamlet* contains nine soliloquies in all, five of which are



- In *Hamlet*, there are many famous soliloquies
- It is a kind of self-analysis

delivered by Prince Hamlet and four by Claudius. Hamlet vents his resentment against the entire race of femininity in the first soliloquy. He alludes to the betrayal of one brother by another in order to convey his angry thoughts. He becomes cynical, pessimistic, and hateful of people, women, and life itself as a result of these emotions. These soliloquies at least partially disclose Hamlet's innermost motivations, including his sensitivity, melancholic disposition, difficulty arriving at conclusions, propensity for introspection at every turn, and other traits.

- An aside is supposed to be addressing the audience

In dramatic literature, an aside is a device used when a character addresses the audience directly while usually remaining unheard by the other actors on stage. The audience and the onstage action are connected by asides. It either serves to hint at upcoming play events or to let the audience in on a character's most private thoughts and feelings. Shakespeare has employed asides in plays like *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and others.

1.2.9 Irony

- Ironical statements are remarks that contradict each other and reveal the truth

Contradictory statements or circumstances that expose a truth that is different from what seems to be true are known as ironic devices in literature. One of the many writers renowned for their use of irony in literature is William Shakespeare. His techniques for subtly incorporating dramatic, situational, and verbal irony into stories have been so difficult for other writers to match. When talking about irony, one of the essential literary figures we cannot overlook is Shakespeare.

- *Julius Caesar* and *Romeo and Juliet* are examples of verbal irony

An example of verbal irony can be found in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, where before being killed by conspirators, including Brutus, Julius Caesar praises the latter's honourable character. This occurs after the audience perceives Brutus as a dishonest man after witnessing his plot to kill Caesar on the Ides of March. Another example is Juliet's speech in *Romeo and Juliet* greatly confuses her mother. She claims she is not yet ready to get married but then defies herself by stating that she is getting ready to get married that very night.

The use of situational irony can be found in *Romeo and Juliet*. People often assume it to be a love story before realising after watching the entire play that it is truly a tragedy because both Romeo and Juliet pass away in the



- Situational irony is used in *Julius Caesar* to make it a tragedy

course of the narrative. In *Macbeth*, Macbeth murders King Duncan to seize the kingdom but later learns that he must continue killing people in order to hold it. This quickly alienates his supporters, preventing him from finding contentment in his new role.

1.2.10 Disguise

Disguise is used to convey dramatic irony. It has a long history of being frequently used in Greek and Roman theatre. Shakespeare's characters frequently used disguise in a variety of settings. During the period, the use of disguise was viewed as problematic and highly dangerous.

Gender Disguise: Shakespeare employed the disguise technique frequently in his plays when referring to women. One instance is Rosalind from *As You Like It*. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia poses as a male lawyer to solve Shylock's problem and prove that she is just as intelligent as the male characters.

Shakespeare utilised a disguising tactic in *Twelfth Night*. The person who does this is Viola, who convinces everyone that she is a man by dressing in masculine clothing. Shakespeare generates confusion regarding gender with the Olivia-Viola-Orsino love triangle by disguising his protagonist in male clothing. Malvolio wins Olivia with a disguise, while Feste poses as Sir Topas, a clergyman.

- Male actors disguise as female characters

During the Elizabethan era, a person's clothing revealed their identity and social class. 'The English Sumptuary Laws' were in effect at the period, which required people to dress appropriately for their social level while also limiting excess. Those who did not dress appropriately for their class were subject to punishments like penalties, property loss and even death. This increases the effectiveness and significance of the disguise approach while also making it risky at the same time.

- 'The English Sumptuary Laws' demanded people to wear clothes that matched their social status

- The originality of the characters is revealed, and the disguise is removed at crucial moments

In *King Lear*, Edgar, Gloucester's son, serves as an illustration of a disguise in the sense we just addressed. Since Edgar was falsely accused of hatching a plan to kill his father, he has assumed the identity of a beggar named Poor Tom. As he gets determined to exact retribution, his character and appearance change.



Shakespeare employed the approach as a potential dramatic element even though disguise and changing one's appearance were a little bit difficult and dangerous during his day. It might encourage laughter or a sense of approaching dread.

Summarised Overview

Shakespeare was, like most of the playwrights during the period, influenced by the intense tragic scenes portrayed by Seneca in his plays. The major character types employed by Shakespeare are the protagonist, the antagonist, the dupe, the best friend, the clown and the heroine. The women characters were given importance in his plays, although the roles of women were played by men. He used the blank verse, which was the prominent form, in his works. He also employed quibbles, the techniques of soliloquies and asides and verbal and situational irony in his plays.

Assignments

1. Write an essay on the character types in Shakespeare's plays.
2. Elucidate on Shakespeare's use of imagery.
3. What is a soliloquy?
4. Elaborate on the Senecan influence on Shakespeare.
5. Write notes on the different kinds of ironies used by Shakespeare.
6. Which Shakespearean plays employ the technique of disguise? Explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton UP, 2012.
2. Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. Picador, 2008.
3. Berryman, John. *Berryman's Shakespeare*. Ed. John Haffenden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
4. Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. Penguin, 1991.



5. Eastman, Arthur. *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism*. Random House, 1968.
6. Engle, Lars. "William Empson." *Great Shakespeareans: Empson, Wilson, Knight, Barber, Kott*. Ed. Grady, Hugh. Continuum, 2012.
7. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
8. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Norton, 2004.
9. Hubler, Edward. *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Hill and Wang, 1962.
10. Joseph, Sister Miriam. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. Columbia UP, 1947.
11. Kennedy, William J. "Shakespeare and the Development of English Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge UP, 2007. 14-32.
12. Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
13. Landry, Hilton. *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. University of California Press, 1963.
14. McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945-2000*. Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
15. Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. 1957. New ed. Routledge, 2001.
16. Spurgeon, Caroline F. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. Read Books, 2013.
17. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
18. Taylor, Gary. "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Tandon. Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
19. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.
20. Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Harvard UP, 1997.



References

1. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
2. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
3. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 3

Major Classifications of Shakespearean Plays

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ become acquainted with the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare.
- ▶ get a comprehensive view on how Shakespeare contributed to the English language.
- ▶ gain insight on the influence of history on the plays of Shakespeare.
- ▶ identify the influence of various discourses in Shakespearean plays.

Background

Have you heard of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*? What are they called? They are the most famous tragedies of Shakespeare. Of course, you know what a tragedy is. Shakespeare has written tragedies, comedies, romance, problem plays, histories and Roman plays. You have learned about the influence of Seneca on his plays, right? Then, what do you know about Shakespeare's contribution to the English language? He has coined so many words and phrases. In this unit, you will learn about all these things and also about the discourses encountered in his plays.

Keywords

Classification, Tragedies, Comedies, Romances, Enrichment of language, Discourses, Humanism, Imperialism, Patriarchal dominance

Discussion

1.3.1 Thematological Classification of Plays

Shakespeare, in contrast to other writers, produced a



- Editors classified Shakespeare's plays

- Some tragedies have comical elements
- some comedies have tragic elements

- Tragedies are plays with sad endings

wide range of plays in various styles. Shakespeare wrote thirty seven plays. His writing ranged from side-splitting humour to deadly tragedy, intoxicating romance, magic and madness, historical classics, and more. He was a master of many genres. Shakespeare did not categorise his plays; rather, it was the editors who did so after they had been published. His plays can be thematically classified into tragedies, comedies, romances, problem plays, histories and Roman plays.

None of Shakespeare's plays strictly adhere to the characteristics of their genre. Shakespeare intersperses extremely human moments of disaster and comedic relief throughout the tragedies, while the comedies are frequently filled with moments of loss, fear, truth, and melancholy. Each play is a unique and complicated network of genuine moments, decisions, consequences, love, hate, terror, and more. Each genre may have a particular way of ending the play.

1.3.1.1 Tragedies

Shakespeare's tragedies frequently centre on a primary character, or numerous characters, who either strive to overcome pressures placed on them by their family or society, or who cause their own downfall as a result of inherent defects. In other words, they have a fatal flaw or weakness that leads to their demise, such as pride, jealousy, or ambition. Tragedies are frequently epic tales that may feature romance, conflict in the family, historical personalities, kings and queens, political intrigues, social disillusionment, and much more.



Fig 1.3.1 A scene from *Macbeth*

- Have tragic ending, and even deaths

Tragedies typically have a tragic ending and include deaths. It is indeed interesting to note that, generally, Shakespeare's tragedies are frequently his most well-known plays and are recognised as his best creations. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Julius Caesar* are some of the most appreciated tragedies of Shakespeare.

1.3.1.2 Comedies

- Comedies have happy endings

Shakespeare's comedies frequently feature romances, misidentification, magic, love potions, epic quests, disasters, long-lost twins, fools, and other humorous mischieves. Shakespeare frequently uses the protagonists in his comedies to leave the confines of the city or courtly life and explore foreign and enigmatic locales as a plot device. The characters play a lot, get confused, and learn things about themselves. However, some of the comical stories are actually rather serious.

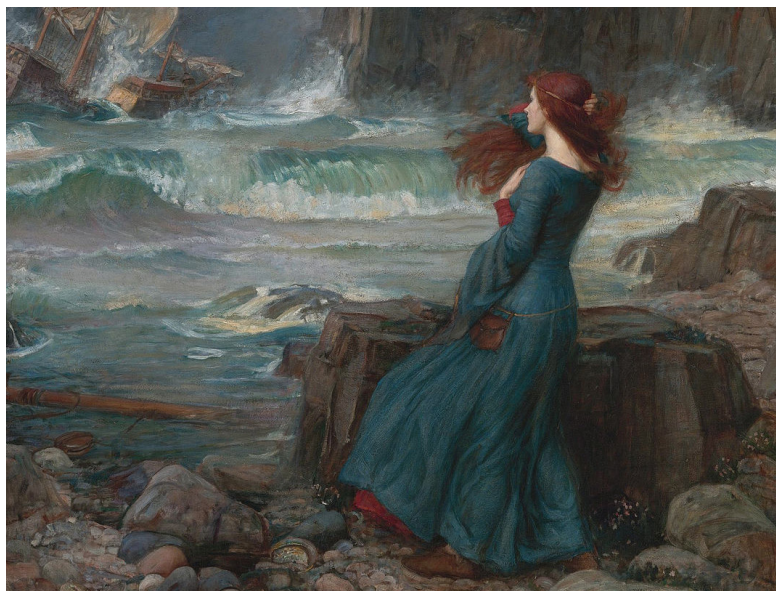


Fig 1.3.2 A scene from *The Tempest*

- Although comedies, some of the plays are of very serious nature

The fact that none of the characters die and that all come to a happy conclusion with some sort of resolution is what they all share in common. Most comedies conclude with one or two weddings (or three). Any characters who attempted to sabotage the pleasant narrative are invariably dealt with a harsh blow. *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night* are some of the best comedies written by Shakespeare.

- Deals with a bittersweet atmosphere

1.3.1.3 Romances

Typically referred to as romances or tragicomedies, late comedies describe tales of wandering and separation that end in a tearful and jubilant reunion. They have a bittersweet atmosphere that seems beautifully fitting for a writer who has examined the depths of human sorrow and depravity in the great tragedies with such frankness.

1.3.1.4 Problem Plays

- Deal with characters having diverse opinions

Shakespeare's plays are sometimes classified as belonging to a type called "Problem Plays." Scholars disagree even on the plays that belong in this genre, making this classification one that has been contentious for a long time. The phrase "Problem Play" typically alludes to the difficulties in categorising several of Shakespeare's plays. It can also be used to describe plays that have characters who hold divergent opinions about controversial or social issues. The concept of categorising Shakespeare's plays was first used by critic Frederick Samuel Boas. Shakespeare's plays in this genre include *The Winter's Tale*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

1.3.1.5 Histories and Roman Plays

- Historical plays deal with real history

Shakespeare composed numerous plays about real people, primarily English kings and queens. He did, however, occasionally stray from historical accuracy and preferred to alter characters and events to create compelling narratives. Even though he did this for dramatic effect, some people did not enjoy it. For instance, critics of Shakespeare's wicked portrayal of King Richard III are still in existence. They contend that the play's impact was so great that it significantly altered the king's legacy and reputation. The historical dramas *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV* Parts 1 and 2, *Richard II*, and *Henry VI* Parts 1-3 are among the greatest. Shakespeare also composed four plays that are set in Rome. They are collectively classified as the Roman plays, which are *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* and *Titus Andronicus*.

1.3.2 Shakespeare's Enrichment of the English Language

The writings of William Shakespeare are studied

by students throughout the world. He is one of the people who has had the largest impact on English literature and language. How profound his effect is on the language might be very difficult to understand at times. Shakespeare's time did not see the development of English as a standardised vernacular language. Shakespeare's works are responsible for the standardised use of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Shakespeare has added more than 1700 new terms to the English language. This is especially notable because many of the words Shakespeare invented are still in use today. Words like "lonely," "frugal," "dwindle," are some of the examples. Shakespeare also developed expressions like "breaking the ice," "having a heart of gold," and so on. Shakespeare's blank verse had a significant impact on literature and poetry for many years. The Bard had a significant impact on several great writers, including Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Charles Dickens. Shakespeare transcended time through his contributions. Shakespeare has had a significant impact on the language and culture, therefore studying his works is a necessary component of cultural education today. As interesting as Shakespeare's subjects are his words. He has significantly improved the English language and Shakespeare is still regarded as one of the best authors of English literature, having transformed European theatre and has had a significant impact on a vast number of literary figures. His writings have been translated into a huge variety of languages, including Malayalam.

- Shakespeare has added more than 1700 new words to English vocabulary

He is considered as the most quoted author globally. The brilliant writer has contributed words like "alligator," "manager," "farmhouse," "gloomy," "eyeball," "watch-dog," "zany," "outbreak," "barefaced," "noiseless," "eyesore," "baseless," "unreal," and "fashionable." Shakespeare has made contributions in the form of both words and phrases. The world became increasingly interconnected in his lifetime due to the effects of colonisation. Words from different languages were frequently used during the time. Shakespeare was a clever rephraser. He spoke in a mix of languages, including languages of the Celts, Old Norse, German, French, and Latin. The development of the English language was aided by these words. Some of the famous

- Shakespeare was a clever rephraser



phrases coined by him are “All that glitters is not gold,” “Brave new world,” “Break the ice,” “A dog will have its day,” and “Faint-hearted.”

Quotable Quotes of Shakespeare

- ▶ “This above all: to thine own self be true.” - *Hamlet*
- ▶ “Our doubts are traitors, And make us lose the good we oft might win, By fearing to attempt.” - *Measure for Measure*
- ▶ “But love is blind, and lovers cannot see.” - *The Merchant of Venice*
- ▶ “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts. - *As You Like It*
- ▶ “Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them” - *Twelfth Night*
- ▶ “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” - *Hamlet*
- ▶ “The world is grown so bad, that wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch” - *King Richard III*
- ▶ “We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.” - *The Tempest*

1.3.3 Discourses Encountered

1.3.3.1 Humanism

George Chapman, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare supported human dignity during the Elizabethan period. Shakespeare stands out among these great playwrights as a poet who held a mirror up to human nature. He places a strong emphasis on human dignity and emotions as he explores human character in his plays. The protagonist of *Hamlet* praises the worth and beauty of human existence,

What a piece of work is man!

How noble in reason!

How infinite in faculty!



In form and moving and how express and admirable!

How like an angel!

In apprehension how like a god!

The beauty of the world!

The paragon of animals!

- Humanism is predominantly present in Shakespearean works

Of course, Hamlet refers to human life as “the quintessence of dust” because of his pessimistic outlook. As Shakespeare progresses from tragedies to romances in his plays, the message of humanistic essence becomes abundantly obvious.

- Shakespeare had a pessimistic attitude

Prospero represents the civilising influence of the artist and educator in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. His enchanted abilities calm and direct the tempests of human nature. The admirable traits he possesses include charity, compassion, friendship, and wisdom. Shakespeare had a pessimistic outlook, thus he addressed issues that arise from human shortcomings. His paintings have a dialectical tone to them. The humanism of the Renaissance is characterised by scepticism. The binary oppositions he presents in his plays include action versus reflection, theory versus practice, decency versus immorality, individualism versus society, and others.

Shakespeare, in contrast to most playwrights of the day, did not have a formal education, but it was evident that humanism was the foundation of his schooling. The concepts of Renaissance humanism are plainly evident in *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*. In his tragic dramas, he honours humanism. Despite their sufferings and terrible deaths, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, and Macbeth display admirable human traits including compassion, fortitude, patience, and the “milk of human kindness.”

1.3.3.2 Imperialism

- Post-colonial criticism of Shakespeare’s works reveal the English superiority

Post-colonial theories have been used by literary academics in recent years to examine the essential role that racial, cultural, and national sentiments played in Shakespeare’s works. These studies are important because they show how Shakespeare, whose works represent the essence of Englishness and serve as a yardstick for mankind as a whole, highlights English



superiority over the uncultured and underprivileged Others.

- The radical “otherness” can be seen in many of his plays

Shakespeare’s plays show how racial “otherness” concepts were used in Elizabethan England to support European patriarchal power. There were numerous pertinent philosophies during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in England that are relevant to this drama. The society of the time, and an understanding of how it operated, serves a great purpose in studying these interactions in order to examine the values and ideas his plays uphold and challenge. Shakespeare, like many authors of this era, supported a number of beliefs. Despite the fact that many have called Shakespeare a forerunner in many ways, Shakespeare mostly wrote from an Elizabethan or Jacobean perspective.

- The conquest of the island by Prospero, and his control over Caliban show the imperialism attitude of Englishmen

On the basis of the idea that Europeans are superior, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* supports the unequal treatment of different racial groups. *The Tempest*’s depictions of race and ethnicity show that the book is rife with imperialist European notions. Shakespeare supports Prospero’s conquest of the island and its indigenous population in a play in which usurpation is a major theme. The portrayal of Caliban and his mother Sycorax highlights how racist and sexist views work to keep the balance of power in the possession of a small, governing elite. The racial and gender beliefs that shape the play’s power dynamics become apparent when the disproportion of power is examined. Imperialist, European, and patriarchal attitudes are firmly rooted in the portrayal of non-European characters as inferior. Based on the intrinsic inferiority of the native people, Prospero’s imperial patriarchal regime’s capture of the island and its inhabitants is depicted in *The Tempest* as perfectly natural and inevitable. The drama precisely replicates imperialist discourse in this way, thus defending European annexation of ‘other’ territories and populations over whom they have no legal right. Shakespeare is primarily seen by Edward Said in *Orientalism* as a precursor and tool of orientalist knowledge.

Shakespeare’s principal preoccupation in *Othello*, according to a sizable number of critics, is the clash of cultures between the East and the West. The “sinful”

- Othello is portrayed as an example of the colonized race

union between a white woman (who represents the white canon) and a black moor who is from the eastern realm also symbolises the conflict in the play. From the very beginning of the play to its conclusion, Othello is simply portrayed as a barbarian. The play centres on a black man raping a white woman. Othello is still a barbarian despite Shakespeare's efforts to cover-up his racial status by portraying him as a slayer of Turks, a soldier fighting for a Christian power, and a Venetian state servant. The drama finally rejects the notion of inter-racial sex because, according to critics, such relationships can only result in catastrophe. This is consistent with Said's theory of Orientalism and imperialism, which holds that as one culture subjugates another, the dominant culture gradually subsumes the weaker culture until it is annihilated.

- The imperialistic nature in the conflict between the Roman Empire and Egypt is portrayed in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Shakespeare depicts the Elizabethan reimagining and interpretation of the Roman world in *Antony and Cleopatra*. It depicts a period in Roman history when the Roman empire experiences significant change. At that moment, Caesar had passed away and the triumvirs were in charge of Rome. The main action starts in 41 BCE, when the Romans set out to enlarge their empire and eventually conquer the entire known world. Another area that might be colonised is the mysterious land known as Egypt. The two figures Antony and Cleopatra represent this political conflict. The sexuality of the two major characters adds to the political conflict between the Roman Empire and Egypt as a result of their passion. The play explores the relationships between lust and authority; more specifically, it explores the relationships between romantic passion and political conflict. The two major protagonists are engaging in a dramatic struggle for political survival. Antony is conflicted about choosing between his loyalty to Rome and his sexual attraction to Cleopatra. While being dependent on Antony, Cleopatra tries to defend Egypt from the Romans' imperialist impulses.

- Although the feudal system was outdated, Shakespeare preferred it in his plays

1.3.3.3 Feudalism

Shakespeare's plays naturally showed his strong preference for a centralised monarchy over a feudal system, which was stable but outmoded, given the political climate at the time. Shakespeare's political



plays depict a feudal society that appears solid but has subtle flaws, while also demonstrating the trend toward centralization and hinting at the coming Age of Kings.

- The bestowing of titles in the play demonstrate Shakespeare's interest in the feudal system

The customs and titles that the characters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* hold are in keeping with the play's setting and unmistakably point to a feudal system of administration. The exchange of vows is the fundamental principle of feudalism. The count rewards his vassal for his faithfulness by giving him a prize. Duncan executes the treacherous Thane of Cawdor in *Macbeth* while also awarding Macbeth a second fief for his win in battle. Breaking the oath of loyalty made during the rite of investiture is a treacherous conduct that is severely punished. This is why Macbeth muses over the wickedness of his murderous scheme.

Shakespeare uses *The Merchant of Venice* as a microcosmic representation of early modern society to explore the shifting economic landscape of Europe. The relationships between Antonio, Shylock, and Portia, or between a merchant, a money lender, and a landlord, portray the brand-new set of economic connections that came along with the advent of capitalism. The play's depiction of these encounters and the Venetians' responses to Shylock and Antonio positions the comedy as an investigation of the social concerns associated with the development of free markets throughout history. In larger anthropological terms, the transition from feudalism to capitalism resulted in the shift from a ritual system of social organisation to a market system. The Venetians in the play worry that as authority flows from the ritualised heart of the public scene of representation to market exchanges in the periphery, violence will not be successfully postponed and that unstable fluid hierarchies will rule. Shakespeare investigates this conflict, highlighting both the widespread complaints of the capitalist economy and the restrictive limitations of fixed ritual hierarchies.

- *The Merchant of Venice* presents the different aspects of the feudal system

1.3.3.4 Patriarchal Dominance

When William Shakespeare was writing, patriarchy was the norm. Shakespeare uses personas and attitudes to show how these ideas were embodied in these plays. His writings also feature female characters that demand accountability from their male counterparts. He made use

- Shakespeare's works highlight the attitudes of the male dominated society towards women

- Shakespeare seems to think that women in politics is a dangerous thing

- Shakespeare's plays yearn for a return to stability from female monarchy

of the harsh patriarchal culture of the Elizabethan period. He frequently exploits the conflict between a woman's desire and a man's dominance to narrate the characters' conversations. Along the process, he highlights women's tenacity. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two women are instructed to marry males they do not wish to marry. The two ladies are expected to follow their fathers' orders and enter into these marriages, but they are unhappy with the offered choices. Women are unable to persuade their fathers that they are not objects deserving death before having free will. Titania, the play's queen, is an apparently independent woman who ignores what King Oberon orders her to do. Oberon taking advantage of Titania and deceiving her into falling in love with Bottom is the comedy that drives the plot of the play. Oberon used this to put her back in her "place." Theseus and Hippolyta's relationship is another one that is depicted in this play. As a character who was strong, aggressive, and a warrior, Hippolyta is introduced. She was always at odds with patriarchy. Her desire to be free after Theseus "won" the war of love is expressed as contempt of her partner.

Shakespeare reminds us about the risks of women participating in politics at the national level in *Hamlet* by having Gertrude marry Hamlet's uncle. The result of this union is that Claudius, who is now the Queen's husband, and Hamlet, the King's son, are now at odds over the authority of the monarchy. In each of these plays, women's participation in the political processes causes political instability and disturbs the balance of nature.

Shakespeare captures political gender fears in the characters, constructs a schema of conflict and disorder arising from such anxiety in the themes, and satisfies the yearning for a return to state stability by solidifying the patriarchal system in the play's contextual resolutions. Shakespeare does bring up the problems surrounding female rule at the time in these plays, even though *Hamlet* does not directly criticise Queen Elizabeth's monarchy. Another instance is Polonius and Laertes, two clearly masculine characters in the play, giving Ophelia the order not to meet Hamlet. This theme is continued in *Henry IV*, which emphasises relationships between men, including those between fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, male coworkers, etc., as well as masculinity



and honourable behaviour in males. In essence, the tale is about how the prince would inherit the throne from his father. The play's female roles are unduly dramatised, making them appear somewhat unimportant.

1.3.3.5 Homosexuality

- Official censorship of plays was a norm of that period, hence depiction of homosexuality on stage was impossible

Shakespeare would have run into difficulties if any of his plays or poems directly addressed homosexuality because all plays were subject to official censorship on depictions of same-sex desire. Most Elizabethan dramas included some elements of cross-dressing since male actors typically played female roles. Male onlookers were encouraged to admire the beauty of boy actors as though they were females by this cross-dressing. Boys assuming feminine roles also meant that there was no on-stage cuddling or kissing between the male actors. Shakespeare's plays that call for a female character to masquerade as a man heighten these effects.

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind dresses as a boy and asks the man she loves to act as though "he" is actually a lady so they can flirt. In those sequences, a male actor portraying Orlando pursues a male actor portraying a girl who is dressed as a guy. If nothing else, *As You Like It* makes the case that a person's gender is not the primary factor in their attraction to another person. Shakespeare's treatment of the themes of gender and sexual desire is most nuanced in *Twelfth Night*. The protagonist of the play, a young lady named Viola, assumes the identity of a man named "Cesario." Her given name can be interpreted as a nod to Julius Caesar's alleged bisexuality. As "Cesario," Viola works as a servant for Duke Orsino, who asks "Cesario" to assist him in courting Countess Olivia, the woman he truly loves. Orsino develops affections for "Cesario" throughout the play, but he is unable to express them until "Cesario" admits that "he" is actually a woman. Orsino proposes to Viola as soon as she exposes her true gender identity. When Orsino proposes, Viola is still wearing a man's outfit, and he even calls her "boy" the entire time. Countess Olivia also develops feelings for "Cesario." She is drawn to "Cesario's" feminine appearance and speech, despite the fact that she thinks "Cesario" is actually a man. In the play's climax, Olivia weds Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, thinking he is "Cesario." Sebastian tries to comfort

- Boys played the role of women

her after she realises her error by saying that he, like “Cesario,” is gender-neutral: “maid and man.”

Summarised Overview

Shakespeare's plays have been thematically classified in tragedies, comedies, romances, problem plays, histories and Roman plays. He has made numerous contributions to the English language. He has coined many words and phrases. His quotes are even now being used in daily life. Various discourses have been encountered in his plays. Features of humanism, imperialism, feudalism, patriarchal dominance and homosexuality can be deciphered by deeply analysing his plays.

Assignments

1. Elucidate on histories and Roman plays.
2. What is a tragedy? What are the main features of a Shakespearean tragedy?
3. Write a note on humanism in Shakespeare's plays.
4. What are the contributions of Shakespeare to the English language?
5. Comment on the influence of imperialism in Shakespeare's plays.

Suggested Readings

1. Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton UP, 2012.
2. Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. Picador, 2008.
3. Berryman, John. *Berryman's Shakespeare*. Ed. John Haffenden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
4. Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. Penguin, 1991.
5. Eastman, Arthur. *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism*. Random House, 1968.



6. Engle, Lars. "William Empson." *Great Shakespeareans: Empson, Wilson, Knight, Barber, Kott*. Ed. Grady, Hugh. Continuum, 2012.
7. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
8. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Norton, 2004.
9. Hubler, Edward. *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Hill and Wang, 1962.
10. Joseph, Sister Miriam. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. Columbia UP, 1947.
11. Kennedy, William J. "Shakespeare and the Development of English Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge UP, 2007. 14-32.
12. Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
13. Landry, Hilton. *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. University of California Press, 1963.
14. McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945-2000*. Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
15. Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. 1957. New ed. Routledge, 2001.
16. Spurgeon, Caroline F. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. Read Books, 2013.
17. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
18. Taylor, Gary. "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Tandon. Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
19. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.
20. Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Harvard UP, 1997.



References

1. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
2. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
3. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 4

Shakespearean Criticism and Poetry

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit the learners will be able to:

- ▶ channelise their interest in Shakespearean criticism
- ▶ define what a sonnet is, and what are the main features of a sonnet
- ▶ enhance their knowledge on the sonnet form used by Shakespeare
- ▶ demonstrated awareness of the various themes used in Shakespearean sonnets

Background

Shakespeare was a famous playwright and poet of the Elizabethan era. Criticisms of Shakespeare's works began to crop up during the 17th century, and continue even today. The Romantic poet and critic, John Keats, the English essayist Charles Lamb, A.C. Bradley, Leslie Stephen, the father of Virginia Woolf, etc. are some of the main critics of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare has written many sonnets. Do you know what a sonnet is? It is a fourteen line poem. There are many kinds of sonnets, and Shakespeare used one of these for his own poetry. Let us learn more about all these in this unit.

Keywords

Criticism, John Keats, Charles Lamb, Bradley, Sonnet, Shakespearean sonnet



Discussion

1.4.1 Shakespearean Criticism

Shakespeare's plays have been the subject of a wide spectrum of criticism throughout the ages, including debates on gender roles and mistaken identity, literary techniques like monologues and asides that appear in many of his plays, and his use of language, metre, and rhyme. Shakespeare's writing has been compared and contrasted by certain commentators with that of succeeding authors who used comparable topics, structures, and linguistic choices. Others may examine numerous productions of the works that have been staged, recorded on film, or captured digitally. The criticism provides a wealth of information to help one understand Shakespeare's enormous body of work, which has been entertaining and enlightening audiences for more than four centuries.

- Critics on Shakespeare

1.4.1.1 John Keats

John Keats is one of the finest Romantic writers who is frequently likened to Shakespeare because of his deep sense of imagination. His reputation as a poet grew so rapidly that Matthew Arnold was led to compare him with Shakespeare, "He is, he is with Shakespeare." Following a contentious debate with English politician Charles Wentworth Dilke, John Keats popularised the phrase "negative capability" in the literary lexicon as a way to foster acceptance of the unknown. Famously, Keats argued against the pursuit of logic and reason in favour of a sense of beauty and wonder in one of his letters to his brothers George and Tom Keats.

- Keats is likened to Shakespeare
- He popularised the term 'negative capability'

- The ability to deal with unanswered questions or to live in a penitentialium of mystery is referred to as negative capability

Negative capability refers to the capacity to deal with unanswered questions or to live in a penitentialium of mystery. Not every occurrence needs (or will have) a clear, satisfactory explanation, especially in fiction. This partial knowledge is embraced by negative capacity, which willfully suspends disbelief in favour of an expansive, imaginative narrative. It is more important to explore the fleeting beauty of a moment than to understand why or how it came to be.

According to him, negative capability is a writer's ability "which Shakespeare possessed so enormously,"



- Negative capability is a kind of ability of the writer
- Shakespeare possessed it very well

to accept “uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” A literary work with negative capability may contain beauties and depths that render conventional ideas of truth and morality useless. An author with negative capability is objective and emotionally detached as opposed to one who writes for didactic goals. Negative capability may exist as a result of a deliberate omission of details or the absence of the ideal response in a certain circumstance.

Keats observes that Shakespeare used Negative capability in his plays and it can be observed in the majority of his tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and other works. In the play *Hamlet*, Hamlet is a character who has negative potential, which is represented in his soliloquies. In his soliloquies, Hamlet expressed his bewilderment and doubt over whether or not he should kill Claudius, and he remained in that condition of indecision without reaching any specific conclusions or facts. Lear also exhibits negative traits in the play *King Lear*, where he must deal with all the unanswered questions about why he was exiled from his own kingdom, the sorrow he feels after learning that his own two daughters had pretended to love him, and the whole condition of perplexity. Keats attributes Shakespeare’s works with the quality of negative capability as a result of this.

- Most of Shakespeare’s tragedies portray this capability of Shakespeare

1.4.1.2 Charles Lamb

Charles Lamb, in an essay published in *The Reflector* magazine, “On the Tragedies of Shakespeare,” elucidates on the role of performances in determining the success of a play. He complains that a string of terrible performances has rendered him “utterly unable” to appreciate some of Shakespeare’s most well-known works. For instance, Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy, which is a rumination on human misery and suicide, has undergone a kind of butchery. The most famous work of Shakespeare, considered by some to be the height of his literary genius, has been “so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place in the play,” that Lamb is no longer aware of its incredible power and says, “It is become to me a perfect dead member.”

- Lamb explains how the quality of performances affect a play



- Two factors influence performances - Shakespeare is too much talented, and the supernatural wisdom prevents actors natural acting

The essay is the first in a long and fascinating line of readings that aim to demonstrate how, when Shakespeare's plays are performed, they are inadvertently wrecked. It has had a significant impact on how Britain's most celebrated writer is viewed. According to Lamb, Shakespeare's plays are less geared toward stage performance than those of practically any other dramatist at all, and this may seem to be a paradox. Lamb and many other scholars in this school believe that there are two things that set Shakespeare apart from other early modern playwrights: first, he is simply too talented; and second, his plays contain an ethereal, almost supernatural wisdom that defies the abilities of a mortal actor to portray. According to Lamb, performances severely constrain the wild ideas of the mind, the imaginative and intellectual soars that Shakespeare's readers experience, and cramp and push down to the measure of a strait-lacing actuality. Reality shackles imagination.

- Shakespeare's characters are unexplainable

In contrast to the heroes of other modern tragedies, such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* or *Faustus*, Kyd's *Hieronimo*, or Jonson's *Caesar* or *Catiline*, to name a few, what Lamb and others saw in Shakespeare's tragic characters, and what people still think distinguishes them from them, is that they are distinctly inward, fiercely asserting that there is more to their nature than meets an audience's eye. Lamb found this to be an issue since the actors he saw on London's stages at the turn of the nineteenth century were unable to accurately portray the intricate inner lives of the characters they were attempting to bring to life.

- The deep sorrows of Hamlet cannot be depicted exactly on the stage

When describing Hamlet's reflective thoughts, Lamb asks how they can be represented by a gesticulating actor who comes and mouths them out before an audience. "These profound sorrows, these light-and-noise-abhorring ruminations, which the tongue hardly dares utter to deaf walls and chambers, how can they be represented by a gesticulating actor." (Lamb) He also believes Charles Macready, an actor, is unsuited to portray the tortured, eerie environment of Macbeth's mind.

The main goal of Lamb's study is to reconsider Shakespeare's tragedies while reaffirming both Shakespeare and the authorial category. This ambition,

- Lamb's study reassesses Shakespeare's tragedies while reinforcing both Shakespeare and the authorial category

which was undoubtedly influenced by both his romantic contemporaries and his consideration of modern theatre, is a good example of M. H. Abrams's thorough arguments for the romantic transition from audience-centered to author-centered poetics. By embracing this perspective, Lamb disproves claims that performers like Garrick shared Shakespeare's authorial authority and the "great or heroic nature" of his roles. In the first instance, Lamb argues that the author exercises total dominion over the actor in the "power of originating," therefore the actor can never be seen to have a "mind sympathetic with the poet's."

- It is difficult to define an author to common people

Without some difficulty and mental confusion, it is impossible to make even the concept of what an author is understandable to actors on stage and spectators. Second, Lamb's argument is extended to characters. For example, since an audience may come to associate the character of Lear with a specific human acting in his role, Lear cannot be created or represented by a gesticulating actor because acting transforms him into something else and Lear is merely the poet's idealised conception of the character.

- Lamb makes a distinction between a man who is a reviewer and a man who is not a reviewer

The next claim made by Lamb splits humanity itself. Lamb makes a distinction between a man who is a reviewer and a man who is not a reviewer amongst those select few who might appropriately respond to Shakespeare. Lamb's insistence on Shakespeare's authorship category still stands in this distinction, but now, rather than with actors, Shakespeare's authorial sovereignty works against common auditors, whose opinions, when given weight, harm the play's main purpose and, in turn, vulgarly misrepresent Shakespeare. However, this is no longer purely the actor's fault or caused by something inherent in acting, but rather is related to how the audience perceives Shakespeare's plays, which, if they are natural, are so deeply rooted.

Regardless of the author, the play, or its representation, Lamb argued that any audience asked to judge lacked the necessary critical faculties. This is due to the fact that audiences, unlike critics, are unable to appreciate Shakespeare's plays for what they are, despite the fact that they are fundamentally unique from all others. Lamb makes a specific argument in favour of reading



- ▶ Unlike critics, audiences are unable to understand Shakespeare's plays for what they are
- ▶ Stage representation forces the audience, for whom imagination is no longer the dominant faculty, to rely exclusively on their substandard unaided senses

over viewing: Shakespeare's tragedies are by far the least suited to being performed on stage, and the only way we can experience his plays from an elevated level of abstraction is by reading them. Additionally, reading Shakespeare stimulates one's imagination and encourages mental reflection. On the other hand, watching a performance on stage just arouses interest or curiosity in the base and vulgar natures of Shakespeare's characters. In addition, stage representation reduces an excellent vision to the level of flesh and blood, forcing the audience, for whom imagination is no longer the dominant faculty, to rely solely on their subpar unaided senses.

1.4.1.3 A.C. Bradley

A. C. Bradley is frequently cited and mentioned because he has established his work, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, as the definitive analysis of Shakespearean tragedies. Bradley's differences and points raise a variety of issues that can be discussed and debated. Bradley grounds his knowledge of Shakespearean tragedies in his writings on three key ideas.

The first point is the emotional agony the tragedy's protagonist goes through. Both of the major tragedies, namely *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, make this very clear. Throughout the play, Macbeth struggles with his decision to kill Duncan or not, as well as feelings of crushing remorse and uncertainty. On the outside, Macbeth seems to have no problems because he has already fulfilled his lifelong dream by becoming the King. However, he experiences unending turbulence and storms inside the entire play, which rip him apart from the inside out. Similar to this is the situation in *Hamlet*, where the fundamental ambiguity persists right up to the very conclusion of the play. The conflicting ideas of his mother's love and his father's retribution limit his actions.

The second point is how fate and chance play a part in disasters. When the messenger shows up a little bit later and Lear loses Cordelia, it is more obvious in *King Lear*. Lear's mental instability is caused by the setback he experienced, but his health is also a matter of luck, which causes him more distress. Again, in *Julius Caesar*, we observe that Calpurnia has various nightmares and

- ▶ Analyses Shakespearean tragedies
- ▶ Three key ideas
- ▶ The emotional agony faced by the protagonist



- How fate determines the destiny

that, on the crucial day, Caesar disregarded her warnings. The fact that Banquo is killed but Macbeth's hired killers are unable to kill his son suggests that there was some element of chance involved in *Macbeth* as well. In fact, some people view the entire witchcraft phenomenon and the prophecy as an act of fate. Once again in *Othello*, we can observe that Desdemona's handkerchief's fall occurs at a very vital and disastrous moment for Desdemona herself.

- The heroes in tragedies have high status

The heroes of a tragedy are the subject of Bradley's third argument. Bradley asserts that the Tragedy's heroes have a high status. They are opulent and wealthy. So, among the classic tragedies, we have characters like the Prince of Denmark, the King of Scotland, and King Lear. Shakespeare does this on purpose because the tragedy that befalls great individuals has a significant impact on the audience and spectators. Additionally, there was another entity available for individuals who could identify with the stature that the tragic hero was discovered in. Shakespeare's heroes are both wealthy and honourable. They are strong, competent, and moral men. Lear treats his daughters with kindness and generosity, Hamlet is a wonderful scholar with incredibly deep and wise ideas, and Macbeth is a brave and gallant character. This moral principle was in stark contrast to Hamartia.

- Assessment follows a formalistic approach

Shakespearean Tragedies by Bradley provides us with a wonderful example of this breakdown of the tragedies. Bradley's assessment of Shakespeare follows a formalist approach. He stays within the text and makes an effort to adhere to the words' apparent meanings. He makes an effort to identify the factors that turn the story into a tragedy. Even though it already takes the shape of a play, it might be listed as the connections that lead to and are impacted by a story's sad climax.

- Bradley depends on the play itself for analysis

People have approached Shakespeare and expressed their opinions about the work in similar ways. Bradley has made an effort in his writing to examine tragedies in a way that highlights their causes. Instead of straying from the text and the play, Bradley makes references from the play itself. Other critics, like Stephen Greenblatt, have adopted a strategy that aims to clarify how the text relates to the outside world.



1.4.1.4 T.S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot, in his critical essay “Hamlet and His Problems,” has acknowledged that *Hamlet* the play is the main issue and Hamlet the character is only secondary, and Hamlet the character has a unique weakness for that most hazardous kind of critic: the critic whose intellect is naturally of the creative order but who exercises itself in criticism instead due to some deficit in creative strength. According to Eliot, critics like Coleridge and Goethe frequently use *Hamlet* as a metaphor for their own artistic fulfilment. They appear to have lost their primary responsibility as critics, which is to analyse the play. As a result, their strategy seems deceptive. Actually, they have made their own version of the play.

- Coleridge and Goethe have created their own versions of *Hamlet*

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, insofar as it is Shakespeare’s, is a play dealing with the effect of a mother’s guilt upon her son, and that Shakespeare was unable to impose this motive successfully upon the “intractable” material of the old play. Eliot is very appreciative of Robertson and Prof. Stoll for their righteous attempt to turn their critical observation in the right direction. At this point, it is obvious that Eliot is criticising Shakespeare and defending the critics like Robertson.

- Shakespeare failed to express the motive of mother’s guilt on her son

According to Eliot, the renowned critics paid considerably more attention to the character of Hamlet than to the play *Hamlet*. This is what he refers to as the root of the issue. The fundamental reason why *Hamlet* is regarded as the Mona Lisa of Literature is that it is fascinating.

- Critics have concentrated more on the character of Hamlet than the play

The play is a masterpiece, yet it is unquestionably a failure on the level of art. According to Eliot, the play is perplexing and unsettling in a number of ways that none of the others are. Shakespeare may have worked the hardest on this play out of all of them, but despite its length, it has a number of unnecessary and illogical passages.

- There are many unnecessary passages in the play

Shakespeare’s attempt to create the impression of a mother’s guilt did not, in Eliot’s judgement, succeed as well as he could have with Othello’s jealousy. Shakespeare, who is well-known for working on Thomas Kyd’s vengeance play *The Spanish Tragedy*, took inspiration for Hamlet’s madness from that work, “Hamlet’s madness

- Shakespeare failed in depicting the mother’s guilt



is less than madness and more than feigned.”

Eliot also claims that Shakespeare searched for an appropriate “Objective Correlative” for Hamlet’s feelings. Objective Correlative is described by Eliot as “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.” The Prince of Denmark’s inner suffering cannot be effectively expressed by anything, person, circumstance, or occasion. Although his anguish is awful, neither a character nor an action in the play captures the whole severity of his shock at his mother’s culpability.

- Objective Correlative

Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, according to Eliot, is also successful in generating the same emotional quotient, or the “Objective Correlative.” The author explains to the readers that a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions has been used to communicate the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep; the words of Macbeth upon learning of his wife’s death strikes as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The total suitability of the external to the emotion is the creative “inevitability,” and this is precisely what *Hamlet* lacks.

- Shakespeare succeeded in creating Objective Correlative in *Macbeth*

To Eliot, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is an aesthetic failure, but this failure is solely attributable to the fact that he attempted to solve an issue that was too difficult for him. His inability to do so is an indication of his artistic excellence because he was attempting to convey an indescribable horror. Similar to how a great artist would fail to create a stunning picture in the lack of sufficient colours and canvas, he failed because the plot he chose and the people he used weren’t appropriate for the task. Shakespeare actually wanted to portray a truly amazing event, but his ability failed him even before he tried.

- Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is hence an aesthetic failure

1.4.1.5 Wilson Knight

Wilson Knight, one of the most important Shakespearean critics of the 20th century, contributed to the development of a new way to read Shakespeare’s works and encouraged a broader understanding of many of the plays. Knight outlined his principles of interpretation in *The Wheel of Fire* (1930), *The Shakespearean Tempest*



- A play's spatial component should be taken into consideration

(1932), and his later works. He claimed that these would “replace that chaos by drawing attention to the true Shakespearean unity.” Knight rejected criticism that emphasises sources, character analysis, psychology, and ethics. Knight maintained that Shakespeare’s poetic use of images and symbols, especially in the opposition of “tempests” and “music,” was the source of this unity. He also argued that a play’s spatial components, or “atmosphere,” ought to be taken into account just as carefully as its chronological components.

Knight explains the poetic symbolism he discovers in Shakespeare in pretty explicit detail in the preface to his third book, *The Imperial Theme*. These plays have certain values and negations, demonstrating the commonality that unites them all. Knight uses the term “values” to refer to the good traits in people and the actions that people take, which, to the creative mind, are plainly accorded high poetic honour in Shakespeare. These include monarchy, honour, conflict, love, and religion. In some plays, they may appear together and even clash, as in *Antony and Cleopatra* when love and war clash, and imagery of the sun, moon, stars, flowers, feasting, gems, fire, music, and other things is used to symbolise them. The subjects of the melancholy plays are the negations, such as hate, evil, and death, which stand in opposition to these virtues. Their iconography includes storms, illnesses, creatures, rocks, and iron. It is evident that some images can be used to convey both positive and negative meanings. For instance, nature may be idealised or negatively portrayed, and the sea can be both tragic and serene. The primary opposition that Knight ultimately draws from this series, however, is the one he elaborates on in his most recent work, *The Shakespearean Tempest*: the music-tempest opposition. The root of Shakespeare’s complete unity, according to him, is this opposition- “the one principle of unity in Shakespeare.”

- Poetic symbolism
- Use of images

Knight refers to his method as “interpretation” and sets it apart from “criticism.” He contends that the majority of Shakespearean analysis places too much emphasis on temporal and sequential elements and not enough emphasis on ambience and setting. Both the poet and the reader may unknowingly generate and experience the spatial aspect, or atmosphere. According to Knight,

- Difference between interpretation and criticism

the atmosphere is “pure Shakespeare,” yet the time-sequence and the storyline frequently borrow from older authors like Plutarch and Holinshed. Knight believes that studying Shakespeare’s sources is ineffective because they don’t influence the atmosphere or the spatial component. Knight focuses more on the play’s atmosphere, subject, and “burning centre core” than it does on its storyline or chronological order. According to Knight, all the incidents make sense once we understand this primary idea, this theme. The occurrences generally connect to this single, overarching reality rather than to one another or the typical outward manifestations of daily life.

- Character is just a role, and not what the writer is

Knight’s de-emphasizing of character is one of his key contributions. He contends that character is just a role we act out and not who we truly are. Shakespeare goes beyond character and captures the essence of who we are. Knight claims that Shakespeare takes off the mask, digs deeper than personality, and reveals the universal motivations that all humans have.

- Shakespeare’s progress

“Shakespearean Progress”, as described by him, is the considerable progression of plays from *Julius Caesar* to *The Tempest*. Each play must be related in this sequence. A special mention should also be made of the hate-theme that permeates most of these plays.

- Progression of Shakespeare’s plays

When these ideas are applied to certain plays, a pattern emerges. There is a “core actuality of pain” in *Hamlet*. The focus of this play is death, since Hamlet’s illness causes both mental and spiritual demise. The apocalypse of evil is *Macbeth*. The central topic of *Othello* is the contrast between a jaded intellect and a likeable humanity. The central theme of *King Lear* is the place of man in the cosmos. *King Lear* is Purgatory if *Macbeth* is Hell and *Antony and Cleopatra* are Paradise. Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* is arguably his most sophisticated and best. It reveals a somewhat universalist picture of the elements of earth, air, water, fire, and music as well as idealistic humanism.

Wilson Knight has raised the bar for Shakespeare analysis, exposed previously underappreciated facets of Shakespeare’s genius, and deepened our comprehension of not only Shakespeare but also literature in general and human nature.



1.4.1.6 William Empson

- Literature cannot be confined to certain ideological spaces

Sir William Empson, a poet and critic who lived from 1906 to 1984, is most known for his 1930 book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, in which he argues that literary works cannot be contained to moral or historical pigeonholes by closely examining literary texts. In it, he proposed a two-fold approach to literature that, with only minor adjustments, he was to use throughout the rest of his professional life.

- Kyd's *Hamlet* was insulted by people
- Shakespeare endeavoured to stop this in his version

Empson summarises his theory at the start of the second section of his two-part essay. The first section of this essay argues that the 1600 Globe crowds would have insulted Kyd's *Hamlet* simply because they could yell "Hurry Up"; as a result, Shakespeare's first challenge in rewriting it was to figure out how to stop them by making the delay itself a topic of interest. From this vantage point, he argued, it is rational to resurrect the theory that he wrote two versions of *Hamlet* and that the First Quarto's mutilation provides indirect evidence about the first one. This theory was popular among Victorian critics but has since been refuted by Sir Edmund Chambers and Professor Dover Wilson.

- His 1601 version of *Hamlet* was successful

A modest alteration for 1601 satisfied this line of interest by making *Hamlet* a perplexing one and spreading mystery everywhere. The initial version, for 1600, so effectively solved the technical challenge that it established *Hamlet* as a "mystery" among the earliest audiences. As a result, the soliloquy "How all occasions," which seems to purposely contradict the commentators, was created as an addition for audiences who were particularly enthralled by *Hamlet*; the complete passage was intended to be used occasionally but not frequently.

In other words, Shakespeare began with a poorly written play in which five acts to kill the King were truly unnecessary. Shakespeare subsequently "fixed" the issue by making even his own motivations for writing *Hamlet* a mystery.

The second part of the essay builds on the notion that Hamlet's character is intentionally enigmatic. According to Empson, Ophelia was not the intended target of Hamlet's outbursts against her; rather, they were included to heighten the inconsistencies in Hamlet's character. Shakespeare must have made it clear in the original

- ▶ Hamlet has a complex character.

Hamlet that the Queen knew her union with Claudius was improper but that she had no part in the killing of the elder Hamlet; according to Empson, he withheld that information in order to shroud Hamlet in mystery and force him into what the audience also perceives as an impenetrable situation.

- ▶ Characters are created through language
- ▶ Empson's contributions are significant

His criticism of *Macbeth* in *Essays on Shakespeare* reminds us that characters in plays are created through language; they are what they say, or, more correctly, what we make of what they say. Metaphors bring the characters' words to life for us in a very real way. Using a method of textual criticism that has had such a profound impact, Empson's studies uncover layer upon layer of irony, suggestion, and argumentation in a variety of literary works. As a result, his contributions to some fields of literary scholarship frequently remain significant even though they may no longer be acknowledged as his. For example, Empson's study in *Some Versions of Pastoral* is responsible for the widespread acceptance of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 94's" ("They that have power...") difficulty and complexity (indeed, ambiguity). Empson's analysis of "Sonnet 94" helps to explain the sonnet's current high regard (it is frequently ranked among the best sonnets), as well as the method of critique and interpretation that led to this ranking.

- ▶ People are prohibited from writing about Shakespeare

1.4.1.7 Leslie Stephen

After Matthew Arnold, Leslie Stephen is frequently recognised as the second-most distinguished English critic of the Victorian era. The essay, "Shakespeare as a Man" opens with Leslie Stephen criticising his reluctance to flout the prohibition on writing about Shakespeare without a specific permit. Only those who had been born in heaven may criticise. He doesn't claim to have made any recent findings about *Hamlet* or the initials "W.H."

His primary motivation for reading any book is almost always the chance to interact with the author. He feels as though he is having a conversation with Milton thanks to *Paradise Lost*, and Scott greets him in the *Waverly Novels*. He believes that every writer is subconsciously their own Boswell, and that every author, no matter how neutral or dramatic they claim to be, actually reveals their own secrets. The same is true, according to Leslie, even of Browning. Every time we get to know someone well, we



- Stephen reads books to interact with the writers

see that even if different facets of their personality could be highlighted in both their life and their works, the same attributes are displayed in both, and one cannot adequately describe the literary without mentioning their charm.

- The more the wonder, the more improbable the explanation

Shakespeare's criticism, in his opinion, consists primarily of too much careless competition in hyperboles. All distinguishing qualities are lost as long as critics feel the need to exhibit their power of appreciation by going crazy. When a poet is obscured by such light, we are unable to draw any conclusions about him. He is reverently treated like a prophet at times, but his everyday demeanour at other times proves his inspiration. The wonder will be greater, the more improbable the explanation. Stephen explains that there have been many critics who have dwelled upon his 'gentleness' in many different ways, making him a kind of 'milk-sop'.

- Shakespeare is not identifiable with any of his characters.

Shakespeare was a dramatist, and to Stephen, every dramatist is also knowable as a author. But Shakespeare is not responsible for the opinions that he formulates. It is out of personal reasons that we think so. A dramatist lets everyone know his views about his fellow creatures, writers including Jonson and Samuel have done this earlier too. Although it is indirect, it is not that it is insignificant. But Shakespeare does not seem identifiable with any of his characters. He is neither Falstaff nor Hamlet.

- Shakespeare's plays provide original types of characters

To Leslie Stephen, the best thing about Shakespeare's plays is that they offer an extraordinary variety of vivid and original types of characters. Each reader has distinct ideas about specific aspects of Shakespeare that they use to determine whether a passage of dialogue in a play is by him or not, proving that the term "Shakespearean" does indeed have an implied meaning.

- The difficulty of knowing and the difficulty of analysing.

There are two kinds of difficulties that Stephen faces here - the difficulty of knowing and the difficulty of analysing. He is of the opinion that language has its own barriers that prevent us from communicating the finer shades of thoughts, but critics have a special capability in doing so, and Stephen leaves it to the critics to fill up the solutions to the question about Shakespeare. But he adds that a dramatist is surely able to bestow talents upon his characters that he does not himself possess.



- Shakespeare fused personal history with poetic themes in writing sonnets

About Shakespeare and his sonnets, Stephen expresses his view that Shakespeare may have made use of some of his personal history in combination with already established poetical themes. He was certainly a dramatist enough to discover a motive for poetry.

1.4.1.8 Frank Kermode

Some recent theoretical advancements, particularly those that imply that Shakespeare's fame is exaggerated, imagined, or unfairly enforced by the school examination system, are not something Frank Kermode is interested in. He has no fascination for Shakespeare idolatry as well, which turns Shakespeare into a stone of brilliance by forbidding any sections in the plays from displaying symptoms of hurriedness or confusion. To him, Shakespeare's language is a lovely book, the nectar of a lifetime of trips to the Shakespearean garden, and it makes great virtues of sensible in-betweenness. Kermode takes a normal middle path between high theory and unfiltered amateurism.

- Kermode has no interest in Shakespeare worship

According to him, Shakespeare's audience could not have conceivably understood the artistic complexity of his best soliloquies and speeches, any more than us. There are also many paragraphs that are not only challenging but also seem unnecessarily cryptic, sometimes disguised as thought or explication passages. The "new style" that Kermode refers to as emerging in *Richard II* and *Henry IV Part 1* and 2 and blossoming into the energetic, tangled, and potentially hazardous soliloquies of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* is of particular interest to him. Sometimes, this new style "push[es] the poet beyond the limits of reason and intelligibility," as seen by its obsessive mulling over particular word and image combinations.

- Some soliloquies are unnecessarily cryptic

- Shakespeare captures the best image of a thinking mind

Shakespeare is always viewed by Kermode as a dramatic poet, a playwright who offers poetry to his characters. He recognises that Shakespeare figured out how to capture the sharpest image of a thinking mind using analogy and metaphor.

The King's favourite, Bushy comforts the Queen in a monologue from *Richard II* in which Kermode builds a complex comparison concerning shadows, false and actual grief, eyes, tears, and attitudes. It is challenging to fully understand what Shakespeare or Bushy are



- What Shakespeare means in some passages is highly challenging to comprehend

expressing in this passage, as Kermode points out. Bushy “has stumbled upon a challenging parallel and is hammering it out as clearly as he can, but what matters is that he is thinking. Shakespeare regularly uses speeches like this one, where a complex notion falls short of finding the ideal language. Dr. Johnson frequently criticised such paragraphs and subsequently made an effort to edit them.

Kermode investigates the idea that Shakespeare is attempting, and failing, to sort things out in such moments, even if he is as skilled as any contemporary critic at extracting meanings. He has a Johnsonian robustness. According to him, the most interesting aspect of Bushy’s speech is how Shakespeare struggles with a sentiment made apparent by the fact that the speaker appears to be thinking. Shakespeare is trying his best to convey the speaker’s consolation while also appearing to be thinking, and as a result, his efforts are slightly muddled. Shakespeare’s dramatic poetry, in other words, makes a significant effort to depict the mind. Shakespeare, according to Kermode, represents the first step in Western individuation, and Hamlet represents the major change in literary representation. Kermode is also aware—though he should have emphasised this point more—that the notion that a dramatic poet may use metaphor and analogy to depict the turmoil within his characters’ heads raises an interesting dilemma. Shakespeare, in a sense, gives his characters his own favourite metaphors as a result.

- Shakespeare represents the first step in Western individuation

In his examination of the great tragedies and the last plays, Kermode pays close attention to such things. He dares to infuse low humour into sad situations even at the risk of undermining the “high” effect. Shakespeare grants distinct idiolects to different characters.

Shakespeare’s poetry is often bent to suit the needs of various characters, and Kermode is a fierce critic of this. He makes a comment about how Shakespeare had to design a unique language for Ariel, who is not human, in *The Tempest*. Ariel describes leaving the recently shipwrecked Ferdinand alone, sitting in an awkward angle of the isle, “cooling of the air with sighs,” and “his arms in this sad knot” early in the play.

- Shakespeare has bent his poetry to suit the needs of characters

1.4.1.9 Terry Eagleton

Nearly all of Shakespeare's main plays are given a daring and unique interpretation by Terry Eagleton in light of contemporary Marxist, feminist, and semiotic theories. He sheds light on a number of recurring issues or conflicts in Shakespearean play through a series of tenaciously precise interpretations, particularly a contradiction between words and objects, body and language that is also explored in terms of law, sexuality, and nature.

- Marxist ideology

The ideological variant came first, followed by the Marxist variety in the present. Terry Eagleton teaches English at Oxford's Wadham College as a fellow and tutor. What one may anticipate from the author of *Literary Theory* is his *William Shakespeare*. He attempts to define literary theory within the context of "political criticism" in the book, which is widely used in universities as an introduction to literary criticism. The prose is not mocking but invites it: "... will contribute to the strategic goal of human emancipation, the production of "better people" through the socialist transformation of society...."

- Eagleton tries to define literary theory within the context of "political criticism"

Shakespeare's characters, according to Shaw, lacked "convictions." Eagleton is certain of his own. Like Shakespeare's dramaturgy, Eagleton's ideology is inseparable from the language that conveys it. Sometimes it seems like Eagleton's rhetorical sophistication rivals that of Shakespeare.

His favourite rhetorical device is paradox, which is frequently declared as such. In his analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*, he states that the paradox is that to preserve the framework of the law, you must break what it actually says.

- Paradox is employed frequently

Normal students are often inspired by professors who bore them. They understand the professor's implication when he says, "It is evident from all this that the 'character' of Hamlet would not be the most stable foundation on which to establish a political order." This is a typical example of negative understatement, which is one of Eagleton's preferred modes. It challenges the reader or listener to disagree by implying more than it expresses. Furthermore, it challenges us to view *Hamlet* as more than just a by-product of historical dynamics. Such are the



- Negative under-statement

conclusions drawn from contemporary Marxist criticism of Shakespeare.

Eagleton's Marxist interpretation of Shakespeare is less Shakespearean and more Marx, or Eagleton. Shakespeare allegedly misinterpreted one of his own plays, he claims, at one time. Shakespeare cannot be made a Marxist, but he can interpret Shakespeare's plays to make them seem to have a Marxist relevance.

- Shakespeare should take early retirement

When attempting to demonstrate how *The Tempest* exposes "the glaring contradictions" in the poet's thought, Eagleton finds it only natural that Shakespeare should take early retirement "with a considerable amount of money," whereas Henry James found it intolerable that Shakespeare, at the age of 50, simply locked the stage door behind him and retired to Warwickshire.

Shakespeare eludes the trap of ideology. Eagleton may not have a strong sense of paradox, but his criticism, which fails to radicalise Shakespeare, ultimately reinforces the idea that we still regard Shakespeare as one of the greatest writers for a reason.

1.4.1.10 Jonathan Dollimore

Cultural Materialism, a term coined by Raymond Williams and made popular by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, in their collection of essays *Political Shakespeare*, is a Marxist orientation of New Historicism that emphasises the radical and subversive analysis of all historical material within a politicised framework. Through an eclectic theoretical approach, supported by the political participation resulting from the influence of Marxist and Feminist perspective, and by executing a textual analysis—close reading that critiques conventional approaches, especially on canonical texts—Cultural Materialism emphasises studying the historical context and looking at those historical aspects that have been ignored or silenced in other narratives of history.

- Cultural materialism

Cultural Materialists share the New Historicists' belief in the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. They are conscious of the political agendas of writings and, as a result, are vigilant to the ways in which power manifests itself through the text's implicit application of ideology. Cultural Materialists aim to change the social order by seeking readings that centre on the exploited



- Believed in the textuality of history and the historicity of texts

- Cultural materialism demystified and depoliticized canonical texts
- Views Shakespeare's works in the light of Cultural Materialism

- Shakespeare's plays have been influenced by the social, political and economic conditions of England

and marginalised while also looking at the potential for subversion and resistance in both the text and the interpretive act. They disagree with New Historicists who they perceive to produce apolitical interpretations in which there is no question of agency on the part of the marginalised.

By applying Structuralist-Marxist and post-structuralist theory to canonical literary texts, new historicism and cultural materialism demystified and repoliticized them. Shakespeare criticism in the past seemed to be predisposed to an essentialist humanism, but a radical critique of it proved unstoppable. By 1985, Jonathan Dollimore could write in the introduction to *Political Shakespeare* that "it would be wrong to represent idealist criticism as still confidently dominant in Shakespeare studies"; the so-called "Crisis in English Studies" finally appeared to have an answer in new historicism and cultural materialism.

Dollimore believes that culture cannot exist independently of the political and economic system and is neither merely a reflection of it. Therefore, literary texts' historical implications are studied by cultural materialism. Shakespearean plays are influenced by the social, political, and economic conditions of Elizabethan and Jacobean England as well as the specific institutions that produced culture. Furthermore, the history that matters is not the one from four hundred years ago because culture is constantly created and Shakespeare's text is always being rebuilt, reassessed, and reallocated by a variety of institutions in a variety of circumstances. The cultural context in which the plays are placed affects what and how they indicate. Therefore, Dollimore considers the institutions that allow for the replication of Shakespeare's works and the possibility of modern interventions when critiquing them.

1.4.2 Poetry

Sonnets

Shakespeare's plays and narrative poetry were both public works that were at least partially composed with the intention of making money. They were also expressions of his professional ego. But more often than not, it would appear, he wrote poems for his own amusement or to deal with difficult emotions he was



- ▶ “sugared sonnets among his secret pals.”
- ▶ 154 sonnets

experiencing, never intending for them to be published or to be profitable. These poems were always in the form of the sonnet he had used as a young lover to express relief at the end of his argument with Anne Hathaway. The book *Palladis Tamia* by Francis Meres, published in 1598 and praising his plays, is where we first learn about them. Shakespeare is said to have penned what Meres refers to as “sugared sonnets among his secret pals.” He might be implying by saying that they were sent to his close friends or even disseminated secretly. Shakespeare’s name first appeared across two sonnets in a small, cheap book called *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599. Shakespeare’s 154 sonnets and a narrative poem titled *A Lover’s Complaint* were acquired by Thomas Thorpe, another publisher, and they were published as *Shakespeare’s Sonnets, never before Imprinted* in 1609.

- ▶ Sonnet - 14 lined poem
- ▶ Written in iambic pentameter
- ▶ Wyatt and Surrey

Shakespeare’s sonnets are astonishing, occasionally frightening, and often baffling and deceptive in their interpretations. As sonnets, they focus mostly on “love,” but they also consider time, change, ageing, lust, absence, betrayal, and the troublesome mismatch between your ideal and your loved one’s reality. The fundamental and unanswered concerns of “what are Shakespeare’s sonnets about?” and “how should we understand them?” persist even after four centuries. Shakespeare’s sonnets contain 14 lines, and the majority of them are divided into three quatrains and a final, ending couplet that rhymes with abab cdcd efef gg. The “English” sonnet is a type of sonnet with this rhyme sequence. It was Thomas Wyatt who introduced the Italian sonnets to England first, and was later popularised by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Shakespeare was a prolific user of this sonnet format in later Renaissance English literature. Shakespearean sonnets make use of the alternating rhymes in each quatrain to establish strong contrasts between various lines and sections or to establish a sense of progress across the poem. All sonnets are written in iambic pentameter. The last couplet strengthens or undermines the narrative or epigrammatic point made in the preceding couplets.

1. The Fair Youth Sonnets (Sonnets 1 - 126): The poet has a passionate romantic relationship with a young man, who is the subject of the most of the sonnets (1–126). In the first seventeen sonnets, the poet tries to persuade the

young man to get married and have lovely offspring who will resemble their father, guaranteeing his immortality. The ensuing sonnets in the young man sequence frequently discuss how poetry and unadulterated love can triumph against death and “all oblivious enmity.” The man is addressed as Mr. W.H. Shakespeare scholars have been enthralled with the identity of “Mr. W.H.” for generations. The names of Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton (with his initials strangely switched over), to whom Shakespeare dedicated his first narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, and William Herbert, the third Earl of Pembroke, to whom Shakespeare’s *First Folio* would later be dedicated, are among those frequently suggested for consideration as “fair youth.”

2. The Rival Poet Sonnets (Sonnets 78 - 86): Shakespeare’s sonnets contain a number of characters, both real and imaginary, including The Rival Poet. Within the Fair Youth group, sonnets 78–86 contain the sonnets that are most frequently referred to as belonging to the Rival Poet group. There are many hypotheses that have been put forth regarding these individuals, including the Rival Poet, and scholarly discussion continues to present both persuasive and contradicting arguments. According to these beliefs, the speaker of the poem views the rival poet as a rival for notoriety, money, and favour.

3. The Dark Lady Sonnets (Sonnets 127 - 152): Shakespeare’s sonnets from lines 127 to 152 are addressed to a woman known as the “Dark Lady” because her skin is described as being “dun” and she is supposed to have black hair. We learn more about the black lady and the speaker’s relationship to her in these sonnets. Unlike the sonnets addressed to the “Fair Youth,” these sonnets are overtly sexual in nature. The speaker of the sonnets and the Lady are said to have had a close friendship, but it is hinted that she was deceitful, maybe to the “Fair Youth.” At the time of writing, the poet mockingly characterises himself as middle-aged and bald. Both Mary Fitton and the poet Emilia Lanier, have been mentioned in several attempts to link the “Dark Lady” with historical characters.

► His poems are addressed to a fair Youth, a Rival poet and a Dark Lady

4. The Greek Sonnets (Sonnets 153 and 154): The remaining two sonnets, which are quite distinct from the others, are based on the Roman myth of Cupid, to whom the poet has indeed likened his muses to.



- Love, incompetence, withering of beauty, mortality, sensuality, and social responsibilities are the major themes

Shakespeare's sonnets examine concepts such as love, incompetence, withering of beauty, mortality, sensuality, and social responsibilities. Shakespeare's depictions of the interactions between his characters reveal these themes. They can also be seen in the way he uses descriptive language and describes the speaker's innermost thoughts. Shakespeare also explored the conflict between an individual's desires and what the larger community is ready to accept in his sonnets. Shakespeare's poetry contains the notion that beauty fades with time, making a person less desirable and slightly dejected about himself. One of Shakespeare's most popular sonnet themes is that offsprings should be produced in order to preserve beauty. The only hope is to produce the next generation that will retain such qualities as it is challenging to maintain a perfect figure and attractive appearance. Time is viewed as the enemy of bodily identity, worth, and vigour.

Shakespeare's sonnets also explore the tension between true love and sexual urges. According to the poet, it can be difficult to tell which is which. Lust can pass for love and is frequently confused with it. Instead of taking the time to uncover genuine emotion, there is a propensity to seek that which is superficially alluring.

Shakespeare also examines the possibility that love or romantic feelings could be detrimental. The poet expresses the physical and emotional impacts of romantic relationships in the language of his poetry. In addition to the unfavourable sensations of isolation that follow separation, sickness is one of the results. Being in a romantic relationship also carries the risk of vulnerability because the people's actions, self-concepts, and way of life depend on one another. Shakespeare used symbols to convey his topics in his sonnets. Stars, trees, flowers, and the weather are a few of these. For instance, the weather and seasonal changes are frequently used as a symbol to convey the erratic nature of human emotion. Shakespeare explicitly demonstrates this idea in the language of some of his lines by stating that relationships frequently go through the same kind of patterns that weather conditions do.

- Love or romantic feelings are detrimental

The author conveys the concept of fate by using the star symbol. Shakespeare examines the idea that a person can make his own fate instead of embracing

- Requirements for remaining beautiful

the notion that fate is predestined. Trees and flowers stand for the beauty and fragility of life. In some sense, having children and ensuring a better situation for future generations are requirements of being beautiful.

Summarised Overview

Shakespeare is the greatest playwright of English Literature. He lived during the Elizabethan period. He created a variety of plays that were inspired by various sources including old tales and historical chronicles. He also acted in plays during the initial stages of his career. The Elizabethan theatre had unique features compared to the older ones. The Shakespearean audience consisted of people from all walks of life. The five-act Elizabethan framework, which originated from the Greek form, was frequently used by Shakespeare for his plays. There were many editions of Shakespeare's works, including folios and quartos.

Like most of the Elizabethan playwrights, the influence of Seneca can be found in Shakespeare's plays too. He held onto typical character types in most of his plays. Men played the role of women characters. Shakespeare employed supernatural elements in his plays. He used the blank verse. Imagery, quibbles, soliloquies, asides, irony and disguise can frequently be seen in his plays.

The plays are thematologically classified into tragedies, comedies, romances, problem plays, histories and Roman plays. Shakespeare has contributed much to the enrichment of English language. He has coined many words and phrases. The influence of humanism, imperialism, feudalism, patriarchal dominance and homosexuality can be perceived in Shakespeare's plays.

The major critics of Shakespeare are John Keats, Charles Lamb, A. C. Bradley, T.S. Eliot, Wilson Knight, William Empson, Leslie Stephen, Frank Kermode, Terry Eagleton and Jonathan Dollimore. Shakespeare has written 154 sonnets. They are addressed to a Fair Youth, a Rival poet and a Fair Lady.

Criticism of Shakespearean works began as early as the 17th century. The major critics of Shakespeare were John Keats, Charles Lamb, A.C. Bradley, T.S. Eliot, Wilson Knight, William Empson, Leslie Stephen, Frank Kermode, Terry Eagleton, Jonathan Dollimore. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets. The structure of the Shakespearean sonnet is three quatrains and a couplet- His sonnets to a Fair Youth, a dark lady and a rival poet. The identity of these characters still remains a mystery. The stock themes of the sonnets include love, incompetence, withering of beauty, mortality, sensuality, and social responsibilities.



Assignments

1. Write an essay on the criticism of the works of Shakespeare.
2. Elucidate on Eagleton's Marxist interpretation of Shakespeare.
3. What is a sonnet? Explain the features of Shakespearean sonnets.
4. Consider A.C. Bradley's views on the works of Shakespeare.
5. Which Shakespearean critic advocates cultural materialism? Explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton UP, 2012.
2. Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. Picador, 2008.
3. Berryman, John. *Berryman's Shakespeare*. Ed. John Haffenden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
4. Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. Penguin, 1991.
5. Eastman, Arthur. *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism*. Random House, 1968.
6. Engle, Lars. "William Empson." *Great Shakespeareans: Empson, Wilson, Knight, Barber, Kott*. Ed. Grady, Hugh. Continuum, 2012.
7. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
8. Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. Norton, 2004.
9. Hubler, Edward. *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Hill and Wang, 1962.
10. Joseph, Sister Miriam. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. Columbia UP, 1947.
11. Kennedy, William J. "Shakespeare and the Development of English Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge UP, 2007. 14-32.



12. Kermode, Frank. *Shakespeare's Language*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
13. Landry, Hilton. *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. University of California Press, 1963.
14. McDonald, Russ. *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945–2000*. Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
15. Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. 1957. New ed. Routledge, 2001.
16. Spurgeon, Caroline F. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. Read Books, 2013.
17. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
18. Taylor, Gary. "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages." *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Tandon. Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
19. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.
20. Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Harvard UP, 1997.

References

1. Ford, Boris, ed. *The Age of Shakespeare. The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 2. Penguin, 1991.
2. Stern, Tiffany. "The Theatre of Shakespeare's London." *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Ed. Margreta de Grazia. Cambridge UP, 2010. 45-60.
3. Taylor, Michael. *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford UP, 2001.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

Poetry and Drama

BLOCK-02

Block Content

- Unit 1 Plays (Detailed Study)
- Unit 2 Poetry (Detailed)
- Unit 3 Poetry (Detailed)
- Unit 4 Drama (Non- Detailed)



Unit 1

Plays

(Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire a general understanding of the genres of Shakespearean tragedy and comedy.
- ▶ critically analyse the structure and form of the selected texts.
- ▶ describe the predominant themes and stylistic features of the selected texts.
- ▶ examine the predominant stylistic features of the selected texts.

Background

The theatre carried great cultural significance in the Elizabethan era. It was, at once, a source of entertainment for the masses, and an artistic mode that had to be closely regulated by those in power. During this period, several permanent theatres were built, and professional acting groups were established. By the late sixteenth century, theatres such as the Theatre, the Rose, the Swan, and the Globe were constructed at the peripheries of London.

A vital achievement of William Shakespeare, one of the best renowned playwrights of the era, was to write and stage plays that best utilised the features of the emerging theatres. Elizabethan stages typically did not use a lot of stage settings, so it was largely left to the audience to imagine the locations and scenarios within plays. Female parts were often played by young men, and there were no curtains or facilities for lighting. Shakespeare's plays were shaped to a large extent to address these peculiarities of the Elizabethan stage.

Many of Shakespeare's dramas, for instance, includes dialogues that vividly describe offstage actions, scenery, and events that could not be depicted onscreen. His characters often cross-dressed, allowing for more efficient use of male actors in female roles. The plot often provided reasons for characters to remove themselves from stage at the end of a scene, or for dead bodies to be carried away; this created an easy segway into the action of the next scene.

Thus shaped by the material conditions of the Elizabethan stage, the Shakespearean theatre grew into cultural prominence due to many influencing factors. Many of his contemporaries and immediate successors such as Ben Jonson and John Milton commended his linguistic prowess. Critics including John Dryden and Samuel Johnson praised the playwright for his craft, particularly his ability to depict the wide scope of human nature. In later years, Shakespeare began to be upheld as an epitome of British culture and its 'superior' artistic contributions.

An important aspect to consider is the social commentary that is contained within Shakespeare's plays, across different genres such as comedy, tragedy, and history. Many of his works, though complex and rich, seemed to complement accepted and established social order in issues ranging from class, gender, sexuality, race, and nationalism. In other words, they offered a path for validating dominant cultural beliefs and social values. This has further added to the popularity of Shakespearean plays across time.

The current unit offers detailed explorations into two of William Shakespeare's dramas – *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*. Though representing two different genres, tragedy and romantic comedy, these works are inherently moulded by the socio-cultural atmosphere of the Elizabethan era. They offer intriguing perspectives on human relationships, emotions, society, and the way that individuals engage with these.

Keywords

Renaissance, Shakespearean Drama, Tragedy, Comedy, Plot, Characterisation, Theme



Discussion

2.1.1 Hamlet

The 15th-century Renaissance ushered in a renewed interest in the study of human experience and consciousness. *Hamlet* was written around 1600 or 1601, in the early 17th century, and first performed in 1602. By this point, the Renaissance had spread to other European countries, and beliefs about our ability to fully comprehend the human experience had become more sceptical. Scholars and artists claimed that human understanding of the world was based on appearances, and that only with great difficulty could humans see beyond these appearances to see the “real.” This conflict is explored in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Characters are constantly challenged to discover the truth about others, whether it is about their intentions, true personalities, or even their sanity.

- Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as a Renaissance play

The play’s main action takes place in Denmark, which was largely Protestant at the time of composition. The play belongs to the ‘revenge tragedy’ genre, which was popular during the Jacobean era because of its taste for violence and intrigue. The most obvious, and one of the play’s main themes, is vengeance. Other themes include humanity, death, mortality, and suicide. The story of Prince Hamlet was adapted by Shakespeare from a number of sources, including Books III and IV of Saxo Grammaticus’s 12th-century *Gesta Danorum* and volume 5 (1570) of *Histoires Tragiques*, a free translation of Saxo by François de Belleforest. The play was clearly preceded by another play, commonly known as the Ur-Hamlet, of which Thomas Kyd is thought to be the author.

- Influences

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is the first of his four great tragedies. Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* when he was 36 years old, in 1661. The play was written in response to the sophisticated spirit of questioning of his era, which stands at the nexus of a Christian mediaeval world of faith and one of critical uncertainty.

- Conflict between faith and critical spirit

There are a few plot points that all revenge tragedies have in common. In each of them, there is a grievous insult or wrong that necessitates vengeance. Revenge tragedies also emphasise the avenger’s internal



► Internal battles
and external violence

struggle, in which he frequently battles (or pretends to battle) madness and wallows in the moral difficulties of his situation. Finally, revenge tragedies culminate in a dramatic bloodbath in which the guilty party is horribly and ritualistically murdered. *Hamlet* isn't Shakespeare's first revenge tragedy; that honour goes to *Titus Andronicus*, a Marlovian horror-show that includes all of the elements mentioned above.

The central reason for the play's prominence is the intriguing characterisation of its protagonist, Hamlet. Many of the most famous thinkers and artists of the past four centuries have analysed his brooding, erratic nature. He was described by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as a "poet, a sensitive man" who was too weak to deal with Denmark's political pressures. Sigmund Freud, an Austrian psychoanalyst, saw Hamlet as having "Oedipus complex," or an overwhelming sexual desire for his mother. This complex is frequently linked to a desire to murder one's father and sleep with one's mother. Hamlet's uncle has usurped his father's rightful position, and thus has replaced his father as the man who must die, according to Freud. However, Sigmund Freud is careful to point out that Hamlet represents modern man precisely because he kills Claudius to avenge his father's death, rather than to sleep with his mother. Political interpretations of Hamlet abound, with Hamlet serving as a symbol of political resistance or a challenge to a corrupt regime. Many of the characters who must deal with Hamlet, such as Polonius, Claudius, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, develop theories to explain his behaviour, but none of them succeed.

► Interpretations

Summary

The play is divided into five acts, which are each further sub-divided into various scenes. The following is a brief summarisation of the plot:

Act I, Scene 1

The play begins outside the royal Danish palace on a bitterly cold night watch. Bernardo takes the place of Francisco as the new guard. Horatio and Marcellus, two more characters, arrive soon after. The two soldiers, Bernardo and Marcellus, have witnessed an incredible sight: the ghost of Denmark's former King, King Hamlet, has appeared before them in full armour. They've



► Supernatural element

invited Horatio, a scholar and sceptic who has recently arrived in Denmark, to confirm their ghost sighting on the third night. Horatio is initially sceptical of the ghost's appearance. It happens all of a sudden. Horatio is ordered by the two soldiers to speak to the ghost, but he refuses. The ghost vanishes as quickly as it appeared.

► Possibility of war

Soon after the ghost vanishes, Marcellus inquires of the other two as to why Denmark's war forces have recently been mobilised in such large numbers. Horatio responds by stating that the Danish army is preparing for an invasion by Prince Fortinbras of Norway. Fortinbras' father (also named Fortinbras) was killed in single combat with Old Hamlet, the now-deceased king, many years ago. There is a rumour that now that Old Hamlet has died, presumably weakening the Danes, Fortinbras plans to invade Denmark and claim the lands that were forfeited after his father's death.

► Attempts to communicate

The ghost of Old Hamlet reappears after Horatio has finished explaining this political backstory. Horatio makes an attempt to communicate with the ghost this time. When the ghost remains silent, Horatio orders Marcellus and Bernardo to try to capture it with their spears, but all they get is air. A rooster crows just as the ghost appears to be ready to finally respond to Horatio. This noise frightens the ghost away. The others agree that Horatio should tell Prince Hamlet, Old Hamlet's son, about the apparition.

Act I, Scene 2

► Ambiguous position

The action begins at the court of Claudius and Gertrude, Denmark's King and Queen. They've only recently married. After the death of Claudius' brother, Old Hamlet, this marriage occurred quickly. Claudius addresses the brevity of the marriage, portraying himself as bereaved of a lost brother while ecstatic over a new wife. Claudius also addresses the proposed invasion of the young Fortinbras. He claims to have spoken with Fortinbras' uncle, King Harald of Norway, who has demanded that Fortinbras halt any plans to invade Denmark. Claudius dispatches two courtiers, Cornelius and Voltmand, to Norway to settle the matter. Finally, Claudius turns to Laertes, the son of Polonius, his trusted adviser. Claudius allows Laertes to return to France after he expresses his desire to do so.

The first of Prince Hamlet's many lines is spoken at this point, despite the fact that he has been standing apart from the king's audience the entire time. Claudius inquires as to why Hamlet remains so depressed. The responses of Hamlet are evasive, cynical, and cunning. He claims that his grief over the death of his father continues to affect him. Claudius then launches into a speech about the unnaturalness of prolonged grief; losing one's father, he says, is painful but common, and Hamlet should accept this as nature's course. He wishes for Hamlet to stay with them in Denmark rather than return to Wittenberg, where he is a student, and when Gertrude insists, Hamlet agrees. After that, the king, queen, and their entourage leave the stage, leaving Hamlet alone.

► Hamlet's melancholic nature

Hamlet expresses the depths of his melancholy and disgust at his mother's hasty marriage to Claudius after his father's death in his first soliloquy. In terms of manhood, he declares his father to be many times Claudius' superior. Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo enter after this soliloquy. Hamlet is initially too enraged to recognise Horatio, an old school friend, but he eventually warms up to him. After a brief discussion about the state of affairs, Horatio informs Hamlet that he has recently seen his deceased father the night before. When Hamlet asks him to explain, Horatio tells him about the ghost's appearance. In the hopes of seeing the ghost himself, Hamlet decides to attend the watch that night.

► Unsettled about marriage

Act I, Scene 3

Soliloquy

Laertes is saying his goodbyes to his sister, Ophelia, as the scene begins. During their farewell, Laertes counsels her on her relationship with Hamlet, with whom she has recently spent a lot of time. He tells her to forget about him because he is too much of a husband to hope for as Prince of Denmark. He also advises her to guard her chastity, which he considers to be her most valuable asset as a woman. Polonius, Laertes's father, arrives just as he is about to leave. Before sending Laertes on his way, Polonius blesses him and gives him a slew of advice. Polonius approaches Ophelia after Laertes has left and asks her what they were talking about when he arrived. Ophelia admits that they were discussing her relationship with Hamlet. Hamlet has made many



► Gender expectations

honourable declarations of love to her, she tells Polonius. Polonius, like Laertes, rejects this, claiming that Hamlet only wants to attack her chastity and then leave her. He makes Ophelia promise not to spend any more time alone with Hamlet, which she accepts.

Act I, Scene 4

► Encounter

Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus wait for the ghost to reappear on the night watch. When they hear cannons from the castle, Hamlet informs them that Claudius is drinking pledges. Hamlet goes on a short rant against the Danish tradition of binge drinking. The ghost reappears as soon as his speech is finished. Hamlet addresses the ghost right away, pleading with it to speak. The ghost invites Hamlet to separate himself from the others. Horatio and Marcellus try to persuade Hamlet not to follow the ghost, warning him of the many dangers that await him. Hamlet doesn't listen. Horatio and Marcellus, on the other hand, are determined to keep a safe distance from their friend.

► Entrusted mission

The ghost finally speaks to Hamlet when he is alone. He tells Hamlet that he has returned from Purgatory, where his soul is tormented for the sins of his life. The ghost then reveals that he was murdered, not killed by a viper as previously believed. Furthermore, he reveals that the murderer was his own brother, Claudius, who now wears the throne and sleeps with his wife. Claudius snuck into his garden while taking his usual afternoon nap and poured poison into his ear, killing him horribly and sending his soul unpurified into the afterlife, according to the ghost. The ghost demands vengeance, instructing Hamlet not to plot against his mother, whom he describes as "weak and lustful," but to concentrate all of his vengeance on Claudius. The ghost then vanishes.

Hamlet, confused swears to his father that he will kill Claudius. Horatio and Marcellus appear after he has made this vow. Despite the fact that Hamlet does not reveal what the ghost has revealed, he insists on them swearing not to tell anyone about the apparition. Then Hamlet makes them swear on his sword once more. Meanwhile, beneath the stage, the ghost of Old Hamlet can be heard insisting that he and his son swear to secrecy. He then adds, obliquely, that they may find his behaviour strange in the coming days – he may act irrationally or pretend to be insane – but that they must keep what they've seen

► Revenge

hidden. Following this final agreement, Hamlet leads the other characters off stage, determined to avenge his father's assassination.

Analysis of Act I

The play's first scene is quite perplexing. T.S. Eliot once declared the play's first lines to be the best in English, a microcosm of the entire work. Shakespeare employs a variety of rhetorical devices to introduce some of the play's major themes and concerns, which he continues to develop until the play's conclusion. It is a play that contains many of the most famous and unanswerable questions ever posed, whether they are literal questions ("To be or not to be") or metaphorical questions. The fact that Shakespeare begins Hamlet with the question "Who's there?" is remarkable. On one level, this is a straightforward question, one that is asked on a daily basis in seemingly innocuous situations. On a deeper level, however, it is one of the most fundamental questions. Is there anyone there? Who are we, exactly? What exactly is man? What is the story of Hamlet? What exactly is Hamlet? The first scene maintains this focus on interrogation by asking us question after question. Horatio, the quintessential scholar, sceptical and empirical, begins by questioning the ghost's reality; later, he is encouraged to "question" the ghost in a more literal sense – to ask the ghost questions.

► Questions of identity

After several long speeches by Claudius providing political context, we come to Hamlet's first soliloquy in the second scene. A "soliloquy" is a solo performance on stage by a speaker who explores his or her own thoughts and feelings. Such speeches or on-stage introspection are practically synonymous with both King Hamlet and Prince Hamlet. The soliloquies of Hamlet are a collection of thoughts that have been forced out of a speaker's mind. As a result, the audience or readers can peer into Hamlet's mind, exploring the patterns of his thought as he does. Hamlet allows interjections in his first soliloquy, plays with allusions and puns, and is frequently distracted by this or that image. Hamlet's tendency for procrastination, his fatal flaw, is central to the play and to the central motivational mystery of Hamlet – the delay of revenge.

► Glimpse into Hamlet's nature



► Intertwined narratives

Hamlet appears to be the most contemplative hero ever seen on the English stage, profoundly “depressed” or “melancholic.” The play belongs to the “revenge tragedy” genre. The protagonist of the play is melancholic – dominated by saturnine, sluggish, pensive “humours.” As with any genre, revenge tragedy has certain predictable conventions, one of which is that the protagonist is melancholic. Polonius and his family make two appearances in Act One. Almost every Elizabethan play has at least one “subplot,” and this family is central to Hamlet’s primary subplot as well as Hamlet’s relationship with Ophelia. Polonius is a pedantic and meddling character who is always eager to be “in the know,” no matter what the situation. Polonius’ most famous speech in the play, and one of Shakespeare’s most quoted speeches, is his advice speech to Laertes, which concludes, “to thine own self be true” (I.iii.). Polonius, in short, never misses an opportunity to speak, and when he does, he does so creatively.

Act II, Scene 1

Act Two opens with Polonius speaking to Reynaldo, one of his servants, about his son, Laertes, who has returned to Paris by this point. Polonius has dispatched Reynaldo to track down Laertes and investigate his behaviour. He gives Reynaldo very specific instructions on how to obtain this information. First, Reynaldo must learn about the prominent Danes in Paris from strangers without revealing that he has any special feelings for Laertes. When Laertes’ name is mentioned, Reynaldo is supposed to act as if he knows him from afar, and that he knows Laertes as a happy-go-lucky young man who enjoys gambling, drinking, fencing, swearing, fighting, and whoring. Ophelia then enters. Hamlet’s wild, unkempt appearance and deranged manners have scared her, she tells her father. After describing Hamlet’s behaviour, Ophelia goes on to say that she has cut off all contact with Hamlet and has refused his letters, as per Polonius’ orders. As a result, Polonius concludes that Hamlet’s madness is caused by Ophelia’s rejection. He had assumed Hamlet was only flirting with her, but it turns out that Hamlet was deeply in love with Ophelia. Polonius dashes off to inform Claudius and Gertrude that he has figured out what is causing their son’s strange behaviour.

► Monitoring behaviour



Act II, Scene 2

King Claudius has made plans of his own to discover the reasons for Hamlet's supposed madness. He has summoned two of Hamlet's school friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to comfort his nephew and to try to discover the reason for his distemper. The two scholars are only too happy to oblige in this task. After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave the royal presence, Polonius rushes in, announcing that he has found the reason for Hamlet's madness. Before revealing his news, he requests that Claudius and Gertrude hear from the two newly returned ambassadors to Norway, Voltemand and Cornelius. They claim that after investigating his nephew Fortinbras' actions, the King of Norway discovered that he was planning to invade Denmark. The King of Norway then chastised Fortinbras and told him to abandon his plan to conquer Denmark, which the young Fortinbras agreed to. Norway rewarded Fortinbras with a generous annual allowance, overjoyed at his nephew's acceptance. Norway also gave Fortinbras permission to wage war against the Poles. Finally, the ambassadors report that Norway has asked Claudius for permission to allow Fortinbras to pass through Denmark on his way to fight Poland. Claudius declares his approval of this message and says that he will consider its details.

► Strategies and espionage

In a roundabout way, Polonius informs the king and queen that he has discovered Hamlet's doomed love for Ophelia, and that he believes this lost love is the source of Hamlet's madness. Claudius inquires as to how they might prove it, while Polonius devises a strategy. He instructs Ophelia to approach Hamlet in the library while he is there. He also suggests that he and Claudius hide behind a tapestry and watch the meeting from afar. Polonius tries to speak with Hamlet while Gertrude and Claudius leave. Hamlet makes fun of Polonius, mocking him, avoiding his questions, and twisting his words inside out. Nonetheless, Polonius "reads between the lines" and interprets Hamlet's incoherent responses as the result of a broken heart. Polonius departs to arrange Hamlet's proposed meeting with his daughter.

► The reasons for madness

When Hamlet asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern why they have come to Elsinore, they try to avoid the question by declaring that they have come solely to see him.



Hamlet forces them to admit that they were summoned by the king and queen. Then he launches into a rambling speech about his misery. On their way to Elsinore, he and Guildenstern passed a group of players. They briefly discuss the city theatres that the troop had left behind before arriving in Denmark. The players arrive quickly and with a flourish. Polonius rushes back into the scene, bearing the already stale news that the players have arrived. Hamlet, on the other hand, rushes up to greet them. Hamlet demands to hear a speech right away, and specifically a recitation based on a scene from Virgil's *Aeneid*, as told to Dido by Aeneas, recounting the death of Priam during the fall of Troy. Hamlet gives the first few lines of the speech before handing it over to one of the players, who delivers a long and rambling description of Priam's death at Pyrrhus' hands. The player then goes on to describe Hecuba, Priam's wife, in her grief after her husband is killed. The player begins to cry and shake as she describes her anguish. Hamlet agrees when Polonius finally cuts him off. Before the players leave, Hamlet pulls the main character aside and asks if the company is familiar with a particular play, "The Murder of Gonzago." The player confirms that they do, and Hamlet orders it for the following night, promising to write some new speeches to be inserted into the play as is.

► Play within a play

When Hamlet is left alone on stage, he ponders the strangeness of his situation. "How can this player be so filled with grief and rage over Priam and Hecuba, imaginary figures he doesn't even know, while "I, who have every reason to rage, grieve, and seek bloody revenge, am weak, uncertain, and incapable of action?" he thinks to himself. In a fit of rage, he curses himself for his indecisiveness before cursing his murderous uncle. Hamlet then reveals his strategy for ensuring that the ghost of his father is real and not an evil spirit sent to tempt his soul to eternal damnation. He announces his intention to stage a play based on his father's murder. He'll keep an eye on Claudius while it's being played. If the king is guilty, Hamlet reasoned, he will show it when confronted with the crime scene.

► Procrastination

Analysis of Act II

This Act begins by setting the tone for Elsinore's political intrigue. Polonius uses Reynaldo to spy on

► Political plans

Laertes; Claudius and Gertrude use Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet; and Norway foils Fortinbras' plot to invade Denmark only to aid him in a venture against Poland. Everyone in Elsinore appears to be plotting against each other. Polonius' instructions to Reynaldo are absurdly convoluted, and his attempt in the second scene to relate his great discovery of Hamlet's broken heart to Claudius and Gertrude fails miserably. He says, "Brevity is the soul of wit," and then goes on to be anything but brief and witty. Instead, he's boring, pedantic, arrogant, pompous, flowery – and, more importantly, dead wrong. Polonius, as in Act One, clearly thinks of himself as a great political thinker, but in vain.

► Political savvy

Claudius, too, demonstrates remarkable political stupidity by relying on the espionage of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two rather clownish characters whom Hamlet immediately sees through. Furthermore, Claudius' blunt instincts are revealed in the Norway episode; he appears ready to agree to allow Fortinbras, who had planned to take over his realm only days before, to march through Denmark on his way to conquer Poland. In Act Two, Hamlet, on the other hand, has found his pace. His language is dazzling, full of wild puns, clever jokes, and succinct and powerful observations. His exchanges with Polonius, for example, brilliantly play with the concept of "method in madness". He takes on the role of a depressed lunatic. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are also no match for Hamlet's perceptiveness. He immediately delves into the depths of their mission, referring to them as royal spies. In short, Hamlet appears in this Act as Elsinore's only truly gifted politician, as well as the only accurate reader of men's minds. However, it appears that Hamlet is so preoccupied with pondering the meaning of action that he is unable to act himself.

The play's treatment of the characters places it squarely in the category of "metatheater," or theatre about theatre. Shakespeare appears to be blurring the lines between theatre and reality. The subject of Hamlet's second soliloquy, which closes the Act, is, of course, this. He asks the player who has just wept for his fictional subject, "What is Hecuba to him or he to her?" First, Hamlet speaks of the man on stage who has shown such emotion for Hecuba while he, Hamlet, who has every reason to be sad, remains cold and hesitant to

► Metatheatre

act. On this second level, Hamlet almost appears to be aware that he is in a play. He doesn't rush the retaliation because he knows there's nothing to retaliate for; nothing actually happened; everything was staged. Of course, he can't truly "know," but Shakespeare creates a sense of self-awareness and self-doubt that extends beyond the stage's confines.

Act III, Scene 1

Claudius inquires of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about Hamlet's affliction. The two say they haven't been able to figure out what's causing it. They do mention, however, that Hamlet was enthralled by the players' performance that night, prompting Claudius to agree to see the play. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have left the room. The plan for Polonius and Claudius is to use Ophelia to discover the source of Hamlet's madness. They tell Ophelia to pretend to read a book. Hamlet enters and gives his most famous speech, "To be or not to be," at the start of the play. Hamlet sees Ophelia after a long contemplation on the nature of being and death. She attempts to return some of Hamlet's remembrances when courting her after a brief conversation. Hamlet responds caustically, casting doubt on Ophelia's sincerity. He then sarcastically and venomously chastises Ophelia, repeating, "Get thee to a nunnery," or, in other words, "Go become a nun to control your lust." Hamlet exists after this tirade, leaving Ophelia in tears. Claudius and Polonius emerge. The king claims that he does not believe Hamlet is insane because of his failed love for Ophelia, or even that he is insane at all, but rather that he is tormented for some unknown reason. Before he can cause any serious trouble, he decides to send Hamlet on a diplomatic mission to England. Polonius agrees with the plan, but insists that Hamlet's grief is caused by his love for Ophelia. Claudius agrees to arrange a private interview between Hamlet and his mother after the play that evening.

► Exploring motives

Act III, Scene 2

Hamlet instructs the players by telling them to act naturally and avoid bombast. He instructs the players on how to prepare for the game and then confers with Horatio. Hamlet enlists the help of his friend to watch the king's reaction to the play they are about to see. Horatio

► Parallels with reality

takes a seat in order to get a good view of the king. The royal party arrives. Claudius, Polonius, Gertrude, and Ophelia engage in frantic conversation with Hamlet. The play opens with a “Dumb Show,” a pantomime of the upcoming drama. The basic form of the alleged murder is repeated on stage: a happily married king and queen; the king takes a nap; a poisoner enters and pours something into the king’s ear, killing him; the poisoner then takes possession of the queen. Ophelia is perplexed by the plot, but Hamlet tells her to wait for the prologue’s speaker to explain. The stage is then immediately entered by the player king and queen. They’ve been married for thirty years, according to the king. The player queen wishes for their love to last as long as it did before. If the king dies, the queen is encouraged to remarry. The queen vehemently opposes this notion, swearing never to love another if she were to change her mind. The king falls asleep as a result, and the queen leaves.

► Proof

When Hamlet inquires about his mother’s reaction to the play, Gertrude responds with the famous line, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks.” Claudius is also vocal about his concerns about the play’s nature. However, it continues with the arrival of Lucianus, the sleeping king’s nephew. This villain approaches the sleeping player king and injects poison into his ear. Hamlet, unable to contain himself, erupts, proclaiming that Lucianus will soon win the king’s overbearing wife’s love. Claudius rises and commands the play to come to a close. He and his entourage depart. Hamlet and Horatio share a laugh, knowing that the ghost was telling the truth. Following a brief celebration, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter and inform Hamlet that he has enraged Claudius. They also claim that Gertrude has summoned Hamlet to her chambers. They then implore Hamlet to reveal the source of his illness. Polonius enters and pleads with Hamlet to see his mother once more. Hamlet reflects in a short soliloquy that he will be cruel to his mother, demonstrating the extent of her crime in marrying Claudius, but that he will not harm her.

Act III, Scene 3

Claudius gives Rosencrantz and Guildenstern a sealed envelope with instructions to transport Hamlet to England and deliver the envelope to the king. Polonius



► Procrastination

then enters, announcing Hamlet's intention to meet with his mother and hiding behind an arras to listen in on their conversation. Meanwhile the king contemplates the state of his soul alone. He kneels to pray, hoping to atone for his sins, but realises that his penance will be hollow because he will keep the prizes for which he murdered in the first place. Claudius is attempting to pray vainly when Hamlet appears behind him. He considers that he now has the opportunity to kill Claudius and avenge his father, but he pauses, considering that if he kills him while he is praying, he will most likely go straight to heaven. Hamlet resolves to assassinate Claudius later, when he is committing a sinful act. He makes his way to his mother's room.

Act III, Scene 4

► Spur of the moment

Polonius hides behind one of Gertrude's curtains in the chamber while waiting for Hamlet. Gertrude tries to be firm and chastising, but Hamlet responds by accusing her of committing a capital sin by marrying her husband's brother. He drags his mother in front of a mirror and says he'll reveal her for the most part, which Gertrude misinterprets for a moment, thinking Hamlet might try to murder her. She begs for assistance. Polonius, who is hidden from view, cries out for help as well. Claudius, Hamlet believes, is the source of the hidden voice. He kills Polonius by stabbing him through the curtain. When Hamlet discovers that he has killed Polonius, he labels him a "rash, intruding fool."

Hamlet sits his mother down and presents her with two portraits, one of her first husband and the other of Claudius, quickly forgetting about his mother's death. He compares the two as polar opposites, with one representing nobility and virtue and the other representing deformity and vice. This comparison has a profound effect on Gertrude, and she appears to realise the gravity of her sin. Hamlet continues to chastise her and use the most derogatory and hurtful language to describe Claudius. Old Hamlet's ghost reappears in the midst of this rant, telling Hamlet to stop torturing his mother and to remember his duty to kill Claudius. Hamlet consoles his mother at the ghost's command. Gertrude, unable to see the ghost, notices Hamlet conversing with nothing and concludes that he is insane. Hamlet

► Contrast

explains to his mother that he is not insane. He reminds her that she should repent her marriage to Claudius and specifically tells her to avoid them sleeping together. Hamlet reminds his mother that he has been summoned to England and declares that, while he will go, he will not trust Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He leaves his mother's room, dragging Polonius' body behind him.

Analysis of Act III

The most remarkable aspects of the soliloquy that begins "To be or not to be," is the subtlety and eloquence with which Hamlet explores the nature of death and human life. Most casual *Hamlet* readers interpret the speech as a suicide contemplation at its most basic level. However, rather than being a specific expression of a desire to die, the speech can be thought of as a general contemplation of the human condition. The play-within-a-play, for example, is the apex of the 'theatricality' theme. The play-within-a-play is a convention found in several revenge tragedies, including *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's own early tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare, of course, takes this convention to its logical conclusion in *Hamlet*. Hamlet appears to take great pleasure in exposing Claudius' guilt through dramatic means.

► Themes

Hamlet's abuse of his former beloved and mother, Ophelia and Gertrude, is another disturbing thread running throughout the play. Hamlet is relentlessly cruel in his scenes with Ophelia, accusing her of having a lustful nature, a dishonest heart, a deceitful appearance, and so on. "I have heard of your paintings well enough," he begins in scene three, building up to an utterly misogynistic rant. Men in the English Renaissance were fascinated by women's make-up, which they saw as a symbol of feminine deceptions, excuses, manipulations, deceptions, and hypocrisies. "[Hamlet] plays the madman most, when he treats Ophelia with such rudeness, which appears to be useless and wanton cruelty," Samuel Johnson wrote in 1765.

► Relationship with women

Ophelia has had few lines and little of her own will or mind up to this point; she has done her father's will, her brother's will, and Hamlet's will. All three men in her life have defined her almost entirely on the basis of her sexuality and beauty. Most readers will find Hamlet's



► Critical readings

behaviour with his mother repulsive. In scene four, their encounter is filled with even more ripe and filthy language of corrupt sexuality, “Nay, but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty.” In his Oedipal theory, Sigmund Freud claimed to have discovered the buried, *primaeval* cause of Hamlet’s flare-up, claiming that all little boys go through an original sexual drama in their childhood, in which they want to murder their fathers and possess their mothers. This scene fuels further speculation about the nature of Hamlet’s feelings toward his mother. So, in Act Three, we see Hamlet at his most sublime, in his contemplations on death, and at his most inexcusably depraved, in his cruelty toward the women.

Act IV, Scene 1 and 2

► Discovery of the murder

Claudius immediately asks Gertrude to explain what has happened after Hamlet exits, dragging Polonius’ body. She tells him about Hamlet’s unintentional murder of Polonius, and Claudius realises that he could have been killed just as easily. Claudius inquires as to where Hamlet has gone, and Gertrude responds that he has removed the body. The king directs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to track down Hamlet and discover where he has taken Polonius’ body. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern interrogate Hamlet about the whereabouts of Polonius. Hamlet evades their questions in a playful manner.

Act IV, Scene 3

► Exile

Claudius is preoccupied with the death of Polonius and the search for his body. Hamlet is accompanied by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Claudius interrogates Hamlet about Polonius’ whereabouts. “Up the stairs into the lobby,” Hamlet reveals. The king dispatches servants to locate the body. Claudius then informs Hamlet that he will be departing for England immediately, as planned. Hamlet departs mockingly, leaving Claudius to ponder his plans for Hamlet. He has written letters to the English king, whom Denmark recently defeated in war, requesting that he assassinate Hamlet as part of the duties owed by right of conquest.

Act IV, Scene 4

The Norwegian army of Fortinbras is nearing the Danish border. Fortinbras sends one of his captains to Claudius' court to request permission to cross Denmark on their way to Poland. The captain meets with Hamlet, who is being transported to England by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet inquires about the captain's army and the reason for his trip to Poland. According to the captain, Norway claims "a small patch of ground" in Poland as her own. He characterises this land as completely worthless and insignificant. The captain corrects Hamlet, saying that Poland is already garrisoned and prepared to defend such a piece of land. Hamlet concludes his discussion with the captain. He lingers behind the others marching to the ship, delivering a long soliloquy on the irony of the situation: these men are risking their lives for a worthless piece of land, while he, who has every reason to risk his life in the name of vengeance, delays and fails to act. Hamlet resolves to retrain his mind to think in blood. Ironically, he continues on toward England shortly after making this decision, leaving Denmark behind.

► Awareness of inaction

Act IV, Scene 5

Back in Denmark's court, Gertrude is speaking with a gentleman who informs her that Ophelia has gone insane. She's babbling incoherently about her father and demanding to see Gertrude. The king enters and sees her in her state of insanity. Ophelia then discusses her father's untimely death and hurried, unofficial burial. "My brother shall know about it," she threatens as she walks away. Claudius considers the difficulty of their situation, admitting that their decision to cover up Hamlet's murder and bury Polonius so quietly, backfired. A messenger arrives on time, informing Claudius that Laertes has arrived at court with a mob of supporters intent on deposing Claudius and making Laertes king. Laertes storms in, instructing his followers to wait outside. Claudius tries to soothe Laertes by telling Gertrude to stay out of their conversation and let Laertes interrogate him to his heart's content. Claudius informs Laertes that Polonius is no longer alive. He also implies that he and Laertes are on the same team, and that he, too, has been harmed by Polonius' death. Ophelia reappears, carrying a bouquet of flowers, just as Claudius is about to explain



► Political turmoil

what he means. Laertes is deeply distressed by the sight of his insane sister. She abruptly exits after singing another song about her deceased father. Claudius tells Laertes to look into the matter as thoroughly as he wishes before she departs, confident that he will find himself siding with Claudius against Hamlet.

Act IV, Scene 6

Horatio is approached by a messenger who informs him that some sailors have some good news for him. Horatio receives a letter from Hamlet from these sailors. He reads the letter out loud to himself. It tells the story of Hamlet's ship being attacked by pirates while on his way to England. Hamlet boarded the pirate ship during the battle. With Hamlet still on board, the two ships parted ways. The pirates treated Hamlet "like mercy thieves," promising to return him to Denmark in exchange for certain favours. He instructs Horatio to follow the sailors to his hiding place. Horatio promises to assist them in delivering the letters, one of which is addressed to the king, and then accompany them to see Hamlet.

► Pirate attack

Act IV, Scene 7

Claudius and Laertes are having a discussion. To Laertes' satisfaction, the king appears to have explained the strange circumstances surrounding Polonius' death. He claims that he did not attempt to kill Hamlet for two reasons: first, his mother adores him, and second, the Danish people are Hamlet supporters. Claudius is surprised to learn that the letter is from Hamlet when a messenger arrives and delivers it to him. Hamlet's imminent return to court is announced in the letter. With this in mind, Claudius and Laertes devise a plan to assassinate Hamlet without upsetting Gertrude or the general populace. They plan to stage a duel between Hamlet and Laertes, two skilled swordsmen, with Laertes having the better reputation. Claudius proposes that Laertes be given a sharp sword, whereas Hamlet's sword remains blunt. Laertes goes one step further, claiming that he will poison his sword so that even the tiniest scratch will kill Hamlet. Claudius adds that he will also prepare a poisoned cup for Hamlet to drink during the fight. Gertrude comes in with more bad news. Ophelia, she claims, has drowned. When she fell in, she was watching

► Death of Ophelia

Ophelia play in the branches of a willow near the water. Ophelia, according to Gertrude, seemed oblivious to danger and died slowly while singing songs. Claudius goes to console Laertes after hearing this news.

Analysis of Act IV

Following Polonius' death, the action has reached a high point of tension. Claudius' lack of political talent is further demonstrated by the fact that he has simply hushed up Polonius' death. Then there are the two most important events in Act Four: Laertes' return and Ophelia's madness. However, it's worth noting that the fourth scene contains another of Hamlet's famous soliloquies, "How all occasions inform against me." This speech basically restates what Hamlet said in his previous soliloquy about the actor who plays Hecuba. Hamlet's basic position is that he is perplexed that these soldiers can die for a piece of worthless ground while he, who has every reason to rage, war, and battle Claudius, is introspective and melancholy. He says, "Rightly to be great/ Is not to stir without great argument,/ But greatly to find quarrel in a straw/ When honor's at the stake." In other words, man's greatness stems from his ability to treat any occasion, no matter how insignificant, as an opportunity for greatness. It is important not to overthink things, but to act on them.

► Political miscalculations

Laertes' vengeful return serves as a contrast to Hamlet's own hesitant, over-thinking character. He says, "When I burst into court demanding satisfaction, "That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard, / Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot / Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow / Of my true mother." In other words, Laertes declares that he must swiftly and bloodily avenge his father's death. Hamlet, on the other hand, has been composed, reflective, passive, playful, and morbid. In summary, Hamlet has pondered and pondered but has not acted.

► Reflective nature

Ophelia's madness is the other major event in this act. Her songs, particularly "To-morrow is Saint Valentine's Day," are quite sexual. Some have interpreted this ballad, which documents a man's duplicity in promising to marry a young maid in order to get her into bed, only to abandon her because she relented to him, as evidence that Ophelia herself gave up her virginity to Hamlet, who then abandoned her. Ophelia may be demonstrating the



► Psychological trauma

cultural pressures on a young woman of her time, forced into the impossible position of chastity and sexualization in her mad scenes. As a means of controlling her sexual identity, Ophelia is constantly urged to be chaste as in Laertes' instructions or the "get thee to a nunnery" scene. She must know nothing about sex but enough to stay away from it.

One of *Hamlet's* famously impossible-to-solve questions is Ophelia's death by drowning. Was she killed by accident or did she take her own life? She appears to have committed suicide. Her death, according to Gertrude, was a very slow one, "Her clothes spread wide,/ And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,/ Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,/ As one incapable of her own distress,/ Or like a creature native and indued/ Unto that element." Gertrude's story is an attempt to keep Ophelia safe. She recognises that Ophelia is better off dead and uses her story to conceal the fact that she committed suicide. The truth is not forthcoming in this play, as it is in so many other aspects. As Hamlet says in Act II, "[T]here is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

► Truth of death

Act V, Scene 1

The final act begins with two gravediggers conversing as they dig Ophelia's grave. They keep repeating the rumour that Ophelia committed suicide and wonder if she should be buried in sacred ground. We learn that despite the clergy's objections, the king has provided for her burial. Hamlet and Horatio enter after some witty and macabre banter about the nature of gravedigging. The main gravedigger sends his partner off for a cup of bourbon and then begins digging while singing songs. The gravedigger's indifference to the gravity of his profession fascinates Hamlet. As the gravediggers remove various skulls from the grave, Hamlet speculates on who they might have belonged to in life – whether a courtier or a commoner.

► Humorous exchange

Hamlet approaches the gravedigger and exchanges morbid witticisms with him. The gravedigger tells Hamlet how long it takes for bodies to decay in the ground. He then pulls a skull from the grave, claiming it has been there for the past twenty-three years. This, according

to the gravedigger, is the skull of Yorick, the old king's jester. Hamlet is taken aback because he knew and loved Yorick as a child. He picks up the skull and talks about Yorick, which leads him to ponder the nature of death in general. Hamlet notices that the burial isn't as ornate as usual, implying that the deceased committed suicide. While Laertes debates the paltriness of the burial rites with the priest, he and Horatio stand aside. Laertes reveals to Hamlet that the dead body is that of Ophelia while arguing with the priest. Gertrude takes a step forward to bid Ophelia farewell. Laertes is right behind him. Laertes, overcome with grief, leaps into his sister's grave to resurrect her body and orders the gravediggers to bury him alive. Hamlet declares after his battle with Laertes that he loves Ophelia more than forty thousand brothers could. His admission is dismissed by the king and queen as insane. Hamlet then walks out, followed by Horatio. After they've gone, Claudius reminds Laertes of their plan to take care of Hamlet.

► Grief

Act V, Scene 2

What happened on Hamlet's journey to England is explained to Horatio. He claims that he was suspicious of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and decided to intercept their letter to England. He discovered an order for his death in the letter. Hamlet then concocted a new letter in which he demanded the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He had a signet ring in the shape of the Danish seal, so he used it to seal the letter. While Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were sleeping, Hamlet replaced the letter. As previously stated, pirates attacked the ship at this point. Hamlet and Horatio are interrupted by Osric, a courtier. Claudius has proposed a swordsmanship contest between Laertes and him, Osric informs Hamlet. Hamlet eventually agrees to take part in the competition. When Horatio expresses concern that Laertes is a better swordsman than he, Hamlet responds that he has been practising for a long time. The king, queen, and other dignitaries gather around a table to watch the swordfight. Hamlet apologises to Laertes for his outburst at Ophelia's grave as well as his hasty killing of Polonius. Although Laertes appears to accept the apology, he declares that his honour will not be satisfied until they have completed their competition. Hamlet and Laertes each pick a sword. Laertes chooses the sword

► Duelling



with the poisoned blade without hesitation. Claudius offers Hamlet a drink as they prepare to fight.

For the time being, Hamlet declines the drink. They play another round, with Hamlet winning a point once more. Gertrude toasts Hamlet's health after the second pass. Despite Claudius' protests, she takes up the poisoned chalice and drinks from it. A third pass between Hamlet and Laertes ends in a tie. Laertes wounds Hamlet with the poisoned rapier after this pass, while Hamlet is unguarded. They fight, and Hamlet takes Laertes' poisoned sword. He uses it to injure Laertes. The queen collapses at that precise moment. She declares that the drink has poisoned her and then passes away. Hamlet demands that the treachery be exposed, and Laertes admits to the king's and his plan. He claims that they will both die as a result of being wounded by the poisoned blade. Hamlet wounds Claudius with the poisoned sword, then forces the king to drink from his poisoned cup. Claudius passes away. Laertes begs Hamlet's forgiveness before dying. Knowing that he is about to die as well, Hamlet asks Horatio to explain the bloodbath to the onlookers. On the other hand, Horatio wishes to die alongside his friend, but Hamlet persuades him to live a little longer and clear his name. Fortinbras should be crowned King of Denmark, according to Hamlet. He then dies – "the rest is silence."

► Conclusion

With a flourish, Osric announces that Fortinbras has arrived from his victory in Poland, accompanied by English ambassadors. When Fortinbras walks into the court, he discovers four noble bodies sprawled on the floor. The English ambassadors arrive with the news that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been murdered. Claudius, Horatio explains, would not have welcomed this news even if he had been alive to hear it. He gives the order for the royal bodies to be taken up. Horatio also promises to reveal the truth about the deaths. a story full of "carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts; / Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters; / Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause." Finally, Fortinbras declares that Hamlet shall receive a soldier's burial.

► Honour

Analysis of Act V

Hamlet's final act is just as mysterious, ambiguous, and contentious as the rest of the play. Many of the play's



► Metatheatre

earliest critics, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were perplexed by Hamlet's strange and abrupt manner of revenge. These critics frequently criticised the play's lack of moral significance. The ending of Hamlet, according to Samuel Johnson, is both unjust and improbable. The earlier part of the play, including the ghost's role in giving Claudius' death a moral shape, appears to have been overlooked. Johnson accuses Shakespeare of dramatic clumsiness and moral ineptitude because Hamlet seems to bring the drama to a close almost by accident. Act Five has been described by critic Harold Bloom as Hamlet's rejection of his own dramatic role. In other words, he appears to be bored with his own play and dismisses its generic requirements. Bloom writes: "Any Fortinbras or Laertes could chop Claudius down; Hamlet knows he deserves the prime role in a cosmological drama, which Shakespeare was not quite ready to compose." Hamlet's final act, in this view, transcends the play itself. The plot, the action, has only served as a vehicle for Hamlet's tremendously powerful self-exploration, and the play's "revenge tragedy" requirements are met almost despite the play itself.

► Introspection vs. action

In this final act, Hamlet appears to celebrate rather than curse his tendency for becoming distracted by thought in favour of action. When Horatio appears concerned that he is about to fall into the trap set by Claudius and Laertes, he says to him, "[W]e defy augury. [...] If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. All that matters is that you're prepared." Hamlet rejects "augury," that is, any predictive phenomena or future-oriented thinking in general. In some ways, he rejects the ghost's command to achieve a specific goal. Only one of the four deaths in the play's final scene Hamlet's is pre-planned. The other three are random and unpredictable. In fact, Hamlet's dying words are a plea to his friend Horatio to assist the court audience in sorting out the carnage they have witnessed: "[I]n this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, / To tell my story." Hamlet emphasises that significance is only found in remembrance, in storytelling, in making sense, not in anticipatory action. In this way, his death demonstrates the importance of introspection over action, and the triumph of thought over fate in the face of death's uncertainty and ambiguity.



- Opposing personalities

The tone shifts dramatically in the opposite direction with the arrival of Fortinbras. Despite this, Fortinbras is Hamlet's polar opposite. He is an action-oriented character, similar to Laertes or Old Hamlet. As Hamlet predicted, he doesn't waste any time in announcing his intention to usurp Denmark's throne. Finally, Fortinbras misunderstands the dead prince and gives him a soldier's funeral as a final irony. Despite the fact that we know very little about him, Fortinbras appears to be the anti-Hamlet – a man who can only comprehend others in light of his own straightforward and simple mind. Hamlet, on the other hand, discovers a universe of variety within his own mind; he examines the world from many angles, searches for many answers, and revolves all but resolves nothing. The arrival of Fortinbras marks the end of Hamlet's true reign, not Claudius' petty and inept rule, but Hamlet's mental regime and subjectivity's possibilities.

Twelfth Night

- Canon

Twelfth Night, most likely written in 1601, is generally regarded as one of Shakespeare's finest comedies, along with *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The drama *Twelfth Night* explores the surprising things that love may bring about, including deception, disguises, and insanity. It has an alternative title - *What You Will*. The play refers to the twelfth night of the Christmas season or Epiphany (January 6). Further, it includes cross-dressing and transvestism as do plays such as *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

- Renaissance theme

The female leads in these plays posed as young males for a variety of reasons. It's important to keep in mind that in Shakespeare's day, men played all the roles, and women weren't permitted on the English stage until the late 1600s. Because of this, every acting company included a number of tender young men playing feminine parts. The idea that a young man or woman may pass for another gender convincingly appealed to Renaissance audiences.

Act I, Scene 1

Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, is sitting in his palace and enjoying himself by listening to music. He is in love and is in a whimsical, romantic mood, luxuriating

► Romance

in the various emotions which the music evokes. But he impulsively decides that he has heard enough music and after sending the musicians away, he expounds on the subject of love. Curio, one of his pages, asks his master if he wouldn't like to hunt; perhaps exercise will cure his master's soulful, philosophical moodiness. Orsino replies that he would like to hunt but he would like to hunt the lovely Olivia, to whom he has sent another of his pages, Valentine, as an emissary. At that moment, Valentine enters. But he brings such bad news that he begs "not [to] be admitted": Olivia's brother has died, and she has vowed to mourn her brother's death for seven years. Surprisingly, the news does not dampen Orsino's spirit. He rhapsodizes on how a girl with such sensitivity can express her emotions; if she "hath a heart of that fine frame," he says, then she would be even more devoted and loyal to a lover.

Act I, Scene 2

Viola, as well as a sea captain and several sailors, board the ship. They were shipwrecked on the Illyrian coast and narrowly escaped drowning. The captain congratulates Viola on surviving the shipwreck, telling her that when their ship split in half, he saw her brother, Sebastian, tie himself to a mast; however, he fears that this did not save Sebastian, as he saw him and the mast swept away by the waves. According to the captain, Sebastian has a slim chance of surviving, but it's also possible that only the captain, Viola, and these few sailors are the only ones alive. Viola thanks the captain for his kindness and gives him some gold coins, asking if he has any. The captain does; he is well-versed in Illyria. He was born and raised here, and he tells Viola that the country is ruled by Duke Orsino, a "noble Duke." Viola is familiar with the name because her father mentioned him. She believes the Duke is a bachelor. The captain is not so sure that this is still true; he claims that current gossip claims that the duke has been courting "fair Olivia," but he claims that Olivia is a virgin and is determined to keep her virginity. Olivia turned down men after the death of her father (a year ago) and her brother (recently). Viola is intrigued by the story; she is currently grieving for her brother, Sebastian, and nothing would make her happier than to help Olivia. The captain, on the other hand, believes that such a scheme is impossible. Olivia is not going to



- Tragedy turned into opportunity

see anyone. Viola ponders for a moment before devising an ingenious plan. If the captain presents her to Duke Orsino, she will disguise herself as a young man and pay the captain handsomely for his assistance. She'll sing for the Duke, play any number of musical instruments for him, and become a part of his household. They leave after the captain agrees.

Act I, Scene 3

Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's uncle, is criticising his niece for crying so much over her brother's death at her house. He tells her serving girl, Maria, that his niece is overreacting melodramatically, and he strongly disagrees. Sir Toby's arrival at such a late hour, his careless dressing, and his excessive drinking are all things Maria disapproves of. Olivia had just complained about these things, as well as the fact that Sir Toby had brought Sir Andrew Aguecheek to the house, whom he believes is the ideal suitor. Despite Maria's characterization of Aguecheek as a "fool and a prodigal," Sir Toby considers him a suitable suitor for his niece: He claims that Aguecheek earns three thousand ducats a year and plays the violin and cello and speaks several languages. Maria is underwhelmed. The man is said to be a gambler, a quarreler, a coward, and a habitual drunkard, according to her. When Sir Andrew joins them, there is a brief exchange of jeers, the majority of which are directed at Sir Andrew. Maria departs, and the two gentlemen discuss Sir Andrew's chances as an Olivia suitor. Sir Andrew is discouraged and ready to return home tomorrow, but Sir Toby persuades him to stay another month, especially since Sir Andrew enjoys masquerades and revels and, as Sir Toby points out, is a fantastic dancer and acrobat. The two men exit the stage, laughing and joking. Sir Toby's desire to convince Sir Andrew to stay and woo the lovely Olivia has to be for a secret and mysterious reason.

- Expected social roles

Act I, Scene 4

Valentine, one of Duke Orsino's pages, enters the palace, accompanied by Viola, who is masked as a young man named Cesario. We can tell from their conversation that Cesario has already won the duke's heart after only three days. Viola has earned Orsino's trust and favour to the point where when "Cesario" arrives, Orsino sends the others away so that he and Cesario can be alone. He

► Earning trust

asks Cesario to do him a favour that is both special and personal. Cesario will serve as the duke's messenger and proxy, carrying love notes from Orsino to Olivia. Cesario is to explain precisely Orsino's feelings for Olivia, as well as enact Orsino's "woes." Furthermore, Orsino appears to believe that his declarations of love will be received even better because Cesario is so attractive. His reasoning is that because his love messages will be introduced in such a good looking package, they will entice the lovely Olivia. If Cesario succeeds, Orsino says he will be well compensated; he will "live as freely as thy lord / To call his fortune thine." Cesario is hesitant, revealing that "he" (Viola in disguise) has fallen in love with Orsino in an aside.

Act I, Scene 5

Maria and Feste, the jester, are joking around in Olivia's house. Due to Feste's absence, Olivia is irritated. She jokes with him that Olivia might hang him, but Feste is unfazed. He retorts, "Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage." He enjoys making fun of Maria. They are both grave and serious individuals. Olivia orders Feste to leave, but Feste refuses, determined to amuse his mistress; he begins telling a series of jokes that amuse Olivia. The pompous and humourless Malvolio, on the other hand, is not amused by Feste's revelry. The jester, according to Malvolio, is a weak and sick man, as is his wit. Feste enjoys Malvolio's arrogant scorn, and he easily parries Malvolio's weak wit, impressing Olivia. Malvolio is "sick of self-love" and "distempered," she says. She claims that jesters do not ridicule; it is their profession, a harmless one, and that Feste is simply correcting Malvolio. Maria enters and informs them that a good young man from Duke Orsino has arrived and wishes to speak with Olivia, but that he is being held by Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby. Olivia's rage erupts. The duke, or anyone else, will not be able to woo her. She doesn't give a damn what the messenger says; any excuse will suffice. She says she doesn't want to see any suitors and tells Maria to send the young man away right away. Sir Toby appears while Maria and Malvolio are away. Feste has a fantastic opportunity to imitate Olivia's old uncle's drunken antics because he is inebriated. Olivia's mood lightens as she is amused by Feste's wit, and she assigns Feste to look after her uncle after he leaves. She wants to



► The role of the jester

make certain that nothing bad happens to him while he is inebriated. Malvolio walks in and tells Olivia that the “fair young man” is indeed “fair” and “young,” as well as “persistent.” Olivia finally gives in and agrees to see the young man as long as Maria is present. Before he enters, she covers her face with a veil.

Viola, disguised as Cesario, enters and begins his mission by lavishing Olivia with compliments, all the while deflecting Olivia’s questions about his status and background. Olivia is fascinated by this fair, young “man.” Cesario continues, and Olivia finally feels at ease with him, dismissing Maria, and the two of them begin to discuss Duke Orsino’s status as a suitor for Olivia’s hand in marriage. Olivia is eventually persuaded to reveal herself, and she shows Cesario her lovely face, to which “he” responds amusingly and enthusiastically: “Excellently done, if God did all.” Cesario then laments that the owner of such beauty is cruel if she takes her “graces to the grave” and “leaves no copy in the world.” He assures her of Orsino’s love, but Olivia expresses her doubts about the depth of Orsino’s love. He doesn’t truly know her, so he can’t pursue his case any further. He says his goodbyes to Olivia and her “fair cruelty.” Olivia approaches Malvolio, enthralled by the young Cesario. She instructs him to follow Orsino’s messenger and return a ring that he has forgotten. She also tells Malvolio that if Cesario returns tomorrow, she will explain why Orsino’s suit is impossible in detail. Olivia is head over heels in love.

► The unpredictability of emotions

Analysis of Act I

Twelfth Night has always been one of Shakespeare’s most popular plays on the stage. The duke is in love, and his famous first lines announce this feeling:

If music be the food of love, play on!

Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,

The appetite may sicken, and so die. (1-3)

But the duke isn’t in love with anyone in particular; rather, the duke is in love with love itself; after all, the Lady Olivia has turned down his love, but he still insists on marrying her. However, he makes few attempts to possess the object of his affections. In his first speech,

► Romantic nature

the duke establishes his persona. At the same time as he enjoys sentimental music, he becomes impatient with it and dismisses the musicians. The duke then uses the sea as a metaphor for love, which he compares to love. The sea, like the duke's capacity for love, is vast, but it is also subject to change, unstable, and continually changing its direction.

► Counterpart

When we learn that Lady Olivia plans to mourn her brother for seven years, her desire to be "cloistered like a nun" for that time identifies her as a romantic sentimentalist who is out of touch with reality; she is thus a romantic counterpart to Duke Orsino. When the duke hears the news, he is overjoyed: if she can stay faithful to her brother for so long, it means she has a constant heart, which means she will always be loyal to a lover when the time comes. The duke then retires to his bedchamber. The duke then retires to his "sweet beds of flowers," where he sleeps and dreams, believing that "love thoughts lie rich when canopied by bowers." We've seen the duke agitated and enamoured of love, tired of love, and eventually ready to sleep and dream of love in this brief opening scene.

► Practicality

With the shift of the setting to Illyria's seacoast, we meet another main character in the comedy, Viola, and learn more about Lady Olivia. Despite the fact that their names are nearly perfect anagrams (a rearrangement of the same letters in the names), and despite the fact that they are in similar complicated situations in this play, they are vastly different women. Both of them have recently been orphaned, and despite appearances, they have both lost a brother and are thus alone in the world. But that's where the resemblance ends. Olivia is allowing herself to be consumed by her grief, whereas Viola, while grieving deeply for her brother, is still able to function in the real world. Viola, unlike Olivia, who is shipwrecked and alone, does not have time to grieve. She must use her wits, intelligence, and ability to analyse situations and characters as a shipwrecked virgin maid on a strange shore who knows no one. As a result, Viola decides to disguise herself as a man in order to ensure her own safety in an alien world that would not respect a young virgin maiden. Viola's disguise not only provides her with security and protection, but it also allows her to use her wit for her own amusement as well as the amusement of the audience.



We are introduced to yet another group of characters. The subplot involves Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and Maria. Sir Toby Belch is known for his heavy drinking and his obese, corpulent frame, as his name suggests. Sir Toby spends the majority of the play complimenting Sir Andrew in order for the latter to continue to provide him with money for drinking and dancing. Olivia, Sir Toby's niece, is too engrossed in her melodramatic mourning to notice the partying going on in her house, but when she does, she disapproves and relies on her steward, Malvolio, to keep her household in order; thus, Malvolio becomes the punch line for the party planners. Olivia's vibrant, clever, and mischievous maid, Maria, is another character in the subplot. She comes from a long line of Shakespearean servants who are smarter and wittier than the people around them. As a result, she will be perceived as far bitingly sarcastic than Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and he will become the target of many of her jokes and puns. Sir Andrew Aguecheek is important to the plot because he owns three thousand ducats a year, and Sir Toby wants to stay on good terms with him in order to benefit from the eccentric knight's generosity. As a result, he is constantly plotting ways to persuade the knight that Olivia is indeed sympathetic to the tall, skinny, ridiculous knight's romantic overture.

► Humorous subplot

This scene demonstrates Viola's complete success in achieving her goal of becoming a member of Duke Orsino's household. She has completely captivated the duke in only three days, who has taken a shine to her and is now not only employing her as his personal messenger, but also confiding his innermost thoughts to her. Valentine tells Cesario that he will most likely be promoted in the duke's service at the start of the scene. Viola has also fallen in love with the Duke in these three days. The dramatic irony that Viola (in disguise) is compelled to try to win Olivia for Duke Orsino when, in reality, she is trying to win the Duke for herself is part of the comic situation here. She wishes to remove her disguise and become his wife. "Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife," Viola exclaims at the end of the scene. Viola is now aligned with the other romantic lovers as a result of this statement. She is only distinguished from them by the fact that she is in constant contact with reality and can thus assess her situation.

► Confusing identities

► Differing nature of romance

Feste the fool enters with Maria, his witty servant, and the two engage in a verbal duel. Maria is a mischievous, quick-witted individual, and Feste has a mind that is as quick as lightning. Their verbal humour and exchanges follow a rapid give-and-take pattern. The arrival of Countess Olivia has been eagerly anticipated. We've known about her since the first scene of the act, and she finally makes her first appearance at the end of Act I. She is stunning and poised, and she exudes a commanding presence as she chastises the clown for his lack of seriousness during a time of mourning. Olivia demonstrates great intelligence as the scene progresses; she is very good with words, she appreciates the clown's magnificent humour, especially when it is directed at the dreary and grave Malvolio, and she is also very practical in her disapproval of her uncle's drunkenness and loud belching. And, despite the fact that the duke is attractive, wealthy, devoted, and intelligent, she is unable to love him. One of her reasons, we learn later in the scene, could be the duke's intense melodramatics in his message to Olivia. The duke's message to Olivia that he loves her is delivered by Cesario "With adorations, with fertile tears, / With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire," declares Duke Orsino, and is a perfect description of Duke Orsino's love's rhetorical and superficial nature.

► Performance

Olivia orders someone to "take the fool [Feste] away" as soon as she walks in. Olivia thinks he's a "dry fool" because she's in mourning, and foolery afflicts her at this time. When the fool asks Olivia for permission to prove his lady a fool, she agrees, and Olivia eventually appreciates the fool's wit and logic; indeed, she is sharp with Malvolio, who disparages the fool and wonders how his mistress can enjoy conversing with him. Malvolio once again demonstrates his lack of a sense of humour by constantly attempting to keep the entire household in a state of gravity and oppression. When Cesario arrives at the gate, Olivia reconsiders her decision to see the messenger after hearing Malvolio's description of the youth. As a result, we realise that Olivia's guise of mourning for her brother is just one of the many masks she wears throughout the comedy — that is, Lady Olivia used the explanation of her brother's death as a pretence for singling herself out and making herself interesting, and news of her excessive mourning has certainly spread across the country.



When Cesario is admitted, more masks and disguises are employed to the fullest extent possible. Olivia, for starters, wears a veil over her face to hide her true identity. Viola is, of course, posing as Cesario, the young man. Olivia is struck by the messenger, who is young, passionate, and attractive, rather than the message itself. Cesario, on the other hand, senses Olivia is too proud to be wooed, but he tries anyway. Olivia is oblivious to the message after it is delivered, but she is so enthralled by the messenger that she offers him a purse full of money. Cesario is enraged by the gift and refuses to accept it; he is not a fee-accepting person.: “*I am no fee’d post, Lady; keep your purse. My master, not myself, lacks recompense.*” Olivia recalls Cesario’s proud declaration, “*I am a gentleman,*” after he has left. Olivia, in fact, relishes recalling Cesario’s entire conversation; she is well aware that she is falling in love with the “boy,” and she wonders if Orsino is posing as Cesario. Her desire to learn more and to see the young “boy” again drives her to concoct a scheme to entice him back to her. We know it’s a ruse; Cesario didn’t leave a ring behind, but it’s the safest way Olivia can convince the youth to come back. The situation has become extremely complicated: Olivia loves a lady (Viola) who is posing as a man (Cesario), while Duke Orsino loves Olivia, who dismisses him, and he is in turn loved by a lady (Viola) who is merely a young man in the duke’s company.

► Masquerade

Act II, Scene 1

The second act commences on the Illyrian coast. Sebastian, Viola’s twin brother, survived the shipwreck and appears on stage with Antonio, a sea captain (not the same sea captain who managed to reach shore with Viola). Sebastian, like his sister Viola, is heartbroken; he believes Viola perished at sea during the storm. He attributes his gloomy mood and misfortune to the stars and “the malignancy of [his] fate.” He tells the sea captain that he needs privacy because of his terrible grief; his problems are numerous, and he is afraid that they will spread like an infection and “distemper” the sea captain’s mood.

► Dealing with loss

Antonio, on the other hand, will not abandon Sebastian; his love for him is strong enough to withstand Sebastian’s emotionalism. He would now be dead at the bottom of

► Friendship

the sea, alongside his beloved sister, if Antonio hadn't saved him. His fate would have been the same as his sister's if the heavens had been pleased. He then recalls his sister's beauty, as well as her sharp mind, which he describes as "extraordinary and enviable." Sebastian quickly recognises and apologises for the sea captain's remark that Sebastian's lamentations are "bad entertainment." Antonio inquires about becoming the young man's servant. That one favour would mean the world to him. His final destination is Duke Orsino's court, where Antonio has "many enemies." Despite this, Antonio declares that "come what may," he will always treasure his friendship with Sebastian.

Act II, Scene 2

Viola, still disguised as Cesario, enters the stage, followed by Malvolio, who approaches the young man and inquires if he is the same young man who was with the Countess Olivia only moments before. Cesario admits it was he, and Malvolio hands him the ring that Duke Orsino sent to Olivia, which Cesario had accidentally left behind. Malvolio adds sarcastically that if Cesario hadn't been so forgetful, he would have saved Malvolio the time and trouble of returning it. Malvolio mockingly tells Cesario to return to his master, Orsino, and tell him that Olivia "won't have anything to do with him," and also warns Cesario that he should "never be so hard to come again in his [Orsino's] affairs." Cesario is taken aback by Malvolio's arrogance; he then says, "I'll none of it," mirroring Malvolio's arrogance. Malvolio is enraged by Cesario's arrogance and throws the ring to the ground, saying, "If it be worth stooping for, there it lies." He abruptly exits after that.

► Class difference

When she's alone, Viola mulls over what's happened; she's certain she didn't leave the ring with Olivia. She is horrified at the prospect of Olivia falling in love with Viola's boyish persona. Olivia "made such a good view of me; indeed, so much / That sure methought her eyes had lost her tongue," she recalls clearly. The proof is indisputable. Cesario has indeed captured Olivia's heart. Olivia, Viola thinks, would be better off if she could "love a dream." "Disguise... art a wickedness," Viola recognises. She describes disguise as a "pregnant enemy" capable of wreaking havoc on "women's waxen



► Complications

hearts.” Viola, like Olivia, is a woman. She understands the pain of love: “Our frailty, not we,” she muses, “for such are we made of.” Viola asks Time to help her untangle this knot because she is unable to do so herself.. “it is too hard a knot for me to untie.”

Act II, Scene 3

Sir Toby and Sir Andrew have been noisily celebrating at Olivia’s house late at night, reciting fragments of songs, Latin sayings, and old country proverbs. They conclude by praising Sir Andrew for being such a brilliant scholar because Sir Andrew agrees with Sir Toby’s final conclusion that “life... consists of eating and drinking,” reminding Sir Toby that they both need another drink. As a result, he yells for “Marian” (Maria) to bring them “a stoup of wine.” Feste, the jester, has not gone to bed and is delighted to come in and find a party in progress, where Feste sings a love song about men wooing their true loves, which begins “O mistress mine.” . The second verse extols the joy of love: love is an action that must be performed; “it is not hereafter.” Because the future is uncertain, lovers should kiss because “youth is a stuff [that] will not endure,” according to the song. Maria enters and informs them that their “caterwauling” will result in their eviction. If Olivia awakens, she will have Malvolio, her steward, throw them all out. Malvolio walks in and informs them that Olivia has ordered them to either remain quiet or leave the house. Malvolio is enraged when Sir Toby and Feste mock him. He lashes out at Maria, attempting to humiliate her for allowing such misbehaviour. He’ll tell him about her involvement in all of this “uncivil” behaviour. She will forge Olivia’s handwriting on a letter, leading Malvolio to believe Olivia is in love with him. “It’ll be a royal sport,” Maria predicts. She then tells them to go into hiding and check in on Malvolio when “he shall find the letter.” She then bids them goodnight, and the three men are ecstatic at the prospect of making a fool of Malvolio.

► Lack of decorum

Act II, Scene 4

The duke is gathered with Cesario (Viola), Curio, and others at Orsino’s palace, and he requests to hear a song, a certain “old and antique” song that he heard the night before, and which seemed to “relieve [his] passion much.” However, because Feste, the jester, is not

► Music

present to sing it, Orsino sends Curio out to find him, and while Curio is gone, Orsino summons Cesario. "If ever [Cesario] shalt love," he tells the young lad, "remember how Orsino suffered while experiencing love's sweet pangs." Orsino tells Cesario that he is the sad epitome of all lovers, "unstaide and skittish" except when he thinks of his beloved, "the constant image." Cesario suggests that love has already enthroned itself within him, and Orsino agrees, saying that Cesario is correct. By looking at the boy, he can tell that his "eye / Hath stayed on some favour that it loves." Cesario admits that this is correct. The duke is intrigued, and he begins to interrogate Cesario about the woman who has piqued his interest.

► Socially accepted ideals of romance

Cesario confesses that the object of his affection looks a lot like Orsino, which Orsino dismisses: "She isn't worth thee, then," he says. He becomes enraged when he learns that Cesario's "beloved" is about Orsino's age. He advises a woman to date someone "elder than herself." He claims that women are not capable of loving with the same intensity as a young man, and that Cesario needs to find a very young virgin, one who has just blossomed, "for women are as a rose [and] once displayed, do fall that very hour." Cesario agrees, saying that women often "die, even when they grow to perfection." It is sung by spinsters and young maidens, and its theme is the simple truth of love's innocence. "Come away, come away, death..." begins the song, which is a melancholy evocation, and then goes on to lament unrequited love, which Orsino and Viola (and Olivia) all experience. The song's lover is a young man who has been "slain" by "a fair cruel maid," and he asks for a white shroud to encase his body, his heart broken. He doesn't want flowers strewn across his black coffin, and he doesn't want friends or mourners present when he's laid to rest. The emphasis here is on love's innocence, and our focus is on poor Viola, who has fallen in love with Duke Orsino, who thinks of her as nothing more than a handsome young man to whom he feels "fatherly."

Feste praises his good and generous master and then exits after Orsino gives him money for singing the mournful ballad. When the duke and Cesario are alone, the duke excuses the others and tells Cesario that he must return to Olivia and her "sovereign cruelty." Cesario is told that he must persuade Olivia that Orsino's love



...no woman's sides

► Gendered 'love'

So big, to hold so much. (92-95)

- Determination to pursue affection

Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian (another of Olivia's servants) have agreed to meet in Olivia's garden, and

Maria places the forged love letter in the garden path, where Malvolio will undoubtedly discover it. When Malvolio walks in, he's salivating at the prospect of Olivia falling in love with him. He claims that Maria confirmed this theory, and that he has overheard Olivia say that if she were to marry, she would choose someone who looks a lot like Malvolio. Olivia, he believes, shows him more respect than she does any of her other suitors. Malvolio notices the "love note" at this point. When he finishes reading it, he is certain it was written by Olivia. Olivia wrote the script and phraseology, and the note bears her stamp, which she uses to seal letters. Surely she refers to him in the first stanza; he is her steward and is at her command. The poem's perplexing final line calms his emotions: "M, O, A, I, doth sway my life." Malvolio then discovers a prose letter enveloped with the poem, which he reads aloud. The letter's author claims that if this letter "falls into [her beloved's] hand by accident," he should be aware that the woman he loves is "above" him due to the stars (fate). She then states words that have been much-quoted ever since: "... some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em." Despite her status as a maid, Maria has mastered the art of composing exquisite, apologetic modesty combined with the gentleness of a love that cannot be named.

► Prank

After reading the letter, Malvolio is overjoyed. As he was "commended," he vows to be proud and perplex Sir Toby. There is no doubt in his mind that Olivia wrote the love letter. In other words, Maria is going to make Malvolio, who is usually sober, look like a giddy fool. Just as Maria enters, Malvolio exits, and Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian emerge from the hedge. They're all having a great time. Sir Toby is willing to marry Maria because of her wit. Maria claims they won't have to wait long to see the outcome of their prank. Malvolio will make every effort to see Olivia as soon as possible, dressed in yellow stockings and cross-garters, Maria claims. Olivia despises yellow stockings, and cross-garters are a fashion Olivia despises; additionally, Olivia is usually so depressed about her inability to choose a husband for herself that Malvolio's constant smiling enrages her.

► Change in personality



Analysis of Act II

- Contrasting personalities of the siblings

The opening scene transports us away from the regal residences to a beach on another part of Illyria's coast. Sebastian and Antonio, two new characters introduced in the comedy, make up the third plot line. Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, is believed to have drowned at sea, according to Viola. Sebastian, like his sister, is sweet and attractive. Sebastian will appear more impulsive and emotional throughout the rest of the comedy than his twin sister; for example, he will consent to marry a woman (Olivia) whom he has just met — an act of extreme haste.

- Symbolic significance of disguises

Olivia dispatched Malvolio to track down Cesario and return a ring that Cesario had left behind at the end of Act I. Malvolio is seen returning the ring in a scornful, haughty, and arrogant manner in this short scene. Malvolio's rudeness and ill nature are highlighted in part by this scene. He is incredibly arrogant toward a young man who has caused him no personal harm. Olivia has fallen in love with an exterior facade rather than the inner person, Viola realises. This realisation allows her to make a remark about the "frailty" of women who are repeatedly deceived by various disguises. When Viola cries out, "Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness, / Wherein the pregnant enemy does much," She makes allusions to the "wickedness" that results from a woman's constant deception by disguises, dating back to Eve's first deception in the Garden of Eden. Viola, on the other hand, must keep her disguise because she would be helpless to defend herself as a young woman alone in a different nation.

Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are partying in a drunken, boisterous celebration, and Feste will soon join them with some songs. Then Maria, who had been complaining earlier, finally joins in the festivities. The atmosphere is festive. Malvolio's entrance is particularly amusing. Sir Toby and Feste dance around this foolish figure, and Malvolio has gone too far when he reminds Sir Toby that he can be thrown out of the household. It should be remembered that, while Malvolio is a steward, he is socially inferior to Sir Toby, and that, whatever constraints Sir Toby may have, he is a knight and Lady Olivia's uncle in Elizabethan society. "Art any more than a steward?" Sir Toby asks after Malvolio's threat. Sir Toby then states

► Hedonistic behaviour

the fundamental conflict between the two: “Do you think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?” This final statement perfectly encapsulates the world’s two types of people: there are the Malvolios, who want everyone to be as plain and humourless as he is, and there are the Sir Tobys, who never tire of life. The phrase “cakes and ale” has become synonymous with people who enjoy themselves. Malvolio turns to Maria to rebuke her after Sir Toby has put him in his place, and then he exits. As a result, when the scene ends, we are ready.

This scene abruptly shifts back to Duke Orsino’s palace, and the mood and atmosphere are re-established as the duke calls for music once more, in contrast to all of the trickery involved in the subplot of the previous scene. We’re back with the same languid and indolent duke, who now requests the old and antique song he heard the night before. Feste will appear later in the scene and sing the song “Come away, Come away, death.” The theme of this lyric is a young man’s deathly sadness over an unrequited love for a fair, cruel maid. The young man in the song dies as a result of his love, and he hopes that no other sad, true lover will follow in his footsteps. Interestingly, while the song’s theme expresses Duke Orsino’s mood, it also expresses Olivia’s (who is unrequited in her love for Cesario) and Viola’s moods (who is unrequited in her love for Duke Orsino). “My father had a daughter who loved a man,” Cesario says at the end of the scene, comes as close as Viola dares to expressing her love for Duke Orsino. The duke’s exaggerated statements of love contrast with her tormented inner anguish and reasoned love. Viola’s passion is less pretentious than the duke’s, but it is just as intense and genuine. The scene’s conclusion advances the plot because Orsino orders Cesario to deliver another love letter. The scene’s conclusion advances the plot because Orsino orders Cesario to deliver a love message and a jewel to Olivia once more, setting up another encounter between Olivia and the inaccessible Cesario.

► Different notions of love

Malvolio’s gulling is one of the most amusing scenes in the entire play. They plan to deceive him “black and blue.” They resent Malvolio’s lack of human sympathy and puritanical arrogance toward them, and they plan to play a trick on him by exploiting his own arrogant and



egotistical nature. It would be impossible to play this trick on him if he wasn't so self-centered and egotistical. As a result, we have a hard time empathising with Malvolio. The letter's instructions will be the source of future hilarity. Malvolio is to wear yellow stockings, which are an old-fashioned symbol of envy, already a laughable joke, and also a symbol of a low-class servant; additionally, yellow is a colour that is associated with death. Malvolio must also wear "cross gartered" stockings. The irony is that Malvolio hopes to woo a countess while dressed in this absurd garb! He's also supposed to smile at Olivia all the time, and Maria knows Olivia can't bear smiles because she's in "mourning." Finally, the duping is so flawless that Sir Toby says of Maria, "I could marry this wench for this device" — referring to her duping scheme. When Maria returns, she instructs the others to wait until Malvolio appears in front of Olivia before proceeding. He'll wear and do everything Olivia despises, and Malvolio's cheerful demeanour will be so incongruent with Olivia's melancholy demeanour that she'll probably have him banished. The audience's expectation of this upcoming scene is the source of the comedy.

► Malvolio as a comic character

Act III, Scene 1

Viola, disguised as Cesario, has arrived in Olivia's garden to plead Orsino's case, and is currently chatting with Feste, Olivia's jester. They engage in a harmless verbal sparring game. Feste is, after all, Olivia's "fool," as Cesario reminds him. Feste tells Cesario that Lady Olivia has no fool, and that she will have no fool "until she is married." Feste enters to inform Olivia that Cesario is waiting for her in the garden. While Cesario is waiting, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew enter and begin joking with him, both men expressing their admiration for Cesario, particularly Sir Andrew, "That youth's a rare courtier." Olivia and Maria enter, and Olivia quickly completely ignores Maria, Uncle Toby, and Sir Andrew to be alone with Cesario. She immediately asks for Cesario's hand, followed by his name. She protests when he responds that he is her servant: he is Orsino's servant. But, as Cesario reminds Olivia, he is her servant because he is Orsino's servant, and because his master is her servant (due to his love for her). Olivia is distracted by Orsino's logic and chatter. Orsino is the last person she wants to hear about.

► Olivia's affection

She admits that the ruse of the lost ring and her sending Malvolio after Cesario was nothing more than a convenient excuse for Cesario to return to her. She begs him to speak; she desperately wants to hear words of love from him. Cesario, on the other hand, can only say that he pities her. Olivia is dignified in her acceptance of Cesario's rejection. She then tells Cesario not to be afraid, and that she will not press him for love that he cannot provide. She can't help but admire the fortunate woman who will finally "harvest" this youth. Cesario gets ready to leave, then pauses to ask Olivia if she has any last words for Orsino. She begs Cesario to stay a little longer: "Stay," she entreats him, and "prithee, tell me what thou think'st of me" Cesario and Olivia both admit imprecisely that they are not who they appear to be, and Olivia can no longer take it."

I love thee, so, that maugre [despite] all thy pride,
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide. (148-49)

Despite this lovely and unexpected declaration of love, Cesario cannot, even as a friendly gesture, encourage Olivia. He has no choice but to reject her declarations of love. As a result, he tells her, as plainly as he can, that he only has "one heart," that he has given it to "no woman," and that "no woman" shall be the "mistress" of that heart, "save I alone." As a result, he must bid Olivia farewell; he will never speak of his master's love for her again. Olivia begs Cesario to "come again" in desperation, hoping that his heart will change and he will come to love her.

► Rejection in love

Act III, Scene 2

Sir Andrew is becoming enraged and frustrated at Olivia's house. He is making no progress in winning Olivia's affections; he believes that she favours Cesario more. He tells Sir Toby and Fabian that he saw Olivia and Cesario in the orchard and that Olivia is clearly in love with Cesario. Fabian, on the other hand, believes Olivia is only using Cesario as a ruse to hide her feelings for Sir Andrew and thus make Sir Andrew jealous. Sir Andrew, according to Fabian, should have confronted Cesario on the spot and "punched the youth into oblivion." He bemoans the fact that Sir Andrew has been denied the opportunity to demonstrate his bravery in front of Olivia's eyes. Sir Andrew should challenge Cesario to a duel, he suggests. They will be the ones to deliver the challenge.



- Attempts at romantic courtship

Sir Andrew agrees to the plan and goes off to get a pen and some paper, while Sir Toby and Fabian laugh at the practical joke they've just concocted. They are certain that neither Sir Andrew nor Cesario will engage in a real duel with each other.

Act III, Scene 3

Viola's twin brother Sebastian and the sea captain Antonio enter. They're walking down a street near Duke Orsino's palace, and Antonio explains that he couldn't let Sebastian wander around Illyria alone because of his love and concern for him, even though he knows it would be dangerous for him to do so. He knows he'll be arrested on the spot if he's recognised, but he doesn't have a choice: he loves Sebastian so much that he can't bear the thought of him being hurt. Sebastian is grateful for Antonio's risk, and Antonio advises him to start taking precautions right away. He requests that he be exempted so that he can seek cover. He hands Sebastian his purse, and the two agree to meet in an hour at The Elephant, a tavern. As a result, Sebastian, armed with a purse full of cash, sets out to see the sights of the town.

- Protection

Act III, Scene 4

Olivia and Maria are in the garden, and Olivia is planning an evening of entertainment for Cesario; she has sent him an invitation, and he has promised to pay her a visit. She's ecstatic at the prospect and is pondering how she should treat him, how she should "feast him." She is concerned that he will believe she is attempting to "purchase" him. She wonders where Malvolio is; he is usually solemn and courteous, and she can count on him to calm her nerves. Malvolio enters, a foolish smile on his face. His entire appearance has changed since our last encounter; his dark clothing has vanished. Maria's forgery of a love note has transformed him from "sad and civil" to a cheerfully smiling courtier. He kisses his hand and blows kisses toward Olivia, smiling again and again. Malvolio doesn't seem to notice her bemusement at his inexplicable, incongruous attire and behaviour. He prances in front of her, quoting lines from the letter he assumes Olivia wrote to him, focusing on the "greatness" passage in particular. Olivia tries unsuccessfully to interrupt him, but he rambles on and on until she

- Malvolio's performance

concludes that he is struggling from “midsummer madness.”

Cesario's arrival is announced by a servant, and Olivia entrusts Maria with the “crazy” Malvolio. Meanwhile, Malvolio is hostile to Sir Toby and insults Fabian, recalling the orders Maria inserted into the letter. They are all exasperated and furious by him, and when he leaves, they plan to lock him up in a dark room. Olivia won't mind, says Sir Toby, because “my niece is already convinced he's insane.” Sir Andrew walks in with a copy of his challenge to Cesario in his hand. Sir Toby reads the language aloud, and we can tell he is very proud of it. Cesario is inside with Olivia, Maria informs him. Cesario begs for his master, Duke Orsino, to be considered a serious suitor, and Olivia shifts the focus to Cesario himself, gifting him a diamond brooch with a miniature portrait of herself. Olivia exits after Cesario accepts it politely and courteously.

► Gift

Sir Toby informs Cesario that his “interceptor,” Sir Andrew, is waiting for him and ready to fight him in a sword fight. Cesario is terrified, and he begs Sir Toby to track down this knight and figure out what wrong-doing he has committed. Sir Toby taunts Cesario and Sir Andrew into drawing their swords, assuring them that they will be safe. A true swordsman enters at this point. It's Antonio, who mistook young Cesario for Sebastian and told Sir Andrew to lay down his sword unless he wants to fight Antonio. When a troop of officers enters, Sir Toby draws his sword and prepares to fight Antonio. Orsino has sent out his men to arrest him. Antonio looks dejectedly at Cesario. The sea captain is both saddened and enraged by Cesario's apparent ingratitude when he asks for his purse back, and when Cesario denies ever receiving it, the sea captain is both saddened and enraged. Viola believes Sebastian is still alive as the officers lead Antonio away. It's possible that this man rescued her twin brother, Sebastian, and that Antonio mistook her for Sebastian just now because of her disguise.

► Mistaken identities

Analysis of Act III

The opening scene picks up where Act II, Scene 4 left off, with Duke Orsino preparing to dispatch Cesario on yet another mission to Olivia. We should keep in mind that



the scenes have alternated between romantic plots and subplots involving Malvolio's deception. Act III begins in Olivia's garden, following the hilarious scene at the end of Act II, but the scene is light and jovial because Cesario has just met Olivia's clown, Feste. The pranking continues with the arrival of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, but more importantly, Sir Andrew is able to notice the manner in which Cesario (Viola) addresses Olivia, which will later lead to the pretended duel between the two. Olivia immediately and desperately wants to hear words of love from Cesario after dismissing everyone to be alone with the young messenger, but all he can say is that he pities her. Olivia then reveals herself to be very similar to Duke Orsino, in that she is as fickle as the duke. "I will not have you," she tells Cesario at first. Then, just as Cesario is about to leave, Olivia can't let him go without knowing what he thinks of her: "Stay, I prithee, tell me what thou thinkst of me." Despite this lovely and spontaneous declaration of love, Cesario is unable to surrender or explain himself to Olivia without revealing his disguise; however, "he" is guilty in her eyes of wanton cruelty. In this scene, Lady Olivia has been reduced to the same state as Orsino. She begs for love and is turned down.

► Emotional state

Even someone as dense as Sir Andrew can see Olivia's love for Cesario. We're not surprised that he hasn't made any progress in his courtship with Olivia. What's more astonishing is that he still believes he has a chance to win Olivia's affection. Sir Andrew, on the other hand, is envious of Olivia's favours to Cesario. Malvolio is following the forged letter's. As a result, if Sir Andrew is naive in his belief that he will win Olivia's hand, Malvolio is egotistical to believe the same. And, as evidenced by his attire and demeanour, he will be revealed to be just as foolish as Sir Andrew.

► Advise on love

In a comedy that is primarily about romantic love, there is an exploration of another type of love: Antonio's manly love for young Sebastian; he loves young Sebastian enough to follow him into the enemy's country, where he risks being arrested and severely punished if he is discovered. Antonio's trust and affection for Sebastian is demonstrated at the end of the scene when he hands Sebastian his purse of money in case the young man needs to buy something. This monetary gift will later

► Complex plot

become significant in the plot when Viola, dressed as Cesario, is mistaken for Sebastian by Antonio. As a result, another goal of the scene is to bring Sebastian to the same city as Viola, setting the stage for more complications involving misidentification. The plot is quickly becoming so complicated that Shakespeare may have to start unravelling it.

► Acting out the part of a stereotypical “lover”

Olivia mistook Malvolio for a madman, Malvolio mistook Olivia for a true love, Viola mistook a man who allegedly insulted Sir Andrew, Lady Olivia mistook Viola for a man with a “heart of stone,” and Antonio mistook Viola for her brother Sebastian. Maria warns Olivia (and the audience) before Malvolio arrives that he is “possessed,” that he is insane, and that devils have taken over his sanity. Malvolio keeps referring to different lines of the letter that he thinks Olivia wrote. Olivia becomes increasingly perplexed as Malvolio insists on quoting line by line from the letter and returns time after time to the “greatness” passage. She believes he is rambling madly. Finally, she considers “this is very midsummer madness,” feeling compassion for her steward.

► Absurdity of situation

One of the high points of the comedy in this play is the duel between Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Cesario (Viola). The fact that the pretended duel is fought over Lady Olivia, whom Cesario (Viola) has rejected and who is completely unaware of Sir Andrew’s plans, is equally absurd. In fact, part of the high comedy involves Malvolio’s egotistical absurdity in believing that the high-born Lady Olivia would stoop to love him, as well as Sir Andrew’s folly in believing that he has enough of a romantic chance with this lady to fight for her. The ludicrousness of Sir Andrew and Cesario’s duel for Olivia’s love is one of the most absurd duels in history. The plot’s various elements are gradually coming together. Viola now recognises that she has been mistaken for her brother, paving the way for Lady Olivia to mistake Sebastian for her.

Act IV, Scene 1

The scene begins on Olivia’s street in front of her home. Feste has mistook Sebastian for Cesario as Sebastian and Feste are conversing. Feste insists that his mistress, Cesario, has sent Feste to him. Sebastian is annoyed by the jester’s persistence and tells him, “Thou



- Continuing confusion about identities

art a foolish fellow,” before tipping him generously and sending him on his way, or else he will give Feste “worse payment,” which means a kick. Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, and Fabian arrive, and Sir Andrew assumes Sebastian is the “cowardly” Cesario; Sir Andrew strikes him, and Sebastian beats him up, asking, “Are all the people insane?” Feste says he’ll inform Olivia of everything that’s happened, and she’ll be furious to learn that her favorite suitor, the reluctant Cesario, has quarrelled with Olivia’s uncle and with Sir Andrew. Meanwhile, Sir Toby grabs Sebastian’s hand in an attempt to save Sir Andrew from further harm. Olivia begs Cesario to let her into the house. Sir Toby is severely reprimanded and sent away, out of her sight, and he exits with the other two. She apologises for the “pranks of [these] ruffians,” and Sebastian remains speechless throughout. He can’t believe his eyes: he’s being courted by a lovely young countess; if it’s all a dream, he says, “let fancy still my sense in Lethe . . . let me sleep.” Olivia is insistent: “Come, I prithee,” she says, and begs him to marry her. Without hesitation, Sebastian accepts: “Madame, I will,”.

Act IV, Scene 2

Malvolio and the “midsummer madness” are looked after by Sir Toby and the household staff, who have him locked in a dark room. Feste disguises himself as a parson with the intention of performing a “mercy call” on the “poor mad prisoner.” Sir Topas, the curate, will be his new role. Of course, hearing what he believes to be the parson’s voice brings great relief to the imprisoned steward. When Feste slips away for a moment, Sir Toby suggests that Feste speak with Malvolio in his natural voice; things have deteriorated, and he wants to free Malvolio and put an end to the charade. Malvolio argues that he is not insane, and Feste is eventually persuaded to bring ink, a pen, and some writing paper for Malvolio to “set down to [his] lady” proof of his sanity.

- Madness

Act IV, Scene 3

Sebastian is starting to enjoy the bliss of being loved by a beautiful and wealthy countess while sitting in Olivia’s garden, though he is still perplexed as to why all of this has happened to him. He admires the beautiful pearl Olivia has given him as he sits alone, and he wonders why Antonio did not meet him at The Elephant Inn, where



► Secrecy

they had agreed to meet. He wishes Antonio was there to counsel him. Sebastian agrees to marry Olivia; however, the wedding will be kept a secret until later, when they will have a lavish, public ceremony befitting Olivia's position. As the fourth act comes to a close, they leave arm in arm for the private ceremony.

Analysis of Act IV

Olivia has dispatched Feste to Cesario (Viola) to deliver a message, but he delivers it to Sebastian instead, because Viola's twin brother looks identical to her. Sebastian has no idea what Feste is talking about, which adds to the hilarity. This is yet another example of dramatic irony employed for amusing effect. Even funnier is the fact that Sir Andrew, a natural coward, believes Cesario (Viola) is afraid of him, which is actually the case. When Sir Andrew strikes Sebastian, Sebastian doubles down on the blows until Sir Toby has to restrain him. The comedy here is largely derived from the stage action, as well as the comedy of misplaced identities. Olivia arrives to find her uncle "manhandling" Sebastian, whom she mistook for Cesario. Sebastian is willing to believe that he is in the strangest country in the world, or that he has gone insane, because of his passionate love for a beautiful noble lady whom he has never seen. Olivia, on the other hand, is overjoyed at the unexpected turn of events; she believes Cesario (Viola) has finally fallen in love with her.

► Dramatic irony

The use of disguise is used to create a comic effect once more. Feste disguises himself as a parson and appears in front of Malvolio this time. The disguise consists of a black gown, similar to the one worn by Malvolio earlier. The comedy is multi-layered: Malvolio believes that the appearance of the parson will shed some light on his insanity, but in reality, Malvolio will have to remain in the dark for some time. "There is no darkness but ignorance," Feste says, and Malvolio was certainly ignorant to believe Olivia could ever be allured to him.

► Disguises in comedy

The audience can easily empathise with Sebastian's bewilderment and astonishment at the events that have unfolded, while also experiencing the great bliss of being loved vicariously. Sebastian tries to doubt reality, but he looks at the pearl that Olivia has given him, and we must remember that Olivia is a stunning



► Plot device

woman who could easily make anyone fall in love with her at first sight. Mistaken identities are a common plot device in romantic comedies, and Olivia and Sebastian's impending marriage will serve as the foundation for all of the complications that will emerge in the second act.

Act V, Scene 1

This final Act, which consists of only one scene, takes place in front of Olivia's house on a street. Feste is reluctantly carrying Malvolio's letter to Olivia, which is pleading for Malvolio's sanity, but Fabian is attempting to persuade him not to read it. Feste, understandably, is not in a hurry to deliver it. Duke Orsino, Cesario (Viola), Curio, and others enter, and Orsino speaks with Feste briefly; he compliments Feste's quick wit and gives him a gold coin, as well as instructions to "bring her along"; if he does, there may be more gold coins for Feste. Cesario (Viola) notices Antonio and several officers approaching and informs Orsino that this is the man who saved him from Sir Andrew earlier. Orsino recalls Antonio well; the sea captain's face was familiar to him when he last saw him "besmeared / As black as Vulcan in the smoke of war." The captain of a pirate ship at the time, Antonio, did a lot of damage to Orsino's fleet. Despite their past disagreements, Orsino remembers Antonio as a courageous and honourable adversary. When asked how he ended up in Illyria, Antonio tells Orsino that he was a victim of "witchcraft," meaning that he saved Cesario's life and then this "most ungrateful boy" refused to return the purse of money he had lent him earlier.

► Mistaken identities clash

Olivia and her entourage make a grand entrance at this point. "Heaven walks on earth," Orsino says when he sees Olivia enter. Orsino is well aware that Olivia adores Cesario, and he is prepared to "tear out cruel eye" for all of Olivia's loving glances directed at him. Cesario is summoned to accompany him. Despite the fact that Cesario is very important to him, he will "sacrifice the lamb . . . to spite a raven's heart." Olivia is shocked: where is Orsino's haughty new husband being taken? Cesario responds that he is willing to accompany Orsino and that he would "die a thousand deaths" for him. "More than I love these eyes, more than my life... [and] all the more, than e'er I shall love wife," he says of Orsino. "Me, detested! how am I beguiled!" Olivia exclaims, stunned.

► Heightening confusion

She summons the priest who married her to Cesario (to Sebastian), and the priest enters, attesting to the fact that these two young people did indeed marry. Orsino is now the one who is enraged. Sir Andrew bursts in, wailing for a surgeon; Sir Toby, too, requires one. They claim Cesario (Sebastian) has injured them, and Sir Andrew's head has been broken. "Here he is!" they say, pointing to Cesario (Viola). Cesario (Viola) raises his voice once more. He has done no harm to anyone; however, Sir Andrew did draw his sword and challenge him to a duel once, but Cesario (Viola) has never harmed Sir Andrew.

Olivia tries to find out who is willing to take responsibility for this bloody business, but the surgeon appears to be drunk and unable to come. Sebastian is the key to unlocking the solution to all of this perplexity. He expresses regret to Olivia for injuring Sir Toby. Orsino is the first to comment on Sebastian and Cesario's resemblance in appearance. Except for the colours of their clothes, it's nearly impossible to tell them apart. Sebastian then reminds Olivia of their recent exchange of words, and he refers to her as his "sweet one." He joyfully recognises Antonio and confesses that since he lost him, "the hours [have] racked and tortured" him. Antonio, like Orsino, is astonished. Cesario and Sebastian, he says, are like "an apple cleft in two." Then Viola (Cesario) speaks up, telling Sebastian that he reminds her of a twin brother who she fears died in a "watery tomb." Sebastian was very much resembled her father; he had a mole on one brow — and Sebastian interrupts her at this point: so did his father. Furthermore, they both acknowledge that this man died when they were thirteen.

► Acknowledgment

Viola then reveals that her true identity is concealed by "masculine usurp'd attire"; she is Sebastian's long-lost twin sister, and she can prove it by taking them to the home of a sea captain who is aware of her disguise and is keeping her women's clothes for her; however, they must also produce Malvolio because he has been imprisoning the sea captain. Sebastian approaches Olivia and informs her that she has been "mistook." Olivia summons Malvolio right away, demanding to know why he has this sea captain imprisoned, and she requests that he be brought before her personally, despite the fact that "they say, poor gentleman, he's much distracted." Feste enters with Malvolio's letter, which serves as proof of his



► Revelations

sanity. Olivia instructs him to read the letter aloud. She isn't convinced that Malvolio is truly insane. He brings Maria's "love note" with him when he enters. Olivia recognises the handwriting as Maria's right away.

As a result, she begins to piece together the details of her servants' practical joke on Malvolio. Fabian confesses his and Sir Toby's roles in their attempt to avenge Malvolio by recounting all of the secret plottings that have taken place. He also admits that Sir Toby was the one who persuaded Maria to write the forged love note, and that he has married her "in exchange." Count Orsino turns to Viola at the end of the play and tells her that while she was once his "mistress and fancy queen," she is now his "mistress and fancy queen." Everyone leaves the stage, leaving Feste alone. He finishes with a song. It tells the story of men's development, focusing on different stages of their lives and putting all of the serious issues that men face into the dramatic context of this comedy whose sole purpose is to "please."

► Resolution of chaos

Analysis of Act V

As most of the various plots, themes, problems, and mistaken identities must be unravelled and resolved, the final act has only one scene, which gives it a stronger sense of unity. Feste is on his way to Olivia with a letter from Malvolio, which will clarify the plot surrounding Malvolio's gulling and "incarceration." With the arrival of the arrested Antonio, however, confusion reigns supreme: Cesario (Viola) is accused of first bewitching and then betraying Antonio; then of alienating Olivia's adoration from Orsino; and finally, Cesario (Viola) is started accusing of betraying the marriage bond entered into with Olivia and confirmed to by the priest. Cesario (Viola) is rendered speechless when these accusations are levelled at him. Orsino dismisses Antonio's charge. Sir Andrew's unexpected appearance, followed by Sir Toby's, creates yet another distraction. They arrive injured, yelling for a "surgeon," and accuse Cesario of brutally beating them.

► Final order

When Sebastian walks in, the puzzle's final solution is in sight. The most striking feature of him is his physical resemblance to Cesario; keep in mind that he and his sister are both dressed as men, making it nearly impossible

► Acceptable conclusion

to tell them apart except by their clothing colours. However, because Viola recognises her brother, the final scene focuses on Sebastian, who gradually realises that the young man dressed as Cesario is actually Viola. Even though we don't see Sir Toby and Maria, who have just married, according to Feste, all parties are happily joined to each other in this recognition scene. Malvolio is the only one who is unhappy. He lacks humour, charity, and forgiveness, and the play ends on a happy note with the pledge of contentment for almost everyone after he leaves.

Summarised Overview

In effect, *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* portray the complicated nature of human relations. On one hand, as *Hamlet* explores humanity through the lens of the genre of 'tragedy', the latter focuses on the world through the comic genre. As a result, either work presents a different side of the human condition. While the events of *Hamlet* conclude in the deaths of several main characters, *Twelfth Night* ends on a stereotypically happy ending for all the protagonists, with several pairs of lovers being united with each other in marriage. This corresponds, typically, to the social expectations of time. The dysfunctional relationship between different individuals leads to destruction and death in the first case, thereby restoring order, while the sorting out of confusion and mistaken identities remedies the complications in the second case. In both texts, the endings reflect the prevalent social settings of the Elizabethan age.

Assignments

1. What role does the ghost play in *Hamlet*?
2. Why does Ophelia commit suicide?
3. How does Hamlet ascertain King Claudius's guilt?
4. Discuss *Hamlet* as a literary exploration of revenge and madness.
5. Contrast the characterization of Hamlet with that of Fortinbras.
6. What events force Viola to take up the disguise of Cesario?
7. Write a short note on the character of Malvolio from *Twelfth Night*.
8. Discuss the transformation of Lady Olivia over the course of the play, giving examples from the text.



9. Explore the use of mistaken identities and disguises in *Twelfth Night*.
10. Explain how the different characters in *Twelfth Night* conceive of love and romantic attraction.

Suggested Readings

1. Bradley, A.C. "Shakespeare's Tragic Period." *Twentieth Hamlet*. 13-21. <https://asf.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/TWELFTH-NIGHT-post-Brandy3.pdf>
2. Cantor, Paul A. *Shakespeare: Hamlet*. Cambridge, 1989.
3. Morris, Deborah. *A Guide to William Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" or "What You Will"*. Utah State University, 1985. <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1250&context=honors>
4. Lewis, C.S. "Hamlet." *Shakespeare Tragedies*. 71-74.
5. Mangan, Michael. *A preface to Shakespeare's Tragedies*. New York: Longman, 1991.
6. Prosser, Eleanor. *Hamlet and Revenge*. second edition. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1971.
7. Salinger, L.G. "The Design of Twelfth Night." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Twelfth Night*. Walter King, ed. Prentice-Hall: Englewood, 1968.
8. Summers, Joseph. "The Masks of Twelfth Night." *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Twelfth Night*. 1968.

References

1. Champion, Larry. *The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedies*. Cambridge, 1955.
2. David Bevington. *Action Is Eloquence*; Harvard UP, 1984.
3. Evans, Levin, Baker. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Houghton, 1974



4. Eliot, T.S. Ed. *20th Century Interpretations of Hamlet* , edited by David Bevington, Prentice, 1968.
5. Fredson, Thayer Bowers. *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, 1959.
6. Jackson, Bloom. *Shakespearean Criticism*. Oxford UP, 1974.
7. Thompson, Karl F. *Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*. Harcourt, 1980.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 2

Poetry

(Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire an understanding of the history of the sonnet as a poetic genre.
- ▶ detail the significant contributions of William Shakespeare to the genre.
- ▶ identify the dominant features of the Shakespearean sonnet.
- ▶ critically analyse some of the dominant themes and stylistic elements of the selected poems.

Background

The Oxford Dictionary describes the sonnet as: “a 14-line poem, each containing 10 letters, and a fixed rhyme pattern.” The word “Sonnet” comes from the Italian word “Sonetto” meaning “little song”. It is the perfect style of poetry to express one thought or thought that revolves around love and emotions. In this genre, poets express special love and affection for a loved one. In ancient times many poets concentrated on their writings on topics such as, heroes, legends, and kings but this was a unique change in the history of literature when poets began to write the attributes of their loved ones.

Sonnets originated in Italy and gained popularity as a form of poetry in the 13th century. It was further developed in the 14th century, when Francesco Petrarch popularised it through poems about a woman named Laura. In a poem, he stated that she had declined him because she was already married. Petrarch introduced the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, which became a model for lyrical poetry and was admired and imitated throughout Europe. The following is the basic structure of Petrarch’s sonnets:

There are fourteen lines of poetry.

The first stanza is in octave, while the second stanza is in sestet.

The octave is based on the ABBA, ABBA rhyme scheme.



The sestet could have a variety of patterns, such as CDCDCD or CDDCEE. This structure is “Sicilian Sestet”, directly used by Petrarch himself.

Petrarch’s sonnet pattern is divided into two parts: an octave (the first eight lines of the sonnet) and a sestet (the second six lines of the sonnet). In the sestet, there was a shift in thought, known as volta or the turn of thought.

In the 16th century, France, Spain, and England adopted the Petrarch style. It was created in Italy by Dante Alighieri, *il Sommo Poeta* (“the Supreme Poet”), who wrote a series of sonnets for his beloved Beatrice. The sonnet was introduced to England by Wyatt and Surrey. Wyatt had the same octave as everyone else, but his sestet scheme was CDDCEE. Several of his poems deal with romantic love. Wyatt wrote 96 love poems, the most famous of which were his 31 English sonnets. The translations from Petrarch’s work accounted for ten of them. In 1557, Wyatt wrote sonnets. Surrey took his place after he died.

Henry Howard, also known as Surrey, was a poet, politician, and nobleman from England. Sir Thomas Wyatt was a friend of his. His friend Wyatt and he were the first to write English sonnets. They were known as the “Fathers of the Sonnet” because of their excellent translations of Petrarch’s sonnets. Surrey, on the other hand, introduced a new rhyme scheme- ABA, CDCD, EFEF, GG- which William Shakespeare adopted.

“Astrophel and Stella” is a sonnet sequence written by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586). Penelope Devereux was the inspiration for this piece. Sidney is Astrophel, and Penelope is Stella (a star) (a star lover). His sonnets also have a love theme, in which he expresses his undying love for her. Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) canonised England in 1595 with his great poem “Amoretti.” He wrote about his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle in a collection of eighty-eight sonnets. He talked about the challenges he faced before and after his marriage. His poems are mostly autobiographical and are inspired by the poet’s own life experiences.

Spenser and Shakespeare mastered the sonnet in the 16th century. John Donne wrote his religious sonnet in the mid-seventeenth century, and John Milton wrote sonnets about politics and religion. He also addressed personal issues, such as his own blindness. The modern sonnet has been applied to a wide range of poetic subjects. Petrarchan sonnets were still written by many English writers, including William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Elizabeth Barrett. With Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Christina Rossetti introducing female interest into sonnets, the English revival lasted well into the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Barrett Browning revived the love sonnet sequence. The 20th century was full of developed sonneteers which include, Robert Frost and Robert Lowell from



America, England's W.H Auden, Dylan Thomas, Seamus Heaney and John Crowe Ransom, and Edwin Morgan from Scotland.

Keywords

English Sonnet, Form, Themes, "Fair Youth"

Discussion

► Traditional form

A sonnet allows the poet to express and explore strong emotions. The first 12 lines of an English sonnet, also known as a Shakespearean sonnet, are divided into three quatrains. This change was introduced into Elizabethan sonnets by Surrey. Each of these quatrains has four lines. In these three quatrains, the poet addresses a problem or theme, each quatrain containing a single thought, followed by the next quatrain, and finally, in the final two lines, he resolves it. The final two lines are called "Couplet" which has a regular rhyme scheme. Mostly all the poets wrote sonnets in iambic pentameter.

Iambic Pentameter: Iambic Pentameter is a style of writing in poetry where each line is five feet long. Each foot contains two syllables; one is stressed and second is unstressed. In simple way each line carries ten syllables: five stressed and five unstressed. *Look at the example*

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (Shakespeare)

(Shall+I) (com+par) (Thee+to) (a+ sum) (mer's+day)

William Shakespeare, the most influential writer in English literature, wrote poems about love, beauty, jealousy, passage of time, and mortality. He composed nearly 154 sonnets, which he published in 1609. The first 126 are addressed to a young man, the next 28 to a woman, and the final two to Cupid. His first seventeen poems are "Procreation sonnets" addressing a young man and encouraging him to marry and have children. He is telling the man this in order to remember his beauty by passing



► Addressee of the sonnets

it down to the next generation. The dedication, addressed to “Mr. W. H.,” has sparked a flurry of speculation about the identity of this person. The two front-runners are Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke. Shakespeare’s First Folio, published in 1623, was dedicated to Pembroke and Pembroke’s brother Philip. Critics who believe that one of Queen Elizabeth’s maids of honour, Mary Fitton, is the Dark Lady of Sonnets.

► Publication history

Almost all of Shakespeare’s sonnets are composed of three quatrains followed by an iambic pentameter and a final couplet. Shakespearean sonnets have the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Although Shakespeare’s sonnets were not formally published until 1609, Francis Meres’ *Palladis Tamia* (1598) contained an allusion to their existence, in which Meres stated that Shakespeare’s “sugared Sonnets” were circulating privately among the poet’s friends. The text of Shakespeare’s sonnets that is widely accepted as authoritative is that of Thomas Thorpe’s 1609 edition. Thorpe’s edition, titled *Shakespeare’s Sonnets: Never Before Imprinted*, is known today as the “Quarto,” and serves as the foundation for all modern sonnet texts. While contemporary criticism is still interested in whether or not the sonnets are autobiographical, the sonnets, taken whole or in parts, are first and foremost a work of literature, to be read and discussed both for their poetic quality and their narrative tale. Their appeal stems from the diversity and breadth of subjects covered.

► Chronicle of relationships

Although Shakespeare’s sonnets can be divided into various sections in a variety of ways, the most obvious division is between Sonnets 1–126, in which the poet forms a relationship with a young man, and Sonnets 127–154, in which the poet forms a relationship with a woman known as the Dark Lady or his mistress. The poet addresses an alluring young man with whom he has struck up a relationship in the first large division, Sonnets 1–126. He tries to persuade the handsome young man to marry and have children in Sonnets 1–17 so that the youth’s incredible beauty will not perish when the youth dies. The poet’s sexual relationship with the Dark Lady, a married woman with whom he becomes infatuated, is the subject of the second, shorter grouping of Sonnets 127–154. The relationship with the young man, swings

between feelings of love, hate, jealousy, and contempt.

Sonnet 18

The skillful and varied presentation of subject matter addressed to the young man makes *Sonnet 18* memorable. It is the first sonnet poem in which the young man is not explicitly encouraged to have children. Instead of praising the youth's beauty, the poet abandons his quest for the youth to have a child. The poet begins by posing a question — "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" — and then ponders it, remarking that the youth's beauty far outweighs summer's pleasures. These phrases emphasise the young man's beauty: "wind" and "buds," "summer's lease," "more lovely," "all too short," and "too hot."

► Aesthetic appreciation

On the surface, the poem appears to be a simple declaration of admiration for the beloved's beauty; summer is prone to unpleasant extremes of wind and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is personified as the "eye of heaven" with a "gold complexion," and the imagery is simple and unaffected throughout, with the "darling buds of May" giving way to the "eternal summer" that the speaker promises the beloved.

► Comparison

The first 17 sonnets' "procreation" sequence ended with the speaker's realisation that the young man might not need children to maintain his beauty; he could also live "in my rhyme," as the speaker writes at the end of Sonnet 17. Thus, Sonnet 18 is the first "rhyme"—the speaker's first attempt to immortalise the young man's beauty. The speaker's poem's ability to defy time and passing down the beauty of the beloved to future generations, is a major theme in the sonnet. Because it is embodied in the sonnet, the beloved's "eternal summer" will not fade: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see," the speaker writes in the couplet, "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

► Purpose of poetry

Sonnet 18 has undoubtedly become a favourite love poem in the language because its message and meaning are relatively easy to decipher and analyse. The poem is narrated in the first person and frequently addresses the young man directly. It is the first poem that doesn't exhort the Fair Youth to marry and have children. In the last few



► Memory

sonnets, Shakespeare has begun to introduce the idea that his poetry might provide an alternative 'immortality' for the young man, though in those earlier sonnets Shakespeare's verse has been deemed an inferior way of securing the young man's immortality when placed next to the idea of leaving off spring.

The speaker initially tries to find an appropriate metaphor to describe his beloved (a young man) suggesting that he might be compared to a summer's day, the sun, or "the darling buds of May." Yet as the speaker searches for a metaphor that will adequately reflect his beloved's beauty, he realizes that none will work because all imply inevitable decline and death. The poem begins with the speaker suggesting a series of similes to describe the young man. In each case, he quickly lists reasons why the simile is inappropriate. For instance, if he compares the young man to a "summer's day," he must admit that the metaphor fails to capture the young man's full beauty: he's more "lovely" and more "temperate." As the poem proceeds, though, the speaker's objections begin to shift. Instead of arguing that the young man's beauty exceeds whatever he's compared to, the speaker notes a dark underside to his own similes: they suggest impermanence and decay. To compare the young man to the summer implies that fall is coming and if to compare him to the sun implies that night will arrive soon.

► Poetic devices

"Thy eternal summer," the speaker says in line 9, "shall not fade." The beauty of a young man does not deteriorate or change. Natural images fall short of capturing the young man's beauty. To praise him, the poet must compare him to something eternal, such as art. They will not change with the passage of time, unlike the summer or the sun. "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee," the poet says quickly, before moving on to a more ambitious claim that the poem itself will give the young man eternal life. The argument of the poem becomes circular at this point: the young man isn't like a summer day or the sun because his beauty is timeless. Only because the poem praises him does he achieve a sense of permanence and immortality. As a result, the speaker believes that poems are eternal objects that do not change or alter as they encounter new readers or historical contexts. He also believes that poetry

- Conservation of beauty

- Claim to immortality

- Futility of physical monuments

possesses a unique set of abilities, almost magical in nature. It not only describes, but it also protects.

Finally, the poem invites the reader to consider poetry's powers: the ways in which it preserves and creates beauty unmatched by the rest of the mortal world. The poem's first eight lines describe how traditional poetic resources failed to capture the young man's beauty, while the poem's final six lines argue that the young man's eternal beauty is best compared to the poem itself. The poem reveals a new confidence in Shakespeare's approach to the Sonnets, and he will go even further in the following sonnets. Sonnet 18 can thus be interpreted as a tribute not only to the speaker's beloved, but also to the power of poetry itself, which the speaker claims is a path to eternal life.

Sonnet 55

The poem, "Not Marble, Nor the Gilded Monuments", by William Shakespeare is about the futility of monuments and statues. The poem conveys the message that great and noble souls leave an indelible impression on their fellow beings and are remembered for a long time by posterity. Monuments and statues, no matter how ornate or valuable, fail to immortalise the wealthy and powerful. The poet in the poem is greatly impressed by his friend, the fair youth, and dedicates this poem to him. Even though no ornate statues or monuments to this great man have been erected, the poet claims that his memory will outlast the rich and powerful who make a conscious effort to immortalise themselves. The monuments and statues they erected would be obliterated by the passage of time and the ravages of war. 'The living record' of the poet's friend's memory and noble deeds, on the other hand, would not be erased from the pages of literature or from the hearts of admirers. His accomplishments would leave such an indelible impression on people's minds that he would be remembered by posterity until the end of time, when he would rise from the grave and be rewarded by God with even higher statues.

The first stanza claims that his poetry will outlast the marble statues and gold-plated monuments. With the passage of time, these monuments would take on a neglected appearance, and unfaithful time would



► Passage of time

take its toll, causing them to perish. The word 'marble' in the preceding lines refers to the princes' ornate statues that they commission to immortalise themselves. The poet refers to Time as 'Sluttish' in the fourth line of this sonnet, a derogatory term that refers to a filthy, untrustworthy woman. In this line, the poet refers to time as "sluttish," implying that it, too, is untrustworthy. The ornate monuments and statues that they erect to keep their names alive after they die are neglected, decaying, and eventually destroyed by war or the ravages of time. As a result, time is not loyal to anyone. According to the poet, however, the poet's friend's value-oriented life is commemorated in verses that are preserved in the admirers' memory, which even time finds difficult to erase.

► Documenting

The chaotic effect of destructive wars would destroy statues and monuments. The biography of the fair youth, as recorded in the poet's verse, would, however, outlast the destructive power of war. The poet refers to wars as wasteful because they result in widespread death and destruction. In the last line of the stanza, the word 'you're' stands for Shakespeare's friend or any worthy man who lived a good life. The sonnet written by the poet in memory of his friend is referred to as a "living record of your memory." Despite death and prejudice from enemies, the poet's friend would be remembered by future generations as "oblivious" until the end of time. On 'the day of judgement,' when God Almighty finally gives each person his due, 'he,' the poet's friend, would rise from the grave with the rest of the souls.

William Shakespeare enlightens us to the great truth of life: nothing is permanent in life except the immortality that can be attained through literature. The poem depicts the magnificence and limitations of worldly glory. All of the great rulers' monuments, memorials, and statues are subject to decay. If natural decay fails to destroy these monuments, wars will "overturn" them, or petty squabbles will "root out" the masons' fine work. The word "root" even alluded to the possibility of nature reclaiming these objects. All such monuments and relics are ruined by the ravages of time and nature herself. Only the poet's great rhyme and powerful poetry will survive through time. Successful people frequently seek to immortalise their fame and greatness by erecting statues and monuments

► Immortality and art

in their honour. But such memories are obliterated by the ravages of time, which spare no one, no matter how important or insignificant. Throughout the world, there are numerous such historic pieces of evidence that have gone unnoticed. They are frequently destroyed in wars, riots, and other events.

This poem was written in honour of the brave man who will live through all of history's wars. Even Mars, the great God of War, won't be able to use his destructive fire to "burn" the speaker's lover's "memory." This is due to the poet's friend being immortalised and remembered within the poem itself. Even after his death, the brave man will live on through this poem. From now until the end of time, all future generations will read this poem and praise the poet's beloved. In this poem, the poet refers to a specific love, though it is unclear whether it is a human or more abstract love. The poet alludes to the 'Day of Judgment,' when Jesus Christ will come down to Earth to judge our actions. According to the poet, he will live through this poem until the day of judgement, when his beloved will appear. After reading the poem, everyone will praise the brave man and his deeds. The poet is upbeat and optimistic, believing that neither war nor nature will be able to destroy his poem. Poetry is easily and flawlessly reproduced: it is passed down from person to person, on paper or in memory. Because new generations of lovers will read the poem, the lover's memory will be preserved as well. Shakespeare aspires to build an everlasting monument that will endure the test of time. The poet compares his poetry with the unperishable thing that has the power to outlive stone and marble monuments.

► Theme of eternity



Summarised Overview

The current unit explores the nature and themes of the Shakespearean genre of sonnets. Shakespeare's sonnets are magnificent, occasionally unsettling, and evasive in their meanings. Focusing mostly on "love," they also consider "time, change, ageing, lust, absence, betrayal" and the "problematic gap" between two people in love. The two poems selected for study herein is testament to the wide thematic scope of the "Fair Youth" sequence to which they belong. Addressed to a mysterious young man, the sonnets do carry sensual themes and an admiring tone. However, this is not the focus – instead, they prove to be a reflection on the relationship between art, beauty, and immortality even as humans are faced with the ravages of time.

Assignments

1. How does the speaker use natural imagery to create a picture of the young man's beauty in *Sonnet 18*?
2. Discuss the theme of immortality as presented in the *Sonnet 18*, citing specific lines as support for your views.
3. Examine the ways in which *Sonnet 55* presents the power of art to immortalise the young man.
4. How does *Sonnet 55* create a 'living record' of the fair youth?
5. Explain the features of the Shakespearean sonnet with reference to *Sonnet 18* and *Sonnet 55*.

Suggested Readings

1. Shakespeare, William, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Illustrated Edition*. My Books Classics, 2018.
2. Shakespeare, William, et al. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Reissue, Simon, 2016.
3. "Review: The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Norton Anthology of English Literature." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*,



vol. 38, no. 3, 2002, pp. 353–54. Crossref, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/38.3.353-c>.

4. Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Illustrated Edition (37 Plays, 160 Sonnets and 5 Poetry Books With Active Table of Contents)*. My Books Classics, 2018.

References

1. Boyce, Charles, *Shakespeare A to Z*, Bantam, 1990.
2. Bradby, G. F., *Short Studies in Shakespeare*, Brooklyn, Haskell, 1977.
3. Bradbrook, M. C., *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: A Study of his Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time*, Chatto, 1965.
4. Craig, Hardin, *Shakespeare: A Historical and Critical Study with Annotated Texts of 21 Plays*, Scott, 1931.
5. Duncan-Jones, Katherine, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Thomas Nelson, 1997.
6. Hubler, Edward, *The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Hill, 1952.
7. Jones, Peter, ed., *Shakespeare: The Sonnets, A Casebook*, Macmillan, 1977.
8. Kaula, David. "In War with Time: Temporal Perspectives in Shakespeare's Sonnets". *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*. Vol. 3, No. 1, *The English Renaissance* (Winter, 1963), pp. 45-57. JSTOR Database
9. Lever, J. W., ed. *Sonnets of the English Renaissance*, London, Athlone P, 1974.
10. Marotti, Arthur F., "Love Is Not Love: Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order," Summer, 1982, pp. 396-428.
11. Martin, Philip, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Self, Love and Art*, Cambridge UP, 1972.
12. Pequigney, Joseph, *Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, University of Chicago P, 1985.
13. Shakespeare, William. Ed. Duncan-Jones, Katherine. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Bloomsbury, 2010.
14. Spurgeon, Caroline F. E., *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge UP, 1935.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

Unit 3

Poetry

(Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire an understanding of the history of the sonnet as a poetic genre.
- ▶ detail the significant contributions of William Shakespeare to the genre.
- ▶ identify the dominant features of the Shakespearean sonnet.
- ▶ critically analyse some of the dominant themes and stylistic elements of the selected poems.

Background

Of the many areas of critical and popular interest connected to Shakespeare's sonnets, is the sonnet sequence dedicated to the "Dark Lady". Numbered from 127 to 154, these sonnets address a Dark Lady who is the object of the poet's desire. Unlike the earlier sonnets addressed to the 'Fair Youth', there is a shift towards a darker tone and troubling topics. The poems in this sequence signify a love or attraction that is passionate and sexual in nature.

Often, the Dark Lady's beauty is presented as being unconventional for the Elizabethan era. The speaker ties her physical attributes to her persona as a "temptress," referring to her in various poems as "my female evil" and "my bad angel". In some poems, it is suggested that she is romantically linked to the Fair Youth and is in an affair with him. She appears to be the cause of great emotional anguish in the poet.

Throughout the sequence dedicated to the Dark Lady, the poet's frustration with their imperfect relationship builds up. He uses the metaphor of "darkness" or "blackness" to continually describe her evil than her uncommon looks. Particularly in poems that deal with her relationship with another man, emotions such as jealousy and doubt are fore-fronted. The current unit discusses two sonnets from the Dark Lady sequence, both of which emphasise the typical patterns and themes of this Shakespearean sub-genre.



Keywords

English Sonnet, Form, Themes, "Dark Lady"

Discussion

Sonnet 130

Writing sonnets praising the beauty of the beloved was very common during the Elizabethan period. This type of sonnet would make a list of her attractive features of the face and body, praising her eyes, lips, cheeks, teeth, breasts and so on. Through *Sonnet 130*, Shakespeare flips all of these conventions on their heads. This is an unusual love poem, a kind of inverted love verse that mocks the exaggerated treatment of the beloveds' beauty in Petrarchan sonnets.

- Challenging conventions

The Dark Lady's appearance is contrasted by William Shakespeare, who implies that the woman is very beautiful, but that it is important for the poet to view the woman he loves realistically. In this case, poetic metaphors and conventional exaggerations about a woman's beauty will not suffice.

- Stereotypes

The poet wants to see his mistress in a realistic light and praise her for her beauty. He implies that all of Elizabethan love poetry has stock or clichéd comparisons for praising a woman's beauty which is unrealistic and silly. As a result, the poet will not exaggerate the beauty of the woman he adores in any way.

- Realistic perception

The poem begins with a scathing remark about his beloved's eyes which is "nothing like the sun." According to Elizabethan tradition, such a comparison would have been almost inevitable because the sun is one of the most important elements for life on Earth, which is a very high level of comparison. The speaker, on the other hand, continues to mock his beloved's appearance by dismissing any attempt to compare her to natural objects. The colour of the mistress' lips is contrasted with the colour of a coral in the second line, but it is negated by the fact that corals are even "far redder" (1) than her lips. The colour red is associated with sensuality, and she is not as sensual as a woman should be in a man's eyes.

- Denying far-fetched comparisons



► Grounded depiction

Her skin isn't white like the snow. White skin is typically associated with nobility, implying that a person comes from a noble family and is virginal. As a result, the whiter a woman was, the more respected she was, even though her breasts are grey-brown and her hair is "black wires." The speaker's beloved does not have a rosy flush to her cheeks, and she also despises the way she smells and speaks. The Elizabethan tradition always aimed to elevate a mortal woman to the status of a goddess through the reading of her works. However, rather than elevating her, the poet brings her down to earth.

► Critique of false praise

Although the poet admits that he enjoys listening to her speak, he adds that the sound of music is more relaxing than her voice. His mistress treads on the ground, which he has never seen a goddess do. Despite her flaws, the poet insists on loving her, not because she is a goddess, not because she is an unattainable beauty, but because she is his and is real. He loves her for who she is, and his love is unaffected by men's ideals of beauty. His love for her is greater than anything he had previously compared her to. She is valuable to the speaker, and he loves her more than anyone who has "betrayed" her with "false comparison" (14). This last line is a rebuke to men who regard a woman as merely an object to be observed rather than a person to be examined. Scholars have argued that 'Sonnet 130' is not ultimately romantic in nature, but rather Shakespeare was attempting to highlight the fact that Elizabethan love poetry tended to emphasise and praise people for qualities that they could not, or would not, have possessed. By appearing to be more negative on the surface, his poem is more gracious and genuinely complementary. He goes beyond traditional compliments by emphasising their exaggerated nature, implying his mistress' true loveliness by overturning the traditional way of praising beauty in order to imply that his love is greater than that.

Shakespeare satirises the Greek and Roman literary tradition of praising the beauty of one's affection by comparing it to beautiful things, usually in a hyperbolic manner, in 'Sonnet 130.' This poem's speaker is a realist lover, making it a witty poem with a complex blend of seriousness and playfulness. The poet is sincere in his praise of his mistress's beauty, but he does so in a playful manner. He recalls a number of traditional ways



► Satirical sonnet

of praising beauty, only to turn them on their heads and make them appear absurd. As a result, the imagery used throughout the poem makes it more contemporary, as contemporary poets would frequently mock clichés.

► Opposing ideas

The poet's beloved is not a lady endowed with divine qualities. The speaker adores a woman with whom he can share his heart and who understands every emotional impulse of him. As a result, the speaker declares that his love is rare because he does not flatter her with false epithets. Using far-fetched analogies to elevate a lady actually widens the gap between two souls. Shakespeare claims they are on the same level. The themes of love and perception as opposed to reality are central to this sonnet.

► Beauty as superficial

Although it was unusual for a man to see a woman as a multidimensional character, William Shakespeare wrote this poem in such a style. Women were supposed to dazzle men with their beautiful faces and bodies. But falling in love with a woman because she was smart or intellectual was completely out of the ordinary. He wished for other men of his era to reconsider their attitudes toward women. It is also worth noting that the Fair Youth and Dark Lady sonnets differ not only in addressing, but also in tone and mood. The Fair Youth sonnets are more spiritual because they use mostly romantic and tender words, whereas the Dark Lady sonnets, which are distinguished by their overt references to sex and bawdiness, are about sexual passion.

Sonnet 144

► Differing nature of love

Sonnet 144 is the only sonnet in Shakespeare's sonnet sequence that features both the fair youth and the dark lady. This is a poem in which both characters compete for the speaker's heart and soul. The first line, with its inverted word order, "Two loves I have," "comfort and despair" (1), alerts the reader to the fact that they are about to embark on an unusual journey. There is an immediate sense of stress, which is reflected in the language, which depicts a person caught between two poles - positive and negative, ease and unease, hope and despair.

One love brings comfort, while the other brings despair. The speaker is affected psychologically or

► Opposing personalities

emotionally and he sees them as spirits or entities. The better angel, the fair youth, is the love that brings comfort. In contrast, the adversary is a dark-skinned woman who has become a rival lover and a worse spirit. This first quatrain introduces the reader to the beloved and the antagonist, introduces religious language, and has the speaker firmly entrenched in a love triangle.

► Symbolism

The dark lady is then compared to “evil” by the poet because she is causing hell for the speaker. The evil woman, now a temptress, steals the speaker’s man, resulting in a battle of good versus evil, and the speaker is clear that the fault is with the woman. While distracting the better angel, the worse spirit is corrupting him. There is more religious language and biblical undertones, such as saint, devil, implying that she may use her feminine charms to tempt the young man into sin. The image conjured up is of a saintly innocent being sexually seduced by a female whose dark powers will send him and the speaker to hell. She is utilising her physical prowess, as well as her blatant and obscene sexual advances. This parallel may be a reference to Eve in Genesis’ Garden of Eden.

► Flawed relationship

The speaker recognises them both as friends who share common ground, so even if they are separated, the fair young man and the dark lady will receive what they deserve - he in a hell created by her - and both of them victims of lust and sin. The third quatrain is a bit confusing. Hell was also used as a double entendre in Shakespeare’s time; being in hell was an allusion to sexual intercourse. Because he only suspects she is up to something and fears for his fair youth, the speaker who isn’t sure about these two friends is doomed to live in doubt and ignorance. However, despite the lack of observable evidence, the speaker is able to assume it due to his familiarity with both the angels. As their relationship progresses, the speaker realises that his better angel has a fundamental flaw. As a result, the dark angel appears to have some influence on him. Only if she gets rid of him and he contracts a venereal disease will the speaker know for sure. This last line is based on a metaphor that was popular during Shakespeare’s time, an allusion to the onset of venereal disease, which was a serious ailment at the time.



► Dualistic nature

The poet's mood is cynical and mocking because he is tormented by uncertainty about the relationship, and the humour of the previous sonnets is missing. The speaker's internal conflict is highlighted in the first line. This poem can be interpreted in a variety of way - autobiographical, psychological, and theological. The author appears to be portraying both the good and bad sides of his character. This ambiguity is a constant source of consternation for the human condition. The term "comfort" refers to the positive, while "despair," or a loss of hope, refers to the negative.

► Popular conception of morality

The second phrase expresses his oscillation between these two extremes: "fair" may refer to a person's spiritual side, while "coloured' ill" may refer to their physical side. One wishes to walk the path of goodness and morality, but lustful desires tempt one to commit sins. Marlowe, the famous playwright, created a similar situation for his *Dr Faustus*, who was torn between good and evil (Mephistopheles).

► Impossible to reconcile

The poet understands the importance of self-discipline in order to maintain his ability to continue on his path. As a result, he is employing his knowledge to explain and persuade his better nature to intervene against his evil side. He hopes to persuade his better nature to make better decisions in the future, but because both urges reside in the same speaker, he is unsure how he will prevent the evil urge from overtaking the good. The speaker appears to be ending his talk on a depressing note. The speaker will "live in doubt" because he believes he will never be able to reconcile the two halves of his mind. As a result, the "worse spirit" has a chance to win the battle for his soul. On the other hand, because he knows he will "live in doubt" for the rest of his life, the possibility remains that the "good one" will eventually be able to overcome and extinguish the "bad angel."

The masculine part is responsible for a man's moral spirit, while the feminine part is responsible for his physical demise. However, he notices that these opposing forces are diametrically opposed to him. They are "both to each friend," which means they get along well and coexist. The goodness within him, on the other hand, sees the darkness as a manifestation of hell, just as the darkness sees the goodness as her manifestation of hell.

► Defeat

The speaker's sentiments are encapsulated in the final rhyming couplet. While the speaker expresses doubts about the conflict's outcome, he appears to contradict himself in the final line, predicting that the situation will be resolved when the "bad angel" defeats the other. He never implies that the conflict will be resolved once his "good" angel defeats the evil one. Perhaps the speaker is observing the darker side of man's nature in this way, observing that, regardless of one's intentions, the darker side often emerges.

► Women as temptresses

Another interpretation of the sonnet could be that the poet attempts to detach himself from the love triangle and consider the situation objectively. The poet is referring to his rejection and suffering as a result of his triangular relationship with a fair young lady and a dark lady. The "fair youth" and the "dark lady," respectively, are introduced by the speaker as his lovers. In his opinion, one is reassuring, while the other is depressing. The contrast between the two lovers is obvious in this scene. The poem becomes misogynistic at this point, as the women are referred to as "worser spirit" or "female evil." While the fair youth is his "better angel," the "dark lady" is an evil-skinned woman. He is irritated because she has a habit of luring his "better lover," the fair youth, away from the poet. She wants to not only steal his "better love," but also corrupt him and turn him into a devil.

► Inconclusive ending

The speaker is perplexed, saying that he does not know if his better angel has been transformed into a "fiend" or not. He just suspects the relationship between the 'fair youth' and the 'black lady.' The speaker also appears to be plagued by a sense of ambiguity, as he is unsure whether his lovers are amicable or not. He can only speculate on the likelihood of the certainty of the bond between his two lovers because he is separated from them. The answer to the dilemma addressed in the quatrains is always found in the last two lines of Shakespeare's Sonnets. However, in the current sonnet, instead of resolving his worries, the couplet accentuates them. He ends by stating that the relationship or affair between the dark lady and the fair youth is completely unknown and ambiguous, leaving him in the dark. He will be in an unsure state till his bad angel chases away his good angel.



Summarised Overview

The current unit explores the nature and themes of the Shakespearean genre of sonnets. The two sonnets selected for study herein are addressed to a “Dark Lady,” whose identity even today remains a point of contention. While *Sonnet 130* is a parodic reading of the conventional sonnet form, *Sonnet 144* is an anguished account of the speaker’s tumultuous relationship with the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady. In either poems, the Dark Lady is characterised in negative, often disparaging tones. In fact, she is portrayed as the “antipetrarchan heroine” with continual references to those features and qualities that make her unconventional or unideal.

Assignments

1. How does *Sonnet 130* differ from conventional Petrarchan sonnets?
2. Discuss the characterisation of the beloved in *Sonnet 130*.
3. Compare and contrast the “two loves” that form the central conflict in *Sonnet 144*.
4. Critically examine the theme of *Sonnet 144*.
5. Explore the poetic representation of the dark lady with special reference to *Sonnet 130* and *Sonnet 144*.

Suggested Readings

1. <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/sonnets/section9/>
2. https://www.openculture.com/2012/07/shakespeares_satirical_sonnet_130_as_read_by_stephen_fry.html
3. <https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/william-shakespeare/sonnet-130-my-mistress-eyes-are-nothing-like-the-sun>
4. Qadria, Rashna Jennifer. *Sonnet 130 by William Shakespeare. A Conventional Romantic Poem?* Grin Verlag, 2020.
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS8WY0HTS14>
6. https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/sonnets/sonnet_144/



References

1. Huse, Susanne. *Comparison and Contrast Essay: Shakespeare's Sonnet 60 vs. Sonnet 144*. 1st ed., GRIN, 2008.
2. Kerrigan, John, ed. *The Sonnets ; and, A Lover's Complaint*. *New Penguin Shakespeare* (Rev. ed.). Penguin, 1969.
3. Shmoop Editorial Team. (2008, November 11). *Sonnet 130 Questions*. Retrieved April 14, 2022, from <https://www.shmoop.com/sonnet-130/questions.html>
4. <https://nosweatshakespeare.com/sonnets/130/>
5. Qadria, Rashna Jennifer. *Sonnet 130 by William Shakespeare. A Conventional Romantic Poem?* Grin, 2020.
6. Shakespeare, William, and My Books Classics. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Illustrated Edition*. My Books Classics, 2018.
7. Shakespeare, William, et al. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Folger Shakespeare Library). Simon, 2016.
8. https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/ped-blogs/wp-content/uploads/Lit-for-Comp_IM-184509.pdf

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 4

Drama

(Non- Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire a general understanding of the genres of Shakespearean comedy and history.
- ▶ critically analyse the structure and form of the selected texts.
- ▶ describe the predominant themes and stylistic features of the selected texts.
- ▶ examine the predominant stylistic features of the selected texts.

Background

Few playwrights can rival William Shakespeare's renown in the world. His plays have been performed on amateur and professional stages all over the world and have been translated into several languages. Millions of people have heard and watched the plays' radio, television, and cinema adaptations in English, German, Russian, French, and Japanese. Numerous well-known producers and playwrights have resurrected and revised the plays, and they have had a significant impact on other writers' works. Novelists and playwrights like Charles Dickens, Bertolt Brecht, William Faulkner, and Tom Stoppard have written works that attempt to recreate the spirit and style of the original plays and to interpret the plays in the context of their own eras after being inspired by Shakespeare's plots, characters, and poetry.

The current unit examines two of his works that are difficult to classify, but have received great acclaim - *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. *The Tempest* is often regarded as Shakespeare's final play. Scholars credit the play's direct source to the 1609 wreckage of an English ship at Bermuda, as well as travellers' accounts of the island and the mariners' suffering. The play can be viewed as a criticism on European discovery of new regions by Shakespeare. Prospero is stranded on an island with Caliban, a barbarian



and uncivilised native. He teaches this “local” his language and customs, but this care has no effect on the creature’s nature, at least according to Prospero. Prospero, on the other hand, does not expel Caliban; rather, he enslaves him, forcing him to perform tasks. The exploration of new countries is a central element in Utopianism. The possibilities for new starts in these “new” regions piqued Europeans’ interest.

The exception among William Shakespeare’s classic tragedies is *Antony and Cleopatra*. It was written around 1607, after the series of tragedies that started with *Hamlet* and ended with *Macbeth*; it stands in stark contrast to them in terms of tone, content, and structure. In a sense, the play refers to Shakespeare’s first great tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. As in the earlier mentioned work, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a love story that culminates in a double suicide; however, the lovers in this novel are middle-aged Antony and Cleopatra, whose struggle to reconcile their personal wants and public duties is played out with the fate of the world at stake. Thus, Shakespeare dramatizes a love story on a grand, tragic, historical scale.

Keywords

W

Form, Comedy, History, Themes, Colonialism, Tragic romance

Discussion

The Tempest is a play that is difficult to categorise. Although it concludes with a wedding and so qualifies as a comedy, there are numerous serious overtones that detract from the humorous tone. *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are among the romances, all of which were written later in Shakespeare’s life. These plays were composed between 1604 and 1614, soon before Shakespeare’s retirement, when he was writing plays that mixed romance with darker themes. The romances are tragedies with tragic components, yet these terrible parts are resolved. Shakespeare uses imagination and magic in *The Tempest* to depict romantic love, sibling hostility, and a father’s devotion for his child. In addition, *The Tempest* explores many of the themes that Shakespeare explored in his previous works, such as efforts to topple a ruler (*Macbeth*, *Richard II*, and *Julius*

- Difficulty of classification

Caesar), nature vs nurture (*The Winter's Tale* and *King Lear*), and innocence (*Macbeth*, *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar* and *Twelfth Night*). Despite the fact that *The Tempest* is the first masque within a play, the concept of a play within a play has previously been explored in works such as *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. In many ways, *The Tempest* is a culmination of Shakespeare's earlier work, as it incorporates many of his earlier themes.

- Masque used as flashback and stylistic element

The masque, which takes up much of *The Tempest*'s fourth act, was becoming a popular type of court entertainment by the early seventeenth century. Masques were extravagant exhibitions intended to appeal to the senses of the audience while also glorifying the monarch. Furthermore, their overwhelming wealth suggested the king's court's splendour, therefore they performed a political function as well. It's vital to recall that the masque served a secondary purpose: it satisfied the need to relive the past. Prospero's masque, is centred on pastoral imagery, with reapers and nymphs celebrating the land's bounty. With their pastoral motifs, the masques also responded to this nostalgia for a bygone era.

- Three unities upheld

The Tempest is one of the few works that adheres to the three unities. Aristotle maintained in his *Poetics* that dramatic structure requires unity of action. This meant that a dramatic work must have a distinct beginning, middle, and conclusion. The concept of temporal unity is drawn from Aristotle's argument that all action should take place inside one day's rotation of the sun. The concept of unity of place emerged later, and it is a Renaissance idea that the play's setting should be limited to a single area. These unities gave the piece more realism and made it simpler for the audience to accept what was happening on stage. Shakespeare rarely used the three unities, but he does so in this play, which he had done only once before, in *The Comedy of Errors*. All of the competitions take place on the island over the course of three hours. The three unities, particularly the one of time, were required by Shakespeare to offset the magic's scepticism and to give the plot consistency.

The Tempest follows the traditional five-act structure. In reality, most Elizabethan plays follow a five-act format that correlates to action divisions. The Exposition is the opening act, in which the playwright introduces



► Formative structure

the principal characters and puts forth the dilemma. The first act of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* describes the nature of Antonio's betrayal of Prospero and explains how Prospero and Miranda ended up on the island. A massive storm also opens the first act, establishing the scope of Prospero's power. This act also features the majority of the play's remaining characters. The plot to assassinate Alonso is developed in *The Tempest*, demonstrating that Antonio is still a shady figure. Furthermore, the audience learns more about Caliban, and Stefano and Trinculo laying the framework for the formation of a second conspiracy.

The Climax is the third act, and it is here that the action reaches a climax and the crisis occurs, as the name suggests. This is the stage in a romance that the young lovers declare their love, though there may be obstacles. It is crucial that the path to love not be too easy, which is why, in *The Tempest*, Prospero forbids Miranda and Ferdinand from contacting each other, despite the fact that the audience knows this is merely a trick. The plot to assassinate Prospero is formed in this act, despite the fact that the audience is aware that Ariel is listening and thus there is no real threat. Finally, during dinner, Prospero meets his foes, which is the important climactic moment in this act. The Falling Action, which marks the start of the play's resolution, is the fourth act. Prospero reacts with the attempt to murder him by punishing Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo in this act, which acknowledges and celebrates Ferdinand and Miranda's romance with a masque. The Catastrophe is the fifth act, and it is here that the play comes to a close. As the name implies, this act draws the play to a close, resolves the conflict, and sets the stage for the wedding. As the play comes to a climax, Prospero triumphs over his foes, Ferdinand reunites with his father, Antonio and Sebastian are defeated, and Caliban laments his treachery.

► Denouement or Falling action

Summary

Act I, Scene 1

The Tempest begins in the middle of a raging storm. The setting is a royal party on board a ship at sea. Several royal passengers come as the sailors try to preserve the ship, and Alonso, the king, demands to know where the master (captain) is? Worried that the passengers will

► Encounter with the storm

intervene, the boatswain directs them to go below deck. Gonzalo, the king's councillor, reminds the boatswain that he is speaking to the monarch, but the boatswain counters that if the king has such great power, he should use it to calm the storm. If he lacks this power, the royal party should follow the boatswain's commands and go below decks. The royal party disembarks, likely to seek safety below deck. However, Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo have quickly returned topside, to the chagrin of the boatswain. The boatswain continues his efforts to save the ship despite the curses of Sebastian and Antonio. The seamen, on the other hand, soon enter, lamenting the ship's loss. Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo decide to accompany the rest of the royal party below decks, where they will pray for their lives.

► Class difference

The first confrontation between Gonzalo and the boatswain illustrates one of *The Tempest's* most fundamental themes: class struggle, or the fight between those who gain and hold power and those who are frequently the unwitting victims of authority. The boatswain instructs the royal party to withdraw below deck when they are confronted. He is doing his job, and it would be silly of him to stop in response to Alonso's request for the master. The boatswain seems unconcerned by Alonso's status as king. Because the storm is unconcerned about a man's social or political status, the monarch has no protection from the storm just because of his rank. Gonzalo responds by reminding the boatswain that the king and his entourage are the passengers. The suggestion is that, regardless of the circumstances, the boatswain should remember that his social standing makes him subservient to the royal party. Gonzalo's words serve as a stark reminder that class and rank are still vital aspects of life, even in the midst of a hurricane. The boatswain, on the other hand, advises the royal party to "use your authority" to calm the storm (20-21). In the eyes of the boatswain, all men are equal in a storm and all men are equally at risk.

Alonso seems to understand that the captain is the ship's final authority, at least initially. The boatswain's telling Gonzalo that the king should use his authority to stop the storm is a reminder that the king has no authority under these circumstances. Although he can control men even the king cannot control nature. The



► Hierarchy of power

storm and the subsequent rebellion on ship is a metaphor for the rebellion occurring in English society. In the Elizabethan and Jacobean world, English society was defined by its class system, in which individuals were born into specific classes by divine right. In the natural order of things, therefore, the aristocracy is superior. Although the characters in *The Tempest* are depicted as Italian in origin, their experiences and conflicts are English. Passengers, who are always aware of their social superiority over the crew, must be reminded that the captain of the ship is the final authority during a storm.

► Difficulty of classification

Aside from class conflict, there are explorations of colonialism and a desire to find or create a utopian society. The storm scene in *The Tempest* creates nature as an essential feature of the play and emphasises nature's role in society. Other tempests will be revealed in subsequent scenes, such as the emotional tempests caused by familial conflict - the dispute among Antonio and Prospero, and the upcoming conflict between Sebastian and Alonso; tempests of discord (consider Caliban's dissatisfaction and desire for vengeance); and tempests of forbidden love (consider the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand). So, while *The Tempest* is technically a romantic comedy, the title and opening scene foreshadow an exploration of conflicts that are more complex than romantic.

Act I, Scene 2

At the island, Prospero and Miranda are watching the ship as it is thrown about by the storm in Scene 2. Miranda is aware that her father is causing the storm, and she begs him to put an end to the ship's and her own misery, as she suffers while watching the ship's passengers suffer. Prospero assures his daughter that his acts were taken to keep her safe. He also informs Miranda that she is unaware of her ancestry, and he proceeds to tell her the narrative of her birth and their lives before to their arrival on the island. Prospero's narrative begins with the revelation that he is Duke of Milan and Miranda is a princess. He also mentions that he had given his kingdom's day-to-day rule to his brother, Antonio. Prospero acknowledges that literature drew him in more than chores, and he readily gave his brother the chance to take command. Antonio, on the other

► Strategy

hand, exploited his power to undermine Prospero and conspire against him. When Antonio made an agreement with the King of Naples to depose Prospero and grab his inheritance, Prospero and his daughter were tossed into the water in a small, dilapidated boat. Gonzalo, who was compassionate, furnished them with luxurious clothing, linens, and other requirements. Prospero was also given books from Gonzalo's library. Prospero and Miranda eventually made their way to the island, where they have been ever since.

► Romantic attraction

Prospero uses his power to put Miranda to sleep once he concludes the story. As soon as Miranda falls asleep, the spirit Ariel appears and gives Prospero an update on the storm, the ship, and the passengers. Everyone on board, except the crew, was forced to evacuate ship, according to Ariel. Ariel informs Prospero that the passengers have been divided into smaller groups and are dispersed over the island; that the ship, with its sleeping crew, is safely hidden in the port; and that the rest of the fleet has sailed home, believing the king has drowned. Ariel then requests that Prospero release him as promised. Prospero, on the other hand, orders Ariel's release to be postponed for a few more days. Prospero awakens Miranda and summons Caliban, the son of the witch Sycorax, as Ariel departs. Caliban has been Prospero's slave for a long time, but he is haughty and rebellious, and he can only be controlled by magic. Caliban claims ownership of the island and argues that Prospero has deceived him in the past. Prospero argues that Caliban is a tyrant for attempting to rape Miranda. After Caliban leaves, Ariel enters with Ferdinand, who sees Miranda, and the two fall instantly in love. Although this is what Prospero intended to have happen, he does not want it to appear too easy for Ferdinand, and so he accuses Ferdinand of being a spy. When Prospero uses magic to control Ferdinand, Miranda begs him to stop.

As a way of informing the audience of this crucial information, Prospero recounts Miranda their history. Furthermore, the audience must understand what events lead to Prospero's decision to cause a storm and why the men onboard the ship are his foes. As a result, they can decide that Prospero's desire for vengeance is justifiable. Ariel and Caliban are both slaves to Prospero's wants.



► Validating Prospero's plans

He has made it plain that he offered Ariel freedom and then refused it, and he abuses Caliban like an animal. The audience must comprehend that Prospero has been transformed into a different man as a result of a tragic fate. Prospero's story also reveals that he was a bad ruler who was more concerned with his books than with his responsibilities. As a result, Prospero is not completely blameless in the events of Milan. Antonio wouldn't be able to take authority from a monarch who was involved and attentive.

► Caliban as an ambiguous character

Prospero employs nature's magic, a white, benign magic that causes no harm. He does not utilise evil black magic. Prospero discovered this magic via his study, not with the aid of witches or wicked spells. His white magic has displaced the black, evil power of Caliban's mother, Sycorax. Any initial anxiety the viewers may have had about Caliban's captivity vanishes when the audience learns that he tried to rape Miranda. His subsequent actions will reveal more about his character, yet he can be redeemed, and redemption is required for the play to succeed.

Act II, Scene 1

► Imagining the new land

Along with their numerous companions, Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo have washed up on the shore. Gonzalo makes an effort to console the other survivors by encouraging them to express their gratitude for surviving the storm unharmed. Alonso begs for silence while Sebastian and Antonio make fun of him for it. The king interrupts the soldiers as they survey the island they have been marooned on to express his desperation; he thinks his son, Ferdinand, has perished in the shipwreck. He is inconsolable despite Francisco's assurance to Alonso that the prince is a very good swimmer and may yet be alive. Gonzalo goes on to explain to his companions why he believes the island to be so promising. He proclaims aloud his imagined actions as the hypothetical monarch of the island. He calls it a utopia without the need for money, titles, employment, or labour. Gonzalo is cruelly teased by Antonio and Sebastian for daydreaming, and Alonso once more orders them to be quiet.

The noblemen are now caught off guard as Ariel enters the scene and starts playing an enchanting tune that

puts everyone to sleep save Sebastian and Antonio. They decide to keep watch over the king after this peculiar turn of events. At this juncture, Antonio tells Sebastian that it would be a very convenient opportunity for him to kill his brother and usurp the crown. Sebastian decides to murder the sleeping king if Antonio would also murder Gonzalo, despite his initial reluctance. But Ariel whispers a warning into Gonzalo's ear just before the horrible deed is carried out. Then Gonzalo jumps up and awakens Alonso. When the king awakens, Antonio and Sebastian are standing over Gonzalo and Alonso with their swords drawn. Alonso demands a justification. Sebastian alleges that he heard lions approaching and that he and the other man were defending the monarch from the animals. Alonso issues a command for the group to get up and leave so that they may look for the missing prince since he feels extremely uneasy in their current situation. Ariel vows to tell Prospero what he has done and resolves to assist Alonso in finding his son as the action comes to a close.

► True nature

Act II, Scene 2

Caliban begins the scene by cursing Prospero. Caliban fears it's one of Prospero's spirits approaching to punish him once more when he hears footsteps approaching. Caliban collapses to the ground, pulling his cloak over his body so that only his feet are visible. Trinculo, the king's jester, comes instead of Prospero. When Trinculo encounters Caliban, he is looking for a place to hide from the approaching storm. Caliban appears to be half man and half fish with his body partially hidden by the cloak, or at least that is Trinculo's initial impression. Trinculo recognises the possibilities that this mysterious creature offers right away. He can return to civilization with this "monster" and exhibit it, charging entrance to others who want to see this natural anomaly. Trinculo decides to seek shelter behind Caliban's cloak as the storm approaches.

► Fear

Stefano, the king's butler, enters and comes to a halt as he sees Caliban on the ground, which is cloaked and has four legs poking out. Stefano, like Trinculo, immediately recognises the financial opportunities that such a creature presents back home. But all of Stefano's prodding has terrified Caliban, who believes he is about



► Imperialism

to be subjected to a new sort of torment in addition to that which Prospero has already delivered. Stefano begins pouring wine into Caliban's mouth after removing the cloak from his head. Trinculo emerges from beneath the cloak and joins Stefano and Caliban in sipping wine, relieved to find another storm survivor on the island. Caliban is drunkenly watching Stefano and Trinculo's blissful reunion and concludes that Stefano is a god who has fallen from heaven. Caliban swears allegiance to this new "god," and the three depart together, with Caliban promising to procure Stefano the greatest meal the island has to offer.

Caliban, who appeared only briefly in Act I, is given a closer look for the first time. Caliban appears now, cursing Prospero, and the intensity of his hatred is immediately apparent. He is terrified of Prospero, whom he both reveres and despises. Caliban is now Prospero's slave. Caliban was the original owner of the island but was enslaved by Prospero. Despite the fact that Caliban blames Prospero for his problems, it is apparent that nature has turned against him. Caliban acknowledges that the creatures on the island make faces at him, bite him, and hiss at him in his soliloquy, which opens this scene. He places the blame on Prospero, claiming that he has complete power over nature. Every sound is interpreted as a spirit sent by Prospero to torment him. Caliban depicts nature as it appears to be free of man's domesticity - nature as it appears to be unaffected by corrupt influences. Caliban, on the other hand, isn't completely blameless. Caliban's attack on Miranda has already been relayed to the audience by Prospero. His behaviour is more like to that of wild animals than it is to that of normal man. He has not been socialised to the standards of social speech and instead acts as if he were an animal in the jungle, obeying nature. If Caliban represents nature's most basic components, Stefano and Trinculo represent the depths to which sophisticated beings can fall if they lack self-control. Both men are opportunists, waiting to take advantage of the new "man" they've discovered hiding behind a cloak. Stefano and Trinculo both have the same initial thinking about how to generate money from a being as strange-looking as Caliban. They saw the potential in portraying him as a freak of nature right away.

► Civilisation encountering the exotic

► Aspiration for power

Shakespeare is reflecting on a real-life occurrence in English culture, namely, the exposition of American Indians brought back to England from the new Virginia colonies. These Native Americans were transported to England and put on exhibit for monetary gain. Stefano and Trinculo quickly agree with Caliban and plot murder since they believe there will be a profit to be gained. There is, however, another explanation. Stefano is ecstatic about his new role as Caliban's deity. He enjoys the adoration and the turn of events. He's gone from butler to deity, and he considers it a significant step up in rank. Just as Sebastian and Antonio expect authority as a result of their aggressive actions, the butler and the court jester want power with little effort. They are willing to fulfil Caliban's bidding if slaying Prospero will make them kings of the island.

► Comic Relief

Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo are interesting because the audience laughs at their efforts. Trinculo is dressed as a clown, and he hid under a wine cask throughout the storm. While Sebastian and Antonio's plot may pose a real threat to Alonso, Trinculo and Stefano's plot can only be interpreted as powerlessness. The spectator is always aware that their scheme to murder Prospero and ravish Miranda is doomed from the start. Stefano and Trinculo are the epitome of civilization's worst qualities: drunkenness and folly.

Act III, Scene 1

The scene opens with Ferdinand piling logs as he is assigned to do by Prospero. He thinks of Miranda as he is doing this, and Miranda then arrives and begs him to stop. The adjacent presence of Prospero is unknown to the two lovers. She suggests that Ferdinand take a break from his labours, but he is concerned that he won't finish with the logs before it becomes dark. Then Miranda suggests that she complete the work while he rests. This idea is categorically rejected by Ferdinand, who claims that it would be dishonest for him to take a break while she worked. Prospero makes a comment on the illness that is love after hearing this conversation. Ferdinand had not previously known Miranda's name. Although Prospero warned her not to tell anybody, she does so when Ferdinand asks what her name is (adding that he may use it in prayer). Ferdinand extols her perfection,



► Love as weakness

which, in his opinion, is unmatched by the qualities of any other woman. Miranda continues by explaining her isolation: she never knew any other women and exclusively lived with her father.

She claims that her only “dowry” would be her “modesty” (virginity) if she were to wed Ferdinand. Ferdinand admits that he is a prince, and given the possibility that his father could be deceased, possibly even a king. He tells Miranda that she is the reason that he is building the woodpile, declaring his love out to the skies and the earth as a whole. She then starts crying and assures him that these are tears of joy. Prospero asks the heavens to bless their young love from his hiding spot. Miranda and Ferdinand keep declaring their love for one another. She claims that she is undeserving of his love and asks if he would accept her as his wife, vowing that if he does not, she will serve him for the rest of her life. The young prince grabs her hand and promises to marry her, saying that she has captured his heart. They part ways and make plans to reunite in half an hour. After they exit, Prospero appears on stage. He is ecstatic that his plans have succeeded; Miranda will soon marry the young prince. He exits to return to his books.

► Future

Act III, Scene 2

Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban are thoroughly inebriated. They cannot see Ariel. The three men want to keep drinking but are aware that they could run out of wine. If required, Stephano advises that they use water at the very last second. To Stephano’s satisfaction, Caliban has taken on the role of his servant, but Trinculo despises this arrangement. He believes that since there aren’t many people on the island, the government cannot continue to function if the rest of the population is as stupid as them. Caliban is chosen as Stephano’s lieutenant or standard-bearer as he declares his plan to rule the island. Caliban, who is now quite drunk, commends Stephano. Trinculo continues to fight the “ignorant monster” Caliban, who begs his master for support in return. Stephano reprimands the “mutinous” Trinculo and threatens to hang him, warning him to treat his subject Caliban with respect. Caliban expresses gratitude to his master and asks for a hearing. Caliban bows down before Stephano after being instructed to do so by the latter.

► Subject-Master

Having been forced into service by the unjust ruler Prospero, who stole his authority over the island, Caliban describes his current predicament. Then, speaking undetected, Ariel starts to argue with them. The voice of Trinculo is used by Ariel to proclaim, "Thou liest." Thus, Trinculo appears to be speaking to Caliban and Stephano. Stephano threatens to hit Trinculo in the teeth while Caliban, furious, claims he does not lie. Trinculo, who was taken aback, correctly asserts that he said nothing. As Caliban resumes his narrative, he implores Stephano to assist him in exacting revenge on Prospero. The island should be claimed by Stephano, Caliban proposes, and Caliban will support Stephano as its king. They start making plans to assassinate Prospero with Stephano's approval. Ariel steps in once more as Trinculo reiterates that Caliban is a liar. Trinculo is admonished by Stephano, who ultimately beats him. Caliban proposes they resume their plot by capturing Prospero when he is sleeping. He advises that they capture the books and claims that they will then be able to easily murder Prospero since he believes that the magician's strength is in his books. Caliban also introduces Miranda to Stephano as the potential future queen of the king. This is sufficient persuasion for Stephano to change his mind, and he agrees to the scheme to murder the sorcerer and make Miranda his queen. Trinculo and Caliban are then named as his viceroys. With a handshake and an apology, Stephano draws Trinculo into the plot. Ariel hurries out to tell Prospero about their plan. The happy Caliban proposes they sing Stephano's song while they wait for Prospero to nod off, but they struggle with the melody. When Ariel reappears and plays a tabor and a pipe, Stephano and Trinculo are terrified. Caliban makes an effort to soothe their concerns about an island that is filled with "sweet airs." The men follow the music offstage as it fades away.

► Revolt

Act III, Scene 3

After a fruitless search for Ferdinand, the royal party rests on the beach, tired. Prospero arrives unnoticed by the royal party and observes their antics. A number of phantom forms appear in a flash, bringing with them a lavish dinner. The spirit shapes leave after indicating to the party that they should approach and eat. The royal



► Supernatural events

party is sceptical, but also hungry and eager to dine. Despite this, Ariel appears as a harp. He vanishes the banquet, accusing Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso of being the sinners' tools. The men draw their swords, but they are stuck in place and unable to raise their arms due to sorcery. The king, like Antonio and Sebastian, is shaken by what he has seen and heard, and they depart. Gonzalo sends Adrian and Francisco to keep an eye on them, fearful that they will injure themselves.

► Enemies meet their fate

This scene is the culmination of Prospero's plan as well as the conclusion of Antonio's various plans. Prospero's sorcery renders Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso helpless. In the face of Prospero's greater authority, their conspiring against him, as well as Antonio and Sebastian's future plotting against Alonso, proves ineffective. Prospero has been waiting for this moment for 12 years, and he gives no indication of how he will exact his vengeance. However, because he supported Miranda and Ferdinand's love, it is apparent that any retaliation against Alonso will be mild, as he would never endanger his daughter's happiness. Sebastian and Antonio, on the other hand, have plenty of reason to be concerned.

► Ariel as the submissive subject

Ariel, as he has done since the beginning, efficiently and effectively carries out Prospero's commands. Ariel is a spirit of the air, who exudes delicacy and excitement in everything he does. He is eager to be free, and after the conclusion of this assignment, he will be free in two days. Ariel is eager to please Prospero, who rescued him from the witch Sycorax, who had imprisoned him in a tree for refusing to perform her will. Ariel performs his job with gusto, immediately accomplishing what is required and rapidly reporting any activity that he notices, despite the fact that he desires his freedom in exchange. Ariel had previously disclosed a conspiracy to assassinate Prospero, and now he is assisting in the punishment of Prospero's foes. Because he helps combat Prospero's status on the island and humanises the action he takes against his old opponents, Ariel's obedience is a significant representation of his humanity. Finally, Ariel's eager submission to Prospero's demands contrasts sharply with Caliban's curses and conspiring against the same master.

This scene exemplifies the chasm between reality

► Striking terror

and fiction. Although it looks to the hungry hostages that the departing dinner is real, it is not. Ariel appears momentarily as a harpy, a fabled creature with vulture wings and claws and a woman's face, but it is a deep voice from the heavens that talks, not Ariel's. All of this is arranged to frighten and punish Prospero's opponents. Prospero is the puppeteer, expertly manipulating the action with his strings. His victims have no idea that Prospero is waiting in the wings, undetected.

Act IV, Scene 1

Prospero, admitting that he was harsh, now proposes a recompense to make up for the young lovers' temporary misery. He gives Miranda to Ferdinand as his wife after recognising Ferdinand and Miranda's affection for one another. Prospero then summons Ariel to assist him in planning a betrothal celebration. The festivities involve a masque performed by the island's spirits. Prospero suddenly recalls the three assassins plotting his death and calls a halt to the masquerade. He then summons Ariel, who claims that he brought the three drunken men through a thorn patch and into a filthy pond, where he left them to wallowing. To lure the men, Prospero tells Ariel to hang gaudy garments on a tree. Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo appear soon after, foul-smelling and dripping wet. Stefano and Trinculo bemoan the loss of their bottles, but are delighted by the clothes that hangs nearby. Caliban begs them to proceed on their quest, despite his warnings that their hesitancy will lead Prospero to apprehend them. Prospero and Ariel appear with spirits dressed as hunters and hounds at that precise moment. The three conspirators run, pursued by the spirits. Prospero tells Ariel that he will soon be free, knowing the power he now wields over all of his foes.

► Acknowledgement of true love and betrothal

Prospero may finally unveil his actual self for the first time. The spectator may see what Prospero is like without the weight of revenge or control propelling his actions for these few moments. Miranda is even more naive than other young ladies because she has never been exposed to the socialisation that other young women have. She is more vulnerable as a result of her solitude, and her father recognises her sincerity. He is, however, a father who is facing the loss of his own child, and he constantly warns Ferdinand to look after her.

► Triumph of love



► Ceremonial masque

The betrothal ceremony concludes with a masque, which, in keeping with the theme of reality and illusion, is inspired by mythological goddesses as well as Greek and Roman mythology. The goddesses were chosen for their symbolism and natural links, and they signify fertility and fruitfulness, celestial harmony, and a perpetual springtime of love. Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, represents the promise of spring rains that will result in a plentiful crop. Juno's appearance confirms the favour of the skies, and because Juno is the goddess of marriage and childbirth, her presence is a promise of a good marriage and a blessing for the couple. Finally, Ceres' arrival heralds the favour of nature on this union. Together, the goddesses represent the promise of celestial harmony, abundant harvests, and seasons that never change.

► Pastoral genre

The theme of Prospero's masque is pastoral, with reapers and nymphs enjoying the land's fertility. Love isn't sexual; it's innocent and romantic. The romanticised vision of country living, with its abundant harvests and happy existence, ignores the realities of rural life, with its numerous struggles. However, a wedding masque is not the appropriate time to remind the young couple of the potential difficulties they would face. Instead, Prospero concentrates on the benefits of a good marriage and the joy that Ferdinand and Miranda will provide to each other. Prospero greets Ferdinand at the end of the masque, telling him, "We are such stuff / As dreams are made of" (IV.1). This acts as a reminder that the masque, with all of its celestial creatures, is a figment of the imagination. Life, like the masque, will eventually come to an end. Prospero informs Ferdinand that dreams frame each man's life. Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian, have placed far too much importance on material possessions and titles.

Many historians and reviewers believe Prospero's statements contain elements of Shakespeare's autobiography. "Our revels now are over" is a melancholy reminder of the transient plight of all men's lives, according to many who believe Shakespeare is letting Prospero to pronounce his farewell to the stage. It's tempting to read autobiography into Prospero's words because *The Tempest* is near the end of Shakespeare's

► Exemplary punishment

career and life. Nonetheless, his comments may only serve as a passionate reminder to each individual to respect life and recognise its temporary constraints. Prospero must shed the mantle of parenting and assume the robe of king by the end of the scene in order to cope with the three conspirators plotting his death: Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo. Prospero's intrinsic goodness and desire to forgive his foes are reflected in his moderate punishment. He'll make them suffer as a result of their plotting, but he won't actually harm them. Prospero's true nature, goodness, and humanity had become visible to the audience by this act.

Act V, Scene 1

Ariel tells Prospero that Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio feel repentant, anxious, and desperate in this scene. Gonzalo is anxious and saddened by his king's suffering. Prospero tells Ariel that he would treat his adversaries with kindness, and requests that Ariel bring the group to him. Prospero soliloquizes about what he has performed with magic while waiting for the king and his company to arrive, promising at the end of the soliloquy that he will immediately give up magic, bury his magic staff, and destroy his magic book at sea. Prospero is dressed in the Duke of Milan's robes. Prospero embraces Alonso in a sign of peace, and Alonso is struck with regret and quickly relinquishes Prospero's dukedom. Prospero then turns to Sebastian and Antonio and says he will not accuse them as traitors. Antonio is pardoned, but he must give up his claim to Prospero's throne.

► Reconciliation

While Alonso mourns the loss of his son, Prospero shares the news that he, too, has lost a child, his daughter. He pulls back a curtain to reveal Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess, implying that he has lost her in marriage. Ferdinand tells his father that he is betrothed to Miranda and that this happened while he believed his father was dead. Alonso greets Miranda warmly and declares that he will be a second father to his son's fiancée. Gonzalo begins to cry as he sees the pair and thanks God for performing such a miracle. With the master of the boat and the boatswain, Ariel enters. Despite the fact that the ship was in fine condition and was docked, the perplexed men had no idea what had happened. Ariel then introduces Caliban, Stefano, and Trinculo, who are

► Revelation

still drunk. These individuals, Prospero explains, had robbed him and conspired to assassinate him. Caliban quickly confesses his sins and swears to seek forgiveness. Prospero asks his visitors to spend the night with him, telling them about his exploits and life during the last 12 years. Ariel's final task for Prospero is to ensure calm seas the next morning when they set sail.

Prospero's forgiveness is demonstrated in this closing scene, which also serves as an example of humanity for one's adversaries. "The rarest action is / In virtue than in vengeance," Prospero reminds Ariel before confronting his adversaries. That is, forgiving one's adversaries is preferable to hating them. In this final moment, Prospero sets an example by bringing everyone back together. When Alonso awakens from his coma, he rushes to embrace Prospero and then swiftly abandons his claim to Prospero's dukedom. This is the kind of behaviour the audience expects from Ferdinand's father, and it's exactly what Prospero needs to bring this conflict to a close. Ferdinand is a devout young man who is full of love and kindness, and it is logical to assume that he received these qualities from his father, even though his father has forgotten them at times. Alonso is genuinely happy for Ferdinand's engagement and greets Miranda with genuine elegance. He is obviously thrilled to have regained custody of his son, but he is also clearly pleased to have gained a daughter. Alonso is as kind and honest as Prospero, as seen by these spontaneous actions.

► Humane

Antonio and Sebastian, on the other hand, clearly lack the humanity of their brothers. Antonio and Sebastian have not offered any apologies. Antonio is speechless when it comes to his niece. Prospero, on the other hand, keeps his word and does not pursue vengeance against Antonio. Prospero's humanism shines through in his treatment of Antonio, whom he labels a traitor but refuses to regard as such. Their heinousness merely demonstrates that nature allows for both good and evil. Caliban comes from the natural world as well, although as the son of a witch and a devil. He is unlike the other people on the island, yet in this final moment, he demonstrates more humanity than many of Prospero's "civilised" adversaries. Caliban, on the other hand, has risen above his companions and freely recognises his mistakes. Caliban demonstrates that he is more honourable than Antonio and Sebastian, by

► Contrast

acknowledging his mistake. Prospero allows compassion to take the place of magic now that he has his adversaries under his grasp. Prospero's game has come to an end with the putting away of his magic. He has restored balance with magic and no longer requires it. The play concludes with the promise of Ariel's liberation and Prospero's return to the life that nature and God intended for him.

Act V: Epilogue

Prospero, now alone on stage, asks the crowd to release him. He claims to have given up his powers and forgiven those who have wronged him. He now demands that the audience release him from the island that has served as his jail, allowing him to return to Naples. The applause of the spectators will mark his release. All men, according to Prospero, want for forgiveness of their former foes. Prospero exits the stage to acclaim from the audience. The epilogue is frequently used to tie up loose ends and clarify any unsolved issues. This epilogue, however, does not deliver the answers that the audience may be expecting. For example, the spectator is never informed about what would happen to Caliban or Antonio and Sebastian. Instead, much discussion has centred on whether Prospero's farewell to magic is meant to signal Shakespeare's departure from the stage.

► Revenge

There are certainly parallels to be drawn between Prospero and Shakespeare. Prospero manipulates everyone on the island, whereas Shakespeare manipulates the characters he creates and the plots he creates. Both Prospero and Shakespeare produce amusement, with Prospero's masque and Shakespeare's plays, and both want to retire. It's possible that attributing Prospero's statements to Shakespeare's own life is a mistake. Shakespeare continued to write after finishing Prospero's story, composing three additional plays. It would be a mistake to view *The Tempest* only as Shakespeare's farewell to the theatre, as this would ignore the play's many other significant strengths.

► Parallels between character and author

Antony and Cleopatra

The stormy love affair between the great Roman warrior and the endlessly alluring queen of Egypt; the rivalry between Antony and Octavius Caesar; the final battle of Actium, and the ensuing suicides of the two



► Historical romance

lovers are all depicted in Shakespeare's version of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The drama takes place over a ten-year period, beginning in 40 B.C.E., shortly after Antony first encountered Cleopatra, and ending in 30 B.C.E., the year of their deaths. The "Life of Antonius" in Thomas North's *The Lives of the Noble Grecianes and Romans* (1579), an English translation of a work by Plutarch, is the primary source for *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Summary

Act I, Scene 1

Two Roman soldiers in Egypt, Philo and Demetrius, discuss how their general, Mark Antony, has fallen in love with Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen, and has lost interest in his legitimate job as one of the Roman Empire's three commanders (or triumvirs). When Cleopatra and Antony enter, an envoy from Rome greets them, imploring Antony to convey how much he loves her. Antony declares that he is uninterested in hearing Roman news, but Cleopatra insists that he do so. She makes fun of Antony for possibly ignoring a command from Octavius Caesar or an admonition from Antony's wife, Fulvia. Antony replies that Rome has no meaning for him when she pushes him to return. He claims that it is his responsibility to remain in Alexandria and love Cleopatra. After the lovers have left, Philo and Demetrius are taken aback by their general's contempt for Caesar and the empire's worries.

► Strategic awareness

Act I, Scene 2

The servants of Cleopatra ask a soothsayer to tell them their fortunes. Charmian and Iras, the queen's maids, are told by the Soothsayer that their fates are the same: their pasts will prove to be better than their futures, and they will outlive the queen they serve. Cleopatra joins them, expressing her dissatisfaction with Antony's unexpected return to Rome. She sends Antony's follower Enobarbus to collect his master, but she later changes her mind and flees as Antony comes. A messenger informs Antony that Fulvia and Lucius, Antony's brother, raised an army against Caesar but were defeated. When the messenger cautiously argues that if Antony had been in Rome, the event would not have occurred, Antony invites the man to speak openly, to "taunt [his] faults / With such full licence as both truth and malice / Have power to utter"

► Regret

(I.2). Fulvia has died, according to another messenger. Antony says that he had wished for his wife's death for a long time but now wishes for her to be alive again.

► Return to Rome

When Enobarbus arrives, he tries to console Antony by suggesting that Fulvia's death should be celebrated rather than mourned. Antony resolves to break away from Cleopatra and return to Rome, fearful that his attachment to Cleopatra are to blame for these occurrences, as well as a fight being conducted by Sextus Pompeius, who is currently striving to take control of the seas from the triumvirs.

Act I, Scene 3

► Jealousy and anxiety

Antony is summoned by Cleopatra's servant Alexas. Cleopatra feigns a fainting spell when Antony comes. She wonders how she could have trusted a man who was willing to breach his promises to his wife. Antony informs her of the tumultuous political situation in Rome, as well as the death of Fulvia. Cleopatra observes how little he weeps and prophesies that he will weep as little after her death as well. They debate about the intensity and validity of his sentiments until Antony leaves, assuring that their love will not be jeopardised by distance.

The rivalry between East and West, Egypt and Rome, is central to Shakespeare's plot in *Antony and Cleopatra*. He introduces this conflict right away in the first scene, when two Roman soldiers judge their commander, Mark Antony, for abandoning his military duties for the exotic delights of Cleopatra's Egypt. As Philo and Demetrius bemoan Antony's fall, arguing that his "captain's heart" now serves as a source of information, as "the bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy's lust," they illustrate a divide between a world that is governed by reason, discipline, and prudence, and another ruled by passion, pleasure, and love (I.i). Cleopatra, on the other hand, is far more than the high-class prostitute that the Romans think she is. She is often regarded as Shakespeare's most powerful female character. While Octavius Caesar, Antony's ruthless adversary, has yet to appear onstage, the extensive exposition of the strife between Fulvia, Caesar, and young Pompey reminds us of the political background of this love story. Antony rules over a third of the Roman Empire, which has been riven by civil war



- Political events in history within plot

for decades, and he and Caesar are allies but not true friends. Such an unstable scenario does not bode well for Antony's romance with Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen. Enobarbus, Antony's most devoted follower, serves as the voice of reason here, as he does throughout the play; he talks honestly, in prose rather than rhyme. As Antony's influence fades, his distancing from him grows; for the time being, though, he represents - Antony's connection to the West and his political responsibilities. Cleopatra's theatricality contrasts strikingly with Enobarbus's direct honesty.

Act I, Scene 4

In Rome, Octavius Caesar laments to Lepidus, the third triumvir, that Antony has forsaken his obligations as a statesman, as well as the better part of his manhood. Lepidus tries to defend Antony by claiming that his tendencies for drinking and indulging are traits he acquired. Caesar is sceptical, claiming that Antony has no right to be in Egypt during a time of crisis. Pompey's forces are strengthening and gaining support among individuals whose previous allegiance to Caesar was based on fear rather than obligation, according to a messenger. Caesar laments Antony's absence, remembering his heroic and unsurpassed accomplishment as a soldier. He and Lepidus come to an agreement to raise an army against Pompey.

- Alliances

Act I, Scene 5

Cleopatra expresses her longing for Antony to Charmian. She is curious as to what he is doing and whether he is thinking of her. Alexas walks in and gives her a pearl as a gift from Antony. He informs Cleopatra that Antony kissed the jewel on his way out of Egypt and had it delivered to her as a sign of his affection. Cleopatra inquires as to whether he appeared sad or cheerful, and she rejoices when Alexas reports that Antony appeared neither: Cleopatra claims that appearing sad could have tainted his supporters' moods, while appearing pleased could have undermined his followers' faith in his resolve. Cleopatra instructs Alexas to prepare twenty messengers so that she can write to Antony every day while he is away. If necessary, she promises to "unpeople Egypt" by turning all of the country's population into messengers (I.5.).

- Exaggerated romance

Act II, Scene 1

Menecrates and Menas, Pompey's lieutenants, discuss the military situation. He believes he can defeat the triumvirs not only because he has control of the sea and is well-liked by the Roman people, but also because he thinks Antony, his greatest rival, is still in Egypt. Caesar and Lepidus have amassed an army, according to Menas, and another soldier, Varrius, arrives to inform them that Antony has arrived in Rome. Menas hopes that Caesar and Antony's mutual animosity would lead to a fight between both the two triumvirs, but Pompey anticipates that the two will band together to fight a common foe.

► Political strategy

Act II, Scene 2

When speaking to Caesar, Lepidus instructs Enobarbus that Antony should employ "soft and delicate discourse" (II.ii.). Antony will speak as simply and honestly as any great man should, says Enobarbus. Antony and Caesar enter with their entourages and take a seat to converse. Caesar bemoans the uprising led by Fulvia and Antony's brother against him. He questions why Antony dismissed his messengers in Alexandria and accuses him of failing to give military assistance to the other triumvirs. Antony defends himself, and one of Caesar's companions, Maecenas, recommends that they put their differences aside in order to face Pompey. Another of Caesar's men, Agrippa, advises Antony to marry Caesar's sister, Octavia. He argues that this relationship will cement the men's love for and respect for one other. Antony agrees. Caesar and Antony shake hands and resolve to march together toward Pompey's fortress on Mount Misenum, swearing brotherly affection. Enobarbus tells Agrippa about the excellent life they had in Egypt when the triumvirs disperse. He compares Cleopatra to Venus, the goddess of love, when describing how she first met Antony. Despite his marriage to Octavia, Antony insists that he will never be able to abandon her.

► Marital politics

Act II, Scene 3

Antony pledges Octavia that, despite the fact that his obligations will keep him away from her frequently, he will not repeat his previous sexual sins. Antony is accompanied by the Egyptian soothsayer, who forecasts Antony's return to Egypt, after Octavia and Caesar have



► Quest for glory

left. Antony inquires as to whether he or Caesar has a better future, to which the Soothsayer responds that Caesar's fortune will climb greater. The Soothsayer forecasts that as long as Antony remains in Rome, he will be eclipsed by Caesar. Antony should leave plenty of room between himself and Caesar, he advises. Antony dismisses the fortune-teller but agrees with his assessment, and he resolves to return to the East, where he finds "joy" (II. iii.38). Antony summons and commissions Ventidius, a soldier and friend to march east and fight the kingdom of Parthia.

Act II, Scene 4 & 5

Meanwhile, Maecenas and Agrippa are summoned by Lepidus to gather their forces and meet at Mount Misenum, where they will face Pompey's army. Cleopatra amuses herself in Egypt with her eunuch servants Charmian and Mardian. A messenger from Italy arrives while she reminisces about Antony, comparing him to a fish she had caught. Cleopatra suspects Antony is dead based on his sad demeanour and warns the messenger if he delivers such terrible news. The envoy informs the queen that her sweetheart is still alive and well, but he does disclose that Antony is now married to Octavia. Cleopatra lashes out at the messenger, but he insists on telling her the truth. Cleopatra acknowledges that treating a humble worker so cruelly is beneath her station. She finally dismisses the messenger and gives him orders to go see Octavia so that he can report on her appearance, age, behaviour, and even hair colour.

► Whimsical behaviour

Act II, Scene 6

Pompey and the triumvirs meet before starting a war. Pompey informs Caesar, Lepidus, and Antony that he is fighting to avenge his father, who was murdered in Egypt after being defeated by Julius Caesar. Despite Pompey's superiority at sea, Antony warns him that the triumvirs' army will triumph. Pompey is offered power over Sicily and Sardinia in exchange for agreeing to cleanse the sea of pirates and make payments to Rome as a levy. Pompey says he was willing to accept the offer until Antony upset him by refusing to acknowledge the hospitality, which he demonstrated to Antony's mother during her recent visit to Sicily. Antony convinces Pompey that he intended to express his gratitude in a graceful manner, and the two

► War negotiations

men shake hands and make peace. Pompey invites the Romans to dinner on his ship, and the triumvirs accept. Enobarbus and Menas retire to the back of the room to talk about their military careers, the present political situation, and Antony's marriage to Octavia. Enobarbus reiterates his belief that Antony will return to Egypt. Following the discussion, the two head out to supper.

► Mystery of Cleopatra

Antony is neither a hero nor a fool who has abandoned reason and duty in the name of love. Cleopatra, too, is a regal and stunningly attractive seductress. Above all, she is a skilled actress, a lady whose anguish over Antony's marriage to Octavia can only be comforted by the theatrics of pulling a knife on her unwitting messenger. When the Romans look at Cleopatra, they see more than a harlot. Cleopatra is a woman of "infinite variety," as Enobarbus puts it in Act II, scene ii: "there is room in her for both theatrical emotions and true affection, for both stately grandeur and girlish vulnerability" (II.ii.).

Act II, Scene 7

Pompey's dinner party is discussed by a group of servants, who make specific comments on Lepidus' drunkenness. While Antony and Pompey debate the Nile River, Pompey enters with his guests. Lepidus rambles on about crocodiles, which, according to legend, arose spontaneously from the muck of a river. Antony responds with a comically circular and useless statement when Lepidus asks him to explain the crocodile: "It is fashioned, sir, like itself, and is as broad as it hath breadth" (II. vii.39–40). Menas approaches Pompey and suggests that they set sail and kill the three triumvirs while they are still drunk and on board the boat, giving Pompey control of the Western world. Menas is chastised by Pompey for revealing this scheme with him. Pompey claims that if the deed had been done without his knowledge, he would have commended it, but now that he knows, it would be a violation of his honour. Menas expresses his disgust with Pompey and declares that he will leave his master's service in an angry aside. Meanwhile, the triumvirs and their host continue to party, eventually linking hands, dancing, and singing before leaving the ship and stumbling off to bed.

► Idea of honour



Act III, Scenes 1 & 2

Fighting for Antony, Ventidius defeats the Parthians and kills their king's son. One of Ventidius's troops begs him to continue into Parthia in order to gain greater renown, but Ventidius refuses. He says that if he was too successful in war, he would lose Antony's favour and be unable to develop as a member of Antony's armies. Ventidius instead calls a halt to his army and writes to Antony, congratulating him on his triumph. The current situation of affairs is discussed by Agrippa and Enobarbus: Pompey has left, Octavia and Caesar are upset by their impending separation, and Lepidus is still sick from his night of excessive drinking. Agrippa and Enobarbus make fun of Lepidus, the weakest of the three triumvirs. Lepidus, Antony, and Caesar enter to the sound of a horn. Caesar bids Antony and his sister goodnight, pleading with his new brother-in-law not to mistreat Octavia and thereby force a wedge between himself and Antony. Lepidus and Caesar remain in Rome when Antony and Octavia depart.

► Casualties of war

Act III, Scene 3

The messenger of Cleopatra returns to report on Antony's bride. He informs Cleopatra that Octavia is shorter than she is, has a low voice, and appears to be lifeless. This information pleases Cleopatra, who enjoys imagining Antony's bride to be foolish and short. Antony cannot possibly enjoy being with Octavia for long, she decides, considering her lack of excellent qualities. She pledges to reward the messenger for his good work, showers him with gold, and urges him not to hold grudges against her because of her treatment of him in the past. Antony will almost probably return to her, she tells Charmian.

► Comparison

Act III, Scene 4

Antony laments to Octavia that Caesar has not only waged war against Pompey since leaving Rome, but has also publicly ridiculed Antony. Antony is urged by Octavia not to trust all he hears and to keep the peace with her brother. Octavia laments that if Antony and Caesar were to fight, she wouldn't know whether she back her brother or her husband. Antony explains to her that he must do everything it takes to maintain his honour, without

► Crisis

which he would be nothing. Nonetheless, he dispatches her to Rome in order to restore peace between Caesar and himself. In the meantime, he prepares for war with Pompey.

Act III, Scenes 5 & 6

Enobarbus speaks with Eros, another of Antony's friends. The two talk about Caesar's victory over Pompey's army and Pompey's assassination. Caesar reportedly used Lepidus' men, but then refused Lepidus his part of the spoils after their triumph, according to Eros. Caesar has immediately accused the triumvir of conspiring against him and has imprisoned him. Antony's navy, according to Enobarbus, is preparing to depart for Italy and Caesar. Caesar, back in Rome, is furious with Antony. He informs Agrippa and Maecenas that Antony has travelled to Egypt to serve as Cleopatra's monarch. He has made her absolute queen of lower Syria, Cyprus, and Lydia, and has given her power over most of the Middle East. Antony is angry, according to Caesar, since he has not yet been granted a fair share of the provinces that Caesar wrested from Pompey and Lepidus. If Antony replies in kind and provides him a portion of Armenia and other kingdoms taken by Antony, he declares he will split his lot. Octavia enters just as Maecenas predicts that Antony will never agree to such stipulations. Caesar bemoans the fact that the woman travels so quietly, without the pomp that Antony's bride should get. Antony has joined Cleopatra in Egypt, where he has gathered a huge alliance to confront Rome, Caesar reveals to her. Maecenas assures Octavia that she has the support of every Roman citizen.

► Conflict

Act III, Scene 7

Cleopatra intends to fight with Antony and is enraged when Enobarbus suggests her presence will be a distraction. Enobarbus tries to persuade her otherwise, but she ignores his arguments. Antony informs Camidius, his general, that he will meet Caesar at sea. Camidius and Enobarbus object, claiming that while they have a territorial advantage, Caesar's maritime fleet is far greater. Antony, on the other hand, refuses to listen. Cleopatra claims that her sixty-ship fleet will win the fight. Despite the pleas of a soldier who begs Antony to



► Flawed strategy

forego a doomed sea combat in favour of fighting on foot, Antony departs to prepare the navy. Camidius comments after the general and the queen leave that they are all “women’s men” dominated by Cleopatra (III.vii.)

► Pattern of behaviour

The play’s emphasis with the sexualized East is seen in Caesar’s description of Antony and Cleopatra in Act III, scene vi. The image is reminiscent of Enobarbus’ earlier statement, in which he claims that the Egyptian queen floats down the Nile on a gleaming throne. By depicting the West as serious, militaristic, and masculine, and the East as exotic, pleasure-loving, and sexual, the play makes differences between the West and the East. In this scenario, Maecenas, Caesar, and Agrippa are shocked not only by Antony’s public appearance with a lady who is not his wife, but also by their decadence. While military officers discuss the intrigues of war in the West, Antony’s life in the East is portrayed as centred on sensuous pleasures, both with Cleopatra and inside the richness and splendour of her country.

► Spectacle

Throughout the play, spectacle is paramount, as Caesar emphasises when he complains to Octavia about her lack of it. Octavia arrives in Rome, intent on keeping the peace between her husband and brother. Octavia, Caesar says, has the appearance of a common maid going to market. Caesar associates spectacle with power: the grander the show, the more substantial and true the power. When Caesar plots to parade Cleopatra on the streets of Rome as a testament to his empire’s invincible might at the play’s conclusion, he returns to this line of thought.

Antony and Cleopatra’s romance is distinct from that of some of Shakespeare’s other key characters in that it concentrates on how the two interact with bigger historical and social conflicts. Unlike *Romeo and Juliet*, which mostly follows the couple as they steal moments together at a crowded party or on a moonlit balcony, Antony and Cleopatra’s problems are public rather than private. Antony’s return to and reconciliation with Cleopatra, as well as all of their more private moments, take place offstage. The grand performances of lovers who live in, and play for, the public eye, rather than the quiet murmurs of secretive lovers, get stage time in this drama. Love in *Antony and Cleopatra* appears to be

- Private meetings, public impact

more a product of political alliance than of the bedroom, because we are always aware of the public ramifications of the couple's encounter. The lovers' affair will take on the world when Caesar regrets that Antony has thrown up his dominion for a "whore".

Act III, Scenes 8 - 10

Caesar instructs his soldiers to wait until the sea fight is over before attacking. Antony orders Enobarbus to station his squadrons atop a hilltop from which they can observe the combat at sea. Antony's men were winning the battle when Cleopatra's ship fled without notice, and Antony pursued her. The fleet was thrown into chaos, and Caesar was victorious. The sight sickens Antony's troops, one of them declares that he has never seen something so heinous. Camidius defected to Caesar's side, sending his army and following the lead of six of Antony's royal supporters, while Enobarbus remains loyal to his general against his better judgement.

- Betrayal

Act III, Scene 11

Antony berates himself, deeply ashamed of his battle performance, and orders his servants to quit the service of such an unworthy master. He advises them to leave Antony in the same way that Antony has abandoned his nobler self. Cleopatra finds her beloved upset and alone when she enters. She attempts to console him, but Antony can only recall his heroic past: he was the one who fought difficult battles and dealt with Cassius and Brutus' treachery. But, he concludes, such incidents are no longer relevant. He questions Cleopatra why she has embarrassed him, and she begs pardon, stating she never expected him to follow her retreat. When his heart was attached to her rudder, he asked her how she could doubt that he would follow her. Antony bemoans the fact that he must now seek the forgiveness of young Caesar, but unable to take the sight of the queen's grief, he forgives her. Antony says as he kisses Cleopatra that even her kiss repays him for his guilt.

- Reconciliation

Act III, Scenes 12 & 13

When Antony's ambassador arrives with his master's plea, Caesar is with Dolabella and Thidias, two of his supporters: Antony wants to be allowed to reside in Egypt



or, failing that, to “breathe between the sky and earth, / A private man at Athens” (III.xii.). Cleopatra’s request that Egypt be passed on to her successors is also delivered by the diplomat. Caesar denies Antony’s pleas, but promises Cleopatra a fair hearing if she exiles or executes Antony. He dispatches Thidias to persuade Cleopatra to accept these demands in the hopes that she will betray her love. Cleopatra is told by Enobarbus that the defeat was not her fault because Antony might have chosen reason over desire. Antony announces that he will challenge Caesar to a one-on-one fight when the embassy returns with Caesar’s message. Enobarbus considers this option, but determines that if he stays loyal to Antony, he might be able to fight Caesar if Antony is killed. Meanwhile, Thidias arrives to inform Cleopatra that if she surrenders Antony, Caesar would show her mercy. The queen admits that she embraced Antony out of fear rather than love, and she declares Caesar a deity to whom she will submit. Antony storms in, enraged, and orders that Thidias be whipped. He then confronts Cleopatra, accusing her of betraying him. Antony is satisfied when the queen vows that she would never betray him. Antony’s navy has reunited, and a large portion of his ground forces have remained intact, ready to confront Caesar once more. Enobarbus, who has been watching the event, decides that he has served Antony long enough. Antony’s mind appears to be deteriorating, and he feels compelled to abandon his master.

► Declaration of loyalty

Act IV, Scenes 1 & 2

Caesar, who is encamped near Alexandria, Egypt, receives Antony’s challenge and laughs it off. Maecenas advises him to take advantage of Antony’s indignation, explaining that “never anger / Made good guard for itself” (IV.i). Caesar gathers his force, which will be boosted by deserters from Antony’s army, and plots to defeat Antony for good. Antony receives word from Enobarbus that Caesar has refused to fight him. Antony inquires as to why, and Enobarbus implies that Caesar is so certain of victory that a one-on-one fight would be unjust. Antony says that he will fight the next day, regardless of whether he wins or loses. He expresses gratitude to his servants for their devoted service and cautions them that this may be his last night with them. They begin to cry, and

- Contrasting certainty of victory and defeat

Enobarbus criticises Antony for such a morbid speech. Antony apologises for causing them grief and begs them to spend their evening together as he takes them out to a lavish feast.

Act IV, Scenes 3-5

Antony's soldiers hear odd music coming from beneath the ground that night. They mutter that it is Hercules' music, the god after whom Antony was modelled and who, they suppose, has abandoned him now. Eros arms Antony for war the next day, and Cleopatra insists on assisting him. Antony is optimistic about the upcoming battle, promising Cleopatra that anyone who tries to take off his armour before he is ready will face his anger. An armed soldier enters, reporting that a thousand more soldiers are waiting at Antony's command. Antony kisses Cleopatra goodbye before leading his men into combat. Antony orders soldiers to deliver Enobarbus's possessions to him, along with "gentle adieus and greetings," and laments that his "fortunes have/ Corrupted honest men" (IV.v.14).

- Supernatural omens

Act IV, Scenes 6-8

Antony admits as he prepares for war that he wishes he had fought Caesar on land sooner. Enobarbus would still be an ally if he had done so, a soldier observes. Antony has never heard of the treachery of his most trusted friend before, and the revelation astounds him. Eros then reveals him the "chests and treasure" that Enobarbus left behind. (IV.v.).

- Desertion of Enobarbus

Act IV, Scenes 9 & 10

When Antony returns from combat, he vows to completely destroy Caesar's army the next day. He commends his warriors for their bravery and orders them to tell their families about the conflict. Antony proclaims his love for Cleopatra when she enters. He proclaims that she is the only weapon capable of piercing his armour and reaching his heart. To commemorate the happy occasion, Antony leads his army and his beloved in a triumphant march through the streets of Alexandria. Enobarbus, unaware that he is being watched, rails against his existence, wishing for its end and hoping that he will be remembered as a traitor and runaway



► Soldier'

from justice. The guards decide to rouse him when he collapses, only to learn that he has perished. They carry his body to their camp because he is a powerful man.

Act IV, Scenes 11-13

Unaware that he is being watched, Enobarbus screams against his own existence, begging for its termination and hoping to be remembered as a traitor and fugitive from punishment. When he collapses, the guards decide to rouse him, only to discover that he has died. Because he is a powerful guy, they transport his body to their camp. Antony recognises his predicament and orders Scarus to direct his army to evacuate. On his own, the general accuses Cleopatra of being a dangerous enchantress who has brought him to ruin. When the queen arrives, Antony chases her away, threatening to kill her for betraying him.

► Entanglements

Act IV, Scenes 14-15

Cleopatra returns to her servants, regaling them with stories of Antony's violent anger. To appease Antony, Charmian proposes that her mistress lock herself in a monument and send word that she has committed herself. She asks Mardian to bring the news to Antony and to return with word on her lover's reaction, as per the arrangement. Antony prepares to kill his lover, telling Eros that now that Cleopatra's love has been proven fake, he has no idea who he is. With his false account of the queen's death, Mardian adds that her final words were "Antony! most noble Antony!" (IV.xv.). He is overcome with regret and swears that he would die with Cleopatra, begging her pardon for believing him to be dishonest. He begs Eros to assassinate him. Eros rejects, horrified, but Antony reminds him of a promise he made long ago to honour Antony's most irrational wishes. Eros gives in. He prepares to kill Antony, but instead stabs himself. Antony commends his soldier's courage and advises him to follow in his footsteps. He is cut down by his own sword, yet he is unable to kill himself. A group of guardsmen refuses to complete the assignment, and Cleopatra's attendant Diomedes reports that the queen is still alive. However, it is too late to save Antony's life. Antony, who is dying, orders his guards to bear his body to Cleopatra.

► Death

Act IV, Scene 16

Diomedes comes beneath her and informs her that Antony's guard has arrived with the injured Antony. The lovers make a call to each other. Antony informs her that he is dying and wishes to give her one more embrace. She responds that she is afraid of being taken by Caesar and humiliated through the streets as a prisoner of war if she comes down from her monument. Cleopatra, on the other hand, urges the men to hoist Antony up to her. As they do so, Cleopatra notices that Antony's body has shifted from strength to heaviness. Onlookers declare their intimacy "a heavy sight" as she draws him to her and kisses him (IV.xvi.). Antony tells the queen to put herself at Caesar's mercy, relying in Caesar's friend Proculeius' honesty. He then reflects on his own glory and declares that he will die magnificently, "a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly conquered" (IV.xvi). He dies, and Cleopatra condemns the world for becoming abruptly dull. She feels that without Antony, neither life nor herself are noteworthy: she may be a "maid that milks / And does the meanest chores" (IV.xvi.76–77). Cleopatra determines that they must bury Antony in Roman manner and then prepares her own death.

► Grief

Act V, Scene 1

Dolabella is given the task of delivering a command to Antony for his surrender. Decretas, one of Antony's troops, enters after Dolabella has left, carrying Antony's sword. When Caesar inquires as to why the guy would dare to come in such a manner before him, Decretas replies that he was Antony's most devoted follower and now aspires to serve Caesar as well. Caesar inquires about the significance of this reversal, and Decretas replies that his master has died, taken from this world by the same noble hands that carried out Antony's heroic actions. After all, Antony's death, as one of the two triumvirs, should be marked by tremendous uproar and sadness, as Caesar observes. Caesar and his men agree that Antony was a great man, and Caesar declares that mourning him is appropriate. Cleopatra sends a messenger to inquire about Caesar's plans for the queen. Caesar assures Cleopatra that he would be honourable and nice to her, and sends her a messenger with assurances, wishing her good health. Despite Caesar's assurances that he will not



embarrass Cleopatra, he intends to compel her to reside in Rome, where she will be his permanent triumph. In order to accomplish this, he commands some of his men, led by Proculeius, to prevent Cleopatra from committing suicide.

Act V, Scene 2

► Spoils of war

Proculeius appears at Cleopatra's monument and inquiries about Cleopatra's terms for surrendering to Caesar. Cleopatra recalls Antony telling her to trust Proculeius and expresses her optimism that the emperor will enable her son to rule Egypt. Proculeius assures her that Caesar will be generous and that her petition will be met with kindness shortly. Meanwhile, his soldiers, who have snuck within the monument, are attempting to apprehend Cleopatra. Proculeius disarms the queen, who had drawn a dagger in the hopes of killing herself before being captured. Cleopatra yells out that she will never allow herself to be brought around Rome as a trophy of the empire's triumph, and he orders the soldiers to protect her until Caesar arrives.

► Imprisonment

Cleopatra's children will be spared and she will be kindly treated. Seleucus, Cleopatra's treasurer, opposes her when she asks him to affirm that she has handed Caesar everything. Cleopatra yells about her servant's betrayal, but Caesar consoles her. He assures her that he is far more than a mere businessman and has no desire for her fortune. Cleopatra discloses to her maids that she has reservations about Caesar's intentions, adding to her companions that he is enchanting her with words, and Iras and Charmian encourage her to carry out her suicide plan. Dolabella confirms Cleopatra's suspicions by admitting that Caesar intends to transport the queen to Rome and encouraging her.

► Doubts about intention

Rather than suffer the humiliation of being a show for the amusement of filthy Roman audiences, Cleopatra decides to commit suicide. She tells Charmian and Iras to clothe her in her most queenly garments. When they've done so, she invites a clown into her presence, who presents her with a basket of figs containing asps, venomous snakes. Cleopatra greets her attendants goodbye, dressed in her finest royal robes. Cleopatra grabs a snake from the basket and sets it against her

► Finality

breast after Iras dies. She dies after setting another asp to her arm. As the guards rush in to find the dead queen, Charmian clutches the snake to her body and dies beside her mistress. Dolabella is the first to arrive, followed by Caesar. When they figure out how Cleopatra has killed herself, Caesar has her buried next to Antony in a grand burial.

Summarised Overview

The current unit explores *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra* giving great significance to the plot and themes; in particular, the ability of these plays to cross different genres and include various features is emphasised. *The Tempest*, the last of Shakespeare's plays, offers powerful perspectives on the ethics of governing, colonialism, and power. By centralising Prospero's quest for revenge, and its subsequent success, the text also enforces certain hierarchies of class, righteous order, and social values such as chastity. *Antony and Cleopatra* proves to be difficult to classify, since the elements of romance and tragedy are deeply intertwined within it. We find the protagonists struggling to reconcile their private desires with public duties, often leading to flawed decisions and failed plans. It further raises the universal question of how individuals may fight against destiny.

Assignments

1. Examine the postcolonial aspects in *The Tempest*.
2. Write a detailed comparison between the characterisation of Ariel and Caliban.
3. Is Prospero justified in his quest for revenge? Provide examples from the play to validate your answer.
4. How does William Shakespeare use romantic and historical elements to weave a tragic tale in *Antony and Cleopatra*?
5. Closely examine the characterisation of Cleopatra in the Shakespearean play *Antony and Cleopatra*?



Suggested Readings

1. Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 2nd ed. Oxford UP, 2005.
2. Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto P, 2008.
3. Sen, Dr. S. *The Tempest*. University of Delhi, 1981.
4. Sharma, R-B.M.A. *The Tempest*. Pratibha, 1987.
5. Shakespeare, William, *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. by Barbara Everett, Signet, 1988.
6. Shakespeare, William, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Standard Ebooks.
7. "No Fear Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra.", *SparkNotes*. <https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/antony/>
8. Oates, Joyce Carol. "The Tragedy of Imagination: Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" – on Antony and Cleopatra." *Celestial Timepiece*, 1964. <https://celestialtimepiece.com/2015/01/27/the-tragedy-of-imagination-shakespeares-antony-and-cleopatra/>
9. "Marjorie Garber's Harvard Lecture on Antony and Cleopatra," *YouTube*

References

1. Brown, Joseph Russel. *Shakespeare: The Tempest*. Edward Arnold LTD. 1969.
2. Coleridge, S.T. *Shakespearean Criticism*, Aldine P, 1974.
3. Durband, Alan. *The Tempest*, The Guernsey P, 1985.
4. Hibbard, G.R. *The Tempest*. Oxford UP, 1987.
5. Rickett, Compton. *A History of English Literature*, Thomas Nelson and Sons., 1950
6. Frye, Northrop. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Tempest*, Engle Wood Cliff, 1969.
7. Smith, Hallet. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Tempest*, Engle Wood Cliff, 1969.
8. Spencer, Theodore. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Tempest*, Engle Wood Cliff, 1969.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



Modern Adaptations and Re-workings of Shakespeare

BLOCK-03

Block Content

Unit 1 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* - Tom Stoppard

Unit 2 *Shylock is My Name* - Howard Jacobson

Unit 3 *Ran* - Akira Kurosawa

Unit 1

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

Tom Stoppard

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ familiarise with Tom Stoppard and his works
- ▶ critically examine, and contrast this play with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
- ▶ critically analyse the concepts of existentialism and absurdism in the work
- ▶ comprehend dramatic irony and how it functions in the play

Background

William Shakespeare is considered an eternal literary figure as his works continue to exist as framework for numerous literary works through the ages. He has withstood the test of time since his debut in the sixteenth century, emerging triumphant through his works and others' adaptations of his works. Shakespeare used materials to develop his plot from the existing sources of his time period. After his "travails in the mortal soil," he was immortalised through his works, whether original or adapted by others. No other writer can claim to be as widely adapted as Shakespeare. This is proven by the various adaptations of Shakespearean plays into musicals, dramas, one-act plays, cartoons, paintings and so on. This demonstrates the lasting appeal of the "Bard of Avon," as he would always be known. Shakespeare's immortality has been enhanced further in the age of posthumanism by many types of new media. Every literary student and reader has heard the name Shakespeare at least once in their lives. *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb is without a doubt the most popular Shakespeare adaptation. Shakespeare's works have been translated and adapted into numerous languages and countries. Some writers and directors have made use of certain characters to expand the Shakespearean world, just as we see in the fictional universe created by the Marvel and DC movie franchises. *Kaliyattam*, *Karmayodha*, *Haider*, *Ran*, *The Lion King* are some of the notable movies that owe their conception to the world created by Shakespeare. The novel, *Shylock is My Name*, and the play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, are both adapted from the world created by Shakespeare. Sir Tom Stoppard is one of the most



well-known living playwrights and has been knighted by Queen Elizabeth for his contribution to theatre. His play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, is an example of intertextuality, where the play is taken from a scene from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He has also authored various screenplays and adaptations of plays in foreign languages, including a feature film version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in 1990.

Keywords

Heads or tails, Memory, Tragedians, Insanity, The letter, Illusion, Existence

3.1.1 Summary

The play begins with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spinning coins in a blurry environment. Because the coin is referred to as “heads” or “tails,” the winner places it in his sack. Rosencrantz has won seventy-six times in a row when the coin has fallen on heads. Guildenstern, the more intellectual and inquisitive of the two, is not outraged at his loss, but rather tries to conceal his dissatisfaction with the improbability of the circumstance. Rosencrantz seems unconcerned with the happenings and feels he has established a new record. After that, Guildenstern muses on various theories for why the laws of probability appear to be suspended in this coin flip game. He offers numerous answers, ranging from supernatural intervention to the idea of a single moment being reproduced indefinitely. Unable to come up with a substantial explanation for the occurrence, Guildenstern attempts to recollect his first memory, but neither Rosencrantz nor Guildenstern has memories of their history. They have no recollection of what transpired earlier that morning. After exchanging queries, they recall a messenger who summoned them early in the morning to attend to an important business.

- Introduction to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

A band can be heard in the distance by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It is a company of six tragedians commanded by the Player, a spokesman. The Player, who first mostly engages with Rosencrantz, is attempting to sell them a show. In his description of the works for sale, the Player implies that a romance packed with “faithless

► Introduction to Player and his plays

wives” and “ravished virgins” will be more expensive. Rosencrantz is unaware that the Player is selling pornography. Regardless, Rosencrantz and the Player continue haggling over the price until Rosencrantz falls so low that the Player grows dissatisfied and packs up to leave. Guildenstern enters and swiftly recognises what the Player is providing. He is highly shocked by the play’s obscenity, but is cunning enough to lure the Player and his company to wager. As before, the coin always lands on heads, and the troupe is defeated multiple times in succession. Because they have no money left, the group decides to put on a play to satisfy their obligation.

The scene shifts. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have arrived at the royal court, where they see a dishevelled Hamlet embrace Ophelia. Claudius and Gertrude welcome Rosencrantz and Guildenstern but get their names mixed up. The two were summoned by the King and Queen since they were boyhood friends of Hamlet. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discover that Hamlet has been “transformed” since his father’s death. The King and Queen believe that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will not only comfort Hamlet but will also discover what is genuinely ailing him. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern begin to strategize how they would obtain information from Hamlet after discussing how the unexpected encounter between the King and Queen was embarrassing and made them feel like idiots. They talk about their interview style and play a game of questions. The goal is to have a discussion that is made up of questions and never make a remark. They have grown tired of the game and have decided to try something else. Guildenstern resolves to pose as Hamlet, and Rosencrantz interrogates him. Through the fake interview, they are ultimately able to deduce the full story of Hamlet after much uncertainty on Rosencrantz’s side. Act One concludes with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern meeting Hamlet, who, like everyone else in the play, greets them enthusiastically but mispronounces their names.

► The deduction of Hamlet’s issue

The following act begins with the conclusion of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s interrogation. Hamlet is speaking in cryptic analogies. Polonius enters the room and informs Hamlet that the actors have come. They both leave, leaving Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to assess the effectiveness of their interview. Guildenstern first



► The Question Game

claims that the interview was fruitful, but Rosencrantz rapidly dismisses him, citing the intimidating “scores” of the Question Game. It looks like Hamlet is quite good at deflecting inquiries. Despite their preparation, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear to offer forthright replies to all of Hamlet’s concerns. The fact that they were able to see his symptoms is a tiny consolation.

► The Player’s assistance

The Player comes and instantly expresses his displeasure with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for not staying to see them play. He and the rest of the ensemble feel humiliated to have performed in front of no one. The Player informs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that his group will be playing *The Murder of Gonzago* for the royal court after an extensive sermon about acting. The Player instructs Guildenstern to act authentically and then assists them in learning more about Hamlet. This revelation makes them wonder whether Hamlet is indeed insane and whether he truly loves Ophelia. Before the royal court arrives, the Player departs to practise his lines, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ponder the essence of death.

► Rosencrantz’s dilemma

Gertrude wants to know how their meeting with Hamlet went. Rosencrantz, feeling a little self-conscious, exaggerates the meeting’s success. Rosencrantz feels irritated by the repeated interruptions, entries, and departures after the royal party departs. Rather than waiting for Hamlet to speak to them, Rosencrantz attempts to establish a conversation with Hamlet but fails at the last minute. He attempts to surprise the Queen from behind, but it turns out to be one of the players, Alfred, disguised in women’s garb. The company walks in and starts practising the dumb-show that will be presented before *The Murder of Gonzago*. When Hamlet makes Ophelia cry, the practise is cut short. Ophelia eventually calms down, and the session begins.

The plot of the dumb-show is similar to Hamlet’s plot: A monarch gets poisoned by his brother in the dumb-show. The brother then marries the queen and ascends to the throne. Lucianus, the dead king’s son, is distraught by the incestuous union. Lucianus murders Polonius in a passion, and his uncle, the King, sends him to England to be killed. When Lucianus arrives, he swaps places with his two spies and is killed in their stead. The storyline

► The play within a play

parallels are lost on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They also do not recognise the two spies as themselves. Claudius interrupts the rehearsal to reveal that Hamlet has murdered Polonius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are tasked with finding Hamlet and recovering Polonius' murdered body. Their uncertainty over whether to search for or wait for Hamlet allows him to easily avoid them, despite the fact that he places himself in the hands of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern minutes before they must bring him to Claudius. They brought him to England, accompanied by a soldier.

The third act begins aboard a boat. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in the dark and struggle to get their bearings. They recollect their mission: to convey Hamlet to the King of England and deliver a message. After playing games, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern examine the letter they are supposed to bring and learn that it orders Hamlet's execution. While they are asleep, Hamlet switches the letters and substitutes Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for himself. Pirates attack the ship, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern shelter in barrels, only to learn that the Player and his troupe are also on board. They are all wondering if Hamlet survived the onslaught. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are satisfied to be in the dark about what happened to him. Guildenstern is concerned about what they will tell King George III of England. When he rereads the letter, he notices that the names have been transposed. The Player tries to teach Guildenstern about death, but he grows so enraged at the Player's arrogance that he stabs him. The Player dies, only to rise and show that he is an actor. After experiencing a spectrum of feelings, including exhaustion, frustration, and indifference, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern consign themselves to death and quietly vanish. An ambassador from England reports the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and remarks on the terrible ending of the play.

► The idea of absurdism

3.1.2 Detailed Summary

Act I

The scene opens with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in a nondescript setting in Elizabethan dress. They are playing a game of spinning coins. In this game, they bet on whether a tossed coin lands heads or tails. Having called



► The theory of possibilities

heads several times in a row, Rosencrantz is winning the game and has a nearly full bag of coins. Guildenstern is not angry about the loss of the money, but is rather concerned at the improbability of a coin landing on heads over seventy times in a row: "A weaker man might be moved to re-examine his faith, if in nothing else at least in the law of probability." Rosencrantz does not share these same concerns but is rather excited about the prospect of setting a new record for the most wins in a row. After losing several more times, Guildenstern begins to mull over some logical reasons for the events taking place. He hypothesises that he might be entertaining self-defeat within himself. He also considers the possibility that the event actually occurred once, but that moment is over and is repeating over and over again. Two other possibilities that he considers are divine intervention and the notion that he should not be surprised because each time a coin is spun, it is just as likely to end up on heads as it is on tails.

► The messenger and the message

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's conversations are quite often a series of non-sequiturs. While Guildenstern is trying to figure out the coin-spinning phenomenon, Rosencrantz intermittently inserts irrelevant information, such as how beards and fingernails continue growing after death. In the midst of his queries, Guildenstern asks Rosencrantz, "What's the first thing you remember?" After many questions that lead nowhere, it is revealed that Guildenstern remembers that nothing will save them from the fact that they both were sent for by a messenger. Then, as if through no effort of his own, Rosencrantz gradually begins to recall the morning in more detail: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were awakened before dawn by a messenger standing on his saddle delivering an urgent royal decree, calling each of them by name. That where they have been called to and why are still unknown.

► The concept of illusion and reality

Drums are heard in the distance. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter a debate as to whether the sounds they hear are real or an illusion. Guildenstern answers the uncertainty with an illustration about a unicorn: a man sees a unicorn cross his path, but as more and more people witness the event, it becomes apparent that it is just a horse with an arrow sticking through its forehead. After Guildenstern's illustration, Rosencrantz announces confidently, "I knew all along it was a band."



After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's conversation about illusion and reality, six tragedians enter. The troupe includes a spokesman ("the Player"), musicians, actors, clowns, and a young boy named Alfred.

Excited to have come across "an audience" in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Player attempts to sell them gory romances, full of fine cadence and corpses, pirated from Italy, for an unspecified price. In typical fool fashion, Rosencrantz rises and introduces himself and Guildenstern, but mixes up their names. He does not realise his mistake until Guildenstern corrects him. Despite this, Rosencrantz remains the primary point of contact with the player. The Player attempts to sell them a pornographic show and tries to convey the nature of his product to Rosencrantz in indirect terms. At one point the Player says, "It costs little to watch, and a little more if you happen to get caught up in the action, if that's your taste and times being what they are." The Player's insinuations and euphemisms, however, completely escape Rosencrantz. The humorous encounter continues when the Player attempts to negotiate a price for the show. The Player initially names ten guilders per person as a price, yet Rosencrantz, fumbling through an obtuse dialogue, argues him down to seven. When Rosencrantz is unable to grasp the Player's speech about the declining standards of theatre, the latter very nearly gives up and continues on his way.

► The bargain

Guildenstern finally steps in and asks the troupe where they are going. Through a series of questions, Guildenstern attempts to discern whether the troupe met them on the road by plan. The Player evades his questions and asserts that they have no control over where they play, whether on the court or in the tavern. Guildenstern implies that he has influence in the court and may be able to help the troupe perform there. However, the Player questions Guildenstern's influence; Guildenstern, indignant, shakes the man violently. Having collected himself, Guildenstern returns to the Player's mention of getting caught up in the action. Realizing that Guildenstern is brighter than Rosencrantz, the Player enthusiastically bargains with Guildenstern, offering him a private and uncut performance of *The Rape of the Sabine Women* starring Alfred, a young boy dressed in drag. Guildenstern is enraged at the notion and slaps the Player

► The concept of existence

in the face. He says, “it didn’t have to be obscene” as he questions why the nature of the sign had to be obscene rather than mystical (such as a bird dropping a feather on his shoulder) or absurd (such as a mute dwarf pointing the way). The Player, offering no real explanation for the obscenity, apologizes, saying, “You should have caught us in better times. We were purists then.”

Before the Player can turn to leave, however, Rosencrantz, who now understands the nature of the show, stops him, wishing to know more about the gory details of what they do. Faced with the threat of the troupe leaving, Rosencrantz offers up a single coin. The Player rejects the offer, but his troupe grasps for the coin. Rosencrantz suddenly becomes indignant and denounces them as disgusting filth, and the Player turns to leave. Before they exit, Guildenstern entices the troupe to gamble. They toss the coin several times, and each time it lands on heads, with Guildenstern winning. The Player places his foot on the coin to stop the betting but is tricked into betting whether or not the year of the Player’s birth doubled is an odd number. Not realising until it is too late that all numbers doubled are even, the Player loses the bet. Unable to pay his debt, Alfred, the young boy, is offered up to settle the bet. Guildenstern sees in the boy a charitable project. He aims to turn the boy away from filthy theatre and demands that the troupe perform an actual play to pay off their debt. The actors move to take their places, but the Player remains stationary, directing the others. When Guildenstern asks when the Player is going to change into costume and go on stage, the Player replies that he is always in costume and always on stage. Just as the Player’s immobility becomes awkward, Rosencrantz approaches him and asks him to move his foot, which conceals the coin beneath it. When Rosencrantz stoops to examine it, he discovers that it has landed on tails.

► The bet

As Rosencrantz tosses the coin to Guildenstern, the lighting changes, and Ophelia runs by, holding the garment she has been sewing. Hamlet follows her, dishevelled and shaking. He clasps her tightly and then lets go of her with a shudder. He backs off stage without releasing his gaze; she runs in the opposite direction. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been frozen during this scene, and Guildenstern unfreezes first. However, before they can leave, Claudius and Gertrude, the

► The reason behind
Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern's
summoning

King and Queen of Denmark, enter. The King greets Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, mistaking one for the other. This causes a usually well-choreographed bow sequence in which both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are uncomfortable, adjusting their clothes awkwardly as the King briefs them as to what they have been sent for. It seems that Hamlet's father has died, and that the King and Queen have observed a measurable "transformation" in Hamlet's manner and appearance. As Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been sent so that the King and Queen may better understand the reasons for Hamlet's distress. Gertrude, unable to distinguish between the two, addresses both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and lets them know how fondly Hamlet thinks of them and how grateful both she and her husband are for their arrival.

► Rosencrantz's
dilemma

Attendants come so that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may visit Hamlet immediately. However, before they can exit, however, Polonius (the King's advisor) enters and says that he has found out the cause of "Hamlet's lunacy." Polonius, the King and Queen exit before Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hear the reason. Once gone, Rosencrantz immediately lets Guildenstern know of his discomfort and desire to go home. Rosencrantz is disturbed by the ever-present uncertainty he feels within the court. Here, he is not even certain of his name. Guildenstern comforts Rosencrantz by telling him to relax and to allow the events to play out for themselves. He also tries to explain Rosencrantz's dilemma on a philosophical level. Guildenstern explains that what was once an innate fact becomes subject to question when the very nature of how one perceives the world changes. When Rosencrantz suggests that they go looking for Hamlet, Guildenstern convinces Rosencrantz to stay where they have been "placed" and pass time by playing a Game of Questions. The object of the game is to carry on a coherent conversation without making a statement. In this trite game, they breach deep questions regarding their identity and the purpose of their existence.

Hamlet passes by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and they briefly debate whether or not they recognise him and how he has changed. They attempt to put the "question" game to practical use without much success. Guildenstern is pretending to be Hamlet so that they can



rehearse for their interrogation. However, Rosencrantz does not catch on very quickly, and much confusion ensues before they are able to glean any new information from the exercise. By the end of the game, they are able to summarise the plot of Hamlet. Rosencrantz says, “To sum up: your [Hamlet’s] father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped onto his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice.” With the successful completion of the exercise, Rosencrantz confuses their identities once again. Hamlet enters backward as he aggravates Polonius with senseless verbal play. Polonius eventually leaves. At the end of the scene, Hamlet enthusiastically greets his dear friends but also mistakes their identities.

► Game of Questions

Act II

The scene begins with the conclusion of a dialogue between Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Hamlet in Act II, Scene II of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. “I am simply insane north-northwest; when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw,” Hamlet says in an indecipherable tongue, as Polonius enters. Polonius is attempting to alert Hamlet of the arrival of the Player’s company, but Hamlet first avoids Polonius by indulging in meaningless conversation with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

► Hamlet’s quirkiness

After Hamlet and Polonius have left, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are able to reflect on the success of their lengthy conversation with Hamlet. Unfortunately, even after rehearsing the game of questions, Hamlet gets the best of them by evading most of their inquiries. The score was 27-3: Hamlet asked 27 questions and only answered three of them. For example, when Hamlet asks them, “Were you sent for?” they fail to evade the question and instead answer it directly. Guildenstern tries to compensate for their defeat by noting that they were able to observe his symptoms. Guildenstern makes an impromptu verdict of “thwarted ambition - a sense of grievance, that’s my diagnosis.” Rosencrantz, however, swiftly deflates Guildenstern’s half-hearted optimism. In return for the information they have given, they have only gleaned that Hamlet is depressed and does not like living in Denmark. Guildenstern begins to ponder Hamlet’s final words before Polonius enters (“I am but

► Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s Game of Questions with Hamlet

mad north-west; when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw"). Since the true meaning of the lines is completely incomprehensible to them, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern begin to argue about how to determine the direction of the wind by first determining the direction of the sun.

They get lost in the maze of intricacy, and at the end of their dispute, they are no closer to understanding Hamlet's meaning. Rosencrantz, having realised that attempting to begin the following stages is fruitless, resorts to passing the time with the vanishing coin magic act. The action resumes in the middle of their game as Polonius, Hamlet, and the group arrive. Hamlet has privately requested that the players perform a rendition of *The Murder of Gonzago* that he has altered. The Player confronts Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about leaving the performance they delivered while on the road after noticing them standing to the side. He is unhappy because performing without an audience is embarrassing to him. The Player then delivers a lengthy lecture about the nature of acting emphasising the importance of observation. After further inquiry, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern learn that the Players will perform *The Murder of Gonzago* for Hamlet and are given a preview of the play's plot: the blood, passion, and grandiosity of a King and Queen.

- The Player's grievance and the drama of blood and love

"I should concentrate on avoiding losing your heads," the Player says as he attempts to leave, foreshadowing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths. However, Guildenstern begs him to stay, admitting his discomfort at being in court and his lack of understanding of what is going on. The Player tells Guildenstern not to constantly examine his situation, but rather to relax and adapt as the scenario unfolds. Then Guildenstern protests that he has no way of knowing whether what he has been taught about Hamlet is accurate. The Player reassures him that all have to rely on assumptions and then assists him in learning more about Hamlet. They decide that Hamlet is truly sane but is acting insane. The Player motions to go, but Guildenstern refuses to let him unless he provides a compelling cause for his departure. The Player answers that he has to practise his lines.

- Hamlet's sanity

With no other entrances, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seek to entertain themselves but discover that the coin



► The missing coin

they played with earlier is missing. With this discovery, the conversation turns to the subject of death. Rosencrantz does not grasp why people get depressed about the idea; he believes it is like lying asleep in a box. And if given a choice, he would rather lie in a box dead than alive. Guildenstern contributes little to the conversation as Rosencrantz continues talking about the banality of eternity and when one actually gains an “intuition of mortality.”

► The royal procession

The royal procession arrives, led by the King, Queen, Polonius and Ophelia. Gertrude strikes up a discussion with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, wondering about their meeting with Hamlet. Rosencrantz embellishes the facts while describing Hamlet’s openness to them. They do, however, tell Gertrude the truth about Hamlet’s excitement for the play that is about to be presented. Polonius supports their claim, and the King presses them once again to persuade Hamlet to attend the play. After the royal procession leaves, Rosencrantz declares his annoyance about having been inconvenienced by these entrances and exits. Rosencrantz then sees Hamlet upstage, and Guildenstern becomes preoccupied with how they will initiate a conversation with Hamlet—or rather, “insert” themselves into the scene. Rosencrantz moves toward Hamlet, but he falters at the last moment, saying, “We’re overawed; that’s our trouble. “When it comes to the point, we succumb to their personality.” Ophelia enters a religious procession. Hamlet greets her, and they exit. Rosencrantz regains his courage and decides to surprise the Queen by sneaking up behind her and placing his hands over her eyes, but the figure turns out to be Alfred, dressed in a robe and blonde wig.

The Player enters the scene and remains still when he comes face to face with Rosencrantz. The Player elevates his foot as Rosencrantz excuses himself. The Player steps on Rosencrantz’s hand as he places it on the floor. Rosencrantz is disturbed by the scenario and seeks to flee, but each of his attempts is thwarted by an actor making an entrance. Rosencrantz ultimately surrenders and retires. The company begins their dress rehearsal, led by the Player. They begin with a stupid performance in which a king is poisoned in his sleep by his brother. When the queen discovers that her husband has died, she is consoled by her brother, and the brother

► The dumb-show

and the queen marry. Ophelia's weeping interrupts the dumb-show. Hamlet declares that there shall be no more marriages and orders her become a nun. After observing Hamlet, Claudius concludes that Hamlet is not in love with Ophelia—or even insane. Claudius resolves to transfer Hamlet to England in order to protect him from the repercussions of his actual sentiments.

► Plight of Lucianus

The Player confers with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern concerning the critique of the dumb-show. During that conversation, the Player once again alludes to the deaths of “marked characters.” Guildenstern tries to elicit the Player's message, but he does not completely comprehend it. The Player's dumb-show continues. The next scene is a gratuitous love session between the Queen and the new King. The scenario is objectionable to Rosencrantz since the subject is improper for a royal audience. The Player convinces him that murder, seduction and incest are exactly what his audience wants to witness. The Player takes on the role of Lucianus while acting and narrating. Lucianus is the new King's nephew who, enraged by his mother's illicit marriage, contemplates suicide and murders Polonius. In grief, Lucianus confronts his mother. The king, plagued with remorse, decides to send Lucianus to England via two spies carrying a message. Lucianus eludes the two spies and modifies the letter. Instead of Lucianus, the letter now commands the murders of the two spies.

Rosencrantz interrupts the dumb-show and approaches the two actors playing the spies, who are dressed identically to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They are both perplexed but do not grasp that they are the two spies. The Player again foreshadows their deaths, saying, “A slaughterhouse - eight corpses all told.” Instead of enquiring about the identity of the eight people who die, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern embark on a rant on the differences between actual and theatrical death. Guildenstern doubts that an actor can die so many times and yet be believable, but the Player asserts that the audience is trained to believe in death on stage. He offers an example of how he once chose to hang an actor for real during a death scene and realised that the audience did not think this tragic death was real, instead of feeling that it was lousy acting. Guildenstern disputes the Player's argument that you may act out death, arguing that acting



- Acting is a man's failure to reappear

is a man's inability to return. The scene concludes when Guildenstern says this and two cloaks are put over the two spies in the play.

The lights fade, and when they are turned back on, the two spies are still sprawled on the stage. Upon closer examination, however, the two figures are revealed to be those of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, resting. Claudius enters and informs them that they must find Hamlet and the body of Polonius as Hamlet, in a rage, has killed Polonius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot agree as to whether they should search for him together, or split up. They spot Hamlet dragging Polonius' body and try to trap him, but Hamlet effortlessly evades them. Rosencrantz calls out to Hamlet, asking him where he has put the body, but Hamlet refuses to tell them and derides them for spying on him and assigning their loyalty to the King. Hamlet spots the King, and, in order to avoid him, bows, thus smoothly evading Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at the same time. Claudius inquires about the location of the body, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unable to give him an answer. Claudius then demands that they produce Hamlet, and the two stand awkwardly, unsure of what to do. Luckily, a messenger brings in Hamlet, saving Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from the King's wrath. Rosencrantz is relieved, mistakenly believing that they are relieved of their duty and do not have to see Hamlet again. However, they discover that they must escort Hamlet to England. While Hamlet is conversing with a soldier, they discuss whether they truly want to go to England, and wonder whether this task will in reality free them from the whole ordeal.

- Death of Polonius and Hamlet's missing

Act III

The action begins in darkness, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern trying to figure out where they are. They believe they are dead, but Guildenstern swiftly dispels that worry by pinching Rosencrantz. They realise they are aboard a boat after hearing multiple instructions. They then try to ascertain whether it is night or day and come to the conclusion that it is a day. Guildenstern then rambles on about how he like boats and feels secure in them. He has a moment of clarity: they are "bearing a letter from one king to another; they are taking Hamlet to England." At this point, they make sure they can locate Hamlet, who is sleeping.

- The boat



Rosencrantz and Guildenstern then begin to play a game where one guesses which hand the coins are in. The sight of the money sparks an argument about how much each got paid to escort Hamlet. They conclude that they are being paid the same because the King cannot distinguish between the two. Rosencrantz then begins to frantically search for the letter the King gave him when Guildenstern calmly reveals that it was given to him. They read the letter and discover that it orders Hamlet's death. As Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are speaking, Hamlet blows out the light. As they sleep, Hamlet swaps the letters. Morning arrives, and Rosencrantz tries to discern the direction they are going in based on the position of the sun. They both hear music and try to discern where it is coming from. They discover that it is the Player's troupe, which is hiding in barrels because their play offended the King. Hamlet appears, spits into the audience, and then wipes his eyes. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern try to discern from his actions whether he is mad or not. In the midst of their conversation, a group of pirates attacks. Hamlet, the Player, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern all jump into different barrels to hide. The lights go out, and when they come back, Hamlet's barrel has swapped positions with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's. Hamlet, it seems, is missing. This event sparks a discussion with the Player about whether Hamlet is dead.

► The letter

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have to remain satisfied with not knowing what truly happened to Hamlet. They are resigned to the fact that he is dead and they cannot gain their release without him. Rosencrantz tries to comfort his friend by saying that they only need to arrive in England and make their report, and they will be released, but Guildenstern does not believe any of it. Guildenstern reads the letter and discovers that their names have been substituted for Hamlet's. Guildenstern is angry at their predicament because they have been told so little. The Player asserts that they know enough and seem content with their imminent deaths because, for actors, most things end in death. Guildenstern becomes enraged that this actor is presumptuous enough to instruct him about life and stabs the Player with his own dagger. The Player dies, only to get up again and reveal that he was acting. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, tired and frustrated, resign themselves to the idea of their deaths.

► Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's predicament



3.1.3 Characterisation

Guildenstern: Rosencrantz's best friend is Guildenstern. He is the more pessimistic of the titular team, attempting to maintain sanity and reason despite their existential dilemma.

Rosencrantz: Guildenstern's best friend is Rosencrantz. He is upbeat, simple-minded, and easily distracted, and he frequently draws emotional and intellectual cues from Guildenstern.

Player: The leader of a hungry band of wandering tragedians who appears to pursue Ros and Guil throughout the play.

Alfred: He is the only one of the tragedians who had a name. He is generally cast in feminine roles.

Tragedians: Hamlet's troupe of actors recruited to play in Elsinore. Their poverty forces them into prostitution.

Hamlet: The prince of Denmark and Ros and Guil's former schoolmate. The pair is called in to spy on Hamlet, whose sanity has been called into doubt as a result of his uncle marrying his mother after murdering his father, the former king.

Ophelia: Polonius' daughter and Laertes' sister. She was once Hamlet's prospective bride, but his treatment of her drives her to despair.

Claudius: The King of Denmark, and Hamlet's uncle and stepfather. He slew his brother, the former king, and married his brother's wife, assuming the kingdom while Hamlet was away. He is the one who dispatches Ros and Guil.

Gertrude: Denmark's Queen and Hamlet's mother. She is disturbed by Hamlet's strange behaviour, but she is oblivious of her husband's wicked intentions.

Polonius: An old and clumsy but well-intentioned King's counsellor. Hamlet kills him by mistake.

Summarised Overview

Thomas Straussler was the birth name of Tom Stoppard. He is a playwright and screenwriter from the United Kingdom whose work is distinguished by verbal brilliance, inventive action and structural agility. Stoppard's works often reveal a growing concern with both the abuse of freedom and the nature of love. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), which premiered at the Edinburgh Festival in 1966 and was picked up by the National Theatre a year later, brought him fame and money. The play is based on Stoppard's favourite collision pattern: two minor characters from Shakespeare's tragedy, unsure of their own identities and spending the time flipping coins and playing word games, collide with the seemingly unexplained public events that comprise Hamlet. The acceptance of death by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern towards the end of the play as a means of realising their actual identities is nonetheless profoundly moving.

Assignments

1. Examine the significance of the 'Tragedians' performance. How does it influence the audience's overall comprehension of Stoppard's play?
2. Analyse Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's growth as characters during the play.
3. Consider how the play employs foreshadowing in light of its portrayal of the universe as ultimately random and chaotic.

Suggested Readings

1. Spurgeon, Caroline F. E. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. Cambridge UP, 2004.
2. Wilson, Dover J. *What Happens in Hamlet*. Cambridge UP, 1935



Reference

1. Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Faber, 2013.
2. Mattern, Karl. *Analysis of 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'*, GRIN Verlag, 2007.
3. Gale. *A Study Guide for Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Creative, 2017.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

1.



Unit 2

Shylock is My Name

Howard Jacobson

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ familiarise themselves with Howard Jacobson and his works
- ▶ critically examine and contrast the novel with Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*
- ▶ critically examine the questions of identity, parenthood, anti-Semitism, and revenge in the novel
- ▶ comprehend the irony in the portrayal of Shylock

Background

Shylock is My Name by Howard Jacobson was published in 2016. It is a reimagining of the Shakespearean persona Shylock from the play *The Merchant of Venice*. He re-examines Shakespeare's Shylock through the lens of his connection with Simon Strulovitch, a wealthy Jewish philanthropist residing in the Golden Triangle near Manchester. Aside from a lack of explanation for how the sixteenth-century Venetian Jew has translated into a modern-day Mancunian, this novel only delivers a vague suggestion that the story's Shylock is a reimagining of Shakespeare's Jewish moneylender. This reworking provides a comprehensive overview or assertions about the current Shylock that readers who are familiar with the original material may eventually identify as features belonging to Shakespeare's character. It is expressly stated that Shylock is a Jewish figure with a sarcastic and quick-witted appearance. It is also revealed that his daughter Jessica left him to marry a Christian guy. Finally, there are references to his being a widower from the beginning of the novel: it is said that his wife's name is Leah and that she has passed away. The intertextual relationship with the play sharpens the focus of the story without appearing to be a limitation; Jacobson has taken tremendous liberties with Shakespeare's original, making the connection anything but derivative. *Shylock is My Name* is one of Jacobson's most innovative and fascinating novels.

Keywords

Patriarchy, Philanthropist, Abandonment, Circumcision, Overprotective



3.2.1 Discussion

► Linking Shylock and Strulovitch

Shylock and his future companion, Strulovitch, meet at a cemetery in South Manchester, where the former is conversing beside the tomb of his wife. From this point on, the narrative intertwines the two characters' lives to the point that Strulovitch may be called Shylock's duplicate. Furthermore, the crafting of these double characteristics allows Jacobson to present an in-depth and creative portrayal of Shakespeare's Shylock as a devoted parent.

► Similarities and contrast between Shylock and Strulovitch

The first piece of evidence points to a close link between Strulovitch and Shylock, in their first portrayal as angry-looking people. The former is defined as a “wealthy, angry, easily upset philanthropist with on-again, off-again enthusiasms” for Shakespeare. The external narrator presents the latter as “an enraged and temperamental Jew, but his wrath leans more to the sarcastic than the mercurial”. Both of them are portrayed as melancholy personalities, which foreshadows the fact that they have been damaged. In the instance of Jacobson's Shylock, this sense of depreciation parallels that of Shakespeare's Jew, who is characterised by a bleak and resentful demeanour. However, there is a significant contrast in mood between Strulovitch and his friend. Whereas Strulovitch is said to have an unpredictably fluctuating temper, Shylock is more quirky than unreasonable. The latter's witty characteristic is essential for comprehending how this tale portrays Shylock positively: eventually, Shylock's cleverness aids in making him an exceptional counsel to the Jewish benefactor.

Throughout the narrative, one factor enhances the link between the two protagonists: their situation as fathers who are alone and responsible for raising a daughter. Unlike Shylock's wife, who died, Strulovitch's second wife had a stroke on Beatrice's fourteenth birthday and has been unable to speak effectively since. Despite their efforts to raise their daughters, both are finally betrayed—these female characters elope with two Christians. In the instance of Shylock's Jessica, she had already gone with Lorenzo by the time the story begins. Strulovitch's Beatrice plans to elope with Gratan Howsome, a Christian footballer who, to make matters worse, is said to have given the Nazi salute on the field. After their daughters abandoned them, neither of them found someone to



► Associating Shylock's parenthood with Strulovitch

depend on. Both of them feel powerless in society, but the story suggests that Christians should be more sympathetic to them and, at the very least, comprehend their pain. Shylock admits to Strulovitch in their first talk as friends that they lack charity. Children mocked him as he went out into the streets, shouting out for Jessica. No kind Christian parent ever dragged them home and chastised them for their brutality. Similarly, his doppelganger Strulovitch is sometimes shown as a disgruntled man with a grudge against the art importer D'Anton: this gay art merchant is implicated in Beatrice's elopement with the Christian sportsman, undercutting the grief that the Jewish father is expected to experience.

► The patriarchy and overprotectiveness

In terms of the reasons why the daughters have abandoned their parents, the novel makes no explicit mention of Jessica's abandonment of Shylock; the sole speech made by the notoriously quiet Jew regarding this occurrence is the following: "Jessica was taken from me. After Leah's ring was stolen." According to this remark, Jessica's elopement was inspired by his father's patriarchal mentality, as he considered her as a belonging to be equated with his wife's ring. This phrase may be deceptive since it indicates that Shylock may still be represented as a materialistic man in this twenty-first-century rewrite. However, as we will see later, the story gives ample proof that Shylock is far from a greedy guy. In the case of Beatrice, Strulovitch has spoilt her, and Shylock observes this from the start of his connection with the benefactor. Furthermore, he has evolved into an overprotective father who eventually overwhelms Beatrice and limits her independence.

The philanthropist is described throughout the narrative as a somewhat domineering parent who does everything to protect her. In chapter eight, for example, there is a narratorial statement pointing to Strulovitch's dominant attitude. "Untrue what Strulovitch said about not exactly tailing his daughter." It is hinted that he is continually spying on her, and the story goes on to provide a brief description of how he chastises her for allegedly squandering both his and her mother's hopes for her: "She was throwing that promise away. On boys who were beneath her. On crazes that demeaned her. On drinks and drugs, she didn't need. On music that didn't merit a second of her attention." This patronising attitude on

► Strulovitch's over-protective attitude

Strulovitch's behalf is harmful to Beatrice, as exposed later in the following extract: "She tried to remember a time when he hadn't pursued her, dragged her out of parties, punched her boyfriends [...]. Look what you're doing to me. You're killing me." Beatrice has acquired a sense of rebelliousness as a result of her father's overprotective attitude, which has prompted her choice to leave.

► Strulovitch and Shylock's concern for their daughters

Contrary to such an initially negative portrayal of these two fathers, there are hints throughout the novel that their somewhat patriarchal attitude is accounted for by their love for their daughters. This is the case with the following narratorial remark: "The universe decreed that fathers should love their daughters not wisely but too well. And that daughters should hate them for it." This quotation strengthens these dads' love, which manifests as an emotion that has become so strong that it has become overpowering for their daughters. Strulovitch and Shylock's caring natures are bolstered by a purported speech that openly mentions their fatherliness: "We are not the slightest bit alike, he thought, except in what we feel for our daughters." This remark reflects Strulovitch's opinion that, no matter how different they are, they both care for their daughters.

In the instance of Shylock, he reveals his feelings towards Jessica in a significant chapter that demonstrates how this work challenges the tired stereotype of Shylock as a callous father: "I half expect to hear from my too dear daughter every hour. I buried her in my heart the day she left, but a daughter doesn't stay buried. Even a daughter that steals her father's most precious possession." Even if he is still upset with her for taking Leah's ring, he admits to caring for her. This is heightened by his want to hear from her. Furthermore, later in the chat, he expresses regret to her: "She found living in a Jewish house something worse than a prison." The story transforms Shakespeare's harsh Jew into a contemplative man who fully understands Jessica's decision to elope. This good picture is bolstered by Shylock's rapport with his twin, a patronising father who eventually admits to being too protective. Strulovitch mulls about something with his adviser Shylock: "I cannot be said to have protected her if she runs away." When his friend advises him to explain his motives, the art dealer replies, "I behave like a barbarian, Beatrice, because I love you?" As stated expressly, the work does

- The reimagining of Shakespeare's Shylock as a forgiving father

not blame Shylock as a foolish father but rather highlights his unconditional love for his daughter. This is something that connects Shylock and Strulovitch, and it contributes to a reimagining of Shakespeare's Shylock as a forgiving father who does not prioritise his avarice over his love for Jessica and Leah.

After Strulovitch proclaims that he would not approve of the union between Beatrice and Gratan, Shylock's function as an altruistic advisor achieves its apex. Strulovitch advises him to examine his alternatives, and his companion responds: "And they include sparing [Gratan] the cut?" At this point in the story, the Jewish Shylock suggests that the Christian player be circumcised. Such mutilation may be seen metaphorically as a rite of passage that would allow Gratan to marry Beatrice. Indeed, Shylock's mention of circumcision alludes to Antonio's link with the usurer in Shakespeare's play: "The two men fell naturally to discussing Shylock's own original intentions, vis-à-vis Antonio's flesh. Had his aim been Antonio's privy parts, or Antonio's heart?" This narratorial statement complicates the matter of Antonio's pound of flesh in *The Merchant of Venice*, because the Jew never expressly states which organ he desires. Similarly, this quotation suggests an ambivalence about the flesh of the novel's Christian footballer. This ambiguity may be seen in the reference to the heart, which might refer to either the physical organ or emotions. Such ambiguity is maintained throughout the story in order to heighten tension. Nonetheless, the story eventually emphasises the emotional meaning of the phrase in order to enhance the good portrayal of Shylock. In a conversation between Gratan and D'Anton, for example, the art dealer asks the player if Strulovitch mentioned "circumcision of the heart," and he goes on to claim that he did, "We can be better Christians, St Paul argued, by understanding circumcision metaphorically, not following the letter of the law, but the spirit. We can be circumcised in the heart." In the context of the story, Shylock's proposition might be interpreted as a far-reaching transformation that will benefit all of the individuals involved, particularly Strulovitch as a father and Beatrice as a daughter.

- Shylock's function as an altruistic advisor

Shylock, being a caring and loving parent, understands that Strulovitch's approval of the marriage will make Beatrice happy. After all, she adores Gratan, and her

imminent marriage would mean freedom from the overbearing Strulovitch. Given that the footballer's link is a heart circumcision, Shylock's instruction might be read as an attempt to reconcile the emotional divide between Jews and Christians, not just in the rewriting but also in the source text. Gratan is said to have offered a Nazi salute on the pitch, therefore his circumcision would be the first step toward individual and societal healing between Christians and Jews. D'Anton eventually offers circumcision in place of Gratan as the narrative unfolds. This watershed moment is doubly beneficial for Strulovitch. On the one hand, the probable physical circumcision of his long-standing adversary will allow him to exact revenge for procuring Beatrice for the football star. The emotional mutilation, on the other side, may spark a connection between the previously antagonistic characters: because D'Anton is strongly tied to Beatrice, the formation of such an emotional bond may ameliorate Strulovitch's tense relationship with his adored daughter.

- Societal healing between Christians and Jews

Shylock is finally viewed as an outstanding character by his buddy as the architect of the scheme to draw Strulovitch closer to his daughter. Indeed, the philanthropist develops such feelings for Shylock that he refers to him as "his conscience," and he even refers to the generally cold-natured Jew as his "best man" and "role model." Actually, Shylock is presented as a patient guy whose phlegm and unconditional advice may aid Strulovitch in his desperate endeavour to win Beatrice's affection, even if reconciliation is far from simple. The following proclamation reflects Shylock's generosity: "I don't deny you anything. The man presently cohabiting with your daughter denies you. Your daughter denies you. The opinion of the world denies you." Shylock is resolved not to ignore his buddy, despite his dismal outlook on the success of his plot. This phrase implies that, in addition to the aforementioned fatherly feature, this work emphasises Shylock's greatness as a human being.

- Shylock as a mentor to Strulovitch

This humanism is acknowledged not only by Strulovitch, but also by a friend of Beatrice's named Plurabelle, who was in charge of carrying a letter from D'Anton to Strulovitch: "You looked so forbidding when you opened the door to me at Simon Strulovitch's I didn't dream you could be capable of such humanity." As stated in the statement, the work succeeds to transform

Shakespeare's Shylock from an outsider to be ignored into a powerful and respected individual who, in addition to being a devoted parent, demonstrates compassion in his relationships with others. Shylock's excellent image of Plurabelle is bolstered by a statement given by the Jew before to D'Anton's admittance to the clinic. Shylock emphasises the quality of kindness in this discourse, "You can act in the spirit of God's love, show charity [...], spare the undeserving, love those that do not love you." The disinterested affection amongst humans underlined in his words might be contrasted with the Jew's avarice and malice in *The Merchant of Venice*. Instead, Jacobson helps to elevate Shylock's status as a genuinely emotional guy who can connect with his audience and, most crucially, has promoted a possibly greater link between Strulovitch and his daughter. A full reconciliation between father and daughter has not yet been achieved by the end of the tale. Strulovitch believes that this is more than enough for him when Beatrice decides to return home.

- Shylock as a powerful and respectful figure

Summarised Overview

Howard Eric Jacobson is a novelist and journalist from the United Kingdom. He is well-known for his comedy books, which frequently centre on the challenges of British Jewish people; comparable situations may be found in this story as well. In this bold and insightful retelling of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock is pitted against his modern-day equivalent, art dealer and troubled parent Simon Strulovitch. Jacobson portrays Shylock as a man of keen wit and passion, still preoccupied with issues of identity, fatherhood, anti-Semitism, and vengeance, with remarkable sarcasm.

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast Shakespeare's Shylock and Howard Jacobson's Strulovitch.
2. How does Howard Jacobson's work examine Jewish identity while retaining a true spiritual affinity with its forerunner?

Suggested Readings

1. Kermode, Frank. *Introduction. Shakespeare's Language*. Straus, 1998. 3-24.
2. Spurgeon, Caroline F. E. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us*. 1935. Cambridge UP, 2004.

References

1. "Book Note: Shylock is my Name" *Bardfilm*, 2017. <http://bardfilm.blogspot.com/2017/03/book-note-shylock-is-my-name.html>
2. Herman, Judi. "Review: Shylock is My Name – Howard Jacobson's gift for comedy glisters pure gold" *Jewish Renaissance*, 2016. <https://www.jewishrenaissance.org.uk/blog/review-shylock-is-my-name>.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 3

Ran

Akira Kurosawa

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ familiarise themselves with Akira Kurosawa and his works
- ▶ examine and contrast the film with Shakespeare's *King Lear*
- ▶ analyse the visual representation of the characters
- ▶ examine the role of violence in the culmination of the story

Background

Ran, a 1985 historical film directed by Akira Kurosawa, is based on William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and incorporates sequences based on the legends of daimyō Mōri Motonari. In the film, Tatsuya Nakadai plays Hidetora Ichimonji, an elderly Sengoku-period warlord who resolves to abdicate in favour of his three sons. *Ran*, like much of Kurosawa's work from the 1970s and 1980s, is a joint Japanese-French production produced by Herald Ace, Nippon Herald Films, and Greenwich Film Productions. Kurosawa got the idea for *Ran* in the mid-1970s after reading about Motonari, who was famed for having three extremely devoted sons. Kurosawa designed a scenario in which the sons oppose their father. Although the film was greatly influenced by Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, Kurosawa began utilising it only after he had begun work on *Ran*. *Ran* was Kurosawa's third association with Shakespeare's works. Kurosawa directed *Throne of Blood*, a film based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in 1957. He directed the *Hamlet*-inspired picture *The Bad Sleep Well* in 1960. Despite the differences in setting and language, all three films have garnered positive reviews. Kurosawa's last epic, *Ran*, is widely recognised as one of the best films ever produced and is frequently cited as one of his finest works. The film's strong imagery and use of colour were praised.

Keywords

Excommunicate, Ascend, Seduce, Revenge, Treachery, Insult



3.3.1 Discussion

Akira Kurosawa's 1985 epic *Ran*, which means "chaos," is partially based on Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The narrative opens with Ichimonji, a warlord, and his three sons hunting a wild boar. The warlord kills the boar and then falls asleep, having a vision of himself travelling alone in the world. After years of deliberation, Ichimonji feels that this vision indicates that the moment has come to delegate power to one of his sons. He passes his property and authority to Taro, his eldest son, and just requests that his sons guard him till his death. Saburo, the youngest son, thinks this is ridiculous since his siblings are not the type of tranquil individuals required to bring in a new era. Ichimonji excommunicates Saburo for his remarks, judging him to be irreverent and rude. Taro's bride, Kaede, is the daughter of a family Ichimonji slaughtered in order to steal their land and castle. Kaede manipulates her husband to push Taro's father away from their castle and steal the crown after Taro has gained power.

► Ichimonji's vision

After being exiled, Ichimonji takes refuge at the Second Castle with his middle son, Jiro. Jiro, on the other hand, wants to topple Taro and deliberately refuses to let his father inside his house. As a result, Ichimonji begins to traverse the enormous land with just his devoted advisor, Tango, and his fool, Kyoami. Taro and Jiro's army slaughter all of Ichimonji's warriors as they flee to the Third Castle for sanctuary. Jiro also assassinates Taro in order to take the kingdom. In the middle of this commotion, Ichimonji becomes insane and walks off into the countryside by himself.

► Ichimonji's exile

Jiro ascends to the throne, and Taro's widow, Kaede, threatens to disclose his murder of Taro if he does not allow her to remain in court and marry him. She seduces him and asks that he assassinate his present wife, Lady Sué. Meanwhile, Saburo discovers his father's whereabouts and arrives to save him. Saburo arrives with his warriors, while Jiro appears on the battlefield with his army. Jiro permits Saburo to discover and take their father, but it is all a ruse to draw Saburo onto his farm and kill him. Saburo is slain immediately after discovering Ichimonji. Ichimonji succumbs to madness shortly after.

► The trap

Meanwhile, Jiro's army has been besieged by Lord Ayabe's army, another warlord aiming to depose Jiro.

► Kaede's revenge

Kurogane, Jiro's right-hand man, searches for Kaede, who admits to creating these events to wreak revenge on Ichimonji for the murder of her family. Kurogane slashes her head off as Jiro prepares to be slaughtered by Ayabe's soldiers.

3.3.2 Part 1

The picture begins with four warriors on horseback riding across the Japanese countryside during the Middle Ages. We notice a number of wild boars roaming through the long grass, which the soldiers on horseback pursue, attempting to kill them down with bows and arrows. The troops sit and eat in a nearby camp. Lord Hidetora Ichimonji, the elderly warlord, has slain the wild boar, and the warriors toast his victory. They talk about the hunt, and one of Ichimonji's sons asks if they should prepare the boar and eat it in the camp. "He was a really elderly animal. His carcass is too rough and filthy." Ichimonji compares the boar to himself and asks his followers whether they would eat him. The other warlords who have gone on the hunt then answer that they have come on the hunt to strengthen the bonds between their houses. One of the warlords, Ayabe, informs Ichimonji that he wishes to marry his daughter to one of Ichimonji's sons. The warlord seated next to Ayabe shares Ayabe's desire to marry his daughter to one of Ichimonji's sons and requests that Ichimonji make a selection among them.

► Ichimonji's comparison of boar

Ichimonji mentions that his second son, Jiro, is already married but says nothing further about it. One of Ichimonji's sons summons Kyoami, the fool, to amuse the party. Kyoami appears and does an elaborate rabbit show, much to the joy of the warriors. During the performance, the youngest son, Saburo, makes a statement to Kyoami that everyone agrees is incredibly impolite. Ichimonji falls asleep while sitting, and everyone decides to take a little break. "It's not like Father to sleep in front of esteemed visitors," Jiro comments to Taro, the eldest son, before concluding that Saburo's interjection must have humiliated Ichimonji. As everyone looks on, Saburo chops some branches from a nearby shrub and places them next to Ichimonji to shade him from the sun.

► Saburo's humiliation of Ichimonji

Everyone moves to the other side of a tent, where Jiro and Taro debate how their father has never fallen asleep like this before. They order Kyoami to wake up



Ichimonji, but Ichimonji runs from the opposite side of the tent, appearing distressed. He sits down and informs the group that he has had a vision in which he is alone in the forest. Suddenly, he bursts out laughing and tells them that he heard Taro's voice calling him back and saw his three children. Saburo is worried about his father's illness and retreats in terror. Ichimonji takes a seat in front of his sons and the lords, Fujimaki and Ayabe, to deliver an announcement. He gathers a crowd around him and delivers a speech. He mentions being born in a neighbouring castle during a period of near-constant fighting. "When I was only 17 years old, I raised my banner over that castle, and for 50 long years I waged war." He then abruptly declares that he wishes to hand over leadership of his kingdom to Taro, his eldest son and that he will relocate to the outer tower. "I will retain an escort of 30 men as my personal guard, and I will also retain the title and insignia of Great Lord," he said.

► Ichimonji's vision and speech

As Jiro asks his father what will become of him and Saburo, the peasants all bow in devotion to Ichimonji. He informs them that the Second and Third Castles will be their responsibility. Taro abruptly bows in front of his father, insisting that the burden of managing the kingdom is too heavy for him and that he is unfit for the job. Saburo laughs that Taro is merely saying these things to impress their father, but Jiro shares Taro's devout demeanour.

► Taro's flattery

Ichimonji orders Kyoami to bring arrows, which he distributes to his boys one at a time, instructing them to break them in half. He then hands his sons three arrows wrapped in a bundle and instructs them to cut the package in half. He informs them that if they work together, they would be able to break it, as Saburo grabs the bundle and smashes it over his knee. "More of your foolishness," Ichimonji says, as Saburo tries to talk back to his father, calling him senile. "How dare you insult your father," Ichimonji says, and Saburo responds that they dwell in "a world barren of any loyalty, a world without any feeling." He belittles his father for ruthlessly slaying so many people throughout the years. He accuses his father of being senile and dumb for trusting his sons, despite the fact that he raised them to be mercenary fighters.

► Saburo belittles Ichimonji

Ichimonji is taken aback and labels Saburo a traitor. Saburo maintains that he is merely attempting to protect



► Saburo and Tango's banishment

his father from his siblings' treachery, but this infuriates Ichimonji even more. Saburo maintains that the lesson with the three arrows was a waste of time since the brothers are not together. Ichimonji is enraged and exiles Saburo from the kingdom, implying that he has spoiled him by loving him more than his siblings. Tango, one of the noblemen, speaks up for Saburo, claiming that he is truthful and true. Ichimonji grows enraged and seizes a blade from Kyoami, banishing Tango and Saburo. Tango, who is alone in a field, asks Saburo what he intends to do. Saburo maintains that he is more concerned about his father than himself. When a troop of soldiers approaches, he tells Tango he's an idiot for speaking up. Saburo and Tango flee, followed by troops.

► Ichimonji's loss of power

In actuality, their pursuers have no malicious intent. Given his brave show in front of his father, one of the noblemen, Fujimaki, says that he wishes to marry his daughter to Saburo. He invites Saburo and Tango to his home, but Tango declines, preferring to go in disguise to serve Ichimonji. Lady Kaede, Taro's wife, receives news from Ichimonji's concubines that they are leaving the palace but obstructing her retinue. She tells him to get rid of them and declares herself the lady of the castle. Meanwhile, Ichimonji observes from above as the messenger separates the concubines for Lady Kaede. "This is unacceptable. My ladies bowing before Taro's wife?" Ichimonji tells his adviser. Kyoami does a dance and appears to mock Ichimonji, implying that he was a fool to lose his castle.

Taro and Kaede are now at their new home in the castle. He informs her that he handed the armour and flag that once hung in these apartments to the people, but she believes that the banner should remain in the home. He informs Kaede that his father wants to retain all of his insignia, but Kaede insists that if they do not retain the visual insignia of his father's rule, they will be nothing more than a ghost of the former court. He rushes to retrieve the family banner after she shames him for not being more aggressive. As a quarrel breaks out among the subjects over the return of the banner, Kyoami makes light of the situation and is pursued by one of them. However, as soon as the subject pursues the idiot, he is struck by an arrow and falls to his death. The subjects glance up to see that Ichimonji shot the arrow that killed



► Kaede's plotting

his subject. That night, in front of a fire, Kyoami performs a humorous dance for the subjects and Ichimonji, mocking the kingdom's power struggle, notably Taro's subdued authority. Suddenly, a messenger comes, announcing Taro's gathering to commemorate the transfer of power. He invites Ichimonji and his assistant, and they proceed to see Taro and Kaede.

3.3.3 Part II

► Taro takes control

When Ichimonji comes, only Taro and Kaede are there, and he is startled by the tiny size of the party. Kaede offers him to sit on a cushion underneath them, and he is offended, insisting that he is still the Lord and Master, even if he has handed away his fortress. Finally, he sits, and Taro reminds him that he has given up his authority and that his father's guards are misbehaving, alluding to Kyoami's mocking song about him. "They are simple soldiers without courtly manners," Ichimonji argues that these are simply foolish songs. "Comic songs can go too far," Taro remarks brusquely, referring to the fact that Ichimonji killed his guard that afternoon while the guard was defending him against mockery. He instructs his father to sign a respect pact and seal it with his blood. Ichimonji is enraged to accept a commitment handing up all of his authority to Taro.

► Kaede's vengeance

"Everything in it you yourself declared in front of Lord Ayabe and also Lord Fujimaki, both very honorable witnesses," The assistant declares, implying that it makes no practical difference. Ichimonji violently signs it and seals it with his blood. "Is this the attitude of a son to his father?" Ichimonji inquires of Taro, implying that Kaede has put him up to it. He comes up and declares that he will be moving in with his other son, Jiro. Kaede informs the assistant that he performed well when Ichimonji leaves. Kaede and Taro are silent for a bit before Kaede says anything, "I was born and raised in this castle. It belonged to my father. But I left it in order to marry you. After the marriage, my father and brothers relaxed their vigilance. Then, they were all murdered by your father, Hidetora. And now, I am back here in this castle, seized from my family. How impatiently I have longed for this day." She then points out the location where her mother committed suicide.



- Jiro resolves to challenge his brother

Jiro gets a letter at his castle informing him that Ichimonji is on his way there. Jiro explains, "Taro chased him out of the First Castle. He says Father's become eccentric." He mentions his father's counsellor, Ikoma, who is now Taro's special advisor, and says that allowing Ichimonji to visit there would be a bad idea. Taro, according to Jiro's counsellors, is behaving very disrespectfully, and Jiro should be the one to take the crown from his father. "You ought to seize the opportunity," one of them urges, and Jiro resolves to challenge his brother, who is just 12 months elder, for the kingdom. Jiro claims that the problem is not Taro, but Kaede, when one of his advisors proposes that he try to steal Kaede from Taro. He dismisses this concept but recommends that when his father and his 30 warriors arrive, they must beat them.

- Jiro offends Ichimonji by instructing him to apologise

Ichimonji comes to Jiro's, where the staff welcomes him. As they enter, Ichimonji informs one of the helpers that he wishes to talk with Jiro's wife, Lady Sué. He seeks Sué in a little cottage, but she is not there. She is standing somewhere else, watching the sunset and praying to Buddha. Ichimonji approaches her and speaks to her, recognising her sorrowful demeanour and apologising for killing her entire family. He tells her, "You should look upon me with hatred. It would be far easier to bear." Sué simply says, "I don't hate you. Everything is decided in our previous lives. The heart of Buddha embraces all things." As Jiro approaches them, Ichimonji implies that Buddha is no longer watching after them. Jiro informs his father that he received a letter from Taro stating that Ichimonji's soldiers were extremely rude, and hence he would not allow Ichimonji's guards into his castle. Ichimonji is incensed, implying that he cannot be alone in the castle. Jiro suggests that his father return to Taro's castle and apologise, but Ichimonji is offended.

- Ichimonji realises his mistake

Ichimonji's guards are barred from entering the castle, much to Ichimonji's dismay. He realises Jiro is just as cunning as Taro and instructs Jiro's soldiers to unlock the gates so he may depart. They unlock the gates, and he departs his son's realm, vowing never to see Jiro again. Ichimonji looks for a place to go, but his guards inform him that the peasants have stolen everything and fled to the mountains to avoid them. He listens quietly while an advisor advises him to travel to the Third Castle, but Ichimonji says that he would go if he could, but Saburo's followers would never accept him.



- Soldiers' allegiance to Saburo

Ogura comes to the Third Castle and explains that Taro has granted him control of it. The gates open, and a soldier emerges, saying, "Without our Master Saburo, the castle is nothing to us. We, therefore, leave it to you. We have recently had news that he is staying with Lord Fujimaki, and we are riding out now to join him there." Saburo's warriors depart from the Third Castle in quest of Saburo.

- Ichimonji realises his mistake

Tango returns to Ichimonji's tent with food and bows to his master. He informs Ichimonji that he is still his servant and begs him to accept him back. Ichimonji suddenly orders his soldiers to go murder the peasants, but Tango maintains that the villagers were merely following Taro's orders. Tango tells, "Taro issued a decree that anyone who gives you food or shelter will die." Tango informs Ichimonji that he may travel and remain with Saburo, who is residing with Lord Fujimaki, despite his sad situation. Ichimonji declines, implying that Saburo will never accept him again after what transpired. "Saburo loves you and is always thinking of your welfare," Tango is adamant, telling Ichimonji that Saburo directed him to watch after him. As a messenger arrives to inform them that Saburo's warriors have gone to meet him at Fujimaki's residence, Ichimonji begins to cry.

- Taro and Jiro's trap

According to one of Ichimonji's counsellors, Fujimaki is planning to marry off his daughter in order to gain control of Saburo's men and so cause turmoil in the region before assuming the kingdom himself. Tango is adamant that this is not the case, but the adviser insists on taking Ichimonji to the Third Castle. When Kyoami makes a joke about being killed, Ichimonji punches him and instructs him to stay behind with Tango. Tango and Kyoami spend the evening in the forest. Tango explains that their only sin was telling the truth as Kyoami sobs. Ichimonji comes and spends the night in the Third Castle. He becomes terrified in the middle of the night and flees to check whether there is an invasion going on. Taro and Jiro's forces attack the castle, killing virtually all of Ichimonji's men and setting fire to the fortress. Ichimonji rushes down and discovers one of his troops, injured, who informs him that Ogura and the others duped them into remaining there. As Ichimonji's warriors try to defend him in a high tower, Jiro and Taro's forces defeat the Third Castle. Ichimonji enters a room only to see two ladies committing suicide together, and then climbs to the top of the tallest skyscraper.



3.3.4 Part III

Taro and Jiro make their way to the castle. Taro is shot by one of Jiro's generals, sparking a huge conflict between the two brothers' warriors. Jiro inquires about Ichimonji, and the general informs him that his father will very certainly perform seppuku or ritual suicide. As Ichimonji sits in solitude, burning arrows stream into the tower, presumably driving him insane by the treachery he has undergone. After the battle has stopped, Ichimonji considers killing himself but decides against it. He pauses in the midst of the fires that are engulfing the tower and waits until all of Jiro's warriors have departed before wandering down the stairs and out of the castle, a distressed expression on his face. Soldiers have gathered outside the castle, and they part as he walks through the centre and out into the woods unscathed. Jiro's general tells him to murder his father, but he merely stands there and observes as Ichimonji walks away.

- Ichimonji became insane by the treachery he has undergone

Tango and Kyoami appear, riding a horse toward the Third Castle. They come across Ichimonji in the middle of a stormy field and ride toward him. They prostrate themselves before Ichimonji, who gathers flowers and looks to be insane. Kyoami tells, "In a mad world, only the mad are sane." Ichimonji grows apprehensive after seeing a glimpse of his wicked life. Tango and Kyoami approach a little cottage and want to spend the night. While the villagers first refuse to accept them, they finally force their way in. The owner of the home sits quite motionless inside, not looking up at them. They laid Ichimonji down and asked the homeowner for something to cover him with before realising that the peasant with whom they were staying was blind.

- Being loyal courtiers Tango and Kyoami approach Ichimonji to assist him

Ichimonji awakens, his sanity restored. "Too bad, he was better off mad," Kyoami says, as Ichimonji recounts the fact that Taro and Jiro betrayed him and tried to have him killed. "I'm the one who should have died," he cries, as the peasant drops a blanket on the ground. Tango misidentifies the peasant as a woman, but he corrects him. Tango recognises the peasant as Tsurumaru, Jiro's wife's brother, as they light a fire. Tsurumara claims that Ichimonji burnt down their castle and gouged his eyes out when he was a youngster. "I tried to be like my sister, to pray to Buddha, to rid myself of the hatred that is



- Ichimonji realises his mistakes

always within me, but for a single day, I could not forget. Not one night do I ever sleep in peace.” He says that he has a flute, a present from his sister, and takes it out to play it as a symbol of hospitality. As Tsurumara plays his flute, Ichimonji becomes agitated and falls through the door into the grass outside.

- Jiro’s confession of his brother’s death

Jiro enters the scene, handing Kaede a braid of Taro’s hair. He speaks eloquently of his brother, while Kaede just inquires about Taro’s whereabouts. Jiro informs her that they did not bring the corpse due to the heat from the fire, but instead burnt it. Jiro grows agitated when she requests her husband’s gear and helmet, implying that he is now wearing the equipment himself. He summons his warriors to assist him in removing the armour and proceeds to undress in front of Kaede. Meanwhile, she grabs Taro’s hair and walks into another room with it.

- Kaede’s scheme of recapturing her place again

Suddenly, we find Jiro on his throne, dismissing the traitorous servants. Lady Kaede enters the court just as the servants are being dismissed to talk with Jiro. She appears, holding Taro’s helmet, and apologises for her harsh remarks before. She alluded to the idea that Ichimonji has gone insane, and Jiro thinks that this should make her pleased because she despises Ichimonji. Jiro accepts Taro’s helmet before snatching his knife and holding it to his throat. “Now prepare to die!” she screams, but he insists that he did not kill Taro. “It was Kurogane who killed him!” he gasps, but she is not so satisfied by his answer, insistent that it was he who gave the orders to kill Taro. She closes the sliding doors that surround them, cackling, then walks towards him with the knife. “The truth is, I don’t care at all about my husband’s death,” she says, “The only thing that concerns me is what happens to me! I refuse to live like a widow with my hair cropped, or a nun rotting inside a convent, with my head shaved! This castle once belonged to my father. And I have no intention of leaving!” Kaede tells Jiro that she will tell no one about his crimes if he takes care of her and makes her his wife. She kisses him abruptly, then licks the slice she made on his neck with the knife.

3.3.5 Part IV

Kaede informs Jiro that she wants to be his wife after seducing him. He offers to divorce Sué for her sake, but

this is insufficient. Instead, she wants him to murder his wife, a scheme to which he reluctantly agrees. Kaede sobs and says she couldn't handle the thought of him sleeping with another woman. Kyoami and Ichimonji are sitting in a flower field. The fool claims, If fate had decreed it, Tsurumaru would be living here. Just imagine, you're taking refuge in the very castle you destroyed." Ichimonji is silent, but smiles, which makes Kyoami laugh. Tango, meantime, cooks something in a pot over a fire before heading to Ichimonji. Kyoami is placing a grass helmet on the warlord's head, with two lilies on either side, like plumes. Tango approaches Ichimonji as Kyoami announces the arrival of Jiro's recently discharged slaves.

► Ichimonji repents

Tango returns and informs Kyoami and Ichimonji that they must travel to Saburo. Tango concludes that bringing Saburo there is the only option when Kyoami informs him that Ichimonji would flee at the mention of Saburo. Tango rides away to find Saburo. The scene changes to Jiro informing an advisor, Kurogane, that he wishes to marry Kaede. Kurogane thinks that it is Jiro's right to take Kaede as his wife, but to have Sué killed would be "an act of complete folly." He refuses to do Jiro's bidding as Kaede enters and tells Kurogane to make sure he salts Sué's head before bringing it back.

► Kaede urges Jiro to kill Sué

3.3.6 Part V

As Jiro's army approaches, we notice Saburo resting on his horse in the midst of a field. A messenger rides forward, informing Saburo of where he might locate his father. "We are to withdraw as soon as we have Father," Saburo tells the men to wait until it becomes dark, when a soldier notices Lord Ayabe's forces gathered on a nearby hillside. The scene turns to Jiro, who is warned by Kurogane that Fujimaki and Ayabe are encircling them. He urges Jiro not to give the lords any reason to attack.

► Kurogane tries to avert a war

Jiro misinterprets Saburo's actions as him intending to deploy his forces in war as he goes in pursuit of Ichimonji. Kurogane attempts to talk Jiro out of attacking, but Jiro is dead-bent on it. "Kaede barks and you grovel!" Kurogane expresses his disappointment to his master, and Jiro dismisses him from the battlefield. He then instructs his warriors to launch an attack. Meanwhile, Saburo's soldiers dispatch a message to notify him about the attack. Saburo's



- Jiro misinterprets Saburo's actions

men flee into the forest as Jiro's foot soldiers gather. Kyoami locates Ichimonji in the grasslands and summons Saburo. Saburo tries to rouse up his father, who sits up and stares at the sky. They stare up at the clouds that are moving quickly above them. "What a terrifying sky. Am I in another world? Am I in a paradise?" Ichimonji says.

- Reunion of Ichimonji and Saburo

As Saburo tries to help his father, Ichimonji becomes angry, accusing them of trying to deprive him of his own death. Saburo reminds Ichimonji that he is his son, and Ichimonji stops and remembers, running away in fear. "How can I face you after what I've done to you?" Ichimonji says, stumbling away, "No words can forgive me. I deserve to die." Saburo assures his father that he ought not be remorseful, and Tango insists that Ichimonji look at his son. "You will live with us, and you will forget this bad dream," Saburo says to his father, as Ichimonji cries.

- Ichimonji dies of grief caused by the death of Saburo

Meanwhile, Jiro's troops make attempts to assault Saburo's force, but several of them are killed by soldiers hidden in the jungle. Jiro orders his forces to fire on the woodland in order to bring Saburo's men out into the open. A messenger appears, informing Jiro that Ayabe's army has crossed the border and is on its way to the First Castle. Jiro becomes concerned and orders his men to return to the fortress. We observe Ichimonji travelling with Saburo on his horse, saying that he has a lot to tell him. They are laughing at their reunion when Saburo is shot from his horse. Ichimonji, Tango, and Kyoami crouch over Saburo's body, understanding Saburo is no longer alive. Ichimonji is heartbroken, and addresses his son, saying, "I have so much to tell you." He embraces his son's corpse in a craze, then collapses on top of him, dying himself. Kyoami cries over the two dead bodies.

Kurogane goes to Kaede to confront her about the killing of Sué. "All I wanted was to avenge the destruction of my own family," Kaede says, "I wanted to see this castle burn." Kurogane suddenly draws his blade and murders Kaede, splattering her blood on the wall behind her. Kurogane then warns Jiro to brace himself for death and defeat. Ichimonji and Saburo's bodies are carried over the plains by Saburo's men. We observe Tsurumaru waiting for his sister, holding his Buddha image, before dumping it from a high height. The camera zooms close

- Kaede avenges her family's murder

on the Buddha picture, then pans out to see Tsurumara alone.

3.3.7 Characterisation

Tatsuya Nakadai plays Ichimonji Hidetora, in the film.

Akira Terao plays Hidetora's eldest son and heir, Ichimonji "Taro" Takatora, the film's version of Goneril.

Jinpachi Nezu plays Hidetora's second son, Ichimonji "Jiro" Masatora, the film's counterpart of Regan.

Daisuke Ryu plays Ichimonji "Saburo" Naotora, Hidetora's youngest son, and the film's Cordelia.

Lady Kaede, Kaede no Kata, Taro's wife, and the film's Edmund, are played by Mieko Harada.

Lady Sué, Jiro's wife whose clan was destroyed by Hidetora and the rough equivalent of Albany, is played by Yoshiko Miyazaki.

Mansai Nomura plays Tsurumaru, Sue's brother who was blinded by Hidetora and serves as the film's Gloucester.

Kurogane, Jiro's top advisor, and military leader, is played by Hisashi Igawa.

Kyoami, the fool, is played by Peter.

Hirayama Tango, Hidetora's major advisor, is played by Masayuki Yui, who is somewhat equivalent to Kent.

Ikoma Kageyu, an Ichimonji clan official, is played by Kazuo Kato.

Jun Tazaki plays rival daimy Ayabe Seiji.

Hitoshi Ueki as Fujimaki Nobuhiro, another rival daimy based on the play's King of France.



Summarised Overview

Akira Kurosawa was a Japanese film director and painter who directed thirty films over the course of his five-decade career. He is widely recognised as one of the most significant and influential directors in movie history. This 1985 film was Akira Kurosawa's final major epic, and it's a magnificent masterpiece. It is an adaption of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The film, *Ran* depicts the narrative of Lord Hidetora, an ageing warrior with a history of terrible bloodshed, who entrusts his dominion to three sons. *Ran* was hailed as one of Kurosawa's finest films due to the grandeur of its vision, the philosophical depth of its film version, and the fervour of its dramatic performances.

Assignments

1. Examine the significance of the title of *Ran*.
2. What does the ending of the film, *Ran* suggest about the world?
3. Comment on the role of violence in the sfilm. Is it necessary for the film to accomplish its ends?
4. Examine, if any, values in the scenes from *Ran* clash with those present in Elizabethan England. State what they are and explain why there would be a clash.

Suggested Readings

1. Bloom, Harold. "Shakespeare's Universalism." *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. The Berkley, 1999. 1-20.
2. Bradley, A. C. "Introduction. Shakespearean Tragedy." Foreword by John Bayley. Penguin, 1991. 19-22.

References

1. Akira, Kurosawa. *Ran*, Greenwich, 1985.
2. Roger. Ebert. "Ran, review", *rogerebert.com*, 2000. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-ran-1985>.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



Critical Responses

BLOCK-04

Block Content

Unit 1 Revisiting Shakespeare

Unit 2 Critiquing Shakespearean Drama

Unit 3 Reading the Shakespearean Sonnet

Unit 4 Studying Shakespearean Adaptations

Unit 1

Revisiting Shakespeare

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ acquire a general critical understanding of Shakespeare and his literary output
- ▶ contextualise some of the major theories used to critically read Shakespeare
- ▶ describe the features and concerns of different theoretical approaches to Shakespeare
- ▶ familiarise themselves with some prominent Shakespearean critics

Background

Across time, literature has always been connected to questions of identity, culture, and power, just as much as it has shaped and been shaped by them. Critical readings of literature open out a space where we may explore the formation of these aspects. In order to do so, a variety of approaches and perspectives can be wielded, as is apt for our purpose.

One of the primary focuses of such investigations is the process of literature. In particular, queries about how power works in and through literature, framing portrayals of identity and culture, are significant. Equally important is an understanding of the social and historical backdrop in which literature is created.

Representation, i.e. the specific ways in which meaning is constructed in literature and presented to its readers, is a vital part of the same. Literary representations often contain a relationship of subordination and dominance. They may seek to naturalise, or to portray as natural, certain beliefs and hierarchies. In doing so, they may provide legitimacy to particular ideologies.

For instance, in the traditional English novel, women were often represented as 'Angels in the House'. The novels' ideals of women being focused on the affairs of the home, of being passive, self-sacrificing, and pure were naturalised as proper feminine conduct. This extends from the legacy of the very first novel *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), down to the popular fiction of the succeeding ages. Of course, such a pattern of representation throws light on



the manner in which patriarchal beliefs were legitimised across different periods.

In this way, literature does not stand separated from society. Rather, its creation, reception, and circulation in society should be understood as a reflection of its interactions with socio-cultural institutions. This extends to various aspects such as class, caste, gender, race, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. All of these, with respect to the text, the writer, and the reader, determine how a particular genre or literary work is viewed at a particular point of time.

As we come to the focus of this unit, the above context is vital. Traditional Shakespearean critiques explore thematic and formal aspects, throwing light on how the bard transformed the literary and linguistic landscape of English. More recent critical examinations of Shakespeare have shown that his dramas and poetry, as well as their modern adaptations, can be read using other critical perspectives.

As non-native readers of Shakespeare, particularly being located in a former British colony, we need to reflect on the significance of revisiting the works of the bard. William Shakespeare, the poet and playwright, was introduced to us as part of a colonial legacy. His writings, often, embrace the very principles and philosophies that validated imperial authority and certain cultural norms. The act of critically exploring Shakespeare allows us to make visible the techniques through which this was done.

Key Concepts

Psychoanalytical criticism, Post colonial criticism, Marxist Criticism, Gender Studies Criticism

4.1.1 Discussion

The question of how to put William Shakespeare (1564-1616) into context has always followed the field of Shakespeare Studies. The body of works as well as the person behind them has fascinated readers and scholars across centuries for a variety of reasons. Traditional Shakespearean criticism studies these dimensions as features of his unique literary merit and his representation of the spirit of his age.

► Contextualising Shakespeare

To a certain degree, the peculiarities of the period have played a part in his growth as a playwright and a poet.

- Elizabethan Era and English Renaissance

Shakespeare wrote during the heights of the Elizabethan era and the English Renaissance. Certain biographic and historical details emphasise the role played by the social climate of the time.

- Socio-cultural benefits

Shakespeare hailed from a common family without aristocratic titles or land ownership. Yet, unlike his father who was a successful glover, he was able to pursue theatre as a profession. Many critics consider this to be a sign that he benefitted from the social and cultural upheavals of the age.

- Urban and Technological advancement

The period also witnessed urbanisation, technological growth, and economic expansion. His move to the city of London, undoubtedly, allowed him to be close to the nerve centre of the Elizabethan stage. The development of print technology in the preceding period had immense impact on the reception of his plays and sonnets. This permitted the circulation of his works as publications that could be bought and read at leisure.

- Human-centric

Further, it is possible to trace some of the core values of the Renaissance in his works. The humanism that characterised the artistic and cultural movement to an extent, finds expression in his body of writings. For instance, Shakespearean plays display a renewed focus on the human condition. This is evidenced in some of his complex characters such as Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth. The audiences and readers see a multi-dimensional portrait of their greatness and failures, instead of a simplistic picture.

- Disregard of social position

These complicated characters are drawn from elite social ranks, from monarchs, nobility, and courtiers. The presentation of their raw emotions, mistakes, and imperfections identifies them as fallible human beings, despite their position on the Elizabethan social ladder. This manner of characterisation might have been made possible, due to the sense of humanism fostered during the period.

- Distinctive writing style

Aside from embracing some of the literary and cultural tendencies of the Elizabethan and Renaissance eras, Shakespeare's distinctive writing style earned him fame. His verses have been variously referred to as "sweet", "sugar'd", "mellifluous" and "honeyed". Many of his plays such as *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* were taken



on tour, translated, and performed in other languages during the author's lifetime.

► Shakespeare and 'Englishness'

In this way, we might view the preoccupation with Shakespeare as being rooted in how he was received during his day. Yet, this alone does not account for his ongoing acceptance in English literary circles as a 'national poet'. Unlike other Elizabethan and Renaissance writers, he has come to be regarded as central to the idea of 'Englishness', English culture, and national character.

► Theatre in Elizabethan culture

An important aspect to be considered when reading Shakespeare critically, is the cultural significance of the theatre in Elizabethan England. It offered a space for popular entertainment for the poor and the rich alike. While ordinary people found a way to escape their daily hardships by attending plays, the nobility and aristocracy saw the theatre as a way of spending their leisure time.

► Reflection of social values

Despite the theatre being frequented by members of the lower and elite classes alike, its structure reveals a sense of division between different social groups. The ordinary people or 'groundlings' stood in a pit near the stage, while upper class spectators would be seated in the cushioned gallery. In certain theatres, rich nobles could watch the play from chairs set on the side of the stage. Thus, in a way, the Elizabethan theatre reflected the values of Elizabethan society.

The Renaissance era had its fair share of theatres and playhouses. Some of the most famous of these were *The Theatre*, *The Swan*, *The Rose*, *Blackfriar's Theatre*, and *The Globe*. Many of Shakespeare's plays were staged in these establishments and by several Elizabethan acting troupes. Explore them in detail at this link: [https:// writersinspire.org/content/elizabethan-jacobean-theatres](https://writersinspire.org/content/elizabethan-jacobean-theatres)

► 'Natural order' of things

As with any other society, the Elizabethans too functioned within a hierarchy. The monarchy stood at the top, followed closely by the clergy. They were followed by different noble classes and landed gentry. The merchants, middle classes, and the poor comprised the lower rungs of society. This organisation of power was viewed as a reflection of the 'natural order' of things.



► Dissent

The beliefs, practices, and institutions of the age were, more often than not, deployed to uphold the legitimacy of the Elizabethan social order. Dissent against the authority of the crown, the privileges given to the elite classes, or indeed, against any aspect of the dominant way of life was demonised. 'Otherness' in thought or deed was often seen to represent a threat to the 'rightful' system itself.

► Contradictory space of theatres

It is in this ideological backdrop that the theatre gains additional significance in Elizabethan England. Built on the South bank of the Thames river, on the outskirts of the city, Elizabethan theatres were akin to double-edged swords. On the one hand, they offered a public arena where otherwise strictly regulated classes and sexes could mingle in however restricted a manner. On the other hand, they also seemed to promote unruly behaviour and anti-establishment opinions.

► Censorship

The monarchy was so cautious of the influence of the theatre on the public that there was a government branch called the Office of the Revels, to monitor and censor plays. It was their duty to ensure that no politically or socially sensitive material would be presented on the stage. Authorities would read the manuscript of the play before every theatre performance at court and take out offensive or subversive content.

► Anxiety about influence of theatres

In fact, authorities were deeply anxious about the power of the theatre to incite rebellion, to sway public opinion against the monarchy. Sir Henry Wotton, an Elizabethan courtier, has pointed out that plays have the potential for "making greatness familiar, if not ridiculous." Thus, the fear was that the theatre would unveil the aura of authenticity that surrounded state power.

► Instructional value of theatres

However, this predominant concern is addressed by Thomas Heywood in his *Apology for Actors*. Heywood reiterates that plays were written and performed so as to teach "subjects obedience to their king" by demonstrating the pathetic ends of those who have created "tumults, commotions and insurrections." Many Elizabethans subscribed to the view that theatres could instruct and educate the public in desirable ways.



Theatres in the Elizabethan era operated under a financial and cultural arrangement known as patronage. This is a system of economic support extended to acting troupes and playwrights by the monarchy and rich nobles of the Elizabethan society. There was an understanding that the flourishing of art, theatre, and music enriched the social status of the patrons, and created a sense of overall prosperity. Here is an in- depth exploration of Shakespeare's patrons: <https://politicworm.com/oxford/oxfords-life-in-a-nutshell-shakespeare/shakespeares-patrons/>

► Herald of English values

As observed by Kathleen Mcluskie, "Shakespeare... gave voice to the social views of the age..." On the surface, many of his works appeared to advocate for monarchy, divine right to rule, absolute power, English imperial aspirations and social norms. The glorification of the established order in his works has allowed Shakespeare to be accepted as a bearer/ herald of English values.

► Subversive elements

Yet, deeper readings of the bard show discrepancies within this neat understanding of his works. Characters such as Sir John Falstaff (*Henry IV, Parts I and II, and Henry V*), The Fool (*King Lear*) and Caliban (*The Tempest*) showcase a subversive understanding of state power and colonialism. Indeed, his Roman plays explore power in a manner that is instructive and cautionary to the crown and political authorities. So, it is vitally important that Shakespearean criticism function in grey areas, than in black-and-white spaces.

► Close Reading

The critical strategies for reading Shakespeare evolved across a period of time. Early twentieth century Shakespearean critiques were dominated by close reading, genre studies, and character studies. Close reading (I.A.Richards, 1920s) approaches poetry in terms of its formal, linguistic, and poetic features, without reference to author, date, historical context and cultural backdrop. The principle was to encounter literary works on their own terms.

While these foundational methods held immense value as tools for analysis, other critical perspectives have

- ▶ Ernest Jones - "Hamlet and Oedipus"

opened out powerful readings from where Shakespeare could be studied anew. A case in point would be Ernest Jones's essay, "Hamlet and Oedipus" (1899), which examines the psychology and internal motivations of Hamlet. In it, Jones argues that Hamlet is driven or controlled by the unconscious part of his mind.

- ▶ Oedipus Complex

Specifically, he identifies in Hamlet an example of the Oedipus Complex. According to the Freudian theory, Hamlet harbours a strong attraction towards his mother and has always resented his father for marrying her. So, his uncle has fulfilled Hamlet's repressed desire by killing his father and uniting with his mother. This is viewed as the root cause for Hamlet's hesitation in unflinchingly carrying out his revenge.

- ▶ Features of Psychoanalytical criticism

As we saw above, psychoanalytical criticism works by giving significance, in literary analysis, to the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind. In order to interpret the inner life of the characters portrayed in the work, it pays close attention to unconscious motives and feelings. Psychoanalysis identifies the psychological context of the work, typically locating the individual's mental state as opposed to social structures such as class or race.

Despite the vast readership and literary scholarship that surrounds William Shakespeare, the question of his identity remains a puzzle. The evidence for his identity comes from details in his own works and from the commentary of his contemporaries. Many critics accept the standard biography of Shakespeare while others put forward different possibilities. Follow this link to discover the long history of investigations into who Shakespeare is: <https://lithub.com/the-ongoing-obsession-with-shakespeares-true-identity/>

- ▶ Ania Loomba - "Outsiders in Shakespeare"

Another intriguing example of a diverse critical reading of Shakespeare can be found in Ania Loomba's essay "Outsiders in Shakespeare". Loomba examines images of racial, national, religious, and cultural differences as they appear in Shakespeare's plays. In particular, she notes how 'outsiders' to the Elizabethan society were utilised to represent otherness, wildness, and savagery. This is an instance of postcolonial criticism, wherein Ania Loomba



exposes the notions of privilege that are attributed to western civilisation.

► Representation of Race

Loomba provides a wide range of textual evidences from various Shakespearean works. The depiction of the Prince of Morocco, Portia's suitor, in *The Merchant of Venice* is a poignant illustration of how racial features are employed to signify social undesirability. The Prince of Morocco's blackness is described as "the complexion of a devil" by Portia who fears and loathes it. In *Much Ado About Nothing* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'Ethiope' is used as a derogatory term.

► Features of Post-colonial Criticism

Postcolonial criticism aims to reject claims of universalism attached to Western literatures and culture, often highlighting their inability to "empathise across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference" (Peter Barry). As seen in Loomba's methodology, they explore how other cultures, races, and religions are represented in dominant literature. They emphasise the ways in which literature is silent or implicitly supportive of colonial discrimination, imperialism, and colonisation.

► Hugh Grady - Reification

Hugh Grady, an American scholar, approaches Shakespeare through the lens of Marxism. In one of his essays, he examines the concept of reification, the process of transforming an abstraction or an ideal into a concrete form (having Valentine's Day symbolise eternal love, for example). An excerpt from Ulysses's speech in *Troilus and Cressida* is taken up to further discuss this.

► Depiction of Capitalist system

In the final part of the speech, Ulysses attempts to warn about what will occur if the established order is not followed: "Then everything includes itself in Power, Power into will, will into appetite; And appetite, an universal wolf...Must make perforce an universal prey, And last eat himself up." Grady sees in the description of the 'universal wolf', full of power, will, and appetite, a powerful reification of the capitalist system. Grady sees this passage as a defence of the Elizabethan social system against the emerging capitalism of Shakespeare's age.

► Paul Innes — *Class and Society in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*.

However, other marxist readings have described the ways in which Shakespearean works have bolstered class divisions. Paul Innes has noted how different social ranks are categorised throughout Shakespeare's body of works in *Class and Society in Shakespeare: A Dictionary*.

Specifically, he examines how marginalised sections of Elizabethan society are depicted.

He succeeds in showcasing, for example, how the term churl (referring to a feudal servant) becomes a class-based insult in Shakespeare. It is used as a derogatory reference to someone born in a 'low' social rank. Innes points out that the word appears in several Shakespearean plays, with the most telling usage being rendered by Suffolk in Henry VI. In the text, he insinuates that a member of the opposite faction was born out of a union between his mother and "some stern untutor'd churl".

► Portrayal of social ranks

As is clear from the discussions on Grady and Innes, Marxist literary critique has a direct focus on both capitalism and class divisions. It interprets literary works through an analysis of class struggle or social progression from feudalism to industrial capitalism. Often, they examine literary genres in the context of the society and writers in terms of the social- class to which they belong. This allows Marxist readings to locate literary works as the 'product' of the social assumptions and cultural values of the time in which it is 'consumed', or circulated and read.

► Features of Marxist criticism

In the essay "Gender and Sexuality in Shakespeare", Valerie Traub investigates how the author responded to gender and sexuality as factors of human identity and political power. She details how ideas about sex and gender that existed during the Renaissance era are expressed in several Shakespearean dramas. Different elements such as the patriarchal household, notions of chastity, and sexual morals are studied herein.

► Valerie Traub - Feminist Critique

Such exercises of feminist criticism reflects on the representation of the different sexes, and challenges the marginalisation of women in literature. Traub highlights the manner in which plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew* instructs women to be subservient in their domestic and public roles. This makes clear the patriarchal ideological base of seemingly 'neutral' works of literature.

► Marginalisation of women in literary representation

As such feminist criticism revisits the canon, positioning women's experience and identity as central. It examines the role of language and literature in constructing power relations that sustain patriarchy and the social othering of



► Features of Feminist criticism

women. It uses a wide range of approaches and theories to tease out the gendered nature of literary representation.

► Stephen Greenblatt - Self-fashioning

A radically different reading of Shakespeare and the Renaissance era emerged with the work of Stephen Greenblatt. In his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, he notes that questions surrounding self-identity heavily influenced the culture of this period. In particular, he studies *self-fashioning* as the process of constructing identity in tune with a set of socially acceptable standards and a conscious aspiration towards imitating a praised model in society is examined.

► Parallel reading of literary and non-literary

In order to bring out the different ways in which literature engages with self-fashioning, Greenblatt reads in parallel literary and non-literary texts, such as historical documents. He focuses attention on how identity practices maintain structures of power. For example, his reading of *Othello* reveals how male sexual anxieties are perpetuated by patriarchal self-fashioning in the Renaissance era.

► Features of New Historicism

This is an instance of a New Historicist critique where history and literature are given equal weightage, and understood as aspects that inform each other. This deviates from the conventional model of seeing literary texts as a matter of creative genius and aesthetics. Rather, literature becomes understood as a product of the social, political, cultural, and intellectual conditions at the time of its production and circulation.

► Alan Sinfield - Theatre and ideology

Another key rethinking of Shakespeare is seen in Alan Sinfield's study "Royal Shakespeare: Theatre and the Making of Ideology." In it, he examines the contemporary rise to prominence of the Royal Shakespeare Company, a British theatre group. Their role in constructing the concept of 'Shakespeare' as a powerful cultural token in the specific political conditions of postwar Britain is examined.

Sinfield highlights the fact that several of Shakespeare's plays were rewritten, and scenes often rearranged, to convey the author's acceptance of order. For instance, the death of certain characters were moved to the end of the play so as to serve a moral message. Further, the very purpose of the RSC, which was to propagate theatre to the masses, is deconstructed. Sinfield challenges the



► Functioning of RSC as institution

assumption that it would be desirable to distribute high or elite culture amongst the public, as the RSC does with its selection of plays from Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

► Features of Cultural Materialism

This is a clear illustration of cultural materialism, where the focus is on recovering the context of exploitation or history from which a literary text or discourse emerges. As seen above, the work's transmission in the present and its politics are explored in depth. This methodology combines attention to historical context, theoretical method, political commitment, and textual analysis.

Summarised Overview

This unit explores the question of critically revisiting William Shakespeare, outside of conventional criticism. In the beginning, it enumerates the various queries that are raised when approaching the author. This includes the issue of his popularity, his ability to capture the spirit of his age, and the reception of his individual talent. However, these points alone do not explain his current status as a literary icon.

The cultural significance of the theatre and Shakespeare's engagement within the socio-cultural and political sphere is an important aspect. However, a range of theoretical approaches have changed the perception of Shakespeare. This includes psychoanalytical criticism, postcolonial criticism, Marxist criticism, Feminist criticism, New Historicist and Cultural Materialist criticism. They establish the need for continued investigations.

Assignments

1. What is the cultural significance of the theatre in Elizabethan England?
2. Detail some of the features of psychoanalytic criticism with reference to Ernest Jones.
3. List examples of marginalised representations of 'Outsiders' in Shakespeare as discussed by Ania Loomba.
4. What are some of the specific concerns of Marxist literary criticism?
5. According to Valerie Traub, how are women portrayed in *The Taming of the Shrew*?
6. What is *Self-Fashioning*? How does New Historicism discuss the concept with relation to *Othello*?
7. Detail Alan Sinfield's critique of the Royal Shakespeare Company.



Suggested Readings

1. de Grazia, Margaret and Stanley Wells. editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge UP, 2001.
2. Carter, Ronald and John Rae. *The Routledge History of Literature in England*. Routledge, 2007.
3. Gajowski, Evelyn. editor. *The Arden Research Handbook on Contemporary Shakespeare Criticism*. The Arden Shakespeare, 2021.

References

1. Carter, Ronald and John Rae. *The Routledge History of Literature in England*. Routledge, 2007.
2. Gajowski, Evelyn. editor. *The Arden Research Handbook on Contemporary Shakespeare Criticism*. The Arden Shakespeare, 2021.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

1.



Unit 2

Critiquing Shakespearean Drama

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ possess a general insight into how the structure and conventions of the Elizabethan theatre influenced Shakespearean Drama
- ▶ define and detail some of the major classifications of Shakespearean plays
- ▶ critically contextualise some of the salient features of Shakespearean plays
- ▶ analyse some of the predominant themes and dramatic techniques employed in Shakespearean drama

Background

Often placed at the forefront of the English literary canon, the Shakespearean drama has always been explored for the philosophies, life lessons, and other insights it offers. Either taken as a genre or as different genres mediated by a unique playwright, the 37 existing plays have been at the centre of wide-ranging critical discussions for many years.

The act of critically reading a Shakespearean play supposes an appropriate and valid response at the end. It involves coming to terms with the language of the play, often versified, dense, and old-fashioned. It requires us to understand the broad outline of the drama, contextualising the roles of the characters, identifying different dramatic devices, and seeing how all of these elements fit into the final product.

The current unit explores various strategies for critically reading Shakespearean plays, with special reference to the three works prescribed in Module 2. Particularly, it would provide perspectives through which a reader could undertake a deeper study of the plays. This includes a more thorough delineation of stage craft, genre, and themes.



Keywords

Elizabethan Stage, Dramatic conventions, Classification, Genre

4.2.1 Discussion

A viable starting point for studying a Shakespearean play is the shared conventions of drama of the writer's time. This includes the structure of the stage as well as that of the play. Both these elements exert influence on each other. They determine how a play is shaped and how it is eventually performed. The structure of the play, along with a combination of dramatic devices and themes, add to this.

► Framework

The evolution of the Elizabethan stage in terms of physical features and settings had a tremendous influence on Shakespeare's dramatic output. It has to be noted that the dramas of earlier ages, such as the mystery and morality plays, were severely limited in their portrayal of human nature and psychology. As opposed to this, Shakespearean plays pay renewed attention to the interior life of characters. The opportunity to do so arose as a result of the peculiarities of the Elizabethan stage.

► Material conditions

The typical Elizabethan stage consisted of a raised platform, often as large as 40 square feet, which jutted out to the middle of the yard. The spectators would surround it on all three sides. The area immediately behind the platform would function as the main stage. It would be sheltered by a roof, called "the shadow" or "the heavens". The roof was a vital space that often concealed an upper area from which objects and props could be raised or lowered.

► Structure

At the end of the stage was a multi-level construction with two large doors leading to the stage. There was a space for "discoveries" of characters who were hidden or listening in secret, to take the plot forward. This was probably between the doors. The top level of the construction could function as a balcony, viewing gallery, or fort, depending on whether the scene called for it.

► Multiple purposes

The presence of the platform, inner main stage, and upper stage level made movement possible in all directions. It enriched the range and complexity of



► Imagination

actions that could be presented in dramatic plots. Since there were no curtains or other ways to veil the stage completely from the audience, only the most essential props were allowed on stage. It is clear that the members of the audience were required to imagine the settings and stage properties for most part of the performance.

► Social divisions

The audience were seated at different levels that reflected their social status. The aristocracy and the nobility, who wielded the most economic and cultural power, would be seated in balconies and in the highest parts of the gallery. Wealthy merchants and landed gentry would occupy the positions below them. Commoners who had the means to purchase tickets would throng in the area between the jutting platform and the galleries. They would have to stand, and were referred to as 'groundlings'.

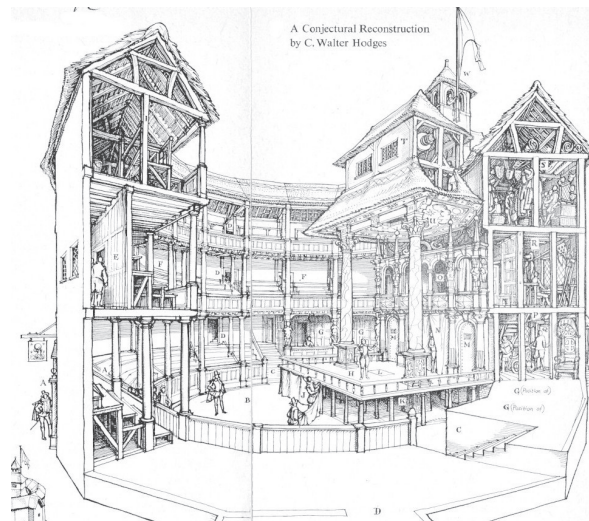


Fig. 4.2.1. Structure of Elizabethan Stage

These specific arrangements went a long way in moulding the structure of the Shakespearean play. For instance, since there was no way to hide the stage from the audience, whenever a death happens onstage, the playwright had to plot events in such a way that the body was eventually carried out by the characters. For instance, in *Henry IV*, when Prince Hal kills Hotspur, Falstaff later discovers the body and carries it off-stage. This allows the next scene to be acted out without disruption.

► Influence

► Provision for context

The barrenness of the stage in terms of props was balanced with elaborate costumes and language. The social status of characters could be understood from their costumes, as well as the richness of their dialogue. Most characters spoke in a manner that was heavy with

imagery and allusions, allowing audiences to understand or imagine the settings of the scene.

In other words, even as Shakespearean plays followed the pattern of exposition, complication, and resolution, the details of the performance were controlled by consideration of stage features. The plays fit into a five-act structure, with each act being sub-divided into scenes. Each of the acts roughly performed the following functions:

1. Act 1 operates as the *exposition*. Here, the audience is made aware of the general setting, characters are developed, and a conflict is introduced.
2. Act 2 serves to escalate the *rising action* or *complication*. Here, the rising action brings in complications and the protagonist encounters various obstacles and setbacks.
3. Act 3 usually marks the *climax* of the play. Here, the action and narrative reaches a turning point, building tension and interest.
4. Act 4 generally functions to denote *falling action*. Here, the story is coming to an end, and any unknown details or loose plot twists are dealt with.
5. Act 5 offers a *denouement* or *resolution*. Here, conflicts and tensions that drove the first four acts are resolved. Often, this part of the play brings out a moral or a philosophical lesson.

► Purpose of Acts

Importantly, Shakespearean plays emphasise a kind of order that prevails at the beginning of the play. As the drama progresses, this order is thrown into chaos. Depending on the type of play, the results of this chaos may vary. In a romantic comedy, the eventual result would be a complete resolution of the tensions. In tragedies, the dissolution of this order is so complete that violence occurs and the main characters meet with death. So the message that the audience takes home differs from play to play.

► Concept of order

As noted by John Peck and Martin Coyle, this gives us a way of contextualising all aspects of the play as a reflection of the conflict between the ideal of order and its disruption. This includes the action, characters, their



► Social ideal

speech, the language used, and the themes explored. Here, we must note that all plays do not strictly adhere to this format. The functions of acts may overlap in some cases, or they may be entirely different according to the context. But, in the broad sense of structure, most Shakespearean plays share these conventions.

► Categories

Traditionally, Shakespeare's plays have been classified into four: Comedies, Histories, Roman Plays, and Tragedies. Though not completely water-tight, these divisions are based on the stories, themes, and overall tone of the plays. While several other categories have been added in recent years, these four remain the standard types.

The nineteenth-century Shakespearean critic, F.S. Boas, famously introduced the classification known as *Problem Plays*. Using this term, he refers mainly to three works of Shakespeare that are difficult to be put into any conventional type. The plays are *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. They have also been called dark comedies.

► Resolution

Shakespearean comedies are those plays in which dramatic conflict and narrative tension are resolved happily. They are characterised by a comic or satiric tone, with the depiction of amusing or entertaining people and incidents. The protagonists of comedies often triumph over adversity to reach a happy ending.

► Happy ending

Consider the play, *Twelfth Night* in this regard. It employs features that are traditionally associated with Shakespearean comedies, such as mistaken identities, humorous misconceptions, physical comedy, and a happy ending. Typically, as in this play, Shakespeare's comedies end with a wedding. The two sets of lovers, Olivia and Sebastian, and Viola and Orsino are united.

► True identity

Other comedic aspects in the play are the misunderstandings and the complications that initially keep the lovers apart. Since Viola is pretending to be a man named Cesario, she cannot return Olivia's interest. At the same time, her own attraction towards Orsino is disrupted because of her playacting as Cesario. It is only when her true identity is revealed that the lovers can be

united with their preferred partners.

► Tone

The silliness and fun that is generated as a result of the farcical plot, cross-dressing, and series of misunderstandings is a distinguishing mark of comedies. While the protagonists pursue wrong partners, minor characters such as the Fool, Sir Toby Belch, and Sir Andrew engage in comic relief. They come up with rhymes, songs, innuendoes, and physical antics that are meant to cause mirth.

► Romanticisation

Twelfth Night is often cast as a romantic comedy because the theme of love is so dominating in the play. Its concept is built on the idea of love at first sight, as seen in Olivia's statement: "Even so quickly may one catch the plague." This idea of romantic love runs against the notion of reason, and is based on passion.

► Setting

The mysterious island of Illyria is a significant component of the plot. The scene of action is distant and remote, and exists only in imagination. In a sense, this adds to the romantic tone of the play and encourages the audience to suspend their disbelief. Had the location been a familiar one such as London or Venice, some of the comic aspects of the plot might have seemed excessive.

► Conflict

In fact, it is possible to trace a confrontation between emotion and reason in the play. Within the plot, we see the characters struggle with their deep passions and the realities of their life. At the level of structure, the dramatist's imagination has to contend with the audience's sense of reality.

► Transformation

Despite the mirthful and farcical elements of the narrative, the play engages a serious philosophical question about the nature of desire. It presents the idea that romantic desire, though changing, may be strong enough to overturn the social order. The noble-born Olivia falls in love with Cesario, who is a servant, whereas Duke Orsino feels attracted to Cesario despite the fact that he is a boy. The lovers also shift the object of their affection easily as their passion shifts. In other words, desire in the play is an aspect that wreaks havoc on everything that is socially relevant such as class, gender, and so on.

However, the happy ending of the play is reserved for the noble-born characters. Malvolio, being of a lower



► Social order intact

social station, is unable to win over Olivia. Further, many critics look at Antonio's feelings for Sebastian as being homoerotic in nature. They remain unrequited in the play. Thus, the happy ending of the play actually restores the social order.

As is evident from this, some of the most common features of Shakespearean comedy are evident here:

1. Comic tone and language
2. Mistaken identities or misconceptions
3. Physical comedy
4. Conflict of reason and emotion
5. Fate or chance
6. Idyllic settings
7. Separation and reconciliation
8. Happy endings

► Commonalities

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, discusses three classical unities that are to be followed in drama, specifically tragedy. According to this, plays were to represent a single action that takes place over the course of a single day, at the same location. These were known as the unities of action, time, and place. *Twelfth Night* does not follow these unities.



Fig. 4.2.2 From a performance of *Twelfth Night*, The Belasco Theatre, New York, 2013. Photo by Ralph H. Daily.

► Tragic hero

Shakespearean tragedies, while following his typical dramatic structure, are more serious and elevated in tone. Its protagonists are noble, but flawed, individuals who commit a grave error. Their mistake leads them on a downward spiral and causes a shift in the established order. While normalcy is restored at the end of the play, tragic protagonists often pay for their miscalculations with their life.

► Revenge

A short look at the plot of *Hamlet* shows us how the play becomes a tragedy. The drama opens with a few guards talking about a ghost who resembles Hamlet's father, the former king of Denmark. The ghost reveals that the King was murdered by Claudius, Hamlet's uncle, who is currently the King and married to Gertrude, Hamlet's mother. The Ghost instructs Hamlet to avenge his death.

► Tragic flaw

Due to his own confusion and doubt, Hamlet delays killing Claudius. He spends a long time reflecting on his inability to take revenge. When he does set out to act, he accidentally kills Polonius, the father of his lover, Ophelia. He is banished to England, apparently mad. Ophelia kills herself, unable to bear the grief of her father's death and her lover's exile.

► Ending

Upon his return to Denmark, Hamlet enters into a duel with Polonius' son, Laertes, who kills him with a poisoned sword. Having understood that his suspicions about Claudius were right, he kills Claudius before dying. Gertrude also dies after drinking from a poisoned cup.

► Question

In the beginning, the Ghost hints at something that has disturbed the established order — the murder of Hamlet's father. This leads to Hamlet's quest to justify the wrong and confront the chaos before him. The audience is presented with the question of how an unnatural act such as a man murdering his brother, or an incestuous marriage (Uncle marrying mother) impacts the moral fabric of the world around them.

► Symbolic

This dichotomy of good and evil is a vital feature of the Shakespearean tragedy. The struggles of the protagonist mirror the greater cosmic battle. Hamlet, in trying to make sense of the Ghost's revelation, is also trying to make sense of the potential for evil in humans. It is ironic that revenge, and the act of murder, is necessary for rectifying the same.



► Empathetic representation

Even as Hamlet hesitates to carry out the murder, and later accidentally murders the unfortunate Polonius, the audience sympathises with him to a great extent. This is, in part, because Hamlet represents the figure of the 'tragic hero'. As mentioned earlier, he is a 'noble' individual, who possesses a singular flawed quality that brings about his downfall.

► Weakness

This tragic flaw or 'Hamartia' in Hamlet is often considered to be his indecisiveness or inaction. He does not take appropriate action after the Ghost's revelation of the murder, or even later when opportunities present themselves. It is for this reason that he pays heavily as the play progresses. This creates an understanding of the human condition as well.

► Rectification

The concept of revenge as a righteous act is played out in the narrative of *Hamlet*. It is equated with justifying a wrong, and setting the disordered moral system on its right path. The plot revolves around Hamlet's emotional and psychological preparations for revenge. Yet, when he finally achieves the goal of killing his stepfather, it happens because Claudius's plan to murder Hamlet backfires. Thus the role of fate or chance is also explored.

The theme of righteous revenge can be found in a long line of works, as early as classical Greek and Roman plays. The revenge tragedy as a genre is often credited to Seneca, a Roman politician and philosopher, who supposedly wrote a series of ten plays revolving around plots of bloodthirsty revenge. Explore in detail at this link: [https:// www.britannica.com/art/Senecan-tragedy](https://www.britannica.com/art/Senecan-tragedy)

► Supernatural interventions

The presence of the ghost is another classic element of the Shakespearean tragedy. It appears that Hamlet's moral choices are ordained by fate. He has no choice but to carry out the revenge so that the ghost or the spirit of his father may be laid to rest.

As we can understand from the discussion above, the major characteristics of the Shakespearean tragedy include:

1. A dichotomy of good and evil

► Features

2. A tragic hero
3. Tragic flaw
4. Fate or chance
5. Revenge
6. Supernatural elements

Herein, we must consider the purpose of tragic drama, with reference to *Hamlet*. The play deals with a range of themes such as revenge, morality, corruption, conscience, justice, love, and the evil nature of humans. Combined together, and presented in this particular fashion, these themes stand to convey a particular message — the possible disorderliness of life. It is this disorder that is experienced by Hamlet, and that which forces him into conflict. The audience is meant to witness this downfall and take away moral and philosophical lessons from it.

► Reason

Aristotle defines the effect of true tragedy on the spectator as a process of *Catharsis* or emotional purgation. Tragedies, in his opinion, should make the audiences experience repressed emotions such as fear and pity, thereby giving them a psychological release. Find out more about his theory here: <https://www.britannica.com/art/catharsis-criticism>

► Multiple genres

Antony and Cleopatra is a play of Shakespeare that challenges many of the classifications that it is put into. Traditionally, it is categorised as a Roman play or a history play in that it focuses on a character from Roman history. So, it reimagines and fictionalises individuals and historical events. However, this aspect alone does not define the work.

► Duty and passion

At its core, the play presents a conflicted picture of Antony, now one of the Roman triumvirate. He struggles between his political purpose and his love for Cleopatra. This leads to a war between Rome, led by Octavius Caesar, and Egypt, marshalled by Antony and Cleopatra. Based on our understanding of order in Shakespeare, we can see the disruption that has been posed.

► Generic outcome

At the end of the play, believing Cleopatra to be dead, Antony kills himself. Consequently, Cleopatra, too, kills herself. The deaths of the protagonists bring in a tragic element to the play. In the manner of other Shakespearean tragedies, these deaths are connected to Antony's tragic



flaw. He errs in neglecting his obligations and duties for the sake of passion.

► Pairing

Yet, there are comic overtones within the tragic plot of the play. The theme of two opposites desiring each other is often a mainstay of comic stories. Many critics have suggested that it is only the fatal outcome of their desire that transforms the play into a tragedy. Otherwise, what is seen as a tragic flaw would have been seen as a passionate commitment.

► Centrality of theme

At the same time, the narrative uses opulent, extravagant language to describe the romance between Antony and Cleopatra. Even as we are aware of the crisis looming in the background, the play creates a sense of the genuine human passions at play. While the outcome of the romance is tragic, the mode of its representation celebrates the emotion. In this way, the work focuses on love in a way that Shakespearean romances often do. In short, *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals the intertwining of different genres.

► Open-ended

A frequent query that accompanies the play is whether it is a condemnation of irresponsible passion or a celebration of magnificent love. There are elements in the play that make both readings possible. Due to its hybrid form, conclusive statements about its philosophical stands cannot be made. Rather, we see a creative, complicated exploration of themes that has provoked readers across centuries.

Summarised Overview

The current unit provides a detailed account of the various critical approaches that may be used to contextualise the plays prescribed for study. It specifies the importance of dramatic language, characterisation, conventions of stage, devices, and themes in critically analysing them. The interconnections between the physical features of the Elizabethan stage and the structure of the Shakespearean play are also detailed. It further looks at how the concept of social order is relevant in Shakespearean drama and the ways in which specific genres use the idea. Additionally, it explores selected plays as examples of the various genres, illustrating how they might be critically approached and studied.

Assignments

1. What are the different steps involved in formulating a critique of Shakespearean plays?
2. Describe the physical features of the Elizabethan stage.
3. How did Elizabethan stage features influence Shakespearean plays?
4. Briefly explain the five-act structure of the Shakespearean play.
5. How is the concept of order employed in Shakespearean drama?
6. Which are the four types of Shakespearean plays?
7. Consider *Twelfth Night* as a Shakespearean comedy.
8. Examine *Hamlet* as a Shakespearean tragedy.
9. Detail the intermixing of different dramatic types in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Suggested Readings

1. Coyle, Martin, and John Peck. *How to Study a Shakespearean Play*. Macmillan, 1985.
2. Grazia, Margaret de, and Stanley Wells. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge UP, 2001.

References

1. Coyle, Martin, and John Peck. *How to Study a Shakespearean Play*. Macmillan, 1985.
2. Grazia, Margaret de, and Stanley Wells. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge UP, 2001.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

Unit 3

Reading the Shakespearean Sonnet

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ acquire a general insight into the evolution of the Sonnet form
- ▶ describe the socio-political contexts that influenced the Shakespearean sonnet
- ▶ analyse some of the major stylistic elements and themes in the Shakespearean sonnet
- ▶ critically explore Shakespeare's development and practice of the genre

Background

The literary history of the sonnet extends well beyond William Shakespeare and Renaissance England. The poetic form originated in Italy, drawing its name from the Italian word *sonetto*, meaning 'little song'. Its inventor, Giacomo da Lentini, was an official poet in the Sicilian court of Emperor Frederick II. The sonnet has certainly travelled a long way from its beginnings.

Traditionally, the sonnet refers to a fourteen-lined poem, written in iambic pentameter. It employs one of several possible rhyme schemes, depending on its style. Further, the genre follows a specific thematic organisation. Most often, the sonnet makes a proposition or an argument that is resolved within its rigid structure. While these general characteristics of the sonnet remain the same, the form has been used in many different ways by diverse writers over time and space.

It has been said that the sonnet is one of the most well-travelled of poetic forms. This stands testament to the versatility of the genre. It carries features of the lyric, in its brevity and ability to express intense personal emotion (sometimes in a manner suggestive of a song). The art of dialogue and persuasion are vital in a sonnet since it presents or argues out a case. Further, sonnets commonly use the volta, a sharp change in poetic perspective, to play out differing opinions.

One of the earliest poets to master the genre was Francesco Petrarca or



Petrarch (1304-1374), an Italian writer of verse. His sublime use of the sonnet as a vehicle of courtly and romantic love made the form popular in his time. The general conventions, rhyme scheme, and structural order that Petrarch followed is considered to be the classical form of the sonnet. Though he did not invent it, and indeed borrowed it from other poets, this specific variation is named the Petrarchan sonnet.

The Petrarchan sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentametre, divided into two stanzas of eight and six lines. The first stanza of eight lines is called the octave, and it follows the rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA. The second stanza of six lines is called the sestet, and its rhyme scheme is CDCDCD or CDECDE. The octave would state a problem, ask a question, or express conflict, whereas the sestet would present a solution, an answer, or would reconcile the tension.

While the Petrarchan model remained the conventional form, the sonnet acquired different features over time, as it travelled across various cultures. One of the most discussed variations of the genre is the Shakespearean sonnet or the 'English sonnet'. Just as with Petrarch, the invention of this particular form is credited to another English poet of the early Renaissance era. However, Shakespeare's sublime use of the sonnet in the English literary canon has ensured that it is associated with his name.

Keywords

Petrarchan Sonnet, English Sonnet, Publication History, Classification of sonnets, Formal interpretation, Thematic analysis.

4.3.1 Discussion

The sonnet form, despite its foreign origins, arrived on English shores in the 1530s. The names of Sir Thomas Wyatt, English ambassador, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, are synonymous with the development of the genre in English. It was the publication of their sonnets in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557) that popularised the form in England.

► Circulation of form

Sir Thomas Wyatt contributed to the advancement of the sonnet in English by translating Petrarch's sonnets, and writing his own in the model of the Italian poet. His poetry drew attention to the form as suited to expressions of love and courtly romance. Another reason that Wyatt's

► Contributions

sonnets remained much discussed is because they professed love to Anne Boleyn, a significant figure in English political history.

The course of English history was changed by King Henry VIII's desire for Anne Boleyn, an elegant and well spoken young woman who returned from France in 1522. She was offered the title of the sovereign's chief mistress, but refused to take it up. However, this solidified the king's interest in her, and soon, his interests were focused on marrying her. As Henry VIII was already married to Catherine of Aragon, and the Catholic Church forbade divorce, the king broke away from Papal rule. He took control of the English Church and arranged for this marriage to Catherine to be annulled. This paved the way for his union with Anne Boleyn to be recognised as valid. Explore more of this part of English history here: [https:// www.britannica.com/biography/Anne-Boleyn](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Anne-Boleyn)

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, played a vital role in the development of the genre. A military campaigner and courtier to Henry VIII, he was heavily involved in the political turmoil of his age. In fact, most of his poetry came to be written during his confinement at Windsor, under the charge of treason. Surrey acknowledged the mastery of Wyatt, and composed his own translations of Petrarch that were closer to the Italian original.

► Contributions

In the matter of composing his own sonnets, however, Surrey made variations to the classical Petrarchan model. He changed the stanza structure and rhyme scheme in a way that better suited the rhythm of the English language. Instead of dividing his sonnets into octaves and sestet, he employed three quatrains (stanzas of four lines) and a concluding couplet (stanza of two lines). Surrey followed the rhyme scheme: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. This would become known as the 'English Sonnet'.

► Transformation

Despite changes in certain formal aspects, four features remained constant in the anatomy of the sonnet over the course of its evolution:

- (i) Number of lines
- (ii) Standardised rhyme scheme



► Consistent features

- (iii) Consistent metre
- (iv) Volta or 'turn'

Take, for instance, the Earl of Surrey's sonnet titled "Set me whereas..." Fourteen lines in length, it follows the rhyme scheme of the English sonnet. Its opening line is as follows: *Set me/ whereas/ the sun/ doth parch/ the green.* As you can see, the ten syllables in the line are ordered in a particular pattern where unstressed syllables alternate with stressed ones (boldened). This pairing of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable is known as an *iamb*. Since there are five such pairs, the above line is said to be composed in *iambic pentameter*. This poetic metre imitates the natural cadence of English speech, and is one of the most used in English poetry.

► Metrical pattern

Poetic metre refers to the rhythmic structure of verse or lines in a poem. Depending on whether a poem uses metre or not, or what kind of metre is used, poetry may take on a musical or conversational quality. Here is a list of some prominently used metres in the English language:

Style	Type	Stress Pattern U - Unstressed/ Stressed	Number of Syllables
Iambic	Iamb	U/	2
Trochaic	Trochee	/U	2
Spondaic	Spondee	//	2
Phyrric	Phyrric	UU	2
Anapestic	Anapest	/UU	3
Dactylic	Dactyl	UU/	3
Amphibraic	Amphibraic	U/U	3
Amphimacer	Amphimacer	/U/	3

Another feature that accompanied the form over the years, is the use of the *volta* or the 'turn'. This is a poetic device that indicates a thematic, emotional, or philosophical reversal within the text of the poem. Sometimes, it functions as a revelation or as a reconciliation of tension. In the English sonnet, the rhyming couplet usually contains the *volta*.

► Reversal



The *Volta* is a poetic device that reverses meaning and creates irony. It is widely used in sonnets, haikus, sijos, and other poetic types. Depending on how it has been used, it creates different effects within the poem. Go to this link to explore diverse examples of the usage of the volta: <https://literarydevices.net/volta/>

► Representation

The traditional themes of the sonnet include love, courtly romance, longing, yearning for the beloved, and reflections connected to the same. This continued from the Italian variation down to the English model. While it was certainly not the only form of love poetry in the Elizabethan age, it was generally understood to be one that required great technical skill. The sonnet's focus on relating the experience of desire and inner conflict of the speaker in such a short, structured way made them a unique literary exercise.

► Convention

In the larger English canon, well before Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney composed a collection of sonnets titled *Astrophil and Stella* (1591). It consisted of 108 sonnets that described Astrophil's unrequited love for Stella. In 1595, Edmund Spenser published his sonnet sequence *Amoretti*, addressing his love for his future-wife. Thus, the sonnet was clearly a part of Elizabethan love conventions, especially among the upper echelons of society.

► Social conditions

William Shakespeare's sonnets were first published as a Quarto in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe, though they were probably composed in the 1590s. The latter date is suggested because a severe plague outbreak shut down London theatres in 1593 and 1594. Further, there was growing support for the puritan perspective that theatres were immoral spaces, and needed to be regulated or shut down entirely. Many critics consider it likely that Shakespeare could have turned to poetry during this uncertain period.

The sonnet sequence was titled *Shake-speares Sonnets. Neuer before Imprinted*. [Shakespeare's Sonnets. Never Before Imprinted]. It consisted of 154 consecutively numbered sonnets and a long narrative poem entitled "A Lover's Complaint". Individual sonnets are referred to by



► Publication

their assigned number instead of titles. The specification that this work contains sonnets that have never before been printed suggests that some of Shakespeare's sonnets may have been printed before.

There is no direct evidence to say that Shakespeare authorised the publication of his sonnets by Thorpe or that he was involved in numbering and ordering the sonnets. Early scholarly opinion was that Thomas Thorpe was a "disreputable pirate" who published Shakespeare's sonnets without consultation or permission. However, in the 1980s, Katherine Duncan-Jones dismantled this view by pointing out that Thorpe had published the works of many popular writers of the age including Ben Jonson. She pointed out that the publication style of the sonnet sequence closely resembled that of other collections of sonnets during the 1590s. Further, she noted that many Elizabethan sonnet series ended in a poem of narrative complaint as seen with "A Lover's Complaint". Duncan-Jones also emphasises many thematic and structural connections between the different sonnets within the collection that makes it possible that there was a coherent arrangement of the works.

► Authorisation

A matter of serious contention, even today, is the identity of the individual to whom the sonnets are dedicated. After the title page of Thorpe's Quarto, the following words are printed:

It is generally considered that the term 'onlie begetter' refers either to the person who inspired Shakespeare to write the sonnets. There are many who believe that the initials W.H. stands for William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke or for Henry Wriothesley, a generous patron of the poet. Several others have suggested that the reference is to the person who 'procured' or collected the sonnets for Thorpe — William Hall. As such, there is no definitive answer to this question.

► Identity

In terms of approaching the sonnets themselves, we need to familiarise ourselves with their formal style and thematic classification. In terms of poetic form, Shakespeare employed the 'English sonnet' made popular by Surrey. Except for three poems (sonnet 99, 126, and 145), the remaining 151 follow the scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, in fourteen lines of iambic pentameter.

► Format

Though the poems revolve around love and desire, they branch out to include several diverse reflections on the nature of romance, beauty, time, sexual attraction, and art.

The arrangement of the sonnets has provoked some readers and critics to see them as a coherent, continuous narrative. This is based on the addressee of the sonnets. The most popular categorisation ranges from:

- Sonnets 1-126: The Fair Youth Sequence
- Sonnets 127-154: The Dark Lady Sequence

There are certain variations of theme within these broad classifications. For instance, in Sonnets 1-17, the poet urges the Fair Youth to marry and beget children. In the sequence from 78-86, a 'rival poet' emerges who appears to be competing for the Fair Youth's attention and patronage. Several poems allude to a love triangle between the Fair Youth, the Dark Lady, and the speaker (sonnets 40-42, 144 etc). There are many theories as to the real-life identities of these three figures as well as readings that suggest that their presences are symbolic only.

► Arrangement of theme

The Fair Youth sequence often highlights the speaker's friendship and platonic love for the youth. Idealised attributes of the Elizabethan age, such as beauty, courtly behaviour, accomplished life, and elite social station, are associated with him. The tone of the poems varies between admiration, sensual attraction, a sense of betrayal, and jealousy.

► Nature of relationship

While the cultural ideals of the Elizabethan era appear to be embodied in the Fair Youth, the Dark Lady seems to deviate from this. The Dark Lady sequence often hints at a passionate relationship centred on sensuality and desire. Her beauty is depicted as unconventional for the time, with her complexion described as "dark as night". As the sequence progresses, the relationship between the speaker and the Dark Lady takes on conflicted overtones. The lady is deemed to be untrustworthy and manipulative, often taking lovers other than the speaker.

► Contrasting portrayals



Given that Shakespeare places the 'Fair Youth' as one of the central objects of admiration and desire in his sonnet sequence, there have been many discussions about the poet's sexuality. There is constant disagreement about whether these poems signify male friendship in the renaissance, a celebration of nonsexual, Platonic love, or a homoerotic/bisexual love affair. Visit this link for more critical discussions on the same: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare/Sexuality>

► Recurring ideas

Let us now take up Sonnets 18 and 55, prescribed for study in Block 2 of this course. According to the above classification, both poems fall under the first sequence. The philosophical message of the poems is then addressed to the persona of the Fair Youth. The underlying themes of love, art, and immortality are present in both sonnets, though explored differently.

Sonnet 18 revolves around the question of how the eternal beauty of the beloved may be preserved. The speaker notes how seasons and objects in nature such as the sun or trees often fade away or lose their beauty. Unlike those things, the "eternal summer" of the beloved would remain memorialised in the verses of the poet. The "eternal lines" of the sonnet itself becomes a vessel for the Fair Youth to live on. The speaker ends by referring to the remembrance provided by art:

► Function of Art

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet 55 presents the relationship between the speaker, his beloved, and poetry along very similar lines. However, the intimate depiction of nature in Sonnet 18 is replaced by civilisational imagery. Instead of summer, buds, and the sun, the speaker introduces marble, gilded monuments, masonry, and war. He argues that while time and wars may wipe out memories and monuments, they would never touch the "living record" of the beloved's memory. Since the "powerful rhyme" encapsulates the lover, the concluding couplet states:



► Memorialisation

*So, till the Judgement that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.*

Outwardly, both sonnets appear to be statements of praise intended for the lover. This ties into the status of the sonnet as a conventional expression of romantic interest at the time. Sonnets 18 and 55 convey those idealised emotions that are typically attached to quaint, courtly notions of love. The refined language of these sonnets correspond to the speaker's idealisation of the Fair Youth.

► Idealised love

The exaggerated comparisons of the beloved, in both sonnets, are borrowed from existing conventions of Renaissance and Elizabethan love poetry. The opening lines of Sonnet 18, for illustration, compares the Fair Youth with a summer's day — but finds that he is, in fact, far more pleasant than the season. In Sonnet 55, the speaker claims that his poetry would allow his lover to “pace forth” against death. These far-fetched analogies and hyperbolic language were part and parcel of the voicing of love within the sonnet genre.

► Genre and language

On a deeper level, both sonnets form part of a commentary on the nature of the genre itself. The works highlight the power of literature and art to defy time, living on long after their subjects have been lost to the past. This reflection on the power of the form to immortalise the beloved appears to be a validation of the genre, rooted in the fact that the speaker's artistry arises out of love.

► Validation

On the other hand, there is a considerable shift in tone and diction as we arrive at Sonnet 130. It is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing works in the Dark Lady sequence. It parodies the sensational language of the sonnet and love poetry, mocking the far-flung comparisons and unattainable ideals of the genre. Rather than project the Dark Lady as an exemplary object of affection, the sonnet establishes her as an ordinary woman with flaws and imperfections.

► Realistic

The sonnet opens by dismantling high-sounding declarations of the beloved's beauty. Her eyes are not like the sun, the coral is far redder than her lips, and there are no roses in her cheeks. Despite moving away from such hyperbole, the speaker considers his love as more “rare”



► Inversion

and valuable than any praise that the lover has received through false comparison. In other words, the sonnet advocates against the idealisation of the beloved.

► Conflict

The usage of the sonnet form to challenge its internal conventions is particularly interesting. Its language lacks the flowery sweetness expected of a love poem, and complements the revelation that the speaker has in the concluding couplet. Further, it creates a tonal picture of his love for the Dark Lady as a conflicted one.

► Binary

The representations of the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady, as seen in the above instances, come into play in Sonnet 144. Here, we have direct references to the way in which these two figures influence the speaker, and how the speaker reacts to them. The opening line of the sonnet generates the notion of two different and contrasting types of love — one of comfort and one of despair. The speaker appears to be trapped in this binary.

► Anxiety

The speaker describes the two loves that guide him, thus: *The better angel is a man right fair, / The worser spirit a woman coloured ill*. As with earlier portrayals, the ‘fair’ man is privileged in terms of the speaker’s affection and regards. His hostility seems to be directed at the ‘ill- coloured’ woman as the “worser” spirit. The sonnet is filled with the speaker’s anxiety that the ‘female evil’ would corrupt the ‘angel’.

► Love triangle

The sonnet explicitly discusses the speaker’s suspicion of the man and the woman engaging in a secret affair. He alludes to this as he suggests that the “purity” of the better angel may be won over by the “foul pride” of the Dark Lady. Yet, he can only live in doubt until his “bad angel” fires the good one out. Thus, the poem concludes on a note of despair and suspicion, affirming the speaker’s emotional turbulence.

► Moral Betrayal

Through the course of these four sonnets, we see the progression and devolution of the speaker’s relationships with the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady. From being a symbol of virtue and beauty, the young man becomes open to corruption. His betrayal of the speaker, in entering into a relationship with the Dark Lady, appears to symbolise a moral or spiritual decline. This is signified in the perceived loss of purity on the part of the young man. The “worser spirit” becomes the source of the apparent temptation.

- Male friendship and female sexual attraction

The complicated contents of the sonnets have raised various critical readings. A much discussed aspect has been the representation of gender and race in the poems. Even in the selected texts, we can see how male bonding is given predominance over male-female relationships. On the one hand, this follows the existing Elizabethan convention of male friendship. On the other hand, it marginalises the Dark Lady for holding sexual power over the speaker and the youth, suggesting that being attracted by her is equal to being corrupted.

- Threat to patriarchal norms

Feminist critics have emphasised that the Dark Lady appears to function outside the boundaries of Elizabethan propriety and ideal femininity. She represents a threat to the social and spiritual virtues symbolised by the Fair Youth. Her sexual appetite and her refusal to conform to norms such as chastity and fidelity, transform her into the speaker's "bad angel"; an emotional influence with the power to damage his moral sense.

- Perception of race

Similarly, most descriptions of the Dark Lady focuses on her foreign, 'othered' features - specifically, the colour of her skin. While Sonnet 130 presents the unconventionality of her beauty, Sonnet 144 directly refers to her as an 'ill coloured' woman. Many critics argue that the corruptive nature of her desire might be related to her darkness, thus denoting a cultural otherness.

- Self-identity

These sonnets also explore the connection between selfhood and desire. The speaker seems to cherish his longing for the Fair Youth, even characterising his craft as a way of memorialising that desire. However, his attraction towards the Dark Lady, and her affair with the young man, appears to unsettle him. It leaves him in doubt as opposed to the exalted admiration that he feels for the Fair Youth.

Summarised Overview

To fully contextualise the Shakespearean sonnet, as genre and as a work of poetry, we need to recognise how the writer has played with artistic conventions. The traditional love sonnets in the collection, celebrating beauty and desire, are addressed to a man. They take on a philosophical and symbolic nature as well. The sonnets focusing on a woman, the traditional subject of the sonnetry of his age, are bitter and despairing. Even though the selected sonnets follow the English model, it is possible to see thematic patterns of the Petrarchan sonnet within them. The first two quatrains may raise a question or an argument that is resolved in the third quatrain and the concluding couplet. Such juxtapositions show how the poet innovated established styles.

Explore other sonnets by William Shakespeare at the following link:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-shakespeare>

Assignments

1. Trace the brief history and general characteristics of the sonnet form.
2. Why is the sonnet form considered to be versatile?
3. Who were the early pioneers of the Sonnet genre in English?
4. What are the features of the 'English sonnet'?
5. Explain the usage of *iambic pentameter* in the sonnet form.
6. What is the *volta*?
7. Describe the primary theme of sonnets across ages.
8. Briefly describe the history of the publication of Shakespeare's sonnets.
9. What are Katherine Duncan-Jones's views on the 1609 Quarto?
10. Write a short note on the questions raised by the dedication page of the Quarto.
11. Briefly describe the format followed by Shakespeare in composing his sonnets.
12. How are Shakespearean Sonnets popularly classified?
13. Compare and contrast the representation of the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady.
14. How are Sonnets 18 and 55 interconnected?
15. Describe the representation of the Dark Lady in Sonnet 130.
16. How does Sonnet 144 present the progression of the speaker's relationship with the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady?



Suggested Readings

1. Cousins, A.D. and Peter Howarth. editors. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*. CUP, 2011.
2. Fuller, John. *The Sonnet*. Routledge, 2018.
3. Regan, Stephan. *The Sonnet*. OUP, 2019.
4. Schiffer, James. *Shakespearean Sonnets: Critical Essays*. Routledge, 2010.

References

1. Cousins, A.D. and Peter Howarth. editors. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*. Cambridge UP, 2011.
2. Schiffer, James. *Shakespearean Sonnets: Critical Essays*. Routledge, 2010.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 4

Studying Shakespearean Adaptations

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ▶ contextualise the nature and politics of selected Shakespearean adaptations
- ▶ critically explore the influence of some features of the medium of adaptation
- ▶ analyse the selected works in the backdrop of socio-cultural context
- ▶ describe the import of certain themes and narrative strategies in the selected works

Background

Adaptations are, in principle, akin to translations. They refer to an artistic or literary work that is shifted into another medium or genre. While some elements of the source, such as theme or plot, remains the same, the adapted work is generally regarded as a new creative contribution. How a work is adapted, into what form or genre, and how much is retained, depends on a wide array of factors.

Often, the politics of the adaptation transforms the settings or the thematic context of the original. A Shakespearean play about a power-hungry Scottish general (*Macbeth*) might become a Hindi film about a henchman, eager to take over the reign from a powerful underworld don (*Maqbool* 2003). The changed settings allow for target audiences to identify with and immerse themselves in the narrative.

The vast oeuvre and legacy of Shakespeare has been the subject of many adaptations. Ranging from alternative drama, radio plays, novels, cinema, series, and graphic novels, the author's words and imagination have been placed onto many different canvases. What informs these adaptations and their politics? How can they be critically contextualised? The following unit offers relevant perspectives on Shakespearean adaptations, with special reference to prescribed works in Modules 2 and 3.



Keywords

Genre, form, politics of adaptation, context, socio-cultural elements

4.4.1 Discussion

Many of Shakespeare's plays have been adapted from different sources including from historical writings, works of other dramatists, and mythological references. Our idea of what is original and what is a copy might need to be revisited. Explore this link for more details: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare/Shakespeares-sources>

Tom Stoppard is a Czech born British dramatist of the modern era. He was born in 1937, and in 1966, he wrote and directed *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which was a commercial triumph. It draws its source material from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Both have similar characters and plots, but they differ because of their respective historical, social, literary, and priority contexts. The language, theatrical approach, ideals, characters, and subjects of the plays vary as well.

► Variations

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead revises the focus of the original by centralising the minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, from the Shakespearean original. The events of *Hamlet* continue all around them as Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern wander around, debating existential questions.

► Perspective

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead drew great critical acclaim upon its premiere in 1966. By reversing the perspective to Hamlet's childhood friends, both of whom experience the uncertainties and madness around them, Stoppard managed to comment on the meaninglessness and theatricality of life in general.

► Absurdity

In Act 1, the two friends wander through a wilderness, competing with coin flips. The coin lands on heads every time, and Rosencrantz wins each time. This has gone on for many times in a row. Guildenstern points out the improbability of the fact while Rosencrantz merrily

► Logic

continues to flip the coin. He wonders if they are in a world where the laws of chance and time are absent. In fact, the pair cannot even remember why they are travelling. They only know that they have been summoned by a messenger.

► Awareness

Even in this opening scene, the audience witness the absurdity of the world in which the two friends exist. Those familiar with the original text are aware that the two are probably headed for Elsinore castle, having been called there by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude. In this sense, the spectators have information that the actual characters seem not to possess.

► Chance

The duo encounter a troupe of actors, known as the Tragedians. The Player, the leader of the group, indicates that they specialise in sexual scenes. He insinuates that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern can participate in these sexual performances for a fee. Though the two appear to be disgusted, they are intrigued by the offer. Guildenstern plays a few betting-games with the Player, taking advantage of the coin-flipping episode. He wins and asks for a play. He reveals that the coin has landed on tails now.

► Purpose

The scene suddenly shifts and the two friends are now inside Elsinore castle. They watch Hamlet and Ophelia burst onto the stage and leave in opposite directions. Claudius mistakes Rosencrantz for Guildenstern, and commands them to find out what is bothering Hamlet, their childhood friend.

► Spectators within their own play

The sudden change of scene emphasises the transient nature of human experience. Inside Elsinore, they watch the main characters of the Shakespearean original. It is almost as though they are watching the play from within, without being aware of it. Earlier, while they seemed to have no purpose or logic, Claudius now provides one for them.

Act 2 sees Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discuss how they might interrogate and probe Hamlet about the reason behind his supposed madness. They play a round of question and answer during which they confuse themselves. They even end up confusing their own identities. Guildenstern suggests that he pretend to be Hamlet and Rosencrantz question him. They come to the

► Self-identity

conclusion that Hamlet is disturbed about the death of his father and the usurping of the throne by his uncle.

Hamlet further confuses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with a cryptic speech. Polonius arrives to tell Hamlet that the Tragedians have arrived. The two friends are stumped by Hamlet's bizzare behaviour and cannot decide if he is truly mad. Later when the Tragedians enter, they discuss the matter with the Player. They also enter into a philosophical debate about what happens after death.

► Madness

The theme of confused identities continues from the earlier parts of the play. Claudius, Hamlet, and even the friends themselves cannot seem to distinguish one from the other. In part, this speaks to their interchangeability as characters. Further, they cannot decide if Hamlet is faking his madness in a world that increasingly seems not to make sense.

► Lack of Rationale

The play progresses as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern explain to Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, and Ophelia that Hamlet wants them all to attend the play tomorrow. The group leaves, but Hamlet enters. Not noticing his two friends, Hamlet wonders whether he should commit suicide. Ophelia enters, praying. They exit after a short conversation.

► Unexplained action

The Tragedians rehearse their play which has parallels to Claudius's rise to power and marriage to Gertrude. In between, a distraught Ophelia enters, followed by an angry Hamlet. He demands her to become a nun and leaves. Claudius and Polonius enter and depart with Ophelia.

► Play within a play

The Tragedian's performance appears to metaphorically retell the events at Elsinore. Disturbingly, it foretells the death of two spy characters who resemble the two friends. While Rosencrantz sees some amount of familiarity in these characters, he does not recognise them for himself and his companion. They discuss whether death can truly, adequately be represented on stage. The screen goes black.

► Counterparts

A voice-over in the darkness indicates that the play has shaken Claudius. The next day, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are asked to find Hamlet who has killed Polonius. Alone, they create a plan to trap the prince with their belts and thus immobilise him. They fail when

► Strategising

Hamlet enters from a different, unexpected direction. He leaves, carrying Polonius's dead body. The duo call Hamlet back but he refuses to say what he has done with the body.

► Orders

Hamlet accuses the two friends of conspiring with Claudius and being his tools. He, then, escapes as Claudius enters. Later, he is escorted onstage under guard. The scene shifts yet again. Guildenstern tells Rosencrantz that they must travel with Hamlet to England. They reluctantly depart.

► Indecisiveness

In Act 3, on the ship to England, it is revealed that Guildenstern has a letter from Claudius which demands the execution of Hamlet in England. Initially they cannot find the letter, and later they find it. When they sleep, Hamlet switches the letter with a new one that he has written.

► Irrational elements

The next morning, they discover music coming from the barrels onboard. Just as pirates are about to storm the ship, the Tragedians startle everyone by coming out of the barrels. The lights dim as Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Hamlet, and the Player plunge into the barrels. Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and the Player emerge from the barrels as soon as the lights are turned back on. Hamlet has left.

► Desperation

The Player is informed about the letter by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who also practise their response to the English king. Guildenstern learns that the letter now specifies that Guildenstern and Rosencrantz will be put to death. The two are surrounded by the Tragedians. Guildenstern steals a dagger from the Player and stabs him out of desperation for his fate. The Player appears to cry out and stumble.

► Blurred boundaries

The Player, however, lives since the knife was only a prop with a retractable blade. Only Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are now visible due to a shift in lighting. They say their parting comments before leaving the stage. The play concludes with Horatio reciting Hamlet's farewell speech as two diplomats arrive in Elsinore to bring the tragic news of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths.

The particular form taken by the adaptation points to the way in which absurdist theatre explores the human



► Form and plot

condition. The play investigates abstract, fundamental aspects of existence such as death and human capacity for free will. In doing so, it tries to make sense of a world that appears to be characterised by utter randomness, apathy, brutal existence, and meaninglessness. Thus every action, utterance, and thought contributes to the absurdity.

► Technique

The language of the play, incorporating wordplay and insensible linguistic constructions, reflect this absurdity. This is done to demonstrate the difficulty of conveying meaning in a world such as the one portrayed by *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. All that is known and certain is turned on its head. As Guildenstern says: "All your life you live so close to truth, it becomes a permanent blur in the corner of your eye, and when something nudges it into outline it is like being ambushed by a grotesque..." This is true of Rosencrantz's description of the sunset as "The sun's going down. Or the earth's coming up" rings similarly true.

► Abstraction

Additionally, the play's numerous incidents of miscommunication and misunderstanding begin to seem more and more accurate. It frequently reminds the audience, death is the unknown and is outside the realm of human perception. Guildenstern answers to Rosencrantz's attempt to justify death by equating it to a boat: "No, no, no...Death is...not. Death isn't...Death is the ultimate negative. Not-being. You can't not-be on a boat."

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead reveal some of the principal features of the absurdist theatre:

1. A world without meaning
2. The isolation of the individual
3. Experimentation with form
4. Devaluation of language and meaning
5. Lack of coherent plot

► Common elements

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* served as the inspiration for *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, which was then altered by the addition of fresh ideas and viewpoints. Stoppard posed questions about the two minor characters from one of the most frequently performed plays in history. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern only appear in a few scenes during *Hamlet*, and Stoppard's play fills in the blanks of what Shakespeare thinks might have happened

► Adaptation



in between moments.

Tom Stoppard wrote and directed a film version of the play, also titled *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, in 1990. Its cast comprised of such actors as Gary Oldman, Tim Roth, Ian Glen, Richard Dreyfus, Joanna Miles, and Donald Sumpter. It opened to mostly positive reviews, though many criticised the script as more suited to the stage.



Fig. 4.4.1. Mark Fossen as Rosencrantz and Mark Macey as Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard. Directed by Jerry Rapier.

Of the many villains that have been depicted in Shakespearean theatre, the character Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* has retained a sense of intrigue. The play presents him as a miserly, Jewish moneylender who demands “a pound of flesh” from a merchant who defaults on a loan payment. It has been widely noted that he conforms to many of the stereotypes believed of Jews in sixteenth century England. This includes the depiction of his ‘greed’ and ruthlessness, as well as his hostility towards the Christian characters in the play.

► Stereotype

Harold Bloom, a renowned literary critic, has pointed out that the very plot of the play espouses hatred towards Judaism, and is antisemitic. In his 1998 book, *Shakespeare and the Invention of the Human*, he considers the play

► Impact

to have done “real harm...to the Jews for some four centuries...” because of its representation of Shylock.

Jewish communities across the world have been historically discriminated against through the propagation of harmful stereotypes. Common objects and tropes which are used to highlight or mock Jewishness include certain physical features, personality traits, or even cuisine. Organisations such as the Anti-Defamation League and American Civil Liberties Union fight against such negative representations in popular culture, media, and elsewhere.

It is in this context that Howard Jacobson’s novel *My Name is Shylock* marks a fresh approach to the character of Shylock. Published in 2016, the text presents a sympathetic yet complicated portrayal, which results in a striking retelling of the original story. The narrative is set in the twenty-first century, with Simon Strulovitch standing in as a modern counterpart for Shakespeare’s Shylock. Strulovitch is a Jewish art collector, who struggles against the antisemitism and discrimination of the outside world. In accessing his perspective as a cultural and religious outsider in contemporary England, the reader empathizes with Strulovitch.

► Recasting Shylock

There is an intertextual dialogue between the Shakespearean play and Jacobson’s novel in that the character of Shylock appears and plays a crucial role in the narrative. Strulovitch discovers him in a graveyard and declares: “Of course Shylock is here, among the dead. When hasn’t he been?”. He seems to have been wandering the earth for centuries, grieving for his daughter who elopes with a Christian in the source material. Shylock is on the run to evade forcible conversion to Christianity, as the ruling had been made at the end of the Shakespearean play.

► Symbolism

Shylock, himself, becomes a symbol of the persistence of Jewish suffering across the ages. In the twenty-first century, Strulovitch shares many of the anxieties and discriminations that Shylock faced in the sixteenth century. Comparing himself to Shylock, Strulovitch cannot see many resemblances except their enduring love for their daughters. Yet, he wonders, “So what was it

► Continued discrimination

Gentiles [Christians] saw that told them they were both Jews?" In other words, he is still trying to contextualise the discrimination and hatred that he and Shylock have been facing for their Jewish identity, even across different ages.

► Weight of identity

One of the most telling dialogues in the novel is uttered when Shylock says, "These Jews! They don't know whether to cry for me, disown me, or explain me." In short, there is a constant struggle as to whether Jewish identity, with its inheritance of 'othering', is to be accepted, discarded, or made palatable to other communities. This parallels the experience of the followers of Judaism in a world that is actively hostile to them.

► Continuation of theme

As in the source text, Strulovitch is motivated by a desire for revenge against D'Anton (the counterpart to Antonio), whose antagonism is displayed through petty insults and subtle antisemitism. His hatred of Jews form the undertone of his actions and words; quite often, he employs sophisticated jokes to make outsiders uncomfortable and aware of their status. The first meeting between the two occurs at a local council meeting. Strulovitch proposes that a historic house be converted into a gallery of British Jewish art, named in the memory of his parents. D'Anton dissuades the council from going forward with the idea, claiming that such a gallery would not be culturally apt. As expounded in the novel: "Strulovitch, who didn't like the way D'Anton pronounced his parents' names, saw his proposal turn putrid. It hung in the air of the council chamber like a malign presence."

William Shakespeare might have derived the theme of *The Merchant of Venice* from a real-life incident from 1594, where the queen's physician, Rodrigo Lopez, was executed for treason. Lopez was a recent convert to Christianity, with Jewish ancestry, and was accused of trying to poison Queen Elizabeth. Many critics consider him to be the inspiration for the character of Shylock.

Unlike in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, wherein Antonio and Portia epitomise Christian values, Plurabelle (a version of Portia) and D'Anton in the novel toy with people's emotions for entertainment. When they meet Gratan, a footballer infamous for giving the Nazi

► Subversive characterisation

salute on the field, they feel it would be fun to encourage a relationship between him and Beatrice, Strulovitch's daughter. They manipulate the relationship, ignoring the grounded and discriminatory realities of Jewish life, mostly to alleviate their boredom.

The infamous "pound of flesh" demanded of Antonio in the Shakespearean version is transformed here; Strulovitch demands that Gratian undergo the ritual of circumcision required to join the Jewish faith, if he is to continue the relationship with Beatrice. D'Anton and Plurabelle aid the young couple to elope, seemingly evading the threat. However, Strulovitch plays his trump card – either Gratian or one of his friends must perform the rite, or he will reveal the fact that Gratian, aided by his friends, entered into a relationship with Beatrice while she was still underage. Under threat of social disrepute and legal trouble, D'Anton offers to undergo circumcision if his friend fails to do so. In this way, Jacobson appears to offer partial vindication to the historical Shylock. However, on the agreed time and date, Strulovitch is informed by the doctor that D'Anton has already been circumcised. Thus, despite having been initiated, the revenge is not completed.

► Retribution

Akira Kurosawa has adapted several Shakespearean plays onto the silver screen. His filmography includes *Throne of Blood* (*Macbeth*) (1957) and *The Bad Sleep Well* (*Hamlet*) (1960). Both movies were grounded in traditional Japanese culture, with elements of Noh theatre and folk mythology interspersed with the Shakespearean narratives. Can you identify this technique in *Ran*?

► Critical Acclaim

Akira Kurosawa, a Japanese filmmaker, combined *King Lear*, from Shakespeare, with the legends of Mori Motonari, a Japanese daimyo, to create *Ran*. It was released in 1985, and is regarded as a sublime cinematic creation. Many hailed its outstanding visual composition at the time of its release, and costume designer, Emi Wada was awarded the Academy Award for Best Costume Design.

The movie follows warlord Ichimonji Hidetora as he tries to decide which of his three sons can be relied upon to succeed him as king. Although Taro and Jiro, his older kids, are incredibly polite, their flattery turns out

► Plot

to be hollow as they demonstrate how power-hungry each of them is. Ichimonji only has Saburo, his youngest son, whom he exiled from his realm to protect him. The movie centres on Ichimonji's struggle to find safety and acceptance as he ages, as well as his tragic reunion with Saburo.

► Modifications

While transposing *King Lear* to feudal Japan, Kurosawa adapts the work to be relevant to its new settings. Instead of the three daughters, the film portrays three sons. This shift in gender would certainly have made more sense in the patriarchal ethos of Japan. Another key change lies in the politics of the medium. While *King Lear* is full of poetic reflections and thundering dialogue, *Ran* is devoted to the power of the visual.

► Cause and effect

At the same time, Kurosawa also brings changes to the parallel plot in Shakespeare. Kaede, the wife of the eldest son, belongs to a family that Ichimonji had killed to usurp their wealth and lands. This sets in motion the series of events that finally results in the ageing ruler's downfall. Thus, a reflection on the past of the protagonist is brought into the film's storyline.

► Dismantling of 'fate'

Lear's madness, which appears to be arbitrary in the original, is given a context in *Ran*. Ichimonji is driven mad as a direct result of his past brutality and warmongering. Unlike in the Shakespearean narrative, the tragic warlord is not driven by the tragic flaw of pride alone. Rather, it is the tyranny and violence unleashed in the desire for power that destroys the protagonist of *Ran*.

► Historical commentary

The larger scheme of the movie comments on a political era in Japan when its decentralised feudal territories were slowly being consolidated into larger unions (sixteenth century). The introduction of European weaponry, particularly firearms, is crucial in this context. The battle sequences in *Ran* bear testimony to the same.

► Deeper context

As noted by Brian Parker, one of the highlights of the Kurosawa's movie adaptations is the providing of moral and historical explanations for the decline of the protagonist. Where Shakespeare's Lear appears to have been struck down by fate and 'hamartia', the film's Ichimonji brings about his downfall as a direct result of human error and evil.



► Visual techniques

Ran also foreshadows much of the plot developments using symbols, allegories, and other imagery. For instance, the opening image of the movie shows the silhouettes of Ichimonji and his three sons mounted on horses. They ride off into different directions, just as, later on, they end up divided in life. Similarly, the wild boar is symbolic of aggression in Japanese culture. It corresponds to Ichimonji, himself. After it is hunted and killed, the warlord states that it is too old to be eaten, making the parallels clear.

The screenplay of *Ran* is considered to be a masterpiece in terms of powerfully adapting a work of literature onto the screen. It shows evidence of various strategies used by the screen writer and director to mould a believable and potent universe around which the movie could be produced. Read the screenplay here: <http://www.cinephiliabeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Ran.pdf>

Summarised Overview

The unit explores the politics of adapting Shakespeare into different genres and media, across different periods of time. While Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* draws upon absurdist theatrical traditions to centralise the narrative of two minor characters from *Hamlet*, Howard Jacobson's *My Name is Shylock* places the events of *The Merchant of Venice* in a contemporary fictional setting. In both these adaptations, the writers interpret the dominant plotlines of the respective Shakespearean plays to offer creative, subversive takes. *Ran*, on the other hand, transforms the plot of *King Lear* into a different cultural and artistic setting. It restructures the play into striking visual elements that, while conveying the themes inherent in the Shakespearean drama, proves its relevance along universal lines.

Assignments

1. How does Stoppard's play change the focus of its source material?
2. Examine the actions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Stoppard's play.
3. In what ways are the plot of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* absurdist?
4. How does *My Name is Shylock* revisit Shakespeare.
5. Detail *My Name is Shylock* as a work of postmodernist fiction.
6. Explore the changes Kurosawa made to the plot of *King Lear*.
7. What are the different techniques used to foreshadow plot developments in *Ran*?

Suggested Readings

1. Belsey, Catherine. "Shakespeare and Film: A Question of Perspective." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 11.3 (1983): 152-58.
2. Cartmell, Deborah. *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*. St. Martin's, 2000.
3. Gross, John. *Shylock: A Legend and its Legacy*. Simon and Schuster, 1994.
4. Hornby, Richard. *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*. Bucknell UP, 1986.

References

1. Greer, Richard. *Screening Shakespeare: Using Film to Understand the Plays*. Longman, 2002.
2. Gross, John. *Shylock: A Legend and its Legacy*. Simon and Schuster, 1994.
3. Holderness, Graham. *Visual Shakespeare: Essays in Film and Television*. U of Hertfordshire P, 2002.
4. Hornby, Richard. *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*. Bucknell UP, 1986.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

Kozhikode

Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery

Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura

Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi

Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

Shakespeare Studies

COURSE CODE: M21EG02DC



Sreeenarayanaguru Open University

Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: info@sgou.ac.in, www.sgou.ac.in Ph: +91 474 2966841