

Acting Shakespeare

Curriculum Unit for High School Theatre Class

Target Age Group: High School Students, Sophomores to Seniors

Time Frame: 8 weeks, 3 times per week
(50 minutes on Mondays, 85 minutes on Wednesdays and Fridays)

Designed by Elizabeth Berg

Course Description

In this course, students will gain greater familiarity with William Shakespeare and his plays. They will become more comfortable with Shakespeare's language, learn how to scan and analyze Shakespearean verse, and examine two of his plays within a historical and cultural context. They will read *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Richard III* and use discussion and drama-based activities to analyze the plays, uncover new meaning in the text, and apply the themes to their own lives. At the end of the unit, they will rehearse and perform Shakespearean scenes, applying both the acting skills they have been learning throughout the year, and the new discoveries they have made during the Shakespeare unit, to a performance context.

Enduring Understandings

- Students will understand that, when understood and thoughtfully applied, Shakespeare's language has the ability to illuminate and deepen, rather than obscure, narrative, character, and meaning.
- Students will understand that, while Shakespeare's plays were drawn from classical sources and are often considered "timeless" today, his playwriting choices were often influenced by the time period in which he was writing.
- Students will understand that accurate scansion of Shakespearean text can help clarify the meaning and allow an actor to communicate themes and ideas more freely.
- Students will understand that Shakespeare's plays were written to be read aloud, and the act of communicating with another actor can illuminate meaning that doesn't always come across on the page.
- Students will understand that a rich understanding of character motivations comes from a combination of reading the text closely for clues and imagining possible solutions to unanswered questions.
- Students will understand that, although *Richard III* is a "history" play, Shakespeare freely altered historical events for both dramatic and political reasons.

- Students will understand that in *Much Ado About Nothing*, a character's way of speaking and command (or lack of command) of language says a great deal about who they are.
- Students will understand that, although they use different words, more figurative language, and frequently a verse structure, the feelings and ideas that Shakespeare's characters try to communicate with one another (and the audience) have much in common with the thoughts communicated by characters in a realistic drama – and by all of us in our own lives.

Essential Questions

- Why are Shakespeare's plays still so popular today?
- As actors, how can we help our audience follow the story of a play even when the play's language is more challenging?
- How was the practice of theatre different in Elizabeth England than it is in the contemporary United States?
- What role did theatre play in the life of the average Londoner? How was the impact of theatre different than it is today? How was it similar?
- Why might Shakespeare have chosen to adapt familiar stories rather than write original plays?
- How might acting styles have been different in Shakespeare's day, given that plays were typically performed outside for large, rowdy audiences?
- How does speaking in iambic pentameter change the way we approach a scene? In what ways does our approach not change?
- Why did Shakespeare choose to primarily write in iambic pentameter rather than other verse forms?
- What can the inclusion of verse add to a theatrical performance?
- What is the difference between reading a line of Shakespearean text and speaking the word out loud? Is it easier to understand the words when you hear them spoken?
- What causes a person to become "evil"? Is Don John's antagonist nature a reaction to how others have treated him, or has he always been this way?
- How can we examine a theatrical text in order to draw out clues about a character's past?

- Why might Shakespeare have chosen to make Richard III such a villainous character?
- *Much Ado About Nothing* is a comedy with some very somber moments – three-quarters of the way through, it almost becomes a tragedy. What effect does this have on the rest of the play? Why might Shakespeare have made that choice?
- How many of the events and situations in *Richard III* and *Much Ado About Nothing* could exist today? Are any of them time-period-specific?
- What can we learn about a Shakespearean character based on whether they speak primarily in prose or in verse?

Knowledge

- Students will identify some of the major themes found in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Richard III*. Students will connect these themes to an Elizabethan context as well as to their own lives.
- Students will gain a greater understanding of the culture of Tudor England and the context in which Shakespeare wrote his plays.
- Students will learn about the history and culture of the Globe Theatre and about the types of audiences that typically attended plays during the Elizabethan era.
- Students will understand the concepts of iambic pentameter, stressed and unstressed syllables, masculine and feminine endings, irregular/trochaic feet, and elision.
- Students will understand why Shakespeare uses iambic pentameter and why he might choose specific instances to break the meter.
- Students will understand how a knowledge of historical context, such as the effect that being bastard-born could have on a person's life in earlier centuries, can affect and deepen our understanding of a text.

Skills

- Students will be able to scan lines of Shakespearean verse and use language and context clues to deduce the text's meaning.
- Students will understand techniques such as phrasing, antithesis, and imagery and be able to apply them when performing lines of Shakespearean verse.

- Students will be able to apply the acting skills they have learned in previous units, including playing objectives, believability, physical & vocal work, and characterization, to scenes from Shakespeare's plays.
- Students will be able to adapt a familiar story to fit a historical context and to achieve a political goal.
- Students will be able to scan a line of Shakespearean text, identify irregular lines, and elide as necessary in order to make a line fit the meter.
- Students will be able to write their own lines of iambic pentameter.
- Students will learn to read a play closely and make inferences about the possible events leading up to the main events depicted in the play.
- Students will engage with Shakespearean language in a way that is active and involves communicating directly with their scene partner.

Resources

Required Reading

Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*.

Handouts

- Shakespearean Conversations: 125 Odd Words (http://www-tc.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/handouts/prf-lp_shakesconversations2.pdf)
- Common Shakespearean Vocab Words (attached)
- Scansion Worksheets A & B (attached)
- *Much Ado About Nothing* Insult Sheet ([http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/uploadedFiles/Stratford/Education_and_Training/Teachers/PDF and Doc Files/Much%20Ado%20Insults.pdf](http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/uploadedFiles/Stratford/Education_and_Training/Teachers/PDF_and_Doc_Files/Much%20Ado%20Insults.pdf))
- Beatrice & Benedick's First Argument (attached)

Film Footage

Much Ado About Nothing. dir. Kenneth Branagh. American Playhouse Theatrical Films, 1994. DVD.

Much Ado About Nothing. dir. Josie Rourke. Film recording of theatrical performance at Wyndhams Theatre. 2011.
<http://www.digitaltheatre.com/production/details/much-ado-about-nothing-tennant-tate/overview#overview>

Richard III. dir. Richard Loncraine. Mayfair Entertainment International, 1995. DVD.

Selected Scenework

Much Ado About Nothing

- Act I, scene iii – Don John, Conrade, Borachio
- Act III, scene i – Hero & Ursula
- Act III, scene iii – Dogberry & Verges
- Act IV, scene i – Beatrice & Benedick
- Act V, scene i – Benedick, Claudio, Don Pedro
- Act V, scene ii – Beatrice & Benedick

Richard III

- Act I, scene ii – Richard & Lady Anne
- Act I, scene iii – Richard & Queen Margaret
- Act I, scene iv – Clarence, Murderer 1, Murderer 2
- Act IV, scene iv – Lady Anne, Queen Elizabeth, Lord Stanley (cut Dorset and Duchess of York)
- Act IV, scene iv – Richard & Queen Elizabeth

Other References

This curriculum unit includes some activities and handouts that were adapted from or inspired by other sources:

- Folger Shakespeare Library. “Education Department Curriculum Guide to *Much Ado About Nothing*.”
<http://pages.simonandschuster.com/images/ckfinder/26/pdfs/Folger%20Curriculum%20Guides/MuchAdoAboutNothing.pdf>
- LoMonico, Michael. Shakespearean “Conversations.” *PBS.org*.
<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/performance/lessonplan.html>
- Royal Shakespeare Company. “*Richard III* Education Activities Pack - 2012”
http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/edu_richard3_2012_activities_pack.pdf.
- Royal Shakespeare Company. “*Richard III* Education Pack – 2007.”
http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/rsc_edu_r3_2007_full_pack.pdf
- Shanley, Dan. “Elizabeth English” handout. *ShanleyWorld.com*.
http://shanleyworld.com/ShanleyWorld/Shakespeare_files/Elizabethan%20English%20and%20Shakespearean%20Vocabulary.pdf
- Van Tassel, Wesley. *Clues to Acting Shakespeare*. New York: Allworth Press, 2000.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks: PreK-12 Standards in Theatre

Acting

- 1.7 Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene.
- 1.10 Use vocal acting skills such as breath control, diction, projection, inflection, rhythm, and pace to develop characterizations that suggest artistic choices.
- 1.12 Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters’ wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics.

- 1.13 In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process).
 - 1.14 Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices.
 - 1.15 Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis.
 - 1.17 Demonstrate an increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble.
 - 1.18 Apply appropriate acting techniques and styles in performances of plays from a variety of dramatic genres and historical periods.
- Reading & Writing Scripts
- 2.7 Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict.
 - 2.8 Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts.
- Directing
- 3.2 Read plays from a variety of cultures and historical periods, describe their themes, interpret their characters' intentions and motivations, and determine their staging requirements.
 - 3.6 Rehearse and perform a variety of dramatic works for peers or invited audiences.
- Critical Response
- 5.8 Identify and discuss artistic challenges and successful outcomes encountered during the creative and rehearsal process.
 - 5.9 Use appropriate theatre terminology to describe and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their own or the group's work.

Week 1: Introduction to Shakespeare

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- words and definitions from "125 odd words" handout, written on small slips of paper
- three large sheets of butcher paper
- markers
- whiteboard
- Handout: "Common Shakespearean Vocab Words"

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Students play a modified version of the "Blind Line" improv game. Ahead of time, prepare the room by spreading slips of paper across the playing space. Each slip of paper contains a word/phrase and definition from "125 Odd Words" handout. Call up 2-4 volunteers at a time

- to improvise a short scene. Throughout the scene, actors must pick up a slip of paper and incorporate the listed word or phrase into the scene.
2. **Discussion:** What effect did these unfamiliar words have upon the improvised scenes? Were you able to figure out, through context clues and acting choices, the meaning of some of these esoteric words?
 3. Introduce the topic for the curriculum unit: "Acting Shakespeare." Set out a box of markers and three pieces of butcher paper titled "What I Know," "What I Think," and "What I Wonder." Students write words, phrases, or sentences on the three pieces of butcher paper exploring what they already know about Shakespeare, how they think and feel about Shakespeare, and what questions they have about Shakespeare and his plays. Post the three pieces of paper on the wall and ask students to respond to what their classmates have written.
 4. Explain that Shakespeare's language can be quite accessible if you know how to "decode" it.
 - a. Divide students into pairs and ask each pair to write a short (8-10 lines) dialogue between two modern-day high school students. The dialogue doesn't need to be dramatic - it can be a mundane, everyday conversation.
 - b. Introduce Shakespearean pronouns such as "thou," "thee," "thy," "thine," and "ye" and write them on the board. Ask students to replace the pronouns in their scene with the pronouns written on the board.
 - c. Introduce verb inflections (adding "est," "st," or "eth" to the end of a verb) and verbs that change ("doth" instead of "does," "tis" instead of "it's," "hath" instead of "has," "be" instead of "are," etc.) Write some examples on the board. Ask students to add inflections to their dialogue. Encourage them to overdo it.
 - d. Write a few examples on the board of Shakespearean lines that use a different word order than standard contemporary English. (Examples: "A gloomy peace this morning with it brings." "That handkerchief did an Egyptian to my mother give.") Then, write a few of Yoda's lines from the *Star Wars* films (e.g. "Powerful you have become. The dark side I sense in you." "Patience you must have, my young padawan." "Away put your weapon.") Ask students to mix up the word order in their sentences. Challenge them to see how many words they can move around without losing the meaning of the sentence.
 - e. Pass out "Common Shakespearean Vocab Words" handout. Ask students to replace as many words as possible in their dialogue with words from the handout. If their original conversation doesn't contain many words on the handout, they can also expand their dialogue (e.g. adding "Alack" or "Nay" to the beginning of a sentence).

5. Ask volunteers to read their new dialogue aloud to the class. After each scene is read, ask classmates to summarize what they think the scene was about. See how close they can get to the original version.

Day 2 (85 min) – extended lesson plan

Enduring Understanding

Students will understand that, while Shakespeare's plays were drawn from classical sources and are often considered "timeless" today, his playwriting choices were often influenced by the time period in which he was writing.

Essential Questions

- How was the practice of theatre different in Elizabeth England than it is in the contemporary United States?
- What role did theatre play in the life of the average Londoner? How was the impact of theatre different than it is today? How was it similar?
- Why might Shakespeare have chosen to adapt familiar stories rather than write original plays?
- How might acting styles have been different in Shakespeare's day, given that plays were typically performed outside for large, rowdy audiences?

Knowledge & Skills

- Students will gain a greater understanding of the culture of Tudor England and the context in which Shakespeare wrote his plays.
- Students will learn about the history and culture of the Globe Theatre and about the types of audiences that typically attended plays during the Elizabethan era.
- Students will be able to adapt a familiar story to fit a historical context and to achieve a political goal.

Materials

- Deck of playing cards
- Note cards with heckler-type comments written on them
- wig
- Sheets of scrap paper (for paper snowballs)
- Whiteboard
- Four slips of paper listing the following occasions: Queen Elizabeth's 65th birthday (1598), the coronation of James I (1603), signing of peace treaty between Spain and England (1604), completion of the King James Bible (1611)

Lesson Plan

1. Welcome students to the Globe Theatre as they begin to enter the classroom.
 - a. Ask each student to draw a playing card. This playing card will dictate their "status" for the remainder of the activity.
 - b. Assign students a place to sit based on their status:

- i. Lower numbers are groundlings. They have to stand in front of the stage/playing space.
 - ii. Higher numbers are wealthier play-goers. They get to sit in chairs (the galleries).
 - iii. The student who draws the queen gets to sit on the stage.
 - c. Choose 2-3 students to be the actors, and have them begin playing an improv game in front of the class.
 - d. As the actors are improvising, move through the audience and give them new directions. Ask audience members to begin shouting comments at the players. They may invent their own comments, but a few should draw from a stack of note cards provided by the teacher. (The note cards will help provide some historical context; e.g. "This is much duller than bear-baiting!")
 - e. Switch actors periodically. At one point, mention that male actors played female roles, hand a woman's wig to a male student, and ask him to play the female roles.
 - f. Toward the end of the activity, provide the groundlings with sheets of paper and ask them to begin throwing "fruit" (paper snowballs) at the actors.
2. **Discussion:** What was it like to perform for this type of audience? What was it like to be a member of this audience and be so clearly segregated by class? How do you think this particular theatrical climate may have influenced the writing of Shakespeare's plays and the ways they were performed during his time?
 - a. Ask the students if they can identify any similarities between the way Shakespeare's audiences were segregated and the way in which our own audiences are segregated by race and class today. Mention that the price difference between the best seats and the cheap seats is actually greater today than it was during the Elizabethan era.
3. Draw a timeline on the whiteboard representing Shakespeare's life alongside the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. Introduce the topic of the English Renaissance and some of the changes it was creating within the country and the culture. Tape images to the whiteboard to help represent this historical period in a visual way.
 - a. Explain that Shakespeare's theatre troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men and later the King's Men, was often brought in to perform directly for Elizabeth I and later James I. Although Shakespeare typically adapted older, classical stories for his plays, he would often choose plays that had some connection to contemporary events - and was also acutely aware of the need to please the monarch!
4. Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students each. Tell each group that the royal court is hosting a large banquet, and their theatre troupe has been selected to perform at the celebration. They have been asked to write an original play for the occasion.

- a. Assign each group a separate "special occasion" that indicates the reason for the banquet: the birthday of Queen Elizabeth I, the coronation of James I, the 1604 peace treaty between Spain and England, or the completion of the King James Bible in 1611.
 - b. Ask each group to choose a well-known story (it can be a fairy tale, folk tale, superhero origin story, or anything else - it's okay if it was first written after the 17th century) that they think would please Elizabeth I or James I. They should adapt the story to fit the time period and to send a message or provide commentary on current events - preferably a message that would be well-received at court. The scenes should be short (3-5 minutes).
5. Have each group perform their scene for the rest of the class.
- a. After each scene, solicit comments from the audience about the differences they noticed between the original story and the version their classmates have just presented. Ask them to speculate about the reasons for these particular changes.
 - b. After audience feedback, ask the theatre troupe to share their special occasion, the facts listed on their historical sheet, and what led them to make the changes that they made.
 - c. At the end, ask the groups to reflect on what it was like to adapt a familiar story, particularly when they had a very specific type of audience in mind.
6. **Wrap-up Discussion:** Explain that very few of Shakespeare's plays were completely original, and describe some of the source material he adapted when writing his plays. Ask the students why they think Shakespeare's plays have such longevity when many of the texts he based his plays upon have been forgotten. Before releasing the students, mention that this may have something to do with the language Shakespeare uses, and tell them that they will be exploring language in more detail in the next class.

Assessment

Performance Task: Students will work in groups to adapt a familiar story and create a play that they imagine will be performed for the monarch of England. Students will demonstrate an understanding of Elizabethan history and culture as well as the ability to think critically about how they might create a play that is likely to win approval from a specific audience.

Other Evidence: Informal discussions throughout the lesson will allow the instructor to gauge understanding, critical thinking, and engagement.

Day 3 (85 minutes) – extended lesson plan

Enduring Understanding

Students will understand that accurate scansion of Shakespearean text can help clarify the meaning and allow an actor to communicate themes and ideas more freely.

Essential Questions

- How does speaking in iambic pentameter change the way we approach the scene? In what ways does our approach not change?
- Why did Shakespeare choose to primarily write in iambic pentameter rather than other verse forms?
- What can the inclusion of verse add to a theatrical performance?

Knowledge & Skills

- Students will understand the concepts of iambic pentameter, stressed and unstressed syllables, masculine and feminine endings, irregular/trochaic feet, and elision.
- Students will be able to scan a line of Shakespearean text, identify irregular lines, and elide as necessary in order to make a line fit the meter.
- Students will understand why Shakespeare uses iambic pentameter and why he might choose specific instances to break the meter.
- Students will be able to write their own lines of iambic pentameter.

Materials

- whiteboard with the following Shakespeare quotations written on it before the start of class: *“Two households, both alike in dignity,/In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,/From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,/Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.” “To be, or not to be: that is the question:/Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer” “It is the east, and Juliet is the sun./Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon”*
- copies of Scansion Worksheet A & Scansion Worksheet B in equal amounts – enough copies for each student to have one of the two worksheets

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** “Busta Rap” improv game
 - a. Divide class into two teams and have each team form a single-file lines facing the other. Ask for a suggestion for a one-syllable name (e.g. Jane). The entire class starts clapping to create a beat, and the student at the front of one of the lines says, “I know a girl, her name is Jane” (or whatever the name is), staying on the beat. When the student reaches the final word, the rest of team must say the name “Jane” along with him/her.
 - b. The student at the front of the other line must then improvise a rhyming response (e.g. “She speaks Spanish; she is from Spain”), dropping a clue in the first half of the line so that his/her team is able to guess the rhyming word and speak it in unison.

- c. Then the first student speaks an additional rhyming line, (e.g. “She has a dog; it’s a Great Dane”), and the rap continues until one of the students messes up the rhythm or can’t come up with a rhyming word OR the rest of the team doesn’t say the correct word.
 - d. When one person loses the round, they go to the back of their line, a new one-syllable name is suggested, and play continues. The game ends when every member of one of the teams has been eliminated.
 2. **Discussion:** What’s it like to play a game like this, where you must speak entirely in rhythm? How does the form of the rap help you communicate with the rest of your group?
 3. Ask for 10 volunteers and have them stand in a line, shoulder to shoulder, facing the rest of the class.
 - a. Ask them to read the first line on the whiteboard (“Two households, both alike in dignity”), with each person taking a syllable. Students practice reading the line a few times.
 - b. Introduce the concept of iambic pentameter. To demonstrate, ask the 10 students at the front of the room to spread apart so they are broken up into 5 pairs – or iambs. Ask them to read the line again, but this time, the odd-numbered students speak their syllable softly, and the even-numbered students speak loudly – thus demonstrating the rhythm of iambic pentameter.
 - c. Ask the class to speak the line in unison as they clap out the rhythm.
 - d. Demonstrate proper iambic pentameter notation by scanning the line on the whiteboard.
 - e. To demonstrate what Shakespeare sounds like when the wrong syllables are stressed, ask the students to read the line again – this time in trochaic pentameter, stressing the odd-numbered syllables.
 - f. Ask the 10 students at the front of the room to read the next three lines on the whiteboard in the same way. When they get to the third line (“From ancient grudge break to new mutiny”), ask the class if anything sounds off. Then explain trochees and irregular lines of iambic pentameter. Ask the students to read the line again, this time stressing “break” rather than “to” in the third foot.
 4. Switch to a new group of 10 students.
 - a. Students try the line “To be, or not to be: that is the question,” from *Hamlet*, one syllable at a time. Segue into a discussion of feminine endings. Add an eleventh student, then try the line again with a feminine ending.
 - b. Try the second line in the soliloquy (“Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer”), which also has a feminine ending (and begins with a trochee).
 - c. Using the same group of 11 students, try out the line, “It is the east, and Juliet is the sun,” one syllable at a time, in iambic pentameter, with a feminine ending. Ask the class how that sounds. Introduce the second option for handling an 11-syllable line: elision. Ask for

- suggestions for which word to elide. If necessary, try out several options before settling on eliding the second syllable in "Juliet."
- d. Try out Romeo's next line, "Arise fair sun, and kill the envious moon." Ask one student to "direct" the 11 actors in reading the line, either with elision or a feminine ending. Try out both ways and ask the class to decide what sounds the best.
5. Divide the class into seven groups of 3-4 students and pass out copies of either Worksheet A or Worksheet B to each group. Each worksheet contains an assortment of lines from Shakespeare's plays – some regular and some featuring feminine endings, trochees, and/or elision.
 - a. Have students work in their groups to scan each line.
 - b. Re-group the class and ask each small group to share one irregular line and how they chose to scan it.
 6. Divide students into pairs. Give each pair a situation and ask them to write a short scene of 8-12 lines between two characters. Each line must be in iambic pentameter.
 - a. Once the scenes have been written, redistribute them so that each group ends up with a different scene from the one they wrote. Ask them to spend a few minutes reading through and then rehearsing the scenes.
 - b. Ask for volunteers to perform their scenes.
 7. **Discussion:** What was it like to perform a scene written in iambic pentameter? What was it like to watch one? How does iambic pentameter affect the rhythm of a scene? Does it reveal anything about character, action, and situation?

Assessment

Performance Task: By writing their own lines of iambic pentameter, students will demonstrate an understanding of both the structure of iambic pentameter and its connection to everyday human speech. Students will also perform short scenes in iambic pentameter, thus allowing the instructor to assess the class' overall comfort level with speaking verse and to structure future lessons based on that assessment.

Other Evidence: Working in small groups, students will demonstrate how well they understand the day's lesson by attempting to scan lines of Shakespearean verse. Informal discussions throughout the lesson will allow the instructor to gauge understanding, critical thinking, and engagement.

Week 2 - Much Ado About Nothing

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- *Much Ado About Nothing* Insult Sheet (multiple copies depending on the size of the groups), pre-cut before the start of class
- *Much Ado About Nothing* character handout

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Pass out 4-5 insults to each student and have them mill and seethe about the room. After about 15-20 seconds, give them permission to begin using their pre-assigned insults against anyone who walks past them.
 - a. From time to time, call out a new character (grumpy grandparent, angry Italian waiter, etc.), and ask them to speak the insults as that type of character.
 - b. Re-group and ask a few volunteers to share some of their favorite insults. Explain that these insults are all from the play *Much Ado About Nothing*, but that almost every Shakespearean play contains dozens of unique, juicy insults.
 - c. Give students the opportunity to share any insults they found confusing or hard to understand. Ask the rest of the class for ideas about what these more confusing insults might mean.
2. Tell students that for the next two weeks, the class will be exploring the play *Much Ado About Nothing*. Before we begin discussing the play, we will use an improv to explore some of the play's main themes within a contemporary context.
 - a. Ask for four volunteers. Give them the following scenario: A and B don't like one another and are having yet another fight. After A leaves, C and D (B's friends) enter and attempt to convince B that A actually has a huge crush on B. Have the students improvise a scene based on this scenario.
 - b. Ask for three more volunteers, and give them a different scenario: X, Y, and Z are in a scene, and Y and Z are trying to convince X to break up with his/her long-term boyfriend/girlfriend. They must do everything they can to try to find convincing reasons.
 - c. After the improvisation, explain that *Much Ado About Nothing*, the play the class will be reading, involves characters written several centuries ago who find themselves in very similar situations.
3. Introduce students to the premise of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Pass out a handout with the character family tree.
 - a. Talk through the handout, discussing each character and their relationship with the other characters.
 - b. As each character is mentioned, call up a volunteer to stand in front of the class and form a character pose. These poses should show

something about each character and how they relate to the other characters.

Homework

Read Act I of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Day 2 (85 min) – Extended Lesson Plan

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that Shakespeare’s plays were written to be read aloud, and the act of communicating with another actor can illuminate meaning that doesn’t always come across on the page.

Students will understand that a rich understanding of character motivations comes from a combination of reading the text closely for clues and imagining possible solutions to unanswered questions.

Essential Questions

- What is the difference between reading a line of Shakespearean text and speaking the words out loud? Is it easier to understand the words when you hear them spoken?
- What causes a person to become “evil”? Is Don John’s antagonist nature a reaction to how others have treated him, or has he always been this way?
- How can we examine a theatrical text in order to draw out clues about a character’s past?

Knowledge & Skills

- Students will learn how a knowledge of historical context, such as the effect that being bastard-born could have on a person’s life in earlier centuries, can affect and deepen our understanding of a text.
- Students will learn to read a play closely and make inferences about the possible events leading up to the main events depicted in the play.
- Students will engage with Shakespearean language in a way that is active and involves communicating directly with their scene partner.

Materials

- Beatrice & Benedick’s First Argument handout, 4 copies

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Play a game of “Whoosh!”
 - a. Gather the students in a circle and ask for a volunteer to take a stab at summarizing the plot events of last night's reading. As the student narrates, other students jump into the center of the circle and act out the story that's being told. Every few lines, the narrator says "Whoosh!," the students in the center re-join the circle, and new students enter the circle as the narrator continues the story. (If

- the class struggles, the teacher can also begin the narration to help get them started.)
- b. Ask for a second volunteer to try to summarize last night's reading. Continue playing the game until the class feels they have a clear grasp of what happened in Act I. If any plot-related questions come up while they game is being played, discuss them as a class and clarify the points of confusion.
2. Divide the class in half and have them form two lines facing one another. One line plays Beatrice; the other line plays Benedick. Have a few copies on hand of the Act I, scene i confrontation between Beatrice and Benedick. (Students will need to have their hands free while speaking, so whoever is standing next to the current speaker should hold the script for them.)
 - a. Pass an imaginary ball to the first student in the Benedick line. This student catches the ball, changes it in some way (size, shape, heaviness, type of ball), speaks Benedick's first line ("If Signior Leonato be her father..."), and passes the ball to the first student in the Beatrice group. This student catches the ball, changes it, speaks Beatrice's first line, and passes the ball to the second Benedick.
 - b. Continue until all students have had the opportunity to catch the ball and speak a line. If there are more students in the class than lines in the scene, students can start over from the first line in the exchange.
 3. **Discussion:** Re-group and discuss the wordplay between Beatrice and Benedick. How are the wordplay and ball-tossing related? What did you notice about the way Beatrice and Benedick interact with one another? When Beatrice and Benedick insult one another, they listen very closely to what the other person is saying, then find some way to twist their words back at them.
 - a. Ask students if they found any lines in the previous dialogue unclear or confusing. Help clarify the meaning of these lines.
 4. Discuss the fact that in this particular play, several of the characters have developed strong feelings about the other characters, positive or negative, before the play even begins. Don John, in particular, has very little backstory, and his main motivation in the play seems to be that he dislikes it when anyone is happy. Introduce some historical context and discuss what Don John's bastard birth would have meant during this time period.
 - a. Divide the class into six groups of 4-5 people, and ask each of them to create a short scene from a character's past.
 - i. Two groups create a scene from Don Pedro and Don John's childhood: one group's scene is from Don John's perspective, and one group's is from Don Pedro's perspective.
 - ii. Two groups show the meeting of Claudio and Hero: one from Claudio's perspective and one from Hero's perspective.
 - iii. Two groups show a past meeting between Beatrice and Benedick: one from Beatrice's perspective; one from Benedick's perspective.

- b. Have each group perform their scene for the class.
5. **Wrap-up Discussion:** If the scenes we just saw were part of the play, how might they change the way we view the characters? Discuss the fact that for an actor, when not everything about your character is made deliberately clear in the text, it can be helpful to create a backstory so that you understand how your character arrived at the events of the play and why they might make the choices that they make.
- a. Encourage the students to continue searching for clues, as they read the remaining four acts, that could help explain these six characters and why they relate to one another the way they do.

Assessment

Performance Task: By creating scenes that explain the backstories of specific characters, students will demonstrate both their understanding of the text that they've read and their ability to develop and make inferences about characters to explain what may not be directly stated in the text.

Other Evidence: The “Beatrice & Benedick’s First Fight” activity will allow the instructor to assess students’ understanding of Shakespearean verse and their ability to perform this verse effectively. The “Whoosh!” warm-up activity will allow the instructor to gauge how well students understood the previous night’s reading – as well as whether or not they completed the assignment. Informal discussions throughout the lesson will allow the instructor to gauge understanding, critical thinking, and engagement.

Homework

Read Act II of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Day 3 (85 min)

Materials

- television or projector
- videos: 1994 film and 2011 West End production of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Lesson Plan

1. Warm-up – Possum in a Tree
2. Read Act III, scene iii aloud with the class. Discuss what students understood and what questions they have.
 - a. Introduce the concept of malapropisms and their role in this scene. Read through the scene again, this time stopping at each malapropism. Ask students to suggest the word they think Dogberry actually meant.
 - b. Divide students into pairs and assign each pair a Dogberry scene (III.iii, III.v, IV.ii, or V.i). Ask them to work together to correct the

malapropisms in Dogberry's speech so that what he is saying makes sense.

3. Watch clips of Beatrice & Benedick's early interactions from two filmed versions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1994 Kenneth Branagh film; 2011 filmed West End production).
 - a. **Discussion:** Compare the interpretations of the scene in these two clips. How were they similar? How did they differ? Was anything different from what you expected when you first read the scene?
 - b. What can we learn about the characters when we compare Beatrice and Benedick's use of language to Dogberry's use of language?

Homework

Read Act III of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Week 3 - Much Ado About Nothing

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- television or projector
- video: 2011 West End production of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Late for Work
 - a. **Discussion:** What does it feel like to try to communicate an idea to someone when you can't do so in a direct way?
2. Show video clip of Act II, scene iii (Benedick's eavesdropping scene) from the 2011 West End production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.
 - a. Short responses to the clip: What's funny about this scene? Where does the humor come from?
3. Call up volunteers to cold-read Act II, scene iii from *Much Ado*. Encourage them to use the whole space – they don't need to stay on the stage! Remind them of their objectives in the scene and tell them to focus on those.
4. Call up four more volunteers to cold-read Act III, scene i – the Beatrice eavesdropping scene.

Homework

Read Act IV of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Day 2 (85 min)

Materials

- small pieces of scrap paper (enough for each student to have at least 3 pieces)
- small tape recorder
- possibly access to the school library/computer lab

Lesson Plan

1. Warm-up: Ball-Passing Game
2. Ask for a few volunteers to cold-read Act IV, scene i in front of the class.
 - a. **Discussion:** What are your reactions to the scene you just saw? Is Claudio being fair? Is Leonato? What would it be like to be Hero in this situation?
3. Ask the students to pretend they're Hero. Have them walk around the room, imagining that the wedding scene has just ended. What does it feel like to be Hero in this moment? Ask the students to search for Hero's "safe space" and form a statue that shows how she is feeling.
 - a. Pass out three pieces of scrap paper to each student. Ask them to write how Hero is feeling on the first paper, something she wishes she could say to another character on the second paper, and something she wishes she could do on the third paper. All of these should be in first person.
 - b. Choose one student to play Hero. Ask the other students if anyone has written a line that sounds like it would make a good first line in a monologue. Ask the student to bring their paper up so Hero can read the line. Record Hero speaking the line, then ask if anyone has a line that would make a good follow-up. Allow students to walk up to Hero whenever they have a line that will fit into the monologue, and record Hero saying each of the lines. After every student has contributed at least one line, play the full monologue back to the class.
4. Ask the class to begin preparing a mock trial for Claudio. Divide the class into a prosecuting team and a defending team. Pick two lead prosecutors and two lead defense attorneys. One student on the defense team plays Claudio, and others on each team can play character witnesses, such as Hero, Leonato, Beatrice, Benedick, Don John, Don Pedro, and the Friar.
 - a. Give students time to prepare their arguments. They should analyze the text closely for evidence and also do some internet research on marriage customs in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Homework

Read Act V of *Much Ado About Nothing*

Day 3 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. Warm-up: Jello
2. Give each trial team time in class to finish preparing their arguments.
3. Stage a trial for Claudio. Make sure all witnesses have a chance to speak and Claudio himself has a chance to testify.
 - a. Ask the class to vote on whether they think Claudio is innocent or guilty.
4. **Wrap-up Discussion:** As a reader, how did you feel about the resolution of Hero & Claudio? Were you satisfied by it? Who do you think will be a happier couple – Hero & Claudio or Beatrice & Benedick?

Week 4 - Richard III

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- large red roses & white roses made from construction paper – enough for everyone in the class – some should also feature the names of major characters in the Lancaster & York family trees
- safety pins
- copies of Richard's opening soliloquy – enough for everyone in the class

Lesson Plan

1. As students enter the classroom, hand each of them a red rose or white rose name tag, and ask them to pin it to the front of their shirt.
2. **Warm-up:** War of the Roses game (a slow motion battle, similar to "Samurai," but the class is divided into two opposing teams (Lancasters and Yorks)
3. Introduce the next play: *Richard III*.
 - a. Introduce the York & Lancaster family trees.
 - b. As each member of the family tree is named, call up the student who is already wearing that name tag and ask them to pose in front of the class.
 - c. Describe the events of the War of the Roses that occur just before the start of Richard III. A chair can be used to represent the throne and the different people who occupy it. Students can die dramatically when their character dies.
4. Gather the group in a circle and pass out copies of Richard's opening monologue.

- a. Ask a student to begin reading the monologue. When that student reaches the first punctuation mark, they stop, and the next student in the circle begins reading. Continue to move around the circle and read the monologue, punctuation mark to punctuation mark, until the monologue is finished.
 - b. Divide the students into small groups of 4-5 students and assign each group a set of 4-5 lines within the soliloquy. Ask each group to choose what they think are the most important words and ideas within the lines, then stage a choral reading, with movement, that expresses those images and ideas.
 - c. Have each group present their choral pieces to the class, and ask for audience responses after each piece is performed.
5. **Discussion:** What do we think this monologue is about? Did adding physical activity help clarify any of the meaning? What can we do when we encounter a piece of Shakespearean text and don't know all the words? How can we still make sense of it?
- a. At this point, instructor can explain what Richard is talking about in his opening soliloquy and clarify any points of confusion.

Homework

Read Act I of *Richard III*

Day 2 (85 min)

Materials

- whiteboard

Lesson Plan

1. Warm-up: Game of "Whoosh" to summarize last night's reading
2. Introduce the caesura. Write the first six lines of Lady Anne's Act I, scene ii speech on the whiteboard. Add a caesura to the first three lines. Ask students for suggestions on where to put the next three.
 - a. Divide the class into pairs and give each pair a line from Lady Anne's speech. Ask them to split the line at the caesura so that each student takes half a line. Each student should then come up with a movement to go along with their phrase.
 - b. Ask the group to circle up in the order in which their lines appear in the speech. Move down the circle as each student speaks their phrase, accompanied by their gesture.
 - c. **Discussion:** How can separating thoughts with a caesura help clarify the meaning of a speech?
3. Look at wooing scene between Richard and Anne.
 - a. Ask students to make a list of reasons Anne might agree to marry Richard, different ways for Richard to try to persuade her, and responses Anne might have to Richard's advances.

- b. Bring to volunteers to the front of the class to read the scene. Ask the audience to suggest one “as if” for Richard and one “as if” for Anne. Have the actors read the scene with the suggested interpretations.
- c. Bring up two new actors and try out two new “as if”s. If there’s time, try it a third time.
- d. **Discussion:** How did you react to the different interpretations you saw of this scene? Were some more believable than others?

Homework

Read Act II of *Richard III*

Day 3 (85 min)

Materials

- television or projector
- DVD: 1995 film of *Richard III*

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Game of “Whoosh!” to summarize last night’s reading.
2. Watch clips from the 1995 *Richard III* film – Richard’s opening soliloquy and the scene where he woos Lady Anne.
 - a. Discuss the interpretation of these scenes in the film. How close is their interpretation to the interpretations we came up with in class?
 - b. How does the modern setting change your interpretation of a play that takes place in a very specific historic period? Do you think it works?
3. Ask each student to write a short monologue describing how Lady Anne might be feeling the night before her marriage to Richard.
 - a. Divide the class into groups and have them create a movement piece to go along with lines from some of their original monologues, interspersed with some of Lady Anne’s lines pulled directly from Shakespeare’s text.
 - b. Perform these pieces for the class.

Homework

Read Act III of *Richard III*

Week 5 - Richard III

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- 2 large sheets of butcher paper
- Markers/colored pencils

- Craft supplies

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Game of “Whoosh!” to summarize last night’s reading.
2. Divide the class in half and give each half a piece of butcher paper and a set of craft supplies.
 - a. Ask for a volunteer from each group to have their body traced so that the butcher paper contains a human outline.
 - b. Ask one group to decorate the person in a way that represents how Richard sees himself. The second group represents how others see him.
 - c. Then, ask groups to look through their texts and find quotes that describe how Richard sees himself or how others see him. (When looking for quotes, students should pay particular attention to Act III, their assigned reading from the previous night.) They should write those quotes around the outside of the human outline.
3. **Power-point mini-lecture:** Shakespeare’s Richard vs. Historical Richard. What in the play is factual, and what may have been invented by Shakespeare?
 - a. **Discussion:** Why might Shakespeare have chosen to make Richard III so unequivocally villainous?

Homework

Read Act IV of *Richard III*

Day 2 (85 min)

Materials

- a few different tracks of horror-like, spooky background music

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Murderer
2. Explore Act IV, scene ii.
 - a. All students mill and seethe about the room, at varying speeds, eventually becoming aware of others in the room who are watching them. Ask them to react in a very physical way to the people around them.
 - b. Ask two actors to read for Richard and Buckingham from Act IV, scene ii while the rest of the class continues to mill about, listening in on their conversation.
 - c. **Discussion:** How is the fear of being discovered affecting Richard?

3. Divide students into groups of 4-5 people. Each group creates a nightmare that Richard might be having at this time and presents it for the class. Spooky background music will be provided.

Homework

Read Act V of *Richard III*

Day 3 (85 min)

Materials

- two large pieces of butcher paper
- markers
- butcher paper brainstorm from Week 1, Day 1
- keys
- blindfold

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Key & Thief
2. Divide students into five groups of 5-6 people. Each group is in charge of one act from the play. Tell them to imagine that, as the resident Shakespeare experts at the high school, they have been asked to create a touring play for the local middle schools. Their goal is to communicate the story of *Richard III* in a silly way. Give each group a style (soap opera, Western, etc.) and tell them they can put their scene together however they wish so long as anyone who sees their play will understand the basic story structure of *Richard III*.
 - a. Present these acts in order for the rest of the class.
3. **Wrap-up discussion:** Bring out the large pieces of butcher paper the class put together on the first day of the unit, five weeks ago. Ask them to look over what they wrote at the time. What has changed when it comes to their understanding of Shakespeare? What has remained the same? Bring out two new pieces of butcher paper, titled “What I Know Now” and “What I Still Wonder.” Ask students to share their thoughts on the papers. Post the papers on the wall.

Week 6 – Scene Rehearsal

Day 1 (50 min)

Materials

- Shakespeare lexicon or Oxford English Dictionary
- Copies of scenes for every student in the class

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Street Fighter
2. Distribute scenes
 - a. Students read scenes aloud with scene partners. Ask them to make list of words/phrases they don't understand.
 - b. Students work together to write a paraphrased version of their scene. They will have access to the vocabulary handouts distributed earlier in the curriculum as well as an Oxford English Dictionary and/or Shakespeare lexicon.
3. Each pair of scene partners connects with another pair, and they present their paraphrased scenes for one another. Students shouldn't think of these as "performances" and should focus more on communicating with their scene partner than on performing for their audience, but they should still get the experience of adding physicality to their paraphrased scene.
4. **Discussion:** What did you discover about your character and your scene that you didn't know before today's class?

Day 2 (85 min)

Materials

- 2 large pieces of butcher paper
- markers

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Zip Zap Zop
2. Students silently read through their scenes and underline any examples of imagery used by their character.
 - a. Split the class in half. Students in *Much Ado* scenes go to one piece of butcher paper, and students in *Richard III* go to the other piece.
 - b. Each students picks their favorite image from their character's dialogue, then finds a way to draw that image somewhere on that piece of butcher paper. This drawing can be as literal or as abstract as they want it to be.
 - c. Ask each student to pick their favorite word that their character speaks within their chosen scene. Have them write the word somewhere on their piece of butcher paper.
 - d. Re-group. Ask the *Much Ado* actors to group around the *Richard III* paper and comment on their first impressions. Then have the *Richard III* actors make comments about the *Much Ado* paper.
3. **Discussion:** What were the differences between the images used in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Richard III*? What were some of the similarities? What can you learn about your character from the images they choose to

use? Why might Shakespeare have chosen to use so many images in his writing?

4. Students meet back up with their scene partner and spend time scanning the verse in their scene, making note of irregular feet, feminine endings, and elision. (Students in prose scenes can discuss word choice, length of speeches, length of sentences, etc. and discuss why their characters are speaking in prose rather than verse.)
5. Students spend the final 10 minutes rehearsing their scenes and setting preliminary blocking.

Homework

Finish scanning scenes

Day 3 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Laban warm-up using students' Shakespearean characters.
2. Phrasing exercise: Students mill about the room while speaking their lines. They walk on the breath (at the punctuation) and stop at every line of text.
3. Students make a list in their notebooks of their character's actions and tactics within their selected scenes.
 - a. Students meet with their scene partners and discuss the actions they have chosen, making adjustments as needed.
4. Students continue to rehearse their scenes.

Week 7 – Scene Rehearsal

Day 1 (50 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** “Kick the Box”
 - a. Ask each student to choose one verse line from their scene (or one sentence in the case of prose scenes). Go around the circle and have each student speak their line.
 - b. Place a small cardboard box at one end of the room. One at a time, each student walks up to the box, speaks their line, and kicks it on the final word.
 - c. Discuss the importance of supporting the final word in a line. Ask students to try speaking their line again, dropping off the end of their sentence as we're accustomed to do in the 21st century, and note how much of the line gets lost.

2. Students continue rehearsing scenes, keeping the “kick the box” lesson in mind as they rehearse. They will be performing a “work-in-progress” (with scripts) version of their scene during the next two class sessions, so they should have blocking set by the end of the class period.

Day 2 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Students improvise scenes as their Shakespearean characters.
2. Students perform scenes for class. Classmates make observations. Instructor gives some constructive feedback.

Day 3 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** “Day in the life” of your character
2. Students perform scenes for class; classmates make observations. Instructor gives some constructive feedback.

Homework

Get off-book over the weekend if you aren’t already memorized.

Week 8 – Scene Rehearsal

Day 1 (50 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Category, Category
2. Scene rehearsal. Visit each group to check in and provide coaching as needed. See if they have any questions about the notes from last week’s run-throughs.

Day 2 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Buggelo
2. Shakespeare trivia game
3. Scene rehearsal

- a. First, students run their scenes without any staging – have them sit in chairs across from one another and speak their lines to each other, focusing on communicating with and reacting to their scene partner.
- b. Then, they do an “Italian-style” rehearsal to build up their energy.
- c. After both of these run-throughs, they work on polishing their scenes for the remainder of the class period.

Day 3 (85 min)

Lesson Plan

1. **Warm-up:** Kitty Wants a Corner
2. Final performance of all scenes for class.

Scansion Worksheet A

Scan each of the following lines. Mark feet [|], unstressed syllables [˘], and stressed syllables [/]. Be sure to check for feminine endings, irregular feet, and elision.

1. But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

2. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

3. I left no ring with her. What means this lady?

4. The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

5. Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow.

6. An ass's nole I fixed on his head.

7. Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit...

8. The quality of mercy is not strained.

Scansion Worksheet B

Scan each of the following lines. Mark feet [|], unstressed syllables [˘], and stressed syllables [/]. Be sure to check for feminine endings, irregular feet, and elision.

1. A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!
2. Is this a dagger which I see before me?
3. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
4. What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?
5. I am a man more sinned against than sinning.
6. O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
7. If music be the food of love, play on.
8. Gallop apace, you fiery footed steeds.

Common Shakespearean Vocab Words

addition: title
ado: commotion, trouble
affined: bound by duty
against: for, in preparation for
alack: alas (exclamation of sorrow)
alarum: call to arms with trumpets
anatomize: to analyze in detail
anon: soon, at once, until later
apace: quickly
arrant: absolute
aroint: begone
assail: to make amorous siege to
attend: to await
aught: anything
aye: yes
bade: asked, commanded
baggage: strumpet, prostitute
balk: to disregard
barm: the froth on ale
base, baseness: low, animal-like, petty
bawd: low person, pimp/prostitute
bawdy: obscene, sexual, low-class
befall: happen, turn out in the end
beguile: to charm or deceive with charm
belike: maybe
bereft: deprived, robbed
beshrew me: shame on me, curse me
betray: give away (his face doth betray his thoughts)
betrothed: engaged to marry, or the person one is engaged to
blank: a target
blood: passion (sometimes)
bodes: foreshadows, is an indicator of...
bolted: refined
bosom: heart
brace: pair
brake: bushes
brave: fine, handsome
breast: chest, heart
bum: backside, buttocks
but: only, except
by and by: immediately, directly
caitiff: a wretched, humble person
catch: song
character: handwriting
chuck: term of endearment, chick
clout: a piece of white cloth
cog: to deceive

coil: trouble
commend me to: give my regards to
corse: corpse
cousin: any close relative
crown: head
cuckold: (noun) a man whose wife cheated on him; often compared to an animal with horns
(verb) when a woman cheats on her husband, she cuckolds him
descant: improvise
dispatch: to hurry
dote on: love dearly, often overdoing it (spoiling a child)
e'en: evening
enmity: hate (like "enemy")
enow: enough
ere: before
err: to make an error; to sin
fain: gladly, willingly (or, forced or obliged)
fare thee well: goodbye
feign: pretend, put on an emotion
fie, fie on it: darn it, to heck with it
fool: can be a term of endearment or pity
forbear: stop, leave alone
forsooth: truthfully
forswear: swear falsely; renounce, deny
fustian: wretched
gentle: noble-born
glass: mirror
go to!: "C'mon, get outta here..." or, "Screw you!"
got: begot
grammarcy: thank you
guile: charm in order to deceive; trickiness
had as lief: I would rather
halter: noose
haply: perhaps, by chance
harbinger: precursor, foreshadowing
haste: hurry
heavy: sorrowful
hence: away from here (place), after this (time)
hie: go (quickly; usually used as an order)
hither: here
hitherto: so far, to this extent
ho!: a call to attention, usually by someone with authority
honest: chaste, pure
housewife: hussy, prostitute
humour: mood, frame of mind
impeach: dishonor
issue: offspring, children
it is (not) meet: it is (not) proper or expected
it will serve: it will do, good enough

kinsman: relative, family member
knave: scoundrel, jerk (young male)
knavery: fooling around, trickery
lest: unless, otherwise; in case of
liege, my liege: king, master, lord
like to: likely to
likeness: resemblance
list: listen
look to: watch, keep an eye on, take care of it
maiden: a young girl, specifically a virgin
maidenhead: virginity (protect her maidenhead)
marry: indeed (literally, “by Mary”)
mayhap: maybe
mere, merely: absolute, completely
merry: happy, festive
mess: meal, food
mew: confine
minister: servant
moiety: portion
morrow: day
nary: not a single one
naught: nothing
nay: no
ne'er: never
office: service or favor; job; responsibility
oft: often
out, out upon: exclamation of frustration
ope: open
owe: own
passing: surprisingly, exceedingly
pate: head, especially the top
perchance: maybe
perdition: hell, by the fire of hell
perforce: of necessity
pernicious: harmful, deceitful
politician: schemer
post: messenger
power: army
prate: chatter, babble
presently: soon
prithce: I pray thee (please)
purse: man’s small bag for coins; a person’s finances
quaffing: drinking alcohol in a “chugging” fashion
quest: a jury
recreant: coward
resolve: to answer; reply to
rude: not eloquent
sack: white wine, probably cheap
score: twenty (four score and seven equals 87)

several: separate, distinct
shrew: mean, scolding woman
shrive, shrift: confession (religious)
sirrah: man, sir; used when addressing an inferior (also, "oh, man!")
sith: since
soft!: exclamation of surprise
solemnity: peacefulness, respectability
solemnities: ritual celebrations (more formal than fun)
sooth: truth
soundly: plainly
sovereign: the leader who answers to nobody
sovereignty: independence, the leader's control, or one's control over oneself
stale: harlot
steal (away): sneak out, usually quickly; or, to hide
steward: one who fulfills an office which is rightfully the office of someone else who cannot do that job him/herself; often an uncle overseeing the realm for an underage king
subscription: loyalty, allegiance
sue: to make an appeal (that appeal is a suit)
tax: to criticize; to accuse
troth: truth, truly
teem: to give birth
thence: from there, from then on
thither: there
to the purpose: on topic, constructively, toward a goal
treble: triple
troth, by my troth: truthfully (or a vow)
twain: two
tucket: trumpet flourish
tut: hmphf
undone: ruined
verge: edge, circumference
verily: truly
virtue: can refer to a woman's virginity
visage: face, appearance
want: lack
wanton: childish, playful, undisciplined, sexually unrestrained (esp. women)
welkin: sky
wench: girl, young serving woman
withal: in addition, all together, with
whence: where, from where
wherefore: why (not "where")
whither: where, to where
woe: sadness
wont: used to, likely to
woo: date, flirt with, seduce, win over
wot: know, learn, be told
would that, I would: if only, I wish
wretch: miserable, despicable person

yea: yes

yon, yonder: over there

your part: your opinion, point of view, your sake

zounds!: an exclamation; literally "by his (Christ's) wounds"

Beatrice & Benedick's First Argument
Much Ado About Nothing, Act I, Scene i

BENEDICK

If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

BEATRICE

I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

BENEDICK

What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?

BEATRICE

Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK

Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

BEATRICE

A dear happiness to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that: I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall 'scape a predestinate scratched face.

BEATRICE

Scratching could not make it worse, an 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.

BENEDICK

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer. But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

BEATRICE

You always end with a jade's trick: I know you of old.