



# Teaching Shakespeare to Language Learners

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# Overview

## Part 1:

- Why teaching Shakespeare?
- Shakespeare & Language
- Shakespeare & Context

## Part 2:

- Working with Language
- Developing the Four Skills
- Promoting Independent Learning













# Why Shakespeare?

- Why not?
- **Relevance:** relationships & topics that are related to our lives
- **Context:** sustained engagement with characters & situations
- **Challenge:** cognitive engagement & sense of empowerment
- **Learning:** language awareness & vocabulary building



## How difficult is Shakespeare's language?



- a. Very difficult
- b. Quite difficult
- c. Quite easy
- d. Very easy

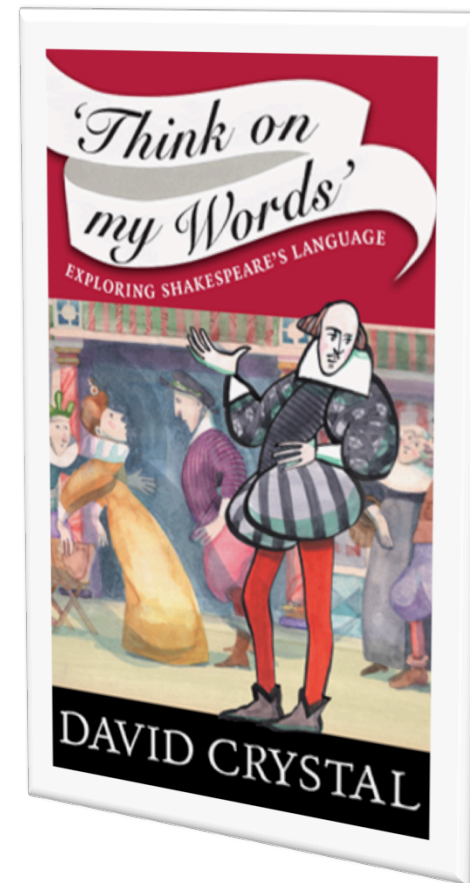




# Shakespeare & Language

## The Myths:

- The quantity myth
- The invention myth
- The style myth
- The translation myth





# The Quantity Myth

- End of 16<sup>th</sup> century:  
150,000
- 21<sup>st</sup> century:  
600,000
- Fluent speaker:  
50,000
- Shakespeare's  
vocabulary: 20,000

*'It is not as much the number of words we have as what we do with those words that makes the difference between an ordinary and a brilliant use of language.'* (p.3)





# The Invention Myth

- First recorded user in the *OED*
  - 2,200 words first recorded in Shakespeare
  - 1,700 plausible Shakespearean inventions
  - About half of them stayed in the language
- *anthropophagy, assassination*
  - *ear, eye, lip, mouth, scandal, word*
  - *uncomfortable, uncompassionate, uneducated, unaware, undo* (314)



# The Style Myth

**Style:** vocabulary, sentence length, structure, word-order, sounds, interaction between speakers

- Characters' styles: groups or individuals
- Genres: tragedies, comedies, history plays
- Early and later plays
- Language choices between alternatives in particular lines



# The Translation Myth

- 10% of Shakespeare's grammar is likely to cause a comprehension problem
- 95% of Shakespeare's vocabulary are words we know and use every day
- only 5% of *all* different words in *all* Shakespeare's plays will give you a hard time





If quantity, unusual words, and 'style' are not the major problems, why do so many people find it difficult to understand Shakespeare?

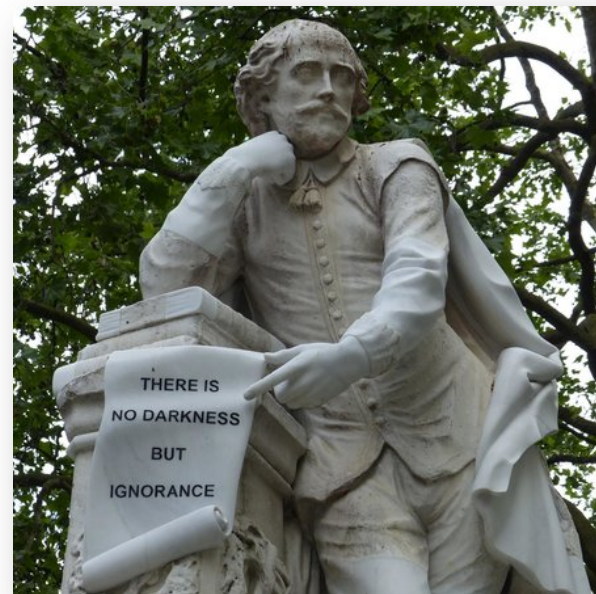




# Shakespeare & Language

What we need to understand Shakespeare:

- Pay attention to the language
- Use our imagination
- Think creatively
- Rethink the sentences
- Watch & read – read & watch
- Use the Shakespeare Glossary





# THINGS WE SAY TODAY, WHICH WE OWE TO SHAKESPEARE:

"KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?"  
 "IN A PICKLE" "SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE" "HEART OF GOLD"  
 "FAINT HEARTED" "SO-SO" "GOOD RIDDANCE"  
 "LIE LOW" "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE" "BAITED BREATH" "SEND HIM PACKING"  
 "COME WHAT MAY"  
 "WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE"  
 "NOT SLEPT ONE WINK" "FULL CIRCLE" "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH"  
 "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"  
 "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE" "NAKED TRUTH" "BREAK THE ICE"  
 "WILD GOOSE CHASE"  
 "LAUGHING STOCK" "BREATHED HIS LAST"  
 "HEART OF HEARTS" "VANISH INTO THIN AIR"  
 "SEEN BETTER DAYS" "MAKES YOUR HAIR STAND ON END"  
 "DEAD AS A DOOR NAIL" "FOR GOODNESS' SAKE" "LOVE IS BLIND"  
 "GREEN EYED MONSTER" "FAIR / FOUL PLAY / PLAY" "OFF WITH HIS HEAD"  
 "THE WORLD IS MY OYSTER" "BRAVE NEW WORLD"  
 "BE ALL / END ALL" "A SORRY SIGHT"





# Shakespeare & Context

- Historical context: Elizabethan England
- Literary context: Elizabethan theatre
- Cultural references: people, places, situations
- Intertextuality: the Bible and Classical Literature





# Working with Language

- Memorable language: language in context
- Creative use of language: word classes, affixation, phrasal verbs, idioms
- Figurative language: metaphor, similes, oxymoron
- Sentence construction: parallelism and hendiadys
- Pragmatics





# Developing the Four Skills

- **Reading:** extracts, adaptations (graded readers), summaries, extra information, working with translations, literary criticism
- **Listening:** selected scenes, trailers, film adaptations, recorded stage performances, interviews



# Developing the Four Skills

- **Speaking:** reading groups, class discussions, presentations, group debates, performances
- **Writing:** summaries, paraphrasing, creative writing, essay writing



# Promoting Independent Learning

- Web quests
- Group projects
- Internet interactive tools
- Putting on a play
- Library search
- Flipped lessons
- MOOC: Exploring Shakespeare
- Shakespeare Lives 2016









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# Thank you!

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