



Shakespeare

# Shakespeare's Language

An essential part of studying ANY Shakespeare play



# **A bit of background!**

- **There were no dictionaries until 1604! This means that language used in that era was very fluid and could be moulded and shaped.**
- **People studied Rhetoric .**
- **Poets and playwrights experimented with words, phrases and imagery.**
- **Free to make up words and to adopt new ones, they could also change meanings of words too.**

# **And there's more...**

- **If a word didn't exist, Shakespeare changed an old one or made up a new one.**
- **Shakespeare had a huge fascination with dramatic language. He truly believed in the power of words to focus and light up the imagination, persuade the intellect and move the audience's emotions.**
- **You can apply almost all you have learnt about poetry to Shakespeare's works.**

# Dramatic language



*'Suit the action to the word, the word to the action'*

- His theatre
- Stage Magic
- Creating atmosphere and setting through language.
- Intensely active and physical, pulsating with vibrant energy.
- Inbuilt stage directions.
- Evoke Imagery
- For example: Grief and Loss:

*'Death lies upon her like an untimely frost  
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field'*



*Comment on the above quotation and discuss how you think it evokes imagery. Why is it better than simply saying: "She died."*

# Imagery

- The use of emotionally charged words and phrases which conjure up vivid pictures in the mind and imagination.

*' Why what's the matter,  
That you have such a February face,  
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness '*



- Shakespeare uses a lot of Imagery from nature. Look out for it and see how much you can find. Discuss the above quotation and say why you think it's effective.





# And...

- Imagery can employ:
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Personification



*' She never told her love  
But let concealment like a worm I th' bud  
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,  
And with green and yellow melancholy  
She sat like Patience on a monument  
Smiling at grief'*

Look at this example and see if you can spot the techniques that have been used.

# Lists

- Accumulate words and phrases like a list.
- Increased dramatic effect by making description forceful, and atmospheres or arguments more passionate or extreme.

◊ *'Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork, and blind worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg, and howlet's sting,'*

# Repetition: why use it?

- Dramatic force.
- Repeated words, phrases, rhythms and sounds (rhyme, alliteration, assonance) add to the emotional force of a moment or scene.
  - ◊ *'Thou; It come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never'*
- Lists: Shakespeare often makes his characters list things. Can you think of any examples? What effect does this have?



# Rhyme

- Uses rhyme in songs, prologues and epilogues, masques and plays within plays.
- Blank verse
- Strong rhymed couplets are used for exits
- **Sometimes rhyme occurs in speech shared by two characters to express shared emotions:**

*Juliet: O now be gone, more light and light it grows*

*Romeo: More light and light, more dark and dark our  
woes*

# Hyperbole

- Extravagant and obvious exaggeration. E.g. “It’s so hot I am dying!”
- When we read Macbeth as a class see if you can spot any of the language we have discussed.