

# Things to Know When Studying Shakespeare ...



## Some Definitions:

- A Drama:** A story presented through the media of acting, music, dialogue, setting and characterization.
- Comedy:** A drama in which the supreme desire of the hero is realized, and the ending is a happy one for many others in the play.
- Tragedy:** A drama in which the supreme desire of the hero is unrealized and many others in the play also suffer as a result of this.
- History:** A drama in which the plot is based on historical facts chosen by the playwright and adapted to his/her narrative purpose.
- An Act:** A unit of action (sequence of incidents) – Note: Shakespeare's plays consisted of five acts.
- A Scene:** A unit of place and time (exist within each act)

## Language of the Drama:

- Pun:** A pun is "a play on words," which intentionally creates ambiguity in meanings of words. A pun is often used for witty or humorous effect.
- Irony:** A device used by the writer/dramatist, creating a contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (or between expectations and reality).
- Dramatic Irony:** Occurs when the writer/dramatist reveals something important to the reader/audience that a character (speaking or acting in a particular way) is not aware of him/herself.

**NOTE:** *The difference between Irony and Dramatic Irony is that in the case of Irony, the speaker/character may be aware of the hidden meaning in his/her statements, whereas in Dramatic Irony, the speaker is unaware of any "double meaning."*

- Soliloquy:** A soliloquy is a speech made by a speaker to him/herself, revealing the character's thoughts. It presents information to the audience, revealing a character's true motives. When a soliloquy is delivered, there are *no other actors present on stage!*
- Aside:** An aside is a brief speech spoken (or whispered) by the speaker to himself. It is conventionally only heard by the audience, even though *other characters are present on stage!*

**Rhyming Couplet:** A pattern in poetry that consists of two rhyming lines (think of "couple" → two) ☺

**Example:** Her eyes in heaven/ Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing and think it were not night.

*The above lines are spoken by Romeo about Juliet in Act 2, Scene 2. Often, characters who are in love in Shakespeare's play can be heard speaking in rhyming couplets!!*

**Blank Verse:** A type of poetry that does not have a particular rhyming scheme.

*Although a few rhyming couplets may be spoken by characters here and there in some Shakespearean plays, his plays are written in blank verse.*

### Shakespearean Pronouns

Pronoun	When Used	Example
<p><b>Thou</b> (you) *When "you" is the <u>subject</u> of the sentence</p>	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	Thou art my friend.
<p><b>Thee</b> (you) *When "you" is the <u>object</u> of the sentence</p>	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	I love thee. I give thee all my love.
<p><b>Thy</b> (your)</p>	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer. <u>Thy</u> is not used before words beginning with a vowel or before words beginning with a silent "h" followed by a vowel. Instead, <u>thine</u> is used.	Here is thy sword. I love thy company
<p><b>Thine</b> (your)</p>	To show possession without a following noun or with a following noun beginning with a vowel or a silent "h" followed by a vowel.	This sword is thine. Where is thine enemy?
<p><b>Thyself</b> (yourself)</p>	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	Prepare thyself. Thou thyself art a fool.