

ARTISTIC EVOLUTION | FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shakespeare's language can seem scary, but give it a try! *Go at your own pace, and have fun!*



SHAKESPEARE IN PRISON

DETROIT PUBLIC THEATRE'S
SIGNATURE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Here are seven (count 'em, seven!) speeches spanning Shakespeare's career. They are spoken by different characters in different circumstances in plays set everywhere from ancient Rome to medieval-ish Denmark to a mythical, not-even-a-little-historical version of England. But... *the basic situation is the same for each speech*: the audience knows that a character did something they shouldn't have done, and then, while that character is onstage, their deed is revealed to the other characters.

You might also notice we put these speeches on our fancy timeline (ooh! ahh!)...

1590

The Set Up

The Shakespeare

The Translation

<p>The Taming of the Shrew 1591 (ish*)</p> <p>Richard II 1592 (ish*)</p> <p>The Comedy of Errors 1592 (ish*)</p> <p>Romeo & Juliet 1595 (ish*)</p> <p>A Midsummer Night's Dream 1599 (ish*)</p> <p>Richard III 1595 (ish*)</p> <p>Julius Caesar 1599 (ish*)</p> <p>Henry V 1599 (ish*)</p> <p>As You Like It 1600 (ish*)</p> <p>Macbeth 1606 (ish*)</p> <p>King Lear 1606 (ish*)</p> <p>The Tempest 1611 (ish*)</p> <p>The Winter's Tale 1611 (ish*)</p>	<p>Titus Andronicus 1591 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Aaron masterminds a plot to destroy Titus Andronicus's family. It mostly works, but then he gets caught, and...</i></p> <p>Much Ado About Nothing 1598 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Borachio and his boss spread nasty rumors about a woman named Hero, who goes into hiding (everyone assumes she's dead). Borachio gets caught bragging about what he did, and...</i></p> <p><i>*This is the only one from a comedy... hmmm...</i></p> <p>Hamlet 1600 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Laertes conspires with the king to set up a rigged duel, in which Laertes' sword is poisoned, and there's a cup of poison just in case. But Hamlet's mother accidentally drinks the cup, Laertes stabs Hamlet, and Hamlet grabs Laertes' sword and stabs him! What a mess! And...</i></p> <p>Othello 1603 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Iago convinces Othello that his wife was unfaithful to him. Othello kills Desdemona, but then Iago gets caught in his manipulations, and...</i></p> <p><i>As we said, Othello kills Desdemona, and then everybody and their brother comes into the room and sees him, and...</i></p> <p>King Lear 1606 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Edmund, among other things, orders the execution of Lear, the ex-king, and Cordelia, Lear's youngest daughter. Then he gets wounded in a duel, his plots are revealed, and...</i></p> <p>Cymbeline 1611 (ish*)</p> <p><i>Iachimo is part of an unnecessarily complicated plot* to steal a ring from Leonatus. He gets caught, and says to the king...</i></p> <p><i>*Really. It would take the whole page to explain it.</i></p>	<p>AARON O, why should wrath be mute, and fury dumb? I am no baby. I, that with base prayers I should repent the evils I have done: Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did Would I perform, if I might have my will; If one good deed in all my life I did, I do repent it from my very soul.</p> <p>BORACHIO I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light: ... my villainy they have upon record; which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my master's false accusation: and, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.</p> <p>LAERTES Hamlet, thou art slain: No medicine in the world can do thee good; In thee there is not half an hour of life; The treacherous instrument is in thy hand. Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practise Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lie. Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd. I can no more: the king, the king's to blame.</p> <p>IAGO Demand me nothing: what you know, you know: From this time forth I never will speak word.*</p> <p>OTHELLO Soft you; a word or two before you go. I have done the state some service, and they know't. No more of that. I pray you, in your letters, When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak Of one that loved not wisely but too well; Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought Perplex'd in the extreme.</p> <p>EDMUND I pant for life: some good I mean to do. Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send. Be brief in it, to the castle: for my writ Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia: Nay, send in time.</p> <p>IACHIMO I am glad to be constrain'd to utter that Which torments me to conceal. By villainy I got this ring: 'twas Leonatus' jewel: Whom thou didst banish: and—which more may grieve thee, As it doth me—a nobler sir ne'er lived 'Twixt sky and ground. Wilt thou hear more, my lord?</p>	<p>AARON Oh, why should I keep my anger quiet? I am not like some kid, apologizing for my actions with stupid prayers. I'd do ten thousand worse things if it would get me what I want. In fact, I apologize for any good thing I've ever done.</p> <p>BORACHIO I have tricked you under your noses. These fools who caught me figured out what you supposedly smart people never did. ... They've taken notes on my plotting, and I'd rather die than have to tell you all of the shameful details. A woman is dead because my boss and I falsely accused her, and I want nothing except punishment.</p> <p>LAERTES Hamlet, you're already dead. There's no medicine that can save you. You have less than half an hour to live. The sword in your hand is sharpened and poisoned. I fell into my own trap. So here I lie, and I'll never get up. Your mother's poisoned, too. It was all the king's idea.</p> <p>IAGO Don't ask me anything. You know what you know. I won't say another word ever again. <i>*Truth—Iago doesn't say anything for the rest of the play.</i></p> <p>OTHELLO Wait. A word or two before you go. I've given the state of Venice a bit of help in the past, and they know it. But enough about that. When you record these sad events in your letters, please describe me exactly as I am. Don't tone things down or exaggerate them out of hostility. If you're being fair, you'll have to describe me as someone who loved too much, but who wasn't wise about it. I was not easily made jealous, but once I was tricked and manipulated, I worked myself into a frenzy.</p> <p>EDMUND I wish I could live longer. I want to do a little good despite my evil nature. Go quickly—hurry—to the castle, for I've given orders to have Lear and Cordelia killed. Hurry, send someone immediately!</p> <p>IACHIMO I'm glad you're forcing me to say the things that have been so painful to keep secret. I got this ring through trickery; it belonged to Leonatus, the guy you banished. It might make you sad—it sure makes me sad—to know that he was the noblest man who ever lived. Do you want to hear more, my lord?</p>
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Now that you've read through the speeches (arranged so nicely along that lovely timeline)... Do you notice changes in Shakespeare's writing over time?

1613

Which speeches do you like best? Some people hate the early plays, while others love pre-1600 (ish*) Shakespeare! Some people think Shakespeare lost his touch after 1606 (ish*), while others think he was just getting warmed up. What about you?



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You can respond to these in any way you choose:

Write **ACT IT OUT** Talk about it
Draw **THINK ABOUT IT**
... up to you!



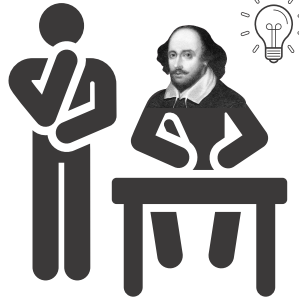
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Okay. So: Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* early on, where *Cymbeline* was one of the last plays he wrote. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* were written at the peak of his career, when he was cranking out some of his most famous plays (we're looking at you, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*!). That doesn't necessarily mean that the early plays are "bad." It does mean that he grew as an artist over time. Most people wouldn't want him to have stopped with *Titus Andronicus* even if it's one of their favorites. Thank goodness he kept going!

One of these things is not like the other(s)!

Let's zoom in on that early writer, that early play, and that speech of Aaron's on the first page of this pack. Even if you love it, Aaron's speech is pretty clunky. It's got potential, but it's rough. How might Shakespeare get from this speech to Iachimo's? He might need help from someone he trusts.



Think of the people in your life—teachers, coaches, mentors—who've helped you when you've been in a situation like Shakespeare's (even if you're not a writer). Now pretend that you are that person for him.

The right mix of constructive criticism and encouragement can be just what someone needs to reach their potential (or at least get closer!). On the other hand, harsh criticism can shut someone down.

On the other-other hand, avoiding criticism entirely can give someone a false sense of their own work, whether for better or worse.

Keeping all of that in mind, what feedback would you give Shakespeare on Aaron's speech to help him make it better? Pay him the respect of being totally honest, but don't crush the guy's spirit—we want him to keep writing!

If you think Aaron's speech is perfect (or even if you don't!), pick another one that doesn't quite work for you, and give Shakespeare some feedback on that one. Again, honesty is the respect you pay a writer, but think about putting your criticism in language that wouldn't make a sensitive, artsy dude defensive—you want him to be able to truly hear what you're saying and run with it!

Two of these speeches are given by people who are mortally wounded (Laertes and Edmund). How does that change their speeches? (Think about what they say and how they say it.)

Only one of these speeches is in prose (Borachio). Why do you think Shakespeare wrote it in prose? How does that make it different from the others?

Pick one of the speeches that speaks to you. What's your version of it? (This could be a poem, a letter, a rap, a drawing—whatever!)

One of these speeches is way shorter than the others (Iago). What is the effect of his little speech?

Do any of the speeches, characters, or situations remind you of something from another play, movie, TV show, or book? See what happens if you "update" one of the speeches in the style of the scene it reminds you of!



TITUS ANDRONICUS - 1591(ISH*)
DEMETRIUS
She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd;
She is a woman, therefore may be won;
She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved.

RICHARD III - 1595(ISH*)
RICHARD
Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.

These two passages were written just a few years apart, and you can see Shakespeare reusing his material. But look how much more interesting Richard's speech is! Demetrius is just being sappy about the woman he has a crush on. Richard is being nasty about a woman he talked into marrying him after he killed her husband and father. Writers often do this—they come up with the beginning of a good idea or a clever phrase, try it in a couple of different places, and finally find the one where it "fits." Do you ever do that with your writing, drawing, songwriting... or just talking? What are the unique ideas or phrases you keep coming back to, trying to make them "fit"?

NOW LET'S ZOOM WAY OUT



WHAT MAKES A PIECE OF ART "BAD" OR "GOOD," ANYWAY?

SERIOUSLY. THINK ABOUT IT...

Who gets to define quality? How do they decide whether art is "high" or "low" quality? Why do they get to decide?

Where do you think the idea of artistic "quality" comes from?

Does "quality" mean the same thing as "value"?

IS "HIGH QUALITY" ART AUTOMATICALLY "GOOD"? IS "LOW QUALITY" ART AUTOMATICALLY "BAD"?

If a piece of art is not "high quality," was it still worth creating? Is it worth sharing with others? Why or why not?

How do you define "quality" when it comes to art? Is your definition the same across the board, or is it different depending on the medium (i.e., film, creative writing, poetry, music, theatre, etc.)?

People often say, "You are your own harshest critic." In your experience, is that generally true? Why or why not?