Shakespeare’s Help Sheet #3

For Springboard.

**“Reading Shakespeare’s Language” The Taming of the Shrew**

*by* Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (editors)

1. **Craft and Structure:** How does the first paragraph of the essay classify the challenging parts of Shakespeare’s language into *syntax* and *diction?* How does this contribute to the development of ideas in the essay?

Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language.

Diction is the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

1For many people today, reading Shakespeare’s language can be a problem-but it is a problem that can be solved. [It requires] developing the skills of untangling unusual sentence structures and of recognizing and understanding poetic compressions [combining], omissions [cutting], and wordplay. And even those skilled in reading unusual sentence structures may have occasional trouble with Shakespeare’s words. Four hundred years have passed between his speaking and our hearing. Most of his [immense](https://cobbga.springboardonline.org/ebook/book/CF257F0C012D4AF480568BF4220EC9CD/A92965A26F9C4F848E9CD6321FAAF602) vocabulary is still in use, but a few of his words are not, and, worse, some of his words now have meanings quite different from those they had in the sixteenth century. When reading on one’s own, one must do what each actor does: go over the lines (often with a dictionary close at hand) until the puzzles are solved and the lines yield up their poetry and the characters speak in words and phrases that are, suddenly, rewarding and wonderfully memorable.

Word bank: break down structures vocabulary

Shakespeare’s sentence \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is given as an example of syntax. Shakespeare’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is given as an example of diction. They contribute to the development of Shakespeare’s ideas by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ difficult parts into manageable parts.

1. **Key Ideas and Details:** How is the idea that some of Shakespeare’s words are no longer used the same way illustrated in the third paragraph?

3The most problematic words are those that we still use but that we use with a different meaning. The word heavy has the meaning of “distressing,” brave where we would say “splendid,” idle where we would say “silly,” and curst where we would say “bad-tempered.” Such words will be explained in the notes to the text, but they, too, will become familiar as you continue to read Shakespeare’s language.

Some examples of words no longer used are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. **Craft and Structure:** What is the connotative meaning of the word *puzzled* in paragraph 7?

**\*Remember connotative is the feeling it causes.**\*

In reading for yourself, do as the actor does. That is, when you become puzzled by a character’s speech, check to see if words are being presented in an unusual sequence. Look first for the placement of the subject and the verb. Shakespeare often places the verb before the subject (e.g., instead of “He goes,” we find “Goes he”). More problematic is Shakespeare’s frequent placing of the object before the subject and verb. “For how I firmly am resolved you know” (1.1.49), where the normal sentence order would be: “For you know how I am firmly resolved.”) Inversions (words in reversed order) serve primarily to create the poetic rhythm of the lines, called [iambic pentameter](https://cobbga.springboardonline.org/ebook/book/CF257F0C012D4AF480568BF4220EC9CD/A92965A26F9C4F848E9CD6321FAAF602).

The connotation of the word puzzled is that figuring out the meaning of Shakespeare’s words is similar to solving a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (What’s the root word of puzzled?)

1. **Knowledge and Ideas:** What claim does the author make in the conclusion? What reasons and evidence does the author use to support the claim?

10It is immensely rewarding to work carefully with Shakespeare’s language so that the words, the sentences, the wordplay, and the implied stage action all become clear—as readers for the past [five] centuries have discovered. The joy of being able to stage one of Shakespeare’s plays in one’s imagination, to return to passages that continue to yield further meanings (or further questions) the more one reads them—these are pleasures that certainly make it worth considerable effort to “break the code” of Elizabethan poetic drama and let free the remarkable language that makes up a Shakespeare text.

Word Bank: “break the code” fun rewarding

The author claims that it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to work out Shakespeare’s language \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to imagine one of Shakespeare’s plays. His evidence is that people have been \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Shakespeare’s language for centuries.