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Shakespearean Dictionary

By Tammy Whynot

Shakespeare was writing at a time when the English language was undergoing a major metamorphosis. It is not a huge stretch to argue that in many cases while Shakespeare was writing, he was simply making it up as he went along, creating new words, phrases, and crafting new standards in grammar and structure. The evolution of Middle English to Early Modern was shaped by writers such as Shakespeare, who greatly

added to vocabulary by not only coining completely original words but by changing verbs to nouns (or vice-versa), connecting words together in new ways, or adding suffixes and prefixes to existing words (Mabillard, 2000).

Estimates as to exactly how many words Shakespeare personally added to the English language vary, but there is general agreement that we still commonly use 1,700 words that he created (McQuain and Malless, 1998). Below is a listing of words that are undoubtedly familiar to teens, followed by the quotation and play in which they first appeared.

Advertising (adjective)

“advertising and holy to your business”

Measure for Measure

Amazement (noun)

“wild amazement hurries up and down”

King John

Bedroom (noun)

“then by your side, no bed-room me deny”

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Drug (verb)

“I have drug'd their possets”

Macbeth

Excitement (noun)

“a father kill’d, a mother stain’d, /
excitements of reason and my blood”

Hamlet

Eyeball (noun)

“make his eyeballs roll”

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Fashionable (adjective)

“Time is like a fashionable host”

Troilus and Cressida

Gloomy (adjective)

“darkness and the gloomy shade of death”

1 Henry VI

Gossip (verb)

“I’ll gossip at this feast”

The Comedy of Errors

Laughable (adjective)

“the jest be laughable”

The Merchant of Venice

Obscene (adjective)

“encounter that obscene and most
prepost’rous event”

Love’s Labor’s Lost

Puking (verb)

“Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms”

As You Like It

Rant (verb)

“I’ll rant as well as thou”

Hamlet

Skim milk (noun)

“I could divide myself and go to buffets, for
moving such a dish of skim-milk with so
honourable an action!”

1 Henry IV

Swagger (verb)

“What hempen home-spuns have we
swagg’ring here, / so near the cradle of the
Fairy Queen?”

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Undress (verb)

“undress you, and come now to bed”

The Taming of the Shrew

Worthless (adjective)

“worthless threats”

3 Henry VI

Zany (noun)

“some carry-tale, some please-man, some
slight zany”

Love’s Labor’s Lost

References

Mabillard, A. (2000). *Words Shakespeare invented*. Retrieved from <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/wordsinvented.html>

McQuain, J., Malless, S., & Shakespeare, W. (1998). *Coined by Shakespeare: Words and meanings first used by the Bard*. Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster.

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Shakespeare's Most Popular Quotes Today

By Amanda Wilk

It is difficult to pinpoint Shakespeare's most famous or popular quotes because there are so many to choose from. The quotes here are those that many people today have heard or even recited in everyday life. They are quotes that have become such an integral part of mainstream culture that today many may not even realize they are hearing the words of Shakespeare. They can be used to demonstrate the continued relevance of Shakespeare today, as these words are not ancient theatrical relics, but can be heard spoken in everyday life.

To be or not to be that is the question
Hamlet

All the world 's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts
As You Like It

Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.
Twelfth Night

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we