# Shakespeare Plays and Language

KS3 English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

## 1. Worked example

**Translate into modern English: 'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'**

Step 1 · Find the old words

'wherefore' = why; 'art' = are; 'thou' = you (an intimate form).

Step 2 · Put the sentence back in modern order

'Why are you Romeo?'

Step 3 · Use the context to add the meaning

Juliet has just learned that Romeo belongs to the Montagues, her family's enemies. She is wishing he had a different name and family.

**Answer: Romeo, why do you have to be Romeo, a Montague?**

Check: The translation keeps her meaning (why), not the common mistake (where).

## 2. Now try one with the steps

**Mark the stresses in: 'If music be the food of love, play on;'**

Step 1 · Count the syllables

Step 2 · Say it aloud and listen for the strong beats

Step 3 · Name the pattern

Step 4 · Notice which words land on the beats

**Answer:**

## 3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. In which town was Shakespeare born? [1]

2. How many lines are there in a Shakespearean sonnet? Write the number. [1]

**3.** Name the three main types of Shakespeare play. [1]

**4.** What does 'wherefore' mean in 'wherefore art thou Romeo?' [1]

**5.** How many syllables are there in a regular line of iambic pentameter? Write the number. [1]

**6.** How many stressed beats are there in a line of iambic pentameter? Write the number. [1]

**7.** What is the difference between verse and prose in a Shakespeare play? [2]

**8.** Give one reason Shakespeare might switch a character from 'you' to 'thou'. [1]

**9.** Translate 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' into modern English. [1]

**10.** Why do the witches in Macbeth speak in rhyming chants rather than iambic pentameter? [2]

**11.** What does the dagger 'The handle toward my hand' suggest about Macbeth's state of mind? [2]

**12.** Juliet's question 'wherefore art thou Romeo?' is often misunderstood. Explain the mistake and the real meaning. [2]

**13.** Why might Shakespeare give a comic servant prose straight after a tense scene in verse? [2]

**14.** A line of Shakespeare has eleven syllables, with an extra weak syllable at the end. Why might this be worth commenting on? [2]

## 4. Before you hand it in

**'Wherefore art thou Romeo?' means 'Where are you, Romeo?'**
Check old words in context or a glossary: Juliet asks why he is a Montague.

**Reading every line separate sentence and stopping at each line end.**
Follow the punctuation, not the line breaks. Read to the full stop, then work out the meaning.

**'Shakespeare wrote in Old English.'**
Say 'Early Modern English': many words are familiar, with some old forms such, art and doth.

**Naming iambic pentameter but saying nothing about it.**
Comment on what the rhythm does: which words land on the beats, or where the pattern breaks and why.