

Week 1- Context: Elizabethan England

Elizabeth I was Queen of England from 1558 – 1603. The King and Queen were exceptionally important figures for their people.

The majority of people were peasants who had little education, little to look forward to, and very little power. Most of society were unable to read and the theatre was an opportunity for people to hear stories and indulge in fantasy. As the bible had not yet been translated into English (this happened under the rule of James 1), it was also a way for people to hear more about religion and God's power.

Women had very little power or status in patriarchal Elizabethan society and were seen as possessions; owned by their fathers and then by their husbands.

God chose the King or Queen, therefore what they said was law. This was referred to as The Divine Right of Kings.

The Great Chain of Being is a strict hierarchical structure of all matter and life, thought in medieval Christianity to have been decreed by God. The chain starts with God and progresses downward to metals and other minerals.



People believed in witches. It was a very superstitious world and people were often deemed a witch if they had a run of unfortunate events that could not be explained. The population was about 4 million. Today the population of Britain is 64.6 million. There were outbreaks of the plague in 1563 and 1603, each wiping out over one quarter of London's population.

Week 2– Context: Shakespeare and The Theatre

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare was baptised on 26th April 1564, but we don't know his exact date of birth. William was born to prosperous parents and was given a good education. He died on 23rd April 1616.

He was a part-owner of a theatre company called The Lord Chamberlain's Men and from 1599, he was part-owner of the Globe Theatre. From 1603 to 1613, Shakespeare's company played at the court of King James about 15 times per year. By 1600, London's theatre-goers numbered 20,000 per week as it was the only affordable entertainment for all classes. The poorer audience members were known as The Groundlings. However, women were not allowed to act on stage. It was seen as unfeminine. Men played women's roles in cleverly designed costumes.

Magical spirits, devils and gods and goddesses often appear in plays from Shakespeare's time. Good spirits and gods and goddesses usually entered through a trapdoor in the Heavens. Evil spirits and devils came up from Hell, under the stage, through a trapdoor in the stage.

Thousands of words that Shakespeare invented we still use today. Who do you think invented the words manager, fashionable, eyeball, laughable, gloomy or lonely, among others?

Week 3-Dramatic and Literary Techniques

Apostrophe: An exclamatory passage in a speech or poem addressed to a person (typically one who is dead or absent) or thing (typically one that is personified)

Aside: A remark or passage in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but is supposed to be unheard by the other characters in the play

Comic Relief: The inclusion of a comic character (e.g. The Nurse) or event to create humour. This is sometimes used to provide a contrast to tragic events and so make them seem worse.

Cyclical Structure: A story that ends in a similar place to where it began

Foreshadowing: A warning or indication of a future event

Imagery: The use of visually descriptive or figurative language

Monologue: A speech by one actor in a play or in a film

Oxymoron: Two opposite ideas are joined together for specific effect
e.g. 'brawling love, loving hate'

Paradox: a statement or situation that may be true but seems impossible or difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics

Soliloquy: When a character voices their thoughts aloud either to themselves (and the audience). They are always alone.

Symbol: a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.

Reminder: Revise sections from previous weeks as part of your homework. You will have questions from previous weeks' learning in your weekly tests.

Week 4 - Key Quotations: Act 1-3

"From forth the fatal loins of these two foes / A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life" (**The Prologue**)

"O brawling love ,O loving hate," (**Romeo: Act 1, Scene 1**)

"My child is yet a stranger in the world" (**Lord Capulet: Act 1, Scene 2**)

"It is the east and Juliet is the sun." (**Romeo: Act 2, Scene 2**)

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (**Juliet: Act 2, Scene 2**)

"These violent delights have violent ends" (**Friar Lawrence: Act 2, Scene 6**)

"A plague o both your houses, they have made worm's meat of me." (**Mercutio: Act 3, Scene 1**)

"Hang thee young baggage, disobedient wretch!" (**Lord Capulet: Act 3, Scene 5**)

Week 5- Punctuation: The Colon & The Dash

Colons are like flashing arrows: they are there to direct your attention to the information that follows them. They amplify, explain or fulfil the information presented before the colon.

To introduce a list or rule of 3: Violence: unacceptable, uncivilised and unnecessary.

To introduce a quotation: Romeo thinks Juliet is beautiful: "Juliet is the sun".

Dashes indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought.

In place of a colon when you want to emphasise the conclusion of your sentence: After months of deliberation, the jurors reached a unanimous verdict—guilty.

To include and emphasis extra detail phrases: It was in the 1957 musical West Side Story—a retelling of Romeo and Juliet – took Broadway by a storm.

Week 6 - Ambitious Vocabulary:

Antagonist: A person who opposes the protagonist.

Archetypal: Very typical of a certain kind of person or thing. Lord Capulet was an archetypal father in Elizabethan England.

Aristotle: A Greek philosopher who lived in the 4th century BC, devised a formula for what makes a tragedy:

- There will be a tragic hero – normally a powerful person
- Sadly, the tragic hero (like most normal people) has a weakness – a hamartia.

Fate: The development of events outside of a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.

Pathos: Something that evokes (creates) pity or sadness.

Patriarchy/Patriarchal: A system of society in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded.

Prologue: A monologue or dialogue which appears at the start of the tragedy (before the entry of the Greek chorus), which presents the tragedy's topic.

Protagonist: The leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film or novel.

Stereotypical: A widely held but fixed idea of a particular person or thing. Women were stereotypically viewed as weak and obedient in Elizabethan England.

Tragedy: A drama based on suffering, which ends in death. It originated in the theatre of Ancient Greece 2500 years ago.

Unrequited: Something that is not returned. *e.g. unrequited love*

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