

Name _____

Period _____

Help! What Does This Mean?!? – Focus on Archaic Language

Languages are the result of many hundreds and even thousands of years of development. The English language is in a constant state of change. Every day hundreds of new words enter the language (dot.com, cyberspace, phat) and many others are dropped.

Because Shakespeare wrote his plays almost 400 years ago, many of the words that he used and were used back then are now **archaic**, or no longer in common use. Below are some archaic words used repeatedly in Shakespeare's plays.

Archaic word:	Meaning in Shakespeare's plays:
Anon	Soon, right away, coming
But	If or only
Ere	Before
Fain	Willingly
Fray	Fight
Good-den	Good day
Mark	Listen
Nay	No
Ne'er	Never
O'er	Over
Oft	Often
Shrift	Confession
Soft	Wait a minute
Would	wish

Exercise 1: Translineate each line below by referring to the above chart.

1. "Soft, I will go along." _____
2. "Ere, she may become a bride." _____
3. "What fray was there?" _____
4. "Have you got leave to go to shrift today?" _____
5. "I would that Thursday were tomorrow." _____
6. "But saying o'er what I have said before." _____
7. "I ne'er saw true beauty till this night." _____

Exercise 2: Create original sentences of your own using an archaic word from the chart.

1. _____
2. _____

Many of the pronouns and verbs we know were slightly different back then, too. See the examples below:

Shakespeare's pronoun or verb	Today's English equivalent
Thee,	Me, him, her, it
Thou,	I, he, she, you
Thy	Me, his, hers, its
Wot	Know
Wert	Were
Doth	Does
Shalt	Shall
Hath	Has
Art	Are
Wilt	Will
Tis	It is

Exercise 3: Use the chart above to help you translineate the following lines.

10. "Why, Romeo, art thou mad?" _____

11. "I would thou wert happy." _____

12. "Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright." _____

Some of Shakespeare's sentences also use a word order that is slightly different from ours. However, if you think about the sentences and flip the order of the words around, you will begin to understand them.

Example: in the middle of the play, Juliet says, "O, where is Romeo? Saw you him today?"

The word order in today's English would be: "O, where is Romeo? Did you see him today?"

Exercise 4: Read some other famous examples from *Romeo and Juliet* and try to translineate these phrases into our modern version of English.

13. "Why call you for a sword?" _____

14. "Came he not home tonight?" _____

15. "He hath not a name." _____

16. "Be ruled by me; forget to think of her." _____

17. "Nay, gentleman, prepare not to be gone." _____

18. "Put up your swords. You know not what you do." _____

19. "So early walking did I see your son." _____

20. "Younger than she are happy mothers made." _____