

# ***SHAKESPEARE***

**VI SEMESTER**

**CORE COURSE: ENG6 B20**

**B.A. ENGLISH**

**(2019 Admission onwards)**

**CBCSS**



***UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT***

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Calicut University P.O.,  
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# UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

## School of Distance Education

### Study Material

### VI Semester

### Core Course (ENG6 B20)

### B.A. ENGLISH

### SHAKESPEARE

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## **COURSE OUTCOME:**

After the completion of the course students should be able to:-

Read and appreciate the works of Shakespeare

Develop awareness about the universal appeal and the literary charm of Shakespeare's works

Develop knowledge about drama, practice of drama performance and the literary sensibility of different ages with regards to the Shakespearean Canon.

Identify the cultural and political positions of Shakespeare and develop her own sense of critiquing a classical text.

## Module 1: Relevance of Shakespeare

### Who is Shakespeare?

Shakespeare was born on the 23rd of April 1564 at Stratford-on-  
von, a village in Warwickshire. His birthday is most commonly  
celebrated on 23 April (see When was Shakespeare born), which  
is also believed to be the date he died in 1616. H John  
Shakespeare married Mary Arden, and together they had eight  
children. John and Mary lost two daughters as infants, so  
William became their eldest child. His father was a prosperous  
grain dealer whose fortunes declined after sometime and  
Shakespeare who attended the local grammar school had to give  
up his studies at the age of 13 or 14 in order to help in the family  
business. He made a hasty marriage at eighteen, had three  
children-two daughters and son His wife, Anne Hathaway, was  
eight years his senior. Together they had three children. Their  
first daughter, Susanna, was born six months after the wedding  
and was later followed by twins Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet  
died when he was just 11 years old. He drifted to London in or  
about 1586 and remained cut off from home and family for  
about ten years. Little is known about his early life in London.  
He appears to have been attracted to the stage and is said to have  
begun as a holder of visitors' horses. Later he found employment  
as an actor and is said to have acted the Ghost in Hamlet and  
Adam in *As You Like It*, besides acting in the plays of Ben  
Jonson and others.

The first notice of Shakespeare as a dramatist occurs in Greene's pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit* (1592). Later Shakespeare became a prolific writer during the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages of British theatre (sometimes called the English Renaissance or the Early Modern Period). Shakespeare's plays are perhaps his most enduring legacy, but they are not all he wrote. Shakespeare's poems also remain popular to this day.

### **The influence of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

“To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,

Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;

While I confess thy writings to be such

As neither man nor muse can praise too much;

'Tis true, and all men's suffrage.” (To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare BY BEN JONSON)

Ben Jonson, the contemporary of Shakespeare, said, “he (Shakespeare) was not of an age, but for all time. Nature herself was proud of his design”. William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the history of the English language, and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. Even 400 years after his passing, Shakespeare remains relevant in the 21st century. The reach of the playwright is extensive, and people from all over the globe and all walks of life have read him, watched his plays, or have at least watched screen adaptations of his work. Why does the work of William Shakespeare continue to resonate with generation after generation and why he remains so popular in the 21st century? The answer of this question is his great stories transcending time and culture; unequal character and their various interpretations; eloquent verses that deal with

subtle human emotions. He deals with powerful elemental passions, with joys and sorrows common to all humanity, so that each one of us shares vicariously in the fate of his characters. He introduces immense variety of characters in his plays who are outlived time. Shakespeare's influence extends from theatre and literatures to present-day movies, Western philosophy, and the English language itself. He transformed European theatre by expanding expectations about what could be accomplished through innovation in characterization, plot, language and genre. Shakespeare's writings have also impacted many notable novelists and poets over the years, including Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, and Maya Angelou, and continue to influence new authors even today. Shakespeare is the most quoted writer in the history of the English-speaking world after the various writers of the Bible; many of his quotations and neologisms have passed into everyday usage in English and other languages. According to Guinness Book of World Records, Shakespeare remains the world's best-selling playwright, with sales of his plays and poetry believed to have achieved in excess of four billion copies in the almost 400 years since his death. He is also the third most translated author in history.

**How to do things with Shakespeare (New Approaches, New Essays)** is a collection of essays aims to help students to identify and understand the current positions of Shakespearean criticism. This book is edited by Laurie Maguire. Laurie Maguire is a Fellow of Magdalen College and Reader in English at Oxford University. Her books include *Shakespearean Suspect Texts* (1996), *Studying Shakespeare* (2004), *Where There's a Will There's a Way* (2006), and *Shakespeare's Names* (2007). Maguire has published widely on Renaissance drama, textual problems, performance, and women's studies. Each essays in this book posits certain questions related to Shakespeare's creative works and finds its answers. Twelve experts take new

critical positions in their field of study using the writings and analysis of Shakespeare, to show how writers (students and academics) find topics and develop their ideas.

The prescribed essay from this book is “How the Renaissance (Mis) Used Sources: The Art of Misquotation” is written by Julie Maxwell. In this essay, Julie examines the quotations and misquotations of scripture in Shakespeare’s works, positing an early modern culture of quotation in which creative inaccuracy was prized over sterile exactitude. The underlying principle of her enquiry is cultural and historical. We all know what is quotations and misquotations, do we all? While writing, we often quote from other books or works to substantiate our points or validating our ideas. Modern explanation is that a quotation will be verbally exact, properly attributed and taken from the best available edition. Then let us examine how misquotation occurs. It happens in two distinct ways. The first is verbal inexactness, the loose recollection or startling adaptation of the exact words of the original text. The second is quoting out of context. Conventions of quotation were different in Renaissance than they are now. In this context, Julie closely looks at Shakespeare’s plays and brings out his peculiar style of quoting and misquoting Bible in his plays. She quotes George Steiner ;

“To this ubiquity of biblical presence in English literature, there is a paramount and challenging exception. Secondary studies tell of a goodly number of allusions to biblical material in Shakespeare. Quotations, mostly muted or indirect, have been identified. There is, however, no central encounter, no engagement of any scope (as there is, in contrast, with Homer or Plutarch). It is as if Shakespeare had deliberately evaded not only the narrative storehouse of the Old and the New Testaments, but the flowering of this great resource as it shaped the language from Wycliffe and Tyndale to his own immediate



contemporaries. I would conjecture that some wary instinct of sovereign autonomy inhibited Shakespeare from too close a contact with the only texts, with the only discourse in action, which might dim his own powers". (Steiner 1996: xliii) In Steiner's view, Shakespeare is afraid of using Bible. But before accepting Steiner's view, we need to know what rules and expectations governed literary uses of the Bible in Shakespeare's world. According to Julie, in the case of Shakespeare, the quotations (mostly misquotations) from the Bible in his plays are not his own literary embellishments. They are partly a replication of other people's quoting habits, partly an alteration of familiar words to achieve specific effects. In other words, he is a dramatist and a poet. Shakespeare avoids clear direct quotation and muffles it instead. Many of the biblical phrases or images used by Shakespeare had already become proverbial, prompting editors to point out that the source cannot be determined. When there is a translation Shakespeare could have followed, generally there is unwillingness to allow him any verbal enterprise. This is an extraordinary assumption to apply to a creative genius. Only Shakespeare's inventiveness can explain other cases when his vocabulary anticipates the King James, not published until 1611.

"Watching as Reading The audience and Written Text in Shakespeare's Playhouse" is an essay by Tiffany Stern, discusses the role of printed texts during the time of Shakespeare. This essay examines whether the language of Shakespeare's texts was ever used to describe staging and conversely, whether the language of staging was ever used to describe reading. She challenges the terms to which assumptions were being made about what is "literary" and what is "theatrical". What do such words mean when looking at the works of early modern playwrights?

Many critics stresses the notion that Shakespeare's plays were published as "literature" rather than for staging. This essay closely looks at such notions and suggests that the practice of reading critically in the theatre is blended with the practice of watching critically.

. In Shakespeare's time, written texts were distributed or carried by audience themselves for reading before the play began. For them, reading was a social activity and these books were generally reciting out loud; the contents of a book would thus be made available to everyone near a reader, whether literate or not. Written texts – in performance – filled the playhouse, and "literature" was regularly intruded into the theatrical space before the play began. Firstly, the article addresses the role of printed books in the public theatre, considering how they are regularly read in the play house and, indeed, are also sold there. The actors on stage will have seemed a continuation of the light and disposable literature that had already fascinated or enraged the audience, and will have been instantly compared to the texts that had preceded them. This means that Shakespeare's plays on stage, like those of his contemporaries, may often have had books as their context, while, conversely, such plays of his as were in print may have flanked his own and other plays on the stage.

Then the essay turns to literate members of the audience asking how common place- books are used in the playhouse and to what extent performed text was immediately turned back into writing. The playhouse was, either way, a place where literature was marketed and purveyed in two distinct but linked forms, performance and print.

Finally, it discusses the way the theatre gratified to and used that reading audience: how the stage, hung about with words written

on large boards, inscribed itself, encouraging readers to view it as, always, a semi-textual space. Other performance devices involving title-boards include the way a play might negotiate between two alternate titles. Oddly, these boards have not been seriously thought about for the last hundred years, despite a newfound interest in material theatre, the material book, and the playhouse's relationship to text. In the conclusion, the article brings out the similarities suggested throughout between watching and reading, and between performances and publications. Productions on stage were continually surrounded by a marginalia of written words. So Tiffany argues that Shakespeare, like other early modern playwrights, was obsessed with text, and his performances were "published" in many textual ways beyond or beside what happened in the printing houses.

### **Answer the following questions**

1. Write an essay about the relevance of Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
2. Shakespeare as a dramatist in the Elizabethan age.
3. Why is Shakespeare still important today?
4. Write about the habit of quotation and misquotation of Shakespeare.
5. "Shakespeare, like other early modern playwrights, was obsessed with text, and his performances were "published" in many textual ways beyond or beside what happened in the printing houses." Elucidate this statement.

## **Module 2: The Different Artist**

The Shakespearean body of works or ‘canon’ as it is generally recognized consists of 37 plays and a number of poems, the best known of which are the sonnets. Shakespeare’s poetic and dramatic career has been divided into four periods corresponding to the growth and experience of his life and mind. These divisions are as follows:

### **Shakespeare Plays: Period of Experimentation (1588-1593)**

During his early years with the Lord Chamberlain’s men Shakespeare continued to write history plays, and also the series of romantic comedies.

To this period belong: Titus Andronicus; Henry VI (three parts); Love’s Labour’s Lost; Comedy of Errors; Two gentlemen of Verona; Richard III; Richard II; Romeo and Juliet. To this period belong also the two poems: Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece. The work of this period is, as a whole, extremely slight in texture; the treatment of life is superficial; there is no depth of thought or characterisation; and the art is evidently immature. The work is characterised by youthful exuberance of imagination, by extravagance of language, and by a constant use of puns, conceits, and other affections.

His early comedies Comedy of Errors, Taming of the Shrew Two Gentlemen of Verona Histories 1, 2, 3, Henry VI Richard III, King John and the only tragedy Titus Andronicus reveal his wide range of themes, stage sense, poetic potential and above all his dramatic genius He shows in all types of his plays a new

direction in character conception sequences of scenes, thematic complexion and poetic nuances. Poetry, prose, music/songs are deftly interwoven. He kept in mind all types (classes of spectators and humanity in general).

The works written in the next two years or so 1592-94) *Loves Labour's Lost* (Comedy) *Venus & Adonis*, "Rape of Lucrece" (poems) bring to light Shakespeare's commendable poetic genius, the feel of life and also his narrative potential.

### **Shakespeare Plays: Period of the Humor and History (1594-1600)**

The works of this period are: *King John*; *The Merchant of Venice*; *Henry IV* (Part I and Part II); *Henry V*; *The taming of the Shrew*; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *Much Ado about nothing*; *As you like it* and *twelfth Night*. These plays show a rapid growth and development in the poet's genius. They reflect a deeper knowledge of human life and human nature; the characterization and the humour have become more penetrating; thought has become weightier; thyme has largely been abandoned for prose and blank verse, and the blank verse itself has lost its stiffness.

During 1594-99 he wrote mostly comedies - *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Merchant of Venice* *Merry Wives of Windsor* *Much Ado about nothing* & *As you Like it*. From a forthright, sparkling poetic depiction of simple romantic/pastoral love and set up of the early comedies Shakespeare moved on to the world of king & court & Country Disguise motif gained strength. More resourceful women characters came to the fore. A dark comedy like *Much Ado About Nothing* points to his taut problem play *Measure for Measure*. His history plays of this period – *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry IV* Part 2 and *Henry V* – reveal his grasp of

England's history as well as his attitude to kinship and allied problems.

Recent and topical revolts, rebellions all become the staple of Shakespeare's histories. His treatment of history moved the spectators. These plays (at least a few) disturbed the Queen & the Privy Council. All the same they vouch for Shakespeare's ability to combine the real, imagined & Universal aspects of life in general. *Romeo & Juliet* a classic in poetic nuances throws open Shakespeare's entrance into his complex and moving tragedies.

### **Shakespeare Plays Period of the tragedies, and bitter comedies (1599-1608)**

The most productive period of his career was 1599-1608. It saw the genesis of his mature-bright & dark comedies *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well* and the complex and comprehensive tragedies - *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, *(King) Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra* & *Coriolanus*. Most of them are single star plays, complex, unbelievably deep psychological studies of a myriad cross section of humanity. All shades of human emotions, thoughts, beliefs, hopes, despairs find free play in these plays. Shakespeare shows us the multi-layered mind of man through high poetry and dense imagery. All types of people-men and women, all kinds of problems are presented in the most moving manner possible.

### **Shakespeare Plays: Period of the Fine Comedies or Dramatic Romances (1608-1612)**

The great artist makes a perfect circle by his last plays *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *the Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* & the last history

play Henry VIII. Theme of Forgiveness and reconciliation becomes mature Shakespeare's forte.

During this period the temper of Shakespeare has changed from bitter and gloomy to serene and peaceful. The heavy clouds have melted away from the sky. A tender and gracious tone prevails. The groundwork is still furnished by tragic passion, but the evil is no longer permitted to have its way. The evil is controlled and conquered by the good. At the same time, they show the decline of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. They are often careless in construction and unsatisfactory in characterization, while there is a decline in style and versification also.

Shakespeare's dramatic genius grew from strength to strength from the sparkling comedies through pulsating histories to mature Comedies, problem plays, dense and deep tragedies and finally to the world of comprehensive and all forgiving love, Shakespeare always developed & progressed in his craft & career. And his plays still develop and progress in the minds of the multitude all over the world.

### **Shakespearean tragedy**

“A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language; in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions.” –Aristotle

The word tragedy was derived from the Greek word tragoidia, which means ‘the song of the goat.’ It is called "the song of the goat" because in ancient Greece the theatre performers used to wear goatskin costumes to represent satyrs. Today in theatre and literature a tragedy is a work that has an unhappy ending. The ending must include the main character's downfall. The

composition of Shakespeare's major tragedies, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth were occurred during the period from 1600 to 1606. The writing of tragedy occupied much of Shakespeare's energy during these years and the two years following, which saw the appearance of Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus and Timon of Athens; for various reasons these latter three tragedies have generally been treated by critical history as inferior to the earlier four.

Why should Shakespeare's tragedies be considered his major achievement? To answer this, we need to go to Aristotle's Poetics and his idea that, in the hierarchy of dramatic kinds, tragedy is superior to comedy. He justifies that tragedy represents people as better than the norm, while comedy represents them as worse. Furthermore, tragedy is concerned with members of noble families, so the hierarchization is at least in part a reflection of social hierarchy. According to Aristotle the plot of a tragedy must be an imitation of fearful and pitiable incidents. The protagonist must be good, but not completely good, and he must fall from good to bad fortune. His fall comes about from what Aristotle calls hamartia, which has often been misleadingly translated as 'tragic flaw, but which seems more properly to refer to some error of the protagonist's. His experience must be such that it will, through pity and fear, purge these emotions, an even identified as catharsis. The protagonist's experience should also lead him from ignorance to knowledge, a process of recognition called anagnorisis, he will understand the progression of cause and effect that has given an inevitability to his experience. Aristotle's definition of tragedy formed the basis of many subsequent theories and has frequently been applied to readings of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespearean tragedies often portray the struggle between good and evil. Most of them deal with the supremacy of evil and



suppression of good. According to Edward Dowden, a 19th century noted poet and literary critic, “Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is concerned with the ruin or restoration of the soul and of the life of man. In other words, its subject is the struggle of Good and Evil in the world.” Evil is presented in Shakespearean tragedies in a way that suggests its existence is an indispensable and ever-enduring thing. For example, in Hamlet, the reader is given the impression that something rotten will definitely happen to Denmark (foreshadowing). Though the reader gets a clue, typically the common people of the play are unaware of the impending evil.

A tragic hero is one of the most significant elements of a Shakespearean tragedy. Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello are typical examples of tragic heroes. The hero may be either male or female and he or she must suffer because of some flaw of character, because of inevitable fate, or both. The hero must be the most tragic personality in the play. According to Andrew Cecil Bradley, a noted 20th century Shakespeare scholar, a Shakespearean tragedy “is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death.” (Usually the hero has to face death in the end.)

An important feature of the tragic hero is that he or she is a towering personality in his/her state/kingdom/country. This person hails from the elite stratum of society and holds a high position, often one of royalty. Tragic heroes are kings, princes, or military generals, who are very important to their subjects. Take Hamlet, prince of Denmark; he is intellectual, highly educated, sociable, charming, and of a philosophic bent. The hero is such an important person that his/her death gives rise to full-scale turmoil, disturbance, and chaos throughout the land. When Hamlet takes revenge for the death of his father, he is not only killing his uncle but inviting his own death at the hands of

Laertes. And as a direct result of his death, the army of Fortinbras enters Denmark to take control. In Shakespearean tragedies, the hero usually dies along with his opponent. The death of a hero is not an ordinary death; it encompasses the loss of an exceptionally intellectual, honest, intelligent, noble, and virtuous person.

Conflict is another imperative element of a Shakespearean tragedy. There are two types of conflicts:

**External Conflict:** External conflict plays a vital role in the tragedies of Shakespeare. External conflict causes internal conflict in the mind of the tragic hero. Every tragic hero in a Shakespearean play is confronted with external conflicts that must be addressed. Hamlet, for example, is confronted with external conflict in the shape of his uncle, Claudius. He has to take revenge, but as a result of his uncle's craftiness and effective security, Hamlet isn't able to translate his ideas into action. This external conflict gives rise to internal conflict, which hinders Hamlet from taking any action.

**Internal Conflict:** Internal conflict is one of the most essential elements in a Shakespearean tragedy. It refers to the confusion in the mind of the hero. Internal conflict is responsible for the hero's fall, along with fate or destiny. The tragic hero always faces a critical dilemma. Often, he cannot make a decision, which results in his ultimate failure. Again, Hamlet is a perfect example. He is usually a doer, but over the course of the play, his indecision and frequent philosophical hang ups create a barrier to action. Internal conflict is what causes Hamlet to spare the life of Claudius while he is praying.

## **Catharsis**

Catharsis is a remarkable feature of a Shakespearean tragedy. It refers to the cleansing of the audience's pent-up emotions. In other words, Shakespearean tragedies help the audience to feel and release emotions through the aid of tragedy. When we watch a tragedy, we identify with the characters and take their losses personally. A Shakespearean tragedy gives us an opportunity to feel pity for a certain character and fear for another, almost as if we are playing the roles ourselves. The hero's hardships compel us to empathize with him. The villain's cruel deeds cause us to feel wrath toward him. Tears flow freely when a hero like Hamlet dies. At the same time we feel both sorry for Hamlet and happy that Claudius has received his proper punishment.

## **Supernatural Elements**

Supernatural elements are another key aspect of a Shakespearean tragedy. They play an important role in creating an atmosphere of awe, wonder, and sometimes fear. Supernatural elements are typically used to advance the story and drive the plot. The ghost Hamlet sees plays an important role in stirring up internal conflict. It is the ghost who tells Hamlet his father was killed by his uncle Claudius and assigns him the duty of taking revenge. Similarly, the witches in Macbeth play a significant role in the plot. These witches are responsible for motivating Macbeth to resort to murder in order to ascend the throne of Scotland.

## **Comic Relief**

Comic relief is our final key element. Shakespeare didn't follow in the footsteps of his classical predecessors when writing tragedies. Greek and Roman writers didn't use comic relief. But Shakespeare wanted to relieve the tension for the reader and

lighten up the mood here and there. A few examples of comic relief scenes include the grave digger scene in Hamlet, the drunken port scene in Macbeth, the fool is smarter than the king dialogue in King Lear, and the Polonius in the wings speech in Hamlet.

## **Shakespearean comedy**

Shakespeare comic plays can be classified into four different group.

### **Early Comedies**

Shakespeare early comic plays were farcical and immature. It was packed with wits, puns and conceits. Humour appeared as forced and cheap. The style of Shakespeare early comedies matches the Lyly's style. Plot and character composition were weak. Shakespeare's comic plays that fall in this category are: Love's Labour's Lost,

The Comedy of Errors,

The two gentlemen of Verona,

Midsummer Night's Dream.

### **Joyous Comedies**

The plays that fall in this group were full of love and music, fun and merry-making are the main ingredients of these comedies. They have wonderful heroines and characters were skilfully composed. A fine blend of romantic and realistic can be seen in these plays. This group includes plays like:

The Merchant of Venice,

As You Like It,

Much Ado About Nothing,

Twelfth Night

### **Dark Comedies**

Dark comedies written by Shakespeare were sombre, dark and tragic in essence. These plays have Low moral values and the theme is more of cynicism than comedy. These plays are comedies, only in name and form, but not in essence. This group includes plays like:

All Is Well That Ends Well,

Measure for Measure,

Troilus and Cressida

### **Dramatic romances**

This style of comedy was very different from Shakespeare early comedies. Towards the end of his career, Shakespeare switched back to comic plays from tragedies. This group includes plays like:

Cymbeline,

The Winter's Tale,

The Tempest

### **Features Shakespearean comedy**

1. Love and Marriage

Shakespeare comedy is a story of love and marriage. Not only the hero and heroine but almost all characters fall in love. Therefore, marriage is inevitable in the end. Marriages constituted the achievement of happiness and the promise of continued happiness. Example: A Midsummer Night's Dream and Twelfth Night.

## 2. Mistaken identity or misconception

Characters impersonating someone or are mistaken for someone else is another important feature of Shakespearean comedy. This was the prime force behind humour. Example: In Much Ado about Nothing etc.

## 3. Idyllic Setting

Shakespearean comedies are set in idyllic surroundings. The locations are like paradise, which doesn't exist in reality and is created by the imagination of the writer. Example : The forest in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"

## 4. Disguise and Gender

Characters disguised as someone else, particularly female characters disguised as man is yet another feature. Shakespeare just leveraged the circumstances and used gender and sexual identities to embellish his work. Example: As You Like It etc. The use of sexual politics is seen in comedies like The Taming of the Shrew, etc.

## 5. Music and Dance

Another important feature of Shakespearean comedy is music and dance. The climax part of his comedies is always full of music, dance and merrymaking. Vocal and instrumental music

was used to illuminate and foreshadow the characters, provide momentum to the plot and sheer entertainment. The use of popular songs and ballads is also seen.

## 6. Fools

Presence of “fools” in Shakespeare’s comic plays is also an important characteristic. “Fools” serve any purpose in his plays. He is witty and sometimes the mouthpiece of Shakespeare.

## 7. Fate and Fantasy

Fate and Fantasy place an important role in Shakespeare’s comic plays. He makes human appear as a plaything, in the hand of some supernatural power. Supernatural elements like fairies and monsters are also part of his play.

## 8. Happy Ending

All Shakespearean comedy has a happy ending and ends with the marriage of one or several characters. The confusing gets resolved and everything is clear.

Shakespearean comedy may involve some very dramatic storylines. Usually what defines a Shakespearean play as a comedy is that it has a happy ending, often involving a marriage. Another aspect of romantic comedy is that it is sympathetic and poetic, not satiric. Shakespeare’s pervasive humanity and broad sympathy come to the forefront everywhere in his plays, especially in the mature comedies. Humour is tempered by this view of life.

**Answer the following questions**

1. Write an essay about the four stages of Shakespeare's dramatic career.
2. Write an essay about Shakespearean tragedies
3. Did Shakespearean tragedies follow Aristotle's three unities?
4. Write an essay about Shakespearean comedies.
5. What are the special features of Shakespearean tragedies?



## **Module 3: Representative Works for non-detailed study**

### **Twelfth Night**

“Twelfth Night”, or “What You Will” is a romantic comedy by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written around 1601–1602. One of Shakespeare’s finest comedies, Twelfth Night paved the way to the great tragedies and problem plays in order of composition. The original source appears to have been the story of Apollonius and Silla in Barnabe Riche’s *Riche His Farewell to Military Profession* (1581), based in turn on a number of Continental versions that included an Italian comedy called *Gl’ingannati* (1531; “The Deceived”), published anonymously, and a story in Matteo Bandello’s *Novelle* (1554–73). The play revolves around the twins Viola and Sebastian, who are separated in a shipwreck. Viola (who is disguised as Cesario) falls in love with the Duke Orsino, who in turn is in love with Countess Olivia. Upon meeting Viola, Countess Olivia falls in love with her thinking she is a man.

### **Plot Summary**

Duke Orsino of Illyria is in love with Olivia, but his advances are rejected. A shipwrecked Viola arrives on his shores, and with the help of a Captain, disguises herself as a boy, calling herself Cesario, and enters Orsino’s service. Orsino takes to Cesario, and sends ‘him’ to woo Olivia for him. Viola, however, is already falling in love with Orsino. Cesario arrives to woo Olivia, and Olivia falls in love with ‘him’. She rejects Orsino’s

approach, but asks Cesario to return. Orsino discusses the nature of love with Cesario, and sends 'him' again to Olivia, who confesses her love for Cesario, much to 'his' dismay. Meanwhile, Viola's twin brother Sebastian, also a casualty of the shipwreck, arrives in Illyria with the help of Antonio, a sea-captain and former enemy of Orsino. Sebastian looks around the town, and Antonio gives him his purse to use, deciding to stay at the inn for safety.

Staying with Olivia is her uncle Sir Toby, who is encouraging Sir Andrew, his drinking-companion and source of funds, to woo Olivia. While carousing with Olivia's fool Feste late one night, they quarrel with Malvolio, and with the help of Olivia's maid Maria, they decide to trick him. Maria writes a letter to Malvolio, forging Olivia's handwriting, to make Malvolio think Olivia loves him. The letter asks Malvolio to dress and behave in eccentric ways.

Toby, Andrew, and Fabian observe Malvolio opening the letter and absorbing its contents. He approaches Olivia according to the letter's instructions, and she thinks him mad. Toby arranges for him to be confined in a dark room. Later, he gets Feste to disguise himself as a priest, Sir Topas, to taunt Malvolio. Malvolio writes a letter of complaint to Olivia.

Meanwhile, Andrew prepares to leave the house, having seen Cesario apparently being more successful with Olivia, but Toby persuades him to stay, and to challenge Cesario to a duel. Sir Toby separately informs Andrew and Cesario that the other is a ferocious fighter, and they approach each other with trepidation. They are about to fight when Antonio arrives, intending to defend Cesario, whom he has mistaken for Sebastian. Antonio is arrested by officers who recognize him as Orsino's enemy. He

asks for his purse from Cesario, who of course professes no knowledge of it.

Feste is sent to bring Cesario to Olivia, but encounters Sebastian instead. They meet Andrew, who strikes Sebastian, thinking him to be Cesario, and Andrew is beaten for his pains. Olivia arrives to stop a fight between Sebastian and Toby. Sebastian is immediately taken with her. Thinking him to be Cesario, she is delighted that he has finally responded to her advances, and they go off to be married.

Orsino is told by Cesario of Antonio's arrival, but when Antonio is brought before him and asserts that he has been with Cesario for some time, Orsino thinks him mad. Olivia arrives, and again rejects Orsino's advances. As he and Cesario prepare to leave, Olivia insists on Cesario staying, and calls him her husband. When Cesario denies it, she presents the priest as confirmation. Orsino is enraged, thinking Cesario has betrayed him. Toby and Andrew pass by, having just been severely beaten by Sebastian. Sebastian then arrives, and the twins delightedly recognize each other. Everyone is amazed, Viola's true identity is revealed, and she and Orsino decide to be married.

Feste delivers Malvolio's letter to Olivia, and he is brought from his cell. Fabian reveals the nature of the trick played upon him, and Malvolio leaves vowing revenge on them all. They all prepare for celebration, leaving Feste to bid the audience farewell.

## Major Characters

**Viola:** a shipwrecked young woman, later disguised as the young man Cesario, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Viola-Cesario stands at the centre of the play as Shakespeare's example of reason, intelligence, self-control, and mature love.

For her moral stature and wit, Viola ranks with Portia and Rosalind, two other great female characters in Shakespeare's comedies.

**Orsino:** A powerful nobleman in the country of Illyria. Orsino is lovesick for the beautiful Lady Olivia, but becomes more and more fond of his handsome new page boy, Cesario, who is actually a woman—Viola. Orsino is a vehicle through which the play explores the absurdity of love: a supreme egotist, Orsino mopes around complaining how heartsick he is over Olivia, when it is clear that he is chiefly in love with the idea of being in love and enjoys making a spectacle of himself. His attraction to the apparently male Cesario injects sexual ambiguity into his character.

**Sebastian:** Sebastian is Viola's twin brother. After the shipwreck, he was rescued by Antonio, and spent three months in his company. Antonio is a sea captain. Though considered a pirate by Illyrians, he considers himself an honorable opponent.

**Sea Captain:** A Sea Captain was the captain of the ship that Viola and Sebastian were traveling on.

**Valentine:** Valentine is one of Orsino's attendants. He was sent to Olivia as a messenger of love, but was not allowed to speak to her.

**Curio:** Curio is one of Orsino's attendants. He seeks to distract Orsino by taking him to hunt, but Orsino refuses.

### **Theme of the Twelfth Night**

Shakespeare just leveraged the circumstances and used gender and sexual identities to embellish his work. Gender trouble and sexual ambiguity are the two main themes of the play *Twelfth Night*. Most of the characters display these in different ways.

Antonio's passionate devotion to Sebastian can be recognized as homoerotic, or at least romantic. Lady Olivia falls in love with Viola, who is disguised as a man, but still resembles a woman. Duke Orsino is happy to change his friendship with Cesario to romantic love once he learns Cesario is really Viola, but seems in no hurry for Viola to take off her male disguise. Though gender and sexual politics was not even a discussion during period of Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* self-consciously creates humor and enjoyment for the audience out of the possibility of same sex attraction. Ultimately, the play is perhaps best understood as a testament to the unpredictable power of erotic desire and love in general.

## **The Tempest**

The *Tempest* is a play by William Shakespeare, probably written in 1610–1611, and thought to be one of the last plays that Shakespeare wrote alone. The *tempest* was first printed in the First Folio of 1623 by Heminge and Condell as the first play of the edition. Several theories have been suggested to explain the composition of the play like;

1. It is a reworking of an earlier play
2. It is an adaptation of a German play called "DIE SCHONE SIDEA by Jacob Ayrrer of Nuremburg.

## **THE PLAY: SYNOPSIS**

Prospero, the protagonist of *The Tempest* was Duke of Milan before his banishment twelve years ago. He is both a scholar and student and practitioner of the art of magic. With the help of Alonso, the king of Naples, Prospero's brother, Antonio had succeeded depositing him. Prospero's was one who never liked power and position and spent all his time in library. The

conspirators had caught him when he was totally off guard. He was consigned to a rotten canoe with his infant daughter and only child Miranda and thrown into the wild sea in the dead of night. Even rats had deserted the vessel. Divine providence intervened and brought the father and the daughter safely to an island mysterious, lonely, an uninhabited but for two creatures, one, Caliban a freckled whelp, hag-born and the second Ariel a delicate spirit whom Prospero took charge. Sycorax, a witch and mother of Caliban, had imprisoned Ariel within the entrails of a river Pine. It was Prospero who had freed Ariel and later made him his favourite servant. Prospero tries to tame, help and train Caliban and also to teach him his language. But the deformed creature had attempted an attack on Miranda, whereupon Caliban was condemned to serve the father and the daughter as their household slave. Ariel was happy and obedient and served Prospero faithfully. Caliban, despised and ill-treated, raged a perpetual war against his state of servitude.

When the curtain goes up, Prospero and Miranda have been on the island for twelve years. A storm builds up it is a magic tempest, intentionally raised by Prospero with the aid of Ariel. A ship is brought ashore. On board the ship are Alonso, king of Naples an inveterate enemy of Prospero and Antonio, Prospero's brother and usurper of the ducal throne. Ferdinand, the fine young prince of Naples, is with them. There are a few members of the court too with them in the ship. There has been no loss of life. Around the entire assemblage, now that they have been brought to the shore safe and secure. Prospero begins to weave his magical spells. He has his design on Miranda and Ferdinand. He wants to see that they are brought face to face they fall in love with each other at first sight and get married so that Naples and Milan are fused into one.

In the meantime, Sebastian, the brother of Alonso, and the evil Antonio conspire with each other, hatch a plan to slay Alonso. At the same time Caliban, having met Stephano and Trinculo, a drunken butler and jester from the ship and taking them to be gods, inspires them to murder Prospero, his master. But Prospero is all-seeing and all-knowing from his cell he watches over and controls their evil actions. The spark of love that appeared wild the fire of love-was engineered by Prospero Ariel is put to use through his apparitions and quaint devices, to terrify miscreants. Soon afterwards, having 'austerely punished the poor Miserable Ferdinand in order to test his new-found love for Miranda, Prospero the task master, agrees that they shall marry. He presents a solemn masque performed by spirit actors, which is only broken off, when he remembers Caliban, his mean, base accomplices and their evil plans-the dastardly plot which the three were hatch in to murder Prospero. Prospero and Ariel then send diverse spirits, in the shape of dogs and hounds to hunt the insidious and ignoble conspirators. Prospero then draws into his enchanted circle the band of courtly miscreants. Prospero reveals his identity as the Duke of Milan. But he is generous, may magnanimous and forgives his enemies on the condition that his dukedom is restored to him. To the penitent Alonso, who still believes that his son, Ferdinand, is drowned in the sea Prospero brings the happy tidings that the prince is alive and well. He displays to all the prince and Miranda playing a game of chess.

Prospero's purpose has been accomplished He was decided to give up his occult studies He will bury his books and wand in a ditch deeper than did ever plummet sound. He will leave the island and return to Milan. He has promised freedom to Ariel He fulfils his promise by freeing him to the elements. Where he will enjoy a life of heavenly freedom. Caliban has been humbled by

Prospero. At the end of the play all leave the island for Naples, leaving Caliban alone on the island

## **THEMES OF THE 'TEMPEST'**

The 'Tempest' is a pastoral play, as it is concerned with the opposition of nature and art. Here it is the opposition between the world of Prospero's art and the world of Caliban's nature. Caliban, the natural man is at the centre of the play and it is against him that the civilized and cultured man is measured

No comparison is offered in the play between a primitive innocence in Nature (the prelapsarian innocence or that before the fall of man) and a sophisticated decadence. In Caliban what we have is a typical (human?) being who has been deprived of Nurture. Nurture refines Nature and offers man a power over nature, including his own nature (i.e. character and conduct). Caliban represents a savage—symbolically, a natural man minus the grace of god, sense minus mind—in short, a beast for all practical purposes. Prospero represents the highest point of perfection in terms of art and wisdom (he is almost a sage; he is very much lacking in certain human qualities, though). Caliban belongs to the lowest rung of the social ladder. He has a duality in mental make-up. He has a human form and a beast by character which makes him doubly dangerous.

This is better understood if we relate the characters of the play to one another. We may stratify the characters as follows. We ought to be careful while drawing these lines of demarcation as there is the possibility of a good deal of overlapping/trespassing we begin with Caliban.

Caliban: close to the ape in the evolutionary chain: a savage and deformed slave for whom language is an instrument to curse man with; natural man devoid of all traces of culture, more beast



and less human. Caliban would be what a human would be like if born and brought up in an uninhabited island just like any creature in nature. We have such characters as Caliban in children's stories, fairy tales, legends and the like.

Stephano and Trinculo: Human in form but somewhat beastly in character vicious, earthly amoral, ignorant-opposed to everything given by Hamlet in his description of man: "What a piece..... A little better than Caliban".

Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio, Feudal society corrupt to the core, guilty on all counts when nurture has had no impact Culture and refinement, human society and Art have been wasted on them. They are human beings representing evil Sebastian and Antonio are worse than Alonso, as there is no sign of any transformation in them at the end.

Adrian and Francisco: Noble worthy, honourable human beings. Detached may uninvolved from central action.

Gonzalo: Virtuous man, a model human being, different from Adrian and Francisco, in that he is involved in the action. He has done and willing to the good deeds.

Ferdinand: a good noble, refined young prince like Adam before the fall; typical Renaissance ideal of man.

Miranda: a pure chaste compassionate human female like Eve, extremely loving and lovable.

Prospero: a magus, reminding us of ancient Persian priest with magical powers -Wise Man almost similar to the sages. A super human with typical human frailties.

Ariel: pure spirit with no corporeal form and so not subject to any weakness characterizing flesh, reminiscent of Puck.

We have in the play an exact antonym of Ariel is in the non-fell presence of Sycoras. She is Caliban's deceased mother, a servant and instrument of evil. She represents the evil and dark forces of nature (like the witches of Macbeth)

The play explores the idea of forgiveness as contained in the words of Prospero "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance". The themes of obedience and disobedience underscore the island's hierarchy of power. Prospero stands at the top of this hierarchy. As both the former Duke of Milan and a gifted student of magic, Prospero is the most powerful figure on the island. He therefore demands obedience from all of his subjects, including his servants and his daughter. At some point, however, each of these subjects disobeys him. Caliban swears his allegiance to Stephano, trading one master for another in an attempt to topple the island's hierarchy altogether.

### **Answer the following questions**

1. How is romantic love depicted in the play Twelfth Night? What points does Shakespeare seem to be making about romance?
2. Discuss the themes of the play "The Tempest"
3. Ariel and Caliban are both forced to serve Prospero. How are their interactions with Prospero similar? How are they different?
4. How can The Tempest be seen as a colonial narrative?
5. Why does Prospero give up his magic at the end of the play?

## **Module 4: Excerpts for Detailed Study**

### **The Trial Scene in ‘The Merchant of Venice’ Act IV Scene 1 lines 1- 163**

The Merchant of Venice is a 16th-century play written by William Shakespeare in which a merchant in Venice named Antonio defaults on a large loan provided by a Jewish moneylender, Shylock. It is believed to have been written between 1596 and 1599.

Bassanio, a noble but penniless Venetian, asks his wealthy merchant friend Antonio for a loan so that Bassanio can undertake a journey to woo the heiress Portia. Antonio, whose money is invested in foreign ventures, borrows the sum from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, on the condition that, if the loan cannot be repaid in time, Antonio will forfeit a pound of flesh. Antonio is reluctant to do business with Shylock, whom he despises for lending money at interest (unlike Antonio himself, who provides the money for Bassanio without any such financial obligation); Antonio considers that lending at interest violates the very spirit of Christianity. Nevertheless, he needs help in order to be able to assist Bassanio. Meanwhile, Bassanio has met the terms of Portia’s father’s will by selecting from three caskets the one that contains her portrait, and he and Portia marry. (Two previous wooers, the princes of Morocco and Aragon, have failed the casket test by choosing what many men desire or what the chooser thinks he deserves; Bassanio knows that he must paradoxically “give and hazard all he hath” to win the lady.) News arrives that Antonio’s ships have been lost at

sea. Unable to collect on his loan, Shylock attempts to use justice to enforce a terrible, murderous revenge on Antonio: he demands his pound of flesh. Part of Shylock's desire for vengeance is motivated by the way in which the Christians of the play have banded together to enable his daughter Jessica to elope from his house, taking with her a substantial portion of his wealth, in order to become the bride of the Christian Lorenzo. Shylock's revengeful plan is foiled by Portia, disguised as a lawyer, who turns the tables on Shylock by a legal quibble: he must take flesh only, and Shylock must die if any blood is spilled. Thus, the contract is canceled, and Shylock is ordered to give half of his estate to Antonio, who agrees not to take the money if Shylock converts to Christianity and restores his disinherited daughter to his will. Shylock has little choice but to agree. The play ends with the news that, in fact, some of Antonio's ships have arrived safely.

### **The Trial Scene in 'The Merchant of Venice' Act IV Scene 1 lines 1- 163**

The trial scene (Act IV, Scene 1) is the longest scene in William Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. It is the climax of the play where good prevails and evil gets punished. Although the trial scene is mainly about the punishment and saving of Antonio but there is a fight between Portia and Shylock. We can consider this play as a study of justice, mercy and revenge which we can surmise from the trial scene.

### **Summary of the Trial Scene**

In Venice, the Duke opens Antonio's trial by saying that he pities Antonio because Shylock is an "inhuman wretch incapable of pity" (4.1.3–4). The Duke has attempted to influence Shylock to spare Antonio, but Shylock will not. Antonio replies that he is prepared to suffer Shylock's rage with quiet dignity.

Shylock insists that he wants his "bond," and that if the Duke refuses him it will make a mockery of Venice and its entire justice system. Shylock refuses to explain why he wants a pound of flesh rather than money. He says that some men do not like pigs, some do not like cats, and that he does not have to explain himself any further than by saying that he hates Antonio.

Bassanio, who is in the gathered crowd, tries to argue with Shylock. But Antonio interrupts, telling Bassanio it's no use: you might as well try to argue with a wolf as try to soften Shylock's hard "Jewish heart" (4.1.80). Bassanio offers Shylock twice the 3000 ducats that is owed to him. Shylock retorts that he wouldn't accept six times that amount. The Duke asks how Shylock can expect mercy if he himself doesn't show it. Shylock replies that he needs no mercy because he's done no wrong. He comments that the Venetians assembled have purchased slaves, asses, dogs, and mules; and just as those creatures belong to their owners, Antonio's pound of flesh belongs to Shylock, who has purchased it.

The Duke announces that he has asked a wise lawyer, Doctor Bellario, to come and help judge the case. Salerio reports that a messenger has come bearing letters from Bellario, and goes to get him. Privately, Bassanio urges Antonio to try to keep his spirits up, but Antonio responds that he is like the "tainted wether" (castrated ram) in a flock of sheep and that Bassanio should aspire not to die for Antonio, but to live and write Antonio's epitaph.

Nerissa enters, disguised as a lawyer's clerk. She presents a letter to the Duke from Bellario. Meanwhile, Shylock wets his knife in anticipation of a verdict in his favor and Gratiano curses Shylock as an "inexcrable dog," whose "desires are "wolvish,

bloody, starved and ravenous" (138). Shylock calmly replies that he has the law on his side.

The Duke reports that Bellario has recommended that the court hear the opinion of a young and learned lawyer, named Balthazar, who has studied the case with Bellario and knows his opinion. Portia enters, disguised as Balthazar. The Duke greets her and asks whether she is familiar with the facts of the case. Portia replies that she is. "Which here is the merchant? And which the Jew?" (170), she asks. Antonio and Shylock come forth together.

Portia tells Shylock that Venetian law is indeed on his side. Therefore, she begs him to show mercy, "an attribute to God himself" (4.1.191) that "seasons justice" (4.1.192). She repeats: rather than insisting upon justice, she says, Shylock should show mercy. Shylock rejects her request: "I crave the law" (4.1.202), he says, and insists upon having the pound of flesh.

Portia asks Antonio for any last words. Antonio tells Bassanio not to grieve, to send his best wishes to Portia, and to speak well of Antonio after his death. Bassanio and Gratiano respond that to save Antonio's life, they would willingly sacrifice their own lives and the lives of their wives. In their disguises as Balthazar and his clerk, Portia and Nerissa quip that it's a good thing Bassanio and Gratiano's wives aren't present as it's unlikely they would be pleased by such sentiments. Privately, in an aside, Shylock comments in surprise at the nature of Christian husbands, who would so willingly allow their own wives to be killed. He wishes his daughter had taken a husband from "any of the stock of Barrabas (a Jewish bandit) ...rather than a Christian" (292–3). Then, aloud, Shylock demands the court stop wasting time. Portia agrees.

But just as Shylock is about to cut into Antonio, Portia reminds Shylock that the contract doesn't grant him any drop of blood from Antonio's body: "the words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'" (303). She adds that if, in taking his pound of flesh, Shylock sheds "one drop of Christian blood" (4.1.306), then, following the law of Venice, all his lands and goods will be confiscated and given to the city.

Shylock, stunned, quickly backtracks, and decides to take Bassanio's prior offer of 9000 ducats. Bassanio is ready to accept, but Portia stops him. She says: Shylock wanted justice and he will have it. Shylock must take exactly a pound of flesh but without shedding any blood: if he takes any more or less, he will be put to death and all his property confiscated. Shylock asks if he really won't get back even his initial 3000 ducats. Portia replies that he will get nothing but exactly what the contract specified.

Shylock insisted that he wants the law, and Portia makes sure that he sticks exactly to the contract. Shylock says that he will give up his suit. But, Portia tells him that another Venetian law holds that if an "alien" (4.1.344) is proven to have sought the life of any "citizen" (4.1.346), that citizen has the right to take one half of the alien's property. The other half is confiscated and given to the state, while the alien's life lies at the mercy of the Duke. Therefore, she advises Shylock to beg for mercy from the Duke.

Now the tables have been turned on Shylock. He was advised to practice mercy but insisted on the law. Now he must beg for mercy rather than a strict interpretation of the law. Stepping in, the Duke declares that he will show Shylock the "difference of our spirit" (4.1.364). He will spare Shylock's life, but Shylock must give half of his wealth to Antonio and half to the state of

Venice. Portia then asks Antonio to weigh in. Antonio says that the state should renounce its claim to its half of Shylock's property; Antonio will use his half during his life and grant it to Lorenzo and Jessica after his death. Shylock, for his part, must convert to Christianity and leave all his wealth to Lorenzo and Jessica.

When the Duke accepts these conditions, Portia mockingly demands: "Are you contended, Jew?" Shylock concedes that he is. Portia tells the clerk to draw up a deed. Shylock says he feels unwell—they should send the deed after him and he will sign it. As he leaves, Gratiano snarls that he's lucky: if it were up to Gratiano, he would have been sent to the gallows, not to a baptism.

The Duke asks Portia, still disguised as Balthazar, to dinner. She declines on the grounds that she must get back to Padua. Antonio and Bassanio also thank Portia. Bassanio tries give Portia the 3000 ducats he'd brought to pay off Shylock, but Portia refuses. Bassanio insists that Portia take some gift as a token of thanks. Finally, Portia says she'll take Antonio's gloves and Bassanio's ring. Bassanio hesitates. He says the ring is worthless and he'll buy a more expensive one. Portia persists, and Bassanio admits that the ring is a gift from his wife that he has sworn not to give up. Portia responds that this is a convenient excuse and that as long as Bassanio's wife isn't crazy, she'll understand.

After Portia and Nerissa exit, Antonio tells Bassanio that he should value Balthazar's efforts to save Antonio's life more than his wife's orders, and should give up the ring. Bassanio gives in. He sends Gratiano ahead with the ring and tells him to take it to Balthazar. Bassanio and Antonio head off to Antonio's house to rest for the night before returning to Belmont.



## **Julius Caesar**

Julius Caesar, tragedy in five acts by William Shakespeare, produced in 1599–1600 and published in the First Folio of 1623. The action begins in February 44 BC. Julius Caesar has just re-entered Rome after a victory in Spain over the sons of his old enemy, Pompey the Great. The victory celebration has interrupted by Flavius and Marullus, two political enemies of Caesar. It soon becomes obvious from their words that some powerful and secret forces are working against Caesar

Attended by a train of friends and supporters, Caesar appears on the stage. He is warned by a soothsayer to "beware the ides of March," but he ignores the warning and leaves for the games and races marking the celebration of the feast of Lupercal.

After Caesar leaves, only two men remain behind — Marcus Brutus, a close personal friend of Caesar, and Cassius, a long-time political foe of Caesar's. Both men are of aristocratic origin and afraid that their ancient privilege are going to end in Caesar's political reforms and conquests. Envious of Caesar's power and prestige, Cassius cleverly analyses to discover where Brutus' deepest sympathies lie. As a man of highest personal integrity, Brutus opposes Caesar on principle, despite his friendship with him. Cassius cautiously inquires about Brutus' feelings if a conspiracy were to unseat Caesar; he finds Brutus not altogether against the notion; that is, Brutus shares "some aim" with Cassius but does not wish "to be any further moved." The two men part, promising to meet again for further discussions.

In the next scene, the conspiracy of Cassius is revealed. He has gathered together a group of discontented and discredited

aristocrats who are only too willing to assassinate Caesar. Cassius persuades Brutus to head the conspiracy, and Brutus agrees to do so. Shortly afterward, plans are made at a secret meeting in Brutus' orchard. The date is set: It will be on the day known as the ides of March, the fifteenth day of the month. Caesar is to be murdered in the Senate chambers by the concealed daggers and swords of the assembled conspirators.

After the meeting is ended, Brutus' wife, Portia, suspecting something and fearing for her husband's safety, questions him. Touched by her love and devotion, Brutus promises to reveal his secret to her later.

The next scene takes place in Caesar's house on the fateful ides of March. The preceding night has been a strange one — wild, stormy, and full of strange and unexplainable sights and happenings throughout the city of Rome. Caesar's wife, Calphurnia, terrified by horrible nightmares, persuades Caesar not to go to the Capitol, convinced that her dreams are omens of disaster. By prearrangement, Brutus and the other conspirators arrive to accompany Caesar, hoping to fend off any possible warnings until they have him totally in their power at the Senate. Unaware that he is surrounded by assassins and shrugging off Calphurnia's exhortations, Caesar goes with them.

Despite the conspirators' best efforts, a warning is pressed into Caesar's hand on the very steps of the Capitol, but he refuses to read it. Wasting no further time, the conspirators move into action. Purposely asking Caesar for a favour they know he will refuse, they move closer, as if begging a favour, and then, reaching for their hidden weapons, they kill him before the shocked eyes of the senators and spectators.

Hearing of Caesar's murder, Mark Antony, Caesar's closest friend, begs permission to speak at Caesar's funeral. Brutus grants this permission over the objections of Cassius and delivers his own speech first, confident that his words will convince the populace of the necessity for Caesar's death. After Brutus leaves, Antony begins to speak. The crowd has been swayed by Brutus' words, and it is an unsympathetic crowd that Antony addresses. Using every oratorical device known, however, Antony turns the audience into a howling mob, screaming for the blood of Caesar's murderers. Alarmed by the furor caused by Antony's speech, the conspirators and their supporters are forced to flee from Rome and finally, from Italy. At this point, Antony, together with Caesar's young grandnephew and adopted son, Octavius, and a wealthy banker, Lepidus, gathers an army to pursue and destroy Caesar's killers. These three men, known as triumvirs, have formed a group called the Second Triumvirate to pursue the common goal of gaining control of the Roman Empire.

Months pass, during which the conspirators and their armies are pursued relentlessly into the far reaches of Asia Minor. When finally they decide to stop at the town of Sardis, Cassius and Brutus quarrel bitterly over finances. Their differences are resolved, however, and plans are made to meet the forces of Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus in one final battle. Against his own better judgment, Cassius allows Brutus to overrule him: Instead of holding to their well-prepared defensive positions, Brutus orders an attack on Antony's camp on the plains of Philippi. Just before the battle, Brutus is visited by the ghost of Caesar. "I shall see thee at Philippi," the spirit warns him, but Brutus' courage is unshaken and he goes on.

The battle rages hotly. At first, the conspirators appear to have the advantage, but in the confusion, Cassius is mistakenly

convinced that all is lost, and he kills himself. Leaderless, his forces are quickly defeated, and Brutus finds himself fighting a hopeless battle. Unable to face the prospect of humiliation and shame as a captive (who would be chained to the wheels of Antony's chariot and dragged through the streets of Rome), he too takes his own life.

### **Antony's speech in 'Julius Caesar' Act III Scene 2**

“He was my friend, faithful and just to me.

But Brutus says he was ambitious,

And Brutus is an honourable man.”

Brutus and Cassius enter the Forum, which is thronged with citizens demanding satisfaction. They divide the crowd — Cassius leading off one portion to hear his argument, and Brutus presenting reasons to those remaining behind at the Forum. Brutus asks the citizens to contain their emotions until he has finished, to bear in mind that he is honourable, and to use their reason in order to judge him. He then sets before them his reasons for the murder of Caesar and points out that documentation exists in the Capitol that support his claims. The citizens are convinced and at the end of his oration, cheer him with emotion. He then directs them to listen to Antony's funeral oration.

Antony indicates that, like Brutus, he will deliver a reasoned oration. He refers to Brutus' accusation that Caesar was ambitious, acknowledges that he speaks with "honourable" Brutus' permission, and proceeds to counter all of Brutus' arguments. The crowd begins to be swayed by his logic and his obvious sorrow over his friend's murder. They are ultimately turned into an unruly mob calling for the blood of the

conspirators by mention of Caesar's generosity in leaving money and property to the people of Rome, and by the spectacle of Caesar's bleeding body, which Antony unveils.

The mob leaves to cremate Caesar's body with due reverence, to burn the houses of the assassins, and to wreak general destruction. Antony is content; he muses, "Mischief, thou art afoot, / Take thou what course thou wilt!"

A servant enters and informs Antony that Octavius has arrived and is with Lepidus at Caesar's house. Antony is pleased and decides to visit him immediately to plan to take advantage of the chaos he has created. The servant reports that Brutus and Cassius have fled Rome, and Antony suspects that they have heard of his rousing the people to madness.

## **Analysis**

Brutus is blithely unaware of the danger that he has allowed to enter the scene. He speaks to the people of Rome in order to make them understand what he has done and why, and with relatively straightforward logic, lays out his rationale before the people and makes them believe that he was right. He describes Caesar's great ambition and suggests to the plebeians that under Caesar's rule they would have been enslaved. Again, the audience is given an understanding of the masses as easily swayed — they do not seem able to form their own opinions but take on the coloration of the most persuasive orator. They are necessary to the successful running of the state, yet they are a dangerous bunch that could turn at any moment. Brutus convinces them of his cause by his use of reason. Even his style is reasonable, here presented in even handed prose rather than the rhetorical flourish of Antony's poetry.

Antony is a master of the theatrical. What more dramatic effect could there be than Antony entering the forum bearing the body of the slain leader? No matter what Brutus says, and despite the fact that the crowd is emphatically on his side, from this moment, all eyes are turned to Mark Antony and the corpse he bears. In his trusting naïveté, Brutus leaves the stage to his opponent. What follows is Antony's now-famous "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him" funeral oration. Antony's rhetorical skill is impressive; he instantly disarms any opposition in the crowd by saying "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him," but quickly follows this with a subtle turn of phrase that suggests Caesar was a good man and that all that was good of him will go to the grave. He has turned his audience's attention from the "evil ambition" of which Brutus spoke.

Look closely at the rhythms that Antony builds into his oration. Think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech, and the repeated emphasis in that speech on one phrase. Antony does the same thing with the phrase "For Brutus is an honourable man, / So are they all, all honourable men" or "But Brutus says he was ambitious, / And Brutus is an honourable man." The phrase is repeated four times, in slightly variant forms, allowing Antony not only to counter each of Brutus' arguments, but also question Brutus' honour simply by drawing so much attention to it.

Finally, Antony incites the mob by suggesting that they have something to gain from Caesar's will. By this means, he initiates desire but must then direct it. He begins to create the desire for revenge and each time he does so, he strengthens that desire by reigning it in. Each time he holds them back, he builds their desire until finally they are passionate enough to do what Antony wants, seek out and kill the conspirators, and,

consequently, leave him in power. As a finishing touch, just as Antony created an impressive image by entering the Forum bearing the body of Caesar, he draws his oration to a close by pointing to another image that will remain in the minds of the people as they riot. He reveals Caesar's wounds. As Antony is fully aware, that image speaks far better for his cause than any words possibly could.

### **Answer the following Questions**

1. What is the importance of trial scene in the play "Merchant of Venice"?
2. Portray the character of Shylock
3. Discuss the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio. What does their friendship reveal about their characters?
4. Discuss how the trial scene reveals a conflict between justice and mercy. Is the conflict resolved? If so, how?
5. To what ethical or moral values does Brutus appeal in his speech? That is, what values does he assume the Roman people care about?
6. What does the crowd say in response to Brutus' speech? How does the statement "Let him be Caesar" demonstrate the success or failure of Brutus' speech?
7. Analyse Antony's speech for purpose, tone, methods, effectiveness, etc.

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