



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside Out

PRODUCED BY THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT OF THE DENVER CENTER THEATRE COMPANY

JANUARY 2003



Sarah Wayne Callies • Photo by Gary Isaacs

love's LABOR'S lost

Jan. 30 - Mar. 1 • The Stage Theatre

Ferdinand, King of Navarre, opens the play with a proclamation declaring that his court will devote itself to a three-year period of rigorous ascetic study. To ensure that distractions are minimal, there will be fasting, only three hours of sleep a night and, most importantly, no women to be allowed within the court. The king's friends, Longaville and Dumain, sign the pact readily though Berowne expresses reservations about the venture and its chances of success. He points out what Ferdinand has forgotten, that the Princess of France and her entourage are to arrive at the court that very day. To honor his word, the King decides that the Princess and her embassy must remain outside the palace walls and Berowne reluctantly signs the pact. As they set out to greet the visiting royalty, the king's fool, Costard, is being sent to Don Armado to be punished for breaking the proclamation by consorting with Jacquenetta, a country wench.

The Princess of France, her lord Boyet, and three ladies, Rosaline, Maria and Katherine, have come to recoup money owed to the King of France. Naturally, they are put off by being denied entry to the court and, in protest, they set up camp outside its gates. Longaville, Dumain and Berowne have been taken with the ladies' charms and Boyet makes note of the King's "affection" toward the Princess. The ladies retreat to their tents to plan their revenge for this social slight.

**Ferdinand: Study is like the heaven's glorius sun,
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks"**

William Shakespeare,
Loves Labors Lost, I-i-84

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A Health Family Production



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Meanwhile, Don Armado, who is himself in love with Jacqueneta, strikes a deal with Costard to drop his sentence if he will deliver a letter to her. Before he is able to do so, Berowne asks him to deliver a missive to Rosaline. In typical Shakespearean style, the letters are delivered into the wrong hands, setting up a highly comic series of errors.

Ferdinand and his lords overhear one another professing love for their respective ladies and confess their pact is meaningless while the women are around. It is here the play becomes a merry romp of spectacle, disguise and verbal acrobatics in Shakespeare's salute to courtly love. Just as the jests begin to sort themselves

out a messenger arrives to tell the Princess that her father has died and that she must leave immediately. She tells Ferdinand that if he enacts a penance for breaking his oath – a year's time cloistered in a remote hermitage – she will consider his suit of marriage when her mourning is complete. Each lady-in-waiting has a similar promise from her suitor and it is agreed they will return to Navarre the following year to find out if their love has been true.

A B R I E F B I O G R A P H Y O F T H E B A R D

William Shakespeare

For all his fame and celebration, the personal history of William Shakespeare is rather mysterious. The two primary sources of information on the Bard are his works and the surviving legal and church documents from Elizabethan times. This leaves us with little information about Shakespeare, the man.

Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, records from the Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564. His birthday is commonly thought to be April 23. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and leather merchant, while his mother, Mary Arden, was a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight Shakespeare children – three of whom died in childhood. After a remarkable run of success as a merchant, John Shakespeare

became involved in Stratford politics as an alderman and high bailiff, a position similar to a sheriff. His fortunes declined in the 1570s for reasons unknown.

Shakespeare's childhood years, especially his education, are the subject of much scholarly speculation. It is believed that he attended Stratford's free grammar school, which at the time had a reputation to rival Eton's. Though no records exist that might prove this claim, Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin and classical Greek support this theory and the literary quality of his works suggests a solid education. What is certain is that William Shakespeare never went on to university, which has stirred debate about the authorship of his works.

His marriage to Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582 is the next documented event in Shakespeare's life.



William Shakespeare

He was 18 years old at the time; Anne was 26 and three months pregnant. She gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, on May 26, 1583. Twins Hamnet and Judith were born on February 2, 1585, though Hamnet died 11 years later. From the birth of the twins to his appearance in London, there is nothing on record and these years are romantically termed “lost.”

Shakespeare may have joined a theatre company touring through Stratford or he may have left of his own accord. It is known that by 1592 he had made a name for himself as an actor and playwright in London’s theatre world. By 1594 he had joined a theatre group known as The Lord Chamberlain’s Men (called the King’s Men after the 1603 ascension of James I), in which he played principal roles and became a managing partner. With master comedian Will Kempe, and Richard Burbage, a leading tragic actor of the day, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men became a favorite London troupe made popular by the theatre-going public and patronized by royalty. Favorites of Queen Elizabeth, they were invited every Christmas to act for her at her palace. Shakespeare responded to this honor by writing *Richard III* which legitimized the Tudor ascension.

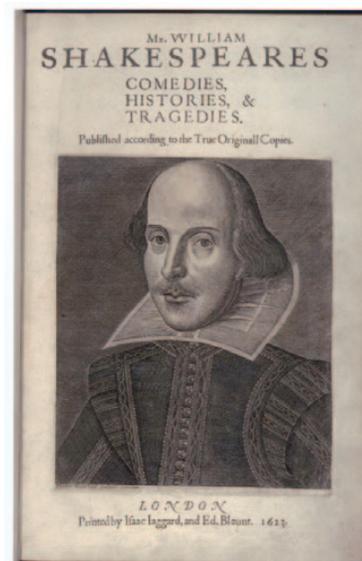
Shakespeare’s time in London parallels the progression of the plague and theatres were often forced to close to prevent its spread. This practice prompted The Lord Chamberlain’s Men to move the closed Blackfriars Theatre, within London’s boundaries, to where the Globe would be built, across the river – and move the theatre, they did. In the middle of a summer’s night, they completely dismantled the Blackfriars and carried the lumber across the river for use in building the Globe. The Blackfriar’s owner was out of town on business at the time and, because the troupe had been leasing the theatre, he sued The Lord Chamberlain’s Men for this act. Surprisingly, they won the lawsuit.

Shakespeare’s success is apparent when studied against other playwrights of this age. His company was London’s most successful and his plays were published and sold in octavo editions, or “penny-copies” to the more literate of his audiences. Never before had a playwright seen that his works published and sold as popular literature within his own time. Though not wealthy by London standards, his success allowed him to purchase New House and retire comfortably to Stratford in 1611.

According to his will, written in 1616, William Shakespeare bequeathed all of his property to his eldest and favorite daughter, Susanna. Her sister, Judith received 300 pounds and to his wife, Anne, he left the famous “second best bed.” The best explanation for this mystery is that most likely arrangements had already been made for Anne to move in with Susanna and her husband, Dr. John Hall, to whom he’d given his favorite bed. It is said that William Shakespeare died on his 52nd birthday, April 23, though this is probably more myth than reality. Record shows that he was buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church of Stratford on April 25, 1616. Seven years after his death, two of Shakespeare’s companions from the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, printed the First Folio edition of his Collected Works. This 1623 text contained Shakespeare’s sonnets and many previously unpublished plays.

William Shakespeare’s legacy is a body of work that may never again be equaled in Western civilization. His words have endured for 400 years reaching the hearts and minds of audiences as powerfully as ever. He left a final piece of verse as his epitaph:

*Good friend, for Jesus’ sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.*



Shakespeare *and* LANGUAGE *in* *love's* LABOR'S *lost*

"The difference between the almost-right word and the right word is really a large matter – it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

Mark Twain, letter to George Bainton
(October 15, 1888)

From Dull's spare language to the verbal excesses of Armado and Holofernes, critics have often found *Love's Labor's Lost* to be Shakespeare's wordiest and windiest play. William Carroll, in *The Great Feast of Language*, reasons that "the play is concerned with the very nature of language – with its history, its potential, its proper use by the imagination."¹ Elizabethans were very concerned with the power of names and the proper naming of things. This belief is derived from the *Bible* (Genesis 2: 19-20), when God brought the animals before Adam "to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." A concern for correct naming, for wisdom through learning, runs throughout *Love's Labor's Lost*. After all, that is the purpose of the noblemen's pact. When Berowne admits to Navarre that he "for barbarism spoke more/than for that angel knowledge you can say," he admits that he has defended incorrect speech against a higher knowledge.² Later on in the same scene, Navarre is reading a letter from Don Armado accusing Costard of a liaison with Jaquenetta. Armado refers to the servant as a "low spirited swain," "unlettered small-knowing soul" and "shallow vassal." Not until he is called by his proper name does Costard recognize what Armado's complaint is.

The lower characters babble in a hash of English, French, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and other tongues. As they exhaust the supply of English words, they ransack other languages and their search for elegant variations lead them to "manipulate and misconstrue sounds into new words, old names into misnomers."³ This practice illustrates the creative process of language, from misunderstanding to meaning. For Carroll, *Love's Labor's Lost* is Shakespeare's exploration into the nature of language – how it begins with names and then develops by the addition and confusion of sounds aided by the imagination.

John S. Prendergast in *Love's Labor's Lost: A Guide to the Play* believes Shakespeare was por-

traying Renaissance England's experiences with changes in both everyday and literary language. Throughout the play there are controversies regarding "pronunciations, spelling, language acquisition, classical versus vernacular, wit through verbal dexterity, poetic sensibility, etc."⁴ In the 16th century these issues divided the classes and hindered communication between the characters. In addition, England was emerging as a world power and there was an ever-increasing tension between cultures and languages. In the play, this tension is portrayed by Armado, the fashionable Spaniard, who uses foreign terms and witty exchanges. He represents the clash of cultures; he is characterized as a fool because of his linguistic excesses. This is Shakespeare's way of showing his audience that the new world spoke other languages than English.

In *Love's Labor's Lost: A Dalliance with Language*, James Calderwood presents the argument that language and social order co-exist. He writes that the collapse of Navarre's academic society stems from the language that created it. The words of the oath were not connected to human nature and, rather than reflecting reality, they suppressed it. In the beginning scenes of the play, the scholars aggrandize words, but after realizing their language cannot create a social order, they begin to debase it. "Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is" (IV-3-68). This abuse of words leads to verbal chaos; "words are merely appearances devoid of any intrinsic truth or power."⁵ Such a break-down of language, Calderwood believes, generated a potential social and political collapse such as the shattering of Navarre's scholarly society. But the Princess and her coterie prevent this destruction by being true to words; they refuse to enter the King's court and thereby force Navarre to keep his vow and preserve his word. The fact that the King's word is kept intact by the Princess' assistance reminds us "that language is a public medium in which everyone has a stake."⁶ Where love is concerned, a language must effectively unite what is meant with what is understood: love must truly be felt, expressed and received. This pattern for the dialogue of love is ignored in *Love's Labor's Lost* and "love's labor is lost because the scholar-lovers cannot find the verbal style in which love can be genuinely expressed and hence genuinely received."⁷

Sources: TOPICS of SHAKESPEARE'S Day

“Ferdinand: Navarre shall be the wonder of the world; Our court shall be a little academe.”

William Shakespeare,
Love's Labor's Lost, I-i-12, 13.

The kingdom of Navarre does not exist as an independent country today nor did it during Shakespeare's era. In the Middle Ages, however, it was a sizable region to the south and west of the Pyrenees Mountains in what is now north-central Spain and southwestern France. The 1474 marriage of King Ferdinand V of Aragon, to Isabella Queen of Castile marked the beginning of a time of Spanish land acquisition. In 1493, lands that Spain had mortgaged were recovered from France and Ferdinand took possession of Navarre in 1515. Lower, or French, Navarre, the part of the country north of the Pyrenees, he generously left to his enemies.

The play has historical references to its time. Henry IV was then King of French Navarre and the source for Shakespeare's king, whom he named Ferdinand because it sounded more “Renaissance.” Queen Elizabeth of England had an alliance with Henry and sent him 4,000 English troops in 1589 under the command of Lord Willoughby. A Marshal de Biron was Navarre's liaison officer to the English and Berowne is most likely named in his honor. Dumain could have come from one of two sources. Charles, Duc de Mayenne was one of Henry's opponents, or it could have come from a county in the region called Mortain. Close to Mortain was the county Longueville and it can be presumed Longaville was based on the Duc de Longueville, one of Henry's generals.

In 1572, the Protestant Henry, married Marguerite de Valois, a Catholic and the daughter of Catherine de Medici. Their religious differences made for a miserable marriage, and Marguerite went home to her family. In 1578 she and her mother made a well-publicized visit to Henry and it may have been this visit that Shakespeare dramatized.

The play is believed to have been written in 1594, after England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. It would seem natural that a Spaniard would be the target of humor and Don Armado is a broad jibe at the defeated Spain. Many of the characters are written satirically and the play is full of “inside jokes.” With the plague raging in London and forcing many theatres to close, the belief that *Love's Labor's Lost* initial productions were for private audiences makes sense.

During the time of the threat of the Spanish Armada and for years after, the Earl of Essex had become Queen Elizabeth's favorite, as the Earl of Leicester, her previous pet, had died. Essex's great rival was Leicester's protégé Sir Walter Raleigh, who was miffed by the handsome Earl's great success with the Queen. Raleigh ran a secret atheistic and scientific academy called *The School of the Night* that supported Copernican theory and scientific investigation. Others supposedly involved were writers Christopher Marlowe and George Chapman, astronomer Thomas Herriot, translator John Florio and the Italian intellectual Giordano Bruno. Shakespeare would have belonged to Essex's group, prompting critics to think Armado was satirizing Raleigh. Another candidate for the Don is Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford who had toured Europe in 1575-76 and adopted many Italian habits. He often functioned as a self-mocking “court jester” and, some believe, is a probable author (or co-writer) of Shakespeare's plays.

The effect of all this topical speculation was to turn the play into an enigma, a riddle and a puzzle that only those in the know could solve. The play's language and its often obscure jokes have led critics to believe that something other than romance was going on.

“It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

Sir Winston Churchill.
Radio Broadcast Oct. 1, 1939.

Commedia **DELL'ARTE** *in* **Love's** **Labor's** *Lost*

The *Commedia dell'Arte* dates from 16th-century Italy and was a type of theatre where professional actors often improvised using stock characters. Many of these companies traveled to England influencing much of Renaissance drama, especially in the use of stock character types.

The play is about education and one of the most humorous characters is the pedant, Holofernes. Being well-educated does not transfer into eloquence. He is the self-appointed arbiter of correctness, yet mispronounces words and has a propensity for synonyms and fractured Latin.

Don Armado is the “braggart.” His role in the play is to serve as court jester, except he doesn't know he's being made fun of as he tries to be linguistically precise but lacks clarity. A figure of authority, he is undermined by his own foolish conduct and the fact that the other characters refuse to acknowledge him as anything other than a clown.

Nathaniel exists as a parasite to Holofernes, constantly praising his host, though praise is out of line with what the audience has come to think of the school master. Like Holofernes and Armado, he serves to anchor the theme of education and linguistic acrobatics.

Costard, “the fool,” represents “commoners” in the audience. Full of malapropisms and mispronunciations, he also is capable of insight and puns. Costard represents Shakespeare's attitude toward language – “although he is not always aware of what he is saying, his creativity and linguistic energy highlight the central theme of language and its relation to personality and social roles.”¹

Anthony Dull, the Constable, is generally silent, but a dull constable is a favorite stock character of Shakespeare. He too is noted for his mistakenly used words.

Jaquenetta, a country wench, is another stock character. Uneducated, naive, sultry and very fertile; in her passivity, it's possible Shakespeare meant for her to represent the simple life that the upper-class characters have missed.

The final stock character is Moth, “the boy” or “zany.” He is quick-witted and holds his own against the other characters. With Armado he leads the conversation by questioning his master's tendency toward pretentious Latin words and convoluted sentence structure. Moth summarizes the dominant theme of the play when he labels the exchange between Armado and Holofernes as “a great feast of language” (V-i-35).



THEMES *of the* Play

**“FERDINAND: Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
Live register’d upon our brazen tombs
And then grace us in the disgrace of death;
When, spite of cormorant devouring time
The endeavor of this present breath may buy
That honour which shall bate his scythe’s keen edge
And make us heirs of all eternity.
Therefore, brave conquerors, – for so you are
That war against your own affections
And the huge army of the world’s desires –
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force.”**

I-i-1,11.

Many of the play’s major themes are stated in this opening speech. Ferdinand’s “little academe” will pursue humanistic studies to achieve fame and immortality. They desire an idealistic world, but the violation of oaths and the war against the world’s desires cannot shut out reality.

One thing the young men must learn is the importance of language to “portray heavenly truth, or even earthly love.”¹ In the sonnet scene, the scholars struggle with language and its impact on their intended audience, but, when the women receive them, they scorn the opportunistic praise. The men insist language is an artificial system whereas the women see it as a living art; the difference between proper and improper language.

Eloquence and grace are other themes explored

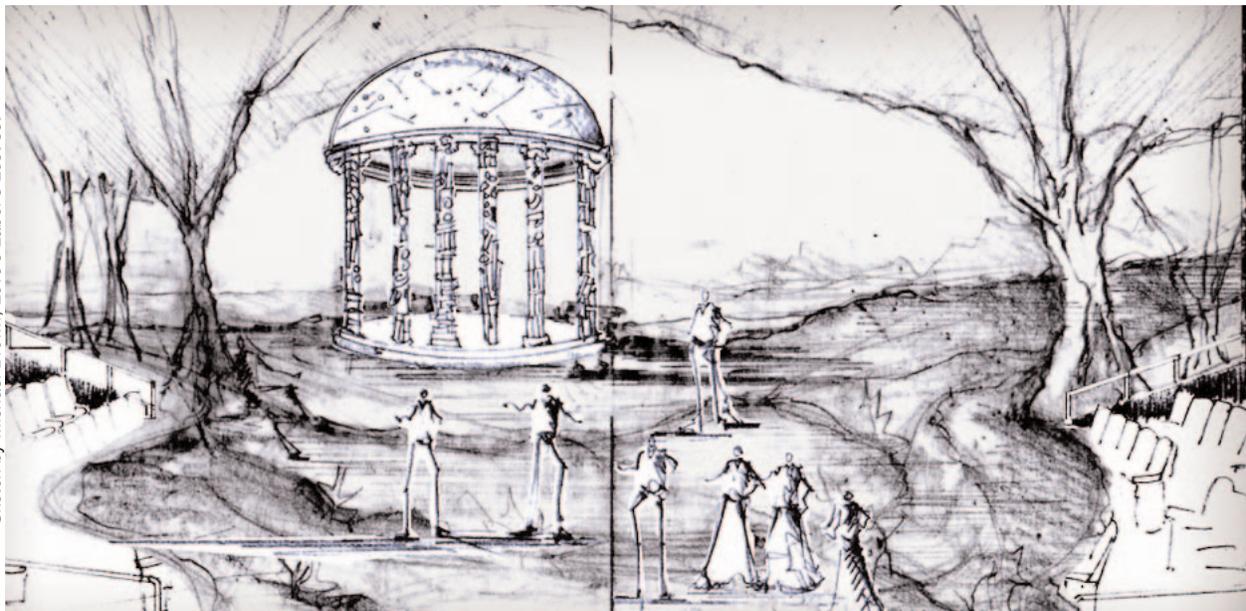
here. While upper class characters have the luxury of using words for fun and playful competition, the lower classes use language as a means for social improvement, emulating the upper class to sound more like it. When the nobles react harshly to the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, it is the women who point out their hypocrisy.

Themes of nature and artifice are played out constantly. Nature, or the uncontrollable world outside of Navarre, is not supposed to interfere with the artificiality of the academy. But it does. When the Princess and her retinue enter the scene, they bring their natural beauty and intelligence along with notice of an unpaid debt. Reality intrudes. Love and language both can be highly artificial, forced and mannered or sincere, real and truthfully expressed.

From the very beginning of the play, the audience is in a world defined by education. The young lords have had a formal education; Don Armado affects one; Holofernes and Nathaniel attempt to teach anyone who will listen, and the lower characters are infected by the pretensions of the upper class. By the end of the play, the young women have become teachers who set out to educate their suitors in proper behavior.

The reminder of labor in the play is “great things labouring perish in their birth” (V-ii-521). The list of those things that perish (that Death erases) are love, language, fame and honor – all the themes of the play.

Sketch by Michael Brown, *Love’s Labor’s Lost* set



The **FAILURE** of **Male-Female** **RELATIONSHIPS** in *Love's* **LABOR'S** **Lost**

**“Whatever women do they must do twice
as well as men to be thought half as
good. Luckily this is not difficult.”**

Charlotte Whitten

In his book *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, Mark Breitenberg writes that the Elizabethan age was concerned with female sexuality and the threat of cuckoldry, the politics of courtship and marriage, and the presence of a virgin Queen at the head of an otherwise masculine culture. He reasons that “the failure of the play (*Love's Labor's Lost*) to end in marriage sustains the empowered position of the women and underscores the inadequacies of the men.”¹

Peter B. Erickson supports this theory of masculine insecurity and helplessness in his essay “The Failure of Relationship Between Men and Women in *Love's Labor's Lost*.” He argues that Navarre’s pact to construct a haven for masculine purity by excluding women is an attempt to cast women as outsiders because they have the power to be disruptive. With the Act II entrance of the Princess, we see a self-confident, poised young woman acting on behalf of her ailing father. When she firmly puts the officious Boyet in his place, she sets the tone for the play’s action: the women will mock the men and challenge their wits. Soon the battle of wits becomes a battle of the sexes.

“The men’s inability to achieve relationships with the women can be seen in part as a result of the failure of their language.”² The men posture and write pretty poetry but to no avail; even Berowne, the most perceptive of the lot, moans: “My wit is at an end” (V-ii-430). But the women can see the poetry for what it is: “As much love in rhyme/as would be cramm’d up in a sheet of paper/Writ a’both sides the leaf, margent and all” (V-ii-6-8). The women detect in the words the overblown rhetoric that demonstrates the men’s

powerlessness; at least, with language. The scholars’ undoing is their masque of the Muscovites in which they “attempt to act out their poses of worship and submission.”³ When Moth recites the same platitudes the men have already written, the women turn their backs on him, furthering the separation of the sexes.

In Anne Barton’s essay on the play, she cites the entrance of the women as more than the provocation of tension. “The Princess and her little retinue represent the first penetration of the park by the normal world beyond, a world composed of different and colder elements than the fairy-tale environment within.”⁴ Through them reality speaks. They criticize the academy and the men who formed it with a wit that has edge and logic to it. They are both astute and detached, pointing out the dangerous attitude of disregarding the feelings of others and of wit that is thoughtlessly employed.

Reality enters full force in the final act as the characters act out a scene of the Nine Worthies to entertain the nobles. The proud Armado is humbled with his confession of poverty and his illusion is destroyed. Then the fairy-tale ends with news that the King of France is dead.

Love's Labor's Lost invokes fantasy and festivity, but is unable to actualize them. The happy ending cannot be achieved and “Jack hath not Jill” (V-ii-875) because the “men have not learned how to accommodate speech to facts and to emotional realities.”⁵ The women depart, leaving the men with a penance to perform and the promise of their return.

**“Love doesn’t grow on trees like apples in
Eden – it’s something you have to make
and you must use your imagination to
make it too, just like anything else. It’s all
work, work.”**

Joyce Carey

ACTIVITIES

Shakespeare's Language

There are many reasons why contemporary audiences have trouble understanding the language of Shakespeare. One of the major reasons is that it was written in the 16th century and language has changed considerably since then. Some of the other reasons are shown below.

I. Shakespeare was writing for performers and giving the actor clues as to how a certain character would speak. One of his methods was the compression of syllables. This is similar to how we also compress the language. Like Shakespeare's characters, we reduce syllables when we speak as the following shows:

“to” to “t,” “with” to “wi’,” “-ing” to “-in’,” “you” to “ya” and “here” to “ere.”

Examples:

“I’m goin’ t’ town.” “Tha’s good – Lemme go wi’ya’.” “I’ll b’darned if you are.” “C’mere.”

Activity:

Look through the text of the play and find other examples of compressed language. Write some of them out with the complete words.

II. Rhymes: Shakespeare rearranged words in unexpected ways in order to put words that rhymed at the end of lines. These lines are from the final scene in *As You Like It*.

*Then is there mirth in heaven
When earthly things made even
Atone together.
Good Duke, receive thy daughter;
Hymen from heaven brought her,
Yea, brought her hither,
That thou mightst join her hand with his
Whose heart within his bosom is.*

Activity:

1. Arrange the following sentence into two lines, end the first with **snow** and the second with **blow**.

“The snow comes in January, wild winds blow,
and the trees are bare.”

2. Arrange the following into four lines, ending the first line with **weep**, the second with **sung**, the third with **bo-peep** and the fourth with **among**.

“Then they did weep for sudden joy,
and I sung for sorrow, that such a king should
play bo-peep and go among fools.”

III. Unusual sequences of words are also found in Shakespeare. At the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Prince says:

“A glooming peace this morning with it brings.”

Activity:

1. List three major elements in the sentence above and then rearrange it to make more sense.

In *Othello*, Othello says:

“That handkerchief,
did an Egyptian to my mother give.”

List three major elements in the sentence above and then rearrange it.

2. Find other passages in *Love's Labor's Lost* that have unusual sequences of words.

IV. Insults, slurs, effronteries, offenses, injuries and other impertinences:

Shakespeare used minimal scenery, lighting and sound effects. Everything in his plays is evoked through language. Shakespeare's language celebrates sound. His plays overflow with alliteration, rhyme and the music of words. A lively introduction to the joy of Shakespeare's language is woven through the play with the exuberant “insults” he gives his characters. Supply the students with a list of insults and have them explore extending the words and playing with the sounds to amplify the force of the insults. For example elongating the “s” sound adds a sinister quality or over stressing the “k” can give a punch to a line.

ACTIVITIES

C O N T I N U E D

Shakespearean insults:

*A wretched puling fool, a whining mammet!
I am stifled with the smell of sun. (Your) face is not
worth sunburning!
Let vulture vile seize on his lungs!
You apes of idleness!
Away, you cutpurse rascal, you filthy bung, away!
Go, ye giddy goose.
Peace, good pinot, peace, good tickle brain.
Would that you wert clean enough to spit upon!
Mountain of mad flesh!
O gull, o dolt, as ignorant as dirt!
Goats and monkeys!
I will smite his noodles!
Blasts and fogs upon thee!
Mad mustachio purple-hued maltworms!
You crusty botch of nature!
You banbury cheese!
Let the vultures gripe thy guts.
Vile worms, thou was o'erlooked even in thy birth.
What, you egg! Young fry of treachery!
You filthy famished correctioner!
Blunt monster with uncounted heads!
Thou lump of foul deformity!
You unhair'd sauciness!*

V. Shakespeare's verse, iambic pentameter, seems strange and inaccessible to new audiences but clues to understanding the verse lie in our hearts and hands. Ask students to put their hand on their heart. What sound does their heart make? The heartbeat is a weak beat followed by a stronger beat, *dee dumm*, exactly the same as an iambic foot. Now repeat this sound, a weak beat followed by a strong beat, once for each of the five fingers on one hand. This is the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse, iambic pentameter.

VI. *Love's Labor's Lost* is packed with sonnets. A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines with a fixed pattern of meter and rhyme. The form used by Shakespeare has been accepted as typically English. It consists of three quatrains (four line stanzas) followed by a couplet (two line stanza). The rhyme scheme is *abab cdcd efef gg*. Write a sonnet about someone or something you love.

VII. The play is also packed with puns. A pun is a play upon words that have the same or similar sounds, but different meanings. An example is: "Two coin collectors got together for old dimes' sake." The ancient Greeks and Romans showed their appreciation by groaning. Make up your own puns about school, rappers, current events.

Questions about the Play

I. Look at the King's opening speech in Act 1, scene 1. What is his plan, as he describes it? What are the finer details as listed by Berowne? Note the affiliation with monastic rules and with the concept of the scholar-king from Aristotle, as well as thematic ties to *Measure for Measure*. What do you think of this plan? What does its presence in a comic world tell you about it? How does it affect the King's reign and his political ties within this play?

II. Look at the response of each of the three courtiers to the plan in I,1. What do we learn about each of the courtiers from their reactions? Note the minor deities and mythical characters associated with each courtier throughout the play. How do these associations appear in the show of the Nine Worthies at the end? Note how we are constantly being invited by the author to compare all of these characters with their female counterparts and with the play's clowns and ridiculous characters. Can anyone in this play stick to the King's plan? Why or why not? What does the oath involve that makes it so problematic?

III. Compare the King to Armado. What do they think of each other? What is Armado like? What is his embarrassing secret revealed at play's end? What does this tell you about him? What does it represent symbolically in the world of this play? How does Armado compare to the King's *idea* of women? To the actual women of the play? To Holofernes and Nathaniel and Costard? To Moth? All of these characters can be usefully compared to each other based on their manipulations of language.

ACTIVITIES

C O N T I N U E D

IV. Compare the Princess' opening speech in Act 2 to that of the King in Act 1. How do the characters compare? What do we learn about the Princess from her opening speech? How does she use language? How does she regard the King? How does she relate to Boyet? How does he use language and what are his goals?

V. Look at how the ladies describe each of the courtiers of the King. How do the pairs get along when they finally meet? How does each man fall from his oath?

VI. This play is loaded with poetry, especially sonnets. Note the shifts back and forth between poetry and prose. When do these occur? Which form does each character prefer? Why? How do the love letters compare? Does Costard know what he is doing when he mixes them up?

VII. Act 4, scene 2 is the ideological center of this play. What is the purpose of each scene? How does it illustrate major themes within this play? What is the symbolism of the hunt in Act 4? What is the outcome? Why is this unusual? Why does it work out this way?

VIII. What is Holofernes' reaction to the sonnet in IV, 2? Who are Holofernes and Nathaniel and what are their relationships with the courtiers? What is Holofernes doing in this play? Why include a character whose speech is so unintelligible when rendered in a play's performance?

NOTE: Shakespeare's audience generally would have found Holofernes' language more comprehensible than we do, but remember that the speeches are delivered in a fairly bombastic style and at a good speed, as this character's goal is to awe and impress, if not overwhelm the listener.

IX. Why the Nine Worthies? Why Muscovites? What keeps going wrong with the King's plans toward the Princess and her ladies? Why? What are all those long speeches about blackness about in Act 4? What is the final solution of the courtiers with reference to having to break their vows? How do the ladies respond to the idea that the men have broken their vows? Why is the breaking of vows such a crucial issue between the two groups?

X. What is the Princess' plan in Act 5? Why? How does it work out? What finally makes the "labors" lost? Think about the relationship of the Princess politically to her father and to the King within the play. What would be the political consequences of her father's death in a real world setting? What is she doing at the King's court anyway? How would the King's advances appear to someone on such a mission? What is the final condition established for the men to win the hands of the women? Why? Will they be able to win the women in the end? Why or why not?

XI. What is that final song about? What do owls and cuckoos have to do with anything? Who is "greasy Joan" and why should she be brought into the play at this point?

These exercises contribute to Colorado Model Content Standard #4 for Reading and Writing; students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. Colorado Model Content Standard # 5 for Theatre; students analyze and assess the characteristics, merits, and meanings of traditional and modern forms of dramatic expression. Colorado Model Content Standard #1 for History; students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.

