

SHAKESPEARE FINAL EXAM: The purpose of this course is to focus on the plays as artistic constructions composed of elements that cohere to explore a complex of dense ideas: How do quotes demonstrate character qualities or issues explored in the play as a whole? How are scenes sequenced in ways that help explore these issues? How are symbols/imagery used to convey ideas? How do figures of speech further emphasize character qualities related to issues important in the play. When you study, think in these terms about the plays.

Multiple Choice, Matching, and Blanks

Terms: blank verse, iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter, enjambment vs. end-stopped lines, sonnet, quarto, bad quarto, folio, First Folio, comedy, tragedy, history play, [Roman play], [romance], [stage machiavel and “white” machiavel], professional fool, classical unities, foreshadowing, protagonist, soliloquy, subplot, simile, metaphor, Petrarchan love, oxymoron, malapropism, [Senecan drama], [medieval Vice], psychomachia, green world, microcosm/macrocosm, [equivocation], dramatic irony. (Bracketed terms will not be on the test.)

Two sections of quotes: one on identifying the play, the other on identifying the character speaking. Review the identifying attitudes or characteristics of each character below. How does that character relate to major questions explored in the play? How do the character’s priorities or values relate to the protagonist’s? What is that character’s role— why is the character in the play? Does the character speak in prose or verse? **Characters: Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio; Theseus, Puck; Shylock, Portia; Henry V; Othello, Iago, Desdemona, Roderigo, Emilia, [Cassio]; King Lear, Edmund, Edgar, Goneril/Regan, Cordelia, [Gloucester], the fool, Kent.** The brackets mean these won’t be in the quote section, but might figure in multiple choice questions.

Multiple choice questions (or perhaps blanks) might concern the following:

Chronology: early plays, middle plays, late plays. Genre: an example of a tragedy, a history play, a comedy, [a Roman play], [a romance]. Typical and atypical forms of these genres.

Examples of plays that subscribe to the classical unities or radically break with them.

Examples of foreshadowing, professional fools, [machiavels], loyal counselors, paired lines or scenes.

Examples of plays that make use of varied verse forms [and of stichomythia]; plays in which insanity or the supernatural is important

Examples of quotes containing a figure of speech or trope (like oxymoron or dramatic irony).

Factual questions concerning something thematically important in a play: for example, “What problem does Iago have concerning Roderigo toward the end of the play?” Or “How does Gloucester come to suspect Edgar?” or “Who is older, Edgar or Edmund?”

Short-Answer Questions (there will probably be 3— #1 and two more)

1. Explain 1) the **context** (who is talking to whom, when; also the intention/purpose of the speaker) and 2) the **significance** with regard to an **issue or question** the play explores. Begin with a concept or question explored in the play; then explain how connotations and metaphors within the quote pertain to complexities concerning this concept. (See the Theseus sample of a short answer.)
2. The opening scene in a Shakespearean play often sets up themes that will be significant in the overall work. It might provide a visual “picture” of a mental situation or an abstract condition; or it might “summarize” a relationship important in the whole play. Explain how the opening of a play functions in this manner.
3. Scene sequencing is one of Shakespeare’s strengths as a dramatist: sometimes, the sequence produces irony, giving insight into important themes or issues; other times, a scene comes up later that pairs with and comments on an earlier scene. I’ll give a pair or sequence and ask you to explain how the two together communicate complexities concerning some issue. I might also ask how material in a subplot pertains to issues explored in the main plot.
4. Explain how something functions symbolically in its play (*e.g.*, clothing, stage props, stage actions, setting). (*E.g.*, the inscription or contents of a casket in *MV* or the storm on the heath in *KL*)