

who the f—k is  
shakespeare?



## who the f—k is shakespeare?

### Research Pack

Please note that this document includes descriptions of characters and stories which reference the original source material. As such, the language is gendered and may not reference the specifics of the version of the show that you will watch. It serves as a reference point for information about the texts and characters.

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**Glossary of terms from *who the f—k is shakespeare?* 15-29**

## Plot Synopsis of Original Texts

### ***Antony & Cleopatra***

Mark Antony, one of the three rulers of the Roman Empire, spends his time in Egypt, living a life of decadence and conducting an affair with the country's beautiful queen, Cleopatra. When a message arrives informing him that his wife, Fulvia, is dead and that Pompey is raising an army to rebel against the triumvirate, Antony decides to return to Rome. In Antony's absence, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, his fellow triumvirs, worry about Pompey's increasing strength. Octavius condemns Antony for neglecting his duties as a statesman and military officer in order to live a decadent life by Cleopatra's side.

The news of his wife's death and imminent battle pricks Antony's sense of duty, and he feels compelled to return to Rome. Upon his arrival, he and Octavius quarrel, while Lepidus tries ineffectually to make peace. Realising that an alliance is necessary to defeat Pompey, Antony and Octavius agree that Antony will marry Octavius's sister, Octavia, who will solidify their loyalty to one another. Enobarbus, Antony's closest friend, predicts to Octavius's men that, despite the marriage, Antony will surely return to Cleopatra.

In Egypt, Cleopatra learns of Antony's marriage and flies into a jealous rage. However, when a messenger delivers word that Octavia is plain and unimpressive, Cleopatra becomes confident that she will win Antony back. The triumvirs meet Pompey and settle their differences without going to battle. Pompey agrees to keep peace in exchange for rule over Sicily and Sardinia. That evening, the four men drink to celebrate their truce. One of Pompey's soldiers discloses to him a plan to assassinate the triumvirs, thereby delivering world power into Pompey's hands, but Pompey dismisses the scheme as an affront to his honour. Meanwhile, one of Antony's generals wins a victory over the kingdom of Parthia.

Antony and Octavia depart for Athens. Once they are gone, Octavius breaks his truce, wages war against Pompey, and defeats him. After using Lepidus's army to secure a victory, he accuses Lepidus of treason, imprisons him, and confiscates his land and possessions. This news angers Antony, as do the rumours that Octavius has been speaking out against him in public. Octavia pleads with Antony to maintain a peaceful relationship with her brother. Should Antony and Octavius fight, she says, her affections would be painfully divided. Antony dispatches her to Rome on a peace mission, and quickly returns to Egypt and Cleopatra. There,

he raises a large army to fight Octavius, and Octavius, incensed over Antony's treatment of his sister, responds in kind. Octavius commands his army and navy to Egypt. Ignoring all advice to the contrary, Antony elects to fight him at sea, allowing Cleopatra to command a ship despite Enobarbus's strong objections. Antony's forces lose the battle when Cleopatra's ship flees and Antony's follows, leaving the rest of the fleet vulnerable.

Antony despairs, condemning Cleopatra for leading him into infamy but quickly forgiving her. He and Cleopatra send requests to their conqueror: Antony asks to be allowed to live in Egypt, while Cleopatra asks that her kingdom be passed down to her rightful heirs. Octavius dismisses Antony's request, but he promises Cleopatra a fair hearing if she betrays her lover. Cleopatra seems to be giving thought to Octavius's message when Antony barges in, curses her for her treachery, and orders the innocent messenger whipped. When, moments later, Antony forgives Cleopatra, Enobarbus decides that his master is finished and defects to Octavius's camp.

Antony meets Octavius's troops in battle and scores an unexpected victory. When he learns of Enobarbus's desertion, Antony laments his own bad fortune, which he believes has corrupted an honourable man. He sends his friend's possessions to Octavius's camp and returns to Cleopatra to celebrate his victory. Enobarbus, undone by shame at his own disloyalty, collapses under the weight of his guilt and dies.

Another day brings another battle, and once again Antony meets Octavius at sea. As before, the Egyptian fleet proves treacherous; it abandons the fight and leaves Antony to suffer defeat. Convinced that his lover has betrayed him, Antony vows to kill Cleopatra. To protect herself, she sequesters herself in her monument and sends word that she has committed suicide. Antony, racked with grief, determines to join his queen in the afterlife. He commands one of his attendants to fulfil his promise of unquestioned service and kill him. The attendant kills himself instead. Antony then falls on his own sword, but the wound is not immediately fatal. He is carried to Cleopatra's monument, where the lovers are reunited briefly before Antony's death. Octavius takes the queen prisoner, planning to display her in Rome as a testament to the might of his empire, but she learns of his plan and kills herself with the help of several poisonous snakes. Octavius has her buried beside Antony.

## ***Macbeth***

The play begins with the brief appearance of a trio of witches and then moves to a military camp, where the Scottish King Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated two separate invading armies—one from Ireland, led by the rebel Macdonald, and one from Norway. Following their pitched battle with these enemy forces, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches as they cross a moor. The witches prophecy that Macbeth will be made Thane (a rank of Scottish nobility) of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. They also prophesy that Macbeth's companion, Banquo, will beget a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself.

The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo treat their prophecies sceptically until some of King Duncan's men come to thank the two generals for their victories in battle and to tell Macbeth that he has indeed been named thane of Cawdor. The previous thane betrayed Scotland by fighting for the Norwegians and Duncan has condemned him to death. Macbeth is intrigued by the possibility that the remainder of the witches' prophecy—that he will be crowned king—might be true, but he is uncertain what to expect. He visits with King Duncan, and they plan to dine together at Inverness, Macbeth's castle, that night. Macbeth writes ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened.

Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband's uncertainty. She desires the kingship for him and wants him to murder Duncan in order to obtain it. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband's objections and persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so they will black out; the next morning they will blame the murder on the chamberlains, who will be defenceless, as they will remember nothing. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a vision of a bloody dagger. When Duncan's death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the chamberlains—ostensibly out of rage at their crime—and easily assumes the kingship. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well.

Fearful of the witches' prophecy that Banquo's heirs will seize the throne, Macbeth hires a group of murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. They ambush Banquo on his way to a royal feast, but they fail to kill Fleance, who escapes into the night. Macbeth becomes furious: as long as Fleance is alive, he

fears that his power remains insecure. At the feast that night, Banquo's ghost visits Macbeth. When he sees the ghost, Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, who include most of the great Scottish nobility. Lady Macbeth tries to neutralise the damage, but Macbeth's kingship incites increasing resistance from his nobles and subjects.

Frightened, Macbeth goes to visit the witches in their cavern. There, they show him a sequence of demons and spirits who present him with further prophecies: he must beware of Macduff, a Scottish nobleman who opposed Macbeth's accession to the throne; he is incapable of being harmed by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure, because he knows that all men are born of women and that forests cannot move. When he learns that Macduff has fled to England to join Malcolm, Macbeth orders that Macduff's castle be seized and, most cruelly, that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered.

When news of his family's execution reaches Macduff in England, he is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behaviour. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, becomes plagued with fits of sleepwalking in which she bemoans what she believes to be bloodstains on her hands. Before Macbeth's opponents arrive, Macbeth receives news that she has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair. Nevertheless, he awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane, to which he seems to have withdrawn in order to defend himself, certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility. He is struck numb with fear, however, when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches' prophecy.

In the battle, Macbeth hews violently, but the English forces gradually overwhelm his army and castle. On the battlefield, Macbeth encounters the vengeful Macduff, who declares that he was not "of woman born" but was instead "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb (what we now call birth by caesarean section). Though he realises that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm, now the King of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.

## ***Twelfth Night***

In the kingdom of Illyria, a nobleman named Orsino lies around listening to music, pining away for the love of Lady Olivia. He cannot have her because she is in mourning for her dead brother and refuses to entertain any proposals of marriage. Meanwhile, off the coast, a storm has caused a terrible shipwreck. A young, aristocratic-born woman named Viola is swept onto the Illyrian shore. Finding herself alone in a strange land, she assumes that her twin brother, Sebastian, has been drowned in the wreck, and tries to figure out what sort of work she can do. A friendly sea captain tells her about Orsino's courtship of Olivia, and Viola says that she wishes she could go to work in Olivia's home. But since Lady Olivia refuses to talk with any strangers, Viola decides that she cannot look for work with her. Instead, she decides to disguise herself as a man, taking on the name of Cesario, and goes to work in the household of Duke Orsino.

Viola (disguised as Cesario) quickly becomes a favourite of Orsino, who makes Cesario his page. Viola finds herself falling in love with Orsino—a difficult love to pursue, as Orsino believes her to be a man. But when Orsino sends Cesario to deliver Orsino's love messages to the disdainful Olivia, Olivia herself falls for the beautiful young Cesario, believing her to be a man. The love triangle is complete: Viola loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Cesario—and everyone is miserable.

Meanwhile, we meet the other members of Olivia's household: her rowdy drunkard of an uncle, Sir Toby; his foolish friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who is trying in his hopeless way to court Olivia; Olivia's witty and pretty waiting-gentlewoman, Maria; Feste, the clever clown of the house; and Malvolio, the dour, prudish steward of Olivia's household. When Sir Toby and the others take offence at Malvolio's constant efforts to spoil their fun, Maria engineers a practical joke to make Malvolio think that Olivia is in love with him. She forges a letter, supposedly from Olivia, addressed to her beloved (whose name is signified by the letters M.O.A.I.), telling him that if he wants to earn her favour, he should dress in yellow stockings and crossed garters, act haughtily, smile constantly, and refuse to explain himself to anyone. Malvolio finds the letter, assumes that it is addressed to him, and, filled with dreams of marrying Olivia and becoming noble himself, happily follows its commands. He behaves so strangely that Olivia comes to think that he is mad.

Meanwhile, Sebastian, who is still alive after all but believes his sister Viola to be dead, arrives in Illyria along with his friend and protector, Antonio. Antonio has cared for Sebastian since the shipwreck and is passionately (and perhaps sexually) attached to the young man—so much so that he follows him to Orsino's domain, in spite of the fact that he and Orsino are old enemies.

Sir Andrew, observing Olivia's attraction to Cesario (still Viola in disguise), challenges Cesario to a duel. Sir Toby, who sees the prospective duel as entertaining fun, eggs Sir Andrew on. However, when Sebastian—who looks just like the disguised Viola—appears on the scene, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby end up coming to blows with Sebastian, thinking that he is Cesario. Olivia enters amid the confusion. Encountering Sebastian and thinking that he is Cesario, she asks him to marry her. He is baffled, since he has never seen her before. He sees, however, that she is wealthy and beautiful, and he is therefore more than willing to go along with her. Meanwhile, Antonio has been arrested by Orsino's officers and now begs Cesario for help, mistaking him for Sebastian. Viola denies knowing Antonio, and Antonio is dragged off, crying out that Sebastian has betrayed him. Suddenly, Viola has newfound hope that her brother may be alive.

Malvolio's supposed madness has allowed the gleeful Maria, Toby, and the rest to lock Malvolio into a small, dark room for his treatment, and they torment him at will. Feste dresses up as "Sir Topas," a priest, and pretends to examine Malvolio, declaring him definitely insane in spite of his protests. However, Sir Toby begins to think better of the joke, and they allow Malvolio to send a letter to Olivia, in which he asks to be released.

Eventually, Viola (still disguised as Cesario) and Orsino make their way to Olivia's house, where Olivia welcomes Cesario as her new husband, thinking him to be Sebastian, whom she has just married. Orsino is furious, but then Sebastian himself appears on the scene, and all is revealed. The siblings are joyfully reunited, and Orsino realises that he loves Viola, now that he knows she is a woman, and asks her to marry him. We discover that Sir Toby and Maria have also been married privately. Finally, someone remembers Malvolio and lets him out of the dark room. The trick is revealed in full, and the embittered Malvolio storms off, leaving the happy couples to their celebration.

## ***Hamlet***

On a dark winter night, a ghost walks the ramparts of Elsinore Castle in Denmark. Discovered first by a pair of watchmen, then by the scholar Horatio, the ghost resembles the recently deceased King Hamlet, whose brother Claudius has inherited the throne and married the king's widow, Queen Gertrude. When Horatio and the watchmen bring Prince Hamlet, the son of Gertrude and the dead king, to see the ghost, it speaks to him, declaring ominously that it is indeed his father's spirit, and that he was murdered by none other than Claudius. Ordering Hamlet to seek revenge on the man who usurped his throne and married his wife, the ghost disappears with the dawn.

Prince Hamlet devotes himself to avenging his father's death, but, because he is contemplative and thoughtful by nature, he delays, entering into a deep melancholy and even apparent madness. Claudius and Gertrude worry about the prince's erratic behaviour and attempt to discover its cause. They employ a pair of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to watch him.

When Polonius, the pompous Lord Chamberlain, suggests that Hamlet may be mad with love for his daughter, Ophelia, Claudius agrees to spy on Hamlet in conversation with the girl. But though Hamlet certainly seems mad, he does not seem to love Ophelia: he orders her to enter a nunnery and declares that he wishes to ban marriages.

A group of travelling actors comes to Elsinore, and Hamlet seizes upon an idea to test his uncle's guilt. He will have the players perform a scene closely resembling the sequence by which Hamlet imagines his uncle to have murdered his father, so that if Claudius is guilty, he will surely react. When the moment of the murder arrives in the theatre, Claudius leaps up and leaves the room. Hamlet and Horatio agree that this proves his guilt. Hamlet goes to kill Claudius but finds him praying. Since he believes that killing Claudius while in prayer would send Claudius's soul to heaven, Hamlet considers that it would be an inadequate revenge and decides to wait. Claudius, now frightened of Hamlet's madness and fearing for his own safety, orders that Hamlet be sent to England at once.

Hamlet goes to confront his mother, in whose bedchamber Polonius has hidden behind a tapestry. Hearing a noise from behind the tapestry, Hamlet believes the king is hiding there. He draws his sword and stabs through the fabric, killing Polonius. For this crime, he is immediately dispatched to England with

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. However, Claudius's plan for Hamlet includes more than banishment, as he has given Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sealed orders for the King of England demanding that Hamlet be put to death.

In the aftermath of her father's death, Ophelia goes mad with grief and drowns in the river. Polonius's son, Laertes, who has been staying in France, returns to Denmark in a rage. Claudius convinces him that Hamlet is to blame for his father's and sister's deaths. When Horatio and the king receive letters from Hamlet indicating that the prince has returned to Denmark after pirates attacked his ship en route to England, Claudius concocts a plan to use Laertes' desire for revenge to secure Hamlet's death. Laertes will fence with Hamlet in innocent sport, but Claudius will poison Laertes' blade so that if he draws blood, Hamlet will die. As a backup plan, the king decides to poison a goblet, which he will give Hamlet to drink should Hamlet score the first or second hits of the match. Hamlet returns to the vicinity of Elsinore just as Ophelia's funeral is taking place. Stricken with grief, he attacks Laertes and declares that he had in fact always loved Ophelia. Back at the castle, he tells Horatio that he believes one must be prepared to die, since death can come at any moment. A foolish courtier named Osric arrives on Claudius's orders to arrange the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes.

The sword-fighting begins. Hamlet scores the first hit, but declines to drink from the king's proffered goblet. Instead, Gertrude takes a drink from it and is swiftly killed by the poison. Laertes succeeds in wounding Hamlet, though Hamlet does not die of the poison immediately. First, Laertes is cut by his own sword's blade, and, after revealing to Hamlet that Claudius is responsible for the queen's death, he dies from the blade's poison. Hamlet then stabs Claudius through with the poisoned sword and forces him to drink down the rest of the poisoned wine. Claudius dies, and Hamlet dies immediately after achieving his revenge.

At this moment, a Norwegian prince named Fortinbras, who has led an army to Denmark and attacked Poland earlier in the play, enters with ambassadors from England, who report that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Fortinbras is stunned by the gruesome sight of the entire royal family lying sprawled on the floor dead. He moves to take power of the kingdom. Horatio, fulfilling Hamlet's last request, tells him Hamlet's tragic story. Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be carried away in a manner befitting a fallen soldier.

## Character Descriptions from original texts

### Cleopatra

### *Antony & Cleopatra*

The assortment of perspectives from which we see Cleopatra illustrates the varying understandings of her as a decadent foreign woman and a noble ruler. As Philo and Demetrius take the stage in Act I, scene i, their complaints about Antony's neglected duties frame the audience's understanding of Cleopatra, the queen for whom Antony risks his reputation. Within the first ten lines of the play, the men declare Cleopatra a lustful "gipsy," a description that is repeated throughout the play as though by a chorus (I.i.10). Cleopatra is labelled a "wrangling queen" (I.i.50), a "slave" (I.iv.19), an "Egyptian dish" (II.vi.123), and a "whore" (III.vi.67); she is called "Salt Cleopatra" (II.i.21) and an enchantress who has made Antony "the noble ruin of her magic" (III.x.18).

But to view Cleopatra as such is to reduce her character to the rather narrow perspective of the Romans, who, standing to lose their honour or kingdoms through her agency, are most threatened by her. Certainly, this threat has much to do with Cleopatra's beauty and open sexuality, which, as Enobarbus points out in his famous description of her in Act II, scene ii, is awe-inspiring. But it is also a performance. Indeed, when Cleopatra takes the stage, she does so as an actress, elevating her passion, grief, and outrage to the most dramatic and captivating level. As Enobarbus says, the queen did not walk through the street, but rather Hop[ped] forty paces . . . And having lost her breath, she spoke and panted, That she did make defect perfection, And breathless, pour breath forth. (II.ii.235–238)

Whether whispering sweet words of love to Antony or railing at a supposedly disloyal servant, Cleopatra leaves her onlookers breathless. As Antony notes, she is a woman "[w]hom everything becomes—to chide, to laugh / To weep" (I.i.51–52). It is this ability to be the perfect embodiment of all things—beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice—that Cleopatra stands to lose after her defeat by Caesar. By parading her through the streets of Rome as his trophy, he intends to reduce her character to a single, base element—to immortalise her as a whore. If Antony cannot allow his conception of self to expand to incorporate his defeats, then Cleopatra cannot allow hers to be stripped to the image of a boy actor "squeaking Cleopatra . . . / I'th' posture of a whore" (V.ii.216–217). Cleopatra often behaves childishly and with relentless self-absorption; nevertheless, her charisma, strength, and indomitable will make her one of Shakespeare's strongest, most awe-inspiring female characters.

## Lady Macbeth

## Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most famous and frightening female characters. When we first see her, she is already plotting Duncan's murder, and she is stronger, more ruthless, and more ambitious than her husband. She seems fully aware of this and knows that she will have to push Macbeth into committing murder. At one point, she wishes that she were not a woman so that she could do it herself.

This theme of the relationship between gender and power is key to Lady Macbeth's character: her husband implies that she is a masculine soul inhabiting a female body, which seems to link masculinity to ambition and violence. Shakespeare, however, seems to use her, and the witches, to undercut Macbeth's idea that "undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males" (1.7.73–74). These crafty women use *female* methods of achieving power—that is, manipulation—to further their supposedly male ambitions. Women, the play implies, can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to pursue these ambitions on their own.

Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband with remarkable effectiveness, overriding all his objections; when he hesitates to murder, she repeatedly questions his manhood until he feels that he must commit murder to prove himself. Lady Macbeth's remarkable strength of will persists through the murder of the king—it is she who steadies her husband's nerves immediately after the crime has been perpetrated.

Afterward, however, Lady Macbeth begins a slow slide into madness—just as ambition affects her more strongly than Macbeth before the crime, so does guilt plague her more strongly afterward. By the close of the play, she has been reduced to sleepwalking through the castle, desperately trying to wash away an invisible bloodstain. Once the sense of guilt comes home to roost, Lady Macbeth's sensitivity becomes a weakness, and she is unable to cope. Significantly, she (apparently) kills herself, signalling her total inability to deal with the legacy of their crimes.

## **Viola**

## ***Twelfth Night***

Viola is the central character in Shakespeare's play, *Twelfth Night*. She is washed up on a beach in Illyria after losing her twin brother in a shipwreck. She disguises herself as a boy, gives herself the name Cesario and finds employment with Duke Orsino, the wealthy young ruler of Illyria.

All through the play Viola shows strength of character, a quick wit and enormous resourcefulness. Being disguised as a boy leads to an impossible position but in spite of that she maintains self-control and a dignity that contrasts with the excessive emotions of the other main characters.

Viola is arguably the most delightful and engaging female character in Shakespeare's comedies. She finds herself in the middle of some extreme emotions – Orsino's excessive lovesickness, expressed with comic melancholy and Olivia's aggressive pursuit of Viola whom she believes to be a boy. Viola's common-sense behaviour in response represents the normal emotions of a reasonable person: she immediately finds a way to deal with it – to make herself safe and to get on with things.

As a result of her circumstances, she demonstrates a high degree of practicality and resourcefulness. She is in a shipwrecked, vulnerable situation so she disguises herself as a boy so that she will be safe and have a man's freedom to move about without protection.

She is very intelligent, shown in her dealings with people throughout the play, with an engaging wit and a huge amount of charm. It is those qualities that help her get into the service of Orsino in the first place, and also that cause Olivia to fall in love with her. By that time, Orsino is also in love with her, even though he thinks she is a boy.

All these qualities, plus the loyalty she shows Orsino, crowned by her skill in music and conversation, win the complete trust of Orsino, enough to use her as his emissary to Olivia to woo her on his behalf.

## **Ophelia**

## ***Hamlet***

Ophelia's role in the play revolves around her relationships with three men. She is the daughter of Polonius, the sister of Laertes, and up until the beginning of the play's events, she has also been romantically involved with Hamlet. Ophelia's relationships with these men restrict her agency and eventually lead to her death. From her very first scene, men tell Ophelia what to do.

In Act One, scene three, where we first meet her, Laertes and Polonius admonish Ophelia not to trust Hamlet's expressions of love.

Despite the force of their warnings, Laertes and Polonius both trust Ophelia to make her own decisions. However, as the question of Hamlet's state of mind becomes increasingly dire, Polonius tightens the reins on his daughter.

At the top of Act Three Polonius forces Ophelia to return Hamlet's letters and renounce his affections. Ophelia obeys, but her action sends Hamlet into a fit of misogynistic rage. Soon after, Hamlet mistakenly kills Polonius. The combination of her former lover's cruelty and her father's death sends Ophelia into a fit of grief.

In Act Four she spirals into madness and dies under ambiguous circumstances. Ophelia's tragedy lies in the way she loses her innocence through no fault of her own.

## Glossary of terms from *who the f—k is shakespeare?*

### In order of appearance in the text

#### **BSL**

The abbreviation for British Sign Language. A sign language used in the United Kingdom, which may be the first or preferred language for many among the d/Deaf community in the UK.

#### **Yoke**

A wooden cross-piece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to a plough or cart that they are to pull

#### **10 Things I Hate About You**

A 1999 American teen romantic comedy film starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger, based on *The Taming of the Shrew*.

#### **She's the Man**

A 2006 American teen romantic comedy sports film, starring Amanda Bynes and Channing Tatum, based on *Twelfth Night*.

#### **Romeo + Juliet**

A 1996 romantic crime film directed and co-written by Baz Luhrmann, starring Leonardo di Caprio and Claire Danes, based on *Romeo and Juliet*.

#### **Gnomeo & Juliet**

A 2011 family comedy cartoon adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* in which they are garden gnomes voiced by James McAvoy and Emily Blunt.

#### **West Side Story**

A 1961 American musical romantic drama film, based on the musical of the same title, inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. Where the two families are rival gangs in New York, the Sharks (a Puerto Rican gang) and the Jets (a white gang).

#### **The remake of West Side Story**

A 2021 American musical romance, directed by Steven Spielberg, and based on the original musical. Starring Rachel Zegler, Mike Fiast, and Ariana DeBose.

## **Warm Bodies**

A 2013 horror romance film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which R (played by Nicholas Hoult) is a zombie, and Julie (played by Teresa Palmer) is a human.

## **The Lion King**

A musical family film originally created as a 2D animation in 1994 by Disney, and based on *Hamlet*, in which all of the characters are animals in the savannah of East Africa (the animation locations were inspired by Tanzania and Kenya). *The Lion King* was remade in 2019 as a photorealistic CGI live-action version, set to the music of Beyoncé.

## **Mean Girls**

A 2004 American teen comedy film starring Lindsay Lohan and Rachel McAdams, inspired by *Julius Caesar*. It was later turned into a musical, which was adapted for the screen in 2024.

## **“all the most famous white dudes you know”**

Hamlet, the titular character in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, has always been considered a dream character for male actors. It has more often than not, been performed by white male actors who have either initially gained fame as actors, or who have gone on to become famous. Notable names include David Tennant, Kenneth Branagh, Daniel Day-Lewis, and Benedict Cumberbatch.

## **“(plus a handful of white women)”**

Several white women have played the character of Hamlet in professional theatre productions. Most recently, Maxine Peake, Michelle Terry, and Tessa Parr.

## **“ - three Black people!”**

Three Black people have notably played *Hamlet* in professional UK productions (not adaptations). Namely, Cush Jumbo, Paapa Essiedu, and Adrian Lester.

## **Clip show**

An episode of a television series that consists primarily of excerpts from previous episodes. Most clip shows include a frame story in which cast members recall events from past instalments of the show, depicted with a clip of the event presented as a flashback.

## **“I built up an army / And took it to Rome”**

Ptolemy XII Auletes, ruling pharaoh of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, designated in his will that his daughter Cleopatra VII should reign alongside her brother Ptolemy XIII as co-rulers in the event of his death, but a fallout between them led to open civil war. Julius Caesar attempted to reconcile the siblings, but a discontent Ptolemy XIII raised forces against Caesar and Cleopatra. Cleopatra was supported by Julius Caesar in the war against her brother, and Ptolemy XIII died in the Battle of the Nile. Caesar maintained a private affair with Cleopatra that produced a son, Caesarion.

## **Caesar**

Caesar is a title used by Roman emperors. It derives from the Roman dictator Julius Caesar's surname, and was changed from being a surname to a title used by Roman emperors in 68 AD.

## **Ides of March, BC 44**

A reference to the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 44BC – a date associated with misfortune and doom. It became renowned as the date on which Roman dictator Julius Caesar was assassinated by Roman senators hoping to preserve the Roman Republic. The aftermath was not what they had hoped.

## **Octavian and Antony**

After the assassination of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Octavian undertook a military expedition to the east to defeat Brutus and Cassius. In two battles at Philippi, the troops of Brutus and Cassius are defeated and Brutus and Cassius take their lives. The Triumvirate (a group of 3 men holding power; Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus) then divide up the Empire amongst them.

## **Dionysus**

The Ancient Greek god of fertility, wine, and pleasure. The Romans called him Bacchus. Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele.

## **Isis**

The Ancient Egyptian goddess of healing and magic. She was known by Egyptians as Aset, but is more commonly known now by her Greek name, Isis. Her name translates to “Queen of the Throne” which is reflected in her headdress, which is typically a throne.

## **Mandragora**

Also known as Mandrake, is a plant used for soothing, anaesthetic and aphrodisiac purposes, but also for its hallucinogenic properties as a medication.

## **Demi-Atlas**

In Greek mythology, Atlas is a Titan condemned to hold up the heavens or sky for eternity. Demi-Atlas refers to how Cleopatra views Antony as someone who has to hold up the weight of the world on his shoulders.

## **Burgonet**

The burgonet helmet was a Renaissance-era and early modern combat helmet. Pronounced burga-net.

## **Ptolemy**

This was the first name given to all of the male heirs of the Egyptian throne during the Ptolemaic period in Egypt. This particular moment refers to Ptolemy XIII, Cleopatra's brother, who she defeats in a civil war to gain sole control of Egypt.

## **Tarsus**

An ancient city in Cilicia, Turkey, and the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia during the Roman Empire. It was a significant trade centre and Roman administration centre for the region, and was known for its wealth and culture.

## **Aphrodite**

The ancient Greek goddess of sexual love and beauty, identified as Venus by the Romans.

## **Octavia**

The sister of Augustus Caesar, she was the only daughter born of Gaius Octavius' second marriage to Atia, the niece of Julius Caesar.

## **Wrangling**

The word "wrangle" means a noisy or angry dispute or altercation. Used as an adjective, it describes someone as argumentative, loud, and angry.

## **Tawny**

Something that is a mix of yellow, orange, and brown colours, or a light yellowish-brown colour. It is often used to describe animals' fur or feathers. The use of it in the original text to describe Cleopatra implies a comment on her skin tone and equates her to an animal.

## **Strumpet**

A prostitute or promiscuous woman.

## **bred of mud**

Born of mud. In the original text, it refers to a common belief in ancient writers that Nile mud was so fertile that it would spontaneously generate creatures through the action of the sun's rays upon it. Again, the text might suggest that the Roman senators are equating Cleopatra to an animal, and referencing her skin tone by implying that she comes from being born out of the mud.

## **Othello**

The titular character in Shakespeare's *Othello* – a tragedy written around 1603. Othello is a dark skinned North African man, who marries a white woman. Through the racist scheming of Iago, he is sent in to a fit of jealousy and rage, believing that his wife is being unfaithful to him. During this time he murders his innocent wife, then takes his own life when he realises his error.

## **Misogynoir**

The combined force of anti-Black racism and misogyny directed towards Black women. This term was coined by Black feminist writer Moya Bailey in 2008 to address the misogyny directed toward black transgender and cisgender women in American visual and popular culture. The concept of misogynoir is grounded in the theory of intersectionality, which analyses how various social identities such as race, gender, class, age, disability, and sexual orientation interrelate in systems of oppression.

## **Chares**

A household chore or task. The word comes from the Middle English word char, which comes from the Old English word cierr meaning "a turn, job, piece of work"

## **Nubia**

Nubia is a region along the Nile river encompassing the area between the first cataract of the Nile and the confluence of the Blue and White Niles – now modern day south Egypt and central Sudan. It was the seat of one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Africa. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, northern Nubia would be invaded and annexed to Egypt, ruled by the Greeks and Romans.

## **Gaul**

A region in western Europe first clearly described by the Romans, encompassing present day France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and parts of Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Northern Italy. Julius Caesar took control of the region on behalf of the Roman Republic, and Gaul was divided into three parts: Gallia Celtica, Belgica, and Aquitania.

## **Roman senate**

The highest and constituting assembly of ancient Rome and its aristocracy. With different powers throughout its existence it lasted from the first days of the city of Rome (753 BC). The official name was the Senatus Populusque Romanus, during the early Republic, senators were wealthy men who had previously held a position as a magistrate. During the Roman Empire, the emperor had control over who could become a senator.

## **Imperium**

The supreme power and right to command. In ancient Rome, the supreme power held by an emperor, to command and administer in military, judicial, and civil affairs.

## **Augustus**

The name given to Octavian, the founder of the Roman Empire. He reigned as the first Roman emperor from 27 BC, after defeating Antony's forces at the Battle of Actium, until his death in 14 AD. The reign of Augustus initiated an imperial cult, as well as an era of imperial peace in which the Roman world was largely free of armed conflict.

## **“How many times a day do you think about the Roman Empire?”**

A 2023 TikTok trend, in users were prompted to ask the men in their lives how often they think about the ancient Romans. According to a report, most men think about the Romans once a day. It showed a significant difference between white and Black men – with white men seeing the Roman Empire as a symbol of hope and masculinity that should be emulated.

## **Dog whistle**

In politics, it is a coded message communicated through words or phrases commonly understood by a particular group of people, but not others.

## **Cydnus**

A reference to the journey Cleopatra took on the River Cydnus, which she took to meet Mark Antony for the first time. In this moment, it refers to her taking the journey of death to meet Antony in the afterlife.

## **Candyman**

Daniel Robitaille (Candyman) is a fictional character and the main antagonist of the Candyman film series. The character is a vengeful spirit and originator of the Candyman legend, who was killed as the result of an interracial love affair during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He now appears when someone summons him by saying his name 5 times while facing a mirror.

## **Complete Works of Shakespeare**

A collection of all 37 of William Shakespeare’s comedies, tragedies, and historical plays. Some volumes also feature Shakespeare’s complete poetry, including sonnets.

## **Boogey**

A reference to the Boogeyman; a fictional monster that is used in stories for centuries to scare children into behaving well. The term can also be used to describe something that is feared or dreaded.

## **Girlboss**

A neologism that denotes a woman whose success is defined in opposition to the masculine world in which she swims upstream.

## **John Lennon**

A Liverpool born singer, songwriter, and musician, and founding member of The Beatles. In his solo career, he wrote the song “Imagine” – which encourages listeners to imagine a world of peace, without materialism, without borders, and without religion. The chorus includes the lines “You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one” – which is also referenced in this play.

## **Thane**

A Scottish feudal lord who holds lands, and performs military service for the king.

## **Glamis**

A title of European nobility in *Macbeth* that Macbeth holds at the beginning of the play. The title is similar to an earl or duke, and the area which he rules is called Glamis – a small village in Scotland, including Glamis Castle.

## **Cawdor**

A title of European nobility in *Macbeth* that Macbeth holds at the beginning of the play. The title is similar to an earl or duke, and the area which he rules is called Cawdor – a small village in Scotland, including Cawdor Castle.

## **Duncan**

The King of Scotland at the beginning of *Macbeth*, who is murdered in his sleep by Macbeth so that he can take the throne.

## **Battlements**

A low wall at the top of a castle or a tower with open spaces to shoot through.

## **Compunctious visitings of nature**

Thought to be a reference to Lady Macbeth’s menstrual cycle, which she asks the spirits to stop so that nothing will stop her from helping to kill the king.

## **Queen Elizabeth**

Elizabeth I was Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death in 1603. She was the last monarch of the House of Tudor. She was the only surviving child of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn – though she was declared illegitimate because of the annulment of her parents' marriage. She established the English Protestant Church, which would later be known as the Church of England. She never married or produced an heir, and was eventually succeeded by her cousin James VI of Scotland.

## **Cognitive dissonance**

A psychological phenomenon that occurs when a person holds two contradictory beliefs at the same time, or when their behaviour does not align with their beliefs or values.

## **Women weren't allowed to act on stage**

Women were legally restricted from acting on stage until 1661 in England. This meant that all female or feminine characters were often performed by young men and boys who had not gone through puberty or whose voices had not yet broken, in drag.

## **Gunpowder Plot**

A failed attempt to assassinate King James I of England during the Opening of Parliament in 1605. The plan was organised by Robert Catesby, a devout Catholic who hoped to kill the Protestant king and establish Catholic rule in England.

## **Regicide**

The purposeful killing of a monarch or sovereign, often associated with the usurpation of power.

## **Picky tea**

A colloquial term for a meal made up of leftovers and ready-made food from the freezer, often eaten at home when you don't want to cook – or when it's too hot to cook a full meal over the stove.

## **English killed the last king of Wales**

Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, also known as Llywelyn the Last, was a medieval Welsh ruler and one of the last native and independent princes of Wales before its conquest by Edward I of England. He was killed on at the Battle of Orewin Bridge at Builth Wells, while separated from his army.

## **Monarchy of Scotland was overrun by the English**

The Kingdom of Scotland was merged with the Kingdom of England to form a single Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707, although the kingdoms had shared a monarch since 1603 known as the Union of the Crowns, when King James I was crowned.

## **Mary Queen of Scots**

Also known as Mary Stuart or Mary I of Scotland, was the Queen of Scotland from 14 December 1542 until her forced abdication in 1567. In the eyes of many Catholics, Mary Stuart was the rightful queen of England, not Elizabeth I. Her execution was ordered by her cousin, Elizabeth I, and she was killed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1587 at Fotheringhay Castle.

## **“trad-wife”**

A term used to describe a married woman who embraces traditional gender roles in marriage. This can include taking on a homemaker role, supporting her husband as the primary breadwinner, and leaving her career to focus on her family. Tradwives often adhere to conservative or alt-right political views and are often anti-feminist. The term was coined on TikTok, with many women posting content that holds an aesthetic of Jim Crow era Americana.

## **Stepford Wife**

An informal and often derogatory term for a married woman who is submissive to her husband, preoccupied with domestic concerns, and doesn't think or behave independently. It describes a woman who blindly conforms to a subservient role in her relationship with her husband. It originated from the 1972 novel by Ira Levin, in which wives have been replaced by their husbands with docile androids.

## **Loch Ness Monster**

Affectionately known as Nessie, it is a mythical creature in Scottish folklore that is said to inhabit Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands.

## **Macduff**

Lord Macduff, the Thane of Fife, is a character and the heroic main antagonist in *Macbeth*. He suspects Macbeth of killing Duncan and joins Malcolm to overthrow him. When Macduff's family is killed by Macbeth, he vows revenge and kills him on the battlefield.

## **Malcolm and Donalbain**

Malcolm is the eldest son of King Duncan, and heir to the throne. Donalbain is the younger brother. Upon hearing about the murder of their father, they decide to flee the country to England and Ireland respectively, believing that going their separate ways will keep them safe. This is perceived as guilt, and they are blamed for the murder of their father. Malcolm later raises an army in England, and marches on Scotland with Macduff to reclaim his throne from Macbeth.

## **The witches**

The Three Witches, also known as the Weird Sisters, are characters in *Macbeth* who eventually lead him to his demise. They predict his future as the king of Scotland, and later his eventual downfall.

## **Banquo**

He is at first an ally of Macbeth (both are generals in the King's army) and they meet the Three Witches together. After prophesying that Macbeth will become king, the witches tell Banquo that he will not be king himself, but that his descendants will be. Later, Macbeth in his lust for power sees Banquo as a threat and has him murdered by three hired assassins: Banquo's son, Fleance, escapes. Banquo's ghost returns in a later scene, causing Macbeth to react with alarm in public during a feast.

## **Birnam Wood... High Dunsinane Hill**

Birnam Wood is a forest near Dunsinane Hill in Scotland. The Witches predict that Macbeth will be King of Scotland until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. The English Army, led by Malcolm, cuts down branches in Birnam Wood and use them to disguise their approach to the hill, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

## **Arabia**

A great peninsula of SW Asia, between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. It is known as the Crossroads of the World, and was at the centre of important ancient trade routes. Arabian people were known for selling ouds and other perfumes. In this line, it references that all of the riches and fragrances of the world would cleanse her of her guilt.

## **“Tomorrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow”**

A line from a soliloquy performed by Macbeth in which he mourns his empty life and time after his wife has taken her life. It sums up the weariness of life, and a philosophy about the futility of life.

## **“What, the fair Ophelia?”**

A line from a monologue by Hamlet in which he laments the death of Ophelia, who took her own life off stage. He sees her funeral procession in the graveyard when he is there contemplating his own life.

## **Bourgeoisie**

The middle class, typically with reference to its perceived materialistic values or conventional attitudes.

## **Illyria**

The name of the country that Viola arrives in after the shipwreck. It refers to the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, from Albania in the south to the Istrian peninsula in the north.

## **Eunuch**

A man or boy who has been castrated, especially (in the past) one employed to guard the women’s living areas in court.

## **Crinolines**

A structured petticoat that is designed to hold out a skirt.

## **Desire path**

An unplanned route or path that is used by pedestrians in preference to or in the absence of a designated alternative. For example, one worn into a grassy surface by repeated traffic.

## **Diana**

In Roman mythology, Diana was the goddess of hunting, the moon, and chastity.

## **Judith Butler**

An American philosopher and gender studies scholar whose work has influenced political philosophy, ethics, and the fields of third-wave feminism, queer theory, and literary theory. They use they/them pronouns, and are considered to be one of the most intellectual figures of our time.

## **Queer-coded**

The attribution of stereotypically queer traits to fictional characters without stating their gender or sexual identity explicitly.

## **“I am all the daughters of my father’s house,/ And all the brothers, too”**

A line said by Viola to Orsino when he asks them about their siblings. It expresses a longing that Viola feels to tell him the truth about who they are, the longing for their presumed-dead brother, and the uncertainty that they feel around their gender identity.

## **Love is Blind**

A reality TV series on Netflix, which promotes itself as a social experiment where single men and women look for love and get engaged, all before meeting in person.

## **Usurped**

To take a position of power or importance illegally, or by force.

## **Betrothed**

The person to whom one is engaged.

## **Libertine**

A person questioning and challenging most moral principles, someone who ignores or even spurns accepted morals and forms of behaviour observed by the larger society.

## **Recks not his own rede**

Does not listen to his own advice.

## **Harry and Meghan**

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, whose relationship sparked much drama and received media and public backlash.

## **Doublet**

A man's snug-fitting jacket that is shaped and fitted to a man's body.

## **Stockings**

Clothing for the legs and loins, breeches, or clothing for the lower leg.

## **“As if he'd been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors”**

A line from *Hamlet* which Ophelia says to her father in describing Hamlet's appearance when he comes to see her. In Elizabethan times, those suffering from melancholy or madness were said to suffer from visions of supernatural horrors such as devils and goblins.

## **Nunnery**

A building or group of buildings in which nuns live as a religious community; a convent.

## **A sword or a pen**

A reference to the idiom 'The pen is mightier than the sword' – which indicates that the written word is more effective than violence as a means of change.

## **Purgatory**

In Catholic doctrine, a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are making amends for their sins before going to heaven.

## **I take my own life**

In *Hamlet*, Ophelia dies by drowning in a river after becoming insane due to her father's murder at the hands of Hamlet, and Hamlet's actions. Ophelia's death is described in Act 4, Scene 7 of the original text, and is shrouded in mystery because it happens offstage. Queen Gertrude tells Ophelia's brother Laertes that Ophelia fell into the river while picking flowers and drowned while singing, Gertrude also mentions that Ophelia's clothes spread out and weeds clung to her crown. It is heavily implied that she took her own life.

### **Iambic pentameter**

A type of poetic metre that uses a rhythm of five metrical feet, or iambs, in each line of verse. Each iamb is made up of two syllables, alternating unstressed and stressed.

### **Sonnet**

A popular classical form of poetry. Traditionally, it is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter, employing one of several rhyme schemes, and adhering to a tightly structured thematic organisation – usually structured in three quatrains (each with their own ABAB rhyme schemes) and a final couplet. The final rhyming couplet often sums up or gives a surprising twist.

### **Tories**

The informal name given to the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom, currently the opposition to the Labour government.

### **Labour**

The current ruling party of the United Kingdom, formerly the opposition to the Tories.