

# Understanding Shakespeare's Language

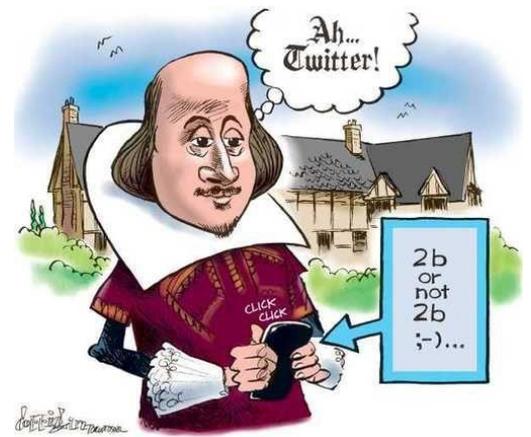
- "Thou", "thee", "thine" and "thy" are pronouns that have dropped out of the main dialects of Modern English.

	Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Present Tense - Verb Ending
1st Pers. Sing.	I	me	my/mine	X
2nd Pers. Sing.	thou	thee	thy/thine[1]	<b>-est</b>
3rd Pers. Sing.	he/she/it	him/her/it	his/her/its	<b>-eth</b>
1st Pers. Plural	we	us	our	X
2nd Pers. Plural	ye/you[2]	you	your	X
3rd Pers. Plural	they	them	their	X

[1]: <Thy> = 'your' / <Thine> = 'yours'.  
[2]: "You" had replaced "ye" for most plural uses by 1600.

- Here are the conjugations from that era of two common irregular verbs:

Present tense		
Pronouns	BE	HAVE
I	am	have
Thou	<b>art</b>	<b>hast</b>
He / She / It	is	<b>hath</b>
We	are	have
Ye / You	are	have
They	are	have



- In Shakespeare's time "thou" and "thee" were for familiar use, and "you" and "ye" were formal.
  - The previously plural "you" was used in the singular to signify politeness and respect. Eventually, the politer "you" drove out nearly all uses of "thee" and "thou"; they survived mostly in poetry and religion.
  - Several groups continue to use these pronouns today as part of their daily speech (although with different grammar), including residents of Yorkshire, Cumbria, the East Midlands, and some rural areas of Western England.
- ❖ **Rephrase these sentences into Shakespearean English.** Remember, in Shakespeare's time <you> was only used in formal situations.

- Who are you?
- How do you like this tune?
- Have you been here long?
- Have you forgot yourself?

❖ Choose between **thou, thee, thy** and **thine**.

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The girls wish to dance with ..... | 2. .... knowest my heart is .....   |
| 3. .... hast done me wrong.           | 4. Why dost ..... not believe me?   |
| 5. I have never lied to .....         | 6. If only ..... love was as constant as mine,<br>..... wouldst feel the anguish that I do. |

❖ **Rephrase this poem into modern day language** (use the vocabulary below).

Sonnet 18, often alternatively titled Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?, is one of the best-known of 154 sonnets written by the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare. In the sonnet, the speaker compares his beloved to the summer season. He also states that his beloved will live on forever through the words of the poem.

### Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

### Vocabulary

**temperate** (adjective): mild; pleasant; warm  
**bud** (noun): first growth on a plant or flower  
**lease** (noun): period, time, duration  
**eye of heaven**: Shakespeare is referring to the sun  
**complexion** (noun): colour; appearance  
**fair** (adjective): attractive; beautiful; handsome; lovely

**eternal** (adjective): endless; everlasting.  
**brag** (verb): to boast; to show-off.  
**wand'rest** (verb): 'to wander': to walk without direction.  
**shade** (noun): shadow; darkness; gloom.  
**so long**: as long