**De Aston**

**English Department**

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**Year 8: Shakespearean Comedy**

**Academic Excellence Booklet**

The role of the Academic Excellence Booklet is for you to complete these tasks over the next six weeks. These activities are purposely designed to challenge you, so don’t worry if you find them difficult. You’re meant to! Learning happens when people have to think hard. That being said, your English teacher is a specialist, so ask any of us for help, anytime!

1. The Royal Shakespeare Company has a brilliant website dedicated to helping you get to know Shakespeare’s plays better. Visit <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/> then select the play you have been studying. The website has three levels, depending on how confident you are about your knowledge of the play. Level 1 is quite simplistic, so if you feel this is the level that is suitable for you at this time, revisit this task when you are feeling more confident.

There are lots of options here, so choose the task that most interests you:

At level 2:

* Click on ‘Language’, then choose a key scene to investigate. Complete all activities for this scene: look, listen, watch, imagine.
* Click on ‘Staging’, then choose a moment, setting or relationship to focus on. Look at the images of different productions of the play and answer the questions.

At level 3:

* Click on ‘Characters’, then choose a character to investigate. Watch the video, then complete the PEE table for that character. You can type straight into the table, then print your work when you’ve finished.
* Click on ‘Language’, then choose an aspect of language to analyse (ignore ‘themes’). Read the extract, then complete the PEE table for that character. You can type straight into the table, then print your work when you’ve finished.

2. Watch this video about Shakespeare’s comedies:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjAqfh9aY9Y>

The speaker raises some excellent points about the roles of women in Shakespeare’s comedies. While the tragedies are primarily about men, the comedies tend to focus on women, and they often subvert the expectations men had of women at the time. Shakespeare also emphasises the value of marrying for love, rather than for financial gain as was typical in Shakespeare’s time.

* Write a short essay (aim for 250 words) exploring how these ideas are presented in the play you have studied.

The speaker also discusses how, in addition to the traditional categories of tragedy, comedy and history, there are now two further categories: the problem plays and the romances.

* Explain in your own words how to recognise these two types of play, with examples.

3. “As You Like It” is another of Shakespeare’s comedies. It follows its heroine Rosalind as she flees her uncle's court, accompanied by her cousin Celia to find safety and, eventually, love, in the Forest of Arden. In the forest, they encounter a variety of memorable characters, notably the melancholy traveller Jaques who speaks many of Shakespeare's most famous speeches. Jaques provides a sharp contrast to the other characters in the play, always observing and disputing the hardships of life in the country. Below is one of his most famous speeches:

*All the world’s a stage,*

*And all the men and women merely players;*

*They have their exits and their entrances;*

*And one man in his time plays many parts,*

*His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,*

*Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms;*

*And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel*

*And shining morning face, creeping like snail*

*Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,*

*Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad*

*Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier,*

*Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the* ***pard****,*

*Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,*

*Seeking the* ***bubble reputation***

*Even in the* ***cannon’s mouth****. And then the justice,*

*In fair round belly with good* ***capon*** *lin’d,*

*With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,*

*Full of wise* ***saws*** *and* ***modern******instances****;*

*And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts*

*Into the lean and* ***slipper’d******pantaloon****,*

*With spectacles on nose and* ***pouch*** *on side;*

*His youthful* ***hose****, well sav’d, a world too wide*

*For his* ***shrunk******shank****; and his big manly voice,*

*Turning again toward childish treble, pipes*

*And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,*

*That ends this strange eventful history,*

*Is second childishness and mere oblivion;*

*Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

**Glossary**

pard = panther

bubble reputation = fame

cannon’s mouth = the shots from a cannon

justice = a judge

capon = bribes

saws = sayings

modern instances = anecdotes

slipper’d pataloon = slippers

pouch = money bag

hose = trousers

shrunk shank = skinny legs

sans (French) = without

In this speech, he describes the 7 stages that a man goes through in his life. Your task is to rewrite this speech in modern English.

You could begin “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women just actors; their life is the play and when they leave the stage that is like dying. Over his life a man goes through 7 different stages:…”

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For more resources, including literacy support, visit www.deastonenglish.com