

Hi I'm Grace, that's Yorick. Welcome to workshop four: Shakespeare Rhetoric. Yeah. Totally. Rhetoric. Got it. What's that? So Rhetoric is just the art of making a speech effective. Remember Shakespeare was a playwright, so he wrote lines for people to speak on a stage rather than words for somebody to read inside their head four hundred years later.

Thank you. Oh, and just one more thing.

**\*PUNCHES IN THE FACE\***

That is for every schoolboy and schoolgirl for the next four hundred years.

He had to know how to make his speeches good not only for the audience, but for the character who was trying to persuade another character on stage to do what they wanted them to do. Shakespeare used a lot of tools in order to get his point across in the spoken word. I've broken them down into four categories: Rhythm, Repetition, Antithesis, and Metaphor. Don't pass out. Don't fall asleep. Don't worry. We're gonna break it down.

Rhythm is something you already know if you watched the last couple videos about Shakespeare's verse or iambic pentameter. We

haven't really talked about why Shakespeare wrote in poetry except to differentiate his characters. As an actor I have discovered that iambic pentameter is actually way easier to memorize as well. It's more like memorizing song lyrics than a big chunk of text. Also, iambic pentameter was just fashionable at the time; everybody was doing it, so if you wanted to like keep up with the times you had to write in iambic pentameter. And the theory goes that in the rhythm of how a character speaks are a bunch of clues to their emotional lives. If you're speaking in a rhythm then you know what you are saying all the time. As opposed to, wait...what was I saying? I'm not sure this even counts as verse cuz - hold up, here's a parenthetical - I have a lot of questions with no answers...

Here's a better example: In the first scene on Romeo and Juliet a street brawl breaks out. No one is speaking in verse. Everyone is throwing stuff at each other, having a sword fight, blood is drawn, and the Prince has to show up and bring order to this chaos. And he does it with verse.

Rebelious subjects enemies to peace

Profaners of this neighbor stained steel

Will they not hear? What ho! You men! You beasts!

That quench the fire of your pernicious rage

With purple fountains issuing from your veins

On pain of torture from those bloody hands

Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground

And hear the sentence of your moved Prince!

On the flip side we also have somebody like Hamlet who entered the stage believe he is alone, contemplating whether or not he should live, or he should die.

To be or not to be, that is the question

whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing, end them. To die. To sleep no more.

So the rhythm of the lines can tell an actor a whole lot about how to play the character. But you can't really talk about rhythm without talking about repetition. Repetition. Repetition. Repetition. Repetition.

There's all kinds of repetition in Shakespeare's works. You can impress your English teacher if you know the word Epizeuxis, which is just a fancy way of saying: a repetition of words. Epizeuxis. Epizeuxis. Epizeuxis. Shakespeare repeated words so that his characters could drive home an emotional point. Macbeth is existential:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Lear is very sad:

How. How. How.

Othello is mad and wants to cut someone.

Weak for my revenge! Blood! Blood! Blood!

I think you get the point.

Shakespeare also repeated sounds within the words, so not just the whole word, but what the word sounds like. Here's two new fancy words for you: Assonance and Consonance. Be careful with that first one. Assonance is the repetition of vowels, and consonance is the repetition of consonants. Consonance. Consonants. Conso...  
\*FRUSTRATION\*.

For example: When Juliet finds out that Romeo might be dead, the vowel that she keeps repeating is I. I, eye, aye...I am not I if there be such an I. To me that means Juliet is kind of stuck in the moment and can't really get past the news that her husband might be dead.

About five lines after, Lady Macbeth says:

Look like the innocent flower

But be the serpent under it

She's got all these Esses to end her speech.

Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

That Lady Macbeth is a snake.

Here's one I know you're familiar with: Rhyming! Shakespeare would rhyme all of the time. I did not do that on purpose. A lot of his characters spoke in rhyming couplets. Like we saw with Richard II sometimes it was just to show everybody how clever you are. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, everybody speaks in rhyming couplets when everything is going really well, and all the lovers are in love with each other, and it sounds very much like one fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish. And then they get into the woods and they want to tear each other's eyes out, and they stop rhyming.

A rhyming couplet at the end of your speech can really put a button on the end, but also I like to think that a rhyming couplet ends the scene, and that actors backstage are listening for that rhyming couplet to know when to enter. That way you don't need to memorize your friend's entire speech when you've got all of your own lines in your head. You just have to be backstage listening for that one obvious cue.

Ok, so we know about rhythm. We know about Repetition in many different forms. I'd also like to talk about antithesis. You already know what antithesis is, because you know what a thesis is; you need them in order to write English papers. Thesis is a point you're trying to make. So an antithesis is two different points; a point here and a point there compared against each other. It's a statement like, not this, but that. Or, if this then that. Antithesis shows what is by giving an example of what is not.

Give every man thy ear, but not thy voice.

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall

As an actor I find antithesis really handy because it's not always in a very short statement, sometimes it's an entire speech. Hamlet's to be or not to be speech for example is all one entire antithetical speech; contrasting to be, or the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune against not to be, or that undiscovered country that happens after death.

Antithesis is really helpful to me because once I find it, I can understand the structure of the thought; whether that's a really small thought, or a really big speech.

Ok. Last one, and then we will review. A metaphor is a statement that compares directly two very unlike things in order to show the similarities between the two. It's a statement that doesn't use like or as. If you use like or as you are writing a simile, not a metaphor.

Examples of a metaphor in modern English would be: this room is a pigsty, or, that guy is a beast. Shakespeare used this all the time.

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East and Juliet is the sun

She doesn't shine like the sun. She is the sun.

\*STEVIE WONDER SINGS LIKE A BOSS\*

Beware my lord of jealousy

It is the green eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds  
on

Jealousy is literally a monster sitting on your shoulder with bright green eyes eating your brain whenever you feel jealous.

Life's but a walking shadow

A poor play who struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more.

This one is one of my favorites, because while Macbeth is using the metaphor - life is but a walking shadow, life is but a poor player on the stage - literally, the dude in front of you saying these lines is an actor on the stage. That's some pretty smart writing, I think.

Metaphors are great because they paint a really clear image, and tells the audience exactly what that character is thinking and feeling.

Yorick. Take over. Every time I talk about metaphor it makes me sneeze. Yeah. It really sets off my analogies.



Ok, I promised a review, so here we go. Today we talked about Shakespeare's rhetoric. We started with rhythm or Shakespeare's verse and what the rhythm can tell you about what's happening in the speech. Then we talked about repetition in three different ways; we talked about epizuexis, which is the repetition of a specific word. We talked about assonance and consonance; assonance being the repetition of a specific vowel, consonance being the repetition of consonants. And we talked about rhyme and rhyming couplets, and what those do for your speech.

We also talked about antithesis; not this but that, or if this then that setting up two different things in order to form a thought. And, we talked about metaphor; comparing two unlike things directly, without using like or as, in order to show some kind of similarity between the two things.

That is a lot. I hope this video helps you with any Shakespeare speech that you are assigned to speak out loud in class. I hope it helps you get better at public speaking in any kind of way; maybe you're in forensics. And I hope it helps you learn some words that help you impress your English teacher next time you talk to them.

If you're part of the discussion section, I want to hear from you, about if you hear any of these things in modern media, like podcasts, or YouTube videos, or television shows, or movies, or whatever you're listening to.

Thanks very much, and I'll see you next time.