

Notes for Understanding Shakespeare

1 - When reading verse, note the appropriate _____ and _____.

_____ at the end of a line unless there is a mark of punctuation.

Beginning readers often find it helpful to read a _____ pause at a comma and a _____ pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

2 - Read from _____ to punctuation mark for meaning.

This helps you read _____.

Punctuation marks _____ of thought.

Keep in mind that periods, colons, semicolons, and question marks signal the end of a thought.

3 - In an _____ sentence, the _____ comes before the _____.

Some lines will be easier to understand if you put the _____ first and reword the sentence. For example, look at the line below:

“Never was seen so black a day as this:” (Romeo and Juliet, IV, v)

You can change its inverted pattern so it is more easily understood:

“A _____ as black as this was never _____.”

4 - An _____ occurs when a word or phrase is left out.

In Romeo and Juliet, Benvolio asks Romeo's father and mother if they know the problem that is bothering their son. Romeo's father answers:

“I neither know it nor can learn of him” (Romeo and Juliet I,i).

This sentence can easily be understood to mean,

“I neither know [the cause of] it,
nor can [I] learn [about it from] him.”

5 - _____ did what to _____.

A) Keep track of the _____, _____, and _____:

ROSS: The king hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success: and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebel's fight... (Macbeth I, iii)

Clause 1- Subject _____ Verb _____ Object _____

Clause 2- Subject _____ Verb _____ Object _____

B) Track _____ references.

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who* is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her* maid art more fair than she:*

“Who” refers to the _____.

“thou her maid”: the “thou” refers to _____ (i.e. the sun).

“she” and “her” refer to the _____.

C) Identify the _____ that are being expressed and _____ them.

O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer – married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. (HamletI,ii)

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

E) If you are still having trouble understanding, _____, just as an actor rehearsing would have to do. That will help you understand how one thought is _____ to another.

6 - Shakespeare frequently uses _____ to illustrate an idea in a unique way.

Pay careful attention to the two _____ objects or ideas being compared. In Macbeth, Duncan, the king says:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. (I,v)

The king compares Macbeth to a _____ he can _____ and watch _____.

7 - Watch for _____

An _____ is a reference to some _____, _____, _____, or _____ not directly explained or discussed by the writer.

Allusion is a quick way of _____ information or presenting an _____.

Common allusions are to _____ or to _____.

8 - Contracted words are words in which a _____ has been left out.

Some that frequently appear:

Be't		on't		wi'	
Do't		t'		'sblood	
'tis		ta'en		i'	
'gainst		e'en		'twill	
'bout		know'st		o'er	
ne'er		o'			

9 - Watch for _____ Words

A) **Archaic Words.** These words are old. Use _____ clues or a _____.

B) **Obsolete Words.** These words are not used at all anymore. Look at the _____ or _____ of the text.

C) **Familiar Words with Unfamiliar Definitions.** Double check your own _____, the _____, the _____, and the _____.

10 - Notice _____.

_____ : a literary device that achieves humor or emphasis by playing on _____ . Two distinct meanings are suggested either by the _____ word or by two _____ words.

_____ : A kind of pun in which a word or phrase has a second, usually _____, meaning.

_____ occurs when a character mistakenly uses a word that he or she has confused with another word.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the Nurse tells Romeo that she needs to have a “confidence” with him, when she should have said “conference.” Mockingly, Benvolio then says she probably will “indite” (rather than “invite”) Romeo to dinner.

11 - Understand the purpose behind Shakespeare's language.

98% of the words in Shakespeare are current-usage English words.

There are three main reasons it can still be difficult to understand:

- A) Shakespeare wrote the words for an _____ to illustrate them as he spoke. His words are meant for the _____, not for the _____.
- B) Shakespeare had the same love of _____ and _____ words in such places as hip-hop and sportscasting today. His plays reflect an excitement about language and an _____ that becomes enjoyable once the reader gets into the spirit of it.
- C) Since Shakespeare puts all types of people on stage, those characters will include some who are _____, some who are _____, some who are _____, and some who are _____, and all of these will speak in ways that are sometimes trying.