

Handout 1

Shakespearean "Conversations"

80 Troublesome Words

Zounds! Perchance thou hast felt like a common recreant when asked to anatomize a Shakespeare play. Anon, thou shalt toss of that coil, and with great dispatch, avoid feeling like a fustian caitiff.

If you're going to read or see a Shakespeare play, there are some words that come up again and again and might confuse you. Some of these are now archaic or arcane, and some are still in common use but their meaning has changed. Knowing the following words will turn the beginning reader into an instant expert.

addition - title	chuck - term of endearment,	oft - often
affined - bound by duty	chick	passing - surprisingly,
alarum - call to arms with	clout - a piece of white cloth	exceedingly
trumpets	cog - to deceive	perchance - maybe
anatomize - to analyze in detail	coil - trouble	perforce - of necessity
ancient - ensign	cousin - any close relative	politician - schemer
anon - until later	descant - improvise	post - messenger
arrant - absolute	dispatch - to hurry	power - army
aroint - begone	e'en - evening	prithee - i pray thee (please)
assail - to make amorous siege	enow - enough	quest - a jury
to	fare - thee-well-goodbye	recreant - coward
attend - to await	fie - a curse	resolve - to answer; reply to
aye - yes	fustian - wretched	soundly - plainly
baffle - to hang up (a person)	got - begot	stale - harlot
by the heels as a mark	grammarcy - thank you	subscription - loyalty,
of disgrace	halter - noose	allegiance
baggage - strumpet, prostitute	heavy - sorrowful	tax - to criticize; to accuse
balk - to disregard	honest - chaste, pure	troth - belief
barm - the froth on ale	housewife - hussy, prostitute	teem - to give birth
belike - maybe	impeach - dishonor	tucket - trumpet flourish
blank - a target	list - listen	verge - edge, circumference
bolted - refined	mayhap - maybe	verily - truly
brach - bitch hound	mess - meal, food	want - lack
brake - bushes	mew - confine	welkin - sky
brave - fine, handsome	minister - servant	well - a-day-alas
bum - backside, buttocks	moiety - portion	wherefore - why
caitiff - a wretched humble	morrow - day	yea - yes
person	nay - no	zounds - by his (Christ's)
catch - song	ne'er - never	wounds
character - handwriting	office - service or favor	