

CRITICAL ESSAY TOPIC:

ORIGINAL SHAKESPEARE VS *NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE*

Compare a brief passage from a Shakespeare play *not* on our reading list to its *No Fear Shakespeare* translation into modern English prose.

Your passage should be short enough that you can thoroughly analyze it in a brief essay. For this assignment, it's better to pick fewer lines and analyze them in greater depth than the reverse. Somewhere between 5 and 10 lines should probably be about right.

Comparing Shakespeare's language to a bland modernization of it — a modernization that delivers all of the information in the passage but none of its magic — should help you see how things like sound patterning, word choice, and syntax can transform a mere vehicle for conveying ideas into an amusement park ride for its readers' minds.

So use the *No Fear* modernization as a tool to help you sharpen your perception of verbal nuances, to help you see more of what's going on in the language than you might otherwise have noticed.

Reproduce both versions of the passage early in your essay and refer to them frequently throughout your analysis.

Begin your paper with a genuine question about how the original differs from the modern version. Make that question the last sentence of your first paragraph. The rest of the essay should answer this question. Present your analysis in a clear and well-organized manner. Each paragraph should deal with a specific element of the passage, explain how that element works, and present its main point in a clear topic sentence. Draw your conclusions in your final paragraph, briefly summing up your answers to the question posed at the start of the essay. (See the [Sample Essay](#) for a model of this format.)

Read both versions of the passage slowly, carefully, and repeatedly in order to make worthwhile observations. Your assignment is to analyze the translations themselves, not the character who speaks the lines, or the plot they're involved in, or the themes or ideas they express. So don't get bogged down in plot summary or paraphrase or other abstractions. Make everything you say in your analysis relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don't get sidetracked; stick with the words. The more specific you are, the stronger your analysis will be.

Make your prose as clear and concise as possible. Don't waste your time (or mine!) trying to sound impressive. Write, instead, in a conversational voice: the clear, plainspoken, engaging voice of a person talking about a subject they find interesting. Don't let your essay run longer than what you have to say. Make every word count. One sentence that has something to say is better than a paragraph that doesn't.

Your essay should be between 500–800 words, not counting the original and modernized passages you quote at the start your essay.

Use MLA Format for quotations and citations. (See drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/, especially “How to Quote Shakespeare,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “Document Format.”)

Submit your essay through the TurnItIn link on the class Blackboard page labeled “3306 Critical Essay – summer '17.” You needn't submit a hard copy version of your essay.

DUE DATES:

- **COMMENTS DEADLINE: July 31**
If you want comments on your essay, you must submit it on or before Monday, July 31.
(Please Note: You will NOT be able to revise and then re-submit your paper after seeing my comments.)
- **FINAL DEADLINE: August 5**
Although I will make few or no comments on essays submitted after Monday, July 31, I will grade these papers just the same as those turned in by the earlier date.

SUGGESTED SHAKESPEAREAN PASSAGES

This is merely a list of suggestions; you can analyze any Shakespearean passage as long as it comes from a play not on the syllabus. (Note that most of these passages are too long for the assignment, so you'll need to select a shorter section for your essay.) Feel free to consult with me about selecting a passage.

The line numbers are from the Pelican Shakespeare edition. (Line numbers vary from edition to edition primarily because typesetting choices — such as page, margin, and font sizes — determine the length of prose lines. Therefore prose always skews the line numbers of the subsequent lines in any scene where it occurs.)

The *No Fear Shakespeare* editions are available at: nfs.sparknotes.com

Antony and Cleopatra

(2.2.201–28) “The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne”

As You Like It

(2.7.138–65) “All the world’s a stage”

Hamlet

(1.2.129–59) “O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt”

(2.2.487–544) “Now I am alone”

(3.1.56–88) “To be, or not to be — that is the question”

Henry V

(Prologue.1–34) “O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend”

Julius Caesar

(3.2.73–107) “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears”

Macbeth

(5.5.17–28) “She should have died hereafter”

(1.5.37–53) “The raven himself is hoarse”

The Merchant of Venice

(3.1.54–67) “Hath not a Jew eyes?”

(4.1.182–203) “The quality of mercy is not strained”

Richard II

(2.1.31–66) “This royal throne of kings”

Richard III

(1.1.1–31) “Now is the winter of our discontent”

Romeo and Juliet

(2.2.1–32) “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?”

(3.2.1–31) “Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds”