

Essay 2 – Explication of a Speech From Shakespeare

Write a two-to-three-page (500-800 words) explication of ONE of the following speeches by Shakespeare:

Romeo & Juliet (2.2.2-32) - “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?”

Julius Caesar (3.2.73-107) - “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!”

Hamlet (3.1.55-87) - “To be, or not to be, that is the question”

In this essay you will thoroughly and precisely explore a brief passage of Shakespeare’s dramatic language.

Explication To explicate your chosen speech, work through it carefully, line by line, unpacking the effects of each line’s poetic and rhetorical techniques. Then explain how those techniques help convey a possible meaning or key concept that a casual, first-time reader might easily miss. Your thesis will state this discovery explicitly. Note that an explication must analyze *form* as well as *content*: not just the themes and ideas in the speech, but also how Shakespeare crafts and styles the language. To help you develop both your explication and your thesis you will write a set of **Explication Journals**.

Everything you say in your explication must relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don’t get sidetracked; stick with the words. Focus on explicating this particular speech, don’t start talking about Shakespeare, or the culture that produced him, or the moral messages his plays (may or may not) contain, or on anything else but the words in front of you.

Structure of Explication Essay	
Introduction (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Hooks the reader’s interest.▶ Introduces the critical question your essay will address.▶ Ends with a thesis statement (your answer to the question).
Explication (3-4 paragraphs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Explains the function of several poetic and rhetorical devices within the speech through close, careful, detailed analysis.
Conclusion (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Briefly summarizes your explication.▶ Returns to the “hook” from the opening paragraph.

Sources Your essay will have at least TWO sources: one primary source (the text of the speech itself) and at least one secondary source. Your secondary source will provide specific information relevant to your explication. You might use a standard reference work like the *Oxford English Dictionary* to help you define the precise historical meaning of a word, or you might look at a more specialized reference work on Shakespeare’s language (like David and Ben Crystal’s *Shakespeare’s Words*, C.T. Onions’s *A Shakespeare Glossary*, Alexander Schmidt’s *Shakespeare Lexicon*, or a concordance of Shakespeare’s works); the detailed footnotes and glosses in critical editions of Shakespeare’s plays (like the Arden, Oxford, or New Cambridge editions) could prove helpful, so might the vast body of critical commentary available on the play. But whatever secondary source you use, make sure it directly illuminates some aspect of your own explication of the speech.

Your essay must have a Works Cited page with full bibliographic information on your sources, and it must employ in-text, parenthetical references. Use proper MLA formatting throughout your essay. (See drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/), especially “Document Format,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “How to Quote Shakespeare.”).

Schedule for Essay 2 – Explication of a Speech From Shakespeare		
Outline Workshop	March 18	Explication Journal 4 (including your Working Thesis and your Informal Outline).
Peer Review Workshop	March 22	THREE copies of your First Draft.
Revision Workshop	March 25	Return Completed Peer Critiques.
Revision Conferences	March 27	No class. (Optional Revision Conferences in CASA 325.)
Final Revision Due	April 1	Revised Draft, First Draft, all the Peer Critiques you received, and all your Explication Journals (in a two-pocket folder with your name on the front cover).

Please Note This essay builds on all the skills you learned from writing your short story analysis. Therefore everything the assignment sheet for that essay said about Thesis, Evidence, Structure, Style, Audience, Drafts, Revision Conferences, Proofreading, and so on applies to this essay too.

Romeo & Juliet (2.2.2-32)

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?	2
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.	3
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon	4
Who is already sick and pale with grief	5
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.	6
Be not her maid, since she is envious;	7
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,	8
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.	9
It is my lady, O, it is my love!	10
O that she knew she were!	11
She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?	12
Her eye discourses, I will answer it.	13
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks.	14
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,	15
Having some business, do entreat her eyes	16
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.	17
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?	18
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,	19
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven	20
Would through the airy region stream so bright	21
That birds would sing and think it were not night.	22
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!	23
O that I were a glove upon that hand,	24
That I might touch that cheek!	
JULIET	Ay me!
ROMEO	She speaks!
O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art	25
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,	26
As is a winged messenger of heaven	27
Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes	28
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,	29
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds,	30
And sails upon the bosom of the air.	31
	32

Julius Caesar (3.2.73-107)

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!	73
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.	74
The evil that men do lives after them,	75
The good is oft interred with their bones;	76
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus	77
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;	78
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,	79
And grievously hath Caesar answered it.	80
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest	81
(For Brutus is an honorable man,	82
So are they all, all honorable men),	83
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.	84
He was my friend, faithful and just to me;	85
But Brutus says he was ambitious,	86
And Brutus is an honorable man.	87
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,	88
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill;	89
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?	90
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;	91
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:	92
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,	93
And Brutus is an honorable man.	94
You all did see that on the Lupercal	95
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,	96
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?	97
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,	98
And sure he is an honorable man.	99
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,	100
But here I am to speak what I do know.	101
You all did love him once, not without cause;	102
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?	103
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,	104
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me,	105
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,	106
And I must pause till it come back to me.	107

Hamlet (3.1.55-87)

To be, or not to be, that is the question:	55
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer	56
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,	57
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,	58
And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—	59
No more, and by a sleep to say we end	60
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks	61
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation	62
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—	63
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,	64
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,	65
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,	66
Must give us pause; there's the respect	67
That makes calamity of so long life:	68
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,	69
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,	70
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,	71
The insolence of office, and the spurns	72
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,	73
When he himself might his quietus make	74
With a bare bodkin; who would fardels bear,	75
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,	76
But that the dread of something after death,	77
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn	78
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,	79
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,	80
Than fly to others that we know not of?	81
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,	82
And thus the native hue of resolution	83
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,	84
And enterprises of great pitch and moment	85
With this regard their currents turn awry,	86
And lose the name of action.	87