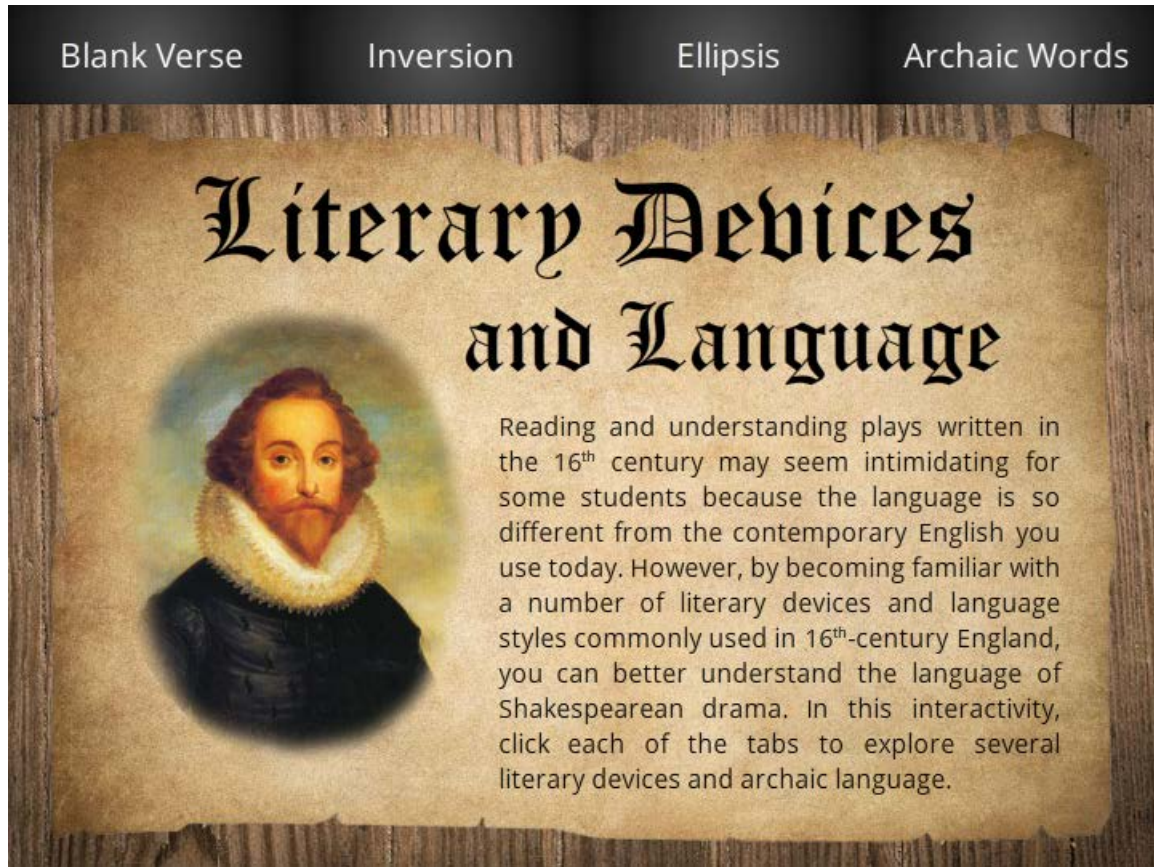


Module 8: Drama – *Romeo and Juliet*
Topic 1 Content: Literary Devices and Language

Introduction



The image shows a digital interface for an educational module. At the top, there is a dark grey navigation bar with four white tabs: 'Blank Verse', 'Inversion', 'Ellipsis', and 'Archaic Words'. Below this bar is a large, textured, parchment-like background. On the left side of the parchment is a portrait of William Shakespeare, wearing a dark cap and a white ruff collar. To the right of the portrait, the title 'Literary Devices and Language' is written in a large, black, gothic-style font. Below the title is a paragraph of text explaining the purpose of the interactive activity.

Reading and understanding plays written in the 16th century may seem intimidating for some students because the language is so different from the contemporary English you use today. However, by becoming familiar with a number of literary devices and language styles commonly used in 16th-century England, you can better understand the language of Shakespearean drama. In this interactivity, click each of the tabs to explore several literary devices and archaic language.

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Blank Verse

Blank Verse	Inversion	Ellipsis	Archaic Words

Shakespeare's plays were mostly written using blank verse, a type of poetic writing that follows a particular rhythmic pattern, or meter. Specifically, **blank verse** is unrhymed iambic pentameter (five sets of two syllables with the even syllables stressed). Note the example of blank verse found in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*.

 ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

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Inversion

Blank Verse	Inversion	Ellipsis	Archaic Words
<h2>Inversion</h2> <p>In order to ensure that each line maintains iambic pentameter, Shakespeare often used inversion so that the stress would fall on the correct syllable. Inversion involves reversing or in some way changing the normal word order of a sentence. For example, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge utilized inversion when he wrote the poem "Kubla Khan." Observe the verb forms in the first two lines of his poem below.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decree</p> <p>As you can see, the use of inversion has modified the placement of the verb. The more natural word order would place the verb after the subject <i>Kubla Khan</i>, although this results in less musicality.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In Xanadu Kubla Khan did Decree a stately pleasure-dome</p>			

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In Xanadu **did** Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome **decree**

As you can see, the use of inversion has modified the placement of the verb. The more natural word order would place the verb after the subject *Kubla Khan*, although this results in less musicality.

In Xanadu Kubla Khan **did**
Decree a stately pleasure-dome

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Ellipsis

Blank Verse	Inversion	Ellipsis	Archaic Words
<p style="text-align: center;">Ellipsis</p> <p>Another technique commonly found in Shakespearean drama is ellipsis. In literature, an ellipsis is the omission of words from a sentence. A poet or playwright may choose to use ellipsis in order to reduce the number of syllables and maintain meter. Ellipses (the plural form of <i>ellipsis</i>) do not hinder understanding of the text because they are used when the reader can safely assume what the missing words are. Note the example of ellipsis below.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To err is human, to forgive, divine</p> <p>Can you identify the missing word in the line? The famous quotation was written by Alexander Pope in <i>An Essay on Criticism</i>. The missing word is the verb <i>is</i> in the phrase "to forgive [is] divine." The reader can assume that the verb does not change from the first phrase ("To err is human") to the next phrase.</p>			

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To err is human, to forgive, divine

Can you identify the missing word in the line? The famous quotation was written by Alexander Pope in *An Essay on Criticism*. The missing word is the verb *is* in the phrase "to forgive [is] divine." The reader can assume that the verb does not change from the first phrase ("To err is human") to the next phrase.

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Archaic Words

Blank Verse	Inversion	Ellipsis	Archaic Words

Another language feature that can help you more easily understand Shakespearean plays is archaic vocabulary, or words that have fallen out of use. Because language is constantly evolving, many words and phrases that your parents or guardians use may seem outdated to you. Likewise, the expressions that you and your friends use likely sound foreign to your elders. Since Shakespeare's plays were written more than four hundred years ago, there are bound to be some words that are no longer used any more. Here are a few examples of archaic words.

anon = soon
cozen (or coz) = any relative or close friend
forsooth = in truth; indeed
hither = here
wherefore? = why?