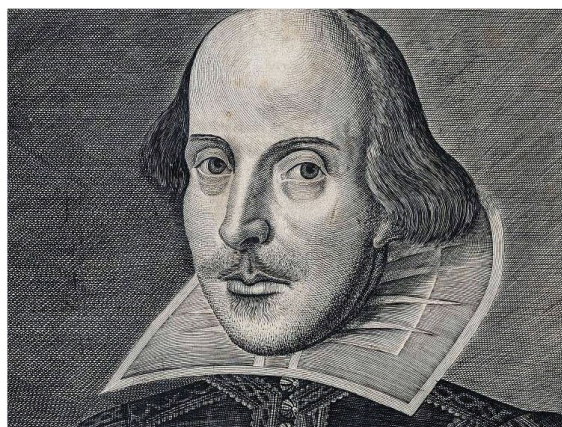


WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, A SONNET AND BILBAO

Coach John talks about William Shakespeare, who is believed to have been born and died on April 23rd.



Shakespeare's plays are set in many locations, some of them fictional

Europe, Africa and the Middle East are all settings for Shakespeare's plays. His plays are **set** in 12 countries, with cities in what is now Italy being Shakespeare's favourite **backdrop**. Some plays, such as *The Tempest*, take place in entirely fictional worlds. The only comedy to be set in the UK is *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Shakespeare took phrases from other languages

For instance, 'fat **paunches** make **lean pates**' was originally a Greek and Latin proverb by St Jerome. Shakespeare's 'Greek to me' could also be from a similar phrase in Latin, a language which Shakespeare could read.

The word 'love' appears 2,191 times in the complete works

The number is based on the 1864 Globe Edition – the amount could vary slightly from edition to

edition. Altogether, there are 28,829 unique word forms in all of Shakespeare's works, and 12,493 occur only once.

Shakespeare invented lots of expressions that we still use today

'Heart of gold' (*Henry V*)

'Wild-geese chase' (*Romeo and Juliet*)

'Faint-hearted' (*Henry IV part I*)

'Brave new world' (*The Tempest*)

'Break the ice' (*The Taming of the Shrew*)

'For goodness' sake' (*Henry VIII*)

'Foregone conclusion' (*Othello*)

'Love is blind' (*The Merchant of Venice*)

The stories told in most of Shakespeare's plays are not original

Shakespeare's primary source materials were English and Latin works: histories, plays, and poems.

The most popular name from a Shakespeare play used today is Olivia

That's according to the list of most popular US and British baby names in 2014. Olivia is the name of a character in *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare was the first person to use the name with this spelling.

by ECP coach



John Hird

Word list

set: (v) to put (something or someone) in a particular place or posture

backdrop: (n) the rear curtain of a stage setting
[usually singular] the setting of an event

paunch: (n) a large belly, or one that sticks out;
a potbelly

lean: (adj) (of persons or animals) without much
flesh or fat

thin: **pate: (n)** the top of the head

thee: (pron) the form of thou, or you, used as an
object of a verb or of a preposition: 'With this ring,
I thee wed'

merry: (adj) full of cheerfulness or joy; joyous in
spirit

well-tempered: (adj) treated so as to develop the
desired degree of hardness and elasticity. well-
tempered steel. a well-tempered sword blade

Let's chat about that!

1. Give a summary of the texts to your coach or classmates
2. What two important events happened to Shakespeare on April 23rd?
3. How many of Shakespeare's plays were set in the UK'?
4. Explain the phrase, "fat **paunches** make **lean pates**" (Look it up)
5. Try to explain some of Shakespeare's invented phrases.
6. Read and listen to Sonnet number 18 (See page 2) Listen to a translation if it's too difficult. Do you like it? What is it about?
7. What is Shakespeare's connection to Bilbao?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18)

*Shall I compare **thee** to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of
May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course,
untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his
shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can
see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

[Read and listen to David Tennant reading Sonnet 18](#)
[A Spanish translation of the Sonnet](#)

SHAKESPEARE AND BILBAO

Shakespeare uses the word "bilbo" twice, to refer to the city and the iron that came from it. In "The **Merry** Wives of Windsor," Shakespeare refers to the bilbo sword. This was the name given in the 16th century to a short, **well-tempered**, and very sharp blade that received its name from the city where the highest-quality ones were produced and thence exported all over Europe. He even uses the insult "latten bilbo," since a brass bilbo is useless given its lack of durability; a bilbo could never be made of brass, as they were always made of high-quality steel.

In "Hamlet," Shakespeare refers to the Bilboes. These are handcuffs used by the British navy (curiously, the bilbo swords were also quite popular with that same navy), which were famous for their durability and which were used to keep prisoners or slaves from escaping. As the name implies, the highest-quality ones were made of steel that came from Bilbao.