

# Elements of Drama

## A kingdom for a stage

In this lesson we focus on the language Shakespeare used in his plays to make events vivid, his ideas concrete, and his characters real.

### Lesson Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- analyse the language Shakespeare uses to create setting, character, and ideas

### Curriculum Links

#### LO 2: Reading and Viewing

explore and explain key features of texts and how they contribute to meaning

#### drama:

- recognise how dialogue and action are related to character and theme

### Lesson notes

In the Elizabethan theatre, there were no elaborate sets and props. The plays were performed on an empty stage, in daylight, in a theatre open to the sky. Shakespeare used conventions like an actor carrying a flaming torch to suggest night, or a king wearing a crown to suggest the setting. But, for the most part, Shakespeare established the setting through language.

#### Example of how Shakespeare set the scene in *As You Like It*

In *As You Like It*, a large part of the play takes place in the Forest of Arden. At one point in the play, Rosalind and Celia arrive in the forest, and Rosalind says:

“Well, this is the forest of Arden”, so we know exactly where they are. When Shakespeare first introduces the Forest of Arden to the audience, the character, Duke Senior, gives a much longer description. His description begins like this...

*Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court?  
Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,  
The seasons' difference, as the icy fang  
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,  
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,  
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say  
'This is no flattery: these are counsellors  
That feelingly persuade me what I am.*

#### What this tells us

- We know the scene is set in a forest and that life in the forest is harsh, difficult and challenging because of some of the words that have been used, such as “these woods”, “the icy fang”, “And churlish chiding of the winter's wind”.
- The opening line also explains why the people are in the woods – they are in exile. Shakespeare also shows us how they have responded to the change in their circumstances. Duke Senior gives a positive view of life in the forest, but without sentimentality.

- Although this is not an idealised, romantic view of living out of doors, Duke Senior is determined to make the best of the adverse conditions. He makes out that they are, in actual fact, better off in the cold of the woods than in the artificial, false environment of the court.

#### Shakespeare's creative use of language

- Duke Senior describes the court as being a place of “Painted pomp”. Shakespeare has used an alliteration to create a lively mental image. “Pomp” refers to the splendid display, fine clothes and decorations of the court, but the idea is undercut by “painted” which suggests that the court is artificial and superficial.
- The words “Icy fang” are an example of personification. Shakespeare evokes the image of a wolf with a terrible, long, sharp tooth that can bite into a person's flesh. The wind becomes a physical presence as menacing and painful as a wolf's fang.

### TASK

Read the following lines from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II scene ii. In this scene, Romeo and Juliet have fallen in love, and Juliet says the following lines:

*Sweet, good night!*

*This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,  
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.*

- What figure of speech is “bud of love” an example of?
- What aspect of their love is Juliet emphasising by using the word “bud”?
- To what is she looking forward when she talks about “a beauteous flower”?
- What kind of person is Juliet that she chooses the images of a bud and a flower to describe their love?