

CHARACTER EXPLORER

MINI EDITION

Viola is a central character in *Twelfth Night*. After a shipwreck in which Viola's twin Sebastian is lost and Viola is alone in a strange land, Viola copies Sebastian's appearance, takes on the name Cesario, and delivers messages of love for Orsino. Olivia, the recipient of these messages falls in love with Cesario, who has fallen in love with Orsino. It's quite a puzzle!

VIOLA SAYS:

O you should not rest
Between the elements of air and earth
But you should pity me.

O time, thou must untangle this, not I!
'Tis too hard a knot for me t'untie.

Conceal me what I am

As I am woman – now alas the day!
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe

As I am man,
My state is desperate for my master's love.

Juliet is one of the central characters in *Romeo & Juliet*. Juliet is from the Capulet family, which has a violent, deep-seated hatred for the Montague family. In spite of this, Juliet falls in love with Romeo and is willing to risk everything for this new-found passion.

JULIET SAYS:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea
My love as deep

Leap to these arms, untalked of and
unseen

I have a faint, cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life.

Is there no pity sitting in the clouds
That sees into the bottom of my grief?

Thy lips are warm

Romeo is the other central character in *Romeo & Juliet*. Romeo is from the Montague family, which has a violent, deep-seated hatred for the Capulet family. In spite of this, Romeo falls in love with Juliet and is willing to risk everything for this new-found passion.

ROMEO SAYS:

Fire-eyed fury be my conduct now

O I am fortune's fool

Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls

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Puck is a mischievous spirit follower of Oberon, one of the rulers of the fairy realm in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck uses a magical flower which makes a sleeping person fall in love with the first person they see upon waking. Puck delights in the mayhem this causes before reversing it with magic.

PUCK SAYS:

My mistress with a monster is in love.

I jest to Oberon and make him smile

Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

Those things do best please me
That befall preposterously!

Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Hamlet is the title character in a tragedy called *Hamlet*. Near the beginning of the play, the ghost of Hamlet's parent appears and claims to have been murdered by a sibling who has since ascended the throne. The ghost asks Hamlet to take revenge, but Hamlet doesn't know what to believe.

HAMLET SAYS:

O that this too solid flesh would melt.

But break my heart, for I must hold
my tongue.

Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart.

The rest is silence.

I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth.

Margaret is an important character in four of Shakespeare's history plays. Margaret is married to the English monarch, Henry the Sixth, whose reign is challenged and ultimately taken away. Henry is neither a gifted soldier nor politician, so Margaret leads their faction to try to maintain power.

MARGARET SAYS:

Off with the crown, and with the crown his head;
And, whilst we breathe, take time to do him dead.

Bear with me; I am hungry for revenge.

It made me laugh to see the villain run.

Margaret my name, and daughter to a king,
The King of Naples, whosoe'er thou art.

Ay me, unhappy!
To be a queen, and crown'd with infamy!

EXPLORE

Now it's your turn! Follow the steps below as you explore Shakespeare's characters.

- On your own or with a small group, choose a character you'd like to explore.
- Choose a line or combination of lines you'd like to play with.
- Make sure you understand the thoughts expressed in these lines; you can get help from our glossary, a dictionary, or another person.
- Find your favourite way(s) to express these line(s) in your own way. This could be acting, gesture, music, visual art, writing, or a combination.
- Share your creations in whatever ways bring you joy.
- Explore other characters, either on this list or in other plays, and discover how you might make them your own.



REFLECT

- Why did you choose your character?
- In what ways are you and this character similar?
- In what ways are you different?
- What feelings came up for you when you were interpreting and expressing your line(s)?