

# "TO TRUTHS TRANSLATED"

## SHAKESPEARE IN OTHER LANGUAGES

Much like acting or staging a production, translating is its own form of creative interpretation. Thinking about Shakespeare in other languages can open his plays up to new appreciation, interpretation, and understanding.



### What do we mean by “languages”?

We communicate in countless different ways. Some languages are written. Some languages are spoken. Some languages use gesture and movement while some, like braille, are understood through touch. Throughout history, humans have used letters, symbols, sounds, pictures, and more to create thousands of different languages. Some people think of music, art, dance, and mathematics as languages that transcend geography. Scientists are even beginning to codify what traditional knowledge has long respected: the language of plants, animals, and the natural world.

## EXPLORE

### How do we translate Shakespeare?

#### TRANSLATING STORY

Since storytelling takes so many forms, telling the story in a different language can be the easiest part of translation. As the story gets translated, different aspects of the story can change too. For example, different settings in a play, such as a castle, a bedchamber, a forest, or a marketplace might be very different types of places in different parts of the world. In this way, we go beyond translating a story; we are transporting it, too.

#### TRANSLATING CHARACTER

Language and culture are deeply connected. When translated to another language, Shakespeare’s characters can be explored in a new cultural context, giving them new depth and texture. As Shakespeare’s rulers, rebels, lovers, parents, clowns, and others inhabit new worlds, they resonate in new ways.

#### TRANSLATING POETRY

Much of Shakespeare’s language appears in a verse form that is well-suited to spoken English. Translators of Shakespeare usually abandon the original verse forms and find the best ways to convey meaning and tone in the new language. Other languages have features that are better suited to other poetic forms or other means of expression.

## What do we lose through translation? What do we gain?

It's impossible to do an accurate, literal translation of complex, poetic language that's rich in imagery and nuance. However, translating Shakespeare's plays and poems to other languages makes them accessible to more audiences. Translations also open the plays and poems up to new interpretations and new resonances, amplifying their impact and expanding our understanding.

## MAKE IT YOURS

Try your hand at creating your own translation!



**Take a look at the Shakespeare lines below and find one that's interesting to you.**



**Keeping in mind all of the different ways to think about language, how might you translate your line?**

- **Is there a language other than English that you've grown up with?**
- **Is there a language you're currently learning?**
- **Is there another way you express yourself?**
- **How do you approach your translation? Is it possible to translate word-by-word? Is it easier to translate the ideas? How do you convey the feeling of the line as well as the meaning?**
- **What do you discover?**

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

All that glitters is not gold.

I defy you, stars!

My drops of tears I'll turn to sparks of fire.

All the world's a stage.

This above all: to thine own self be true.

To be or not to be, that is the question.

If music be the food of love, play on!

Lord, what fools these mortals be!

These are but wild and whirling words.

You tread upon my patience.

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!

Now cracks a noble heart.

A thousand times good night.

O I am fortune's fool!

My heart dances.

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