



Insults & Exalts

A Shakespearean Insult & Compliment Generator

Shakespeare's characters use some very creative insults! They also say some beautiful things to each other. Use this resource to create fun Shakespeare-inspired insults and compliments.

Create your own insults

1. Create an insult by choosing one word each from Column 1, 2, and 3.
2. Find someone who's willing to trade playful insults with you.
3. Look that person in the face and, with a sense of power and playfulness, say "You..." and add your three words in the order of their columns. (For example, "You belching, sheep-biting clodpole!")
4. Now switch so that each of you has a chance to hurl and receive an insult.

1

belching
blasted
brawling
cankering
churlish
cogging
cowardly
crusty
false
feigning
filthy
foppish
foul
grumbling
insolent
irksome
knavish
pernicious
rotten
ruffian
ruinous
saucy
shallow
soulless

2

abominable
absolute
beef-witted
beetle-headed
crafty-swearing
disgraceful
dissembling
false-faced
fell-lurking
foul-spoken
hyperbolical
ill-composed
injurious
intolerable
knotty-pated
muddy-mettled
perfidious
self-endearred
sheep-biting
skimble-skamble
tripe-visaged
unmeritable
vile-drawing
wind-changing

3

adversity
barnacle
buzzard
cacodemon
canker-blossom
carbuncle
cheater
clodpole
dishclout
fantastico
fool
fustilarian
geck
hedge-pig
iniquity
lump
miscreant
pickthank
rampallian
rudesby
spider
thing
villain
worm

Create your own "exalts"

Now that you've had fun creating your own insults, offer an antidote to your insults by creating some compliments (or "exalts," as we like to call them!).

1. Create an "exalt" by choosing one word each from Column 1, Column 2, and Column 3.
2. Find the person you've insulted. If you haven't insulted anyone, find someone who you would like to compliment.
3. Look that person in the face. With a sense of generosity and sincerity, say "You..." and add your three words in the order of their columns. (For example, "You gracious, celestial jewel!")
4. Now switch so each of you gets to give and receive a compliment.

1	2	3
blessed	all-cheering	allurement
brave	angelical	amazement
bright	beauteous	angel
dear	bedazzling	blossom
divine	celestial	cherubin
gallant	courageous	crown o'th'earth
glorious	exalted	darling
graceful	excellent	divinity
gracious	exquisite	enchantment
hopeful	delightful	flower
inspired	majestical	friend
kind	marvelous	heart
perfect	pleasant-spirited	jewel
precious	praise-worthy	marvel
radiant	precious-dear	sweeting
sweet	quick-witted	sweetheart
valiant	sweet-faced	treasure
wise	unmatchable	wonder

Reflection questions

1. In creating your insults and exalts, what inspired your choice of words? What did you like about them? How many fun combinations can you find?
2. We're playing here, but what would it feel like to really insult someone? How would it feel to be truly insulted? What makes it clear that this is playful and not serious?
3. What did it feel like to exalt someone? How was that different from insulting them?
4. What did it feel like to be exalted? How was that different from being insulted?

Let's give credit where credit is due! This exercise is the brainchild of Jerry Maguire, an English teacher at Center Grove High School in Columbus, Indiana. It was shared at the 1985 Teaching Shakespeare Institute hosted by the Folger Shakespeare Library and was included in the first volume of their series, *Shakespeare Set Free* (Washington Square Press, 1993). This is our variation.