



Insults & Exalts*

A Shakespearean Insult & Compliment Generator

**This shortened version of Insults & Exalts is recommended for anyone who prefers to work with a smaller selection of words.*

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 fool!")
4. Now switch so that each of you has a chance to hurl and receive an insult.

1

belching
brawling
cowardly
crusty
false
filthy
foul
grumbling
rotten
saucy
shallow

2

abominable
absolute
beef-witted
beetle-headed
disgraceful
false-faced
intolerable
sheep-biting
skimble-skamble
tripe-visaged
wind-changing

3

barnacle
buzzard
cheater
dishclout
fool
hedge-pig
lump
spider
thing
villain
worm

Reflection questions

1. When you created your insults, what inspired your choice of words? What did you like about them?
2. We're playing here, but what would it feel like to really insult someone? How would it feel to be truly insulted?
3. Why do you think it's fun to pretend to insult one another? What makes it fun?
4. How did it feel to be insulted?

Create your own compliments

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 generosity and sincerity, say "You..." and add your three words in the order of their columns. (For example, "You glorious, sweet-faced wonder!")
4. Now switch so that each of you has a turn, giving and receiving a compliment.

1

brave
bright
glorious
gracious
perfect
precious
radiant
sweet
valiant
wise

2

admired
angelical
beauteous
bedazzling
courageous
excellent
delightful
marvelous
sweet-faced
unmatchable

3

angel
blossom
darling
enchantment
flower
friend
heart
jewel
treasure
wonder

Reflection questions

1. When you created your exalts, what inspired your choice of words? What did you like about them?
2. What did it feel like to exalt someone? How was that different from insulting them?
3. How did it feel to be exalted or complimented? How did it feel 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.

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