



"You speak a language that I understand not!"
Shakespeare's Language





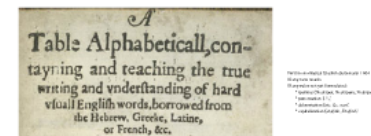
Editions of Shakespeare



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Language born or reborn?



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The word "MYTH" is rendered in a bold, three-dimensional, white font against a solid black background. The letters have a hand-drawn, sketchy quality with visible outlines and some internal shading, giving them a sense of depth and movement. The 'M' and 'Y' are particularly prominent, with their vertical strokes extending downwards. The 'T' and 'H' are also clearly defined, with the 'H' having a wide base. The overall effect is dramatic and eye-catching.

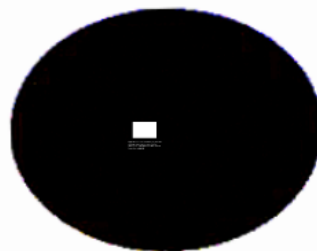
Three myths about Shakespeare's language:

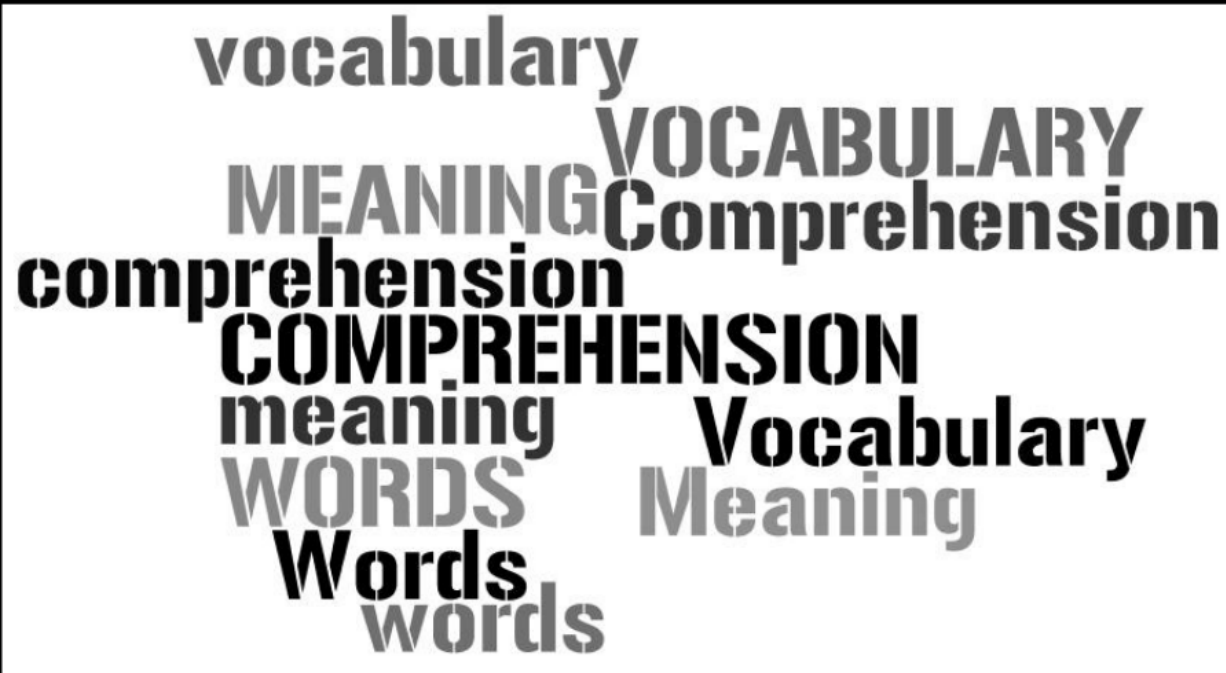
Shakespeare had the largest vocabulary ever!

Shakespeare invented 1/3 of the English language!

It is impossible to understand Shakespeare without a modern translation!

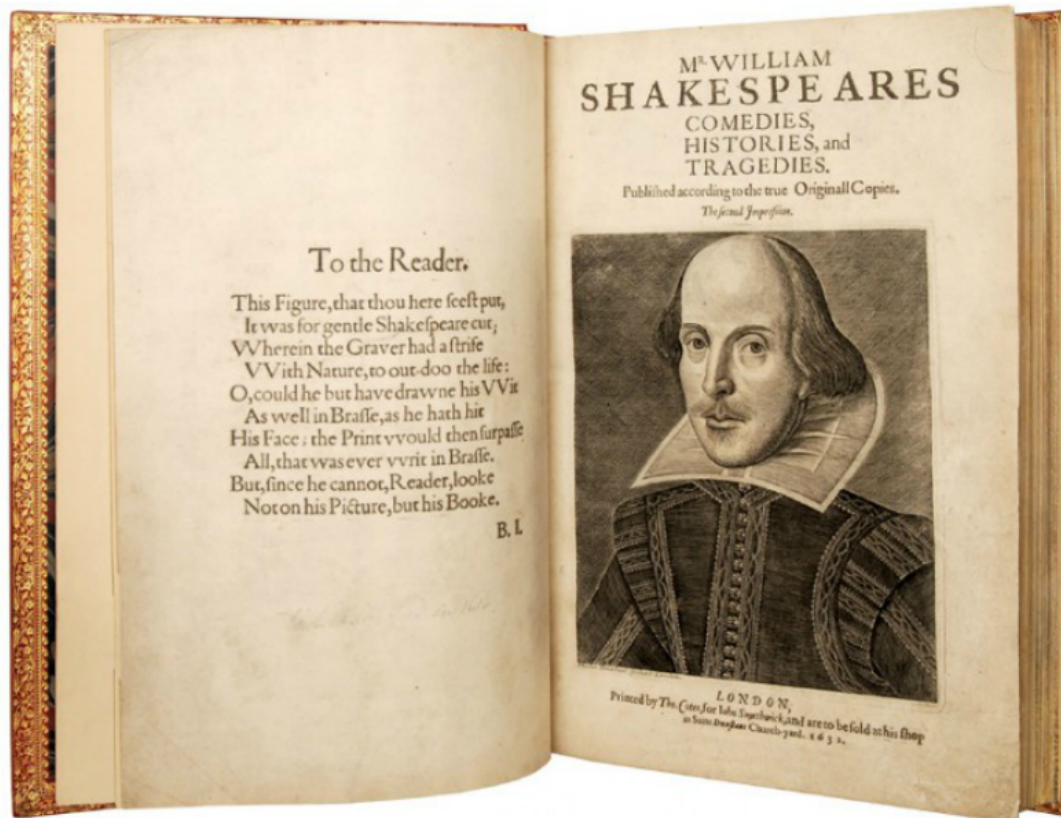
Myth busters





- There are more than 4 times as many words in modern English as in Renaissance English!
- Shakespeare's vocabulary WAS impressive!

Editions of Shakespeare



To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Graver had a strife
VVith Nature, to out-doo the life:
O, could he but have drawne his VV
As well in Brasse, as he hath hit
His Face: the Print vvould then surpass
All, that was ever vvrit in Brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. L.

M^r WILLIAM SHAKESPEARES COMEDIES, HISTORIES, and TRAGEDIES.

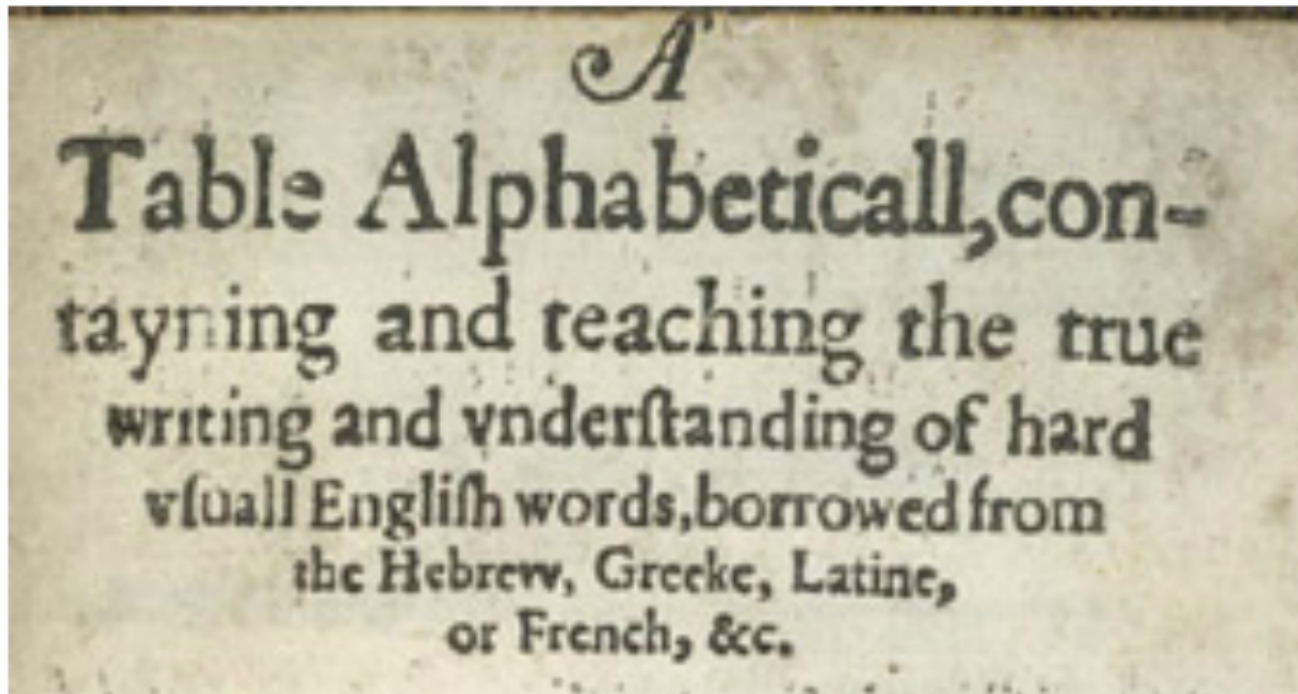
Published according to the true Originall Copies.
The second Impression.



LONDON,
Printed by Tho. Cotes, for Iohn Iaggard, and are to be sold at his Shop
at Saint Dunstons Church-yard. 1623.

- How did the plays reach us today?
- Why are they called "roles"
- Copyright?
- Who typeset and printed them?
- Who dictated the texts to the printers?
- Good and bad editions - errors?
- Quarto editions before 1623
- First folio 1623

Language born or reborn?



First monolingual English dictionary: 1604

Many new words

Many rules not yet formulated:

- * spelling (Shaksper, Shakspeare, Shakspear...)
- * punctuation (. ! ,)
- * abbreviation (etc. &c. ecet)
- * capitalization (english, English)

y 1 u i t s 110

3 spelling

3 n 1 1 n c t 1 1 2 1

Presence or absence of final -e (again)

Apostrophe to replace letter (arm'd)

-ie instead of -y (busie)

Double/single consonant (royall)

ie or ee for sounds [ee] (neere)

No difference i/j u/v

70% of spelling is the same!

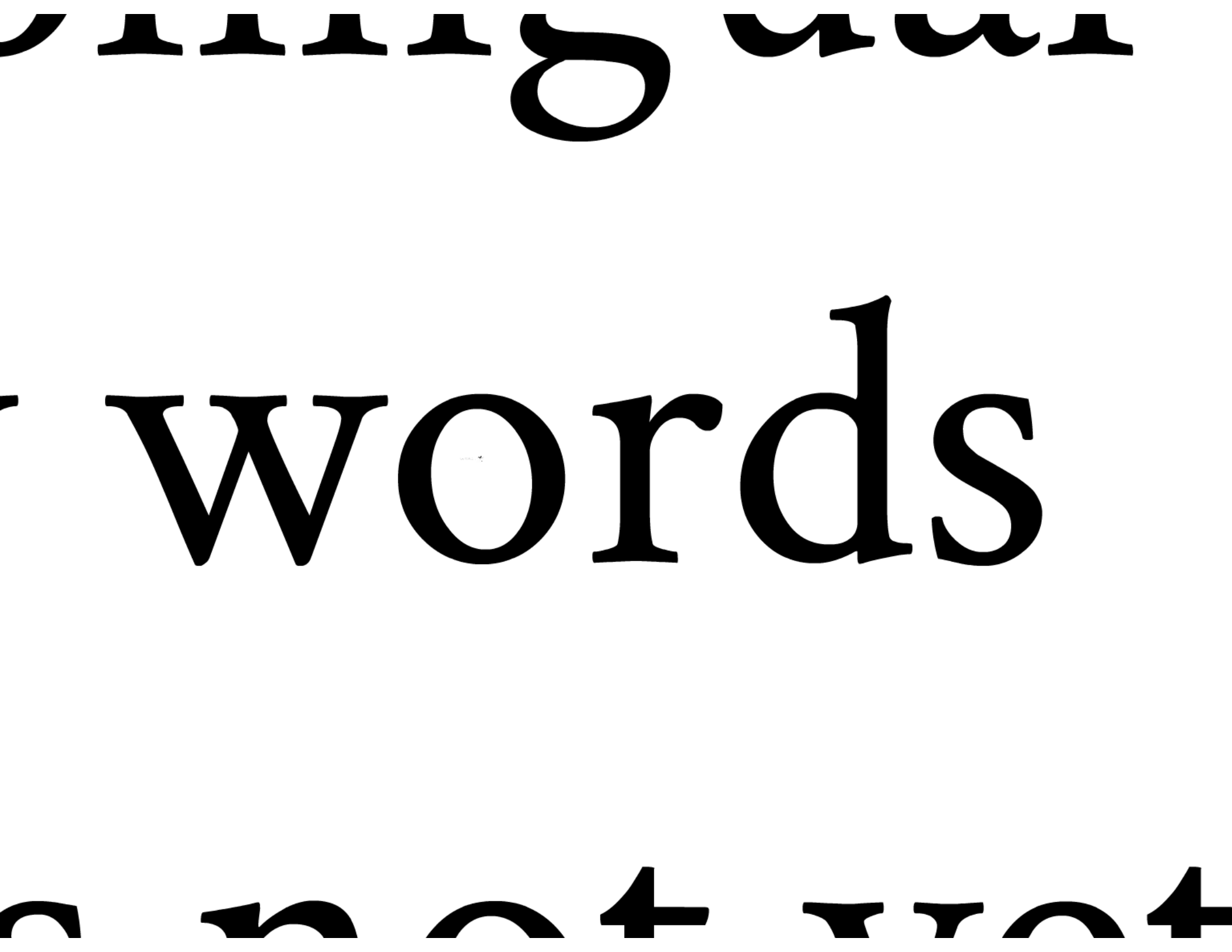
THE
MOST EX-
cellent and lamentable
Tragedie, of Romeo
and Iuliet.

*Newly corrected, augmented, and
amended:*

As it hath bene sundry times publicly acted, by the
right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine
his Seruants.



LONDON
Printed by Thomas Creede, for Cuthbert Burby, and are to
be sold at his shop neare the Exchange.
1599.



words

App. 1,000 completely unfamiliar words (finical, incony)

App. 200 “false friends” (“demand” means “ask”)

Shakespeare likes to pun (words with several meanings; cf. “Sonnet 135”)

135

WHo euer hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
And *Will* too boote, and *Will* in ouer-plus,
More then enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine,
Shall will in others seeme right gracious,
And in my will no faire acceptance shine:
The sea all water, yet receiues raine still,
And in abondance addeth to his store,
So thou beeing rich in *Will* adde to thy *Will*,
One will of mine to make thy large *Will* more.
Let no vnkinde, no faire beseechers kill.
Thinke all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

Other important differences:

Thou goest (you go)

She goeth, she hath (she goes/has)

-th already archaic at the time (-s)

Pronouns - 2nd person singular:

Thou, thee, thy, thine, thy selfe (intimate)

You, ye, your, yours, your selfe (polite singular)

Verse?

The choice may express class distinction
Most plays are a mixture of prose and verse
The characters can often accommodate

Higher social class
High style (courage, love)

Prose?

Lower social class
Low style (teasing, sex talk)

Iambic pentameter: (5 X u-) (line consists of five iambs)

“Oh, **R**omeo, **R**omeo, **w**herefore **a**rt thou **R**omeo?”

Usually blank verse (rhyme spared for “special occasions”)

Spelling often emphasizes rhythm:

“Pro**f**aners **o**f this **n**eighbour-**s**tained **s**teel”

“With **C**upid's **a**rrow, **s**he hath **D**ian's **w**it”

Ride hest-øvelse:

I am...I am... I am... I am... I am...

I stress the words I want you all to hear

Make your own iambic pentameter line



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