

A Two Gentlemen Lexicon



Believe it or not, Shakespeare's language is not very far removed from our own modern English. However, since words change meaning, fall out of favor, or are added to the vocabularies of English speakers almost daily, Shakespeare's word choices can seem very like a foreign language at times. Just remember that in language, "modern" is relative: words like *fauxhawk* (c. 1996) or *podcast* (c. 2004) were unheard of fifteen years ago, and words that just a generation or two ago may have been used frequently, e.g., *fream* (an outsider) or *hepcat* (a person who is aware of fashion), are now obsolete.

Here are some words from our adaption of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* that you may not know. Look these over before you come to the play, and then sit back and smile—you're probably way ahead of the person sitting next to you!

Banished: expelled or banned

"To die is to be *banished* from myself and Silvia is myself." (Valentine)

Bechance: happen to, become of

"All happiness *bechance* to thee in Milan!" (Proteus)

Boon: blessing

"Grant one *boon* that I shall ask of you." (Valentine)

Censure: criticism or rebuke

"'Tis a passing shame that I . . . should *censure* thus on lovely gentlemen." (Lucetta)

Chidden: angrily rebuked

"I was last *chidden* for being too slow." (Speed)

Constancy: being honest or true

"Here is my hand for my true *constancy*." (Proteus)

Cur: mutt

"She says your dog was a *cur*." (Launce)

Disfurnish: take away, deprive

"Of which if you should here *disfurnish* me, you take the sum and substance that I have." (Valentine)

Dolor: a sadness that is painful

"Breathe it in mine ear, as ending anthem of my endless *dolor*." (Valentine)

Ducat: a gold coin

"Not so much as a *ducat* for delivering your letter." (Speed)

Enfranchise: grant freedom to

"This night I will *enfranchise* thee." (Duke)

Enjoin: entreat, beg

"Last night she *enjoined* me to write some lines to one she loves." (Valentine)

Forswear/forsworn: to reject a belief or a person

"Hath she *forsworn* me?" (Valentine)

Habiliments: clothes

"My riches are these poor *habiliments*." (Valentine)

Knave: rascal

“I have the wit to think my master is a kind of *knave*.” (Launce)

Month’s mind: intense wish

“I see you have *month’s mind* to them.” (Julia)

Obdurate: stubborn

“Madam, if your heart be so *obdurate*, vouchsafe me yet your picture for my love.”
(Proteus)

Overweening: arrogant

“Go, base intruder! *overweening* slave!” (Duke)

Parle: talk

“Of all the fair resort of gentlemen that every day with *parle* encounter me, in thy opinion which is worthiest love?” (Julia)

Pawn: a person used to getting what he/she wants

“Belike that now she hath enfranchised them upon some other *pawn*.” (Silvia)

Peevish: irritable, easily annoyed

“No, trust me, she is *peevish*, sullen, froward.” (Duke)

Privy: aware of something, usually secret

“Myself am one made *privy* to the plot.” (Proteus)

Quoth: said, quoted

“‘Friend,’ *quoth* I, ‘you mean to whip the dog?’” (Launce)

Sirrah: a term of address for someone believed to be beneath you

“How now, *sirrah*?” (Valentine)

Surfeit: the condition of being overfull

“O, I have fed upon this woe already, and now excess of it will make me *surfeit*.”
(Valentine)

Tarry: waste time

“You’ll lose the tide, if you *tarry* any longer.” (Panthino)

Votary: a person devoted to a cause or another person

“You are already Love’s firm *votary*.” (Duke)

Vouchsafe: promise in a way that seems below one’s self

“*Vouchsafe* me yet your picture for my love.” (Proteus)

Well-reputed: well looked upon, thought well of

“Fit me with such weeds as may beseem some *well-reputed* page.” (Julia)

Try It!

Ask a parent or another adult how many of the words below they know. Then help them out with the ones you know.

- airhead
- dis
- emoticon
- spiffy
- zine