

# *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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*Study Guide*

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*Two Worlds*

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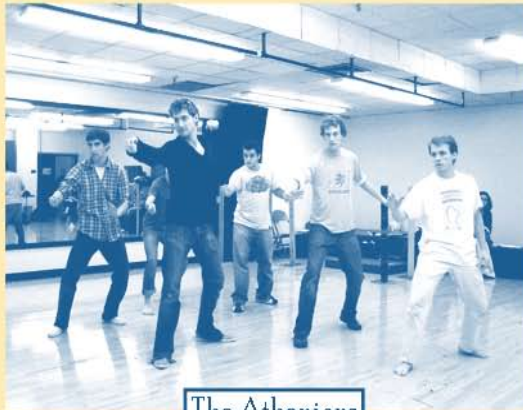
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# World of the Colonizers

**Post-Colonialism:** A politically motivated historical-analytical movement that emerged in the 1990s. Its aim is to identify and dismantle the effects of colonialism in all areas (ie: linguistic, material, historic, and textual).

**Colonizer:** The European countries that invade, conquer and attempt to “civilize” foreign cultures. Colonizing most often means a breakdown of the existing culture and an introduction of western customs, language, and Christianity.



The Athenians



The Faeries

**Colonized:** The countries that have been invaded by European countries. The colonized people must choose to rebel against the invading culture, adopt it, or adapt and attempt to live life in a state between the two worlds.

# VS. Colonized World:

**Hybrid State:** A life between the world of the colonizers and the colonized. This state involves having a double identity and often comes with the confusion of an instable identity that does not wholly belong to either world.



Hermia



Egeus

**Mimic Man:** A colonized person that seeks to adopt the life of the colonizers. Homi Bhabha explains that the colonizers desire a “reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (qtd. in Rice 381). The mimic man, because of race and culture, can never entirely become like the colonizer. But, because he adopts European language, dress, and religion, he loses his place with his own people.



# Two Worlds:

## Shakespeare's English

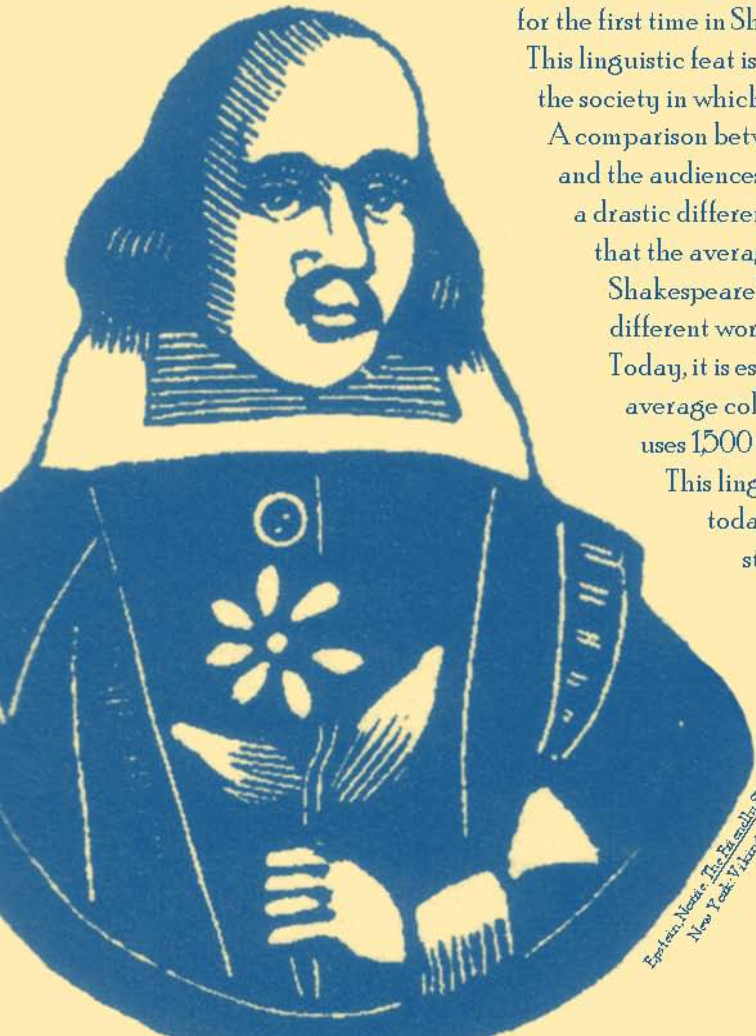
One of the main reasons that William Shakespeare is considered a challenge for modern audiences is because of his expert use of language. Shakespeare uses 21,000 different words in his works compared to the 8,000 words that appear in the King James Version of the Bible. Out of those 21,000 words, 1,700 words (or about one in every twelve words) appear for the first time in Shakespeare's works.

This linguistic feat is a product of the society in which Shakespeare lived.

A comparison between his audiences and the audiences of today reveals a drastic difference. It is estimated that the average person in Shakespeare's time used 2,600 different words per day.

Today, it is estimated that the average college graduate uses 1,500 words total.

This linguistic gap forces today's audiences to stretch further and work harder to understand his words.



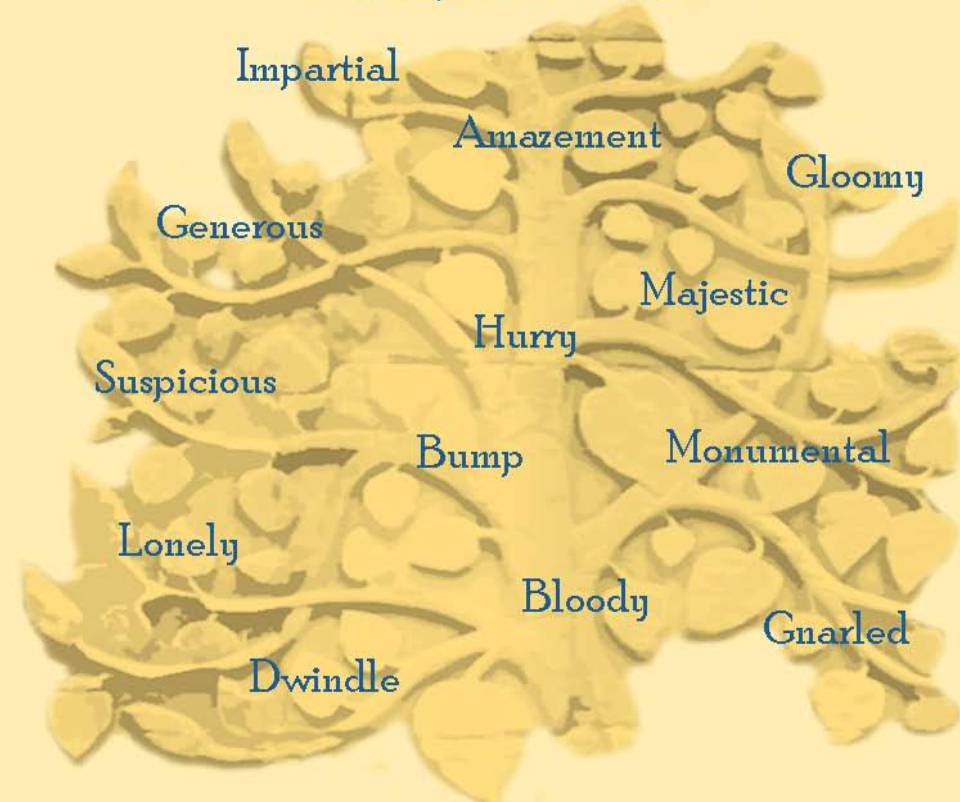
*Epstein, Neer. The Elizabethan Shakespeare.  
New York: Harv. 1993.*

# Two Languages & Modern English

"We find Shakespeare boring because we're lazy. We're not willing to get through the language. That's the only barrier. If a play is performed right by those who are properly trained, after about twenty minutes you won't be aware of the language because the human story is so strong."

-David Suchet (qtd. in Epstein 10)

## Some words that appeared for the first time in Shakespeare's Works:



# Two Worlds: Verbal Language



The movement of the Athenian World

Shakespeare uses his skills with words, rhythm, and rhetoric to create clear differences between the world of magic and the world of reason. Theseus, the Duke of Athens, is the embodiment of reason and structure, so his lines are almost entirely written in Shakespeare's trademark iambic pentameter, a strict form of poetry involving lines of ten beats with the emphasis placed on every other beat. For example: "To you your father should be as a god" (Li. 49). Conversely, the language of the forest is often written in free verse, a poetic tactic using no formal rhythm or meter.

# Two Languages & Physical Language

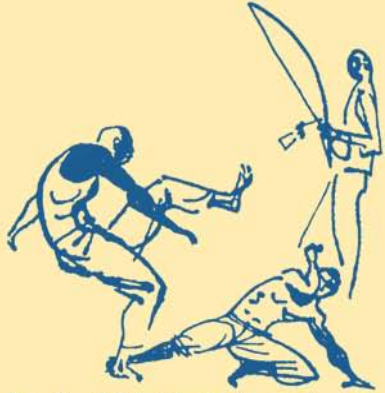


The movement of the Faerie World

Just as the verbal language is different between the two worlds, the language of the movement in this production reflects that difference as well. Because the movement of the Athenian world is formal the characters from this world stand erect and move in primarily straight lines. The movement of the faerie world is ritualistic. The faeries move through the space using a variety of levels, pacing, and patterns. In order to emphasize this difference, the actors that play the faeries trained in Capoeira—a Brazilian martial arts form—while the actors that play the Athenians trained in formal ballet and ballroom dance.

# World of Slaves vs. World of Oppressors:

## The Secret Language of Capoeira



Lewis, J. Lowell. *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Marked by spinning kicks, acrobatics, feats of balance, and controlled jumps, Capoeira suggests fighting, but the skill is for the participants to avoid contact. Generally practiced in a circle, the movement is accompanied by a song leader who keeps the rhythm of the music going. The origins of Capoeira are debated by scholars. Some argue that Capoeira was an African art brought by the slaves to Brazil and influenced by Brazilian culture. Others maintain that it is a Brazilian art influenced by the culture of the African slaves.

Postcolonial theory offers a way of resolving this question by suggesting that Capoeira sprang from the hybrid state of the slaves that were brought from Africa and introduced into the European-colonized country of Brazil, which was a colony of Portugal. Popular tradition suggests that Capoeira is an art form that allowed the slaves to practice fighting under the guise of dance and music. It is a combination of martial arts, dance, and Afro-Brazilian music. Many people practice Capoeira around the world today to remember a spirit of freedom, come together in the spirit of camaraderie and music, and stay in shape.

The actors were trained by members of the BYU Brazilian Capoeira Club. Public Capoeira lessons are Tuesdays at 7:00 PM in the Wilkinson Center Ballroom.

Check out their website at:

<http://clubs.byu.edu/capoeira/>



### Works Cited:

- Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare*. New York: Viking, 1993.  
Rice, Philip and Patricia Wangh. *Modern Literary Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2001.  
"Shakespeare's Words and Phrases." *No Sweat Shakespeare*. 2004. 2 Jan 2008.  
<[http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/shakespeare\\_words\\_phrases.htm](http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/shakespeare_words_phrases.htm)>  
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