



## AP European History

Name:

Shakespeare: Human Nature & the Human Condition

Section:

By dealing with classical themes and figures, setting many of his plays in Renaissance Italy and ancient Greece, and probing the full range of people's motives, actions, and feelings, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), widely regarded as the world's finest playwright, gave expression to the Renaissance Spirit. The following passages illustrate Shakespeare's brilliant insight into Human Nature and the Human Condition.

### The Nobility of the Human Being

#### ***Hamlet, Act II, scene ii. lines 310-313***

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!  
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how  
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!  
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the  
world! the paragon of animals!

### The Dark Side of Life

#### ***Henry the Eighth, Act III, Scene ii. lines 414-428***

Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!  
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;  
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,  
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,  
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,  
This many summers in a sea of glory,  
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride  
At length broke under me and now has left me,  
Weary and old with service, to the mercy  
Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.  
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:

#### ***Macbeth, Act 5, scene v. lines 20-29***

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

#### ***Measure for Measure, Act III, Scene i. lines 130-144***

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside

In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and incertain thought  
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!  
The weariest and most loathed worldly life  
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature is a paradise  
To what we fear of death.

### War

#### ***The Tragedy of Coriolanus, Act IV, Scene v. lines 219-229***

##### **First Servingman**

Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as  
day does night; it's spritely, waking, audible, and  
full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy;  
mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more  
bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

##### **Second Servingman**

'Tis so: and as war, in some sort, may be said to  
be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a  
great maker of cuckolds.

##### **First Servingman**

Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

##### **Third Servingman**

Reason; because they then less need one another.

#### ***The Life of Henry V, Act IV, Scene i. lines 125-134***

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath  
a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and  
arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join  
together at the latter day and cry all 'We died at  
such a place;' some swearing, some crying for a  
surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind  
them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their  
children rawly left. I am afeard there are few die  
well that die in a battle; for how can they  
charitably dispose of any thing, when blood is their  
argument? Now, if these men do not die well, it  
will be a black matter for the king that led them to  
it; whom to disobey were against all proportion of  
subjection.

## The Roles We Play

### ***As You Like It, Act II, Scene vii. Lines 143-170***

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

## Love and Lovers

### ***A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V, Scene i. lines 4-11***

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

### ***Much Ado About Nothing, Act II, Scene iii. Lines 60-68***

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.  
Men were deceivers ever,  
One foot in sea, and one on shore,  
To one thing constant never.  
Then sigh not so, but let them go,  
And be you blithe and bonny,  
Converting all your sounds of woe  
Into hey nonny, nonny.

### ***Triollius and Cressida, Act III, Scene ii. Lines 144-146***

but you are wise,  
Or else you love not, for to be wise and love  
Exceeds man's might; that dwells with gods above.

### ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act III, Scene i. Lines 81-105***

#### **DUKE**

There is a lady in Verona here  
Whom I affect; but she is nice and coy  
And nought esteems my aged eloquence:  
Now therefore would I have thee to my tutor--  
For long ago I have forgot to court;  
Besides, the fashion of the time is changed--  
How and which way I may bestow myself  
To be regarded in her sun-bright eye.

#### **VALENTINE**

Win her with gifts, if she respect not words:  
Dumb jewels often in their silent kind  
More than quick words do move a woman's mind.

#### **DUKE**

But she did scorn a present that I sent her.

#### **VALENTINE**

A woman sometimes scorns what best contents her.  
Send her another; never give her o'er;  
For scorn at first makes after-love the more.  
If she do frown, 'tis not in hate of you,  
But rather to beget more love in you:  
If she do chide, 'tis not to have you gone;  
For why, the fools are mad, if left alone.  
Take no repulse, whatever she doth say;  
For 'get you gone,' she doth not mean 'away!'  
Flatter and praise, commend, extol their graces;  
Though ne'er so black, say they have angels' faces.  
That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man,  
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

### ***As You Like It, Act III, Scene ii. Lines 359-364***

#### **ROSALIND**

But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?

#### **ORLANDO**

Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much.

#### **ROSALIND**

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves  
as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and  
the reason why they are not so punished and cured  
is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers  
are in love too.

**Question:** How did Shakespeare express and reflect Renaissance idea?