

THE BASICS

Paraphrasing

At the American Shakespeare Center, one of the first things the actors do when they receive their scripts is paraphrase their lines word for word. While 98.5% of the words Shakespeare wrote into his plays are still in common usage, English is a highly versatile and inventive language, with its multiplicity of word choices for a single meaning, as well as its multiplicity of meanings for a single word. As such, word definitions may have changed over the last 400 years, leaving students and actors some room for exploration and discovery within each one. Paraphrasing can help ensure that actors (and students) have made the strongest playing choice when it comes to the meanings of various words.

The benefits of a word for word paraphrase extend beyond word meaning, however. Syntax and word order inform actors (and students) about character options and choices. If a character always chooses a 3 syllable word where a 1 syllable will do, or mis-orders her words, or never comes to the end of a sentence, paraphrasing can help students to recognize those traits, providing students (and actors) with playing choices.

Activity

Explore Paraphrasing using **the First 100 Lines**.

- Give your students both the plain text of the lines and the accompanying Wordle (tm).
- Have your students first look at the Wordle, and then circle or highlight any words they do not immediately recognize. How many of them are there?
 - If fewer than 2%, they are well within the range of common usage words.
 - You can explain any proper nouns as unusual names or places that would be familiar with in the context of play-going in London -- to bring the point home, ask if there are any place names in the States that Londoners today would struggle with.
- Discuss what the Wordle tells you about the first 100 lines of the play. Who or what appears to be important?
- Have your students refer to the plain text of the lines and find the words they found unfamiliar. Are there any context clues that provide the word's meaning?
- If there are any words which your students still find unfamiliar or challenging, have your students look up the definitions (if the Oxford English Dictionary is available to your students, have them use that, because it will show them the accretion of meaning over the years).
 - You may also want to have them look up at least one "familiar" word, to examine how its meaning may have changed through time.
- For those challenging words, have your students find a synonym that makes sense in context.
 - check tense and plurality
 - examine whether there is an opportunity for a missing pun or image.
 - "extra points" for keeping the paraphrase in meter.
- Have your students share their discoveries.
- Now, give each student 2-3 lines of the First 100 to paraphrase word-for-word. They should replace verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs even if the words are familiar to them, but they should not change the order of any words (or prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, or proper nouns).

- See your copy of the First 100 Lines for examples. The paraphrasing provided in this Study Guide does not present the only options, but just one choice. Your students may and should make other suggestions.
- The word for word paraphrase doesn't have to be in iambic pentameter, nor do your students need to worry about preserving Shakespeare's rhymes – though ASC actors occasionally challenge themselves to do one, the other, or both.
- Do a read-around (see page 19) of your class's paraphrased lines.
 - If there is repetition of a word, the students following the first speaker of the word must use the first paraphrase.
 - “Extra points” for the most creative solution.
- Discuss the importance of word-for-word paraphrasing. Often in Shakespeare, it isn't the words themselves that are difficult, but rather the unusual syntax and sentence structure, and the possible double- or triple-meanings of the words. Your students will learn more about the purpose and impact of disrupted syntax in our **R.O.A.D.S. to Rhetoric** section (page 57).
 - Remind your students that Shakespeare's plays were originally *heard*, not read. Your students may want to identify times when an audience could hear multiple meanings in one word, enhancing the aural experience.
 - Examples: reign/rein/rain; where/wear;
 - Then, go back and see if your students can use words in their paraphrasing which retain or create that aural experience. This exercise will demonstrate Shakespeare's verbal creativity and ability to your class.

Some activities throughout this study guide will ask or suggest that your students paraphrase before putting a scene on its feet. You may wish to have them follow this process each time they engage with the text.

Follow Up:

- You may also wish to revisit the Wordle at the end of your unit. How do the prominent words from the First 100 Lines reflect on the entire play? Does Shakespeare preface the central conflict or important ideas? Or does the first scene present something different?
- **Writing Assignment:** In a journal response or short essay, have your students choose one word from the Wordle (not necessarily one of the largest) and discuss how that word applies to the entire play. Where else does it occur? Who uses it? What kind of a word is it?

Line Assignments

Your students will paraphrase their Line Assignments as homework. They should choose their favorite line or sentence, copy it down in their Promptbooks, and be prepared to share that line with the class, as well as responding to the additional prompts.

You may also wish to have your students create Wordles of their Line Assignments.

Paraphrasing - First 100 Lines

1.1

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE,
and Attendants*

THESEUS

Presently, beauteous Hippolyta, our marriage time
Comes in quickly; four joyous suns carry in
A new month: Yet, O, I feel, how sluggishly
This ancient month dies; she draws out my wants,
As step-mother or a widow 5
Protractedly shriveling up a youthful gentleman's
inheritance.

HIPPOLYTA

Four suns will fast dip themselves in dark;
Four nighttimes will fast sleep up the hours;
And then the Luna, as an argent weapon
Lately-curved in the sky, shall see the time 10
Of our rituals.

THESEUS

Depart, Philostrate,
Incite the Athenian young to celebrations,
Alert the vigorous and spry soul of joy;
Push sadness away to burials;
The wan fellow is not for our ceremony. 15
Hippolyta, I courted thee with my blade,
And achieved thy favor, causing thee pain;
But I will marry thee to a different tune,
With ceremony, with victory and with celebration.

*Enter EGEUS and his daughter HERMIA,
LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS*

EGEUS

Contented be Theseus, our honored ruler. 20

THESEUS

Gratitude, kind Egeus: what's the gossip with thee?

EGEUS

Stuffed with exasperation arrive I, with grievance
About my daughter, my kid Hermia.
Step forward, Demetrius. My honored Duke,
This person hath my permission to wed her. 25
Step forward, Lysander: and my courteous lord,
This person hath enchanted the heart of my
daughter;

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast presented her with
poems,

And exchanged amorous gifts with my daughter:
Thou hast by night at her casement crooned, 30
With pretending notes songs of pretending
affection,

And robbed the thought of her desire
With ringlets of thy locks, jewels, trinkets, tricks,
Curois, drops, bouquets, sweets, signs
Of powerful sway in inexperienced adolescence: 35
With slyness hast thou stolen my child's love,
Twisted her loyalty, which belongs to me,
To willful unkindness and, my kind lord,
Be it if she will not presently in front of your
lordship

Agree to wed with Demetrius, 40
I ask the old right of Athens,
Since she is mine, I can deal with her:
Which shall be either to this man
Or to her demise, complying with our legal code
Presently given in that instance. 45

THESEUS

What think you, Hermia? be warned pretty girl:
To you your parent should be like a deity;
One that created your loveliness, yes, and one
To whom you are simply like a figure in beeswax
By him carved and inside his ability 50
To spare the statue or destroy it.
Demetrius is a good man.

HERMIA

As is Lysander.

THESEUS

As himself he is;
Yet in this way, lacking your parent's support,
The further should be considered the better. 55

HERMIA

I wish my parent saw only with my sights.

THESEUS

Instead your sights should with his decision see.

HERMIA

I do pray you lordship to forgive me.
I understand not via which force I am created
brave, 60
Nor how it could touch my humility,
In so great an audience now to beg my feelings;
Yet I pray your lordship that I could understand

The bad that could happen to me in this instance,
Should I deny to marry Demetrius.

THESEUS

Either to expire the demise or to forego 65
For eternity the company of males.
Ergo, beautiful Hermia, consider your wishes;
Understand of your adolescence, scrutinize
extensively your temperament,
If, assuming you acquiesce not to your parent's
decision,
You could suffer the habits of a cleric, 70
Eternally to be in shadowy abbey locked,
To breathe a fruitless nun the rest of your days,
Singing soft songs to the icy barren Diana.
Three times gifted they that control thus their
passion,
To depart on the like virgin journey; 75
Yet more immediately contented is the flower
Than that which withering on the barren spike
Matures, survives and perishes in lone sanctity.

HERMIA

So will I mature, so survive, so perish, my liege,
Before I will give my untouched right away 80
To his rule, whose unwanted burden
My spirit agrees not to grant government.

THESEUS

Obtain days to consider; and, by the following
fresh month--
The binding-time between my fiancé and me, 85
For eternal knot of marriage--
On that morning either brace to perish
For defiance to your parent's choice,
Or otherwise to marry Demetrius, as he wishes;
Or on Diana's shrine to vow
Forever asceticism and lonely existence. 90

DEMETRIUS

Rethink, lovely Hermia: and, Lysander, surrender
Thy uncertain claim to my determined deed.

LYSANDER

You have her parent's favor, Demetrius;
Allow me to have Hermia's: act you wed him.

EGEUS

Insulting Lysander; correct, he hath my favor, 95
And what is mine my affection shall give him.
And she is mine, and the whole of my ownership of
her
I do gift to Demetrius.

LYSANDER

I am, my liege, as finely born as he,
As finely provided; my affection is greater
than his; 100