

Chevan

Shakespeare

## Using the OED for Detailed Readings of Shakespeare

Information literacy topics:

- Searching strategies for information
- In-text citations
- References
- Using technology tools

Objective: To practice using search tools in the online Oxford English Dictionary to aid in a detailed reading of Shakespeare, considering word origins, meanings, and context.

Before class: Some students may be familiar with Macbeth, though the reading does not require prior knowledge.

During class:

1: Find the activities for this class, at:

**Amity website**→**High School**→**Students**→**ARHS Library**  
**(tab) Find Online Stuff**→**By Subject**→**English**  
**(tab) Class Projects** →**Chevan**→**Using the OED for Shakespeare**

2. Presentation of the OED.

2.a. Presentation of the background of the OED.

The OED is considered (by its publisher) to be the “accepted authority” on the English language. Started in 1879, the first edition was only completed 50 years later, in 1928. It has more than 600,000 entries and includes information on their “etymology”, or how they have evolved over time, illustrated with examples from the history of the printed word in English. The electronic version is updated every 3 months to keep it current.

2.b. Presentation of the search functions, techniques, and resources in the OED.

Main message: In addition to using the search box for a simple search, or an advanced search, ***there are lots of other ways to view information in the OED.***

- **Dictionary:** All of the nearly 300,000 words in the online version of the dictionary (about half of the print version) are listed here in alphabetical order, starting with the word “a”, meaning the first letter of the Roman alphabet. As you browse, you can use “limiters” in your search, to “Refine your search”, by:
  - Subject (e.g. Law, British)
  - Language of Origin (European)
  - Region (e.g. India)
  - Usage (e.g. Colloquial, Euphemistic, or Archaic)
  - Part of Speech
  - Part of Speech
  - Date of First Citation
  - the source the word was First Cited In.

Notice that certain limiters are searching the full-text entry, so they may give unexpected results.

- **Categories:** You can browse by
  - Subject
  - Usage
  - Region
  - Origin
- **Timelines:** You can view the number of words whose usage were first documented in different time periods, with sample words. You can limit the results by Category, Region, or Origin (Try 1100 a.d., and Technology).
- **Sources:** Look at the sources most frequently used to illustrate written use of words in history. Can you guess what the most common source is? (The Times of London).
- **Historical Thesaurus.** Search to find synonyms of specific words throughout history, or to browse a subject tree of words. Search the verb “cheat” for example.

## 2.c. Additional Resources for the OED

[Key to symbols](#) used in the OED.

[Key to abbreviations](#) used in the OED.

2.d. Discussion and demonstration of the Advanced search: It's always worth doing an Advanced Search, since it allows simple searches, but the reverse is not true. A simple search gives no additional options.

### Demonstration: “**Sticking-place**”

- First, think of a logical meaning of the word in context.
- Go to Advanced Search.
- Search as a compound word, and try with and without hyphen, or as separate words (try all ways)
- Choose criteria for where to search:
  - search in **Headword** (search term is the title of dictionary entry) **MOST COMMON**
  - search in **Lemma** (search term is a form or compound of the word found in dictionary entries)
  - search in **Variant Spelling** (search will include different possible spellings of the search term)
  - search in **Definition** (search term appears in any definition of any entry)
  - search in **Etymology** (search term appears in any Etymology, or description of the origin of the word)
  - search in **Quotation**:
    - Great trick: If you are having no luck, try copying a piece of the whole line (e.g. “courage to the sticking place”, and doing a search by Full Text or Quotation, to see if that quotation is actually used as an example in the dictionary.
- Choose part of speech (only if you are sure of it)

2.e. Discussion of searching strategy:

Sample: “But screw<sup>1</sup> your courage to the **sticking-place**<sup>2</sup>,”

“In this exercise, and when you work alone, you will take notes on the following”:

- 1. BEFORE you search
  - the part of speech of the word in this context
  - an initial GUESS as to what the word or word combination might mean in context.
- 2. From the OED, the best meaning in context OR best MULTIPLE meanings if word play is involved.
- 3. The quote from the OED of the earliest use of the word in that context.
- 4. The earliest date use of the word in that context.
- 5. The *etymology* (word origin), stating the earliest form of the word, and the root language.

4. Individual student searches.

**Practice:** “But screw<sup>1</sup> your courage to the **sticking-place**<sup>2</sup>.”

4.a. Log on to the [OED](#) at the Connecticut State Library. (You need to have previously gotten your [Connecticut STATE library card](#).)

4.b. Use this [data collection form](#) (make your own Google or Word copy) to take notes on the following:

- 1. BEFORE you search:
  - the part of speech of the word in this context
  - an initial GUESS as to what the word or word combination might mean in context.
- 2. From the OED, the best meaning in context OR best MULTIPLE meanings if word play is involved.
- 3. The quote from the OED of the earliest use of the word in that context.
- 4. The earliest date use of the word in that context.
- 5. The *etymology* (word origin), stating the earliest form of the word, and the root language.

5. Independent searching practice.

Continue searching, as before, filling in the [data collection form](#), (make your own Google or Word copy)

6. Wrap-up

Main message: *An advanced search always gives you more search options, which you don't HAVE to use, and there are lots of other ways to view information in the OED.*

### Macbeth Act I, Scene 7

#### Plot Background

Macbeth, a loyal subject and relative of the king, Duncan, has been plotting with his wife, Lady Macbeth, to kill the king, so that Macbeth can take his place.

In Act I, Scene 7, the king has arrived at Macbeth's castle, and will be spending the night. This is Macbeth's golden opportunity, but he begins to have second thoughts.

Lady Macbeth challenges him not to give up his plan, and explains how they will carry out the assassination.

#### Lady Macbeth's speech

But **screw**<sup>1</sup> your courage to the **sticking-place**<sup>2</sup>,  
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—  
**Whereto**<sup>3</sup> the **rather**<sup>4</sup> shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly **invite**<sup>5</sup> him--his two **chamberlains**<sup>6</sup>  
Will I with wine and **wassail**<sup>7</sup> so **convince**<sup>8</sup>  
That memory, the **warder**<sup>9</sup> of the brain,  
Shall be a **fume**<sup>10</sup>, and the **receipt**<sup>11</sup> of reason  
A **limbeck**<sup>12</sup> only: when in **swinish**<sup>13</sup> sleep  
Their **drenched**<sup>14</sup> **natures**<sup>15</sup> lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan? what not **put upon**<sup>16</sup> 70  
His **spongy**<sup>17</sup> officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great **quell**<sup>18</sup>?

#### Search terms (in bold) in context

1. **screw** your courage to the sticking-place
2. screw your courage to the **sticking-place**,
3. **Whereto**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him
4. Whereto the **rather**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him
5. Whereto...shall his day's hard journey...**invite** him
6. his two **chamberlains**
7. Will I with wine and **wassail** so convince
8. Will I with wine and wassail so **convince**
9. memory, the **warder** of the brain
10. shall be a **fume**
11. the **receipt** of reason [shall be] a limbeck
12. the receipt of reason [shall be] a **limbeck**
13. **swinish** sleep
14. their **drenched** natures

15. their drenched **natures**

16. What cannot you and I...**put upon**...his...officers

17. his **spongy** officers

18. our great **quell**?

1. **screw** your courage to the sticking-place

3.a. To stretch tight by turning a screw

3.b. *fig.* With object a person or his attributes.

"Tightening" can be seen as maximizing one's courage.

2. screw your courage to the **sticking-place**,

2. *The place in which a thing stops and holds fast.*

Consider it together with screw", since it is part of the same expression, and it takes on the meaning of "secure your courage to where it will stay firmly in place".

3. **Whereto**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him

3a. *To which (in various senses of to prep.).*

4. Whereto the **rather**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him

1. *the rather: (all) the more quickly, (all) the sooner. Obs.*

"Quickly" seems the best alternative.

5. Whereto...shall his day's hard journey...**invite** him

1 e. *fig. Unintentionally to bring on (something) or encourage (it) to come.*

So the day's journey "encourages" sleep to come on.

6. his two **chamberlains**.

1.a. A male personal attendant of a king or nobleman, who waits on him in his bedchamber; (*rarely* also) a lady's maid. Also *fig. Obs.*

Since there are two, the other meanings, which indicate a single position of importance, are not applicable.

7. Will I with wine and **wassail** so convince

2. The liquor in which healths were drunk; esp. the spiced ale used in Twelfth-night and Christmas-eve celebrations.

4. A carousal; riotous festivity, revelling.

Either or both of these is logical. Lady M. might have been proposing wine and spiced ale, or wine and partying.

8. Will I with wine and wassail so **convince**...

1. To overcome, conquer, vanquish; *fig.* to overpower. Also *absol. Obs.*

The contemporary meaning of persuading is not quite right here, but overpowering with wine seems right.

9. memory, the **warder** of the brain

1.a. A soldier or other person set to guard an entrance; also, a watchman on a tower.

b. transferred sense and figuratively

In this sense, memory keeps watch over the brain. However, Ernest Schanzer (1957) points out that though the brain was thought to be composed of different parts, memory was not thought to be a guard of reason, so he suggests that warder means not so much a guard, as a “warden” or caretaker.

10. shall be a **fume**

1. a. The volatile matter produced by and usually accompanying combustion; smoke. Also with *a* and in *pl.* *Obs.* or *arch.*

5. (figuratively) Something comparable to smoke or vapour as being unsubstantial, transient, imaginary, etc.

6. Something which ‘goes to the head’ and clouds the faculties or the reason.

So memory is reduced to nothing but pure smoke, essentially, to disappear.

11. the **receipt** of reason [shall be] a limbeck

10.a. A place for the reception of things; a receptacle. Cf. [reset n.<sup>1</sup> 1b](#). Now *rare*.

The area of the brain, the “container”, that holds reason.

12. the receipt of reason [shall be] a **limbeck**

1. *Chem.* An early apparatus used for distilling, consisting of two connected vessels, This alternate form of “alembic”, referred to a distilling apparatus. There is speculation about whether it meant the part where the liquid was boiled, to contrast it to the part where the purified distillate was collected (which might have been the “receipt”), but the imagery of “reason” in a bubbling mass adds to the metaphor for drunkenness.

13. **swinish** sleep

1.b. Of actions, etc.: Characteristic of or befitting a swine; coarse, degraded, beastly.

Because, of course, they are drunken louts who swilled down the drinks and are probably snoring it off .

14. their **drenched** natures

1. *trans.* To make to drink; to administer drink to; now *spec.* to administer a draught of medicine in a forcible manner to (an animal).

4.a. *trans.* To wet thoroughly by immersion; to steep, soak, saturate.

6. *fig.* To drown, immerse, plunge, overwhelm.

Not only are their senses and powers soaked and overwhelmed by alcohol, but there is also the potential meaning of the guards having been intentionally *made* to drink.

15. their drenched **natures**

1. a. The vital or physical powers of a person; a person's physical strength or constitution. *Obs.*
2. a. The power or force which is fundamental to the physical and mental functioning of a human being. *Obs.*

The chamberlain's "natures" are their physical and mental strengths, which are diminished by the alcohol they have drunk.

16. What cannot you and I...**put upon**...his...officers

- 35.a. To lay (blame) *on* or *upon* (formerly †*in*) a person or thing.

It is important to note here that "put upon" is a verb here (as opposed to the adjective "put-upon". The meaning is to BLAME the officers.

17. his **spongy** officers

3. b. *Resembling a sponge in absorptive qualities; absorbent. Chiefly fig.*
4. *fig.* Deficient in substance or solidity.

Clearly used in a figurative sense, for the amount of alcohol they have consumed. May also have another metaphorical meaning of lacking in substance because they are incapacitated.

18. our great **quell**?

1. The action or an act of quelling something or someone (in various senses); †killing, slaughter (*obs.*); suppression, repression, quashing.

Fairly literal, a murder.

Student Instructions:

Chevan

Shakespeare

### Using the OED for Detailed Readings of Shakespeare

Information literacy topics:

- Searching strategies for information
- In-text citations
- References
- Using technology tools

Objective: To practice using search tools in the online Oxford English Dictionary to aid in a detailed reading of Shakespeare, considering word origins, meanings, and context.

1: Find the activities for this class, at:

**Amity website→High School→Students→ARHS Library**

**(tab) Find Online Stuff→By Subject→English**

**(tab) Class Projects →Chevan→Using the OED for Shakespeare**

2. Presentation of the OED.

2.a. Background of the OED.

2.b. Search functions, techniques, and resources in the OED. (See Notes for more information.)

- **Dictionary**
- **Categories**
- **Timelines**
- **Sources**
- **Historical Thesaurus**

2.c. Additional Resources for the OED

[Key to symbols](#) used in the OED.

[Key to abbreviations](#) used in the OED.

2.d. Discussion and demonstration: Advanced search. (See Notes for more information.)

2.e. Discussion of searching strategy:

Sample: “But screw<sup>1</sup> your courage to the **sticking-place**<sup>2</sup>,”

In this exercise, and when you work alone, you will take notes on the following:

- 1. BEFORE you search
  - the part of speech of the word in this context
  - an initial GUESS as to what the word or word combination might mean in context.



- 2. From the OED, the best meaning in context OR best MULTIPLE meanings if word play is involved.
- 3. The quote from the OED of the earliest use of the word in that context.
- 4. The earliest date use of the word in that context.
- 5. The *etymology* (word origin), stating the earliest form of the word, and the root language.

#### 4. Individual student searches.

**Practice:** “But **screw**<sup>1</sup> your courage to the sticking-place<sup>2</sup>.”

4.a. Log on to the [OED](#) at the Connecticut State Library. (You need to have previously gotten your [Connecticut STATE library card](#).)

4.b. Use this [data collection form](#) (make your own Google or Word copy) to take notes on the following:

- 1. BEFORE you search:
  - the part of speech of the word in this context
  - an initial GUESS as to what the word or word combination might mean in context.
- 2. From the OED, the best meaning in context OR best MULTIPLE meanings if word play is involved.
- 3. The quote from the OED of the earliest use of the word in that context.
- 4. The earliest date use of the word in that context.
- 5. The *etymology* (word origin), stating the earliest form of the word, and the root language.

#### 5. Independent searching practice.

Continue searching, as before, filling in the [data collection form](#), (make your own Google or Word copy)

#### 6. Wrap-up

Main message: *An advanced search always gives you more search options, which you don't HAVE to use, and there are lots of other ways to view information in the OED.*

### **Macbeth Act I, Scene 7**

#### **Plot Background**

Macbeth, a loyal subject and relative of the king, Duncan, has been plotting with his wife, Lady Macbeth, to kill the king, so that Macbeth can take his place.

In Act I, Scene 7, the king has arrived at Macbeth's castle, and will be spending the night. This is Macbeth's golden opportunity, but he begins to have second thoughts.

Lady Macbeth challenges him not to give up his plan, and explains how they will carry out the assassination.

### Lady Macbeth's speech

But **screw**<sup>1</sup> your courage to the **sticking-place**<sup>2</sup>,  
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—  
**Whereto**<sup>3</sup> the **rather**<sup>4</sup> shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly **invite**<sup>5</sup> him--his two **chamberlains**<sup>6</sup>  
Will I with wine and **wassail**<sup>7</sup> so **convince**<sup>8</sup>  
That memory, the **warder**<sup>9</sup> of the brain,  
Shall be a **fume**<sup>10</sup>, and the **receipt**<sup>11</sup> of reason  
A **limbeck**<sup>12</sup> only: when in **swinish**<sup>13</sup> sleep  
Their **drenched**<sup>14</sup> **natures**<sup>15</sup> lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan? what not **put upon**<sup>16</sup> 70  
His **spongy**<sup>17</sup> officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great **quell**<sup>18</sup>?

### Search terms (in bold) in context

1. **screw** your courage to the sticking-place
2. screw your courage to the **sticking-place**,
3. **Whereto**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him
4. Whereto the **rather**...shall his day's hard journey...invite him
5. Whereto...shall his day's hard journey...**invite** him
6. his two **chamberlains**
7. Will I with wine and **wassail** so convince
8. Will I with wine and wassail so **convince**
9. memory, the **warder** of the brain
10. shall be a **fume**
11. the **receipt** of reason [shall be] a limbeck
12. the receipt of reason [shall be] a **limbeck**
13. **swinish** sleep
14. their **drenched** natures
15. their drenched **natures**
16. What cannot you and I...**put upon**...his...officers
17. his **spongy** officers
18. our great **quell**?