



In 1997 Rex Gibson, director of the Shakespeare in Schools project and series editor of the Cambridge School Shakespeare editions, collected and designed *Shakespeare's Language*, 150 photocopiable worksheets to help teachers work with students on Shakespeare's language. "Analysis of language can be undertaken in enjoyable and motivating ways which reveal, through close attention to detail, important facets of wider aspects of the play being studied," Gibson said. "It enables students to grasp how Shakespeare's dramatic language expresses the conflicts which are at the heart of all drama."

In 1998 Gibson collaborated with Janet Field-Pickering, head of education at the Folger Shakespeare Library, to publish an American version of the work, which is called *Discovering Shakespeare's Language*. This issue's broadsheet is one of their activities. ■

Rhyme

Rhyme in verse involves matching sounds at the ends of each line. It gives an audible pattern to language and makes speech easier to learn:

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Shakespeare uses rhyme in songs, prologues, and epilogues, masques and plays within plays, and for the supernatural (for example the witches in *Macbeth* or the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

Long speeches in blank verse (unrhymed) often end with a rhyming couplet. So, too, do many scenes or acts. The Elizabethan stage did not have sophisticated technology (lights, curtains) to signal the end of a scene. So Shakespeare often provides his characters with a strong rhyming couplet to accompany their exit and as a cue for other actors to enter. As Macbeth leaves to murder Duncan he hears the bell:

Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* Biron rhymingly laughs at people who are too serious about learning from books. His three friends try to mock him, but he wins the exchange with rhyme on rhyme:

deep-searched
well understood
continual plodders
unthinking readers
earthly godfathers
scholars
wot
know
proceeded
argued
proceeding
understanding
green geese are
a-breeding
young geese are
cackling

BIRON Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks;
Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books.
These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
That give a name to every fixed star,
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know nought but fame;
And every godfather can give a name.

KING How well he's read, to reason against reading!

DUMAINE Proceeded well, to stop all good proceeding!

LONGAVILLE He weeds the corn, and still lets grow the
weeding.

BIRON The spring is near, when green geese are a-
breeding.

DUMAINE How follows that?

BIRON Fit in his place and time.

DUMAINE In reason nothing.

BIRON Something then in rhyme.
—1.1.84-89

1. In groups of four, assign parts and speak the lines above to emphasize the rhymes. How might such rhymed lines be performed onstage?

2. Search through the play you are currently studying for examples of use of rhyme. Look particularly at scene endings.