

**Handout:**

***The Love of the Language***

The creativity of Shakespeare's language often excites students. They love the unusual sounds, and they instinctively understand where he's going. Some of the words that he made up ("assassination" and "downstairs," for example) are commonly used today. Others aren't as familiar, and were probably truly "nonsense" when Shakespeare wrote them.

- 1) Explain that Shakespeare sometimes made up his own words when he couldn't think of the perfect word to use.
- 2) Prior to this class period, print out each of the following words on cardstock paper, one to a page.

hurly burly  
miching  
mallecho  
boggler  
hugger mugger  
pignut  
oppugnancy  
wittolly  
hodge-podge  
skimble skamble  
noddles

- 3) Choose one of the words, and with a volunteer, come up with a definition for that word, based on how it sounds. Take your time reasoning it out so your students have a good example.
- 4) Divide your class into groups of 2-3, and give each of them their own word. Tell them that they should come up with their own meanings. Tell them not to worry about what it "really means."
- 5) Once the students come up with their own words, ask them to develop a short scene in which they use the word.
- 6) Have each group come up to the front, and show the group their word. Then have each group perform their scene.
- 7) After each scene, ask the audience if they know what the word means, according to their classmates. Ask the children who defined the word if this is correct.

Ways to extend this activity:

You can let the students look up their words to see what Shakespeare's original meaning for them was. (A Shakespeare Glossary by C.T. Onions is a great resource for this. Details are on the bibliography page.) You can also ask students come up with their own words for something familiar. For example, look out of the window on a sunny and hot day, and tell the children that you have decided that the day is "hotbright." Go around the room and encourage them to invent descriptive words of their own.