



Language

The People of the Renaissance LOVED language. A quick wit was highly prized. Everyone, from the lowliest of peasant to the loftiest nobleman, played with words. No self-respecting person would say in two words what could be said in six or seven. Below are some common words and phrases to help you understand the language and speak to the various people at the Festival.

Titles

Social standing and proper etiquette were very important during the renaissance era. You could tell a lot about people's social standing by how they addressed one another. The following are appropriate titles for addressing our villagers.

- *M'lord or M'lady (respectful)
- *Sir or Madam, Gentleman or Gentlewoman, Cousin or Cuz (Equal birth or social standing.)
- *Your Majesty or Your Highness (King and Queen)
- *Your Grace (Members of the Royal Court)
- *Master or Mistress Artisan (Craftsperson)
- *Wench (Common or lower-class woman)
- *Knaves (Common or lower-class man)

Hello's and good-bye's

Renaissance language was very specific. People did not use the all-purpose greeting of "hello" or "hi". There were different greetings depending on the time of day. Also, etiquette might call for one to ask permission before leaving. One could also express one's blessing or good wishes

- *Good Morrow (Good Morning)
- *Good Day (Afternoon greeting or parting)
- *Good eve or eventide (Good Evening)

- *God ye good den (God grant you a good day)
- *I bid you adieu (Good-bye)
- *By your leave (With your permission)
- *Fare thee well (Good-bye-wishing them well)
- *God save thee (A blessing)

compliments

- *Thou are most beauteous this day (You look pretty today)
- *Thy voice is sweeter than that of an angel (Your voice is beautiful)
- *By my troth, mine eyes are blessed by your very visage (In truth, the sight of your face is a blessing)
- *Thy beauty eclipses the sun (You are dazzlingly beautiful)

insults

(Also see insult word list at the end of this section)

- *Thou are lily-livered (Calling someone a coward)
- *Thou slop-jar of ineptitude (A slop jar is similar to a chamber pot. People also spit or throw garbage in it.)

Other helpful words

- *Privies (bathrooms)
- *Zounds (Exclamation of astonishment, pronounced zounds)
- *Fantastical (Amazing)
- *Knotty-pated (Thick-headed)
- *Buffoon (Fool)
- *By my troth (Exclamation of truth)
- *HUZZAH! (Hurrah!)

Classroom Discussion: The language expressions in William Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Write a short outline of a Shakespearean play; including characters.

A favorite past-time of the people of the renaissance was the art of insulting one another. Here's a fun exercise that will increase your vocabulary!

Combine one word from each of the three columns below; prefaced with "Thou":

Column 1

artless
bawdy
beslubbering
bootless
churlish
cockered
clouted
craven
currish
dankish
dissembling
droning
errant
fawning
fobbing
forward
frothy
gleeking
goatish
gorbellied
impertinent
infectious
jarring
loggerheaded
lumpish
mammering
mangled
mewling
paunchy
pribbling
puking
puny
quailing
rank
reeky
roguish
ruttish
saucy
spleeny
spongy
surly
tottering

Column 2

base-court
bat-fowling
beef-witted
beetle-headed
boil-brained
clapper-clawed
clay-brained
common-kissing
crook-pated
dismal-dreaming
dizzy-eyed
doghearted
dread-bolted
earth-vexing
elf-skinned
fat-kidneyed
fen-sucked
flap-mouthed
fly-bitten
folly-fallen
fool-born
full-gorged
guts-gripping
half-faced
hasty-witted
hedge-born
hell-hated
idle-headed
ill-bred
ill-nurtured
knotty-pated
milk-livered
motley-minded
onion-eyed
plume-plucked
pottle-deep
pox-marked
reeling-ripe
rough-hewn
rude-growing
rump-fed
shard-borne

Column 3

apple-john
baggage
barnacle
bladder
boar-pig
bugbear
bum-bailey
canker-blossom
clack-dish
clotpole
coxcomb
codpiece
death-token
dewberry
flap-dragon
flax-wench
flirt-gill
foot-licker
fustilarian
giglet
gudgeon
haggard
harpy
hedge-pig
horn-beast
hugger-mugger
jolthead
lewdster
lout
maggot-pie
malt-worm
mammet
measle
minnow
miscreant
moldward
mumble-news
nut-hook
pigeon-egg
pignut
puttock
pumpion

unmuzzled
vain
venomed
villainous
warped
wayward
weedy
yeasty

sheep-biting
spur-galled
swag-bellied
tardy-gaited
tickle-brained
toad-spotted
urchin-snouted
weather-bitten

ratsbane
scut
skainsmate
strumpet
varlet
vassal
whey-face
wagtail

This list was compiled by Matthew Lecher