

PRONOUNS OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH (APPROXIMATELY 1500- 1700)

'ELIZABETHAN' ENGLISH (1558-1603), 'THE KING'S' ENGLISH (1604-1611),
'SHAKESPEARE' ENGLISH (1589 PERFORMED -1623 PUBLISHED)

THE ROYAL 'WE'- used by individual Kings, Royalty, and those in High Religious offices to reflect the plurality of the position.

'On Wednesday next *we* solemnly proclaim

Our coronation. Lords, be ready all.' (*Richard II*, Act IV, Scene 1)

-Henry Bullingbroke in anticipation of his crowning, staking his claim for the throne.

'YE'- AS A PLURAL FORM OF 'YOU'- used to speak to a large group of people.

'Hang *ye*, gorbellied knaves, are *ye* undone? No, *ye* fat chuffs, I would your store were here! On, bacons, on! What, *ye* knaves, young men must live!'

(*Henry IV, Part 1*, Act II, Scene 2)

-Falstaff, in front of a large group of soldiers that he means to rob.

'THOU' IS INFORMAL FORM OF 'YOU' (AS SUBJECT OF SENTENCE)

'*Thou* hast, Sebastian, done good feature shame.' (*Twelfth Night*, Act III, Scene 4)

-Antonio to who he thinks is his best friend, derogatorily stating,

'*You* have given shame to your good looks.'

'THEE' IS INFORMAL FORM OF 'YOU' (AS OBJECT OF SENTENCE)

'I swear to *thee*, youth, by the white hand of Rosalind, I am that he, that unfortunate he.'

(*As You Like It*, Act III, Scene 2)

-Orlando to Rosalind, trying to make an intimate connection.

**'THINE' IS INFORMAL FORM OF 'YOUR(S)'
(AS POSSESSIVE PRONOUN, BOTH SINGULAR AND PLURAL)**

'This above all: to *thine* own self be true.' (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 3)

-Polonius to his son on the eve of his departure to school. (singular use, 'your')

'But get thee back, my soul is too much charged

With blood of *thine* already.' (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene 8)

-Macbeth to his enemy, explaining the previous deaths of the family (plural use, 'yours')

**'THY' IS INFORMAL FORM OF 'YOUR'
(AS POSSESSIVE DETERMINER- REQUIRES A NOUN PHRASE)**

'O Hero! What a Hero hadst thou been,

If half *thy* outward graces had been placed

About *thy* thoughts and counsels of *thy* heart!' (*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act IV, Scene 1)

-Claudio to his betrothed Hero, speaking of her assumed infidelity (precedes a noun phrase).

'THYSELF' IS INFORMAL FORM OF 'YOURSELF' (AS REFLEXIVE PRONOUN)

'Zounds, show me what thou't do.

Would weep, would fight, would fast, would tear *thyself*? (*Hamlet*, Act V, Sene 1)

-Hamlet to his enemy, Laertes, at the grave of his former fiancé, and Laertes' sister, as a challenge to prove his love.

'OURSELVES' IS REFLEXIVE FORM OF ROYAL 'WE'

'The latest breath that gave the sound of words

Was deep-sworn faith, peace, amity, true love

Between our kingdoms and *our* royal *selves*.' (*King John*, Act III, Scene 1)

-King John, to reinforce a treaty he had made between countries, France and England.

APPLICATION

- For a director or actor, to look for the clues that Shakespeare gave in the text to let us know how these characters deal with each other (by switching the formality of pronoun usage)

Formality- Forms of 'You'

-when speaking to someone of higher status

-when trying to distance yourself from the other

Informality- Forms of 'Thou'

-when speaking to someone of equal or lesser status

-when trying to become intimate or familiar with someone

-when insulting or speaking down to the other

Kate: Where did *you* study all this goodly speech?

Petruchio: It is extempore, from my mother-wit.

Kate: A witty mother! Witless else her son.

Petruchio: Am I not wise?

Kate: Yes, keep *you* warm.

Petruchio: Marry, so I mean, sweet Katherine, in *thy* bed!

(*The Taming of the Shrew*, Act II, Scene 1)

-Petruchio is attempting to get close and forcibly woo Kate. She is attempting to distance herself.