

Prepping Shakespearean Text – Some Techniques

- 1) Look up every word and list all of the multiple meanings. Use only a large version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and pay attention to the dating of the definitions. Research the meaning of your character's name – use it when building your character.
- 2) Use Shakespearean glossaries to further look up your words
- 3) Examine the text and find your most important or "key" words – highlight or underline them
- 4) If you are dealing with poetry it will usually be iambic pentameter:
 - a. 5 feet of 2 beats each for a total of 10 beats
 - b. Each foot is comprised of an unstressed and then a stressed syllable
- 5) If it is poetry and it is not iambic pentameter make special note of it and ask why
- 6) De-emphasize pronouns: "I," "you," "them," "it," "ours," "who," "which," "myself," "anybody," "her," "she," and "me." Only on rare occasions will a pronoun be emphasized
- 7) Use the First Folio Edition:
 - a. Locate your passage
 - b. Locate all long-spelling words
 - c. Locate all internally capitalized word
 - d. Explore these words as potential keywords
 - e. Consider re-punctuating your passage using First Folio punctuation
- 8) Follow the punctuation game:
 - , = "you see"
 - . = "that's it"
 - : = "now listen"
 - ; = "and furthermore"
 - ? = "well"
 - ! = *insert your own expletive*
- 9) In iambic pentameter lines find the caesura – the break in the line across which there is a balance of meaning – should be near the middle of the line, may be between two words that mean something similar – may split a foot – not just a pause or break, but a fulcrum of meaning
- 10) Rely on the text, it is an actor's best friend – lean back on the words and maintain even breath and energy throughout the line. Do not stop for line shape – follow the metre and the punctuation instead