

Name _____

Date _____

Shakespeare - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Scholars have been able to piece together William Shakespeare's likely biography from sources like official records, his will, his marriage certificate and his tombstone. Shakespeare was likely born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. He probably attended a free school, where he studied Latin plays. At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and they went on to have three children, one of whom died of black plague. For several years after the birth of his children, Shakespeare disappeared from all records. Scholars call these his "Lost Years." Records then show that by 1594, Shakespeare was an established actor and writer in London with his popular company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men. He'd hold these positions for 20 years. Shakespeare is thought to have died on April 23, 1616—his likely birthday—at age 52.

What is the main purpose of this passage?

**A.**

to recount key events in William Shakespeare's life

This passage recounts several key events in Shakespeare's life, including his birth, education, marriage, the birth of his children, his work as a writer and actor and his death.

B. to provide a theory about what happened during William Shakespeare's "Lost Years"

C. to explain where William Shakespeare got the ideas for his plays

D. to describe William Shakespeare's work with The Lord Chamberlain's Men

2. Shakespeare's plays can be divided into major categories. His tragedies center around heroes with tragic flaws. A tragic flaw is a defect in a character that leads to his or her demise and, often, death at the end of the play. In Shakespeare's tragedy **Hamlet**, the main character Hamlet's indecision over whether to avenge his father's death leads to his downfall. In **Macbeth**, Scottish general Macbeth's ambition for the throne drives him to murder. He is then plagued by guilt and madness.

Based on the passage, what is Hamlet's tragic flaw in the play **Hamlet**?

- A. extreme guilt
B. opposition to war
C. indecision
D. ambition

✓ C. indecision

*According to the passage, in Shakespeare's tragedies, "A tragic flaw is a defect in a character that leads to his or her demise and, often, death at the end of the play. In Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*, the main character Hamlet's indecision over whether to avenge his father's death leads to his downfall." This shows that Hamlet's tragic flaw is his indecision.*

3. Shakespeare's comedies are more upbeat and usually concern love and end in marriage. They often contain multiple, intertwining plots, puns and cases of mistaken identity. In the comedy **Twelfth Night**, the character Viola disguises herself as a man, "Cesario," to serve a duke who is in love with a rich countess. In a twist, the countess then falls in love with "Cesario." Another category of Shakespeare's plays is tragicomedy. Also called his late romances, his tragicomedies contain elements of both tragedy and comedy and often contain supernatural elements, too.

Based on the passage, which of the following most likely describes the plot of a Shakespearean comedy?

- A. One man takes advantage of another man's jealousy, driving him to murder. ✓
- B. Many couples fall in love and get married in a forest.
- According to the passage, Shakespeare's comedies "usually concern love and end in marriage." Based on this detail, a play in which many couples fall in love and get married in a forest is a likely example of the plot of a Shakespearean comedy.*
- C. King Henry V of England considers making a claim to rule France.
- D. A Roman politician is betrayed and killed by senators.

4. Shakespeare's histories tell of events in the lives of English kings. But as a playwright, Shakespeare took creative liberties when writing them. In fact, he sometimes changed details to appeal to Queen Elizabeth I, the queen who reigned during much of his career. In his play **Richard III**, Shakespeare portrays the title character as extremely evil, corrupt and murderous. Queen Elizabeth I was a descendent of the king who had overthrown the real Richard III. So, Richard was hated during Elizabeth I's time. To avoid contradicting the queen's opinion, Shakespeare exaggerated the character Richard's negative qualities in his play.

Which of the following statements would the author of this passage most likely agree with?

A. Every detail in Shakespeare's histories is true.



B.

Some details in Shakespeare's histories are not completely true.

According to the passage, Shakespeare "took creative liberties" when writing his histories and even "changed details to appeal to Queen Elizabeth I." For example, Shakespeare "exaggerated" the negative qualities of King Richard III when he created a character based on him. The author would therefore likely agree with the statement that "some details in Shakespeare's histories are not completely true."

C. Shakespeare's histories are so unrealistic that they're not enjoyable.

D. Shakespeare should not have tried to appeal to the queen with his histories.

5. Though Shakespeare was writing in 16th century England, his work still ^{^^}resonates^{^^} with people today. He wrote about topics like love, fate, family, war and death that are relevant to people in many different cultures and time periods. Shakespeare's complex characters and beautifully-crafted dialogue have also withstood the test of time. His works have been translated into more than 100 languages, and in 2015, he was the most-produced playwright in the US. All over the world, his plays have been adapted into modern tales, such as **The Lion King** from **Hamlet** and **West Side Story** and **Gnomeo and Juliet** from **Romeo and Juliet**. Shakespeare himself adapted earlier works to create the plots for some of his plays. For example, **Romeo and Juliet** was based on an Italian story.

What does "resonates" mean in the passage above?

- A. is based on an older story
- C. no longer has relevance

B. is frequently translated



D.

has meaning and importance

According to the passage, "Though Shakespeare was writing in 16th century England, his work still resonates with people today. He wrote about topics...that are relevant to people in many different cultures and time periods," and his characters and dialogue have "withstood the test of time." Details like "relevant to people in many different cultures and time periods" and "withstood the test of time" show that in this passage, "resonates" means "has meaning and importance."

6. The language in Shakespeare's plays takes a variety of forms, including iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is a line of verse with 10 syllables made up of five pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables. The rhythm of iambic pentameter sounds like a heartbeat: "ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM." Here's an example from *Romeo and Juliet*: "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." Lines of iambic pentameter can be rhymed or unrhymed, and Shakespeare often used iambic pentameter for the speech of higher-class characters or to elevate language. In contrast, Shakespeare often used prose, writing without a pattern of stressed or unstressed syllables or rhyme, for lower-class characters.

Which detail from the passage describes iambic pentameter using something the reader may be familiar with?

- A. "...Shakespeare often used iambic pentameter...to elevate language."
- B. "In contrast, Shakespeare often used prose...for lower-class characters."
- ✓ C. "The rhythm of iambic pentameter sounds like a heartbeat: 'ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM.'"
- In this detail, the author states that the rhythm of iambic pentameter "sounds like a heartbeat," something the reader may be familiar with.*
- D. "Here's an example from *Romeo and Juliet*: 'But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.'"

7. Shakespeare's plays are filled with examples of figurative language, language that means something other than its literal meaning and expresses ideas in vivid and imaginative ways. In **Romeo and Juliet**, Romeo says: "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon, Who is already sick and pale with grief That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she..." Shakespeare shows Juliet's radiance by comparing her to the sun using figurative language: the metaphor "Juliet is the sun." He also uses personification, saying the moon is "envious" and "sick and pale with grief" that Juliet is more beautiful than it is.

Why does the author of this passage include a quotation from **Romeo and Juliet**?

- A. to describe where the play **Romeo and Juliet** takes place
- B. to support her argument that Shakespeare's language was not very imaginative
- C. to describe Romeo's character traits in the play **Romeo and Juliet**
- ☒ D. to give examples of figurative language in Shakespeare's plays

*The author begins by stating that "Shakespeare's plays are filled with examples of figurative language." The quotation from *Romeo and Juliet* then includes an examples of such figurative language: a metaphor ("Juliet is the sun") and personification ("the envious moon, who is already sick and pale with grief").*

8. Shakespeare invented many new words and phrases and made others popular. Initially, Shakespeare was credited with inventing 1,700 words. When researchers first began compiling the Oxford English Dictionary in the late 19th century, they looked through many texts by hand to find the first written use of words. They often found Shakespeare's plays to be the sources of words. But many years later, computers began to be used in this process of investigating the sources of words. These new technologies were able to uncover earlier sources of some of the words previously credited to Shakespeare. "Puke" is one of these words. For a long time, Shakespeare was credited with being the first to use "puke." He included it in his play **As You like It**, which is believed to have been written in 1599. In later years, an earlier instance of the word "puke" was found in the 1596 book **Hawking, Hunting, Fouling and Fishing**.

Based on the passage, what is true about the use of computers in the process of finding the the sources of words?

- A. They are only able to look through books, rather than plays, to find the sources of words.
- B. They are only able to search for the sources of 1,700 words at a time.
- ☒ C. They are often better than humans at finding the sources of words.
- D. They have not been very useful in the process of finding the sources of words.

According to the passage, "When researchers first began compiling the Oxford English Dictionary...they looked through many texts by hand to find the first written use of words," which often resulted in Shakespeare's plays being cited as the "sources of words." But when "computers began to be used in this process of investigating the sources of words," they "were able to uncover earlier sources of some of the words previously credited to Shakespeare." Therefore, these computers were better at this task than humans.