



I know it's *Romeo and Juliet*, but it's too cute to pass up!

## Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Vocabulary

### **CUNNING** (1.1.36)

adj. having or showing skill in achieving one's ends by deceit or evasion (syn. sly, scheming, deceptive / ant. honest, forthright)

n. skill in achieving one's ends by deceit (syn. guile, deception, duplicity / ant. honesty, sincerity)

Cunning is sly – a fox, a con-man, a particularly manipulative person, a trickster.

### **ABJURE** (1.1.65)

v. to solemnly renounce or give up; to shun (syn. renounce, disavow, forsake / ant. accept, embrace)

Abjure is a serious word; it's not just giving something up, but rather it's renouncing something.

### **AUSTERITY** (1.1.90)

n. extreme plainness and simplicity of style or appearance (syn. starkness / ant. ornateness)

n. sternness or severity of manner or attitude (syn. seriousness, strictness / ant. gentleness)

An austere environment is almost sterile and cold (not cold as in frigid temperatures but rather cold in feelings as in inhospitable, unwelcoming). An austere person is extremely serious, formal, seemingly unfeeling, or stiff.

### **IDOLATRY** (1.1.109)

n. worship, extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something (syn. adoration, glorification / ant. contempt, scorn)

related: idol

### **EDICT** (1.1.151)

n. an official order, proclamation, decree, or command issued by an authority (syn. mandate, law, ruling / ant. request, petition)

### **TRANSPOSE** (1.1.233)

v. to change or rearrange; to cause two or more things to change places with each other; to transform (syn. interchange, transfer, transmute / ant. remain)

We usually use transpose when we are talking about numbers – when you mix up the order of the numbers in a phone number, for example. She thought the phone number was 540-3241, but she transposed the numbers; it's actually 3214. We also use transpose in terms of music, as in transposing to a different key.

### **PERJURE** (1.1.241)

v. to cause someone to violate an oath or a vow; to willfully make a false statement under oath (syn. falsify / ant. attest, certify)

**GALLANT** (1.2.19)

adj. brave, heroic (syn. courageous, valiant / ant. cowardly, dastardly)

adj. giving special attention and respect to women; chivalrous (syn. courteous, gentlemanly / ant. discourteous)

A knight is gallant.

**CONDOLE** (1.2.22)

v. to express sympathy with someone who is sad or sorrowful; to grieve with (syn. console, support, comfort / ant. neglect, disregard, ignore, upset)

related: condolences

Condole is like console – you express sympathy or comfort someone in a time of grief or disappointment.

**WANTON** (2.1.63, 99, 129)

adj. (if used to describe a cruel or violent action) deliberate and unprovoked (syn. malicious / ant. justifiable)

adj. (if used to describe a person) immodest or promiscuous (syn. indecent / ant. chaste)

adj. (if used in a poetic or literary sense, can also mean...) playful and lively (like fairies) or growing profusely and luxuriously (like the forest of the fairy world)

Wanton has many different definitions, and Shakespeare makes use of all of them!

**QUAINT** (2.1.99)

adj. attractively unusual or old-fashioned (syn. charming, eccentric, whimsical / ant. ordinary)

We think of small towns or old cottages or covered bridges as quaint.

**PROGENY** (2.1.115)

n. a descendant or the descendants of a person, animal, or plant; offspring (syn. offspring, descendants, children, heir / ant. none)

**CHIDE** (2.1.45, 3.2.45)

v. to nag or scold; to rebuke or express disapproval of (syn. chastise, admonish / ant. praise)

You might think your mom chides you all the time about picking up after yourself.

**DISDAINFUL** (2.1.261)

adj. showing contempt or lack of respect (syn. scornful, disrespectful, condescending / ant. respectful)

You're disdainful if you don't show proper respect for your elders, parents, or teachers, for example.

**LANGUISH** (2.2.35)

v. to fail gradually in health or vitality from grief, regret, or longing; to waste away due to longing or desire (syn. yearn, pine, suffer / ant. thrive)

v. to lose or lack vitality; to grow weak or feeble (syn. deteriorate / syn. flourish)

Someone who is languishing is slowly wasting away, slowly getting worse and worse.

**SURFEIT** (2.2.147)

n. an excessive amount of something (syn. excess, abundance / syn. lack)

A surfeit is a surplus. Same thing.

**HERESY** (2.2.147)

n. belief or opinion profoundly contrary to or at odds with what is generally accepted (syn. dissension, blasphemy / ant. belief, faith)

Atticus Finch's beliefs were basically heresy in racist, segregated 1930s Alabama.

**PROLOGUE** (3.1.15)

n. a separate introductory section of a literary or musical work (syn. introduction, preface / ant. epilogue)

n. or the actor who delivers the prologue in a play

n. an event or action that leads to another event or situation

**ENTREAT** (3.1.35, 3.2.249)

v. to ask someone earnestly or anxiously to do something, especially to try to get what you want by flattering someone, trying to please them, or trying to win their favor ("get in good" with them) (syn. implore, beg, beseech / ant. demand, force)

Entreat is like beseech – it's used to mean to implore or beg. To be more specific, if you're trying to get someone to do something for you by getting in good with them, you're entreating them.

**COMPEL** (3.2.249)

v. to force someone to do something, especially by exercise of authority; to bring about something by the use of force, pressure, or exertion of great effort (syn. press, push / ant. request)

Compel is like the opposite of entreat or beseech; you're not begging someone to do something for you, but rather you're basically forcing them. Under the threat of being grounded for a month, you might feel compelled to clean your room.

**DISCORD** (4.1.117)

n. disagreement between two people (syn. strife, conflict / ant. accord, concord, harmony)

**CONCORD** (4.1.143)

n. agreement or harmony between people or groups (syn. unity / ant. dissonance, discord)

**EXPOUND** (4.1.205)

v. present and explain a theory or idea in detail. (syn. explain, convey / ant. confuse, withhold)

You usually expound on or upon a topic. If a teacher is expounding upon a subject, he/she just keeps going on and on and on in sooo much detail.

**PARAGON** (4.2.11)

n. a person or thing regarded as a perfect example of something; a person or thing viewed as a model of excellence (syn. epitome, ideal, quintessence / ant. none)

**APPREHEND** (5.1.19)

v. to arrest (someone) for a crime (syn. arrest / ant. release)

v. to understand or perceive (syn. comprehend, realize / ant. misunderstand, misinterpret)

We usually use apprehend to mean arrest, but in Shakespeare's time, it could also mean to get or get a grip on something – like "Oh, now I get it..."