

# Shakespeare's language

*Just imagine...*

In Jimmy's last English lesson, his English teacher had talked about Shakespeare and his language, and had given some examples of it. Old-fashioned, but kind of cool, too, Jimmy thought. Definitely different! That night, he had a strange dream: Shakespeare came and talked to him. Jimmy could not understand everything, but it was fun being back in Shakespeare's time. The next morning, Jimmy knew that something was different, something had happened to him. But what? Maybe you can help him ...



A scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

## 1 Warm up

Look at the following sentences. Do you understand them? Try to write them in modern English.

1. Where dost thou come from?

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2. Can I talk to thee?

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## 2 Help Jimmy

Remember, Jimmy had a strange dream. He gets up in the morning, has breakfast, goes to the bus stop and meets his girlfriend Linda. But what has happened? He can't talk normally anymore! Can you help?

1. Jimmy: My beloved! Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Linda: What are you talking about? Summer? It's November and it's raining. Are you crazy?

You: No, Linda, Jimmy wants to tell you that ... \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Jimmy: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted, hast thou, the master mistress of my passion.

Linda: What? Help! Have I got too much make-up on?!

You: No, Linda, he's only saying that ... \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Jimmy: Linda, thou hast a gentle heart, but not acquainted with shifting change,  
as is false woman's fashion.

Linda: Wow, this is getting better and better: Now you don't like what I'm wearing: "false fashion".  
Thanks a lot, Jimmy. What's wrong with you today?

You: Linda, calm down, he's only trying to tell you that ... \_\_\_\_\_

4. Jimmy: O! let my looks be then the eloquence and dumb presagers of my speaking breast.  
Learn to read what silent love hath writ.

Linda: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think I've had enough of your weird blah-blah for today, Jimmy.  
See you some other time – bye!

You: No, Linda, wait! I know it all sounds really strange to you, but I think he wants to tell you ...

### 3 Become a specialist!

- a) Jimmy's lines from exercise 2 are taken from some of Shakespeare's sonnets. ☞ [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).  
Type in the beginning of Jimmy's lines; try to find out where the sentences come from.

(Or ☞ [www.rhymezone.com/r/gwic.cgi?Word=\\_&Path=shakespeare/poetry/sonnets](http://www.rhymezone.com/r/gwic.cgi?Word=_&Path=shakespeare/poetry/sonnets).  
Here you can click onto the different sonnets and look at each one separately.)

1. Jimmy's lines from sentence 1 are from Sonnet \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Jimmy's lines from sentence 2 are from Sonnet \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Jimmy's lines from sentence 3 are from Sonnet \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Jimmy's lines from sentence 4 are from Sonnet \_\_\_\_\_ .

- b) Read through the sonnets again and decide which sonnet you like most. Give reasons.  
If you don't understand everything, the Shakespeare website above might be able to help you, or  
perhaps this one: [www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespeare-dictionary.htm](http://www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespeare-dictionary.htm)

- c) Can you explain what a sonnet actually is?

**Lösungen:**  
1 (Lösungsvorschläge): 1. No, Linda, Jimmy wants to tell you that you're as beautiful as a summer day (or even more beautiful); 2. No, Linda, he's only saying that you're a natural beauty, and that he likes you VERY much; 3. Linda, calm down, he's only trying to tell you that you're a wonderful person, that you're an open and honest girl/woman. You don't play games; 4. No, Linda, wait! I know it all sounds really strange to you, but I think he wants to tell you that you just have to look into his eyes to see what he feels for you, what his heart is saying about you.  
3a) 1. Jimmy's lines from sentence 1 are from Sonnet 18 (in Roman numerals: XVIII); 2. Jimmy's lines from sentence 2 are from Sonnet 20 (in Roman numerals: XX); 3. Jimmy's lines from sentence 3 are from Sonnet 20; 4. Jimmy's lines from sentence 4 are from Sonnet 23 (in Roman numerals: XXIII).  
3b) Individuelle Antworten.  
3c) A sonnet is a verse form consisting of 14 lines with a fixed rhyme scheme and rhythm pattern.