

How to Swear Like Shakespeare

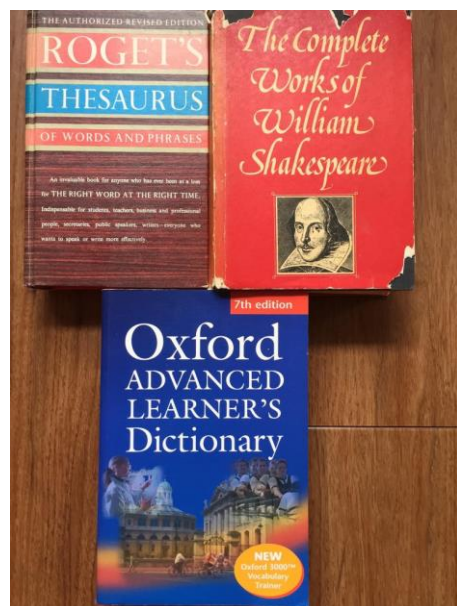
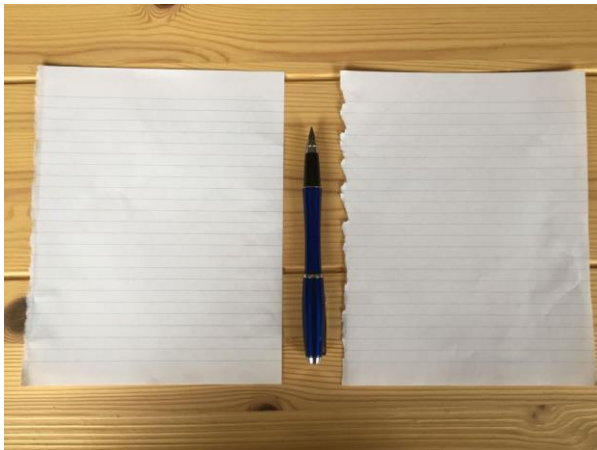
"Methink'st thou art a general offence and every man should beat thee."
- William Shakespeare

Have you ever wanted to insult someone in such a way that it would leave them speechless? But did you find yourself using the same old boring language again? Then you should take a look at William Shakespeare's elegant way of insulting people. Even though he died over four hundred years ago, his witty insults are just as impressive and hilarious today as they were all those centuries ago.

It's not easy to come up with the perfect insult. It takes time and effort, and it's also important to know a little bit about the way Shakespeare concocted his insults before you can give it a go yourself. So pay attention, be patient, and read on.

Disclaimer: I am a nice person. In no way am I trying to be unkind or to spread hate. I simply consider this an entertaining way of using creative language, and I hope you do, too.

Step 1: "I Call for Pen and Ink and Write My Mind" - What You Need



What you need in order to write a proper insult, is, obviously, pen and paper. You might also want to use a pencil for brainstorming.

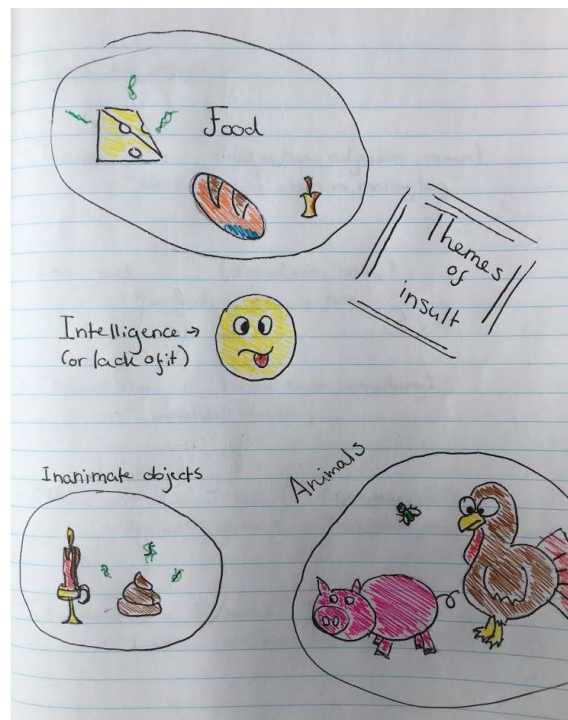
Also make sure you get a dictionary, and, if you have one, a thesaurus. A dictionary is useful, since the English language has changed a lot in four hundred years, and some

words Shakespeare used might have become unfamiliar. A thesaurus, a book that lists words and their synonyms, might come in handy when you want to spice up your language. If you don't have a physical copy, just look it up on the internet - oh, the joys of living in the Digital Age!

Furthermore, if you're really determined to hurt someone to their very core, make sure to get a copy of the *Collected Works of William Shakespeare*. There's a plethora of brilliant examples just waiting to be read that will inspire you to give it your all and come up with the most inventive of insults.

But first: a short introduction to William Shakespeare. Insults 101, so to speak.

Step 2: "I Scorn You, You Scurvy Companion" - Pick the Theme of Your Insult



Shakespeare never just called someone stupid, or smelly, or annoying. That would be far too easy. Instead, he had a wide range of themes he could pick from in order to deliver the cruellest insult imaginable. I will list the most important ones here, accompanied by some examples. Make sure you read them carefully, because you will base your final insults on the next two steps!

- **Personal attributes.** If you want to make it personal, you should focus on intelligence (or lack thereof) or their occupation. Nobody likes it when that happens. "*I was seeking for a fool when I found you.*"

- **Animals.** It's always a good idea to insult someone by telling them they remind you of a specific animal. The more disgusting the animal, the better. We still do that, too. You could call someone a dog or a pig, and everyone would know exactly what you mean. Shakespeare, of course, turned this into an art form in itself. "*What a slug*" or "*A very toad*" are great examples.

- **Food and inanimate objects.** This is kind of the same as the one above, but with food or other things instead of animals: "*Thou art damned like an ill-roasted egg*". Oh, that one hurts! Another one I really like is "*The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes.*"

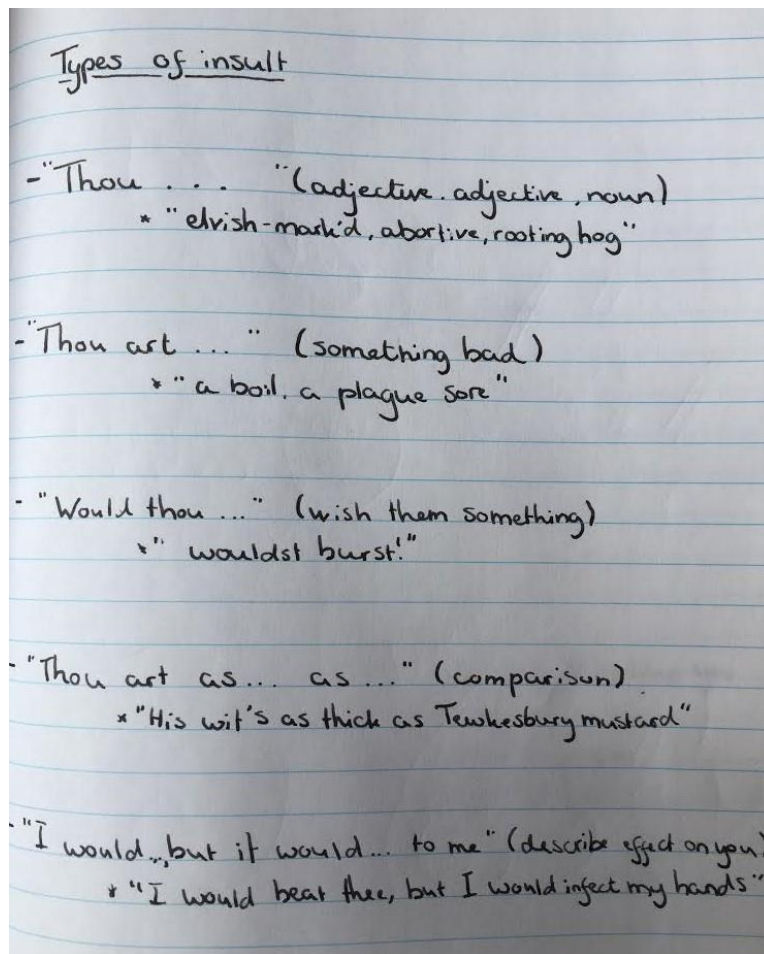
- **Diseases.** Well, this one makes sense, I guess. If someone tells you you're like a disease, that can never be a compliment. Shakespeare specialised on this particular topic, "*Thou art a boil, a plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle*" being one of my favourites, for if one disease doesn't do it, just add some more.

- **Body parts and physical appearance.** It's always fun to refer to someone's body when you want to give them a proper scolding, as many people have at least one aspect they don't like that much about themselves. It's also fun to tell someone that they lack something they should have: "*Thou thing of no bowels, thou*" or that they have something they would rather not have: "*Thou odoriferous stench*".

If you want to look at all these topics in a lovely, insightful infographic, take a look at this site:

<https://curiouscharts.com/products/a-taxonomy-of-great-shakespearean-insults>

Step 3: "Oh Thy Foul One" - Decide on Your Type of Insult



There are several ways in which you can deliver the perfect Shakespearean insults. Some are easier to compose than others, but I want to share the most entertaining ones with you. Read them through, and decide which one you like best, or which one simply works most for you.

- "*Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog.*" This type of Shakespearean insult is by far the most popular one. You simply start your sentence with *thou*, then use **two fancy adjectives, followed by a noun** (choose from any of the themes mentioned in step 2). There are several Shakespeare Insult Generators online, or even available as a hardcover book. Use this site, for instance: <https://9gag.com/gag/aA195WE/the-shakespearean-in...> Just pick a word from each column, and there's your insult. It's a lot of fun to practise with these, as they are relatively easy to create.

- "*Thou art a fleshmonger, a fool and a coward.*" Instead of hurling adjectives at the person you're trying to hurt with your words, just tell them **what they are, loud and clear**. The more insulting words, the better, of course!

- "*Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon.*" Usually when someone wishes you something, it's definitely a good thing. However, Shakespeare turns it around and uses **a wish in order to completely burn them down.**

- "*Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows.*" If you really want to insult someone stylishly, just make sure you **compare them to something.** There are endless examples with this type of insult.

- "*I would beat thee, but I would infect my hands.*". Instead of telling people what they are like, just turn it around by **describing the unpleasant effect the person has on you.** This stings more than just telling people they are, for example, merely disgusting.

There. It's a lot of information, but I hope you've managed to remember most of it. Let's put it into practice now!

Step 4: "'t Is Time to Do 't": Choose Your Insultee



Look at him. He's begging to have a good insult thrown at his arrogant face, isn't he?

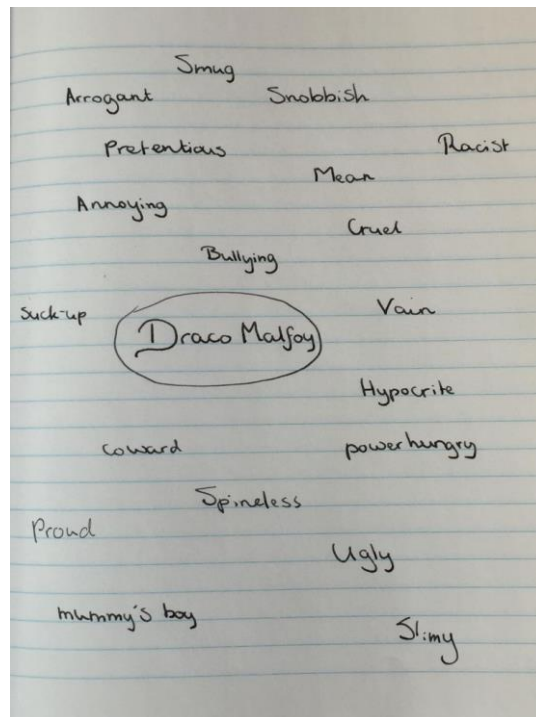
You now know some of the ways in which Shakespeare insulted someone, so the time has come to try it out for yourself. The first thing you have to do is to pick someone you really don't like, someone you would love to hurt or humiliate, making use of nothing but your words.

I have decided to pick Draco Malfoy from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, as he is quite well known, and rather unlikable. This boy is one of Harry's enemies, and he's got several character traits working against him. So let's insult him. Let's hurt him. Let's destroy him, using only our words.

The next couple of steps will show you how to do this, using your brand-new knowledge of William Shakespeare and his methods of insulting.

Note: If you don't know this fictional character, or, inexplicably, don't mind him, you're of course perfectly free to use pick your own victim.

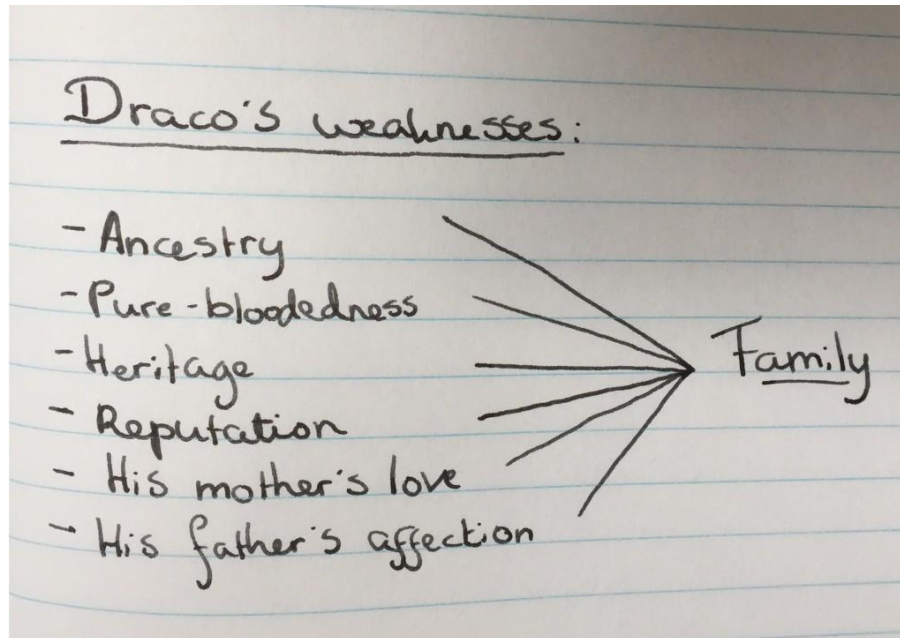
Step 5: "Thou Art False in All" - Write Down Their Worst Qualities



We've just agreed on using Draco Malfoy as the victim of our insults. What you need to do now, is think of all the things that make him annoying, disgusting, evil, or whatever you think of him. Take your pen and paper and create a mindmap of Draco Malfoy and all his bad character traits. Make sure to come up with as many as possible, because you'll need all of them to come up with the perfect insult for this wormy creature.

Look at the picture for inspiration.

Step 6: "In Thee Thy Mother Dies" - Pick the One That Hurts the Most

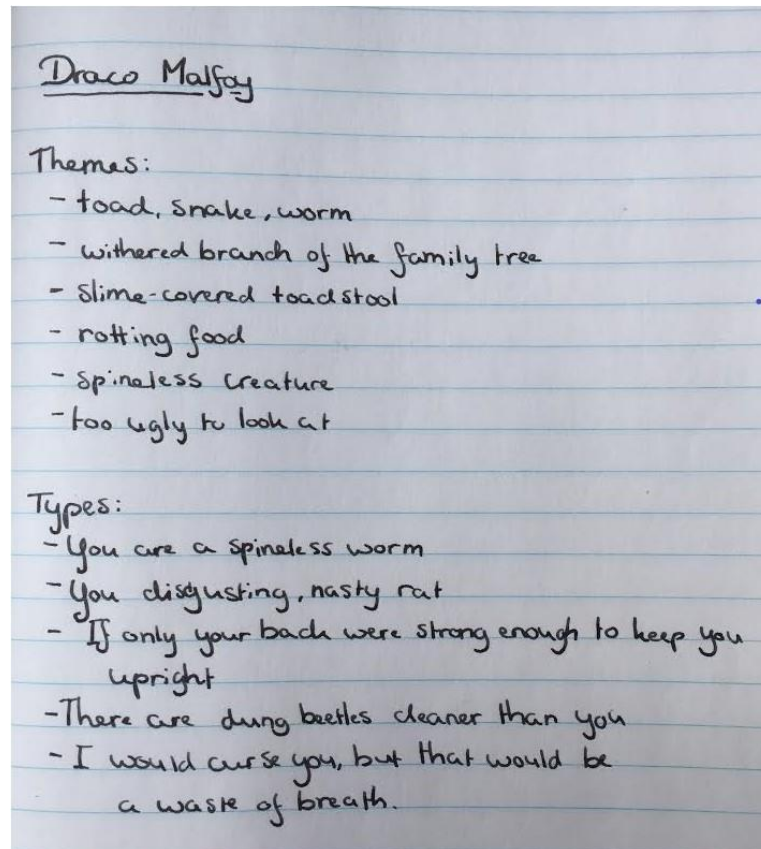


I hope you've been able to come up with all sorts of mean things to say to Draco. The thing is, some of them wouldn't even hurt him. If you'd call him mean or cruel, he'd probably just shrug his shoulders and tell you you'd probably deserve it, then. Likewise, he probably wouldn't even react to a silly insult like ugly or vain. Therefore, it is important to think hard about his vulnerabilities. Only then can you truly hurt him.

Draco is a very proud boy. He's happy to be part of Slytherin, like his parents and grandparents before him. He is well chuffed that his father is a prominent member of the Wizarding Society, and he won't have it if someone speaks ill of his mother. Hmm, I think we're on to something here.

So, let's stick with this idea and go to the next step.

Step 7: "Thou Lump of Foul Deformity" - Shakespearising Your Insult



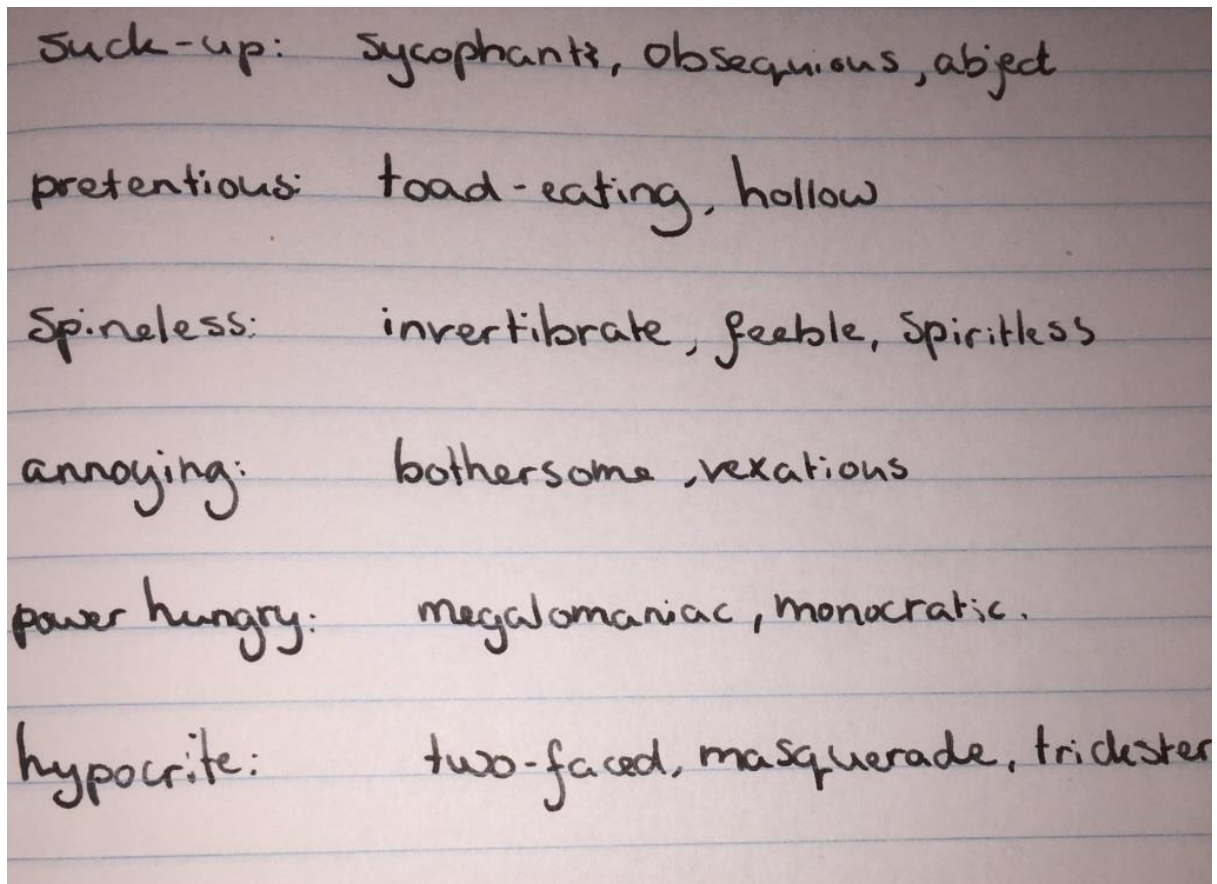
So far, you've decided on who to insult, you know what you want to call them, and you know what would hurt them the most. You are almost done, but not quite. What you need to do now is to make it Shakespearean: pick a topic and a type of insult (I explained this in step two and three).

First think about what sort of insult you want to make. Would you like to comment on his personal attributes, or tell him there are animals that you like better? Or is he a sickness to you, or rather a stone? It's all up to you! The best way to do this, would be to experiment with different themes - it's great fun!

Secondly, what type of insult would you throw at him? A simple "thou ..." one? Or wish him something? Compare him to something? Again, you decide what you like best. Don't forget to write it all down! If you keep notes while coming up with examples, it's so much easier to come up with the perfect insult!

If you're happy with both of these aspects, then you should combine them and write down what you think will become the final version of your insult, but in your own words, in modern language. The only thing that still remains to be done is to make sure it sounds as witty and fancy like Shakespeare. How? Next step!

Step 8: "As Good As Done" - Use Your Thesaurus

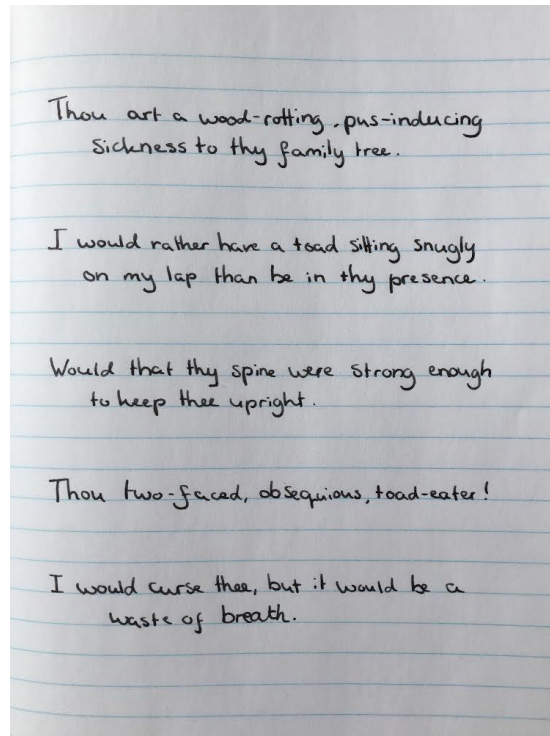


It's time to make sure your words sound old-fashioned, eloquent, and intelligent. In short: try to sound like Shakespeare. Bring out the dictionary and the thesaurus!

Take a look at everything you've written down so far, and determine whether you're happy with all the words you've used in your insult. If not, look these up in the thesaurus and exchange them for better ones. I have tried to do this in the picture above. The synonyms look so much better, don't they?

Also, make sure you change your *yous* into *thous*, *thees*, and *thys*. It makes it sound more authentic. Take a look at this website if you want to be sure you apply the correct word: <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-betwe...>

Step 9: "All's Well That Ends Well" - That's It, You're Done!



We're there. It all started with Draco Malfoy being an annoying little brat who is desperate for some attention of his mother. He is a spineless, ugly, pretentious kid, and he needed a good humiliation. And now look what we've done: these insults really work, don't they? I think they do, and it was jolly good fun to create them.

I have tried to come up with a couple of them, using a different type of insult every time. You can also combine them, of course.

So that's it. That's all you need to know if you want to write your own Shakespearean insult. I promise you, it's so much fun to do, both on your own or with friends. You could even organise a theme night and have a contest on who can come up with the best insults. Enjoy!