

Quoting Shakespeare

Although Shakespeare wrote his plays and poems some 400 years ago, the stories and the characters can be just as interesting and real today as they were then. However, the language used all those years ago was sometimes rather different from the one we use nowadays and it is not always easy to understand what Shakespeare meant. Some of the words he used were 'coined' (invented) by him. Yet many of his expressions are still familiar to us today - we regularly speak Shakespeare without realising it.

Take a look at this short text by journalist Bernard Levin, "On Quoting Shakespeare":

"If you cannot understand my argument, and declare **"It's Greek to me"**, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be **more sinned against than sinning**, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your **salad days**, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act **more in sorrow than in anger**, if your **wish is father to the thought**, if your **lost property** has **vanished into thin air**, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to **budge an inch** or suffered from **green-eyed jealousy**, if you have **played fast and loose**, if you have been **tongue-tied**, a **tower of strength**, **hoodwinked** or in a **pickle**, if you have **knitted your brows**, **made a virtue of necessity**, insisted on **fair play**, **slept not one wink**, **stood on ceremony**, **danced attendance** (on your lord and master), **laughed yourself into stitches**, had **short shrift**, **cold comfort** or **too much of a good thing**, if you have **seen better days** or lived in a **fool's paradise** - why, **be that as it may**, the **more fool you**, for it is a **foregone conclusion** that you are (as **good luck would have it**) quoting Shakespeare; if you think it is **early days** and clear out **bag and baggage**, if you think it is **high time** and that **that is the long and short of it**, if you believe that **the game is up** and that **truth will out** even if it involves your **own flesh and blood**, if you **lie low** till the **crack of doom** because you suspect **foul play**, if you have your **teeth set on edge** (at **one fell swoop**) **without rhyme or reason**, then - to **give the devil his due** - if the truth were known (for surely you have a **tongue in your head**) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you **bid me good riddance** and **send me packing**, if you wish I were **dead as a door-nail**, if you think I am an **eyesore**, a **laughing stock**, the **devil incarnate**, a **stony-hearted villain**, **bloody-minded** or a **blinking idiot**, then - **by Jove! O Lord! Tut, tut! for goodness' sake! what the dickens!** but me no buts - it is **all one to me**, for you are quoting Shakespeare."



