

Name _____

Shakespearean Puns

Directions: The following is a list of five puns taken from plays written by Shakespeare. Using the Visual Thesaurus, analyze how each of these puns “works” by identifying the key word or words in the quote that are the subject of Shakespeare’s wordplay. Which puns are homographic (relying on a word’s multiple meanings) and which ones are homophonic (relying on words that sound alike)?

1. *Richard III* (Act I scene 1)

“Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York...”

Context: These are the opening lines of *Richard III*. King Richard III was the son of the Duke of York.

2. *Romeo and Juliet* (Act I scene IV)

Romeo: “Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling.

Being but heavy, I will bear the light.”

Context: Romeo is reluctant to attend a party because he is suffering from a broken heart.

3. *Romeo and Juliet* (Act I scene IV)

Mercutio: “Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.”

Romeo: “Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes

With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead

So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.”

Context: Romeo is reluctant to attend a party because he is suffering from a broken heart.

4. *Hamlet* (Act I scene II)

Claudius: “...But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son...”

Hamlet: [*aside*] “A little more than kin, and less than kind.”

Context: Hamlet is upset that his uncle Claudius has married his mother. Hint: Think of “kind” as also short for “kindred.”

5. *Much Ado About Nothing* (Act II scene I)

Beatrice: “The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well: but civil, count; civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion.”

Context: Beatrice is referring to the character Claudio. Hint: There is a type of bitter orange that comes from Seville, Spain.
