Font of Knowledge: Understanding the Language of Shakespeare

Reading and understanding Shakespeare can be challenging for 21st Century readers. His plays are in verse. Syntax and grammar are a little different. Many words are spelled as they are today but mean something different. Or they’re spelled differently and have the same meaning as today. But once we moderns get past these barriers, Shakespeare’s works come to life and have profound meaning for us even today.

This assignment is a way to get through that language barrier. It will be completed in 4 steps:

1. **Select a scene passage or soliloquy:** Read through the packet of preselected passages from The Tempest. While you might not have a complete understanding of the text, which passage speaks to you the most? Which resonates with you? (Don’t try to pick the shortest, they are all about the same length.) Select that one. Read it through several times. Then write a summary of what you believe the passage is saying. Check in with Mr. van Dyke to confirm that you’re on the right track.

2. **Identify parts of speech:** For homework you will highlight and identify active verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and strong nouns in the passage you selected. Additionally, you will write down any questions you have about the passage, its overall meaning, or the meaning of particular words or lines in the passage. Be prepared to ask these questions tomorrow of one of your classmates or Mr. van Dyke.

3. **Lab time & transcription:** Next we will spend one class period in the computer lab where nearly 100 fonts have been loaded onto the computers for this project. Using your passage and parts of speech notes from last night’s homework, you must complete the following:
   a. Type your chosen passage into Word using a plain font (Arial or Times New Roman).
   b. Then using your homework notes go back over the typed text. As you go through, change the fonts for the highlighted words, selecting fonts that **visually express the meaning or feeling of the words**. The point here is to use the unique characteristics of the font to express the meaning of the word and the overall text. Feel free to use **bold, italics, or underlining** in addition to the fonts if you think that will help you be able to express the meaning of the text. See the example below.

   ![](example_font.png)

   Print out two (2) copies of your script when you’re finished formatting. Keep one for yourself and turn one in to Mr. van Dyke before you leave the lab.

4. **Oral interpretation:** For homework, you will practice reading the passage aloud. Your oral interpretation should express the moods and feelings conveyed by the fonts you chose. Tomorrow you will have 20 minutes to work with two other classmates to read your passages aloud to each other and receive feedback. You will then read the your passage to the class. The goal is to read it not just with feeling, but with understanding. It does not – and arguably, **should not** – be memorized. You will be assessed both on the thoughtfulness and creativity of your printed text as well as your understanding of the text as exhibited by your clear oral interpretation.
[Rubric attached]