



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **12th Grade** | Unit 6

LANGUAGE ARTS 1206

ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

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Author:

Norine J. Reed, MA.

Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

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Elizabethan Literature

Introduction

Five members of the Tudor family ruled England from 1485 to 1603. Of those one hundred eighteen years, Queen Elizabeth I ruled for forty-five (1558–1603). During her reign, the religious, political, economic, and intellectual changes that had begun under her grandfather, Henry VII, and her father, Henry VIII, reached a climax. The result was a flourishing of the arts and patriotism. As Queen, Elizabeth not only ruled but also gloriously represented the spirit of her times. Both she and her people loved and lived life with zest. The Elizabethan Age was one of exuberance and enthusiasm.

The medieval focus on life after death gave way to an Elizabethan emphasis on the here and now. Though still religious, Elizabeth's subjects vigorously pursued the pleasures and benefits of worldly living.

Religion itself had been a source of controversy and struggle in England since the reign of Henry VIII. When the Catholic Pope refused to grant Henry a divorce from his Spanish wife, Catherine, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn, Henry cut ties with the Church in Rome and established himself as the head of the Anglican Church of England. Thus, Henry VIII introduced the Protestant Reformation, begun in Germany, to England. Though Henry generally maintained a balance between the Protestant and Catholic elements, his successors did not. The power struggle between religions accelerated under Henry's son and immediate successor, Edward VI, and under Mary, Henry's daughter by Catherine and successor to Edward. After Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn, took the throne she definitively reestablished the Anglican Church.

One of the greatest crises England encountered during Elizabeth's reign was an attack by the powerful Spanish Navy. In July, 1588, Philip II of Spain sent his Invincible Armada to invade England. The Spaniards lost over sixty-three ships and nine thousand men, and Spanish dominion of the seas was ended. England ruled the seas, and her spirit of pride and patriotism soared.

The Elizabethan Age was a period of geographical explorations and expansion. Consequently, England emerged as a leader in the European race to build commercial empires. Trade with distant countries provided a new source of wealth to the middle-class merchants.

Enjoying the spirit of success, England was an eager recipient of the spirit of "rebirth" or "reawakening" that was influencing the thought of sixteenth-century Europe.

This "rebirth," later labeled by historians as the Renaissance, was sparked by a renewed interest in the classics of ancient Greece and Rome. It also resulted in a burst of creativity in and cultivation of the fine arts, in a growth in the spirit of individualism, in an expansion of intellectual thought, and in a new insight into the purpose and significance of the human person.

The Renaissance emphasis on the magnificence and wonder of the individual person as well as of the surrounding world encouraged the Elizabethan to consider life as more than a process of waiting for life after death. They believed that life was exciting and beautiful and should be enjoyed immediately. Shakespeare's Hamlet exclaims, "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable."

The Renaissance ideal expanded the concept of the individual to include all aspects—spiritual, rational, emotional, and physical—of the human personality. The Elizabethan exuberance, therefore, was a reflection of a seemingly limitless desire to know and to do and to be.

The English literature of the Renaissance offers ample proof of the Elizabethan respect for life and beauty, wherever it may be found. In this LIFE PAC® you will read and study the songs and sonnets of the poets. You will study the prose of the King James Bible. You will examine the development of the English drama and read one of Shakespeare's plays. Finally, you will analyze and criticize the play you have read.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFE PAC®. When you have finished this LIFE PAC, you will be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of Elizabethan songs.
2. List the basic techniques for interpreting songs and sonnets.
3. Define the literary devices used in poetry and prose.
4. Define the sonnet and its rhythm and rhyme patterns.
5. Identify sonnet forms and the common themes and subjects used by Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne.
6. Explain the background of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible and three literary forms used by Scripture writers.
7. Explain why Francis Bacon was an outstanding essayist of his time.
8. Trace the development of English drama.
9. Identify the characteristics of Elizabethan English.
10. List the three major types of drama written by Shakespeare.
11. Define tragedy as a type of drama as it applies to *Hamlet*.
12. Trace the chronological development of plot in *Hamlet*.
13. Outline the structure of the plot of tragedy and its related elements in *Hamlet*.
14. Identify the personality traits of each of the seven major characters in *Hamlet* and their relationships with minor characters.
15. Explain the major conflicts in *Hamlet*.
16. Define criticism and its dependence on evidence.
17. Explain the methods of writing critical essays.
18. Identify the five steps used in writing a critical essay.
19. Write a critical essay on one of *Hamlet's* characters.

Survey the LIFE PAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study and write your questions here.

1. ELIZABETHAN POETRY AND PROSE

Elizabethan poetry offers a variety of thoughts in words and rhythms that are pleasing to hear. The prose of the King James Version of the Bible presents God’s Word in messages that are clear and direct. The ease with which you may enjoy this literature could lead you to the mistaken conclusion that the writer’s task is an easy one. In this section you will analyze some of the devices the writer must use to create poetry and prose that are melodious and meaningful. Your familiarity with these devices, in turn, will aid you in interpreting what you read.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of Elizabethan songs.
2. List the basic techniques for interpreting songs and sonnets.
3. Define the literary devices used in poetry and prose.
4. Define the sonnet and its rhythm and rhyme patterns.
5. Identify sonnet forms and the common themes and subjects used by Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne.
6. Explain the background of the publication of the King James Version of the Bible and three literary forms used by Scripture writers.
7. Explain why Francis Bacon was an outstanding essayist of his time.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| abstraction | courtier | petition |
| archaic | deviate | pithy |
| complemented | equating | quest |
| concrete | immortalize | sequences |
| contrition | | |

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

SONGS

The exuberance of the Elizabethan Age often expressed itself in songs, some spontaneous and others carefully designed. The development of musical instruments, such as the *virginal* and *viola da gamba*, **completed** this impulse to sing. Nearly everyone in Elizabethan times could sing or play a musical instrument. In 1577 Richard Tottel published the first collection of songs and lyrics under the title *Songs and Sonnets*. This book, however, usually is called *Tottel's Miscellany*. Similar song books soon appeared, some with titles such as *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* and *The Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*. Like these titles, many of the Elizabethan songs were decorative and elaborate; others, however, were clear and simple.

Elizabethan songs often alluded to Greek mythology. Such references are a natural way for Renaissance songwriters to express their admiration of classical times. In the poem “The Triumph of Charis” the poet used Charis as his subject. In Greek mythology, Charis is the personification of beauty and charm.

“The Triumph of Charis”

See the chariot at hand here of Love,
 Wherein my lady rideth!
 Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
 And well the car Love guideth.
 As she goes, all hearts do duty
 Unto her beauty;
 And enamor'd, do wish, so they might
 But enjoy such a sight,
 That they still were to run by her side,
 Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light
 All that Love's world compriseth!
 Do but look on her hair, it is bright
 As Love's star when it riseth!
 Do but mark, her forehead smoother
 Than words that soothe her;
 And from her arched brows, such a grace
 Sheds itself through the face
 As alone there triumphs to the life
 All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
 Before rude hands have touched it?
 Have you marked but the fall of the snow
 Before the soil hath smutched it?
 Have you felt the wool of the beaver?
 Or swan's down¹ ever?
 Or have smelt o' the bud of the briar²?
 Or the nard³ in the fire?
 Or have tested the bag of the bee⁴?
 O so white! O so soft! O so sweet is she!

— Ben Jonson

1 *down*: soft, fine feathers

2 *bud of the briar*: the wild rose

3 *nard*: an aromatic substance

4 *bag of the bee*: honey

**“Golden Slumbers Kiss Your Eyes”
from THE PLEASANT COMEDY OF PATIENT GRISILL**

Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles awake you when you rise;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby:
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

Care is heavy, therefore sleep you;
You are care, and care must keep you;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby:
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

— Thomas Dekker

“Song” from CYMBELINE

Hark, hark! the lark at heaven’s gate sings,
And Phoebus gins¹ arise,
His steeds² to water at those springs
On chalic’d³ flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds⁴ begin
To ope their golden eyes.
With every thing that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise;
Arise, arise!

— William Shakespeare

1 *gins*: begin

2 *steeds*: horses

3 *chalic’d*: cup-shaped

4 *Mary-buds*: marigolds

“Song” from MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more!
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea, and one on shore;
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no moe,
Of dumps so dull and heavy!
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

— William Shakespeare

**“The Man of Life Upright”
from A BOOK OF AIRS: XVIII**

The man of life upright,
Whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanity;

The man whose silent days
In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
Nor sorrow discontent;

That man needs neither towers
Nor armor for defense,
Nor secret faults to fly
From thunder’s violence.

He only can behold
With unaffrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep
And terrors of the skies.

Thus, scorning all the cares
That fate or fortune brings,
He makes the heaven his book,
His wisdom heavenly things,

Good thoughts his only friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober inn
And quiet pilgrimage.

— Thomas Campion

**“Spring, the Sweet Spring ...”
from SUMMER’S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT**

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year’s pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
Cuckoo, jug-jug¹, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The palm² and may³ make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe⁴ all day
And we hear aye⁵ birds tune this merry lay⁶:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!
Spring, the sweet spring!

— Thomas Nashe

- 1 *jug-jug*: sound of the nightingale
2 *palm*: willow
3 *may*: hawthorn
4 *pipe*: play a shepherd’s flute
5 *aye*: always
6 *lay*: song

Answer these questions.

- 1.1 Which of the five songs was the least simple and clear? _____

- 1.2 Which song would a mother most likely sing to a child at bedtime? _____

- 1.3 Which song is a morning, awakening song? _____

- 1.4 Which song focuses on the fickleness of men? _____

- 1.5 Which song offers praise for and consolation to the person who tries to lead a virtuous life?

- 1.6 Over what does Charis triumph? (Reread lines 5–6 and 7–9 if necessary.)



804 N. 2nd Ave. E.
Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

800-622-3070
www.aop.com

LAN1206 – July '17 Printing

ISBN 978-1-58095-356-6



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