

26 archaic words worth memorizing for readers of Shakespeare

anon (adv.)

soon, shortly, presently

Ham III.ii.272 [Hamlet to Ophelia] You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife

aught (n.)

anything; [together with a negative word] nothing

Ham IV.iii.60 [Claudius, as if to the King of England] if my love thou holdest at aught

Ham V.ii.357 [Horatio to Fortinbras] If aught of woe or wonder

avaunt (int.)

begone, go away, be off

Mac III.iv.92 [Macbeth to Banquo's ghost] Avaunt, and quit my sight!

ay (int.)

yes

aye (adv.)

always, ever, for eternity

MND I.i.72 You can endure the livery of a nun / For aye

countenance (n.)

face, expression

countenance (v.)

stand, stomach, withstand

cozen (v.)

cheat

fain (adv.)

[usually with would] gladly, willingly

Ham II.ii.131 [Polonius to Claudius] I would fain prove so

Ham IV.vii.190 [Laertes to Claudius] I have a speech o'fire that fain would blaze

forsooth (adv.)

in truth, certainly, truly, indeed

1H4 I.iii.138 [Hotspur to Worcester and Northumberland, of King Henry] He will forsooth have all my prisoners

hence (adv.)

(to go) away, away from here

hie (v.)

hasten, hurry, speed

Ham I.i.155 [Horatio to Marcellus and Barnardo] Th'extravagant and erring spirit hies / To his confine

hither (adv.)

(to come) this way, towards us

knave (n.) scoundrel, rascal, rogue, as in Ham V.i.135 [Hamlet to Horatio, of the First Clown]
How absolute the knave is!

pate (n.)
head, skull

CE II.i.78 [Adriana to Dromio of Ephesus] Back, slave, or I will break thy pate across

peradventure (adv.)

perhaps, maybe, very likely

E3 V.i.22 [Edward to Calais Citizens] You, peradventure, are but servile grooms

perchance (adv.)

perhaps, maybe

CE IV.i.39 [Antipholus of Ephesus to Angelo] Per chance I will be there as soon as you

perforce (adv.)

1 forcibly, by force, violently

R2 II.iii.120 [Bolingbroke to York] my rights and royalties / Plucked from my arms perforce

2 of necessity, with no choice in the matter

R2 V.ii.35 [York to Duchess of York] The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted

thence (adv.)

(to go away) from that place, from there

thither (adv.)

(to go) to that place, to there

thou, thee, thy (pron.)

2nd person familiar forms of you, in nominative, objective and possessive cases.

visage (n.)

face, countenance

MV III.ii.59 [Portia to Bassanio, of the Trojan wives] With bleared visages come forth to view /
The issue of th'exploit

want (v.)

lack, need, be without

Ham I.ii.150 [Hamlet alone] a beast that wants discourse of reason / Would have mourned
longer

wanton (adj.)

1 carefree

2 unrestrained, incorrigible

3 immoral, lewd

whence (adv.)

from where, from there

wont (v.)

be accustomed, used [to], be in the habit of

1H6 I.ii.14 [Regnier to all] Talbot is taken, whom we wont to fear

23 Shakespearean "false friends," words easily mistaken because the meanings have shifted since Shakespeare's time

an or **and** (conj.)

if

bootless (adj.)

without booty, unprofitable

get (v.)

produce offspring, have children

glass (n.)

mirror, looking-glass

Ham III.i.154 [Ophelia alone, of Hamlet] The glass of fashion

habit (n.)

dress, clothing, costume

H5 III.vi.111 [Montjoy to King Henry] You know me by my habit

haply, happily (adv.)

perhaps, maybe, by chance, with luck

Ham IV.i.40 [Claudius to Gertrude] So haply slander ... may miss our name

humour (n.)

mood, disposition, frame of mind, temperament [as determined by bodily fluids]

CE II.ii.7 [Antipholus of Syracuse to Dromio of Syracuse] Is your merry humour altered?

ill (adj.)

bad, adverse, unfavourable

AC II.ii.160 [Antony to Caesar, of Pompey] I must thank him only, / Lest my remembrance suffer

ill report

ill (adv.)

badly, adversely, unfavourably

1H6 IV.i.74 [King to Talbot, of Burgundy] Let him perceive how ill we brook his treason

issue (n.)

1 child(ren), offspring, family, descendant

Mac III.i.64 [Macbeth alone] for Banquo's issue have I filed my mind

2 outcome, result, consequence(s)

H5 V.ii.12 [Queen Isabel to King Henry] happy be the issue ... / Of this good day

mark (v.)

note, pay attention to, take notice of

Ham II.i.15 [Polonius to Reynaldo] Do you mark this?

marry (int.)

mild oath: by the Virgin Mary

meet (adj.)

fit, suitable, right, proper

Ham I.v.107 [Hamlet alone] meet it is I set it down

Ham I.v.171 [Hamlet to Horatio and Marcellus] As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

methinks (v.)

it seems / seems to me

Ham V.ii.98 [Hamlet to Osrick] But yet methinks it is very sultry

Ham V.ii.5 [Hamlet to Horatio] Methought I lay / Worse than the mutines in the bilboes

office (n.)

task, service, duty, responsibility

MND II.ii.8 [Titania to Fairies] Sing me now asleep; / Then to your offices

owe (v.)

own, possess, have

AW III.ii.119 [Helena alone] all the miseries which nature owes

present (adj.)

immediate, instant

Ham V.i.291 [Claudius to Laertes] We'll put the matter to the present push

presently (adv.)

immediately, instantly, at once

TNK II.i.277 [Gaoler to Arcite] you must presently to th'Duke

rail (v.)

rant, rave, be abusive [about]

CE IV.iv.72 [Antipholus of Ephesus to Dromio of Ephesus, of Adriana] Didst not her kitchen-maid rail, taunt, and scorn me?

several (adj.)

separate, different, distinct

E3 I.i.168 [Prince Edward to all] Then cheerfully forward, each a several way

soft (int.)

wait!

something (adv.)

somewhat, rather

Cym I.ii.17 [Innogen to Posthumus] I something fear my father's wrath

Ham I.iii.121 [Polonius to Ophelia] Be something scatter of your maiden presence

wherefore (adv.)

why

wit (n.)

1 intelligence, wisdom, good sense

1H6 I.ii.73 [Pucelle to Dauphin] I am by birth a shepherd's daughter, / My wit untrained in any kind of art

2 mental sharpness, acumen, quickness, ingenuity

AYL V.i.11 [Touchstone to himself] we that have good wits have much to answer for