

Elizabethan Words and Expressions

Pronoun Usage Thee, Thou, Thy, and Thine

Regarding the “thou” form of address-- it is second person singular (you) **informal**, and so should only be used with those you are on close terms with or those of a “lower” social status than you.

To determine which of these pronouns to use, you must determine the job it is going to do. If it will be a subject, as in “You are looking lovely today,” or “Will you please hand me that basket?” then use “thou.” For an object, as in “Did he give it to you?” or “The basket is beside you,” then “thee” is the appropriate pronoun. To indicate possession, such as in “Your eyes are the loveliest I have ever seen,” or “Your mug is on that table,” use “thy” or “thine.” “Thy” precedes words that start with a consonant sound; “thine” precedes those that begin with a vowel sound. “Thy mug.” “Thine eyes.” In first person (I), “my” and “mine” function the same way: “my mug” “mine eyes.”

Second person *plural* informal (i.e., you all) is “ye,” as in “Oh, ye gods of little fishes!” The Rhode Island equivalent is “youse” as in “youse guys.”

	Subject	Object	Possessive
1st person singular	I	me	my, mine * *
2nd person singular	you (formal), thou (informal)	thee	thy * , thine * *
3rd person singular	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her its
1st person plural	we	us	our
2nd person plural	ye (i.e. you all)	you	your
3rd person plural	they	them	their

* Precedes words beginning with a consonant.

** Precedes words beginning with a vowel.

Verb Conjugation

With the addition of the “thou” form and the difference between the modern and the Elizabethan conjugation of the he/she/it form, it may help to review present tense verb conjugation a bit. The other tenses are largely the same.

	to do	to have	to be	to run	to fight
I	do	have	am	run	fight
you (singular)	do	have	are	run	fight
thou	dost	hast	art	runnest	fightest
he/she/it	doth	hath	is	runneth	fighteth
we	do	have	are	run	fight
ye (you plural)	do	have	are	run	fight
they	do	have	are	run	fight

Some Rules of Thumb

Turn it Upside Down

Use a double negative to indicate a positive, such as “not unkindly” for “nice,” “not unlovely” for “pretty,” or “not ill-formed” for “shapely.”

Do be do be do

Add some form of the verb “to do” to the front of an action verb to give it a slight emphasis. “He did fight well this day.” “She does speak highly of the boot merchant.”

Shorten “it”

Use contractions with the pronoun “it” and the verb “to be.” ‘Tis, ‘Twas, ‘Twould, ‘Twasn’t, Is’t? Avoid all other contractions.

Not!

Put “not” after an action verb to negate it. “I know not where I left my purse.” “He ate not at lunch today.” “I care not for mushrooms.” “She fought not this day.”

Double it

Double comparisons add a little flavor to life, and can be either positive or negative. “That was the most unseemliest remark.” “A more lovelier dress I never did see.”

Words to Replace

Okay

We use “okay” to indicate agreement, to indicate a state of wellness, or to indicate acceptance or approval. Below is a delightful array of words used in this period to convey these meanings.

Instead of...	Try...
“Okay” when asked if you will do something.	Willingly, Gladly, Certainly, Right willingly, For certes, By your command, Aye
Are you okay? I’m not okay.	Are you well? Art thou well? I am ill. I am unwell.

Hi/Bye

Instead of “Hi!” or “Bye!” try Good morrow, Good day, Good even, Good evening, I give you greetings, Fare you/thee well.

Pretty it up

Replace...	With...	Replace...	With...
anything	aught	later	anon
nothing	naught	maybe	perchance, perhaps
here	hither	lack	dearth
there	thither	before	ere
over there	yon	please	prithee, I pray thee

Elizabethan words appearing in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*

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|-----|--------------------|---|-----|------------------|---|
| 1. | withal | immediately thereafter;
additionally | 26. | kinsman | a male relative or
compatriot |
| 2. | “by your
leave” | Request for permission | 27. | marry | well, indeed, really, |
| 3. | “in faith” | indeed; truly | 28. | masque | a masquerade party |
| 4. | adieu | farewell | 29. | methinks | I think |
| 5. | ado | fuss | 30. | nay | a denial |
| 6. | afeard | Afraid | 31. | ne'er | never |
| 7. | alack | a sorrowful interjection | 32. | o'er | over |
| 8. | anon | at once; later | 33. | oft | often |
| 9. | ay | Yes | 34. | pray | to beg earnestly |
| 10. | beseech | beg earnestly | 35. | dispatch | to send away; to execute
someone |
| 11. | beshrew | to be angry with | 36. | sirrah | fellow (often used in the
informal) |
| 12. | betimes | sometimes; soon | 37. | soft | wait |
| 13. | cur | mongrel; coward | 38. | sooth | truth |
| 14. | Doctor | Lawyer | 39. | strange | foreign |
| 15. | ere | before; rather than | 40. | surfeit | to overindulge |
| 16. | fair | pleasing | 41. | tarry | delay; wait |
| 17. | fain | want to | 42. | straight | immediately |
| 18. | fie | interjection of disapproval | 43. | thrice | three times |
| 19. | gaol | Jail | 44. | troth | good faith; betrothal |
| 20. | hath | has | 45. | uttermost | utmost |
| 21. | “ hie thee” | go quickly | 46. | wherefore | why |
| 22. | hither | toward here | 47. | whither | where |
| 23. | how now! | a friendly greeting | 48. | wilt | will (second person) |
| 24. | I would | I wish | 49. | withal | additionally; immediately
thereafter |
| 25. | Jacks | Men | 50. | wont | accustomed to |