

Elizabethan as a Second Language

Greetings

Good morrow, Good day or Good den
Give you good even, Good night
Well met, How now, God save you

Farewells

Good day, God save you, etc.
God keep you, Godspeed
Fare you well, Adieu

Forms of address: Nobles

Your Grace (Queen, princes, bishops)
My Lord, My Lady, Noble sir, Noble lady
Good my Lord, Good my Lady
Lord [Title]; Sir [Firstname]

Forms of address: general

Sir, Madam, Master, Mistress
Goodman, Goodwife, Goody
Mother, Father, Gaffer, Gammer
Lad, lass, young master, little lady, etc.
also girl, boy, maid, wench

The curtsey or “reverence”

(Men, remove hat first)
(1) Take half a step back with one foot
(2) Weight on both feet, bend both knees
(3) Keep back straight, head up
(4) Wait for “Pray, recover,” or gesture

Thou Thee Thy Thine

I	Me	My	Mine
You	You	Your	Yours

Verbs

I am Thou art He is
I have Thou hast He hath
I was Thou wast He was
(or Thou wert)
I do Thou dost He doth
I shall Thou shalt He shall
I go Thou goest He goeth

Imperative: Go thou and do likewise!

Be, were: regional or subjunctive

If I were; Be you friend or foe?
If, unless, suppose, whether, would, should, etc.

Double negatives

Nay, he had no beer, nor water neither

Double positives

More beautifuller, most strongest

Contractions

I am, do not, cannot, he is, etc.
'Tis, 'Twas, 'Twere, 'Twould, Is't
E'en, ne'er, o'er, o'

Leaving out words

I shall [go] to marker
[Come]To me!
Canst[thou] not hear? Art [thou] deaf?
What's o'clock?
What's toward?
I'll [have] none of that.

More good words

for Yes: Yes, Aye, Yea

for No: No, Nay

for Okay: Good, Well enow

for Please: If it please you/thee,
An it please you, I pray you,
Prithee (I pray thee), Pray

for Thanks: My thanks, many thanks, God grant
you mercy, Grant you mercy, Gramercy

for Really: In sooth, forsooth, verily, truly, surely,
indeed, Marry

In very sooth: code for “This is real”

for Excuse me: I cry you mercy, I pray your par-
don, Pray forgive me, Pray pardon me

for It's true: I trow, I think me, Methinks

for Maybe: Mayhap, Belike, Perchance,
Peradventure

for Doubt: Go to! Is it so? Even so? In sooth?

for Wow: Marry! Well! In faith! In sooth!

for Oh, no: God-a-mercy, God's me, Alas, Lackaday,
Out upon it, Welladay, Fie!

Oaths

God's teeth, God's death, God's blood,
Odds bodikins, 'Sblood, 'Swounds
By Hercules, by Zeus, by Minerva

Saints

By St. Dismas (the crazy), St. Cecilia (music),
St. Agnes (sheep), St. Barbara (explosives);
By St. Peter's keys, etc.

Praise, comparisons

Fair as a summer's day
As thick as porridge
Green as grass.... etc.
NOT wondrous, beauteous, marvellous

Pronunciation

A: My father and my daughter have watered the garden ere they wandered up the walk.

Long A: The baker makes a daily cake for the gracious lady of the lake and her maidens.

EA: By the sweat of his head, he earns his bread ere he be dead.

ER: Mercy, cold water is better to the thirsty in pewter than in a pitcher of silver.

I/Y: My, thy fly doth fly high. Aye, I sigh, for my sighs I am like to die.

OR: My lord's sword is stored at the forward door.

U: Come, cousin, comfort thy love with a cup of buttermilk, and look to thy luck.

OW: How now, let us plow with the sow, since only thou knowst how the brown cow can be found.

S: I assure thee certain, that to fashion a cushion one must sew surely.

Z: At my leisure, I may treasure the pleasure of a good measure of ale.

T: It is my nature to venture my departure to seek my fortune but I must pasture my sheep.

Extra syllables: Marriage takes passion, patience and affection to reach perfection.

-ED: Those who wed used to be better advised in days long passed.

Proverbs & expressions

A friend is never known till a man have need.

A wonder lasts but nine days.

Bachelors boast how they will teach their wives.

Be the day never so long, at last they ring to evensong.

Some bargains dear bought, good cheap would be sold.

Every cock is proud on his own dunghill.

Great boast and small roast make unsavory mouths.

Be not busy or bold with your biggers or betters.

That the eye sees not, the heart rues not.

When the fox preaches, beware our geese.

Frenzy, heresy and jealousy are seldom cured.

More haste less speed.

He that will not when he may, when he would he shall have nay.

Soon ripe, soon rotten.

Readings

1. Graziano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all the day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search.

2. When ever thou bargain, for better or worse, Let alway one bargain remain in thy purse. Good credit doth well, but good credit to keep Is pay and dispatch him, ere ever thou sleep.

3. (A RIDDLE) I washed my hands with water,
Which was neither rain nor run,
I dried them with a towel
That was neither wove nor spun. (ANSWER BELOW)

4. (A RIDDLE) When I was young and beautiful, I wore a blue crown. When I was old and stiff, they tied a rope round my body. Then I was cudgelled and beaten and dragged away from house and home. What am I? (ANSWER BELOW)

Books

Early Modern English, by Charles Barber. 1997, Edinburgh University Press. ISBN 0-7486-0835-4
(Probably the best available introduction.)

A Way With Words: The language of English Renaissance literature, by Gert Ronberg. 1992, Edward Arnold, ISBN 0-340-49307-0.
(A bit livelier and easier to read than Barber; unfortunately out of print, look for it used.)

The English Language: A Historical Introduction, by Charles Barber. 2000, Cambridge University Press, ISBN 0-521-78570-7 pbk.
(A short, but comprehensive, history of English)

Introduction to Early Modern English, by Manfred Görlach. 1991, Cambridge University Press, ISBN 0-521-31046-6 pbk.
(Heavy reference book, but excellent)

A Shakespearian Grammar: An Attempt to Illustrate Some of the Differences Between Elizabethan and Modern English, by E. A. Abbott. 1870, republished 2003 by Dover Publications, ISBN 0-486-43135-5.
(An old(1870) book reprinted; lots of examples from Shakespeare, but use with caution.)

The Archaeology of English, by Martyn Wakelin. 1988, Barnes & Noble, ISBN 0-389-20859-0.
(Rather textbook-y, but thorough & interesting.)

The Story of English, by Robert McCrum, William Cran, Robert MacNeil. 1986, Penguin Books, ISBN 0-14-009435-0.
(This is the book from the BBC/PBS series.)

ANSWER: (3) Dew and sunshine; (4) A flax plant.