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**THE WRITINGS OF SHAKESPEARE IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN  
SCENARIO - THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN**

(Teaching to the Undergraduates of Engineering and Technology in English Language Lab and Classroom)

Dr. Uma Devi, Professor of English ([umagreenlands@yahoo.com](mailto:umagreenlands@yahoo.com))  
Ms. Latha Suhasini, Asst. Professor of English ([suhasniraj@gmail.com](mailto:suhasniraj@gmail.com))  
Geethanjali College of Engineering and Technology, Hyderabad, India

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### Abstract

This paper explores an idea of various stages of Man; where the text was correlated in the ELT classroom. The different stages in human life are elicited from students through brain storming session. There is a vast difference between the Language of the Shakespearean Era and the Contemporary language teaching to Students with technical bent of mind. From this poem, language aspects such as, vocabulary, figures of speech, grammar aspects, word-formation, Intonation, Rhythm and Accent are taught in the ELT classroom.

**Key words:** ELT, Figures of Speech, Language Learning, Shakespeare's Words and Ideas, The Seven Ages of Man.

### Introduction

'The Seven Ages of Man' is a monologue from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' (Act II, Scene VII); .The poem is a didactic excerpt that reflects Shakespeare's deep knowledge and transience of human life and relationships. It has its own merits universally accepted; irrespective of time, place and situation. This text is used in the Lab. sessions to inculcate a taste for Shakespearean English and ideology .This paper explores an idea of various stages of Man; where the text was correlated in the ELT classroom; comparing the Teaching and Learning of Old English to that of the Post-Modern English. Various aspects like **Brain Storming, Role Play, Vocabulary, Grammatical Aspects, Figures of Speech and so on....** can be taken up in the classroom teaching in order to enhance L.S.R.W skills.

Various opinions on the different stages in human life are elicited from students through brain storming session. As the students read the poem slowly and carefully the following Language Learning aspects can be adopted-

- Vocabulary: mewling, puking, woeful, oblivion .....
- Figures of speech: Similes and Metaphors  
Similes – creeping like a snail  
Metaphor – seeking the bubble reputation
- Grammar aspects: Prepositions/phrases; Adjectives etc.  
Prepositions/phrases: jealous in honor; quick in quarrel  
Adjectives: shining morning star; whining school boy
- Word formation: Puking (this word was coined by Shakespeare)
- Archaic/Obsolete words: Sans
- Intonation, Rhythm and Accent

The students enact various stages of Man. They compare and contrast the seven ages of man in their discussions. The students write a small poem or a memorable event based on their understanding. They may be told to elaborate on similar thoughts evoked after reading the poem. There is a vast difference between the Language of the Shakespearean Era where Old English was employed and Contemporary language taught to Students with technical bent of mind where Modern English is used mostly. Various aspects like **Brain Storming, Role Play, Vocabulary, Grammatical Aspects, Figures of Speech and so on....** can be taken up in the classroom teaching in order to enhance L.S.R.W skills in the students. To assess the literary interests a questionnaire will be circulated at the end of the session.

***The Seven Ages of man (By William Shakespeare)***



All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
5 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;  
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
10 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
15 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
20 Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
25 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

#### About the Author:

**William Shakespeare**<sup>[1]</sup> 26 April 1564 (baptised) – 23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called the "Bard of Avon". His extant works include 38 plays 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated and played into every major living language; and are renowned all over the world of literature.

He is a successful actor, writer, and part-owner of a company. Most of his known works include *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories; later on wrote tragedies and he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances in his last phase.

In one of the Ben Jonson's poems he prefaced Shakespeare as "not of an age, but for all time". His works are largely studied, performed, adapted reinterpreted and rediscovered by students, scholars of the 20th and 21st centuries in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Shakespeare is considered to be a great legend for all times. His innovative, adapting the traditional style created a freer flow of words. His works have set the standard of English Modern Language. Many expressions uses by him are commonly used today. <sup>[3]</sup>His ability to formulate new, popular words and his ability to maintain an extensive vocabulary positively define him as a "man of words." For his phrases to stand the test of time, Shakespeare must have had proficiency for the English language.

### Lesson plan:

**No. of Students: 24 (8 Groups of 3 each)**

**Time: 3 Hours**

**Objective:** At the end of the lesson, the students will be able to

1. Read a poem in Middle English clearly with expressions.
2. Appreciate reading poems in Classical Literature like Milton, Chaucer, etc;.
3. Demonstrate an understand Shakespeare's text by interpreting meaning through brainstorm, discussion and writing sessions.
4. Understand that Shakespeare's words and ideas are still relevant and applicable today i.e, having universal appeal to the three unities.

### Instructional Aids & Materials:

- Copies of the text, "The seven ages of man," with each of the seven ages on a different sheet of paper (*As You Like It*, 2.7.139–166)
- Video clippings showing the various stages of Man.
- Blackboard and chalk

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### Anticipatory Set/Hook:

The students are asked to write about a memorable moment/event in their life that might have affected/changed their life – viz; Infancy, Childhood, Lover, Soldier, Judge, Pantaloon stage and Old age.

### Process of Brainstorm and Discussion:

- All students are invited to share what they have written. There would be an interactive session to elicit the response of the class (about kinds of stages they will have to encounter if they live for seventy years or in their life time or others' life).
- The class will be divide into seven groups (between three and five students per group) and each group will have to enact or play the role of the stage they are given to explain to the rest of the class what stage of man their passage describes( Interactive Seminar).
- Now the concept of the seven ages of man will be brought into modern times by asking relevant questions—generation gap, social issues like why so many old-age homes or orphanages.
- Shakespearean language and usage of vocabulary, figures of speech, idiomatic expressions, new terms and archaic words in the poem will be explained by the teacher according to the context of each paragraph (stage).

### Summary and Analysis of *The Seven Ages of Man*

“The Seven Ages of Man” is an excerpt from Shakespeare’s play ‘As You Like It’. The poem begins with a phrase, ‘All the world’s a stage’. In this poem, Life is compared to a stage divided into seven stages with its own varied qualities and features; where men and women are actors. They play seven roles according to their age. The first stage, as described by the poet, is the infant who is nursed, cries and vomits all the time. In the next stage the infant grows into a schoolboy, reluctant to attend school. The third stage is that of a lover who is lost in his thoughts of his lady’s love. In the fourth stage, he turns to be a soldier who is physically fit, aggressive, short-tempered and ambitious by nature. In the fifth stage, he is a fair, healthy man full of wisdom and with maturity and wisdom; the family man becomes a judge, which is seen in his authoritative looks and advice to people. The man’s authoritative voice grows weak and trembles as he grows old and is seen in a pantaloon and spectacles in the sixth stage. The last stage is about the senile man who loses his teeth, his vision and his hearing. After this, the man part in the play ends and he exits from the stages of his life forever.

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## Analysis:

Shakespeare wants to render a message through his poem that men and women are ‘merely players’ in the drama of life as they play their part and depart. They enter a stage at their birth and leave during death. Man passes through seven phases of life in accordance with their age.

- **Vocabulary:**  
Mewling, puking, woeful, oblivion .....
- **Figures of speech:**  
Similes, Metaphors and Alliteration  
Similes – creeping like a snail  
Metaphor – seeking the bubble reputation
- **Simile:**<sup>[2]</sup> A simile is a figure of speech in which two dissimilar objects are compared and the comparison is made clear by the use of terms like ‘like’, ‘such as’ and so on.  
Examples of simile in the poem:  
*Sighing like furnace and creeping like a snail*
- **Metaphor:** Metaphor is that figure of speech where comparison of two different things are implied but not clearly stated. Examples of metaphor in the poem:  
*All the world's a stage*  
*And all men and women are merely players*  
*Seeking the bubble reputation*(reputation has been termed as short-lived like a bubble)
- **Alliteration:** Alliteration is the close repetition of the consonant sounds at the beginning of words to facilitate narration. Example of alliteration in the poem:  
*shrunk shank*  
*plays his part*
- **Grammar aspects:**  
Prepositions /phrases, Adjectives, etc  
Prepositions/phrases: jealous in honor; quick in quarrel  
Adjectives: shining morning star; whining school boy
- **Word formation:** Puking (this word was coined by Shakespeare)
- **Archaic/Obsolete words:** Sans
- Intonation, Rhythm and Accent

Depending on the time the students will be asked to either write their own soliloquy or a poem or will be given as assignment.

**Tools for Assessment:**

The teacher will assess the students’ understanding of the outlined objective by evaluating how groups interpret meaning of the text through discussion, performance of their role play, and through their writing assignment of a poem. Questionnaire will be given and the students understanding would be analyzed based on the evaluation.



**Questionnaire:**

**Geethanjali College of Engineering and Technology  
Department of S&H**

<b>ACADEMIC YEAR : 2016-17</b>	<b>I B TECH</b>	<b>Date :</b>
<b>COURSE:</b>		<b>CLASS :</b>
<b>FACULTY:</b>		<b>SECTION :</b>

**Answer the given questions on the following Scale:**

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
5	4	3	2	1

<b>Q. No.</b>	<b>QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	<b>SA 5</b>	<b>A 4</b>	<b>A/DA 3</b>	<b>DA 2</b>	<b>SDA 1</b>
1)	All the men and women are ‘merely players’ because they enter and exit the different stages of life.					
2)	The word ‘mewling’ means crying -Do you agree?					
3)	As a Lover, ‘the man sighs like a furnace’ for his mistress’ love- Is it true?					
4)	In the fourth stage man or women is ‘Quick in quarrel’- do you agree with the poet?					
5)	‘Seeking the bubble reputation’ means reputation is temporary- Your stake.					
6)	William Shakespeare's "The Seven Ages of Man" is applicable to every individual.					
7)	The content of the poem can be written in simple English language as you converse with your friend.					
8)	This poem evokes a great interest towards life and literature.					
9)	The sixth stage is the best stage of all.					

10. Write a memorable event that reflected/ brought about a change in your life.

OR

Write four rhythmic lines on your own that reflect your thoughts on life.

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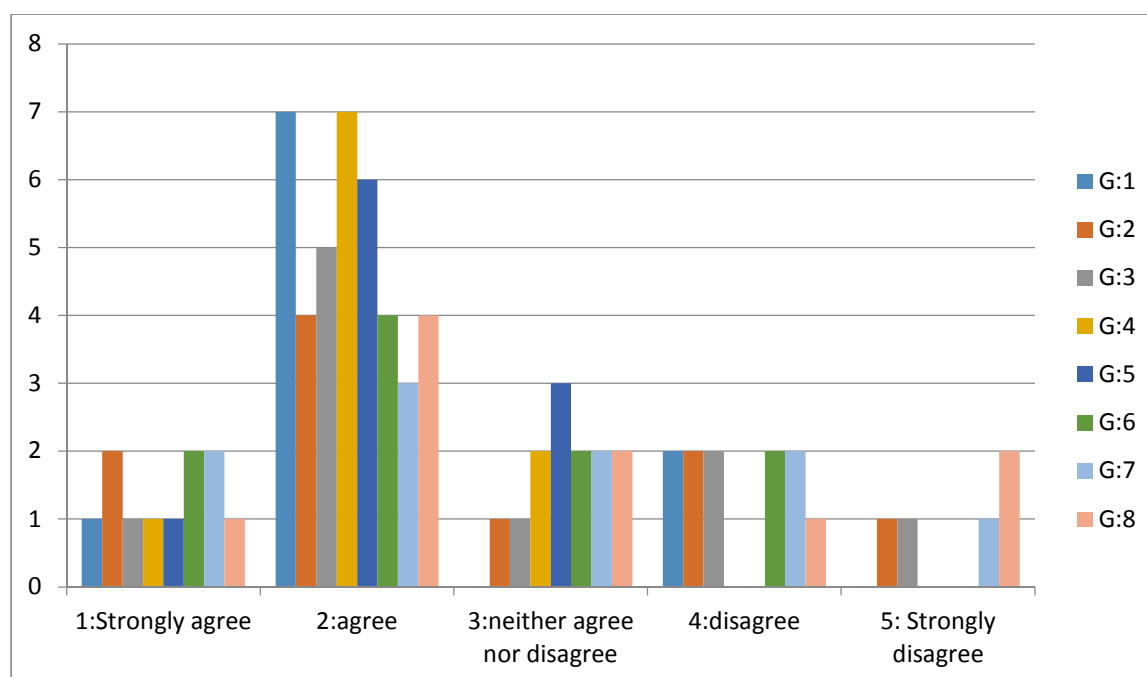


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### Analysis Chart

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
G1	4	4	4	4	2	4	2	5	4	4
G2	4	4	5	3	2	4	2	5	1	4
G3	4	5	4	3	2	4	2	4	1	4
G4	4	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4
G5	5	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	4
G6	5	4	1	4	2	4	2	3	5	4
G7	4	2	3	4	2	3	1	4	5	5
G8	3	2	1	4	4	4	1	4	2	5

The above analysis is interpreted through the following Graph



*X axis: represents responses*

*Y axis: represents no. of questions*

The above graph depicts clearly that many of the students agree with the universal ideas of Shakespeare. Only four groups disagree or strongly disagree on two questions (3 & 9). Therefore it may be concluded that the technical students not only appreciate the poem but also improve their communication skills. They have inclination towards literature and language which ignites their creative skills. Such exercises in language laboratories will transform the young minds.



### Output:

- Students will analyze a world literature piece which is a didactic poem.
- Students will be able to determine the connotative meaning of words and phrases in "The Seven Ages of Man" and upgrade their language skills.
- Students will analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone.
- Through this poem, the students learn to compare and contrast between various stages in life of a Man.
- The student improves on his usage in language, phrases, vocabulary, figures of speech.
- The poem enriches the analytical and language skills in a student and thereby the poem is unique/ideal for English Language Teaching.
- The technical students will develop a taste for Shakespearean English, drama as a genre and interest in writing short philosophical poem which enhances their creativity.

### Conclusion

Thus, the poem, 'The Seven Ages of Man' is a monologue and didactic excerpt that reflects Shakespeare's deep knowledge and transience of human life and relationships. It is a good opportunity for the teachers of English to teach the language aspects such as, vocabulary, figures of speech, grammar aspects, word-formation, Intonation, Rhythm and Accent to the students of Engineering and Technology in the ELT classroom.

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