

The Insults and Compliments

In Act 1, Scene 2 Richard stops Anne and the coffin that bears her father-in-law on the way to the late king's funeral – in order to woo her in the next part of his plan!

A series of insults fly backwards and forwards between the pair as Anne is initially appalled at Richard's appearance and he uses his cleverly manipulative words to win her round. Look at the extracts below from their conversation and match up the statements with the correct retort:

Sweet saint	Vouchsafe, diffused infection of a man
Lady, you know no rules of charity	... thou canst make / No excuse current but to hang thyself.
O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!	He lives that loves thee better than he could.
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman	Villain, thou knowest nor law of God nor man!
Fairer than tongue can name thee	Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.
... let me have / some patient leisure to excuse myself.	Foul devil
Some dungeon.	Curse not thyself, fair creature: thou art both.
Thou was the cause and most accursed effect.	Fouler than heart can think thee
Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life!	Never hung poison on a fouler toad.
His better doeth not breathe upon the earth.	Your bed-chamber.
Never came poison from so sweet a place.	More wonderful when angels are so angry.
Thou dost infect mine eyes.	Your beauty was the cause of that effect -

Once you have matched up each of the phrases complete the following activities:

1. Decide who says each of the phrases.
2. Does the conversation follow any sort of pattern?
3. How does Richard manage to persuade Anne that he really loves her?
4. Although Richard's actions are repulsive do you think Shakespeare meant us, the audience, to admire his manipulative nature and clever way with words or to merely hate him?