

UNIT 10

All the World's a Stage

William Shakespeare



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions(one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues.
- Evaluate stages of plot development in a fictional text: exposition, setting, climax, character development, resolution.
- Examine how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- Interpret and integrate information from a variety of sources for comprehension (e.g., maps, graphs, charts, diagrams).
- Examine and interpret the use of conjunctions and transitional devices in speech and writing for effective communication. Recognize and use subordinating conjunctions to connect independent clause/s to dependent clause/s, e.g., He could not attend the meeting because he was sick.
- Write multiple paragraphs of free writing for fluency, creativity, brainstorming or pleasure. Proofread and edit texts for errors.



Pre-reading:

- What do you think Shakespeare means by saying, "All the world's a stage" ?
- In what ways is human life similar to a drama or play?



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,
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,
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 honour, sudden and quick in **quarrel**,
Seeking the bubble **reputation**
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
Into the lean and slipper'd **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
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.



Theme

The central idea of the poem is that life is like a stage and human beings are merely actors who perform different roles at different stages of life. Shakespeare explains that every person passes through seven stages, from infancy to old age. Each stage has its own characteristics, responsibilities, and behaviour. The poem highlights the temporary and changing nature of human life. It shows that just as actors enter and exit a stage, people are born, grow old, and eventually leave the world. In the final stage, humans return to a helpless condition similar to childhood, emphasizing the cycle of life and the inevitability of aging.

About the poet

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was a renowned English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, and received his early education at the local grammar school, where he studied Latin and classical literature. Later, he moved to London and became a successful member of a theatrical company known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, whose plays were performed at the famous Globe Theatre. Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and several narrative poems. His works include great tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, as well as comedies like *As You Like It* and *Romeo and Juliet*. His writings explore universal themes such as love, ambition, jealousy, power, and the stages of human life. Shakespeare greatly enriched the English language by introducing many new words and expressions. His works continue to be studied, performed, and admired around the world. He died in 1616, but his literary legacy remains timeless.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
entrances	coming onto the stage; here it means birth
exits	leaving the stage; here it means death
justice	judge; a wise and mature person
mewling	crying softly like a baby
oblivion	forgetfulness; loss of awareness
pantaloon	trousers
pard	leopard
players	actors in a play; here it refers to human beings
quarrel	fight or argument
reputation	fame or respect earned by actions
sans	without
satchel	a small bag used for carrying books; a schoolbag
shank	the lower part of the leg
stage	a platform where actors perform; here it means the world
treble	high-pitched voice
woeful	full of sorrow or sadness



Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Explain the metaphor "All the world's a stage" in your own words.
2. The poem describes seven stages of life. Pick any three and explain how people might experience them differently.
3. How does Shakespeare use imagery to show the difference between youth and old age? Give examples from the text.
4. Identify and explain two similes used in the poem and discuss what they reveal about the human stages.
5. What does Shakespeare suggest about the transient nature of life?
6. Relate any two stages of life from the poem to real-life experiences you have observed or read about.
7. Do you think comparing life to a stage is a realistic or symbolic idea?
8. Imagine a modern "stage of life". How would you describe the roles and challenges of people today in seven stages?
9. Which stage of life described in the poem do you find most interesting or relatable, and why?

B. Choose the correct synonym of the underlined word.

1. All the men and women merely players.
a. workers b. actors c. teachers d. leaders
2. They have their exits and their entrances.
a. successes b. birthdays c. departures d. celebrations
3. Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
a. sleeping b. vomiting c. laughing d. crawling
4. And then the whining schoolboy, creeping like snail.
a. singing happily b. running quickly c. complaining in a weak voice
d. studying seriously
5. Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad.
a. a short humorous story b. a sad or romantic song
c. a historical speech d. a dramatic play
6. Seeking the bubble reputation.
a. permanent b. short-lived c. noble d. powerful
7. And then the justice, in fair round belly.
a. policeman b. judge c. soldier d. farmer



Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Choose five unfamiliar words from the poem. For each word, provide:

1. Definition
2. Sentence using the word
3. Where it appears in the poem / context

Word	Definition	Sentence	Context in the Poem
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Literary Devices

Below are the major literary devices used in the poem, along with their definitions, line references, and examples from other famous poems.

Metaphor: A direct comparison between two unlike things without using "like" or "as."

Line Reference: "All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players." (Lines 1–2)

Explanation: Shakespeare directly compares the world to a stage and humans to actors.

Example from another poem:

From Robert Burns – "A Red, Red Rose"

"O my Love's like a red, red rose."

Simile: A comparison between two unlike things using "like" or "as."

Line References:

"Creeping like snail..." "Sighing like furnace..." "Bearded like the pard..."

Explanation: These similes vividly describe the schoolboy, lover, and soldier.

Example from another poem:

From William Wordsworth – "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"

"I wandered lonely as a cloud."

Imagery: Language that appeals to the senses (sight, sound, touch, etc.).

Line Reference: "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Explanation: This creates a clear visual image of helpless old age.

Example from another poem:

From John Keats – "Ode to Autumn"

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness."

Repetition: The repeated use of words or phrases for emphasis.

Line Reference: "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Explanation: The repetition of "sans" (meaning without) emphasizes loss and emptiness.

Example from another poem:

From Alfred Lord Tennyson – "Break, Break, Break"

“Break, break, break...”

Personification: Giving human qualities to non-human things.

Line Reference: “Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon’s mouth.”

Explanation: The “cannon’s mouth” suggests the cannon has a human feature (mouth).

Example from another poem:

From Percy Bysshe Shelley – “Ode to the West Wind”

“O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being.”

Irony: A contrast between expectation and reality.

Line Reference:

The last stage returns to “second childishness,” showing life ends as it began.

Explanation: Life starts and ends in helplessness — an ironic cycle.

Example from another poem: From Thomas Gray – “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”
“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Grammatical Aspects

Simple Present Tense

Definition: A tense used to express general truths, habits, or universal facts.

Reference from the Poem:

“All the world’s a stage.”

“They have their exits and their entrances.”

Explanation: Shakespeare uses the simple present to express universal truths about life.

Additional Example: “The sun rises in the east.”

Possessive Form (Genitive Case)

Definition: A grammatical form showing ownership, usually with apostrophe and an ‘s’.

Reference from the Poem:

“The cannon’s mouth.”

Explanation: The apostrophe shows possession (the mouth of the cannon).

Additional Example: “The teacher’s book is on the table.”

Use of Simile Structure (“like” + noun)

Definition: A grammatical structure used to compare two things using “like” or “as.”

Reference from the Poem:

“Creeping like snail.”

“Sighing like furnace.”

Explanation: The structure "like + noun" forms a comparison.

Additional Example: "He runs like a deer."

Participle Phrases (Present Participle -ing form)

Definition: A verb form ending in "-ing" used as an adjective or to show continuous action.

Reference from the Poem:

"Seeking the bubble reputation."

"Sighing like furnace."

Explanation: "Seeking" and "sighing" are present participles describing actions.

Additional Example: "Walking down the street, she saw a friend."

Ellipsis (Omission of Words)

Definition: The omission of words that are understood from context.

Reference from the Poem:

"Creeping like snail."

(The word "a" before snail is omitted.)

Explanation: Shakespeare omits small grammatical words for poetic rhythm.

Additional Example: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Repetition of Negative Preposition ("Sans")

Definition: Repeated use of a preposition meaning "without."

Reference from the Poem:

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Explanation: "Sans" is a French word meaning "without," used repeatedly for emphasis.

Additional Example: "Without hope, without fear, without regret."

Parallel Structure

Definition: The use of similar grammatical forms in a series for balance and rhythm.

Reference from the Poem:

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Explanation: Each phrase follows the same grammatical pattern.

Additional Example: "She likes reading, writing, and painting."

Contraction

Definition: A shortened form of two words combined with an apostrophe.

Reference from the Poem:

"World's" (world is)

Explanation: "World's" is a contraction of "world is."

Additional Example: "It's raining today."



Oral Communication Skills

A. Read aloud the following dialogue and practise it in groups.

Jahanzeb: Have you understood what Shakespeare means by, "All the world's a stage"?

Hunzala: Yes, he compares life to a stage and people to actors who perform different roles.

Jahanzeb: That's interesting. So, what are the seven stages he describes?

Hunzala: They are the infant, the schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, the justice, the old man, and the second childhood.

Jahanzeb: Why do you think he calls old age "second childhood"?

Hunzala: Because in old age, a person becomes weak and dependent again, just like a child.

Jahanzeb: Which stage do you find the most realistic?

Hunzala: I think the schoolboy stage is very realistic. Shakespeare describes him as unwilling to go to school, which still happens today.

Jahanzeb: True! I also like how he describes the lover, sighing like a furnace. It shows strong emotions.

Hunzala: Yes, and the soldier stage shows ambition and desire for reputation.

Jahanzeb: What message do you think Shakespeare gives through this poem?

Hunzala: He wants to show that life is temporary and full of changing roles. Everyone must pass through these stages.

Jahanzeb: I agree. It also teaches us to understand and accept the different phases of life.



Writing Skills



Activity: Write Your Own "Stages of Life"

1. Imagine that you are living in the modern world.
2. Divide human life into **seven modern stages** (for example: toddler, student, teenager, professional, parent, retired person, etc.).
3. Write a **short paragraph (120–150 words)** describing these stages.
4. Try to use:
 - At least **one metaphor**
 - One **simile** (like / as)
 - Descriptive language