

Swear like Shakespeare!



Shakespeare's plays are full of people who say not very nice things to each other for a number of different reasons. Sometimes they belong to different groups of people who hate each other; sometimes they are just making fun of somebody. In any case, you can usually combine them to form wonderfully long chains of insults: try it out, choose one word from each column below and combine them in one long insult!

greasy

bunch-backed

canker-blossom

hideous

clay-brained

clotpole

knavish

dog-hearted

dogfish

peevish

eye-offending

hedge-pig

rank

horn-mad

ruffian

saucy

lily-livered

jack-a-nape

waggish

muddy-mettled

rabbit-sucker

yeasty

sour-faced

rudesby

fitful

paper-faced

scullion

gnarling

pinch-spotted

whipster

Language

Here is an explanation of the insults, many of which are no longer in use today:

- greasy** – adj., covered with fat or oil
bunch-backed – adj., with an abnormally curved back
canker-blossom – n., a small worm that eats flowers
hideous – adj., ugly, disgusting
clay-brained – adj., slow, stupid
clotpole – n., stupid person
knavish – adj., dishonest, lying
dog-hearted – adj., cruel
dogfish – n., a kind of small shark, very common in Shakespeare's time
peevish – adj., silly, foolish
eye-offending – adj., ugly
hedge-pig – n., a small animal with spikes on its back:
rank – adj., stinking
horn-mad – adj., furious, angry
ruffian – n., a strong and violent person (especially a man) who threatens and hurts other people
saucy – adj., rude usually in a playful way
lily-livered – adj., without courage, a coward
jack-a-nape – n., monkey
waggish – adj., playful, full of trouble
muddy-mettled – adj., slow in thinking
rabbit-sucker – n., a baby rabbit
yeasty – adj., superficial, not serious about things
sour-faced – adj., having a bad-tempered facial expression
rudesby – n., a very impolite (rude) person
fitful – adj. losing your calm quickly
paper-faced – adj. having a face as white as paper
scullion – n., base servant
gnarling – adj., making the sounds of an angry dog
pinch-spotted – adj., full of spots and bruises

