



READING SHAKESPEARE

Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:30, Amherst Woman's Club
(NB: time and place in the catalogue are not correct.)

Are you interested in reading Shakespeare? Reading aloud will be the core of this seminar, because it helps with understanding the nuances of the passages selected for reading. We will discuss the passages after reading them, for their meaning, for their language, for what they reveal about the characters and for their part in the play as a whole.

We will start with **The Merchant of Venice**, a romantic comedy with the dark and compelling character of Shylock embedded in the plot. The casual and ignorant anti-Semitism of Shakespeare's time is hard for us to stomach, but the ironies in the play and its depiction of rich Venetians are well worth discussing.

There is a lot of humor in Shakespeare. Our second play will be **Henry IV Part 1**, which introduces Falstaff, one of Shakespeare's most famous characters. He was popular immediately; we will discuss what made and continues to make him popular. It is not just the humor.

Twelfth Night also has humor, with a mélange of characters who are a bit off in one way or another, either by choice (woman disguised as a man), or by their own natures. It's a zany comedy fueled by ambiguity.

And then there's tragedy: **King Lear** will be our final and perhaps most challenging play. It is known as one of Shakespeare's greatest plays, terrifying in the grandeur of the tragedy and its immense pessimism.

We would like this seminar to encourage and support our understanding of the plays. Any degree of previous experience with them is fine; lifelong devotees, occasional dabblers and complete strangers to the plays are all welcome. We will learn from our reading and from each other.

Shakespeare works on many levels and innumerable interpretations have been made over the centuries; the pleasure is in developing our own understanding and discussing our interpretations, with or without reference to previous critics.

Come and join us!

SCHEDULE

Week 1	Housekeeping and introductions. (Laura Price) The development of Shakespeare's art. (Ruthie Kosiorek)
Week 2	Merchant of Venice, Acts I and II
Week 3	Merchant of Venice, Acts III, IV and V
Week 4	Henry IV, Part 1, Acts I and II
Week 5	Henry IV, Part 1, Acts III, IV and V
Week 6	Twelfth Night, Acts I and II
Week 7	Twelfth Night, Acts III, IV and V
Week 8	King Lear, Act I
Week 9	King Lear, Acts II and III
Week 10	King Lear, Acts IV and V

The amount of reading is about the same for each week, approximately 40 to 50 pages, depending on the edition. Any edition is fine. Presenters will be asked to send us a list of the passages they have chosen for reading aloud, so that we can locate them in our texts in advance.

Presenters will work in pairs, with each pair responsible for choosing and presenting passages, formulating questions for discussion and leading the discussion. If the seminar is not fully subscribed, some presenters will work alone. The moderators will be available for assistance as needed.

In addition to the readings, there will be opening and closing discussions of each play as a whole, led by the presenters.

We will not make assignments for presentations until we have heard from participants what their preferences are. It will not be first-come first-served; we will try to respect everyone's preferences.