

AKSHIRAA COACHING CENTRE - UG TRB - ENGLISH STUDY MATERIAL



AKSHIRAA COACHING CENTRE

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UG TRB EXAM

(ENGLISH ONLY)

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Unit III – Shakespeare

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5. Shakespearean Women

- ✪ Shakespeare has covered the entire gallery of women in his plays.
- ✪ Shakespearean women can be classified into several categories.
- ✪ The first group will be clever and assertive characters like Portia, Beatrice and Rosalind.
- ✪ The second group will be loveable and fanciful characters like Juliet, Helena, Viola, Ophelia and Miranda.
- ✪ The third group will be the tragic heroines like Desdemona, Cordelia, Hero and Hermiona.
- ✪ The fourth group will comprise aggressive and dominant creatures like Lady Macbeth, Goneril, Regan and Cleopatra.

Famous Female Characters:

✪ Adriana, in The Comedy of Errors

- Adriana is the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus and a long-suffering Ephesian lady
- She is a fierce, jealous woman.
- She suspects her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, is having an affair with the courtesan.
- She is most notable for her observations about a woman's role in marriage and her lamentations over her lost love.

✪ Beatrice, in Much Ado About Nothing

- Beatrice is the niece of Leonato, a wealthy governor of Messina.
- She is a strong female character, sharp, witty, clever and loyal to her family.
- She refuses to marry because she has not discovered the perfect or equal partner.
- She is a woman with an independent mind living in a world where women have a few rights.

AKSHIRAA COACHING CENTRE - UG TRB - ENGLISH STUDY MATERIAL**✧ Bianca, in The Taming of the Shrew**

- Bianca is the youngest and favorite daughter of Baptista Minola.
- She is characterised as a pretty, obedient and polite daughter.
- She is known to be sweet, beautiful, fair and virtuous.
- She is mistreated by her sister Kate, who ties her up and regularly beats her.

✧ Celia, in As You Like It

- Celia is the daughter of Duke Frederick, cousin to Rosalind,
- She is really close with her cousin Rosalind and supports her when she is banished.
- She is physically attractive, intelligent, witty and humourous.
- She keeps sacrificing her personal comforts for the ones she loves.

✧ Cleopatra, in Antony and Cleopatra

- Cleopatra is the queen of Egypt and Antony's lover.
- She had been mistress to both Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great in the past.
- She is an intelligent and cunning politician, a seductress and a ferocious warrior in the play.
- She has ability to attract men in her skillful wit and her beauty. Enobarbus says: *'Age cannot wither nor customs / Stale her infinite variety'*.
- She commits suicide by making a poisonous snake bite her, instead of surrendering to her enemies.

✧ Cordelia, in King Lear

- Cordelia is the youngest of King Lear's three daughters.
- Her chief characteristics are devotion, kindness, beauty, and honesty.
- She is contrasted with Goneril and Regan who manipulate their father for their own ends.
- Her virtue and purity make it to be described as Christ-like or representative of God's goodness.

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✧ Cressida, in Troilus and Cressida

- Cressida is the daughter of Calchas, a Trojan priest.
- She is portrayed as fickle, petty and silly.
- She becomes Troilus's lover.
- She represents a young and naïve girl who is desperate for love.

✧ Desdemona, in Othello

- Desdemona is the daughter of the respected Venetian Senator Brabantio. Desdemona is one of the most pitiable victims among English heroines.
- She a lady of spirit, intelligent, faithful and loving wife, but she fails to justify her love to her husband.
- She is murdered by her husband in a suspicious rage.

✧ Emilia, in Othello

- Emilia is an attendant to Othello's wife, Desdemona.
- She is a quick witted, brave and clever lady.
- She is famous for her monologue on the equality of sexuality in both men and women.
- She courageously saves Desdemona by exposing her husband's sinister plans.

✧ Gertrude, in Hamlet

- Gertrude is Hamlet's mother and Queen of Denmark.
- She is affectionate, impulsive, and strong-willed.
- She seems unaware that Claudius killed her former husband and she gets married Claudio.
- Hamlet attributes this need for a husband to her lustiness.
- Hamlet comments her, "Frailty, thy name is woman!".

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❖ Goneril, in King Lear

- Goneril is King Lear's eldest daughter.
- She is jealous, treacherous, and amoral.
- After professing her deep love for her father, she receives half of his kingdom.
- She betrays him and plots his murder.

❖ Hermia, in A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Hermia is Egeus's daughter, a young woman of Athens.
- She is in love with Lysander and is a childhood friend of Helena.
- As a result of the fairies' mischief with Oberon's love potion, both Lysander and Demetrius suddenly fall in love with Helena.
- Puck has sorted matters out with the love potion, and Lysander's love for Hermia is restored.

❖ Helena, in A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Helena is a young woman of Athens, in love with Demetrius.
- She is a sad and lovesick figure.
- Demetrius and Helena were once betrothed, but when Demetrius met Helena's friend Hermia, he fell in love with her and abandoned Helena.
- Helena thinks that Demetrius and Lysander are mocking her when the fairies' mischief causes them to fall in love with her.

❖ Helena, in All's Well that Ends Well

- Helena is the orphan daughter of a great doctor.
- She is the ward of the Countess of Rousillon.
- She falls in love with the Countess' son, Bertram.
- Through the use of her wit and the body of knowledge, she overcomes all obstacles.

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❖ Hero, in Much Ado About Nothing

- Hero is the innocent and obedient daughter of Leonato.
- She contrasts with the more outspoken and independent Beatrice.
- She presents a conventional image of a suitable and desirable wife.
- Claudio describes her as a 'jewel' when he first meets her and praises her for being 'modest'.

❖ Hermione, in The Winter's Tale

- Hermione is the Queen of Sicily and lovely wife of King Leontes.
- She is a good, beautiful, majestic, gracious lady.
- She fulfills her roles with a tender dignity.
- She is falsely accused of infidelity by her husband.

❖ Hippolyta, in A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Hippolyta is the legendary queen of the Amazons.
- She is engaged to Theseus.
- She has both power and compassion.
- Hippolyta's character is based on the ancient historian Plutarch's 'Life of Theseus'.

❖ Imogen, in Cymbeline

- Imogen is the daughter of King Cymbeline.
- She is described by William Hazlitt as "perhaps the most tender and the most artless".
- She is a beautiful princess and is often seen as a paragon of feminine virtue.
- She is obedient and generally submissive.

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❖ **Isabella, in Measure for Measure**

- She is Claudio's sister.
- She tries to plead with Angelo for Claudio's life.
- She is far too proud, pious, and selfish to agree to his terms, even if it means saving her brother.
- She is a basically good person, but she is misguided.

❖ **Julia, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona**

- Julia is a young lady of Verona beloved by Proteus.
- She falls completely in love with him.
- She disguises herself as a boy and follows her lover, Proteus to Milan.
- She discovers that he has forgotten her and is paying court to the Duke's daughter.

❖ **Juliet, in Romeo and Juliet**

- Juliet displays inner strength, intelligence, bravery, wit, and independence.
- She falls in love with her family's enemy, Romeo.
- She marries him and fakes her own death.
- She ultimately kills herself so that she and Romeo can remain together in death.

❖ **Katherine, in The Taming of the Shrew**

- Katherine is the daughter of Baptista Minola.
- She is sharp-tongued, quick-tempered, and prone to violence
- She constantly insults and degrades the men around her.
- Her hostility toward suitors particularly distresses her father.

❖ **Lady Macbeth, in Macbeth**

- Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's fiercest female characters. She is ambitious and ruthless to get power and wealth.
- She manipulates her husband powerfully to kill Duncan.

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- She becomes the driving force behind Macbeth's murder of King Duncan.
- Her firmness disintegrates gradually leading to nightmares that haunt her and ultimately drive her to suicide.

✪ **Lavinia Andronicus, in Titus Andronicus**

- Lavinia is the only daughter of Titus Andronicus.
- She is a beautiful, chaste young woman.
- She is obedient, quiet, patient, loving, and never a bother to anyone.
- She is betrothed to the younger prince Bassianus, but her father breaks the engagement to marry her to Saturninus.

✪ **Miranda, in The Tempest**

- Miranda is the daughter of Prospero brought up in the island at an early age.
- She is compassionate, generous, and loyal to her father.
- She is intelligent and headstrong, having learned a lot from her father.
- Under Ariel's enchantment, she follows her father's plan, and falls in love with Ferdinand willingly.

✪ **Margaret of Anjou**

- Margaret is a major character who appears in the history plays, *Henry VI, Part 1, Part 2, Part 3 and Richard III*.
- Margaret is an intelligent, ruthless woman who easily dominates her husband.
- She is strong, controlling, and passionate.
- She knows what she wants, and she goes after it, no matter who's in her way.

✪ **Olivia, in Twelfth Night**

- Olivia is a wealthy, beautiful, and noble Illyrian lady.
- She is presented as being an intelligent woman with a number of good qualities
- She plans to mourn her brother's recent death for seven years.
- When she meets the emissary from Duke Orsino (Viola disguised as a boy), she immediately falls in love with the youth.

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❖ Ophelia, in Hamlet

- Ophelia is the daughter of Polonius and sister of Laertes.
- She has received several tributes of love from Hamlet but rejects him after her father orders her to do so.
- She is lectured by her father and brother about her sexuality.
- She goes mad after Hamlet murders Polonius.

❖ Portia, in The Merchant of Venice

- Portia is beautiful, gracious, rich, intelligent, and quick-witted lady.
- She must marry only the man who chooses the single casket of three which contains her portrait.
- She uses her wit to help her lover win her hand in marriage.
- She saves him from the Court dressed up as a male lawyer and plots against the villains.

❖ The Princess of France, in Love's Labour's Lost

- The princess comes to visit the king of Navarre on an official diplomatic mission from France, concerning the exchange of the territory of Aquitaine.
- She pays a visit to the King along with some of her attendants.
- She plays a game of wits with the King and his lords.
- Her fun is put to an end by the serious news of her father's death.

❖ Paulina, in The Winter's Tale

- Paulina is the wife of Antigonus.
- She is an authoritative, upstanding, courageous and highly moral woman willing to risk her life for what she believes is right.
- She is the strong and unshakeable character of Shakespeare.
- She deserves her final reward of marriage to the good Camillo.

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❖ **Perdita, in The Winter's Tale**

- Perdita is the daughter of Leontes and Hermione.
- She possesses the gifts of natural virtue.
- She displays many rustic virtues - honesty, graciousness, a love of nature, and modesty.
- She is symbolic of fertility and goodness.

❖ **Regan, in King Lear**

- Regan is the middle child of King Lear's daughters.
- She is married to the Duke of Cornwall.
- She joins forces with Goneril to destroy their father.
- She is more skilled in the craft of deception than Goneril.

❖ **Rosalind, in As You Like It**

- Rosalind is probably Shakespeare's most strong-willed female characters.
- Rosalind and her friend Celia disguises as male shepherds and live in the Arcadian forest.
- She is a very lovable character and one of the most optimistic characters.
- At the end of the play, Rosalind delivers the Epilogue, which was traditionally a man's role.

❖ **Tamora, in Titus Andronicus**

- Tamora is the Queen of the Goths.
- She is associated with barbarism, savagery, and unrestrained lasciviousness.
- She is brought to Rome as a prisoner by Titus.
- She begs him not to kill her son Alarbus, but when he does she vows revenge against him.

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❖ Three Witches, in Macbeth

- The witches are referred to as the “weird sisters”.
- They eventually lead Macbeth to his demise.
- Their speech is full of paradox and equivocation without any real motive.
- Their filthy trappings and supernatural activities set an ominous tone for the play.

❖ Titania, in A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Titania is the beautiful queen of the fairies.
- She wants to make a knight of the young Indian prince that she has been given.
- She has a dispute with Oberon and he punishes her by using a potion that makes her fall in love with someone.
- She wakes up and sees Bottom, who has been turned into an ass by Puck.
- She falls in love with Bottom.

❖ Viola, in Twelfth Night

- Viola is an intelligent, brave and quietly thoughtful.
- She comes to Illyria when her ship is wrecked in a storm.
- She disguises herself as a young man, calling herself ‘Cesario’ and becomes a page to Duke Orsino.
- Olivia falls in love with her disguise and so Viola says herself, *‘Disguise, I see; thou art a wickedness’*.
- She suffers from all the unspoken grief in her heart - the plight of her twin brother, her secret love for Orsino and her true identity.

❖ Volumnia, in Coriolanus

- Volumnia is the mother of Caius Martius Coriolanus.
- She plays a large role in Coriolanus' life.
- She is devoted to her son and delights in his military exploits.
- She raises him to a warrior in his military.