

## **Rare Books Pedagogy Unit**

### **Shakespeare Folio Exercise**

The Shakespeare folio exercise is designed to introduce students to the language of Shakespeare's day in order to make it more familiar and less intimidating. Participants will learn how to compare the materiality of multiple Shakespeare Folios in order to trace publishing history, the fluidity of language, and 17<sup>th</sup> century print culture.

#### **As you work through this exercise, please keep the following in mind:**

1. You must comply with all of the rules of the Rare Book Room.
  - No food or drink allowed in special collections.
  - Masks are required.
  - Phones may be used to take photos during the class period. Texting is not allowed.
  - Please handle all texts with care; do not bend book spines back, bend pages, and so on.
  - You may only use pencils while working in the Rare Book Room; pens are not allowed.

#### **In this exercise, you will have the opportunity to examine four Shakespeare folios. As you look at each folio, consider the following:**

1. Consider the size of the book. What does the term folio mean? What does the size of the book tell us about Shakespeare's text?
2. Examine the preface and title page in the first folio. Read the preface "To the Reader" aloud. What type of letterforms do you see that differ from today's letters? Do the letterforms remain the same in each folio? How do they differ from the first to the fourth folio?
3. Look at the preface and title page and the portrait of Shakespeare on the title page. Who is Ben Jonson and what is he asking you to do as the reader? How do these two pages relate to each other? Look at these two pages in each folio. What transformation do you see in the role of Shakespeare?
4. Print culture in the 17th century: What are the conventions of book publishing in the 17th century? What is the process and what is the role of the author? How are books made, bought and sold? Does edition have any significance? How does edition affect the text? What does this book tell us about reader education and social class?
5. Marketing: Which elements of the book reveal marketing efforts and how do these change over time?