

with [u:]; and PRICE words (e.g. ☉ *inspired*) with [i:]. All this was to change in the space of a century or so.

English pronunciation in the sixteenth century

Elizabethan English: William Shakespeare (1564–1616) ☉ Track 63

*Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears:
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him:
The euill that men do, liues after them,
The good is oft enterred with their bones,
So let it be with Caesar. The Noble Brutus,
Hath told you Caesar was Ambitious:
If it were so, it was a greeuous Fault,
And greeuously hath Caesar answer'd it.*

(from *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene ii, original spelling
and punctuation as in 1623 Folio edition)

'frɛndz | 'rɔ:mənz | 'kʌntrɪmən | 'lɛnd mi: ju:lɪ 'i:z ||
ə | 'kʌm tə 'bɛrɪ 'seɪzə | 'nɒt tə 'preɪz hɪm ||
ðɪ 'i:vl ðæt mən 'du: | 'lɪvz 'æftə ðɛm ||
ðə 'gu:d ɪz 'ɒft ɪn'taɪrɪd wɪð ðɛ:l 'bo:nz ||
'so: lɛt ɪt 'bi: wɪð 'seɪzə || ðə 'nɔ:bl 'brju:təs |
həθ 'tɔ:ld ju: | 'seɪzə wəz æm'bɪʃəs ||
ɪf ɪt 'wɛ:l so: | ɪt 'wəz ə 'grɪ:vəs 'fɔ:lt |
ənd 'grɪ:vəslɪ kəθ 'seɪzə 'ænsərd ɪt ||

([ʃ] indicates unrounded [o], secondary CV 7. See IPA chart, p. 258).

(Adapted from Jones 1956: 210)

Even though in modern times Elizabethan theatres have been reconstructed with close attention to minute detail (the Globe in London is perhaps the most famous example) few amongst the present-day audience probably ever stop to consider how the actors' words would have sounded in the Elizabethan era. In fact, Shakespeare's own pronunciation would have been very different from the English of modern actors like Judi Dench or Ian McKellen.

As you can see from the transcription, Shakespeare's English, like Chaucer's, was rhotic (☉ *ears*). By this time, the velar fricative [x] had disappeared from the consonant system, although [ɣ] lived on. With the advent of the Great Vowel Shift, the vowel system had become much closer to that which we know today. Sixteenth-century English had a STRUT–FOOT contrast (even though STRUT, as in ☉ *come*, was not yet as open as it is now). The pronunciation of GOAT (e.g. as in ☉ *bones*) would be recognisable to the present day, even though the vowel was steady-state and not a diphthong. Certain modern FACE words were now pronounced with an open [ɛ:] vowel, sounding similar to present-day SQUARE. PRICE (☉ *I*) and MOUTH were by now diphthongs but with central starting-points [ə]. There was no separate set of BATH words; all were said with TRAP (e.g. ☉ *after, answer'd*).