JACQUES’s “The Seven Ages of Man” from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (II, vii)

Highlight the similes and metaphors in the speech. Then, figure out what they mean. Be aware that the entire speech is an extended metaphor.

All the world’s a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts,

His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,

Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms;

And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel

And shining morning face, creeping like snail

Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,

Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad

Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier,

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, (with a long mustache like the whiskers of a leopard)

Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,

Seeking the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the justice,

In fair round belly with good capon lined, (this line refers to bribing a judge)

With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,

Full of wise saws and modern instances; (saws are pieces of advice)

And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts

Into the lean and slippered pantaloon, (pantaloon means a foolish old man)

With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;

His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide

For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice, (shrunk shank means feeble legs)

Turning again toward childish treble, pipes

And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,

That ends this strange eventful history,

Is second childishness and mere oblivion,

Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. (sans means without)

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Watch a performance of the speech by Benedict Cumberbatch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLk4rXC8YoQ>