

Relevance of Shakespeare in School Curriculum

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Introduction

In the Indian scenario keeping in mind the conceptual and structural language learning Shakespearean works plays a pivotal role. Be it the study of thematic content, usage of blank verse, effective implementation of supernatural elements Shakespearean work is a lone literature in itself. The very inclusion of Shakespearean work -sonnets, tragedies, comedies gives the elementary learner a scope to widen imagination, appreciate literary pieces and study English with an altogether different perspective. With special reference to the high school learners, Shakespearean work provides a wide array and exposure to the language and its literary aspects. Shakespearean works at school level brings forth the atmosphere conducive to the language learning.

Shakespeare is not only great because he has always remained a difficult learning, and though he is taught in schools his earlier versions should be taken into consideration. The present paper aims at the inclusion of Shakespearean works at the school level as it is quite relevant in today's modern world. Shakespeare can be enjoyed in depth at school level. Shakespeare is considered to be the Father of English Literature.

Study of Shakespeare's Plays and poetical works is relevant to the students in the following ways:

1. To Provide a Better Understanding of Life

Shakespeare's work encompasses a wide range of human experiences. Actually, he wrote across experiences. Literary Critic Harold Bloom wrote a book on Shakespeare titled *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. He says that Shakespeare's experiences show the many facets of our lives.

Shakespeare is timeless and superior due to his great sensitivity and understanding of life. His works provide a direction on how to live our lives today.

2. Plethora of Emotions

Shakespeare has dealt with almost all the emotions in his plays- love, greed, deception, lust, ambition, hatred, humour, pride, humiliation, vengeance, betrayal which are applicable to human conditions in modern times. Shakespeare plays fit in modern social context. For example, if we consider Portia's Mercy speech, it has relevance in the modern time too where friends turn foe.

Julius Caesar, Tempest, and Hamlet expose the students to variety of emotions, relations and culture. Shakespeare is the best craftsman English language has ever known in matters of intricately weaving the different emotions. Familiar betrayal, foolish young love, socio-political corruption, etc. are all relevant in today's world.

3. Get Acquainted with Shakespearean Style

Introduction of Shakespeare at school level makes the students get acquainted with the style of this great writer. Style marks the identity and individuality of the writer. It reflects the personality of the author which is mirrored in writing. The work by an author, poet or poetess reflects his mind, heart and soul. It is a distinctive faculty of a sole person which leads to variation of style. It is a benchmark of a particular writer. Style is the image of a man identified in his written thoughts.

W. H. Hudson classified the components of style as intellectual, emotional and aesthetic. The poet derives some elements from the past. A writer writes in a typical manner with choice of words and phrases and the way of construction of a sentence. Personality of the author is transformed into his writing. Style of a poet reflects his past, his surroundings atmosphere, his learnings, his taste in literature.

A poet belongs to a particular period. There are influences on him of that period. The intellectual, social, political, religious and economic circumstances of his age get reflected in his writing. He/she writes in a particular style. Social atmosphere and economic conditions have major influences on the literary career of the poet/poetess. Traditions influence the poetic style and quality of the poet.

Basically, style is personal, but it is influenced by many factors. The school to which a poet belongs - Classical, Romantic, Metaphysical and Pre-Raphaelites and the art form he chooses determine his style. Style is never static, it is dynamic. It changes according to circumstances, past impressions and way of thinking. A style is employed to make his meaning clear to the reader. A style is the characteristic feature of a particular author. It is normally original. Even if at first imitation is involved, it slowly gets integrated as a new one is evolved.

In the earlier works of Shakespeare, we find experimentation by him. He tried to experiment and this in turn resulted into his evolution as a great poet. The early poetry was one of fluidity of thought and poetic technique. It abounded in weakness of dramatic and narrative power, deficiency in characterization and extreme sensuousness. But gradually Shakespeare showed a power of artistic design of great excellence. His sensuousness became rich; he came very near to the felicity of expression. He selected felicitous phrases and often replaced flat words with suggestive and forceful ones. He discovered the use of all the suggestive power of words – their music, associations, and their romantic and sensuous appeal. He had a wonderful power of expression through imagination.

4. Self-realization for Creation of a Better Society

Shakespeare's work will make the students understand themselves and other members of human association. Students will be able to sympathize with their brethren. As we are in an era of

globalization relations are becoming strained and impersonal. People are getting more and more individualistic. Study of Shakespeare will imbibe the virtues of love for humanity and leads towards a greater understanding of human problems and provide solutions for a meaningful existence in society. Students will be able to form opinions, to see a different perspective on circumstances.

5. Developing Creative Thinking

Education prepares students for corporate jobs. Teaching Shakespeare may seem to be irrelevant in such a scenario but still it has some benefits in the form of developing creative thinking, rhetoric skills and persuasive communication skills.

6. Appealing Stories and an Urge for Creative Writing

Studying Shakespeare at school and college create an urge in young minds to write plays in a creative manner both in English and their mother tongue Indian languages. Students get an idea of the structure of the play – Scenes, Acts, movements of characters, role of imagery, idioms, tone and so on. In addition, the plays create in young minds to enact plays and assume roles of choice in the plays. I have known many girls earnestly trying to portray the character Portia. Boys also want to play the role of many characters. All these add to the use of English in day to day life in a more natural manner. Plays retold in current English will have great impact on mastery of English.

Conclusion

Though Shakespeare's archaic English is difficult to understand, the relevance of his work for the present generation can never be ignored. Shakespeare's work is timeless and ageless. His creations will be of relevance for generations to come.

References

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Picture: Thobile Mathonsi. Shakespeare should fall from school curriculum - Professor. By Theolin Tembo Mar 29, 2017. In response to issues raised by the committee on decolonisation, clarification was given of how the curriculum review process since Curriculum 2005 has included the need for transformation, Motshekga said. Professor Chris Thurman from the English department at Wits University, who teaches Shakespeare, had said in a previous report that William Shakespeare no longer had relevance for South African children. "I'm not a school teacher, but it seems to me there is already an element of choice at school level. There are already learners who don't encounter Shakespeare within the curriculum at high school level. Then I will explore Shakespeare's relevance and value in the curriculum both from the perspective of the student reader and the teacher seeking to persuade students and, in some cases, the school administration of his importance to the curriculum. Shakespeare in Today's Schools According to a 2010 survey organized by the Royal Shakespeare Company, 50% of the world's students study Shakespeare. The survey, based on responses from British Council offices in 43 countries, reported that 64 million students study Shakespeare every year. The survey also asked the important question of why students a