

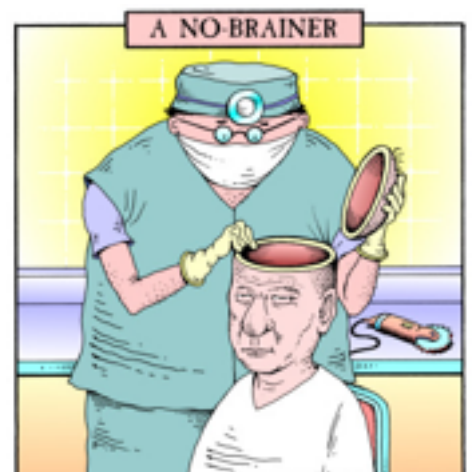
Shakespeare: Is he relevant



to the modern student?

We all know that Shakespeare wrote some historic literary pieces but I'm regularly asked whether they are still relevant?

In my opinion, it's a no brainer!



Let's start with his characters. They were always complex and multi-dimensional, which is just what modern society requires from us. Only someone who is one-dimensional would disagree with this!



Lady Macbeth is a classic example. She had ex-

treme ambition; was both

cunning and dissimulating;

and she was affectionate and

full of energy. This is just

what is needed for women to

succeed in today's work/study/life balance struggle.



Lady Macbeth, differed so greatly from the other women of her time, as she challenged gender stereotypes and the perceptions of women.

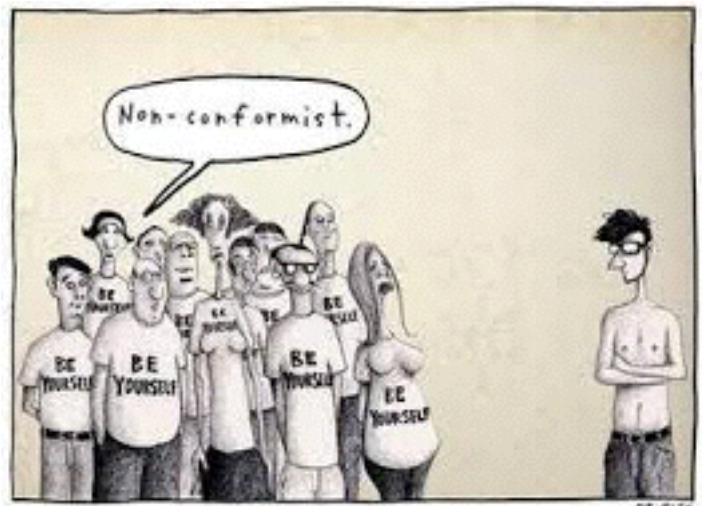


Modern day characters, such as Hermione in the Harry Potter Series, are similar to Lady Macbeth, due to their differences from other characters within the text. Hermione is a muggle-born (unlike the other characters who were born from magical parents); she is smarter



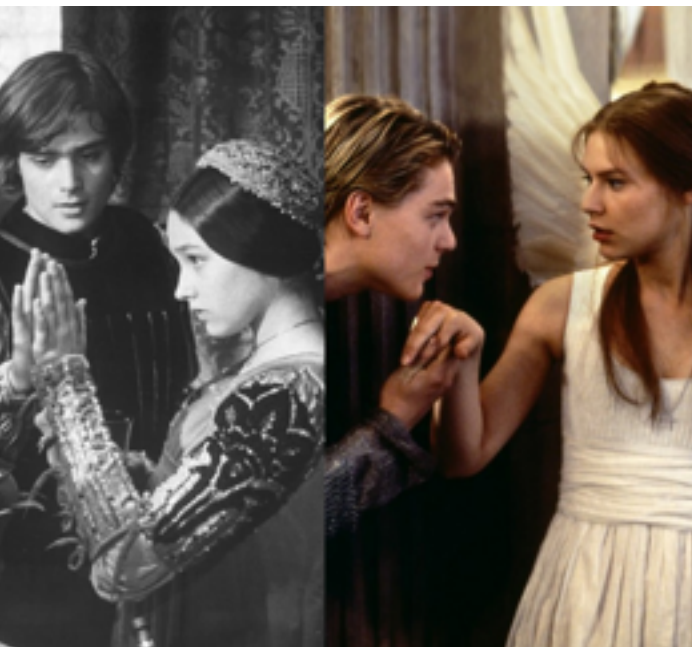
than all the other students at Hogwarts; she isn't concerned about her appearance like the other witches; and just like Lady Macbeth, she is portrayed stronger than the male characters of Harry and Ron!

The idea of non-conformist characters was pioneered by Shakespeare and this in itself, resonates with modern society as we are always looking towards ground breakers. Aren't we?



Shakespeare also used a backstory to enhance the emotions felt by the reader towards the characters. When you first read the beginning of Romeo and Juli-

et, Romeo was grieving the loss of his girlfriend. You have to admit, you feel so sorry for him. Then, when he fall's in love with Juliet, you can't help but feel ecstatic for him! You feel extra joy, now that Romeo has stopped grieving. Without this backstory, your emotions would not be so high. Ask anyone and I'm sure they will tell you that love and heartbreak is as relevant today as ever before?



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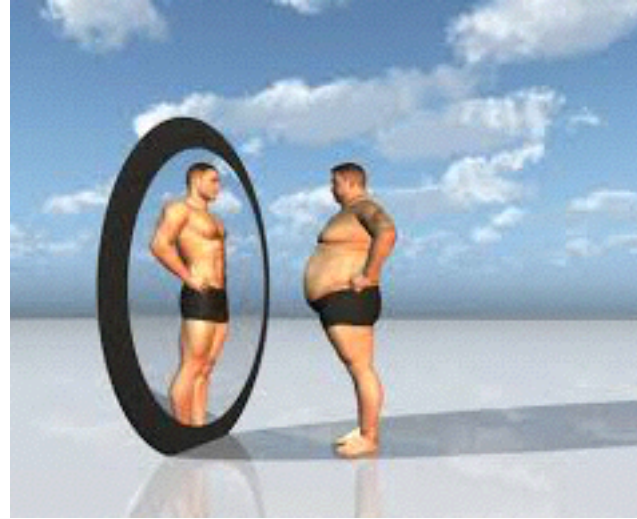


Shakespeare's main themes of conflict; appearance and reality; order/disorder; change and the levels of the themes (social, individual and natural) are all important factors that entertain us as people both today and in the past.

Conflict is Shakespeare's essence of drama.



By using appearance and reality, he can make characters appear what they are not. I think all of us have wanted to appear differently from what we really are at some stage, so who can't relate to that?!



By using order/disorder, Shakespeare uses the idea of stability, giving way to confusion; such as when King Lear goes mad and when Lady Macbeth calls on the spirits to unsex her. This would seem to fit

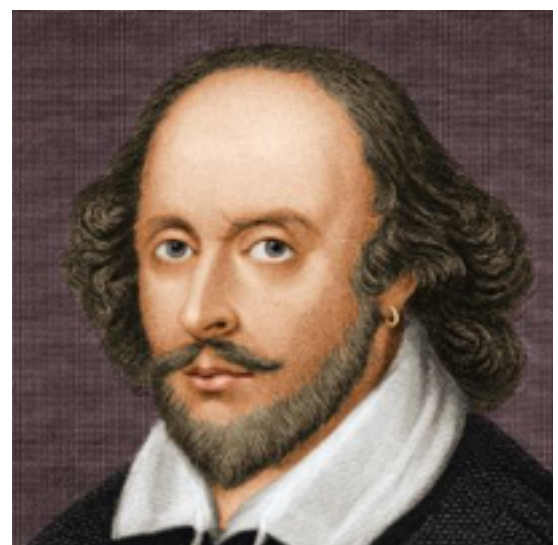


in perfectly with modern teens who complain of boredom easily when life appears to have no confusion!

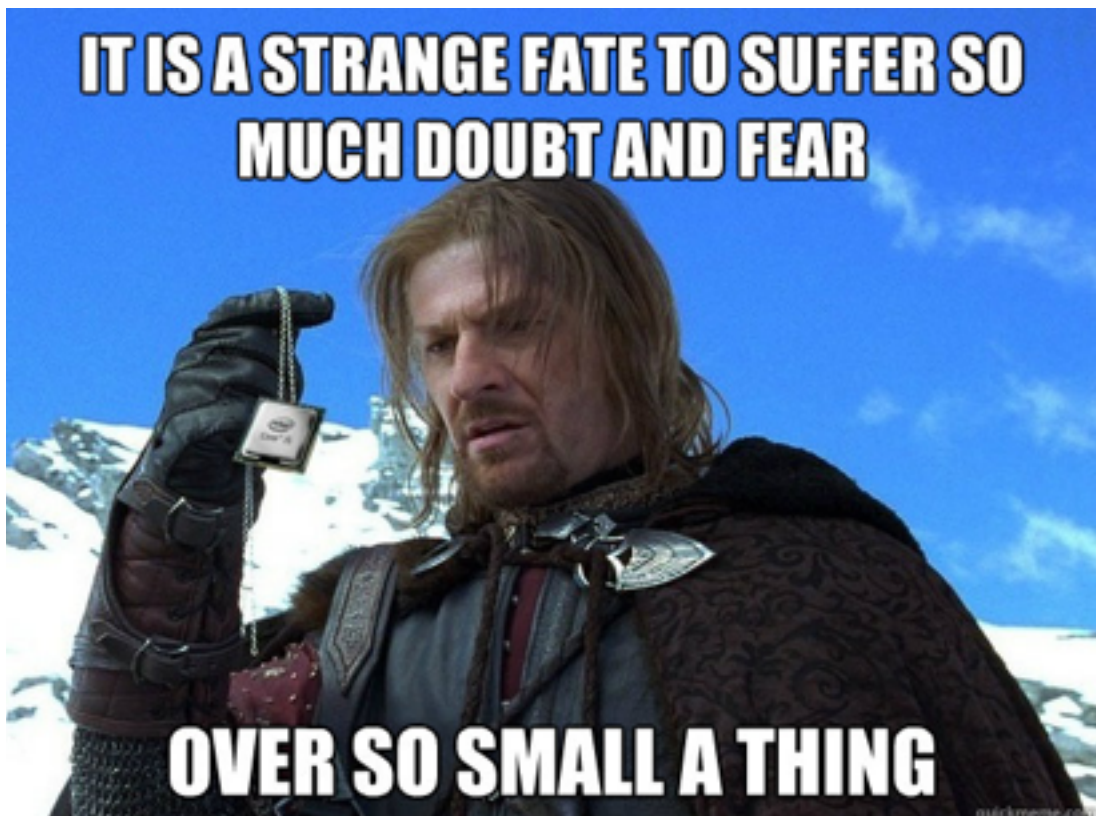
Finally, the way Shakespeare uses levels of society in his writing, gives young people an awareness of more than themselves, such as society or nature. This is something we all need to be reminded of in an era of times of global warming.



Everywhere I look, I see Shakespeare's themes being reflected in society. Go on, admit it, you do too!



Shakespeare's idea of how 'Unchecked Ambition' results in corrupting power in Macbeth, is seen in films, TV and books today. In J. R. R. Tolkien's the Lord of the Rings, Boromir, in his ambitions to rid Middle Earth of Sauron, attempts to steal the ring from Frodo and gets killed by the orcs; purely because he had no moral constraints!



Another Shakespearean theme that is widely used today, is the use of symbols. In Macbeth, there is thunder and lightening when the three witches appear. Similarly, in Star Wars, when Anakin Skywalker is converted to Darth Vader, these symbols are also utilised. The lightning bolts symbolise the presence of evil being born. Check out this link to see for yourself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6bEs3dxjPg>

The image shows the iconic Star Wars logo, consisting of the words "STAR" and "WARS" stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and blocky, with a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.

Did you know that many modern, popular movies and books are based on Shakespearean themes? And that many modern characters were inspired by his characters?

Katniss Everdeen's character in The Hunger

Games Trilogy was actually inspired by Lady Macbeth!



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Like Lady Macbeth, Katniss' involvement in the games, makes her very weak and she too becomes mentally unstable. Katniss would sometimes wander off and forget who she was, just like Lady Macbeth, when she was burdened with guilt!

Similarly, Peeta, in the same trilogy, is based on the male character of Macbeth.



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Peeta and Macbeth are both full of “the milk of human kindness.” So too, when Peeta is tortured using tracker jacker venom, he becomes violent and aggressive, much like Macbeth.

I know, many of you readers to this blog, would say that Shakespeare's language is so out dated and ask, 'who speaks like that anymore?' But, the answer to this is you! Did you know that we owe a lot of our modern language to Shakespeare?



Without any rules to the English language at the time, Shakespeare was able to twist and bend the way in which characters in his play's spoke and interacted. I think this is amazing, as most readers of this blog

would agree, that as children, they often wondered how words started?



Did you know, Shakespeare also invented many words and phrases that we use today such as: downstairs, assassination, manager, inaudible and cold-blooded? Without Shakespeare, these words that are still widely used, wouldn't even exist!



Are you aware that Shakespeare also changed the way modern people pronounce words? For example: the word ‘marked’ is now pronounced ma:kt. Before Shakespeare, it was pronounced ma:ked. He changed this pronunciation, because he wanted to reduce the amount of syllables for one of his poems! How much easier has he made it for us to speak? You may also be surprised to know that the vowel sound in ‘heat’ and ‘meat,’ etc, used to be the same, as the vowel sound in ‘name’ and ‘shame!’ Shakespeare changed this ‘ea’ sound, to be the same as the ‘ee’ sound in meet, see and bee! How cool is that?!



“Class, I’ve got a lot of material to cover, so to save time I won’t be using vowels today. Nw lts bgn, pls trn t pg 122.”

So, after reading all my thoughts and information on this blog, I know, that you too, can see, that even today, centuries after his death, Shakespeare is as relevant as ever.



So grab yourself some Shakespeare, sit back, enjoy and breathe in the 21st century air.

