

BEFORE YOU WATCH

1 Work in groups. Discuss the questions.

- 1 How often do you go to the theatre?
- 2 Do you like watching plays? Have you got a favourite play?
- 3 Are there any famous playwrights from your country?

2 a Work in pairs. Read the title of the article. What reasons do you think the writer gives?

b Read the article quickly and check your ideas.



David Peterson | Mon 21 July 2020

Why is Shakespeare important in the 21st century?

William Shakespeare died more than 400 years ago, but his plays and poems are still very popular today, and not only in the UK. School students around the world study his work and people in more than a hundred countries go to the theatre to watch his plays. In fact, there are versions of his plays in almost every world language – including British Sign Language, Maori, Shona and Yoruba. As well as theatre productions of his plays, there are also many operas, ballets, musicals and modern-day Hollywood and Bollywood film versions of his stories. There was even a Twitter production of Romeo and Juliet by the Royal Shakespeare Company, where the main characters told their story in 140-character comments or tweets.

So why is the work of a man who wrote 450 years ago so popular now? According to one Shakespeare expert, one reason Shakespeare is still popular is because he told brilliant stories with really interesting characters, but also, because the things he wrote about – love, friends and family – are important in modern life. We still experience the same feelings and situations as the characters, so it's easy for us to understand them. They help us learn about ourselves. What could Shakespeare teach you?

3 Read the article again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 William Shakespeare wrote plays and books.
- 2 You can only watch Shakespeare's plays at the theatre in English.
- 3 There are ballets and operas of Shakespeare's stories.
- 4 The Royal Shakespeare Company told one of Shakespeare's stories on social media.
- 5 Shakespeare's plays are popular because the characters are interesting.
- 6 Shakespeare wrote about topics that aren't really important today.

4 a Work in pairs. Look at the photo in the article. What do you think it shows? How old do you think it is?

b Watch the video and check your ideas.

WHILE YOU WATCH

5 a Work in pairs. Choose the correct answers (a or b).

- 1 Which famous people does Esme say were born in the UK?
 - a Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill and Queen Victoria
 - b Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth
- 2 How does Paul describe the Globe Theatre in Shakespeare's day?
 - a noisy and busy
 - b busy and uncomfortable
- 3 What did people do at the theatre?
 - a They shouted at the actors.
 - b They ate, drank and chatted to their friends.
- 4 How much were tickets for the Gentleman's Rooms?
 - a fourpence
 - b sixpence
- 5 Which tickets were the most expensive?
 - a the Gentleman's Rooms
 - b the Lord's Room
- 6 What could you see from the Lord's Room?
 - a the back of the actors' heads
 - b the front of the stage
- 7 How long did it take the theatre to burn down?
 - a half an hour
 - b an hour
- 8 What did Shakespeare do after the theatre burned down?
 - a He moved back to Stratford-upon Avon.
 - b He stayed in London and wrote more plays.

b Watch the video again to check your answers.

6 Watch the video again. Complete the sentences with the numbers in the box.

1997 1613 1 400 1564 3,000 1616 15 40 200,000

- 1 William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in _____.
- 2 He wrote about _____ plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.
- 3 The Globe Theatre burned down in _____ during a performance of one of Shakespeare's plays.
- 4 A new theatre, a copy of the original Globe, opened in _____.
- 5 The original Globe Theatre was big – about _____ people could watch a play at the same time.
- 6 In Shakespeare's time, the population of London was _____.
- 7 Almost _____ percent of the population went to the theatre at least once a month.
- 8 It wasn't expensive to go to the Globe – it cost _____ penny to stand and watch a play.
- 9 Shakespeare died on 23rd April _____.
- 10 Actors still perform Shakespeare's plays at the Globe Theatre _____ years after he died.

7 a Work in pairs and summarise the main events of the fire.

b Watch the video from 02:58–03:32 to check your answers.

AFTER YOU WATCH

8 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- 1 What did you think was interesting in the video?
- 2 Do you know any plays by Shakespeare? Which ones?
- 3 Are there any old or famous theatres where you live?

9 a Work in groups. Write a short scene from a play. First, choose one of the situations below and talk about the important things that happen. Make notes.

- an unusual weekend
- an interesting journey
- an unexpected visitor
- an argument between friends

b Talk about what the characters say in the scene and write their conversation.

c Decide who in your group will be each character in the scene and practise the conversation.

d Perform the scene from your play to the class.

