

Shakespeare is outdated and should no longer be taught on the curriculum"- to what extent do you agree?'

'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.' - Shakespeare

Frankenstein has become interchangeable with his monster in name. Alice is more popular for the phrase 'down the rabbit hole' than she is for Wonderland. Romeo and Juliet are used as metaphors for two people deeply in love (though I'd argue that it was never really love which connected the pair). The examples go on and on of how the ideas from classics transcended their literary form - authors forgotten - a single phrase remembered. Many argue that these Novels should also be excluded from the curriculum simply because they give rise to drowning students one by one into an ocean of boredom to be lost forever more. Shakespeare is no exception, but should we doom his stories to be remembered as simple metaphors?

I could analyse Shakespeare's use of language, his ideas and stories, his plot twists and comedy, but if we didn't already know his crucial role in these aspects, there would be no debating his removal from the curriculum as he wouldn't be on it. I was introduced to Shakespeare's work at the age of 8 in a summary book of all his plays. I quickly started collecting the real plays and memorising his soliloquies - to me the stories were simple yet they would stay in my mind for days. The complexity of language, which my friends couldn't understand both due to the time he was writing in as well as his immaculate word choice, was comforting when a Drama competition was held at my school. I stood shaking with my stage fright dancing behind me in front of all my classmates and shivers racing down my spine. I knew I needed to distract them away from my trembling voice and when my turn came to perform, I *became* Hamlet.

'To be or not to be...

...

Be all my sins remember'd'.

I received an applause and I knew exactly why they applauded. Who they applauded. It was beautiful writing they chose to hear. Beyond the need to evaluate it - they were required to do nothing but enjoy it. Pick the parts they felt and understood. After all, I had only recited a poem, not performed so it was not my non-existent acting skills which had caused that reaction. I was - much to my dismay - sent through to the finals and when I won the competition, I took a bow with Shakespeare and Hamlet holding each of my hands.

Shakespeare's work is an irreplaceable symphony. Irreplicable.

You can say Chaucer's poetry or Dickens' Novels, but when it comes to Shakespeare, one need only say his name and all is understood. It has been argued by many critics that he may not be a literary genius, but rather a lucky writer. Even if that is true, which in my opinion, it is not, his words carry a beauty which language has lost over time. A rhythm and a heartbeat... 'I am... I am... I am'. Words on a page morph into characters in worlds beyond our own with his flawless beat...

I am... I am... I am Antonio... I am Antonio, the Merchant of Venice.

Which of Shakespeare's stories hold no relevance to the way that we're living today? Macbeth's tragic descent into tyranny serves as a cautionary tale about the corrupting influence of power - something perhaps more directed at politicians. His exploration of jealousy and manipulation in 'Othello' remains pertinent in understanding human nature's darker side. Even in comedies like 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' Shakespeare delves into themes of love, identity, and the absurdities of human behavior, all of which resonate with contemporary audiences navigating a journey of self discovery.

'Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.'

If we want something to blame for giving rise to this debate, it would be the English curriculum as a whole because, in my humble opinion, debating his vitality in the curriculum is an insult to him. From a young age, Shakespeare is introduced not as something to enjoy, but something to dread. Foreign words of which every single one should be understood. 'Do not focus on the beauty of the language, analyse it.' 'Don't consider the genius of the narrative, find the climax.' Though not direct quotes, they are along the lines of what I was told by teachers. Well Shakespeare's writing was not written as a cipher to decode. Nor was it intended to be a graph with a peak and a trough. His writing should allow the reader to make thrilling connections with the characters.

Teach us to be as kind as Portia upon deciding to aid Bassanio, but also as brave as Mercutio though don't be too harsh on your friends like Hamlet.

If there is any issue in the curriculum, it is perhaps the fact that it lacks the diversity prevalent in the group of students being taught it and that is no fault of Shakespeare. In the 17th Century, he managed to popularise the Egyptian love story between Antony and Cleopatra and yet we fail to do the same in our modern society where information is available in a way which would bewitch medieval historians and bring heart attacks to renaissance doctors. Ask a year 11 student who Tolstoy is and they will likely say, 'Isn't

that a new game?' Show them a book by the great Alexander Dumas, and they will simply misread his name without any recognition of his work.

All in all, if anything should be eliminated, it is the way the English Curriculum is taught, not the content in it, because **'the fault'**, dear reader, is not in Shakespeare, **'but in ourselves.'** In the unchanging education system we chose to use.

On a final note:

**'Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.'**

A reminder that knowledge and beauty are one. Found in everything. A timeless message for every moment of everyday.