William Shakespeare:

A literary giant in the 21st century

Shakespeare and the Elizabethan world – additional material for LK 13 Englisch ROS

Telgte, August 2010
"All the world's a stage"

"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 school-boy, 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,
Jealous in honour, 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 lin'd,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
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."

Jaques (As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII, lines 139-166)
The Globe Theatre

During the first years of Elizabeth’s reign, the English playing companies used inns, inn yards, college halls and private houses for their performances. It was not until 1576 that the actor-manager James Burbage built the Theatre in Shoreditch, the first purpose-built playhouse in London. Shakespeare joined the resident troupe at the Theatre in the 1580s and the company (later known as the Chamberlain’s and then the King’s Men) flourished there for 20 years.

In 1596 a dispute arose over the renewal of the lease and negotiations were begun to acquire a disused hall in the precincts of the old Blackfriars priory to use as an indoor theatre. James Burbage died in February 1597; in April the lease expired, but the dispute continued for two years, during which time the company performed at the nearby Curtain playhouse. In Christmas 1598 the company sought a drastic solution: they leased a plot near the Rose, a rival theatre in Southwark, demolished the Theatre and carried its timbers over the river. To cover the cost of the new playhouse, James Burbage’s sons Cuthbert and Richard, offered some members of the company shares in the building. Shakespeare was one of four actors who bought a share in the Globe. By early 1599 the theatre was up and running and for 14 years it thrived, presenting many of Shakespeare’s greatest plays.

In 1613, during a performance of Henry VIII, wadding from a stage cannon ignited the thatched roof and the theatre burned to the ground ‘all in less than two hours, the people having enough to do to save themselves’. The theatre was quickly rebuilt, this time with a tiled roof. Shakespeare may have acted in the second Globe, but he probably never wrote for it. It remained the home for Shakespeare’s old company until the closure of all the theatres under England’s Puritan administration in 1642. No longer of use, it was demolished to make room for tenements in 1644.
A Trip to the Elizabethan Theatre

Every day, at two o’clock in the afternoon in the City of London two and sometimes three comedies are performed, at separate places, wherewith folk make merry together, and whichever does best gets the greatest audience. The places are so built, that they play on a raised platform, and everyone can well see it all. There are, however, separate galleries, and there one stands more comfortably and moreover can sit, but one pays more for it. Thus anyone who remains on the level standing pays only one English penny: but if he wants to sit, he is let in at as further door and there he gibes another penny. If he desires to sit on a cushion in the most comfortable place of all, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he gives yet another English penny at the door. And, in the pauses of the comedy, food and drink are carried round amongst the people, and one can thus refresh oneself at one’s own cost.

By Thomas Platter

As a class discuss the differences between the Elizabethan theatre and a modern theatre. Fill in the form below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elizabethan Playhouse</th>
<th>Modern Theatre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No special lighting (why?)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Very little scenery</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No female actors - female parts played by boys (why?)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Few special effects</strong></td>
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Sonnets

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1. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
2. Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
3. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
4. And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
5. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
6. And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
7. And every fair from fair sometime declines,
8. By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:
9. But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
10. Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
11. Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
12. When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,
13. So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
14. So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Follow the speaker's train of thought by answering the three questions:

1. How is his initial question answered?
2. What characteristics of summer are referred to in the images used?
3. What problem does the speaker face and what solution does he offer?

Describe your dream girl/boy using comparisons and similes.

Example: My dream boy's eyes should be as blue as the sea. My dream girl looks like an angle.
Henry Constable (1562-1613):

Of his mistress, upon occasion of her walking in a garden

1. My lady’s presence makes the roses red,
2. Because her lips they blush for shame:
3. The lily’s leaves, for envy, pale became,
4. And her white hands in them this envy bred.
5. The marigold abroad her leaves doth spread,
6. Because the sun’s and her power is the same;
7. The violet of purple colour came,
8. Dyed with the blood she made my heart to shed.
9. In brief, all flowers from her their virtue take:
10. From her sweet breath their sweet smells do proceed,
11. The living heat which her eye-beams do make
12. Warmeth the ground, and quickeneth the seed.
13. The rain wherewith she watered these flowers
14. Falls from my eyes, which she dissolves in showers.

Which comparisons and images are used to describe the beauty of the woman?

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1. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
2. Coral is far more red, than her lips red:
3. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
4. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
5. I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
6. But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
7. And in some perfumes is there more delight
8. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
9. I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10. That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
11. I grant I never saw a goddess go,
12. My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
13. And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
14. As any she belied with false compare.

Compare Shakespeare's sonnet to Constable's. Work out the similarities and differences.
Romeo and Juliet

prologue

Chorus
1 Two households, both alike in dignity,
2 In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
3 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
4 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
5 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
6 A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
7 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
8 Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
9 The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
10 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
11 Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
12 Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
13 The which if you with patient ears attend,
14 What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

[Exit.]

1. How much does the chorus reveal about the play?
2. Try to identify the poetic form of the Prologue. Why does Shakespeare start his tragedy this way?
3. Translate the first 14 lines of the drama into German.

act I, scene V (the first meeting of the lovers)

ROMEO
44 O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
45 It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
46 Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
47 Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
48 So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
49 As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
50 The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
51 And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
52 Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
53 For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

1. Describe Romeo's reaction when he first sees Juliet.
2. How does he underline Juliet's "brightness" in this passage?
act I, scene V (the first kiss)

ROMEO [To JULIET.]

93 If I profane with my unworthiest hand
94 This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
95 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
96 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

97 Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
98 Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
99 For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
100 And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO

101 Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET

102 Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO

103 O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
104 They pray — grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

105 Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

106 Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

[Kisses her.]

1. Explain the religious imagery used.
2. Work out the movements of the two lovers. In pairs read the dialogue using actions you feel are appropriate to their words.
3. Which poetic form is used to express their emotions?

The farewell scene (act III, scene 5)

JULIET

1 Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
2 It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
3 That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
4 Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree:
5 Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO

6 It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

JULIET
Yon light is not daylight, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhal'd,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua.
Therefore stay yet; thou need'st not to be gone.

ROMEO
Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads.
I have more care to stay than will to go:
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so.
How is't, my soul? let's talk; it is not day.

JULIET
It is, it is: hie hence, be gone, away!
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us.
Some say the lark and loathed toad change eyes,
O, now I would they had changed voices too!
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,
Hunting thee hence with hunt's-up to the day.
O, now be gone; more light and light it grows.

ROMEO
More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!

1. Outline what happens in your own words.
2. Explain how the mood of the two main characters changes throughout the dialogue.
3. Which strategy does Romeo use to convince Juliet?
4. List the symbols and images which refer to day and night.
William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet: The Prologue

Enter Chorus

Chorus:
Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona (where we lay our scene);
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents’ strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parent’s rage,
Which but their children’s end nought could remove,
Is now the two hours’ traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Exit (98 words)

Annotations

line 3: grudge – a strong feeling of anger
line 5: loins – part of the body above the legs and below the waist
line 7: piteous – violent disagreement
line 8: strife – causing to feel sadness and sympathy
line 11: nought – nothing

Tasks

1 Comprehension
Describe in your own words what the prologue is about.

2 Analysis
a) Analyse the atmosphere the text tries to create.
b) Analyse the function this scene has for the whole play.

3 Evaluation
To what extent does the form of the prologue correspond with the contents of the play?

4 Comment
Comment on the transformation of the setting from the stage into a modern environment in the medium of film.
Shakespeare – Erwartungshorizont

Textinformation: William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet: The Prologue

Autor: William Shakespeare
Titel: Romeo and Juliet: The Prologue
Textformat/Textlänge: Drama, 98 Wörter

Erwartungshorizont

1 Comprehension
The prologue presents two noble families in Verona who have been fighting against each other for a long time and have killed members of the opposing families in a long-standing feud. When members of either family fall in love with each other and eventually kill themselves, the ancient fight between the two families finds a tragic ending. In the prologue the speaker announces to the audience what will happen during the two hours of the play. The development of the relationship and the death of the two lovers becomes a foregone conclusion and is in the centre of the play. The lovers’ struggle against their families and their parents’ rage, which nothing but the death of the lovers could end, is the central theme of the play. The speaker of the prologue asks the audience to follow the play kindly and apologizes for any mistakes the actors might make in the process of playing.

2 Analysis
a) The atmosphere is that of an official announcement (“where we lay our scene”) but tries to create interest in the reader by mentioning the themes (war, love and death) and the information that the duration of the play is limited (“two hours traffic”). The choice of words try to create immediate suspense (civil blood/hands unclean/fatal loins/star-crossed/misadventured/death/strife/fearful/death-marked love/rage). Apart from trying to appeal to the groundlings with these words, the speaker also tries to address the nobility when he uses words like (alike in dignity/fair/ancient). At the very beginning the speaker also points out the fact that the tragedy is only one on stage and the end of the performance will be kind: “our toil shall strive to mend”.

b) The prologue has the function of informing the audience about the necessity of understanding the play, the “quiddities” answering the questions as to the who?, where?, when?, what? and why? of the story. The aim is to attract the audience’s attention at the beginning of the play and quieten the rowdy crowd of the groundlings to be able to allow the performance to begin. One of its purposes is to prepare them to decide on sympathies with chosen characters and show them during the play. The speaker gives away the plot so that the audience can concentrate on the question of “how” the story is acted out rather than what is being presented.

3 Evaluation
The form of the prologue technically is that of a sonnet, here transformed into a speech. The first verse (“ABAB”) is the presentation of the background, the second (“CDCD”) is a short presentation of the plot, the third (“EFEF”) is a variation of the question about the reasons for the tragedy, the final two lines (“GG”) give and appeal to the audience to follow the production with a kind ear. The first verse thus shows the initial situation between the two parties, the second the love between the protagonists and the third muses on the tragic ending.

4 Comment
The answer is open to individual answers, yet should refer to the specific tools of film as they are used e.g. by Baz Luhrmann in his interpretation of “Romeo and Juliet”, particularly at the introduction to the film, where after a rapid sequence of visual impulses the prologue is presented in the form of a newsflash.
Only two years ago, a report that two-thirds of leading American universities had dropped Shakespeare studies from the list of majors in favour of courses on popular culture and gender studies, caused worries that the playwright was becoming a has-been, a victim of political correctness and watered-down curriculums. Today, happily, it's clear that such reports of Shakespeare's "death" were exaggerated. Shakespeare is still the most produced playwright in 1990's America, and in England he was just voted 'the Briton of the millennium'. There are replicas of the Globe Theatre in London and in Tokio. As the scholar Jonathan Bate points out, the bard has become "a world genius" with a "cross-cultural appeal".

'Shakespeare in Love' – a witty new movie that works an improvisation on the playwright's life – was nominated for 13 Academy Awards and shares a nomination for best picture with 'Elizabeth', another film set against the backdrop of Elizabethan England. These films are only the tip of the Shakespeare iceberg. Coming soon are a slew of movies based on his plays. Certainly the fact that Shakespeare is a brand name has something to do with his current revival. Restoration critics emphasized his role as a dramatic playwright who addressed public and political issues. Romantics portrayed him, romantically, as the poet of melancholy and love. And modernists have stressed the difficulty of his work and its contradictory meanings. Filmmakers are busy describing him as the poet of youth and youthful confusion. Baz Luhrman started this wave in 1996 with his hip, music-video-like adaptation of 'Romeo and Juliet', starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Clare Danes. Now there is a high school version of 'The Taming of the Shrew', as well as a 'Macbeth' set on the high school football pitch and an 'Othello' set in the world of college basketball. 'Shakespeare in Love' depicts the writer himself as a lovelorn youth suffering from writer's block.

Just what is it about Shakespeare's works that accounts for his ability to engage the popular imagination, his accessibility to so many ears and cultures? The usual reason offered for his greatness – the richness of his language, the range and depth of his characterizations, the fecundity of his imagination – do not explain why he has become a household name. But there is something to the argument that he has gradually been institutionalized, and that in becoming part of the English-language canon taught in schools, cited in dictionaries, studied by scholars and laymen alike – he has insidiously become our familiar.


Annotations: the Restoration (l.18) – the return of the monarchy in Britain in 1660
Guided analysis:
1. Point out why, according to the text, Shakespeare's works are still so popular.
2. How does Kakutani try to convince her readers of Shakespeare's relevance and importance? Pay special attention to the structure of the text and to her choice of words.
3. You have got a choice here.
   a) Do you also believe that Shakespeare is a "world genius" (l.10) with a "cross-cultural appeal" (ll.10-11)? Why do you think he is still being read at school?
   or
   b) Why do you think that the films mentioned in the text have become successful box-office hits.