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William Shakespeare's plays feature sexual situations and references, violence, gore and profanity. His plays are widely taught at schools throughout the world. Many movies made today have the same features.



Why do you think you are restricted from attending movies with these features but you can read Shakespeare's plays at school?

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William Shakespeare had to draw an audience for his plays. He chose the titles so that people would know what to expect. He wrote three types of plays: comedies, tragedies and histories.



Based on the title or what you may already know about the play, match each title below to its type and briefly explain your choices.

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|------------|
| _____ 1. | <i>As You Like It</i> | a. tragedy |
| _____ 2. | <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> | b. history |
| _____ 3. | <i>Richard III</i> | c. comedy |

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During Shakespeare's time, stage props were few and lighting was minimal. Sound systems did not exist, of course. Therefore, it was critically important that actors be specially trained and skilled to make their performances memorable.



Given the absence of any technological help, what would be an actor's greatest assets? How is this different from what might be considered the most important assets today? Explain your answers.

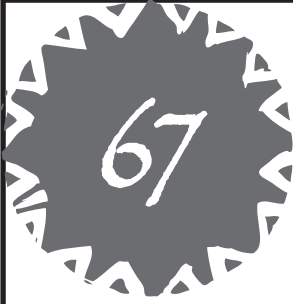
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During Shakespeare's time in London, the plague killed thousands of people. Lacking scientific knowledge and equipment, people invented reasons for the epidemic. (They did not know the disease was carried by fleas on rats.) Often, magic, the ways of the occult world, folklore and superstition played a major role in Elizabethan thought.



Try to put yourself in a sixteenth-century frame of mind and write about the reasons for the plague. Include what cures might be effective.

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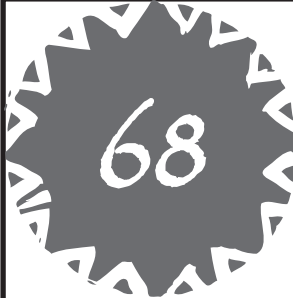


In *King Lear*, the elderly king announces that he will divide his kingdom into three unequal parts and hand over rule to his three daughters. He then asks each of his daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, to tell him how much she loves him. He demands that they answer him in public. The daughter with the best answer will receive the largest portion of the kingdom.

The scheming Goneril and Regan make emotional – and misleading – declarations of their love for Lear, but Cordelia, Lear’s favourite, refuses to answer, saying only, “I love your majesty according to my bond; nor more nor less.” Cordelia is disinherited because she will not flatter her father, even though she really is the daughter who loves him most.

Have you ever been in a position when it would benefit you to flatter a parent rather than tell him or her the truth? Which did you do? Write a paragraph explaining your situation.

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In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Demetrius is in love with Hermia, who in turn loves Lysander. Helena, Hermia’s best friend, is in love with Demetrius. When Hermia runs off with Lysander, Helena tells Demetrius about their flight in order to win his favour:

“ ... and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.”

Do you think her plan will work? Would you do the same thing in her place? Why? Write a letter to Helena explaining what you think of her plan.

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Your horrid image doth unfix my hair.

Macbeth, Act 1, scene 3



Read the line above and think about what it means.
Then rewrite the line in your own words.

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Take every man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.

Hamlet, Act 1, scene 3



Read the line above and think about what it means. Then rewrite the line in your own words.

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