

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING AND TEACHING SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOL

William Shakespeare, the greatest writer in the English literature, wrote a collection of poetry and drama works. His plays capture the heart of human existence, they reach across cultures and are timeless. Shakespeare was a master of English. Today we use a lot of words, which were introduced by him.

And it is very important to connect a new generation of students with Shakespeare's language. The vocabulary of his works shows the diversity and beauty of the language. English history, culture and traditions are illustrated in magnificent plays. New methods of teaching can help children to study Shakespeare in a creative way. Let's try to have a look at some main approaches to teaching Shakespeare.

Speaking about introduction Shakespeare's works in school, we should differentiate studying them in English-speaking schools where English is a native language for children and studying Shakespeare on the lessons of English as a foreign language (e.g. learning English in schools in our country). Today in Great Britain Shakespeare's works are obligatory for students in the secondary school.

The works of the greatest dramatist have been studied for centuries. However, there have been different approaches to how Shakespeare should be taught. The Victorians tried to show the idea that Shakespeare and his works develop, improve and boost young minds. Later, in the 20th century students had to analyze dramatic works in details, paid attention on different small things in every part of the scene, and very often they didn't understand the whole sense. The main idea was unclear for them, but examiners didn't require it. The publication of Cambridge academic Rex Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare* in 1998 shifted the methods of teaching. Theatrical performance in the class started to be more and more popular. Students were able to immerse into the plot and to interpret it in a way how they understand it. The difficult language, complex plots and distant settings of the plays demand

new ways of thinking from children. And when they study his plays by performing them, it gives children a sense of confidence and ownership over the text. Some companies such as Shakespeare's Globe, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Shakespeare's School Festival popularize the works of the greatest playwright having their own particular take on educating children about Shakespeare.

In our country Shakespeare's works are included into the curriculum of Russian literature (the 8th form – "Romeo and Juliet" as an obligatory work; the 11th form – "Hamlet" as a work for extra reading). The first topic of the lessons devoted to Shakespeare in the 8th form is "The Place of Shakespeare in World Culture". Students learn the biographical information about Shakespeare and general information about his most famous works. Then they read and discuss the best-known Shakespeare's tragedy "Romeo and Juliet". The aim of these lessons is to introduce the legacy of the great writer of Renaissance to learners and teach them to analyze his most famous work.

We can find texts about Shakespeare in the English learning books aimed for Belarusian schools. Children in our schools don't study his works in original, because their level of English isn't enough to understand difficult language of Shakespeare's works.

However, some teachers suggest non-standard organization of English lessons, using Shakespeare as a main topic. There can be such forms as reading sonnets both in English and Russian, dramatizing some extracts from different plays, studying words which were introduced by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare is studied both in English schools and Belarusian schools. But in English schools there is a deeper observing of different sides of the Shakespeare's heritage: from the main topics of his works to the language of them. In Belarusian schools Shakespeare is learnt first of all just for familiarization and more often in the Russian language. There should also be creative English lessons devoted to Shakespeare which can give children an opportunity to immerse into the world of one of the greatest authors whose works are world classics even today.

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