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# **INTRODUCTON**

William Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of the most influential figures in the history of literature. His works, which span a wide range of genres including tragedy, comedy, and historical drama, have been studied, performed, and admired for over four centuries. Shakespeare's impact on the literary world is undeniable, with his plays and poetry providing a rich tapestry of human emotion, wit, and insight into the human condition.

Born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, Shakespeare wrote a total of 38 plays and 154 sonnets, many of which are considered masterpieces of English literature. His ability to capture the complexities of human nature, the nuances of love and friendship, and the struggles of power and ambition has made his works timeless and universal.

Shakespeare's influence on literature extends far beyond his own time. His plays have been translated into multiple languages and performed in countries around the world. Scholars have long studied his works for their linguistic complexity, thematic depth, and enduring relevance to contemporary society.

In the field of Shakespearean studies, scholars and enthusiasts alike delve into the historical context of Shakespeare's works, analyze his use of language and dramatic techniques, and explore the myriad interpretations and adaptations of his plays over the centuries. By studying Shakespeare, readers gain not only a deeper appreciation of his artistry but also a greater understanding of the human experience.

# **SHAKESPARE’S PORTRAYAL OF THEMES**

Shakespeare portrays themes such as love, power, ambition, and revenge through complex characters, intricate plotlines, and rich language in his plays. Love is often depicted as both a source of joy and heartache, as seen in works like "Romeo and Juliet" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Power dynamics and ambition drive characters like Macbeth to great heights and tragic ends. Revenge plays a central role in works like "Hamlet" and "Othello," where characters grapple with the consequences of seeking vengeance. Shakespeare's exploration of these themes continues to resonate with audiences today due to the universal human experiences he captures in his plays.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPERARES’ TRAGEDY.

Tragedy refers to any form of art that ends with an unhappy note.

Shakespearean tragedies share several key characteristics, including a protagonist with a fatal flaw or tragic trait, a series of unfortunate events leading to a downward spiral, a sense of inevitability or fate, and a high body count by the end. In "Hamlet," the character of Hamlet himself grapples with indecision and a quest for revenge, ultimately leading to his tragic downfall. In "Macbeth," the protagonist's unchecked ambition and willingness to pursue power at any cost result in a series of calamities and his own undoing. Both plays showcase the tragic trajectories of their central figures, as well as the themes of betrayal, manipulation, and moral decay commonly found in Shakespearean tragedies.

## SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY CHALLENGE SOCIAL NORMS AND CONVENTIONS

Shakespeare's comedies challenge social norms and conventions in various ways. One way is through the use of mistaken identity, where characters often disguise themselves or pretend to be someone else, leading to confusion and humor. This can allow Shakespeare to explore themes of identity, class, and gender dynamics.

Additionally, his comedies often feature strong female characters who defy traditional gender roles, such as Rosalind in "As You Like It" or Viola in "Twelfth Night." These characters challenge societal expectations of women and highlight the limitations placed on them in Shakespeare's time.

Furthermore, Shakespeare uses humor to critique societal issues and hypocrisy. Satirical elements in his comedies poke fun at the flaws and absurdities of the society in which they are set, encouraging the audience to reflect on their own beliefs and prejudices.

Overall, Shakespeare's comedies challenge social norms by subverting expectations, exploring complex themes through humor, and providing a platform for marginalized voices to be heard.

## ROLE OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

In Shakespeare's works, gender and sexuality play complex and varied roles in the representation of characters and relationships. Shakespeare often challenges traditional gender norms and expectations, portraying characters who defy societal conventions. Characters like Viola in "Twelfth Night" and Rosalind in "As You Like It" disguise themselves as men, allowing for exploration of gender roles and identity.

Sexuality is also a prominent theme in many of Shakespeare's works, with relationships often defying societal boundaries. For example, the homoerotic undertones in "Antony and Cleopatra" and the intense relationships between male characters like Antonio and Sebastian in "Twelfth Night" offer nuanced portrayals of love and desire.

Overall, Shakespeare's treatment of gender and sexuality is dynamic and multifaceted, reflecting the complexities of human relationships and challenging audiences to rethink traditional notions of identity and love.

### INTERPRETATION OF SKAKESPEARES’ WORK

When Shakespeare's plays were first performed, audiences saw them as reflections of their own world. They understood the jokes, the social dynamics, and the political references. For example, in Hamlet, the themes of revenge and the dangers of a corrupt court would have resonated with audiences living in a time of political intrigue.

For centuries, Shakespeare's plays were seen through the lens of the "Great Chain of Being", a hierarchy that put God at the top and humans at the bottom. Plays like King Lear, with its themes of social order and rebellion, were interpreted as warnings against defying this hierarchy.

The Romantic period focused on emotions and individualism. Shakespeare's characters, especially the tragic heroes like Romeo and Juliet, were celebrated for their passion and their struggles against fate.

Modern interpretations of Shakespeare's work have moved away from the strict interpretations of the past. Critics began to analyze Shakespeare's work through different lenses;

They explored how women were portrayed and how their experiences were reflected in the plays.

They examined how Shakespeare's plays reflect colonial attitudes and power dynamics.

They investigated the characters' motivations and inner conflicts using psychological theories.

The way we interpret Shakespeare reveals what we value in our own time. We might focus on themes of individual freedom in one era, while another era might be more concerned with social order.

Each generation brings its own understanding to Shakespeare's work. This is because our cultural and social experiences shape how we view the world and its issues.

In a nutshell, Shakespeare's plays are like time capsules. They provide us with a window into past societies, but also challenge us to think about the values of our own time.

### EVIDENCE REGARDING SHAKESPEARES’ AUTHORSHIP

Let's dive into the fascinating, and often contentious, world of Shakespeare authorship. While most scholars accept William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon as the primary author of the plays and poems attributed to him, a significant contingent argues that someone else, or a group of people, was actually responsible.

Let us look at evidence supporting William Shakespeare authorship. The baptismal and burial records confirm the existence of William Shakespeare in Stratford and document his life events, including his birth, marriage, children, and death.

Contracts for theatrical productions, land deeds, and other legal documents directly tie Shakespeare to the theatrical world and the ownership of property. The collection of Shakespeare's plays was compiled and published seven years after his death, featuring a portrait of Shakespeare and dedications that clearly identify him as the playwright.

Shakespeare's works exhibit a unique combination of vocabulary, rhythm, and imagery, consistent across his plays and poems, suggesting a singular authorial voice.

Shakespeare's plays demonstrate a breadth of knowledge about history, geography, law, and other subjects, suggesting a well-educated individual.

Now let have a look at some controversies surrounding his authorship. Apart from his literary works, there are very few personal letters, diaries, or other writings by Shakespeare himself. Some argue this lack of evidence casts doubt on his authorship.

Some scholars point to Shakespeare's humble beginnings as a glove-maker's son and his lack of formal education as reasons to doubt his ability to produce such sophisticated works. They argue that a more educated and aristocratic individual must have been involved. One of the most popular alternative theories suggests that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, was the true author. Supporters point to similarities in their lives, including de Vere's connections to the theatre and his education.

The Collaborative Theory proposes that Shakespeare might have collaborated with other playwrights, perhaps even taking credit for their work. This is supported by the existence of co-authorships in Elizabethan theatre.

While the evidence supporting Shakespeare's authorship is strong, it's not conclusive. The lack of definitive proof feeds the debate. The idea of a hidden author adds an element of intrigue and mystery to Shakespeare's works, making the debate captivating for many.

The anti-Stratfordian movement has, at times, been linked to social and political agendas, with some seeing Shakespeare's work as a reflection of power structures they oppose.

In Conclusion, while Shakespeare authorship continues to be debated, the majority of scholars accept the traditional view that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was the primary author of the plays and poems attributed to him. The controversy, however, serves as a reminder of the enduring fascination with Shakespeare's works and the complexities of literary history.

### ADAPTATION OF SHAKESPEAREAN PLAY

Shakespeare's plays have been widely adapted and reimagined across various forms of media over the years. In literature, many authors have been inspired by Shakespeare's works and have created modern retellings or incorporated elements of his plays into their own work.

In theater, Shakespeare's plays have been performed in traditional settings as well as in modern reinterpretations that update the language, setting, or themes to appeal to contemporary audiences.

In film, Shakespeare's plays have been adapted into movies that range from faithful reproductions of the original text to creative reinterpretations that place the stories in new contexts or time periods.

In other media, such as television, radio, graphic novels, and even video games, Shakespeare's plays have also been adapted and reimagined to reach new audiences and explore different aspects of the stories.

Overall, Shakespeare's enduring influence on literature, theater, film, and other media is a testament to the timeless relevance of his work and the universal themes he explores in his plays.

### CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS APPLY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Contemporary scholars often apply theoretical frameworks such as feminism, post colonialism, and psychoanalysis to Shakespearean texts in order to explore the plays from diverse and nuanced perspectives.

Feminist scholars look at Shakespearean works through the lens of gender and power dynamics, examining how female characters are portrayed, the role of women in society, and how gender roles influence the actions of characters. They may question the representation of women in Shakespeare's plays, looking for instances of subversion or reinforcement of traditional gender norms.

Postcolonial theorists focus on the relationship between colonizers and the colonized in Shakespeare's works, examining themes of power, race, and cultural identity. They may analyze how Shakespeare's plays reflect and perpetuate colonial ideologies, or they may uncover instances of resistance and subversion by marginalized characters.

Psychoanalytic critics explore the psychological motivations and inner conflicts of characters in Shakespearean texts, drawing on theories of the unconscious mind, repression, and desire. They may analyze characters' behaviors in light of Freudian concepts such as the Oedipus complex or the unconscious influence of past traumas.

By applying these theoretical frameworks, scholars are able to unearth new meanings and interpretations in Shakespeare's plays, shedding light on the complexities of the texts and their relevance to contemporary issues. Through these interdisciplinary approaches, scholars are able to engage with Shakespeare's works in fresh and thought-provoking ways, contributing to ongoing conversations about literature, culture, and society.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Shakespearean studies introduce us to the life of the author, how he makes use of language. Shakespeare’s works encourage students to actively engage with the text, connect with characters, and explore the themes within the broader historical and literary context.

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