



William Shakespeare – Genius at Work (C1 -Advanced)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you ever go to the theatre? If so, how often? What kind of plays do you prefer?
2. If not, why not?
3. Are theatre tickets expensive in your country?
4. What are the advantages of live theatre over cinema? And of cinema over live theatre?
5. Have you ever seen a Shakespeare play at the theatre, at the cinema or on TV? If so, which one? What did you think of it?

B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. In Shakespeare's time, theatre audiences did not keep quiet during performances.
2. Shakespeare was an actor as well as a playwright.
3. The plays being performed at the Globe changed every week.
4. Shakespeare avoided including important female roles in his plays.
5. At that time it was illegal for women to perform in plays.
6. As Shakespeare mixed with different social classes, he was able to create all types of characters.
7. You can get a ticket to see a Shakespeare play at the Globe for as little as £5.
8. The purpose of the Shakespeare and Race festival is to remove racist language from the plays.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. In what way is the Globe different from most modern theatres?
2. How do we know that Shakespeare often made last-minute changes to his scripts?
3. What made it possible for Shakespeare to know the actors of the King's Men company very well?
4. Who played the female parts in the plays?
5. When did women start acting on stages in London?
6. How did Shakespeare's company come to acquire royal patronage and the privileges it brought?
7. What do some people think about the link between colonialism and Shakespeare's popularity?
8. What issues, in addition to racism, do some people find in Shakespeare's plays?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. I sent a complaint to the computer company with a _____ photo of the crack in the screen.
2. For a _____ _____ who performs without a safety net, the slightest mistake can be fatal.
3. Luke's parents were worried because they didn't like the boys he was _____ _____ with.
4. One of the government's main _____ is to build more affordable housing for young people.
5. Our school drama club is going to _____ _____ a musical this term.
6. The last _____ of the play will be on Thursday, the day before the opening night.

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. The Globe is a _____ (CONSTRUCT) of Shakespeare's theatre of 1614.
2. The theatre was a very popular form of _____ (ENTERTAIN) in Shakespeare's time.
3. Shakespeare knew his actors' strengths and _____ (WEAK) very well.
4. Boy actors who had female roles were _____ (HOPE) given adult roles when older.
5. The theatre was considered rather _____ (REPUTE) by English moralists.
6. Shakespeare's connections with royalty influenced the _____ (RECEIVE) of his works.
7. Royal patronage gave his company more financial security and _____ (HEIGHT) prestige.
8. Nowadays, theatre performances in London can be _____ (ACCESS) because of the cost.

F – Talk about it

In pairs or groups.

1. Do you think Shakespeare's works would have become just as well-known if Britain had not been a colonial superpower? Why (not)?
2. Do you think great works of literature should be judged according to today's values or according to the values that were prevalent when they were written? Why?

G – Write about it

Write about one of your country's most famous playwrights, living or dead. Mention:

- some biographical details;
 - what kind of plays he/she is known for;
 - what his/her best-known works are;
 - whether you've seen or read any of them;
 - if so, what you thought of them.
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Answers: William Shakespeare – Genius at Work (C1)

B – Listen and answer

1. T 2. T 3. F – They changed almost every day. 4. F – He wrote some prominent female roles. 5. F – There was no legal prohibition of female actors. 6. T 7. T 8. F – It's to discuss the plays in the light of the different sensibilities of today's audiences.

C – Read and answer

1. It's circular and roofless and there's an area where spectators can stand to watch the performance. 2. There are notes added to the scripts. 3. He spent practically his entire career working for this one company. 4. Boy actors aged from around twelve up to around twenty. 5. After the Restoration in the 1660s. 6. As The Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company was patronised by the Lord Chamberlain and his son and frequently performed at court. This brought the company into contact with Queen Elizabeth I and her successor James I. King James became the company's patron, renamed it The King's Men and granted it lots of special privileges. 7. Some people think Shakespeare's work became a global phenomenon as a result of Britain's position as a colonial superpower in the 1800s. 8. Some people also find there are issues of mysogeny, ageism and heterosexism in the plays.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. close-up 2. tightrope walker 3. hanging out 4. aims 5. put on 6. rehearsal

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?

1. reconstruction 2. entertainment 3. weaknesses 4. hopefully 5. disreputable
6. reception 7. heightened 8. inaccessible