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Shakespeare Class

Since we are allowed to write on anything we want I wanted to write what I learned in class as an overview. Always wanting to understand Shakespeare, I've learned the fundamentals to appreciate the writer and the plays, the adventures, the comedy, and human beings at their best and worst, and their ability to change. Shakespeare is timeless. Each generation contends with the same basic characteristics as the next. The following comments about various plays and writing is just a brief reflection of how the writer left his impression on me.

SONNETS- Shakespeare's heart beat is in the sonnets. He thinks about passion, love affairs, lost love, youthfulness, aging, and death, and bearing children. He investigates his own self worth and what his life means in the scheme of things. He is inspired by nature and uses nature as metaphors. Shakespeare wrote at least one hundred and fifty four sonnets. Pertinent for today, there's a sonnet for everyone to relate to.

TAMING OF THE SHREW- During the Renaissance era there was a conflicting attitude regarding fixed marriages and marrying because one wanted to. Educated, willful Kathrine was opposed to her arranged marriage, unlike her favored sister Bianca, yet became the most elegant of all wives through her husband's patience. Kate, learned that her life was easier and she received more of what she wanted by being agreeable with her husband. It became a comedy as her husband tested her agreeableness towards everything he had to say. Their wit and humor bonded them together as they learned to become a couple. Sexual innuendos spice up the play which reveals the flavor of the day it was written. Some of the comments would surely cause a giggle or two today.

MERCHANT OF VENICE- A comedy, yet has its seriousness, as we see the effects of prejudices and revenge. One of my favorite plays and being a companion to the underdog I tend to take Shylock's case. One of the most controversial plays then and now, it can be presented to portray Shylock as a victim or villain.

RICHARD II- The beliefs that the kings were infallible and unaccountable is challenged in Richard the second. The king's fault leads to his dethronement but not before King Richard is plunged to the depths of despair. King Richard was cold and without compassion for his own. Shakespeare uses his counterpart, Bolingbrook, to present responsible kingship and to challenge entitlement to the throne.

Henry IV continues the theme of historical rulers and their struggles with power, authority and responsibility.

HAMLET- Who would not weep with Hamlet as he grieves the loss of his father, is bewildered by his mother's sudden remarriage, realizes his preparation for the throne is worthless, is seemingly betrayed by his one true love, and sent on a mission of vengeance by his father's ghost to kill his uncle, his father's murderer and mother's husband. One tragedy and one mind game after another, it's a test of courage, honor, and reality.

Hamlet's quick wit, speeches and intelligence amazed me.

LEAR- At first, I was leery of Lear. He frightened me because he was so hasty. A powerful ruler without self control proved to destroy himself in the process of destroying his daughter Cordelia. Shakespeare must believe in the power and ability of humans to change, because Lear, humbled through tragedy is brought to the lowest part of his life, connects with the basest of all human beings and is resurrected with his new self

awareness by his daughter, Cordelia, who I believe to be the only stable person in the whole play.

These are just a few of my favorite plays. Actually, I enjoyed them all and learned from each one. Looking forward to future plays. It helps having the tools to understand the positioning on stage, and understanding the different beliefs systems of the day. The lingo gets easier to understand with practice.