
The Lessons We Can Learn From Shakespeare's Plays

I believe that Shakespeare is for everyone. I think that within Shakespeare's play, and sonnets for that matter, one can learn about the depth of human experience. There is so much to see and learn within his plays, that I would never in my wildest dreams be exposed to such things. Although, I am not sure how "realistic" his plays are, the experiences within them are universal (although I pray, more often than not, much less dramatic) and as a Christian and, well, human, it is important to be exposed to different human experiences.

Within *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, I learned about grace, but from a situation that is both relatable, but also, not. When Shylock lends out the money and expects to get a pound of flesh in return (he totally knew that Antonio would not be able to pay him back), it was quite relatable. Who has borrowed money (or something, for that matter) and has had a rough time returning it or paying it back? Many people, would be my answer. Better yet, who has lent out money and has never gotten it back? Same answer as before. How Shylock responds is completely unacceptable; a pound of flesh (or the Antonio's death) does not equate to the money that was lent out to him. This entire situation, for me anyway, acts as a reminder to be graceful. God has shown me grace time and time again, and the reality is that I often do not deserve it (well, like 99.9 percent of the time, really). We cannot be "Shylock's", especially as Christians; we must show grace. Anyways, back to my point, although many of the situations within Shakespeare's plays are not relatable, the themes are actually quite relatable to many and there is much to learn from them. I think that, also, Shakespeare's plays affirm the Christian world-view. One example would be *Hamlet*.

In my research paper, I argued that the play represents the Fall of Man, when Adam and Eve sinned the first sin, catapulting humanity into a life of sin and destruction. In the play, it all starts with Claudius murdering his beloved brother, King Hamlet, and snowballs from there. Sin and deception show up countless times within the play and murder is always on the back murder. So, sin is always prevalent and takes over the lives of every single character within the play. Alongside sin, guilt shows its ugly head and things go from bad to worse. The most tragic element of it all is the fact that Claudius could have humbly come before God and ask for forgiveness or Hamlet could have done the same, after killing Polonius and committing his life to seeking revenge for his father's murder. The play did not have to end the way it did, also, had Hamlet decided to take another route. He did not have to listen to his father's ghost; he did not have to choose death over life. Because he chose to sin, death was victorious and pretty much everyone dies. Although I completely realize that this play is wildly dramatic, it does act as a wonderful example of the consequences of sin.

Lastly, anyone (including Christians) can learn of superior artistry within Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare had such a beautiful gift; a gift given to him from God. His plays are absolutely beautiful. They are extremely well-written, to put it lightly, and, when acted out on stage, they are even more powerful. The sets are beautiful, the costumes are beautiful, everything is beautiful, really! And now that we have television screens, movie screen, and cameras, the plays can be seen in a new way that is much more accessible to the masses. We can see the fruition of his creativity first hand, to not only appreciate it, but be inspired by it. For example, I found *The Tempest* to be the most creative play that we read in this class, although I truly loved

reading and watching every single one. The way that Shakespeare created Prospero to be like a master-puppeteer and the way that the events of the play unfolded because of his search for justice is really unheard of in my experience with literature. Yet, the themes within the play are still quite universal.

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