



Was Shakespeare German?

with Dr Benedict Schofield, German Studies.

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LINKED SUBJECTS:

Drama & Theatre Studies, English Language, English Literature and German

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR... GERMAN

1. What is it about Shakespeare that makes us think that he is uniquely the British national poet? What role does his use of language play?
2. Does it matter if Hamlet says “Sein oder nicht sein; das ist hier die Frage” rather than “To be, or not to be, that is the question”? What is lost in translation – and what can be gained in translation?
3. Why do you think the Germans are specifically attracted to Shakespeare? Is there something about German history and society that means his plays about the power struggles of English history, or his comedies about overturning social structures, are of specific interest to the Germans?



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DISCUSSION POINTS FOR... ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. What is it about Shakespeare that makes us think that he is uniquely the British national poet? What role does his use of language play?
2. To what extent is a Shakespeare play really still “a Shakespeare play” when it is translated into another language? Would Shakespeare still be Shakespeare if we “translated” him into modern English?
3. What is it about the structure, plots and characters in Shakespeare that can appeal to audiences and readers across the world? How do these aspects of his plays “translate” in different countries, regardless of language barriers?



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DISCUSSION POINTS FOR... ENGLISH LITERATURE

1. What is it about Shakespeare that makes us think that he is uniquely the British national poet? What role does his use of language play?
2. To what extent is a Shakespeare play really still “a Shakespeare play” when it is translated into another language? Would Shakespeare “still be Shakespeare” if we “translated” him into modern English, for example?
3. What is it about the structure, plots and characters in Shakespeare that can appeal to audiences and readers across the world? Why do you think Shakespeare’s plays have been performed in so many different countries, and reworked into so many different formats (films, novels, etc)?



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DISCUSSION POINTS FOR... DRAMA & THEATRE STUDIES

1. What is it about Shakespeare that makes us think that he is uniquely the British national poet? Is it just the language of his plays, or is there also a specifically “Shakespearean” form of performance?
2. Can you also think of German playwrights that have become British? For example, when you use Brecht and his techniques in your classes, do you think about how “German” he is?
3. Do theatrical performances cross borders more easily than other art forms, like the novel? If that is the case, why might that be?



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