

Getting Shakespeare: Strategies for Understanding the Bard

William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. His plays and poems have been studied, performed, and enjoyed for centuries. But what makes Shakespeare's work so special? And how can we best understand and appreciate it?



Getting Shakespeare: Strategies for Understanding the Bard by Steven Lee Douglas

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In this comprehensive guide, we will explore a variety of strategies for understanding Shakespeare. We will start by examining his language, which is often dense and challenging. We will then consider his characters, who are often complex and multifaceted. Finally, we will discuss his themes, which are often universal and timeless.

Understanding Shakespeare's Language

One of the challenges of reading Shakespeare is his language. Shakespeare wrote during a time when the English language was undergoing a period of great change. As a result, his plays and poems are full of words and phrases that are no longer in common use. Additionally, Shakespeare often uses complex grammar and syntax, which can make his work difficult to understand.

There are a number of strategies that can help us to understand Shakespeare's language. First, it is helpful to have a good dictionary on hand. A dictionary can help us to define unfamiliar words and phrases. Second, it is helpful to read Shakespeare's plays and poems aloud. This can help us to get a better sense of the rhythm and flow of his language. Finally, it is helpful to study Shakespeare's work with a group of other people. This can help us to share ideas and insights about his language.

Understanding Shakespeare's Characters

Shakespeare's characters are often complex and multifaceted. They are not always easy to understand, but they are always fascinating. To understand Shakespeare's characters, it is important to pay attention to their actions, their words, and their motivations. It is also important to consider the context in which they live.

For example, Hamlet is a young prince who is struggling to come to terms with the death of his father. He is intelligent and thoughtful, but he is also impulsive and indecisive. Hamlet's actions are often driven by his emotions, and he often makes decisions that he later regrets. However, Hamlet is also a deeply moral character, and he is ultimately willing to sacrifice his own happiness for the good of his kingdom.

Understanding Shakespeare's Themes

Shakespeare's plays and poems explore a wide range of themes, including love, loss, betrayal, and redemption. These themes are often universal and timeless, and they continue to resonate with audiences today. To understand Shakespeare's themes, it is important to pay attention to the events of the play and the characters' reactions to those events. It is also important to consider the play's setting and the time period in which it was written.

For example, the play *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy about two young lovers who are forbidden from being together. The play explores the themes of love, loss, and fate. The play is set in Verona, Italy, in the 16th century. The setting and time period of the play help to shape the characters' experiences and the play's themes.

Understanding Shakespeare can be a challenging but rewarding experience. By following the strategies outlined in this guide, you can gain a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's language, characters, and themes. With a little effort, you can unlock the secrets of Shakespeare's plays and poems and discover the timeless genius of his work.



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