

ALL THE WORLD'S

How Shakespeare is viewed around the globe and the role his work can play to support the UK's soft power

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YouGov What the world thinks

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CONTENT

Foreword	2
Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
How Shakespeare is viewed around the world	8
Shakespeare's popularity in the UK and overseas	9
How Shakespeare has been adapted and adopted across the globe	14
Shakespeare's best-known characters and what they say about his influence	18
Shakespeare's continued relevance today	22
The different ways people experience Shakespeare	24
What Shakespeare can do for the UK	29
Conclusion	34
Appendix – About the research	38

FOREWORD

As we mark 400 years since the Bard's death it is the perfect time to reflect on the legacy that William Shakespeare has left on the English language and British culture and whose works continue to challenge and inspire individuals across the world. Shakespeare is a leading light for Britain's outstanding reputation for culture globally.

Four hundred years after his death, William Shakespeare remains one of the most famous Britons in the world.

His plays and sonnets have been translated into more than 100 languages and are studied by school children the world over.

Shakespeare's works resonate across all cultures, continents and languages and we are using this reach to deepen cultural ties between the UK and the rest of the world.

This anniversary year is a great opportunity to celebrate the work of the Bard and his importance to theatre, art and literature, while also promoting the best that Britain has to offer.

His words, plays, plots and characters not only underpin our reputation in literature and the arts, but also strengthens the perceptions of British culture as a whole.

This has real benefits to the UK economy, by attracting even more visitors to our shores and highlighting our cultural sectors to scores of countries.

As one of the most exciting and thriving destinations in the world, the UK continues to attract millions of tourists every year who are drawn to our unique blend of old and new, cutting-edge contemporary culture and a thriving heritage sector.

To mark this important anniversary, the *Shakespeare Lives* programme is staging a year of exciting events across the globe that will capitalise on his ongoing international influence by presenting the best of traditional and contemporary British culture.

In the words of the Bard himself, 'all the world's a stage', and his legacy helps Britain to shine in the global arena.



Rt Hon. Ed Vaizey
Minister of State for Culture
and the Digital Economy



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores Shakespeare's global impact and the ways in which it can best be harnessed to support the UK's international influence.

In 2014, research by IpsosMori for the British Council demonstrated that the person young people overseas identified more than anyone else with contemporary British culture was William Shakespeare. Culture plays a fundamental role in a country's soft power and prosperity. When survey respondents were asked what was most important in making the UK attractive to them, 35 per cent identified the UK's culture. This was more than any other factor. Shakespeare's global popularity is therefore of major potential significance.

2016 is the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. The year is being marked by a series of events, including Shakespeare Lives: a major collaboration between the GREAT Britain campaign, the British Council, and an unprecedented range of cultural partners. To coincide with the anniversary, the British Council has also undertaken new research into Shakespeare's global influence and its implications for the UK's soft power.

A YouGov survey commissioned in 2015 by the British Council shows that Shakespeare's international popularity is very high. Shakespeare is widely known, liked, understood, and thought of as relevant today. 78 per cent of those questioned around the world had experienced Shakespeare's work. Of those:

- 76 per cent liked him,
- 69 per cent said they understood him, and
- 69 per cent said they found him relevant.

He has influenced writers, thinkers, leaders, musicians, and artists – and millions of other people – around the globe.

Indeed, the research shows that Shakespeare is now more popular in many other countries, including in major high growth economies and places of increasing geopolitical influence like India, than he is in the UK.

Shakespeare continues to thrive in many countries which have translated, adapted, and adopted his work into their own cultural traditions, something that is perhaps not widely known in the UK.

The contemporary fame of his characters – of whom Romeo and Juliet are revealed to be the best known – perhaps owe much to the tolerance, empathy, and deep understanding of human nature that many find in his work.

Just as important to his enduring appeal may be the origin of Shakespeare's plays as adaptable and popular entertainment. Added to this are the breadth of his sympathies and the universal nature of his themes, many of which retain great relevance today. Together, these factors suggest the popularity and appropriation of his work is likely to continue for centuries to come.

However, given that the origin of Shakespeare's plays was as popular entertainment, it is possible that teaching them academically might not always be the optimal way to introduce them to people. Indeed, there is some evidence that people may appreciate Shakespeare's plays more when they watch stage or film adaptations than

when they learn about them in school. This may have implications for the international teaching, presentation, and performance of Shakespeare's work.

Significantly, the research suggests that Shakespeare's importance goes far beyond the worlds of education, theatre, and literature. 37 per cent of those asked said that Shakespeare made them more positive about the UK in general. In turn, they said they were more likely to want to visit the UK as tourists or students and to consume the country's other cultural outputs. This implies that, as well as his artistic value, he is an important asset for the UK's prosperity and soft power.

Consequently, 400 years after his death, all those involved in representing the UK and sharing its culture abroad should continue to be aware of the fact that Shakespeare's work is important for the UK and should consider how it can make the most effective contribution to the country's international priorities. For as long as it is read, quoted, translated, taught and performed, Shakespeare's work will continue to be a great advert for the English language that he helped to form, and for the country as a whole. His international popularity confirms that Shakespeare is not just a great icon for the UK, but one that belongs to all the world.

IMPLICATIONS

1. It would be a mistake to underestimate Shakespeare's international popularity. When promoting British culture overseas, it is important to bear in mind that Shakespeare remains perhaps the UK's single most enduring cultural figure, and acts as a powerful icon for the country. Positive engagement with Shakespeare can provide a useful pathway into further appreciation of contemporary UK culture.
2. People's enjoyment of Shakespeare in their own languages suggests translations of his writing are likely to be an important way of improving his standing overseas. Further work could be undertaken to assess the availability of good dramatic translations of Shakespeare, especially in countries of key importance for the UK's foreign policy.
3. The UK's cultural organisations, policymakers, and general public could benefit from gaining greater awareness of the literary traditions of other countries as well as their own, as knowledge of other cultures contributes to positive attitudes and understanding between people.

The UK cultural sector could perhaps do more to promote great works of literature translated from other languages.

4. Shakespearean adaptations can form a valuable part of the UK's international cultural festivals and seasons. One upcoming opportunity for them to do so is the 2017 UK–India Season of Culture.
5. Shakespeare's adaptability and continued relevance suggest that his works can remain part of efforts to promote both historic and contemporary UK culture.
6. The research suggests that, for some people, experiencing adaptations of Shakespeare's plays can have a more positive impact than studying them in school. This is worth bearing in mind when considering the most effective ways of engaging new audiences.
7. This report shows that there is an association between liking Shakespeare and having a positive view of the UK, which may in turn contribute to increased tourism and consumption of UK culture. The secondary benefits associated with Shakespeare's international popularity could arguably be taken

more into account when funding, promotion, marketing, and streaming decisions are being made about British Shakespearean stage, film, and television productions. Further efforts could be made to investigate and increase Shakespeare's significance for UK soft power and prosperity. These efforts could build on the current anniversary activities and continue beyond 2016.

Later this year the British Council will be producing a further report on Shakespeare. *Let the world take note* will provide a more in-depth analysis of the reasons behind Shakespeare's enduring popularity and ability to speak to people across the world 400 years after his death, as well as looking in detail at the rich history of the British Council's involvement with international performances of Shakespeare. The purpose of the current report is to analyse what that popularity might mean for UK soft power and international influence today and in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The globalised nature of today's world has contributed to the growing importance of soft power in the UK's international relations and foreign policy.¹ Soft power has been defined as a country's 'ability to get what [it] wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment'.²

According to Joseph Nye, who coined the term soft power, it arises from a country's political values, foreign policies, and culture.³ The UK regularly comes at or near the top of international rankings of nations according to their soft power.⁴ All of these rankings agree that a key component of soft power – and of the UK's relative clout in this area of growing importance – is the strength of a nation's cultural sector and cultural output.

There is also evidence to suggest that appreciation of each other's cultures contributes to trust and understanding between people from different countries,⁵ and to the potential for greater trade and business links between them.⁶ Furthermore, academic research has demonstrated the important role that trust can play in lowering transaction costs, something that is vital in increasing trade and securing prosperity.⁷

In 2014, previous research by IpsosMori for the British Council⁸ asked young people in key countries for UK foreign policy which factors particularly contributed to making the UK attractive to them. By far the most important factors chosen were cultural. These were identified by 35 per cent of those asked.⁹

Furthermore, when asked to name one person associated with contemporary UK arts and culture who particularly interested them, by far the largest number answered 'Shakespeare'.

This was far more than any other person, including the Queen, the Beatles, David Beckham, and a wide range of other important cultural figures. Chart 1 displays the results as a word cloud, which suggests both the enduring popularity of the playwright and the strength of his association with *contemporary* British culture. These results indicated that, in addition to its intrinsic artistic value, Shakespeare's work may continue to have a significant impact on the way the UK is viewed overseas. They suggested that an important subject for further research

Chart 1: People associated with the UK's contemporary arts and culture

Question: Can you name one example of a specific person associated with [...] contemporary UK arts and culture which you are personally interested in?



Base: Five-country data (5,029); 18–34 year olds in Brazil (1,003), China (1,007), Germany (1,003), India (1,006), US (1,010), Fieldwork December 2013 – January 2014. Data presented here is weighted to relevant national populations. Source: Fieldwork – Ipsos MORI; Analysis – In2Impact.

Note: Open-ended question. Visual represents the top 16 names mentioned for accessibility.

would be to understand his impact and the ways it can best contribute to the UK's international influence. The British Council has therefore undertaken further research into the extent, nature, and implications of Shakespeare's international influence.

The research coincides with the major Shakespearean anniversary programme, Shakespeare Lives. In 2016, the British Council, working with the GREAT Britain campaign and government partners (including UK Trade and Investment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport), and Shakespeare 400 (a consortium of leading cultural, creative and educational organisations, co-ordinated by King's College London), as well as the charity Voluntary Service Overseas and other educators,

museums, theatres, arts organisations, and broadcasters (including the BBC), are celebrating Shakespeare as a global figure to mark the 400th anniversary of his death. As well as an opportunity for a broad programme of cultural and educational activities, it is hoped the programme will support the UK's influence around the world and strengthen international relationships, with potential benefits in tourism, education, trade, and investment. This is therefore an important time to consider the role Shakespeare plays in creating influence and how that can be harnessed in the future.

The research included an international survey conducted by YouGov into public attitudes to Shakespeare. The survey examined the views of over 18,000 people, with at least 1,000

in each of 15 countries and territories across six continents, chosen to represent a broad range of people from a broad range of places, including many of significant economic and strategic importance to the UK.¹⁰ In addition, desk research was undertaken into the nature of Shakespeare's standing overseas and the ways in which his work is interpreted, appropriated, and experienced internationally.

The research aimed to investigate the nature of Shakespeare's popularity and influence, and what it could mean for the UK's prosperity and soft power, in addition to the intrinsic value of his plays and poems as great works of art. This report sets out the results of that research.

1. Hill, C and Beadle, S (2014) *The Art of Attraction*. British Academy. Available online at: www.britac.ac.uk/intl/softpower.cfm; House of Lords Soft Power Committee (2014) *Persuasion and Power in the Modern World*. Available online at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldsoftpower/150/15002.htm
2. Nye, JS (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York.
3. *Ibid.*
4. See, for example, the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index, the Institute of Government Soft Power Index, and the Portland 30 List. Available online at: www.simonanholt.com/Research/research-the-anholt-gfk-roper-nation-brands-index-sm.aspx; www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/The%20new%20persuaders_0.pdf; <http://softpower30.portland-communications.com/ranking>
5. The British Council (2012) *Trust Pays*. Available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/trust-pays>
6. The British Council (2013) *Culture Means Business*. Available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/culture-means-business>
7. Fukuyama, F (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, New York.
8. The British Council (2014) *As Others See Us*. Available online: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/as-others-see-us>
9. This compares to 14 per cent choosing 'economy', 13 per cent choosing 'society', and 12 per cent choosing 'natural environment'. The individual factors making up 'culture' for the purposes of the data included 'cultural and historic attractions' – which at 42 per cent was the most popular single factor – as well as 'arts' (36 per cent), 'history' (33 per cent), 'language' (30 per cent), and 'education' (22 per cent).
10. For full details of the methodology, please see the appendix to this report (page 38).
11. *Cardenio* and a possible sequel to *Love's Labour's Lost* called *Love's Labour's Won*.
12. Schuessler, J (2014) Shakespeare Folio Discovered in France, New York Times.
13. See John Aubrey, *Brief Lives: William Shakespeare*; Wood, M (2003) *In Search of Shakespeare*. London; Bryson, B (2007) *Shakespeare: The World as a Stage*. London; Schoenbaum, S (1991) *Shakespeare's Lives*. Oxford; Ackroyd, P (2004) *Shakespeare, The Biography*. London; de Grazia, M and Wells S (eds) (2010) *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge.



For such a major world figure, surprisingly little is known about Shakespeare's life. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His family was middle class but was falling on hard times. He went to the local grammar school but, unlike his contemporaries Marlowe and Jonson, could not afford a formal university education.

When he was 18 he married Anne Hathaway (then 26 and already three months pregnant with his first child). They went on to have two more children, one of whom – Hamnet – died at 11.

Hardly anything is known about Shakespeare during the 'lost years' of his early twenties. But by the early 1590s he was acting and had written his first play (probably *Two Gentlemen of Verona*). Over the next two decades he wrote at an incredible rate, producing 154 sonnets, several longer poems, and around 40 plays – including many that are widely regarded as the greatest ever written.

It is fortunate that the plays have survived at all, since he took little care to preserve the scripts. At least two of his plays¹¹ appear to be lost forever. It is largely good luck that the others were preserved in the posthumous *First Folio* (originally sold for £1, though some of the 234 known surviving copies are now worth many millions of pounds).¹²

Shakespeare was also a theatrical producer and, through his company of actors – the Lord Chamberlain's Men – owned shares in a theatre in London's Shoreditch. When faced with a difficult landlord, Shakespeare's company physically dismantled the theatre and re-constructed it in the then red light district of Southwark, where it became The Globe, and witnessed the first performances of many of his great plays before large audiences.

The Globe burnt down on 29 June 1613 after a theatrical cannon caused a fire during a performance of Shakespeare's final play, *Henry VIII*. Fortunately, no one was hurt – except one man whose breeches caught fire and had to be put out with a bottle of ale.

By then Shakespeare's work had made him wealthy, and he seems to have retired to Stratford. There is a tradition that his death in 1616 came after a bout of heavy drinking with fellow playwright Ben Jonson. In his will, for reasons that are still debated, he left his wife 'his second best bed'. He is buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford and his gravestone contains a curse on anyone who disturbs his bones.¹³

HOW SHAKESPEARE IS VIEWED AROUND THE WORLD

The research for this report began by investigating the extent of Shakespeare's popularity around the world. The results of the survey revealed that as many as 78 per cent of those asked had experienced Shakespeare in one form or another (most commonly by seeing a film adaptation or reading or hearing his poetry). Of those:

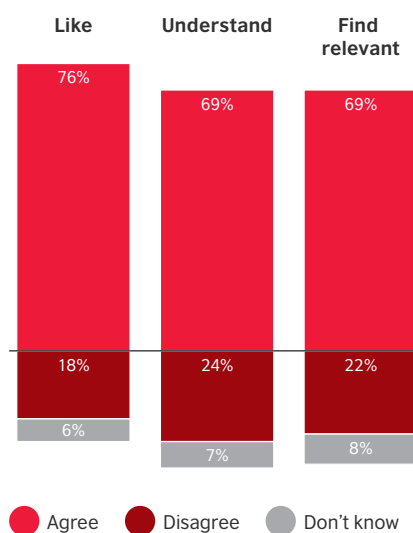
- 76 per cent said they liked Shakespeare
- 69 per cent said they understood Shakespeare
- 69 per cent said they found Shakespeare relevant to today's world.

Chart 2 shows that the clear majority of those who had experienced Shakespeare liked and understood him and found him relevant today. His popularity was high across all genders and age groups.

Shakespeare has remained popular with audiences and with critics for centuries. He is widely viewed as perhaps the greatest literary figure of world history. Of other writers of world stature, only a tiny number, perhaps including Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes,¹⁴ Voltaire, Goethe, and Tolstoy have achieved something approaching Shakespeare's fame and critical acclaim, both domestically and globally. Other great writers, such as the authors of 'the four great masterpieces' of classical Chinese literature,¹⁵ have achieved international critical appreciation and huge domestic popularity that may well spread as more of their work becomes available in translation.

Chart 2: Attitudes towards Shakespeare among those with experience of his work

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you like Shakespeare, understand Shakespeare's work and find Shakespeare's work relevant today?



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: All adults 18+ with experience of having read, seen or taken part in Shakespeare's work.

Yet it could be said that not even these greats have attracted Shakespeare's international renown, nor been able to compete with the breadth and range of someone who produced acknowledged masterpieces of comedy, tragedy, history, romance, and poetry, from the situation-comedy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to the bloody violence of *Titus Andronicus*. Not all of them always spoke kindly of his works: while Goethe wrote lovingly of 'our Shakespeare', Tolstoy dismissed them

as 'crude, immoral, vulgar, and senseless', and Voltaire labelled his plays 'an enormous dunghill'.¹⁶ Occasionally other iconoclasts have also questioned the 'Bardolatry' of Shakespeare's reception.

Yet far more great writers, thinkers, and leaders have professed their appreciation of Shakespeare, from philosophers like Nietzsche and Camus, to politicians like Jefferson, Lincoln, and Mandela, to great international authors like Dumas, Hugo, Pushkin, and Dostoevsky, to popular English writers like Dickens, Wilde, and Christie. His work continues to inspire an enormous secondary literature: it has been estimated that a new book on Shakespeare is published roughly every day.¹⁷

More importantly, Shakespeare's work continues to inspire and entertain ordinary people. As the research found, it remains enormously well-known and well-liked around the world.

SHAKESPEARE'S POPULARITY IN THE UK AND OVERSEAS

The survey commissioned by the British Council also examined the *relative* popularity of Shakespeare across different countries. It revealed that people from some other countries reported greater experience of Shakespeare than people from the UK itself.

These countries included important emerging powers like Brazil, India, China, Mexico, and Turkey, as well as South Africa, where as many as 93 per cent of those surveyed had experienced Shakespeare (compared to 84 per cent in the UK).

Furthermore, as Chart 3 shows, people from other countries were more likely than British people to report that they liked Shakespeare, that they found him relevant today, and even (though the effect was small across an aggregate of the other countries in the survey) that they understood him. Looked at the other way, over a third (34 per cent) of British people questioned *disagreed* that they liked Shakespeare, compared to just 19 per cent of those from other countries.

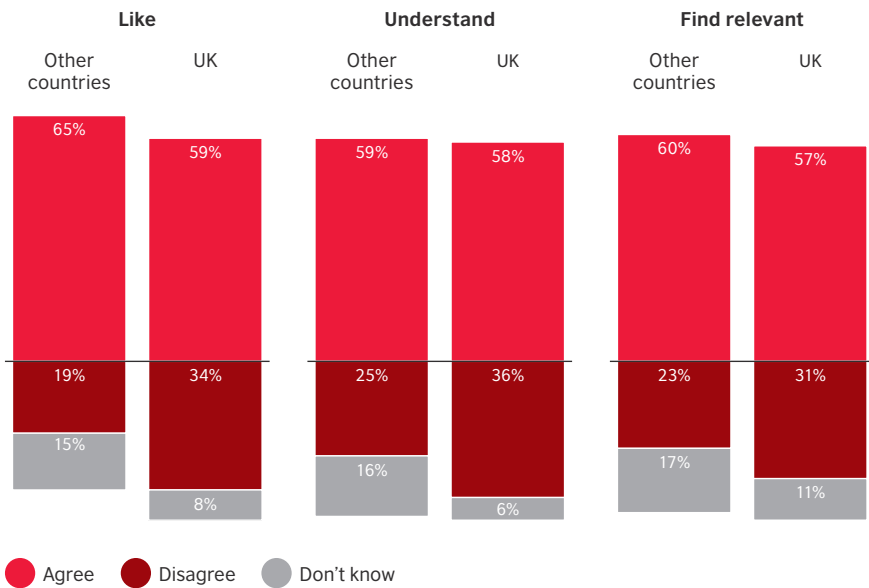
The effect was again particularly pronounced in emerging powers.

For example, 88 per cent of Mexicans surveyed liked Shakespeare, compared to only 59 per cent of British people; 84 per cent of Brazilians said they found him relevant in today's world, compared to 57 per cent of British

people; and 83 per cent of Indians said they understood him, compared to just 58 per cent of people from the UK. The results across all 15 countries surveyed are set out in Charts 4, 5, and 6.

Chart 3: Comparing attitudes to Shakespeare in other countries and in the UK

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you like Shakespeare, understand Shakespeare's work and find Shakespeare's work relevant today?



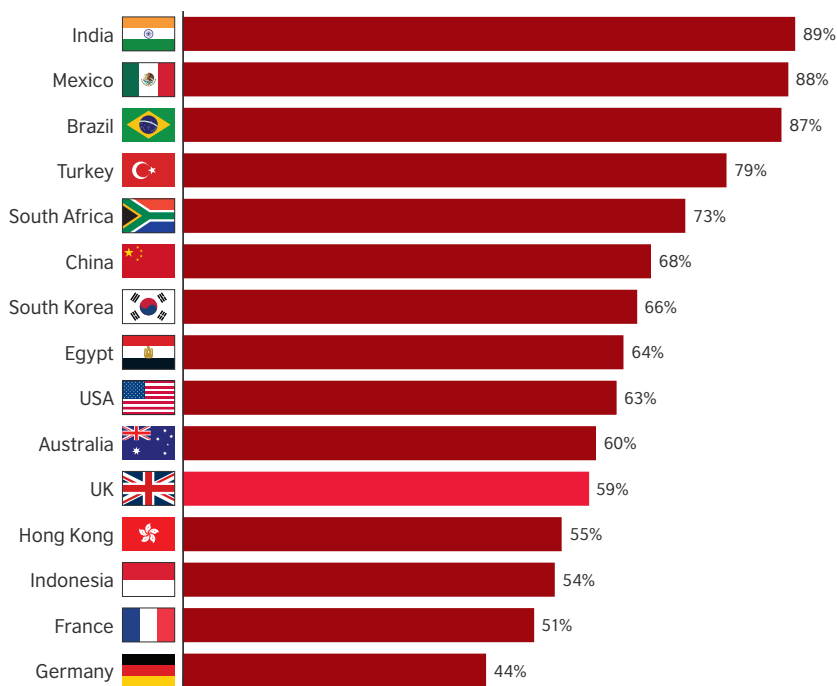
Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (15,907) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162).

14. Also celebrating a 400th anniversary in 2016.
 15. Attributed to Shi Nai'an, Luo Guanzhong, Wu Cheng'en, and Cao Xueqin.
 16. Herbrechter, S and Callus, I (eds) (2012) *Posthumanist Shakespeares*, UK.
 17. Dickson, A (2009) *Rough Guide to Shakespeare*, London.

It is notable that other anglophone countries like Australia and the USA responded relatively less favourably to Shakespeare's works. One possibility is that language may be a factor in the understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare. Translation has made a vital contribution to his enduring popularity in many countries. Translators usually translate into contemporary language. This might make the plays more relevant and easier to understand for international audiences than for native, English-speaking ones. Translations have allowed Shakespeare to continue to live abroad in his original, popular, sometimes subversive form, away from the old-fashioned figure of high culture that he can be seen as in the English-speaking world.¹⁸ As such they can play an important role in expanding the international popularity of Shakespeare and forging cultural connections between people in the UK and in other countries. Further research into the easy availability of popular Shakespeare translations in other countries could perhaps therefore be considered.

Chart 4: The countries where Shakespeare is most liked

Question: Would you agree that you like Shakespeare?
(percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing)



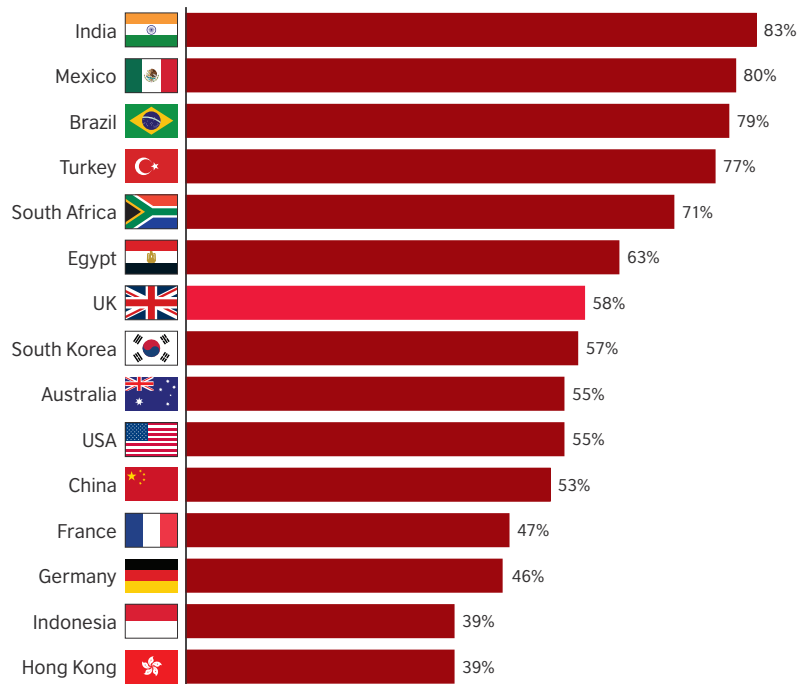
Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

As for English, Shakespeare has long been seen as the greatest single contributor to the language, a tool for teaching it, and even a reason to learn it. English, never static, was at its most open and fast-changing during the High Renaissance when he was writing, and he played an important role in shaping it. Shakespeare's vocabulary, for example, was extremely flexible. He is estimated to have used over 17,000 words, of which he may have invented around ten per cent. There are over 1,000 words that first appear in his plays, most of which are likely to have been invented by him and many of which have since entered everyday speech.¹⁹ He is quoted as a source more than any other individual in dictionaries from Dr Johnson to the present Oxford English Dictionary.

Yet it is sometimes suggested that the very adaptability of English, which has helped it maintain its pre-eminent global position today, is also taking English-speakers further away from being able to understand the language of Shakespeare with every year that passes.²⁰ For example, many of his jokes and double entendres no longer work to the modern ear. Those in the UK and other anglophone countries being exposed to Shakespeare are likely also to be exposed to his works in the poetic Elizabethan English of the originals, with all the difficulties of

Chart 5: The countries where Shakespeare is most understood

Question: Would you agree that you understand Shakespeare's work? (percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing)



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

comprehension that can go with that. For those who might hope to understand as well as appreciate Shakespeare, being native English speakers may be something of a mixed blessing.

Shakespeare's relatively lower popularity in anglophone countries could therefore be partly related to the growing

inaccessibility of his language to native English speakers. However, Charts 4, 5, and 6 also show relatively low levels of understanding and appreciation amongst nearby European nations like France and Germany. This and other evidence from the survey suggests that at least part of the answer may lie elsewhere.

18. Hoenselaars, T (ed) (2004) *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, London.

19. Bryson, B (2007) *Shakespeare: The World as a Stage*, London.

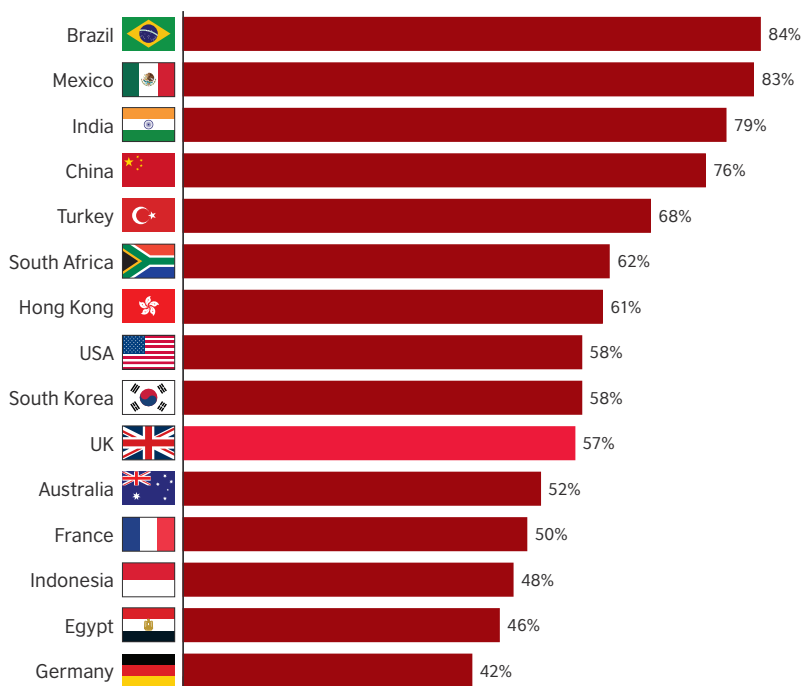
20. Hoenselaars, T (ed) (2004) in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, London.

One possibility is that anglophone and European countries have much broader and deeper cultural understanding of the UK, and that Shakespeare therefore forms a smaller part of these people's experience and knowledge of the UK, facing much tougher competition in those countries from other cultural influences. Another possibility may lie in the degree to which, or ways in which, people in the UK and some other countries are exposed to Shakespeare at school, as is explored further below.

Shakespeare, then, is better liked and understood in some other countries than he is at home. This effect should not be exaggerated: Shakespeare is still well known and loved in the UK – just perhaps not quite as much as he appears to be in some other major countries.

Chart 6: The countries where Shakespeare is considered the most relevant

Question: Would you agree that you find Shakespeare's work relevant today?
(percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing)



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

Phrases Shakespeare introduced
into the English language:

ELBOW ROOM	FLESH AND BLOOD	THEREBY HANGS A TALE
WILD GOOSE	TOWER OF	ONE FELL SWOOP
CHASE	STRENGTH	BLINKING IDIOT
WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE		
HEART OF GOLD	POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE	BE CRUEL TO
FULL CIRCLE	HEART OF HEARTS	BE KIND
THE MAKINGS OF	SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE	NEITHER RHYME NOR REASON
GOOD RIDDANCE	THE SHORT AND THE LONG OF IT	THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS
TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING	STRANGE	BEDFELLOWS
UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT WEARS A CROWN		
METHOD IN MADNESS	WHAT'S DONE IS DONE	A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME
	PLAY FAST AND LOOSE	THE BEAST WITH TWO BACKS
FOREGONE CONCLUSION		BAND OF BROTHERS
DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR		
SALAD DAYS	A LAUGHING STOCK	BEGGAR ALL DESCRIPTION
EBB AND FLOW	FOUL PLAY	
SEA CHANGE	SEEN BETTER DAYS	VANISH INTO THIN AIR
GREEK TO ME	SPOTLESS REPUTATION	HOIST BY ONE'S OWN PETARD
REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST		
A PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR HOUSES	BREAK THE ICE	PROTEST TOO MUCH
ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE		

HOW SHAKESPEARE HAS BEEN ADAPTED AND ADOPTED ACROSS THE GLOBE

From performances to cowboys and Native Americans in America's old west, to Aboriginal and Maori productions in 21st century Australasia, Shakespeare's plays have been heavily adapted for every age since his own and in all parts of the world. Many countries have thriving Shakespearean traditions, often interwoven with distinctive elements from their own cultures.

Versions of Shakespeare's plays were already being performed in Europe in his own lifetime.²¹ Since then, they have been translated into over a hundred languages.²²

In Germany, for example, Shakespeare's works have been performed since they were written, and celebrated as part of the German cultural tradition since

they were popularised by Goethe and Schlegel in the late 18th century. Indeed, his works have been translated into German more than into any other language and there are estimated to be more professional performances of his plays every year in Germany than in the UK.²³

There, as elsewhere, he has been co-opted for political ends. Shakespeare was celebrated by nationalists and Nazis, and performances were encouraged even during the world wars when Germany was fighting Britain. In 1937, however, a production of *Richard III* at the Berlin Staatstheater achieved notoriety for its apparent criticism of Goebbels.²⁴ Meanwhile, in the Communist post-war GDR, Shakespeare

was viewed as a proto-socialist,²⁵ although in Russia Stalin had banned *Hamlet* and in France, in 1934, the French government had outlawed *Coriolanus* on the grounds that the play was considered to be dangerously right wing.²⁶

In Japan, Shakespeare was first performed in the late 19th century as the country was opened up to foreign trade and cultural influences.²⁷ It merged with local Kabuki and Noh traditions (the first known performance was an adaptation of the *Merchant of Venice* called *Life is as fragile as a cherry blossom in the world of money*), and later with samurai-themed cinema, most notably in the famous Shakespeare adaptations of director Akira Kurosawa.²⁸

21. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Cambridge.

22. Including Klingon, the language created for the Star Trek universe.

23. Dickson, A (2015) *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys around Shakespeare's Globe*, London.

24. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *op. cit.*

25. Joughin, JJ (ed) (1997) *Shakespeare and National Culture*, Manchester.

26. Parker, RB (1994) *Coriolanus*, Oxford.

27. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *op. cit.*

28. *Ibid.*



Sakha Theatre perform *Macbeth* in Moscow in 2009

In China, Shakespeare was banned during the Cultural Revolution. Now, however, his work is so well-regarded that in 2011, when then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao came on an official visit to the UK, he visited the Shakespeare sights at Stratford-upon-Avon. While there he commented that literature and culture could be a bridge between nations. Importantly, however, he went on to point out that 'the literary figures of China have produced a myriad of works, and reading these works will help one better understand the course of the development of our great nation'.²⁹ It was a useful reminder that, however gratifying it might be to realise Shakespeare's immense popularity around the globe, the UK has not always been as quick to understand his appropriation overseas or to acknowledge or learn about great writers or cultural figures from other countries. As Shakespeare is being translated into Mandarin with the help of the Royal Shakespeare Company, for example, there remain many great authors of Chinese literature whose masterpieces are relatively unknown in the UK and still lack popular translations.

Shakespeare's unrivalled international status is often linked to colonialism and the resulting pre-eminence of the English language. In many countries, such as India, he was introduced and taught initially as a result of British

imperial activity, and continued to be performed by British actors, as portrayed in the famous Merchant Ivory film, *Shakespeare Wallah*. In the 1980s the British Council put on shows of the entire series of BBC films of the complete works of Shakespeare, which were so popular that they were often shown two or three times a day.³⁰

Yet in India he was quickly appropriated by local performance traditions and later by Bollywood. Performed initially in Bombay's Parsi theatres, and then in Bollywood movies, plays like *Macbeth* moved from being instruments of imperial dominance to voices against cultural oppression.³¹ As Chart 4 (on page 10) shows, he is now more popular in India than in the UK. Furthermore, there is arguably little to distinguish how Shakespeare has been appropriated in those countries which were once colonised by Britain and those that weren't. The survey data itself does not suggest any such clear distinction.

All over the world, Shakespeare has become a means to express issues of national or cultural identity. For example, in some countries he has played an important part in national cultural awakenings and independence movements, served as a vehicle for projecting cultural prestige, or even been employed to subvert colonial oppression.³² For example, Shakespeare was translated into Swahili by the first president of independent Tanzania,

Julius Nyerere, to show the language was every bit as sophisticated and poetic as English.³³

The importance of translating and performing Shakespeare for defining or challenging national culture was recently underlined by productions of *Richard III* in civil-war Syria, the *Comedy of Errors* in post-Taliban Afghanistan, and *Cymbeline* in the world's newest nation: South Sudan. For the latter, the play was translated into Juba Arabic and performed in the UK and South Sudan by a South Sudanese theatre company in collaboration with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the British Council. The play may have been chosen because the plot deals with a fledgling country fighting a war of independence with its larger and more powerful neighbour, ending with a philosophical examination of forgiveness and reconciliation. The company went on to deliver workshops to young people all over South Sudan and has since held several theatre competitions and festivals.³⁴ Shakespeare also continues to be used for subversive political satire, as seen recently with a *King Lear* production by the now banned Belarus Free Theatre.

All over the globe Shakespeare continues to be adopted and adapted into other national traditions and settings and he has played important roles in many places as a way of expressing or exploring different cultural identities.

29. Dickson, A (2015) *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys around Shakespeare's Globe*. London.

30. Donaldson, F (1986) *The British Council: The First Fifty Years*. London.

31. Massai, S (ed.) (2005) *World-wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance*. London.

32. See Desmet, C and Sawyer, R (eds) (1999) *Shakespeare and Appropriation*. New York, and Kapadia, P (2008) *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, UK.

33. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*. Cambridge.

34. www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/mar/20/south-sudan-globe-shakespeare-cymbeline

35. www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/lost-in-translation-the-globes-shakespeare-season-offers-a-surprising-insight-into-different-7821169.html
<http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com/>; <http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com>

The South Sudan Theatre Company's historic first production: Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in Juba Arabic



The British Council has supported UK touring productions in other countries at important political and historic turning points, including Sir Alec Guinness's *Hamlet* in pre-war fascist Italy, a National Youth Theatre *Julius Caesar* in Berlin during the Cold War, just as the Berlin Wall was being built, and Anthony Sher's *Titus Andronicus* in Johannesburg shortly after the election of Nelson Mandela.

More recently, British Shakespeare productions taken on tour have been matched by productions from other countries performed in the UK. Launched during the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, the Globe to Globe programme brought performances of 37 Shakespeare plays in foreign languages by visiting companies to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, where they were watched by over 100,000 people. In 2014, the Globe Theatre set out to tour every country in the world with a production of *Hamlet*. It has now played in 196 countries, including memorable performances in revolutionary Ukraine, post-war Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and refugee camps including in Calais.³⁵

SHAKESPEARE'S BEST-KNOWN CHARACTERS AND WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT HIS INFLUENCE

The recent survey commissioned by the British Council aimed to explore the nature of Shakespeare's popularity in different countries and the possible reasons underlying it. The survey therefore asked people what they thought about when they saw the name 'William Shakespeare'. As Chart 7 shows, the answers to this question showed a strong association of Romeo and Juliet with Shakespeare. The 'star-crossed lovers' were by far the most frequently cited Shakespeare characters in most countries. Indeed, their names were the most common words people identified when asked what they associated with Shakespeare in general.

This high level of association of Romeo and Juliet with Shakespeare is fitting. As well as his huge contributions to romantic comedy, Shakespeare was arguably the first person in the western theatrical tradition to make romantic tragedy a serious genre.³⁶ The play in which he first did so is now so popular that every year thousands of letters from lovesick people around the world are addressed to 'Juliet Capulet, Verona'. Many are answered by a team of volunteers organised by the city council of Verona.

From Broadway to Bollywood, *Romeo and Juliet* has been adapted around the

world to show the timeless and universal power of love to transcend divisions created by family, class, nationality, and race. A recent version of *Romeo and Juliet* was produced by disabled actors in Bangladesh – where opportunities for disabled actors are limited.³⁷ In an age of globalisation, mass migration, and ethnic and religious conflict – and with more people choosing partners of different backgrounds or ethnicity than ever before in history – the play's message is becoming ever more timely and universal.

Chart 7: What do you think about when you see the name 'William Shakespeare'?

Question: What do you think about when you see the name 'William Shakespeare'?




Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

36. Levenson, J.L. (2000) Introduction to *Romeo and Juliet*, Oxford.

37. See www.shakespearelives.org/explore/different-shakespeare

38. Gross, J in Wells and Orlin (eds) (2003) *Shakespeare's Influence*.

A young man and woman are lying down, surrounded by a thick layer of dry, brown autumn leaves. The woman is on the left, her head tilted back, eyes closed, with her long brown hair spread out. The man is on the right, also with his head tilted back and eyes closed. They are both wearing white shirts. A dark, patterned blanket is partially visible beneath the leaves. The background is a solid dark red color.

Scholars have found some 20,000 pieces of music linked to Shakespeare.³⁸ Composers from Mendelssohn and Berlioz to Verdi and Wagner have adapted versions of his works. *Romeo and Juliet* alone has provoked famous musical treatments from Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev to Radiohead and even Dire Straits. Shakespeare has also inspired generations of great artists (from Blake and Fuseli to Delacroix and Sargent), architects (e.g. Garrick's temple of Shakespeare, probably by Robert Adam), film-makers (Welles, Olivier, Branagh, Zeffirelli, Kozintsev, Kurosawa), astronomers (his characters give their names to the moons of Uranus), and – of course – millions of ordinary people.

This may have wider implications. One aspect of Shakespeare's plays that contributes to his popularity today is their susceptibility to modern exploration of class, gender, age, and ethnicity. Perhaps unusually for writers of his own era, Shakespeare appeared to have an ability to put himself into the shoes of a vast range of different characters and types of people and therefore speak to very different audiences. The breadth of his perspective and his empathy has allowed a huge number of different interpretations and appropriations.

In *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, he portrayed black and Jewish characters with nuance and sympathy, possibly challenging the prejudices of his Elizabethan audiences. Indeed, the role of *Othello* in particular has been a launch pad for black actors since Ira Frederick Aldridge in 19th century Britain and Paul Robeson in 1940s America, and as such may have contributed to some breaking down of racial prejudices.

He may have been assisted in this by personal contacts. It is noteworthy that the black population of Shakespeare's

London probably already numbered many hundreds out of a total population of around 250,000 in the city, and that Shakespeare created the character of Othello at a time when there were some political moves to expel the community from the country. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the 'Dark Lady' who is the subject of many of his love poems may have been Aemilia Bassano, of Venetian and probably Jewish background. Some have suggested that Shakespeare may have had an affair with her and that the relationship could have influenced the nuanced portrayal of Jewish Venetians in *The Merchant of Venice*.³⁹

Unusually for a male writer of his era, Shakespeare also created a sympathetic body of female characters, from Rosalind, Helena, and Viola to Juliet herself. Although no female actors were allowed to perform in Shakespeare's day, great female actors have made his female roles their own since May Saunderson's famous Juliet during the reign of King Charles II, when London theatres were re-opened and women allowed to perform there for the first time.⁴⁰

More recently, *Romeo and Juliet* and other plays have been played with both all-male and all-female casts.

Shakespeare's apparent ability to depict all types of people and understand human nature and experience may have been assisted by the fact that Elizabethan London was more cosmopolitan than is sometimes assumed. Burgeoning international trade and the first great age of globalisation brought people and influences into London from around the world. This cosmopolitanism is reflected in the setting of the plays, as well as the characters in them. Aside from his great cycle of English history plays, and although there is no evidence that he ever travelled abroad, the vast majority of Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, and romances have international settings.

All this suggests that adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, and perhaps *Romeo and Juliet* in particular, have the potential to reach out to marginalised communities around the world and to build bridges across divides of class, race, gender, religion, and culture.

39. Wood, M (2003) *In Search of Shakespeare*, London.

40. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *op. cit.*

Nadia Albina as
Duke of Venice
in *Othello*



SHAKESPEARE'S CONTINUED RELEVANCE TODAY

This research looked in more detail at the possible reasons behind Shakespeare's ability to reach out to different people across the world today. It identified perhaps four other major reasons why a grammar school boy from 16th century Stratford-upon-Avon, with no formal university education, has been able to achieve such lasting critical and popular international fame as a writer. All of them suggest that fame is likely to continue, with important consequences for the UK.

The first lies in the way in which Shakespeare created his plays. He was not a scholar producing erudite works in a now-distant and literary tradition. Rather, he was a popular entertainer who performed and even personally acted in his works in front of raucous mobs of groundlings, and adapted those works accordingly. Shakespeare's audiences appear to have been men and women drawn from every part of society, from well-educated courtiers to illiterate labourers, perhaps as likely to come to Southwark to watch bear-baiting as classical drama. He could learn at first-hand what they wanted and craft – and probably re-craft – his plays accordingly. He made his living from entertaining real people in real time, in language they could understand.

Secondly, far from being unchangeable objects, his plays were themselves often adaptations of stories taken from other places that were worked and re-worked by Shakespeare, often in collaboration with others. Indeed, the idea of

Shakespeare as a lone 'romantic genius', creating definitive and unalterable works of art, has only really existed since the rise of Shakespearean scholarship in the late 18th century,⁴¹ and would probably have seemed alien to the man himself.⁴² After all, he lived at a time before copyright and when the whole concept of sole authorship was arguably much less familiar or important than it is today.⁴³ Alteration is fundamental to many of the works themselves.

A third reason for Shakespeare's endless adaptability, and another possible source of his international popularity, is that the moral complexity and political subtlety of his plays allow infinite interpretations. Since his death the plays have been given both right-wing and left-wing messages, anti-Semitic and pro-Semitic interpretations⁴⁴ and pro- and anti-colonial adaptations.⁴⁵ Shakespeare's own sympathies, as far as we can tell, seem to be too broad, even-handed, humane, and nuanced for any one simple interpretation.

A fourth reason is the range and timelessness of Shakespeare's themes. Many of Shakespeare's plays contain plots that resonate powerfully with contemporary audiences and address issues all too familiar in today's world. Examples include:

- **Refugees and shipwrecks** (*Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*)
- **A clash of civilisations** (*Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

- **The morality and nature of international and civil war** (*King John*, *Henry IV, V, and VI*)
- **Political legitimacy, tyranny, and resistance** (*As You Like It*, *Richard II and III*, *Macbeth*)
- **Political violence and assassination** (*Julius Caesar*)
- **Revolution and counter-revolution** (*Coriolanus*)
- **Gang violence** (*Romeo and Juliet*)
- **Racism and prejudice** (*Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*)
- **Servitude and slavery** (*Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*)
- **Punishment and imprisonment** (*Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Measure for Measure*)
- **Debt and poverty** (*Merchant of Venice*, *Timon of Athens*)

The fact that Shakespeare's works seem so relevant to today's audiences is also arguably a good reason why any fears about whether or not they project a modern image of the UK are misplaced. Unlike other figures associated with UK heritage, Shakespeare is easily adaptable to different settings at different times – facts which are also likely to contribute to his continued international popularity in the future.

41. Hoenselaars, T (2004) *Shakespeare and the language of translation*, London

42. He is, for example, thought to have collaborated on works by other writers, including the plays *Edward III* and *Sir Thomas More*.

43. Cunningham, V (2008), *Shakespeare and Garrick*, Cambridge;

44. Shapiro, J (1996) *Shakespeare and the Jew*, New York.

45. Hulme, P and Sherman, WH (eds) (2000), *The Tempest and its Travels*, Philadelphia; Loomba, A (2002) *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, Oxford; Taylor, G (1989) *Reinventing Shakespeare*, New York.

46. Dickson, A (2015) *Worlds Elsewhere: Journeys around Shakespeare's Globe*, London.

47. See *Caesar Must Die*, directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani and *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, written and directed by Hank Rogerson and Jillann Spitzmiller.



Shakespeare has long appealed to those on the receiving end of ‘the oppressor’s wrong’ and ‘the law’s delay’ – and to those accused of breaking the laws as well as those who make them.

Shortly before his execution, King Charles I wrote the words ‘While I breathe I hope’ in Latin in a book of Shakespeare he had with him in prison. More recently, Nelson Mandela signed his name next to a passage in *Julius Caesar* (‘Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once.’) in a copy of the Complete Works circulating among the political prisoners on Robben Island. In *The Long Walk to Freedom* he described thinking of the line ‘Be absolute for death’ from *Measure For Measure* the night before he received his sentence.⁴⁶

Recent productions by criminals serving long sentences for serious crimes – of *Julius Caesar* in Rebibbia prison, Rome and of the *The Tempest* in Luther Lockett Correctional Complex, Kentucky – have been recorded on film.⁴⁷

THE DIFFERENT WAYS PEOPLE EXPERIENCE SHAKESPEARE

The study went on to analyse the survey data to examine the different ways in which people had experience of Shakespeare and their impact on levels of positivity towards him.

As is shown in Chart 8 below, the analysis revealed that people have experience of Shakespeare in a range of different ways in the UK and other countries. Overall, 46 per cent of those asked had seen a film based on one of his plays. 45 per cent had read or heard his poetry. 35 per cent had been taught him in English at school or university, compared to 19 per cent who had been taught him in translation, and 23 per cent who had watched, heard or read his work in translation. Nine per cent had seen

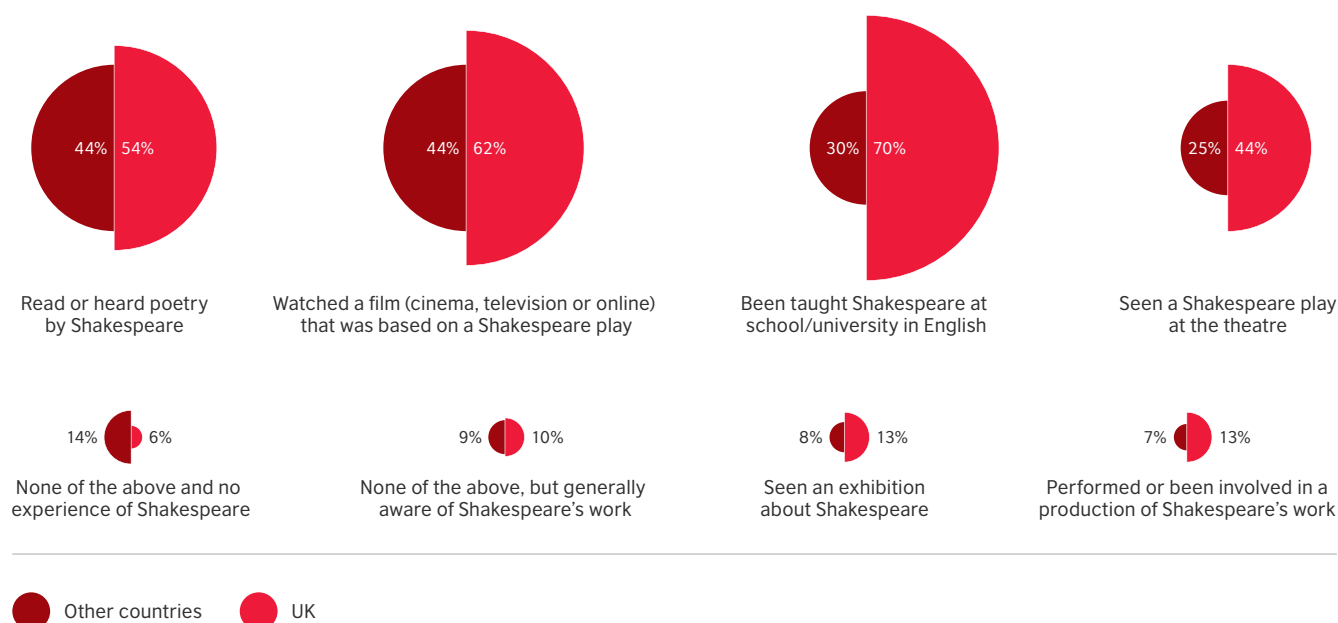
an exhibition about Shakespeare and seven per cent had performed or been involved in a production of his work.

This is consistent with previous research commissioned by the British Council and the Royal Shakespeare Company that suggested that some two thirds of countries have Shakespeare as a named author on their curriculum and that around half of the world's schoolchildren study Shakespeare at school. That equates to at least 64 million people a year. In China, for example, 21 million students each year study *The Merchant of Venice* in Mandarin – more than study Shakespeare every year in English in anglophone countries.⁴⁸

In the UK itself, however, the proportion of people who were taught Shakespeare at school is significantly higher, at 70 per cent (a figure likely to go up after curriculum changes making some Shakespeare exposure compulsory for all UK schoolchildren). That he is studied in so many other countries makes him unique among authors. The previous international research for the British Council identified the reasons people thought were behind this, with 50 per cent stating that they believed the reason is because Shakespeare is relevant and useful in helping young people to reflect on contemporary issues and dilemmas, 65 per cent believing it to be connected

Chart 8: Comparison of experiences with Shakespeare in other countries and in the UK

Question: Thinking of your experience of Shakespeare, which of the following apply to you?

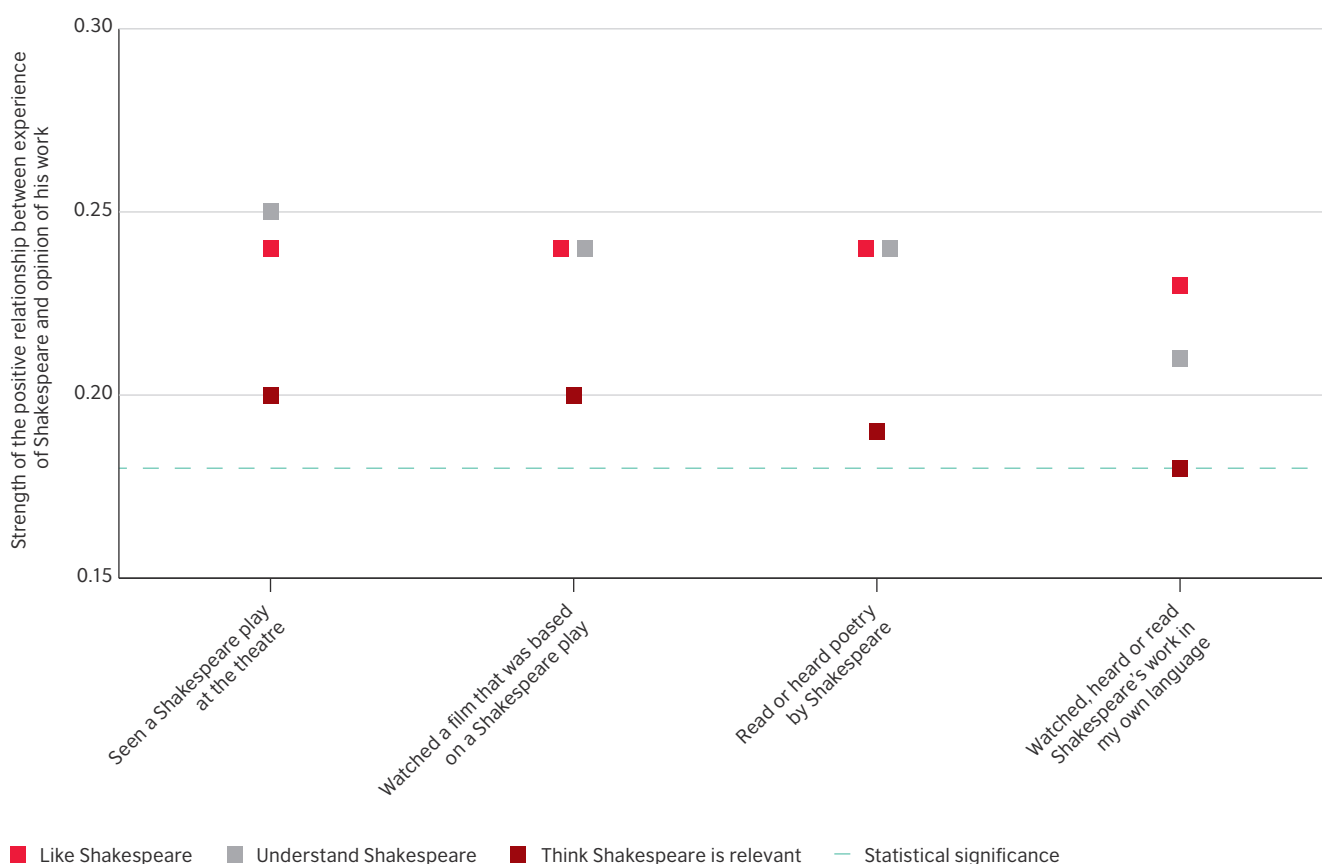


Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (15,907) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162).

48. The RSC and the British Council (2012) *Shakespeare: a worldwide classroom*.

Chart 9: The relationship between people's opinion of Shakespeare and seeing his plays or reading/hearing his poetry

Questions: Thinking about your experience of Shakespeare, which of the following apply to you? To what extent do you agree or disagree that... (you like Shakespeare, you understand Shakespeare, Shakespeare is relevant in today's world?)




Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

to learning about the English language and British culture, and 70 per cent attributing it to the intrinsic value of the plays themselves.

Yet there is another aspect to these very high figures. The exposure to Shakespeare in school is not

necessarily a contributor to positive perceptions of him. Of all the main ways of experiencing Shakespeare, being taught him at school or university in English proved to be the least associated with liking or understanding him or thinking him relevant today.

As Chart 9 shows, on the other hand, watching a play or a film of Shakespeare's work, or reading or hearing his poetry – either in English or in translation – had a (weak) positive relationship to understanding and liking him.

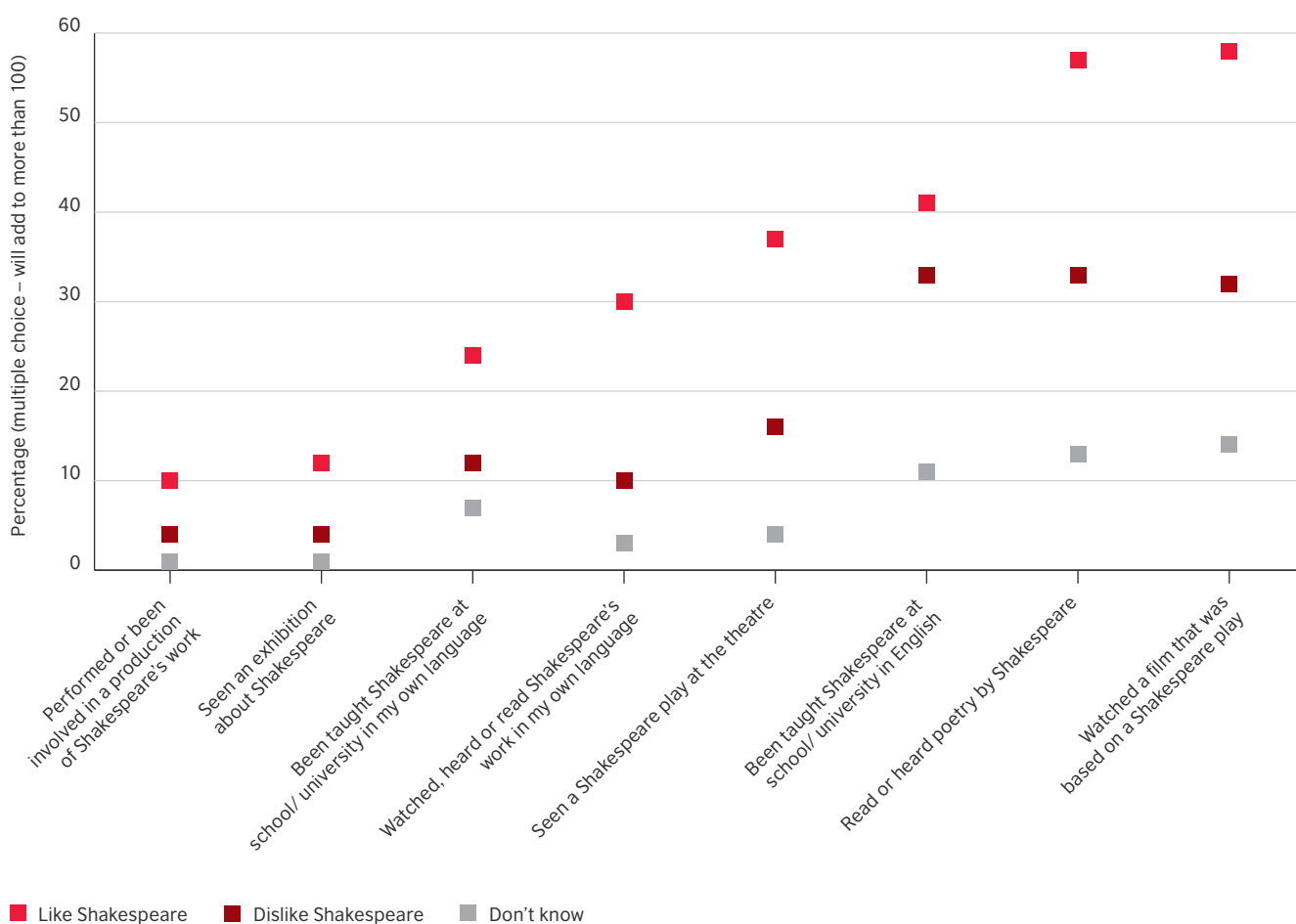
A photograph of Sir Ian McKellen in a film archive. He is wearing a blue fedora, a blue scarf, and a dark blue jacket over a light blue shirt. He is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background consists of tall metal shelving units filled with numerous film canisters, some of which have labels. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the left creating a bright area on the shelves and casting shadows on McKellen's face.

Sir Ian McKellen, spearheading the BFI's Shakespeare on Film programme, at the BFI National Archive

If none of his plays were ever performed on stage, Shakespeare would still be famous by virtue of being the author of more films than anyone else on Earth, with writing credits on over 1,000 films.⁴⁹ Cinema has allowed popular Shakespearean films in every conceivable format from all over the world, from early silent pictures like the 1900 French *Hamlet* with Sarah Bernhardt to the 2015 widely-fêted *Macbeth* with Michael Fassbender; from Olivier's war-time flag-waving *Henry V* to Branagh's portrayal of the brutal realities of medieval warfare in his version of the same play; from Broadway musicals like *West Side Story*, the *Boys from Syracuse*, and *Kiss Me Kate*, and modern-setting Hollywood movies like *O, Ten Things I Hate About You* and *Romeo + Juliet*, to Bollywood spectacles like *Maqbool*, *Omkara*, and *Haider* and samurai epics like *Ran* and *Throne of Blood*; and from science fiction fantasies like *Forbidden Planet* to jazz movies like *All Night Long* to meta-Shakespearean films like *Shakespeare in Love* or *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* to animated children's films like the *Lion King* and even *Gnomeo and Juliet*.⁵⁰

Chart 10: The relationship between people's opinion of Shakespeare and different ways of experiencing his works

Questions: Thinking about your experience of Shakespeare, which of the following apply to you? To what extent do you agree or disagree that...(you like Shakespeare)



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

Furthermore, as Chart 10 shows, those disliking Shakespeare are more likely to have been taught him at school in English. And those who liked Shakespeare were also more likely to have watched a play or a film or have read or heard his poetry than to have been taught about him in school or

university. It should be noted that these correlations may not be causal, though they are certainly suggestive.

More research is needed to understand this further. One possibility is that the relative difference between the proportion studying Shakespeare

in English lessons at school in the UK and some other countries, as opposed to being exposed to his works via film or stage adaptations, may explain some of the discrepancy between Shakespeare's popularity at home and in other countries.

49. According to the Internet Movie Database, as of 2016

50. Jackson, R (ed) (2007) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, Cambridge.

In other words, it may be that ‘the play’s the thing ... [to] catch the conscience’ – or at least the consciousness – of the audience. This would be no surprise. Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed, not studied. They were designed to be put on – perhaps only a handful of times each – in front of the raucous and demographically mixed audiences of London’s theatres, not written for literary connoisseurs. The survey therefore reminds us that, for all his critical success, Shakespeare was and remains a popular writer, with a deliberately broad appeal. This is part of what makes him so universal today.

The plays contain broad humour, obscenity, action, horror, slapstick, and the timeless appeal of universal human emotions, as much as they also contain literary and classical allusions and sophisticated wordplay. They include what many consider some of the greatest poetry ever written. But its language

and metre was intended to be spoken and understood by his audiences: the Elizabethan blank verse that forms the majority of the complete works uses ‘iambic pentameters’ to mirror the cadences of spoken English. When his most famous hero, in suicidal doubt and despair, utters his most famous line, it is not in language that is flowery or intellectual but in basic English that is immediately and universally comprehensible. It is a question that those who see it performed can understand, just as they can understand and empathise with the internal doubt and turmoil that afflict the suicidal character as he utters it: ‘To be or not to be’.

This is emphatically *not* to suggest that Shakespeare should not be taught in school in the original today. Such teaching can play an important part in learning the English language itself. It may also make people more likely to

understand and appreciate Shakespeare when they later experience him through watching a performance – something that could be interesting to explore in further research.

Yet it might suggest that a range of different approaches should be considered when it comes to the ways in which Shakespeare is taught in English, both in the UK and around the world. The 400th anniversary events may represent a great opportunity to re-engage the enthusiasm of British people for Shakespeare, starting at school level by finding new ways to make Shakespeare accessible to younger audiences.

WHAT SHAKESPEARE CAN DO FOR THE UK

The research concluded by investigating some of the implications and opportunities for the UK of Shakespeare's enduring popularity.

Shakespeare's most obvious and direct contribution to the UK's profile and standing is via theatrical performances of his plays. Amongst the UK's cultural assets, previous research has demonstrated that 19 per cent of those surveyed around the world described theatre as an important attraction of the UK.⁵¹ UK theatre attracts 33.9 million attendances every year – more than attend English and Scottish Premiership and Football League football matches put together.⁵²

Shakespeare directly contributes a significant portion of this industry. His plays are performed hundreds of times a year in the UK. Among other places, they are constantly shown in the Royal Shakespeare Company theatres in Stratford-upon-Avon and at Shakespeare's Globe in London, two of the country's leading tourist attractions, generating around 1.5 million visits per year and over £50 million at the box office.^{53, 54}

The plays also form a regular and popular core of the repertoire at the National Theatre, the Barbican Centre, and London's commercial West End, which is the largest and most lucrative theatrical hub on Earth, with total revenue of over £633 million in 2015,⁵⁵ as well as in theatres across the country. Indeed, Shakespeare is the most performed dramatist in the world.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the plays have arguably contributed greatly to the UK's broader status as the world's leading theatrical nation. Apart from short periods in the 17th century, when the theatres were closed because they were deemed immoral or pestilential, London has been a centre of the theatrical world ever since Shakespeare's time.

British Shakespearian actors – trained in the exacting art of performing his plays – have made a major impact on the acting world since they were first written. From Kempe and Burbage, to Garrick and Irving, to Olivier and Dench, each century has produced many famous British actors who honed their skills performing Shakespeare. Shakespearean training forms an important part of the training of many of the UK's actors in general. To this day

it is widely expected that a Hollywood studio searching for a charismatic villain will look to the UK and its Shakespearean actors. It is likely that none of this would have been true were it not for one man and the influence he still has, four centuries after his death.

Furthermore, films of Shakespeare plays have themselves achieved great popularity. From Brando in *Julius Caesar* and Olivier in *Richard III* to Burton and Taylor in *The Taming of the Shrew* to Pacino in *The Merchant of Venice* and Stubbs and Bonham-Carter in *Twelfth Night*, great actors have taken Shakespeare to wider audiences than those who regularly attend the theatre.⁵⁷ In addition there have been important television productions, including the complete works produced by the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s, which have long been consumed for education and entertainment in many countries.⁵⁸ More recently, new technology is allowing the streaming of theatrical performances worldwide: a potentially important way of increasing Shakespeare's profile and availability internationally. And of course the great demand for Shakespeare's works is a significant benefit for the UK publishing industry.

51. The British Council (2014) *As Others See Us*. Available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/policy-insight-research/research/as-others-see-us>

52. UK Theatre (2015) *Theatre Matters*.

53. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/about-us/facts-and-figures/annual-review>

54. www.shakespearesglobe.com/uploads/files/2015/02/2014_annual_review.pdf

55. Society of London Theatre (February 2016) *Box Office Figures Report*.

56. Kennedy, D (1993) *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*, Cambridge.

57. Wells, S and Stanton, S (eds) (2002) *op. cit.*

58. Jackson, R (ed) (2007) *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, Cambridge.

Yet the survey data suggests a popularity that extends its reach beyond just the world of theatre, film, television, and publishing and reveals him to be an important asset for the UK. Overall, as Chart 11 shows, 37 per cent of those surveyed said Shakespeare makes them 'more positive' or 'much more positive' about the UK in general. It is also worth noting that young people were on average even more enthusiastic about Shakespeare, with 42 per cent of 18–24 year olds reporting that they were 'more positive' or 'much more positive', compared to 31 per cent of those over 55. This coincides with the finding that younger people are somewhat more likely to have watched, heard, or read Shakespeare in their

own language (25 per cent of 18–24 year olds, compared to 17 per cent of those over 55).

On the question of how much Shakespeare affected people's views of the UK, the survey revealed a wide range of answers across different countries. In Germany, only 16 per cent said that he made a positive effect on their opinions of the UK. In the USA and Australia the figures are only slightly higher, at 17 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. At the other end of the scale, however, 57 per cent of Brazilians and 62 per cent of Indians reported that he had a positive effect on their views of the UK. Given the growing populations of many of these countries and their increasing geopolitical and economic

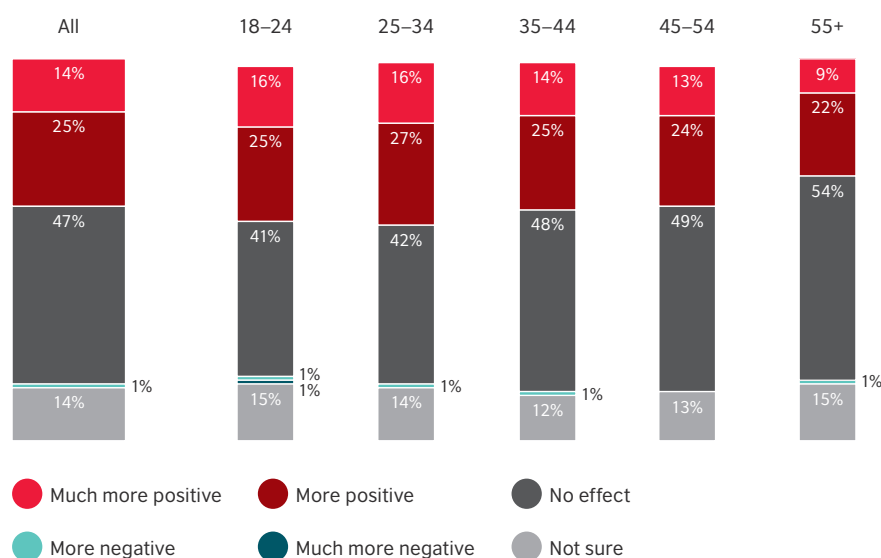
importance as markets for British exports – including creative content – these results may suggest a significant role for Shakespeare's works as powerful cultural facilitators opening doors for the UK around the world.

Featuring Shakespearean productions internationally as part of future festivals and cultural seasons, for example, may therefore pay dividends when it comes to engaging people with the UK and increasing the numbers of people who want to visit as tourists or study here. Given that India came at or near the top of the charts detailing Shakespeare's international popularity and his effect on people's opinion of the UK, the forthcoming 2017 UK–India cultural season may offer one such opportunity.⁵⁹

In general, then, as Chart 12 shows, people in anglophone countries were less likely to agree that Shakespeare positively influenced their opinion of the UK than were people from emerging economies. The reasons for the discrepancy are unclear. The fact that European countries like France and Germany showed similar results to those in anglophone countries suggests that it may not be the issue of encountering Shakespeare in archaic English. It could possibly be that people in emerging economies have less exposure to the wider aspects of British culture that influence the views of people from countries that are geographically and culturally closest to the UK. Alternatively, it may be because those in emerging economies were more likely to have encountered Shakespeare through a film or television adaptation than to have been taught him in English in school. As we have already seen, such exposure is more closely associated with developing a liking for Shakespeare. In addition, such exposure is also more closely correlated with being influenced

Chart 11: Shakespeare's impact on people's opinion of the UK, including breakdown by age

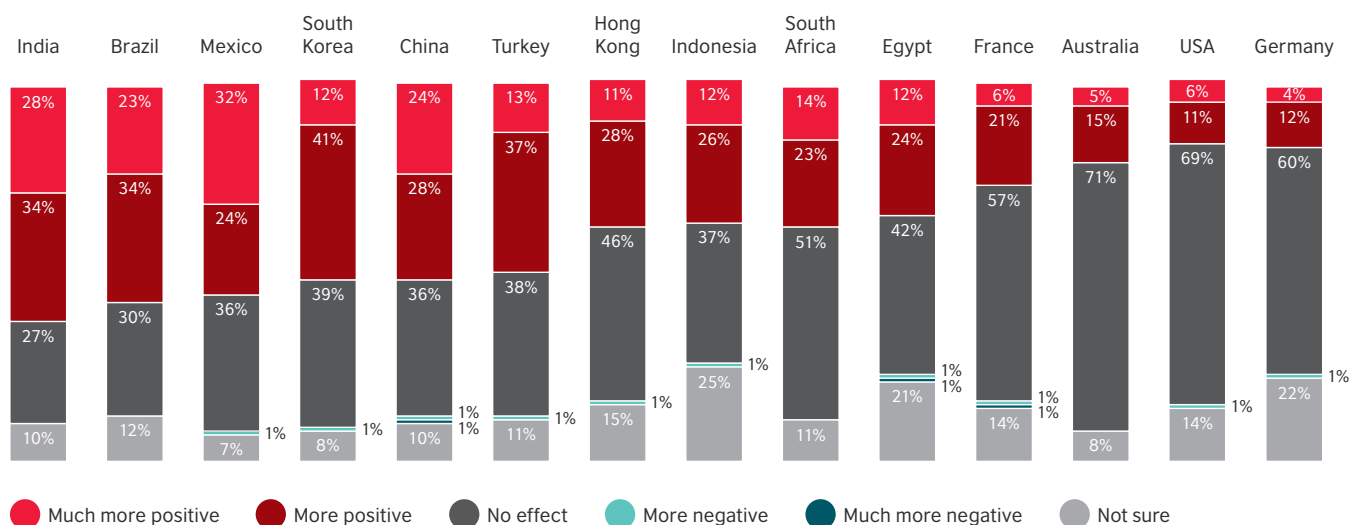
Question: To what extent, if any, does Shakespeare affect your opinion of the UK?
Does Shakespeare make you...? (much more positive; more positive; no effect; more negative; much more negative; not sure).



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

Chart 12: Country comparison of Shakespeare's effect on people's opinion of the UK

Question: To what extent, if any, does Shakespeare affect your opinion of the UK? Does Shakespeare make you...?
(much more positive; more positive; no effect; more negative; much more negative; not sure)



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (n=18,042) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162), UK (2,135).

by Shakespeare into having a positive attitude towards the UK as a whole. Chart 13 shows that 56 per cent of those whose opinion of the UK is positively influenced by Shakespeare had watched a film version of one of his plays, compared to 36 per cent of those whose opinions of the UK are negatively influenced by him.

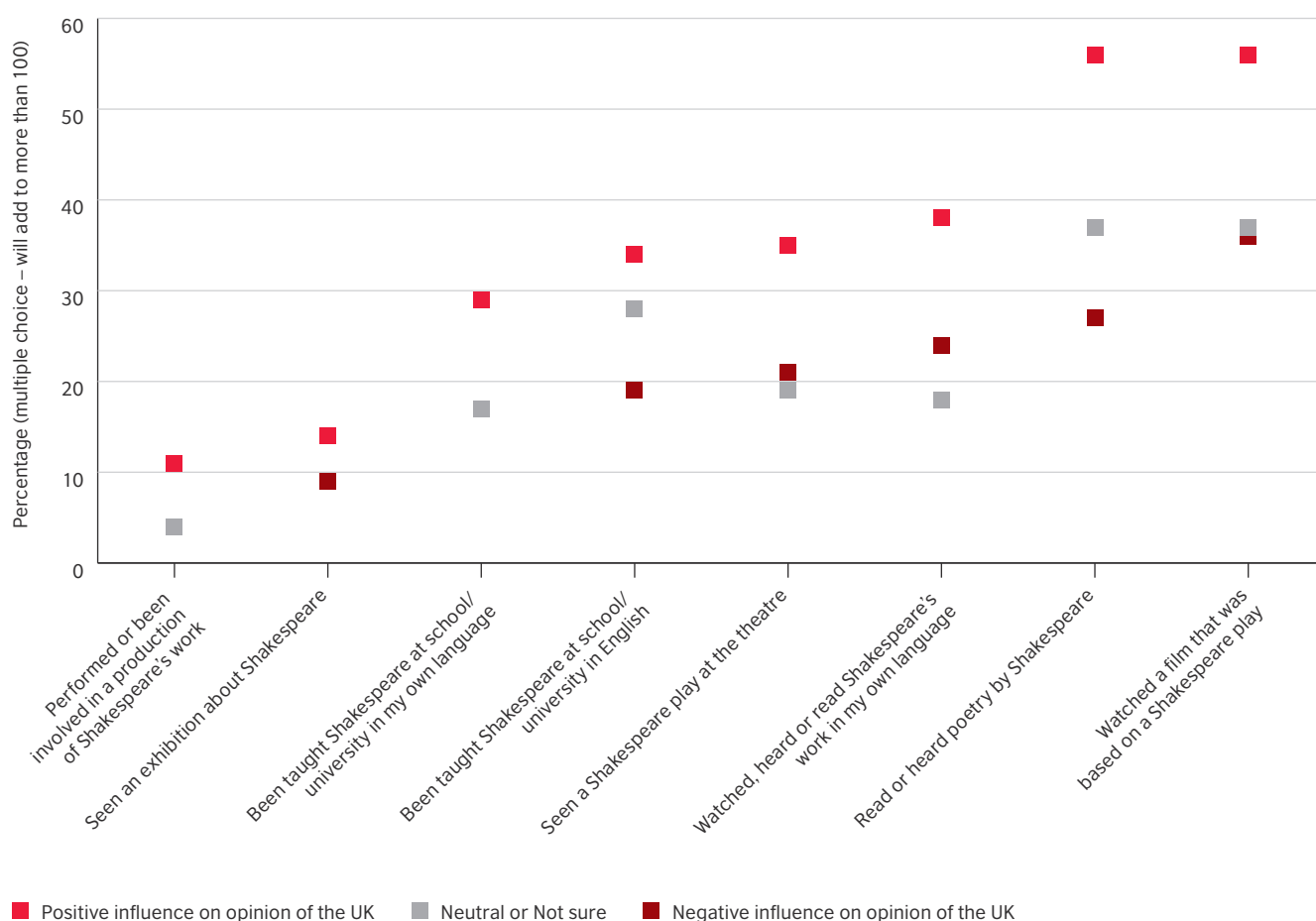
The survey also suggests that, as well as there being a correlation between

liking Shakespeare and being more positive about the UK in general, Shakespeare may also be a significant asset for the UK tourism and creative industry sectors. As shown in Chart 14, those whose opinion of the UK is positively influenced by Shakespeare are more likely to want to visit the UK as a tourist or a student. 70 per cent of those whose opinion of the UK is positively influenced by Shakespeare

say that they want to visit the UK as a tourist, compared to only 37 per cent of those whose opinion is negatively influenced by him. They also say that they are more likely to be interested in enjoying the UK's wider culture and history, including its music, film, theatre, television, books and art.

Chart 13: Those whose opinion of the UK is positively influenced by Shakespeare are more likely to have watched a film based on a Shakespeare play and read or heard his poetry

Questions: Thinking about your experience of Shakespeare, which of the following apply to you? To what extent, if any, does Shakespeare affect your opinion of the UK? Does Shakespeare make you...? (much more positive; more positive; no effect; more negative; much more negative; not sure)



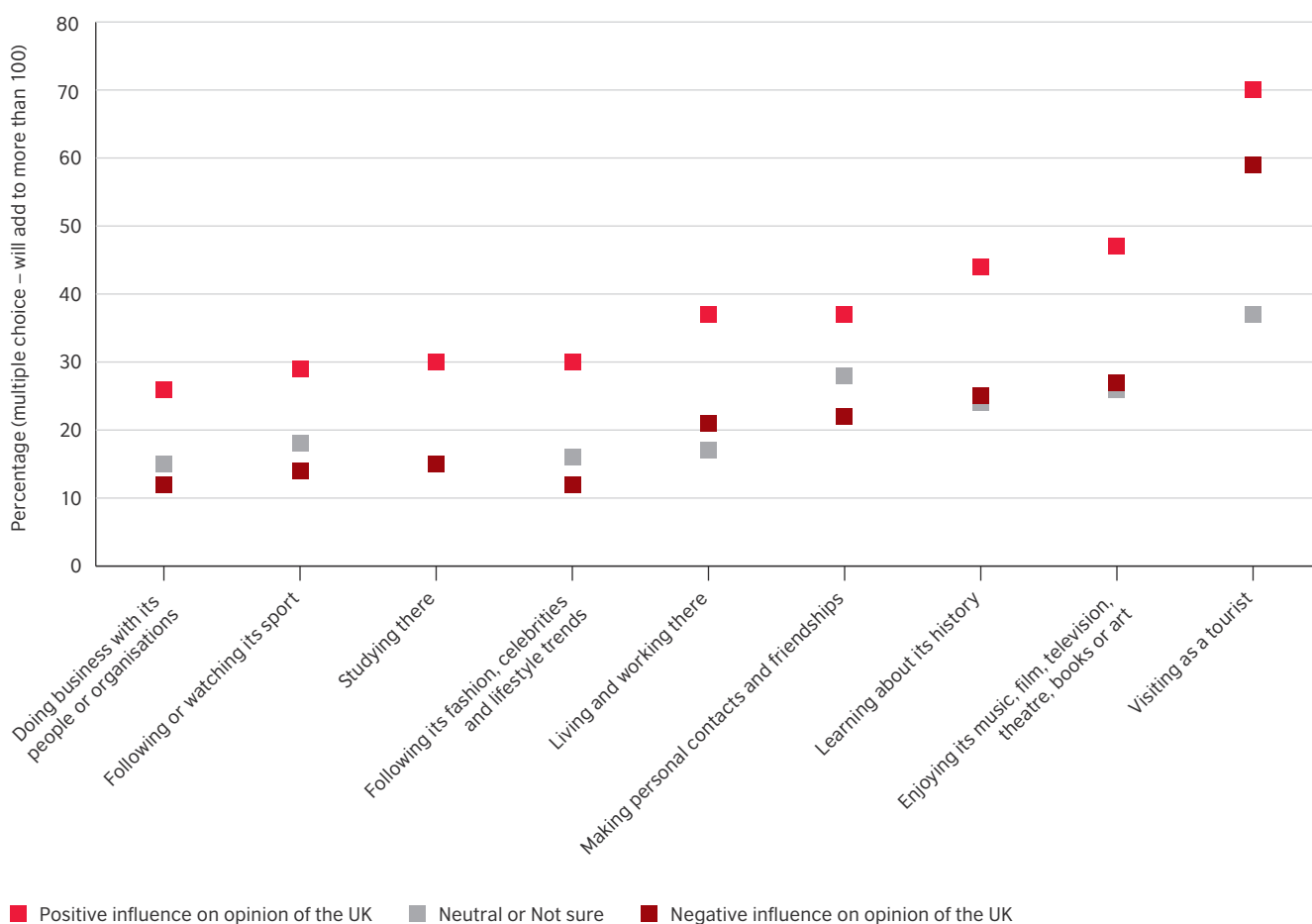
Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (15,907) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162).

Shakespeare could therefore be seen as a powerful enhancer of UK influence and attraction, and also a potential envoy for the UK's wider tourism and creative industries, beyond theatre, film, television, and publishing. Together these sectors form large and

growing contributors to the country's economic prosperity, with tourism worth around £126.9 billion per year to the UK economy overall, or nine per cent of UK GDP⁶⁰ and the UK's creative industries generating some £84.1 billion per year.⁶¹

Chart 14: Those whose opinion of the UK is positively influenced by Shakespeare are more likely to want to visit the UK as a tourist. They are also interested in enjoying UK culture and history

Questions: Thinking about the UK, which, if any, of the following are you particularly interested in? To what extent, if any, does Shakespeare affect your opinion of the UK? Does Shakespeare make you...? (much more positive; more positive; no effect; more negative; much more negative; not sure)



Source: YouGov (November 2015). Base: Adult (18+) population (15,907) in Australia (1,072), Brazil (1,007), China (1,043), Egypt (1,004), France (1,014), Germany (2,059), Hong Kong (1,140), India (1,000), Indonesia (1,088), Mexico (1,014), South Africa (1,019), South Korea (1,276), Turkey (1,009), USA (1,162).

60. <https://www.visitbritain.org/visitor-economy-facts>

61. DCMS (January, 2016) *Creative Industries Economic Estimates*.

CONCLUSION

As well as its intrinsic value, a country's culture is a vital contributor to its soft power. Shakespeare is seen around the world as a very significant part of the UK's culture. His work is well known, liked, understood, and contributes positively to perceptions of the UK.

The evidence shows that he remains globally popular – in some other countries more so than in the UK. The reasons for that popularity, including the characters, themes, and other factors that have led to his widespread adaption and adoption overseas, implies that this is likely to endure. The continuing appeal among today's young people of Shakespeare's plays, their empathy and apparent tolerance, their popular adaptability, and their even-handed and timeless applicability, all suggest they are unlikely to be forgotten soon.

For as long as people suffer 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune... the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the poor man's contumely, the pangs of despised love, the law's delay, the insolence of office...', Shakespeare's work will continue to speak to humanity, will continue to be relevant, and will continue to be loved. This report has suggested that this is just as true in other countries as it is in the UK.

And for as long as it is read, quoted, translated, taught, and popularly performed, Shakespeare's work will continue to be a great promoter of the English language that he helped to form, and for the country whose national myths he helped to create.

This research shows that Shakespeare has a positive effect on perceptions of the UK and that there is a correlation between liking Shakespeare and people's desire to visit the UK and to access its cultural output. He also acts as a popular and sympathetic British icon.

As such he provides an excellent starting point for cultural connection and friendly knowledge and understanding with people overseas, perhaps particularly in high growth economies with fewer existing ties to the UK.

Shakespeare has already stood the test of 400 years. As perhaps the greatest and most popular of the major literary figures of history, Shakespeare is likely to last indefinitely and to remain, as his contemporary Ben Jonson predicted, 'not of an age, but for all time'. And, as this research confirms, his international popularity shows that he is not just a great British icon, but one that belongs to all the world.

IMPLICATIONS

1. It would be a mistake to underestimate Shakespeare's international popularity. When promoting British culture overseas, it is important to bear in mind that Shakespeare remains perhaps the UK's single most enduring cultural figure, and acts as a powerful icon for the country. Positive engagement with Shakespeare can provide a useful pathway into further appreciation of contemporary UK culture.
2. People's enjoyment of Shakespeare in their own languages suggests translations of his writing are likely to be an important way of improving his standing overseas. Further work could be undertaken to assess the availability of good dramatic translations of Shakespeare, especially in countries of key importance for the UK's foreign policy.
3. The UK's cultural organisations, policymakers, and general public could benefit from gaining greater awareness of the literary traditions of other countries as well as their own, as knowledge of other cultures contributes to positive attitudes and understanding between people. The UK and its cultural sector could perhaps do more to promote great works of literature translated from other languages.
4. Shakespearean adaptations can form a valuable part of the UK's international cultural festivals and seasons. One upcoming opportunity for them to do so is the 2017 UK–India Season of Culture.
5. Shakespeare's adaptability and continued relevance suggest that his works can remain part of efforts to promote both historic and contemporary UK culture.
6. The research suggests that, for some people, experiencing adaptations of Shakespeare's plays can have a more positive impact than studying them in school. This is worth bearing in mind when considering the most effective ways of engaging new audiences.
7. This report shows that there is an association between liking Shakespeare and having a positive view of the UK, which may in turn contribute to increased tourism and consumption of UK culture. The secondary benefits associated with Shakespeare's international popularity could arguably be taken more into account when funding, promotion, marketing, and streaming decisions are being made about British Shakespearean stage, film, and television productions. Further efforts could be made to investigate and increase Shakespeare's significance for UK soft power and prosperity. These efforts could build on the current anniversary activities and continue beyond 2016.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE SHAKESPEARE LIVES PROGRAMME

Shakespeare Lives is a global celebration of the influence of William Shakespeare on culture, language, education and society.

The British Council, the GREAT Britain campaign and an unprecedented number of cultural and educational partners, including Shakespeare's Globe, the RSC, BFI, Hay Festival, and BBC Arts, after 'an unprecedented number of educational and cultural partners,' and before are marking the 400th anniversary year of his death with a series of initiatives, including a unique online collaboration, performances on stage and film, exhibitions, public readings, conversations, debates, and educational resources, that people around the world can actively join in with from January to December 2016.

While half the world's schoolchildren study Shakespeare today, there are still 250 million children who cannot read or write. The Shakespeare Lives partnership with international charity partner VSO will support their work to help more children have access to education worldwide. For the year-long **#PlayYourPart** digital campaign, the first of a series of monthly social media campaigns began on 5 January (Twelfth Night) and was called Share Your Shakespeare. This included leaders and celebrities sharing posts to build wider audiences and encourage awareness of VSO's work in education.

www.shakespearelives.org

**SHAKESPEARE
LIVES IN 2016**







APPENDIX – ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The survey underpinning this report was undertaken in November 2015 by YouGov on behalf of the British Council. Further statistical analysis was also provided by YouGov.

For the survey YouGov questioned over 18,000 people across 15 countries and territories. It was undertaken online between 2 and 16 November 2015.

An online survey method was used as this was the most cost effective means of undertaking the research and enabled a focus on people who are more likely to be interested in and able to benefit from future international connections, and more likely to be current or future influencers and decision makers within their countries.

These places were chosen to give a broad geographic spread across the globe and to include key places of importance for UK diplomacy and trade. In each country, the sample included at least 1,000 people. The data was weighted on gender and

age to reflect the wider population profiles. The full breakdown is set out in the table below:

COUNTRY/ TERRITORY	SAMPLE
UK	2,135
India	1,000
Mexico	1,014
Brazil	1,007
Turkey	1,009
South Africa	1,019
Egypt	1,004
South Korea	1,276
USA	1,162
Australia	1,072
China	1,043
France	1,014
Germany	2,059
Indonesia	1,088
Hong Kong	1,140

STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANALYSIS

The individual sample size for the research in each country was over 1,000.

Where the UK is excluded and combined data from the other 14 countries is shown in this report, the combined sample size is 15,907. Where combined 15 country data is shown, the combined sample size is 18,042.

To give an indication of the statistical significance of individual results presented in this report we show below the approximate confidence interval applying at a confidence level of 95 per cent for a result of 50 per cent generated from different sample sizes within a population:

COUNTRY/ TERRITORY	INDICATIVE CONFIDENCE INTERVAL
UK	+/-2.1%
Non-UK	+/-0.8%
All	+/-0.7%

Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz
theatre perform *Hamlet* in
Moscow in 2010





IMAGE CREDITS

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