



Shakespeare After All

Marjorie Garber

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A brilliant and companionable tour through all thirty-eight plays, *Shakespeare After All* is the perfect introduction to the bard by one of the country's foremost authorities on his life and work. Drawing on her hugely popular lecture courses at Yale and Harvard over the past thirty years, Marjorie Garber offers passionate and revealing readings of the plays in chronological sequence, from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Supremely readable and engaging, and complete with a comprehensive introduction to Shakespeare's life and times and an extensive bibliography, this magisterial work is an ever-replenishing fount of insight on the most celebrated writer of all time.

Shakespeare After All Details

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From Reader Review Shakespeare After All for online ebook

Kyle says

While almost all Shakespeare criticism tends to sound the same, after biographical details and conjecture (enough with the young William poaching deer!) is thrown in, this account of Shakespeare's plays is fresh and omnivorous. A bit cheeky too - when she speaks about a particular uncritical critic who has a thing for Falstaff, whose one-sided readings may become the old-fashioned way of writing about Shakespeare. Nice presentation of speeches and dialogue throughout the book, representing a large variety of character, often the ones overlooked (as well as plays like the Two Noble Kinsman). One very interesting area of study, which seems to be a term coined by Marjorie Garber, are the "unscenes" - vivid pictures placed in the dialogue of events that happen off stage, such as Kate and Petruchio's wedding, Hamlet's madness reported by Ophelia or the reunion at the end of the Winter's Tale. Another great connection made between characters in other plays, such as suggesting Henry V and Richard II become synthesized. Lots to say, too, about language in the plays, not only how the words were supposed to have been spoken way back then, but what they sound like to us today. Julie Taymour film Titus gets a brief mention here, and there are many great examples of film adaptation in the further reading section. After All covers all the bases, and gets readers wanting to read - or see - the plays one more time, so that ideas from her book can sink in.

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

[Articulated Shakespeare: "Shakespeare After All" by Marjorie Garber](#)

I've always tried to avoid judging a 16th-17th century playwright by 21st century standards. To truly appreciate Shakespeare's work one has to make the effort of being conversant with 16th-17th century ecosystem (literature, culture, etc.). In so many ways, Shakespeare's characters created the archetypes that define who we are (or at least give us a language to understand ourselves). What I liked the most about Garber's book was her ability to reading into the plays in some plays and reading out of them in some others. At the end of the book, almost all of her choices seemed right to me. In some instances I didn't agree with her reading. "Pericles" ("The Incest Riddle" seemed far-fetched to say the least) and the "Winter's Tale" come to mind.

Read the rest elsewhere if you feel so inclined.

Jared Colley says

I read this book alongside Harold Bloom's famous work on the Bard and actually enjoyed it much more. The books are organized in much the same way, tackling each play one-by-one, chapter by chapter. When reading them side by side, I was more convinced and intrigued by Garber's readings; I think her interpretive strategies are more like my own than say Mr. Bloom's - so I am probably biased. In fact, I know I am biased;

Bloom is a megalomaniac. Garber does a good job making use of more recent schools of interpretation (namely post-60s textual, feminist, and historicist forms of critique) while resisting the tendency of exploiting Shakespearean texts for political/pedagogical purposes that go beyond the texts-themselves. She respects the universality of Shakespeare's art while also grounding the complexity of Shakespeare's literature in the networks of socio-historical forces and influences. This book is a great reference and a great read.

Sammy says

Really rather good, although - as with so many books of this type - its target audience is a little ... vague.

In terms of accessibility for a general reader, Garber gives us a neat precis of Shakespeare's life and times, followed by analyses of all the plays in the canon. No play misses out, and all are treated fairly. At the same time, this is not an "introduction to Shakespeare", no matter what the blurb may try to sell you. All of the chapters assume at least some familiarity with the play in question, or are obscure enough about plot that you'd need to have some detail to begin with. This is not an account of the play's sources, history, or fate on the stage and screen; it's a popular academic treatise. With that said, if you're building up an amateur's Shakespeare library, this is an interesting read. What may be frustrating is an inevitability: there is so much to talk about with each play that, like most books of "essays", Garber tends to pick a few points about each play and then discuss them. This is not anything like a comprehensive overview (after all, most chapters are about 30 pages), but it tackles some of the key questions academics and directors ask about each work.

For the academic reader, I'm not sure how I feel. It seems as if Garber got the commission for the book by promising a general introduction, but she can't quite keep her intelligence at bay. And, hey, I'm not complaining; her insights are valid and well-written. Unlike most Shakespeare writers, I almost never feel as if she's wandering down a rabbit-hole of philosophical ramblings. No, Garber's analyses are - although decidedly deskbound - certainly drawn from real examination of the plays in the context of William Shakespeare's time. There are a few niggles depending on your taste (for me, I dislike that old-school scholar thing of describing a character using dashes, e.g. "Lear is her father-king"), but each to their own.

The challenge is that I'm not sure if the book unites the two worlds very well. Some of the chapters are quite high-minded, and reveal little to the general reader about the play. At the same time, there were very few surprises in the book for me (and thus, I'd assume, even fewer for the full-time Shakespeare academic). It doesn't seem as if Garber is really adding to the hefty discussion on the Bard, but nor is she a Richard Dawkins, able to illuminate a fascinating-but-niche world for the general public.

I should note this is a positive review, indeed a *5-star review* (well, 4.6) - in part because I admire Garber's writing, her intelligence, and her views, and in part because as a Shakespeare lover, I was engaged on every single damn page. I heartily recommend this book to people in an "in-between" stage of Shakespeare scholarship, but I'd champion the great populists like Stephen Greenblatt and Stanley Wells for those looking to get their head around the plays in an intellectual-but-understandable way.

Rozonda says

Deep, rich, easy to follow and to understand, this book is a jewel for all Shakespeare lovers, both newbies and experts. This play by play analysis shows cultural, linguistic and social aspects of the plays, both in their

time and throughout history; in fact this is one of its most fascinating qualities- Ms Garber treats the plays as living beings, whose development goes beyond the time they were written and/or acted for the first time. Sometimes she repeats herself a little bit (for example, when she talks about cross-dressing and gender confusion in Shakespeare) but even when she does, it is not annoying due to her erudition and the naturalness of her language. If you want to read a complete introduction to Shakespeare, choose this one.

Chris says

An enjoyable read for any Shakespeare lover. What more can really be said about Shakespeare? Well considering the amount of books that keep coming out, quite a bit. While, for the most part, Garber doesn't offer too much that is new, she has an engaging writing style and takes the reader on a close reading of the plays. For instance, she points out the similarities between Brutus, Cassius, and Caser on a level that is far more than character.

At times, this close reading does fail – for instance, if Romeo forgives Death, why does he leave a note stating where he got the poison from? She also notes, correctly, that Henry VIII gets overlooked, and then writes about it shortly.

Carol Bakker says

This was the best \$9.00 purchase I made this year. In short, Garber is brilliant. Her commentary brought out the deep hues and shapes and textures of the bard. She taught me volumes in the art of reading literature. Her analysis was both interesting and helpful.

Today, I watched Branaugh's movie *Murder on the Orient Express* and looked for literary patterns and themes. Seriously, I thought, 'What would Marjorie see?' I am convinced I noticed substantially more than I would have before reading *Shakespeare After All*.

Garber is both elegant and economical. A book that approaches 1000 pages isn't usually accused of thrift, but she doesn't waste words. At times I paused simply to admire her sentences.

What annoys her? Taking Shakespeare quotes out of context. Appropriating them without regard for the meaning portrayed in the play.

Garber knows the Bible (although I don't know what/that she believes) and often points out biblical allusions that Shakespeare's 17th century audience would have easily recognized. But then she also reveals the bawdy double meanings of words that would never have occurred to me. Sometimes I wish a thing were simply...a thing!

She points out motifs and characters in one play which resemble others throughout the canon. This jester is like that one; see these motherless daughters; pay attention to boxes here. This unmasking scene echoes that one; the sea signifies this; the forest is a place of danger.

Consequently the reader receives both a close read of each play and an encompassing view of some of the

world's best literature.

Few, very few, would find this fun to read for entertainment's sake. But as a study guide to reading Shakespeare, I highly recommend it.

Bookmarks Magazine says

Remember the last time you read a work of literary criticism and actually understood it? The tide has changed with *Shakespeare After All*. Forgoing cultural studies jargon for an eclectic approach that draws from gender studies, post-colonial theory, and Elizabethan stage history, Garber focuses on close, erudite readings of the Bard's work. Comparing her tome to Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), critics agree that Garber is more readable and enjoyable; Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World* (**** Nov/Dec 2004) will give her a run for the money, however. A few reviewers wondered why Garber omitted discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets and poems; others criticized the book's significant length. Yet, until "somebody even smarter than Garber comes along with a 1,200-pager, this is the indispensable introduction to the indispensable writer" (*Newsweek*).

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Aria says

A comprehensive book for those who want to know more about Shakespeare's plays, though it doesn't have as much detail as I had expected it to have. Nevertheless, it's definitely where a student should start with (*after* having read the plays first, of course) when they have to write a paper on the aforementioned.

Kathie Harper says

This is a wonderful guide to reading Shakespeare's plays. Along with her Harvard lectures on You-tube, I feel as though I've gotten a substantive and enlightening discussion of the plays, especially some of the more obscure ones. The Bard lives on.

Laura Leaney says

Here are some fascinating essays on the plays of Shakespeare. No boggy summaries. No unpacking of the plot. Just interesting perspectives and a marvelous close reading of each play. Margorie Garber has an open mind and a sharp eye for what matters. If you're a Shakespeare scholar, you might quibble with some of her interpretations, but for the lay-person, Garber makes accessible the depth, the beauty, and the majesty of Shakespeare's inventiveness and language. I'm also weirdly glad to have read some Shakespeare criticism by a woman.

Here is a line from her piece on "Coriolanus": "One reading might concentrate on Coriolanus, or Caius Martius, himself, the lone aristocrat, the heroic individual; another might take up the narrative of the common people, the hungry, disempowered "voices"; a third might emphasize the roles of the women in the play, or the family group constellated by the three "V's" (the mother Volumnia, the wife Virgilia, the friend Valeria) and her Young Martius, Coriolanus's son." I love this way of opening up the possibilities. I haven't read the play yet, but I'm very excited to re-read her essay after I do.

Her offerings on the plays I know and love ("Macbeth," "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Julius Caesar," "Henry V," and all the rest) are brilliant. I learned something new at every turn, and that's my highest praise.

I wish it hadn't taken me years to finish!

Alex says

This is my go-to book for deepening my understanding of whatever Shakespeare play I just staggered through or tripped over or read to my toddler, which by the way he is very into and the reason is that he's a genius. It's not because I make funny voices and gallop all over the room. It's because he's a genius.

My friend Sammy recommends this for "in-between" Shakespeare fans, and I love that. Like, let's say this isn't your first party with Shakespeare; let's say you know about the second-best bed and you can read a speech without being more than a little confused. But you don't know, like - well I don't know what you would know if you were a serious Shakespeare scholar, if I knew that I would be one. Whatever those people know, let's say you don't know it. I'm sure it's very interesting. So *those in-between people*.

Because Garber gets into each play - the plot, the characters, some of the themes, a few of the tricks. She spends, I don't know, 20 or 30 pages on each of them, so that's a fair amount of depth. Her writing style - these are actually adapted from her lectures, she's a Harvard professor - is engaging and fun. I read a Shakespeare or two every year, and I always return to this book gleefully as soon as I'm done. Listen, I bought this book for my shelf and for my Kindle. That's serious business. I would rather have Garber's insight than anyone else's.

Danell Jones says

Garber offers thoughtful, intelligent, readable commentary on all of Shakespeare's play. Wow.

Sarah Poe says

I have used this book throughout a course I'm taking on Shakespeare and it has been the best resource, hands down. I'm not going to complete the book because I only used it for a half dozen plays but I am sure I will return to it anytime I go see a Shakespeare play or read another. Easy to read, yet thorough.

Ed says

Garber knows Shakespeare as well as anyone--she is a Harvard prof. Her undergrad Shakespeare survey at Harvard is SRO so she knows how to present to non-specialists. Here she covers all the plays and the sonnets in witty, informative and well written essays.
