

Applied Practice
in

Julius Caesar
PSAT/NMSQT/SAT**

By William Shakespeare
RESOURCE GUIDE

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Questions 11-20 are based on the following passages.

Passage 1 is excerpted from Leo Tolstoy's preface to his *Critical Essay on Shakespeare*, published in 1906. Passage 2 is adapted from George Bernard Shaw's letter to Tolstoy's publisher previous to the work's publication.

Passage 1

My disagreement with the established opinion about Shakespeare is not the result of an accidental frame of mind, nor of a light-minded attitude toward the matter, but is the outcome of many years' repeated and insistent endeavors to harmonize my own views of Shakespeare with those established amongst all civilized men of the Christian world.

I remember the astonishment I felt when I first read Shakespeare. I expected to receive a powerful esthetic pleasure, but having read, one after the other, works regarded as his best: "King Lear," "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," not only did I feel no delight, but I felt an irresistible repulsion and tedium, and doubted as to whether I was senseless in feeling works regarded as the summit of perfection by the whole of the civilized world to be trivial and positively bad, or whether the significance which this civilized world attributes to the works of Shakespeare was itself senseless. My consternation was increased by the fact that I always keenly felt the beauties of poetry in every form; then why should artistic works recognized by the whole world as those of a genius,—the works of Shakespeare,—not only fail to please me, but be disagreeable to me? For a long time I could not believe in myself, and during fifty years, in order to test myself, I several times recommenced reading Shakespeare in every possible form, in Russian, in English, in German and in Schlegel's translation, as I was advised. Several times I read the dramas and the comedies and historical plays, and I invariably underwent the same feelings: repulsion, weariness, and bewilderment. At the present time, before writing this preface, being desirous once more to test myself, I have, as an old man of seventy-five, again read the whole of Shakespeare, including the historical plays, the "Henrys," "Troilus and Cressida," the "Tempest," "Cymbeline," and I have felt, with even greater force, the same feelings,—this time, however, not of bewilderment, but of firm, indubitable conviction that the unquestionable glory of a great genius which Shakespeare enjoys, and

which compels writers of our time to imitate him and readers and spectators to discover in him non-existent merits,—thereby distorting their esthetic and ethical understanding,—is a great evil, as is every untruth.

Although I know that the majority of people so firmly believe in the greatness of Shakespeare that in reading this judgment of mine they will not admit even the possibility of its justice, and will not give it the slightest attention, nevertheless I will endeavor, as well as I can, to show why I believe that Shakespeare can not be recognized either as a great genius, or even as an average author.

Passage 2

As you know, I have striven hard to open English eyes to the emptiness of Shakespeare's philosophy, to the superficiality and second-handedness of his morality, to his weakness and incoherence as a thinker, to his snobbery, his vulgar prejudices, his ignorance, his disqualifications of all sorts for the philosophic eminence claimed for him. The preface to my "Three Plays for Puritans" contains a section headed "Better than Shakespeare?" which is, I think, the only utterance of mine on the subject to be found in a book. There is at present in the press a new preface to an old novel of mine called "The Irrational Knot." In that preface I define the first order in Literature as consisting of those works in which the author, instead of accepting the current morality and religion ready-made without any question as to their validity, writes from an original moral standpoint of his own, thereby making his book an original contribution to morals, religion, and sociology, as well as to belles letters. I place Shakespeare with Dickens, Scott, Dumas, etc., in the second order, because, though they are enormously entertaining, their morality is ready-made; and I point out that the one play, "Hamlet," in which Shakespeare made an attempt to give as a hero one who was dissatisfied with the ready-made morality, is the one which has given the highest impression of his genius, although Hamlet's revolt is unskillfully and inconclusively suggested and not worked out with any philosophic competence.

May I suggest that you should be careful not to imply that Tolstoy's great Shakespearian heresy has no other support than mine. The preface of Nicholas Rowe to his edition of Shakespeare, and the various prefaces of Dr. Johnson contain, on Rowe's part, an apology for him as a writer with obvious and admitted

shortcomings and, on Johnson's, a good deal of downright hard-hitting criticism.

Of course you know about Voltaire's
105 criticisms, which are the more noteworthy because Voltaire began with an extravagant admiration for Shakespeare, and got more and more bitter against him as he grew older and less
110 disposed to accept artistic merit as a cover for philosophic deficiencies.

Finally, I, for one, shall value Tolstoy's criticism all the more because it is criticism of a foreigner who can not possibly be enchanted by the mere word-music which makes Shakespeare
115 so irresistible in England. In Tolstoy's estimation, Shakespeare must fall or stand as a thinker, in which capacity I do not think he will stand a moment's examination from so
120 tremendously keen a critic and religious realist. Unfortunately, the English worship their great artists quite indiscriminately and abjectly; so that is quite impossible to make them understand that Shakespeare's extraordinary literary power, his

fun, his mimicry, and the endearing qualities that
125 earned him the title of "the gentle Shakespeare"—all of which, whatever Tolstoy may say, are quite unquestionable facts—do not stand or fall with his absurd reputation as a thinker. Tolstoy will certainly treat that side of
130 his reputation with the severity it deserves; and you will find that the English press will instantly announce that Tolstoy considers his own works greater than Shakespeare's (which in some respects they most certainly are, by the way), and
135 that he has attempted to stigmatize our greatest poet as a liar, a thief, a forger, a murderer, an incendiary, a drunkard, a libertine, a fool, a madman, a coward, a vagabond, and even a man of questionable gentility. You must not be
140 surprised or indignant at this: it is what is called "dramatic criticism" in England and America. Only a few of the best of our journalist-critics will say anything worth reading on the subject.

11. In Passage 1, why does Tolstoy most likely refer repeatedly to Shakespeare’s reputation for greatness?
- A) To downplay his own divergence from public opinion
 - B) To acknowledge that the work he is introducing will likely be dismissed by most readers
 - C) To persuade his readers that they have been misled by prejudiced critics
 - D) To mock modern writers who attempt to imitate a writer of such renown as Shakespeare enjoys
12. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
- A) Lines 5-8 (“repeated . . . world”)
 - B) Lines 24-27 (“then . . . me”)
 - C) Lines 54-56 (“that . . . attention”)
 - D) Lines 58-60 (“I . . . author”)
13. In Passage 1, Tolstoy attributes the firmness of his opinions about Shakespeare to
- A) his long-time immersion in Shakespeare’s works.
 - B) his conviction that “the whole world” cannot be correct.
 - C) his belief in the superiority of prose over poetry as a means of conveying truth.
 - D) his advancing age and the relative youth of those with whom he disagrees.
14. As used in lines 16 and 21, “senseless” most nearly means
- A) unconscious
 - B) unfeeling
 - C) meaningless
 - D) undiscerning
15. Over the course of Passage 2, Shaw’s main focus shifts from a discussion of Shakespeare and his critics to
- A) an explanation for the criticism of Shakespeare’s works.
 - B) a concession that Shakespeare’s works are not completely without merit.
 - C) a speculation about the likely reception of Tolstoy’s criticism.
 - D) an assertion that Tolstoy is without peer among Shakespeare’s critics.
16. Shaw’s attitude toward “the English press” (lines 131-139) could best be characterized as
- A) magnanimous.
 - B) ambivalent.
 - C) vengeful.
 - D) derisive.
17. Shaw cautions his reader (Tolstoy’s publisher) against
- A) dismissing his defense of Tolstoy.
 - B) underestimating the English press.
 - C) taking action in response to Tolstoy’s critics.
 - D) confusing artistic merit with philosophic competence.
18. Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?
- A) Lines 91-94 (“although . . . competence”)
 - B) Lines 95-97 (“you . . . mine”)
 - C) Lines 107-110 (“got . . . deficiencies”)
 - D) Lines 139-141 (“You . . . America”)

Writing Practices

Directions

After reading each passage below, choose the best answer to each question. For some questions, you will revise the passage to improve the expression of ideas. For others, you will edit to correct errors in structure, usage, or punctuation.

Choose the “NO CHANGE” option if you think the best choice for a question is to leave the referenced portion of the passage as it is.

Questions 1-11 are based on the following passage.

While the opening scenes of *Julius Caesar* provide an excellent introduction to some important conflicts that run throughout the **1** play. The parallel between these conflicts and the political conflicts of Shakespeare’s England **2** are not readily apparent unless one is a student of history. Those who study the history of England should be able to appreciate how the Roman political situation parallels that of England in the 1600s.

1. A) NO CHANGE
B) play, the parallel
C) play. However, the parallel
D) play, but the parallel

2. A) NO CHANGE
B) were not
C) aren’t
D) is not