

Shakespeare's World vs. Our Own

Summarize: Choose three (3) of the articles about Shakespeare's life and times to read carefully and summarize. Remember: A summary mentions all the main points but does not go into specific detail.

Title of Article #1: "Elizabeth's England" by the Utah Shakespearean Co.

Summary: Shakespeare expressed the values of the Elizabethan age. Gender roles were an important aspect of the plays: men were heroic and gentlemanly; women were of lower status. Marriage was a business transaction having nothing to do with love.

Title of Article #2: "Actors in Shakespeare's Day" by Stephanie Chardesher

Summary: Acting was not a well-respected profession in the Elizabethan era, but Shakespeare probably got his start as an actor. Some dispute his talent, but the fact that he was in a company indicates he was good.

Title of Article #3: "Shakespeare's Audience" by the Utah Shakespearean Co.

Summary: A third of the population attended a play every week, but many of the audience members were thieves and prostitutes. Audience behavior included eating, smoking, card playing, and heckling the actors.

Synthesize: Review your summaries and compare them to your own knowledge about our modern world. Make inferences about four (4) ways Shakespeare's world is different than ours (that you can support with evidence from the articles). Fill in the blanks below: State each inference as an informational claim and offer one piece of textual evidence to support it. Explain your reasoning for that piece of evidence.

1. One way Shakespeare's world was different than the modern world is that women had almost no rights and were treated like property.

The article titled "Elizabeth's England", by the Utah Shakespearean Co.

says, "marriage was often arranged to bring wealth or prestige to a family, with little regard for the feelings of the bride."

This is unlike the modern world, in which women have essentially equal rights, and often control every aspect of the wedding, especially the selection of her groom.

2. Another difference between Shakespeare's world and the 21st century is that Elizabethans believed in a universal order that placed men above women.

According to the article called "Elizabeth's England," by Ulat Shakespeare,

"everything from the lowest grain of sand to the highest angel had its place in the Great Chain of Being." When things were in their proper place, harmony was the result.
Conversely, nowadays we tend to believe that people can rise to their own level of ambition, any people, even women.

3. A third way Shakespeare's world differs from our own is expectations for women in public were vastly different than for men.

The article titled "Actors in Shakespeare's Day" by Stephanie Chidester

says, "given that women of respectability were not frequent patrons at public playhouses, attendance was scandalous."

This shows that gender roles of the time limited what women could do if they wanted to seem respectable.

4. A final difference between Shakespeare's world and modern times is that there were different expectations for boys and girls, even within families.

In the ^{movie} ~~essay~~ "Shakespeare in the Classroom," Gwyneth Paltrow ^{says} ~~writes,~~

"sons and daughters, especially daughters, were expected to honor their fathers... by obeying them."

This illustrates a significant difference because in the modern world parents usually have similar expectations for all their children.

Just by filling in these blanks, you have NOT written an informational essay. You have, however, done some of the research and gathered some of the information for one. You could turn this into a complete essay by crafting an introduction with an attention getter, background information, and a primary claim/thesis; adding more textual evidence for each topic sentence (informational claim); explaining the reasoning for each piece of evidence; including appropriate transitions in and between paragraphs; and adding a conclusion paragraph. Whether you ever turn it into an essay or not, you now know a few things about Shakespeare that you didn't know before.