WEEK 1: SHAKESPEARE AND HIS WORLD

STEP 1.8: THE WORLDWIDE APPEAL OF SHAKESPEARE

TRANSCRIPT

ANTHONY COSGROVE As well as being an amazing storyteller, Shakespeare was also a master of the English language, and we’ll be looking at this in more detail over the coming weeks.

In this film, we hear from James Garnon, an actor who has appeared in many Shakespeare plays, including at The Globe Theatre in London, which is world-famous for its productions of Shakespeare. A globe is a map in the shape of a ball, and James explains why this is such a good name for Shakespeare’s theatre.

JAMES GARNON I can’t remember the first time I encountered Shakespeare. I do know I grew up in the same house as my grandfather and he quoted Shakespeare endlessly without me necessarily knowing. I think he quoted lots of different things. And I think in British culture that’s how we encounter Shakespeare. You come across him without knowing it and slowly you realise where these things come from.

But too often, I think people even in Britain, feel that Shakespeare is something that belongs to other people, that it belongs to teachers or it belongs to universities. Or it belongs to upper class people or it belongs to middle class people. It really, really, doesn’t. Shakespeare belongs to everyone. He was writing for everyone.

And there’s a reason why Shakespeare’s theatre was called The Globe. It wasn’t just reflecting England. It wasn’t just reflecting London or Britain. It was meant to represent everyone. His characters come from Italy, from Britain. They come from France. They come from Africa. Shakespeare is a truly international writer writing internationally. He may not have known a great deal about the world at the time he was writing but he was trying to speak for all of it.