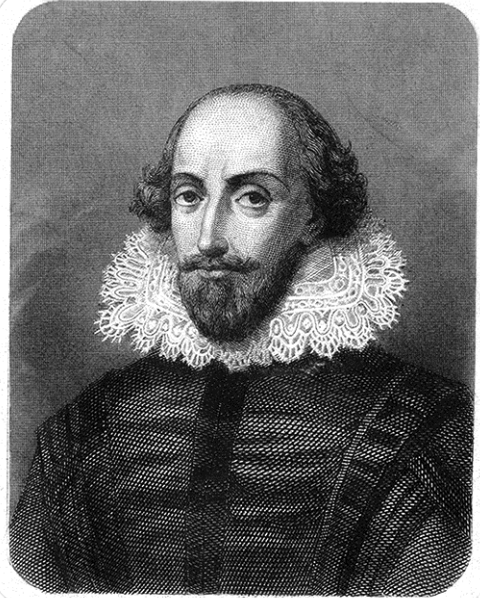


### RSC gives Shakespeare a good rap

adapted from an article by **Nicola Woolcock**

- 1 The lyrical beauty of Shakespeare's language does not appear to have much in common with the often coarse, violent and expletive-filled utterances of rap music. But the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is drawing parallels with hip-hop to try to promote the Bard's plays to today's youth. It says that a 'fun new app' for mobile phones will help a new generation of young people relate to the playwright's work.
- 2 The 'hip-hop Shakespeare quiz' challenges teenagers to work out which lines are from Shakespeare and which from the rapper Akala. The task of distinguishing Shakespeare from its more modern lyrical counterpart is less easy than it first appears. Lines that the app uses from Shakespeare, for example, would not be out of place in a rap: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (Henry VI, Part 2) and: "It is certain I am loved of all ladies" (Much ado About Nothing). 37, lines written by Akala, younger brother of the rapper Ms Dynamite, sound positively Shakespearean: "Strange is the fruit that nourishes not the vein" and "How is this more sophisticated than savagery".
- 3 The app is being downloaded by schools to coincide with the start of term in just over a week. It is aimed at teenagers accustomed to 'snacking' on online content, whose attention spans may initially be too short for a play. Users can lip-sync lines and star in a 'dubsmash' style video, where their phone records them mouthing famous quotes while a voiceover makes them sound more Shakespearean. The app also allows users to mix Shlomo [a beatboxer] with Shakespeare to create a shareable track, and to guess what Shakespeare lines mean.
- 4 Jonathan Neelands, associate dean of creativity at Warwick Business School, said that using modern cultural reference points like hip-hop would "stress the musicality and rhythm of Shakespeare's words better than the deadly dull read-around the class". He added: "One concern for me is whether the app will excite users with the power of the plays to be performed and enjoyed as plays. Having Shakespeare as a choice in your life often depends on having a passionate teacher or family member who teaches you how to enjoy his work."



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