Modern Novels Based on Shakespearean Plays



Were you forced to study William Shakespeare's plays in school? They can be counted as the classics we study before we're old enough to understand them really. The plays are also positioned as high-class classics, which is untrue. They were written as bawdy entertainment for the masses, and some of the language reflects that. Not that it has stopped us from using words and phrases invented by Shakespeare. Because of him we "wear our heart on our sleeve" and go on a "wild-goose chase" that results in us "not having slept a wink." And there are other phrases with very different meanings if you apply the Shakespearean definitions. It's a little too rude for here, but Harry Potter fans will never think of Ravenclaws the same if they look up what "wit beyond measure is man's greatest pleasure"

As well as influencing our modern language, Shakespeare has influenced modern literature. Aldous Huxley's dystopian classic, **Brave New World**, takes the title directly from a speech given by Miranda in **The Tempest**, and there are also story parallels. But there are others too.

King Lear

Fool by Christopher Moore

The Dallas Morning News described Fool as "Hilarious, always inventive; this is a book for all, especially uptight English teachers, bardolaters, and ministerial students." King Lear is told from the perspective of Pocket, the fool in King Lear's court. A keen reader's eye will notice "ameos" from other Shakespeare place.

Hamlet

The Dead Father's Club by Matt Haig

Just like **Hamlet**, Phillip's father returns as a ghost after being killed Phillip's uncle. Except this is modern times, Phillip is only eleven, and the murder was framed as a car accident. There's still revenge, treachery, and a mission to

A Wounded Name by Dot Hutchinson

Ophelia is telling the story this time in a reimagined world set in an American boarding school. This YA re-telling of **Hamlet** is dark, brooding, feminist and doesn't have a happy ending.

The Merchant of Venice

Shylock Is My Name by Howard Jacobson

The Merchant of Venice uses some problematic stereotypes of Jewish people, so not on the top of most people's rewrite list, but Man Booker prize winner, Howard Jacobson successfully does it. The characters have the same concerns about identity, parenthood, anti-Semitism, and revenge; modern-day updates have Beatrice running off with a forthal nlayer. a football player

Taming of the Shrew

Vinegar Girl by Anne Tyler

Pullitzer Prize winner, **Anne Tyler** takes a play sometimes described as misogynistic, and puts a headstrong, independent young woman at its center. In this modern-day retelling, it's a Green Card wedding to keep her father's research assistant from being deported.

Romeo and Juliet

When You Were Mine by Rebecca Serle

When reading Romeo and Juliet, did you ever give thought to Rosaline? Yeah, she's the one Romeo was smitten with before Juliet came along. When You Were Mine tells the famous love story from heartbroken, outside eyes.

Juliet Immortal by Stacey Jay

In this fantasy/paranormal re-telling, the epic love story is one of enemies. Romeo and Juliet hate each other. It's dark and intense, and Juliet doesn't kill herelf—Romeo kills her to achieve immortality. And that's just the beginning. You'll have to read this (and the rest of the series) for the battle for the souls of true lowers everywhere.

A medley of plays

Wise Children by Angela Carter

The Lucky Chances are singers and dancers, Dora and Nora Chance. They're the illegitimate and unacknowledged twin daughters of Sir Melchoir Hazard, the greatest Shakespearean actor of his day. The book is Dora on their 75th birthday telling her memoris, which incorporate references to several Shakespeares plays. And here are some more books inspired by William Shakespeare you may enjoy:

- Midsummer Night's Dream The Great Night by Chris Adrian
 The Two Gentlemen of Verona Two Gentlemen of Lebowski by Adam Bertocci
 Tweffth Night The Madness of Love by Katharine Davies
 Othello New Boy by Tracy Chevalier

Read more by Bianca Smith



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