

HISTORY BULLETIN

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IF YOU LIKE THESE YOU MIGHT LIKE... THREE ABOUT BERLIN 1936

The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown. US rowing crew at the Berlin Olympics—set against the backdrop of the great depression.

Unbroken by Lauren Hillenbrand (also a film). Berlin Olympics athlete imprisoned by the Japanese after crashing in the Pacific in 1943.

In Black and White by Donald McRae. Joe Louis and Jesse Owens. Black superstars of the Thirties and the racism.



HISTORY AND SPORT

One of the great things about studying History is that nearly everything can be made relevant. History and sport make good companions. As well as providing some of the best narratives you could hope for—achievement, despair, courage etc, sport can lay bare facets of society.

Blood Brothers: The fatal relationship between Muhammed Ali and Malcolm X by Randy Roberts and Jonny Smith relays the story of two of the most famous African Americans of the Sixties. Ali was the brash, volcanic fighter who bewitched the boxing world and much beyond. He spent much of his time with America's most notorious, but equally charismatic, black militant. Was the relationship built on manipulation of Ali or a ploy by both men to drum up publicity? Roberts and Smith use FBI files to unpick the possibilities including the theory that Malcolm X used Ali as a human shield, reckoning that he was less likely to be attacked if he was friends with a global celebrity. But the friendship turned sour over



loyalty to the Nation of Islam. Did Ali stay with the Nation because he also feared assassination? Roberts and Smith throw light on the Black Power movement, early celebrity, conspiracy theories, the role of the FBI and turbulent Sixties US society.

Photo: Ali and Malcolm X in 1964.

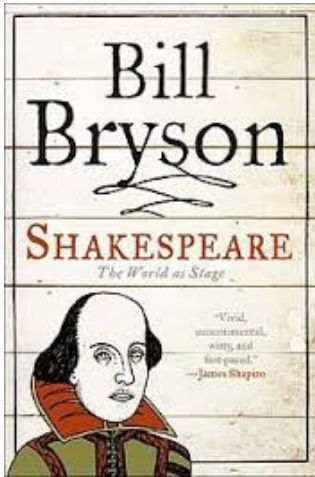


ZAT-O-PEK!

Between 1959 and 1955 Emil Zátopek, a Czech army officer, set 18 world records. At the Helsinki Olympics in 1952 he won gold and set world records in the 5,000m, 10,000m and the marathon. No one else has ever come close to achieving this. Za-

topek is arguably the greatest distance runner ever. But after 1968 Zátopek disappeared from view. He fell foul of the Communist government after speaking out against the 1968 Russian invasion.

Two new books tell his story: **Endurance** by Rick Broadbent and **The Rise and Fall of Zátopek** by Richard Askwith. Both are readable authors. This is a Cold War story as well as a great human story. Brilliant stuff!



A common trait shown by serious Oxbridge candidates is a willingness and ability to link subjects being studied together. History and Economics; History and Art; History and Psychology etc You should be able to find lateral links between Sixth Form courses you are studying as well as wider reading. Use expertise in one subject to make more sense or speculations about another. Two that go together very naturally are History and English—although you don't have to be studying English to think about how literature illuminates History. However, you do need to be reading..... Shakespeare's anniversary in 2016 allows an opportunity to link history and literature.

2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Not surprisingly there is a wealth of events to celebrate. The Globe Theatre on the South Bank has a whole range of talks and exhibitions as well as its staging of plays.

Check out the website: <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/1616>

Another website: <http://www.shakespeare400.org/> gives a very full account of events taking place throughout the year.

If you don't know much about Shakespeare you could do worse than read the excellent little book by Bill Bryson. It is typically easy and entertaining Bryson reading but this little book also has an interesting angle for historians. Bryson is essentially asking why we know so little, for certain, about England's greatest playwright. He pieces together what we can actually be certain about—and it is not very much. For someone thinking about how historians actually work and the paucity of evidence, this is an excellent introduction. Quick, easy, entertaining and relevant for historians.

If you are studying Early Modern A' level or thinking about doing so, 2016 is a gift.

HISTORY THROUGH ARTEFACTS

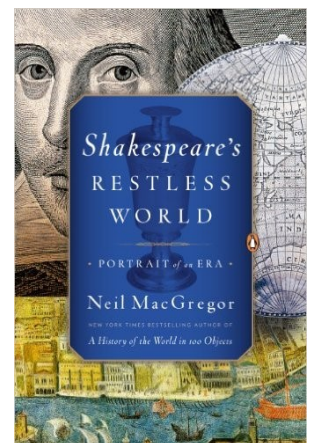
The recently departed Director the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, produced a brilliant exhibition called the **History of the World in One Hundred Objects**. This was accompanied by a book and BBC radio series which is still available as a podcast. It is a lesson in how to use inference. Lesser known is his similar work investigating Shakespeare's England through twenty objects: **Shakespeare's Restless World**.

Amongst the objects examined are a medal commemorating Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe, a luxury sweetmeat-fork dropped at the Rose Theatre during the 1590s and the helmet still displayed in Shakespeare's time above Henry V's tomb in Westminster Abbey.

The chapter on the fork, for instance, an expensive tool owned by someone with the initials "AN", who clearly went to the theatre to show off the

Italianate way in which he could impale prunes, offers a glimpse into what was happening in the galleries while some of the masterpieces of English drama were being premiered. MacGregor's account of a rapier and a dagger found on the Bankside foreshore is equally vivid about the machismo of some young male theatregoers, and some thespians too. As he points out, in 1596 the actor Gabriel Spencer killed a man in a duel, and two years later he was himself killed in another by Shakespeare's colleague Ben Jonson. Meanwhile, one William Wayte claimed that he had been set on by four apparently murderous assailants outside the Swan Theatre, and he named one of them as William Shakespeare.

How far can the study of objects really take us? MacGregor's method of opening up social history by the study of material artefacts is cer-



tainly thought-provoking, but can it really tell us what people were thinking or what they believed? This approach is not without its critics. If you read the book try to read some of the online reviews as well to get the counter argument about using artefacts in this way.