

PROJECT
«Sport in the life of Shakespeare»

Made by pupils of form
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Sports have been popular in the world for hundreds of years, their fun, intense, exciting, competitive and can determine who is the strongest, bravest and quickest, but were they always the same?

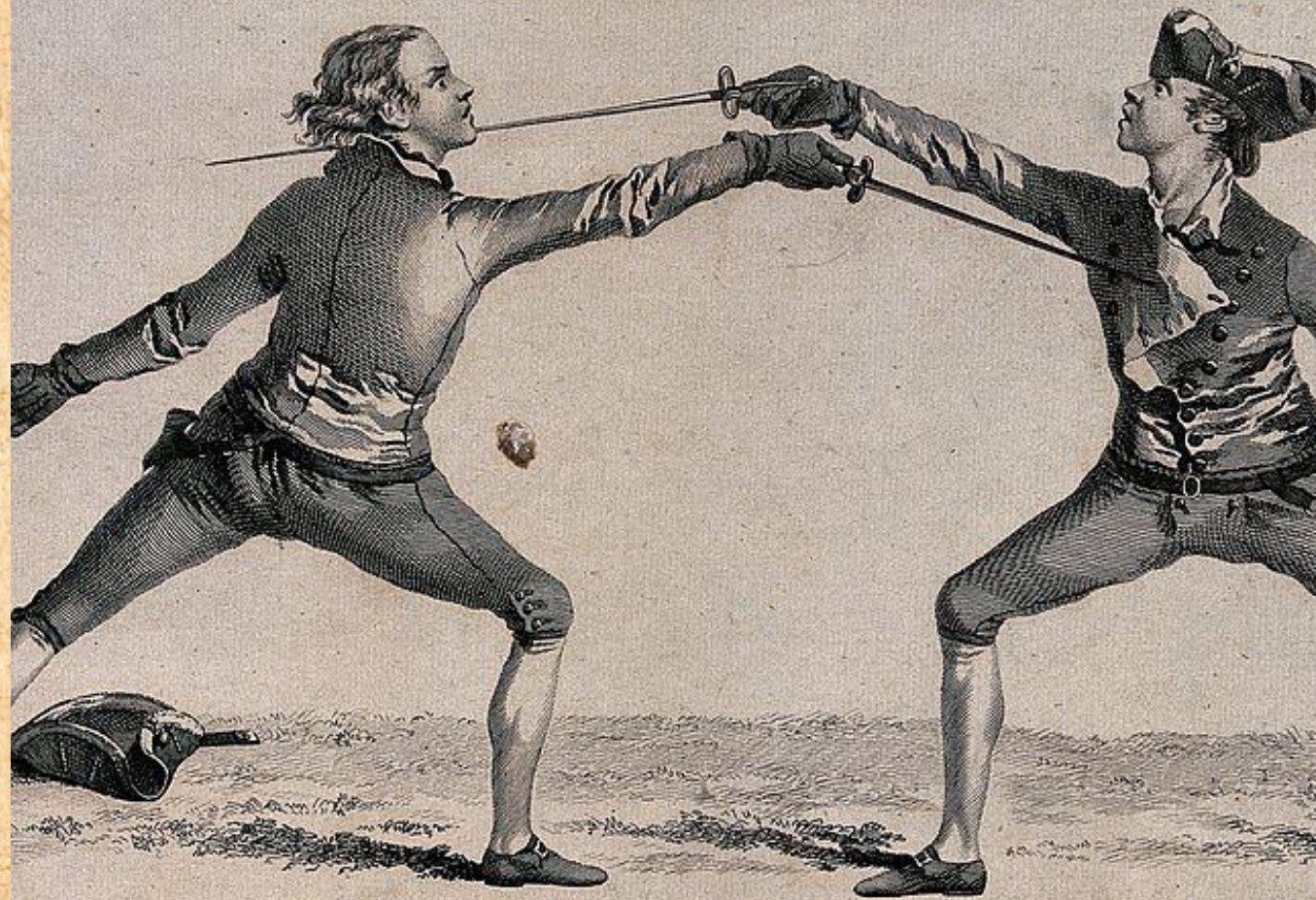
From the day of the death of Shakespeare, his influence on almost every field of human activity, artistic or otherwise, has been examined at almost infinite length: on literature, on music and even science.

The most important area of human endeavour — where the influence of Shakespeare has not been discussed at all, or only fleetingly, and that is sport.



Of course, sport as we know it now – by which I mean the great global industry of the 21st century – did not exist in Shakespeare's time. In Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616), such sport as there was largely consisted of military-type activities – archery, horse riding, jousting – that was only a means to an end and not an end in itself.

That Shakespeare, too, took an interest in these good old sources of recreation, may be gathered from the frequent reference which he has, made to them; his mention of some childish game even serving occasionally as an illustration in a passage characterized by its force and vigor.



*De la riposte de quarte apres la parade de quarte. Plate. 23. —
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Shakespeare and Archery

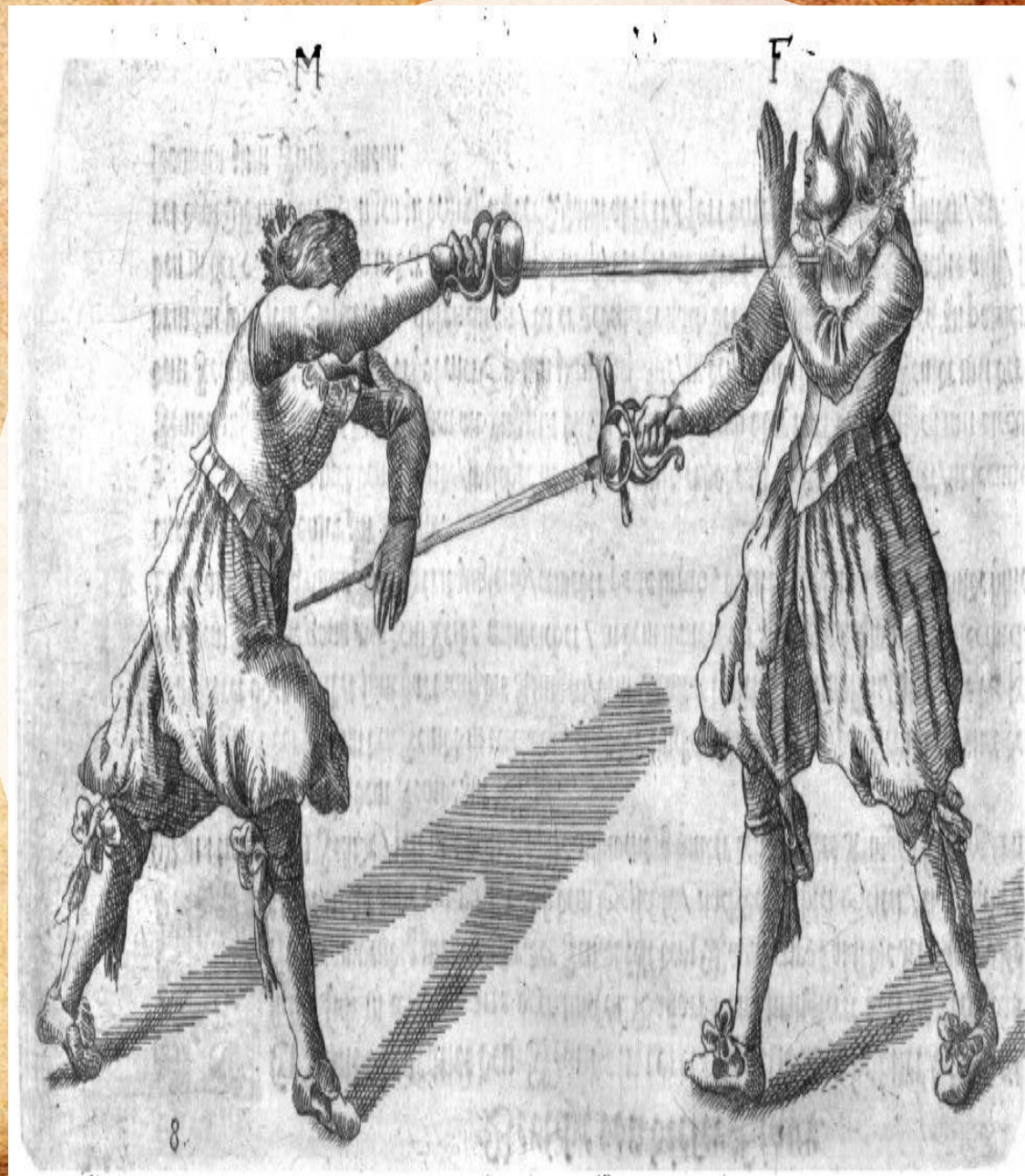
Archery is the sport, practice or skill of using a bow to propel arrows. The word comes from the Latin arcus. Historically, archery has been used for hunting and combat. In modern times, it is mainly a competitive sport and recreational activity. A person who participates in archery is typically called an archer or a bowman, and a person who is fond of or an expert at archery is sometimes called a toxophilite.

- Shakespeare had been intimately associated with the numerous terms connected with archery. Many of these terms can be found scattered throughout his plays. In "Romeo and Juliet", Mercutio relates how Romeo is "shot through the ear with a love-song; the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's buttshaft" this metaphor is from archery, alluding to Cupid.
- Archery was a very popular sport in Shakespearean time. The "Knights of Prince Arthur's Round Table" was a society of archers instituted by King Henry VIII, and was encouraged in the reign of Elizabeth.

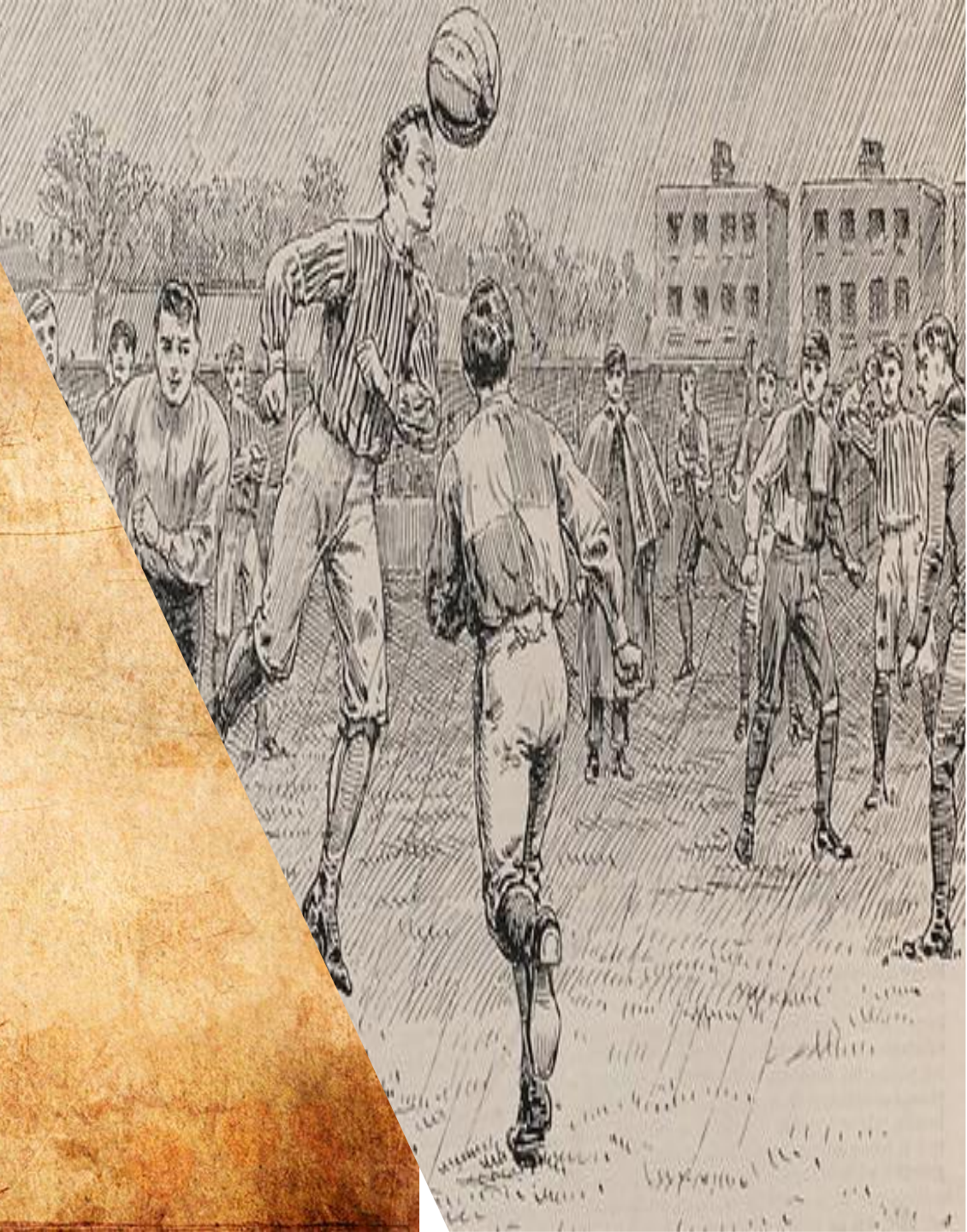
Fencing

Fencing is a sport requiring the use of swords. There are three weapons in fencing, foil, epee, and saber. Fencing involves a complex system of touches and right of way for foil and saber.

- This is a sport where you use swords to try and attack your opponent, also while trying to defend yourself. In Shakespeare's play, "Romeo and Juliet", Romeo and a few other characters demonstrate a game called street fencing. Street fencing is like fencing, both played by two people dueling.
- In years gone by, there were three degrees in fencing, a master's, a provost's, and a scholar's. To each of these a prize was played, with various weapons, in some open place or square.

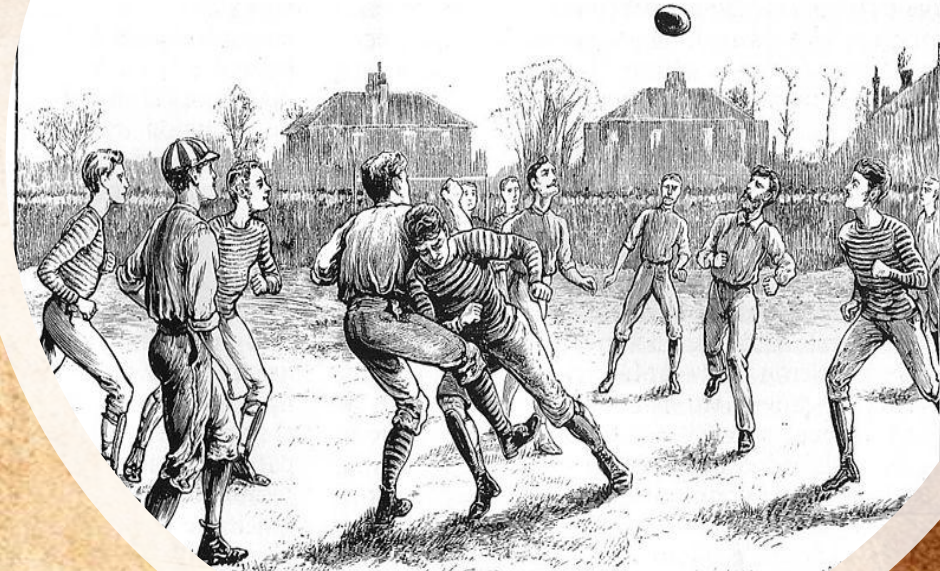


There were other sports in Shakespeare's time that were more purely recreational, but they were played by relatively few people relatively rarely. Tennis was already being played by wealthy aristocrats or members of the royal family, hence its reputation as "the sport of princes", in Shakespeare's lifetime and primitive versions of "football" were already centuries old by Shakespeare's day. It is appropriate, therefore, that the only two sports of the recreational kind that Shakespeare refers to directly are tennis and football.



Football

Football is the most popular game in the world and it is played nearly in all countries. Football is played on a field and two teams compete there. Despite being so popular today, football appeared hundreds years ago. It was played even by ancient people.





Tennis

Tennis is a racket sport that can be played individually against a single opponent or between two teams of two players each. Each player uses a tennis racket that is strung with cord to strike a hollow rubber ball covered with felt over or around a net and into the opponent's court. The object of the game is to play the ball in such a way that the opponent is not able to play a valid return. The player who is unable to return the ball will not gain a point, while the opposite player will.

- Royal tennis, also known as court tennis, was a very popular sport. Players used racquets to hit balls back and forth above a rope stretched loosely over a courtyard. This was played very frequently by kings in England.

I freely admit that the influence of Shakespeare on sport is not as great as on other artistic or cultural areas, such as the arts and politics. Equally, however, Shakespeare's influence on all human life is so powerful, so protean, that his ideas, his characters and above all his words can be, and often are, employed to describe people and events in areas of life, such as modern sport, that Shakespeare himself could not even have imagined existing.

Nevertheless, there is an indirect, almost subtle Shakespearean influence on sport, even modern professional globalized sport of the kind played today, four centuries after his death. As in almost every other area of human activity, Shakespeare's writing (and particularly his plays and their greatest characters) give us a dramatic and narrative framework within which we can frame the most epic and extraordinary figures and fixtures in sport.

