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978-0-521-86177-9 - Shakespeare for the People: Working-Class Readers, 1800-1900

Andrew Murphy

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## SHAKESPEARE FOR THE PEOPLE

Beginning by mapping out an overview of the expansion of elementary education in Britain across the nineteenth century, Andrew Murphy explores, for the first time, the manner in which Shakespeare acquired a working-class readership. He traces developments in publishing which meant that editions of Shakespeare became ever cheaper as the century progressed. Drawing on more than a hundred published and manuscript autobiographical texts, the book examines the experiences of a wide range of working-class readers. Particular attention is focused on a set of radical readers for whom Shakespeare's work had a special political resonance. Murphy explores the reasons why the playwright's working-class readership began to fall away from the turn of the century, noting the competition he faced from professional sports, the cinema, radio and television. The book concludes by asking whether it matters that, in our own time, Shakespeare no longer commands a general popular audience.

ANDREW MURPHY is Professor of English at the University of St Andrews. His books include *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge, 2003) and *But the Irish Sea Betwixt Us: Ireland, Colonialism, and Renaissance Literature* (1999), and he is the editor of *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text* (2007) and *The Renaissance Text: Theory, Editing, Textuality* (2000).

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ANDREW MURPHY

*University of St Andrews*



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## *Abbreviations*

<i>BLA</i>	<i>Bent's Literary Advertiser</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>The Bookseller</i>
<i>EUL</i>	Edinburgh University Library
<i>LMG</i>	Lemuel Matthews Griffiths archive, Birmingham Central Library
<i>NS</i>	<i>The Northern Star</i>
<i>PC</i>	<i>The Publishers' Circular</i>
<i>PMG</i>	<i>The Poor Man's Guardian</i>
<i>SRO</i>	Stratford-on-Avon Records Office