



'DO THEY HAVE TO STUDY SHAKESPEARE?' (CONT'D)

Column: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Who would have predicted it? It is now students and alumni at Georgetown University and elsewhere who rise to the defense of Shakespeare -- as professors who should know better, merrily throw the Bard overboard. Witness the defense of dropping "text and author" requirements offered by professors Leila Christenbury and Joseph Auerbach {"Do They Have to Study Shakespeare?" letters, March 19}. Ms. Christenbury believes that cafeteria-style choice is more important than Shakespeare. She offers the extraordinary argument that students who have not yet read the classics are better able to decide whether they are worthwhile than those who have read them, namely, the faculty. Thankfully, this argument has less influence in medical schools than in English departments.

Mr. Auerbach celebrates a "more flexible" program in which, instead of studying the great authors, students learn to become "rigorous readers" -- apparently without reading anything rigorous. What is really important, he says, is "the willingness to listen and learn from each other about our common experiences" Sounds more like social work than English literature.

While faculty are defaulting on their responsibilities, students and alumni are coming to the rescue. At Georgetown, 200 English majors have signed a petition to reinstate the Shakespeare requirement. Alumni are equally unwilling to let their colleges decline into mediocrity and politics.

The **National Alumni Forum**, which was created to inform and express the alumni voice on matters of academic freedom and academic excellence, is now forming the Committee to Save Shakespeare. We want to ensure that, for future generations of students, a diploma from Georgetown is not just a receipt for \$100,000 in tuition but a true mark of an educated individual.

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