

Essay Contest 2014/15. Zentrum für Kanadastudien

Livia Wohanka (Bundesgymnasium Perchtoldsdorf, 6. Klasse)

William Shatner

The brilliant Canadian William Shatner is not merely a successful actor but an icon, adored and admired by millions of fans all across the world. He has scintillated in the role of the legendary Captain James Kirk in "Star Trek" and has starred in other remarkable films and television series, such as "Boston Legal" and "T.J. Hooker" and has worked as a singer, author, director and comedian.

His achievements

Shatner was born in March 1931 in Montreal, Quebec in Canada to Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. Although he studied economics at McGill University which is also situated in Montreal, the extraordinarily talented young man was trained as a classical Shakespearean actor and improved his skills starring in numerous theatre productions. He made his television debut at the age of 22 in "The Canadian Howdy Doody Show" and appeared in several motion pictures and series, including "The Twilight Zone" and "The Defenders" before he was approached by the American broadcasting corporation NBC and asked to play the role of Captain James T. Kirk in the second "Star Trek" pilot, "Where No Man Has Gone Before". He continued to portray this character in Gene Roddenberry's "Star Trek-The Original Series" from 1966 to 1969.

Much to the joy of his innumerable loyal fans Shatner reassumed the part of the captain in "Star Trek The Motion Picture", which was released in 1979 and reprised it in six of the sequels. By the time William Shatner had become a cultural icon and was famous in the entire world so, as a matter of course, his career did not end with "Star Trek". He played the main characters in the television series "Boston Legal", "T.J. Hooker" and "\$h*! My Dad Says" and appeared in many other movies and shows.

Furthermore, the much beloved actor has also managed to establish himself in other fields of work. He did a great job, directing two of the “Star Trek” movies and has written critically acclaimed non-fiction books, for instance his autobiography “Up Till Now”, as well as plenty of novels. With “TekWar”, a series of imaginative books set in the 23rd century about a digital drug in the form of a microchip, he even created his own science fiction universe. Later on, his well-written adventure novels that take place in the Star Trek-continuity were published. Most recently Shatner has proved his comedic talent, working as a stand -up comedian.

The reasons why he is truly remarkable

William Shatner is in many ways an utterly impressive man. He has got the kind of fame that most celebrities fail to achieve. Not only is he a fantastic actor and a skilled writer, but a legend. Whilst the success of the majority of actors is relatively short-lived, he has managed to stay famous and admired for decades. He is highly praised by his fans and known to basically everyone, to both pensioners and children. Everybody knows and likes him. He will be remembered for all eternity for his brilliance.

Of course “Star Trek” was William Shatner’s breakthrough into stardom, after all it is an immensely popular, timeless classic, but despite this Shatner did not end up as one of those actors who are only famous for one role. He proved to the world that he can do a lot more by performing in so many other productions and by working as an author and as a singer.

Furthermore, William Shatner has also repeatedly stood up for several charities. For example, in 2006 he sold his kidney stone for 25000 \$ and gave the money along with 20000 additional dollars to “Habitat for Humanity”, an organisation that builds houses for homeless people.

When his third wife perished at the age of 40 years as the result of alcohol addiction the devastated Shatner urged his many fans to support “Friendly House”, a charity that helps women who suffer from alcoholism.

Another reason why William Shatner is remarkable is the fact that he is extremely determined and would never let life get him down. Since it was difficult for him to find work following the sudden cancelation of "Star Trek", he ran short of money, lost his house and was forced to lead a humble life, living in a caravan for a couple of years. But William Shatner managed to reclaim his fame by working himself up from small cameo appearances to high-paying jobs. During this period he also provided the voice of James Kirk in the short-lived "Star Trek: The Animated Series".

My reasons for choosing him

First of all, I find William Shatner's determined and strong-willed nature absolutely inspiring and I think it is amazing that he has achieved so much and has been popular for generations.

I have to say that I am a "Star Trek"-fan, I consider the series' concept of a perfectly utopian future to be most wonderful. However, my favourite character has always been Captain James T. Kirk; he displays a certain energy that makes you like him straight away. So basically, I have been fascinated with William Shatner ever since I first saw his powerful performance in "Star Trek".

When my family and I were on holiday in England, I discovered a novel written by William Shatner himself at a comic book store: "Star Trek: The Ashes Of Eden". After reading this gripping story about a retired James Kirk attempting to find the Fountain of Youth, I wanted to read more books written by the same author. This has led me to buy his other "Star Trek"-novels as well as his "TekWar"-series.

To quote Shatner's late friend Leonard Nimoy: I hope he lives long and prospers.