



23 April 2014 - From Hamlet contemplating “to be or not be” to the series on your T.V., English is one of the most widely spoken and learned languages in the world.

Today is the birthday of the quintessential English author William Shakespeare, and so today the [UN and the international community](#) celebrate the English Language Day. Whether it be Coca-Cola or Hollywood, some words and icons of this language are recognizable anywhere, no matter the country. But beyond commercial use, English is a working language in most supranational institutions, be it the UN or the EU. In academic settings when researchers from various countries gather, often English is spoken. Indeed, two thirds of the world’s scientists read in English.

Its international appeal and relative simplicity make it the lingua franca on the Internet and around the world. More people learn English as a second language than any other language on the planet. As a matter of fact, [research](#) indicates that more people speak English as a second language than there are native speakers in the world.

Commercial, political or academic purposes have allowed a growth of the language. Yet the English language guards a special place for the world of books. Its presence in the field of writing is enormous. Of the nearly 130 million books [estimated](#) to exist in the world, large amounts are published in, or translated to, English. Just in the past decade some sources [assessed](#) that about 40% of all new book content in the world comes from English publishers. Whether Hamlet, Harry Potter or Lord of the Rings, English authors, through their pens have captured

our attention and our imagination.

This intricate link is reinforced today, as we celebrate the English language, we also celebrate the World Book and Copyright day. Books not only permit us to escape reality and explore new worlds, they also transmit knowledge of realities far from us. Through books we learn of the history of countries abroad, of the challenges others have faced and more importantly, books provide a change in perspective. One person’s fiction is another’s reality; one person’s hero is another’s villain.

The format of books however is changing. What once was relegated to paper has now become part of the digital age. Books are now available in tablets, and electronic readers around the world in any language. But as books can be spread and shared further than ever before, we must remember behind every page is an author, a Shakespeare or a Tolkien, whose work must be recognized. So next time you’re considering sharing an online book, take the time to see who holds the rights. Because for authors to continue being able to create, share and make us dream credit must be given where it is due.