



From the Annals of the World History

William Shakespeare

23rd April 1564 - 23rd April 1616

William Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His surviving works, including some collaboration, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.



Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer, and part owner of a playing company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men. He appears to have retired to Stratford around 1613 at age 49, where he died three years later.

Shakespeare produced most of his known work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mainly comedies and histories, genres he raised to the peak of sophistication and artistry by the end of the 16th century. He then wrote mainly tragedies until about 1608, including Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, and Macbeth, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights. Many of his plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy during his lifetime. In 1623, two of his former theatrical colleagues published the First Folio, a collected edition of his dramatic works that included all but two of the plays now recognized as Shakespeare's.

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his own day, but his reputation did not rise to its present heights until the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, and the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence that George Bernard Shaw called "bardolatry." In the 20th century, his work was repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Early life

William Shakespeare was the son of John Shakespeare, an alderman and a successful Glover originally from Snitterfield, and Mary Arden, the daughter of an affluent landowning farmer. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and baptized there on 26 April 1564. Although no attendance records for the period survive, most biographers agree that Shakespeare was probably educated at the King's New School in Stratford, a free school chartered in 1553.

It is not known exactly when Shakespeare began writing, but contemporary allusions and records of performances show that several of his plays were on the London stage by 1592. From 1594, Shakespeare's plays were performed only by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company owned by a group of players, including Shakespeare that soon became the leading playing company in London. After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the company was awarded a royal patent by the new king, James I, and changed its name to the King's Men.

Some of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto editions from 1594. By 1598, his name had become a selling point and began to appear on the title pages. Shakespeare continued to act in his own and other plays after his success as a playwright.

After 1606-1607, Shakespeare wrote fewer plays, and none are attributed to him after 1613. His last three

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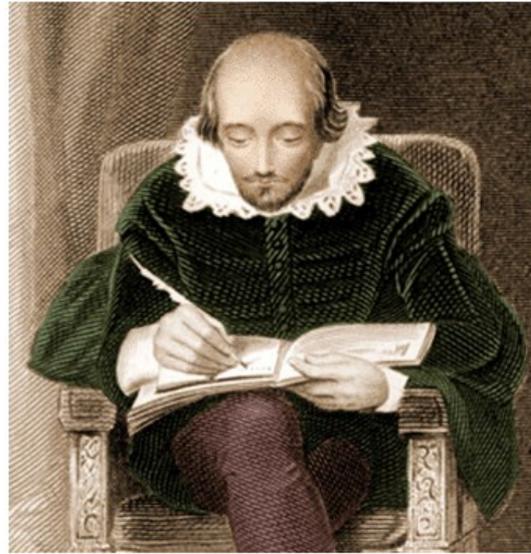
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plays were collaborations, probably with John Fletcher, who succeeded him as the house playwright for the King's Men. Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616 and was survived by his wife and two daughters.

Works



Comedies

All's Well That Ends Well, As You Like It, The Comedy of Errors, Love's Labour Lost, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, Pericles, Prince of Tyre, The Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Two Noble Kinsmen, The Winter's Tale

Histories

King John, Richard II, Henry IV, Part 1, Henry IV, Part 2, Henry V, Henry VI, Part 1, Henry VI, Part 2, Henry VI, Part 3, Richard III, Henry VIII

Tragedies

Romeo and Juliet, Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, Macbeth † Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, King Lear, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline

Other Works

Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, The Passionate Pilgrim, The Phoenix and the Turtle, A Lover's Complaint, Lost plays, Love's Labour's Won, The History of Cardenio, Apocrypha, Arden of Faversham, The Birth of Merlin Edward III, Loctrine, The London Prodigal, The Puritan, The Second Maiden's Tragedy, Sir John Oldcastle, Thomas Lord Cromwell, A Yorkshire Tragedy Sir Thomas More

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