

## Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was a great English playwright, dramatist and poet who lived during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Shakespeare is considered to be the greatest playwright of all time. No other writer's plays have been produced so many times or read so widely in so many countries as his.

Shakespeare was born to middle class parents. His father, John, was a Stratford businessman. He was a glove maker who owned a leather shop. John Shakespeare was a well known and respected man in the town. He held several important local governmental positions. William Shakespeare's mother was Mary Arden. Though she was the daughter of a local farmer, she was related to a family of considerable wealth and social standing. Mary Arden and John Shakespeare were married in 1557.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford in 1564. He was one of eight children. The Shakespeare's were well respected prominent people. When William Shakespeare was about seven years old, he probably began attending the Stratford Grammar School with other boys of his social class. Students went to school year round attending school for nine hours a day. The teachers were strict disciplinarians.

Though Shakespeare spent long hours at school, his boyhood was probably fascinating. Stratford was a lively town and during holidays, it was known to put on pageants and many popular shows. It also held several large fairs during the year. Stratford was an exciting place to live. Stratford also had fields and woods surrounding it giving William the opportunity to hunt and trap small game. The River Avon which ran through the town allowed him to fish also. Shakespeare's poems and plays show his love of nature and rural life which reflects his childhood.

On November 28, 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway of the neighboring village of Shottery. She was twenty-six, and he was only eighteen at the time. They had three children. Susana was their first and then they had twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's son, died in 1596. In 1607, his daughter Susana got married. Shakespeare's other daughter, Judith, got married in 1616.

In London, Shakespeare's career took off. It is believed that he may have become well known in London theatrical life by 1592. By that time, he had joined one of the city's repertory theater companies. These companies were made up of a permanent cast of actors who presented different plays week after week. The companies were commercial organizations that depended on admission from their audience. Scholars know that Shakespeare belonged to one of the most popular acting companies in London called The Lord Chamberlain's Men. Shakespeare was a leading member of the group from 1594 for the rest of his career. By 1594, at least six of Shakespeare's plays had been produced.

During Shakespeare's life, there were two monarchs who ruled England. They were Henry the eighth and Elizabeth the first. Both

were impressed with Shakespeare which made his name known. There is evidence that he was a member of a traveling theater group, and a schoolmaster. In 1594, he became an actor and playwright for Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1599, he became a part owner of the prosperous Globe Theater. He also was a part owner of the Blackfriars Theater as of 1609. Shakespeare retired to Stratford in 1613 where he wrote many of his excellent plays.

There are many reasons as to why William Shakespeare is so famous. He is generally considered to be both the greatest dramatist the world has ever known as well as the finest poet who has written in the English language. Many reasons can be given for Shakespeare's enormous appeal. His fame basically is from his great understanding of human nature. He was able to find universal human qualities and put them in a dramatic situation creating characters that are timeless. Yet he had the ability to create characters that are highly individual human beings. Their struggles in life are universal. Sometimes they are successful and sometimes their lives are full of pain, suffering, and failure.

In addition to his understanding and realistic view of human nature, Shakespeare had a vast knowledge of a variety of subjects. These subjects include music, law, Bible, stage, art, politics, history, hunting, and sports. Shakespeare had a tremendous influence on culture and literature throughout the world. He contributed greatly to the development of the English language. Many words and phrases from Shakespeare's plays and poems have become part of our speech. Shakespeare's plays and poems have become a required part of education in the United States. Therefore, his ideas on subjects such as romantic love, heroism, comedy, and tragedy have helped shape the attitudes of millions of people. His portrayal of historical figures and events have influenced our thinking more than what has been written in history books. The world has admired and respected many great writers, but only Shakespeare has generated such enormous continuing interest. My source states explanations rather than opinions on why Shakespeare's contributions to literature are so vast. My source devoted thirty pages to William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's plays are usually divided into three major categories. These are comedy, tragedy, and history. Three plays which are in the category of comedy are "The Comedy of Errors", "The Taming of the Shrew", and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona". Three plays which are in the category of tragedy are "Romeo and Juliet", "Titus Andronicus", and "Julius Caesar". In the category of history, three plays are "Henry V", "Richard II", and "Richard III".

