

INTRODUCTION

“O, Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?” Juliet, Act II, scene II.

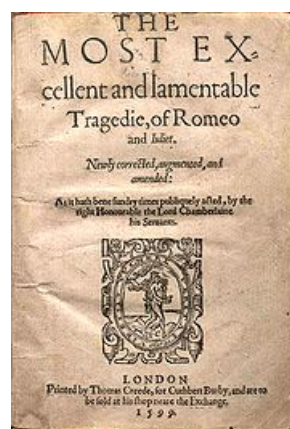
Here at Classics Illustrated we hope to provide you and your students with enjoyable, accessible and thought provoking activities related to some of the finest literary masterpieces ever written.

Our classroom guides aim to provide enough background information to satisfy both teachers and students, which is why we have included a synopsis of the story, and based all activities on the unabridged version of the original text.

This means that you can use this book with any copies of *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* that you have to hand. Great where budgets are limited!

We know you are busy and your time is precious. So we designed this to be a photo-copiable resource that can be used in paper format or shown on a whiteboard. As an added help, many of the activities can be used with little or no preparation, and we've included answers to set questions.

The activities are designed to be used with students ranging from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 or SEN students at most levels. Some are simply informative, some are worksheets, and some stimulate further discussion, research and more involved writing tasks. Most provide a lead into a myriad of extension tasks, and we've listed an abundance of websites full of follow-up ideas and materials.



This aide can be used alongside our Classics Illustrated books just as well as any traditional text, although that certainly isn't a requirement. A lot of the activities will stand alone using the information contained within these covers.

You will also see many opportunities for cross-curricular study including History, PSHE, ICT, Drama and Art and Design.

To meet the requirements of the English curriculum these activities will ensure that many aspects of speaking and listening, reading and writing are covered.

We hope that you and your students enjoy both this book and the wonderful Classics Illustrated series.

The Classics Illustrated education team

THE PLAYS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Presented here is the most accurate account possible of when the plays were written and first shown. This listing is based on all available evidence, records and anecdotes. Where there is any confusion or disagreement, dates and venues are described as estimates.

1589 (estimated) *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (theatre unknown)

1589 (estimated) *The Comedy of Errors* (theatre unknown)

1590-1595 (estimated) *King John* (theatre unknown)

1590 (estimated) *Henry VI, Part One* (The Rose theatre in London)

1591 (estimated) *Titus Andronicus* (possibly the Rose theatre)

1592 *Henry VI, Part Two* (theatre unknown)

1592-1593 (Estimated) *Henry VI, Part Three* (theatre unknown)

1593 (estimated) *The Taming of the Shrew* (theatre unknown)

1593 (estimated) *Richard III* (theatre unknown)

1594 (estimated) *Love's Labour's Lost* (theatre unknown)

1594 (estimated) *Romeo and Juliet*. (theatre unknown)

1595 (estimated) *A Midsummer - Night's Dream* (theatre unknown)

1595 *Richard II* (theatre unknown)

1596 *The Merchant of Venice* (theatre unknown)

1596 *Henry IV, Part One* (theatre unknown)

1597 *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (the Curtain in London)

1597 *Henry IV, Part Two* (the Curtain)

1598 *Much Ado About Nothing* (the Curtain)

1599 *Henry V* (either the Globe or the Curtain.)

1599 *As You Like It* (the Globe)

1599 *Julius Caesar* (the Globe)

- 1600 (estimated) *Troilus and Cressida* (the Globe)
- 1600 *Hamlet* (the Globe)
- 1601 *Twelfth Night or What You Will* (the Globe)
- 1602 (estimated) *All's Well That Ends Well* (the Globe)
- 1603 (estimated) *Othello* (the Globe)
- 1603 *Measure for Measure* (the Globe)
- 1604 (estimated) *Timon of Athens* (the Globe)
- 1605 *King Lear* (the Globe)
- 1606 *Macbeth* (the Globe)
- 1607 *Pericles* (the Globe)
- 1608 *Coriolanus* (the Globe)
- 1608 *Antony and Cleopatra* (the Globe)
- 1609 *Cymbeline* (the Globe)
- 1609 *The Winter's Tale* (the Globe)
- 1610 *The Tempest* (likely to have been performed at Blackfriars theatre in London)
- 1611 (estimated) *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Blackfriars or the Globe)
- 1612 (estimated) *Cardenio* (the play lost to us in its written form) (the Globe or Blackfriars)
- 1613 *Henry VIII* (performed at the Globe)

TASK:

Identify themes that are common across Shakespeare's plays. Explain how, and if they are major or minor themes in each play.

To start you off, the theme of love is common to *Romeo and Juliet*, (major) *The Tempest* (minor) and *The Taming of the Shrew* (major).

How many others can you list?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

For all his fame and celebrity status, William Shakespeare remains a mysterious figure as far as his personal history is concerned. There are just two primary sources for information on the Bard: his works, and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately there are many gaps in this body of information, telling us little about Shakespeare the man. We don't even have a definitive image of Shakespeare to refer to.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, possibly on 23rd April, 1564. Church records from Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptised there on 26th April, 1564. William was the son of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a local heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household—three of whom died in childhood. John Shakespeare had a remarkable run of success as a merchant, alderman, and high bailiff of Stratford, during William's early childhood. His fortunes declined, however, in the late 1570s.



There is a lot of conjecture about Shakespeare's childhood years, especially concerning his education. It is thought by some scholars that Shakespeare attended the free grammar school in Stratford, which at the time had a reputation rivalling that of Eton. While there are no records in existence that prove this claim, Shakespeare's knowledge of Latin and Classical Greek would tend to support this theory. In addition, Shakespeare's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, wrote that John Shakespeare had placed William "for some time in a free school." John Shakespeare, as a Stratford official, would have been granted free tuition for his son. As the records do not exist, we do not know how long (or if) William attended the school, but certainly the quality of his works suggests a good education.

After his birth, the next documented event in Shakespeare's life, is his marriage to Anne Hathaway on 28th November, 1582. William was 18 at the time, and Anne was 26—and pregnant. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born on 26th May, 1583. The couple later had twins, Hamnet and Judith, born 2nd February, 1585 and christened at Holy Trinity. Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on 11th August, 1596.

For the seven years following the birth of his twins, William Shakespeare disappears from all records, finally turning up again in London some time in 1592. This period, known as the 'Lost Years', has sparked as much controversy about Shakespeare's life as any period. Legend has it that young Shakespeare was quite fond of poaching, and may have had to flee Stratford after an incident with Sir Thomas Lucy, whose deer and rabbits he allegedly poached. There is also rumour of Shakespeare working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire for a time, though this is circumstantial to say the least.

It is estimated that Shakespeare arrived in London around 1588 and began to establish himself as an actor and playwright. Evidently, Shakespeare garnered envy early on for his talent, as related by the critical attack of Robert Greene, a London playwright, in 1592:

"...an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country."

Greene's diatribe notwithstanding, Shakespeare must have shown considerable promise. By 1594, he was not only acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the ascension of James I in 1603), but was a partner in the operation as well. With Will Kempe, a master comedian, and Richard Burbage, a leading tragic actor of the day, the Lord Chamberlain's Men became a favourite London troupe, patronised by royalty and adored by the public.

Shakespeare's success is apparent when compared to that of other playwrights of this age. His company was the most successful in London in his day. He had plays published and sold in octavo editions, or "penny-copies" to the more literate of his audiences. Never before had a playwright enjoyed sufficient acclaim to see his works published and sold as popular literature in the midst of his career. In addition, Shakespeare's hare in both the theatrical company and the Globe itself made him as much an entrepreneur as artist. While Shakespeare might not be accounted wealthy by even contemporary London standards, his success allowed him to purchase New House and retire in comfort to Stratford in 1611.

William Shakespeare wrote his will in 1611, bequeathing his properties to his daughter Susanna (married in 1607 to Dr. John Hall). To his other daughter Judith, he left £300, and to his wife Anne he left "my second best bed." William Shakespeare allegedly died on his birthday, 23rd April, 1616. This is probably more of a romantic myth than reality, but Shakespeare was interred at Holy Trinity in Stratford on 25th April. In 1623, two fellow artistes of Shakespeare from the Lord Chamberlain's Men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, printed the First Folio edition of his collected plays, of which half were previously unpublished.

William Shakespeare's legacy is a body of work that is unlikely to be equalled in Western civilization. His words have endured for over 400 years, and still reach across the centuries as powerfully as ever.



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE – FACTS AND TRIVIA

The Bard's last words?

*“Good friend, for Jesus’ sake forbear
To digg the dust enclosed here!
Blest be ye man that spares thes stones
And curst be he that moues my bones.”*

William Shakespeare facts are few and far between. Although we know a lot about the playwright's works, facts concerning the Bard's personal life are less forthcoming. We have listed some commonly held ‘truths’ about the great man. Undertake further research before deciding which are truly ‘fact’ and those that could be ‘faction’.

Nobody knows Shakespeare’s true birthday. The closest we can come is the date of his baptism on 26th April, 1564. By tradition and guesswork, William is assumed to have been born three days earlier on 23rd April, a date now commonly used to celebrate the famous Bard's birthday.

Shakespeare invented the word *"assassination"*.

It is widely held that there are only two authentic portraits of William in existence today; the oft used engraving of William Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout first published on the title page of the 1623 First Folio and the monument of the great playwright in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church.

William married an older woman. Anne Hathaway was 26 years old when William married her at age 18. They married at Temple Grafton, a village approximately five miles (8 kilometres) from Stratford. Anne Hathaway was said to be from Shottery.

Shakespeare and Anne had three children that we know of, (a small family for those days) a daughter Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith. Susanna received most of the Bard's fortune when he died in 1616, age 52. Hamnet died at age 11, Judith at 77. Susanna died in 1649, age 66.

Shakespeare, one of literature’s greatest figures, never attended university.

Of the 154 sonnets or poems, the playwright penned, his first 26 were said to be directed to an aristocratic young man who did not want to marry. Sonnets 127 - 152 talk about a dark woman, the Bard seems to have had mixed feelings for.

Most academics agree that William wrote his first play, *Henry VI, Part One*, around 1589 to 1590 when he would have been roughly 25 years old.

The Bard is believed to have started writing the first of his 154 sonnets in 1593 at age 29. His first sonnet was *Venus and Adonis* published in the same year.

William lived through the Black Death. This epidemic that killed over 33,000 people in London alone in 1603 when Will was 39, later returned in 1608.

The play *Cardenio* that has been credited to the Bard and which was performed in his lifetime has been completely lost. Today we have no written record of the story whatsoever.

The Bard suffered at least one breach of copyright. In 1609, many of his sonnets were published without his permission.

The famous playwright died in 1616 at the age of 52. He wrote on average 1.5 plays a year since he first started in 1589.

We can read most of his plays today because his fellow actors John Hemminges and Henry Condell posthumously recorded his work as a dedication to their fellow actor. In 1623, they published 36 of William's plays. This collection, known as *The First Folio* is the source from which most published Shakespeare books are derived and is an important proof that he authored his plays.

William was born to a Stratford tanner or glove maker named John Shakespeare. His mother Mary was the daughter of a wealthy gentleman farmer named Robert Arden.

Legend has it that at the tender age of eleven, William watched the pageantry associated with Queen Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth Castle near Stratford and later recreated this scene many times in his plays.

Unlike most famous artists of his time, the Bard did not die in poverty. When he died, his will contained several large holdings of land.

Few people realise that aside from writing 37 plays and composing 154 sonnets, William was also an actor who performed many of his own plays as well as those of other playwrights including Ben Jonson for example.

As an actor performing his own plays, William performed before Queen Elizabeth I and later before James I who was an enthusiastic patron of his work.

Will dabbled in property development. At the age of 18, he bought the second most prestigious property in all of Stratford, *The New Place*.

Even Shakespeare had his critics. One called Robert Greene described the young playwright as an "*upstart young crow*" or arrogant upstart, accusing him of borrowing ideas from his seniors in the theatre world for his own plays.

The Bard's will gave most of his property to Susanna, his first child and not to his wife Anne Hathaway. Instead his loyal wife infamously received his "*second-best bed*".

The Bard's second best bed wasn't so bad, it was his marriage bed; his best bed was for guests.

Until *The First Folio* was published seven years after his death in 1616, very little was ever written about the Bard.

Suicide occurs an unlucky thirteen times in Shakespeare's plays. It occurs in *Romeo and Juliet* where both *Romeo and Juliet* commit suicide; in *Julius Caesar* where both Cassius and Brutus die by consensual stabbing, as well as Brutus' wife Portia; in *Othello* where Othello stabs himself; in *Hamlet* where Ophelia is said to have "drowned" in suspicious circumstances; in *Macbeth* when Lady Macbeth dies; and finally in *Antony and Cleopatra* where suicide occurs an astounding five times (Mark Antony, Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras and Eros).

William was popular with King James I. England's ruler following Elizabeth I was so taken with the Bard's skill that he gave his acting company, *The Lord Chamberlain's Men* a patent allowing them to perform and also made these actors Grooms of the Chamber. The Bard returned the favour by renaming his company, *The King's Men*.

TASK 1:

What did Shakespeare **really** look like? Research online or from reference books and find as many portraits, engravings, sketches and etchings as you can that claim to be representative of William Shakespeare.

Put together a folder containing the images. Give your thoughts on whether or not each likeness is that of Shakespeare. List your reasons. One area to research is – did a contemporary of Shakespeare draw the image? – i.e. when was it made, and would the artist have seen or met with the man?

TASK 2:

Name two contemporaries of Shakespeare who wrote plays and poetry. Investigate their backgrounds. Were there any similarities in social class, upbringing or education? Why would that be? What other influences were at work during these times?

