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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE BIOGRAPHY INTRO TO ROMEO AND JULIET



The following is a biography of William Shakespeare from the Folger Shakespeare Library. Read the biography and answer the following questions.

Shakespeare's Life

Since William Shakespeare lived more than 400 years ago, and many records from that time are lost or never existed in the first place, we don't know everything about his life. For example, we know that he was baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon, 100 miles northwest of London, on April 26, 1564. But we don't know his exact birthdate, which must have been a few days earlier.

We do know that Shakespeare's life revolved around two locations: Stratford and London. He grew up, had a family, and bought property in Stratford, but he worked in London, the center of English theater. As an actor, a playwright, and a partner in a leading acting company, he became both prosperous and well known. Even without knowing everything about his life, fans of Shakespeare have imagined and reimagined him according to their own tastes, just as we see with the 19th-century portrait of Shakespeare wooing his wife at the top of this page.

Birth and childhood

William Shakespeare was probably born on about April 23, 1564, the date that is traditionally given for his birth. He was John and Mary Shakespeare's oldest surviving child; their first two children, both girls, did not live beyond infancy. Growing up as the big brother of the family, William had three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund, and two younger sisters: Anne, who died at seven, and Joan.

Their father, John Shakespeare, was a leatherworker who specialized in the soft white leather used for gloves and similar items. A prosperous businessman, he married Mary Arden, of the prominent Arden family. John rose through local offices in Stratford, becoming an alderman and eventually, when William was five, the town bailiff—much like a mayor. Not long after that, however, John Shakespeare stepped back from public life; we don't know why.

Shakespeare, as the son of a leading Stratford citizen, almost certainly attended Stratford's grammar school. Like all such schools, its curriculum consisted of an intense emphasis on the Latin classics, including memorization, writing, and acting classic Latin plays. Shakespeare most likely attended until about age 15.

Marriage and children

A few years after he left school, in late 1582, William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. She was already expecting their first-born child, Susanna, which was a fairly common situation at the time. When they married, Anne was 26 and William was 18. Anne grew up just outside Stratford in the village of Shottery. After marrying, she spent the rest of her life in Stratford.

In early 1585, the couple had twins, Judith and Hamnet, completing the family. In the years ahead, Anne and the children lived in Stratford while Shakespeare worked in London, although we don't know when he moved there. Some later observers have suggested that this separation, and the couple's relatively few children, were signs of a strained marriage, but we do not know that, either. Someone pursuing a theater career had no choice but to work in London, and many branches of the Shakespeares had small families.

Shakespeare's only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of 11. His older daughter Susanna later married a well-to-do Stratford doctor, John Hall. Their daughter Elizabeth, Shakespeare's first grandchild, was born in 1608. In 1616, just months before his death, Shakespeare's daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, a Stratford vintner. The family subsequently died out, leaving no direct descendants of Shakespeare.

London theater

For several years after Judith and Hamnet's arrival in 1585, nothing is known for certain of Shakespeare's activities: how he earned a living, when he moved from Stratford, or how he got his start in the theater.

Following this gap in the record, the first definite mention of Shakespeare is in 1592 as an established London actor and playwright, mocked by a contemporary as a "Shake-scene." The same writer alludes to one of Shakespeare's earliest history plays, *Henry VI, Part 3*, which must already have been performed. The next year, in 1593, Shakespeare published a long poem, *Venus and Adonis*. The first quarto editions of his early plays appeared in 1594. For more than two decades, Shakespeare had multiple roles in the London theater as an actor, playwright, and, in time, a business partner in a major acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (renamed the King's Men in 1603). Over the years, he became steadily more famous in the London theater world; his name, which was not even listed on the first quartos of his plays, became a regular feature—clearly a selling point—on later title pages.

Final years

Shakespeare prospered financially from his partnership in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men), as well as from his writing and acting. He invested much of his wealth in real-estate purchases in Stratford and bought the second-largest house in town, New Place, in 1597.



Among the last plays that Shakespeare worked on was *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which he wrote with a frequent collaborator, John Fletcher, most likely in 1613. He died on April 23, 1616—the traditional date of his birthday, though his precise birthdate is unknown. We also do not know the cause of his death. His brother-in-law had died a week earlier, which could imply infectious disease, but Shakespeare's health may have had a longer decline.

The memorial bust of Shakespeare at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford is considered one of two authentic likenesses because it was approved by people who knew him. The other such likeness is the engraving by Martin Droeshout in the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, produced seven years after his death by his friends and colleagues from the King's Men.

"Shakespeare's Life." *Folger Shakespeare Library*. The Folger, 15 Dec. 2014. Web. 26 July 2016. <<http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>>.



Now answer questions 1 - 10

Use the following infographic to answer the questions 11-15.



IN STATISTICS

BORN AND DIED ON
APRIL 23RD

HAD 7 SIBLINGS
& 3 CHILDREN

LIVED UNTIL 52

THERE ARE MORE
THAN 80
VARIATIONS
RECORDED FOR THE
SPELLING OF HIS
NAME

INTRODUCED ALMOST
3,000 WORDS TO THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AND
USED OVER 7,000 WORDS
ONLY ONCE IN OF HIS
PLAYS

HIS PLAYS ARE MADE
UP OF A TOTAL OF
884,429 WORDS

HE WROTE CLOSE TO 1/10
OF THE MOST QUOTED
LINES EVER WRITTEN OR
SPOKEN IN ENGLISH, AND
IS THE 2ND MOST QUOTED
WRITER IN THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE.

HE WROTE 37 PLAYS AND
154 WORKS THAT WE
KNOW OF.



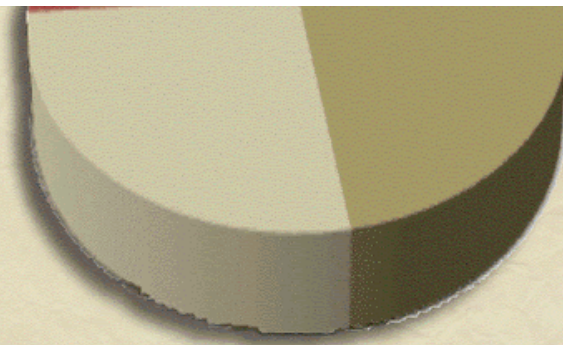
The Numbers

% OF TOTAL
PLAYS



■ Comedy

PLAYS



History

Tragedy

2 OF HIS PLAYS ARE WRITTEN ENTIRELY IN VERSE - KING JOHN & RICHARD II

2 OF HIS PLAYS HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO KLINGON - HAMLET AND MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

6 PLAYS IN WHICH MEN ARE DISGUISED AS WOMEN OR WOMEN AS MEN - A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM, AS YOU LIKE IT, CYMBELINE, MERCHANT OF VENICE, TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, TWELFTH NIGHT

LONGEST PLAYS BY NUMBER OF WORDS

Title	Word Count
Anthony and Cleopatra	1,361
Othello	1,309
Troilus and Cressida	1,301
Hamlet	1,250
Coriolanus	1,240

SHORTEST PLAYS BY NUMBER OF WORDS

Title	Word Count
Midsummer Night's Dream	605
King John	621
Richard II	636
Titus Andronicus	662
Comedy of Errors	664

SHAKESPEARE'S 10 MOST TALKATIVE CHARACTERS

CREATED 1,380 CHARACTERS
1221 OF WHOM HAD
SPEAKING PARTS

Character	Number of Lines
Falstaf	471
Henry V	377
...	...

SPEAKING PARTS	
Hamlet	358
Duke of Gloucester	285
Othello	274
Iago	272
Anthony	253
Richard III	246
Timon	210
Cleopatra	204

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AT
WWW.NOSWEATSHAKESPEARE.COM

Shakespeare in Statistics. N.d. No Sweat Shakespeare. *No Sweat Shakespeare*. Web. 26 July 2016.
<<http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/shakespeare-in-statistics.jpg>>.



Now answer questions 11 - 15

Read this brief summary of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from the No Sweat Shakespeare website and answer the following questions.

On a hot morning, fighting by young servants of the Capulet and Montague families is stopped by the Prince who tells them that the next person who breaks the peace will be punished with death.

Capulet plans a feast to introduce his daughter, Juliet, who is almost fourteen, to the Count Paris who would like to marry her. By a mistake of the illiterate servant Peter, Montague's son, Romeo, and his friends Benvolio and the Prince's cousin Mercutio, hear of the party and decide to go in disguise. Romeo hopes he will see his adored Rosaline but instead he meets and falls in love with Juliet.

Juliet's cousin Tybalt recognizes the Montagues and they are forced to leave the party just as Romeo and Juliet have each discovered the other's identity. Romeo lingers near the Capulet's house and talks to Juliet when she appears on her balcony. With the help of Juliet's Nurse, the lovers arrange to meet next day at the cell of Friar Lawrence when Juliet goes for confession, and they are married by him.

Tybalt picks a quarrel with Mercutio and his friends and Mercutio is accidentally killed as Romeo intervenes to try to break up the fight. Romeo pursues Tybalt in anger, kills him and is banished by the Prince for the deed. Juliet is anxious that Romeo is late meeting her and learns of the fighting from her Nurse. With Friar Lawrence's help it is arranged that Romeo will spend the night with Juliet before taking refuge at Mantua.

To calm the family's sorrow at Tybalt's death the day for the marriage of Juliet to Paris is brought forward. Capulet and his wife are angry that Juliet does not wish to marry Paris, not knowing of her secret contract with Romeo.

Friar Lawrence helps Juliet by providing a sleeping potion that will make everyone think she's dead. Romeo will then come to her tomb and take her away. When the wedding party arrives to greet Juliet next day they think she is dead. The Friar sends a colleague to warn Romeo to come to the Capulet's family monument to rescue his sleeping wife but the message doesn't get through and Romeo, hearing instead that Juliet is dead, buys poison in Mantua.

He returns to Verona and goes to the tomb where he surprises and kills the mourning Paris. Romeo takes the poison and dies just as Juliet awakes from her drugged sleep. She learns what has happened from Friar Lawrence but she refuses to leave the tomb and stabs herself as the Friar returns with the Prince, the Capulets and Romeo's father. The deaths of their children lead the families to make peace, promising to erect a monument in their memory.

"Romeo and Juliet Plot Summary." *SparkNotes*. SparkNotes, 2016. Web. 26 July 2016.
<http://nfs.sparknotes.com/romeojuliet/page_282.html>.



Now answer questions 16 - 20