

bio.

CLASSROOM



Bio4Kids: William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Brief Outline

"To be or not to be" is among the many great lines penned by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is considered to be one of the best playwrights of all time. He wrote an estimated 37 plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. Despite having been written hundreds of years ago, Shakespeare's work remains popular because of his engaging characters, intricate plots, and artful dialogue.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His exact birth date is a bit of mystery, like many aspects of Shakespeare's life. While the exact date wasn't recorded, it has been commonly accepted as April 23. His father was a glove maker and an important man in the town. Shakespeare attended school for a time and it is thought that some of his studies in classical poetry, plays, and history inspired his plays.

It is believed that Shakespeare left school around the age of fourteen, which was not uncommon at the time. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582 when he was eighteen years old. The next year they had a daughter named Susanna. The Shakespeare family grew again in 1585 with the birth of twins named Hamnet and Judith.

Nothing is known for certain about what Shakespeare did between 1585 and 1592. There are stories that he joined a theatrical company or that he worked as a schoolteacher. Whatever the case, Shakespeare had become known as a

dramatist and an actor in London by 1592. Some of his early works include *Titus Andronicus* and *The Two Gentleman of Verona*.

A deadly outbreak of a disease known as "the plague" forced many theatres to close their doors in the early 1590s. Shortly thereafter, in 1593, Shakespeare had his first work, the narrative poem entitled *Venus and Adonis*. Shakespeare would later earn great praise for his sonnets, a type of poem with three four-line sections and a pair of lines at the end, all following a special rhyming scheme.

The theaters reopened in 1594 and Shakespeare returned to the stage as part of a troupe called Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men). He stayed with this group as a dramatist, an actor, and a part-owner for many years. In 1599, the company built the Globe, a theater near London. Shakespeare wrote some of his greatest tragic and comedic works around this time. He created *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* as well as *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure* here. Shakespeare's works were so popular that even Queen Elizabeth I of England had them performed for her.

In his later years, Shakespeare returned home to Stratford-upon-Avon around 1610 to 1613. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616. Since his death, there has been some speculation whether he really wrote all of the plays himself or they were written by a group of people. Some have even questioned whether he really existed at all. The mysteries surrounding Shakespeare may never be solved, but there is no arguing about the lasting impact of the plays and poems attributed to him.

Related Works

Plays

- 1589–93 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- 1590–3 *The Taming of the Shrew*
- 1590–4 *King Edward III* (with others)
- 1590–2 *Henry VI Part 3*
- 1590–1 *Henry VI Part 2*
- 1590–1 *Titus Andronicus*
- 1591–2 *Henry VI Part 1* (with others)
- 1592–3 *Richard III*
- 1592–4 *The Comedy of Errors*
- 1593–5 *Love's Labour's Lost*
- 1594–5 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- 1594–5 *Romeo and Juliet*
- 1594–6 *Richard II*
- 1594–6 *King John*
- 1596–7 *The Merchant of Venice*
- 1596–7 *Henry IV Part 1*

1597 The Merry Wives of Windsor
1597–8 Henry IV Part 2
1598–9 Much Ado about Nothing
1599 Henry V
1599 Julius Caesar
1599–1600 As You Like It
1600–1 Hamlet
1601–2 Twelfth Night
1602–3 Troilus and Cressida
1604 Measure for Measure
1603–4 Othello, The Moor of Venice
1603–5 All's Well That Ends Well
1604–7 Timon of Athens (with Thomas Middleton)
1605–8 King Lear
1606 Macbeth
1606–7 Antony and Cleopatra
1608–9 Pericles (with George Wilkins)
1608 Coriolanus
1609–10 The Winter's Tale
1610–11 Cymbeline
1610–11 The Tempest
1613 Henry VIII (with John Fletcher)
1613–15 The Two Noble Kinsmen (with John Fletcher)

Poems

1593 Venus and Adonis
1594 The Rape of Lucrece
1598–1609 Sonnets
1599 The Passionate Pilgrim
1601 The Phoenix and the Turtle

Related Websites

[Check out the Globe](#)

[Visit Shakespeare's birthplace](#)