

Shakespeare Biography transcript

Murder...

Revenge...

Ambition...

Jealousy...

Love...

Laughter...

No, it's not your favourite soap opera, it's Shakespeare!

Warring and **wooing**, kings and **cowards**, Shakespeare's plays and poems have something for everyone!

We know very little about Shakespeare's early life in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His baptism is recorded as April 26th 1564, in Holy Trinity Church. Shakespeare **led** a normal boy's life as the son of a merchant and public official. At 18 he married Anne Hathaway, and was a father within the year.

Our interest in Shakespeare as a playwright begins with his **membership** in *Lord Strange's Players*. Shakespeare acted in role plays for this group. **By that time** he had a wife and three children **to feed**, and his writing paid the **bills**. It was with this troupe that Shakespeare's first play, *King Henry the VI (part I)*, was supposedly presented. The plays **took in the sum** of three pounds, sixteen shillings and eight pence, a fortune in the Elizabethan era. Shakespeare's theatrical debut was a box office hit.

Unfortunately **plague** struck London in 1592, closing all theatres for almost two years. During that time Shakespeare wrote two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucretia*, for a **wealthy patron**. But his true passion was drama.

When theatres reopened in 1594, Shakespeare joined the *Lord Chamberlain's Men*, a troupe which included the most famous actors of the time, Will Kemp (a comedian and dancer) and Richard Burbage (a tragedian).

In 1599, Shakespeare became a **part-owner** of a new theatre in London, *The Globe*. To this day the Globe is considered **one of the best designed theatres ever**.

Part actor, part playwright, William Shakespeare wrote continuously, producing 37 histories, comedies and tragedies for his troupe to perform. He **relied** on **well known sources** for many of his **plots**: the book of the Histories is based on *Plutarch's lives* or *Holinshed's Chronicles*. To Shakespeare a good story was a good story! And for the comedies and tragedies he **borrowed** from the Bible, Chaucer and popular Greek and Roman playwrights.

In 1613, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, **rejoining** his wife and children, **who had remained there** all during his long career in London. By then, Shakespeare was a wealthy respected gentleman. He died three years later at the age of 52.

Almost four hundred years later, Shakespeare is still a powerful influence in poetry and drama. His plays and sonnets **are taught** in schools around the world, his works **are performed** somewhere in the world every single day.

Perhaps Ben Jonson, a fellow poet and dramatist, **said his best** when he said of Shakespeare:

"he was not of an age, but for all time"