

William Shakespeare

William's Family

William Shakespeare is thought to have been born on 23rd April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. It is not known exactly when he was born but historians know that he was baptised on April 26th and, at that time, people were often baptised three days after their birth.



William was the eldest son of John and Mary Shakespeare. His father was an affluent merchant and property owner; his mother was a local-landed heiress — meaning that she came from a wealthy family.

As a Young Man

On November 28th 1582, at the age of 18, William married Anne Hathaway. At 26 years old, Anne was eight years William's senior when they got married.

The pair had a daughter called Susanna in 1583. Two years later, Anne gave birth to twins - a boy called Hamnet and a girl called Judith. Tragically, at the age of 11, Hamnet died, supposedly from the bubonic plague (a contagious, life-threatening disease that was incurable during William Shakespeare's time).

In the mid-1580s, it is thought William left Stratford and arrived in London while his family remained in Stratford. When he first arrived in the capital city, some historians believe that he worked as a horse attendant at some of London's theatres.

By 1592, he was earning money as an actor and a playwright.

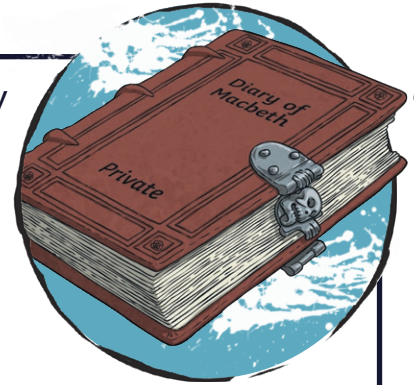


A Playwright and a Poet

The Lord Chamberlain's Men was an acting company that William partly founded. Their name was changed to The King's Men when King James I was crowned the new King of England and became their patron (provided financial support).

At this point, William was beginning to sell some of his written work and he was starting to earn a lot of money. In 1597, he bought New Place: one of the largest houses in his hometown of Stratford.

However, as it took about three or four days to get from London to Stratford by horse, it is believed that William did not make the journey often!

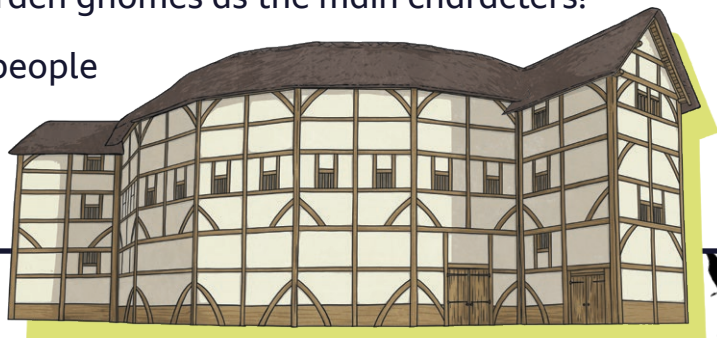


William's Plays

William Shakespeare wrote heart-rending plays called tragedies as well as history and comedy plays. Several of these were performed in front of Tudor royalty.

'Much Ado About Nothing', 'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' are comedies, which are based on misunderstandings and mishaps. His tragedies — themed around misery, loss and disillusionment — include 'Hamlet', 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'King Lear'. Some of these plays have been made into films and cartoons, such as 'Gnomeo and Juliet', which is the story of 'Romeo and Juliet' retold with two garden gnomes as the main characters!

He wrote about themes that people could relate to, such as: jealousy, anger, love, romance, religion and war.



Lasting Legacy

William Shakespeare coined over three hundred words and well-known phrases in the English language. These include:

swagger

the world
is my oyster

fair-play

lacklustre

all that glitters
is not goldwhat's
done is donewild goose
chase

hobnob



William Shakespeare died on April 23rd 1616, which was the same day as his presumed birthday, at the age of 52.

Although the cause of his death is not recorded, some years later, a vicar reported that he died of a fever. William had written his will a few months before he died and famously, and rather strangely, left his wife his 'second-best bed' and all his other possessions to his daughters.

Shakespeare
Day

Each year around the 23rd April the streets of Stratford-upon-Avon are filled with music, song and performances in celebration of the life of William Shakespeare.



1. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- ☐ William married Anne Hathaway.
- ☐ William bought New Place.
- ☐ Anne gave birth to twins.
- ☐ William was baptised.

2. His tragedies — themed around misery, loss and disillusionment — include 'Hamlet', 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'King Lear'.

Which of the following is not a synonym of 'disillusionment'?

- ☐ dissatisfaction
- ☐ confusion
- ☐ frustration
- ☐ let down

3. How did William travel from London to Stratford?

4. Find and copy a word from the text which means 'invented a new word or phrase'.

5. Fill in the missing words.

'Much Ado About _____', 'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' are comedies, which are based on _____ and mishaps.

6. Explain what you think is meant by the phrase 'what's done is done'.

7. Why do you think that it is not known exactly when William Shakespeare was born?

8. What evidence is there that William Shakespeare was a successful playwright during his lifetime?

9. Discuss why you think that the author chose the title 'Lasting Legacy' for the section about William Shakespeare's language.

10. Look at the section called **William's Plays**.
Summarise the main point of this section in one sentence.

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☐ frustration

☐ let down

3. How did William travel from London to Stratford?

William travelled from London to Stratford by horse.

4. Find and copy a word from the text which means 'invented a new word or phrase'.

coined

5. Fill in the missing words.

'Much Ado About Nothing', 'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' are comedies, which are based on misunderstandings and mishaps.

6. Explain what you think is meant by the phrase 'what's done is done'.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the phrase 'what's done is done' means that once something has happened we can't change it so have to accept it and move on.

7. Why do you think that it is not known exactly when William Shakespeare was born?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it isn't exactly known because it was a very long time ago so there may be no evidence or records that give William Shakespeare's date of birth.

8. What evidence is there that William Shakespeare was a successful playwright during his lifetime?

Pupils' own responses, such as: We know that William was a successful playwright during his lifetime because it says that he earnt enough money from selling his written work to be able to afford one of the largest houses in Stratford.

9. Discuss why you think that the author chose the title 'Lasting Legacy' for the section about William Shakespeare's language.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author chose this title because it suggests that William's language has had a huge impact and is still being used today.

10. Look at the section called William's Plays.
Summarise the main point of this section in one sentence.

Pupils' own responses, such as: William Shakespeare wrote many popular plays, including tragedies and comedies, that were about themes that people could understand and relate to.