

William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare's Family

William Shakespeare is thought to have been born on 23rd April, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. William was the third child of John and Mary Shakespeare. His father was a leather merchant and his mother was a local-landed heiress, which basically meant that she came from a wealthy family.

Shakespeare, the Young Man

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

They 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.

In the mid-1580s, it is thought that William arrived in London. When he first arrived, it is believed 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.



Shakespeare the Playwright

William started to sell some of his written work and by 1597, he was beginning to earn a lot of money, so he bought the second-largest house in his hometown of Stratford.

He did not return home very often as it took about four days to get from London to Stratford on horseback. William only ever went home during the forty days of Lent when the theatres were closed!

Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare wrote plays which were tragedies (very sad plays) and comedies, which were amusing. Some of his tragedies are Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and King Lear. Some of his comedies are A Midsummer Night's Dream and All's Well That Ends Well.

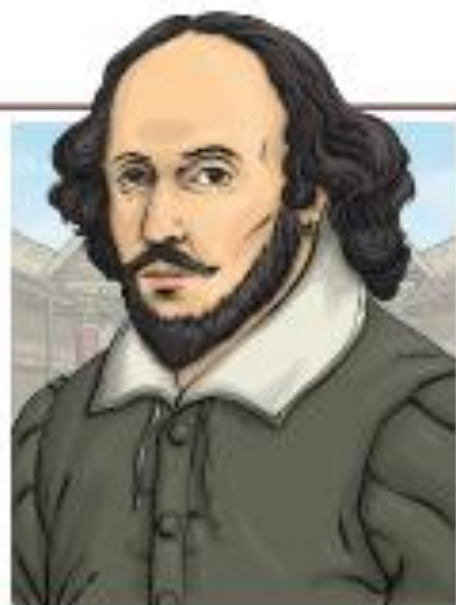
He wrote about themes which people could relate to: jealousy, anger, love, romance, religion and war.

A Lasting Legacy

Because of Shakespeare, there are over three hundred words and well-known phrases in the English language that he invented. Some of them are:

all that glitters is not gold
barefaced
hobnob
wild goose chase

fair-play
bedazzled
watchdog
lacklustre



William Shakespeare died on April 23rd, 1616, which was the same day as his birthday, at the age of 52. It is thought that he died from a fever.

Shakespeare 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 daughter.



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

Questions

1. When was William Shakespeare born? Tick one.

23rd April, 1566 24th April, 1564 23rd April, 1564 20th April, 1582

2. Match the sentences.

William's mother

in Stratford-upon-Avon.

William's father

was from a wealthy family.

William

was a leather merchant

The family lived

was the third child.

3. What were the names of Shakespeare's daughters? Tick two.

Susanna Judith Anne Mary

4. What word closely matches the meaning of 'tragically'? Tick one.

Unhappy Devastatingly Sad Gloomy

5. Summarise the main points in the paragraphs in the blue box.

a) _____

b) _____

6. Identify two tragedies that Shakespeare wrote. Tick two.

All's Well That Ends Well A Midsummer Night's Dream

Romeo and Juliet Hamlet

7. Why do you think Shakespeare wrote plays about themes people could relate to?

8. Choose one of the words that Shakespeare created and use a dictionary to find out its meaning.

9. True or False? Which of these sentences are false? Make them true.

False

Shakespeare died aged 52 years old.

Shakespeare died the day before his birthday.

Shakespeare possibly died from a fever.

Shakespeare died in 1616.

10. Which fact has interested you the most and why?
