

**THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER AND SPECIAL  
SECONDARY EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
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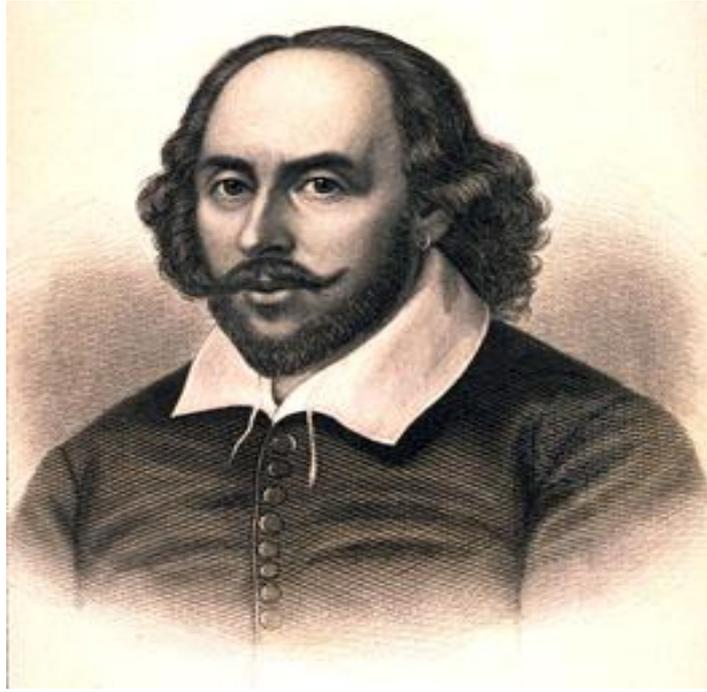
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# **REFERAT**

Thema: W.Shakespeare

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*William  
Shakespeare*

## Shakespeare the man

### LIFE

Although the amount of factual knowledge available about Shakespeare is surprisingly large for one of his station in life, many find it a little disappointing, for it is mostly gleaned from documents of an official character. Dates of baptisms, marriages, deaths, and burials; wills, conveyances, legal processes, and payments by the court--these are the dusty details. There are, however, a fair number of contemporary allusions to him as a writer, and these add a reasonable amount of flesh and blood to the biographical skeleton.

### Early life in Stratford

The parish register of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, shows that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564; his birthday is traditionally celebrated on April 23. His father, John Shakespeare, was a burgess of the borough, who in 1565 was chosen an alderman and in 1568 bailiff (the position corresponding to mayor, before the grant of a further charter to Stratford in 1664). He was engaged in various kinds of trade and appears to have suffered some fluctuations in prosperity. His wife, Mary Arden, of Wilmcote, Warwickshire, came from an ancient family and was the heiress to some land. (Given the somewhat rigid social distinctions of the 16th century, this marriage must have been a step up the social scale for John Shakespeare.)

Stratford enjoyed a grammar school of good quality, and the education there was free, the schoolmaster's salary being paid by the borough. No lists of the pupils who were at the school in the 16th century have survived, but it would be absurd to suppose the bailiff of the town did not send his son there. The boy's education would consist mostly of Latin studies--learning to read, write, and speak the language fairly well and studying some of the classical historians, moralists, and poets. Shakespeare did not go on to the university, and indeed it is unlikely that the tedious round of logic, rhetoric, and other studies then followed there would have interested him.

Instead, at the age of 18 he married. Where and exactly when are not known, but the episcopal registry at Worcester preserves a bond dated November 28, 1582, and executed by two yeomen of Stratford, named Sandells and Richardson, as a security to the bishop for the issue of a license for the marriage of William Shakespeare and "Anne Hathaway of Stratford," upon the consent of her friends and upon once asking of the banns. (Anne died in 1623,

seven years after Shakespeare. There is good evidence to associate her with a family of Hathaways who inhabited a beautiful farmhouse, now much visited, two miles from Stratford.) The next date of interest is found in the records of the Stratford church, where a daughter, named Susanna, born to William Shakespeare, was baptized on May 26, 1583. On February 2, 1585, twins were baptized, Hamnet and Judith. (The boy Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died 11 years later.)

How Shakespeare spent the next eight years or so, until his name begins to appear in London theatre records, is not known. There are stories--given currency long after his death--of stealing deer and getting into trouble with a local magnate, Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford; of earning his living as a schoolmaster in the country; of going to London and gaining entry to the world of theatre by minding the horses of theatregoers; it has also been conjectured that Shakespeare spent some time as a member of a great household and that he was a soldier, perhaps in the Low Countries. In lieu of external evidence, such extrapolations about Shakespeare's life have often been made from the internal "evidence" of his writings. But this method is unsatisfactory: one cannot conclude, for example, from his allusions to the law that Shakespeare was a lawyer; for he was clearly a writer, who without difficulty could get whatever knowledge he needed for the composition of his plays.

### Career in the theatre

The first reference to Shakespeare in the literary world of London comes in 1592, when a fellow dramatist, Robert Greene, declared in a pamphlet written on his deathbed:

There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.

It is difficult to be certain what these words mean; but it is clear that they are insulting and that Shakespeare is the object of the sarcasms. When the book in which they appear (*Greenes groats-worth of witte, bought with a million of repentance*, 1592) was published after Greene's death, a mutual acquaintance wrote a preface offering an apology to Shakespeare and testifying to his worth. This preface also indicates that Shakespeare was by then making important friends. For, although the puritanical city of London was generally hostile to the

theatre, many of the nobility were good patrons of the drama and friends of actors. Shakespeare seems to have attracted the attention of the young Henry Wriothesley, the 3<sup>rd</sup> earl of Southampton; and to this nobleman were dedicated his first published poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

One striking piece of evidence that Shakespeare began to prosper early and tried to retrieve the family fortunes and establish its gentility is the fact that a coat of arms was granted to John Shakespeare in 1596. Rough drafts of this grant have been preserved in the College of Arms, London, though the final document, which must have been handed to the Shakespeares, has not survived. It can scarcely be doubted that it was William who took the initiative and paid the fees. The coat of arms appears on Shakespeare's monument (constructed before 1623) in the Stratford church. Equally interesting as evidence of Shakespeare's worldly success was his purchase in 1597 of New Place, a large house in Stratford, which as a boy he must have passed every day in walking to school.

It is not clear how his career in the theatre began; but from about 1594 onward he was an important member of the company of players known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the accession of James I in 1603). They had the best actor, Richard Burbage; they had the best theatre, the Globe; they had the best dramatist, Shakespeare. It is no wonder that the company prospered. Shakespeare became a full-time professional man of his own theatre, sharing in a cooperative enterprise and intimately concerned with the financial success of the plays he wrote.

Unfortunately, written records give little indication of the way in which Shakespeare's professional life molded his marvellous artistry. All that can be deduced is that for 20 years Shakespeare devoted himself assiduously to his art, writing more than a million words of poetic drama of the highest quality.

### Private life

Shakespeare had little contact with officialdom, apart from walking--dressed in the royal livery as a member of the King's Men--at the coronation of King James I in 1604. He continued to look after his financial interests. He bought properties in London and in Stratford. In 1605 he purchased a share (about one-fifth) of the Stratford tithes--a fact that explains why he was eventually buried in the chancel of its parish church. For some time he lodged with a French Huguenot family called Mountjoy, who lived near St. Olave's

Church, Cripplegate, London. The records of a lawsuit in May 1612, due to a Mountjoy family quarrel, show Shakespeare as giving evidence in a genial way (though unable to remember certain important facts that would have decided the case) and as interesting himself generally in the family's affairs.

No letters written by Shakespeare have survived, but a private letter to him happened to get caught up with some official transactions of the town of Stratford and so has been preserved in the borough archives. It was written by one Richard Quiney and addressed by him from the Bell Inn in Carter Lane, London, whither he had gone from Stratford upon business. On one side of the paper is inscribed: "To my loving good friend and countryman, Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, deliver these." Apparently Quiney thought his fellow Stratfordian a person to whom he could apply for the loan of 30--a large sum in Elizabethan money. Nothing further is known about the transaction, but, because so few opportunities of seeing into Shakespeare's private life present themselves, this begging letter becomes a touching document. It is of some interest, moreover, that 18 years later Quiney's son Thomas became the husband of Judith, Shakespeare's second daughter.

Shakespeare's will (made on March 25, 1616) is a long and detailed document. It entailed his quite ample property on the male heirs of his elder daughter, Susanna. (Both his daughters were then married, one to the aforementioned Thomas Quiney and the other to John Hall, a respected physician of Stratford.) As an afterthought, he bequeathed his "second-best bed" to his wife; but no one can be certain what this notorious legacy means. The testator's signatures to the will are apparently in a shaky hand. Perhaps Shakespeare was already ill. He died on April 23, 1616. No name was inscribed on his gravestone in the chancel of the parish church of Stratford-upon-Avon. Instead these lines, possibly his own, appeared:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here.  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

### EARLY POSTHUMOUS DOCUMENTATION

Shakespeare's family or friends, however, were not content with a simple gravestone, and, within a few years, a monument was erected on the chancel wall. It seems to have existed by 1623. Its epitaph, written in Latin and inscribed

immediately below the bust, attributes to Shakespeare the worldly wisdom of Nestor, the genius of Socrates, and the poetic art of Virgil. This apparently was how his contemporaries in Stratford-upon-Avon wished their fellow citizen to be remembered.

## CHRONOLOGY OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Despite much scholarly argument, it is often impossible to date a given play precisely. But there is a general consensus, especially for plays written 1585-1601, 1605-07, and 1609 onward. The following list of first performances is based on external and internal evidence, on general stylistic and thematic considerations, and on the observation that an output of no more than two plays a year seems to have been established in those periods when dating is rather clearer than others.

1589-92 Henry VI, Part I; Henry VI, Part III; Henry VI, Part III

1592-93 Richard III, The Comedy of Errors

1593-94 Titus Andronicus, The Taming of the Shrew

1594-95 The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet

1595-96 Richard II, A Midsummer Night's Dream

1596-97 King John, The Merchant of Venice

1597-98 Henry IV, Part I; Henry IV, Part II

1598-99 Much Ado About Nothing

c. 1599 Henry V

1599-1600 Julius Caesar, As You Like It,

1600-01 Hamlet, The Merry Wives of Windsor

1601-02 Twelfth Night, Troilus and Cressida

1602-03 All's Well That Ends Well

1604-05 Measure For Measure, Othello

1605-06 King Lear, Macbeth

1606-07 Antony and Cleopatra

1607-08 Coriolanus, Timon of Athens

1608-09 Pericles

1609-10 Cymbeline

1610-11 The Winter's Tale

c. 1611 The Tempest

1612-13 Henry VIII, The Two Noble Kinsmen

Shakespeare's two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, can be dated with certainty to the years when the Plague stopped dramatic performances in London, in 1592 and 1593-94, respectively, just before their publication. But the sonnets offer many and various problems; they cannot have been written all at one time, and most scholars set them within the period 1593-1600. "The Phoenix and the Turtle" can be dated 1600-01.

## PUBLICATION

During Shakespeare's early career, dramatists invariably sold their plays to an actor's company, who then took charge of them, prepared working promptbooks, and did their best to prevent another company or a publisher from getting copies; in this way they could exploit the plays themselves for as long as they drew an audience. But some plays did get published, usually in small books called quartos. Occasionally plays were "pirated," the text being dictated by one or two disaffected actors from the company that had performed it or else made up from shorthand notes taken surreptitiously during performance and subsequently corrected during other performances; parts 2 and 3 of the *Henry VI* (1594 and 1595) and *Hamlet* (1603) quartos are examples of pirated, or "bad," texts. Sometimes an author's "foul papers" (his first complete draft) or his "fair" copy--or a transcript of either of these--got into a publisher's hands, and "good quartos" were printed from them, such as those of *Titus Andronicus* (1594), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598), and *Richard II* (1597). After the publication of "bad" quartos of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), the Chamberlain's Men

probably arranged for the release of the "foul papers" so that second--"good"--quartos could supersede the garbled versions already on the market. This company had powerful friends at court, and in 1600 a special order was entered in the Stationers' Register to "stay" the publication of *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Henry V*, possibly in order to assure that good texts were available. Subsequently *Henry V* (1600) was pirated, and *Much Ado About Nothing* was printed from "foul papers"; *As You Like It* did not appear in print until it was included in *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies*, published in folio (the reference is to the size of page) by a syndicate in 1623 (later editions appearing in 1632 and 1663).

The only precedent for such a collected edition of public theatre plays in a handsome folio volume was Ben Jonson's collected plays of 1616. Shakespeare's folio included 36 plays, 22 of them appearing for the first time in a good text. (For the Third Folio reissue of 1664, *Pericles* was added from a quarto text of 1609, together with six apocryphal plays.) The First Folio texts were prepared by John Heminge and Henry Condell (two of Shakespeare's fellow sharers in the Chamberlain's, now the King's, Men), who made every effort to present the volume worthily. Only about 230 copies of the First Folio are known to have survived.

The following list gives details of plays first published individually and indicates the authority for each substantive edition. Q stands for Quarto: Q2, Q3, Q4, etc., stand for reprints of an original quarto. F stands for the First Folio edition of 1623.

*Henry VI, Part 2* Q 1594: a reported text. F from revised fair copies, edited with reference to Q.

*Titus Andronicus* Q 1594: from foul papers. F from a copy of Q, with additions from a manuscript that had been used as a promptbook.

*Henry VI, Part 3* Q 1595: a reported text. F as for *Henry VI, Part 2*.

*Richard III* Q 1597: a reconstructed text prepared for use as a promptbook. F from reprints of Q, edited with reference to foul papers and containing some 200 additional lines.

*Love's Labour's Lost* Q is lost. Q2 1598: from foul papers, and badly printed. F from Q2.

*Romeo and Juliet* Q 1597: a reported text. Q2 from foul papers, with some reference to Q. F from a reprint of Q2.

*Richard II* Q 1597: from foul papers and missing the abdication scene. Q4 1608, with reported version of missing scene. F from reprints of Q, but the abdication scene from an authoritative manuscript, probably the promptbook (of which traces appear elsewhere in F).

*Henry IV, Part 1* Q 1598: from foul papers. F from Q5, with some literary editing.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* Q 1600: from the author's fair copy. F from Q2, with some reference to a promptbook.

*The Merchant of Venice* Q 1600: from foul papers. F from Q, with some reference to a promptbook.

*Henry IV, Part 2* Q 1600: from foul papers. F from Q, with reference to a promptbook.

*Much Ado About Nothing* Q 1600: from the author's fair papers. F from Q, with reference to a promptbook.

*Henry V* Q 1600: a reported text. F from foul papers (possibly of a second version of the play).

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* Q 1602: a reported (and abbreviated) text. F from a transcript, by Ralph Crane (scrivener of the King's Men), of a revised promptbook.

*Hamlet* Q 1603: a reported text, with reference to an earlier play. Q2 from foul papers, with reference to Q. F from Q2, with reference to a promptbook, with theatrical and authorial additions.

*King Lear* Q 1608: from an inadequate transcript of foul papers, with use made of a reported version. F from Q, collated with a promptbook of a shortened version.

*Troilus and Cressida* Q 1609: from a fair copy, possibly the author's. F from Q, with reference to foul papers, adding 45 lines and the Prologue.

*Pericles* Q 1609: a poor text, badly printed with both auditory and graphic errors.

*Othello* Q 1622: from a transcript of foul papers. F from Q, with corrections from another authorial version of the play.

The plays published for the first time in the First Folio of 1623 are:

*All's Well That Ends Well* From the author's fair papers, or a transcript of them.

*Antony and Cleopatra* From an authorial fair copy.

*Henry VI, Part 1*

*As You Like It* From a promptbook, or a transcript of it.

*The Comedy of Errors* From foul papers.

*Coriolanus* From an authorial fair copy, edited for the printer.

*Cymbeline* From an authorial copy, or a transcript of such, imperfectly prepared as a promptbook.

*Henry VIII* From a transcript of a fair copy, made by the author, prepared for reading.

*Julius Caesar* From a transcript of a promptbook.

*King John* From an authorial fair copy.

*Macbeth* From a promptbook of a version prepared for court performance.

*Measure for Measure* From a transcript, by Ralph Crane, of very imperfect foul papers.

*The Taming of the Shrew* From foul papers.

*The Tempest* From an edited transcript, by Ralph Crane, of the author's papers.

*Timon of Athens* From foul papers, probably unfinished.

*Twelfth Night* From a promptbook, or a transcript of it.

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* From a transcript, by Ralph Crane, of a promptbook, probably of a shortened version.

*The Winter's Tale* From a transcript, by Ralph Crane, probably from the author's fair copy.

The texts of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) are remarkably free from errors. Shakespeare presumably furnished a fair copy of each for the printer. He also seems to have read the proofs. The sonnets were published in 1609, but there is no evidence that Shakespeare oversaw their publication.

## POETIC AND DRAMATIC POWERS

### The early poems

Shakespeare dedicated the poem *Venus and Adonis* to his patron, Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> earl of Southampton, whom he further promised to honour with "some graver labour"--perhaps *The Rape of Lucrece*, which appeared a year later and was also dedicated to Southampton. As these two poems were something on which Shakespeare was intending to base his reputation with the public and to establish himself with his patron, they were displays of his virtuosity--diploma pieces. They were certainly the most popular of his writings with the reading public and impressed them with his poetic genius. Seven editions of *Venus and Adonis* had appeared by 1602 and 16 by 1640; *Lucrece*, a more serious poem, went through eight editions by 1640; and there are numerous allusions to them in the literature of the time. But after that, until the 19th century, they were little regarded. Even then the critics did not know what to make of them: on the one hand, *Venus and Adonis* is licentiously erotic (though its sensuality is often rather comic); while *Lucrece* may seem to be tragic enough, the treatment of the poem is yet somewhat cold and distant. In both cases the poet seems to be displaying dexterity rather than being "sincere." But Shakespeare's detachment from his subjects has come to be admired in more recent assessments.

Above all, the poems give evidence for the growth of Shakespeare's imagination. *Venus and Adonis* is full of vivid imagery of the countryside; birds,

beasts, the hunt, the sky, and the weather, the overflowing Avon--these give freshness to the poem and contrast strangely with the sensuous love scenes. *Lucrece* is more rhetorical and elaborate than *Venus and Adonis* and also aims higher. Its disquisitions (upon night, time, opportunity, and lust, for example) anticipate brilliant speeches on general themes in the plays--on mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*, suicide in *Hamlet*, and "degree" in *Troilus and Cressida*.

There are a few other poems attributed to Shakespeare. When the *Sonnets* were printed in 1609, a 329-line poem, "A Lovers complaint," was added at the end of the volume, plainly ascribed by the publisher to Shakespeare. There has been a good deal of discussion about the authorship of this poem. Only the evidence of style, however, could call into question the publisher's ascription, and this is conflicting. Parts of the poem and some lines are brilliant, but other parts seem poor in a way that is not like Shakespeare's careless writing. Its narrative structure is remarkable, however, and the poem deserves more attention than it usually receives. It is now generally thought to be from Shakespeare's pen, possibly an early poem revised by him at a more mature stage of his poetical style. Whether the poem in its extant form is later or earlier than *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* cannot be decided. No one could doubt the authenticity of "The Phoenix and the Turtle," a 67-line poem that appeared with other "poetical essays" (by John Marston, George Chapman, and Ben Jonson) appended to Robert Chester's poem *Loves Martyr* in 1601. The poem is attractive and memorable, but very obscure, partly because of its style and partly because it contains allusions to real persons and situations whose identity can now only be guessed at.

### The sonnets

In 1609 appeared *SHAKESPEARES SONNETS. Never before Imprinted*. At this date Shakespeare was already a successful author, a country gentleman, and an affluent member of the most important theatrical enterprise in London. How long before 1609 the sonnets were written is unknown. The phrase "never before imprinted" may imply that they had existed for some time but were now at last printed. Two of them (nos. 138 and 144) had in fact already appeared (in a slightly different form) in an anthology, *The Passionate Pilgrime* (1599). Shakespeare had certainly written some sonnets by 1598, for in that year Francis Meres, in a "survey" of literature, made reference to "his sugared sonnets among his private friends," but whether these "sugared sonnets" were those eventually published in 1609 cannot be ascertained--Shakespeare may have written other sets of sonnets, now lost. Nevertheless, the sonnets included in *The Passionate*

*Pilgrime* are among his most striking and mature, so it is likely that most of the 154 sonnets that appeared in the 1609 printing belong to Shakespeare's early 30s rather than to his 40s--to the time when he was writing *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet* rather than when he was writing *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. But, of course, some of them may belong to any year of Shakespeare's life as a poet before 1609.

### The early plays

Although the record of Shakespeare's early theatrical success is obscure, clearly the newcomer soon made himself felt. His brilliant two-part play on the Wars of the Roses, *The Whole Contention between the two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke*, was among his earliest achievements. He showed, in *The Comedy of Errors*, how hilariously comic situations could be shot through with wonder and sentiment. In *Titus Andronicus* he scored a popular success with tragedy in the high Roman fashion. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was a new kind of romantic comedy. The world has never ceased to enjoy *The Taming of the Shrew*. *Love's Labour's Lost* is an experiment in witty and satirical observation of society. *Romeo and Juliet* combines and interconnects a tragic situation with comedy and gaiety. All this represents the probable achievement of Shakespeare's first half-dozen years as a writer for the London stage, perhaps by the time he had reached 30. It shows astonishing versatility and originality.

### The histories

For his plays on subjects from English history, Shakespeare primarily drew upon Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which appeared in 1587, and on Edward Hall's earlier account of *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and York* (1548). From these and numerous secondary sources he inherited traditional themes: the divine right of royal succession, the need for unity and order in the realm, the evil of dissension and treason, the cruelty and hardship of war, the power of money to corrupt, the strength of family ties, the need for human understanding and careful calculation, and the power of God's providence, which protected his followers, punished evil, and led England toward the stability of Tudor rule.

### The Roman plays

After the last group of English history plays, Shakespeare chose to write about Julius Caesar, who held particular fascination for the Elizabethans. Then, for six or seven years Shakespeare did not return to a Roman theme, but, after

completing *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, he again used Thomas North's translation of Plutarch as a source for two more Roman plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, both tragedies that seem as much concerned to depict the broad context of history as to present tragic heroes.

### The "great," or "middle," comedies

The comedies written between 1596 and 1602 have much in common and are as well considered together as individually. With the exception of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, all are set in some "imaginary" country. Whether called Illyria, Messina, Venice and Belmont, Athens, or the Forest of Arden, the sun shines as the dramatist wills. A lioness, snakes, magic caskets, fairy spells, identical twins, disguise of sex, the sudden conversion of a tyrannous duke or the defeat offstage of a treacherous brother can all change the course of the plot and bring the characters to a conclusion in which almost all are happy and just deserts are found. Lovers are young and witty and almost always rich. The action concerns wooing; and its conclusion is marriage, beyond which the audience is scarcely concerned. Whether Shakespeare's source was an Italian novel (*The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado About Nothing*), an English pastoral tale (*As You Like It*), an Italian comedy (the Malvolio story in *Twelfth Night*), or something of his own invention (probably *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and parts of each), always in his hands story and sentiments are instinct with idealism and capable of magic transformations.

In some ways these are intellectual plays. Each comedy has a multiple plot and moves from one set of characters to another, between whom Shakespeare invites his audience to seek connections and explanations. Despite very different classes of people (or immortals) in different strands of the narrative, the plays are unified by Shakespeare's idealistic vision and by an implicit judgment of human relationships, and all their characters are brought together--with certain significant exceptions--at, or near, the end.

### The great tragedies

It is a usual and reasonable opinion that Shakespeare's greatness is nowhere more visible than in the series of tragedies--*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. *Julius Caesar*, which was written before these, and *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, which were written after, have many links with the four. But, because of their rather strict relationship with the historical materials, they are best dealt with in a group by themselves. *Timon of Athens*, probably

written after the above-named seven plays, shows signs of having been unfinished or abandoned by Shakespeare. It has its own splendours but has rarely been considered equal in achievement to the other tragedies of Shakespeare's maturity.

### The "dark" comedies

Before the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 the country was ill at ease: the House of Commons became more outspoken about monopolies and royal prerogative, and uncertainty about the succession to the throne made the future of the realm unsettled. In 1603 the Plague again struck London, closing the theatres. In 1601 Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, was arrested on charges of treason; he was subsequently released, but such scares did not betoken confidence in the new reign. About Shakespeare's private reaction to these events there can be only speculation, but three of the five plays usually assigned to these years—*Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, --have become known as "dark" comedies for their distempered vision of the world. Only during the 20th century have these plays been frequently performed in anything like Shakespeare's texts, an indication that their questioning, satiric, intense, and shifting comedy could not please earlier audiences.

### The late plays

*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII*, written between 1608 and 1612, are commonly known as Shakespeare's "late plays," or his "last plays," and sometimes, with reference to their tragicomic form, they are called his "romances." Works written by an author in his 40s hardly deserve to be classified as "late" in any critical sense, yet these plays are often discussed as if they had been written by a venerable old author, tottering on the edge of a well-earned grave. On the contrary, Shakespeare must have believed that plenty of writing years lay before him, and indeed the theatrical effectiveness and experimental nature of *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* in particular make them very unlike the fatigued work of a writer about to break his staff and drown his book.

### The contribution of textual criticism

The early editors of Shakespeare saw their task chiefly as one of correction and regularization of the faulty printing and imperfect texts of the original editions or their reprints. Many changes in the text of the quartos and

folios that are now accepted derive from Nicholas Rowe (1709) and Alexander Pope (1723-25), but these editors also introduced many thousands of small changes that have since been rejected. Later in the 18th century, editors compiled collations of alternative and rejected readings. Samuel Johnson (1765), Edward Capell (1767-68), and Edmund Malone (1790) were notable pioneers. Their work reached its most comprehensive form in the Cambridge edition in nine volumes by W.G. Clark, J. Glover, and W.A. Wright, published in 1863-66. A famous one-volume Globe edition of 1864 was based on this Cambridge text.

## Romeo and Juliet

Play by William Shakespeare, performed about 1594-95 and first published in a "bad" quarto in 1597. The characters of Romeo and Juliet have been depicted in literature, music, dance, and theatre. The appeal of the young hero and heroine--whose families, the Montagues and Capulets, respectively, are implacable enemies--is such that they have become, in the popular imagination, the representative type of star-crossed lovers.

Shakespeare's principal source for the plot was *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), a long narrative poem by the English poet Arthur Broke (d. 1563). Broke had based his poem on a French translation of a tale by the Italian Matteo Bandello (1485-1561).

Shakespeare set the scene in Verona, Italy, during July. Juliet and Romeo meet and fall instantly in love at a masked ball of the Capulets and profess their love when Romeo later visits her at her private balcony in her family's home. Because the two noble families are enemies, the couple is married secretly by Friar Laurence. When Tybald, a Capulet, kills Romeo's friend Mercutio in a quarrel, Romeo kills Tybald and is banished to Mantua. Juliet's father insists on her marrying Count Paris, and Juliet goes to consult the friar. He gives her a potion that will make her appear to be dead and proposes that she take it and that Romeo rescue her; she complies. Unaware of the friar's scheme, Romeo returns to Verona on hearing of Juliet's apparent death. He encounters Paris, kills him, and finds Juliet in the burial vault. There he gives her a last kiss and kills himself with poison. Juliet awakens, sees the dead Romeo, and kills herself. The families learn what has happened and end their feud.

The most complex of Shakespeare's early plays, *Romeo and Juliet* is far more than "a play of young love" or "the world's typical love-tragedy." Weaving

together a large number of related impressions and judgments, it is as much about hate as love. It tells of a family and its home as well as a feud and a tragic marriage. The public life of Verona and the private lives of the Veronese make up the setting for the love of Juliet and Romeo and provide the background against which their love can be assessed. It is not the deaths of the lovers that conclude the play but the public revelation of what has happened, with the admonitions of the Prince and the reconciliation of the two families.

Shakespeare enriched an already old story by surrounding the guileless mutual passion of Romeo and Juliet with the mature bawdry of the other characters--the Capulet servants Sampson and Gregory open the play with their fantasies of exploits with the Montague women; the tongues of the Nurse and Mercutio are seldom free from sexual matters--but the innocence of the lovers is unimpaired.

*Romeo and Juliet* made a strong impression on contemporary audiences. It was also one of Shakespeare's first plays to be pirated; a very bad text appeared in 1597. Detestable though it is, this version does derive from a performance of the play, and a good deal of what was seen on stage was recorded. Two years later another version of the play appeared, issued by a different, more respectable publisher, and this is essentially the play known today, for the printer was working from a manuscript fairly close to Shakespeare's own. Yet in neither edition did Shakespeare's name appear on the title page, and it was only with the publication of *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1598 that publishers had come to feel that the name of Shakespeare as a dramatist, as well as the public esteem of the company of actors to which he belonged, could make an impression on potential purchasers of playbooks.

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