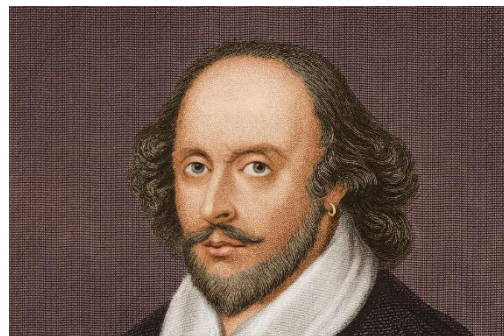


William Shakespeare

Shakespeare is one of Britain's most famous writers. His plays and sonnets (a type of poem) have been translated and read all over the world.

He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, where he grew up. He married Anne Hathaway and they had three children, but he left his family behind and travelled to London to become a playwright.



In London, Shakespeare started a very successful career as an actor and writer. He was also part owner of a 'playing company' (company of actors) called the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later called the King's Men). The company built their own open-air theatre on the south bank of the River Thames – the Globe.

Going to the theatre became very popular in the 1600s and Shakespeare became a very well-known playwright. Even Queen Elizabeth I was a big fan of his plays. When he eventually retired and moved back to Stratford he was a rich and successful man. He died aged 52 (in 1616) and is buried in Stratford.

Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and 157 sonnets. One of his most famous plays is Romeo and Juliet, which is a tragic love story about two lovers from feuding families. Hamlet is thought to be his best play and is about a prince who gets revenge on his uncle for the murder of the king (the prince's father).

Shakespeare's plays are often classified as being either **tragedies**, like King Lear, Macbeth, or Hamlet, **comedies**, like A Midsummer Night's Dream or The Taming of the Shrew, **romances**, like The Winter's Tale or The Tempest, or they are **historical**, like Henry IV or King John.

Today, the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford puts on many of his plays in the town, and his house has become a famous tourist destination. The original Globe theatre was demolished, but a replica now stands near its original spot. It is a popular tourist attraction in London.

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by William Shakespeare

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry:
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,

And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,

And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill.

Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.

Znaven tím vším, já chci jen smrt a klid,
jen nevidět, jak žebrá poutivec,
jak pýchou dme se pouhý parazit,
jak pokřiví se každá čistá věc,

jak trapně září pozlátka všech poct,
jak dívčí cudnost brutálně rve chťič,
jak sprostota se sápe na slušnost,
jak blbost na schopné si bere bič,

jak umění je pořád služkou mocných,
jak hloupost zpupně chytrým poroučí,
jak prostá pravda je všem prostě pro smích,
jak zlo se dobru chechtá do očí.

Znaven tím vším, já umřel bych tak rád,
jen nemuset tu tebe zanechat.

(přeložil Martin Hilský, 1992)

Romeo and Juliet, a play by William Shakespeare. It is set in Verona in Italy, and tells the story of two young people, Romeo and Juliet, who fall in love although they are from families who are enemies. They marry secretly but are unable to live together and the play ends with their death. It is famous for its beautiful poetry and for the balcony scene, during which Juliet says ,O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?’ and ,What's in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet.’ The ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1938) by Prokofiev and the musical show *West Side Story* were both based on the play.

Hamlet is the main character in the play of the same name by William Shakespeare, written in about 1601. Many people consider it Shakespeare's finest play. Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, becomes very sad when his father, the king, dies and his uncle, Claudius, becomes king. His father's ghost tells Hamlet that Claudius has killed him, and makes Hamlet promise to kill Claudius. Hamlet wants to do this but delays too long. The play is long and complicated, and all the main characters die in the end: Hamlet, his mother Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia (the woman Hamlet loves), her father Polonius and her brother Laertes. The character of Hamlet has a lot of doubts about himself, and in his most famous speech considers killing himself.

“To be or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them?”