

*Shakespeare: The Language
That Shaped a World*

Atlanta Shakespeare Company

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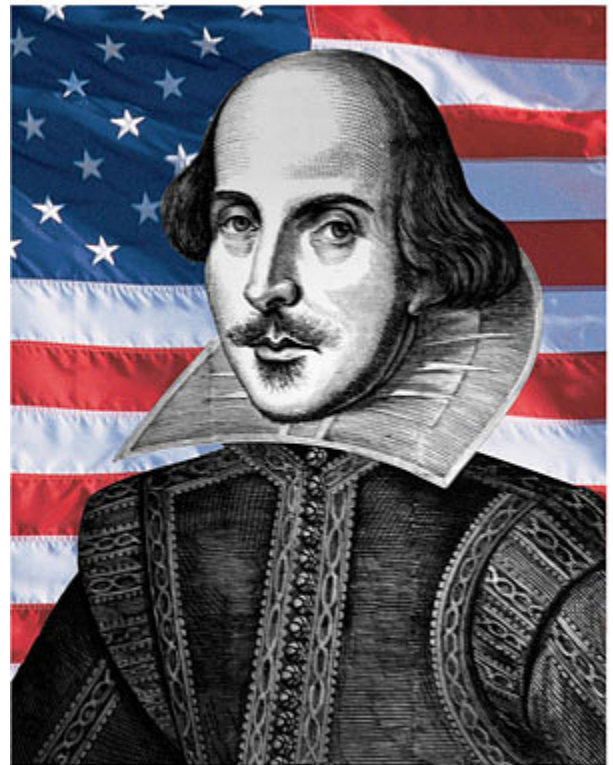
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SHAKESPEARE
IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote thirty-eight plays, which have become popular in classrooms and theatres all over the world.

The son of a glove-maker, Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he received a strong education in Latin and rhetoric at the local school. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and they had three children: Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith.

By 1592, Shakespeare had journeyed to London, where he became an extremely successful playwright and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He also became a businessman by investing in the construction of the Globe Theatre, where many of his plays were performed.

Shakespeare's plays were popular with all types of people, including the two monarchs who ruled England during his lifetime: Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625).

Shakespeare loved to write, and he made a lot of money because of his plays. He became rich, bought a big house in his hometown, and purchased a coat of arms, which gave him and his father the right to be called gentlemen.

Shakespeare was very famous when he died in 1616, and his fame only increased following the publication of all his plays in a big book called the First Folio in 1623.

1616 is the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and celebrations honoring Shakespeare's contribution to literature are taking place around the world.

**“He was not of
an age, but for all
time.”
- Ben Jonson on
Shakespeare**

SHAKESPEARE: DID YOU KNOW?

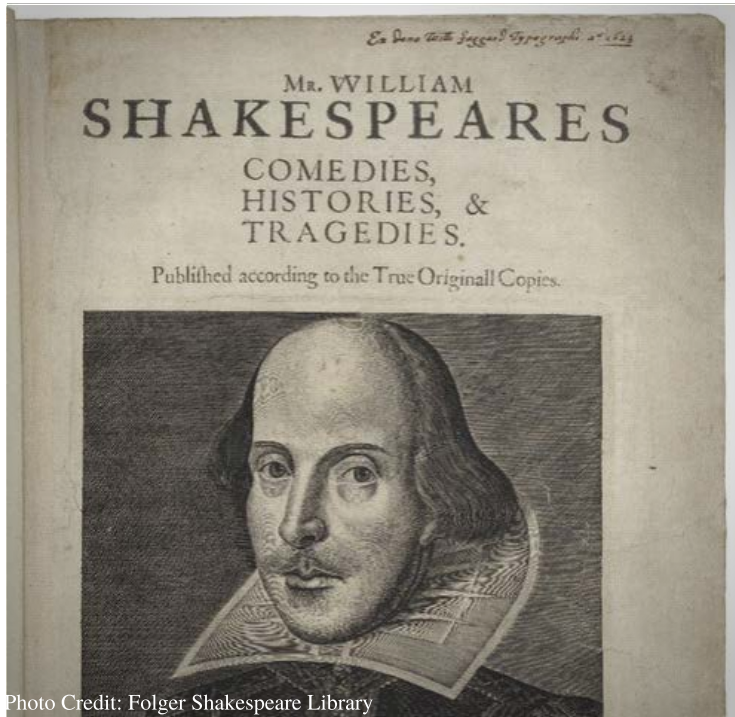


Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library

Did Everyone Like Shakespeare When He Was Alive?

Shakespeare was very popular in his own time. Lots of people from all walks of life came to see his plays, and everyone from the queen to local shopkeepers to apple sellers knew who Shakespeare was. Most people really liked his plays, although there were some other writers who were jealous of his talent and made fun of him. In *SLAW* you will hear a quote from the writer Robert Greene, who did not think that Shakespeare was as talented as everyone else thought he was.

Was Shakespeare popular after he died?

Yes, he was very popular because seven years after his death two of his friends published all his plays, which people were really excited to read. People loved Shakespeare in the centuries after his death. Two hundred years ago people liked Shakespeare so much that they created a new word, *bardolatry*, to describe intense love for Shakespeare. A *bard* is another word for writer.

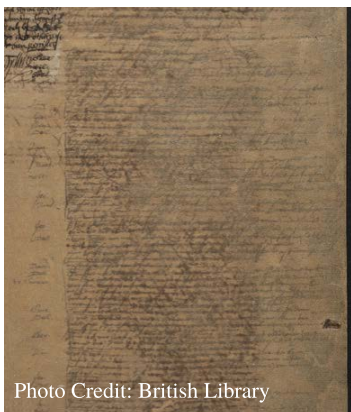


Photo Credit: British Library



Photo Credit: Samantha Smith

**SHAKESPEARE
WROTE 884,647
WORDS AND
118,406 LINES.**

Shakespeare's Handwriting

We only have one record of Shakespeare's handwriting in the manuscript of a play called *Sir Thomas More* (above). Shakespeare's handwriting was not bad, but you would need a special handwriting expert to help you read it because people in Shakespeare's time wrote differently than we do today.

Shakespeare's Last Wish

Shakespeare was buried in 1616 at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. If you visit the church today you can see where he is buried (above). His tombstone asks people not to bother his remains, but a scan of his grave showed that Shakespeare's head might have been stolen a long time ago.

Did Shakespeare Write His Own Plays?

Yes. Over the years, people have made arguments that Shakespeare's plays were actually written by Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, or Edward de Vere. However, people who study Shakespeare's plays are confident that Shakespeare was the author, especially because there are actors and other playwrights who knew Shakespeare who all said that Shakespeare was the author of his plays.

What Did Shakespeare's Coat of Arms Look Like?

This is a sketch of Shakespeare's coat of arms. Having a coat of arms was a really important status symbol in Shakespeare's time. The fact that Shakespeare was able to purchase a coat of arms meant that he had become wealthy and respected because of his writing.



Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Shakespeare's Language

Understanding "thee" and "thou"

For many students, part of what makes reading and seeing Shakespeare so difficult is how different Shakespeare's language seems from our modern-day English. But understanding Shakespeare's plays are easier if you know a couple of key words: "thee" and "thou."

"Thee" and "thou" are variations on the word "you," although in Elizabethan times "you" was the most formal of the three expressions. When Mark Antony speaks of the friendship and admiration he had for the dead Caesar, he says "That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true" (3.1.213). Replace "thee" with "you" and you will realize that he is saying "That I did love you, Caesar, O, 'tis true."

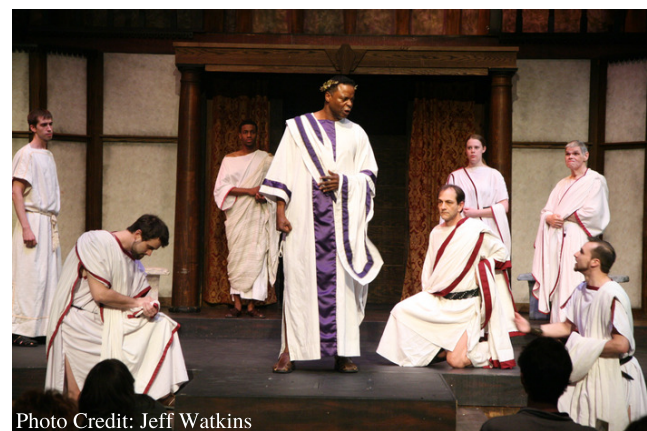


Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Shakespeare's Words

Shakespeare shaped our modern-day English language by creating new words and phrases that had never been used before he made them up.

He coined words that we still use today like:

embrace
 employer
 engagement
 fashionable
 gossip
 laughable
 retirement
 traditional
 zany

Shakespeare created phrases like:

elbow room
 into thin air
 never-ending
 pomp and circumstance
 wild goose chase

Listen during *SLAW* for more words and phrases that Shakespeare created himself!



Photo Credits: National Portrait Gallery



Rulers of Shakespeare's England: Queen Elizabeth I and King James

Queen Elizabeth I

The Elizabethan era refers to the period of time in which Queen Elizabeth I ruled England from 1558–1603. The Elizabethan era is often referred to as the Golden Age of England. Elizabeth's reign was a relatively good time to be English because there was a decrease in the number of problems about politics and religion within the country. When Spain tried to invade England by sending a large number of ships called an armada in 1588, England won the battle on the sea and avoided invasion. While people still endured plague, a terrible and deadly disease caused by fleas that were on the many rats that ran around city, conditions were pretty good.

Shakespeare and another popular playwright, Christopher Marlowe, were very successful during Elizabeth's reign. Theatre was very popular but there were rules that said theatres could not exist within the limits of the city, so all the theatres were built across the Thames, the big river in London. Officials who were very concerned with morality did not like theaters because they worried that going to theater during the day would make people lazy and inclined to bad behavior.

Queen Elizabeth greatly enjoyed theatrical performances. While it was not proper for her to go to a public theatre, she had the actors come to court so she could see performances. She actively involved herself in theatre of the age by forming and serving as the patron of The Queen's Men in 1583. Elizabeth I died in 1603 and because she was never married and had no children she was succeeded by her Scottish relative, James I.

King James I

Although people were concerned that the transition from Queen Elizabeth to King James would cause disruptions to the country, James succeeded Elizabeth without any problems.

James gave his patronage to Shakespeare's company, who under James became the King's Men. The King's Men enjoyed great popularity at court; they had been giving about three court performances a year in the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign and they gave thirteen a year in the first ten years of James' rule. The King's Men were also very popular with regular theatre-goers, and Shakespeare wrote a lot of new plays for his eager audience. On June 29, 1613, the Globe burned down in just an hour after the roof caught fire after a canon was fired during a performance of *Henry VIII*. While this was decidedly not good for the King's Men, it was not an outright tragedy because they had another source of income: an indoor theatre called Blackfriars. The Globe was rebuilt in 1614, and the King's Men continued to perform at both the Globe and Blackfriars.

Playing Shakespeare Through the Ages



Photo Credit: Flickr

The Globe, built in 1599 on the south side of the Thames, was an open-air theatre where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed. The Globe likely was able to hold up to 3,000 tightly-packed audience members. Poorer spectators paid a penny to stand during the performance while richer theatre-goers paid two pennies for a seat and another penny for a cushion. Audience members, especially those standing in front of the stage, were loud and opinionated, often talking to each other or even voicing their thoughts on the play to the actors onstage. Performances took place at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. to take advantage of the day light, but the time of day meant that many people skipped work to attend the plays, which contributed to conservative politicians' dislike of theatre. While the original Globe does not exist today, a reconstruction, seen in the picture to the left, was built in 1997 in Southwark, London.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

The Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, built in 1990 on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia, features a stage with similar features to the Globe's stage. ASC strives to create productions that are also very similar to the ones that Shakespeare's audience would have seen. All ASC productions incorporate Original Practices, which involves the active exploration of the Elizabethan stagecraft and acting techniques that Shakespeare's own audiences would have enjoyed nearly four hundred years ago. Performances at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse feature period costumes, sword fights, sound effects created live by the actors rather than pre-recorded sounds, and live music played on the stage. ASC's actors are trained to speak Shakespeare's words directly to the audience instead of using the more modern acting convention of ignoring the audience's presence as if there was an imaginary "fourth wall" separating the actors and audience. Audience members at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse should gain a better understanding of Elizabethan style, language, and drama by seeing it performed as Shakespeare's own company might have performed it.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

The ASC touring set, which is used in the production of *SLAW*, is a playhouse-inspired unit with three curtained entrances from which actors can enter and exit. Like a production at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, all touring productions employ Original Practices. However, the connection between ASC's productions and the performances Shakespeare's contemporaries would have seen is not limited to period-inspired costumes and direct address to the audience. The act of taking a performance like *SLAW* on tour echoes the Elizabethan practice of actors touring the countryside when outbreaks of the bubonic plague forced theatres, which fostered the spread of disease by enclosing many people in a small area, to close. Elizabethan theatre companies often brought a condensed set, props, and costumes to perform at country estates for noble families or at inns for the common people when the London theatres were closed. In bringing *SLAW* on tour, ASC strives to carry on this Elizabethan tradition of bringing live theatre to people outside the city.

COMEDIES IN *SLAW*

As You Like It



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

As You Like It is about the adventures of Rosalind, a noblewoman who is sent away from court and has to live in the Forest of Arden. She meets lots of country folks in the forest, and in *SLAW* you will see a scene from the play in which a shepherdess, Phebe, says she does not love the kind but simple shepherd Silvius. Watch the scene closely to see what choices the actress playing Phebe makes. Does she raise her voice to indicate that she is exasperated with Silvius? What is the actor playing Silvius doing to show you that he feels sad and rejected?

Comedy of Errors



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

The Comedy of Errors features a funny series of incidents of mistaken identity as a set of identical twin gentlemen—Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus—and their identical twin slaves—Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus—all unknowingly arrive in the same town of Ephesus. After many mix-ups, the play concludes with the sets of twins joyfully reuniting.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

A Midsummer Night's Dream

In this play, a fairy queen named Titania is put under a spell so she falls in love with a country weaver named Bottom, who has been transformed into a donkey by a mischievous fairy named Puck. In *SLAW*, you will see a scene in which the confused Bottom describes his time as a donkey as a dream. Listen closely to Bottom's lines and you will hear how he frequently misuses words, creating a comic effect. You will also see a scene in which Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, fights with Demetrius, who loves Helena's friend, Hermia. Eventually at the end of the play, Helena and Demetrius get married and Hermia marries her boyfriend, Lysander.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Much Ado About Nothing

In this play, Benedick, a young lord who claims he will always be a bachelor, always fights with Beatrice, a noble lady. Several of the characters conspire to get Benedick and Beatrice to fall in love with each other; the women ensure that Beatrice can overhear them talking about how Benedick is in love with her and the men do the same thing to Benedick, talking about how madly Beatrice dotes on him. At the end of the play, Benedick and Beatrice decide to get married. In *SLAW*, look for differences between two scenes from the play; in one scene, Benedick and Beatrice seemingly insult each other and in the other scene they profess their love for each other.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

The Tempest

This play is not technically a comedy; it is a romance, a word that scholars use to talk about some of Shakespeare's plays that have fantastic elements. However, there are some comic elements in *The Tempest*. In the play, Prospero, an exiled duke whose land was stolen from him by his brother, has lived with his daughter Miranda on an island for many years. Prospero has the ability to use magic but at the end of the play, after his brother returns his dukedom and Miranda becomes engaged to a shipwrecked prince, Prospero gives a speech about how he will give up his magic. You will hear this famous speech in *SLAW*.

TRAGEDIES IN *SLAW*

Julius Caesar



In ancient Rome, Julius Caesar is assassinated by senators, including Brutus and Cassius, who fear Caesar's growing power. Brutus speaks to the people, explaining that the senators killed Caesar because he was growing too politically ambitious. Caesar's friend Mark Antony gets permission from Brutus to speak to the people over Caesar's dead body. Mark Antony's speech is very famous and is in *SLAW*. Mark Antony convinces the people that the senators were wrong to kill Caesar.



Hamlet

Hamlet is about a prince in Denmark whose father was killed by his uncle. Hamlet is supposed to revenge his father's death, but he is uncertain of what to do. Hamlet eventually decides that his uncle is guilty and by the end of the play Hamlet is able to kill his uncle just before he is killed himself. This play is very famous and you will hear Hamlet's famous lines "to be or not to be" (3.1.58) in *SLAW*.



Macbeth

In Scotland, Macbeth and Banquo, two celebrated soldiers, are returning from battle when three witches appear to give a prophecy. They foretell that Macbeth will be king but that Banquo's children will eventually rule the kingdom.

People in Shakespeare's time debated whether or not witches existed. Many people believed that witches existed, and they would have been scared of the witches in *Macbeth*. What do the actors playing the witches in *SLAW* do to appear scary or other-worldly?

Romeo and Juliet

Two noble families, the Montagues and Capulets, have been fighting for a very long time. Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, meet at a party and fall in love. Friar Lawrence marries Romeo and Juliet in secret. Just after the wedding, Romeo kills Juliet's cousin in a duel, and he has to leave the city. Not knowing that Juliet is already married, Juliet's parents decide that she will marry someone else. Friar Lawrence helps her avoid a second marriage by telling her to drink a potion that will make her appear dead, so that her parents will place her in the Capulet tomb, where he and Romeo will be waiting when she awakes. She drinks the potion and her grieving parents put her in the tomb, but Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo telling him that Juliet is not really dead never reaches him. Both Romeo and Juliet die by the end of the play, but their deaths cause the Montagues and Capulets to stop fighting.



HISTORIES IN *SLAW*

King John



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

King John deals with fighting between England and France as well as internal quarrels among the nobility of England. In *SLAW*, listen for a speech about grief spoken by Constance, the mother of Arthur, who is the rightful heir to the English throne and who should be king instead of the current ruler King John. Arthur dies in the play by falling off a castle wall while trying to escape imprisonment. Constance mourns intensely for her dead son, although some of the characters accuse her of being theatrical in her grief.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Henry V

Henry V decides to invade France, a decision which affects many of the men in England, who now must go fight for their country. Much of the plot deals with this military campaign, and the most famous passages from this play feature Henry V encouraging his troops before, during, and after battles. While you are seeing *SLAW*, listen for the famous speech in which Henry rallies his troops to attack a French town.

Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three

The plays that comprise *Henry VI* cover the War of the Roses, in which two rival houses, York and Lancaster, battle over their rights to the throne. In *SLAW*, you will see a scene in which Joan of Arc defeats the Dauphin of France. You will also see a scene in which Queen Margaret, who married Henry VI, argues with her husband. Margaret is furious because Henry decides their son will not become king because he plans to pass the throne to the house of York if he is allowed to rule for the remainder of his life.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Richard III

Richard III is a power-hungry and evil man. The play tells the story of Richard's rise to power through a string of murders, deception, and betrayal. Listen in *SLAW* for an exchange between Lady Anne, the widow of Prince Edward, who was the son of Henry VI, and Richard. Anne hates Richard, but he manipulates her into marrying him. Richard has Anne killed later in the play. Richard is eventually killed and the good nobleman Richmond is crowned King Henry VII, ushering in a new era of peace for England.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



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