

# Shakespeare

The Bard and His Times

## Biography

- Don't know when he started acting
- Don't know when or why he moved to London

By 1592, he was well enough known in London to be attacked in print by the playwright Robert Greene in his *Groats-Worth of Wit*:


- "...there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's 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"

## Biography

- Born in April 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon
- John Shakespeare (father)
- tanner, glover, dealer in grain
- town official (alderman, and later mayor)
- Mary (mother) was a daughter of Robert Arden, a prosperous gentleman-farmer.
- Seven brothers and sisters

## Biography

- By 1590, he was an actor and playwright
- Leader of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the King's Men
- Became wealthy.
- Bought the second largest house in Stratford called New Place



## Biography


- Attended the Stratford Grammar School
- Did not go to Oxford or Cambridge
- Married Anne Hathaway in 1582 (He was 18; she was eight years older than him.)
- Three children born: Susanna, Judith, and Hamnet. Hamnet dies unexpectedly at age 11.

## Biography

- Died April 23, 1616
- He left his wife "the second best bed in the house"

**His tombstone reads:**

"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."



## Shakespeare's Works

- Shakespeare wrote 37 plays (?)
  - Tragedies (*Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, Anthony and Cleopatra*)
  - Comedies (*Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer's Nights Dream, Twelfth Night*)
  - Histories (*Julius Caesar, Anthony and Cleopatra, Henry IV, Richard II, King John*)
  - Sonnets (154)
  - Long narrative poems

## Sonnet 18

- A Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
 B Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
 A Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
 B And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
- C Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
 D And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
 C And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
 D By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
- E But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
 F Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest,  
 E Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
 F When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
- G So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
 G So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

## Shakespeare's Works

- Shakespeare writes most of his writing in iambic pentameter

Shall I / compare / thee to / a sum / mer's day?

- Normally this iambic pentameter is unrhymed (called blank verse)

## Shakespeare's Times

- "The Theatre" was north of London.
- In 1596, its lease was lost so the actors took it apart and rebuilt it south, across the Thames.
- It was renamed "The Globe."
- Built outside of the city so that London officials couldn't interfere.

## Sonnets

- With the theaters closed, Shakespeare began writing poems, called Sonnets.
- He wrote 154 in all.
- 14 line poems
- 3 quatrains – groups of 4 lines
- 1 couplet – group of 2 lines

## Shakespeare's Theater

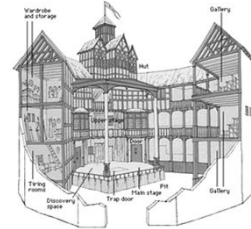
- He wrote his plays to be performed in the Globe Theater.
- It was built in 1599 and burned down 14 years later in 1613.
- It was an 8 sided building with a central yard and a thatched roof.



## Shakespeare's Theater

- Spectators' price of admissions was
  - one penny - to stand in yard around stage (these were called the groundlings)
  - two pennies - to sit in 2nd and 3rd floor galleries
  - three pennies - to sit in the first floor galleries

## Shakespeare's Theater



## Shakespeare's Theater

### Stage

- 1/3 of yard was filled with 6ft high platform
- no curtain
- no artificial lighting
- back wall had at least two doors
- balcony was used for hilltops, walls of cities, or second story scenes.
- trapdoors were used to raise or lower actors and props.

## Shakespeare's Theater



## Shakespeare's Theater

- All social classes attended
- No women on stage
- All parts played by men  
Including Juliet!

## Vocabulary

- Shakespeare had a vocabulary of about 32,000 words.
- Most people at the time had about 500 words.
- Modern people have about 2,000
- College degree may double that figure.

## Shakespeare's Language

- The English Dictionary of his time only had 500 words.
- He's credited with creating 3,000 words in the English Oxford Dictionary
- He was by far the most important individual influence on the development of the modern English
- He invented lots of words that we use in our daily speech

## Shakespeare's Times

- Printing Press (moveable type) 1440
- Reformation began 1516
- The Act of Supremacy of November 1534
- First settlement in America 1607
- King James Bible 1611

## Shakespeare's Language

- It was not Old English
- He often used anathemism:  
In the dark backward and abysm of time.  
I shall unhair thy head  
He chided as I fathered.  
That may repeat and history his loss.  
This day shall gentle his condition.  
Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle.  
My death's sad tale may yet undeaf his ear.

## Shakespeare's Times

- Queen Elizabeth reigned (1558-1603)  
The world was emerging from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance  
Age was extravagant and brutal
- elaborate, ornate clothing, language and manners
  - language was growing fast
  - middle class (stern, moral, and independent)
  - The puritans had strong influence on society

## Shakespeare's Times



## Shakespeare's Times

- **Queen Elizabeth Glory of England**
  - To people, she represented beauty and greatness
  - one of the most powerful countries in the world
- After defeating the Spanish Armada, England became intensely interested in the past. (Patriotic) Historical plays thrived.

## Shakespeare's Times

- During Shakespeare's time, 200,000 people were living in London
- Between Dec. 1592 and Dec. 1593, 11,000 died of plague
- All public areas, including restaurants and playhouses were closed



Costume worn by plague doctor to protect against 'miasmas' of poisonous air

## Prose

- Ordinary writing that is not poetry, drama, or song
- Only characters in the lower social classes speak this way in Shakespeare's plays
- Why do you suppose that is?

## Shakespeare's Times

- Queen Elizabeth dies in 1603
- King James I takes the throne
  - Shakespeare's Theatre company becomes the King's Company

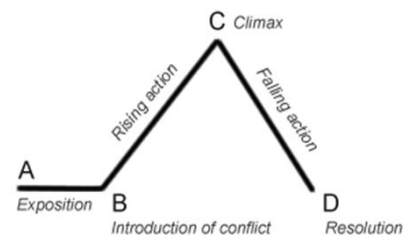
## Plot

- ***The sequence of events in a literary work***

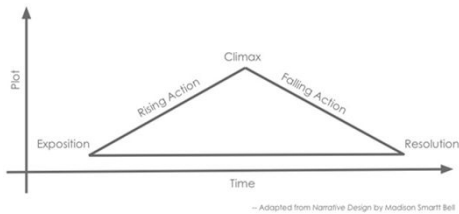
## Blank Verse

- *unrhymed verse*
- *iambic (unstressed, stressed)*
- *pentameter (5 "feet" to a line)*
- *ends up to be 10 syllable lines*

## Plot Diagram



## Plot Diagram



## Conflict

*The struggle that develops*

- *man vs. man*
- *man vs. himself*
- *man vs. society*
- *man vs. nature*
- *man vs. God or fate*
- *man vs. situation or idea*

## Exposition

- *The plot usually begins with this:*
  - *introduces*
    - *setting*
    - *characters*
    - *basic situation*

## Rising Action

- *The progress of the plot as it builds to greater levels of intensity.*

## Inciting Moment

- *Often called “initial incident”*
  - *the first bit of action that occurs which begins the plot*
  - *Romeo and Juliet “lock eyes” at the party*

## Climax

- *The point of greatest tension or intensity in the plot. After this point the plot begins unwind.*
  - *Protagonist- good guy*
  - *Antagonist- bad guy*

## **Climax**

- *The turning point of the story: everything begins to unravel from here*
- *Thus begins the falling action*

## **Tragedy (Shakespearean)**

- *Drama where the central character/s suffer disaster/great misfortune*
  - *In many tragedies, downfall results from*
    1. *Fate*
    2. *Character flaw/Fatal flaw (sin)*
    3. *Combination of the two*

## **Falling Action**

- *The events after the point of greatest tension in the story*
- *Explains the plot or leads into the final state of things*

## **Theme**

- *Any given story may contain many themes.*
- *A reoccurring idea or element in a text.*

## **Resolution**

- *The end of the central conflict*

## **The Theme**

- *Central idea or Insight about life contained in a text.*

## Metaphorical Language

- Comparison of unlike things >
  - Paris standing over the “lifeless body” of Juliet, “Sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew...”
  - “Thou detestable maw...”Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth...”  
Romeo

## Flat Characters

- One-dimensional, embodying only a single trait
  - Shakespeare often uses them to provide comic relief even in a tragedy

## Foil

- A character who through carefully selected similarities and differences highlights the characteristics of another character.
  - Benvolio for Tybalt
  - look for others in R & J

## Static Characters

- Characters within a story who remain the same. They do not change. They do not change their minds, opinions or character.

## Round characters

- Characters who have many personality traits, like real people.

## Dynamic Character

- Characters that change somehow during the course of the plot. They generally change for the better.



## Monologue

- *One person speaking on stage. There may be other character on stage.*
- *ex the Prince of Verona commanding the Capulets and Montagues to cease feuding*

## Pun

- *Shakespeare loved to use them!!!*
- *Humorous use of a word with two meanings - sometimes missed by the reader because of Elizabethan language and sexual innuendo*

## Soliloquy

- *Long speech expressing the thoughts of a character alone on stage. Often in formal language.*
- *In R & J, Romeo gives a soliloquy after the servant has fled and Paris has died.*

## Situational Irony

- *An event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters, the reader, or the audience*

## Aside

- *Words spoken, usually in an undertone not intended to be heard by all characters*

## Dramatic Irony

- *A situation in which the speaker/character does not realize that what they are saying or doing is ironic.*

## Verbal Irony

- Words used to suggest the opposite of what is meant



## Comic Relief

- Use of comedy to provide “relief” from seriousness or sadness.
- In the play we read, look for moments of comic relief that help “relieve” the tension of the situation

