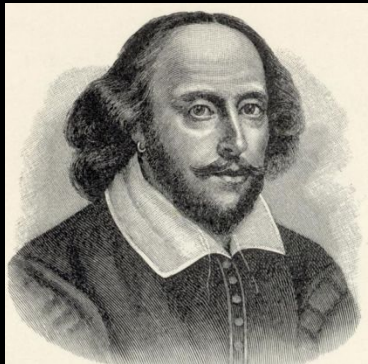
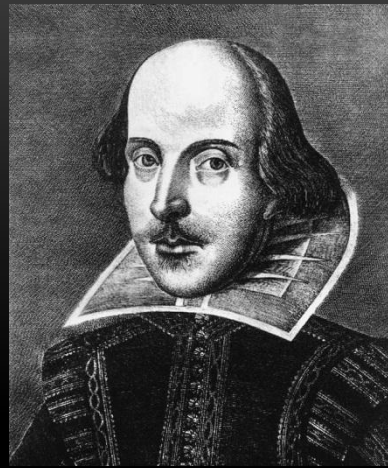
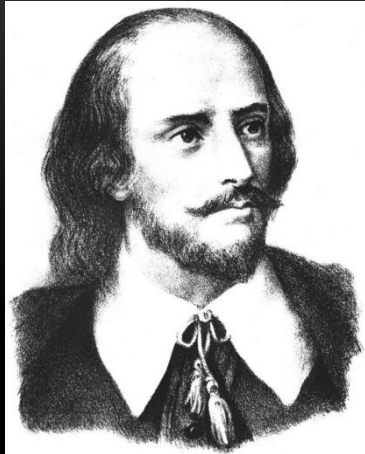


*William
Shakespeare
(1564–1616)*

**The great poet
and dramatist
William
Shakespeare
was a genius
formed by the
epoch of the
Renaissance.**



He is often called by his people "Our National Bard" (bard = a singer of ancient songs, a poet), "The Immortal Poet of Nature" (When the English people called Shakespeare "the poet of Nature" they meant "the poet of realism", but they didn't know such a word then) and "the Great Unknown". Indeed very little can be told about his life with certainty, as no biography of Shakespeare was published during his life time nor for 93 years after his death.



**Yet, patient research by
certain scholars has
uncovered the
biography, but not fully.**



Shakespeare's
Literary Works

William Shakespeare is one of those rare geniuses of mankind who have become landmarks in the history of world culture.

Poet and playwright William Shakespeare was one of the greatest titans of Renaissance.

A phenomenally prolific writer, William Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets and two narrative poems. Shakespeare's plays belong to different dramatic genres. They are histories (chronicle plays), tragedies, comedies and tragic-comedies.

Shakespeare's Literary Work

Shakespeare's literary work is usually divided into three periods:

- The first period — from 1590 to 1601 — when he wrote histories, comedies and sonnets.
- The second period — from 1601 to 1608 — was the period of tragedies.
- The third period — from 1608 to 1612 — when he wrote mostly tragic-comedies.

These three periods are sometimes called optimistic, pessimistic and romantic.

The First
Remixed.

Come

dies

The first period is marked by youthful optimism, great imagination and extravagance of language. In these years Shakespeare created a brilliant cycle of comedies. They are all written in his playful manner. The gay and witty heroes and heroines of comedies come into conflict with unfavorable circumstances and wicked people. But their love and friendship, intellect and faithfulness always take the upper hand.

The comedies are written in the bright spirit of the Renaissance. The heroes are the creators of their own fate, that is to say they rely on their cleverness to achieve happiness. Shakespeare trusted man's virtues and believed that virtue could bring happiness to mankind. Shakespeare was optimistic, therefore love of life is the main feature of his comedies, notable for their wit, comic characters and situations, for the smoothly flowing language and harmonious composition. Shakespeare's comedies were written to take the spectator away from everyday troubles. In them people lived for merriment, pleasure and love.

The best comedies of that period are:

Love's Labor's Lost— 1590

The Comedy of Errors — 1591

The Two Gentlemen of Verona — 1592

A Midsummer Night's Dream — 1594

The Merchant of Venice — 1595

The Taming of the Shrew — 1596

Much Ado About Nothing — 1599

The Merry Wives of Windsor — 1599

As You Like It — 1600

Twelfth Night — 1600

Twelfth
Night



Twelfth Night is one of the most charming and perfect of Shakespeare's plays. It was the last of his merry comedies. After-wards he wrote mainly tragedies. The play was written to say good-bye to the Christmas holidays which were celebrated with great pomp and lasted for twelve days. Twelfth Night was the end of merry-making. Hence the title of the comedy.

The plot of the play is centred round Viola. She is a clever, intelligent and noble-hearted woman. Making a sea voyage she and her twin brother Sebastian are shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria governed by Duke Orsino. The captain of the ship brings Viola safe to shore. Her brother has apparently drowned. The captain tells Viola that Duke Orsino is in love with Countess Olivia whose father and brother have recently died.

For the love of them she avoids people. Viola wishes to serve this lady, but Olivia admits no person into her house. Then she makes up her mind to serve Orsino as a page under the name of Cesario. She puts on her brother's clothes, and looks exactly like him. Strange errors happen as the twins are mistaken for each other.

The Duke is fond of Cesario and tells him about his love for Olivia and sends him to her house to talk to her about his love. Viola goes there unwillingly because she herself loves Orsino.

On seeing Cesario Olivia falls in love with him, "I love thee¹ so, that, in spite of your pride, nor wit nor reason can my passion hide". ; In vain, Cesario's resolution is "never to love any woman". In the meantime Sebastian comes to Olivia's house, she mistakes him for Cesario and proposes they should marry. Sebastian agrees. Soon Cesario — Viola enters. Everybody wonders at seeing two persons with the same face and voice. When all the errors are cleared up, they laugh at Olivia for falling in love with a woman.

Orsino, seeing that Cesario would look beautiful in a woman's clothes, says to him that for the faithful service Viola has done for him so much beneath her soft and tender breeding, and since she has called him master so long, she should now be her master's mistress, and Orsino's true duchess. The twin brother and sister are wedded on the same day: Viola becomes the wife of Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, Sebastian — the husband of the rich and noble Countess Olivia.

**In the character of Viola
Shakespeare embodied the new
ideal of a woman, which was very
different from that of feudal times.**

**The woman described in the
literature of the Middle Ages,
especially in the romances, were
shown as passive objects of love.**

**Shakespeare shows that
women have the right to
equality and independence.
Viola defends her right to
happiness and love.**

La

o

The sonnet is a poetical form that appeared in Italy in the 14th century. It was introduced into English literature during the first period of the Renaissance. Shakespeare's sonnet has 14 lines. It is divided into three stanzas of four lines with a final rhyming couplet.

The sonnets of Shakespeare were published in 1609, but were probably written between 1597— 1600. The first 126 are addressed to a man. A certain "W. H." whose identity remains unknown. He is the author's friend, and the sonnets are addressed to him. Shakespeare complains of his hard life in which his love for his friend is the only comfort (sonnets 26 — 29), but his friend often forgets him (sonnet 33).

Beginning with sonnet 127 a new person appears — The Dark Lady. The authors and his friend are in love with her. The authors both loves her and hates her for making him and his friend suffer (sonnet 133). Thus the sonnets are connected by their common theme — love and friendship. But this is not the only theme of the sonnets. In one of his best sonnets, 66, Shakespeare expresses his indignation with the state of things around him.

Sonnet 66

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry, As, to
behold Desert a beggar born, And needy
Nothing trimm'd in jolity And purest Faith
unhappily forsworn,

And golded 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-like⁶ controlling Skill, And
simple Truth miscall'd Simplicity, And captive
Good attending captain 111.

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

Sonnet 91

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill, Some in their
wealth, some in their body forth; Some in their garments,
though new-fangled ill; Some in their hawks and hounds, some in
their horse;

And every humor hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest; But these
particulars are not my measure, All these I better
in one general best.

Thy love is better than high birth to me, Richer
than wealth, prouder than garments' cost, Of more
than hawks or horses be; And having thee,
of all men's pride I boast.

Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take. All
this away and me most wretched make.

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral
is far more red than her lips' red; If snow be white,
why then her breasts are dun; If hairs be wires,
black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked, red and white, But
no such roses see I in her cheeks; And in some
perfumes is there more delight Than in the breath
that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, — yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go —
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare As
any she belied with false compare.

Pomeo

and

Romeo and Juliet was Shakespeare's first tragedy. He turned from the romantic comedies to make the romantic tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. The play is still very popular and the names of Romeo and Juliet are used to describe any great lovers.

In the tragedy the problem of love is raised to a deep social problem. The play treats love as a serious tragic subject.

Romeo and Juliet are the victims of a long senseless feud between their families. The world of the Montagues and Capulets is antagonistic to their love. The young people are to fight against feudal traditions and patriarchal morality.

The death of the young people makes the older generation realize the absurdity of their feud and leads to the reconciliation of the two families.

The tragedy ends in an optimistic mood.