

William Shakespeare



Biography

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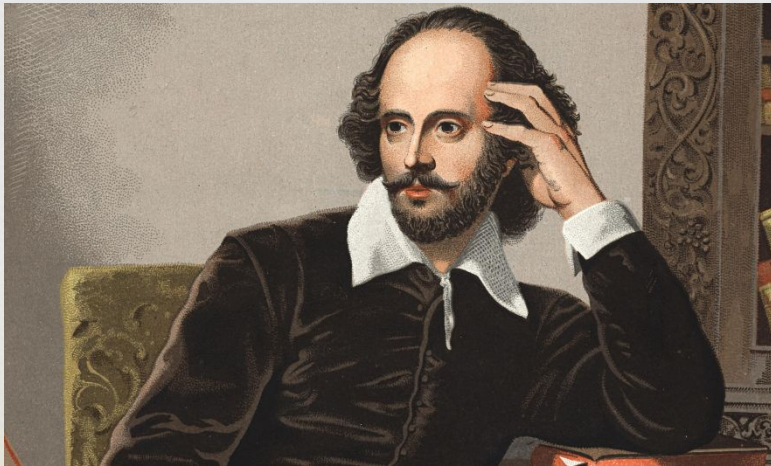
William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire and was baptized a few days later on 26 April 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glove maker and wool merchant and his mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a well-to-do landowner from Wilmot, South Warwickshire. It is likely Shakespeare was educated at the local King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford.



The next documented event in Shakespeare's life is his marriage at the age of 18 to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a local farmer, on November 28, 1582. She was eight years older than him and their first child, Susanna, was born six months after their wedding. Two years later, the couple had twins, Hamnet and Judith, but their son died when he was 11 years old.



In 1593 and 1594, Shakespeare's first poems, 'Venus and Adonis' and 'The Rape of Lucrece', were published and he dedicated them to his patron, Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. It is thought Shakespeare also wrote most of his sonnets at this time.





His earlier plays were mainly histories and comedies such as 'Henry VI', 'Titus Andronicus', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'Richard II'. The tragedy, 'Romeo and Juliet', was also published in this period. By the last years of Elizabeth I's reign Shakespeare was well established as a famous poet and playwright and was called upon to perform several of his plays before the Queen at court. In 1598 the author Francis Meres described Shakespeare as England's greatest writer in comedy and tragedy.



Shakespeare spent the last five years of his life in New Place in Stratford. He died on 23 April 1616 at the age of 52 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. He left his property to the male heirs of his eldest daughter, Susanna. He also bequeathed his 'second-best bed' to his wife. It is not known what significance this gesture had, although the couple had lived primarily apart for 20 years of their marriage.