

The renaissance



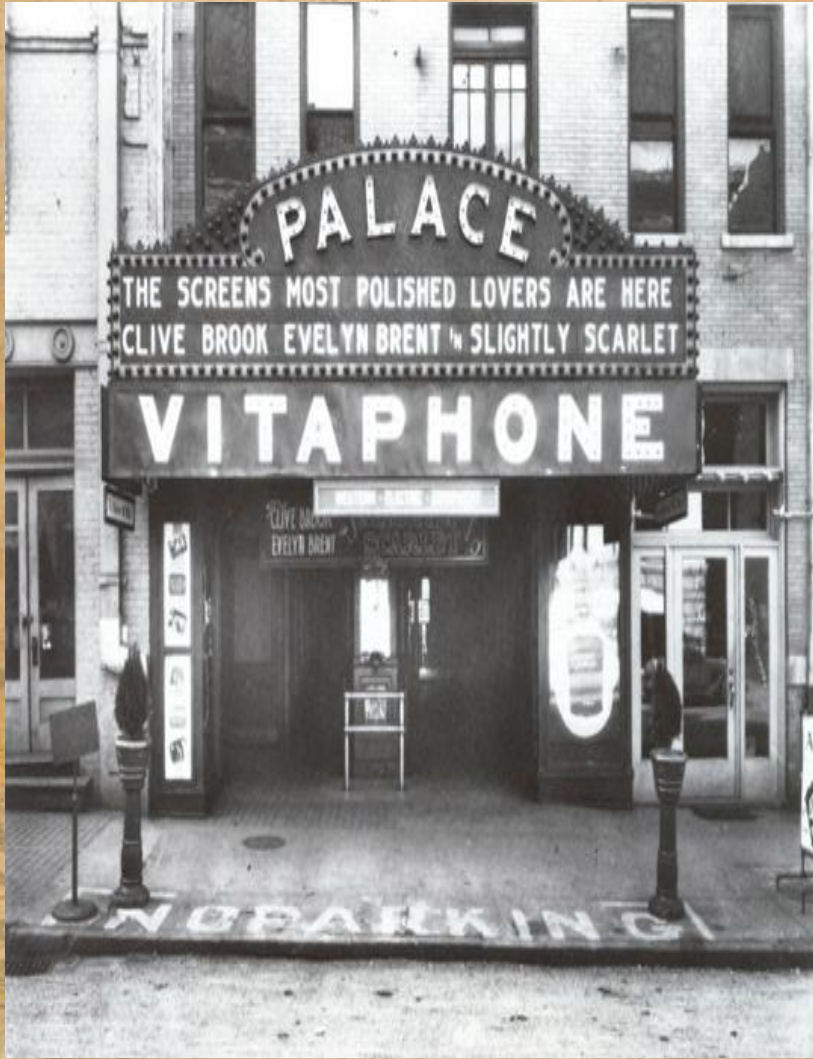
The English Renaissance

- The **English Renaissance** was a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the late 15th to the early 17th century. It is associated with the pan-European Renaissance that is usually regarded as beginning in Italy in the late 14th century. Like most of northern Europe, England saw little of these developments until more than a century later. The beginning of the English Renaissance is often taken, as a convenience, to be 1485, when the Battle of Bosworth Field ended the Wars of the Roses and inaugurated the Tudor Dynasty. Renaissance style and ideas, however, were slow to penetrate England, and the Elizabethan era in the second half of the 16th century is usually regarded as the height of the English Renaissance.

The renaissance poetry

- England had a strong tradition of literature in the English vernacular, which gradually increased as English use of the printing press became common by the mid 16th century. By the time of Elizabethan literature a vigorous literary culture in both drama and poetry included poets such as Edmund Spenser, whose verse epic *The Faerie Queene* had a strong influence on English literature but was eventually overshadowed by the lyrics of William Shakespeare, Thomas **Wyatt** and others. Typically, the works of these playwrights and poets circulated in manuscript form for some time before they were published, and above all the plays of English Renaissance theatre were the outstanding legacy of the period.

The poetry and the theatre scene



- The English theatre scene, which performed both for the court and nobility in private performances, and a very wide public in the theatres, was the most crowded in Europe, with a host of other playwrights as well as the giant figures of Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Elizabeth herself was a product of Renaissance humanism trained by Roger Ascham, and wrote occasional poems such as *On Monsieur's Departure* at critical moments of her life. Philosophers and intellectuals included Thomas More and Francis Bacon. All the 16th century Tudor monarchs were highly educated, as was much of the nobility, and Italian literature had a considerable following, providing the sources for many of Shakespeare's plays. English thought advanced towards modern science with the Baconian Method, a forerunner of the Scientific Method. The language of the *Book of Common Prayer*, first published in 1549, and at the end of the period the Authorised Version ("King James Version" to Americans) of the Bible (1611) had enduring impacts on the English consciousness

Richard Lovelace

1618–1657



- Like the other Cavalier poets of 17th-century England, Richard Lovelace lived a legendary life as a soldier, lover, and courtier. Persecuted for his unflagging support of King Charles I, he died in dire poverty — but not before writing two of the age’s most melodic and moving lyrics: “To Althea, from Prison” and “To Lucasta, Going to the Wars.”

Biography



- In 1642, Lovelace presented a Royalist petition to Parliament favoring the restoration of the Anglican bishops who had been excluded from the Long Parliament. He thus aligned himself with such royalist upstarts as Sir Edmund Dering. Lovelace was imprisoned in Westminster Gatehouse from April 30 to June 21, 1642. While in prison, Lovelace wrote "To Althea. From Prison" which includes the famous words: "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage."

Following his release, Lovelace lived briefly in London, after which he removed himself to the Low Countries and France until after King Charles' capture at Oxford in 1646. Lovelace left the field when he was wounded at the battle of Dunkirk. He returned to (Cromwell's) England in 1647. He was committed by Parliament to Peterhouse Prison, Aldersgate in October 1648, probably for his connection with some disturbances in Kent. Released from prison in April 1649, Lovelace published *Lucasta*. The Lucasta of the poems was Lucy Sacherevell, whom Lovelace liked to call *Lux casta*. Upon hearing that Lovelace had died of the wounds he received at Dunkirk, she married another.

Financially ruined by his support of the royalist cause, Lovelace lived on charity and died in poverty in 1658.

Richard Lovelace



Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

(Richard Lovelace)

William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare 26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616 was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His extant works, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, the authorship of some of which is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Mysterious Origins

- Known throughout the world, the works of William Shakespeare have been performed in countless hamlets, villages, cities and metropolises for more than 400 years. And yet, the personal history of William Shakespeare is somewhat a mystery. There are two primary sources that provide historians with a basic outline of his life. One source is his work—the plays, poems and sonnets—and the other is official documentation such as church and court records. However, these only provide brief sketches of specific events in his life and provide little on the person who experienced those events.

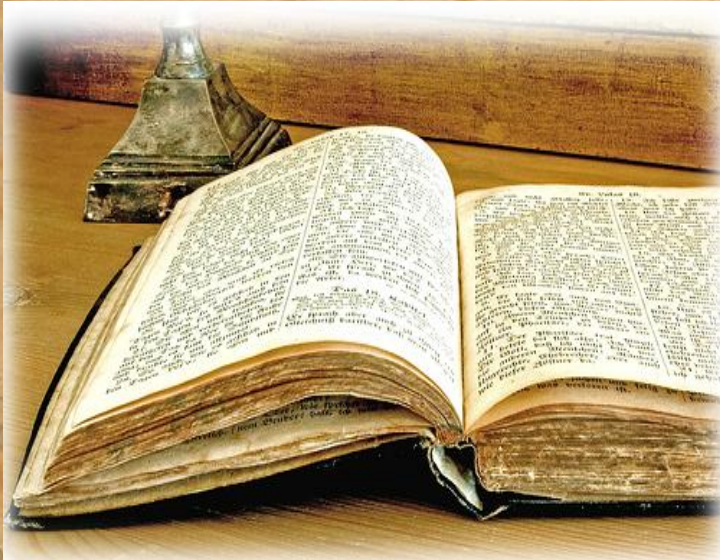


Establishing Himself

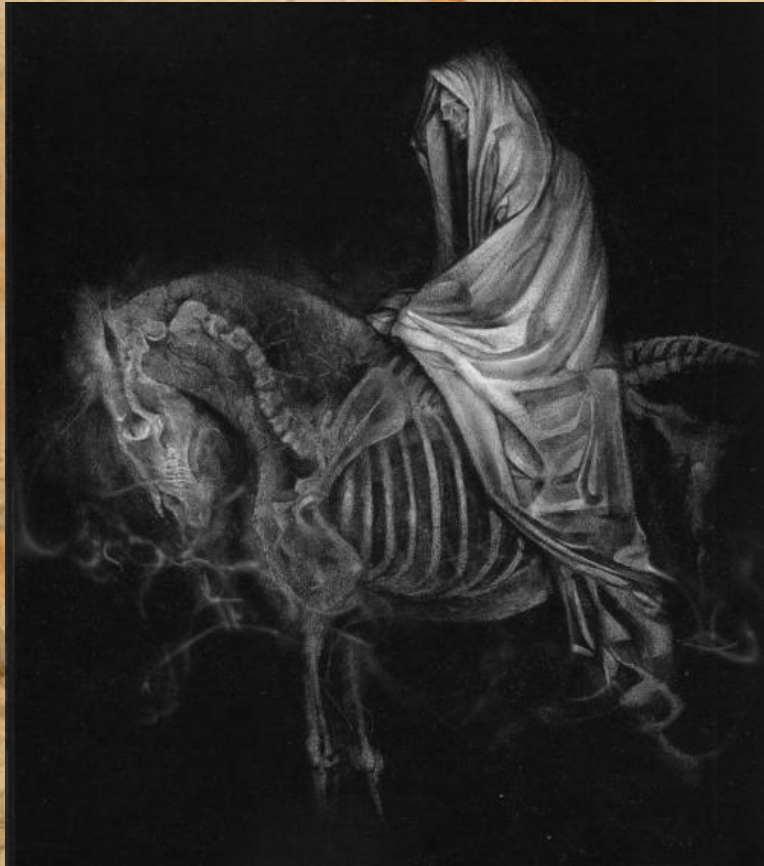
- By 1597, 15 of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare were published. Civil records show that at this time he purchased the second largest house in Stratford, called New House, for his family. It was a four-day ride by horse from Stratford to London, so it is believed that Shakespeare spent most of his time in the city writing and acting and came home once a year during the 40-day Lenten period, when the theaters were closed.
- By 1599, William Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theater on the south bank of the Thames River, which they called the Globe. In 1605, Shakespeare purchased leases of real estate near Stratford for 440 pounds, which doubled in value and earned him 60 pounds a year. This made him an entrepreneur as well as an artist, and scholars believe these investments gave him the time to write his plays uninterrupted.

Writing style

- William Shakespeare's early plays were written in the conventional style of the day, with elaborate metaphors and rhetorical phrases that didn't always align naturally with the story's plot or characters. However, Shakespeare was very innovative, adapting the traditional style to his own purposes and creating a freer flow of words. With only small degrees of variation, Shakespeare primarily used a metrical pattern consisting of lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, to compose his plays. At the same time, there are passages in all the plays that deviate from this and use forms of poetry or simple prose.



Death



- Tradition has it that William Shakespeare died on his birthday, April 23, 1616, though many scholars believe this is a myth. Church records show he was interred at Trinity Church on April 5, 1616.
- In his will, he left the bulk of his possessions to his eldest daughter, Susanna. Though entitled to a third of his estate, little seems to have gone to his wife, Anne, whom he bequeathed his "second-best bed." This has drawn speculation that she had fallen out of favor, or that the couple was not close. However, there is very little evidence the two had a difficult marriage. Other scholars note that the term "second-best bed" often refers to the bed belonging to the household's master and mistress—the marital bed—and the "first-best bed" was reserved for guests.

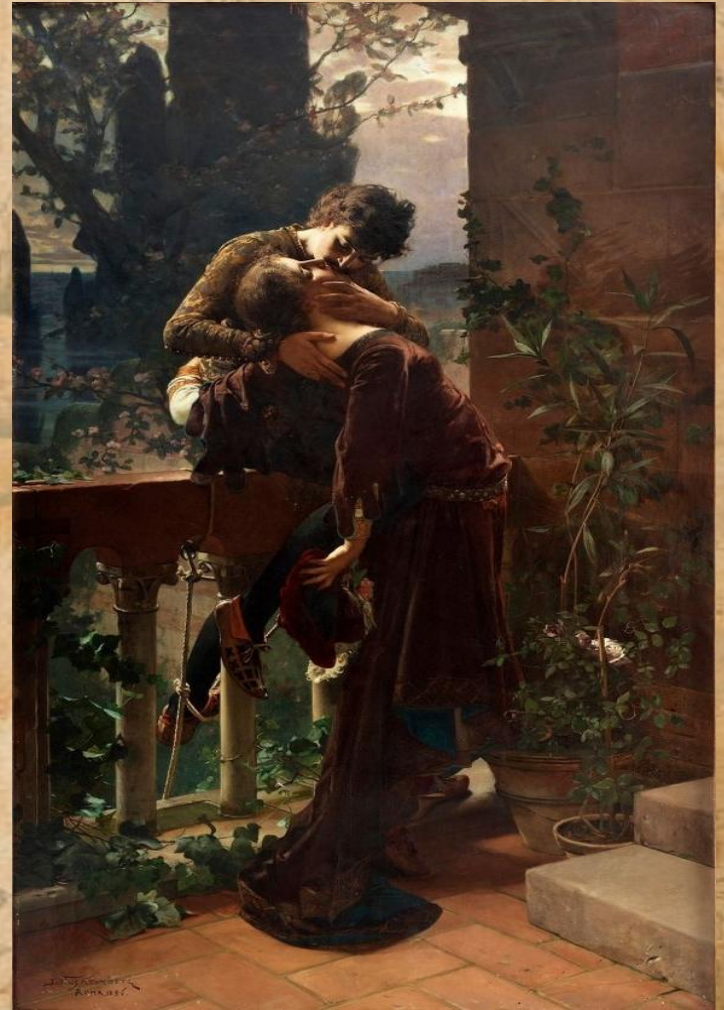
Romeo and Juliet



- ***Romeo and Juliet*** is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare early in his career about two young star-crossed lovers whose deaths ultimately reconcile their feuding families. It was among Shakespeare's most popular plays during his lifetime and, along with *Hamlet*, is one of his most frequently performed plays. Today, the title characters are regarded as archetypal young lovers.

The end

- A glooming peace this morning with it brings;
The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head:
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;
Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished:
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.



Thomas More

(1478–1535)

- Thomas More is known for his 1516 book *Utopia* and for his untimely death in 1535, after refusing to acknowledge King Henry VIII as head of the Church of England. He was canonized by the Catholic Church as a saint in 1935.



Thomas More

- Born in London, England, in 1478, Thomas More's 1516 book *Utopia* was the forerunner of the utopian literary genre. More served as an important counselor to King Henry VIII of England, serving as his key counselor in the early 1500s, but after he refused to accept the king as head of the Church of England, he was tried for treason and beheaded (he died in London, England, in 1535). More is noted for coining the word "Utopia," in reference to an ideal political system in which policies are governed by reason. He was canonized by the Catholic Church as a saint in 1935, and has been commemorated by the Church of England as a "Reformation martyr."

Utopia

- In 1516, More published *Utopia*, a work of fiction primarily depicting a pagan and communist island on which social and political customs are entirely governed by reason. The description of the island of Utopia comes from a mysterious traveler to support his position that communism is the only cure for the egoism found in both private and public life—a direct jab at Christian Europe, which was seen by More as divided by self-interest and greed.
- *Utopia* covered such far-reaching topics as theories of punishment, state-controlled education, multi-religion societies, divorce, euthanasia and women's rights, and the resulting display of learning and skill established More as a foremost humanist. *Utopia* also became the forerunner of a new literary genre: the utopian romance



Geoffrey Chaucer

(1343–1400)

ENGLAND'S FIRST GREAT POET



- English poet Geoffrey Chaucer wrote the unfinished work, *The Canterbury Tales*. It is considered one of the greatest poetic works in English.

Geoffrey Chaucer's immortal 'Canterbury Tales' are among the most splendid examples of narrative poetry in any language.

Geoffrey Chaucer

- Poet Geoffrey Chaucer was born circa 1340 in London, England. In 1357 he became a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster and continued in that capacity with the British court throughout his lifetime. *The Canterbury Tales* became his best known and most acclaimed work. He died October 25, 1400 of in London, England, and was the first to be buried in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner

Early life

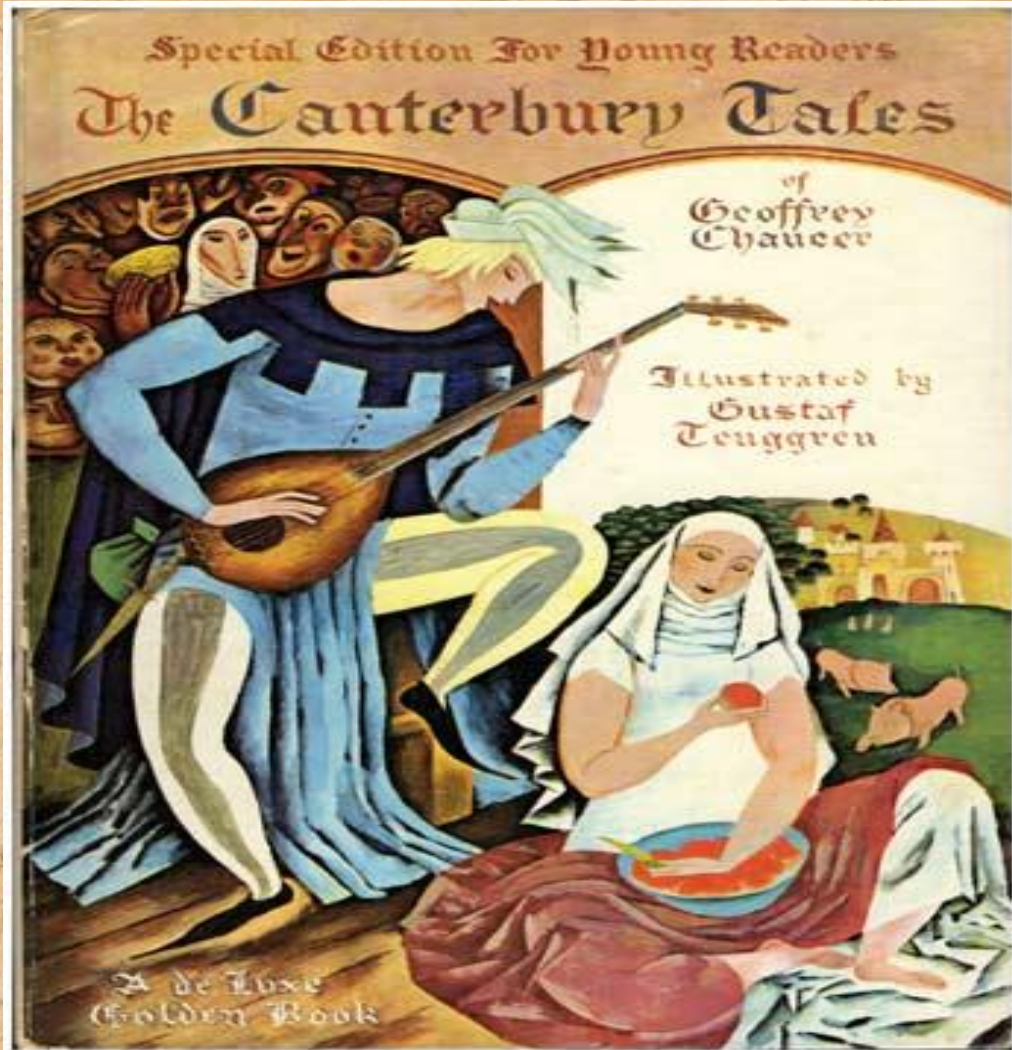
- Poet Geoffrey Chaucer was born circa 1340, most likely at his parents' house on Thames Street in London, England. Chaucer's family was of the bourgeois class, descended from an affluent family who made their money in the London wine trade. According to some sources, Chaucer's father, John, carried on the family wine business.
- Geoffrey Chaucer is believed to have attended the St. Paul's Cathedral School, where he probably first became acquainted with the influential writing of Virgil and Ovid.
- In 1357, Chaucer became a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster, the Duke of Clarence's wife, for which he was paid a small stipend—enough to pay for his food and clothing. In 1359, the teenage Chaucer went off to fight in the Hundred Years' War in France, and at Rethel he was captured for ransom. Thanks to Chaucer's royal connections, King Edward III helped pay his ransom. After Chaucer's release, he joined the Royal Service, traveling throughout France, Spain and Italy on diplomatic missions throughout the early to mid-1360s. For his services, King Edward granted Chaucer a pension of 20 marks.
- In 1366, Chaucer married Philippa Roet, the daughter of Sir Payne Roet, and the marriage conveniently helped further Chaucer's career in the English court.

Death

- The legendary 14th century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer died October 25, 1400 of in London, England. He died of unknown causes and was 60 years old at the time. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey. His gravestone became the center of what was to be called Poet's Corner, a spot where such famous British writers as Robert Browning and Charles Dickens were later honored and interred.



“The Canterbury Tales”



The Canterbury Tales



- **The Canterbury Tales** (Middle English: *Tales of Caunterbury*) is a collection of over 20 stories written in Middle English by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the 14th century, during the time of the Hundred Years' War. The tales (mostly written in verse, although some are in prose) are presented as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The prize for this contest is a free meal at the Tabard Inn at Southwark on their return.

The Canterbury Tales



- The question of whether *The Canterbury Tales* is finished has not yet been answered. There are 83 known manuscripts of the work from the late medieval and early Renaissance periods, more than any other vernacular literary text with the exception of *The Prick of Conscience*. This is taken as evidence of the tales' popularity during the century after Chaucer's death. Fifty-five of these manuscripts are thought to have been complete at one time, while 28 are so fragmentary that it is difficult to ascertain whether they were copied individually or as part of a set. The *Tales* vary in both minor and major ways from manuscript to manuscript; many of the minor variations are due to copyists' errors, while others suggest that Chaucer added to and revised his work as it was being copied and (possibly) distributed.
- Even the earliest surviving manuscripts are not Chaucer's originals, the oldest being MS Peniarth 392 D (called "Hengwrt"), compiled by a scribe shortly after Chaucer's death. The most beautiful of the manuscripts of the tales is the Ellesmere Manuscript, and many editors have followed the order of the Ellesmere over the centuries, even down to the present day. The first version of *The Canterbury Tales* to be published in print was William Caxton's 1478 edition. Since this print edition was created from a now-lost manuscript, it is counted as among the 83 manuscripts.

Christopher Marlowe

1564–1593

- Playwright, poet. Christopher Marlowe was a poet and playwright at the forefront of the 16th-century dramatic renaissance. His works influenced William Shakespeare and generations of writers to follow.



Christopher Marlowe

- Born in Canterbury, England, in 1564. While Christopher Marlowe's literary career lasted less than six years, and his life only 29 years, his achievements, most notably the play *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ensured his lasting legacy.

Marlowe as a Secret Agent?

- The nature of Marlowe's service to England was not specified by the council, but the letter sent to Cambridge has provoked abundant speculation, notably the theory that Marlowe had become a secret agent working for Sir Francis Walsingham's intelligence service. No direct evidence supports this theory, but the council's letter clearly suggests that Marlowe was serving the government in some secret capacity.
- Surviving Cambridge records from the period show that Marlowe had several lengthy absences from the university, much longer than allowed by the school's regulations. And extant dining room accounts indicate that he spent lavishly on food and drink while there, greater amounts than he could have afforded on his known scholarship income. Both of these could point to a secondary source of income, such as secret government work.

Marlowe as a Secret Agent?



- But with scant hard evidence and rampant speculation, the mystery surrounding Marlowe's service to the queen is likely to remain active. Spy or not, after attaining his master's degree, Marlowe moved to London and took up writing full-time.

- Now we will look at characteristics of Renaissance literature. The writers of the Renaissance not only wanted to imitate art, they hoped to change reality through art. Also, the writers reflected a spirit of exploration that was going on throughout the world. Renaissance writers like Shakespeare brought settings to life beyond the English borders. Writers also believed in the art of 'imitation,' gravitating toward the Greek and Roman writers and writing styles.





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BY SONYA MALTCEVA