

BRITISH LITERATURE SHAKESPEARE LECTURES!



William Shakespeare

The Elizabethan Age!

Elizabethan Clothing & the Sumptuary Laws! :-D

An Age of Entertainment

- Bear Baiting & Public Hangings ☹
- Lots of choices about where to go to see a good show
- Theatres were originally north of the river but moved to outskirts - Bankside



James I

Elizabeth I ruled 1558-1603

James I ruled Scotland 1567-1625/ruled England 1603-1625

- Came to the throne because Elizabeth had no heir
- He was the son of Mary Queen of Scots who was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister
- He united Scotland & England – not necessarily something Scotland was ecstatic about...

POET'S CORNER

Located in a part of Westminster Abby

- Chaucer & Spenser were buried in Poet's Corner at this point
- As time went on, it became a place to bury & memorialize the greatest of British authors - and sometimes authors from other places as well

THIS WEEK'S AUTHOR • SHAKESPEARE!

SHAKESPEARE WROTE SONNETS

He was the **Master of the English (Shakespearean) Sonnet** = Three Quatrains + Closing Couplet

He is not known for the Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet = Octave + Sestet

- Remember – all sonnets have 14 lines of Iambic Pentameter

He wrote 154 sonnets

His sonnets were written during an outbreak of Black Plague when theatres were closed 1603-1604 for 11 mos



Young Shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE IS MOST KNOWN FOR HIS PLAYS!

His plays fit into **Three Categories**: (1) Comedies (2) Histories (3) Tragedies

- **Tragedies** – main characters always doomed to death in the end
- **Comedies** – full of mistaken identities, women disguised as men, miscarried letters, and all sorts of silly complications resolved in the end
- **Histories** – stories of kings and Noblemen in exciting situations like war or rebellion

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY LIFE

The Elizabethan Age was a very good time to be born – especially if you had an inclination toward literary pursuits!

Shakespeare was born into a very typical family – six years after Elizabeth became Queen

- Their family had most likely been the typical family that see-sawed back and forth between Protestantism and Catholicism depending on who was in power during the years leading up to Elizabeth
- Leather maker's son – we see knowledge of this trade in his plays

Married Anne Hathaway – He was 18 and she was 26

- 2 daughters & 1 son who died in infancy

There has been lots of controversy about whether Anne and William were happily married

- She never moved to London during his playwright years, but stayed in Stratford
- Upon his death, all he left her was their second best bed – it was the one they had shared, however (Best bed was always for the guestroom)

After they were married – Seven Lost Years

- One theory – a tutor to a family in Northern England
- Second theory – joined a troop of actors

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE IN THE LONDON THEATRE

James Burbage – 1576 – built The Theatre

- The first building designed solely for the performance of plays since ancient Greece & Rome
- The name is now used for all playhouses.
- Name came from Greek – “theatron” meaning “viewing place
- When the lease ran out on the land for The Theatre, company dismantled it timber by timber and brought it across the river by boat to Bankside - 1598

Soon after came other theatres: the **Curtain**, the **Rose**, the **Swan**

Description of Theatres

Circular wooden buildings with open courtyards in the middle

- Those standing in the courtyard were called “Groundlings”
- Rude if didn't like the play
- Playwrights threw in jokes to keep the groundlings happy.

Pay more to sit in galleries with a roof.

No lights, no heat – plays only performed in daytime in good weather.

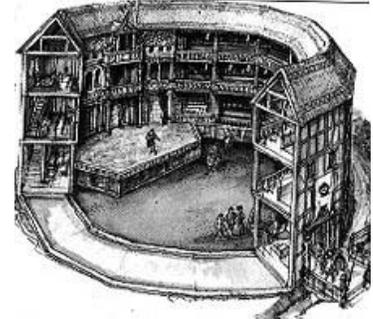
Flag flown to indicate it was a day for a play to be performed.

No curtain across stage – very simple scenery (signs or announcement of setting)

Elegant costumes – purchased from servants of nobles who inherited clothing but could not wear it due to Sumptuary Laws

Roof of stage – “The Heavens”

Area under stage – “The Hell”



“University Wits” – educated young men who wrote plays for the newly established theatres

- Provided fresh material more sophisticated than what had charmed country audiences by the traveling acting groups
- Christopher Marlowe was a University Wit
- Shakespeare was not a University Wit
- University Wits considered Will an upstart

Puritans were against theatre, but Queen Elizabeth loved theatre and protected it.

- Companies of actors were adopted by noblemen for protection and accountability (Lord Admiral's Men, Lord Chamberlain's Men, The Queen's men, The King's Men)
- Patron's name gave the company prestige.
- By law, your company had to have a patron.
- Despite this influential help, Puritans drove actors and theatres outside London city limits

Each acting company

- A leading man & a comedian
- Character actors & boy apprentices
- All actors were men – not proper for women – boys played women's parts

Shakespeare invested in James Burbage's acting company – Lord Chamberlain's Men – later called “The King's Men” under James I

- Richard Burbage was the company's leading man
- Will Kemp – comedian / clown
- William Shakespeare – writer & actor

On the tomb of Shakespeare:

*Good frend for Jesus sake forbear,
To digg the dust enclosed heare:
Blese be the man who spares the stones,
And curst be he who moves my bones.*

SHAKESPEARE'S RETIREMENT

- Retired at age 47
- *The Tempest* (1610-1611) – in the final speech of Prospero, we have a farewell speech that sounds very much like Shakespeare himself is saying his own goodbye to the London Theatre
- During first performance of *Henry VIII*, spark from cannon started fire that burned down the Globe – July 29, 1613
- Will died April 23, 1616 – most likely his 52nd birthday

THE END OF THE THEATRE ERA!

- The Puritans closed all theatres and banned performances in 1642 after usurping the throne from Charles I