

WRITERS

William Shakespeare

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Shakespeare drew from many sources of inspiration to write his plays. Ancient Greek playwrights, histories of England, and the Bible are just a few.
2. At the time Shakespeare was born, Stratford-on-Avon was well-known for its fairs and as a stopping place for traveling entertainers.
3. These entertainers produced plays about such heroic characters as Robin Hood and his merry men, plays Shakespeare undoubtedly saw as a child.
4. Little is known of Shakespeare's early life, but somewhere along the way he picked up a masterful insight into human thought and behavior, a deep sense of the irony of life, and a recognition of the human destiny to forever wrestle with right and wrong, illusion and truth.

THE PERSON

1. William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England, and was baptized April 26, 1564.
2. It is assumed that Shakespeare received a fine early education.
3. Shakespeare, who was married at 18 and had three children before

he was 21, worked as an actor in his 20s, published his first narrative poem at age 29, followed by his first comedies.

4. He helped build the Globe Theater, where most of his plays were performed. *As You Like It* was said to have been written for the Globe's opening night.
5. He later became part owner of a second theater, Blackfriar's, where he continued to write and present his work — writing tragedies from 1600 to 1608.
6. After the theater was closed, Shakespeare wrote sonnets — 154 of them. He died of unknown causes on April 23, 1616, at age 52.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. William Shakespeare is the most renowned playwright in the world, who many believe is the greatest writer in the history of English literature.
2. Although he lived just 52 years, he produced 36 plays, 154 sonnets, and 2 narrative poems.
3. In both the realms of comedy and tragedy, Shakespeare remains the most versatile and accomplished author in written history.
4. He is simply unparalleled in the richness of his language, his clever-

ness with words, metaphors and images and his great gift for poetry.

5. His greatest achievement, however, might be his ability to understand human nature and present the qualities that are common to all human beings in such an informative and entertaining way.

UNIQUE INFLUENCE

1. Shakespeare's work has been admired and loved for more than four centuries.
2. He developed and perfected a dramatic structure that serves as the basis for many modern stories.
3. He also developed dramatic techniques for revealing the inner, psychological workings of the characters. In doing so, he established the format for the modern psychological characters who dominate contemporary theater and screen.
4. An appreciation for Shakespeare grows as time passes and as the themes and characters of which he wrote become even more relevant, in spite of the dramatic changes in the external world.
5. His skill with the language was so great that many of his words are now a permanent part of our vocabulary, such as a "foregone conclusion," "to catch cold," and "disgraceful conduct."

QUOTABLE QUOTES

From Hamlet: "*To be or not to be, that is the question.*"

From Julius Caesar: "*Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.*"

From Richard III: "*A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!*"

From A Midsummer Night's Dream: "*Lord, what fools these mortals be.*"

From The Merchant of Venice: "*The Quality of Mercy is not Strained.*"

From Othello: "*One that loved not wisely but too well.*"

From Macbeth: "*Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*"

From The Tempest: "*O Brave new world, that has such creatures in it.*"

From Richard III: "*Now is the winter of our discontent.*"

From Henry IV: "*Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.*"

From Hamlet: "*Assume a virtue if you have it not.*"