

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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**"To be or not to be, --that is the question--  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them?"  
(Hamlet III)**

## **Biography**

William Shakespeare, a British poet and playwright, is often considered the greatest writer in world literature.

William Shakespeare was baptized April 26, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. He received at most a grammar-school education, and at age 18 he married a local woman, Anne Hathaway. By 1594 he was apparently a rising playwright in London and an actor in a leading theatre company, the "Lord Chamberlain's Men" (later "King's Men"); the company performed at the Globe Theatre from 1599. Shakespeare retired to Stratford before 1610 and lived as a country gentleman until his death.

His earliest plays seem to date from the late 1580s to the mid-1590s and include history plays based on the lives of the English kings, comedies, and the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. The plays apparently written between 1596 and 1600 are mostly comedies. Approximately between 1600 and 1607 he wrote the great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, which mark the summit of his art. Among his later works are the fantastical romances *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare's plays, all of them written largely in iambic pentameter verse, are marked by extraordinary poetry; vivid, subtle, and complex characterizations; and a highly inventive use of English. His 154 sonnets, apparently written mostly in the 1590s, often express strong feeling within an exquisitely controlled form. As with most writers of the time, little is known about his life and work, and other writers, particularly the 17th earl of Oxford, have frequently been proposed as the actual authors of his plays and poems. The first collected edition of his plays, or "First Folio", was published in 1623.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Shakespeare, William," <http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article?tocId=9109536>

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<sup>2</sup> Every title is followed by its translations: E=English F = French G=German S=Spanish A=Arabic

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*Love's Labour's Lost*. VHS. Directed by Elijab Moshinsky. BBC Education & Training. Classic Drama. Complete Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare. N.p.: BBC-TV, 1984.  
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*Macbeth*. VHS. Directed by Jack Gold. BBC Education & Training. Classic Drama. Complete Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare. N.p.: BBC-TV, 1982.  
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*Richard III: The Crown of England*. VHS. Directed by Laurence Olivier. Cinema Club. [Great Britain]: London Film, [1955].  
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## Websites

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A user-friendly website with full scripts of Shakespeare's history, tragedy and comedy themed plays. Visitors can skim through a detailed chronology of Shakespeare's plays. The site also shades light on the "First Folio", as well as Shakespeare's biography and Elizabethan theatres. In English.

Gray, Terry A. *Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet.*

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Kathman, David, and Terry Ross. *Shakespeare Authorship Page.*

<http://shakespeareauthorship.com/> [accessed 06 April 2006]

The website is dedicated to the proposition that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, not Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. It presents its responses and arguments to non-specialists in an easy language with a list of contents citing relevant historical backgrounds and contexts. In English.

*Shakespeare Association of America.*

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Website of the Shakespeare Association of America, an academic organization devoted to the study of William Shakespeare and his plays and poems. The website provides links to web resources on William Shakespeare. Visitors can also browse the Association's bulletin. In English.

*Shakespeare's Globe Online.*

[www.shakespeares-globe.org](http://www.shakespeares-globe.org)

Website of Shakespeare's Globe, a theatre and education center dedicated to the exploration of Shakespeare's work, and the playhouse for which he wrote. The website includes an educational "online reference library", containing a list of the plays performed at the original and the reconstructed Globe Theatre, the *Shakespeare's Globe Research Bulletins* which provide an in-depth account of the rehearsal process of productions staged at the Globe Theatre, and extracts of the magazine *Around the Globe*.