

Who was William Shakespeare?

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is probably the most famous playwright in history. He was born on 23 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England. He was one of eight brothers and sisters. His father, John Shakespeare, was a successful businessman. William went to school in Stratford and learnt Latin and Greek, but he didn't go to university. At the age of fifteen he went straight to work in his father's business.



When he was eighteen, he met and fell in love with Anne Hathaway. She was eight years older than him. They got married in November 1582, and six months later their daughter Susanna was born. In 1585 they had twins, Hamnet and Judith. Little is known about the following seven years of his life. We only know that he moved to London, leaving Anne and the children in Stratford, and that by 1592 he was writing plays and working as an actor.

His plays were very popular and he made a lot of money. In 1597 he bought a big house in Stratford for his family, but he stayed in London for a further thirteen years. He continued to write and act and also bought a theatre. In 1611 he finally retired and moved back to Stratford to live in the house he had bought. In total, Shakespeare wrote 37 plays and 154 sonnets (fourteen-line poems). Some of his love poems are addressed to a married woman, and some of them are addressed to a young man. Nobody knows the identity of these two people. Shakespeare died in Stratford on his birthday, on 23 April 1616, and was buried in the church where he had been christened 52 years earlier.

a Do the quiz about Shakespeare

- 1 What was his first name?
a William b Harry c Hamlet
- 2 When was he born?
a 1564 b 1664 c 1764
- 3 Where was he born?
a Oxford b London c Stratford-upon-Avon
- 4 What was his wife's name?
a Anne b Juliet c Judith
- 5 He was a playwright and also worked as
a an actor b a teacher c an artist
- 6 He wrote plays and also
a novels b sonnets c a dictionary



b Complete the sentences about Shakespeare using one word

- 1 He was _____ in Stratford-upon-Avon in the sixteenth century.
- 2 He had _____ siblings.
- 3 He studied at _____ but not at university.
- 4 Susanna was his first _____.
- 5 Hamnet and Judith were the name of his _____.
- 6 In London, he made a lot of _____.



- 7 He wrote love poems for a man and a woman but their _____ is still a secret.
- 8 He returned to Stratford five years before he _____.

c Make questions and surf the net, if necessary, to answer them

Who/Shakespeare
Who was Shakespeare? He was an English writer and a poet

1 Who/his parents

2 What/his father/do

3 What/the theatre where his plays were acted out

4 Who/perform in theatres in those days

5 Why/the theatres/close during his time

6 What/he/do when the theatres were closed

7 How many plays/he/write

8 What/his most famous tragedy

Romeo and Juliet

d Write the past simple forms of the verbs in brackets

William Shakespeare _____ (**write**) the most famous tragedy of his time: *Romeo and Juliet*. It tells the story of two young lovers, Romeo and Juliet, who _____ (**meet**) at a masquerade ball. They _____ (**fall**) in love immediately, but their families _____ (**hate**) each other.

They _____ (**decide**) to get married secretly with the help of Friar Laurence. However, a fight _____ (**break**) out between Romeo's friend, Mercutio, and Juliet's cousin, Tybalt. Romeo _____ (**kill**) Tybalt in a fit of anger and he was banished from Verona.

Juliet _____ (**be**) heartbroken, and her parents _____ (**force**) her to marry Count Paris. To avoid this, she _____ (**take**) a potion from Friar Laurence, which _____ (**make**) her appear dead for a while. Romeo _____ (**not know**) about this plan and he _____ (**think**) Juliet _____ (**be**) really dead.

Romeo _____ (**rush**) to Juliet's tomb and _____ (**kill**) himself. When Juliet _____ (**wake**) up and _____ (**see**) Romeo dead, she _____ (**take**) her own life as well.

In the end, their tragic love story _____ (**lead**) to the reconciliation of their feuding families.



e Label the pictures

Romeo Montague – Juliet Capulet – Mercutio – Tybalt – Mr. Capulet – Mr. Montague – Lady Capulet – Benvolio



*For never was a story of more woe,
than this of Juliet and her Romeo*

