

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

- Baptized on 26 April 1564.
- His birth is commemorated on 23 April, St. George's Day (the festival day of the patron of England).
- John Shakespeare, his father, was a Stratford-upon-Avon merchant who dealt in gloves and probably other goods.
- Richard Shakespeare, his grandfather, was a yeoman, i.e., a small farmer.
- Mary Arden, his mother, was the daughter of a local farmer who belonged to the local noble family of Arden, after whom the forest to the north of Stratford was named.
- John Shakespeare's affairs prospered at first, and in 1568 he was appointed to the highest office in the town- High Bailiff, equivalent to Mayor.
- William Shakespeare most probably attended the single grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon. If he did, he probably received a good education in the Latin language.
- He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and they had 3 children:
 - a) Suzanna, born 1583
 - b) The twins, Hamnet and Judith, born 1585 (Hamnet died during childhood)
 - c) From that point on until 1592, there is a blank in his life.
- By 1592, Shakespeare was already successfully embarked as a dramatist in London (though there is no clear evidence of when he went there). This is certainly the case, since there is a reference of Shakespeare in *A Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), an autobiographical pamphlet by the London playwright Robert Greene, who accuses Shakespeare of plagiarism.
- From 1592 to 1594, the London theatres were closed owing to epidemics of plague, and Shakespeare used the opportunity to make a reputation for himself as a narrative poet. *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593, and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594. Both were dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton.
- He continued to prosper as a dramatist, and in 1594 he was a leading member of the Lord of Chamberlain's Men, with whom he remained for the rest of his career.
- In 1596 his father acquired a coat of arms- the sign of a gentleman- and in 1597 William bought the New Place, the largest house in Stratford.
- In 1598 John Shakespeare was registered as a recusant. This might mean either that he was a Catholic, or that he was trying to escape arrest for debt.

- The Lord Chamberlain's Men opened the Globe Theatre in 1599, and Shakespeare became a shareholder in it. After the accession of James I, the company came under royal patronage and was called the King's Men.
- Shakespeare was both an actor and a playwright.
- In 1613, during a performance of *Henry VIII*, the Globe was burnt down.
- Shakespeare might have had retired at the New Place by 1610, although he continued his connections with London and bought a house in Blackfriars in 1613.
- He died on 23 April 1616 (he wrote his will a month prior to his death).