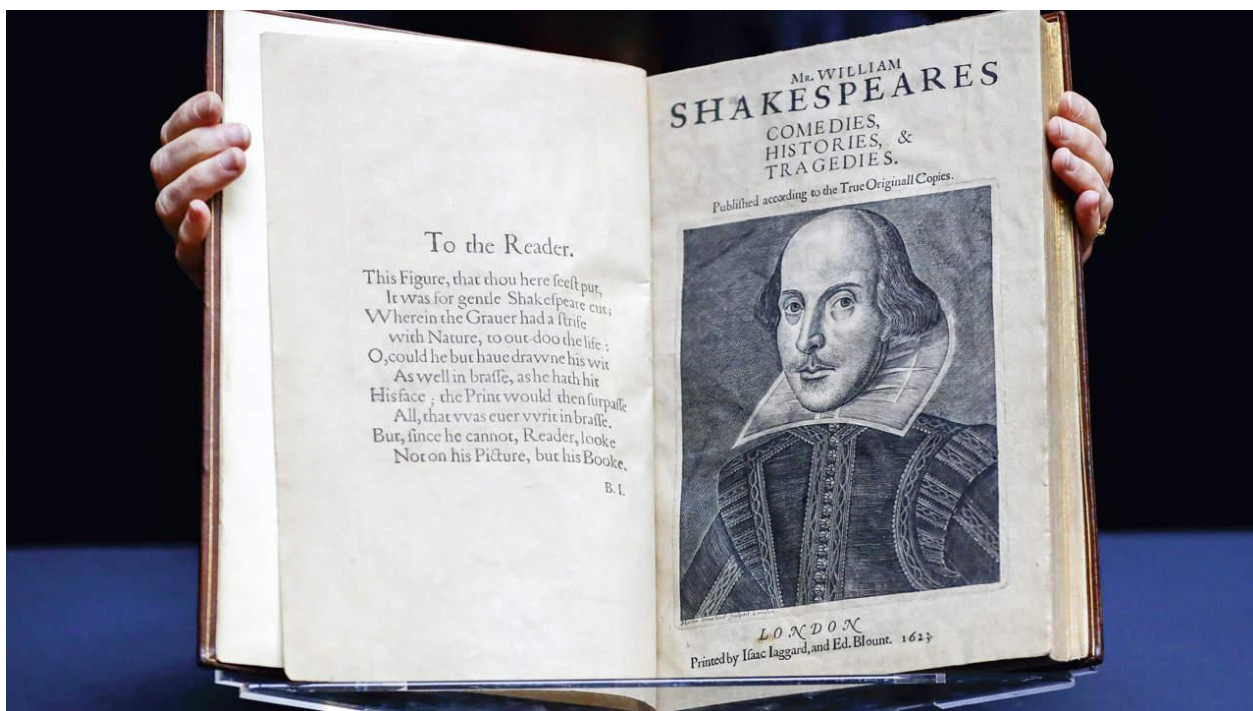


Shakespeare's First Folio [B2]

La prima raccolta delle opere di Shakespeare è uno dei libri più importanti della letteratura mondiale. Pubblicata per la prima volta nel 1623, sette anni dopo la morte del genio di Stratford-upon-Avon, dei 750 esemplari stampati ne rimangono 233. Il suo prezzo all'asta ha raggiunto quasi i dieci milioni di dollari.



Four hundred years ago, in November 1623, a volume of plays appeared on a [bookstall](#) in the market in St. Paul's [churchyard](#). Two years in preparation, the book was entitled Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Shakespeare had died seven years earlier, and two of his actor colleagues, Henry Condell and John Heminges, were determined that his art should not die with him.

BARD'S FIRST COLLECTION

The printing of the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays was a slow, [intricate](#) process, using the writer's own manuscripts (none of which survives today), theatre [prompt](#) copies and old, small [quarto](#) editions. Only half of the thirty-six plays in the book's nine hundred pages had been

published before, so Condell and Heminges' act saved for posterity such literary classics as Macbeth, Twelfth Night and Julius Caesar.

THE BOOK'S IMPORTANCE

The First Folio (it was not called this until later) is probably the most important book in English, due to its effect on both language and culture in English-speaking countries. It is the basis of Shakespeare's [renown](#) in all parts of the world, including places he never knew existed. The book even fixed his physical image for all time, with Martin Droeshout's [frontispiece](#) of the [balding playwright](#).

LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

Printer William Jaggard made 750 copies of Shakespeare's works, for sale at fifteen shillings [unbound](#) and one pound bound. There are now 235 copies in existence, most of them in libraries and museums — the US has 149 and Britain fifty (the British Library keeps five copies.) There is a burnt copy, impossible to recognise, reverently protected in a glass sarcophagus in the University of Pennsylvania. There are probably twenty-seven in private hands, with few likely to enter the open market. In 2020 a [rare book dealer](#), Stephen Lowentheil, paid \$9.98 million for a copy.

FOR ALL TIME

According to Professor Emma Smith, author of The Making of Shakespeare's First Folio, corrections while printing mean that "each copy is a unique [collation](#)" — there were also errors from a [careless](#) teenage apprentice at Jaggard's [printing shop](#)! Many copies also have annotations, [doodles](#) and markings from owners (and marks from their pets!) made over the centuries.

Posterity [owes](#) Shakespeare's friends, Condell and Heminges, an enormous debt. Their determination to preserve the [playwright](#)'s legacy has meant that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time", in the famous words of his friend Ben Jonson's dedicatory poem.

Glossary

- **owes** = dovere
- **renown** = fama, notorietà
- **balding** = che sta diventando calvo
- **unbound** = non rilegato
- **dealer** = commerciante di oggetti d'antiquariato
- **careless** = noncurante
- **intricate** = complesso
- **quarto** = formato in-quarto (8 pagine)
- **playwright** = drammaturgo
- **rare book** = incunabolo
- **doodles** = scarabocchi
- **churchyard** = cimitero
- **frontispiece** = copertina
- **collation** = raccolta
- **printing shop** = tipografia
- **bookstall** = bancarella dei libri
- **prompt** = imbeccata