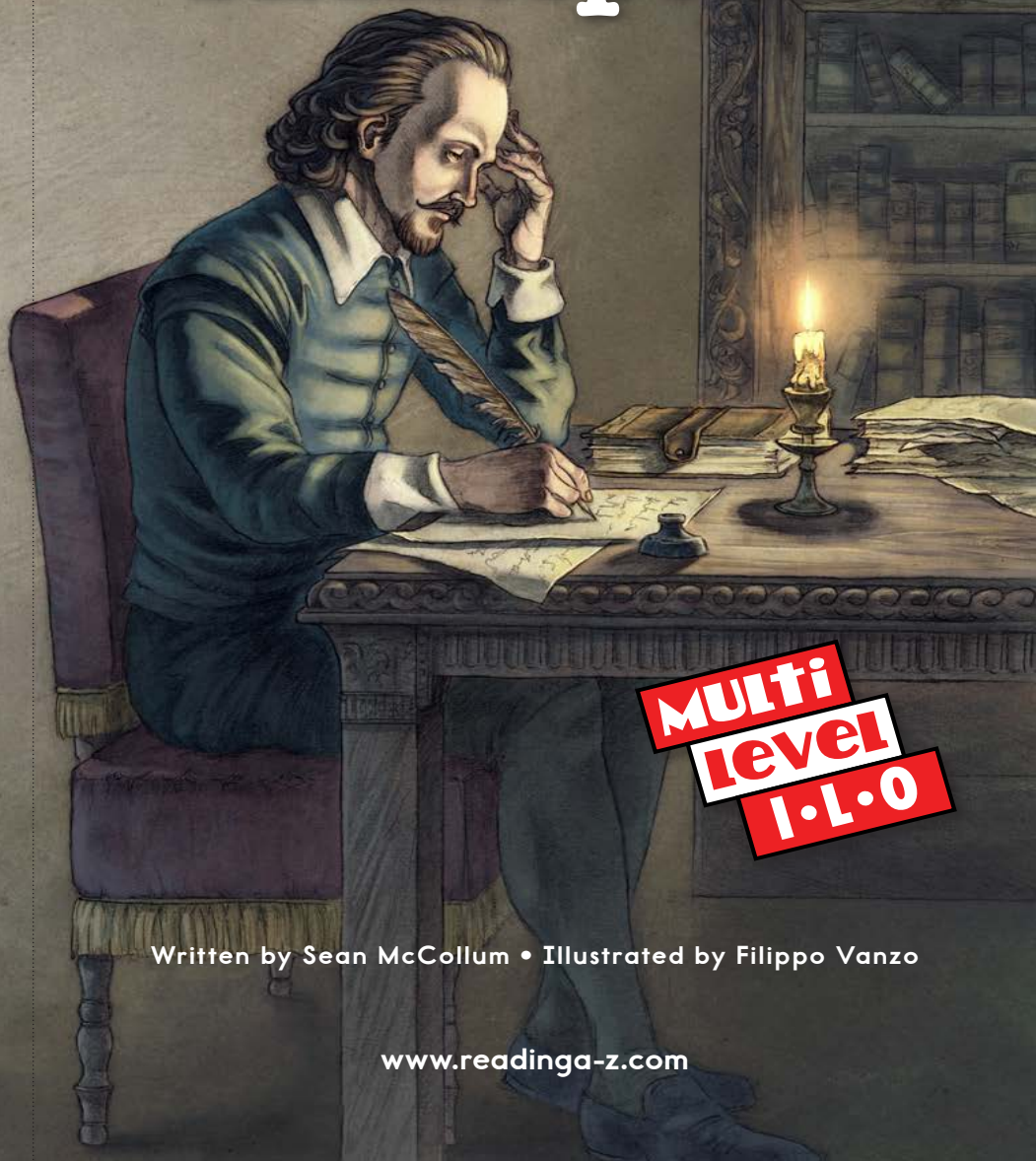


LEVELED BOOK • 0

William Shakespeare

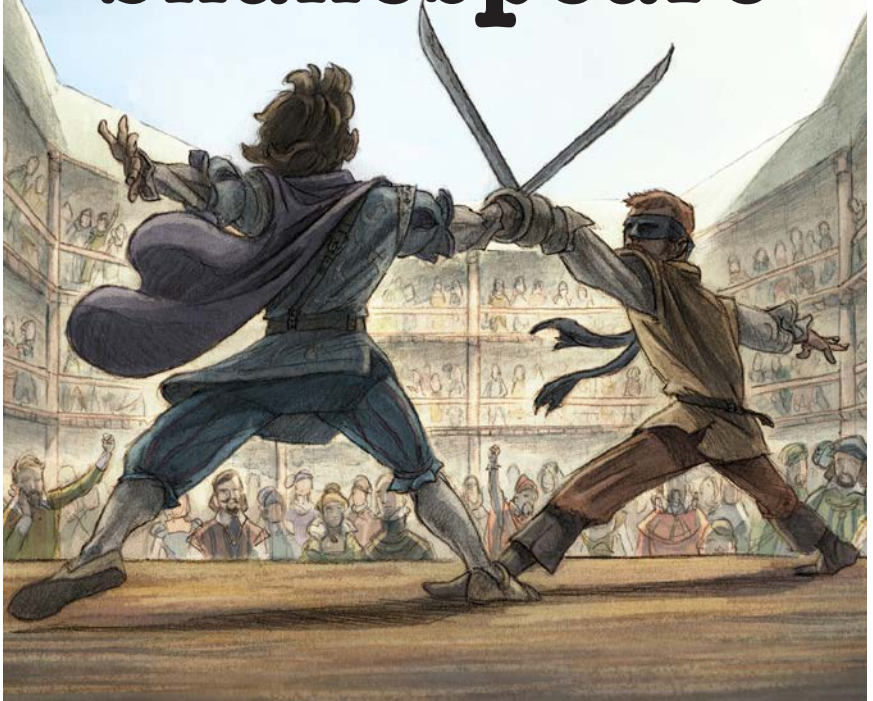


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Written by Sean McCollum • Illustrated by Filippo Vanzo

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William Shakespeare



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Focus Question

Who was William Shakespeare, and why do people remember him?



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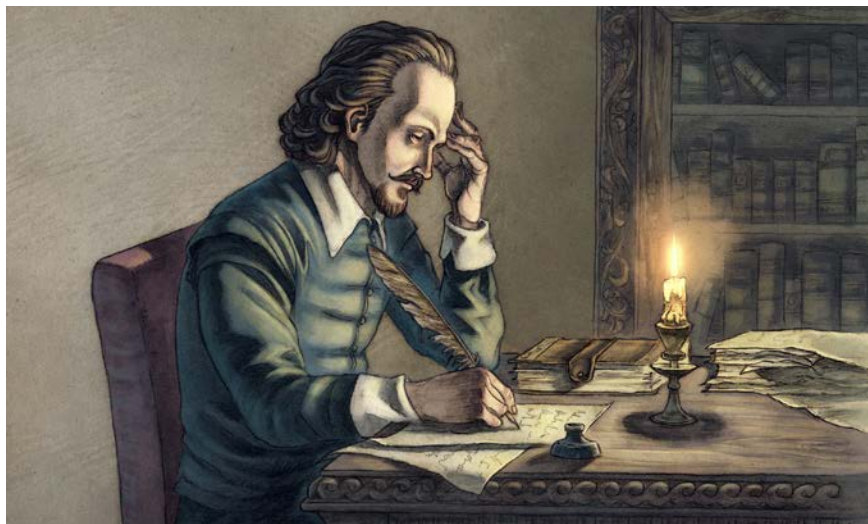
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Experts aren't sure if any portraits were made of Shakespeare. Some believe this portrait shows the writer.

Introduction

English **playwright** and poet William Shakespeare lived from 1564 until 1616. Four hundred years after his death, his words remain very much alive. Many people consider Shakespeare the greatest writer in the **history** of the English language.



Shakespeare is a **popular** writer for many reasons. People admire his plays because they're exciting stories that touch people's feelings. Shakespeare is able to make people feel happy, sad, shocked, or scared along with his characters. His stories also include morals that make people think about big ideas such as good and evil.

The way Shakespeare uses language sets him apart from other writers. His beautiful writing is still thought of as the **benchmark** for writers who want to tell good stories.

Shakespeare's Family

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 to John and Mary Shakespeare. The family lived in Stratford, England, where William attended a good school. This was uncommon for the time, as many people could not read or write.

Shakespeare married a woman named Anne in 1582. They lived in Stratford with their three children. Sadly, their only son died young.

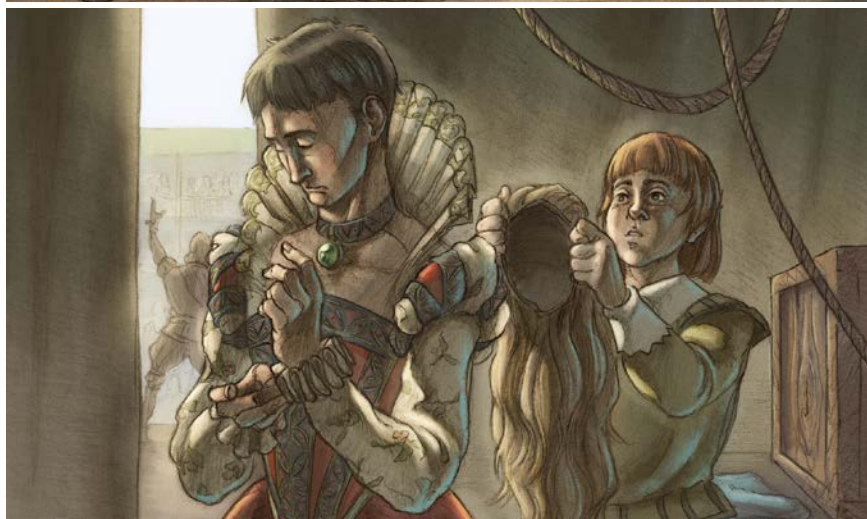




Shakespeare in London

Between 1585 and 1592, Shakespeare left his family in Stratford and moved to London. He worked as an **actor** and a playwright. By 1594, he had become part owner of a popular theater group. Even Queen Elizabeth liked to watch them act.

Shakespeare helped found the Globe, a theater in London, in 1599. Many of his own plays were put on there.



London Theater

The goal of theater in Shakespeare's time was to wow the audience with sword fights and beautiful costumes. The crowds were loud. They yelled "boo" at the bad guys and cheered the heroes. They even threw food at actors they didn't like.

Most plays took place during the day. Actors had to be able to sing, dance, and fight. Only males were allowed to act, with boys usually playing women.

Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare wrote three main types of plays: **tragedies**, histories, and **comedies**. Tragedies are plays in which the hero makes mistakes that lead to disaster. *Macbeth* is the terrible story of one family's desire for power.

Shakespeare's plays about history mostly celebrate England's kings. Shakespeare's comedies were often funny love stories



with happy endings. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a magic potion makes characters fall in love with the wrong people, with funny results.

Writers of plays, poems, and books have used Shakespeare's stories as guidelines for their own work.



Students (left) in California and actors in England (right) act out a sword fight from Shakespeare's play *Henry V*.

Shakespeare's Importance

For hundreds of years, people around the world have read, acted in, and watched Shakespeare's plays. His incredible characters make people laugh and cry. His stories stand the test of time because they show what it is to be human.

For example, many people consider Iago from *Othello* to stand for pure evil, yet he is still human. Sir John Falstaff is at once proud and cowardly, smart and a fool. His **complex** nature makes him one of the most famous characters in English writing. The love story of Romeo and Juliet has been told hundreds of times in many different ways, including in movies and television.



Students in Denver, Colorado, act in Shakespeare's plays.

Many actors say that their parts in Shakespeare's plays are the most difficult and important they've ever played. Shakespeare wrote his characters to be like real people. Actors have to work hard to show how complex the characters are.



People watch Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* on a lawn in Gloucestershire, England.

People can read Shakespeare in more than one hundred languages. Shakespeare festivals around the world continue to draw large crowds. Some actors are even doing the plays in the kind of English from Shakespeare's time. It sounds much different from today's language. Others place his stories in today's world, showing how timeless they are.

From the world's most famous actors to children putting on a play, Shakespeare has something for everyone.

Shakespeare's Poems

Shakespeare wrote one hundred fifty-four sonnets. A *sonnet* is a special type of rhyming poem with fourteen lines. His sonnets were mostly about love. His most famous sonnet began with the line, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

Language Wizard

Have you ever had "too much of a good thing" or "been sent on a wild goose chase"? You quoted Shakespeare and probably didn't know it. When Shakespeare couldn't find the words to say something, he invented new ones. We still use many of these words today, such as *buzzer*, *gloomy*, *hint*, and hundreds of others. He also combined words to create new ones, such as *eyeball*, *bloodstained*, and *leapfrog*.



Shakespeare's Death

After Shakespeare died in 1616, his friends put together a book of his thirty-six plays. It was the first time that eighteen of the plays were **published**. Shakespeare's plays might have been lost if his friends hadn't saved them.



The book became popular all over the world. His friend, Ben Johnson, described Shakespeare's work in the book as “not of an age, but for all time!” He was right. Hundreds of years later, people still relate to Shakespeare's work.

Many people visit Shakespeare's tomb in a church in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

Conclusion

Today, William Shakespeare is considered one of the greatest writers who ever lived. His plays are exciting and fun, and they also touch people's feelings. His characters show how difficult—and how beautiful—life can be and what it means to be human.

People around the world have enjoyed Shakespeare's works for hundreds of years. They will continue to do so for hundreds of years to come.

Shakespeare's Life: Important Dates

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1564 | William Shakespeare is born in Stratford, England. |
| 1582 | Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway. |
| 1583 | Anne gives birth to their first child, Susanna. |
| 1585 | The couple's twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born. |
| 1585–1592 | At some point during these years, Shakespeare moves to London. |
| 1594 | Shakespeare is part owner of a theater group. |
| 1599 | Shakespeare and others open the Globe Theatre. |
| 1616 | Shakespeare dies. |
| 1623 | A book of Shakespeare's plays is published. |



Glossary

- actor** (*n.*) a person who acts out parts on stage, on television, or in movies (p. 7)
- benchmark** (*n.*) something used for judging the quality of other things like it (p. 5)
- comedies** (*n.*) types of entertainment with funny characters and a happy ending (p. 9)
- complex** (*adj.*) having many different parts; difficult to understand (p. 10)
- history** (*n.*) past events (p. 4)
- playwright** (*n.*) someone who writes plays (p. 4)
- published** (*v.*) made writing available to the public (p. 14)
- popular** (*adj.*) liked or enjoyed by many people (p. 5)
- tragedies** (*n.*) plays, movies, or books with sad endings (p. 9)

Words to Know

actor

benchmark

comedies

complex

history

playwright

published

popular

tragedies

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Correlation

LEVEL O	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28

William Shakespeare

A Reading A-Z Level O Leveled Book
Word Count: 733

Connections

Writing and Art

Write an acrostic poem about Shakespeare. Use the name Shakespeare as the acrostic. Each letter in his name begins a line of your poem.

The Arts

Create a topic web about Shakespeare's plays. Complete the web with details from the book. Discuss what you learned with a partner.



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