

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, LITERATURE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE is probably the greatest dramatist all over the world.

Very little is known about his life, especially about his childhood – that is why this is only one of many versions of his biography:

He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. He was the youngest son of three children of a glove maker John Shakespeare and his wife. William attended the local grammar school. At the age of 18 he married Anne Hathaway from a nearby village of Shottery. She was eight years older and they had two daughters. Their son died at the age of 11.

In 1592 Shakespeare came to London and joined a group of actors which later became the King's Men under the patronage of King James I (who ruled after the death of Elisabeth I.) In 1599 Shakespeare bought the Globe Theatre. First he helped to adapt older plays, later he started to write his own plays and he was very successful. Both Elizabeth I and James I liked him very much.

But after the Globe Theatre had burned down and after his son's death he returned to Stratford and lived a quiet life with his family. He was quite rich, so he could buy a new fine house there. He is said to die in 1616 on the same day as he was born (23rd April) after a noisy birthday celebration with his friends.

Shakespeare's work:

He is best-known as a dramatist. However, he was also an actor and a poet.

A. Poetry

He wrote 154 poems – **sonnets**. Sonnet is a lyric poem in a special 14-line form. With Shakespeare the last 2 lines usually sum up the idea of the whole poem. The most frequent topic is love, also in *Sonnet 66*. (The world is full of evil, the poet would like to die but he can't leave his love.)

B. Drama

He wrote 37 plays. They are usually divided into **comedies**, **tragedies** and **historical plays**. The best-known are probably some of his comedies (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*) and the tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*).

Romeo and Juliet

The play is set in the Italian town Verona. Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet meet each other at a ball and Romeo falls with Juliet in love although their families hate each other. That is why their love and later marriage must be secret. But Prince of Verona sends Romeo to the exile because he has killed Juliet's cousin by mischance. Juliet is forced to marry Paris, a young nobleman. To avoid this marriage she drinks a poison after which she falls asleep for several hours and looks as if she was dead. Romeo learns about her death, returns to Verona and kills himself. Soon after that Juliet wakes up and when she sees Romeo dead, she kills herself too. This tragedy draws the Capulets and the Montagues together.

QUESTIONS:

1) What is known about Shakespeare's life?

A: His birth (when, where), parents, education, marriage, children.

B: Shakespeare's stay in London.

C: The rest of his life.

- 2) What does Shakespeare's work include?
- 3) What kind of poetry did Shakespeare write?
- 4) What groups are Shakespeare's plays usually divided into?

A: Give the names of some of his best-known plays.

B: Narrate the story of Romeo and Juliet.

LITERATURE

- 5) Are you interested in literature? Do you like reading?

A: If so, what kind of literary work you prefer? Speak about your favourite author/book.

B: If you prefer films to books, what kind of films do you like? Speak about your favourite film.

- 6) What English-speaking authors do you know (e.g. from your literature lessons at this school)?
- 7) Have you ever been to a theatre? Where in Jihlava can theatre performances be seen?