

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

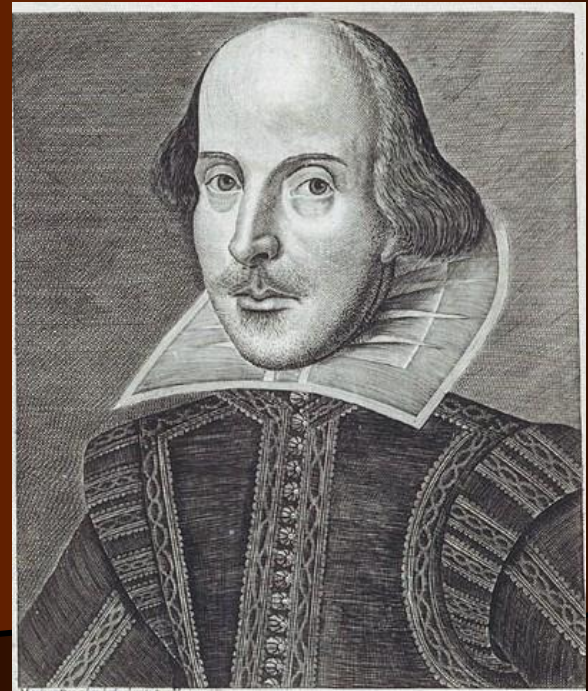
by William Shakespeare



An introduction to the world's most famous couple and its author!

William Shakespeare

- We know relatively little about his life as records were not kept back then.
- The information we do know comes from church record books.
- The church kept records of :
 - baptisms
 - marriages
 - deaths



What we do know:

- Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire County, England on April 23rd, 1563.*



- * The actual date of Shakespeare's birth is not known, but it was customary for newborns to be baptized three days after their birth. Since he was baptized on April 26th, 1563, we assume that he was born on April 23rd.

Parents



His father, John, was a glovemaker and wool merchant.

He became popular and wealthy.

- John served as high bailiff– what we would call a mayor.
- John lost all of his money and went into debt.
- Somehow he managed to get it back and he regained his status shortly before his death in 1601.
- His mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a well-to-do local landowner.

Childhood

- Shakespeare probably attended Stratford Grammar school where he learned to read and write.



The Lost Years

- There is a period of years where we know very little of Shakespeare's life.
- The first period was 1578-1582; the time he left grammar school until he married.
- The second period was from 1582-1592; the time of his marriage until he appeared on the stage in London.

Married Life



- William married Anne Hathaway, daughter of a prominent farmer
- November 28, 1582
- She was 26 years old
- Will was only 18

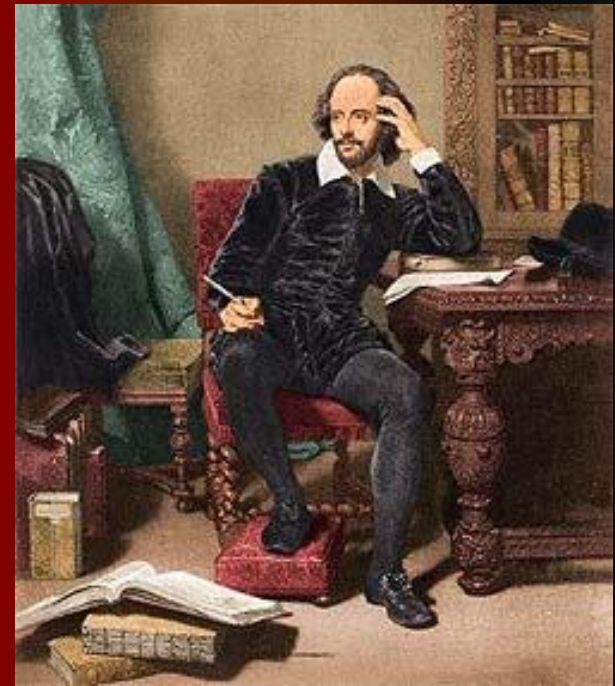
Children

- The couple had a daughter six months after marrying (May 26, 1583)
 - Suzanna
- This means what exactly?
 - Scandalous!
- On January 31st, 1585, they had twins:
 - Judith
 - Hamnet
- Hamnet dies at age 11; cause is unknown.
- This means Shakespeare leaves no male heir to carry on the family name.



Off to London...

- Shakespeare left for London but the cause and timetable were unknown.
- Began his career in theater as an actor for Lord Chamberlain's Men
- Was also a stockholder in the company
- The plays were extremely popular and attracted vast audiences.
- Queen Elizabeth I was a fan of the theater
- When she died in 1603, King James I took over the monarchy. Shakespeare renamed the troupe the King's Men in his honor.



The Plague

- The theater was very popular and attendance was usually very high.
- Unfortunately, the theater was closed due to disease.
- This happened in 1593, 1603 and 1608 when all theaters were closed due to the Bubonic Plague (The Black Death).

Meanwhile...

- William Shakespeare no doubt used these periods of closure to write more plays and go home to Stratford.
- Shakespeare probably also used this time to write poetry, creating 154 sonnets.
- He wrote a total of 37 plays, with his first one appearing in 1594. He produced roughly two a year until 1610.

The Globe Theater

- Built in 1599, most of Shakespeare's plays were performed here.
- Plays were produced for the general public
- Roofless: open air
- No artificial lighting
- Courtyard surrounded by 3 levels of galleries



Fire! Fire!

- Unfortunately, the Globe burned down twice...
 - Once in 1613, and again in 1644
- A replica was built in 1997 and is currently in London on the South bank of the Thames river.



What you saw...

- Wealthy sat in the balconies and got benches
- "Groundlings" = the poor people stood and watched from the courtyard- Paid 1¢ to get in.
- All but wealthy were uneducated/illiterate
- Much more interaction than today:
 - Yelling, throwing things
 - Not uncommon for groundlings to jump on stage and take part in major action scenes



Differences from today...

- Very little scenery
- Settings were referenced in dialogue
- No sound, lighting, or special effects
- Elaborate costumes
- Plenty of props
- Fast-paced, colorful
- Plays lasted 2-3 hours with no intermission!



The biggest difference...

- Women were not allowed on stage— considered indecent.
- Only men and boys
- Young boys whose voices had not yet changed played the minor women's roles
- Important female roles, like Juliet, were played by older boys aged 13-16.
- During this time, boys did not mature as quickly as they do today.



Shakespeare's Plays

- Three different kinds:

- Comedies
- Tragedies
- Histories



- Written around 1595, Romeo and Juliet is considered a tragedy

Tragedy– Shakespearean Style

- A Drama is where the central character(s) suffer a disaster or great misfortune
 - In many tragedies, the downfall results from:
 - Fate
 - Character flaw/Fatal flaw
 - Combination of the two

But, there is also some comedy in the play.

Comic Relief

- "The introduction of comic characters, speeches, or scenes in a serious or tragic work, especially in dramas. Comic relief was universal in Elizabethan tragedies."

~M.H. Abrams



What's funny about death?

- Comedy is included in tragedies because:
 - It heightens the contrast
 - It gives the audience an emotional break
 - It diminishes the tension evoked in the tragic scenes
 - It delights the audience
 - It adds variety
 - When integrated with the plot, it can counterpoint & enhance the serious significance

So, what makes us laugh?

- Aside- Words spoken, usually in an undertone not intended to be heard by all characters
- Contrasts
- Hyperbole-extreme exaggerations
- Poking fun
- Puns- Humorous use of a word with two meanings. Sometimes they are missed by the reader because of Elizabethan language.

● Two renowned comic characters in Romeo and Juliet are:

➤ Mercutio

➤ The nurse

Let's talk Language!

- The language of Shakespeare's time is much different than the language we speak today.
- This is why many people have a difficult time deciphering it.
- It's like reading a foreign language.
- Just remember, you don't have to understand every word. We'll take it slow and make it through!



Blank Verse

- Much of Romeo & Juliet is written in:
 - unrhymed verse
 - iambic (unstressed syllable, stressed syllable)
 - pentameter (5 "feet" to a line)
 - ends up to be 10 syllable lines (+/-)
- Makes up most of the language ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the play
- This is the same form as Shakespeare's sonnets.

Prose

- Ordinary writing that is not poetry, drama, or song
- Makes up only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total language of the play.
 - Only characters in the lower social classes speak this way in Shakespeare's plays
 - Why do you suppose that is?

Drama Terms

- Monologue: One person speaking on stage. There may be other characters on stage, too.
 - Example: The Prince of Verona commanding the Capulets and Montagues to cease feuding.
- Soliloquy: Long speech expressing the thoughts of a character alone on stage.
 - Hamlet's "To be or not to be?" speech

Drama Terms, cont.

- Aside – a remark made by a character in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters in the play. (Stage whisper)

Now, onto the play!

my only love sprung from my only hate.

LEONARDO DICAPRIO

CLAIRE DANES



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

ROMEO + JULIET

Setting of the play

- Verona, Italy
- Mantua
- 13th – 14th Century
- Rich and Elegant



Our Tragic Hero

- Romeo Montague
 - 16 years old
 - Only child
 - In love with Rosaline
 - Impulsive
 - Eventually Exiled



Juliet: The Beautifully Tragic Heroine

- Juliet Capulet

- 13 years old
- Only child
- Innocent
- Independent



The Feuding Families

- Montague
- Lady Montague
- Romeo
- Mercutio

- Capulet
- Lady Capulet
- Juliet
- Tybalt
- Nurse (Juliet's Nurse)



Montagues



Montague



Benvolio



Romeo



Balthasar

Capulets



Nurse



Lady Capulet



Tybalt



Juliet



Capulet

Other Characters



Friar Laurence



Count Paris



Prince



Mercutio

Minor Characters

- Escalus, Prince of Verona
- Samson & Gregory
- Benvolio
- Friar John
- Balthasar
- Abraham