



The Mini Page

Next Week:
Hubble
Telescope

Issue 15, 2025

Founded by Betty Debnam

Meet Will Shakespeare



art by Phoebe Dighton, courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library

Mini Fact:

This painting from 1834 shows the house where Shakespeare was born (center house).

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564, and even now, more than 460 years later, his plays, including "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet," are among the most admired literature in the world. He is also known for his **sonnets** (SAHN-its), a special type of poem.



William Shakespeare

This week, The Mini Page learns more about the writer known as the Bard.

Will's home

William was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His father, John Shakespeare, was wealthy. He had gained much of his money from his wife, Mary Arden. A woman's property went to her husband at that time.

William's dad made leather goods such as gloves. He was also a top official in Stratford. He was chief **alderman**, or an elected official similar to a city councilman. At times, he served as deputy **bailiff** (BAY-lif), or sheriff.

William grew up with five siblings and many cousins. His mother and grandmother probably taught the kids to read at home.

When they were 4 or 5 years old, children learned to read with a **hornbook**, or a little wooden tablet with



A hornbook

Photos courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library

a piece of paper or parchment glued to it. It was covered with a thin, protective piece of animal horn.

Children attending grammar school usually learned both reading and writing. There were no set rules for how to spell words at that time, so nobody had spelling tests.

Going to school

When he was 7, William began attending the Stratford Grammar School, an excellent school founded in 1295. It was in a large hall above a meeting room.

School was hard. The school day started at 6 a.m. in the summer and 7 a.m. in the winter. It lasted eight to 12 hours, six days a week. Kids had to bring their own candles to study in the dark.

The boys studied plays and literature by ancient Romans and Greeks. Students learned by reciting or writing things over and over. They had to memorize a lot. They also had to learn how to compose their own works.

Dramatic plays

About once a year, groups of traveling **players**, or actors, came to Stratford. From the time he was about 8, William was able to watch plays with the rest of the townspeople.

Players would perform in front of town officials, in the square or in an inn yard. People would watch from balconies around the inn.

There were no women players. Young men acted the women's parts. Traveling players may have performed in churches or on temporary stages built in the town.

Growing up

William left school at around 15 years old and may have become a schoolmaster in a household in northern England, or he may have become an actor.

He returned to Stratford when he was 18 and married a neighborhood girl, Anne Hathaway. They had a daughter, Susanna, and twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet died when he was 11.

Shakespeare's plays

We don't know how Shakespeare got started in theater, but experts know he was in London acting and writing plays by the 1590s.

His playwriting career went very well. He bought a house in Stratford for his family. He became part owner of a successful **playing**, or acting, company called The King's Men. It was probably **sponsored**, or supported, by King James. Shakespeare also owned property in London.



Shakespeare's acting company built the Globe Theatre in London, where they performed.

Resources



On the Web:

- folger.edu/explore/shakespeare-for-kids

At the library:

- "Shakespeare's First Folio: All the Plays: A Children's Edition" by The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of William Shakespeare are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- ACTOR, ALDERMAN,
- ANNE, BAILIFF, BARD,
- ENGLAND, GLOBE,
- HORNBOOK, LONDON,
- PLAYERS, PLAYS, POEM,
- SCHOOL, SHAKESPEARE,
- SONNETS, STRATFORD,
- THEATER, WILLIAM,
- WRITER.

Z W E H K B A I L I F F S Z I
L A L D E R M A N P L A Y S K
S O N N E T S B E N G L A N D
J E E R A E P S E K A H S D S
H N W I L L I A M F C J R N C
R N K O O B N R O H S A E O H
O A I A G L O B E G B C Y D O
T T S T R A T F O R D A A N O
C P O E M D W R I T E R L O L
A I R E T A E H T S L P P L U

Cook's Corner

Mango-Honey Sherbet With Lime

You'll need:

- 2 cups chopped mango
- 1 cup low-fat (1%) milk
- 1/2 cup orange juice

- 3 tablespoons honey
- Juice and zest of 1 lime



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. In a food processor or blender, combine mango, milk, orange juice, honey, 1 tablespoon of the lime juice and 1/2 teaspoon of lime zest. Puree until smooth.
2. Transfer the mixture to a bowl or airtight container and freeze until firm, about 1 hour. Serves 4.

Mini Jokes



- Warren:** If William were a reptile, what would he be called?
- Wendy:** Snakespeare!

Eco Note



A global seafood company is offering a \$48 bounty per fish captured after around 27,000 of its farmed salmon escaped from a facility off Norway's coast, sparking concerns for the area's ecology. The escape occurred after a powerful winter storm damaged a fish pen in Troms. Norway's government has ruled out banning open-net farms, where fish are raised in large floating cages in the ocean. Conservationists warn that escaped farmed salmon threaten wild populations by reducing genetic diversity and spreading disease.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for items about plays being staged in your area.

Teachers: Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!



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1. Someone who puts words on paper for others to read (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

2. Stories performed on stage by actors (5-letter plural noun)

□ □ □ □ □

3. Known widely and well; recognized by many people (6-letter adjective)

□ □ □ □ □ □

4. Satisfactory completion of something; the gaining of respect (7-letter noun)

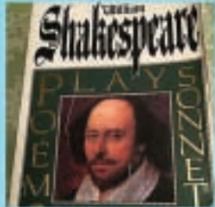
□ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. Shakespeare, a _____, completed 154 sonnets.
2. "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" are two of his well-known _____.
3. One of his most _____ works is "Romeo & Juliet."
4. The show was a _____; people clapped and shouted.

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ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Writer, Plays, Famous, Success.

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