

Playwright Biography: William Shakespeare



The Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare. Artist unknown.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), poet, playwright and actor, was born to Mary Arden and John Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England on April 23, 1564.

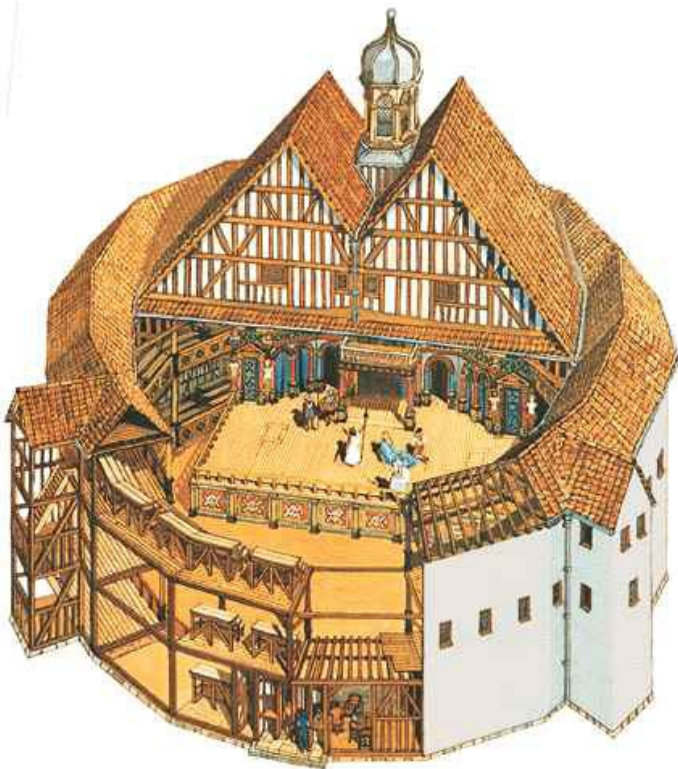
Although much is written about him, very little documentation of his life survives beyond the public records of his birth, death, marriage and financial transactions. Shakespeare probably attended the Edward VI Grammar School, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

At age 18, he married Anne Hathaway (age 26), who gave birth to daughter Susanna, just six months after the wedding. In 1585, Anne gave birth to twins Hamnet (who died at the age 11) and Judith. From 1585-1591, not much is known about Shakespeare's life and this period is often referred to as the "lost years." However, it is clear that he moved to London to pursue theatre during this time (probably around 1587).

In 1592, Shakespeare was listed as an actor with the Lord Strange's Players, for whom he wrote his first play, the highly successful *Henry VI, Part 1*, followed immediately by the sequels *Henry VI, Parts 2 & 3* in the same year. He later joined, and became part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men continuing his career as a playwright. Over the course of twenty years, he wrote 148 sonnets, 3 long poems, and the 37 plays that continued to be performed around the world today. This season A Noise Within is producing Shakespeare's *King Lear* in Spring 2017.

In 1599, Shakespeare bought a share in the newly built outdoor Globe Theatre where his plays were constantly performed. The Globe Theatre was accidentally burned down in 1613 before being quickly rebuilt in 1614. However, the Globe closed in 1642 after all theatres were abolished by England's Puritan administration and was demolished in 1644. Today, visitors flock to London to visit Shakespeare's Globe, a reconstruction of the original theatre, that was opened in 1997.

Between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died in 1616 at the age of 52. He supposedly died on the same day he was born, April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. ♦



A Reconstruction of The Globe Theatre.