



Lauren Gundersen's

The **Book** of **Will**

May 7–June 11



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All the best,

Alicia Green
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Pictured: Carolyn Ratteray, Evan Lewis Smith, and Veralyn Jones, *Gem of the Ocean* 2019. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

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This project is part of Shakespeare in American Communities, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

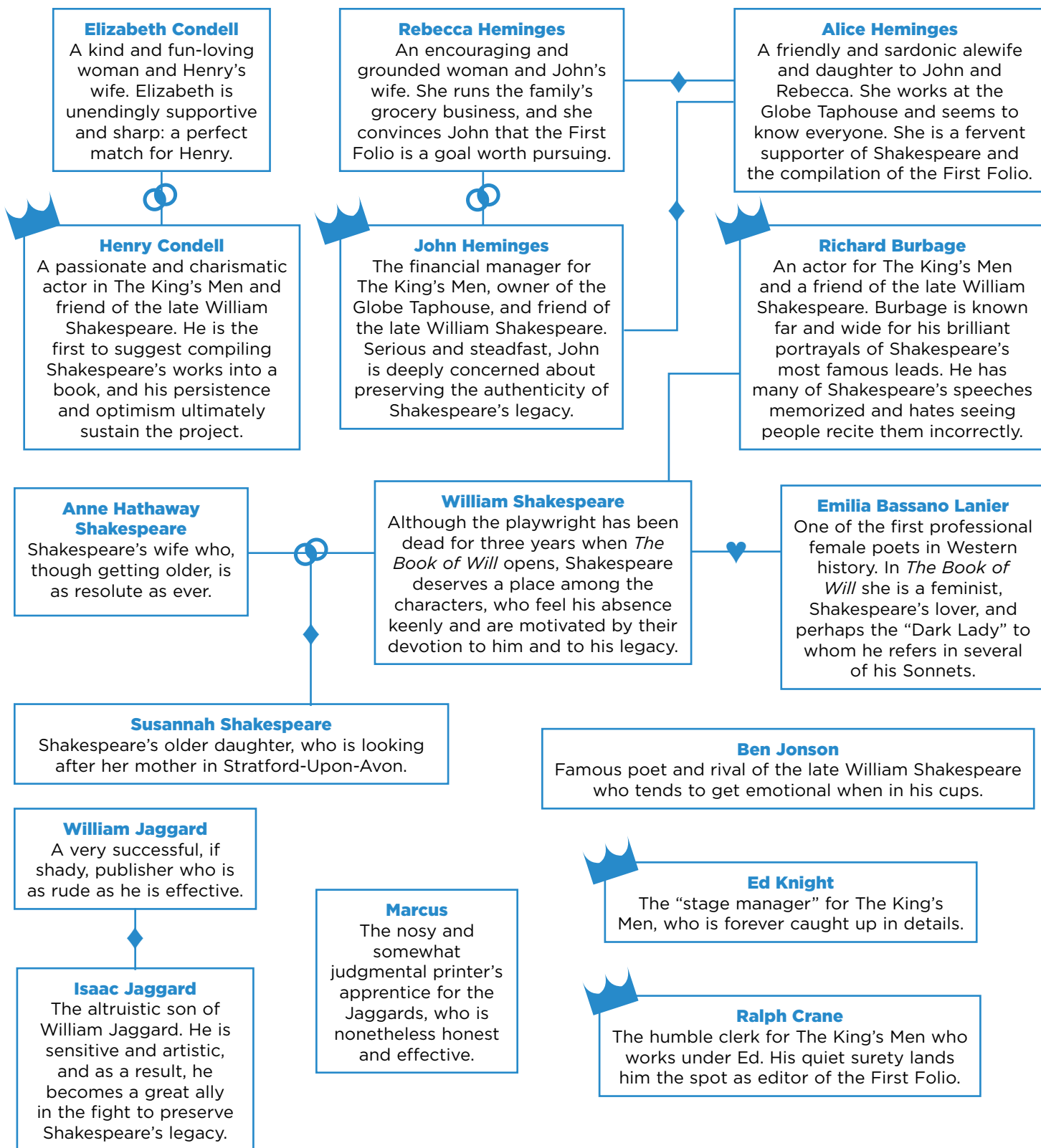


This organization is supported in part by the California Arts Council, a state agency. Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov.

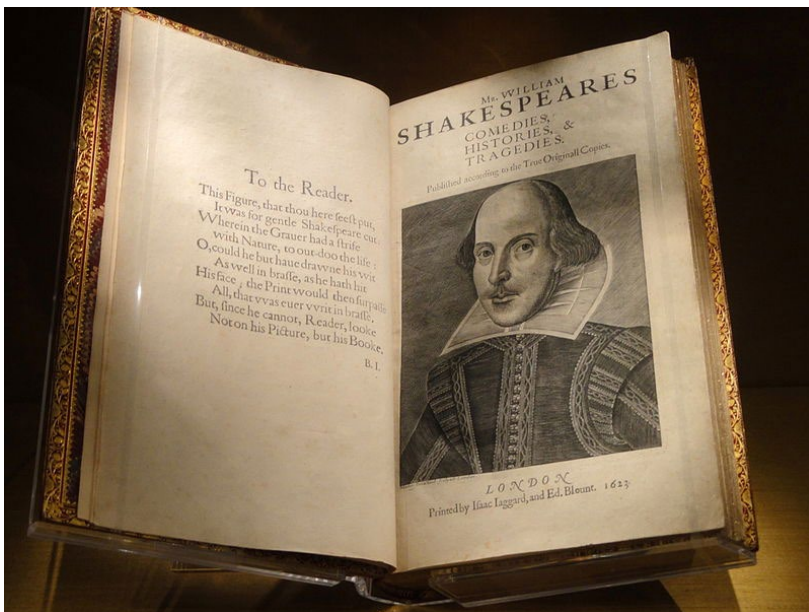


This organization is supported in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Department of Arts and Culture.

CHARACTER MAP



SYNOPSIS BY DR. MIRANDA JOHNSON-HADDAD



First Folio in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, USA. Photo from 2013.



Memorial to John Heminges and Henry Condell, London. Photo from 2013.

The year is 1619, and William Shakespeare has been dead for three years. His friends and fellow actors in The King's Men have gathered at the Globe Tap House, a pub next to the Globe Theatre. Among those present are the famous Shakespearean actors Richard Burbage and Henry Condell; former actor John Heminges, who is now the financial manager of The King's Men and the owner of the Tap House, and Heminges's daughter, Alice, who works in the pub. The men are lamenting a terrible production from a pirated version of *Hamlet* that they have just seen. Everyone is dismayed at the overall decline in the quality of the London theatre productions.

The next day, Heminges and Condell learn that Burbage has abruptly died during the night. Their wives, Rebecca Heminges and Elizabeth Condell, discuss their husbands' devastation at this loss. Later, they all reconvene at the Tap House, joined by the poet and playwright Ben Jonson. Gradually it dawns on everyone that many of Shakespeare's plays, which lived on primarily in Burbage's memory, may now be lost forever. Slowly the friends form the idea to collect as many accurate versions of the plays as they can find and then to publish them in a Folio edition.

The men, their wives, and Alice begin to scour the city for copies of Shakespeare's plays, but they soon realize the many challenges their project presents: no available quartos (good or "bad") for many of the plays; no surviving manuscripts for most of them; confusion over who owns the rights to the plays; where to find a printer; and, above all, how to finance the whole endeavor. The project takes almost four years, during which time Heminges and Condell encounter many colorful individuals whom history remembers still, including Ralph Crane, the scrivener who copied out Shakespeare's plays; William Jaggard and his son Isaac, who printed the Folio; and Emilia Bassano Lanier, who may have been the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Heminges and Condell experience many doubts and huge personal loss over the years, but their belief in their task becomes a passionate conviction that sustains them through the many challenges they encounter. At the play's conclusion, they travel to Stratford-on-Avon to present a copy to Shakespeare's widow, Anne Hathaway, and his older daughter, Susannah. As Anne opens the book, the awed and grateful Heminges and Condell realize, perhaps for the first time, the enormous gift that they have given to the future. ♦

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: **LAUREN GUNDERSON**

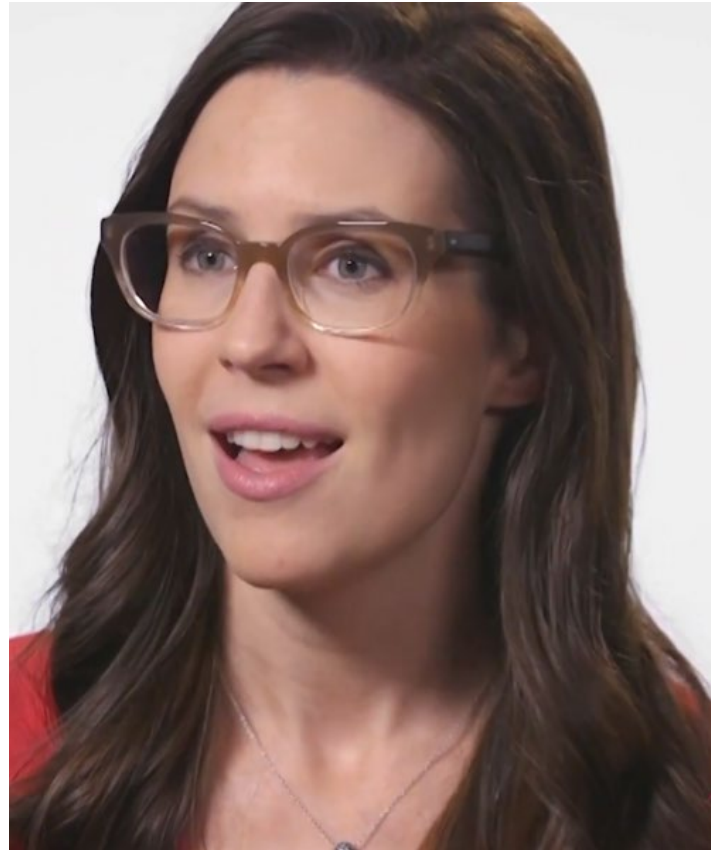
Playwright, screenwriter, and short story author

Lauren Gunderson was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1982. She has written many works since receiving her BA in English and Creative Writing at Emory University, and her MFA in Dramatic Writing at New York University. Though Gunderson is still a young and working playwright, her work already spans decades, with the first of her works, *Parts They Call Deep*, published in 2001 and the most recent of her works, *The Catastrophist*, published in 2021.

Gunderson's plays are steeped in feminism and history, with many of her works featuring important female figures from literature, science, and politics. As a result of her brilliant characters and thematic writing style, she was named among the top ten most-produced playwrights in America in 2017 and 2019 by *American Theatre Magazine*. Her works have won countless awards including the 2016 Lanford Wilson Award from the Dramatist Guild and the 2016 Otis Gurnsey Award for Emerging Writer. *I and You*, Gunderson's coming of age play about two high school students bonding over Walt Whitman, won the 2014 Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn and John Gassner Award.

The Book of Will won Gunderson her second Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award in 2018 and has been produced over 50 times nationwide. Gunderson's other works have seen similar success, with some of her other accolades including a spot as a Jane Chambers Award finalist, and the winner of the Berrilla Kerr Award for American Theatre, Global Age Project, Young Playwright's Award, Eric Bentley New Play Award, and Essential Theatre Prize.

Gunderson has been recognized and sought after by many prestigious institutions. She has been commissioned by The Denver Center Theatre Company, Crowded Fire, CentralWorks, The Kennedy Center, The Alliance Theatre's Collision Project, Marin Theatre Company, Actors Express Theatre, Dad's Garage Theatre, Theatrical Outfit, City University of New York and Synchronicity Performance Group. She has also been commissioned three times by South Coast Rep and twice by the San Francisco Playhouse.



Lauren Gunderson. 2020.

Gunderson's contribution to the theatre world cannot be overstated, and her dedication to activism and feminism makes her the perfect playwright to change the theatre world for the better. She isn't afraid to engage with complicated topics, keeping her plays tonally lighthearted while exploring the depths of human emotion. As a result, she will no doubt continue her impressive career for many years to come. ♦

Edited from: "Lauren Gunderson Bio." [Laurengunderson.com](https://www.laurengunderson.com), <https://www.laurengunderson.com/bio>.

ABOUT **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

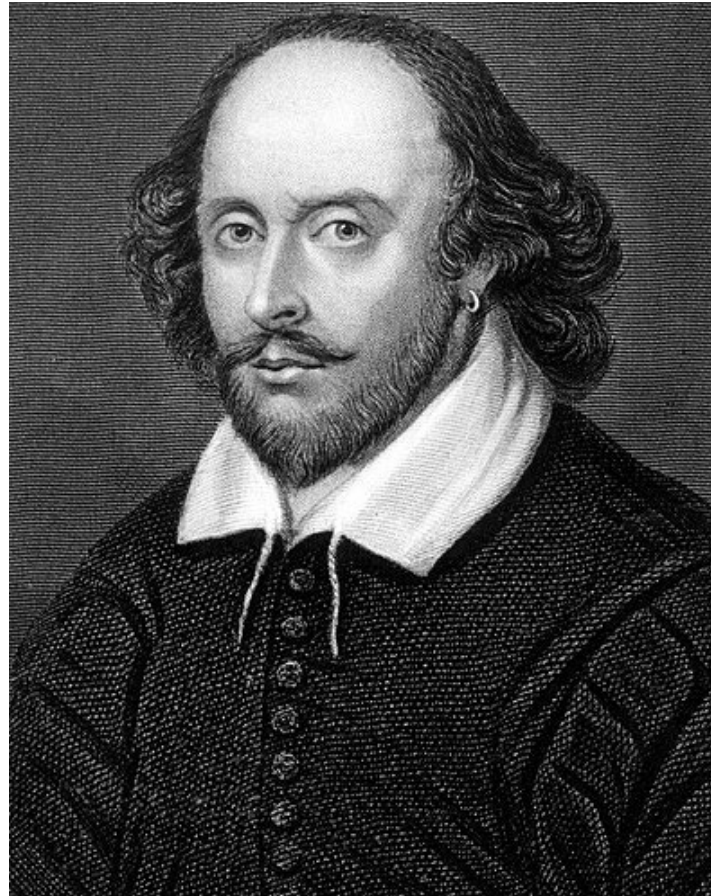
On April 23, 1564, in the English town of Stratford-upon-Avon, poet, playwright, and actor William Shakespeare was born to parents John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. Despite his enduring legacy as the playwright of some of the most well-known works in Western literature, very little documentation of Shakespeare's life exists beyond public records of his birth, death, marriage, and financial transactions.

Today, Shakespeare's works are taught in schools around the world, but Shakespeare's own education began at home. He would have grown up hearing fairytales and fables from his parents and would have been taught to read the Bible. Shakespeare's mother was the executor of her father's will, suggesting that she was literate, which was no small feat for a woman of her time. In addition to his home education, Shakespeare most likely attended the King's New School, a grammar school in Stratford, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

When Shakespeare was 18, he married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 years old. The two had a rushed marriage because Anne was already pregnant at the time of the wedding. The couple welcomed their first child, Susannah, six months after the ceremony. Anne later gave birth to twins Hamnet and Judith. Tragically, Hamnet died when he was just eleven years of age.

The years 1585-1591 are often referred to as the "lost years," as not much is known about Shakespeare's life during this period. However, it is clear that he moved to London to pursue theatre at some point during these years, likely around 1587. By 1592, Shakespeare had established his reputation as an actor and playwright in London. That year, it is believed that the Lord Strange's Men, a prominent acting company at the time, performed one of Shakespeare's plays—probably *Henry VI, Part I*. Shakespeare later became an original member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, one of the two theatrical companies legally approved to perform within London city limits at the time. During his time as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare wrote many of his most popular works.

In 1599, Shakespeare became the chief shareholder in the Globe Theatre, a newly-built performance space in London. His plays were regularly performed there until 1613, when a fire began during a production of *Henry VIII*, destroying the theatre. The Globe was rebuilt by 1614 but was closed, along



William Shakespeare, 5 February 1856.

with all other theatres, by the Puritan government in 1642 and subsequently demolished to make way for tenement buildings in 1644.

Over the course of about twenty years, Shakespeare created a staggering body of work, including 154 sonnets, three narrative poems, and 38 plays that are still performed around the world today. Sometime between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died in 1616 at the age of 52. It is believed that he died on the same day he was born, April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. ♦

TIMELINE OF **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S** LIFE

- 1564** William Shakespeare is born on April 23 in Stratford-upon-Avon to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden.
- 1582** William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway. Their marriage license is issued on November 27th.
- 1583** Shakespeare's first child, Susannah, is born in May, just six months after the wedding of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. Susannah is baptized on May 26th.
- 1585** Anne Hathaway gives birth to twins, Hamnet and Judith. They are baptized on February 2nd.

1585-1591

"The Lost Years." No records of Shakespeare's life during this period exist. At some point, he moves to London.

1590-1592

Shakespeare begins to write plays during this time. His earliest works are *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*. The exact dates these plays were written and first performed is unknown.

- 1592** While it is unclear when Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon, by this time, Shakespeare has established a reputation in London as an actor and a playwright. A plague breaks out in London and theatres are closed.
- 1593** Shakespeare writes *Venus and Adonis*, a long, narrative poem based on Book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.
- 1594** Theatres re-open after the plague. Shakespeare becomes a founding member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men. *The Comedy of Errors* is performed for the first time.



The Original Globe Theatre, artist unknown.

- 1596** Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, dies at age 11.
- 1599** The Globe Theatre opens in London. Shakespeare becomes a shareholder of the theatre.
- 1600-1610** Shakespeare writes several of his most prolific tragedies including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth I dies and King James I ascends the throne. He becomes the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men, who change the name of their company to The King's Men in honor of King James I.
- 1604** Shakespeare writes *Othello*, which is performed for the first time in court on November 1st by The King's Men. Richard Burbage—the leading actor of the company—originates the role of Othello, presumably wearing blackface makeup to indicate Othello's race.
- 1609** Shakespeare's sonnets are published. Shakespeare is believed to have written the sonnets at some point during the 1590s.
- 1613** The Globe Theatre burns down during the first performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*.
- 1614** The Globe Theatre is rebuilt.
- 1616** Shakespeare dies at the age of 52 in Stratford-upon-Avon. It is believed he died on April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity.
- 1623** John Heminges and Henry Condell collect and publish Shakespeare's plays in *Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. This publication is also known as The First Folio.



Shakespeare's Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon.

SETTING AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Shakespeare was a prominent playwright during the late Elizabethan Era. The Elizabethan Era began in 1558 when Queen Elizabeth I became the ruling monarch of England. During this period, the structure of English society was rigid and provided little opportunity for social mobility for members of the lower classes. Opportunities for social advancement were even more limited for women and people of color. In Elizabethan society, a person's birth often determined their social status, as illustrated by the idea of The Great Chain of Being. This concept claims that all things have a proper place in an overarching social hierarchy—from the smallest grain of sand up to the highest angel. The tiers of Elizabethan social structure can be broken down as follows from highest to lowest status:



The Ermine Portrait of Elizabeth I of England. Circa 1595.

The Queen

The Court—Made up of the English Nobility.

Merchants—Well-off citizens without royal connections. Individuals in this social class often took positions in town councils and local government.

Livery Companies—Institutions that controlled what was bought and sold. Companies specialized in certain products such as wine, cloth, and jewelry.

Apprentices—Young men who paid workers in Livery Companies in exchange for experience learning trades.

The Poor—The lowest status of citizens.

By 1569, a welfare system was in place in the City of London to help the able poor find food and work.

ART AND CULTURE

The Elizabethan Era is considered a “golden age” of art and culture in English history. During this time, the popularization of printed materials and live entertainment caused significant shifts in the country's cultural landscape. Over a hundred years before the start of Elizabeth's reign in England, exiled German inventor Johannes Gutenberg introduced the Gutenberg Press. By the time



Costumes of the Elizabethan Era. Unknown Author, 1867.

Elizabeth took the throne, printed materials were among the most important commodities actively produced and sold in London, only growing in popularity over the course of her reign. Advances in printing technology made it possible to churn out pamphlets, sermons, plays, poems, proclamations, and diatribes at a remarkable rate. The increased popularity and accessibility of printed materials allowed for stories and ideas to circulate among English urban centers faster than ever before.

Live entertainment was also a cultural staple in Elizabethan society. Despite the disparity between social classes in the era, live entertainment provided members of all social classes the opportunity to gather and experience anything from songs to sports to, among the most popular of all, live theatre. From the poor, who stood on the ground level of theatres and were thus called “groundlings,” to the nobility who sat in the higher tiers of seats, theatre was accessible to people from all ranks of society. ♦

Edited from:

Picard, Liza. “The Social Structure in Elizabethan England.” The British Library, The British Library, 17 Feb. 2016, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-social-structure-in-elizabethanengland. and Rasmussen, Eric, and Ian DeJong. “Shakespeare's London.” The British Library, The British Library, 2 Oct. 2015, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeares-london.

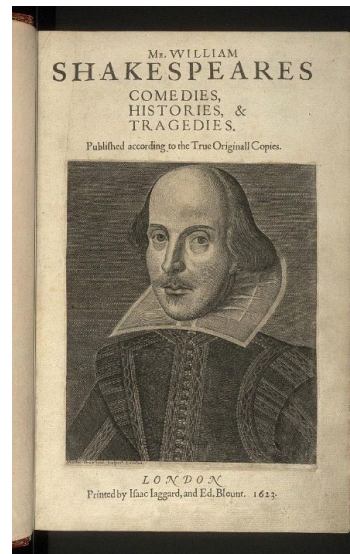
ABOUT THE **FIRST FOLIO**

The Book of Will emphasizes a great amount of hard work and love that were poured into the creation of the First Folio. Though we will never know for sure what Shakespeare was truly like, nor will we ever grasp what he meant to John Heminges and Henry Condell, some clues are left behind in the published pages of the First Folio. Whether Heminges and Condell realized they were assembling one of the greatest gifts ever left to the literary world, or whether they simply longed to honor their late friend, the degree of respect granted to Shakespeare in the pages of the First Folio cannot be overstated.

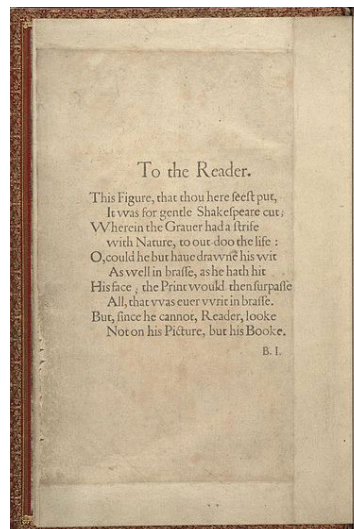
The forward to *The Book of Will* is the same as that of the First Folio itself. That is, a letter from John Heminges and Henry Condell stating their wishes and intentions for the publication. The full forward is below:

“From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number’d. We had rather you were weighed. Especially, when the fate of all books depends upon your capacities; and not on your heads alone, but of your purses. ... And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit to arrange plays daily, know, these plays have had their trial already, and stood out all appeals; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas’d Letters of commendation.

It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the Author himself had liv’d to have set forth, and overseen his own writings; but since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his Friends, the office of their care, and pain, to have collected and published them; and so to have publish’d them, as where (before) you were abus’d with diverse stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious imposters, that expos’d them: even those, and now offer’d to your view cur’d, and perfect of their limbs; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived the[m]. Who, as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. ... Read him, therefore; and again, and again: and if you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him.”



From *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies or The First Folio*, London, 1623.



Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies or The First Folio. Printed by Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard. London. 1623.

The love and respect that Heminges and Condell had for Shakespeare are palpable from this introduction. The care with which the First Folio was assembled—the considerations of legacy—radiate from each word. This is the passage of text from which *The Book of Will* seems to take its tonal inspiration. There is the same grand respect, same solemn mourning, same love of language in Heminges and Condell’s opening words as carry through the plot of *The Book of Will*. ♦

IS THE BOOK OF WILL A COMEDY?

The First Folio, John Heminges' and Henry Condell's great labor of love compiled seven years after Shakespeare's death, was the first published collection of the Bard's plays. The official title of the First Folio printed on the title page of the collection is "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies." This collection was the first time that Shakespeare's works had been grouped by genre. Although these categories are still generally accepted, interpretations of Shakespeare's plays have evolved since the publication of the First Folio. In order to encompass the full breadth of Shakespeare's work, the "romance" and "problem play" categories have since been added.

The plots of Shakespeare's comedies are typically not too different from those of his tragedies. In both his comedies and his tragedies, plots often revolve around ideas of mistaken identity, deception, love, and honor. Comedies and tragedies both contain elements of the other, with the tragedies often enjoying moments of levity and humor (consider Mercutio's Queen Mab monologue in *Romeo and Juliet*) and comedies experiencing moments of grounding solemnity (consider Hero's fake death in *Much Ado About Nothing*). So, if they have so many common elements, how do we go about categorizing something as a comedy?

Shakespearean comedies are typically recognizable for the following:

- Lovers end up together and can usually be expected to marry by the final scene.
- Characters use frequent wordplay, often of the bawdy variety.
- Gender roles are explored whether it be through crossdressing or merely through characterization.
- Hurt is temporary and generally gets resolved by the end of the play.

Despite the four hundred and some years that separate Shakespeare's works from the comedies of today, *The Book of Will* still follows much the same criteria. Because *The Book of Will* serves chiefly as an homage to Shakespeare's work and the titanic effort by his peers to preserve it, the play cannot be said to fit neatly into the category of "comedy." After all, can a play with so much loss and strife be funny? Is every funny play a comedy? Although it may be difficult to categorize the play specifically, to examine *The Book of Will* under the criteria of a

Shakespearean comedy is to reveal its themes and highlight its very nature.

Firstly, do lovers end up together by the end of the play? Yes and no. John and Alice lose Rebecca, but the two share a familial love that grows even stronger with their loss. Henry and Elizabeth, for their part, are still married by the end of the play. Even though the characters experience loss, love still triumphs over it. The perfect example of this is at the very end when John and Henry visit Anne Hathaway Shakespeare and her daughter Susannah. The two women are reunited with Shakespeare's love as a result of the First Folio: his words expressing the unending devotion of a man away from a home he loves.

Secondly, the characters clearly use frequent wordplay that is, indeed, often of a bawdy variety. Any audience member who watches for more than a minute can pick up the snappy language Gunderson employs to mirror the Bard's own wordplay.

Thirdly, Gunderson explores gender roles in every play she writes, and *The Book of Will* is no exception. Alice, Rebecca, and Elizabeth serve as guiding lights and forces of change throughout the story, and they are never afraid to speak their minds or shut down nonsense. Emilia Bassano Lanier is a triumph in her own right, showing what it means to be a strong woman ahead of her time. Anne Hathaway Shakespeare and Susannah Shakespeare are not to be forgotten either, for they remind audiences how to hold their loved ones accountable while also holding them close.

Fourth and finally, pain gets resolved by the end of the play. This may be deceptive. After all, the characters in *The Book of Will* experience tremendous loss and pain. However, if *The Book of Will* does anything, it demonstrates that loss is permanent, but hurt is temporary. The characters don't magically heal or stop grieving their lost loved ones, but they learn that if legacy is preserved, the hurt will turn to hope in time. It is for this reason that perhaps *The Book of Will* works best when categorized as a comedy about death.

Edited from: Jamieson, Lee. "4 Ways to Identify a Shakespeare Comedy." *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 10 Aug. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-identify-a-shakespeare-comedy-2985155>.

A WOMAN'S LOT: THE ROLES AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY

Queen Elizabeth I made history when she famously decided not to marry, making her the first woman to rule England as a sole monarch. While Elizabeth's radical decision to rule without a husband heralded some degree of hope for progress regarding women's rights, women in Elizabethan England were still far from equal to men.

To begin, women were granted significantly fewer opportunities to receive an education. While some girls, typically girls of higher social status, could attend grammar school, they were not allowed to attend university or work in any professional field. Much of a young woman's education centered on how she might be a proper wife and mother, and many only learned to read so they could properly understand the Bible.

According to the laws of the time, women could not own or inherit property, fundamentally excluding them from achieving any kind of financial independence. A woman's financial status and stability depended entirely on the men in her life. In childhood and adolescence, girls relied on their fathers for financial backing, and in marriage, women depended on their husbands. Any property belonging to a woman's family would be passed down to the family's eldest son, regardless of the eldest son's age—a family could have a 20-year-old daughter and an infant son, and the son would still be the sole inheritor of the family's property. Should a family have no male heirs, the eldest daughter would be allowed to inherit her family's property. This, however, was often deemed socially unacceptable. As a result, families frequently went out of their way to procure male heirs to prevent the eldest daughter from inheriting, even if that meant passing an inheritance to a very distant relation.

Since women did not own or inherit property, nearly all women in the Elizabethan Era married. Marriage was an essential aspect of society, and thus many social and legal codes governing marriage practices existed. Before the Elizabethan Era, marriages often functioned solely as alliances between families in order to protect or advance a family's wealth and social status. While marriages still often functioned like this during the Elizabethan Era, a new law was passed in 1604, allowing a man and a woman to marry without the consent of either person's parents. This slight shift in laws and practices allowed for a bit more marital freedom, which appealed to the growing trend of placing affection and love at the core of a marriage.



Left to Right:

Hans Eworth, Portrait of a woman, aged sixteen. 1565.

Unknown author, Queen Elizabeth I. Circa 1559.

WOMEN IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

The women in Shakespeare's plays, particularly in Shakespeare's comedies and romances, tend to challenge what it meant to be a proper woman in Elizabethan England. In *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, we see heroines crossdress as a means of reinvention or disguise. When they do so, they adopt an appearance and manner so precise that they trick nearly everyone they encounter. In presenting as men, these comedic heroines contradict the social expectations assigned to them by their gender and social status, if only for a short time.

Other comedic and romantic heroines in Shakespeare's canon use language and wit to defy social expectations. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Beatrice engages Benedick in frequent battles of wit and wordplay, often outshining him while also embodying a fierce sense of independence. Margaret also stands out, using bawdy humor and double entendre to defy expectations of propriety and purity.

Sir Walter Raleigh, a contemporary of Shakespeare and a poet, notes how the women in Shakespeare's plays, particularly comedies and romances, "are almost all practical, impatient of mere words, clear-sighted as to ends and means. They do not accept the premises to deny the conclusion, or decorate the inevitable with imaginative lendings." ♦

Edited from:

McManus, Clare. "Shakespeare and Gender: The 'Woman's Part'." The British Library, The British Library, 10 Feb. 2016, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeare-and-gender-the-womans-part.

THEMES

DEATH AND THE PRECIOUSNESS OF LIFE

“I realized the great weight of every grieving father’s prayers that must hit God every night, and must sound so much like my own. Sons who lost fathers, husbands without wives, mothers—oh God the mothers. All that grief on God’s ear constantly. Then I felt bad for God. Which made me laugh. Which made me feel alive again. Funny how that worked out didn’t it.” —Henry Condell, Act II, Scene i

The theme of death and loss permeate every page, every line of *The Book of Will*. The sense of grief the characters feel about the passing of their friend is so acute that the absence of William Shakespeare is almost a character in and of itself. Each character must figure out how to process their grief in a way that feels meaningful to them. The grief, this sense of heavy loss certainly weighs on the characters, but it doesn’t thoroughly destroy them. In a play about people mourning their deceased friend, one might expect a melancholy tone, morose characters, and observations about the tragedies that befall human beings. But *The Book of Will* doesn’t fall into that trap. Instead, Gunderson uses the loss to highlight how important life is. In the above quote, Henry talks about mourning the loss of his son. He reflects on the ceaseless pain and the prayers he offered up to take his pain away. But even in that moment of deep and disjointed pain, Henry’s mind turned to humor, and the laughter at his own grief-stricken mindset makes him feel alive again.

That is the true beauty to be found in this comedy about death. For every moment the characters spend grieving a loss, there is a moment where they use that loss to remind themselves how important it is to experience the fullness of life while they’re alive. It is this consistent and poignant duality that brings the play balance and highlights exactly how excellent of a thematic writer Gunderson is. The characters themselves talk about how without the tragedies, there could be no comedies, and without the exits, there could be no entrances. Life is precious because it ends, just like stories are precious because they end. Infinity isn’t special. Endings are special. Even the ones that hurt us.

LEGACY

“He was a great man, Will, and a great friend to me and I feel it’s my duty to care for his legacy like it were my own, and I do not see *any* humor in



Francesco Bartolozzi (~1815), Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727-1785), *The Nymph of Immortality, Attended by the Loves, Crowning the Bust of Shakespeare*. 1784.

editing.” —Ralph Crane, Act II, Scene ii

Throughout *The Book of Will*, there are many discussions about legacy and respect. The characters frequently raise the question of who is worthy of respect, and whose legacy deserves to be preserved and how? Clearly, the most prominent legacy considered by the characters is that of Shakespeare himself. The Bard’s impact is recognized not only by his friends, but also by his peers, rivals, and lovers. By the time the First Folio is published, every character agrees that it is not only personally important to remember the man Shakespeare was, but also culturally vital to preserve the work he created. Gunderson pays homage not only to Shakespeare, but to the tireless efforts of Heminges and Condell, who are rarely even mentioned in popular culture.

This theme is also present metatheatrically, as audience members know that Shakespeare’s legacy lives on in his surviving plays and poems while Heminges’ and Condell’s legacies are chiefly involved with the preservation of Shakespeare’s. It is also interesting to consider which characters in the play have lasting legacies in the real world

THEMES CONTINUED...

and which have been forgotten. Heminges, Condell, Burbage, Crane, and Jaggard may have legacies that are inextricably linked to Shakespeare's work, but at least they are remembered at all. The only information one can find about Elizabeth Condell and Rebecca Heminges are as footnotes in their husbands' stories (who themselves are often footnotes in Shakespeare's). Even Emilia Bassano Lanier, who was an excellent poet in her own right, is granted very little in the eyes of history. By considering which characters are deserving of a lasting legacy in *The Book of Will* and comparing that to which of the real-life inspirations are granted remembrance in the cultural consciousness, readers will notice Gunderson's own feminist ideals. She clearly has great respect for Shakespeare's legacy and that of Heminges and Condell, but she also gives the women in their lives the consideration that they deserve but are seldom afforded.

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND THEATRE

JOHN. "It seems childish but I...would stand on the boards. And speak. The whole theatre dark but for a candle to my side. I would recite speeches. *Hamlet* and *Lear*. Some *King John*, anything that would...direct the rage, the pain, the endless pain of it. Plays held more solace than priests, they always did in that respect. You're supposed to be quiet in church. That I could not do, not when God asked me to hold that much in my heart, I could not do that."

REBECCA. "You needed words."

JOHN. "Yes I did. They were alive for me."

REBECCA. "Yes they are"

—Act II, Scene i

If the undying nature of Shakespeare's works has taught us anything, it is the transformative power that words can have. The Bard's words are so woven into the fabric of current society that imagining a world without them is unfathomable. In *The Book of Will*, Shakespeare's friends are in a similar situation. Their worlds have been completely transformed by their friend and his incredible works. They, however, are also faced with the very real possibility that without decisive action, the plays of William Shakespeare could be lost forever. The love of the words, not just the love of their friend, motivates Condell and Heminges to sacrifice years of life and huge sums of money to preserve the plays as Will wrote them.

The words and lines by themselves are moving enough, with the characters frequently quoting their favorite Shakespeare lines, but there is something particularly moving about words written for the stage. It is a very personal thing to watch someone pour out their deepest thoughts on the stage, something to which any theatre audience can attest. There is a sense of grandiose respect granted to the stage that makes ordinary moments and unpleasant feelings seem important and worthy of observation. When Heminges is grieving the death of Rebecca, Condell remarks that the theatre makes people feel again. Heminges replies that he has already felt quite enough. In answer, Condell offers the following passionate opinion about the role of theatre in society:

"To feel *again*. That's the miracle of it. The fairies aren't real but the feeling is. And it comes to us here, player and groundling alike, again and again *here*. Your favorite story just ended? Come back tomorrow, we'll play it again. Don't like the story you're in? A different one starts in an hour. Come here, come again, feel here, feel again. History walks here, love is lived here, loss is met and wept for and understood and survived here and not the first time but *every* time." —Henry Condell, Act II, Scene i

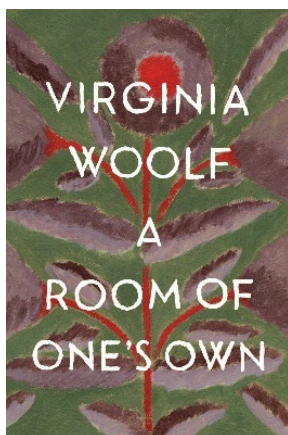
Condell tells Heminges not to shy away from his feelings of grief because the stage will always be there to help him work through the pain he feels. In fact, most of the characters process their loss through language. Burbage grieves Shakespeare by reprising his roles and reciting Shakespeare's speeches as accurately as possible. Condell puts that energy into passionately finding written copies of the plays. Heminges, as demonstrated in the first of the above quotes, uses the words to keep him company and help him express feelings that seem too big for his body. The characters use theatre to work through and characterize the grief they feel, just like Shakespeare often did in his plays. They use entrances and exits to talk about life and death and glorify the passion and the feeling that exists on the stage. Using Shakespeare's words to guide them, the characters in *The Book of Will* live by the idea that "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene vii). ♦

ADAPTING SHAKESPEARE

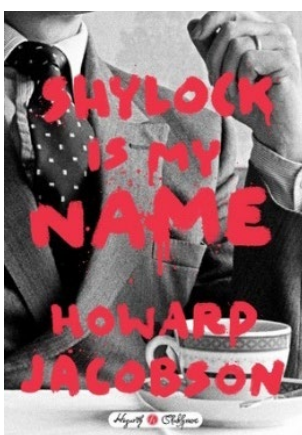
Many of Shakespeare's plays are inspired, directly or indirectly, from other famous works of literature. He was a master adaptor, finding plots that interested him and reimagining them for a common audience. It is very fitting, then, that Shakespeare's own works have inspired such breadth of media in the time since his death. There have been many direct adaptations of Shakespeare's work, like Kenneth Branagh's 1993 *Much Ado About Nothing*, and an even greater number of works inspired by

the Bard's life and legacy, like *The Book of Will*. Whether these adaptations are literal or loose, serious or sardonic, there's no denying the impact that Shakespeare has had on Western culture. Below, we explore just a few of the many pieces of media which, like Gunderson's *The Book of Will*, have Shakespeare's work and legacy at their hearts.

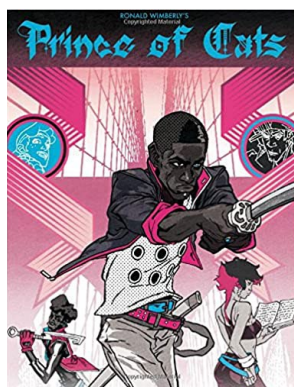
BOOKS:



A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolfe is chiefly a feminist essay concerning the historic treatment of women and how they are systemically prevented from succeeding. Within this essay, Woolfe posits a hypothetical about Judith Shakespeare, a sister of William who has all the same talents as her brother with none of the opportunities.



Shylock Is My Name by Howard Jacobson is a novel that considers the infamous character Shylock by the standards of today, bringing him into a modern context. Jacobson is not afraid to delve deep into the complicated nature of Shylock, nor does he shy away from condemning the antisemitic nature of *The Merchant of Venice*.



Prince of Cats by Ron Wimberly is a graphic novel retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* set in a 1980s party scene and focusing on Tybalt and Rosalyn.

PLAYS:



Emilia by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm is a play with an all-female cast that grants Emilia Bassano Lanier her own voice and her own story. After so many years being overshadowed by the men in her life, Emilia's legacy is one that deserves to be recognized, and *Emilia* does just that.



Something Rotten! by John O'Farrell and Karey Kirkpatrick is a musical about an imagined rival to Shakespeare, Nicolas Bottom. In this comedic romp, Shakespeare is something of a villain, with his fame making him lazy and manipulative.

SONG:



"Limelight" by Rush uses *As You Like It* as both a framework and an inspiration for the song's lyrics and format.

ADAPTING SHAKESPEARE CONTINUED...

FILMS:



Shakespeare in Love, directed by John Hadden, explores the inner world of The Bard and imagines a world in which his greatest love stories were inspired by one beautiful and ambitious woman.



Ten Things I Hate About You, directed by Gil Junger, reimagines Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in a Seattle high school. Charming, witty, and quintessentially 90s, *Ten Things I Hate About You* is one of the most beloved Shakespeare film adaptations to date.



She's the Man, directed by Andy Fickman, is a high school adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in which Viola dresses as her brother in order to attend a boys' boarding school and play soccer.

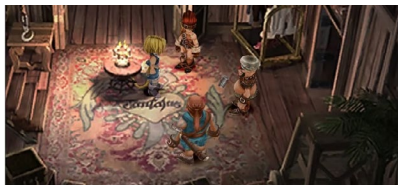


Warm Bodies, directed by Jonathan Levine and based off the book by Isaac Marion, is a kooky retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* during a zombie apocalypse. It follows two star-crossed lovers (one of which is a zombie himself) and begs viewers to consider the transformative powers of love.

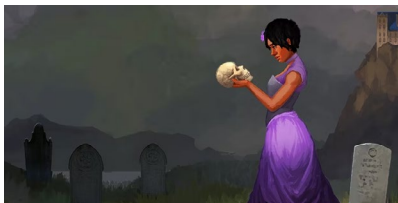


All is True, directed by Kenneth Branagh, follows The Bard in his last few days of life. Touching and thoughtful, *All is True* holds many of the same thematic considerations as *The Book of Will*.

GAMES:



Many of the *Final Fantasy* games have Shakespearean elements but *Final Fantasy IX* is the most directly influenced by Shakespeare. With references to *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*, it takes an eagle-eyed player to spot all of the sly Shakespearean elements.



Elsinore is a time loop-style point and click adaptation of *Hamlet* that challenges players to change Ophelia's fate. Players are encouraged to delve further into the world of *Hamlet* in order to change the events of the play.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why do we love to adapt? What is revealed by placing Shakespeare in a new context?

“NOT OF AN AGE, BUT FOR ALL TIME”: LAUREN GUNDERSON’S *THE BOOK OF WILL*

By Dr. Miranda Johnson-Haddad

History and imagination converge in Lauren Gunderson’s play *The Book of Will*. The playwright brings to life a time and place about which we know a great deal, but about which we also sometimes feel that we have more questions than answers. The very title of Gunderson’s play hints at this tricky balance: is this play about the man William Shakespeare or about the 1623 First Folio, the earliest published collection of his plays? Is Gunderson’s play about both? Or is it a play about the countless individuals, both those whom history remembers and those whose very names we will never know, who contributed to the First Folio’s publication?

Of the thirty-six plays in the First Folio (*Pericles* does not appear, and this omission becomes a running joke in Gunderson’s play), half had not been published before. Without the First Folio, we would have no *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar*, no *Tempest* or *Twelfth Night*. No Shakespearean character would “Exit, pursued by a bear.” Without the First Folio, these and other Shakespeare plays would have shared the fate of what some scholars estimate to be hundreds of early modern plays: they would have been lost forever to future generations.¹

Yet the action of *The Book of Will* takes place at a remove from Shakespeare himself. When the play opens, Shakespeare has been dead for three years, and though his absent presence hangs over the characters constantly, and especially over the actors who are still performing his plays, the man is gone, and the spotlight has shifted to those he left behind. So in Gunderson’s play, we meet known historical figures: the actors John Heminges, Henry Condell, and Richard Burbage; the printer Isaac Jaggard; and the poet/dramatist Ben Jonson (who had published his own collected works in 1616, thereby paving the way for the Shakespearean collection by treating his own dramas as serious works of literature worthy of preservation). And we also meet historical figures whose names we do not know (such as the compositors and apprentices in the printing shop), or whose very existence may be mostly imaginary (such as Alice Heminges).

Nevertheless, however historically accurate *The Book of Will* may or may not be, at the conclusion we, like Heminges and Condell themselves, are left with an overwhelming sense of gratitude that Shakespeare’s plays were preserved for future generations. A third interpretation of Gunderson’s title then becomes apparent: the publication of the First Folio resulted directly from the sheer force of will exerted by countless individuals who were determined that these plays would survive into the future. ♦

1. Emma Smith, *The Making of Shakespeare’s First Folio* (2015, The Bodleian Library, Oxford).

For a digitalized version of the First Folio, see <https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

WORDS COINED BY SHAKESPEARE

Accused—*Richard II*, Act I, Scene I

How Shakespeare used it: To describe the person being charged with a crime or offense. This is the word's first known use as a noun. In this case Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray are the accuser and the accused—Bolingbroke (the accuser) argues that Thomas Mowbray (the accused) is "a traitor and a miscreant."

"Then call them to our presence; face to face,
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak:
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire."—King
Richard II

Modern Definition: someone charged with a crime or offense (particularly relating to a criminal case).

Addiction—*Othello*, Act II, Scene II

How Shakespeare used it: meaning a strong preference for or inclination towards something. The herald encourages everyone to take pleasure in whatever most delights them or in whatever they are most inclined towards (their addictions.)

"It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him."—Herald

Modern definition: noun—an intense and destructive need to have or do something excessively.

Assassination—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene VII

How Shakespeare used it: The word assassin was already known, but Shakespeare used assassination to describe a murder, or deed done by an assassin. In this soliloquy, Macbeth contemplates the murder or assassination of Duncan.

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come."—Macbeth

Modern Definition: The act of assassinating someone, where assassinate means to kill someone who is usually famous or important, often for political reasons.

Bedazzled—*The Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scene V

"Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun that everything I look on seemeth green."—Kate

Dwindle—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: In this scene from *Macbeth*, the First Witch tells the other two witches that she has been torturing a sailor whose wife was rude to her and explains to them how she will "drain him dry as hay" until he "dwindle, peak and pine". Dwindle in this sense is used to mean waste away.

"I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his penthouse lid.
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sev'n'nnights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine." —First Witch

Modern Definition: to gradually become smaller.

Fashionable—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: Ulysses describes time through a series of metaphors and similes. One of the comparisons he makes is with a fashionable host. In this context, fashionable means a host who abides by the most current etiquette—who follows customs that are of the current fashion.

"For time is like a fashionable host that slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand, and with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly, grasps in the comer: welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing."—Ulysses

Modern definition: Representing a popular trend or influence, particularly regarding personal styles.

Inaudible—*All's Well That Ends Well*, Act V, Scene III

"Let's take the instant by the forward top; for we are old, and on our quick'st decrees the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time steals ere we can effect them."—King of France

THE ART OF THE **SHAKESPEAREAN** INSULT

When we think of Shakespeare, we usually think of his plays and poetry. However, Shakespeare has also penned some of the most amazing insults. Far more interesting and colorful than the curse words we usually hear in modern conversation, the witty and acerbic Shakespearean insult is truly an art form. Next time you feel additional color is required in your conversation, try something Shakespearean! Go ahead!

Below are a few of Shakespeare's well-known insults:

"Thou art a boil, a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood."

"Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell"

"I do desire we may be better strangers"

"I am sick when I do look on thee"

"Poisonous bunch-backed toad!"

"Thou lump of foul deformity"

ACTIVITY

Make Your Own Insult! Combine one word from each of the three columns, then preface your combination with "Thou" to create your own Shakespearean Insult!

COLUMN 1

Artless
Bawdy
Bootless
Churlish
Clouted
Craven
Currish
Dankish
Dissembling
Droning
Errant
Fawning
Fobbing
Forward
Frothy
Gleeking
Goatish
Gorbellied
Infectious
Jarring
Loggerheaded
Lumpish
Mammering
Mangled
Mewling
Paunchy
Pribbling
Puking
Puny
Qualling
Rank
Reeky
Roguish
Ruttiesh
Saucy
Spleeny
Spongy
Surly
Tottering
Unmuzzled
Vain
Venomed
Villainous
Warped
Wayward

COLUMN 2

Base-court
Bat-fowling
Beef-witted
Beetle-headed
Boil-brained
Clapper-clawed
Clay-brained
Common-kissing
Crook-pated
Dismal-dreaming
Dizzy-eyed
Doghearted
Dread-bolted
Earth-vexing
Fat-kidneyed
Fen-sucked
Flap-mouthed
Fly-bitten
Folly-fallen
Fool-born
Full-gorged
Guts-gripping
Half-faced
Hasty-witted
Hedge-born
Hell-hated
Idle-headed
Ill-breeding
Ill-nurtured
Knotty-pated
Milk-livered
Motley-minded
Onion-eyed
Pottle-deep
Pox-marked
Reeling-ripe
Rough-hewn
Rude-growing
Shard-borne
Sheep-biting
Spur-galled
Swag-bellied
Tardy-gaited
Tickle-brained
Toad-spotted
Urchin-snouted

COLUMN 3

Apple-john
Baggage
Barnacle
Bladder Boar-pig
Bugbear Bum-bailey
Canker-blossom
Clack-dish
Clotpole
Coxcomb
Codpiece
Death-token
Dewberry
Flap-dragon
Flax-wench
Flirt-gill
Foot-licker
Fustilarian
Giglet
Gudgeon
Haggard
Harpy
Hedge-pic
Horn-beast
Hugger-mugger
Lewdster
Lout
Malt-worm
Mammet
Measle
Minnow
Miscreant
Moldwarp
Mumble-news
Nut-hook
Pigeon-egg
Pignut
Puttock
Pumpion
Ratsbane
Scut
Skainsmate
Vassal Whey-face

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **RESEARCH**

Purpose:

These research prompts will help students develop an understanding of the social and historical contexts of *The Book of Will*.

Prepare:

To prepare for seeing *The Book of Will*, have students break into small groups and research the following topics, either in groups or individually. When they are finished, have students present their findings to the class.

The Elizabethan Era:

- The social structure hierarchy
- Social norms and morals
- The role of women and women's rights
- Theatre and its role in society
- Prominent theatre companies and playwrights
- Popular art and entertainment
- Prominent political figures
- Marital laws

Historical Figures

- John Heminges
- Richard Burbage
- Henry Condell
- William and Isaac Jaggard
- Emilia Bassano Lanier
- Anne Hathaway Shakespeare
- Ralph Crane
- Ben Jonson
- Edward Knight
- Sir Edward Derin

William Shakespeare:

- His life
- His work
- Adaptations
- His legacy
- The compiling of the First Folio

Lauren Gunderson

- Her life
- Her work
- Her awards and achievements

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES**

Purpose:

These activities will prompt students to think critically about the themes and ideas in *The Book of Will* and engage with the narrative.

LEGACIES

In this activity, students will use their creative writing skills to engage with the themes of *The Book of Will* by considering the theme of legacy.

1. Have students read Gunderson's *The Book of Will* or provide students with a contextual overview of the events in the play.
2. Have each student pick their favorite figure from history or pop culture.
3. Ask each student to write a few sentences answering the following questions:
 - Why is this figure important to the world?
 - Why are they important to you?
 - What makes them stand out from every other individual?
 - Which of their accomplishments do you most admire?
 - What do you want to make sure future generations know about them?
4. Then, have the students answer the same questions about a friend, family member, or loved one.
5. Finally, have each student answer the same questions about themselves. They can get creative and explore what they would like to accomplish in the future.
6. Discuss how this relates to *The Book of Will*.
7. Why do you think it was so important to John Heminges and Henry Condell that their friend's legacy be preserved?
8. Was it easy deciding which accomplishments should be shared with future generations? How would you ensure that happened?
9. What did this exercise make you think about? What was easy? What was challenging?

THE ESSENTIALS

In this activity, students will engage with the plot and themes of *The Book of Will* by breaking it down into its most essential parts.

1. Start by breaking students off into groups and assign each group an act of the play.
2. Ask each group to condense the events of their act into one paragraph then have a representative from each group read their paragraph aloud.
3. Reform the groups and have each group summarize their act in one sentence. Again, have a representative from each group read the sentence aloud.
4. Have the groups come together one last time and encapsulate their act in just one word. Have a representative from each group share their words aloud.
5. Ask the students if the entire play can be summarized in one sentence. In one word?
6. Facilitate a discussion on what this activity reveals about the plot and the themes of the play.

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES** CONTINUED...

TELEPHONE

In this activity, students will explore the effects that time and mistranslation can have on a piece of media.

1. Ask the students to arrange themselves into a circle.
2. Designate one student as the starting point. That student will whisper a phrase (about a sentence long) to the student next to them. This will continue all the way around the circle.
3. When the phrase comes back to the starting point, that student should repeat the phrase they started with and the phrase as they heard it repeated to them in the end.
4. Do this a few times using different sentences and different students as starting points.
5. Now, choose a sentence of text from a Shakespearean play. Give this sentence on a slip of paper to the student at the starting point. Have them read the sentence to the student next to them and continue as before.
6. Finally, give them two sentences of Shakespearean text. Tell them to do their best repeating it word for word.
7. Facilitate a class-wide discussion about the following questions:
 - What was easy about that exercise?
 - What was difficult?
 - What was lost as the sentences were repeated over and over?
 - Did the phrases at the end accurately represent what they were at the beginning?
 - Would you say that the sentences were written by the same authors at the beginning and the end?
 - Was it frustrating as the starting person hearing your phrase doctored?
 - Now imagine that you were given an entire play. Do you think the play would be the same after a year? After two years? After ten? After fifty?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Why did Gunderson include Anne Hathaway Shakespeare and Susannah Shakespeare in the story? What purpose do they serve? How do they compare to the other characters?
2. Why are Shakespeare's words so important to the characters in the play? Is it the same for every character? Or do the same words mean different things to different characters?
3. Why are Condell and Heminges willing to undergo such personal and financial hardship to publish the First Folio? Do they understand the gift they are giving to the future, or do they simply want the best for a good friend?
4. Is *The Book of Will* a feminist play? Discuss using examples from the text to support your argument.
5. Is grief a hinderance or a catalyst in *The Book of Will*?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: **KEY THEATRICAL TERMS**

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

After this *A Noise Within* performance, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

blocking: The instructions a director gives actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

character: The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

conflict: The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

dramatic irony: A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

genre: Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

motivation: The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

props: Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

proscenium stage: There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

set: The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

setting: The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

stage areas: The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

theme: The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

thrust stage: A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

ABOUT **A NOISE WITHIN**

A NOISE WITHIN produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue.

In its 30-year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its Education Program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

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