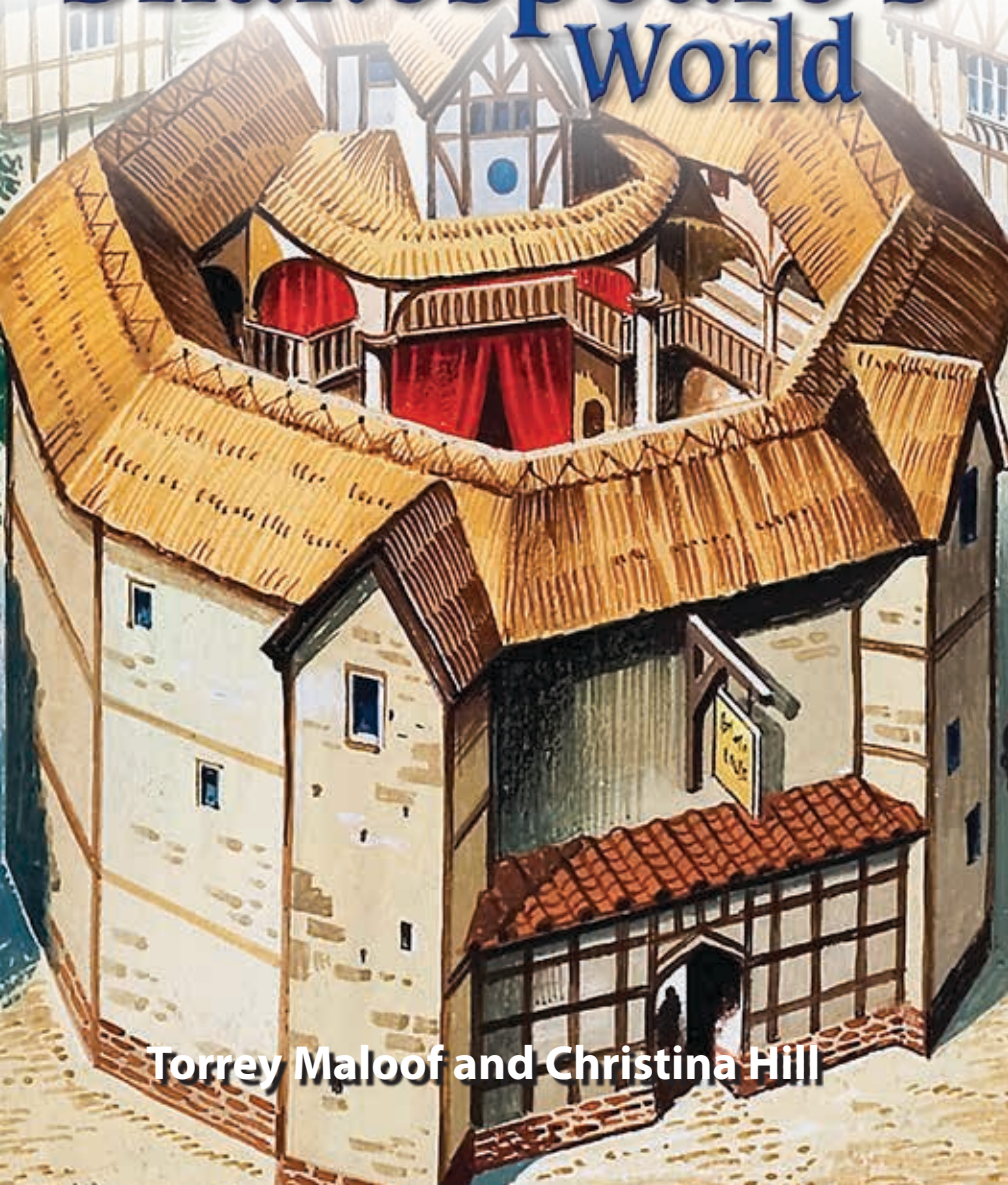


Stepping Into

TIME

William Shakespeare's World



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Will's World

Would you pay \$6.2 million for a book? In the year 2001, someone did! The book purchased was a copy of William Shakespeare's *First Folio*. There are believed to be only 230 copies of the *First Folio* in the world. It is a prized possession sought by many book collectors. But what makes this book so special and expensive? This folio was the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays.

It was published in 1623, seven years after he died. Without it, 18 of his plays may not have been recorded.



For teachers' inspection ONLY

First Folio, Where Art Thou?

A census is the official process of counting the number of people in a country, city, or town. But there is also a census for the *First Folio*! Scholars are working to track down the estimated 230 copies and possibly find more.



The Bard, as he is sometimes called, is one of the most popular and well-known authors in the world. Many people consider him to be the greatest playwright of all time. His poems and plays are masterpieces of human emotion and **psychology**. His skillful use of language, his unforgettable characters, and his unique ability to relate stories have helped Shakespeare's work stand the test of time.

Shakespeare lived and wrote during the Tudor period in England, which was mainly in the sixteenth century. The Tudors were an English royal dynasty that ruled from 1485 to 1603. As you can imagine, life was quite different then. By stepping into Shakespeare's world, we can gain a better understanding and appreciation of his works, and we can learn why, almost 500 years later, his works still appeal to the masses.

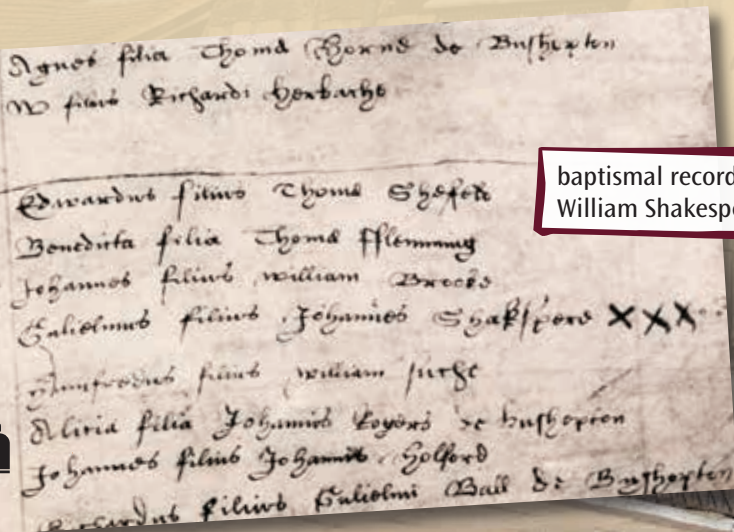
First Folio Facts

The *First Folio* contains 36 of Shakespeare's plays and is more than 900 pages long! It also includes one of only two portraits proven to be William Shakespeare.

Getting to Know the Bard

Just who was William Shakespeare? Despite his popularity, people today do not know a lot about him. Back then, records were rarely kept on average individuals. Shakespeare's exact date of birth is not known. However, historians believe he was born on April 23, 1564, to John and Mary Shakespeare in the small market town of Stratford, England. What we do know is that he was **baptized** on April 26. He was the third of eight children and the firstborn son of the family. His father was a successful businessman who made and sold gloves. Later, he became a member of the town council. John was a well-respected man and made important decisions for the town.

Shakespeare most likely attended a local school in Stratford. Unfortunately, after his baptism, Shakespeare's name is not mentioned again in any official records until 1582. That year, at age 18, he married a woman named Anne Hathaway, who was about 26 years old. The couple had three children. They had a daughter named Susanna and twins, Hamnet and Judith. The young family most likely lived with Shakespeare's parents.



Handwritten baptismal record of William Shakespeare, dated April 26, 1564. The record is written in Latin and lists the names of the parents and the child. The entry for William Shakespeare is highlighted in a red box.

26
26
564
April 3
6
2
May
12

Agnos filia Thomæ Bonns de Buxton
W filius Ricardi Bonns
Edwardus filius Thomæ Shyffete
Benedicta filia Thomæ Flemmyng
Johannes filius William Bonns
Galielmus filius Johannis Spakford XXX
Thompadus filius William Jurse
Deliria filia Johannis Loyers de Buxton
Johannes filius Johannis Gelford
Ricardus filius Galielmi Ball de Buxton

baptismal record of
William Shakespeare

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Decline in Status

Later in life, John Shakespeare became absent from town council records. Some people believe it was because he lost his money. Others believe it was because of religious disputes.

Shakespeare's Home

If you ever travel to England, be sure to visit Stratford, also known as Stratford-upon-Avon. You can take a tour of the house in which Shakespeare was born and raised. Many famous authors have visited the house over the years, including Charles Dickens and John Keats.

Shakespeare in London

Shortly after his twins were born, Shakespeare left Stratford for unknown reasons. By 1592, he was an actor and a playwright living in the bustling city of London. It is not clear exactly how this happened, but we do know that by age 28, he was successful—*very* successful!

Shakespeare's plays were extremely popular in London. He made his money by selling his plays to acting **troupe**s and by performing in them in theaters. He was doing very well for himself until the **plague** hit London.

Poetry and the Plague

From 1592 to 1594, the plague ravaged London. This was a terrifying and deadly disease caused by bacteria. It traveled from person to person at an alarming rate. Hundreds of thousands of people died. The theaters closed in an attempt to stop the spread of the deadly disease. Many of the theater troupes **disbanded** and left the city. Shakespeare most likely left London, too. During this dark time, Shakespeare turned his attention to writing poetry. A **patron** supported him, and a publisher purchased some of his poems and all 154 of his **sonnets**.

The Lost Years

From 1585 to 1592, Shakespeare is missing from all records. Historians know he left Stratford, but they do not know why or where he went. Scholars call this period his "lost years." There are many different theories about how he spent his time. Some people believe he joined a traveling theater troupe.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

F

ROM fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decrease,
His tender heir might bear his memory;

But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou, that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buryest thy content
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

Shakespeare's Sonnets

A sonnet is a poem with exactly 14 lines and a fixed rhyme scheme. Shakespeare's 154 sonnets are heavy with metaphors. Most of them primarily focus on the universal topic of love.



Reader's Guide

For teachers' inspection ONLY

1. What things in Elizabethan England might you have enjoyed?
2. There are many theories about what Shakespeare was doing during his lost years. What do you think he was up to during this time?
3. Imagine sitting down to a meal with Shakespeare and his friends in the sixteenth century. How would your experience differ from what you are used to today? What foods would you like to try?
4. Personal hygiene during this time period was far from ideal. What modern inventions in the area of hygiene would be the hardest to go without?

