



William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is one of the most famous people who ever lived, as his poems and plays are known throughout the world. At least one of his plays is almost certainly still being produced somewhere in the world every day of the year, except perhaps Christmas Day.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His father was John Shakespeare and his mother's maiden name was Mary Arden. Nobody knows William's exact date of birth but he was baptised on 26th April – some people assume that he was born just a few days before, on 23rd April. If that is true, Shakespeare would have been exactly fifty-two years old when he died on 23rd April in 1616.

William married Anne Hathaway when he was only eighteen years old and together they had three children. Their first child was called Susanna, who was born in 1583. Nearly two years later, Anne gave birth to twins, a boy called Hamnet and a girl, Judith. Sadly, Hamnet died when he was eleven years old.

When he was still in his twenties, Shakespeare's plays started to be performed in London. Shakespeare was frequently one of the actors in his own plays. He formed a company along with some of the other players and they built their own theatre alongside the River Thames. The Globe Theatre was constructed in 1599 but was burned down just fourteen years later. A modern replica of the Globe was built, very close to the original site, in 1997.

Shakespeare's plays include histories such as *Richard II*, *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2, *Henry V*, *Henry VI* parts 1, 2 and 3, *Richard III* and *Henry VIII*. He also wrote comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, tragedies such as *Macbeth* and tragicomedies such as *The Tempest*. One of his most famous plays is *Romeo and Juliet*, the story of two young people who fell in love despite the fact that their families were enemies of each other. The play ends with the tragic death of the couple.