

In the Name of God; the Lord of life and Wisdom



FUM Press  
950

## Picturesque Shakespeare

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# PICTURESQUE SHAKESPEARE

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“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to  
heaven,

And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.

Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!”

*(A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Act V, scene i)*

“Poets, who are always glancing around as if they are overcome by passion, make constant connections between things that are earthly and things that are heavenly. And they take the unreal things that tumble out of their imagination and write about them as if they were actual places or things. When people who have such strong imaginations feel some kind of joy, they imagine that it must be some entity or power that brings or creates that joy. Or if, in the night, they feel some fear, they see a bush and imagine it’s a bear!”



## INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

For over four centuries, William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon, has captivated audiences. Hundreds still go to stage productions of his plays and relate to his complex characters. The English language owes the playwright who coined many of the terms we use today a heavy debt. Yet, for many, approaching Shakespeare's works can feel daunting — a challenge that *Picturesque Shakespeare* aims to address with a fresh, visually engaging perspective.

*Picturesque Shakespeare* has modest origins. It began as a collaborative student project. A group of gifted literature students, each gathering information and images for one or two plays that resonated with them, laid the groundwork with rough initial sketches, planting the seeds of what would eventually evolve into the sophisticated, scholarly work you now hold in your hands. Their names are listed at the beginning of this book, a recognition of their invaluable contributions to this literary journey.

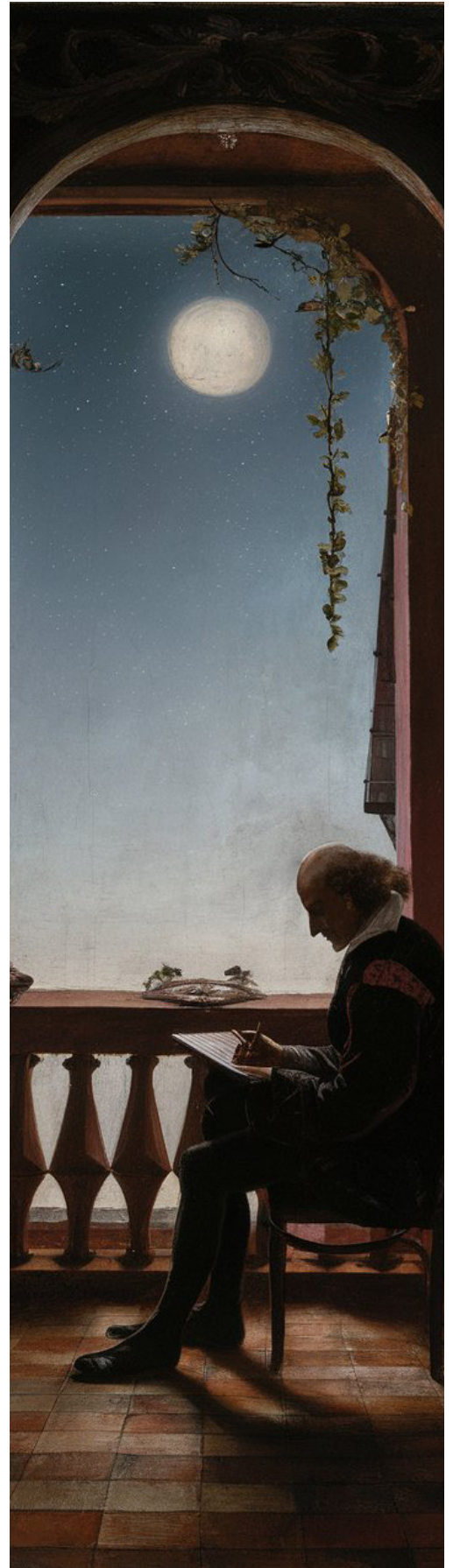
As the project evolved, these initial drafts were carefully revised and expanded by the team of authors, transforming the enthusiasm of student work into the comprehensive guide you see today. This collaborative process mirrors, in a way, the collaborative nature of theater itself. It is a small tribute to Shakespeare's artistic medium and proof that such collaboration can produce results when combined with perseverance.

Whether you're a student of English literature, a theater enthusiast, or simply curious to know about the roots of much of contemporary English literature, *Picturesque Shakespeare* provides a unique gateway into the Bard's universe, created by students for students and Shakespeare lovers of all kinds.

For each play, you will find:

- A prominent passage from the play, along with its modern translation
- Insights into the historical sources and inspirations behind it
- Concise introductions to its story, including themes and context, setting the stage for your exploration
- An engaging plot summary without spoiling the endings
- A comprehensive list of characters with line counts, offering a useful measure of their dramatic presence. Line counts often represent a character's significance, but some of Shakespeare's most unforgettable characters speak little (like Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*) yet remain essential to the play's heart.
- Beautiful illustrations bringing the characters to life, allowing you to visualize the diverse personalities that populate Shakespeare's works and how they are presented on stage and screen

- A full list of the references cited in the chapter on the play



peppered throughout the book are:

- Fascinating "Did You Know?" sections, unveiling intriguing facts about the plays
- Recommended reading lists, offering more chances for literary exploration
- Descriptions of key concepts featured in some plays
- Explorations of notable adaptations, including classic paintings and modern film and television interpretations
- Highlights of memorable stage productions that have left their mark on Shakespearean performance history
- Carefully selected quotes from plays that showcase the beauty and power of Shakespeare's language
- Critical quotes from famous scholars, which shed light on the importance of each play

Drawing from the authoritative *Norton Shakespeare* (3rd edition), this book balances deep scholarly insight with accessibility and visual appeal. We hope it can build a strong foundation for those just beginning their Shakespearean journey while also bringing a fresh perspective to enthusiasts already familiar with the Bard.

It is worth noting that more than four-fifths of the images in this book (nearly 82%) were created using AI image generation models DALL-E, Stable Diffusion XL, and Ideogram. This innovative approach allowed us to bring Shakespeare's characters and scenes to life in a unique manner and portray them according to their description in each play. Any real images used are appropriately licensed, and we've taken great care to ensure the integrity and originality of our visual content. More information is available in the Copyright Notice at the end of this book.

This book, in short, promises to be your colorful companion as you learn more about Shakespeare, regardless of your background literary knowledge.

Welcome to *Picturesque Shakespeare*.

#### ▼ *The Plays of William Shakespeare*

This c. 1849 oil painting by Sir John Gilbert showcases many of Shakespeare's characters, including the powerful Henry VIII, the iconic Falstaff, the brooding Hamlet, the complicated Shylock, the jealous Othello, and the misguided King Lear, as well as many others. While reading this book, you will gain a deep understanding of all of these characters.



# VISUAL GUIDE

Each play in *Picturesque Shakespeare* has four pages dedicated to it. The first is the title page, featuring a passage from the play and its modern translation. The second and third pages cover various aspects of the play, and the fourth page contains a list of characters in the play, along with their images and the number of lines they each speak. This visual guide, spanning four pages, helps you navigate through the content and make the most of your exploration.

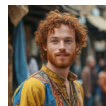
## CHARACTER PROFILES

Contains descriptions of major characters, detailing their role in the play, number of lines, and AI-generated visuals. Helps readers track characters and understand their significance in the plot.



Eros (73 lines)

A servant and friend of Antony, he is devoted and faithful to his master. He agrees to help Antony kill himself when he thinks that Cleopatra is dead, but he kills himself instead.



A Clown (54 lines)

A rustic man who brings a basket of figs with asps hidden inside to Cleopatra at her request. He does not understand her intentions, but unwittingly helps her commit suicide.

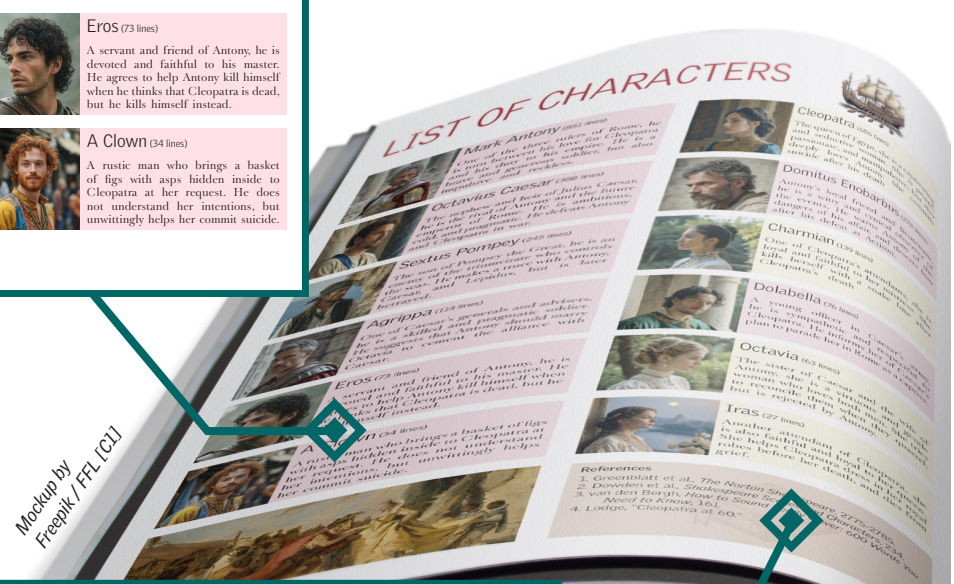
Mockup by  
Freepik / FFL [C2]

## SOURCES & CITATIONS

A list of all the sources used throughout the content on the play. Ensures credibility and transparency for readers who wish to explore further.

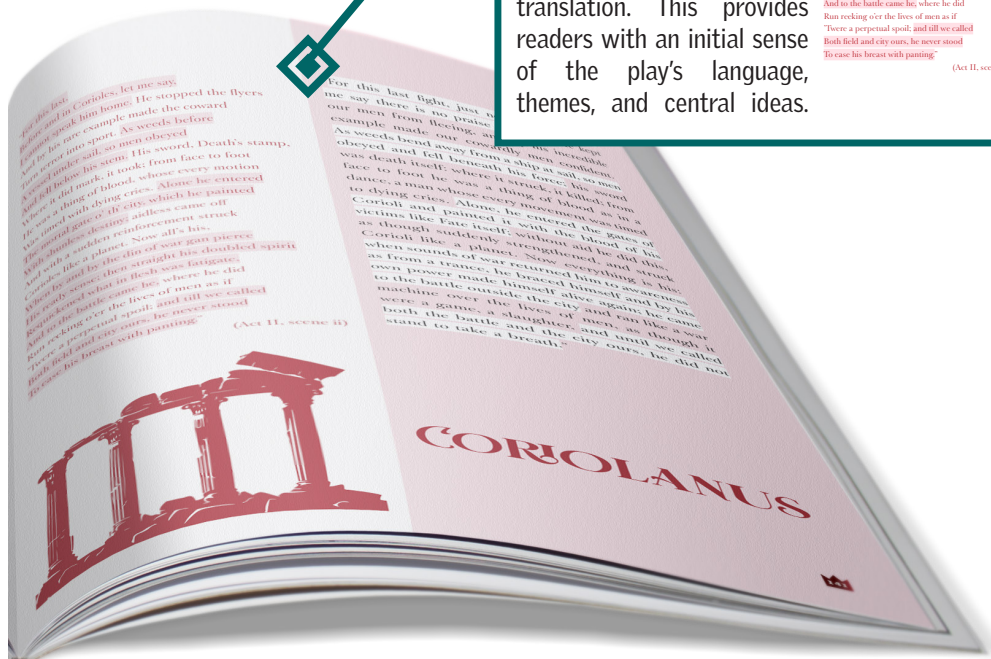
### References

1. Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2775-2785.
2. Dowden et al., *Shakespeare Scenes and Characters*, 234.
3. van den Bergh, *How to Sound Really Clever: 600 Words You Need to Know*, 161.
4. Lodge, "Cleopatra at 60"



## OPENING PASSAGE & MODERN TRANSLATION

Each play begins with a notable passage, presented alongside its modern English translation. This provides readers with an initial sense of the play's language, themes, and central ideas.



For this last,  
 Before and in Coriols, let me say,  
 I cannot speak him home. He stopped the flyers  
 And by his rare example made the coward  
 Turn terror into sport. As weeds before  
 A vessel under sail, so men obeyed  
 And fell before his stem. His sword, Death's stamp,  
 Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot  
 He was a thing of blood, whose every motion  
 Was timed with dying cries. Alone he entered  
 The mortal gate o' th' city, which he painted  
 With shameless destiny; restless came off  
 And with a sudden reinforcement struck  
 Coriols like a planet. Now all's his,  
 When by and by the dust of war gave notice  
 His ready sense; then straight his doubled spirit  
 Requickened what in flesh was fatigued,  
 And to the battle came he; where he did  
 Run rocking o'er the lives of men as if  
 There were a perpetual spout, and till we called  
 Both field and city ours, he never stood  
 To cease his breast with panting." (Act II, scene ii)

"For this last fight, just now in Corioli, let me say there is no praise sufficient. He kept our men from fleeing, and by his invincible example made our cowardly men confident. As weeds bend away from a ship at sail, so men obeyed and fell beneath his force: his sword was death itself; where it struck, it killed; from face to foot he was a thing of blood as in a dance, a man whose every movement was timed to dying cries. Alone, he entered the gates of Corioli and painted it with the blood of his victims like Fate itself; without aid he did this, as though suddenly strengthened, and struck Corioli like a planet. Now everything is his; when sounds of war returned him to awareness as from a trance, he braced himself and by his own power made himself alive again: he came to the battle outside the city and ran like a war machine over the lives of men, as though it were a game, a slaughter, and until we called both the battle and the city ours, he did not stand to take a breath."

## COLOR CODING GUIDE

The color coding throughout *Picturesque Shakespeare* helps readers easily identify the type of each play at a glance.

GENERAL

HISTORY

COMEDY

TRAGEDY

ROMANCE

## PLAY INFORMATION

Provides key details about the play, including its genre, its position within Shakespeare's body of work, and the approximate date it was written.



Written c. 1607-08

## FIRST EDITION

Features an image of the play's first publication, usually from the First Folio or an early quarto, along with its year of publication.



In the First Folio, 1623

## SYNOPSIS OVERVIEW

A concise introductory paragraph summarizing the plot and major themes, offering readers a quick snapshot of the play.

Shakespeare tackles the political arena in *Coriolanus*, one of his late Roman tragedies. The play's uncompromising protagonist is a military hero who struggles to translate his battlefield prowess into political leadership. With a towering central role that demands a powerhouse performance, the play presents a harsh vision of political conflict.

## PLAY ORIGINS

Explains the source materials and inspirations Shakespeare used when creating the play, offering historical context and details about the influences behind the storyline. A number at the end of this part points to its reference.

### SOURCE OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare drew inspiration for *Coriolanus* from a variety of sources, most notably Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Plutarch's account of the legendary Roman leader Caius Martius Coriolanus provided the basic outline of the play's plot and characters. ...1

## INTRODUCTION & ANALYSIS

A brief introduction discussing major themes and the play's relevance. This section provides insight into the broader significance of the play.

### VALOR AND VANITY

Over 400 years after the play was written, timeless political themes in *Coriolanus* still resonate today. Set in ancient Rome, the play examines the relationship between the elite patrician class and the common plebeians, as well as broader questions about the nature of political leadership, democracy, and war. Through the tragic figure of the warrior Coriolanus, who struggles to translate his battlefield heroics into effective civic governance, Shakespeare dramatizes the potential disconnect between military valor and political skill. Though a product of its time, *Coriolanus* transcends the early 17th century context, speaking to more universal concerns about social inequality, the use and abuse of power, civil unrest, and the psychological burdens of leadership during wartime. The play combines poetic language, psychological depth, and dramatic action to vividly depict enduring moral and philosophical dilemmas.<sup>1</sup>



## VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Features classic paintings or illustrations related to the play, with captions providing context. These visuals bring important scenes and themes to life.

### ▼ Coriolanus, his Mother Veturia and his Wife Volturna, Belling him to Give up War

In her 1765 painting, Angelica Kauffman depicts Coriolanus's mother and wife pleading with him to spare Rome from his vengeance. The names in the title for the general's mother and wife are based on historical sources about the real Coriolanus, not on Shakespeare's play.



## FURTHER READING

A list of recommended books and other works for readers who wish to explore the play's themes in more depth.

If you like this, you may also enjoy:

- Julius Caesar*
- The Revenger's Tragedy* by Thomas Middleton
- The Hunger Games* by Susan Collins

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Provides excerpts from prominent critics' reviews, highlighting how the play has been perceived over time and its cultural significance.

"*Coriolanus* implies that no political arrangement could possibly satisfy human needs."

Katharine Eisaman Maus<sup>1</sup>

## PLOT IN A NUTSHELL

Offers a detailed breakdown of the play's storyline, key characters, and major events, helping readers understand the sequence of the plot.

### THE STORY IN A NUTSHELL

*Coriolanus* is a proud and brave Roman general who despises the common people, known as the plebeians, and their leaders, the tribunes. He earns his name by conquering the city of Corioli from the Volscians, a rival tribe led by his arch-enemy, *Aufidius*. He returns to Rome as a hero and is nominated for consul, the highest office in Rome, by his old friend *Cominius*. However, to become consul, he must win the approval of the people and ask for their votes in the marketplace. This goes against his arrogant and stubborn nature and his views on the plebeians, and he fails to impress the people with his speeches. The tribunes, *Brutus* and *Sicinius*, seize this opportunity to turn the people against him and accuse him of treason. *Coriolanus* reacts with fury and insults the plebeians and their right to govern, and is subsequently banished from Rome. Feeling betrayed and humiliated, *Coriolanus* decides to join forces with his former enemy, *Aufidius*, and lead the Volscian army against Rome, hoping to take revenge on his ungrateful countrymen. The Romans are terrified by this news and send several delegations to plead with *Coriolanus* to spare them. Among them are his old friends, *Cominius* and *Menenius*, but *Coriolanus* rejects them all. *Coriolanus*'s last hope is *Coriolanus*'s mother, *Volumnia*. Accompanied by his wife *Virgilia* and his son *Young Martius*, she begs him to make peace for the sake of his country and family. Rome's fate now depends on whether her emotional appeals can soften her son's heart.

## TRIVIA HIGHLIGHTS

A green box containing interesting trivia or lesser-known facts about the play.

### Did you know?

*Coriolanus* has been adapted throughout history to reflect contemporary political climates, but perhaps most disturbingly by the Third Reich. In Germany of the 1930s, the Nazis seized upon Shakespeare's portrayal of a ruthless military strongman to promote their fascist ideology. *Coriolanus*'s authoritarian wrath and martial prowess aligned neatly with Nazi ideals, so they staged propagandistic productions applauding the protagonist's disdain for commoners and glorifying his battlefield dominance.<sup>1</sup>

## NOTABLE QUOTES

Features significant quotes from the play. These quotes highlight pivotal moments and famous lines.

"When blows have made me stay, I fled from words." (II.ii)

## THEMATIC INSIGHTS

Highlights themes or historical contexts that deepen the play's interpretation. Covers topics like historical settings, symbolism, or characters to offer richer insights.



### THE REAL CORIOLANUS

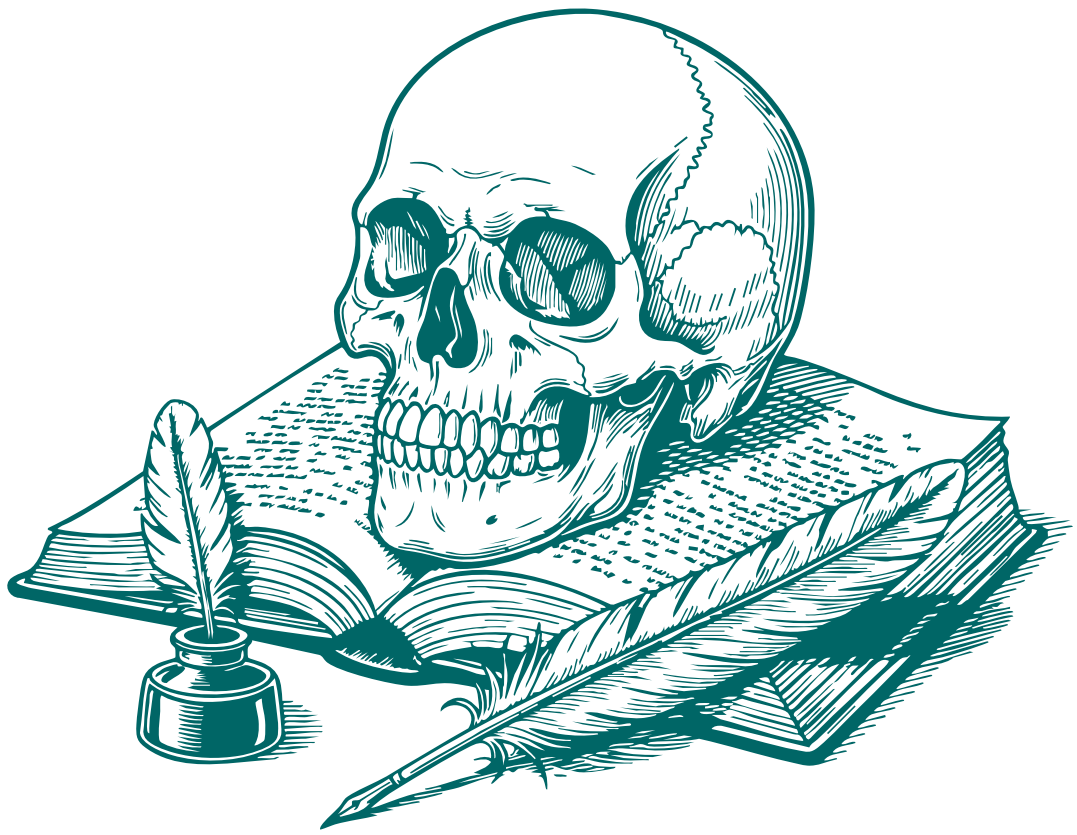
The real-life *Coriolanus*, as described in Plutarch's biography, had considerably more political acumen than his dramatic counterpart. Before his bid for consul, he had already served in several influential political offices. And after being exiled from Rome, he cleverly refrained from burning patrician estates as he approached the city with his invading army, in order to exacerbate existing class tensions.<sup>2</sup>

## ADAPTATION HIGHLIGHTS

This blue box includes details of noteworthy adaptations of the play, including notable stage productions, television versions, and film adaptations.

### On the stage

A 2014 adaptation was staged by Josie Rourke at the Donmar Warehouse in London. It featured a stellar cast that included Tom Hiddleston as *Coriolanus* and Mark Gatiss as *Menenius*. The production was praised for its modern and minimalist approach and its intense performances. A recorded version was subsequently released.<sup>2</sup>



“I, that please some, try all — both joy and terror  
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error —  
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,  
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime  
To me or my swift passage that I slide  
O’er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried  
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power  
To o’erthrow law and in one self-born hour  
To plant and o’erwhelm custom. Let me pass  
The same I am ere ancient’st order was  
Or what is now received. I witness to  
The times that brought them in. So shall I do  
To th’ freshest things now reigning, and make stale  
The glistening of this present, as my tale  
Now seems to it.”

*(The Winter’s Tale, Act IV, scene i)*



“I reveal all — joy and terror, good and bad,  
mistakes made and mistakes paid for — to the  
benefit of some and to the detriment of others.  
I am Time, and I came here to flap my wings.  
Don’t blame me for flying by, passing over  
sixteen years as if it were nothing. It’s within  
my power to defy the rules and pack all of this  
into a single hour. I am the same now as I have  
been since ancient times, since the dawn of  
Time. I’m about to bring in something fresh  
and new to liven up our current tale, which is  
as old (and stale) as Time.”

## SHAKESPEARE’S BIOGRAPHY

# BIOGRAPHY

## I. EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY

While the exact day of William Shakespeare's birth remains unclear, tradition and church records point to a baptism on April 26, 1564, in the small market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. It was customary to baptize infants soon after their birth, leading to the accepted commemoration of his birth on April 23rd, which also fortuitously coincides with St. George's Day, celebrated in England's history. His death date, remarkably fifty-two years later, also falls on the same April 23rd. This somewhat symbolic timing hints at a life intertwined with England's own history. Though Shakespeare would eventually reach global literary renown, his family roots were humbler, tied to the everyday realities of life in a provincial market town.

His father, John Shakespeare, was a prominent figure in Stratford. A successful glover, leatherworker, and merchant, he engaged in trade with agricultural commodities and, at times, lending money, creating wealth from trade and enterprise that set him apart from many within the town. He and his wife Mary, the daughter of the local farmer Robert Arden, together grew their family while navigating public service in a tumultuous time. John Shakespeare steadily rose in Stratford's ranks to be made alderman and then, in 1567, reached the town's highest elected position of bailiff, or mayor; such posts are signs of how active he was in the community. Although he held these positions and his family was somewhat affluent during Shakespeare's upbringing, their fortunes would later unravel. John's time in the limelight seemed to wane, and it is often speculated that the reason for such a downturn in fortunes was due to lingering Catholic beliefs, while at other times it is put down to plain poor business practices. Regardless, this shifting status from middling gentry to economic uncertainty was significant for the young William. His early life was thus marked both by stability and a sense of looming economic pressures, factors that would later fuel the dramatic tensions of his mature works.

As the first son in the family and the third child of John and Mary, William had the responsibility of both preserving family pride and witnessing his parents struggle under large debts. He had to contend with two elder sisters who, due to high rates of child mortality, passed away during childhood. He was then joined by three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund, and two further sisters named Joan and Anne. Little did they all know at that time that the first-born son would go on to leave a legacy that few have matched. Despite his early environment, he received a proper formal education that was typical for his class. Shakespeare, during his formative years, very likely benefited from the town's free grammar school, which afforded him the rare opportunity to engage deeply with both classical Latin texts and contemporary writing practices. A foundation was laid here for the vast lexicon and the complex worldviews that would become cornerstones of his artistic style. The school and community at Stratford would therefore become not only the center of Shakespeare's early formative experiences but also his home when he began a long career as an actor and playwright in the next phases of his life.

## II. ARRIVAL IN LONDON AND CAREER BEGINNINGS

The exact timeline of William Shakespeare's move from provincial Stratford-upon-Avon to the bustling theater scene of London remains uncertain. No records of Shakespeare's life exist from 1585, when his twins



▲ The Chandos portrait

Created around 1610, the Chandos portrait is believed to have been painted by artist John Taylor and is named after its previous owner, the Chandos family. The painting is often considered one of the most authentic likenesses of the playwright, although its exact origin remains debated.