

William Shakespeare

- the most influential writer of all of English literature
- considered the greatest playwright who ever lived
- famous and celebrated but a mysterious figure
- only two sources: his works, and some legal and church documents

- born 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon (the third of eight children)
- no record of his birth, but baptism was recorded by the church
- his father was a prosperous and prominent alderman and bailiff, glover and leather merchant (successful middle-class family)
- presumably attended Stratford Grammar School
- never proceeded to university schooling at Oxford or Cambridge (this has stirred the debate concerning the authorship of his work)
- 1582 married Anne Hathaway (William was 18 at that time and Anne 26 and pregnant)
- 1583 first daughter born, Susanna
- 1585 twins born, Judith and Hamnet
- problems in Stratford? Shakespeare fond of poaching? Stealing deer?
- ~1590 left for London and established himself as an actor and playwright
- he was immediately successful and garnered envy for his talent
- 1597, Shakespeare purchased a house and land holdings in Stratford
- became part-owner of the Globe theatre (opened in July of 1599, Bank-side district, which was across the river from London proper)
- Shakespeare was a favourite of Elizabeth I (ruled 1558-1603) and James I (ruled 1603-1625)
- Shakespeare's company was called the King's Men (greatest compliment possible)
- June 19, 1613, a canon fired from the roof of the Globe for a performance of Henry VIII set fire to the thatch roof and burned the theatre to the ground
- c. 1613, retired to Stratford
- died 1616
- 1623, the First Folio edition of the Collected Works printed (plays and sonnets)

- His works include:
- 37 plays:
 - comedies (*A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It*)
 - tragedies (*Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*)
 - histories (*Richard II, Henry VIII*)
- 154 sonnets
- 5 poems (e.g. *Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece*)