**William Shakespeare**

**THE 'UPSTART CROW'**

* **The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor / playwright was in 1592. He was attacked in a pamphlet, written by a a well-known poet and playwright called Robert Greene**
* **Robert Greene was one of the university wits - a member of the of Cambridge/Oxford trained literary scholars of the era along with Christopher Marlowe and Sir Walter Raleigh**
* **The pamphlet was called the 'Groatsworth of Wit' in which Robert Greene attacks the actor William Shakespeare as an "upstart crow"!**
* **An Upstart is characteristic of someone who has risen economically or socially but lacks the social skills appropriate for this new position - To crow is to boast and a crow is a scavenger who steals from others - Greene clearly dislikes the 'Upstart Crow'!**
* **This is what the pamphlet says:**

***"Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie."***

* **Greene is saying that the 'Upstart Crow' was an actor (wrapt in a Player's hide) who now believes that he can write as well as the best scholars**
* **That Shakespeare was an absolute Johannes Factotum (a Mr. Do-Everything a Jack of all Trades) with a 'Tyger's heart' ( an aggressive person)**

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| * Greene does not like actors "*trust them not*" because of their power - the actors controlled the theatres and acting companies and they paid just a one-off price for a play - the author received no more money, there were no Copyright Laws nor any Royalties * The 'University Set' were considered as being the only authors of any note with the ability to write poetry * William Shakespeare was not of the 'University Set' * Three months after the death of Robert Greene, in December 1592, his publisher and printer, Henry Chettle issued a public apology for the 'Groatsworth of Wit' and to the "Upstart Crow"! |

**William Shakespeare the Actor**

**FROM STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TO AN ACTOR IN LONDON?**

* **William Shakespeare left his home, his family, his wife and children in Stratford-upon-Avon to work in London - WHY?**
* **Nobody knows!**
  + **There were rumours that he had been accused of poaching and fled to London to avoid prosecution - but there is no documented evidence**
  + **Most people tended to stay in the village they were born during the Elizabethan era - travelling was difficult, a license was required to travel (this helped to stop beggars moving from one village to the next and it also helped to contain the spread of the Bubonic Plague)**
  + **Shakespeare had received an education - he would have been able to find work around Stratford-upon-Avon**
  + **Shakespeare's father owned several businesses - William could have worked with the family in Henley Street**
  + **Stratford-upon-Avon is situated one hundred miles north of London, a journey of four days walking**
  + **Who did he know in London?**
    - **Acting Troupes were known to have played in Stratford. Shakespeare's father would have needed to issue these troupes with a license to enable them to perform. So Shakespeare would have known some of these actors!**
    - **Richard Field - Richard Field was about two and a half years older than William Shakespeare (Field was baptised November 16th 1561) and lived in Stratford-upon-Avon on Bridge Street, very near to Henley Street until he was 17**
      * **Richard's father, Henry, was a tanner, in the same line of business as William's father, John Shakespeare**
      * **Richard Field moved from Stratford-upon-Avon London and on September 29, 1579 was apprenticed to George Bishop a prominent Printer / Publisher in Blackfriars**
* **Whatever the reason, William Shakespeare was definitely working as an actor in London in 1592**

**AN ACTOR IN THE ELIZABETHAN ERA**

* **Shakespeare's choice to become an Actor was surprising to say the least!**
* **The reputation of Actors was not good! Many acting troupes had consisted of Rogues and Vagabonds! Actors were not trusted! Acting Troupes were considered such a threat that  that regulations were imposed and licenses were granted to the aristocracy for the maintenance of troupes of players!**
* **Actors would be asked for these credentials - they were treated with suspicion!**
* **Plays were regulated! Plays were subject to censorship - the content of plays was checked to ensure that they did not contain political or religious elements which might threaten the state!**
* **Elizabethan plays were often bawdy and the audiences were rowdy!**

**THE ACTORS & THEATRES!**

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| * There were no theatres in England until 1576! * James Burbage built the the first public playhouse in Shoreditch, London which he called 'The Theatre ' * Until this time the courtyards of inns (called inn-yards) were generally used to show plays * But the Inn-yards were successful! There was money to be made in this form of entertainment! * So more theatres were built. They were similar to the design of the Roman amphitheatres, like the Coliseum, but much smaller * Theatres did not just show plays! A theatre was also used as bear pit, brothel and gambling house ( this added to the poor reputation of theatres, actors and playwrights) |  |
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**THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE THE ACTOR**

* **It is not known exactly how many roles Shakespeare played himself but we do know that Shakespeare had began his career on the stage by 1592, because there is reference to this in  Robert Greene's Groatsworth of Wit**
* **It is probable that Shakespeare played the title role in Edward I (a play by Edward Peele) in 1593**
* **It is also assumed that he played smaller roles in a variety of his own plays, including As You Like It (Adam), Macbeth (King Duncan), Henry IV (King Henry), and Hamlet (Hamlet's father)**
* **Shakespeare's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, referred to a role by William Shakespeare as "the Ghost in his own Hamlet" and that he was "the top of his performance"**
* **There was not time for many rehearsals. It was important to put on new plays. Several different plays might show at one theatre in one week - “eleven performances of ten different plays”**
* **Some actors were given their lines by someone whispering them from the side of the stage - This was called "cue acting "**
* **Shakespearean Actors generally only got their lines as the play was in progress called “ cue scripting ” the Actors did not know the plot until the play was being performed!**
* **There were no females in the Theatres. Young boy actors would take on these roles!**
* **There were different sound and visual effects and props which made the performances more exciting**
* **The actors would sometimes be suspended from ropes in order to make flying entrances, and there were also trap-doors in the stage**
* **The amphitheatres were open to the weather, so they were used during the summer months**
* **As time went on Playhouse (similar to our own theatres) were used, especially in the winter**
* **Performances started in the afternoon and ended by early evening**
* **William Shakespeare the Actor soon moved on to becoming William Shakespeare the Theatre owner and Playwright!**

**William Shakespeare the Playwright**

**WHEN DID SHAKESPEARE WRITE HIS FIRST PLAY?**

* **There is documented evidence to prove that on March 3rd 1593 Henry VI Part 1 was produced by the Acting Troupe, Lord Strange's Men,  at the Rose Theatre**
* **This date implies that Shakespeare wrote parts 1, 2, and 3 of Henry VI between 1590 and 1592**
* **He is also believed to have acted in these plays**
* **Details of first known dates can be found in** [**Publication of Shakespeare Plays**](http://www.literarygenius.info/publication-william-shakespeare-plays.htm) **and** [**Performances of Shakespeare Plays**](http://www.literarygenius.info/performances-william-shakespeare-plays.htm)

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - THE PLAYWRIGHT**

* **It would have been difficult for Shakespeare to become accepted as a writer**
* **Playwrights were not seen as literary experts. A poet was highly acceptable and viewed as educated intellectuals - Playwrights were not!**
* **Shakespeare had not attended University**
* **Shakespeare was not a Courtier and neither did he come from a noble family**
* **He had worked as an actor which would not have enhanced his reputation as a Poet, which would have been important to him**
* **His work as a Playwright would not have seemed so important other than in financial terms**
* **He was looked down upon by some of his contemporaries and criticised publically in Greene's Groatsworth of Wit in which he was referred to as an** [**"Upstart Crow"**](http://www.literarygenius.info/william-shakespeare-upstart-crow.htm)
* **Shakespeare had a patron, a man of prominence who would support the young writer in his poetic works**
* **His patron was Henry Wriothesley who was Third Earl of Southampton (1573-1624)**
* **Shakespeare published his poem Venus and Adonis on April 18th 1593. The poem was dedicated to Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton**
* **The dedication refers to the author's "unpolisht lines" and contains the typically fawning language of a commoner who hopes to gain more favour by dedicating the poem to a courtier**
* **The poem was an artistic success!**
* **But Shakespeare went on to concentrate on Plays rather than Poetry. Perhaps the financial rewards were more potent that artistic praise ( Poems for Show - Plays for Dough!) And Shakespeare did become very rich through his work in the theatres**
* **But there were considerable risks associated with this choice of career**
* **A Playwright could prove to be a dangerous occupation!**

**PLAYWRIGHT - A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION**

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| * Elizabethan politics were really dangerous. Any playwrights found guilty of expressing seditious or heretical opinions, which were in opposition to State could be tortured and sentenced to death for treason or even atheism * Catholics were seen as a threat ( and it is likely that Shakespeare was a Catholic) * There were spies everywhere - Queen Elizabeth I lived in fear of Catholic Plots and invasion from Catholic realms ( she was right to worry - remember the Spanish Armada!) |  |
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* **Thomas Kyd, a fellow playwright was arrested on charges of writing a slanderous play. He was tortured and brande with hot irons before he was released**
* **Kyd implicated the famous playwright Christopher Marlowe in relation to accusations of Heresy and Atheism**
* **Marlowe was summoned to appear before the dreaded Star Chamber but died suddenly (and mysteriously). It has been said that he faked his own death rather that appear before the Star Chamber**
* **Playwrights often used a pseudonym, or an alias, to conceal their true identity**
* **Some Playwrights did not publish their plays. They sold their work to the theatre for a 'one-off' payment and the theatre arranged for publication**
* **William Shakespeare never authorised the publication of any of his plays during his lifetime!**
* **William Shakespeare never claimed authorship of his plays during his lifetime!**
* **The majority of Shakespeare plays were first published in the First Folio, seven years after his death, in 1623!**
* **Details of first known dates can be found in** [**Publication of Shakespeare Plays**](http://www.literarygenius.info/publication-william-shakespeare-plays.htm) **and** [**Performances of Shakespeare Plays**](http://www.literarygenius.info/performances-william-shakespeare-plays.htm)

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| SHAKESPEARE AND POLITICS   * Shakespeare was aware of the danger of dabbling in politics * Plays were censored * The Catholic religion was not approved of - Queen Elizabeth was constantly in fear of Catholic plots * Shakespeare knew people who had been arrested and tortured - friends and family members! * Relatives had been arrested  and taken to the Tower of London   + William Arden, was a second cousin of Mary Arden of Wilmcote, the mother of Shakespeare   + In 1583 Arden was indicted for plotting against the life of the Queen   + Arden protested his innocence only admitting to adhere to the Catholic faith but was executed at Smithfield on 30th December, 1583 * Shakespeare knew of the strict laws prohibiting any explicitly religious or current political events being represented on stage   THE ESSEX REBELLION   * Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex was a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I * She heaped favours on the ambitious young man and appointed him Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1599 * He signed an unauthorised truce with the leading Irish rebel, the Earl of Tyrone * The Queen was furious and ordered his arrest, stripping him of his titles  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | * **In January 1601, the rebel earl led an abortive raid against the Queen and London - he plotted to start a rebellion to overthrow the Queen** * **The supporters of Essex arranged for Richard II to be played at the Globe the day before the rebellion** * **The play, Richard II, tells the story of how Richard II was overthrown by Henry IV and how Richard the King, like Elizabeth the Queen, had abdicated many of her powers in favour of her advisors Cecil and Raleigh** * **The theme expressed in the play was hoped to generate support for the rebellion amongst Londoners** | |  | | --- | |  | |  * The Earl of Essex marched into the streets of London with his followers * But the play had failed to stir up support for Essex and Londoners stayed away from the trouble * The rebellion collapsed and Essex  was captured and, on 25th February 1601 he was executed for treason * Did Shakespeare and his company realise the significance of playing Richard II? Did any of them know about the rebellion? Nothing was proved and no charges were made - the company were forgiven by the Queen and they performed for her in December of the same year as the rebellion |
| The Biography of William Shakespeare   * Was William Shakespeare involved in Politics? * Were actors and playwrights involved in Politics? * Involvement with the Essex Rebellion? * Interesting information about the politics, life and times of William Shakespeare |

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**William Shakespeare Facts**

**FACTS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE**

* **There are many mysteries that surround the life of William Shakespeare - some are based on facts and some are based on fiction! Some are interesting facts, some are strange facts and some are down right weird facts**
* **Shakespeare was interesting! Check out our Top 10 Facts on Shakespeare!**

**TOP 10 FACTS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE!**

* **Trivia Fact 1 - No one knows the actual birthday of Shakespeare!**
* **Trivia Fact 2 - Anne Hathaway was eight years older than Shakespeare and three months pregnant when   
                          they got married!**
* **Trivia Fact 3 - Many Shakespeare life facts are unknown - these are referred to as the Lost Years**
* **Trivia Fact 4 - Shakespeare's Father, John was a money lender! He was accused in the Exchequer Court  
                          of Usury for lending money at the inflated rate of 20% and 25% Interest!**
* **Trivia Fact 5 - William Arden, a relative of Shakespeare's mother Mary Arden, was arrested for plotting  
                          against Queen Elizabeth I, imprisoned in the Tower of London and executed!**
* **Trivia Fact 6 - Shakespeare and his company built TWO Globe Theatres!**
* **Trivia Fact 7 - Shakespeare never published any of his plays!**
* **Trivia Fact 8 - Shakespeare and the Globe Actors were implicated in the Essex Rebellion of 1601!**
* **Trivia Fact 9 - Many eminent Authors and Politicians do not believe that Shakespeare wrote his plays...**
* **Trivia Fact 10 - Shakespeare's family were all illiterate!**

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**RUMOURS AND FACTS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE!**

* **Shakespeare's actual birthday is unknown but April 23rd has been generally used - the same day as St. George's Day, the Patron Saint of England - stranger still his actual date of death is also unknown and this has also been given April 23rd! Fact!**
* **William's father, John Shakespeare was the Mayor of Stratford**
* **There are rumours that Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon to avoid prosecution for poaching a deer!**
* **Shakespeare is rumoured to be the father of an illegitimate son - William Davenant!**
* **We do not really know what Shakespeare looked like! Not one portrait was painted of Shakespeare whilst he was still alive!**
* **The majority of his plays were only published seven years after his death!**
* **Scandalous Facts! Shakespeare's daughter, Judith married a man called Thomas Quiney - but failed to get a special license to marry and, on March 12th 1616, Judith and Thomas Quiney were both excommunicated!**
* **More scandalous Shakespeare Family Facts! It transpired that Thomas Quiney had made another girl pregnant and was prosecuted for 'carnal copulation'**
* **The only mention that Shakespeare specifically makes of his wife in his Last Will and testament was to leave her his "second best bed"**
* **Shakespeare's grandchildren all died - he had no descendents**