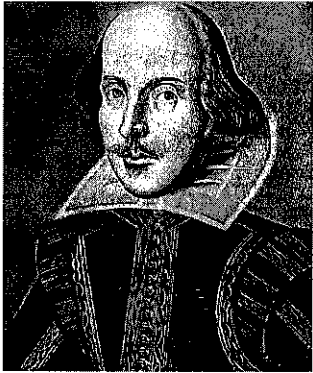


Meet William Shakespeare



FOR MORE THAN 400 YEARS, THE WORK OF POET, PLAYWRIGHT, AND ACTOR WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE HAS FASCINATED PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, ALL

OVER THE WORLD. IN FACT, MANY PEOPLE CONSIDER HIM TO BE THE GREATEST DRAMATIST EVER.

ALTOGETHER, SHAKESPEARE WROTE THIRTY-SEVEN PLAYS, INCLUDING COMEDIES, TRAGEDIES, AND HISTORIES. HE ALSO WROTE MORE THAN 150 SONNETS, ESTABLISHING HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE GREATEST LYRIC POETS OF HIS ERA. SHAKESPEARE'S MANY PLAYS AND POEMS REVEAL HIS TALENTS AS A WRITER AND HIS KEEN UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE. THE PERSONALITIES OF HIS MAIN CHARACTERS ARE OFTEN COMPLEX, REVEALING THE AMBIGUITIES AND PERSONAL CONFLICTS FOUND IN ALL OF US.

LITTLE IS KNOWN, HOWEVER, ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S OWN PERSONAL LIFE, BECAUSE HE LEFT NO DIARIES OR LETTERS. RECORDS INDICATE THAT SHAKESPEARE SPENT HIS YOUTH IN STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, A SMALL ENGLISH VILLAGE. HIS FATHER, JOHN SHAKESPEARE, WAS A GLOVE MAKER AND LOCAL POLITICAL FIGURE. HIS MOTHER, MARY ARDEN, CAME FROM A FAMILY OF WEALTHY LAND OWNERS. IT IS BELIEVED THAT YOUNG SHAKESPEARE ATTENDED THE LOCAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL, WHERE HE PROBABLY STUDIED LITERATURE AND LATIN. UNLIKE MANY OTHER WRITERS OF HIS TIME, HE DID NOT RECEIVE A FORMAL EDUCATION AT A UNIVERSITY.

IN 1582 SHAKESPEARE MARRIED ANNE HATHAWAY. IN A POEM EXPRESSING HER LOVE FOR SHAKESPEARE, HATHAWAY WROTE:

*For queens themselves might envy me,
Who scarce in palaces can find
My Willie's form, with Willie's mind.*

HATHAWAY AND SHAKESPEARE HAD THREE CHILDREN, SUSANNA, HAMNET, AND JUDITH. SCHOLARS BELIEVE THAT SHAKESPEARE MIGHT HAVE WORKED AS A SCHOOL TEACHER DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF HIS MARRIAGE.

IN THE LATE 1580'S, SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON AND QUICKLY BECAME PROMINENT IN THE THEATER. HE JOINED LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN, THE MOST POPULAR TROUPE OF ACTORS IN LONDON. WITH THIS TROUPE, HE ACTED IN PRODUCTIONS THROUGHOUT THE 1590'S AND GAVE TWO SPECIAL PERFORMANCES FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH I. WHILE ACTING, SHAKESPEARE WAS ALSO WRITING PLAYS AND EARNING RECOGNITION AS ONE OF THE GREATEST PLAYWRIGHTS IN ENGLAND. HE WROTE IN THE LANGUAGE OF ORDINARY PEOPLE DURING HIS TIME, AND THE CHARACTERS AND SITUATIONS IN HIS PLAYS APPEALED TO A VARIETY OF PEOPLE IN ENGLISH SOCIETY—FROM KINGS AND QUEENS TO PEASANTS WHO COULD NOT READ OR WRITE.

IN THE LATE 1590'S AND EARLY 1600'S, SHAKESPEARE DEVOTED MORE TIME TO WRITING AND PRODUCED MANY OF HIS GREATEST TRAGEDIES, INCLUDING *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, AND *Hamlet*. IN 1610 HE RETIRED AND RETURNED TO STRATFORD, WHERE HIS FAMILY HAD LIVED THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER. DESPITE THE POPULARITY OF HIS WORK, SHAKESPEARE NEVER CREATED A