



William Shakespeare Lecture Notes

Born – 1564

Died – 1616

Not much is known about Shakespeare's early life. He was the son of a tanner who belonged to the middle class. He grew up in a small town outside of London called Stratford-upon-Avon, and he probably attended the grammar school there. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway and had three children.

By 1592, Shakespeare is known to have moved to London and to have established himself as an actor and a playwright. Note that he wrote plays in order to make a living!

Shakespeare was known to be a shareholder in a prominent theater troupe with close ties to the court of Elizabeth I. Shakespeare and others established the Globe Theater.

He wrote approximately 37 plays between 1592 and 1613. Plays were meant to be watched.

After his death, Shakespeare's plays were divided into three categories and published. The categories are:

Histories

Richard II
Richard III

Comedies

Much Ado About Nothing
The Taming of the Shrew

Tragedies

Julius Caesar
Romeo & Juliet
Macbeth
Hamlet

History plays chronicled the lives of English monarchs; tragedies chronicled the downfall of a tragic hero, while comedies always ended happily.

Shakespeare is famous for using the following techniques:

low humor (slapstick), supernatural elements, a play within a play, puns and other plays on words, mistaken identity.

Shakespeare's plays live on because their themes are universal. The stories have the same appeal for today's audiences as they did for Elizabethan audiences.