

APPENDIX

Biography of William Shakespeare

In April 1564 a son was born to John and Mary Shakespeare at Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother was the daughter of Robert Arden, an important farmer in Warwickshire. His father was a rich citizen whose business was making and selling leather gloves.

The parents did not guess that their son, William, was going to be such an important figure in English poetry and drama, and that his plays would still be acted four hundred years later- not only in England, but all over the world. While still a teenager of nineteen, William married Anne Hathaway, a farmer's daughter some years older than himself.

We don't know how he earned his living during these early years. He may have helped his father in the family business or he may have been a country schoolmaster for a time. During these years his three children were born: Susannah, the eldest, then twins- a son, Hamnet and another girl, Judith. In 1587 Shakespeare went to work in London, leaving Anne and the children at home. One story says this is because he killed some deer which belonged to a rich landowner nearby, and that he had to run away from the law.

Shakespeare soon began to act and to write plays. By 1592 he was an important member of a well-known acting company, and in 1599 the famous Globe Theatre was built on the south bank of the river Thames. It was in this theatre that most his plays were performed and, like all Elizabethan theatres, it was a round building with the stage in the centre open to the sky. If it rained, the actors got wet. If the weather was too bad, there was no performance.

By 1603, the year when Queen Elizabeth I died, Shakespeare was already the leading poet and dramatist of his time. He continued to write for the next ten years, but in 1613 he finally stopped writing and went to live in Stratford where he died in 1616. He is buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. Ben Jonson, who lived from 1572 to 1637, and who was also a famous writer of plays, called Shakespeare „Sweet Swan of Avon“. Shakespeare has been known as the „Swan of Avon“ ever since.

William Shakespeare is considered to be the greatest playwright in European literature. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23 April 1564, six years after Elizabeth I became Queen. His father, John Shakespeare, was probably a glover and wool-merchant and for a time mayor of Stratford.

William went to the local grammar school, where he learned English, some Latin and a little Greek. He never attended university. At the age of fourteen he left school and worked with his father for several years. When he was eighteen and a half he married a farmer's daughter Ann Hathaway from Shottery, who was eight years older. (The marriage was on 27 November 1582) They had three children- Susanna (baptized on 26 May 1583 !) and the twins Hamnet and Judith (born 1585, Hamnet died 1596).

When William was 22, he went to London, leaving his wife and children in Stratford. Here WS became a player and joined the company called „The Lord Chamberlain's Men“. The company was made up of about a dozen actors (no actresses at all). Each player played 2-3 roles in a single play. WS began to write

plays and became famous as a dramatist. In 1599 he bought the Globe Theatre. Besides his plays WS wrote also 154 wonderful sonnets. His last play „The Tempest“ was probably written in 1611. In 1612 he bought a large house and settled down in Stratford. After a few quiet years he died and was buried in Stratford. It happened after spending an enjoyable evening with his friends, on 23 April 1616- the same day as his birth. (birthday party ?).

Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, which fall into three categories: comedies, tragedies and histories. Since the 17th century WS's work has been performed more often than any other dramatist's. His drama is often said to be the „mirror of life“. The greatest aspect of his genius was his understanding of human nature, and his characters are seen as real today as they were when they first appeared on the stage. His command of language has no equal. Computer studies tell us that he used more words than any other writer. His plays are divided into five acts and are written in blank verse.

The best-known of his comedies are :

A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, The Winter's Tale, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing, The Taming of the Shrew, The Comedy of Errors.

Among Shakespeare's tragedies may be named :

Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet

History plays:

Julius Caesar, The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, Pericles, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, Henry VIII, Coriolanus.

Some quotations from Shakespeare:

From Hamlet: „To be , or not to be - that is the question“
„Something is rotten in the state of Denmark“
„Frailty, thy name is woman!“

From Henry VIII: „Two women placed together make cold weather.“

From As You Like It: „All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players.

From Romeo and Juliet: „ Good night,good night, parting is such sweet sorrow

That I shall say good night till it be morrow.“²

² <http://www.biography.com/people/william-shakespeare-9480323>,(accessed in Juny 19th2015 at 11:50 pm)