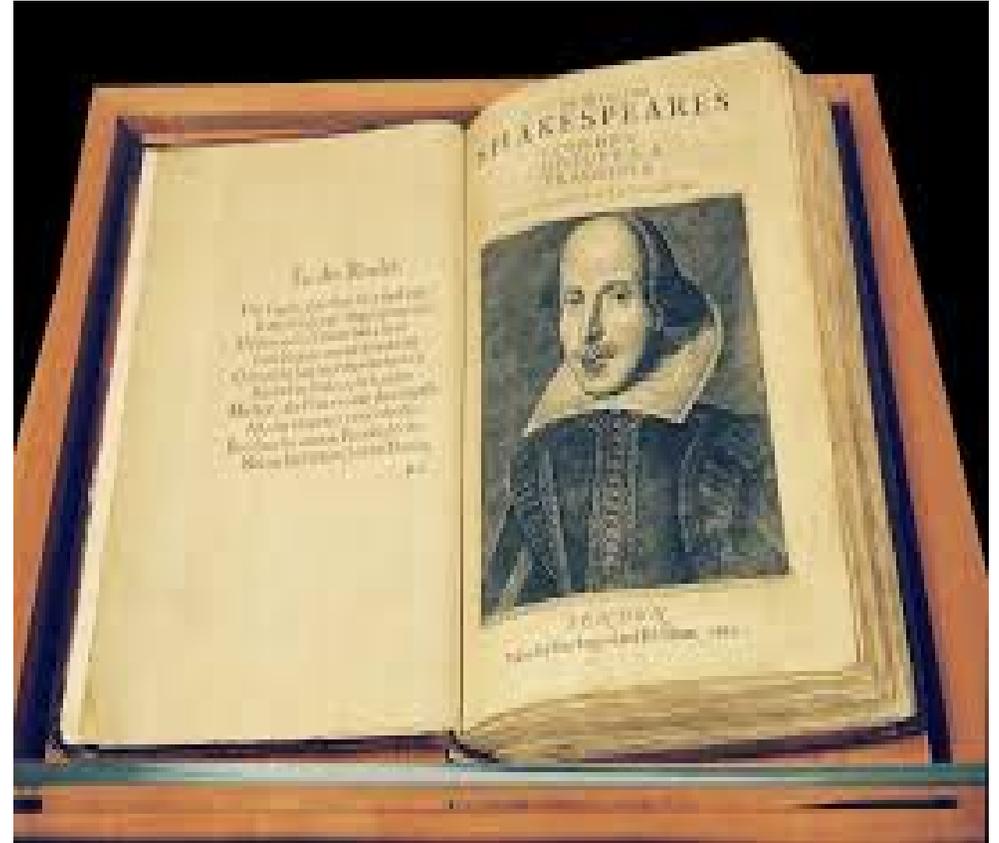


William Shakespeare was a renowned English poet, playwright, and actor born in 1564 in Stratford upon Avon. His birthday is most commonly celebrated on 23 April, which is also believed to be the date he died in 1616.

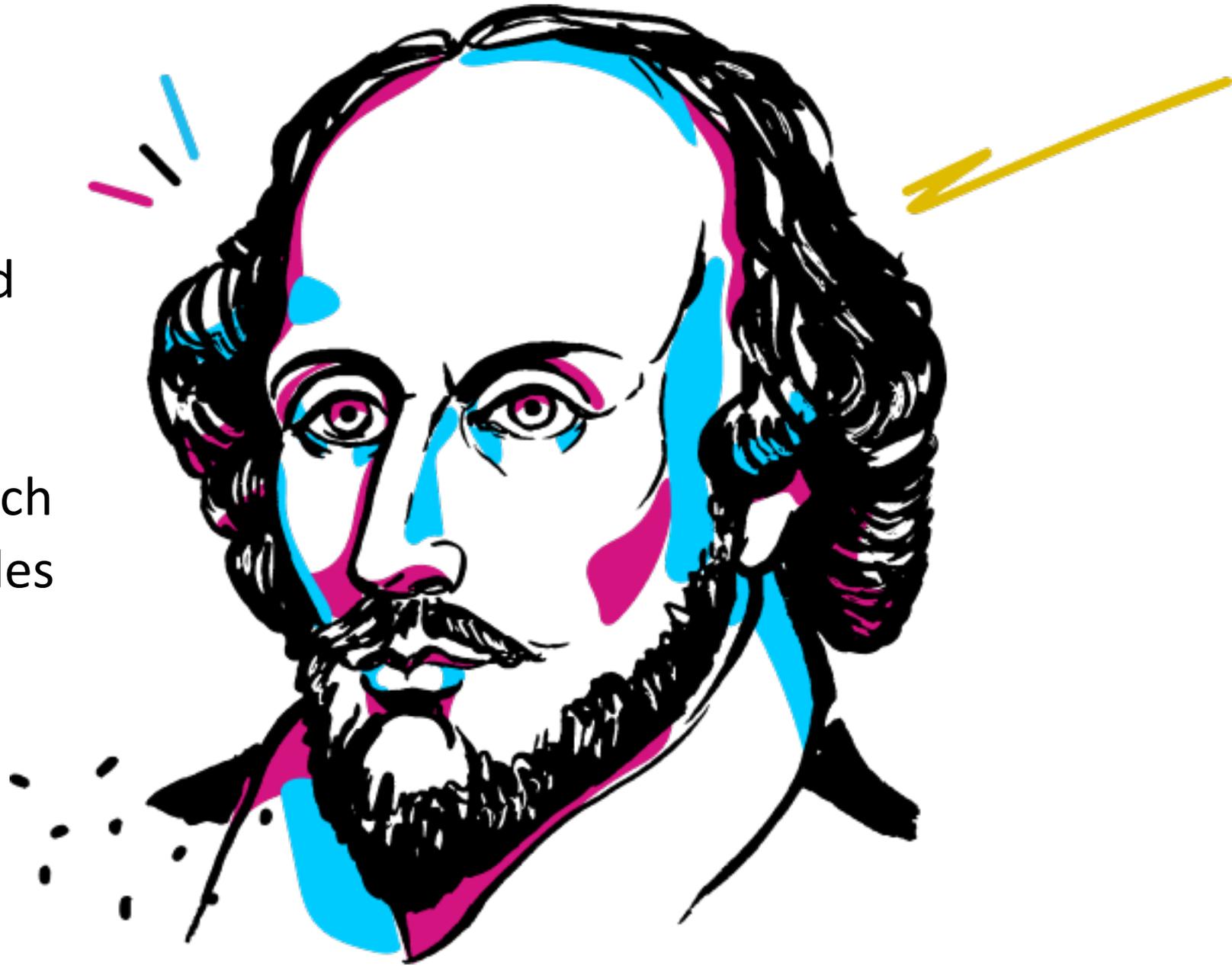


Shakespeare's Work

His works include 38 plays, 2 narrative poems, 154 sonnets, and a variety of other poems. No original manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays are known to exist today. It is actually thanks to a group of actors from Shakespeare's company that we have about half of the plays at all. They collected them for publication after Shakespeare died, preserving the plays



Shakespeare occupies a position unique in world literature. Other poets, such as Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens.



Stratford enjoyed a grammar school of good quality, and the education there was free, the schoolmaster's salary being paid by the borough. The boy's education would consist mostly of Latin studies—learning to read, write, and speak the language fairly well and studying some of the Classical historians, moralists, and poets. Shakespeare did not go on to the university.





The first reference to Shakespeare in the literary world of London comes in 1592, when a fellow dramatist, Robert Greene, declared in a pamphlet written on his deathbed:

“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 bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.”

Private life

Shakespeare had little contact with officialdom, apart from walking—dressed in the royal livery as a member of the King’s Men at the coronation of King James I in 1604. He continued to look after his financial interests. He bought properties in London and in Stratford. In 1605 he purchased a share (about one-fifth) of the Stratford tithes a fact that explains why he was eventually buried in the chancel of its parish church.



He died on April 23, 1616. No name was inscribed on his gravestone in the chancel of the parish church of Stratford-upon-Avon. Instead these lines, possibly his own, appeared:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.



I think William Shakespeare was an interesting and very talented man, although there are some speculations about his sexuality. At age 18, in 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman who was eight years older than he. The swift arrival of the couple's first child suggest that the pregnancy was unplanned, as it was certainly premarital. The marriage thus appears to have been a "shotgun" wedding. Were they compatible, or did William prefer to live apart from Anne for most of this time? When he moved to London at some point between 1585 and 1592, he did not take his family with him. Divorce was nearly impossible in this era.

What was Shakespeare's love life like during those decades in London, apart from his family? Knowledge on this subject is uncertain at best. According to an entry dated March 13, 1602, in the commonplace book of a law student named John Manningham, Shakespeare had a brief affair. Apart from these intriguing circumstances, little evidence survives other than the poems and plays that Shakespeare wrote. Can anything be learned from them? I believe, yes

