

STUDENT EXERCISES

1. How does the play you are currently reading indicate the author? How would it indicate that the man from Stratford wrote it? How would it indicate that the Earl of Oxford wrote it?

Think of other books you have read. If the author's name and description were not in the book, how would you know who is the author and what the author might be like from reading that book?

2. What specific knowledge does the Author show in the play you are reading? (Knowledge of law, foreign languages, customs, people, etc.)

3. What characters are in the play you are reading? Are they Kings and Queens, Emperors and Nobles, or are they everyday people such as shop keepers and farmers? What does this mean for you?

4. Consider a debate. One smaller group is appointed to be on the jury, one group is to take the man from Stratford's side; one group is to take the Oxford side. Present your arguments and let the jury decide.

VIDEO DISCUSSION/GROUP EXERCISES

1. Sir Derek Jacobi (*pronounced Jac-o-bi*), referring to Stratford-on-Avon says, "but one thing it is not, history." What does he mean?

2. What is a pseudonym? Why do writers use them? What arguments are given in the video for the Earl of Oxford using a pseudonym?

3. Sometimes the narrator refers to "*Shakespeare*" and sometimes "*Shakspere*." What distinctions are they making?

4. If you could ask Sir Derek Jacobi two questions, what would they be?

5. What was the main point of this video? What was the most convincing? What was the least convincing?

6. If you could make a video about Shakespeare, what would you show and who would be in it?

RESOURCES

Debates and Articles:

The Ghost of Shakespeare, Who In Fact Was the Bard?
Harper's Magazine, April 1999
The Bard's Beard, Howard Chua-Eoan, Time Magazine,
February 15, 1999.
Hunting for good Will, Michael Satchell, U.S. News and
World Report, July 24, 2000.
The Case for Oxford by Tom Bethell, Atlantic Magazine,
October 1991
Reply by Irvin Mates, Atlantic Magazine, October 1991

Stratfordian:

Allen, Ron, Who Were Shake-Speare?: The Ultimate
Who-Dun-It!
Baxter, James P. The Greatest of Literary Problems: The
Authorship of Shakespeare Works
Matus, Irvin Leigh. Shakespeare in Fact
Schonenbaum, Samuel, William Shakespeare: A Compact
Documentary Life
<http://www.clark.net/pub/tross/ws/will.html>

Oxfordian:

Looney, J. Thomas, "Shakespeare" Identified
Ogburn, Charlton. The Mysterious William Shakespeare
Sobran, Joseph. Alias Shakespeare:
Whalen, Richard, F. Shakespeare---Who Was He
<http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/shaklink.htm>

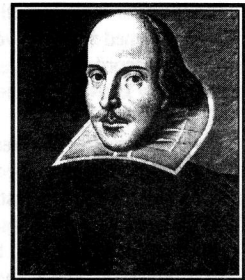
Questions or comments:

pfstreitz@aol.com
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Who Was Shakespeare?



Edward de Vere
17th Earl of Oxford



William Shakspeare
Of Stratford-on-Avon

Teacher's Guide

B404

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Instructors may duplicate the worksheets as needed

A BRIEF HISTORY

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England from 1558 until her death in 1603. Her reign was called the "Elizabethan Renaissance" because of the flowering of many poets and playwrights during this period. The most prominent playwright/poet was William Shakespeare. His name first appeared in a long poem entitled Venus and Adonis and then the name appeared on many plays thereafter. In 1609 there appeared a collection of poems entitled Shakespeare's Sonnets. The plays were performed in both the main public theatres such as The Swan, The Theater and The Globe and they were also performed in the court theaters in the various palaces of the Queen. The most famous collection of plays was The First Folio in which thirty-three plays were published in 1623 after the playwright's death.

In 1642 King Charles I was overthrown by Puritan rebels and England was ruled until 1660 by Parliament and Oliver Cromwell. The Puritans abolished all theaters and the works of Shakespere were not performed for these years. The surviving copies of the plays were the only records of the play-wright and all those who might have personally known who the playwright was died during this period of time.

In the mid 1700s there was a rediscovery of Shakespeare and more people began to recognize him as a great author. In 1763 Robert Garrick held a festival in Stratford-on-Avon and declared that the author was from this small town in rural England. From then on almost all professors and teachers believed that the man from Stratford-on-Avon was the author of the plays and poems.

In 1865 an American woman named Delia Bacon proposed that the man did not write the works from Stratford-on-Avon. She thought Sir Francis Bacon (not a relative) and others working with him wrote the plays and poems. The American author Mark Twain and others such as Walt Whitman, Sigmund Freud and Henry James agreed that the author was not the man from Stratford-on-Avon.

In 1927 J. Thomas Looney wrote a book, "Shakespeare." Identified in which he declared that the author of the plays and poems was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Since the publication of this book there has been a fierce debate over who really is the author.

WHY IS SHAKESPEARE IMPORTANT?

William Shakespeare's works are dramatic presentations of the central dramas of the lives of human beings truth, justice, love and hate, loyalty, dishonor, good and evil. Romeo and Juliet is about finding true love, Julius Caesar about the just use of power, Macbeth is about the corruption of political power, The Merchant of Venice is about the law and bigotry, and Hamlet is about the meaning of one's life. His works influence our current society and ideas even today, "those two are a modern Romeo and Juliet," or she is a real "Lady Macbeth," or common expressions that we use "all's well that ends well."

WHY IS SHAKESPEARE DIFFICULT?

Shakespeare was both a poet and a playwright. He wrote most of the language of his plays in a form called iambic pentameter. Each line had a given number of syllables but there were no rhymes at the end of each line. In addition, Shakespeare often used poetic language to express himself. Rather than saying, "Go away," he might say, "Fly on the wings of angels away." In addition, he often used words that are no longer used in modern English.

It takes some getting used to. In reading the works, try reading them aloud as if to an audience. Remember the lines are to be performed, not read silently. Also, think of how difficult it is for your parents to understand rap music with its beat, rhythms and rhymes. A little practice will make Shakespeare easier.

"To **be** or **not** to **be**, that **is** the **question**." Say this, emphasizing the **bold** word and you are on your way to talking Shakespeare.

BIOGRAPHIES

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon. His supporters state he was educated at the school in town and then became an actor before arriving in London. They say that his first poem Venus and Adonis was published in 1593, when he was twenty-nine years old. His supporters say that he was an actor and a writer working in London writing his plays. They say that later in his life he returned to live in Stratford-on-Avon and continued to write plays and poems until his death in 1616. He is buried in the church in Stratford-on-Avon.

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford was born in 1550. After his father's death in 1562 he became a ward of the Queen and lived in London. He received degrees from Oxford and Cambridge Universities and studied law. He was known to have published works under his own name. He traveled to Italy in 1575. His supporters claim that he wrote plays for the court theater starting in the 1570s. They say his first published work, Venus and Adonis, was written under the pen name "William Shakespeare." His supporters say he continued to publish his plays under the "Shakespeare name." He died in 1604. It is not known exactly where he is buried.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Name of the Man from Stratford

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that the man from Stratford-on-Avon and the Author are the same man: William Shakespeare. They say that the different spellings of the man from Stratford's name occur because spelling was not standardized in the Elizabethan era.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that the man from Stratford-on-Avon's baptism records indicate his name was "William Shakspere." They say that the first appearance of "William Shakespeare" did not appear until the publication of the poem Venus and Adonis in 1593. They further say the man from Stratford signed his last legal will "William Shakspere."

Education

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that William Shakespeare received an education at the school in Stratford-on-Avon. They maintain that the man was able to gain the other knowledge by self-study.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that there are no records of the man from Stratford ever having attended any school. They say that the lack of any letters, documents, other works in his handwriting indicate that the man from Stratford was probably illiterate. (Only about 5% of the people at that time could read and write.)

Setting of the Plays

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that the Author used the power of his imagination to write about Kings and Queens that he apparently never met in the course of his life.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that only someone very familiar with the court of Elizabeth and the language of the aristocrats and their lifestyles could write so knowingly about the Kings and Queens.

Knowledge of the Law

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that the Author could have learned all he needed to know about the law by buying property and being a knowledgeable businessman.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that only someone very familiar with the law could have written the plays and poems and that Oxford had been trained in the law in London.

Plays In Italy

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that the Author did not have to travel to foreign countries but could create plays in countries he had never visited. If he needed to know specific words or descriptions he could ask others.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that only someone who had traveled to Italy and spoke Italian could write so accurately about Italy. (Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, etc. are set in Italy.) Since Oxford had visited Italy and spoke Italian, they say shows he must have been the author.

The First Folio

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that The First Folio clearly prints the name William Shakespeare as both an author and an actor. This they say is undisputed proof William Shakespeare was the Author.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that The First Folio was a work published by Oxford's son-in-law (Lord Montgomery) and was meant to keep the author's identify secret. They say the picture of the man on the cover shows a man with a bulb on his forehead and one shoulder on backwards.

The Earl of Southampton

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that the Earl of Southampton was Shakespeare's patron (gave him money to write plays). (Venus and Adonis was dedicated to Southampton, and some think many of the Sonnets are about Southampton)

Oxfordian:

Some Oxfordians think that the Earl of Southampton was the son of Queen Elizabeth and Oxford, and that is the reason Oxford could not reveal his identify as a writer.

Concealing the Author

Stratfordian:

Stratfordians maintain that there was no concealing the author. They maintain that the man from Stratford was the author and his name was William Shakespeare. They say the author could not be the Earl of Oxford because too many people would have known the secret.

Oxfordian:

Oxfordians maintain that the Earl of Oxford had to use a "pen name" to hide his identity. They claim that revealing his name would reveal too much about the Queen and the court of Elizabeth. Everyone had to be quiet because the Queen was involved.