



## *The Young Shakespeareans*

### **FUN FACTS about SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE & TIMES**

**Very few hard facts are actually known about Shakespeare's life but here are a few very interesting ones**

1. Shakespeare was 18 years old when he married his wife Anne Hathaway who was 26. Their first child Susanna was born six months after the wedding.
2. Shakespeare's only granddaughter Elizabeth (daughter of Susanna) died childless in 1670. Therefore, he has no descendants.
3. Shakespeare began writing in 1589 at age 25. During his life, he wrote at least 37 plays, 154 sonnets, a number of poems and "lost plays", and plays that he collaborated on. This means he wrote an average of 1.5 plays per year before dying in 1616 at age 52.
4. Copyright didn't exist in Shakespeare's time. To prevent plays from being stolen or copied, actors got their lines only once the play was in progress, often in the form of cue acting (someone whispered them backstage, then the actor delivered them onstage).
5. Although Shakespeare is universally considered as one of the finest writers in the English language, his contemporaries were not always impressed. In 1592, theatre critic Robert Greene wrote that he was an "upstart crow, beautified with feathers".
6. Shakespeare acted in many of his own plays as well as those of other playwrights. There is evidence that he played the Ghost in "Hamlet" and Adam in "As You Like It".
7. Shakespeare's shortest play, "The Comedy of Errors" is 1/3 the length of his longest, "Hamlet", which takes four hours to perform.
8. Shakespeare became both a very successful writer and a wealthy businessman. In London, he formed a joint-stock company with his actors, sharing in company profits as well as earning a fee for each play he wrote. In his hometown of Stratford (where his family lived and which he visited often), he owned a large portfolio of properties and was highly respected.
9. One of Shakespeare's relatives on his mother's side, William Arden, was arrested for plotting against Queen Elizabeth I. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London and executed.
10. Though his company was originally called the 'Lord Chamberlain's Men', when King James I made the actors 'Grooms of Chamber', Shakespeare changed the company's name to the 'King's Men'. This made Shakespeare in high demand for Court performances.
11. On June 29, 1613, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre burnt to the ground in two hours after a special effect of a cannon shot set fire to the thatched roof during a performance of "Henry VIII". The theatre was rebuilt the following year.
12. Abraham Lincoln was a great lover of Shakespeare's plays and frequently recited from them to his friends. Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, was a famous Shakespearean actor.
13. Shakespeare invented almost 3,000 words in the English language. Estimations of his vocabulary range from 17,000 to 29,000 words – at least double the number of words used by the average person.
14. Shakespeare wrote close to 1/10 of the most quoted lines ever written or spoken in English, and is the second most quoted English writer, only after the writers of the Bible.
15. England's 'Royal Shakespeare Company' sells more than 1/2 million tickets each year at their theatres in Stratford-on-Avon, London and Newcastle, introducing an estimated 50,000 people to a live performance of a Shakespearean play each year.