

## SHAKESPEARE

### Getting to know Shakespeare

#### Task 1 VOCABULARY

In groups of 3 or 4 check the meaning of the words below. What do you learn about Shakespeare just looking at these words?

gloves	despite	to smell
wife-to-be	personal life	oyster
twins	to remain	true
records	mystery	brevity
leading actor	to claim	soul
to live apart	to attribute	wit
society	contemporary	
eventually	pseudonym	
enough	to consider	
fame	to invent	

#### Task 2 VOCABULARY

What do you think these phrases mean:

to have seen better days

to be true to yourself

to smell the rat

the world is your oyster

Brevity is the soul of wit.

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### Task 3 READING

Read the text below and answer the questions.

William Shakespeare was born on April 23rd, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon to John Shakespeare, a glove maker and a local justice of the peace, and Mary Arden. He was the third of eight children and the eldest boy in the family. He probably left school at 14, and later may have worked as a school teacher. He was only 18 when he met his wife-to-be, Anne Hathaway. She was 26 at the time. They were married shortly afterwards in November 1582 and their first child, Susanna, was born eight months later. Two years later, they had twins, Hamnet and Judith. From this point in his life, all records are lost for seven years until 1592, when he is to be living apart from his wife in London. He had become a writer and leading actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men acting company at the Globe Theatre.

Shakespeare was a successful man: his plays were popular with all levels of society. Eventually he made enough money to buy the Globe and, later, the Blackfriars Theatre. Despite all his fame, William Shakespeare's personal life remains a mystery. Some claim that he did not, in fact, write the plays he is so famous for, attributing them to John Webster, a contemporary of Shakespeare who wrote *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Some historians believe that "William Shakespeare" was really a pseudonym used by Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.

William Shakespeare died in 1616 on his birthday. He was 52 years old. He is considered by many to be the greatest writer in the English language. The names of his most famous plays – Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth – are known all around the world and hundreds of the phrases which he invented have become part of everyday English: to have seen better days, to be true to yourself, the world's your oyster, to smell a rat, brevity is the soul of wit, ... Do you know any more of his phrases?

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1. What year was Shakespeare born?
  - a) 1520
  - b) 1564
  - c) 1590
  - d) 1601
2. How many brothers and sisters did he have?
  - a) one
  - b) three
  - c) five
  - d) seven
3. As a young man, what was his job?
  - a) Glove maker
  - b) Hat maker
  - c) School teacher
  - d) Musician
4. When did he get married?
  - a) 1608
  - b) 1540
  - c) 1564
  - d) 1582
5. What was the name of his wife?
  - a) Mary Arden
  - b) Elizabeth Hall
  - c) Judith Quiney
  - d) Anne Hathaway
6. How many children did he have?
  - a) none
  - b) one
  - c) two
  - d) three
7. What was the name of his acting company?
  - a) the Queen's Men
  - b) the King's Men
  - c) the Lord Chamberlain's Men
  - d) the Blackfriars Men
8. What was the name of his first theatre?
  - a) the Globe
  - b) the Blackfriars Theatre
  - c) the Stratford Theatre
  - d) the Burbage Theatre
9. Which of these didn't he write?
  - a) Coriolanus
  - b) The Comedy of Errors
  - c) The White Devil
  - d) As You Like It
10. When did Shakespeare die?
  - a) January 1st 1592
  - b) April 23rd 1602
  - c) April 23rd 1616
  - d) November 5th 1654

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### Teachers' notes and answer key

Ask your students if they have heard the name William Shakespeare. If you had to brainstorm something about him, you might be surprised how much information they already know about him and his work. However, we must remember that William Shakespeare was born in England over 400 years ago, near the middle of the 16th century. He was an English playwright living in Elizabethan times. He has achieved great fame and recognition throughout history and across many cultures, but all cultures have their great artists - writers, storytellers, thinkers, painters, and so on. How many other well-known writers, storytellers, poets, playwrights, and philosophers can the students name from their culture(s)? Give everyone two minutes to think about anything that they associate with the name "Shakespeare," and then share, on a large piece of paper or on the blackboard, all the collective knowledge the class has about Shakespeare. Then have them do the vocabulary exercises and the reading and answer the questions.

Task 3 Answer Key:

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 7. c  |
| 2. d | 8. a  |
| 3. c | 9. c  |
| 4. d | 10. c |
| 5. d |       |
| 6. d |       |

Additional information about Shakespeare on the web:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Shakespeare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare)

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/>

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/>

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