

Life & Times of William Shakespeare Part 2

Hello Guys, welcome to another podcast from Learning Without Borders. I am Richie Mulaney, and today I'll be talking about William Shakespeare's life as a follow up to The Life & Times of William Shakespeare. This is part 2 of William's life.

So we were left off in 1585, with William having married Anne Hathaway, and we had the birth of Susanna and the twins, Hamnet & Judith. William, we presume, was working as a teacher, or a law clerk. Regardless of his dull occupation, historians reckon this is when William wrote his first plays, *Henry VI*, and then left for London around 1591, how he gets to London is a mystery and there are many tales. Most believe he joined a travelling theatre group, which would have performed in Stratford, and made his way to London. He would have thrived to being an actor/playwright and in 1592 he was referred to, in a famed pamphlet, as a "upstart crow," by Robert Greene, Greene critiquing Shakespeare's poor skills as an playwright. Regardless, William Shakespeare had hit the stages of London and any publicity is good publicity. He worked as an actor and playwright, and rumoured a decent one at that!

Now theatres back in 1590 were very different to the theatre nowadays. Visiting a theatre and watching a play was very different not just because of who was in the audience, but because of the expectations of how people would behave. Theatergoers were not expected to be still and silent throughout the performance like modern audiences are. Rather, it was the modern equivalent of going to see a popular band; the audience would eat, drink and talk throughout the performance, and there would have been a huge variety of people, sailors, merchants, teachers, artists, critics, playwrights etc. Theatres were open air and used natural light, most plays were performed not in the evening as they are now, but rather in the afternoon or during the daylight. And plays during that era used very little scenery and few, if any props, instead using language to set the scene most of the time.

So, let me do a quick review of William Shakespeare, the worlds most renowned writer, the father of English literature; he gets an older woman knocked up, which is slang for getting pregnant, when he's only eighteen, forcing him to marry her and has twins! So I can only imagine the freedom William must have felt when arriving in London, for the first time in his life, it seems, he was responsible only for himself. Finally he can become the William Shakespeare we all know and love, or at least he could have if not for the Black Death, hitting London in late 1592 and theatres closed down in January 1593. During the following year into 1594, we believe William to have written *Richard III*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, we also believe he began writing his Sonnets.

Now, I'm going to leave it there guys. Join me for part 3, when the theatres reopen and Shakespearean theatre is truly born.