

Life & Times of William Shakespeare Part 3

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 3 of William's life.

The year is 1594, the theatres have reopened in London and William Shakespeare is performing with the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a group of actors under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I.

1595 was an extremely busy year for William. He wrote and produced *Richard II*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* & it's believed to be the year he wrote *Romeo & Juliet*. This near unbelievable, in the 4 years since arriving in London this is William's 10th play and he is famous and his creativity and activity continues to flow over the course of the next 3 years. By 1598, William shows his colours as a ample businessman as he had bought shares in several theatres across London and also in the Lord Chamberlain's Men itself. These shares led to William buying the second largest house in Stratford-upon-Avon. I'll also have to mention the unfortunate death of poor little Hamnet, William's son, who died at the age of eleven in 1596. Sometime in the spring or summer of 1596 Shakespeare must have received word that his only son Hamnet, eleven years old, was ill. Whether in London or on tour with his company he would at best have only been able to receive news intermittently from his family in Stratford, but at some point in the summer he presumably learned that Hamnet's condition had worsened and that it was necessary to drop everything and hurry home. By the time the father reached Stratford the boy—whom, apart from brief visits, Shakespeare had in effect abandoned in his infancy—may already have died, on August 11th.

In the four years following Hamnet's death, the playwright, as many have pointed out, wrote some of his sunniest comedies: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, giving evidence that the father's grief must at most have been brief. Then in 1599, the major shareholders of the Lord Chamberlain's Men lease land from Nicholas Brend, The Globe theatre opening later that same year. *Julius Caesar* is performed at the Globe Theatre for the first known time on September the 21st according to, a German tourist, Thomas Platter's diary.

In 1600-1602, *Hamlet* is written, *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Troilus & Cressida* are probably composed! In 1603, Queen Elizabeth dies and King James I takes the throne, to which the Lord Chamberlain's Men perform *As You Like It* for King James. He becomes an enthusiastic patron and the Lord Chamberlain's Men are renamed the King's Men. This man is an absolute machine! 25 plays by 1603 and 12 more to come before his death, including *Macbeth*, *Antony & Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*. It's clear to see why William wasn't a family man, when would he have had the time? The plays he's writing are plays with complex themes, plots and characters, in a city full of critics and jealous peers waiting for his genius to end and he doesn't stop, nor slow.

In 1613, the Globe theatre burned to the ground during a performance of *Henry VIII*, and rebuilt in 1614. William would have moved back to Stratford around 1613, grew ill in 1616 and died in the Spring. As one final testament to his famous wit, he had his tombstone inscribed with a rather hilarious curse; "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." It was somehow a fitting way to draw the curtain on Shakespeare's life.

That concludes my all too brief tale of William Shakespeare's wonderful life. Talk soon :)