

Tikrit University

College of Education for Humanities

English Department



Third Year - 2023-2024

Drama

(Shakespeare: An Introduction)

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Shakespeare: An Introduction

Shakespeare is the greatest English writer and one of the greatest writers in the literary world. He is the "**worker of miracles.**"¹ This is due to his intelligence. Definitely no other English author has held such a reputation all over the literary world. If one compares Shakespeare with other authors such as the poets Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, he will find that he is more popular and more readable than them and his contemporaries. His plots and characters continued to be a living reality for his readers. Ben Jonson, his contemporary, had expressed in his tribute: "Thou ... art alive still, while thy book doth live, / And we have wits to read, and praise to give." Jonson's prophecy of Shakespeare says that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time." According to what one reads today, he can absolutely affirm that this prophecy has been fulfilled.

Although Shakespeare's great plays had plots borrowed from Latin stories, such as the *Menaechmi* * of Plautus*, and the astonishing imagery that was taken from the *Metamorphoses* * of Ovid* and the *Lives* of Plautarch*, yet Shakespeare's

* **The *Menaechmi*** is a play about mistaken identity, involving a set of twins ,Menaechmus of [Epidamnus](#) and Menaechmus of [Syracuse](#). The story of one twin (Antipholus) looking for his lost brother, accompanied by a clever servant (Dromio) whose twin has also disappeared, results in a farce of mistaken identities that also thoughtfully explores issues of identity and self-knowing.

* **Plautus** (Titus Maccius Plautus, 254 BC-184 BC) was the greatest Roman playwright .

* ***Metamorphoses*** is a poem in fifteen books that describes the creation and history of the world in terms according to Greek and Roman points of view.

* **Ovid** (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 BC- 18 AD) was one of the greatest poets of antiquity and author of *Metamorphoses* -,a masterpiece on Greek and Roman myths .

* **Plutarch** (Mestrius Plutarchus, 45- 127 AD) was the Greek historian, biographer, and essayist. His writings had enormous influence on English literature .

plays show a deep knowledge of human behaviour, revealed through portraying a long series and wide variety of characters. He is a writer of great intelligence and wide imagination. His use of poetic language and other dramatic devices to create aesthetic effect is a personal achievement. By words and actions, he wants to show the deepest emotions of human beings and their motivations in universal, social, and individual situations.

Definitely, inside the writer there is a man who has his own world, needs, and motives. To proceed with this study, one got to know who Shakespeare is. Shakespeare's life is still, to some extent, ambiguous and filled with questions. Although the available information of Shakespeare's life was gathered from official persons, like the date of his baptism, marriage, death, and his will. Yet, a large number of illusions were added to his life as a writer.

Shakespeare's Life and Works

He was born in 1564, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom, and died in 1616, Stratford-upon-Avon, United Kingdom. William is the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. She was a wife who would be able to help and advise an energetic and ambitious husband." Because of his job, John Shakespeare was very busy to teach his children. Thus, their mother "taught them their letters and told them stories full of the wonder of local folklore." Mary was an uncommon mother, anyone can imagine that she encouraged her son and was proud of her eager, quick, and imaginative eldest son, William, and his progress.

Shakespeare was probably educated at the local grammar school at the age of six or seven. Latin was the primary language of learning. The study of Latin authors like Seneca, Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, and Horace would have been the focus of his literary training. Despite his removal from the school, due to his father's financial

and social difficulties, Shakespeare had continued his studies. He got married at the age of eighteen from Anne Hathaway with whom he had three children. He travelled to London and worked as an actor, a playwright, and a partner in a leading acting company, he became both prosperous and well-known.

His works:

| Comedy | History | Tragedy | Poetry |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> | <i>Henry IV, part 1</i> | <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | <i>The Sonnets</i> |
| <i>As You Like It</i> | <i>Henry IV, part 2</i> | <i>Coriolanus</i> | <i>A Lover's Complaint</i> |
| <i>The Comedy of Errors</i> | <i>Henry V</i> | <i>Hamlet</i> | <i>The Rape of Lucrece</i> |
| <i>Cymbeline</i> | <i>Henry VI, part 1</i> | <i>Julius Caesar</i> | <i>Venus and Adonis</i> |
| <i>Love's Labours Lost</i> | <i>Henry VI, part 2</i> | <i>King Lear</i> | <i>Funeral Elegy by W.S.</i> |
| <i>Measure for Measure</i> | <i>Henry VI, part 3</i> | <i>Macbeth</i> | |
| <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> | <i>Henry VIII</i> | <i>Othello</i> | |
| <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> | <i>King John</i> | <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> | |

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|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> | <i>Richard II</i> | <i>Timon of Athens</i> | |
| <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> | <i>Richard III</i> | <i>Titus Andronicus</i> | |
| <i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</i> | | | |
| <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> | | | |
| <i>The Tempest</i> | | | |
| <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> | | | |
| <i>Twelfth Night</i> | | | |
| <i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> | | | |
| <i>Winter's Tale</i> | | | |