



# Welcome to Animated Shakespeare!

## About William Shakespeare

We think you'll find these teaching resources – created by professional theatre actors and educators – very valuable supports to your classroom explorations of Shakespeare. The following pages include lesson plans that can stand alone or be used to accompany our video series.

In each Module, you will have three or four Units that deepen students' understanding of various aspects of Shakespeare's work or a particular play. Each video is accompanied by several pages of in-class activities for teachers to prepare, as well as Class Handout sheets to reproduce for your students.

No matter which play you are studying, these activities can supplement your regular class work to enliven the text that has become so influential, not only in theatre, but in the common speech of Western society. Enjoy!

– *The team at KDOONS and WYRD Productions*

**NOTE:** In the following activities and handouts, you may see references to a few terms:

**The First Folio:** This is the common name for the collection of Shakespeare's plays, entitled 'Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies', published in 1623. This is the text favored by most professional actors, and the scenes used in the activities will come straight from the Folio. Many of the Folio plays, however, are not broken down into scenes, just five long acts. For ease of reference, therefore, we will include the standardized line numbers from modern editions of Shakespeare.

**Puke Books:** This term was not created by Shakespeare! We recommend each student have a small notepad – or "Puke Book" – in which she can do timed writing. Students are never forced to share this writing. They will be asked to read it over, highlight the phrase that resonates most strongly and, if they choose, share this tidbit with the class. 'Puking' allows students to personalize their experience of Shakespeare by reflecting on themes from the plays. In their Puke Books, they may discover connections between the stories and their own lives. Optional **Puke Topics** are suggested in an inset many of the Units for students' personal reflections.

**MacHomer:** The videos are performed by Rick Miller, creator of MacHomer (The Simpsons do Macbeth), a solo play that has been performed in 175 cities over 17 years. Prior knowledge of MacHomer is not a pre-requisite to using these videos, but the DVD and/or script are often used as additional teaching tools, and can be purchased as part of the full Outreach bundle at [animatedshakespeare.com](http://animatedshakespeare.com)



### Puke Topic

Students are given a topic, usually a reflective question that they are to consider with pen in hand. We suggest 2 - 3 minutes for students who are new to timed writing, 5 - 10 minutes for a class who is comfortable with it. Their pens are to move constantly through the timed writing period, even if just to repeat 'blah blah blah', because this movement is preferable to both the inertia of thinking and the self-critique of editing. The stream of consciousness that is produced may be ugly – like puke – but it comes whether we like it or not. Students are never forced to share this personal writing. When time is up, everyone should read over his/her own words and underline the phrase that resonates most for him/her.



# About William Shakespeare

## Video Transcript

Everyone knows the name William Shakespeare, but we actually don't know very much about this guy.

His birthday is a guess. What he looked like is a bit of a mystery. Even his identity and his existence are sometimes questioned by people who think this guy could not have written such amazing plays. They credit his plays with someone more educated like the Earl of Oxford or the philosopher Sir Francis Bacon or the playwright Christopher Marlowe or even Queen Elizabeth!

**Here's what we think we know:** William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564 to his mother, **Mary Arden**, and his father, **John Shakespeare**, who was a leather worker, a glove-maker.

He was one of eight children, only five of whom survived to adulthood. At age thirteen he was taken away from his schooling and was forced to apprentice with a butcher. A few years later, we know he married someone named **Anne Hathaway** (who was 8 years older than he was) because she was pregnant with their first child, Susanna. **Susanna** was born, and a couple of years later they had twins: **Hamnet** and **Judith**. And we can pretty much speculate that it wasn't a very happy marriage, because Shakespeare then took off to London for 20 years to start in the burgeoning theatre industry.

He started working and apprenticing, becoming better known, but then the theatres closed during the plague. So Shakespeare started writing, and he became quite known as an actor, a playwright and a poet.

In 1594, at age 30, William Shakespeare became the primary shareholder of the most famous acting company of the time, The Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1599, the famous Globe Theatre was built where Shakespeare performed most of his most famous plays. Shakespeare wrote plays for the Queen of England, **Queen Elizabeth I**, which is why a lot of Shakespeare's plays are called Elizabethan plays. Then when she died, **King James I** of Scotland ascended to the throne and Shakespeare wrote plays for him too. All in all, he wrote 38 plays.

In 1608, he moved back to Stratford to his family. They bought a really nice house and he calmed down with his writing a little bit. In 1613, when the Globe Theatre burnt down, Shakespeare retired officially from the stage. He died in 1616 on April 23rd – his birthday – at the tender age of 52.



# About William Shakespeare

## Topic Recap and Discussion Starter:

### Shakespeare:

- Famous writer, poet, playwright
- Is mysterious: date of birth and appearance uncertain
- Married Anne Hathaway
- Had 3 children:
  - Susanna
  - Hamnet
  - Judith
- Died April 23rd, 1616 (at the age of 52)



### Shakespeare wrote:

- 38 Plays
- 154 Sonnets
- 2 Narrative poems
- Many other short poems

### Shakespeare's plays:

- Were performed by The Lord Chamberlain's Men
- Were performed at the Globe Theatre
- Were written for Queen Elizabeth I
- Then were written for King James I





# About William Shakespeare

## Activity 1: *Shakespeare In Love*

### Objective:

To show students a depiction of Shakespeare as a real man, a romantic and a struggling artist in a hard time.

### Introduction:

*Shakespeare In Love* was released in 1998 and won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

### Instructions:

Show the film and ask students to notice details of

- Royalty (the role of the monarch in a playwright's success)
- Rehearsal (how did playwrights prepare the actors for their parts?)
- The Globe Theatre (how it looked with an audience during performance.)



## Activity 2: *Anonymous*

### Objective:

To learn about the debate surrounding Shakespeare's authorship and identity.

### Introduction:

*Anonymous* premiered at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival. This film shows the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, an Elizabethan courtier, playwright, poet and patron of the arts. Those who dispute Shakespeare's authorship believe that Oxford was more likely to have written such a volume of work, indicating his scholarly understanding of medicine, astronomy, etc. and his world travels (many of the plays are set in Italy, France, Scotland, etc.)

### Instructions:

Show the film and ask students if this storyline seems plausible.

### Puke Topic

**Anonymous**

Stephen King wrote several novels as Richard Bachman. His son Joseph King writes as Joe Hill. Mary Shelly's novel *Frankenstein* was first published anonymously.

Do you know of any other authors who write under a different name (a "pen name", "pseudonym", or "nom-de-plume")?

Why do you think they may have done that?

Have you ever submitted a comment on the internet under nickname or anonymously?

How would you write it differently if your real name were attached to it?



### Activity 3: What's in a face?

#### Objective:

To explore Shakespeare's identity through his much-disputed image.

#### Introduction:

Most of our images of Shakespeare come from long after his death, but there are two portraits with a strong claim to have been painted from life.

**The Sanders portrait** The Sanders portrait is one of two portraits believed to have been painted during Shakespeare's lifetime, at the age of 39, in 1603, as he wrote *Macbeth*. It was found in Canada by the descendants of John Sanders, who may have been a scenery painter for Shakespeare's company.

The Sanders portrait



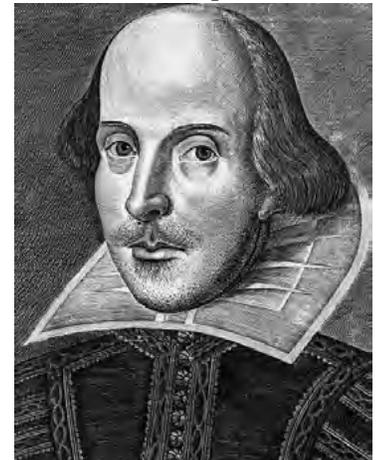
**The Chandos portrait** is thought to have been painted by John Taylor in 1610 (the name comes from its owner, the Duke of Chandos).

The Chandos portrait



**The Droeshout portrait** is the most recognizable and iconic image (and the inspiration for our animated Shakespeare!). It was an engraving made by Martin Droeshout not long after Shakespeare's death in 1616, to illustrate the First Folio of Shakespeare's work, published in 1622. It is thought to be an accurate likeness, as the people involved in the Folio – including Shakespeare's fellow playwright, Ben Jonson – knew him in life.

The Droeshout portrait



#### Instructions:

How does an image of someone cause us to think about their character? What differences do facial expression, age, hair and clothing make? Have your students look at the three portraits and list **adjectives** and **character traits** that the person might have. What would this person be like?

Have your students research online to see the portraits in color, and to write one paragraph for each about the debate over each portrait's authenticity. What other images of Shakespeare do they find online?

*If you have seen the movies in Activity 1, ask students to decide which portraits were used by the actors and directors to create the movies' visions of Shakespeare. Did any of each portrayal's traits match their own adjectives from looking at the images?*

## Activity 4: About Any Character

### Objective:

To have the class enliven the Dramatis Personae of any Shakespeare play by uncovering biographic details of each major character.

### Introduction:

We've heard of Macbeth and Hamlet, Juliet and Rosalind, but who are these people? This activity will require your students to comb the text for information about certain characters in order to humanize them, to lift them off the page, to understand the human motivation behind their actions in the play.

In Macbeth, for example, who is Banquo? This friend who Macbeth hires professionals to kill. Who is Macduff? This man whose entire family is killed by Macbeth. Who are the witches? Women who work in the underworld and orchestrate Macbeth's downfall.

### Instructions:

Have student pairs write a biography for any character in Macbeth or any play you are studying. Try to cover each major player. The students can use hardcopy scripts or electronic text (which is easier to search) to find every reference to their character. (Remember, in the case of Macbeth himself, they may need to search for Glamis and Cawdor as well.) These references to the character's name may reveal what other characters say about him/her.

Students will also need to consider what s/he says about him/herself. Students can scan their character's own lines for indications of their age, work, family, etc.

For example, just before Macduff discovers Duncan's dead body, Lennox tells Macbeth about the tumultuous night outdoors - Macbeth knows full well how rough it was inside! - and concludes with, 'My young remembrance cannot parallel/A fellow to it.' This indicates that Lennox would be played by a man younger than the one playing Macbeth. (In a similar vein, Francis Flute, one of the players in A Midsummer Night's Dream, does not want to play a woman - Thisby, opposite Bottom's Pyramus - because he has 'a beard coming.' He's finally looking older - and his voice is probably deepening - so he doesn't want to portray a woman's smooth skin and higher pitch.)

Once we understand the characters better, we know what kind of actor to cast in each role. Some students may wish to be the director and cast their classmates in certain roles based on their physique or their temperament.

*After sharing their discoveries, ask each student to consider 'How have I/we contributed to our class's understanding of this play?'*



## About William Shakespeare

### A Brief (and much-debated) Biography of William Shakespeare

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Shakespeare then took off to London for 20 years to start in the burgeoning theatre industry. He was working and apprenticing, becoming better known, but then the theatres closed during the plague\*.

He spent that time writing and eventually became quite known as an actor, a playwright and a poet. In 1594, William Shakespeare became the primary shareholder of the most famous acting company of the time, The Lord Chamberlain's Men. In 1599, the famous Globe Theatre was built.

Shakespeare wrote plays for Queen Elizabeth I, which is why a lot of his plays are called 'Elizabethan' drama. When she died, King James I of Scotland ascended to the English throne and Shakespeare wrote plays for him too. All in all, he wrote 38 plays. In 1608, he moved back to Stratford to his family and calmed down with his writing.

In 1613, when the Globe Theatre burnt down, Shakespeare retired officially from the stage. He died in 1616 on April 23rd – his birthday – at the age of 52.

#### Shakespeare:

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## What's in a face?

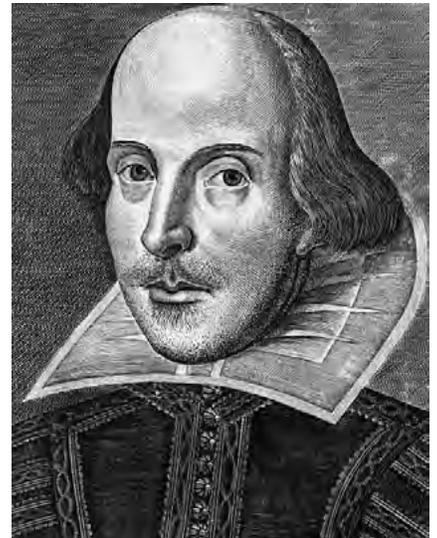
The Sanders portrait



The Chandos portrait



The Droeshout portrait



This person looks:

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This person looks:

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# About William Shakespeare

## About Any Character

**My Character:** \_\_\_\_\_

**By:** \_\_\_\_\_

What I say about myself:

What others say about me: