



troubling aspects of the plot, especially the anti-Semitism directed at Shylock. The play's themes include: money and status; revenge²⁴; justice and mercy²⁵; prejudice and tolerance; and loyalty.

- Is the problem of anti-Semitism still evident in our society?
- How and where can we come across with this theme in our lives?

Heather M. Hill
Pictures from a performance by
the Shakespeare's Players in New York

Who Was Shakespeare?

Little is actually known for sure about the man we call William Shakespeare, although his name is familiar to nearly every English-speaking person or educated person. Most people today consider Shakespeare the greatest of all dramatists. His plays demonstrate a profound²⁶ understanding of the nature of humanity. His skill with language and his ability to construct a story through dramatic and poetic means is unequalled²⁷.

The generally accepted facts are as follows: Shakespeare was born in 1564, the third child and first son of John Shakespeare and his wife Mary Arden, in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. John Shakespeare was a landowner, a merchant, a glove maker, and a man on a political track. In 1567 he became "high bailiff," the highest elected office in Stratford, equivalent to a mayor today.

William was baptized²⁸ in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 23, 1564. The exact date is known from the town records. He most likely attended the local grammar school, the King's New School.

In 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer from the nearby village of Shottery. In 1583,

they had a daughter, Susanna, and then twins, Hamnet and Judith, in 1585. (Hamnet died at age eleven).

Around 1588 Shakespeare moved to London and within a few years he had achieved a degree of success as an actor, poet and playwright. His sonnets especially established his reputation as a gifted and popular poet, but it is the 38 plays he wrote or collaborated on that have firmly established his reputation as the greatest dramatist who ever lived.

Shakespeare became a charter member²⁹ of a theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, in 1594. He first worked in theatres owned by James Burbage northeast of London, the Theatre and the Curtain. In 1598 Burbage moved to Bankside, along the Thames River, and built the Globe Theatre. As a partner in the Globe, Shakespeare profited from its success. His plays were performed at the courts of Queen Elizabeth I and later King James I, who became sponsor of his theatrical troupe³⁰ in 1603. Its name was changed to the "King's Men".

After 1608, Shakespeare's creative output lessened³¹, and he returned to Stratford. He settled his family in one of the town's finest homes and became a prominent local citizen. He died in 1616 at the age of 52 and was buried in the chancel³² of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford. His tomb's elegy³³, allegedly³⁴ written by him, reads:

*Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear³⁵
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares³⁶ these stones
And cursed be he that moves my bones.*

Shakespeare's Works

Shakespeare's works are generally divided up into four major periods. His early plays (1589-95) were somewhat experimental. They include chronicle history plays,

a popular genre of the period which featured medieval³⁷ tragedies played out in bloody detail, and a range of comedies.

Shakespeare's second period (to 1600) included important plays dealing with English history, his "joyous" comedies and two major tragedies. His technique became individualized and distinct as he began to combine elements of the tragic and the comic to reveal the vast sweep of humanity.



The great tragedies, considered his most profound work, were written during the third period (to 1608) of Shakespeare's career. These included *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. He also wrote biting comedies during this time.

During his fourth period (to 1613) Shakespeare wrote his primary romantic tragicomedies including *The Tempest*, considered by many to be Shakespeare's most beautiful and lyrical play.

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1vláda, kralovanie – vládnúť; 2vyhostený – vyhoštený; 3prestrojený za – prestrojený za; 4zápletka; 5zaoberať sa s – zaoberať sa s; 6šťastie, súcit – šťastie, soucit; 7pôžička – půjčka; 8mäso – maso; 9dvorit – dvořit; 10dedička – dědička; 11odpor; 12ako sa k nemu správa – jako se k němu chová; 13utíct – utěct; 14zúrivý – zuřivý; 15zosnulý – zesnulý; 16stroskotanie – ztroskotání; 17sa – se rozhodne; 18zatknutý – zatčen; 19hádky, spor; 20nádhery; 21skrácený – zkrácený; 22neúctivý – neuctivý; 23napriek; 24odplata; 25súcit – soucit; 26hlboký, vážny – hluboký, vážný; 27neprekonaný – neprekonaný; 28pokrstený – pokřtěný; 29zakladajúci – zakládající člen; 30herecký súbor – soubor; 31sa znížiť – se zmenšit; 32priestor pred oltárom – prostor před oltářem; 33žalospev na hrobe – žalozpěv na hrobě; 34údajne – údajně; 35zdržať sa – zdržet se; 36ušetriť – ušetřit; 37stredoveký – středověký