

“Words, words, words.”

(Hamlet, Act II, scene 2)

glove – a piece of clothing that covers your hands and fingers

apprentice – somebody who is learning a trade, training for a job

furniture – chairs, tables, beds, etc., that are used to make a room ready for use

advantage – a good or desirable quality or feature

saying – an old and well-known phrase that expresses an idea that most people believe is true

tight – flat or firm from being pulled or stretched

urine – pee

in the meantime – while something else is being done

to earn – to get money for work that you have done



This resource was created by Lisa Peter for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Learning Department www.shakespeare.org.uk



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Language Learners Advanced

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‘DISCOVER’

Shakespeare’s Birthplace

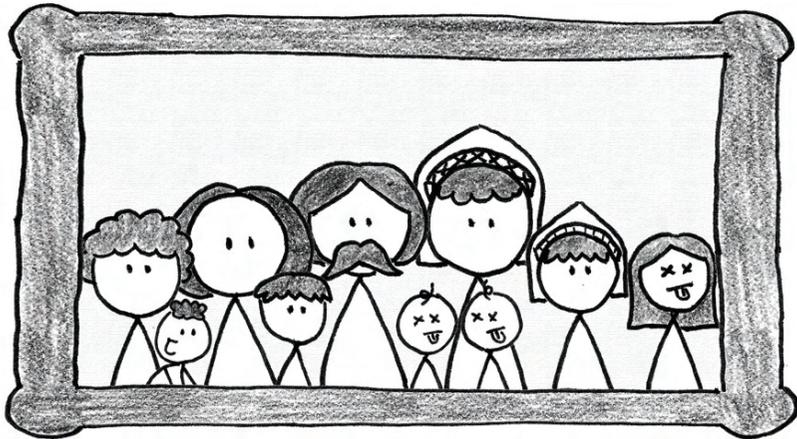
Pupil’s booklet

This booklet will help
you understand your
visit to the home where
Shakespeare was born.



Shakespeare's family

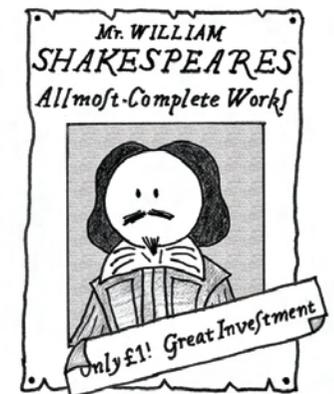
William Shakespeare was the eldest son of John and Mary Shakespeare. They had seven other children but only four of them survived childhood: Gilbert, Joan, Richard and Edmund. They were probably all born in their parents' bedroom, the Birthroom on the first floor, because there were no hospitals in Shakespeare's time, where people could have their babies.



The Shakespeare family: William with his parents, brothers and sisters.

Shakespeare Statistics

- He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, travelled to London in the late 1580s and became an actor and eventually started writing his own plays.
- He died on his birthday in 1616 at the age of 52 and is buried here in Stratford in Holy Trinity Church.
- During his lifetime Shakespeare wrote 38 plays that we know of (2 more are probably lost), 154 sonnets and 5 narrative poems.
- Most of his plays were published in the First Folio only a few years after his death. The book is titled 'Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Tragedies' and it contains 36 plays. It has no poetry or sonnets, and does not include 4 plays (2 of which are lost) known to have been written by Shakespeare.
- The First Folio went on sale for £1 (around £100 today). If we were to sell a copy now, it would probably cost around £3 million.



Advertisement for the First Folio.

? Note: all underlined words are explained at the back of this booklet.

William Shakespeare as a businessman

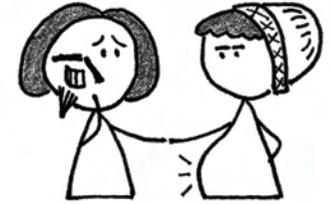
We know William Shakespeare as a very popular writer but he was also a really good businessman. When his father John died, Shakespeare's Birthplace became partly a pub. Will had moved into a much bigger house in the meantime, New Place, which he had bought from the money he had earned in the theatre in London. Imagine a house of 22 rooms and compare it to the Birthplace, where you are now: William Shakespeare became a very rich man indeed!



William's new big house, New Place.

Shakespeare Fun Facts

- William's youngest brother Edmund also became an actor in London but he was not very successful.
- William got his girlfriend Anne Hathaway pregnant before they were married. His eldest daughter Susanna was born only six months after the wedding. Anne was eight years older than William.
- Between 1586 and 1592 Shakespeare disappears from all record. These have been called the 'lost years'.



William's wife Anne was already pregnant when they got married.



William left Stratford and we do not know where he went during the next six years.

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The house and the workshop

John Shakespeare, William's father, was a glove maker. The house on Henley Street was not only his family home, he had his workshop here too, where two or three apprentices helped him. He bought animal skins and turned them into leather in the garden. He then made different kinds of gloves from different kinds of leather, some for work and some merely to protect against the cold. William would have helped his father in the workshop as a teenager.

As families were big and houses small, people wanted to have furniture that did not take up a lot of space and was practical. There is one piece of furniture in the Birthroom that is particularly space-saving, and had a couple of other advantages too. Ask a guide what a 'truckle bed' is and what it has to do with the English saying of "Good night, sleep tight!".

William helping his father in the glover's workshop.



Fun Fact

- Young William probably helped his father first by collecting urine from the poor people in town, before he learned the trade of a glove-maker himself. Urine was necessary for turning animal skin into leather, a process called 'tanning'. The English expression "piss-poor" comes from the fact that some people were so poor, the only thing they could sell was their urine.



William collecting pee for tanning leather.

- Ask a guide in the workshop about the different kinds of leather used for gloves: can you find out what 'kid gloves' are made of?

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