



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

# Shakespeare's Birthplace

## Teacher's Booklet

### Answers



Let your pupils be detectives and learn what life would have been like for the people who lived in this house.

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Tudor girls and boys wore the same types of clothes up until the age of around 5 (see some on the bed). What reasons can you think of why families might have done this?

In the first few years of life more boys died than girls. Tudors (being superstitious) thought that this was because fairies or spirits preferred boys. So to disguise the boys until they were older (so the fairies/spirits wouldn't take them), they dressed the boys as girls (in a kirtle or dress). They also left their hair long.



## The Birth Room (Parents' Bedroom)

Beds in Tudor times had a wood and rope construction. Why do you think people needed to use a bed key to tighten the ropes every few nights? How many people do you think were needed to do this job and why?

The ropes used to loosen or sag because of the weight on them. This meant that your bed was very soft and you wouldn't sleep well – tight bed ropes made for a better night's sleep. At least two people would be needed to do the job as you would need one on each side of the bed to keep the rope tight whilst the next section of rope was pulled taut.

Can you find the small wooden tub under the window? This was a bathtub for babies. How do you think Tudors heated the water to go in it and why has it got a linen cloth inside it?

The water would have been heated in a pot over the fire. It would probably have taken more than one pot to fill the bath. The linen cloth was to stop the baby or child getting splinters from the wood.

Find the small posts sticking up from the side of the bed. They are called 'bed staves'. Why do you think Tudors needed to have bed staves and did they have more than one function?

The bed staves were placed in the holes at night and prevented people rolling out of bed, and bed linen and blankets slipping onto the floor. They could also be used for hitting the mattress to spread out the filling more evenly and get rid of lumps.



## The Parlour

**Amazing Fact! – The stone floor that you are standing on is the same one that William walked on when he was a young boy!**

Hmmm... a bed in the parlour? What do you think it would have been like to sleep in this bed? Why do you think that Tudor beds had curtains?

Main reason was to give the occupants some privacy (remember Tudors often shared bedrooms). They may also have helped to keep the bed space warm.

How many candles can you see? Are there any other sources of light? Which do you think is the best and why? How easy would it be to do jobs in the evening (once it had gone dark)?

2 candles. Other sources: window and fire, if lit. Full daylight (near the window) would probably have been best source. Not easy to do jobs in the evening. Fires had to be dampened down and candles gave poor light (and you had to be able to afford them).

Can you find anything in the room that people in Tudor times could have used to save coins in? Is it a good design? Why or why not?

Money pot on the table; good because the only way to get money out is to break the top off so it stops you spending the money in the pot; bad because it can only be used once.

Wealthy families had thick tapestries as wall hangings. Why do you think the Shakespeare family used these linen ones instead? What job do you think the wall hangings do?

Tapestries were very expensive. Linen would have been cheaper. Wall hangings were for decoration and also helped to make rooms warmer.

William would have written his plays using a quill.



## The Glover's Workshop

**Amazing Fact!** – Lime, alum, egg, dog excrement and urine were used in the tanning process. This turned the animal skins into leather.



Find some of the tools on the workbench. What might they have been used for in a Glover's workshop? What do you think the long wooden sticks would have been used for?

Knives and scissors for cutting; shaping pots for shaping the leather to make pockets (the pouches Tudors carried on belts as they didn't have pockets in their clothes); the long wooden sticks would have been used to shape the fingers for gloves and also to wind thread around when gloves were being sewn.

Look at the leather pockets (the pouches Tudors used as they didn't have pockets in their clothes). Some of the pockets are large with a hard leather backing whilst some are much smaller and softer. Why do you think they are different?

Those with the hard back were a lot more expensive to make and only wealthier people could afford them. They are also larger which meant that people could carry more in them.

Try on some of the gloves that are on the middle table and the shelf under the window. What do you think the different types of gloves would have been for? Why do you think some gloves would have been lined with rabbit fur?

People doing work outside would have worn the thicker gloves, made using cheaper leather. The thinner, softer gloves would have been worn by the wealthy and, if they were decorated with embroidery, they cost a lot of money and were a sign of how much money you had. The ones split into 3 parts were used when riding or driving a cart. Rabbit fur would have been used as a lining for gloves used in cold weather.

Above the window onto Henley Street is a wooden pole used to display some of the goods that John Shakespeare would have made. What do you think the triangular-shaped items on the end would have been used for? Give reasons for your answer.

They are scabbards for daggers or knives. The triangular shape would reflect the shape of the blade.

## The Exhibition Room/Girls' Bedroom

**Amazing Fact!** – Lots of children became apprentices in Tudor times in order to learn a trade or job. You would have left home (somewhere between the ages of 8 and 14) and gone to live with your Master (who would teach you the job) for 7 years! You wouldn't be paid but the Master would give you somewhere to sleep and your food!

The earliest date that somebody scratched next to their name on the 'signed window' is 1806. What is the latest date that you can find?

1968 (in the rectangle below Henry Irving's name).

Examine the 'signed window'. Does anybody who scratched their name into the window have the same name as you or your classmates?

Depends on the names of children in the class.

Look up into the loft that would have been the bedroom for the apprentices (as well as a storeroom for fleeces). What do you think it would have been like to sleep up there? Can you think of 2 positive things and 2 negative things?

Examples - Positives: It was free; you would have had the other apprentices for company; you may have been able to use the fleeces as extra covers. Negatives: It would have been very cold in winter; you might not have got on with the other apprentices; you would need to be especially careful if you were allowed a candle (because of the fleeces); it might be cramped.

## The Boys' Bedroom

**Amazing Fact!** – It was VERY unusual in Tudor times to have a bedroom to yourself! You would share a room (and sometimes a bed) with other members of your family and servants (if you had any). As a boy William would have shared his bed with his younger brothers Gilbert and Richard.

What sort of toys can you find in this room? Do you recognise any of them as being similar to any toys that you have played with?

Wooden dagger, spinning top and whip, wooden doll, small leather ball, a dark wooden counter or piece from a game (e.g. chess piece).