

Prepare to Read

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar



William Shakespeare
(1564–1616)

William Shakespeare is regarded as the greatest writer in the English language.

Nearly 400 years after his death, Shakespeare's plays

continue to be read widely and produced

throughout the world. They

have the same powerful impact on today's audiences as they had when they were first staged in London.

What's Past Is Prologue Based on records showing that Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, scholars estimate the date of his birth as April 23 of the same year. He was born in Stratford-on-Avon, northwest of London. Shakespeare's father, John, was a successful glove maker and businessman. He was a respected man and a leader in the community.

Shakespeare's mother, whose maiden name was Mary Arden, was the daughter of his father's landlord. No written evidence of Shakespeare's boyhood exists, but given his father's status, it is probable that young Will attended the Stratford Grammar School, where he acquired a knowledge of Latin. In addition to Latin grammar, Shakespeare and his classmates would have read Latin dramas by Plautus and Terence; Latin poetry by Ovid, Horace, and Virgil; and studied logic, history, natural history, and some Greek. When Shakespeare left school, he had a solid foundation of classical literature and other subjects.

In late November or early December 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. Records show that she was twenty-six and he was eighteen. The couple had a daughter, Susanna, in 1583, and twins, Judith and Hamnet, in 1585. Some scholars believe that for a brief time after his marriage, Shakespeare served as a country schoolmaster.

All the World's a Stage It is uncertain how Shakespeare came to be connected with the theater in the 1580s. Perhaps he was influenced by seeing

Familiar Expressions From Shakespeare

You have probably quoted Shakespeare without even realizing it! Look for familiar expressions and phrases in the following list. You may be surprised at how much Shakespeare you already know!

"Eaten out of house and home," *Henry IV*, Part 2, Act II, Scene i

"Cruel to be kind," *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene iv

"Knock,/knock! Who's there?" *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene iii

"Too much of a good thing," *As You Like It*, Act IV, Scene i

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be," *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene iii

"Something wicked this way comes," *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene i

"To thine own self be true," *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene iii

"A tower of strength," *Richard III*, Act V, Scene iii