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Shakespeare and His World – *His works*

- **What genres of books did he cover?**

- The Three Genres
 - Comedy = contrast to tragedy, fantasy, shows possibilities, no historical loads and nightmares
 - Tragedy = contrast to comedy
 - History = based on the reality
- Contrasting Comedy and Tragedy
- Between the Genres

- **What are his most important works?**

- **Hamlet:**

facts:

- tragedy
- written between 1599 and 1601
- set in the Kingdom of Denmark
- full name: „The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark“

plot:

Prince Hamlet exacts revenge on his uncle Claudius for murdering his father (who is Claudius' brother) and for succeeding to the throne in his brother's place and marrying his wife. The old King Hamlet's ghost tells Prince Hamlet to kill Claudius, but instead of him, Hamlet mistakenly stabs Polonius to death, whose son Laertes, as a consequence, challenges Hamlet to have a duel, supported by Claudius. Hamlet wins the duel, seriously wounded, and kills Laertes before he dies, too.

important quotations:

- "to be or not to be: that is the question."
- "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (= Schwachheit, dein Name ist Weib!)
- "The readiness is all." (= Bereit sein ist alles.)
- "The rest is silence." (= Der Rest ist Schweigen.)

- **Romeo and Juliet:**

facts:

William Shakespeare's tragedy "Romeo and Juliet" was written early in his career. It is about two young lovers, whose deaths finally unite their fighting families.

"Romeo and Juliet" is based on an Italian tale, translated into the verse "The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet" by Arthur Brooke in 1562. It was retold in the prose "Palace of Pleasure" by William Painter in 1582. Shakespeare borrowed from both, but in order to expand the plot, he developed supporting characters, particularly Mercutio and Paris. Written between 1591 and 1595, the play was first published in a quarto version in 1597, but because of the bad quality, later editions were corrected to make it more like Shakespeare's original.

"Romeo and Juliet" has been adapted numerous times for stage, film, musical and opera. For example, the play has been adapted in versions as diverse as MGM's comparatively faithful film from 1936, the stage musical "West Side Story" from 1950 and the MTV-inspired film "Romeo + Juliet" from 1996.

plot:

Romeo, who falls in love with Rosaline, goes to a party in an effort to forget her or to ease his broken

heart. At this party, he meets Juliet and immediately falls in love with her. Later he finds out that she is the daughter of the rivals of his family. Anyway, Romeo decides to love her, so they confess their love to each other during the very famous "balcony scene" in which they agree to a secret marriage on the next day. Unfortunately, the fight between the families gets worse and Mercutio, a good friend of Romeo's, ends up in a fight with Tybalt, Juliet's cousin. As Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo kills Tybalt in an angry rage, so Romeo is banished from the town. At the same time, Juliet's family plans her wedding with Paris. But Juliet does not want to marry him, so she plans to fake her own death with a sleeping potion. Friar Lawrence promises to tell Romeo to meet her, after the potion wears off and to rescue her to Mantua, where Romeo stays currently. Unfortunately, Romeo does not receive Juliet's message in time, so he goes to Juliet's tomb after hearing of her "death". When he arrives, he is very desperate, because of Juliet's death and drinks poison to die like her. When Juliet's potion wears off, she wakes up to find her lover dead. Afterwards she stabs herself with Romeo's dagger to follow him in death. When the two families find the bodies, they finally make peace with each other.

- **Macbeth:**

facts/plot:

"Macbeth", or the "Tragedy of Macbeth" how it is called originally, is the shortest tragedy ever written by William Shakespeare sometime between 1603 and 1607. It is one of the most popular tragedies written by Shakespeare and describes the rise of the royal army commander named Macbeth to become the King of Scotland, his transformation into a tyrant or rebel and his death. "The tragedy of Macbeth" was first published in the Folio of 1623.

The first act of the play reflects to the battle at Forres, where royal guards from the Scottish King Duncan defeat the allied forces of Norway and Ireland, who are led by the traitor Macdonwald. General Macbeth kills Macdonwald and is praised for his bravery. Later on Macbeth and his allied general Banquo face the three witches which wait to greet them with prophecies. The first witch hails Macbeth as "Thane of Glamis," the second as "Thane of Cawdor," and the third proclaims that he shall "be King hereafter." Then the witches inform Banquo that he will be the father of line of kings, but he will not be a king in future history. A messenger from the King arrives and informs Macbeth of his new title: Thane of Cawdor which means that the first prophecy is fulfilled.

The second act is about the death of King Duncan. Together with his wife Lady Macbeth, General Macbeth kills Duncan with a mysterious dagger.

In the third act Macbeth is crowned king because both sons of King Duncan Donalbain and Malcolm left because of the fear of being killed, too. The new king is afraid of his position because Banquo knows about the witches and the prophecies. He sends three assassins with the order to kill Banquo and his son Fleance, but Fleance survives the assassination. Banquo's ghost enters a celebration in the night and sits in Macbeth's place. Being visible only to Macbeth, he becomes furious. Because of his fear Macbeth decides to visit the three witches a second time to be sure what his future will be like.

The fourth act describes the three new prophecies of the witches. The first one is an armed head that tells Macbeth to beware Macduff (a Scottish nobleman), the second, a bloody child that warns him that no man born by a woman is able to hurt him and the last one, a crowned child holding a tree in hands, pledges that Macbeth should not be afraid of someone until the Great Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. Macbeth also wants to know whether one of Banquo's descendants will ever become king of Scotland and the witches approve it.

The last act is about the final battle between King Macbeth and Macduff who went into exile before. Macbeth transforms more and more into a tyrant and finally, he is murdered by Macduff after all three prophecies have come true.

- **Are there any rumours about the authorship?**

There are rumours that William Shakespeare might not be the real author of his works. As they believe that Shakespeare did not write his plays on his own, some people claim that a consortium of writers (Edward De Vere, Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh etc.) only used Shakespeare's name as a kind of pseudonym.