

Shakespeare and his world

-Theatre-

Today	Shakespeare's time
- usually closed theatres	-theatre was open
- take place in the evening (do not depend on the light or the whether)	-plays could just take place in the afternoon (because of the light)
-usually there is one play every couple days	-two plays every afternoon
-male and female actors	-no female actors (women were played by young boys)
-actors get the play way before the play to practice	- actors often never got the play but just their lines (before or during the play)
-audience sits in front of the stage	-audience could sit on the stage (just for the rich)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - THE PLAYWRIGHT

- **It would have been difficult for Shakespeare to become accepted as a writer**
- **Playwrights were not seen as literary experts. A poet was highly acceptable and viewed as educated intellectuals - Playwrights were not!**
- **Shakespeare had not attended university**
- **Shakespeare was not a courtier and neither did he come from a noble family**
- **He had worked as an actor which did not enhance his reputation as a poet, which would have been important to him**
- **His work as a playwright would not have seemed so important other than in financial terms**
- **He was looked down upon by some of his contemporaries and criticised publically in Greene's Groatsworth of Wit in which he was referred to as an "Upstart Crow"**
- **Shakespeare had a patron, a man of prominence who supported the young writer in his poetic works**
- **His patron was Henry Wriothesley who was Third Earl of Southampton (1573-1624)**
- **Shakespeare published his poem Venus and Adonis on April 18th 1593. The poem was dedicated to Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton**
- **The dedication refers to the author's "unpolisht lines" and contains the typically fawning language of a commoner who hopes to gain more favour by dedicating the poem to a courtier**
- **The poem was an artistic success!**
- **But Shakespeare went on to concentrate on plays rather than poetry. Perhaps the financial rewards were more potent that artistic praise (Poems for Show - Plays for Dough!) And Shakespeare did become very rich through his work in the theatres**
- **But there were considerable risks associated with this choice of career**
- **A playwright could prove to be a dangerous occupation!**

PLAYWRIGHT - A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION

- **Elizabethan politics were really dangerous. Any playwrights found guilty of expressing seditious or heretical opinions, which were in opposition to state could be tortured and sentenced to death for treason or even atheism**
- **Catholics were seen as a threat (and it is likely that Shakespeare was a Catholic)**
- **There were spies everywhere - Queen Elizabeth I lived in fear of Catholic Plots and invasion from Catholic realms (she was right to worry - remember the Spanish Armada!)**
- **Thomas Kyd, a fellow playwright was arrested on charges of writing a slanderous play. He was tortured and branded with hot irons before he was released**
- **Kyd implicated the famous playwright Christopher Marlowe in relation to accusations of Heresy and Atheism**
- **Marlowe was summoned to appear before the dreaded Star Chamber but died suddenly (and mysteriously). It has been said that he faked his own death rather than appear before the Star Chamber**
- **Playwrights often used a pseudonym, or an alias, to conceal their true identity**
- **Some playwrights did not publish their plays. They sold their work to the theatre for a 'one-off' payment and the theatre arranged for publication**
- **William Shakespeare never authorised the publication of any of his plays during his lifetime!**
- **William Shakespeare never claimed authorship of his plays during his lifetime!**
- **The majority of Shakespeare plays were first published in the First Folio, seven years after his death, in 1623!**

