

Name: _____

Mayde Creek High School

Background notes—William Shakespeare

Why Study Shakespeare?

1. SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTH

The baptismal register of the Holy Trinity parish church, in Stratford, shows the following entry for _____: Gulielmus Filius Johannes Shakespeare. The actual date of Shakespeare's birth is not known, but is assumed to be _____. He was born in _____, about 100 miles from London, England

2. SHAKESPEARE'S EDUCATION

Shakespeare probably began his education at the age of six or seven at the _____ grammar school, which is still standing only a short distance from his house on _____ Street. There he studied _____ and _____ writers.

3. Shakespeare's Childhood

There are other fragmented and dubious details about Shakespeare's life growing up in Stratford. He is supposed to have worked for a butcher, in addition to helping run his father's business. When he was in his early twenties, he left Stratford for London to pursue his _____ career.

4. Shakespeare's Marriage

Recordings in the Episcopal register at Worcester on the dates of November 27 and 28, 1582, reveal that Shakespeare desired to marry a girl named _____. Anne was _____ when she married the _____-year-old William Shakespeare.

5. Shakespeare's Children

Shakespeare and Anne had 3 children, _____, _____ and _____ (twins). Tragically, _____ died at age 11.

6. Important dates in Shakespeare's life and career

By _____, he had established himself as an actor and a playwright
By _____, he became a full share holder in the profits of the acting company known as _____.
In 1599, The _____ opened.
In 1603 the acting company changed its name to _____, to honor King _____ I.

7. Death of a Poet

In his early 40's, Shakespeare retired and returned to his home in Stratford-on-Avon
Shakespeare died on _____ at age _____.
He is buried within the chancel and before the altar of the _____ in Stratford.
After his death, friends and co-workers collected and published his plays in a book called _____, published in 1623.
In all, Shakespeare wrote _____, _____ sonnets and _____ long poems.

8. Shakespearean Plays

Credited with writing _____ plays in his lifetime (possibly more)

His plays can be classified into three main categories: _____, _____ and _____.

Four additional hybrid plays are classified as _____.

The Tragedy of _____ is classified among Shakespeare's historical plays, and was written around _____.

9. Characteristics of Shakespeare's Writing Style

_____—A humorous play on words indicating different meanings. (Example: The dentist said, "My occupation is filling.")

_____—A comparison of two unlike things not using the words "like" or "as". (Example: *Music is the best medicine* in the world.)

_____—Whimsical, extravagant, fanciful ideas; an extended metaphor with a complex logic. (Sonnets)

_____—Five feet per line, each beat consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable—technically known as (unrhymed) *iambic pentameter*.

_____—(soliloquies, plural) A speech that an actor gives while on stage alone. He is talking to himself.

_____—Something that an actor says to the audience that the other players can't hear.

10. The English Renaissance

Shakespeare lived in a time known as the _____, meaning "_____". The Renaissance started in Italy in the 14th century and spread from there across Europe. It reached England during the time of the Tudor House, and was at its height in the reign of _____.

The Renaissance was an age of growing sea power, sea exploration and continuing growth in _____ and the _____.

During this time, England developed into one of the greatest powers of the world.

It was also a time of religious turbulence in England in the wake of the Reformation under King Henry VIII, as Protestants and Catholics vied for power and control over the English Church and monarchy, and puritans sought to "purify" the Church.

The success of Shakespeare is largely due to the time he lived in, and to the benevolent patronage of the arts by both of the monarchs who reigned during his lifetime.

11. Tudor England

Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603)

Reigned from _____, a period often referred to as England's "_____ Age".

Daughter of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.

Defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Never married.

A conservative Protestant, she reinstated the Protestant church in England after the Catholic rule of her half sister, _____, had abolished it. Her policies towards the religious factions in England achieved a lasting peace during her reign, and became one of her greatest achievements.

She loved the arts, and created the environment in England for literary masterpieces and theater to flourish—bringing English drama to a height that it has never since attained.

12. Stuart England

King James I (1566-1625)

- Reigned both _____ and _____
- Son of Mary, Queen of Scots. Ascended the Scottish throne in 1567 when he was only 1 year old, after his mother's execution for conspiracy against the English throne.
- Ascended the English throne in 1603 upon the death of Elizabeth I.
- Under his reign, the Elizabethan "Golden Age" of literature and drama continued in England.
- Responsible for having the Bible translated into English for the first time, giving us the "_____ version". (Prior to this time, all Bibles in England were written in _____.)
- Though himself popular with his subjects, his "_____" doctrine would spark the English Civil War after his death, and lead to the execution of his son, Charles I.

13. The Globe Theater

_____ performed his plays here.

Constructed in _____, on the banks of the Thames River (London).

Octagonal in shape, capacity: _____

Play time: 2 hours. Cost of general admission: _____.

Flags, trumpets and fliers told when there would be a play.

The flags also told the audience what type of play they would be seeing: **RED** for **history**, **WHITE** for **comedy** and **BLACK** for **tragedy**.

In 1613, the original Globe was destroyed accidentally when a cannon misfired and set the thatched roof on fire. The theater was rebuilt, but then burned down again in 1644.

In 1999, a new Globe Theater was completed in London on the Thames River.

14. Definition of a Tragic Hero

Man of high birth.

Has great promise, ability, and integrity of character.

Has a _____, or weakness, which will ultimately lead to his downfall.

Has a capacity for suffering (conscience). Does not endure passively, but fights back, seeks remedies.

His actions involve him in choices.

Dies at the end of the play.

Downfall comes through:

- His _____ Flaw (inaction, ambition, etc.)
- _____ causes (maybe the gods interfere)
- Fate/ill-luck
- Combination of all of these
- Sometimes it goes beyond the limits of common sense

Some are compromisers, some are ambitious (a lust for power), some are completely loyal or some simply cannot act (irresolution, inaction, etc.).