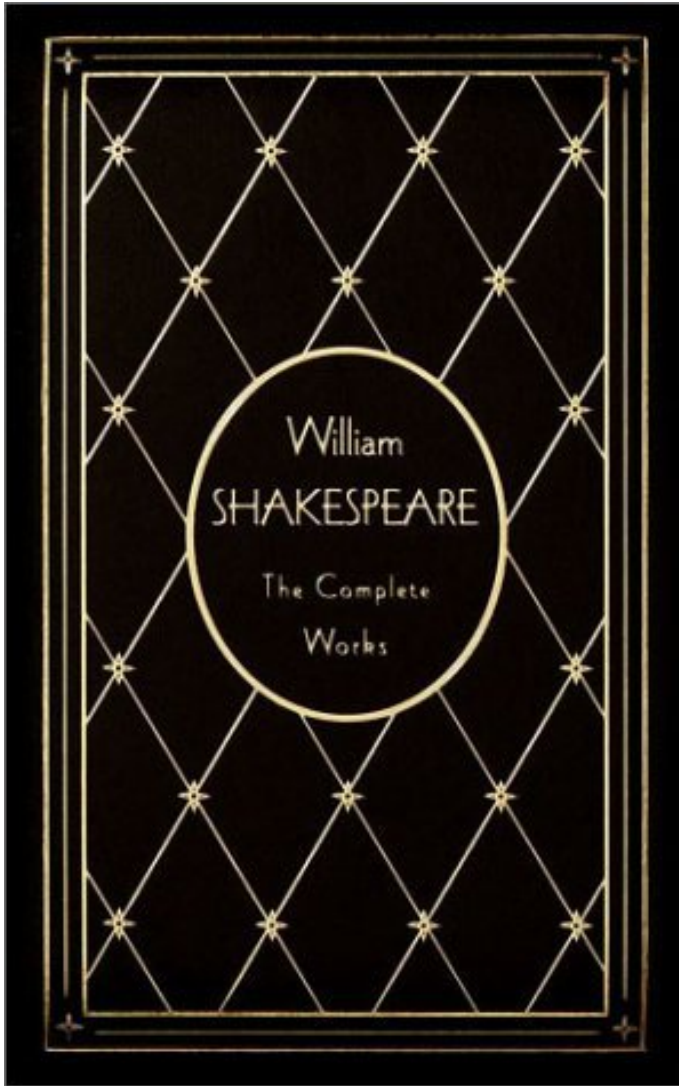

William Shakespeare

The Complete Works



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Author: William Shakespeare

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Description

The complete theatrical works of the immortal Bard, uniquely supplemented with annotations and critical analysis by a host of eminent scholars, including Samuel Coleridge and Samuel Johnson, plus a biography of Shakespeare himself. For the collection of the Shakespeare enthusiast, and the edification of the Shakespeare novice.

Insightful reviews

Sammy: What an exquisite edition of one of the greatest works in the Western canon. Armed with an authoritative editorial team, Professor Jonathan Bate has reworked all of Shakespeare's plays, as well as his poems. The footnotes are extensive and cover all meanings of words (including the more salacious ones that many school texts leave out), while also providing informative historical and contextual information.

This edition seeks to give us every word attributed to Shakespeare (although, as it points out at length, we can't really know what he wrote: all of our current versions come from a variety of sources typeset in his later years, and primarily from the First Folio printed after his death. Any work of the Bard's is distorted in some way). With appendices and footnotes, notable textual errors or areas of debate are highlighted.

There is so much to love here. Epic tragedies - *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* - joined by their lesser, but poetically affecting counterparts like *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare plays with and shuffles around comic tropes in his wide variety of comedies: peaks include *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In his more subdued romances, Shakespeare often seems reduced to more typical characters yet imbues them with layer upon layer of subtlety: *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale* are particularly splendid examples. Some of the tragedies and comedies aren't as startling, and some are challenging - such as his part-satire *Troilus and Cressida* - but every work brims with characters whose opinions, beliefs and motives are individual, and not simply echoing those of an author. Beyond these plays lies a staggering cycle of love poems in *The Sonnets*, as well as his other various poetry which always makes fascinating, lyrical reading.

Capping all this is Shakespeare's incredible cycle of English history, which details the country's fate from 1199 to 1533, through the stories of the English monarchs: their battles, their loves, their lives and the effect their squabbles have over countless citizens. The cycle begins with the somewhat talky *King John* (far from my favourite work, but well presented in the BBC Complete Works cycle) and ends with the autumnal *King Henry VIII*. In between are eight plays (two tetraologies) which encompass the Wars of the Roses, and they are astonishing. From the private thoughts of the monarch to the most unimportant peasant, Shakespeare captures an age.

The introductions on each play detail cultural successes over the centuries, as well as basic

historical information. I've seen people suggest other aspects that could improve this - such as a suggestion of ways to double parts (this is defined as the "actor's edition"). Certainly, I can accept that, but as it stands this is already beyond a 5-star piece of work. A place of honour on my shelf, that's for sure.

Bram: Reflecting on the oeuvre of Shakespeare, I can't shake a perverse idea: the Bard is underrated. And I think this feeling is tied to the contradictory knowledge that he is enormous, creating the master shadow in which all others dissolve. He's the Platonic Form that has made possible, via subsequent authorial study and unconscious absorption, so many of the variations of what we consider the best in literature. The introspection and characterization of Woolf. The zaniness in Melville, Pynchon, and David Foster Wallace. That 'disease', love, in Proust. The soul-searching and linguistic proficiency of Joyce. The paradoxical mix of nihilism and hope in McCarthy. The exuberant wordplay of Nabokov. The tragicomedy of Faulkner. Dostoevsky's meditations on evil, ambition, and the horrifying acts of which we are capable. It's all there, centuries prior, in the great prolepsis that is Shakespeare.

LOVE

Hang there like fruit, my soul,
Till the tree die.
-Cymbeline

What you do,
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so, and, for the ord'ring your affairs,
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that, move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing, in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.
-The Winter's Tale

Troilus: This is the monstrosity in love, lady: that the will is infinite,
and the execution confined: that the desire is boundless, and the
act a slave to limit.

Cressida: They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able,
and yet reserve an ability that they never perform: vowing more
than the perfection of ten, and discharging less than the tenth
part of one.

-Troilus and Cressida

But to be frank and give it thee again;

And yet I wish but for the thing I have.
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep: The more I give to thee
The more I have, for both are infinite.
-Romeo and Juliet

So in considering what Shakespeare anticipated and achieved, the underrating is almost inevitable. But I also think it's related to the perception that reading Shakespeare is the literary equivalent of forcing yourself to eat healthier, to drag yourself to the gym, to decline a night out in order to guarantee adequate sleep. It's good for us, so let's get on with it (or, more often, not). Likely this sense of unpleasant edification is instilled in grade school, at which time most of us are confronted with a confusing combination of experiences upon being assigned a Shakespeare play: that of hearing the Bard's work extolled to impossible heights by our teacher, and the disappointment of the actual, difficult, strangely-worded reading experience.

But are most of Shakespeare's plays even edifying? And if so, edifying in what sense? Aesthetically, the answer is unequivocal, but as with the imbibing of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*, the absorption of many of these plays* with their nihilistic and misanthropic aspects can lead to feelings of deep disquiet and a heightened awareness that seems at once empowering and exquisitely desolate. For me, there's something almost unhealthily addicting about Shakespeare; it's as if he's holding up a fun-house mirror in which I can see life as it almost is, or could be, or would be if it weren't for certain social pressures or any number of complicating aspects that Shakespeare can and does control in his plotting. Or maybe it even shows life as it *actually* is, and me as I really am. And so I can't turn away, seeking ever for a clearer, deeper, more complete vision of what I can't help but feel is true and painful and intoxicating and sick and erotic and poignant and disappointing.

* e.g. *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, et al.

DEATH

This world's a city full of straying streets,
And death's the market-place, where each one meets.
-The Two Noble Kinsmen

If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in mine arms.
-Measure for Measure

I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.
-Richard II

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
-Macbeth

In spite of the depravity he often shares with us in his plays and in spite of what has historically crept into criticism, Shakespeare is anything but moralistic. Redeemed characters generally remain problematic, and most of the wedded endings leave the audience with more discomfort than joy, aware that these relationships are doomed based on five acts of intimation. Shakespeare's not out to steer us toward or away from something; rather, he shows us the abyss into which, being born, we all must sink—an abyss lined with delights, sparse and temporary as they may be, that encourage us to say with Falstaff: "Give me life."

LIFE

I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath. Give me life;
which if I can save, so: if not, honour comes unlooked for,
and there's an end.
-Henry IV, Part I

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our
virtues would be proud if our faults whipp'd them not, and our
crimes would despair if they were not cherish'd by our virtues.
-All's Well That Ends Well

Shallow: Ha, cousin Silence, that thou hadst seen that that this knight
and I have seen! Ha, Sir John, said I well?
Falstaff: We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow.
-Henry IV, Part II

'Tis still a dream: or else such stuff as madmen
Tongue and brain not: either both, or nothing,
Or senseless speaking, or a speaking such
As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,
The action of my life is like it, which
I'll keep, if but for sympathy.
-Cymbeline

"You can't really sum that geezer up, really, in a nifty sentence. Because everything about him is contrary." This is Noel Gallagher on Morrissey, but it could very well be describing the genius of the Bard, whose ostensible breadth of human knowledge and internal experience is

nonpareil. Socrates' unexamined life may not be worth living, but internalizing Shakespeare would certainly seem to satisfy the requirement. His plays and sonnets give the impression of containing the full range of human emotions and motivations, of existing as the Hegelian Absolute that comprises all dialectical opposites (or "contraries", to stick with the Morrissey comparison). Reading Shakespeare, as with Proust's novel, has been one of those impossibly rewarding experiences, provoking endless reflection on the world, on existence, on others, on myself. And yet, having finished the complete writings, I already know that Nabokov was correct in insisting that "curiously enough, one cannot read a book; one can only reread it."

Chris: . I've been watching the old BBC *An Age of Kings*. For those who don't know, this is an old BBC series of Shakespeare's history cycle from Richard II though to Richard III. It has a young Sean Connery as Hotspur and Tom Hardy as Henry V. Judi Dench is there as is Angela Baddley (Mrs. Bridges from *Upstairs, Downstairs*. It got me thinking about the timelessness of Shakespeare.

Why does everyone on the planet read Shakespeare? Why does the Bard's work appear on stage, in film, on television? Why does his work inspire other stories? Why can his work be placed in almost any context and still be good (okay, *Julius Caesar* set in Panama didn't work, but that was the smoky cap guns).

Perhaps the answer to the above questions is that Stratford-Upon-Avon needed a good tourist draw. No, of course not. It is because Shakespeare is da bomb.

There is something for everyone in Shakespeare. There is love in *R&J* or any of the comedies. There is murder in several plays. There is family relationships constantly being examined such as in *Lear* and *Hamlet*. There are thousands, if not millions, of dirty jokes. And don't forget the sonnet that is only about sex. Shakespeare was a beautiful poet who had a really perverted sense of humor sometimes. I half agree with one of my professors, *Titus* just might be Shakespeare's attempt at comedy, trying to mock the revenge tradition. It does, as the Reduced Shakespeare Company has shown, make a really good cooking show.

I personally find the less well known plays to be the better ones. I love *Tony and Cleo*. I love *Much Ado*. Even *King John* has its high points. It is in lesser known plays that the average reader can discover gems. It's true that *Hamlet* and the other big plays are wonderful, brilliant, but the reader should also pay attention to the others, the ones that haven't been talked to death. Because it is in those, that in many ways, the reader can reach Shakespeare. If you know what I mean.

It's true that the Bard has had some misses. I don't think anyone truly, really knows what he was doing with *Troilus and Cressida*, though I have a soft spot for that play. I read *The Phoenix and the Turtle* but can't remember it very well.

But Shakespeare is still da bomb.

The important thing to remember about Shakespeare is that he wasn't meant to be read, but meant to be seen, to be heard. The plays work best when they come off the page, either through performance or simply reading aloud. It also helps to have a working knowledge of the Bible

and mythology.

Jeremy: Reviewing this actual booklet correctly will require over 1000 different books... it's excellent to the purpose of blinding, and it truly is formative to the fashionable human mind. Harold Bloom (you, the fat, ugly, previous man that did not dig Harry Potter all that much...) has it inventing you - the trendy human - and whereas i've got my reservations on his thesis, I appreciate the poetry of that idea. If a litterrorist had me at gunpoint announcing i might be shot lifeless if i didn't stroll clear of my perosnal library with just one book, this may be the one.

GoldGato: there is specific windfall within the fall of a sparrow. If it's now, 'tis to not come; if or not it's to not come, it will likely be now; if or not it's now not now, but it is going to come. The readiness is all. If readiness be all, then this quantity is a staple on any bookshelf. able to be opened for speedy quote checks, able to be heaved at domestic intruders (it's particularly heavy), it's beneficial in such a lot of ways. It remains open at the window shelf, so the afternoon breeze can decide upon its exact pages. Additionally, there are a number of sections facing Shakespeare's life, the Plague, Elizabethan art, and the folks of the nice Poet's time. The extras are worthwhile. For instance, Tudor London used to be a really filthy place, yet as editor G.B. Harrison makes clear, it was once nonetheless attractive in its personal way. there has been no smog to filth the buildings, half-timbered houses stood on slim lanes, and the Thames used to be nonetheless clear. The outdated urban was once all yet burnt up within the nice hearth of 1666. possibly that is why i admire having this large quantity on hand, so i will be able to think olden instances full of silver tongues. Confession: I additionally use this to return up with the various passwords i want for all of my on-line apps. that is as the backside of every web page has highlighted phrases and their meanings. It helps. Book Season = 12 months around (thitherward)

Thomas Pierson: There are, and with a bit of luck will consistently be, tales that contact and stream you in one of these manner that they stick on your reminiscence and not enable go. it truly is even a better impression whilst your love of an writer permits that writer to mentor you masses of years after his death. for my part it truly is actually the easiest kind of mentoring, since it passes at the excessive beliefs of the writer with out being it being weighed down by way of the fallacies of the man. Shakespeare taught me that it was once alright to appreciate the villain; that it is occasionally essential to condemn the hero, to face enterprise within the reason behind love, and to give up neither my ideas nor my honor for such petty trinkets as wealth and position. Shakespeare taught me that it is occasionally essential to giggle at myself, simply to maintain me humble; and that it's a necessity to snort at a chum for a similar reason. I discovered that the line to hell isn't really paved with reliable intentions, yet with the insanity that the melding of ambition and excessive emotion consistently turns out to create. this can be a perennial ebook for me; in addition to The gathered Works of Edgar Allen Poe, Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker Trilogy, Stephen King's darkish Tower series, Flann O'Brien's The 3rd Policeman, Simon R. Green's Nightside Series, Tiziano Sclavi's The Dylan puppy Case Files, and whatever by way of Shel Silverstein.

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