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MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

Student's Worksheet

William Shakespeare

Life, iambic pentameter

Task One:

Read the text about William Shakespeare.

Life

William Shakespeare was born in the pleasant old country town of Stratford-upon-Avon (Warwickshire) on 23rd April, 1564 (baptised on 26th April), six years after the accession of Queen Elisabeth. His father, John Shakespeare, was an alderman and, for a time mayor of Stratford. His mother, Mary Arden, belonged to one of the oldest Warwickshire families, and she brought to her husband, who was probably a glover and wool-merchant, a tiny estate of arable and pasture land and a house.

John Shakespeare and his wife were practically illiterate; but in the days of Elizabeth people were beginning to understand the value of a good education, and John and Mary Shakespeare sent their son William to the local Grammar School where the sons of townsmen were taught without payment. Here the boy learned English, some Latin, and a little Greek. Shakespeare never attended a University, but he was educated enough to excel through his own efforts. He read the good translations of the Latin and Greek classics which were the basis for his historical dramas. He also could read French and Italian works in the original. In consequence of his father's misfortunes in business he left school at the age of fourteen, and appears to have worked with his father for several years.

In 1582 William married a farmer's daughter, Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than her husband. When he was twenty-two, he went to seek his fortune in London, leaving his wife and his three children (Suzanna and twins Hamnet and Judith) and with his father and mother at Stratford.

In London Shakespeare became a player; he belonged to a company called "The Queen's Players". He began by acting inferior parts at the Blackfriars Theatre and by altering old plays. However, he was also a successful businessman. He soon became a part owner of a playing company called Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men; and afterwards his company constructed the Globe Theatre, too.

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In 1592 he began to write original plays, and he became famous as a dramatist. The wittiest poets and writers of the day were his friends, and he also found many admirers among the great and powerful, and the young Earl of Southampton was one of his truest friends.

The closing years of Elisabeth's reign were times of trouble for Shakespeare's friend, Lord Southampton, and the poet was doubtless saddened by this. He also had his own domestic grieves; his only son Hamnet had died, and in 1601 his father was taken from him.

The accession of James I brought new fame and dignity to Shakespeare. The Earl of Southampton was released from prison. The "King's Men" were often called to the court, and Shakespeare's plays were those most frequently performed.

In 1612 the poet settled down in Stratford. After a few quiet uneventful years, spent with wife and children among the scenes of his childhood, the great poet died on April 23rd, 1616, and was buried in the beautiful old parish church of Stratford.

Work

Although his name also often appeared on the list of actors, Shakespeare became famous as a poet and playwright. He wrote two narrative poems, 154 sonnets and roughly 37 plays. His plays are divided into three groups – comedies, histories and tragedies. They are divided into five acts and are, for the most part, written in blank verse, only in the early comedies there is a large proportion of rhymed verse. Most of the comedies are romantic fantasies, designed to delight and amuse their audiences (*A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, As you like it, Much Ado about Nothing, The Merry Wives of Windsor, The Taming of the Shrew, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest*). The histories illustrate the moral lessons to be learned from the crimes of ambitious and treacherous leaders of state. In his later histories he combines sober events with lively comedy (*Richard III, Henry VI, and Richard II*; and the Roman plays *Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, The tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*). The tragedies deal with death, morality and destruction and show how the breaking of a moral law leads to a disaster (*Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello*).

What makes Shakespeare the world's favourite author? No other writer – playwright, poet or novelist – has seen more deeply into the many manifestations of human nature. Shakespeare understood why people behave the way they do. Young and old, men and women, good and evil, beggars and kings: all live in his plays. All speak in such voices that sound right and true in our time just as they did in Shakespeare's own.

Influence of these plays upon the literature of the world is enormous. Goethe expresses the common judgement of the literary world when he says: "I do not remember that any book



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or person or event in my life ever made so great an impression upon me as the plays of Shakespeare.”

Vocabulary:

alderman – radní

illiterate – analfabet

dignity – důstojnost

parish – farní , farnost

treacherous - zrádný

Use the text to make notes under these headings:

Early life:

Marriage/children:

London:

Last years:

Types of literary work + examples:

Characteristics of the types of work:

Influence on literature:



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Task Two: Cover the text and do the quiz.

- 1. When was William Shakespeare born?**
 - a) 23 April 1564
 - b) 15 July 1580
 - c) 25 December 1600
 - d) 1 January 1601
- 2. Where was William Shakespeare born?**
 - a) London
 - b) Canterbury
 - c) Salisbury
 - d) Stratford-on-Avon
- 3. Whom did William Shakespeare marry?**
 - a) Anne Hathaway
 - b) Mary Tudor
 - c) Jane Grey
 - d) Elizabeth Newson
- 4. By how many years William Shakespeare's wife was older to William Shakespeare?**
 - a) Five
 - b) Six
 - c) Eight
 - d) Nine
- 5. How many plays did William Shakespeare write?**
 - a) 24
 - b) 37
 - c) 10
 - d) 15
- 6. How many Acts are in William Shakespeare's plays?**
 - a) Three
 - b) Four
 - c) Five
 - d) Six
- 7. What is Shakespeare typical verse called?**
 - a) free verse
 - b) rhymed verse
 - c) blank verse
 - d) empty verse



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8. **When did William Shakespeare die?**
- a) 31 December 1707
 - b) 24 January 1649
 - c) 3 March 1626
 - d) 23 April 1616
9. **Where can you find Shakespeare's tomb?**
- a) in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon
 - b) at an unknown location
 - c) at the entrance of the Globe Theatre, London
 - d) in Westminster Abbey, London

10. **Divide Shakespeare's plays into three groups (underline them with appropriate colour):**

Comedies

Tragedies

Histories

A Midsummer Night's Dream
As you like it
Coriolanus
Hamlet
Henry VI
Julius Caesar
King Lear
Macbeth
Much Ado about Nothing
Othello
Richard II
Richard III
Romeo and Juliet
The Merchant of Venice
The Merry Wives of Windsor
The Taming of the Shrew
The Tempest
The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra
The Winter's Tale

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Evaluation: Count your score in the quiz.

How successful have you been?

10 out of 10 Excellent (Master of Shakespeare)

9 - 8/10Very good

7 - 6/10Not bad

5 and less/10 Please do revise!

Task Three:

Try to show the iambic pentameter in this verse:

A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!

(Macbeth)