

Shakespeare: The True Story of William Shakespeare (Historical Biographies of Famous People)

Jack Hughes

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History is not limited to the conflicts between nations; it is the record of culture, values, and society. Since man first decorated cave walls with crude images, culture has been transmitted from one generation to the next through the Arts. Artists of all kinds—sculptors, painters, poets, and everything in between—have always held the almost sacred duty of preserving the things that mattered most to their respective societies. The most effective and enduring way cultures have survived has been through their stories.

The oral tradition of Native American creation stories, various folk tales of every stripe, and African and Norse mythologies eventually gave way to the written word. The Epic of Gilgamesh paved the way for the Greek Tragedies, which in turn gave rise to Homer's epics. From the ashes of the fallen Roman Empire, the Catholic Church stepped in, and stories became methods of spreading the Gospel. Even Chaucer, one of the earliest writers to actually pen his stories in English, wrote his works with a religious theme, and Milton's seminal Paradise Lost followed suit.

For centuries, the Church held massive influence over every story that was written. But in the wake of a schism between England and the Vatican, change became possible, and new, talented writers began to write unbound by the monetary necessities of Church patronage.

And then came a humble son of a glove maker who changed the face of literature forever.

William Shakespeare wrote plays and sonnets that have captivated generations of readers and theater enthusiasts. His intricate plots, compelling language, and entertaining narratives have preserved Elizabethan culture in a way that has not been matched by any writer since. His influence is so vast and pervasive that most people don't even realize that their lives have been changed by him and his works. Modern writers as varied as Ernest Hemmingway and Stephen King have acknowledged the tremendous influence over their own writing.

Yet what is known about the man himself? His writing has remained, but there are hardly any credible records that provide insight into his personal life. He did not keep a private journal, so there is very little that is written in his own hand. Instead, researchers must rely on court documents, birth and baptismal records, and personal journals of colleagues and friends. The mysterious figure left behind many doubts and conflicting accounts that may be tainted by bias, and separating fact from fiction is extraordinarily difficult.

What follows is a look into the personal life of William Shakespeare, as much as can be said that is based on reliable, credible information.

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