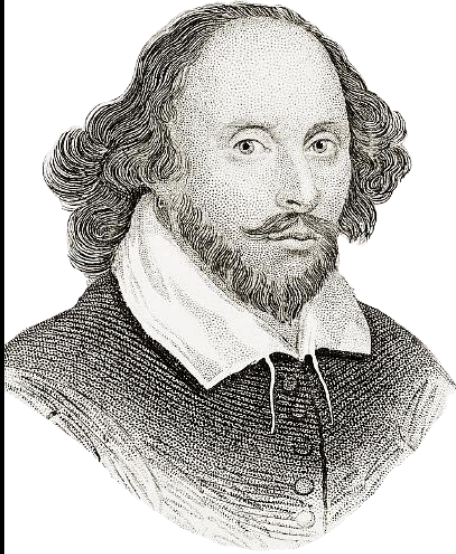


VINEET PANDEY'S CLASSES

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Celebrating
William Shakespeare's
Birthday

Some Fun Facts



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1. Shakespeare is sometimes referred to as “The Bard”.

The word “bard” means poet and he is called “The Bard” and “The Bard of Avon” because he is considered to be the greatest poet to have ever lived. He never signed his name as “William Shakespeare”. Only a few signatures of William’s have survived, but those that have shown that Shakespeare spelled his name “Wilm Shaksp”, “William Shakespe”, “Wm Shakspe”, “William Shakspere”, “Willm Shakspere”, and “William Shakspeare” – but his signature never said “William Shakespeare”.

2. He wrote his early plays for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. They became one of the most popular acting companies in London thanks to some of Shakespeare’s early work, including: The Taming of the Shrew, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

3. Some people think Shakespeare was a fraud.

Shakespeare’s first play comes off as bizarre and even disturbing to modern audiences.

Shakespeare wrote and published *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* between 1589 and 1593. The bizarre part of the comedy comes from where one of the two main characters, Valentine, offers his lover Sylvia to his friend Proteus, the other main character.

The problem lies in that Proteus in that scene had just threatened to rape Sylvia. Naturally, this sends a disturbing message, but some scholars disagree. They argue that this results from a misunderstanding in what Valentine says. According to them, Valentine isn’t offering Sylvia to Proteus, as much as he offers to cherish his friend, as much as he loves Sylvia.

4. Shakespeare introduced almost 3,000 words to the English.

Shakespeare has been credited by the Oxford English Dictionary with introducing almost 3,000 words to the English language. Estimations of his vocabulary range from 17,000 to a dizzying 29,000 words - at least double the number of words used by the average conversationalist.

5. Shakespeare penned a curse for his grave, daring anyone to move his body.

His epitaph was:

*“Good friend for Jesus' sake forbear,
To dig the dust enclosed here:*

*Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.”*

Because Stratford's most famous citizen knew that ordinary parishioners weren't normally granted permanent tenure when they were buried inside the sanctuary, one reason for the writing of this verse incantation was to conjure away a possible eviction.

6. Shakespeare's skull probably stolen by grave robbers, study finds.

A story often dismissed as wild fiction, that 18th-century grave robbers stole Shakespeare's skull, appears to be true. The first archaeological investigation of Shakespeare's grave at Holy Trinity church in Stratford-on-Avon has been carried out for a documentary in 2016. The most striking conclusion is that Shakespeare's head appears to be missing and that the skull was probably stolen from what is a shallow grave by trophy hunters.

Grave-robbing was a big thing in the 17th and 18th century. People wanted the skull of famous people so they could potentially analyse it and see what made them a genius. It is no surprise that Shakespeare's remains were a target.

7. The Comedy of Errors is Shakespeare's shortest play.

The Comedy of Errors is Shakespeare's shortest play at just 1,770 lines long.

8. Nobody knows what Shakespeare did between 1585 and 1592.

To the dismay of his biographers, Shakespeare disappears from the historical record between 1585. Historians have speculated that he worked as a schoolteacher, studied law, traveled across continental Europe or joined an acting troupe that was passing through Stratford. Historians often refer to this part of the writer's life as 'the lost years'...

9. Shakespeare lived through the Black Death.

This epidemic that killed over 33,000 in London alone in 1603 when Will was 39, later returned in 1608.

10. It's likely that Shakespeare wore a gold hoop earring in his left ear.

Our notion of William Shakespeare's appearance comes from several 17th-century portraits that may or may not have been painted while the Bard himself sat behind the canvas. In one of the most famous depictions, known as the Chandos portrait after its onetime owner, the subject has a full beard, a receding hairline, loosened shirt-ties and a shiny gold hoop dangling from his left ear. Even back in Shakespeare's time, earrings on men were trendy hallmarks of a bohemian lifestyle, as evidenced by images of other Elizabethan artists. The fashion may have been inspired by sailors, who sported a single gold earring to cover funeral costs in case they died at sea.

11. Marriage

In 1582, William married a farmer's daughter called Anne Hathaway. They had three children together – a daughter called Susanna, and twins, Judith and Hamnet.

12. In 1592 he suddenly turned up in London as an actor and playwright.

But poor William didn't have it easy – his jealous rivals, known as the 'University Wits', criticised and made fun of his work. One writer, named Robert Greene, referred to him as 'an upstart crow'! "[A]ctors were already marked as undesirables by England's vagrancy laws,

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which mandated that traveling troupes had to find aristocratic patronage," John Paul Rollert wrote in *The Atlantic*. "Rogue players ran the risk of being flogged, branded, and finally hanged." Little is known of Shakespeare's acting chops, but it's believed Shakespeare favored playing "kingly parts," including the ghost in his own *Hamlet*.

13. Shakespeare's writing was likely influenced by his father's legal troubles.

When Shakespeare was about 5 years old, his father, John—a glovemaker—was accused of illegal money-lending and wool-dealing by Crown informers. The ordeal plunged the elder Shakespeare into legal troubles that would plague him for the next decade. "William grew to adulthood in a household where his father had fallen in social and economic rank," historian Glyn Parry told *The Guardian*. Parry argued that the experience likely shaped Shakespeare's attitudes toward power, class, and the monarchy—major themes in his future works.

14. William Shakespeare may have participated in organized crime.

In the 1590s, many of London's theaters operated as shady fronts for organized crime. (The Lord Mayor of London decried the theater—and specifically plans for the new Swan Theatre, where Shakespeare may have briefly worked—as a meeting spot for "thieves, horse-stealers, whoremongers, cozeners, conny-catching persons, practisers of treason, and such other like.") In 1596, Swan Theater owner Francis Langley accused William Gardiner and his stepson William Wayte of making death threats. Soon after, Wayte retaliated with the same accusations against Langley and—for some reason—William Shakespeare. This has led historian Mike Dash to suggest that Shakespeare may have been involved in some unspoken criminal activity.

15. William Shakespeare was a matchmaker (and a marital peace-maker).

After the birth of his twins, Shakespeare fell off the map for seven years. One unsubstantiated theory (and there are many) suggests that he supported his family by working as a lawyer or legal clerk. Indeed, Shakespeare's plays show an impressive grasp of legal knowledge. "No dramatist of the time ... used legal phrases with Shakespeare's readiness and exactness," wrote 19th-century literary critic Richard Grant White. (High praise considering that Shakespeare once wrote, "Let's kill all the lawyers.")

16. William Shakespeare likely helped steal a theater, piece by piece.

In 1596, the Theatre in Shoreditch—where Shakespeare cut his teeth as an actor—went dark. The lease for the property on which it was built had expired, and Shakespeare's acting troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, were forced to take their show elsewhere. Two years later, the former owners hatched a crazy plan to take their playhouse back. One winter night in 1598, a group armed themselves with swords and axes, snuck into the theater, and began dismantling

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the playhouse piece by piece—although it would take more than one night to demolish it. While there's no evidence that Shakespeare joined the crew, he certainly knew about the raid. Eventually, parts of the playhouse would go into the construction of a new theater just south of the River Thames. Its new name? The Globe.

17. Only one handwritten script of William Shakespeare's exists.

Anyone interested in studying the Bard's cramped handwriting has only one reliable place to look—the original draft of the Book of Sir Thomas More , a politically-charged play that targeted, in-part, xenophobia in England. Written mainly by dramatist Anthony Munday, the play was completed with the help of four fellow playwrights. One of them, presumed to be Shakespeare, helped write a stirring monologue in which the lead character asks an anti-immigrant mob to imagine themselves as refugees.

Say now the king ... Should so much come too short of your great trespass As but to banish you, whither would you go? What country, by the nature of your error, Should give you harbour?

The play, by the way, would not be performed. Censors believed it could start a riot.

18. The Globe Theatre burned down during a performance of one of William Shakespeare's plays.

On June 29, 1613, a prop cannon caused a fire at the Globe Theatre during a performance of Henry VIII . Sparks landed on the thatched roof and flames quickly spread. "It kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole house to the very ground," a witness Sir Henry Wotton claimed . According to The Telegraph , "the only reported injury was a man whose flaming breeches were eventually put out using a handy bottle of ale."

19. Shakespeare's legacy lived on thanks to two fellow actors.

Shortly after Shakespeare died, two of his longtime friends and colleagues— John Heminge and Henry Condell —edited Shakespeare's plays and collected them in a 1623 book titled Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies . That same book, now called the First Folio, helped preserve Shakespeare's work for the coming generations and is widely considered one of the most significant books printed in English.

20. 'Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind; and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.'

(A Midsummer Night's Dream)

This quote suggests that love does not use eyes to see one's beloved but the mind. Love depends on one's perception of another person. It is a direct reference to what Helena believes is keeping Demetrius in love with Hermia.

21. If we assume that **the Sonnets are autobiographical**, and that all, or nearly all, are addressed to two persons — a young man beloved of the poet, and the "dark lady," with whom they were both entangled — can these persons be identified? The majority of the critics who accept the personal theory assume that the "Mr. W. H." of the dedication was this young man, rather than the collector or editor of the poems. The only theories concerning the young man (whether "Mr. W. H." or not) that are worthy of serious consideration are that he was William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, or that he was Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton.

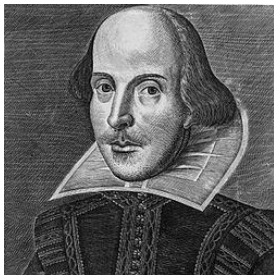
22. **'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.'**

(Twelfth Night)

In the context of Twelfth Night, the quote is part of a joke played on Malvolio, the pompous steward in Olivia's home. Some people are born into power; others work for it; still, others are forced to accept it.

23. **Shakespeare never commissioned a portrait of himself.**

In fact, out of three portraits that unquestionably have Shakespeare as the subject, two only became commissioned after his death. First, we have the Droeshout portrait, made by Martin Droeshout for the title page of the First Folio.



Then there's Shakespeare's own funeral monument, sculpted by Gerard Johnson in 1616, and commissioned by Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall.



24. Historians consider the Chandos Portrait as the only portrait of Shakespeare possibly made during his life.

John Taylor painted it between 1600 and 1610, and it actually became the basis for Martin Droeshout's engraving of Shakespeare for the First Folio.

The name comes from the portrait's previous owner, the Duke of Chandos, in the 18th century. The Chandos family kept the portrait until 1848 when the Earl of Ellesmere bought it from them. He then donated the portrait to the National Portrait Gallery.



25. Shakespeare also presented Muslim characters in his works fairly.

Examples include the Prince Of Morocco in "The Merchant of Venice", and even "Othello", in the play of the same name. In both, and other cases, Shakespeare avoids making the characters look like stereotypes, instead, he made them complex and realistic. Scholars note this represents a rare and inspiring example of a writer presenting Muslims.

26. Academics have sometimes questioned Shakespeare's sexuality.

A few scholars have wondered if Shakespeare might have had homosexual interests. This comes from some of his sonnets, such as Sonnet 18, which he wrote for a young man he called the Fair Youth.

Other scholars, though, reject the idea, instead argued that Shakespeare might instead have had bisexual interests. Shakespeare's marriage with Anne, and their three children, prove he wasn't homosexual.

27. Shakespeare's first play comes off as bizarre and even disturbing to modern audiences.

Shakespeare wrote and published The Two Gentlemen of Verona between 1589 and 1593. The bizarre part of the comedy comes from where one of the two main characters, Valentine, offers his lover Sylvia to his friend Proteus, the other main character.

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The problem lies in that Proteus in that scene had just threatened to rape Sylvia. Naturally, this sends a disturbing message, but some scholars disagree. They argue that this results from a misunderstanding in what Valentine says. According to them, Valentine isn't offering Sylvia to Proteus, as much as he offers to cherish his friend, as much as he loves Sylvia.

28. The cause of Shakespeare's death is a mystery.

An entry in the diary of John Ward, the vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford (where Shakespeare is buried), tells us that "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted." Ward, a self-proclaimed Shakespeare fan, wrote his diary fifty years after Shakespeare died and most historians agree it appears to be a baseless anecdote. It should be noted though that a serious outbreak of typhus, known as the "new fever", in 1616 (the year Shakespeare died), lends credibility to Ward's story.

30. Sexuality

Few details of Shakespeare's sexuality are known. At 18, he married the 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who was pregnant. Susanna, the first of their three children, was born six months later on 26 May 1583. Over the centuries some readers have posited that Shakespeare's sonnets are autobiographical, and point to them as evidence of his love for a young man. Others read the same passages as the expression of intense friendship rather than sexual love. The 26 so-called "Dark Lady" sonnets, addressed to a married woman, are taken as evidence of heterosexual liaisons.

31. Lost plays

- Love's Labour's Won
- The History of Cardenio

32. Shakespeare invented over 1700 words.

He created new words in a lot of ways, such as: changing nouns to verbs, changing verbs to adjectives, connected words that had never been used together, adding a suffix or prefix, and even creating completely new and original words. Some of the words he invented include: assassination, addiction, advertising, blanket, champion, elbow, gossip, generous, lonely, mimic, ode, puking, rant, secure, swagger, torture, and zany.

33. He is one of the most influential writers of the English language. In fact, Shakespeare's works are the second most often quoted after **the Bible**.

34. Shakespeare's fools

a) Feste, Twelfth Night, or What You Will

"Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage."

b) Touchstone, As You Like It

"The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly."

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c) The Gravediggers, Hamlet

"What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?"

d) Nick Bottom, A Midsummer Night's Dream

"This is to make an ass of me, to fright me if they could."

e) The Fool, King Lear

"Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise"

f) Trinculo, The Tempest

"I shall laugh myself to death at this puppy-headed monster. A most scurvy monster!"

35. The first recorded works of Shakespeare are Richard III and the three parts of Henry VI, written in the early 1590s during a vogue for historical drama. Shakespeare's plays are difficult to date, however, and studies of the texts suggest that **Titus Andronicus, The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew and The Two Gentlemen of Verona** may also belong to Shakespeare's earliest period.

36. His first histories, which draw heavily on the **1587 edition of Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles** of England, Scotland, and Ireland, dramatize the destructive results of weak or corrupt rule and have been interpreted as a justification for the origins of the Tudor dynasty.

37. After the lyrical Richard II, written almost entirely in verse, Shakespeare introduced prose comedy into the histories of the late 1590s, **Henry IV, parts 1 and 2, and Henry V**. His characters become more complex and tender as he switches deftly between comic and serious scenes, prose and poetry, and achieves the narrative variety of his mature work. This period begins and ends with two tragedies: **Romeo and Juliet**, the famous romantic tragedy of sexually charged adolescence, love, and death; and Julius Caesar—based on Sir Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's Parallel Lives—which introduced a new kind of drama. According to Shakespearean scholar James Shapiro, in Julius Caesar "the various strands of politics, character, inwardness, contemporary events, even Shakespeare's own reflections on the act of writing, began to infuse each other".

38. In the early 17th century, Shakespeare wrote the so-called "**problem plays**" Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, and All's Well That Ends Well and a number of his best known tragedies.

39. The plots of Shakespeare's tragedies often hinge on such fatal errors or flaws, which overturn order and destroy the hero and those he loves. In **Othello**, the villain Iago stokes Othello's sexual jealousy to the point where he murders the innocent wife who loves him. In **King Lear**, the old king commits the tragic error of giving up his powers, initiating the events which lead to the torture and blinding of the Earl of Gloucester and the murder of Lear's youngest daughter Cordelia. According to the critic Frank Kermode, "the play offers neither its good characters nor its audience any relief from its cruelty". In **Macbeth**, the shortest and most compressed of Shakespeare's tragedies,

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uncontrollable ambition incites Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, to murder the rightful king and usurp the throne, until their own guilt destroys them in turn. In this play, Shakespeare adds a supernatural element to the tragic structure. His last major tragedies, Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus, contain some of Shakespeare's finest poetry and were considered his most successful tragedies by the poet and critic T. S. Eliot

40. Shakespeare turned to romance or tragicomedy and completed three more major plays: **Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest, as well as the collaboration, Pericles, Prince of Tyre.** Less bleak than the tragedies, these four plays are graver in tone than the comedies of the 1590s, but they end with reconciliation and the forgiveness of potentially tragic errors.

41. Shakespeare's last play was The Two Noble Kinsmen.

He started with two gentlemen and ended with two kinsmen. Shakespeare scholars are much more certain about this one — most agree that Shakespeare wrote The Two Noble Kinsmen between 1613 and 1614, just before his retirement and death. Based on a story from Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, the play sees the titular pair of friends fight over who gets to marry the fair Princess Emilia.

42. Shakespeare's most-produced play is A Midsummer Night's Dream.

According to a 2016 report by Priceonomics, the most recent report on the topic, A Midsummer Night's Dream gets the most professional performances nowadays. The website Shakespearances documented nearly every professional Shakespeare production around the world from 2011 on, and A Midsummer Night's Dream accounted for more than 7% of all Shakespeare performances. (Together, Parts 1 and 2 of Henry VI were the least performed.)

43. It's considered bad luck to say "Macbeth" in a theatre.

This is one of theatre's most famous and enduring superstitions. The only exception is during an actual performance of Macbeth — otherwise, people use "The Scottish Play," "Mackers," or "MacB." Some extra-superstitious people won't even say any lines from the show in a theatre, let alone the title! If you do say "Macbeth," you're supposed to step outside the theatre and perform a cleansing ritual: Spin around three times, spit over your shoulder, and say a line from another Shakespeare show. You can only return if someone deems you "clean" and lets you back in — they have to make sure you've warded off the evil luck!

There are a few different origin stories for the superstition. Legend goes that an actual coven of witches cursed the play because they were angry that Shakespeare wrote in a real spell. A less mythic possibility is that theatres that produced Macbeth had an unfortunate history of closing soon afterward due to financial problems. Whether it was directly because of Macbeth's production costs or pure, repeated coincidence, people started to associate the play's name with toil and trouble.

44. His plays have been translated into more than 100 languages.

"taH pagh taHbe'?" Out of all the languages you can read Shakespeare's work in, perhaps the most unexpected of the bunch is Klingon, the language spoken in the world of Star Trek. Only two

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Shakespeare plays — Hamlet and Much Ado About Nothing — are currently available in Klingon, but the Klingon Language Institute reportedly plans to translate more.

45. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

In 1759, David Garrick staged a performance of Antony and Cleopatra in London starring himself and 30-year-old actress Mary Ann Yates in the title roles. Although the production failed to impress the critics (and closed after just six performances) it nevertheless made theatrical history: It marked the first time in the play's 150-year history that Cleopatra had been played by a woman. Before then, performances had only ever been staged by all-male acting companies—including Shakespeare's own King's Men, who staged the first performance in London in 1606.

46. AS YOU LIKE IT

Any actress tackling the smart-talking Rosalind in As You Like It is faced with learning 685 lines, making it Shakespeare's longest female role and a bigger part than the likes of Prospero (656 lines), Romeo (617 lines), and Falstaff in Henry IV: Part 1 (602 lines). Nevertheless, Shakespeare's roles are still weighted towards the men: Antony (839 lines) is a much larger role than Cleopatra (678 lines); Macbeth (715) has almost three times more lines than his wife (259); and Hamlet, the longest role of all, is more than twice as long as Rosalind (1506 lines).

47. HAMLET

At more than 4000 lines and 30,000 words, Hamlet is Shakespeare's longest play and its title role is his biggest overall, accounting for 37 percent of the entire script. It's also believed to be his most produced play, having never fallen out of popularity since it was first performed with Richard Burbage in the title role in 1601. In 2012, Guinness World Records declared Hamlet the second most portrayed human character on film and TV, after Sherlock Holmes (but both fall far short of the non-human Dracula).

48. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

Act 5, Scene 2 of Love's Labour's Lost is Shakespeare's longest single scene, running to an impressive 1016 lines; in comparison, the entire script of The Comedy of Errors runs to just 1786 lines, while this one scene alone is just 15 lines shorter than the entire role of Henry V, Shakespeare's third most talkative character. Shakespeare's shortest scene, incidentally, is in Antony and Cleopatra: Act 3, scene 9 contains just six lines, in which Antony explains how he will arrange his men to see how many ships Caesar is sending into battle, totaling 33 words.

49. RICHARD II

All 2803 lines in Shakespeare's Richard II are written in verse, with no prose passages at all. That makes it the longer of only two verse-only plays in Shakespeare's complete works—the other being King John.

50. TWELFTH NIGHT

Twelfth Night, or What You Will was the only one of his plays that Shakespeare gave a subtitle. Quite what he wanted the title to imply is debatable, although some have suggested that he was trying to

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poke fun at the trend in theatre at the time for attaching snappy subtitles to literary works (specifically probably John Marston, who wrote his own play titled *What You Will* at the same time). Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* is also sometimes given a subtitle, *All Is True*, but that wasn't used in the First Folio and is presumed to have been attached to the play at a later date (or else was its original title, before it was changed in line with Shakespeare's other royal histories).

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