

The Top Ten Reasons Shakespeare Did Not Write Shakespeare

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1 The Real Shakespeare

There never was an Elizabethan playwright named William Shakespeare. There was an Elizabethan actor by the name of William Shaxper or Shakspere born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. When academics speak of the historical William Shakespeare they are referring to this actor.

There is no evidence to show that William Shaxper was a writer. There are no original manuscripts of the plays or the poems, no letters and only six shaky signatures, all in dispute. Both his parents, John and Mary, were illiterate. His wife Anne Hathaway was illiterate. His children were illiterate, which would make Shaxper the only prominent writer in history whose children are known to have been illiterate.

The actor from Stratford never went to college and as far as can be determined never had any schooling. There has been an attempt by Stratfordians to surmise that William Shaxper attended a grammar school in Stratford. No records of this exist and Shaxper made no mention of this school in his will, a startling oversight if this grammar school was single-handedly responsible for creating perhaps the most literate, scholarly man of all time.

The lack of any letters written by William Shaxper is particularly significant. As a great writer, it is likely he would have written a large number. Voltaire's collected correspondence totals roughly 20,000 pieces. Shaxper's, or Shakespeare's collected correspondence totals exactly zero items.

2 The Pen Name

In Elizabethan times, "Shake-spear" meant "to shake-a-spear." Shaking a spear is a reference to the Greek goddess of theatre, Pallas-Athena, also known as the "spear-shaker." This goddess is always depicted carrying a spear, hence the pen name, "Shake-spear."

Many plays, not credited to "William Shakespeare" appeared under the nom-de-plume "Shake-spear," including *The London Prodigal*, *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, *The Puritan*, *The Widow of Watling Street*, *The Comedy of George a Greene*, *Fair Em - the Miller's daughter*, *The Birth of Martin*, *The Arraignment of Paris* and *The Merrie Devil of Edmonton*. Since these plays are not believed to have been written by the mythical William Shakespeare, clearly at least one other writer was using the pen name "Shake-spear."

3 His Vocabulary

The works attributed to Shakespeare contain one of the largest vocabularies of any single English writer. John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for example has about 8,000 different words. The King James Version of the Bible, inspired by God and translated by 48 of Great Britain's greatest biblical scholars, has 12,852 different words. There are 29,066 different words in Shakespeare's Canon.

There is a startling incoherence between the story of a young man, with at best a grammar-

school education, wandering into London, getting involved in theatre, and then suddenly, even miraculously, possessing one of the greatest vocabularies of any individual who ever lived.

4 The Famous Doubters

It is now academic dogma to believe William Shakespeare wrote “the works.” Despite evidence that Shaxper could not have been a writer, few colleges or universities ever touch on the authorship question. Nevertheless the case against William Shakespeare’s authorship is strong enough to have attracted many famous individuals.

A partial list of the Shakespeare doubters include Mark Twain, Sigmund Freud, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Hardy, Oliver Wendel Holmes, Walt Whitman, Otto von Bismarck, Benjamin Disraeli, James Joyce, James Barrie, Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles, John Gielgud, John Galsworthy, Leslie Howard, Daphne Dumaurier, Malcolm X, Helen Keller, Derek Jacobi, US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, and Henry James, who wrote, “I am haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced.”

5 His Unnoticed Death

Mark Twain, in his hilarious 1909 debunking of the Shakespeare myth titled “Is Shakespeare Dead?” points out that no one in England took any notice of the death of the actor William Shaxper.

“His death was not even an event in the little town of Stratford. Does this mean that in Stratford he was not regarded as a celebrity of any kind? His death made no more stir in England than the death of any other forgotten theatre-actor would have made. Nobody came down from London; there were no lamenting poems, no eulogies, and no national tears. A striking contrast with what happened when Ben Jonson, and Francis Bacon, and Spenser, and Raleigh and the other distinguished folk of Shakespeare’s time passed from life! No praiseful voice was lifted for the lost Bard of Avon.”

Twain concludes that the man who wrote Shakespeare’s works could not have been William Shakespeare.

6 Not A Single Book

William Shaxper’s will is four pages long and handwritten by an attorney. In these four pages there is no indication that he was a writer. The will mentions not a single book, play, poem, or unfinished literary work, or scrap of manuscript of any kind.

The absence of books in the will is telling, since to write his works the mythical William Shakespeare would have had to have access to hundreds of books. The plays are full of expertise on a wide variety of subjects including contemporary and classical literature, multiple foreign languages, a detailed knowledge of Italy. Italian language and culture, the law, medicine, military matters, sea navigation, painting, mathematics, astrology, horticulture, music and a variety of aristocratic sports like bowls and falconry.

What happened to the hundreds of valuable books he would have assumedly collected during his lifetime? An exhaustive search of every bookcase within fifty miles of Stratford done in the 18th century failed to find a single book formerly belonging to the “world’s greatest author.”

7 Multilingual

The writer of Shakespeare's plays had command of not only English, but Latin, Greek, French, Italian, German, Spanish and other languages. His French in particular is not of the classroom but reflects the vulgar speech of ordinary people. There are themes and passages from classical works untranslated in Shakespeare's day. Among many examples, *The Comedy of Errors* was based on a Latin play by Plautus of which there was no translation.

The thousands of new words Shakespeare added to the English language were created from his multilingual expertise.

There is no way of reconciling the immense scholarship evinced in Shakespeare's works with William Shaxper, who from birth was surrounded by illiterate people, had little or no education, and is believed never to have traveled outside England.

8 Genius

William Shakespeare was a genius." This answer is generally supplied to all questions relating to Shaxper's apparent lack of qualifications for the title of "world's greatest author." Genius however has its limitations. Historian Thomas Macaulay said: "Genius will not furnish a poet with a vocabulary; it will not teach what word exactly corresponds with his idea and will most surely convey it to others. Information and experience are necessary for strengthening the imagination."

About one third of Shakespeare's plays are either set in Italy or make specific references to events and locations there. Genius may explain the literary skills in Shakespeare's works, but it does not supply knowledge of places never visited or languages never learned.

9 More than 50 Possible Candidates

There is a large selection of individuals who might have had a hand in the writing of Shakespeare's works. At last count there were more than 5,000 books on the Shakespeare authorship question with more than 50 possible candidates. The three most popular are Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe and, currently the strongest alternative candidate, Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. All 50 candidates have one thing in common: each is more likely to have written the works of Shakespeare than William Shaxper himself.

Elizabethan England was a land of brutal censorship. There was no freedom of speech. The Master of the Revels and the dreaded Star Chamber had the power to imprison and torture any writer. The playwright Thomas Kyd was essentially tortured to death. Christopher Marlowe was facing torture when he was murdered or, as some believe, staged his own murder and escaped. Playwrights Ben Jonson, Thomas Nashe, George Chapman, John Marston were all temporarily imprisoned for their writings.

William Shaxper, supposedly one of the most prolific and successful of the Elizabethan playwrights, was never arrested. This fact is particularly astonishing given that the Earl of Essex sponsored a performance of his *Richard II* to encourage a rebellion against the Queen Elizabeth I. The Earl of Essex was arrested and executed, but Shaxper was never so much as questioned.

At such an incredibly dangerous time for artists, remaining anonymous for an Elizabethan playwright would have been a wise choice.

10 Stratford

Stratford-upon-Avon is one of the most successful tourist sites in England, though only about 10% of its visitors ever attend a play. People come not to see theatre but as pilgrims to worship a cult hero in his birthplace.

As with virtually everything associated with the “historical” Shakespeare, the tourist sites in Stratford are pure speculation. “It is fairly certain” that the house on Henley Street is where Shakespeare was born and brought up, complete with, as the birthplace website proudly states, “recreated replicas.” The grammar school in Stratford has lost all records from the period, but “is almost definitely” where Shakespeare received his education. This institution even claims to have his original desk, which is “third from the front on the left-hand side.” On and on the fantasy is created with an avalanche of qualifiers like, “most biographers agree,” and “we are permitted to think,” and “we are warranted in believing,” etc.

In 1969 the people selling tours of Shakespeare home were sued under England’s Trade Descriptions Act, which forbids false statements and claims in advertising. The court ruled that the Act did not apply since the historical site was a “Trust” and not a business.

The word “trust” perfectly applies to all things related to the playwright William Shakespeare; “trust” being defined as the “acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence.” No one knows for sure who wrote the works attributed to Shakespeare. What can be said with some certainty is that William Shaxper didn’t.

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