

A Midsummer Night's Dream Webquest

Directions: Pick **at least five** of the following sites, and answer the questions associated with them. You can get extra credit for visiting additional sites and correctly answering their questions. You **must** visit the following sites: The Authorship Controversy, Shakespeare's Life and Education, and Royal Shakespeare Company Productions.

Site I: The Authorship Controversy

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/mtrial.html>

Scroll down to the **bottom** of the page, and read about the **MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP "WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?"** Then, click on the link to the judges' opinions at the bottom of the page, and read the first opinion, from Supreme Court Justice Brennan.

Since the 1920s, some scholars have argued that William Shakespeare, "the man from Stratford," could not really have written the plays and sonnets that we credit to him. There have been many arguments on both sides, and many other possible authors have been suggested, including Queen Elizabeth I. The most likely candidate, it seems, is Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. People claim that, for various reasons, he wrote the plays and borrowed the name of William Shakespeare, an actor with the Lord Chamberlain's Men, when he published his work. In the 1980s, a group of lawyers conducted a mock trial, trying to prove that the Earl was the real author. The judges for the trial were three then-Justices of the Supreme Court.

"Summary of the Hearing:"

1. Why does Peter Jaszi say Shakespeare probably isn't the author of the plays?

2. Why does James Boyle say it's important that at least one of the plays was written after 1604?

"Opinion of the Justices," Justice Brennan:

3. What does Brennan say about Shakespeare not being well educated enough to write the plays? Does he think Oxford is the real author?

Site II: Shakespeare's Life and Education

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/12/12/>

Begin reading at the paragraph above the heading "Parents/Family," and continue until the end. Also, click on the link "Grammar School" under "Education." Read the opening paragraph and "The Petty School" and "The Grammar School."

1. What jobs did Shakespeare's father have?

2. Who was Shakespeare's school named for?

3. How old were Shakespeare and his wife at their marriage?

4. What were "the Lost Years?"

5. List at least two signs that Shakespeare had great success as a poet and playwright.

6. Who was Shakespeare's co-writer on three pieces?

7. What fact surprised you most about Shakespeare's life or time period?

8. Why might Ben Johnson's famous quote that Shakespeare learned "small Latine and lesse Greeke" be misleading?

9. How old would Shakespeare have been when he began school? What would have his first 'textbook' have been made out of?

10. What would have made learning to read and write English especially difficult in Shakespeare's day?

11. How long would your school day have lasted, and how many days a week would you have gone to class, if you were a student in Shakespeare's day? What was the primary learning method?

12. What subjects would you have studied in school?

Site III: Royal Shakespeare Company Productions

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/picturesandexhibitions/action/viewExhibition?exhibitionid=3§ionid=7&playid=1&pr>

Click on each of the pictures and spend some time reading about each production and looking at the sets and costumes used.

1. What does Puck throw away in the 1989 John Caird production? How does this fit with the attitude of the production as a whole?

2. What event inspired the staging in the 1970 Peter Brook production?

3. What famous actress, who many years later played Queen Elizabeth I in the movie *Shakespeare in Love*, played Titania in the 1962 Peter Hall production?

4. Which production do you think would be the most interesting to see live? Why? Which production looks most like you have pictured the play so far?

Site IV: Shakespeare's Legal and Financial Issues

<http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/snapshots/snapshot34/snapshot34.htm>

Click on the transcript (button that resembles a page) icon for sources 1i, 3, and 4, and use the records and notes to answer the following questions.

Historians have pieced together much of the little we know about Shakespeare from official documents like county records, taxes, deeds, and wills. You can use the bare facts given here to infer a great deal about Shakespeare's fortunes, personality, and family relationships.

Source 1i:

1. How much are Shakespeare's goods valued at in 1597? How much tax does he owe?

Source 3:

2. The money owed by Shakespeare is now the business of whom in 1599? What does this evidence suggest?

Source 4:

3. Complete the table with the bequests in Shakespeare's will.

Susannah (eldest daughter)	<input type="text"/>
Judith (second daughter)	<input type="text"/>
Joan Hart (sister)	<input type="text"/>
Joan's three sons (nephews)	<input type="text"/>
Elizabeth Hall (granddaughter)	<input type="text"/>
The poor of Stratford	<input type="text"/>
Mr. Thomas Combe (friend's nephew)	<input type="text"/>

4. What does Shakespeare leave to his wife? Is there any evidence to suggest that this is an afterthought?

Site V: The Fribbling Report

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/events/sitrep4.html>

John Fribbling is a fictional character; however, his reports on Shakespeare's activities and life in Elizabethan London are based on historical events and conditions. Fribbling works for Sir Francis Walsingham, who really was Elizabeth I's spymaster. He is investigating Shakespeare, who is thought to be a Catholic sympathizer, which was illegal in Elizabeth's England. The fictional Fribbling may be the worst spy ever.

1. What criminal (or at least bizarre) sights could be found in the streets of London in the 1590s?

2. Who criticized the theaters and the performance of all plays?

3. What kind of neighborhood was Shoreditch? How can you tell?

4. What was "Bedlam?" Why do we now use the word as a term for chaos and confusion?

5. Name at least three Elizabethan theaters.

6. What kind of lute (an early guitar) player must Fribbling be?

Site VII: Shakespeare Biography Quiz

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/quiz/bioquiz.htm>

1. What year was Shakespeare born?

2. Who did Shakespeare marry?

3. Why did Shakespeare leave his hometown?

4. The London theaters were closed on account of a virulent outbreak of the plague in 1593 and part of 1594. Specifically, what disease was this?

5. To whom did Shakespeare dedicate his long narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*?

6. Is it possible to say in exactly what order Shakespeare's plays were written?

7. In 1594 Shakespeare became one of the founding members of what acting company?

8. Which fellow actor(s) did Shakespeare remember in his will?

9. What was your score?

Site VIII: Shakespearean Insults

http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/onenightofshakespeare/onenightofshakespeare_insults.shtml

Click on Shakespeare to see another insult. Copy down three insults (don't forget to cite the play, act, scene, and line numbers) and explain them.

1. Insult:

Meaning:

()

2. Insult:

Meaning:

()

3. Insult:

Meaning:

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