

In the time of Elizabeth I, theatre-going was very popular.

Plays were performed without scenery, and sometimes a signboard was carried across the stage to indicate where the action was supposed to take place. The better-off people sat on the balcony, while the poorer people, called groundlings, paid a penny to stand around the stage, drinking beer and smoking pipes, which were passed from hand to hand, booing if the play was bad and cheering or crying if they liked it.

perform: act
scenery: decor
signboard: notice
indicate: communicate
stage: platform
violence: extreme force
bloodshed: killing
entertain: amuse
audience: people

What people expected was a good mixture of violence, bloodshed and romance, and, last but not least, a good deal of fun, so that even in tragedies, clowns used to appear on the stage between the acts of the play to entertain the audience with their jokes.

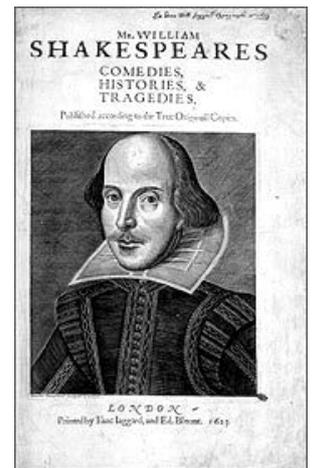
We can find all these elements in Shakespeare's plays, so they became very popular – and they still are.

Some plays by Shakespeare:

- Romeo and Juliet
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Merchant of Venice
- Hamlet
- Macbeth
- The Tempest
- As You Like It

William Shakespeare was born in **1564** in **Stratford-upon-Avon** and died in **1616**. When Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway he was 18 and she was 26. They had 3 children.

Shakespeare not only wrote plays; **he also performed on stage** as a professional actor in London.



TRUE or FALSE?

Queen Elizabeth I lived in the 16th century.	TRUE
William Shakespeare was an actor.	
William Shakespeare wrote "Macbeth".	
William Shakespeare painted beautiful sceneries.	
Some of Shakespeare's plays are full of violence and bloodshed.	
The "groundlings" were rich people.	
It wasn't allowed to smoke or drink beer during the performance.	
Only educated and noble people went to theatre.	
"Romeo and Juliet" is romance and tragedy.	
Stratford-upon-Avon is the birthplace of William Shakespeare.	
Anne Hathaway became Shakespeare's wife.	
Today, Shakespeare's plays aren't popular any more.	