William Shakespeare

Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 52)

ACTIVITY 1  BEFORE READING
1 No  2 Yes  3 Yes  4 No  5 Yes  6 No

ACTIVITY 2  BEFORE READING
Encourage students to speculate and to make
guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They
will find out as they read that the ‘yes’ answers are
numbers 2, 3, 6 and 7.

While Reading

CHAPTERS 1 TO 4 WHILE READING
1 Which . . .? Twelfth Night.
2 What . . .? He had to read and learn a lot of Latin
writers.
3 What . . .? He was a glove-maker, and also bought
and sold sheep.
4 How . . .? Eighteen.
5 What . . .? Hathaway.
6 Which . . .? The Queen’s Men.
7 Why . . .? Because he wanted to be an actor and to
write plays, and because he couldn’t do anything in
Stratford.
8 How . . .? Two hundred thousand people.
9 What . . .? The Curtain.
10 Why . . .? Because he couldn’t remember all the
words, and he forgot who he was.
11 What . . .? Good – but not the best.
12 Which . . .? The Rose theatre on Bankside.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 5
Encourage students to guess but do not tell them
the answers.
1 Thousands of people die from the plague.
2 During the plague the London theatres close.
3 Will spends some of his time back in Stratford.
4 Will writes some poems about a woman.

CHAPTERS 5 AND 6 WHILE READING
1 The Earl of Southampton.
2 You left London as fast as you could.
3 He did some writing, read Lord Southampton’s
books, and met a few friends.
4 Because he wanted to find out who the Dark Lady
of the sonnets was.
5 The Lord’s Chamberlain’s Men.
6 Costumes and properties.
7 Boys.
8 There were plays, a lot of singing and dancing, and
eating and drinking.
9 Hamnet, Will’s son, died.
10 Because he now had a big, grand house, called New
Place, and was rich, so the townspeople were happy
to do business with him, and to borrow money from him.
11 The money, the new house, the new dresses, the
six fields of apple trees, and the big farm north of
Stratford.
12 He still laughed at people, but he also felt sorry for
them – good and bad, rich and poor, young and old.

CHAPTERS 7 TO 9 WHILE READING
1 The Earl of Essex, with 20,000 men (and Lord
Southampton).
2 Will, Richard Burbage, and others in the Lord
Chamberlain’s Men.
3 Richard Burbage.
4 Will himself.
5 Queen Elizabeth the First.
6 The Puritans.
7 Will’s granddaughter, Elizabeth.
8 Will and his friends, and all the writers and poets in
London.
9 Ben Jonson.
10 King James.

CHAPTERS 7 TO 9 WHILE READING
1 Queen Elizabeth, about Sir John Falstaff in Henry
IV; she liked this character very much and wanted
Will to write another play about him.
2 Will, about his play Hamlet, which was four hours
long.
3 Will, about his daughter Susanna.
4 Will, about the new name for the company, because
they were now working for King James, who wanted
to see all the plays.
5 Ben Jonson, about Will’s play The Winter’s Tale,
which put the country of Bohemia by the sea when
in fact Bohemia was a long way from the sea.

BEFORE READING CHAPTERS 10 TO 12
Encourage students to guess but do not tell them
the answers, which are 1b and 2c.

CHAPTERS 10 TO 12 WHILE READING
In Shakespeare’s play The Tempest, he said goodbye to
the stage, but it was not his last play. His two younger
brothers died, and he spent more time in Stratford with
his family. In June 1613 the Globe burnt down, but no
one was hurt. Will went to a party at the Mermaid
Tavern, caught a fever, and died in Stratford in April,
1616. His body lies in a church by the river Avon. He
had no grandsons to carry on his name, but nobody
has forgotten (everybody has remembered) the name Shakespeare.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1 AFTER READING
1+11 Queen Elizabeth liked to see all the new plays, so the company acted in her palaces at Christmas.

2+14 Hamnet was Judith’s twin and Will’s only son, but he died when he was eleven years old.

3+9 The Dark Lady was a woman in Shakespeare’s sonnets, but nobody knows who she was in real life.

4+16 Anne Shakespeare did not like plays or the theatre, because she thought actors were wicked people.

5+12 Judith married a man called Thomas Quincy, but her (their) three sons all died when they were young.

6+15 Ben Jonson was a playwright and a good friend of Will’s, who loved arguing about plays and poetry.

7+10 Richard Burbage was a famous actor in Will’s company, who played many of the big parts in Will’s plays.

8+13 Susanna’s husband was a doctor called John Hall, and their (her) daughter Elizabeth was eight when Will died.

ACTIVITY 2 AFTER READING
If students need help with this, encourage them to look at links in the language, for example:

Have you seen? - No, I haven’t / He’s a very good actor - Yes, he is / . . . anything to laugh at? - No, you won’t laugh.

3 Samuel: Have you seen King Lear, Nathan? It’s Will Shakespeare’s new play at the Globe.

6 Nathan: No, I haven’t. Is it any good? Who’s in it?

9 Samuel: Richard Burbage. He plays the King.

12 Nathan: Oh, I like Burbage. He’s a very good actor.

5 Samuel: Yes, he is. Did you see him in Hamlet?

2 Nathan: Yes, I did, but Hamlet was so sad.

Everybody dies at the end. I like plays with jokes, and lovers.

1 Samuel: Did you like Will’s Romeo and Juliet then? You remember that play? There were lovers in that.

4 Nathan: But it wasn’t funny, was it? Romeo and Juliet kill themselves! No, I like a happy ending myself.

7 Samuel: You mean like the happy ending in Twelfth Night – that play with Sir Toby Belch in it.

10 Nathan: Yes, Sir Toby was great! It was very funny, that play. Is there anything to laugh at in this new play?

13 Samuel: No, you won’t laugh, you’ll cry. When King Lear carries his dead daughter on to the stage—

8 Nathan: Dead daughter? Oh, I don’t think I want to see that. I hope they do The Merry Wives of Windsor again. I’d like to see that again – I loved it.

11 Samuel: Well, Nathan, there are no merry wives in King Lear. But it’s a great play. You must see it!

ACTIVITY 3 AFTER READING
Richard the Third Antony and Cleopatra
Henry the Fourth The Tempest
Henry the Fifth The Merry Wives of Windsor

Romeo and Juliet A Midsummer Night’s Dream
King John The Merchant of Venice
King Lear Twelfth Night
Macbeth The Winter’s Tale
Othello Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

ACTIVITY 4 AFTER READING
Words across: sonnet, parts, wicked, playgoers, jokes, funny, poetry, kings, lovers, actor, stage

Words down: playwright, rehearsal, theatre, afraid, murderers, clever

ACTIVITY 5 AFTER READING
Shakespeare was a playwright who also worked in the theatre. He was an actor himself, playing small parts in his own plays, and he knew what the London playgoers liked. He gave them jokes to make them laugh, and ghosts to make them afraid. He gave them kings and queens, thieves and murderers, soldiers and lovers – real people, who were wicked and cruel, clever and stupid, funny and sad. Shakespeare died when he was only 52, but his plays and his poetry live on.

ACTIVITY 6 AFTER READING
1 The sentence is: ‘To be, or not to be – that is the question.’ It comes from Shakespeare’s play Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

2 The actor Richard Burbage, in the Globe theatre in London.
Encourage discussion of the meaning of this quotation. (The paraphrase of this line, and other lines from the same speech, on page 49 will help students.) The best answer is probably:

3 The speaker (who is Hamlet himself) is thinking about killing himself, but cannot decide whether to do it.

This line – the first line from one of Hamlet’s soliloquies – is perhaps the most famous quotation from all Shakespeare’s plays. You might like to give students the background to the speech, to explain Hamlet’s problem:

Hamlet has learnt that his father the King was murdered by his uncle Claudius, who has taken the throne and also married Hamlet’s mother, Gertrude. The ghost of Hamlet’s father has urged Hamlet to take revenge for the murder, which would be to kill the murderer, Claudius. Hamlet is caught between two opposing duties: the duty of a son to revenge a father’s murder, and the duty of a Christian not to commit murder. So he thinks about suicide as a way out of his difficulties, but decides against it because he is afraid of the ‘dreams’ that might come in that ‘sleep of death’.

**ACTIVITY 7 AFTER READING**

Open answers. Encourage students to exchange opinions (or even do a class survey) about the kind of stories they like (love, crime, ghost, adventure, modern, historical, etc.), and about the advantages and disadvantages of the different ways of telling a story. For example:

- Actors on a stage are real, living people, and can make a story feel very immediate and close to you.
- A film can show you many different scenes, can jump from one place to another, backwards and forwards in time, have ‘special effects’, etc.
- A book allows you to use your own imagination and make your own pictures of people and places (and you can carry it anywhere).