

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

THE LIFE

William Shakespeare lived during the **Renaissance** period, he was born in April 1564, in Stratford, near London.

His parents were John and Mary. The father, a dealer in wool (commerciante di lane), was a solid middle-class citizen.

Young William attended (frequentò) the local Grammar school, where he learn Latin and the classical writers.

When he was only eighteen he married Annie Hathaway. Anne bore him (gli diede) three children.

During the period of bubonic plague he wrote sonnets, lyric poetry and private plays for his aristocratic friends, and got support (ebbe aiuto) from a young nobleman, the Earl of Southampton.

Shakespeare became a shareholder (azionista) and the main playwright (principale drammaturgo) of the most popular acting company in London: "The Lord Chamberlain's Men".

Shakespeare became also part owner (uno dei proprietari) in the most prestigious public playhouse in London: **The Globe Theatre**.

When, in 1603, Queen Elizabeth died, became King James I of England. The acting company "The Chamberlain's Men" became "The King's Men".

Shakespeare had a period of depression. This period were characterised by his personal psychological crisis associated with the stress of writing Hamlet.

But the 1608 marked a change (segna un cambiamento) in Shakespeare's work, from the dark mood (stato d'animo scuro) of the tragedy to one of light, magic, music.

He died when he was 52 years old and was buried (cremato) in the local church (chiesa) of Stratford.

THE ARTIST

He wrote and acted his own plays.

He began writing when he was 25 and he wrote 38 plays including comedies, tragedies and histories.

His famous plays include **Romeo and Juliet**, **Hamlet**, **Macbeth**, **The Merchant of Venice**, **The Tempest**, **Othello**.

Besides his famous plays he is known for his many **sonnets**.

Shakespeare wrote a hundred and fifty-four sonnets.

He uses the **Elizabethan form** (not Italian or French form-octave and sestet): three quatrains (four lines long) and a final couplet rhyming, in decasyllables.

Most of Shakespeare sonnets speak about the themes of love and time. Other themes are: beauty, death, art, friendship and the suffering of the lover. The first 126 sonnets are supposedly addressed to a young man, probably a young aristocrat who was also Shakespeare's patron, while the others are addressed to a mysterious dark lady. The style is characterized by a descriptive language, the use of rhyme and the cultural references.