



THE GLOBE GUIDE TO

Shakespeare

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THE GLOBE GUIDE TO

Shakespeare

Andrew Dickson

With contributions by Joe Staines

First opened to the public in 1995, the reconstructed Globe in London now welcomes more than 350,000 ticket-buyers annually – the closest thing we have to Shakespeare’s “wooden O”, raised originally in 1599 (see p.589).



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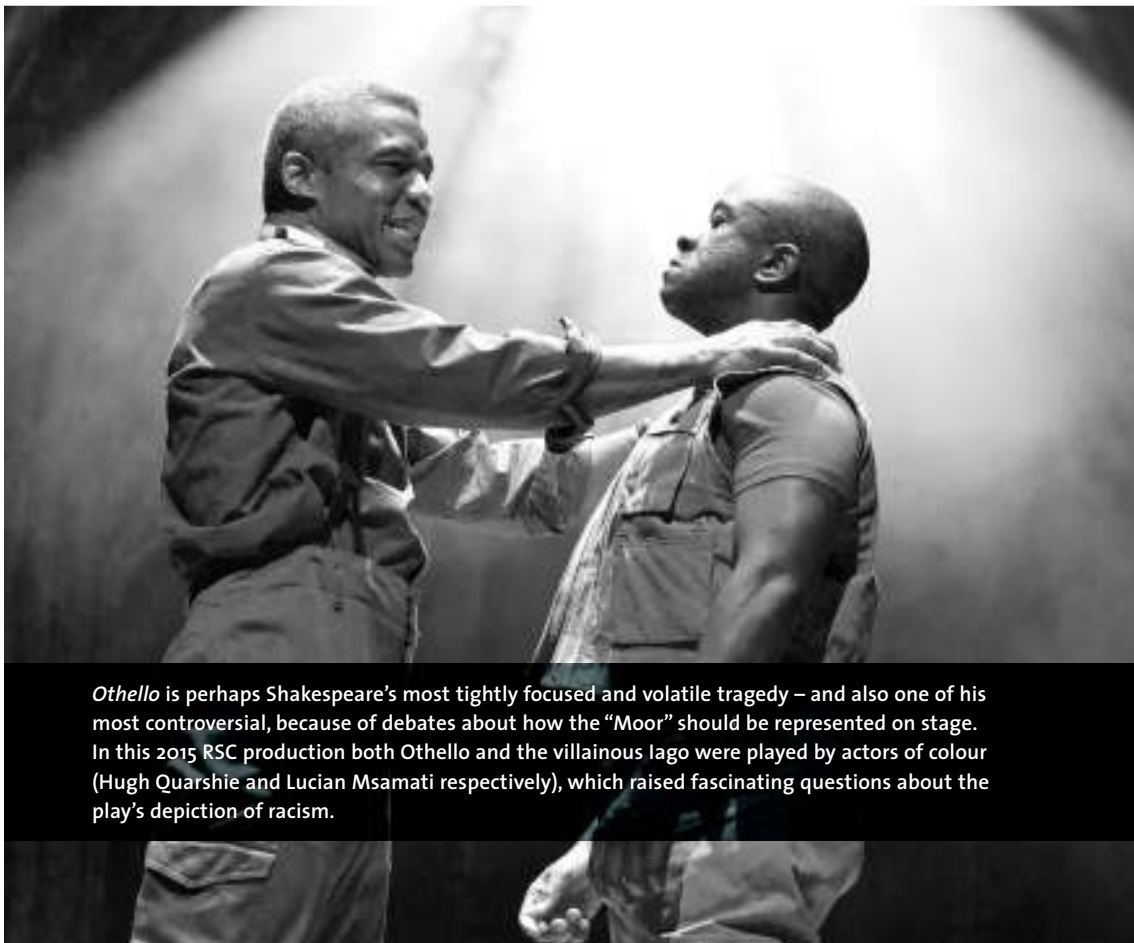
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Othello is perhaps Shakespeare's most tightly focused and volatile tragedy – and also one of his most controversial, because of debates about how the “Moor” should be represented on stage. In this 2015 RSC production both Othello and the villainous Iago were played by actors of colour (Hugh Quarshie and Lucian Msamati respectively), which raised fascinating questions about the play's depiction of racism.

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How this book works

The **Globe Guide to Shakespeare** is designed to be easy to use. It divides into three sections: Plays, Poems and Contexts. Throughout the text you'll also find a series of small essays on key topics; see p.vii for a complete list.

Plays

Each of the 39 plays gets a chapter to itself, and, for ease of reference, chapters are arranged alphabetically. All conform to the same pattern, beginning with a short **introductory paragraph**, accompanied by a **synopsis**, a list of **major characters** and information about the play's approximate **date**, **sources** and **textual history**. This is followed by an **interpretative essay** – the heart of the chapter – that guides you through the play and introduces its crucial themes and ideas, as well as quoting sections from the text. The essay is followed by a

stage history, describing the play's life in the theatre from the earliest years to the present day, as globally inclusive as we can make it. At the end of the chapter are a series of reviews. First listed are **screen and audio adaptations**, highlighting the best and most interesting productions around and the format in which they are currently available.

The final section of each play chapter is devoted to **books**, with a recommendation of the best individual edition of the play in question, followed by selected works of literary criticism.

Poems

The Poems section follows almost exactly the same pattern as the plays, with individual chapters on *A Lover's Complaint*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, the Sonnets and *Venus and Adonis*. Each contains an

interpretative essay and **book recommendations**, with the obvious difference that there are no performance histories, and only a handful of audio or video versions are currently available.

Contexts

The final section of the book begins with a chapter outlining **Shakespeare's life**, focusing on the documented historical facts but also examining the many myths about him. It's followed by an account

of the **stages on which Shakespeare worked**, with specifics about the major acting companies and playhouses. Then comes an introduction to **Shakespeare's language**, describing the oral and written

Quotes and symbols

Quotations


Quotations from the plays and poems are found throughout *The Globe Guide to Shakespeare*. Each one is followed by a numerical reference identifying precisely where it's taken from. The plays are nearly always broken down into acts and scenes, and modern editors usually number the lines too. Following the standardized system, this book cites act numbers first, then the relevant scene number, and finally the line number – so “5.2.23–32” indicates that the quotation in question is taken from Act Five, scene two, and covers lines 23 to 32 (“SD” indicates that the text appears in a stage direction).


When referring to the poems, citations provide line numbers. The text used throughout is the second edition of *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford University Press, revised 2005); other editions, including those recommended at the end of each chapter, will in all likelihood number things slightly differently. Text quoted from other writers is generally presented in modernized spelling.

In the review sections of each chapter, publishing information for **film and audio** versions appears as follows. Each is listed in date order, with cast and director details appearing first, followed by country and date of origin, then current distributor (in the order UK / US where the distributor is different in each territory):

Symbols

Coriolanus


R. Fiennes, V. Redgrave, B. Cox; Ralph Fiennes
(dir.) UK, 2011 ▶ Lionsgate / Weinstein 

DVD = 

CD = 

Macbeth

S. Dillane, F. Shaw, D. Conlan; Fiona Shaw (dir.)
UK, 1998 ▶ Naxos  / 

Download = 

Book details

Book details follow a similar format throughout, listing author/editor, date of original publication, then current publisher (in the order UK / US where publishers are different). “UP” stands for “university press”:

Arden Shakespeare (third series)

Peter Holland (ed.); 2013 ▶ Bloomsbury

The Common Pursuit

F.R. Leavis; 1952 ▶ Penguin / Yale UP [o/p]

Every effort has been made to indicate when books are currently out of print (“o/p”), but with online booksellers the distinction between titles that are available and those that aren't has become increasingly blurred. It's not impossible that a secondhand book ordered through a specialist retailer will be easier to find – and reach you faster – than something published only a few months ago. Ebook availability and format changes frequently, so it's well worth checking to see if books are available in digital form.

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

culture of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as well as the literary techniques they employed, including new words, rhetorical figures and blank verse. An outline of **Shakespeare's canon** – what he wrote and when – follows.

We have also included a chapter introducing Shakespeare's most significant **colleagues and rivals**: nine writers also at work in Elizabethan and Jacobean London. You'll find a detailed introduction to each, along with short descriptions of their best work. Following this, there is short chapter focusing on **Shakespeare**

for kids – reviews of the best adaptations for young audiences.

The Globe Guide concludes with a list of **recommended books**, covering everything from music in Shakespeare to the works that he himself read. This is supplemented by a comprehensive roundup of the **best Shakespearian websites**, ranging from reference sources and DVD rental sites to blogs and discussion groups. Finally there's a **selective glossary**, defining some useful terminology common to this book and others in the area.

Introduction

There are many different Shakespeares. As the years pass, they multiply: theatre is an inquisitive and unpredictable medium, and Shakespeare, the world's most revived playwright, keeps mutating and evolving. Close to four centuries after his death, his plays continue to be seen by millions of people in thousands of locations across the globe. His words and phrases enrich the English language, rippling through casual, day-to-day speech and at the same time sustaining the very notion of "high" culture. His works have generated a major publishing industry and been translated into hundreds of different languages. His name has been pressed into the service of convictions and ideologies he could never have dreamed about, and he has become an icon in countries that didn't even exist when he was alive.

Just as there are many Shakespeares, there is no single way of explaining what makes his work so appealing. His plays and poems aren't just astonishing works of art, but gripping pieces of drama. They're remarkable social documents, but often touched with magic and fantasy. They're full of optimism and comedy about the human condition, yet also shot through with pain, anger and despair. And although they're of their historical moment, they touch something that feels universal. The completeness of Shakespeare's vision remains unmatched, whether he's writing about large-scale politics or the most intimate of love affairs. He is the most exciting, challenging and awe-inspiring writer in the language, and in many different languages too.

For all that, approaching Shakespeare can be a bewildering and intimidating experience. Partly this is because of his reputation as a cornerstone of the academic canon. It is also to do with sheer volume – an effect of the global Shakespeare industry, in which his name possesses significant cultural capital. At least twenty major editions of the *Complete Works* are currently in print, hundreds more academic articles and monographs pile up each year, and more films than ever take their cue from his work. Many of these interpretations offer something different, something new, and in all likelihood something worth pondering. Looking at things from contrasting angles is entirely Shakespearian; as critics long ago realized, no other playwright makes us think so hard about what it is like to experience life from radically different points of view. But you can't read or see everything: few people will wish to watch the more than fifty screen versions of *Hamlet*, examine all the competing theories about *King Lear*'s textual history or trudge their way through the countless critical studies devoted to Shakespeare's life and work.

Which is where this book comes in. In *The Globe Guide to Shakespeare* we've attempted to cut a path through the jungle, offering ways into each play and major poem: key critical studies, recommended editions, essential reference works. The opinions expressed aim to be balanced and accessible, giving a flavour of what's out

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The World Shakespeare Festival in 2012 swept companies from countries all around the globe to British theatres – including the Globe. New Zealand’s Ngakau Toa company kicked off festivities with a strutting, strident version of *Troilus and Cressida* that used many traditional Maori forms.

there while being carefully selective about what has been included. Above all, this isn’t intended to be a textbook, and we hope it’s fun to read: our ambition throughout has been to demystify Shakespeare, to show that there are interesting ways of thinking about his works without saturating them in academic jargon.

Also at this book’s heart is a passionate belief in performance: the idea that Shakespeare’s plays shouldn’t be thought of as lifeless literary texts, but as living, breathing pieces of drama – three-dimensional works designed to be adapted and acted. We’ve included detailed and up to date stage histories for the plays, giving a flavour of hundreds of different productions around the world and over 400 years. You’ll also find reviews of what we think are the most exciting film and TV adaptations on DVD and download, offering an opportunity to experience the plays in screen incarnations across more than a century of cinema – from the earliest silent treatments to big-budget modern movies. We’ve also made a point of including audio versions, partly because many of them boast such stellar casts, but also because Shakespeare’s plays make for astonishing listening, somehow even more vivid when staging is left to the imagination. Even so, it’s worth saying that the best place to get a taste of the action is where it always has been: inside a theatre. Nothing compares to the sensation of being in the same space as the actors, sharing in the unique and unrepeatable experience of live performance.

Yet there is more to Shakespeare than just the plays. As well as being a supremely talented dramatist, he is also one of the most absorbing poets in the English language. Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* have long been admired for their subtlety and intellect, the

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way they enfold intimate confessions about love within dazzlingly intricate language. Less familiar – indeed sometimes overlooked entirely – are his narrative poems *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *A Lover's Complaint*: as varied a trio as you could imagine, and well worth getting to know. While acknowledging that some works will always be more popular than others, we've tried to be reasonably democratic, allotting a similar amount of space to plays and poems in the belief that all of them have something to offer, from the neglected early histories to the less popular late romances.

We have tried to make *The Globe Guide* of use to as many different people as possible. Theatregoers will hopefully find plot synopses helpful, and stage histories of interest when comparing how productions have varied across the years. Students will be able to find reference information, browse critical essays, research books and weblinks. Cinephiles can cut straight to the most rewarding and absorbing film adaptations. Parents and teachers can check out a handful of suggestions on the best adaptations for young audiences. Anyone needing a sense of the broader context can go straight to the chapters on Shakespeare's life, stages and language, or read up on his Elizabethan and Jacobean colleagues and rivals. Individual sections can be read straight through, or dipped into as and when.

Finally, it's worth remembering that no one owns Shakespeare: how you respond is entirely up to you. Although *The Globe Guide* is delighted to be published in association with Shakespeare's Globe, it is independently researched and written. And its aim isn't to tell you what you *should* think about Shakespeare and his writing; it's to encourage you to find out for yourself. This book is intended as a starting point.



Though often neglected, Shakespeare's late plays are experimental masterpieces, touched with fantasy as well as turbulent emotion. *The Winter's Tale* contains perhaps the most famous stage direction in the canon, "Exit, pursued by a bear" – the moment at which the traveller Antigonus is chased off stage by a wild animal. This is the scene as conjured by the English eighteenth-century artist Joseph Wright of Derby (engraved by S. Middiman); the question of how this was staged in Shakespeare's day is still hotly debated.

Q&As: The man and the myths

Was Shakespeare really Shakespeare?

Yes, he was. Some conspiracy theorists believe that Francis Bacon or the Earl of Oxford, among other candidates, wrote the plays, but all the evidence points the other way > p.566

Was Shakespeare gay?

For a variety of reasons it is almost impossible to say, although it is true that Shakespeare wrote over a hundred love poems that appear to be addressed to a man > p.539

Do we know what Shakespeare looked like?

Various portraits exist, but it is likely that none dates from his lifetime, and their accuracy is disputed > p.574

Is it true that Shakespeare abandoned his wife and family?

After marrying Anne Hathaway in 1582 and having three children with her, Shakespeare left Stratford to start work in London; it isn't known how often he returned home > p.562

Where did Shakespeare go to school?

The records have long since perished, but it is extremely likely that he attended the King's New School in Stratford > p.560

Did he speak any foreign languages?

Despite legends that he travelled in Europe as a young man, no records survive; he did, however, understand French and Italian as well as Latin and Greek > p.561

Was Shakespeare Catholic?

The evidence suggests that Shakespeare conformed to mainstream Protestant beliefs, though there is speculation that his father John remained a Catholic > p.564

Did Shakespeare die of syphilis?

Cause of death was not usually recorded in Renaissance England, so no one knows for sure what killed William Shakespeare > p.579



Numerous attempts to capture Shakespeare's likeness were made in the centuries after his death, and there are now memorials in numerous towns and cities worldwide, from Shakespeare Sarani (Street) in Kolkata to John Quincy Adams Ward's pensive statue in Central Park. Its foundation stone was laid in 1864, the 300th anniversary of the playwright's birth, but is highly unlikely to represent what he actually looked like (see p.574).

Did Shakespeare act in his own plays?

We know that he performed in at least two plays by his colleague Ben Jonson, and there is a long-standing tradition that he took roles in *As You Like It* and *Hamlet* > p.570

Do any samples of Shakespeare's handwriting exist?

Yes: his signature survives on a number of documents and it is thought that he wrote part of a playtext now in the British Library > p.190

How many plays did Shakespeare write?

Most scholars agree that Shakespeare was the main author of 39 surviving plays, but he may have contributed to several more, while others have been lost > p.618

Do all his plays survive?

No: two are referred to in the records but have since disappeared > p.242