



William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Volume 1

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Shakespeare produced most of his work between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were comedies and histories—genres he raised to the peak of sophistication and artistry by the end of the 16th century. He then wrote tragedies until about 1608, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, considered some of the finest works in the English language. In his last phase, he wrote tragicomedies, also known as romances, and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his time, and his reputation reached still greater heights in the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, and the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence that George Bernard Shaw called 'bardolatry'. In the 20th century, his work was repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

Shakespeare's works include the 36 plays printed in the First Folio of 1623, classified as comedies, histories and tragedies. Two plays not included in the First Folio were: *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which is attributed to John Fletcher and Shakespeare, and which did not appear in any of the subsequent Folios of Shakespeare's works, and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, which is now accepted as part of the canon, with scholars agreeing that Shakespeare made a major contribution to its composition. No Shakespearean poems were however included in the First Folio.

William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, in four Volumes, is an unabridged edition containing every word that Shakespeare wrote—all 37 plays classified into comedies, history plays, tragedies; all of his 154 sonnets; his narrative poems, 'A Lover's Complaint', 'The Rape of Lucrece', and 'Venus and Adonis'; a miscellany of 20 poems, 'The Passionate Pilgrim'; and 'The Phoenix and the Turtle', an allegorical poem.

The two Introductions, one by Dr. R.S. Sharma and the other by Dr. Ratri Ray give the reader an overall view of how and why Shakespeare has become such an influential cultural icon, and how perceptions of his work have changed in the intervening four centuries. The Introductions summarise the known facts about the dramatist's life, his reading and use of sources, and the nature of theatrical performances during his lifetime. Brief introductions to each play discuss the date and contemporary context of the play and its position within Shakespeare's oeuvre.

The book will be useful for the students, teachers and researches of Shakespeare. It will be a proud possession for all Shakespeare readers and a must for college and university libraries.

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