

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

As we approach the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, the incredible legacy of his literary achievements continues to be as popular as ever.

This week, HLF has announced a grant of £1.8milion so that the site of Shakespeare’s New Place in Stratford, the Bard’s last home, can become a major new landmark attraction.

With 154 sonnets, 38 plays and 2 narratives to his name his works are not only prolific, but continue to influence us today. Many present day sayings were made up by Shakespeare. To go on a ‘wild goose chase’ was a phrase first said in *Romeo & Juliet,* while the term ‘getting in a pickle’ comes from *The Tempest*. So, to entertain you until the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust opens its newest attraction, here’s a list of ten things you didn’t know about Shakespeare.

1. In Shakespeare’s day people didn’t like to waste food. They would eat every last bit of an animal including the tongue, trotters, intestines and even eyeballs, while richer people ate things like peacock and dolphin!
2. Many people think the legendary quote 'Romeo, Romeo… Wherefore art thou Romeo?' translates as 'Romeo, Romeo… Where are you Romeo?' But in fact “Wherefore” in this context means “Why”, because Juliet is asking why Romeo is a Montague.
3. There are thought to be at least two lost Shakespeare plays, where the only existing copies mysteriously disappeared.
4. Some people think Shakespeare was a fraud because he never went to college yet had a wide knowledge of international affairs.

5. It's entirely possible that we're all spelling Shakespeare’s name wrong - recorded spellings range from Shakspere to Shappere to Shaxberd!
6. Shakespeare's longest play is *Hamlet*, which takes around four hours to perform. His shortest is *A Comedy of Errors*, which takes about 80 minutes.
7. There have been thousands of modern remakes of Shakespeare’s stories. Film animation *Gnomeo & Juliet* starring Emily Blunt and James McAvoy as love sick garden gnomes is a favourite with kids.
8. Shakespeare’s tomb had a poem engraved into it that reads 'anyone who moves his bones will be cursed.' Thus, his grave has not been touched since 1747.
9. Although 23 April is generally used to be Shakespeare’s birthday, his actual birthday is unknown. The same goes for the day he died.
10. Nobody knows what Shakespeare did between the years of 1585 and 1592. These are referred to as 'the lost years.'



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Model of Shakespeare's New Place Stewart Writtle

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust secures Lottery grant to unlock the heritage of Shakespeare’s last home