

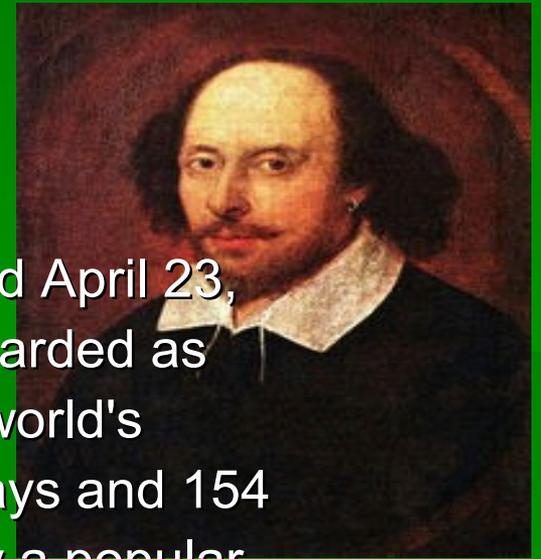
**“Friends, Romans,
countrymen, lend me
your ears...”**

Introduction to Shakespeare
and Julius Caesar

Who was he?

William Shakespeare (baptized April 26, 1564 – died April 23, 1616) was an English poet and playwright widely regarded as the greatest writer of the English language, and the world's preeminent dramatist. He wrote approximately 38 plays and 154 sonnets, as well as a variety of other poems. Already a popular writer in his own lifetime, Shakespeare became increasingly celebrated after his death and his work adulated by numerous prominent cultural figures through the centuries.

Orthodox scholars believe Shakespeare produced most of his work between 1586 and 1612, although the exact dates and chronology of the plays attributed to him are under considerable debate, as is the authorship of the works attributed to him. He is counted among the very few playwrights who have excelled in both tragedy and comedy, and his plays combine popular appeal with complex characterization, poetic grandeur and philosophical depth.



Shakespeare's Plays

- Shakespeare's writing can be divided into two time periods:
 - 1590/2- 1603: Elizabethan Period- Wrote mostly comedies and histories.
 - 1603- 1611/12: Jacobean Period- Wrote mostly tragedies and romances.
- 1585- 1592- "The Lost Years"
 - Scholars have no real idea where Shakespeare was or what he was doing.

Drama

- **Drama** is a literary composition involving conflict, action crisis and atmosphere designed to be acted by players on a stage before an audience. This definition may be applied to motion picture drama as well as to the traditional stage.



Types of Shakespearean

Drama:

- **Tragedy** -- In general, tragedy involves the ruin of the leading characters. To the Greeks, it meant the destruction of some noble person through fate, To the Elizabethans, it meant in the first place death and in the second place the destruction of some noble person through a flaw in his character. Today it may not involve death so much as a dismal life, Modern tragedy often shows the tragedy not of the strong and noble but of the weak and mean,
- **Comedy** -- is lighter drama in which the leading characters overcome the difficulties which temporarily beset them. Usually ends in marriage.
- **History**-- The 1590's were the decade of history play.

Two types of History:

- Providential- History determined by God
- Machiavellian- Not God, but the people who want power who determine history.

Shakespeare's Language

- Shakespeare's plays are written in Early Modern English, which can be difficult to read.
- The pronouns usage is especially different. Some examples include
 - thou = you
 - thee/ ye = you
 - thy/ thine = your/ yours

Iambic Pentameter

- We spoke about Iambic pentameter before, You'll recall that it is:
 - A rhythmical pattern. The "iambic" part means that the rhythm goes from an unstressed syllable to a stressed one, as happens in words like divine, caress, bizarre, and delight. It sounds sort of like a heartbeat: daDUM, daDUM, daDUM. The "pentameter" part means that this iambic rhythm is repeated five times.

Shakespeare uses Iambic Pentameter often in his
Plays!!

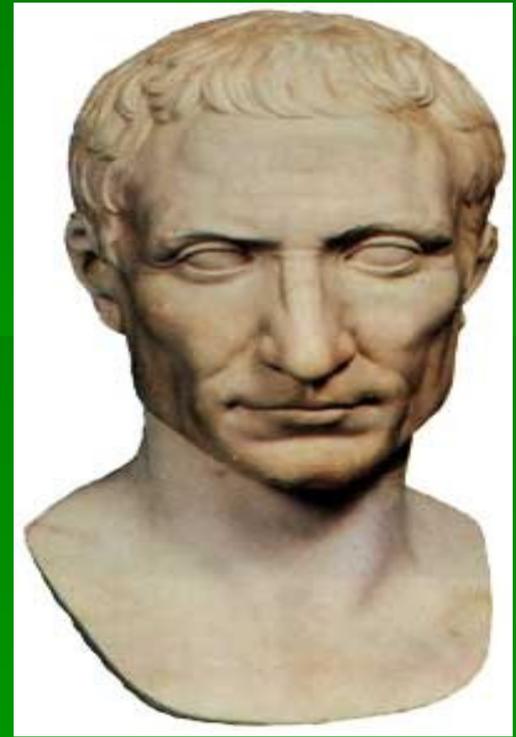
Wordplay

- Shakespeare uses a lot of words with double meanings or *puns*, where a word can mean more than one thing in a given context.
- Shakespeare uses puns as a way of illustrating what is on the surface and what meanings lie beneath.

- Shakespeare's lines were meant to be spoken!!
- Reading them out loud or performing them helps the reader/audience to understand them.

Why Caesar?

- Probably written in 1599, *Julius Caesar* was the earliest of Shakespeare's three Roman history plays. *Julius Caesar* is a dramatization of actual events, Shakespeare drawing upon the ancient Roman historian Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) as the primary source of the play's plot and characters.
- Shakespeare thought the story would translate well onto the stage due to its rich descriptions.
- History Plays were popular during this time and Shakespeare took part in the chronicling of history by writing many history plays. Some others include: *Richard II*, *Henry IV* Part 1 and 2, and *Henry V*.



The Play- *Julius Caesar*

- Written in blank verse- form of poetry in Iambic Pentameter.
- Written due to a renewed interest in ancient Roman literature and art during the Renaissance.
- *Julius Caesar* appeared in print for the first time, seven years after Shakespeare's death.
- It is rich in stage directions like character entrances and exits, blocking, props, and special effects.

Why read it?

- The play has been read and performed for over 400 years!
- Every generation since Shakespeare's time has been able to identify with some political aspect of the play.
- The political figures in the play mimic the political figures and situations of our time.