SHAKESPEARE: 400 YEARS AFTER

ALUMNOS 1º AVANZADO A
CURSO 2015-2016
ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE ALCAÑIZ
SHAKESPEARE’s BIOGRAPHY

A William Shakespeare was baptized at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. That is why it is believed he was born on or near April 23, 1564.

William was the third child of John Shakespeare, a leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a heiress. He had five brothers and sisters. Before his birth, his father became a successful merchant, and he had a good position in society. However, records indicate that his father’s good fortune declined sometime in the late 1570s. William most likely attended the King’s New School in Stratford, which taught him reading, writing and the classics.

He married Anne Hathaway in 1582. He was 18 and Anne was 26. Their first daughter, called Susanna, was born in 1583. Two years later, twins Hamnet and Judith were born. Hamnet died of unknown causes at the age of 11.

After the birth of the twins, there are seven years of William Shakespeare’s life where no records exist. Scholars call this period “the lost years” and there is wide speculation on what he was doing during this period. One theory is that he went to London and found work as a horse attendant at some of London’s finer theaters.

By 1592, there is evidence William Shakespeare earned a living as an actor and a playwright in London and possibly had several plays produced. By the early 1590s, documents show William Shakespeare was a managing partner in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, an acting company in London.

After the crowning of King James I, in 1603, the company changed its name to the King’s Men and they were very popular. Shakespeare had works published which were sold as popular literature.

The theater culture in the 16th century in England was not generally admired by people of high class. However, many of
the nobility were good patrons of the performing arts and friends of the actors.

By 1597, 15 of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare were published. At this time he bought the second largest house in Stratford, called New House, for his family. It was a four-day horse ride from Stratford to London, so it is believed that Shakespeare spent most of his time in the city writing and acting and came home once a year during the 40-day Lenten period, when the theaters were closed.

By 1599, Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theater on the south bank of the Thames River, which they called the Globe. In 1605, Shakespeare earned some money selling some states. This made him an entrepreneur as well as an artist, and scholars believe these investments gave him the time to write his plays uninterrupted.

With the exception of Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare's first plays were mostly histories written in the early 1590s: Richard II, Henry VI (parts 1, 2 and 3) and Henry V. They dramatize the destructive results of weak or corrupt rulers. Drama historians think they were Shakespeare's way of justifying the origins of the Tudor Dynasty.

In his early period he also wrote several comedies: A Midsummer Night's Dream, the Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It and Twelfth Night. Before 1600 he wrote Titus Andronicus, The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew and The Two Gentlemen of Verona.
It was after 1600 that he wrote the tragedies Hamlet, King Lear, Othello and Macbeth. In this final period, he wrote several tragicomedies too, such as Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest.

Tradition says that William Shakespeare died on his birthday, April 23, 1616, but many scholars believe this is a myth. Church records show he was interred at Trinity Church on April 25, 1616.

Oscar Molins Calderón, 1st Advanced A
**CURiosities about Shakespeare**

**Family**
William Shakespeare got married to Anne Hathaway when he was 18 years old and they used to live separately. Her wife was eight years older than him. She got pregnant before marriage. When he died Shakespeare didn’t have any natural descendant alive.

**In his lifetime...**
Shakespeare and his company built the Globe theatre twice. As an actor, he played on stage for Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Nobody knows what he did between 1585 and 1592.

**Death**
More than 60 characters died in his tragedy works. Suicide happened 13 times: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julio Cesar*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

**His works**
His most staged literary play is *Macbeth*. Every quarter of an hour, *Macbeth* is staged in some theatre of the world. His shortest literary work is the *Comedy of Errors* with 1770 lines and the longest is *Hamlet*.

The most famous Elizabethan playhouse was the Globe Theatre (1599), built by the company in which Shakespeare had a stake.
Dogs
He used the word dog or dogs more than 200 times in his literary works, and he was the first one to use the word “watchdog”.

New words
He invented 1700 words and expressions. Some of them are very common nowadays: amazement, arrogance, assassination, bloody, countless, courtship, generous, indistinguishable, laughable, road, suspicious, ... He also used for the first time the female name Jessica. His surname was written in six different ways “Shagspere”, “Shaxberd”, etc.

His will
He shared out his inheritance in a strange way, as he gave most of it to one of his daughters.

Google it!
400 years after his death we find 15 million pages in Google which mention Shakespeare. Elvis Presley only has 2.7 millions.

Epitaph
Shakespeare is buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. His tomb has a curse written on it: “Good friend for Jesus sake forbear to dig the dust enclosed here: Blest be the man that spares these stones, And curst be he that moves my bones.”
One legend says that there are unpublished literary works buried in his tomb.

Mª Carmen Egea Estopiñán, 1st. Advanced A
Main Features of Shakespeare’s Comedies, Tragedies and Histories

Shakespeare’s works:

He composed over 150 sonnets and wrote some of the most famous plays in the English language. They are generally categorised as Comedies, Tragedies and Histories. There is some debate about which category some of the plays should be included in as there are often crossovers between the genres. So what are the features of the different genres?

SHAKESPEARE’S COMEDIES

His comedies are not necessarily what a modern audience would expect a comedy to be. Our modern idea of humor and the idea of humor in Shakespeare's times are different. However, his comedies continue to entertain and amuse audiences around the world. Whilst there may be some funny moments, a Shakespearean comedy may involve some very dramatic storylines. Usually what defines a Shakespearean play as a comedy is that it has a happy ending, often involving a marriage.

Main features:

- A struggle of young lovers to overcome problems, often the result of the interference of their elders
- There is some element of separation and reunification
- Mistaken identities, often involving disguise
- A clever servant
- Family tensions that are usually resolved in the end
- Complex, interwoven plot-lines
- Frequent use of puns and other styles of comedy
- Insults! Although they don't really sound like insults, in Shakespeare’s days they were quite harsh!
- Happy endings

Eighteen of Shakespeare’s plays are usually classed as Comedy:

The merchant of Venice, Twelfth night, All's well that ends well, The tempest, The taming of the shrew, The winter's tale, As you like it, The comedy of errors, Love's labours lost, A midsummer night's dream, The two gentlemen of Verona,
The merry wives of Windsor, Measure for measure, Much ado about nothing, Pericles, prince of Tyre and The two noble kinsmen.

SHAKESPEARE’S TRAGEDIES

Tragedies may involve comedic moments, but tend towards more serious, dramatic plots with an ending that involves the death of main characters.

Main features:

- The characters become isolated or there is social breakdown
- They end in death
- There is a sense that events are inevitable or inescapable
- There is usually a central figure who is a noble hero but with a character flaw which leads them towards their eventual downfall.
- The bigger they are, the harder they fall. Shakespeare’s tragedies often focus on the fall of a nobleman. By presenting the audience with a man with excessive wealth or power, his eventual downfall is all the more tragic.
- External pressures. Shakespeare’s tragic heroes often fall victim to external pressures. Fate, evil spirits and manipulative characters all play a hand in the hero’s downfall.

Eighteen of Shakespeare’s plays are usually classed as Tragedy:

Macbeth, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, Troilus and Cressida, Othello, Coriolanus, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, Timon of Athens and Cymbeline (this is debated, with some scholars classifying it as a Comedy).
SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES

Shakespeare's Histories focus on English monarchs. They usually play upon Elizabethan propaganda, showing the dangers of civil war and glorifying the queen's Tudor ancestors. The depictions of monarchs including Richard III (an enemy of the Tudors) and Henry V (one of the great Tudor monarchs) have been influential in creating a perception of these kings which has persisted throughout the centuries. Many historians point to inaccuracies in the depictions, but the plays have been very powerful in presenting a particular image which is hard for many people to see past.

Main features:

- Set against Medieval English history. Shakespeare’s histories dramatize the Hundred Years War with France. They comprise the Henry Tetralogy, Richard II, Richard III and King John. Many of them feature the same characters at different ages.
- Not historically accurate. In writing the history plays, Shakespeare was not attempting to render a historically accurate picture of the past. Rather, he was writing for the entertainment of his theater audience and therefore molded historical events to suit their prejudices.
- Provides social commentary. Following on from the previous point, the history plays say more about Shakespeare’s time than the Medieval society in which they are set. For example, Shakespeare cast King Henry V as an everyman hero to exploit the growing sense of patriotism in England. His depiction of this character is not necessarily historically accurate.
- Explores the social structure of the time. Shakespeare’s history plays offer a view of society that cuts right across the class system. These plays present us with all kinds of characters from lowly-beggars to the monarchy. In fact, it is not uncommon for characters from both ends of the social strata to play scenes together. Most memorable is Henry V and Falstaff who turn up in a number of the history plays.

Shakespeare’s wrote ten Histories:

King John, Richard II, Henry IV (parts I and II), Henry V, Henry VI (parts I, II and III), Richard III and Henry VIII.

The plays, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra are classified both as tragedies and as Roman histories.

Lidia Borruel Mairal, 1st Advanced A
Elements of comedy in “A midsummer night’s dream”

COMEDIC LANGUAGE

In this clip, Helena moans about her love for Demetrius, Lysander is talking to Hermia, and the Duke is speaking to Theseus.

LOVE OBSTACLES

Hermia’s father tells her she must obey Demetrius even though she loves Lysander.

MARRIAGE OR REUNION

In this scene, Helena is praying to the moon, and Lysander is speaking to Hermia.

PLOT TWISTS

Demetrius and Helena are left by Puck. The scene ends with Hermia and Theseus speaking about the resolution of the plot.

MISTAKEN IDENTITIES

Puck changes Lysander into a donkey, and Titania mistakes Bottom for a person who looks like a donkey.
Elements of tragedy in “Romeo and Juliet”

**HAMARTIA**
Romeo’s flaw is his impulsive nature. He quickly falls in love and gets into fights.

**HUBRIS**
In his pride, Romeo forces Friar Lawrence to marry him and Juliet.

**PERIPETIA**
Romeo kills Tybalt, and is banished from Verona.

**ANAGNORISIS**
Romeo learns of Juliet’s death.

**NEMESIS**
The false poison that causes Juliet to appear dead, and the real poison that Romeo drinks to kill himself.

**CATHARSIS**
The fighting ends with the lovers’ deaths, but it could all have been avoided if the friar’s letter was delivered.

An example of Shakespeare histories
MACBETH is one of the most famous Shakespeare’s tragedies. It is also considered his bloodiest work. It was published after his death and was included in the First Folio, a compilation of many of his works, in 1623. It was probably written around 1606 and it has got 5 acts written mixing prose and verse.

The main themes of this tragedy are the desires of Macbeth, a Scottish warrior, of becoming the King of Scotland. The story takes place in the Scottish Highlands during the 11th century. The main topics that are treated in Macbeth are treason, ambition and power.

Macbeth was written during a time when Scotland was present on the English daily life. During that time James I ruled over England, but also over Scotland as James VI. He joined the Scottish and the English crown. The King was a patron of Shakespeare’s acting company and the English artist wanted to write a tragedy linking James I with his Scottish descendants.

The story starts with a battle between the Scottish army leaded by Macbeth and Banquo, Macbeth’s companion. After winning the battle they come across with three witches, who predict that Macbeth will be thane of Cawdor (chief of a clan) and later King of Scotland. They tell Banquo that his son will be also linked with the crown of Scotland.

After this event, King Duncan makes Macbeth the thane of Cawdor because of his braveness in the battle. Macbeth wants to become the King of Scotland because he believes that it is his destiny. His wife persuades him to murder King Duncan and like that, to become king. After doing it, he also tries to kill Banquo and his son, in order to secure his power. He murders Banquo but he fails to kill his son. Macbeth continues killing all his opponents. Finally, he thinks he is invincible. But his opponents and many Scottish noblemen form an army and attack Macbeth. There is a battle between the two armies and Macbeth is killed. In the meanwhile, Macbeth’s wife has committed suicide.
Shakespeare wanted to transmit the idea that **power corrupts men.** Macbeth is prepared to do anything to become the most powerful man in Scotland. He murders King Duncan, Banquo and other opponents to become the king. **Ambition controls Macbeth and his wife, and makes them commit those atrocities.** Macbeth’s way of overcoming the obstacles to get the throne is always the same: killing his opponents. Shakespeare also emphasizes the difference between kingship and tyranny or dictatorship. King Duncan for example is a good King, but Macbeth becomes an oppressor. That can reflect the situation in Shakespeare’s times when the issue of absolute monarchy was very relevant.

The protagonist of the tragedy is Macbeth, a man who goes mad after three witches tell him his future. First, he is brave and a good warrior. But then, he murders all the people who stand against him.

Other important characters are Lady Macbeth, who persuades his husband to murder his adversaries, Banquo and his son, the Three Witches that foretell destiny, and king Duncan who is a good, benevolent ruler. After Macbeth dies, Duncan’s son Malcom will become the king of Scotland.

This play has been adapted to the screen several times. Underneath the pictures of three famous adaptations: last year’s Justin Kurzel, with Michael Fassbender as Macbeth, Orson Welles’ version (1948) and Roman Polanski’s (1971). *Macbeth* also appeared in an episode of *The Simpsons*, with Homer as Macbeth, and Marge as Lady Macbeth. The Italian musician Giuseppe Verdi composed an opera about Macbeth in 1847. This was his first Shakespeare adaptation.

**Alba Pueyo Moliner, 1st Advanced A**
Henry V is a history play by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written in approximately 1599. It tells the story of King Henry V of England, focusing on events immediately before and after the Battle of Agincourt (1415) during the Hundred Years' War.

The play is the final part of a tetralogy, preceded by Richard II and Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2.

Synopsis:

In Henry V, the young prince has become a mature man and embarks on a successful conquest of France. The early scenes deal with the embarkation of Henry's fleet for France, and include a real-life incident in which the Earl of Cambridge and two others plotted to assassinate Henry at Southampton.

The chorus played an important role in Shakespeare’s plays. They encouraged the audience to use imagination to overcome the stage’s limitations to convey great battles and shifts of location on a bare stage.

First the chorus describes the country's dedication to the war effort and seeks support for the English navy.

Before the Battle of Agincourt, victory looks uncertain, and the young king's heroic character emerges in his decision to wander around the English camp at night, in disguise, so as to comfort his soldiers and determine what they really think of him.

He agonizes about the moral burden of being king, noting that a king is only a man. Before the battle, Henry rallies his troops with the famous St Crispin's Day Speech, referring to "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers".

Following the victory at Agincourt, Henry attempts to woo the French princess, Catherine of Valois. This is difficult because neither speaks the other's language well, but the humor of their mistakes actually helps achieve his aim. The action ends with the French king adopting Henry as his heir to the French throne and the prayer of the French queen "that
English may as French, French Englishmen, receive each other, God speak this Amen."

As with all of Shakespeare's serious plays, there are also a number of minor comic characters whose activities contrast with and sometimes comment on the main plot.

In this case, they are mostly common soldiers in Henry's army, and they include Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph from the Henry IV plays. The army also includes a Scot, an Irishman, an Englishman and Fluellen, a comically stereotyped Welsh soldier.

The play also deals briefly with the death of Falstaff, Henry's estranged friend from the Henry IV plays, whom Henry had rejected at the end of Henry IV, part 2.

Teresa Monforte Sanz, 1st Advanced A

Kenneth Brannagh as Henry V

The battle of Agincourt, from a contemporary miniature

Catherine learns English from her gentlewoman Alice in an 1888 lithograph by Laura Alma-Tadema (Act III)
The Tempest is considered to be the last one of Shakespeare’s plays. It consists of five acts and is written in prose and verse. It was played for the first time in 1611 at the Whitehall Palace in London.

In this play, Shakespeare shows his interest in family relationships and reconciliation in a mythical atmosphere.

In the play there are many characters. The most important ones are:

- **Prospero**: the main character of the play and Milan’s legitimate Duke.
- **Miranda**: Prospero’s daughter.
- **Antonio**: Prospero’s brother.
- **Ariel**: an air spirit, sometimes symbolized as a lion’s roar.
- **Calibán**: a wild deformed slave.
- **Alonso**: the King of Naples.
- **Fernando**: the King of Naples’ son.

There are many other characters with secondary roles: Alonso’s brother, Gonzalo (an old, honest adviser), the Captain, sailors, Iris, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs, Spirits, Sycorax (witch and Caliban’s mother).

The story:

Prospero is Milan’s legitimate Duke, but his envious brother, Antonio, has taken away his position. Prospero is living on a desert island with his daughter Miranda. Using his magic powers, Prospero rescues the spirit Ariel from the tree where he was trapped by a witch. Since then, Ariel serves Prospero as a slave.

One day Prospero divines the presence of his brother Antonio and some friends on a nearby ship and he starts a severe storm with Ariel’s help, so that they shipwreck. He wants to take revenge of his brother.

After some episodes involving romance, betrayal and love tests Prospero’s enemies are all in his power. But he decides to be generous, break his charms and free the spirit Ariel. In the end, Prospero gives up his magic, forgives his opponents and allows the marriage between his daughter Miranda and Fernando, the King of Naples’ son.

Olga Medina Castillo, 1st. Advanced A
Much Ado About Nothing

This romantic comedy was first staged in 1599. It makes fun of the festive society of Messina and its ceremoniousness and mannerisms and of the fanciful language of love that courtiers used.

In the play we can see how the sincere expression of love finally wins over misunderstanding, betrayal and deception.

Main characters:
- **Don Pedro**: Prince of Aragon
- **Benedict**: D. Pedro’s companion and a lord of Padua
- **Don John**: "the Bastard Prince," Don Pedro’s brother.
- **Claudio of Florence**: a count, Don Pedro’s companion and friend to Benedict.
- **Leonato**: governor of Messina, Hero's father
- **Hero**: Leonato’s daughter
- **Beatrice**: niece of Leonato
- **Boracchio**: Don John’s friend

The story:

It is set in Messina, a port city in northeastern Sicily. Prince Don Pedro of Aragon returns from one of his battles accompanied by his men. Among them, the most outstanding soldier, **Claudio**, his friend **Benedict**, and Don Juan, the bastard, wicked brother of the Prince.

They are received by the governor of Messina, Leonato, who lives with his daughter **Hero**, and his niece **Beatrice**. Benedict and Beatrice are old acquaintances of humorous disputes. Claudio falls in love with Hero and with the help of Don Pedro, the lovers get engaged.

Don Pedro has a new plan: to facilitate the union of Benedict and Beatrice, two smart, funny, and obstinate characters who reject the idea of love and are enemies of marriage.

To succeed in his purpose Don Pedro is helped by Leonato, Claudio, Beatrice and her maid. But Don Juan has evil purposes and orders his servant Borachio to trick Claudio so
that he thinks Hero is unfaithful to him. Once the deception accomplished, Borachio regrets it.

The wedding is about to be celebrated, but after Don Juan’s ruse, Claudio rejects Hero and she faints in horror.

The priest does not believe that Hero is guilty and concocts a plan with the complicity of Benedict and Leonato: they will say that Hero is dead to unmask the villains. After confessing their love, Beatrice begs Benedict to kill Claudio for dishonouring her cousin. The guards detain Borachio, who confesses his misdeed.

In the end, they are all reconciled and a double wedding is held: Hero with Claudio (after she wakes up from her faked death) and Beatrice with Benedict. Of course they never stop arguing!

Personally, I love the two main characters who, at the beginning, seem to hate each other to death: Beatriz (Leonato’s niece) and Benedict (the faithful prince’s soldier). After their disputes they manage to cross the line and discover the love they never thought was deep in them.

Esther Lorente Cerdá, 1st Advanced A

Some of Shakespeare’s **recurrent themes** appear in this comedy: **cuckoldry and infidelity, deception and self-deception** (use of games and tricks played on people to make them fall in love, help someone, get something, or to make someone realise their mistake), **use of masks and mistaken identity** (people are constantly pretending to be others or being mistaken for other people).

The title implies that **a great fuss** ("much ado") is made of **something which is insignificant** ("nothing").
This tragedy is one of the best known works of England’s national poet William Shakespeare. He was also called the Bard of Avon. It is considered a masterpiece and has been translated into every major living language in the world.

It is set in Verona, an Italian city where two rival families lived: on the one hand the Montagues –Romeo’s family- and on the other hand the Capulets –Juliet’s family.

Romeo attends a private party of the Capulets using a mask to hide his identity. There he meets Juliet and both fall in love with each other at first sight.

Knowing their parents will not approve their relationship, they decide to get married in secret with Fray Lorenzo’s help. The same day, Romeo fights in a duel with Teobaldo, because he had killed Romeo’s friend. Romeo wins the duel but is punished by the prince of Verona and he must choose between being banished or dying.

Romeo leaves for Mantua to wait for the official publication of his marriage to Juliet but when he arrives in Mantua he finds out that the Count of Paris has asked for Juliet’s hand and he has been granted it.

Juliet doesn’t want to marry the Count of Paris and asks Fray Lorenzo for help. He gives her a special type of poison that will make her look as if she were dead for some time. Then she will wake up and will be able to escape with Romeo.
Fray Lorenzo sends a message to Romeo but before he gets it, he hears that Juliet is dead. He comes back to Verona to see his wife. At the entrance of Juliet’s tomb Romeo fights with the Count of Paris and beats him.

When he approaches Juliet’s body and thinking she is dead, he decides to drink some poison and dies next to his wife’s body. Then Juliet wakes up, finds her husband’s dead body and kills herself with Romeo’s sword.

Fray Lorenzo tells everybody the truth about what has happened and at the end of the story the Capulet and Montague families decide to make peace and put an end to their fights.

In my opinion this story is both beautiful and sad. It makes me sad to think that true love can make two people die and I get angry when I think that some families don’t approve the love choice of their sons or daughters.

Leaving that aside, I really like the story and I think that it deserves to be considered one of the best love stories in the world.

Marta Jarque Gasca, 1st. Advanced, A
Othello:

Originally entitled *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, it is a tragedy, like Hamlet or Macbeth. The first known performance was held on November 1, 1604 at Whitehall Palace in London. It consists of five acts divided in scenes.

The main character, Othello, is kindly presented in spite of his race. This was unusual in English literature in Shakespeare's time, which used to describe the Moors as villains. Othello has been known for its great depth in rhetoric and tragedy.

**Summary:**

The story begins in ancient Venice, where we meet Othello, a general of the Venetian army, Iago, Cassio and Roderigo (soldiers). Iago is Othello’s ensign, and he envies the fact that Othello appointed Cassio as his lieutenant, instead of him. Roderigo is in love with Desdemona, Othello’s girlfriend.

Iago decides to take revenge on Othello helped by Roderigo. They visit Brabantio, the father of Othello’s bride and tell him that he should watch his daughter better.

Brabantio runs to Desdemona’s room and discovers she is not there. The angry father, believes she has escaped with Othello. He is sure that "the Moor" has cheated his daughter.

A few days later, we learn that Othello has married Desdemona and then his problems begin. Brabantio is an influential senator and will try to separate them. But Othello isn’t worried. He believes that his position in the Venetian army will allow him to gain Brabantio’s favour.

Cassio, who was appointed lieutenant instead of Iago, interrupts him saying that the Duke of Venice needs to see Othello immediately about the war in Cyprus.

Brabantio and Roderigo arrive with several henchmen ready to kill or maim Othello for marrying Desdemona. In the Duke’s palace, Othello defends himself saying that Desdemona loves him too and that there was no deception. Desdemona comes and confirms these details.
The Duke asks Brabantio to stop complaining and sends Othello to Cyprus for the battle. Desdemona wants to accompany her husband. Iago, his wife Emilia, Cassio and Roderigo will go too.

Iago and Roderigo are still planning how to get rid of Othello.

During the first days in Cyprus, Iago made Cassio get drunk and start a fight so that Othello dismissed him. Then Iago convinced Desdemona to ask Othello to appoint him the new lieutenant.

Cassio asked Desdemona to try to convince Othello to give him back his job. When he saw Othello approaching he leaves to avoid an argument.

Othello accompanied by Iago, suspects Cassio because he is leaving so fast. Iago suggests that he might have a relationship with Desdemona.

Othello was hurt and got physically ill. Desdemona tries to bandage Othello’s head with her "special handkerchief", which Othello gave her once as a symbol of their eternal love.

Emilia helped her husband Iago get Desdemona’s handkerchief and put it in Cassio's room. When Othello discovered the handkerchief, he thought that Desdemona was cheating him, therefore, she must die.

Iago arranges a conversation making Cassio speak provocatively about the prostitute Bianca and makes Othello believe he was talking about Desdemona. That is why Othello wants to kill him.

Othello is full of jealousy, insults his wife and decides to kill her.

On the other hand, Roderigo is tired of Iago because he didn’t give him back his money nor delivered what he promised, Desdemona.

Iago wanted Cassio to be killed that night. Roderigo tried to stab Cassio, unsuccessfully, and he was stabbed instead. Iago stabbed Cassio.

Two gentlemen come running because they heard the screams. Iago pretends that he had just arrived, accuses Roderigo and stabs him to death before he could speak.

Iago lied to everyone about what happened and asked them to give the news to Othello and his wife.
Meanwhile, Othello has killed Desdemona. Emilia was confused and said by mistake that Cassio had killed Roderigo. Othello confesses his dark plan.

Finally, Emilia realizes her own husband was the cause of the tragedy. When all the characters gather Emilia reveals that Iago has been fooling everyone. Iago stabs her.

The Venetians knights decide to take Othello to Venice to punish him for killing his wife and Cassio inherits Othello’s position in Cyprus. Othello, overwhelmed decides to put an end to his life, rather than living without Desdemona.

VERSIONS:

The play Othello has been adapted to the cinema several times. Shakespeare's tragedy was also the inspiration for two opera versions of the same title (Rossini’s and Verdi’s).

In 2009, a musical adaptation was presented. Some important performances in Spain are:

- The one held at the Bretón theatre, Logroño, in 1904.
- The ones in Teatro Español, Madrid, 1936, 1944 and 1971 again.

Ramón Sandino Fernández, 1st Advanced A
Films Based on Shakespeare’s Life

Throughout history Shakespeare’s plays have inspired 250 films more or less. Out of them, 61 films and 21 TV series are based on Hamlet. There are also films about William Shakespeare’s life.

Shakespeare in Love, 1998

Director: John Madden

London, 1593, William Shakespeare, a young dramatist with a lot of talent, needs to put an end to a bad luck streak that he is having.

Although he tries hard, he doesn’t get the concentration to write his new play (Romeo and Juliet). He is searching his muse and he finds Viola de Lesseps, a beautiful woman who will inspire him. She wants to be an actress, but women at the time were not allowed to act, so she dresses as a man and takes the name of Thomas Kent. During the film William and Viola have a love affair.

Anonymous, 2011

Director: Roland Emmerich

England, XVI century. The film is about Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford and a poet. He is presented as the real author of Shakespeare’s works.

Edward’s life is followed through flashbacks since he was a child until the end of his life. He is treated as a child prodigy who wrote and performed the works attributed to Shakespeare.
**Shakespeare’s sources**

His primary sources were **English and Latin works**: histories, plays and poems.

- For the histories he relied on *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Holinshed) and on *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Monmouth).
- For the Roman history, he used Plutarch’s *Lives*.
- He used an **Italian folktale** that he read in translation for *Romeo and Juliet*.
- *Comedy of Errors* is inspired by Plautus.
- He took many plot elements from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*.
- Other times he rewrote earlier plays.

**His locations**

Shakespeare’s plays are set in **many locations, some of them fictional**: Europe, Africa, the Middle East...

His plays are set in 12 countries, with **Italian cities** as Shakespeare’s favourite backdrop.

Some plays, such as *The Tempest* take place in entirely fictional worlds.

The only comedy set in the UK is *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

**Contemporary films inspired by Shakespeare’s works**

From *West Side Story* (*Romeo & Juliet*), to *Pocahontas* (*Romeo & Juliet and The Tempest*), *The Lion King* (*Hamlet*), and some of Akira Kurosawa’s films like *Throne of Blood* (*Macbeth*) and *Ran* (*King Lear*).

**Common expressions**

Popular expressions invented by Shakespeare that we use today:

- “Heart of gold” (*Henry V*)
- “Wild-goose chase” (*Romeo & Juliet*)
- “Break the ice” (*The taming of the Shrew*)
- “For goodness’ sake” (*Henry VIII*)
- “Love is blind” (*The Merchant of Venice*)

**Playwright and actor**

As well as writing plays, William Shakespeare also acted in them.

Legend has it that he played the Ghost in his own play *Hamlet*.

L. Miguel
**THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE IN SHAKESPEARE’S TIME**

**The audience**
Shakespeare wrote for the masses. Many of the people who attended the plays couldn’t read or write.
- They were not expected to be still and silent during the performance. It was the modern equivalent of going to see a popular band
- The audience would eat drink and talk
- Theatres were open air and used natural light
- Plays used very little scenery, using language to set the scene instead.

**Changing attitudes**
The attitude towards theatre changed in Shakespeare’s times. The Puritan authorities considered it a disreputable pastime, which might distract people from their religious teachings.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, theatres were banned within the city walls of London (even though the Queen enjoyed the theatre and gave it her patronage.

Over time, theatre became more popular and a thriving entertainment scene grew just outside the city walls.

Bankside was considered to be a “den of iniquity” with its brothels, bear-baiting pits and theatres –good company for our popular playwright.

**Theatre going**
At first actors toured travelling the country to perform in towns, cities and private homes.

By the time Shakespeare died, London had several permanent theatres where the actors performed.

They attracted huge audiences. Yet, despite the popularity of play-going, the acting profession had a bad reputation. Actors were seen as unruly and a threat to a peaceful society.
An actor’s training
Many actors began their careers as young boys. The system was very hierarchical. The apprentices were taught by one of the more senior actors within the company. Actors were expected to be able to sword fight, sing and dance, as well as having a good memory for learning lines. Every member of the company would have to help make costumes, props and scenery.

The size of a company
It varied, depending on where they were working and how wealthy the company was. A wealthy company, when working in a theatre, might have 8 – 12 senior members, 3 – 4 boys, a number of hired actors, stage hands (who would help the actors dress at the backstage) and some musicians. Actors would join a company under the patronage of a monarch or a nobleman.

Female roles
In Shakespeare’s time acting was a profession only open to boys and men. Women were acting in other European countries, but they were not allowed to perform in public theatres in England until 1660. In an Elizabethan production boys would play the female parts, like Ophelia in Hamlet or Desdemona in Othello. Occasionally men would play the older women.

The salary
Many theatre companies had a shareholder system and it was the shareholders who obtained the greatest profit. Shakespeare was a sharer of the Chamberlain’s Men Company, (later the King’s Men), and he shared the costs and the profits of the company. The earnings also depended on where the company was playing. They made more money in London than in the country, so actors got higher wages in the big city.

A day’s work
Theatre companies were extremely busy. The performances were in the afternoon because they relied only on natural light. They could perform six different plays each week and never the same play was performed two days in a row. Plays could only be rehearsed a couple of times beforehand, usually in the mornings.
Although acting in Shakespeare involves the same basic skills as acting in a contemporary play, there are some important differences:

- In Shakespeare, the speech of the characters is the most important and powerful element of performance. Shakespeare has put into the characters’ speech all their thoughts, fears, hopes, dreams, and schemes. What the character wants, thinks, feels, fears, and experiences is explicitly stated in his speech.

- In contrast, in most modern plays, the characters often hide or disguise their real feelings, thoughts, and intentions; their words usually hide as much as they reveal.

The actors must be able not only to fully understand the text, but to communicate that understanding to the audience: to play the antitheses that clarify the thought so that the text is intelligible, to reveal the characters’ emotional states through their choice of verbs, etc.

**Playing Shakespeare**

John Barton, co-founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company shot this TV series in 1983 to show how crucial it is an understanding of Shakespeare's language and versification to convey the meaning and power of each scene.

The performers included very famous actors with honeyed tongues and impeccable diction.

In each episode, they perform or recite a variety of scenes or passages from a Shakespeare play or poem and discussed thoroughly line by line what Shakespeare actually meant.
There's no list that could do justice to 400 years of actors taking on Shakespeare, but these are a few of the most renowned ones:

**Laurence Olivier**

He was a dominating figure of the British stage of the mid-20th century. He also worked in films playing more than fifty cinema roles. Late in his career, he had considerable success in television roles.

In 1935 he played in a celebrated production of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the 1940s, Olivier was co-director of the Old Vic, and turned it into a highly respected company. At that time one of his most celebrated roles was Shakespeare's Richard III.

From 1963 to 1973 he was the founding director of Britain's National Theatre. His own parts there included the main role in *Othello* (1964) and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1970).

Among Olivier's films are a trilogy of Shakespeare films as actor-director: *Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948), and *Richard III* (1955).
Ralph Fiennes
As Coriolanus
As Prospero in The tempest

Men
Alan Bates
Kenneth Brannagh
Richard Burton
Ralph Fiennes
Colin Firth
Morgan Freeman
Anthony Hopkins
Jeremy Irons
Ben Kingsley
Richard Moore
Laurence Olivier
Peter O’Toole
Keanu Reeves
David Suchet

Women
Peggy Ashcroft
Helena Bonham Carter
Judi Dench
Mia Farrow
Anne Hathaway
Glenda Jackson
Vanessa Redgrave
Emma Thomson
Kate Winslet

Peter O’Toole
As Macbeth, 1980

Emma Thomson and Kenneth Brannagh
in Henry V (1989)

Vanessa Redgrave
As Rosalind in As you like, 1961

Judy Dench
2010, as Titania in A midsummer nights’ dream, The Rose Theatre, Kingston

L. Miguel
Shakespeare: 400 years after

Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Written by</th>
<th>Pg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare’s biography</td>
<td>Oscar Molins Calderón</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some curiosities</td>
<td>Carmen Egea Estopiñán</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main features of his works</td>
<td>Lidia Borruel Mairal</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>Alba Pueyo Moliner</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry V</td>
<td>Teresa Monforte Sanz</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tempest</td>
<td>Olga Medina Castillo</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much ado about nothing</td>
<td>Esther Lorente Cerdá</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>Marta Jarque Gasca</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Othello</td>
<td>Ramón Sandino Fernández</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you know?</td>
<td>Lourdes Miguel Abuelo</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The theatre experience in his time</td>
<td>Lourdes Miguel Abuelo</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Shakespeare</td>
<td>Lourdes Miguel Abuelo</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Alcañiz, Mayo 2016