EPISODE 127

Who Was William Shakespeare?

Full transcript · mini-story · vocabulary review

Hi, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

Today I'm going to talk about **William Shakespeare** and with a funny mini-story you will practice your English speaking.

OK. Now let's get started!

So, who was **William Shakespeare**, and why is he **famous**?

You know, I find it very hard to believe that you've never heard of **William Shakespeare**, but just in case I'll give you a brief introduction.

Although most people believe that William Shakespeare is the most celebrated British writer of all time, only a few know that he was also an **actor**.

And even though it's been over 400 years since he died, people still celebrate his work all over the world.

His **plays** were the most popular at the time, and I'm sure you've already heard of Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet.

Well, I guess now you know who I'm talking about.

That's great! Let's continue!

So, what else do we know about Shakespeare?

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in 1564.

We're not really sure the exact day he was born, but we do know he was baptized on April 26 that same year.

Did he get married?

In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, and the couple went on to have three children.

Wait a second. Anne Hathaway?

Yes, Shakespeare's wife's name was Anne Hathaway. But obviously, I don't mean the beautiful contemporary American actress.

So, what else do we know about Shakespeare?

We know he was a writer and **wrote** 37 plays.

Shakespeare wrote histories about the lives of kings and famous figures from history.

He also wrote comedies that end with a marriage and tragedies which end with the death of the main character.

Shakespeare also wrote plenty of poetry and, published a book of 154 sonnets.

And how do we know his work was famous at that time?

Well, because he made enough money to live in an affluent part of London, where he wrote some of his most famous works.

Did you know he invented new words?

Shakespeare had an incredible influence on the English language. He invented almost 3,000 words.

Let's listen to some of the first words used in Shakespeare's writing:

amazement

bedroom

champion

dawn

eyeball

fashionable

gossip

olympian

unreal

Shakespeare, the actor

Remember, I told you at the beginning of the episode that Shakespeare was also an actor?

Let's see what plays he was in.

That's right. Shakespeare wasn't just a talented writer but was also a skilled actor. Shakespeare performed on stage with a group of actors called the King's Company.

In Shakespeare's time, women were not allowed to perform on stage, so all female parts had to be played by boys.

Did you know that Shakespeare may have played Ophelia in Hamlet?

Are you a Star Trek fan? Then you probably know that Shakespeare has been translated into **Klingon**.

That's right. Shakespeare was translated into 80 languages, including Klingon.

It turns out that in 2000, Star Trek fans produced a Klingon translation of Hamlet. Although most people prefer the original version. And I'm not surprised. Have you ever heard anyone **speak** Klingon? Personally, I'm afraid of Klingons because of their looks, but when they start talking, then it really gets scary.

Although Shakespeare surely didn't speak Klingon, he loved languages and wrote a whole scene in French for one of his plays.

Well, I hope you're having fun. Next week we will continue with another episode about Shakespeare.

But now, it's time to practice your speaking with a mini-story.

Now, let's practice.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

Answer the questions aloud with short and quick responses. Repeat the Mini-Story several times to improve your speaking and listening.

Just try to give an easy and short answer. Not a complex one.

After your answer, I'll give you the correct answer.

And just like that, I'll tell a story with questions and answers.

Are you ready?
Many people believe William Shakespeare is the best British writer of all time.

Do only a few people believe something?
No. No. Not only a few people believe something. Many people believe something.

Do they believe William Shakespeare was a painter?
No. No. They don't believe that. They believe William Shakespeare was a writer.

Was Shakespeare an American writer?
No. No. Shakespeare wasn't an American writer. He was a British writer.

Is he the worst British writer of all time?
No. No. He's not the worst British writer of all time. He's the best British writer of all time.

Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet are some of the most famous plays of his day.

Is Macbeth one of his most famous plays?
Yes. Macbeth is one of his most famous plays.

Is Romeo and Juliet one of his most famous works?
Yes. Romeo and Juliet is one of Shakespeare's most famous plays.

And who wrote Hamlet? Miguel de Cervantes?
No. No. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet.

Shakespeare had an incredible influence on the English language and invented almost 3,000 words.

Did Shakespeare have any influence on the Spanish language?
No. No. Shakespeare had an incredible influence on the English language.

Who invented new words?
Shakespeare. He invented new words in English.

He only invented 100 new words. Right?
No. No. He didn't only invent 100 new words. He invented almost 3000 new words.

Shakespeare's works were translated into 80 languages, including Klingon and Esperanto.

What was translated into 80 languages?
Shakespeare's works. His works were translated into 80 languages.

Were Shakespeare's works translated into Esperanto?
Yes. His works were translated into Esperanto.

What is the meaning of Klingon?
The word Klingon refers to an alien species from Star Trek, and their language is also called Klingon.

Shakespeare didn't speak Klingon, although he loved languages.

Did Shakespeare hate languages?
No. No. He loved languages.

So, Shakespeare spoke Klingon, right?
No. No. Shakespeare didn't speak Klingon. He loved languages, but he didn't speak Klingon.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 Celebrated
Famous and highly admired; Shakespeare is described as one of the most celebrated British writers.

02 Actor
A person who performs in plays, films, or other dramatic productions.

03 Baptized
Formally received into the Christian faith through baptism; Shakespeare was baptized in April 1564.

04 Contemporary
Belonging to the present time; the episode contrasts Shakespeare's wife with a contemporary American actress.

05 Tragedy
A type of play that ends with the death of the main character.

06 Sonnet
A type of poem; Shakespeare published a collection of 154 sonnets.

07 Affluent
Wealthy or well-off; Shakespeare lived in an affluent part of London.

08 Perform on stage
To act in front of an audience in a theater.

Continue your speaking practice

Build fluency with **guided audio lessons** and mini-stories.
Explore my Premium Courses >

Georgiana
Founder of Speak English Now Podcast
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com