



Shakespeare: NOTES



I. **Important Dates:** born 1564 and died 1616

II. **Why is Reading Shakespeare So Difficult?**

- A. Spelling: words aren't always spelled like they sound
- B. Language: is fluid—it changes over time

III. **Acting During the Elizabethan Era:** not just in theaters

(Plays were performed in houses of noblemen, in town squares and country inns)

IV. **Shakespeare's Theater:**

A. The Globe (3 tiers, center stage, "pit" for the "groundlings"—there is a new Globe Theater in England today)

B. Elizabethan Advertising (white flag=comedy, black flag=tragedy)

C. "Bring on the bay leaves!" (Literal and Figurative)

- Literal Meaning: Bring in bushel baskets of bay leaves to cover the smell of the stinky peasants.
- Figurative Meaning: This play stinks (the audience would often throw rotten fruit...)

V. **Shakespeare's Work**

A. **Genderbending**: many works deal with gender issues, esp. the comedies.

B. **The Sonnets**: 154 in all; divided into two groups

- 1-127 are addressed to a man, so some modern people speculate that he was gay
- 127-154 addressed to “the dark lady,” some modern people think he may have had an affair

C. **The 38 Plays:** Comedies, Histories, Tragedies

- Comedies: love conquers all in the end
- Histories: begin with facts, but bends them (not historically accurate)
- Tragedies: central figure is a tragic hero who plays a part in his own downfall (he has a HAMARTIA, which causes his PERIPEDY)

VI. ***Macbeth*:** unlike *Oedipus*, Macbeth is not arrogant (HUBRIS is not his problem); his HAMARTIA (his tragic flaw) is that he is power-hungry (and he has a desire to please his wife)