

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

- Shakespeare wrote 38 plays (tragedies and comedies), 154 sonnets, and other poetry.
- Classical influences
 - *Julius Caesar*, for example
 - Ovid, Boccaccio
- Innovative
 - Soliloquy
 - Psychological motivation
- Great problems of human existence (universal)



Sonnet 18 -- William Shakespeare

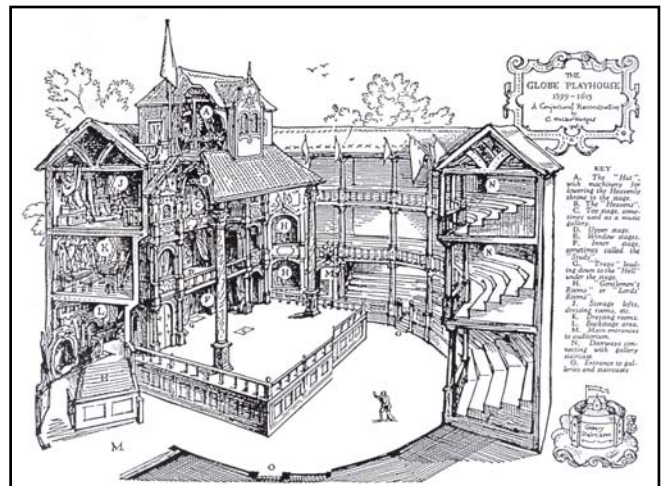
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

The Genius of Shakespeare — Language

- Shakespeare created about 1,000 characters in his plays. Each of his characters have their own vocabulary and speak in their own rhythm.
- Shakespeare seems to have understood each of his characters well enough to know what it would be like to see the world through their eyes; every speech is not just in character, but a revelation of character.
- When he could not find the right word, he invented or redefined one.
- He also made hundreds of expressions proverbial, so that most of us quote Shakespeare several times a day, even if we do not recognize the source of the expression.

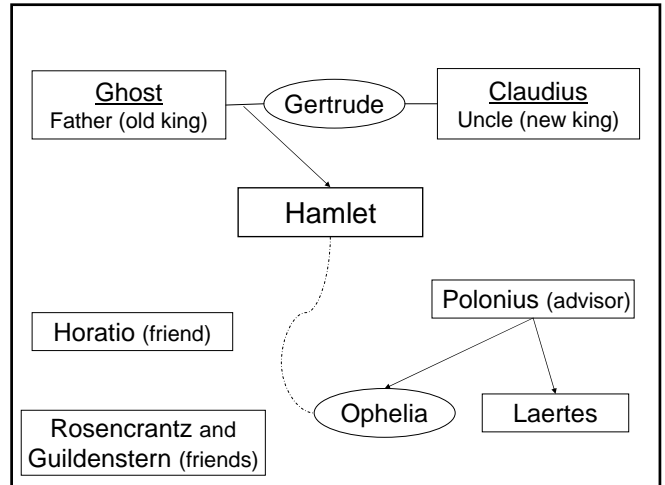
English Drama

- Increasing prosperity and leisure
- Inspired by Classical models
- Traveling actors, noble patrons
- Permanent theater buildings
- Intellectual content for nobility
- Plus a “common touch” for the *groundlings*



The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

- Written in 1600, England
- Set in Denmark, based on the 7th century story of Amleth.



— the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Hamlet: Famous Lines

I must be cruel, only to be kind...
(Hamlet, 3:4)

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
(Marcellus, 1:4)

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.
(Polonius, 2:2)

What a piece of work is a man!
(Hamlet, 2:2)

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.
(Gertrude, 3:2)

Get thee to a nunnery!
(Hamlet, 3:1)

Prince Hamlet

- Prince Hamlet is generally considered to be about 30 years old.
- It mentions in the play that he was a university student at Wittenberg (the same city where Martin Luther first nailed up his 95 theses).
- Insanity, was he always pretending?
- *To be, or not to be . . .*
– Did he make the right choices?

To Be or Not To Be . . .

*To be, or not to be,—that is the question:—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? —To die,—*

To be, or not to be,—that is the question:—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep,—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream:—ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would these fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,—
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.—

