Celebrating Shakespeare (A2)

Who was William Shakespeare? A lot of his life is a mystery.

Shakespeare is one of the most famous writers in the world. His 37 plays are regularly produced, and almost 1,000 films have been based on them. He wrote many classic plays like *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, or Henry V.*

We know he was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, in England, in 1564 and he was baptised on 26 April. He died in Stratford in 1616. It is possible to visit the house where he was born (photo) and his school.

Shakespeare's father John made <u>gloves</u>. He worked at home, using human and animal urine to prepare the animal <u>skins</u> for the gloves! He had social status: he became <u>mayor</u> of Stratford. But when William was 14, his father had financial problems and William had to leave school.

We know William married at age 18, in 1582. Anne Hathaway was 26 and their first child was born just six months after their marriage. They then had <u>twins</u> but one, a boy called Hammet, died aged 11.

Mystery

But Shakespeare's life from 1585 till 1592 is a total mystery. We just know that in 1592 he was an actor and <u>playwright</u> in London, and soon his plays were very successful.

Plays were popular in Shakespeare's time – all classes of society went to the theatre. Shakespeare became rich. In 1596, he bought the biggest house in Stratford.

We don't have a lot of information about Shakespeare's life, but we have his plays. That is very unusual for plays from the Elizabethan era. Seven years after Shakespeare died, his actor friends published all his plays in one book. That is why we have the original texts today.

William Shakespeare's birthday and his day of death are celebrated on 23 April, which is the English national holiday, St George's Day.

Shakespeare's London theatre was called The Globe. A reconstructed Globe Theatre opened in 1997. There are lots of plays there every summer.

Help

gloves (n) what you wear to protect your hands
mayor (n) person elected in charge of a town
playwright (n) person who writes plays. Molière is a famous French *playwright*.
skin (n) what covers your body
twins (n) two children born to the same mother on the same day