

BRITISH LITERATURE

Britain has been home to many famous writers in history, from William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens to J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling.

- Old English literature

The oldest poem written in Old English was **Beowulf**. We do not know the author [óšr], but we know it was written in the 8th century. Some of the characters in the poem existed.

- Medieval literature [midývl litryč] středověká literatura

Geoffrey Chaucer [džefry čósr] is the father of poetry (poezie). He wrote Canterbury tales. It is funny stories told by pilgrims travelling from London to Canterbury.

- Renaissance [renejsanc] renesance

The renaissance in England was the times *during the reign* [rajn](=během vlády) of *Queen Elizabeth I - the first*, a period of prosperity and successful sea trips to new lands in the 16th and 17th centuries.

William Shakespeare was the world's greatest playwright, he is one of the most important writers in the British history.

- The English Revolution

In 1640, *the Civil War* started, *a revolution of the parliament* led by *Oliver Cromwell* against *King Charles I* and his army. Charles I was executed. (=popraven)

John Milton lived at the time of The Civil War. He is best known for his epic poem Paradise Lost

- 18th century literature [senčri](století)

The 18th century was *the times of development of sciences and a great technical progress*. The most important writers of those times were

Jonathan Swift who wrote Gulliver's Travels, which is a satire on British society, **Daniel Defoe**, an author of Robinson Crusoe, a fictional autobiography of a castaway (trosečník) who spends years on a remote tropical island meeting cannibals, and captives (zvířata) before being rescued and *Moll Flanders*, he gives a realistic picture of the life of a prostitute in London and **Henry Fielding** and his masterpiece Tom Jones.

- Romantic literature

Romantic writers of the 18th century were e.g. **Sir Walter Scott** who wrote Ivanhoe, **Mary Shelley** or **Jane Austen**, her most famous novels are Pride and Prejudice, Sense and sensibility and Emma

- Victorian novels (romány) 19th century literature

During the *reign of Queen Victoria* many talented women wrote, such as **Brontë sisters** well known as poets and novelists published their poems and novels under masculine/ men's pseudonyms their stories immediately

attracted attention for their passion and originality. **Charlotte Brontë** (1816 - 1855) Jane Eyre, **Emily Brontë** (1818 - 1848) Wuthering Heights and **Anne Brontë**. Their brother also wrote books but wasn't popular.

Charles Dickens criticized [kritisájzd] (kritizoval) the society [sosájty] (společnost). His most famous works are *The Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield* & *Oliver Twist*.

Oscar Wilde was an Irish writer and poet, became one of London's most popular playwrights in the early 1890s - *Picture of Dorian Grey*

- Contemporary Period (1960 -) Literature today

The most famous writers today are **Salman Rushdie**, **George Orwell** who wrote Animal Farm, **Ian Fleming** [ín] James Bond, **J. R. R. Tolkien** who wrote The Lord of the Rings or **J.K. Rowling**.

J. K. ROWLING

has written several Harry Potter books, books about a boy wizard called **Harry Potter** who went to school at Hogwarts and had to fight the evil Lord Voldemort. She is the *Britain's best-selling author* [óšrs] and a **multimillionaire**. However she *started to write as a poor single mother* in cafés [kafés] (kavárny) in Scotland. The first Harry Potter book was so successful that she wrote several sequences. [síkvensis] (pokračování) *All the books have been made into films and translated into many languages all over the world.*



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Basic facts

Shakespeare was **the world's greatest playwright** and one of the most important writers in the British and world's history. Shakespeare was **born and died on the same day**. He was born on 23rd April 1564 and died on 23rd April 1616, **at the age of 52**. He was born in **Stratford-upon-Avon** (Stratford nad Avonou - řeka).

Shakespeare's life

Shakespeare had 7 brothers and sisters. Families were big in those days. His parents were **rich**, his father was a businessman who bought and sold leather and wool, his mother was the daughter of a rich farmer, so young Shakespeare went to very good schools and **learnt Latin and the literature of the Ancient Rome** [ejšnt] (starodávny Řím). But he was probably **more interested in the**

groups of actors who travelled from town to town and put on plays in schools, churches, halls and public houses.

These plays were very popular and William went to see them after school. When Shakespeare left school, he went to **work for his father**. But soon after, he met and fell in love with **Anne Hathaway**, a daughter of a farmer who lived near. They got married when Anne got pregnant, Shakespeare was 18, Anne 25, **8 years older**. Their baby was born 5 months later.

We do not know what Shakespeare did for the next 10 years. Scientists are not even 100% sure if the Shakespeare who started to write in London is Shakespeare who lived in Stratford. We do not know why he **gave up a good job in his father's business and moved to London**. We do not know why or when he became an actor and playwright. All we know is that **in 1592 Shakespeare wrote his first play. He became popular very quickly.**

The Globe theatre



Shakespeare built a theatre – **the Globe** – in the centre of London 400 hundred years ago. It was **one of the first** theatres in London. People of London loved going to the theatre.



It was **round** and had **no roof** in the centre – like the theaters in Rome. The problem was **it often rained in London**, the theatre was open and **people got very wet**. The Globe could hold **3 thousand people**. Some people sat to watch the play, some stood in the middle in front of the stage. They drank beer and were very noisy clapping, cheering and shouting. to the actors. There were only actors, no women, no actresses, young boys played the parts of the women. **Most people lived on the north side of London and had to** cross the river, **cross London Bridge to go to the theatre**. London Bridge was **the only bridge over the river Thames** at that time. Plays started at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and **a flag flew on the top of the theatre when the play was ready**. The white flag showed a comedy, the black flag a tragedy and the red one informed people that a history play is going to be played on the night. The plays were very popular with both poor and rich people. The Queen often came to see the plays. There was **often plague** [plejg] (mor)/ **diseases in London**, too, people used to die. When more than 30 people died in the town in the week, the flag was lowered and the theatre was closed.

Shakespeare's work

Shakespeare was a **big poet** and **wrote some nice sonnets**, but is **best known for his theatre plays**. He wrote 37 plays, tragedies, comedies, historical plays and romances, which is something between tragedy and comedy.

Tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* and plays which are something between tragedy and historical play – *Julius Caesar, Anthony and Cleopatra*.

Comedies: *A midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, As you like it, Twelfth Night*.

Romances: *The Winter's Tale, The Tempest*

Historical plays: *Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, Henry VI*

Romeo and Juliet

I have seen a film called *Romeo and Juliet*. It is a short **modern version based on Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet**. It was released in 1996. It is an American romantic drama. *The film stars Leonardo Dicaprio & Claire Danes*. *The characters* speak the **original Shakespearean language**, original dialogues but *it takes place at modern times*, there are teenagers, cars, pistols and modern things such as a lift, petrol station and so on.



The Capulet and Montague families are represented by two competing business imperias/ firms. There are not swords (meče) but modern guns, no nobles (šlechticové) but businessmen and real teenages and their parents. *It is set in/ it takes place in* Verona, in Italy. *The main characters are* Romeo

and Juliet, Julie's cousin Tybalt, frier Lawrence. **It is a tragedy of love and revenge**. [rivendž] (pomsta) The film was directed by an Australian director. My favourite part/ (Mrs Nahlovská's favourite part ☺) is when Romeo *meets* Juliet at the ball for the first time, she *is wearing* angel's wings, he *tells* her nice things, *confesses* (vyznává lásku) love to Juliet. ____ (doplňte další věty)

Things we say today, which Shakespeare wrote in his books

To be or not to be, that is the question; Fight fire with fire (proti ohni ohněm) Heart of gold (srdce ze zlata); Vanish into the air (vytratil se Rozplynul vevzduchu) So-so (jakš takš); Fair play; Foul play; The game is up; Naked truth (holá pravda) Break the ice (prolomit ledy); What's done is done (co se stalo, stalo se) Love is blind (láska je slepá); Knock knock! Who's there?

For goodness' sake (pro Krista pána)