Shakespeare Trivia Questions

From: conversationstartersworld.com/shakespeare-trivia

1. Where was Shakespeare born?

Stratford-upon-Avon

Shakespeare's exact birthdate is unknown. However, he was baptized on April 26, 1564, and at the time it was customary to wait three days after birth to baptize. Therefore, his birthdate is traditionally celebrated on April 23rd on Saint George's Day.

2. What was the name of Shakespeare's wife? (Hint: She shares a name with the actress who plays Viola in the New York Shakespeare Festival's 2009 production of Twelfth Night.)

Anne Hathaway

Shakespeare was 18 when he was married, and his wife was 26 at the time. Six months after their marriage their first child Susanna was born. About two years later they had twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet passed away at age 11 of unknown causes.

3. How many sonnets did Shakespeare write?

154

Shakespeare is credited with 154 sonnets and approximately 38 plays. His plays have been translated into every major living language and have been performed more often than any other playwright.

4. How many times does suicide occur in Shakespeare's plays?

Thirteen

Suicide occurs an unlucky 13 times in Shakespeare's plays. It occurs in the iconic Romeo and Juliet where both leads commit suicide, in Julius Caesar where Brutus, Cassius, and Portia commit suicide, in Othello where Othello commits suicide, in Hamlet where Ophelia drowned, in Macbeth where Lady Macbeth dies, and finally in Antony and Cleopatra where suicide occurs five times (Antony, Cleopatra, Mark, Charmian, Eros and Iras).

5. What is the name of Shakespeare's theater?

The Globe

The Globe theater was built by Shakespeare's playing company Lord Chamberlain's Men (later known as The King's Men). The theater burned to the ground on June 29, 1613 when it caught on fire from a cannon shot during a performance of Henry VIII.

6. Where is Shakespeare buried?

Holy Trinity Church, in Stratford-upon-Avon

Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church. The epitaph on his gravestone was supposedly self-composed and contains a curse warning people from moving his bones. The modern spelling reads:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear

To dig the dust enclosed here.

Blessed be the man that spares these stones,

And cursed be he that moves my bones.

Shakespeare Plays Trivia

7. Which of Shakespeare's plays is the shortest?

The Comedy of Errors

The Comedy of Errors only has 1,787 lines and 14,369 words. The play has been adapted to a musical three times. The play was first produced as The Boys from Syracuse and then later adapted as Oh, Brother! More recently, it was produced as a hip-hop musical adaptation called The Bomb-itty of Errors which won first prize at HBO's Comedy Festival.

8. Which of Shakespeare's plays is the longest?

Hamlet

Hamlet has 4,042 lines and 29,551 words. The play is Shakespeare's most produced play and most filmed. Hamlet is the second most filmed story in the world, second only to Cinderella.

9. Which two Shakespeare plays are written entirely in verse?

Richard II / King John

The rest of Shakespeare's plays are written with a mixture of verse and prose. (Prose is natural writing and verse is writing with a meter or rhyme). In 1899, King John became the first Shakespearean play to be filmed. The only scene from the film that has survived is the scene where King John dies.

10. Which two Shakespeare plays are translated into Klingon?

Hamlet / Much Ado About Nothing

The Klingon Language Institute is the official organization dedicated to the revival of Star Trek's Klingon language. They run the Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project and have also translated the Bible into Klingon.

11. Which of Shakespeare's plays is responsible for starlings being released into North America?

Henry IV, Part I

Shakespeare's works contain more than 600 references to various types of birds. The starling, which is only mentioned in Henry IV, Part 1, was purposefully introduced to North America in 1890. The chairman of the American Acclimatization Society, Eugene Schieffelin, decided to import every bird mentioned in Shakespeare's works. He released the starling in New York's Central Park, and now the highly adaptable species has become invasive and driven some native birds to the brink of extinction.

Shakespeare Quotes Trivia

12. "Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once."

Julius Caesar

Spoken by Julius Caesar to his wife, Calpurnia, in Act II Scene II when she is trying to dissuade him from going to the capitol because she had a bad dream indicating his death.

13. "Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

Twelfth Night

Spoken by Malvolio in Act II Scene V when he is reading aloud the letter that Maria wrote to trick him into thinking Olivia is in love with him. The letter refers to how he should not be intimidated by her status being above his.

14. "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

As You Like It

Spoken by Jaques to Duke Senior in Act II Scene VII during the dinner party scene when he gives his famous speech describing the world as a stage. He goes on to list the seven acts that man follows. These are often referred to as the seven stages of man: the infant, the schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, the justice (or judge), the pantaloon (or dotard), the second childishness (or senile elder before death).

15. "If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge?"

The Merchant of Venice

Spoken by Shylock to Salarino in Act III Scene I. Shylock talks about how Antonio mistreats him because he is a Jew, but Shylock vows to apply the lessons of revenge and hatred that Christian intolerance has taught him.

16. "If music be the food of love, play on."

Twelfth Night

Spoken by Duke Orsino when he is introduced in Act I Scene I. He is requesting more music because he is frustrated with his courtship of Olivia. He hopes to cure his obsession with love with an excess of music.

17. "All that glisters is not gold."

The Merchant of Venice

Spoken by the Prince of Morocco in Act II Scene VII when he is reading the scroll found in the golden casket. The Prince is trying to wed Portia and must pass a test set forth by her father. He must select the correct casket containing her portrait out of three caskets, but he ended up choosing incorrectly. This phrase is still relevant today but with the modern spelling of "all that glitters is not gold."

18. "The course of true love never did run smooth."

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Spoken by Lysander to Hermia in Act I Scene I during the scene where they are forbidden from marrying one another by Athenian law. Hermia's father Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius not Lysander. They agree to elope Romeo and Juliet style (without the suicide).

19. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."

Henry IV, Part 2

Spoken by King Henry in Act III Scene I during his soliloquy about how it is unfair that his poorest and lowliest subjects can sleep but not he. He is having trouble sleeping because he is tired, sick, anxious and burdened by rebellion.

20. "To thine own self be true."

Hamlet

Spoken by Polonius to Laertes in Act I Scene III when he is giving his son advice on what to do and how to behave during his trip to France. The phrase had a slightly different connotation during Shakespeare's time. It referred to how Polonius believed a person could do no harm if they took care of themselves first and then others second. In modern times, it has a connotation of truth, individuality, and self-ownership. Be true to yourself!

21. "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

As You Like It

Spoken by Touchstone to William in Act V Scene I. Touchstone and Audrey are discussing their postponed marriage when William appears trying to woo Audrey. Touchstone puts William in his place wittily and William leaves.

22. "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

Macbeth

Spoken by Lady Macbeth in Act V Scene I when she is sleepwalking. The quote refers to the guilt she felt regarding the deaths of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo.

Shakespeare Film Trivia

23. What actor played King Henry in the 1989 Henry V?

Kenneth Branagh

What kind of Shakespeare film trivia wouldn't mention Kenneth Branagh? He is widely known for his film adaptations of Shakespeare's work. The film was his directorial debut, and he received Oscar nominations for Best Actor and Best Director.

24. Which 1995 film adaptation featured Laurence Fishburne in the titular role?

Othello

Laurence Fishburne was the second African-American actor to perform the role. Paul Robeson was the first. Disney's Iago from The Lion King is a reference to Othello's sidekick, Iago, in the play.

25. Which Shakespeare film adaptation was directed by Joss Whedon?

Much Ado About Nothing

The 2012 film was shot in only 12 days at Whedon's home in Santa Monica, California while he was working on Marvel's The Avengers. His wife suggested making the film for their 20th anniversary instead of a vacation, because it was a project he had wanted for a long time. The commentary for the film set a Guinness World record for the most people involved in a commentary since it included almost the entire cast.

26. Which Shakespeare film adaptation is a modernization of The Taming of the Shrew?

10 Things I Hate About You

The 1999 romantic comedy featuring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger was filmed completely on location, and no sets were used. Several of the character's names reflect the film's Shakespeare origin. Kat and Bianca's last name is Stratford (referring to Shakespeare being born in Stratford-upon-Avon); their first names correspond to the characters of Katherina and Bianca; Patrick's last name is Verona (the birthplace of Petruchio which is his corresponding character); and the high school is called Padua (the city in which the play is set).

27. The 2006 romantic comedy She's the Man is based on what Shakespeare play?

Twelfth Night

The film makes several references to Shakespeare. The school is called Illyria, which is the name of the country where the play takes place. In the play, Viola calls herself Cesario, which in the film is the name of the restaurant where Viola/Sebastian breaks up with Monique. The Stratford Junior League in the film is a reference to Shakespeare's birthplace. Also, in Sebastian's room there is a poster for the band Feist, and in the play the clown's name is Feste.

28. Which Disney film is a based on Romeo and Juliet?

The Lion King II: Simba's Pride

According to the director, Darrell Rooney, the film was based on Romeo and Juliet because he felt it was an iconic love story. Rooney felt that the film really showcased the position of the parents more than the play did. The choice to base the film on one of Shakespeare's plays was fitting since The Lion King was based on Hamlet.

29. What 1994 film featured the song "Hamlet Rap" performed by the Double D's?

Renaissance Man

The film featured Danny DeVito, Gregory Hines, James Remar, and Cliff Robertson. The song was written by Mervyn Warren and Mark Wahlberg. In the movie, the characters leave Wahlberg out of the rap song, and they act as though he has no rhythm. In real life, Mark Wahlberg was a professional rapper. (Go Marky Mark!) He also was featured on the song "In Love," which is the end credit song of the film.

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