Shakespear Essay, Research Paper

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April, 1564, and his birth is traditionally celebrated on April 23. He is world wide recognized as a distinguished writer of the Elizabethan error. Through various collections of his plays and poetry people of all different backgrounds are able to relate to his work in one way or another. It is the aspect of realness of human nature that draws the reader closer and closer. William Shakespeare s world famous Hamlet is a direct result of the real life grief and tragedy he experienced.

William was baptized in Warwickshire, England. It is assumed that he attended the local grammar school, being that his father was bailiff of the town. His father, John Shakespeare was a burgess of the borough, in Warwickshire. He was engaged in various kinds of trade and appears to have suffered some fluctuation in prosperity. His wife, Mary Arden, of Wilmcote,Warwickshire, came from an ancient family and was the burgess of some land. Given the somewhat rigid social distinctions of the 16th century this marriage must have been a step up the social scale for John Shakespeare.

In 1582, at the age of eighteen, William married Anne Hathaway who was eight years older than him and pregnant with their first child, Susanna. She was born on May 26, 1583. In 1585 Will and his wife, Mary received the blessing of twins {a boy Hamnet and a girl Judith). Tragically young Hamnet would only live to see the young age of eleven. He died in the year of 1596.

By the year 1599 William had made his way into the theater. Lord chamberlain s men built and occupied the Globe Theatre in Southwark near the Thames River. Here many of Shakespeare s plays were performed by the most famous actors of his time, including Richard Burbage, will Kempe, and Robert Armin. In 1611 or 1612 he gave up his lodgings in London and devoted more and more of his time to retirement in Stratford. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.

According to the Britannica, Shakespeare lived at a time when ideas and social structures established in the Middle ages still formed men s thought and behavior. Queen Elizabeth was God s deputy on earth, and lords and commons had their place in society under her. (pg. 253) This was the main structure of life in William s age and time. People did not choose what they wanted to be or to do in life. This was a time when you just did what was told of you because it was your place to do so. No one could control what type of situation they were born into but it did not matter because they had to accept it as their role in society. To them it was fate/destiny that chose their rank in the world. The officers of royalty were the closest people to God and all others were a number of steps lower depending on their rank.

This rigid and oppressing form of government made way for a constant economic, political, and social struggle throughout England. Royal authority was challenged in parliament. Economic and social structures were disturbed by the rise of capitalism, the redistribution of monastic lands under Henry VIII, the expansion of education, and the influx of new wealth from discovery of new lands according to the Britannica encyclopedia.(pg 253)

There was also an on going struggle with the dominance of religion. Atheism was still considered a challenge to the beliefs of a majority of Elizabethans, but the Christian faith was no longer standing alone. Rome s authority had been challenged by Martin Luther, john Calvin, a multiple of small religious sects, and, indeed the English church itself according to the Britannica Encyclopedia.(pg 263) It is very obvious to see that the Elizabethan error was a period of time that power was very,very important and the fight for it was on.

This is evident throughout William Shakespeare s various works of plays and poetry. There is the presence of that major influence which was the government of his time. According to David Bevington, Shakespeare primarily drew upon Raphael Holinished s Chronicles, which appeared in 1587, and on Edward Hall s earlier account of The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and York. (1584) From these and numerous secondary sources he inherited such traditional themes; the divine right of succession, the need for unity and order in the realm, the evil of dissension and treason, the cruelty and hardship of war, the power of money to corrupt, the strength of family ties, the need for human understanding and careful calculation, and the power of God, which protected his followers and punished the evil . (Bevington121)

Shakespeare expressed each of these themes in the most extraordinary ways. There is no way to describe him but as a brilliant writer. Richard Andrews says, Shakespeare will surprise you every time. He is just wily in the way he stuctures a play. In Mcbath a comic scene is suddenly introduced after the most treacherous slaughter imaginable when incomes a drunk porter who has to go to the bathroom. Shakespeare is tickling your emotions by bringing a standup comic on stage right on the heels of a savage murder. (pg 8) It was this skill of playing on emotions that William used to the best of his ability. He knew how to rub his crowd or audience the right way. He stimulated laughter, anger, sorrow and other emotions through his literature. With this he brought to life various playwrights of comedy, drama, tragedy, and action.

In Shakespeare s day, there was little time for group rehearsals, and actors were given the words of only their parts. Therefore crucial scenes of Shakespeare s plays were between two or three actors only. Female parts were written for young male actors or boys, so he did not write big roles for them or keep them actively engaged on the stage for long periods of time. (Britannica pg254) For Shakespeare the number of talented actors did not make the success of the play because most of his plots involved maybe two

or three characters. He preferred to capture the audience by going in depth and exposing the core of his characters.

William s basis for his playwrights centered around struggles between individuals for supreme power in the state, and also the presentation of real historical events within Shakespeare s own increasingly subtle and complex dramatic characters. (Britannicapg690) It was evident all around him. Queen Elizabeth had inherited her throne through a twist of scandals. When she was young she was bannished from the land for allegedlybeing an illigitemate child her father(the King) and her mother. When she returned from being banished her own sister turned against her out of fear that she would inherit the crown. Then she was accused of sleeping with her stepmom s husband. There are many more stories like these that shape the history of the error of kings and queens.(www.allsands.com)

According to Mr. C.F. Tucker, Shakespeare expanded in depth on such faults as jealousy, impulsiveness, childish willfulness, and unscrupulous ambition. All of these served as vehicles in the exploration of human character, morality, and spirit. Further more these tragedies were strengthened by complex, perfectly structured plots, and enriched by a detail of realness. (pg38) According to the Britannica encyclopedia, these plays example with great subtlety how personality flaws in the main characters lead almost inevitably to the tragic destruction of themselves and almost everyone around them.

Mr. Richard Andrews says, early plays such as Henry VI, Richard III, and Romeo and Juliet were influenced by prevailing contemporary dramatic convention and artifices, but also marked by vivid characterization and an unprecedently rich and inventive use of real life. (Pg17) William involved the use of all aspects of life at that time. Even today people can still relate to the issues he presents through his literature and that time period was more than five hundred years ago.

David Bevington says, Often in Shakespeare s work he expresses love interests. Usually the girl whom the guy loves doesn t love him or she loves him but he loves some one else. In the end true love prevails but not without lots of complication along the way. For in all his plays, comedies, histories, and tragedies- Shakespeare is showing you human nature. (Pg21} This is the main reason why folks understand and can become very indulged in Shakespeare. People know that they as human beings embrace these faults for them it may be a way of visualizing living life in such a fashion.

Mr. C.F. Tucker stated, There can be no stronger vindication of the honesty and intelligence of such a writer. There is nothing fitful or transitory about the true Shakespearean quality; his creations gain , instead of losing, by repeated and various examination , and the very sign manual of his work is the subordination of the expression to the idea , the complete amalgamation of the parts in the whole. (Pg35) The way William pieced together his work was like that of an artist.

With all his success and achievement Shakespeare experienced the devastation of his life in the year of 1596. His only son from a set of twins died. Young Hamnet was just eleven years old. There is no record as to how William handled it but it must have been hard. According to the Britannica, there are stories given currency long after his death, of Shakespeare stealing deer and getting into trouble with a local magnate. In the lieu of external evidence, such explorations about William s life have often been made from internal evidence of his writings. (Pg252) A few years after Hamnet s death Shakespeare produced the world famous play of Hamlet. Through the interpretation of this play it is obvious to draw the connection to Shakespeare himself.

Hamlet: O that too too solid flesh would melt

Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,

Or that the Everlasting had not fixed

His cannon gainst self-slaughter.

O God, O God,

How weary, stale flat and unweeded garden

That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature

Posses it merely. That it should come to this. (1.2 (129-140)

The lines above were spoken from Hamlet at a time in his life when he felt desperate for some sort of solution to his problems. He is stating how he wishes to die but God s law forbids suicide. Also how he now thinks of life as tedious and foul. Finally he recalls his dead father who was superior to Claudius(his father s brother and his mother s new husband). These are the feelings of a person who has experienced a tremendous lost and can not visualize a purpose for going on with their life. William Shakespeare must be that person. Within just a short period of time of five years, he experienced the death of his only son Hamnet and his father John Shakespeare. Hamlet is truly a work of art that expresses how people cope with man s ultimate destiny- death.