WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564-1616

Born: Stratford-upon-Avon, England

No single author has so profoundly affected a language or culture as did William Shakespeare. In a time when there was neither an English grammar nor dictionary, Shakespeare almost single-handedly codified both the grammar and spelling of the English language. In fact, he invented many of the phrases we use today. "Catch a cold, disgraceful, gloomy, lonely, misplace and recall" are just a few of the words and phrases that were unknown in the language until Shakespeare wrote them.

With the exception of his marriage to Anne Hathaway, the author's early years are relatively obscure. In fact, no biography of his life was written until 100 years after his death. However, by 1592 he was well-known as an actor and playwright in London. And by 1596 seems to have become a relatively wealthy man...owning 10% of the stock in the Globe Theatre. In 1603, the troupe with whom he acted came under the patronage of King James I, and was named the King's Men. In 1608, Shakespeare's company bought the Blackfriars Theatre, alternating performances winter and summer between Blackfriars and the Globe.

Shakespeare died a relatively wealthy man and a prominent citizen of Stratford. But the true impact of his work was in shaping the thought and speech of generations of English-speaking peoples throughout the world.