

Introduction Hamlet has been considered one of the best tragedies of William Shakespeare. Prince Hamlet is the hero of the play. His father King Hamlet has been murdered by his uncle Claudius for the sake of Queen Gertrude and kingdom. One day the ghost of king Hamlet appears before prince Hamlet and reveals the truth. It made the prince gloomy. He decides to take revenge upon uncle Claudius and mother Gertrude. He kills Polonius, Claudius and loses Ophelia. Finally, he dies in a battle with Laertes. Hamlet, the first in Shakespeare's series of great tragedies, was initially classified as a problem play when the term became fashionable in the nineteenth century. Hamlet focuses on the complications arising from love, death, and betrayal, without offering the audience a decisive and positive resolution to these complications. This is due in part to the simple fact that for Hamlet, there can be no definitive answers to life's most daunting questions. Indeed, Hamlet's world is one of perpetual ambiguity. The emphasis on ambiguity in the play, and the absence of overt instruction on how to overcome such ambiguity is Shakespeare's testament to real life. Each one of us has experienced Hamlet's struggle to find the truth in a mire of delusion and uncertainty, often to no avail. Hamlet also can be sub-categorized as a revenge play, the genre popular in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Elements common to all revenge tragedy include: a hero who must avenge an evil deed, often encouraged by the apparition of a close friend or relative; scenes of death and mutilation; insanity or feigned insanity; sub-plays; and the violent death of the hero.

Chapter Two William Shakespeare's Life and Works William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 – 23 April 1616) was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon" (or simply "the Bard"). Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford, a small town with many green meadows and a river named Avon. On the edge of Stratford was the Forest of Arden, close to his mother's maiden place. Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden was born in the village of Wilmot on the fringes of the forest of Arden and belonged to a well-to-do yeoman family. She married John Shakespeare in 1557, who was a tanner and glove-maker. John Shakespeare intended to better his conditions and extended his business. He gradually rose to an influential position becoming the town Chamberlain (who kept the town's accounts) in 1561 and later the High Bailiff (legal officer) in 1568. Shakespeare was the third child born to his parents; the two sisters before him had died in infancy. Soon after his birth, plague broke out in London. It was a miracle indeed for both John and Mary that Shakespeare survived the plague. Neither of Shakespeare's parents received any school education, thus they made sure that Shakespeare attend school. They sent him to the Grammar School of Stratford where he learnt Latin grammar and read Ovid and Virgil among other classics. The early years spent in Stratford impacted young Shakespeare who developed a deep connect with nature. The picturesque landscape enhanced his poetic sensibility. Also, Shakespeare was one with the life of the ordinary people. The folk-songs of the peasantry and their ways of celebration have been captured in his works (Potter, 2018: 391–393). Shakespeare was a product of the countryside and ever felt drawn towards it. Most of his plays oscillate between the world of the city and court on one side and the forests and country on the other. Where the country is absent, he moves into the alleys that the common people occupied. Significantly, Shakespeare was witness to deprivation and the misery of people in the country. The place was crowded with beggars and tramps moving within it and presenting a depressing

spectacle. Farmers were racked by their landlords and there was rampant social injustice. In the initial years, Shakespeare's own financial condition worsened as his father incurred penalties for being in deep debt. This may have triggered in the young man the urge to become a self-made gentleman or in fact what was termed bourgeois gentilhomme. The horrific life of the poor that he had seen first in Stratford and later in the dim and dingy lanes of London could also be the reason why Shakespeare had the motivation to buy land and a house. This ensured security. In this, he may have been enabled by the profits from theatre. In London, Shakespeare came in touch with James Burbage who owned the first playhouse erected in London in 1576 called the Theatre. It was James Burbage's son Richard Burbage who would later become Shakespeare's most famous fellow actor. Shakespeare began to work at the Theatre as in-charge of horses for those who rode to watch the plays. He continued to do menial work such as becoming a „servitor“ to the actors, then a prompter's attendant whose job was to facilitate the actors, approached the stage. These petty jobs at the theatre company made Shakespeare aware of the fine details of play-acting and managing a show. Because of his skills, he soon rose above his station. This period in London was marked by the development of the Protestant spirit (Schoenbaum, 1991: 44–47). In 1610 he wrote some of his last plays – The Winter's Tale and The Tempest before finally returning to his hometown Stratford. In 1612– 13, Shakespeare wrote Henry VIII and The Noble Kinsmen (co-written with his friend John Fletcher) but he had more or less retired from active work by this time. His extant works, including collaborations, consist of some 39 plays, 154 sonnets, three long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. His works continue to be studied and reinterpreted. Shakespeare produced most of his known works between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories and are regarded as some of the best works produced in these genres. He then wrote mainly tragedies until 1608, among them Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth, all considered to be among the finest works in the English language. In the last phase of his life, he wrote tragicomedies and collaborated with other playwrights. Many of Shakespeare's plays were published in editions of varying quality and accuracy in his lifetime. However, in 1623, two fellow actors and friends of Shakespeare's, John Heminges and Henry Condell, published a more definitive text known as the First Folio, a posthumous collected edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works that included all but two of his plays. Its Preface was a prescient poem by Ben Jonson that hailed Shakespeare with the now famous epithet: "not of an age, but for all time" (Wells and Taylor, 2005: 155–157).