***Biography of William Shakespeare***

**William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was an English playwright, poet, and actor who lived during the Renaissance—specifically, during the Elizabethan Age in England. Many people think Shakespeare was the greatest playwright in history.**

**Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, to John and Mary Shakespeare. He was one of eight children, several of whom died while still young. His father was a fairly successful glover. William probably studied Latin, Greek and history, and left school when he was 14 or 15. Three years later he married Anne Hathaway. They had a daughter called Susanna and twins named Judith and Hamnet. Sometime before 1590 he left Stratford and went to London, the capital city of England to become an actor.**

**London’s first theatre opened in 1576. Shakespeare worked in London as an actor and then started writing plays too. In 1593 the plague, a terrible disease, killed thousands of people and theatres were closed. During this time William started to write poems instead of plays. His short poems are called sonnets. Although Shakespeare was a talented poet, he is most well-known for his thirty-eight plays, which fall into the categories of tragedies (such as Romeo and Juliet), comedies (such as A Midsummer Night’s Dream), and histories (such as Richard III). Shakespeare often combined categories in a single play; for example, he would mix comedy and tragedy. It was an unusual thing for a playwright to do in.**

**Shakespeare’s plays were performed in England’s royal courts as well as in theaters, such as the famous Globe Theater. Unlike many theaters in the Elizabethan Age, the Globe welcomed people of all social classes, not just nobles and aristocrats. People from all social and educational classes enjoyed Shakespeare’s work because Shakespeare understood human nature. His stories were about situations and emotions that most people could understand: love, hate, jealousy, and grief. Like real people, most of Shakespeare’s characters were neither entirely good nor entirely bad.**

**Shakespeare’s plays are still popular today throughout the world. Many of his plays have been made into movies, such as A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet. Shakespeare’s influence is also evident in many of the English words we use every day. Scholars estimate that Shakespeare made up about 1,500 words, including advertising, alligator, bedroom, lonely, watchdog, and zany. Obviously, Shakespeare loved words, and he knew many of them. While the average American today has a vocabulary of about 10,000 words, Shakespeare had a vocabulary of more than 29,000 words.**

**Shakespeare left London when he was about forty-seven and returned to Stratford to retire, although he worked on two more plays in his final years. He died on April 23, 1616, when he was fifty-two years old. (Some people believe he was also born on April 23.) He was buried in the same Stratford church in which he had been baptized. His tomb lies below the floor of the church, and a warning (possibly written by Shakespeare himself) is engraved on his tombstone:**

***Good friend for Jesus sake forbear.***

***To dig the dust enclosed here!***

***Blest be the man that spares these stones,***

***And curst be he that moves my bones.***



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