

# **A CONCISE HANDBOOK ON ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**Edited by**  
**Devaki Sivaram**  
**Director and Chief Trainer**  
**Elite Academy**  
**Tirunelveli**

**First Impression: 2024**

**© ELITE ACADEMY**

**A Concise Handbook on English Literature**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic and mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system or otherwise, without written permission from the publishers. The views expressed in this volume are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editor or the publishers.

**ISBN: 978-81-97156-4-6**

**Published in 2024**

# CONTENTS

SHAKESPEARE DRAMAS.....	1
JACOBEAN AND CAROLINE AGE.....	13
RESTORATION PERIOD (1660–1700).....	18
THE MAJOR ROMANTIC AGE NOVELISTS.....	21
THE VICTORIAN AGE (1830-1900).....	28
VICTORIAN NOVELISTS.....	31
MODERN AGE NOTABLE WRITERS.....	40
NOBEL LAUREATES.....	54
POST MODERNISM (1945- 2000).....	67
CARIBBEAN LITERATURE.....	82
AFRICAN WRITERS IN ENGLISH.....	87
CULTURAL STUDIES.....	94
QUIZ PAD.....	99
FAMOUS 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY NOVELS AND CHARACTERS.....	197

# SHAKESPEARE DRAMAS

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE INTRODUCTION

- Stratford-upon Avon
- 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1564
- "Lost years" - 1585 to 1592
- Owned shares in the Blackfriars theatre and The Globe Theatre
- 39 plays, 154 sonnets and 3 long narrative poems
- 1<sup>st</sup> folio – 36 plays, omitted Pericles. Prepared by John Heminges and Henry Condell.
- Order: Comedies, Histories, Tragedies
- First work: The Tempest
- Last play: Cymbeline
- Ben Jonson wrote a preface to the folio with the poem addressed 'To the Reader'

## LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST (1598)

- **Characters:**
  - Ferdinand- The King of Navarre
  - 3 lords
  - Swear Celibacy for three years.
  - Their oath break when they met Princess of France and her ladies.
- Other characters:
  - Don Armado
  - Costard – the clown
  - Plays ends with the songs of the Cuckoo and the owl.

## THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA 1593

- Sources : Boccaccio's Decameron
- Two Gentlemen of Verona by *A J Cronin is an essay*
- Valentine
- Proteus
- Julia
- Silvia
- Setting Milan

## ROMEO AND JULIET 1595

- Montagues and the Capulets – warring in verona
- Masked ball – count Paris and Juliet Marriage
- Romeo
- Rosalind
- Tybalt – Juliet's Cousin
- Friar Lawrence
- Mercutio
- Portion – 48 hours
- Romeo in mantua – plague

## THE COMEDY OF ERRORS 1594

- Source : Plautus's Menaechmi
- Egeon – old Syracuse merchant
- Syracuse – enmity – Ephesus
- Twin sons Antipholus
- Twin Slaves – Dromio



## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (1600)

- comedy play.
- The play is set in Athens and consists of several subplots that revolve around the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta.
- One subplot involves a conflict between four Athenian lovers.
- Another follows a group of six amateur actors rehearsing the play which they are to perform before the wedding.
- **Characters**
  - Theseus—Duke of Athens
  - Hippolyta—Queen of the Amazons
  - Egeus—father of Hermia
  - Hermia—daughter of Egeus, in love with Lysander
  - Lysander—in love with Hermia
  - Demetrius—suitor to Hermia
  - Helena—in love with Demetrius
  - Philostrate—Master of the Revels
  - Peter Quince—a carpenter
  - Nick Bottom—a weaver
  - Francis Flute—a bellows-mender
  - Tom Snout—a tinker
  - Snug—a joiner
  - Robin Starveling—a tailor
  - Oberon—King of the Fairies
  - Titania—Queen of the Fairies
  - Theseus and Hippolyta - four days away from their wedding
  - Demetrius X Hermia X Lysander
  - Helena X Demetrius
  - Theseus X Hippolyta

- Oberon X Titania – fairy king and queen
- Play within a play title: **Pyramus and Thisbe**
- Athenian law – daughter should marry a suitor selected by her father.
- Theseus offers her another choice: lifelong chastity as a nun worshipping the goddess Diana
- Love in idleness – magical potion – Viola tricolor
- Puck pours magical potion in the eyes

## TWELFTH NIGHT, OR, WHAT YOU WILL (1600)

- romantic comedy
- The play centres on the twins Viola and Sebastian, who are separated in a shipwreck. Viola (who is disguised as Cesario) falls in love with the Duke Orsino, who in turn is in love with Countess Olivia. Upon meeting Viola, Countess Olivia falls in love with her thinking she is a man.
- plot elements drawn from the short story «Of Apollonius and Silla» by Barnabe Rich.
- **Characters**
  - Viola– a shipwrecked young woman who disguises herself as a page named Cesario
  - Sebastian – Viola's twin brother
  - Duke Orsino – Duke of Illyria
  - Olivia – a wealthy countess
  - Malvolio – steward in Olivia's household
  - Maria – Olivia's gentlewoman
  - Sir Toby Belch – Olivia's uncle
  - Sir Andrew Aguecheek – a friend of Sir Toby
  - Feste – Olivia's servant, a jester
  - Fabian – a servant in Olivia's household
  - Antonio – a sea captain and friend to Sebastian

## QUIZ SET 1

1. It is decided that each Canterbury pilgrim would tell in all:
  - a. One story
  - b. Two stories
  - c. Three stories
  - d. Four stories**Ans: Option d**
2. Which of the following critics is associated with the term 'contrapuntal reading'?
  - a. Michael Bakhtin
  - b. Roland Barthes
  - c. Edward said
  - d. Jacques Derrida**Ans: Edward said**
3. Which works cannot be categorized under post-colonial theory?
  - a. Nation and narration
  - b. Orientalism
  - c. Discipline and punish
  - d. White mythologies**Ans: Discipline and punish**
4. John Dryden describes a major English poet as "a rough diamond, and first must be polished here he shines...." Identify him :
  - a. Geoffrey Chaucer
  - b. John Gower
  - c. George Herbert
  - d. Robert limerick**Ans: Chaucer**
5. A.C Bradley's Shakespearean tragedy was published in
  - a. 1903
  - b. 1904
  - c. 1905
  - d. 1906**Ans: 1904**
6. Sexual jealousy is the theme of Shakespeare's  
**Ans: Othello**
7. Assertion: (A) Othello killed Desdemona  
Reason: (R) Because Desdemona committed infidelity.
  - a. Both A and R are true R is the correct explanation of A.
  - b. Both A and R are true R is not the correct explanation of A.
  - c. A is true, but R is false
  - d. A is false, but R is true**Ans: c**
8. Who gave a happy ending to Shakespeare's King Lear?  
**Ans: Nahum Tate**
9. Which of the following elegy was written by Tennyson?
  - a. Lycidas
  - b. Adonais
  - c. In memoriam
  - d. Thyrsis**Ans: In Memoriam**