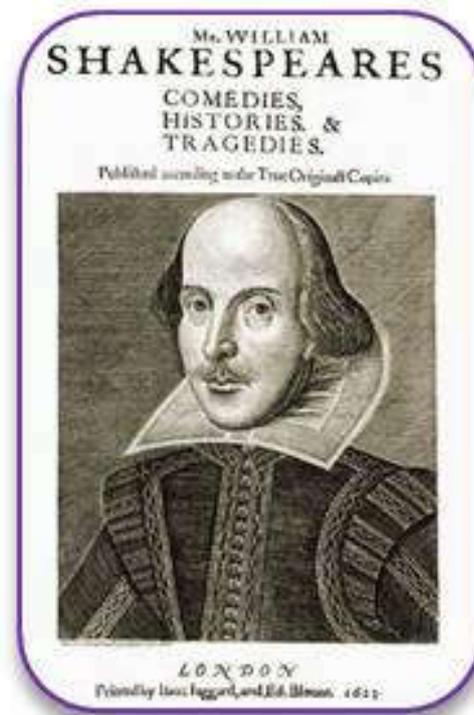


Shakespeare's Horses
An Illustrated History of
Equine Actors
by
CuChullaine O'Reilly F.R.G.S.

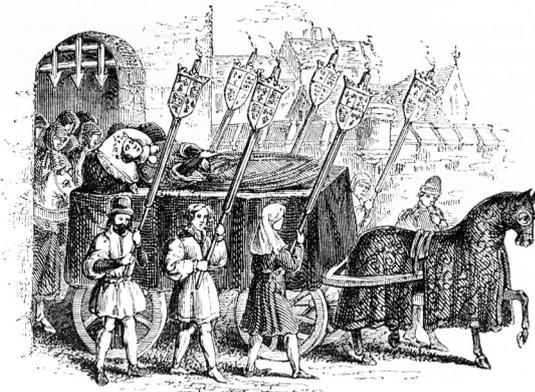


William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon". His works include 39 plays and 154 sonnets. Horses or equestrian references appear in all of Shakespeare's plays. Equine images have been identified for twenty-seven of Shakespeare's plays. This special collection is enriched by many historically important equestrian images that were collected by Dr. Michael John Goodman and then preserved in the [Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare Archive](#).

Histories



[*The Life and Death of King John*](#) recounts the reign of John, son of Henry II of England. This image depicts Paul Giamatti who played King John in the film Ironclad.



[King Richard the Second](#) recounts the last two years (1398 – 1400) of the English monarch's life. This image depicts the funeral of King Richard.



[Henry IV \(Part 1\)](#) is the second play in Shakespeare's tetralogy dealing with the successive reigns of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V. The play begins with Hotspur's battle at Homildon in Northumberland.

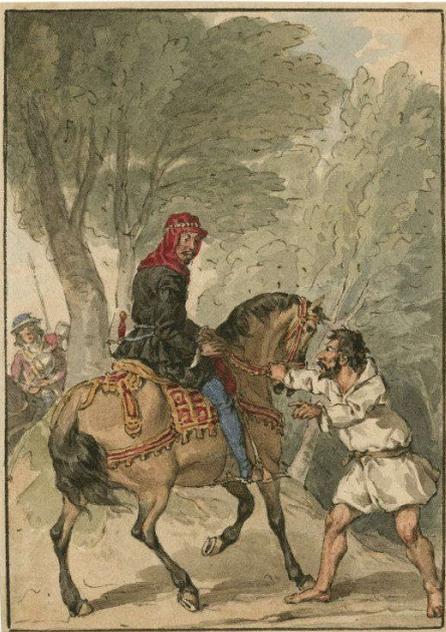
[Henry IV \(Part 2\)](#) recounts Prince Hal's journey towards kingship. A BBC series entitled "**[The Hollow Crown](#)**," was based on Shakespeare's tetralogy. Tom Hiddleston starred as Prince Hal.



[Henry V](#) recounts how the English King embarks on an expedition to France and though his army is badly outnumbered, defeats the French at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. In 1944 [Sir Laurence Olivier](#) adapted the play into a film designed to arouse patriotism during the Allied invasion of Normandy.



[Henry VI \(Part 1\)](#) deals with the loss of England's French territories and the events leading up to the War of the Roses.



[Henry VI \(Part 2\)](#) focuses on the king's inability to quell the bickering of his nobles and culminates with the [First Battle of St Albans](#) in 1455.



[Edward, Prince of Wales.]

Henry VI (Part 3) deals with the horrors of the **War of the Roses**, as civil war turns the once-stable nation into barbarism. It recounts the deeds of Edward Prince of Wales, son of Henry VI.

Richard III recounts the rise to power and subsequent short reign of one of England's most controversial monarchs. Benedict Cumberbatch portrayed Richard III in 2014.



Henry VIII recounts the political intrigues surrounding the king's courtiers. The play is connected to the tragic destruction of the **Globe Theatre**. During a performance in 1613 a cannon shot employed for special effects ignited the theatre's thatched roof, causing an inferno that destroyed the legendary theatre.



Tragedies



[Troilus and Cressida](#)

Set against the backdrop of the Trojan War, the story of the doomed lovers Troilus and Cressida is a medieval tale that is not part of Greek mythology. Shakespeare drew on a number of sources for this plotline, including a version written by Chaucer.



THE FIGHT BETWEEN MARCIUS AND AUFIDIUS.

[Coriolanus](#) recounts the story of a Roman general whose victories on the battlefield cannot shield him from defeat in the cunning game of politics. This image depicts the fight between the Roman and his enemy, Aufidius.



[Titus Andronicus](#): though set in Rome, unlike Shakespeare's other Roman plays which were based on real people and historical events, this fictional tale deals with the theme of brutal revenge.

Romeo and Juliet is the tragic tale of young lovers residing in Verona, Italy. Their deaths bring reconciliation between the warring families. One of Shakespeare's most popular plays, it has been adapted to film many times, including the version made in 2013 starring Hailee Steinfeld and Douglas Booth.



Timon of Athens recounts how the generosity of a wealthy citizen of Athens, including giving away his horses, results in his exile and unhappiness.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is one of several plays written by Shakespeare based upon true events in Roman history. It was one of the author's first plays to be performed at the Globe Theatre, where it was witnessed by a Swiss traveller in 1599.





The Tragedy of Macbeth recounts how a Scottish general receives a prophecy from a trio of witches. He will become king but it will lead to his destruction. This painting by Theodore Chasseriau shows Macbeth and his friend Banquo meeting the witches.

The Tragedy of Hamlet Shakespeare's longest play describes how after the death the King of Denmark, Prince Hamlet returns from England only to discover that his uncle has murdered the king and wed the dead monarch's wife. Hamlet must choose between seeking vengeance or being a passive victim. Adapted to film many times, Mel Gibson starred as Hamlet in 1990.



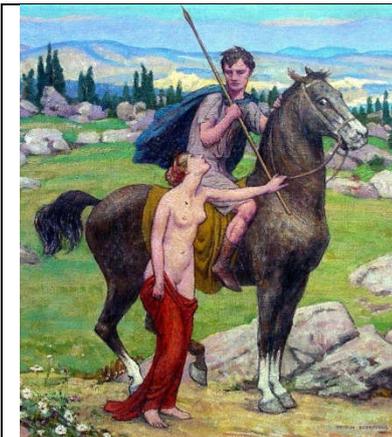
King Lear depicts the gradual descent into madness of the British monarch who gives away his kingdom to his faithless children. This 19th century illustration by John Gilbert depicts the camp of the English forces at Dover.





[**The Tragedy of Anthony and Cleopatra**](#) is a play which focuses on the theme of betrayal, with almost every character betraying their country, ethics or a friend. In 1972 Charlton Heston depicted Marc Antony, who is torn between his loyalty to Rome and his love of Egypt's queen, Cleopatra.

[**Cymbeline**](#) is based on the legend of a British king who was a vassal of the Roman Empire. The play deals with personal jealousy, emotional innocence and political intrigue.



[**Venus and Adonis**](#) recounts how the goddess of love attempts to seduce a handsome young hunter. It is believed to be Shakespeare's first published work. The painting of the star-crossed lovers was created by American artist [Bryson Burroughs](#).

Comedies



[**Much Ado About Nothing**](#) is set in Italy. Believed to have been written in the middle of Shakespeare's career, it recounts the tale of star-crossed lovers who eventually marry. In 1993 a star-studded cast, including Kenneth Branagh, Robert Sean Leonard, Denzel Washington and Keanu Reeves, made the play into a [film](#).

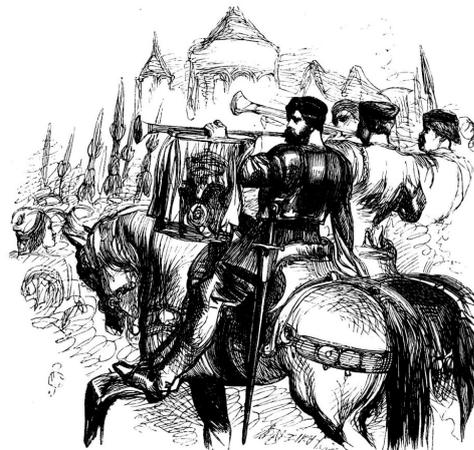
[The Taming of the Shrew](#) describes the courtship of Petruchio and Katherina, who is an unwilling participant. This popular play has been adapted into operas, ballets and films. One of the most famous cinematic versions was made in 1967 and starred Richard Burton and **[Elizabeth Taylor](#)** as the fiery lovers. The question of whether the play is misogynistic has become the subject of considerable **[controversy](#)** among modern scholars and audiences.



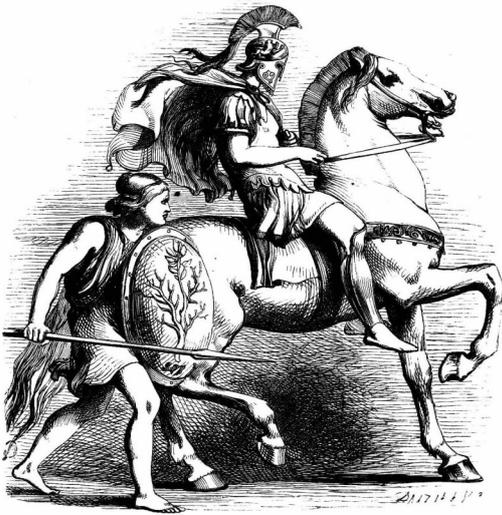
[Two Gentlemen of Verona](#) is believed to be Shakespeare's first play and deals with the themes of love and infidelity. The painting by John Augustus Atkinson depicts Valentine and Proteus, the two 'gentlemen of Verona', who set off to 'broaden their horizons.'



[Measure for Measure](#) deals with the dilemma of mercy and morality. It recounts how Vicentio, the duke of Vienna, protects his subjects from the cruelty of a notorious judge.



[Pericles, Prince of Tyre](#) recounts the wanderings and tragedies endured by the hero and those he loves. The



Venetian ambassador to England saw the play performed in London in 1606.



[*A Midsummer Night's Dream*](#) is one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. Set in a forest inhabited by fairies, it recounts how the Duke of Athens falls in love with the Queen of the Amazons. In 1935 a [film](#) starring many famous actors, including James Cagney, Mickey Rooney and Olivia de Havilland was created. Victor Jory played Oberon, the mounted king of the fairies.

[*All's Well That Ends Well*](#) is one of Shakespeare's lesser-known plays. After the King of France orders Bertram to marry Helena, the unhappy groom eagerly goes to war in Italy rather than honour his marriage vows.

