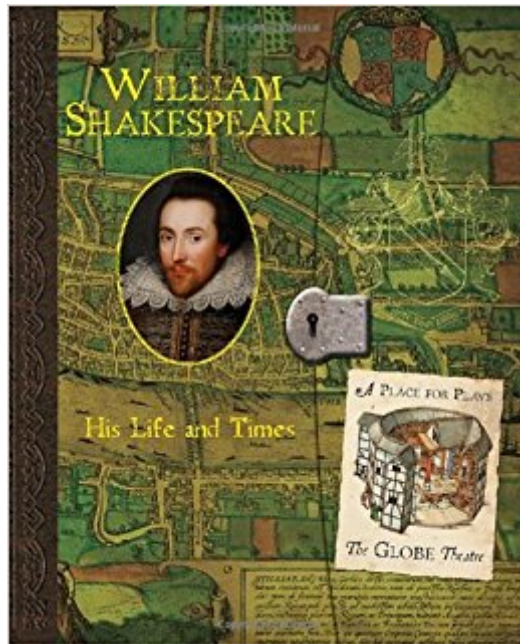


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# William Shakespeare: His Life And Times (Historical Notebooks)



## Synopsis

A lavish, interactive introduction to the great poet's life, his work and the times he lived in. In this enthralling scrapbook that William Shakespeare compiled for his daughter, he looks back on his life as he retires from the theatre. Discover late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century stories of love, war, kings and queens, fellow playwrights and actors, explorers and life in London.

## Book Information

Series: Historical Notebooks

Hardcover: 30 pages

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #490,127 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Renaissance](#) #46 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > European](#) #79 in [Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts > Drama & Theater](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up—This handsome biography, designed as a scrapbook that Shakespeare kept for his daughter Judith, is presented as "a recollection of his years and works—upon the eve of his departure from London to retirement in Stratford-upon-Avon." The portfolio-like volume is filled with facsimiles of documents, writings of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and synopses of his plays, all helping to piece together the facts of his life and the mores of the day. The "autobiographical" writing is laced with vocabulary that captures the flavor of the period, while the authors' informational sidebars use straightforward, clear prose to complement the flowing narrative. Historical details abound, not only in the text but also in the carefully selected "documents" that adorn the book, permitting readers to pore over everything from Elizabethan "Child-Rearing Advice"

to period "Siege Engines" to a "Glossary" of types of thieves. While the basic facts of any well-written Shakespearean biography can be found here, this work also discusses his opinions of his friends and rivals, reveals his deep feelings, and conveys misgivings about some of his life choices. Abundant humor, quotes from Shakespeare's works, and some lesser-known facts add interest to the familiar story. Illustratively, the book is a feast for the eye, with backgrounds composed of high-quality period prints, paintings and sketches, and numerous fold-out facsimiles that pop out from the double-sided pages. Berk and McDermott offer a new perspective on the bard—that of the aged genius looking back on his life and career. Shakespeare lovers and teachers will be delighted. Nancy Menaldi-Scanlan, The Naples Players, FL © Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

"Look no further than this excellent book... never a dull moment. The pleasure of opening letters and lifting flaps... makes it perfect for dipping into or reading from cover to cover." --Carousel: The Guide to Children's Books "A handsome and lavishly illustrated introduction to Shakespeare's life...well designed to bring insight and pleasure to readers of all ages." --David Bevington, Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago "This smart, gorgeous and lively scrapbook will wake many young minds (and older ones too) to the world behind Shakespeare's plays." --Robert N. Watson, Distinguished Professor in the department of English at UCLA. Winner of the School Library Association's CHILDREN'S CHOICE AWARD for best overall non-fiction book for the UK in 2010.

Do you ever feel overwhelmed with the amount of contextual understanding required of students to comprehend even the most well known of the Bard's lines? Get this book. It attracts all readers with its busy layouts and hidden fold-out mysteries. It then immerses them in Elizabethan politics, daily life, recreation, and Shakespeare's biography. This book is Required Exploring.

LOVELY HANDS ON GIFT FOR A CHILD.

To appreciate the wonders of this book, you really need more images of the book's interactive interior. There are dozens of goodies inside this large-format 30-page book with a hardback cover that "unlocks" via that skeleton keyhole you see in the middle of the front cover. Quite frankly, this is a terrific gift even for teenagers and adults who are trying to summon the energy to begin exploring Shakespeare's works. The entire book, including dozens of flaps, pockets, envelopes and other

fold-out "extras" seems to have been designed by a graphic artist with a taste for the realms of Harry Potter or Lord of the Rings--that kind of historical fantasy. Throughout the book, tiny rose-and-beige-colored "booklets" open from the bigger pages, summarizing the Bard's many plays--always with an eye to entice young readers. Here's a Potter-ish summary of Hamlet in one of these little booklets-within-a-book: "In one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, Hamlet, prince of Denmark, is visited by the ghost of his dead father. The ghost begs Hamlet to avenge his murder by Hamlet's wicked uncle Claudius, who is now the new king and married to Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Hamlet pretends to be mad to disguise his plot of revenge and stages a play that will make the king reveal his guilt. But Hamlet's beloved, Ophelia, really does go mad after ..." There are a few more sentences in the actual booklet, but you get the point, right? The designers of this book know how to entice young readers these days: Suspense! Ghosts! (Or are the ghosts real?) Murder! Madness! (Or is the madness real?) And wicked adults who must be stopped by the young people in the play! Of course, that's what Shakespeare understood in his own era and why his works were so successful in the first place. And, if you're giving this book to a youthful or adult reader, why not add a DVD of Kenneth Brannagh's production of *William Shakespeare's Hamlet* (Two-Disc Special Edition). Better yet, Brannagh's epic production, which produces the entire uncut play, is now available in Blu-ray as well to really knock your eyes out as the drama explodes on the screen. Here's that Blu-ray link: [Hamlet \[Blu-ray Book\]](#)

It's funny how many people come to Shakespeare thinking he's boring or dull or whatever, even before they've heard or read a word of what he wrote. This delightful introduction, presented both in and out of character, should go a long way to changing that. The Shakespeare in these pages is a real person, full of life, joys, and sorrows. On the eve of retirement, he writes a letter to his daughter Judith, waiting for him at home in Stratford, and describes the England he knows and especially the great city of London where he has spent most of his career. This book, for the most part, is that letter. (It begins in the very first envelope on the title page. Don't miss it!) The voice is warm, friendly, and fatherly--the Elizabethan tone is suggested more than anything else. Pull-outs, fold-outs, and envelopes add interest with proverbs, advice, theatre hand-bills, and other bits and pieces you won't find at a Renaissance festival. The beautifully illustrated double-pages are a scrap-book of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean world that will give any reader a pleasant taste of what Shakespeare and his contemporaries, peasants and peers, thought and believed about the world, and how they lived in it, too. Love and family life, plays and the theatre, war and science, even what they ate, drank, and laughed at are all represented. The brilliant Ari Berk never ceases to delight,

and this time--writing in partnership with his wife, the equally talented Kristen McDermott--is no exception. Together, the authors have given us a rare life and times, a book that shows us Shakespeare not as the Great Bard but as a husband and father, working writer and actor, looking forward to coming home. It's a joy to read and page through, and will doubtless become a treasured book even after the reader has "out-grown" it.

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