

# Shakespeare- a literary giant in the 21th century

## Elizabethan time and worldview

### Elizabeth I

reigned England from 1558 - 1603

- short period of peace, generally no → *political* (Queen - parliament) and → *religious* (English Reformation, Katholik - Protestant) conflicts
- generally increasing prosperity
- “Golden age “ → greatest literary period → English literature (poetry, theatre), music
- entered the world of trade and colonization

### Worldview:

- medieval / Renaissance belief in a hierarchical universe ordained by God
- every form of living has link in the chain (higher link means greater intelligence, mobility, capability)
- unifying principles: (1) rational order, (2) divine love

<b>Astrologic ranks:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sun</li> <li>- Moon</li> <li>- Planets</li> <li>- Stars</li> </ul>	<b>Four Humors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yellow Bile (or Choler): anger and irritability</li> <li>- Black Bile (or tears): melancholy, sadness</li> <li>- Blood: energy, happiness, sexual arousal</li> <li>- Phlegm: lethargy, boredom</li> </ul>	<b>Four Elements:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fire (hot and dry)</li> <li>- Air (warm and moist)</li> <li>- Water (cold and moist)</li> <li>- Earth (cold and dry)</li> </ul>
--	--	--

<b>The chain of being</b>	<b>primate</b>	<b>Divine powers</b>	<b>Spiritual attributes</b>	<b>Physical sensations</b>	<b>Sensory attributes</b>
<b>God</b>		- omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence	- reason, love, imagination	- outside the physical limitations	
<b>Angelic being</b>	Seraph (pl. seraphim)		- reason, love, imagination - language	- no physical body	- sensory awareness unbound by physical organs
<b>Humans</b>	King		- reason, love, imagination - language	- soul knotted to physical body - passion, pain, hunger, thirst, sexual desire - power of reproduction	-sight, touch, taste, hearing, smell (limited by physical organs)
<b>Animals</b>	Lion or Elephant		- limited intelligence and awareness of surrounding - lack: immortal souls - neither logic nor language	- rank depends on the number of their attributes	
<b>Plants</b>	Oak tree		- lack of mental attributes	- ability to grow and reproduce - ability to eat soil, air and “heat” - no sensory attributes (but: edible and medicinal virtues)	
<b>Minerals</b>	diamond			- lack of: basic ability to grow and reproduce - lack of: mental attributes, sensor organs - their gift: solidity, strength - “magical powers”	

### Literary Ramification:

- the symbols and connotations used at the time depended on the chain of being (ex. → if Shakespeare compared a woman to vine & a man to oak, then the man stands above the woman in the rank)
- imagery

### Moral Ramification:

- it becomes a moral imperative for each creature to know its place

- otherwise: it is guilty of fleshly, carnal sins or intellectual and spiritual sins

Political Ramification:

- monarchy was ordained by God (rebellion was a sin)
- king was God's deputy on earth
- but: king also had moral responsibilities to God and his people → he was expected to rule with love, wisdom, justice
- misuse is a sin against divine order

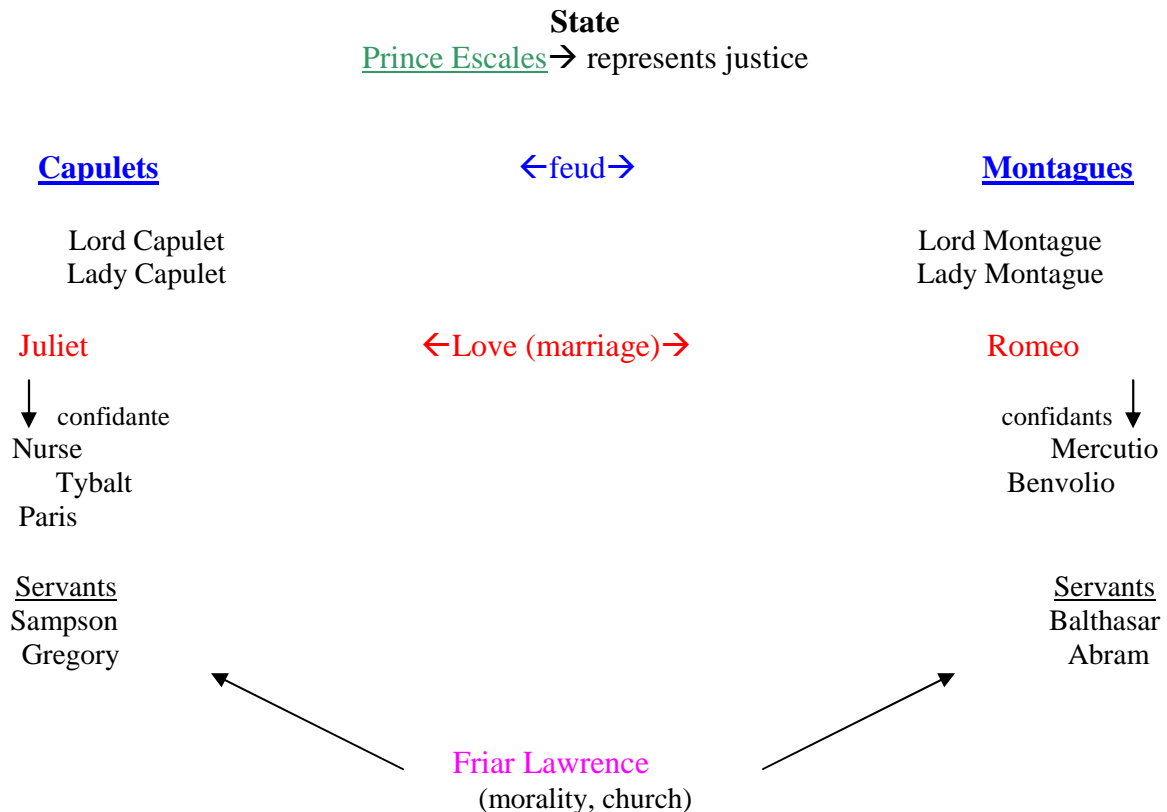
## Shakespeare

### Timeline of Shakespeare's life

1564	Shakespeare is born as the first son of a prominent businessman.
1582	Marriage to Anne Hathaway (a 26-year old farmer's daughter). Their first child is born six months later.
1585	Twins are born; shortly afterwards Shakespeare leaves his family to disappear for seven years: the 'Lost Years'.
1592	Well established in the London theatre world as an actor, playwright and poet
1593	First publication (a narrative poem)
1594	Founding member of an acting company
1595-96	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> are published
1597	Shakespeare buys New Place, the second-largest building in Stratford
1599	The Globe Theatre is built in London; Shakespeare is part owner.
1605	Shakespeare's acting company performs eleven times before the king
1606	<i>Macbeth</i> is published.
1609	Sonnets are published.
1610	Shakespeare leaves London and settles in Stratford, a rich man.
1616	He dies, having written 38 plays.
1623	The first complete collection of Shakespeare's works is published.

## Romeo and Juliet

### Characters



# Sonnets

## Italian sonnet

(also called the *Petrarchan sonnet* after the most influential of the Italian sonneteers) comprises an 8-line 'octave' of two quatrains rhymed a b b a / a b b a, followed by a 6-line 'sestet' usually rhymed c d e / c d e or c d c / d c d. The transition from octave to sestet usually coincides with a 'turn' in the argument or mood of the poem. The Italian pattern has remained the most widely used in English and other languages.

→ Francesco Petrarca; 1304-1374 (scholar, poet, Renaissance Humanist)

- was inspired by a woman called 'Laura' (idealization)
- Laura : godlike person/ woman, unreachability

## English sonnet

(also called the *Shakespearean sonnet* after its foremost practitioner) comprises three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming a b a b / c d c d / e f e f / g g

### structure

- influences the thoughts and the argumentation of the sonnet
- problems are presented (English: in the quatrains)
- the 'turn' comes in the final couplet

### final couplet (special function)

- conclusion, solution in the tiny compass of the final couplet
- often as an epigram
- an impetus for the reader to reflect the message of the sonnet
- climactically restates or extends the theme of the sonnet

### imagery

- physical/ spiritual beauty
- catalogue of attributes of beauty
- Laura- catalogue
- lover's split personality (torn between desire and sublimation)
- dialogue: body ↔ spirit
- physical desire elevated to the level of religious love
- by describing the beloved the sonneteer indirectly defines himself
- he is concerned with the sensitivity of his own self (introspective)

## Shakespeare's sonnets

- collection of poems in sonnet form
- deal with love, beauty, politics, mortality
- written over a period of several years
- sonnets 1 - 126 are addressed to a young man
  - Fair Youth
- sonnets 127- 152 are addressed to a young woman
  - The Dark Lady
- sonnets 153- 154 top off the sonnets before

### Fair Youth

- unnamed young man
- sonnets are written in a romantic, loving language
- idealization of a beautiful young man (probably homosexual tendency) → he is adored but unreachable

### The Dark Lady

- earthly lover → no beauty, even ugliness
- has a love affair with the persona but is unfaithful
- outward appearance : black in every part of her body → black in her behaviour as well

Isabel, Judith