



Four Tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth (Bantam Classics)

By William Shakespeare

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Hamlet

One of the most famous plays of all time, the compelling tragedy of the young prince of Denmark who must reconcile his longing for oblivion with his duty to avenge his father's murder is one of Shakespeare's greatest works. The ghost, Ophelia's death and burial, the play within a play, and the breathtaking swordplay are just some of the elements that make *Hamlet* a masterpiece of the theater.

Othello

This great tragedy of unsurpassed intensity and emotion is played out against Renaissance splendor. The doomed marriage of Desdemona to the Moor Othello is the focus of a storm of tension, incited by the consummately evil villain Iago, that culminates in one of the most deeply moving scenes in theatrical history.

King Lear

Here is the famous and moving tragedy of a king who foolishly divides his kingdom between his two wicked daughters and estranges himself from the young daughter who loves him—a theatrical spectacle of outstanding proportions.

Macbeth

No dramatist has ever seen with more frightening clarity into the heart and mind of a murderer than has Shakespeare in this brilliant and bloody tragedy of evil. Taunted into asserting his "masculinity" by his ambitious wife, Macbeth chooses to embrace the Weird Sisters' prophecy and kill his king—and thus, seals his own doom.

Each Edition Includes:

- Comprehensive explanatory notes
- Vivid introductions and the most up-to-date scholarship
- Clear, modernized spelling and punctuation, enabling contemporary readers to understand the Elizabethan English
- Completely updated, detailed bibliographies and performance histories
- An interpretive essay on film adaptations of the play, along with an extensive

filmography

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Editorial Review

From the Publisher

An exciting new edition of the complete works of Shakespeare with these features: Illustrated with photographs from New York Shakespeare Festival productions, vivid readable introductions for each play by noted scholar David Bevington, a lively personal foreword by Joseph Papp, an insightful essay on the play in performance, modern spelling and pronunciation, up-to-date annotated bibliographies, and convenient listing of key passages.

From the Inside Flap

HAMLET

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About the Author

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 1564, and his birth is traditionally celebrated on April 23. The facts of his life, known from surviving documents, are sparse. He was one of eight children born to John Shakespeare, a merchant of some standing in his community. William probably went to the King's New School in Stratford, but he had no university education. In November 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior, who was pregnant with their first child, Susanna. She was born on May 26, 1583. Twins, a boy, Hamnet (who would die at age eleven), and a girl, Judith, were born in 1585. By 1592 Shakespeare had gone to London working as an actor and already known as a playwright. A rival dramatist, Robert Greene, referred to him as "an upstart crow, beautified with our

feathers.” Shakespeare became a principal shareholder and playwright of the successful acting troupe, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (later under James I, called the King’s Men). In 1599 the Lord Chamberlain’s Men built and occupied the Globe Theater in Southwark near the Thames River. Here many of Shakespeare’s plays were performed by the most famous actors of his time, including Richard Burbage, Will Kempe, and Robert Armin. In addition to his 37 plays, Shakespeare had a hand in others, including *Sir Thomas More* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and he wrote poems, including *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. His 154 sonnets were published, probably without his authorization, in 1609. In 1611 or 1612 he gave up his lodgings in London and devoted more and more time to retirement in Stratford, though he continued writing such plays as **The Tempest** and **Henry VII** until about 1613. He died on April 23 1616, and was buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford. No collected edition of his plays was published during his life-time, but in 1623 two members of his acting company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, put together the great collection now called the First Folio.

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