

The sonnets are almost all constructed from three four-line stanzas (called quatrains) and a final couplet composed in iambic pentameter.[19] This is also the meter used extensively in Shakespeare's plays.

The rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg. Sonnets using this scheme are known as Shakespearean sonnets. Often, the beginning of the third quatrain marks the volta ("turn"), or the line in which the mood of the poem shifts, and the poet expresses a revelation or epiphany.

"The Dark Lady"

#### Sonnet 66

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And guiled honour shamefully misplaced,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
And art made tongue-tied by authority,  
And folly doctor-like controlling skill,  
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,  
And captive good attending captain ill:  
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,  
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.  
—William Shakespeare

#### Sonnet 24

Mine eye hath play'd the painter and hath steel'd,  
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;  
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,  
And perspective it is best painter's art.  
For through the painter must you see his skill,  
To find where your true image pictur'd lies,  
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,  
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.  
Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:  
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me  
Are windows to my breast, where-through the sun  
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;  
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,  
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

### Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

### Sonnet 1

From fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,  
But as the ripper should by time decease,  
His tender heir might bear his memory:  
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,  
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,  
Making a famine where abundance lies,  
Thy self thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.  
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,  
And only herald to the gaudy spring,  
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,  
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.  
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,  
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

### Sonnet 4

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend  
Upon thy self thy beauty's legacy?  
Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,  
And being frank she lends to those are free:  
Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse  
The bounteous largess given thee to give?  
Profitless usurer, why dost thou use  
So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?

For having traffic with thy self alone,  
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.  
Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,  
What acceptable audit canst thou leave?  
Thy unused beauty must be tomb'd with thee,  
Which used, lives th'executor to be

#### Sonnet 40

Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all;  
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?  
No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call;  
All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more.  
Then, if for my love, thou my love receivest,  
I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest;  
But yet be blam'd, if thou thy self deceivest  
By wilful taste of what thyself refusest.  
I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty:  
And yet, love knows it is a greater grief  
To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury.  
Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
Kill me with spies yet we must not be foes.

#### Sonnet 66

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And guiled honour shamefully misplaced,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
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And folly doctor-like controlling skill,  
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,  
And captive good attending captain ill:  
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,  
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

#### Sonnet 8

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?  
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy:

Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly,  
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?  
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,  
By unions married, do offend thine ear,  
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds  
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.  
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,  
Strikes each in each by mutual ordèring;  
Resembling sire and child and happy mother,  
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing:  
Whose speechless song being many, seeming one,  
Sings this to thee: 'Thou single wilt prove none

#### Sonnet 44

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,  
Injurious distance should not stop my way;  
For then despite of space I would be brought,  
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.  
No matter then although my foot did stand  
Upon the farthest earth remov'd from thee;  
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,  
As soon as think the place where he would be.  
But, ah! thought kills me that I am not thought,  
To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,  
But that so much of earth and water wrought,  
I must attend time's leisure with my moan;  
Receiving nought by elements so slow  
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

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NOTE: Characters who exist outside Shakespeare are marked "(hist)" where they are historical, and "(myth)" where they are mythical. Where that annotation is a link (e.g. (hist)), it is a link to the page for the historical or mythical figure. The annotation "(fict)" is only used in entries for the English history plays, and indicates a character who is fictional.

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[A](#)<sup>[edit]</sup>

Statue of William Shakespeare, who, according to legend, played Adam in his own play *As You Like It*.

Aaron is an evil moorish character in *Titus Andronicus*. He incites most of the other evil characters to do violence against the house of Andronicus.

The Abbott of Westminster (fict) supports Richard and the Bishop of Carlisle in *Richard II*.

Lord Abergavenny (hist) is Buckingham's son-in-law in *Henry VIII*.

Abhorson is an executioner in *Measure for Measure*.

Abraham Slender is a foolish suitor to Anne, and a kinsman of Shallow, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Abraham, a Montague servant, fights Sampson and Gregory in the first scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. Sometimes spelled "Abram".

Achilles (myth) is portrayed as a former hero, who has become lazy and devoted to the love of Patroclus, in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Adam is a kindly old servant, rumoured to have been played by Shakespeare himself, in *As You Like It*.

Adrian:

Adrian is a lord, a follower of Alonso, in *The Tempest*.<sup>[1]</sup>

For Adrian in *Coriolanus*, see Volsce.

Adriana is the frequently angry wife of Antipholus of Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Don Adriano de Armado is an arrogant Spanish braggart in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Aediles (officers attending on the Tribunes) appear in *Coriolanus*. One is a speaking role.

For Aegeon (or AEgeon or Ægeon) see Egeon.

For Aenobarbus (or AEnobarbus or Ænobarbus) see Enobarbus.

Aemelia is an abbess in *The Comedy of Errors*. She proves to be the long-lost wife of Egeon, and the long-lost mother of the Antipholus twins.

Aemilius:

Aemilius is Roman nobleman who acts as ambassador between Saturninus and Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*.

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (hist) is one of the Triumvirs. the three rulers of Rome after Caesar's death, in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Aeneas (myth) is a Trojan leader in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Agamemnon (myth) is the general leader of the Greek forces, in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek is a foolish knight, and suitor to Olivia, in *Twelfth Night*.

Agrippa:

Agrippa (hist), a follower of Caesar in *Antony and Cleopatra*, proposes that the widowed Antony should marry Octavia.

Menenius Agrippa in *Coriolanus* is a friend and supporter of Coriolanus in his political struggles.

Ajax (myth) is the (sometimes foolish) champion of the Greeks in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Alarbus is the eldest son of Tamora, sacrificed by Titus' sons, in *Titus Andronicus*.

The Mayor of St. Albans appears briefly in the "Simpcox" episode in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

The Duke of Albany is Gonerill's husband in *King Lear*.

Alcibiades (hist) is a soldier who turns renegade when one of his junior officers is sentenced to death, and true friend of Timon in *Timon of Athens*.

The Duke of Alençon' (hist) is one of the French leaders in *Henry VI, Part 1*.

Alexander:

Alexander is Cressida's servant in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Alexander Court (fict) is a soldier in the English army in *Henry V*. [2]

Alexander Iden (hist) kills Jack Cade in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Alexas is a follower of Cleopatra, in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Alice:

Alice (fict) gives the French princess Katharine an English lesson in *Henry V*. [2]

See also Mistress Ford, whose first name is Alice.

For Aliena see Celia from *As You Like It*, who calls herself Aliena while in her self-imposed exile in the Forest of Arden.

Alonso is the King of Naples, an enemy to Prospero, in *The Tempest*. He mourns for his son, Ferdinand, who he believes is drowned. [1]

Ambassador:

Some ambassadors from France present Henry with a gift of tennis balls from the Dauphin, in *Henry V*. [2]

Some ambassadors from England bring news that Rozancrantz and Guildenstern are dead, in *Hamlet*.

Several characters act as Ambassadors, including Cornelius (in *Hamlet*), Lucius (in *Cymbeline*), Montjoy and Voltemand.

See also Schoolmaster, in *Antony and Cleopatra*.



Amiens is a follower of Duke Senior in *As You Like It*.

For Ancient (in the military sense - a standard-bearer), see Iago and Pistol.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek is a foolish knight, and suitor to Olivia, in *Twelfth Night*.

Andromache (myth) is Hector's wife in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Andronicus:

Marcus Andronicus is the brother of Titus Andronicus.

Titus Andronicus is the central character of *Titus Andronicus*. Broken and sent mad by Tamora and her followers, he eventually exacts his revenge by killing her sons, and cooking them for her to eat.

See also Lavinia, Lucius, Quintus, Martius, Mutius and Young Lucius, members of the Andronicus family in *Titus Andronicus*. Also Sempronius, Caius and Valentine in the same play are "kinsmen" of the Andronicus house.

Angelo:

Angelo deputises for the Duke during the latter's absence from Vienna, but proves corrupt, seeking the sexual favours of Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*.

Angelo is a goldsmith who has been commissioned to make a chain by Antipholus of Ephesus, which he delivers to Antipholus of Syracuse in error. Antipholus of Ephesus later refuses to pay for it, causing much consternation, in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Angus is a thane in *Macbeth*.

Anne:

Anne Bullen (hist), known to history as Anne Boleyn, is a maid of Honour to Katherine who later becomes King Henry's second wife, in *Henry VIII*.

Anne Page is the daughter of Master and Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. She loves Fenton, but her father wishes her to marry Slender and her mother wishes her to marry Caius.

Lady Anne (hist) is the widow of Prince Edward, wooed by Richard over the corpse of her late father-in-law (Henry VI) in *Richard III*.

Antenor is a Trojan leader in *Troilus and Cressida*.

For Anthony see Antony/Anthony below.

Antigonus is a courtier of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, who takes the infant Perdita to Bohemia. He famously exits, pursued by a bear, which eats him.

Antiochus is king of Antioch in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*; he engages in an incestuous relationship with his daughter. He orders the death of Pericles, who has discovered his secret.

Antipholus:

Antipholus of Ephesus, twin of Antipholus of Syracuse - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Antipholus of Syracuse, twin of Antipholus of Ephesus - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Antonio:

Antonio is the title character, although not the central character, of *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock claims a pound of his flesh.

Antonio is the brother of Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Antonio is a sea captain who rescues, and loves, Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*.

Antonio is the brother of Prospero in *The Tempest*. He conspires with Sebastian to murder Alonzo and Gonzalo.[1]

Antonio is Proteus' father, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Antony/Anthony:

For Anthony in *Romeo and Juliet* see *Servingmen*.

Mark Antony (hist) (Often just Antony, and sometimes Marcus Antonius) turns the mob against Caesar's killers and becomes a Triumvir in Julius Caesar. His romance with Cleopatra drives the action of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Sir Anthony Denny (hist) is a minor character in *Henry VIII*, who brings Cranmer to the King.

Apemantus is a churlish philosopher in *Timon of Athens*.

Three Apparitions appear to Macbeth with prophecies, in *Macbeth*.

Apothecary is a small but vital role in *Romeo and Juliet*. He sells Romeo the poison which ends his life.

For Aragon, see Arragon/Aragon, below.

For Arcas, see *Countryman*.

Archbishop:

Archbishop of Canterbury:

The Archbishop of Canterbury (hist) is an important character in the first act of *Henry V*. He expounds Henry's claim to the French throne.[2]

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (hist) is a major character in the last act of *Henry VIII*: hauled before the privy council by his enemies and threatened with imprisonment, but protected by the king.

See also Cardinal Bouchier, who was Archbishop of Canterbury at the time dramatised in *Richard III*.

Archbishop of York:

The Archbishop of York (1) (hist) is one of the rebel leaders in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2*. [3]

The Archbishop of York (2) (hist) assists Queen Elizabeth and the little Duke of York to obtain sanctuary in *Richard III*.

For Archibald, see *Earl of Douglas*.

Archidamus is a Bohemian lord in *The Winter's Tale*.

Arcite and Palamon are the title characters of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Their friendship endures even though they engage in a mortal quarrel for the love of Emilia.

Ariel is a spirit, controlled (but eventually freed) by Prospero in *The Tempest*. [1]

Arragon/Aragon:

The Prince of Arragon is an unsuccessful suitor to Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Queen Katherine of Aragon (hist) is the first wife of King Henry in *Henry VIII*. She falls from grace, is divorced and dies.

See also Don Pedro, who is a prince of Arragon.

Artemidorus prepares a scroll warning Julius Caesar of danger, and tries to present it to Caesar in the form of a petition. Caesar refuses to accept it.

Arthur (hist) is a child, the nephew of the king in King John. He persuades Hubert not to put out his eyes, but dies in an attempt to escape captivity.

Don Adriano de Armado is an arrogant Spanish braggart in Love's Labour's Lost.

Arviragus (also known as Cadwal) is the second son of the king in Cymbeline, stolen away in infancy by Morgan, and brought up as Morgan's child.

For Astringer, meaning a keeper of hawks, see Gentleman in All's Well That Ends Well, who is described as the "Astringer to the King" in his entry stage direction.

An Old Athenian in Timon of Athens objects to his daughter's involvement with Lucilius, until Timon offers to endow Lucilius with money to make him her equal.

An attendant on the King of France speaks four words, "I shall, my liege", in All's Well That Ends Well.

Audrey is a "foul slut" loved by Touchstone in As You Like It.

Tullus Aufidius, leader of the Volscians, is the arch-enemy, and briefly the ally, of the title character in Coriolanus.

Aumerle (hist) is a companion of Richard in Richard II.

For Duke of Austria see Limoges.

Autolycus is a rogue, singer, and snapper up of unconsidered trifles in The Winter's Tale.

B[edit]

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Théodore Chassériau (1819–1856), *The Ghost of Banquo*, 1855

Bagot (hist) is a favourite of Richard in Richard II.

Balthasar:

Balthasar is Romeo's servant in Romeo and Juliet.

Balthasar is a singer, attending on Don Pedro in Much Ado About Nothing.

Balthasar is a merchant in The Comedy of Errors.

Balthasar is a servant of Portia in The Merchant of Venice.

See also Portia in The Merchant of Venice, who takes the name Balthasar in her disguise as a lawyer from Rome.

Three Bandits in Timon of Athens seek Timon's gold, but he persuades them to give up villainy.

Banquo is a captain in Macbeth who, with Macbeth, meets the three witches and hears their prophecies. He is later murdered on Macbeth's orders, but his ghost haunts Macbeth at a feast.

Baptista Minola is the father of Katherine and Bianca in The Taming of the Shrew.

For Barbary, see Countrywomen.

Bardolph:

Bardolph (fict) is a follower of Sir John Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 1[3] and Henry IV, Part 2. In The Merry Wives of Windsor he becomes a drawer for the Host of the Garter. He is hanged for stealing a pax in Henry V.[2]

Lord Bardolph (hist) is a nobleman, one of the Percy faction, in Henry IV, Part 2.

Barnardine is too drunk to consent to be executed, in Measure for Measure.

Barnardo and Marcellus are soldiers who invite Horatio to see the ghost of Old Hamlet, in Hamlet.

For Bartholomew, or Barthol'mew, see the Page in the induction to The Taming of the Shrew.

Bassanio, loved by Antonio, is the suitor who wins the heart of Portia in The Merchant of Venice.

Basset (fict) is a follower of the Duke of Somerset, in Henry VI, Part 1.

Bassianus is the younger brother of Saturninus, and is betrothed to Lavinia, in Titus Andronicus. Chiron and Demetrius murder him, laying the blame on Martius and Quintus.

Bastard:

The Bastard of Orleans (hist) is one of the French leaders in Henry VI, Part 1.

Philip (the Bastard) Faulconbridge is a central character in King John, the bravest and most articulate of John's supporters.

Several characters are bastards, most notably Don John and Edmund.

John Bates (fict) is a soldier in the English army in Henry V.[2]

A Bavian (a baboon) is played by one of the Maying entertainers in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

A Bawd and a Pander run the brothel into which Marina is sold, in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Beadle:

A Beadle arrests Doll Tearsheet in Henry IV, Part 2.

A Beadle whips Simpcox in Henry VI, Part 2.

For Beaufort see Bishop of Winchester.

Beatrice is a central character in Much Ado About Nothing. She falls in love with Benedick.

For Bedford see Prince John of Lancaster, who was the Duke of Bedford.

Belarius (also known as Morgan) steals the two infant princes in Cymbeline, and raises them as his own.

Sir Toby Belch is a drunken knight, and kinsman to Olivia, in Twelfth Night.

Benedick is a central character in Much Ado About Nothing. He falls in love with Beatrice.

Benvolio is a friend and kinsman of Romeo in Romeo and Juliet.

Berkeley:

Berkeley and Tressell (fict) are the two gentlemen accompanying Lady Anne, and Henry VI's coffin, in Richard III.

Lord Berkeley (hist) acts as messenger from York to Bolingbroke, in Richard II.

Berowne is a witty lord of Navarre in Love's Labour's Lost. He breaks his oath by falling in love with Rosaline.

The Duke of Berry (hist) is a French leader in Henry V.[2]

Bertram is the Count of Roussillon in All's Well That Ends Well. He is married, against his will, to Helena.

Bianca:

Bianca is the younger sister of Katherine in The Taming of the Shrew. She is loved by Gremio and Hortensio, and eventually marries Lucentio.

Bianca is Michael Cassio's mistress in Othello.

Lord Bigot, together with Salisbury and Pembroke, fear for the life of young Arthur, and later discover his body, in King John.

Biondello is a servant to Lucentio in The Taming of the Shrew.

Bishop (title):

The Bishop of Carlisle (hist) supports Richard in Richard II.

Bishop of Ely:

The Bishop of Ely (1) (hist) conspires with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the opening scene of Henry V.[2]

The Bishop of Ely (2) (hist) ultimately shows his opposition to Richard, in Richard III.

The Bishop of Lincoln (hist) speaks in favour of Henry's divorce, in the trial scene of Henry VIII.

Bishop of Winchester:

The Bishop of Winchester (hist) (later "the Cardinal") is the chief enemy of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 1 and Henry VI, Part 2.

For The Bishop of Winchester in Henry VIII, see Gardiner.

Blanche (hist) is the king's niece in King John, married (by arrangement among the kings, to seal an alliance) to the Dauphin.

Blunt:

Sir James Blunt is a supporter of Richmond in Richard III.

Sir John Blunt is a supporter of the king in Henry IV, Part 2.

Sir Walter Blunt is a soldier and messenger to the king in Henry IV, Part 1. He is killed by Douglas while wearing the king's armour.[3]

The Boatswain is a character in the first and last acts of The Tempest.[1]

Bolingbroke:

Bolingbroke, later King Henry IV (hist) leads a revolt against King Richard in Richard II. He is the title character of Henry IV, Part 1 and Henry IV, Part 2 which chart the rebellions against him by the Percy faction, and his difficult relationship with his eldest son, Hal.[3]

Bolingbroke, with Southwell, Jourdain and Hume, are the supernatural conspirators with Eleanor Duchess of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 2.

Borachio is a villain, a servant of Don John, in Much Ado About Nothing.

Nick Bottom is a weaver, one of the mechanicals, in A Midsummer Night's Dream. While rehearsing a play, Puck changes Bottom's head for an ass's head. Titania falls in love with him. He plays Pyramus in Pyramus and Thisbe.

Boulton is a servant of the Pander and the Bawd in Pericles, Prince of Tyre. He resolves to rape Marina, but is persuaded to help her to leave the brothel, instead.

The Duke of Bourbon (hist) fights on the French side in Henry V.[2]

Cardinal Bouchier (hist) delivers the little Duke of York from sanctuary, and into the hands of Richard and Buckingham, in Richard III.

Boy:

Boy (hist) in Richard III is the young son of the murdered Clarence (described in one speech as little Ned Plantagenet).

Boy is young Martius, son of Caius Martius Coriolanus, in Coriolanus.

The Boy (fict) is a follower of Sir John Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2 and The Merry Wives of Windsor (in which he is called Robin). He is also a character in Henry V, who goes to war with Pistol, Bardolph and Nym.[2]

A boy sings the wedding song which opens The Two Noble Kinsmen.

A boy is a servant of Troilus, in Troilus and Cressida.

A boy attends on Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing.

A boy sings a song to Mariana, in Measure for Measure.

A boy sings "Come, thou monarch of the vine...", in Antony and Cleopatra.

The Master Gunner's Boy kills Salisbury, in Henry VI, Part 1.

Boyet, a French lord, is the Princess of France's personal assistant, in Love's Labour's Lost.

Brabantio is the father of Desdemona, in Othello.

Brackenbury (hist) is the Lieutenant of the Tower of London in Richard III.

Brandon (fict) arrests Buckingham, in Henry VIII.

The Duke of Britain (hist) is a French leader in Henry V.[2]

For Master Brook see Master Ford, who calls himself Master Brook when he disguises himself to encounter Falstaff.

Brother(s):

The Jailer's Brother accompanies his niece, in her madness, in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

See Leonatus

See Stafford's Brother.

Brutus:

Decius Brutus (hist) is one of the conspirators against Caesar in Julius Caesar.

Junius Brutus and Sicinius Velutus, two of the tribunes of the people, are the protagonist's chief political enemies in Coriolanus, and prove more effective than his military foes.

Marcus Brutus (hist) (usually just Brutus) is a central character of Julius Caesar, who conspires against Caesar's life and stabs him.

Buckingham:

The Duke of Buckingham (1) (hist) is a Lancastrian in Henry VI, Part 2. His death is reported in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Duke of Buckingham (2) (hist) is a Yorkist in Henry VI, Part 3, and is a co-conspirator with Richard - although he is eventually rejected, then murdered on Richard's orders - in Richard III.

The Duke of Buckingham (3) (hist), an enemy of Wolsey, falls from grace and is executed by Henry in Henry VIII.

Bullcalf is nearly pressed into military service by Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Anne Bullen (hist), known to history as Anne Boleyn, is a maid of Honour to Katherine who later becomes King Henry's second wife, in Henry VIII.

Burgundy:

The Duke of Burgundy (1) (hist) brokers the peace treaty between the kings of France and England in the last act of Henry V.[2]

The Duke of Burgundy (2) (hist) fights firstly in alliance with the English, and later in alliance with the French, in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Duke of Burgundy (3) refuses to marry Cordelia without a dowry, in King Lear.

Bushy (hist) is a favourite of Richard in Richard II.

Dick the Butcher (fict) is a follower of Jack Cade in Henry VI, Part 2.

Doctor Butts (hist) is the king's physician in Henry VIII. He alerts the king to Cranmer's humiliation in refused admittance to the council chamber.

C[edit]

The Death of Cleopatra by Reginald Arthur

Jack Cade (hist) leads a proletarian rebellion in Henry VI, Part 2.

Cadwal (real name Arviragus) is the second son of the king in Cymbeline, stolen away in infancy by Morgan, and brought up as Morgan's child.

Caesar:

Julius Caesar (hist) is the title character of Julius Caesar, an Emperor of Rome who is stabbed in the Capitol, on the Ides of March.

Octavius Caesar (hist) is one of the Triumvirs, the three rulers of Rome after Caesar's death, in Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra.

Caius:

Caius, Sempronius and Valentine are minor characters, kinsmen and supporters of Titus, in Titus Andronicus.

Caius Cassius (hist) is a central character in Julius Caesar. He incites the conspiracy against Caesar, and recruits Brutus to the conspirators' ranks.

Caius Ligarius (hist) is one of the conspirators against Caesar in Julius Caesar.

Caius Lucius is the Roman ambassador in Cymbeline, and the leader of the Roman forces.

Caius Martius Coriolanus (hist) is the central character of Coriolanus, who earns the tile "Coriolanus" in recognition of his skill at smiting Volscians in Coriolai.

Doctor Caius (hist-ish) is a French doctor in The Merry Wives of Windsor. He challenges Parson Hugh to a duel.

See also the Earl of Kent, who calls himself Caius in his disguise as a servant of King Lear.

Calchas, Cressida's father, has defected to the Greeks, and negotiates his daughter's exchange for a Trojan prisoner in Troilus and Cressida.

Caliban, son of the witch Sycorax, is a deformed slave to Prospero in The Tempest.[1]

Calphurnia (hist) is the wife of Caesar, whose dream predicts her husband's death, in Julius Caesar.

For Cambio see Lucentio, who calls himself Cambio in his disguise as a schoolmaster.

The Earl of Cambridge (hist) is one of the three conspirators against the king's life (with Scroop and Grey) in Henry V.[2]

Camillo is a follower of Leontes, ordered to kill Polixines, but who instead warns Polixines of his danger and becomes his companion, in The Winter's Tale.

Cardinal Campeius (hist) is the papal legate at the trial of Katherine, in Henry VIII.

Canidius (hist) is a follower of Antony in Antony and Cleopatra.

Canterbury:

The Archbishop of Canterbury (hist) is an important character in the first act of Henry V. He expounds Henry's claim to the French throne.[2]

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (hist) is a major character in the last act of Henry VIII: hauled before the privy council by his enemies and threatened with imprisonment, but protected by the king.

See also Cardinal Bourchier, who was Archbishop of Canterbury at the time dramatised in Richard III.

Caphis is the servant of a Senator in Timon of Athens, sent to collect a debt due from Timon.

For Capilet see the Widow in All's Well That Ends Well, whose surname is Capilet.

Captain:

A Captain survives the shipwreck at the start of Twelfth Night with Viola, and helps her with her disguise.

A Captain of the Welsh army brings Richard the bad news that his army, believing him dead, has deserted him, in Richard II.

A Captain brings Duncan news of Macbeth and Banquo's victories, in the first act of Macbeth.

A Captain attending on Edgar delivers Lear and Cordelia to be hanged in King Lear.

A Captain of the Norwegian army explains Fortinbras' mission against the Poles, in Hamlet.

A Captain in Antony's army is a minor speaking role in Antony and Cleopatra.

An English Captain witnesses the retreat of the cowardly Fastolfe, in Henry VI, Part 1.

An English Captain accompanies Lucy on his mission to obtain assistance from the English Lords, in Henry VI, Part 1.

A French Captain on the walls of Bordeaux defies Talbot, in Henry VI, Part 1.

A Roman Captain in Cymbeline attends on Lucius.

Two British Captains in Cymbeline arrest Posthumus, thinking him an enemy.

Several characters hold (or purport to hold) the rank of captain, including Fluellen, Gower, Jamy, Macmorris and Pistol.

Several characters are sea captains, including Antonio in Twelfth Night. See also Master.

Capulet:

Capulet is Juliet's father in Romeo and Juliet.

Lady Capulet is Juliet's mother in Romeo and Juliet.

Old Capulet is a minor character - a kinsman of Capulet - in the party scene of Romeo and Juliet.

See also Juliet and Tybalt.

Lord Caputius (hist) is an ambassador from the Holy Roman Emperor in Henry VIII.

Cardinal:



Cardinal Bouchier (hist) delivers the little Duke of York from sanctuary, and into the hands of Richard and Buckingham, in Richard III.

Cardinal Campeius (hist) is the papal legate at the trial of Katherine, in Henry VIII.

Cardinal Pandolph (hist) is the Papal legate in King John. He incites the Dauphin against John, but later tries to placate him.

Cardinal Wolsey (hist) orchestrates the fall from grace of Buckingham and Katherine, but himself falls from grace and dies, in Henry VIII.

See also the Bishop of Winchester, who becomes a Cardinal in the course of Henry VI, Part 1.

The Bishop of Carlisle (hist) supports Richard in Richard II.

A carpenter and a cobbler are among the crowd of commoners gathered to welcome Caesar home enthusiastically in the opening scene of Julius Caesar.

Casca (hist) is one of the conspirators against Caesar, in Julius Caesar. He has an important role in the early parts of the play, reporting offstage events.

Cassandra (myth) is a prophetess in Troilus and Cressida.

Michael Cassio is a lieutenant in Othello. Iago persuades Othello that Cassio is having an affair with Othello's wife, Desdemona.

Caius Cassius (hist) is a central character in Julius Caesar. He incites the conspiracy against Caesar, and recruits Brutus to the conspirators' ranks.

Catesby (hist) is a double agent - seemingly loyal to Lord Hastings but actually reporting to Buckingham and Richard - in Richard III.

For Catherine see Katherine.

Cathness is a thane in Macbeth.

Simon Catling, Hugh Rebeck and James Soundpost are minor characters, musicians, in Romeo and Juliet.

Young Cato is a soldier of Brutus' and Cassius' party, in Julius Caesar.

Celia is Rosalind's companion and cousin, and is daughter to Duke Frederick in As You Like It.

Ceres (myth) is presented by a masquer in The Tempest.[1]

Cerimon is a lord of Ephesus in Pericles, Prince of Tyre. He opens the chest in which Thaisa had been buried at sea and, being skilled in medicine, he realises that she is not dead and nurses her back to health.

For Cesario see Viola, who calls herself Cesario in her male disguise, and her brother Sebastian who is sometimes called Cesario, being mistaken for his sister.

The Lord Chamberlain, in Henry VIII (hist & hist) is a conflation of two historical Lords Chamberlain, one of them Lord Sandys, who is also a character in the play.

The Lord Chancellor (hist) - historically Sir Thomas More, although not identified as such in the play - is among the Privy Counsellors who accuse Cranmer in Henry VIII.

Charles:

Charles is a wrestler, defeated by Orlando, in As You Like It.

The Dauphin, later King Charles VII of France (hist) leads the French forces, with Joan, in Henry VI, Part 1.

Charmian (hist) is the main attendant to Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra and dies by snakebite.

Emmanuel the Clerk of Chatham (fict) is murdered by Jack Cade's rebels in Henry VI, Part 2.

Chatillion is an ambassador from France to England in King John.

The Lord Chief Justice (hist) is a dramatic foil to Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Chiron and Demetrius, are two sons of Tamora in Titus Andronicus. They rape and mutilate Lavinia, and are eventually killed and cooked by Titus, who serves them to Tamora to eat.

Chorus:

The Chorus speaks the opening prologue in Romeo and Juliet, and a further prologue at the beginning of the second act.

The Chorus (fict) is the second most major character, after the king himself, in Henry V. He speaks a lengthy prologue to each of the five acts, and an epilogue.[2] See also John Gower, Rosalind, Rumour and Time, each of whom act as a chorus in their play.

See also Prologue.

Christopher:

Christopher Sly is a drunken tinker in the induction to The Taming of the Shrew. He is gulled into believing he is a lord.

Christopher Urswick (hist) is a minor character: a priest acting as messenger for Lord Stanley, in Richard III.

Cicero, a senator, hears Casca's account of strange portents, in Julius Caesar.

Metellus Cimber (hist) is one of the conspirators in Julius Caesar.

Cinna:

Cinna (hist) is one of the conspirators against Caesar in Julius Caesar.

Cinna is a poet, mistaken for the conspirator Cinna in Julius Caesar. Realising they have the wrong man, the mob "kill him for his bad verses".

Citizen:

A citizen of Antium briefly meets the disguised Coriolanus, and directs him to Aufidius' house.

A mob of citizens, seven of them speaking roles, appear both in opposition and in support of the title character in several scenes of Coriolanus. Speaking as one, the mob's speech prefix is Plebeians.

Three citizens debate the succession of Edward V, in Richard III.

See also Plebeians.

Clarence:

George, Duke of Clarence (hist) is the younger brother of Edward and the elder brother of Richard in Henry VI, part 3 and Richard III. He is often known as "perjured Clarence", having broken his oath to Warwick and fighting instead for his brother's faction. He is eventually drowned in a butt of malmesey wine.

Thomas, Duke of Clarence (hist) is Hal's younger brother, who appears in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V.[2]

Claudio:

Claudio is a friend to Benedick and a follower of Don Pedro, in Much Ado About Nothing. He falls in love with Hero but is persuaded, wrongly, that she has been unfaithful.

Claudio, brother to Isabella, is sentenced to death for fornication in *Measure for Measure*.

Claudius:

Claudius and Varro are guards in Brutus' tent, in *Julius Caesar*. They do not see Caesar's ghost.

King Claudius (myth) is the uncle and stepfather of the title character in *Hamlet*. He has murdered his brother Old Hamlet, has taken over his crown, and has married his queen, Gertrude.

Cleomines is a courtier to Leontes, who, with Dion delivers the oracle from Delphos in *The Winter's Tale*.

Cleon is governor of Tarsus in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Pericles brings food to save Cleon's starving people, and later trusts his new-born daughter into Cleon's care.

Cleopatra (hist) is the lover of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. She commits suicide using a poisonous asp.

Emmanuel the Clerk of Chatham (fict) is murdered by Jack Cade's rebels in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Clifford:

Clifford (sometimes called Young Clifford) (hist) is a staunch Lancastrian, and is the Yorkists most hated enemy — as the killer of Rutland — in *Henry VI, Part 2* and *Henry VI, Part 3*.

Old Clifford (hist), father of Clifford, is a Lancastrian leader in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Clitus is a soldier, a follower of Brutus, in *Julius Caesar*. He refuses to aid Brutus' suicide.

Cloten, son of the Queen and stepson to the king in *Cymbeline*, vainly loves Imogen, and eventually resolves to rape her.

Clown:

The Clown is the good-natured son of the Old Shepherd, gulled by Autolycus, in *The Winter's Tale*.

The Clown appears briefly to make fun of the musicians, and later to banter with Desdemona, in *Othello*.

The Clown delivers some pigeons, and letters from Titus Andronicus, to Saturninus. He is hanged for his pains.

The Clown delivers a poisonous asp to Cleopatra in a basket of figs, in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The Clown, also identified as "Pompey" is a servant to Mistress Overdone in *Measure for Measure*.

For the two clowns in *Hamlet* see "Gravedigger".

For "Clown" in *All's Well That Ends Well*, see Lavatch.

See also Touchstone, who is simply called "Clown" until he reaches the Forest of Arden.

Numerous characters are clowns, or are comic characters originally played by the clowns in Shakespeare's company.

See also Fool and Shakespearian fool.

A cobbler and a carpenter are among the crowd of commoners gathered to welcome Caesar home enthusiastically in the opening scene of Julius Caesar.

Cobweb is a fairy in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Sir John Coleville is a rebel captured by Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Cominius and Titus Lartius are leaders of the Roman forces against the Volscians, in Coriolanus.

Conrade is a villain, a servant of Don John, in Much Ado About Nothing.

"Three or four" Conspirators, three of them speaking roles, conspire with Aufidius, in Coriolanus.

The Constable of France (hist) leads the French forces in Henry V.[2]

Constance (hist) is Arthur's mother in King John: a fierce advocate for her son's right to the English throne.

Corambis is an alternative name for Polonius in Hamlet. He is so named in The First Quarto of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" (1603); occasionally referred to as the "bad quarto".

Cordelia (myth) is the goodly youngest daughter in King Lear. She marries the King of France. At the end of the play she is hanged on Edmund's instructions.

Corin is a kindly shepherd in As You Like It.

Caius Martius Coriolanus (hist) is the central character of Coriolanus, who earns the title "Coriolanus" in recognition of his skill at smiting Volscians in Coriolanus.

Cornelius:

Cornelius and Voltemand are two ambassadors from Claudius to the Norwegian court, in Hamlet.

Cornelius, a doctor in Cymbeline, provides a fake poison to the Queen, which is later used on Imogen. He also reports the Queen's last words.

The Duke of Cornwall is Regan's husband, who puts out Gloucester's eyes, in King Lear.

For Corporal, see Bardolph and Nym, who hold that rank.

Costard is a clown and country bumkin from Love's Labour's Lost.

Count (title):

A number of characters have the title Count, including Claudio (from Much Ado About Nothing) and Paris.

Countess (title):

The Countess of Auvergne tries to entrap Talbot in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Countess of Rousillon is Bertram's mother, and Helena's protector, in All's Well That Ends Well.

See also Olivia.

A number of countrymen, together with Gerald, provide Maying entertainment in The Two Noble Kinsmen. Four of them are speaking roles. Three of them are called Arcas, Rycas and Sennois. They may, or may not, include Timothy and the Bavian.

Five countrywomen (called Barbary, Friz, Luce, Maudlin and Nell) dance at the Maying entertainment in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

Alexander Court (fict) is a soldier in the English army in Henry V.[2]

Courtesan:

A courtesan dines with Antipholus of Ephesus, who finds himself locked out of his own home, in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Several characters are courtesans, or are accused of being courtesans, most notably Cressida from *Troilus and Cressida*.

Crab is Launce's dog, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (hist) is a major character in the last act of *Henry VIII*: hauled before the privy council by his enemies and threatened with imprisonment, but protected by the king.

Cressida is one of the titular characters in *Troilus and Cressida*. The Trojan prince Troilus falls in love with this young daughter of a Trojan defector.

A crier to the court, and a scribe to the court, are minor roles - but they usually have dramatic impact - in the trial scene of *Henry VIII*.

Thomas Cromwell (hist) is secretary to Wolsey, and later to the Privy Council, in *Henry VIII*.

Cupid (myth) reads the prologue to a masque in *Timon of Athens*.

Curan is minor character, a follower of the Earl of Gloucester, in *King Lear*.

Curio is an attendant on Orsino in *Twelfth Night*.

Curtis is a servant of Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Cymbeline (hist), the title character of *Cymbeline*, is king of the Britons, and father to Imogen, Guiderus and Arviragus.

D[edit]

Desdemona by Frederic Leighton

Dardanius is a soldier, a follower of Brutus, in *Julius Caesar*. He refuses to aid Brutus' suicide.

Daughter:

The Daughter of Antiochus is a famed beauty, engaged in a secret incestuous relationship with her father, in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*.

The Jailer's Daughter develops an obsessive love for Palamon, and releases him from prison, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. She descends into madness.

Dauphin (sometimes Dolphin in older texts):

The Dauphin (hist) is Henry's chief enemy in *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Dauphin, later King Charles VII of France (hist) leads the French forces, with Joan, in *Henry VI, Part 1*.

See also Lewis.

Davy (fict) is justice Shallow's servant in *Henry IV, Part 2*.

DeBoys:

Jaques DeBoys is a brother to Oliver and Orlando in *As You Like It*.

See also Oliver and Orlando from *As You Like It*, whose surname is also DeBoys.

Decius Brutus (hist) is one of the conspirators against Caesar in *Julius Caesar*.

For Decretas, see Dercetus.

Deiphobus (myth), a brother of Hector and Troilus, is a minor character (with the one line, "It is the Lord Aeneas") in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Demetrius:

Demetrius is in love with Hermia at the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Later, he loves and marries Helena.

Demetrius and Chiron, are two sons of Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*. They rape and mutilate Lavinia, and are eventually killed and cooked by Titus, who serves them to Tamora to eat.

Demetrius and Philo, Romans following Antony, regret his infatuation with Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Dennis is a minor character - a servant to Oliver - in *As You Like It*.

Sir Anthony Denny (hist) is a minor character in *Henry VIII*, who brings Cranmer to the King.

Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby (hist) is a military leader who ultimately reveals his loyalty to the Richmond faction, in spite of his son being a hostage to Richard, in *Richard III*.

Dercetus (hist) is a follower of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. He informs Caesar of Antony's death.

Desdemona is the protagonist's wife in *Othello*. He strangles her, in the mistaken belief that she is unfaithful.

Diana:

Diana is desired by Bertram, and pretends to agree to have sex with him. Instead, under cover of darkness, she exchanges places with Helena, who becomes pregnant with Bertram's child, in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

Diana (myth) the goddess of chastity, appears to Perciles in a vision, in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. She tells him to visit her temple at Ephesus, leading to his reconciliation with Thaisa there.

Dick:

Dick the Butcher (fict) is a follower of Jack Cade in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

See also Richard.

Dideuterio: is the apothecary from whom the court doctor Cornelius in *Cymbeline* obtains the false poison requested by the Queen to murder Cymbeline and Imogen and secure the throne. Cf.: the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Diomedes:

Diomedes is a follower of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. He informs Antony that Cleopatra is alive, and informs Cleopatra that Antony is dying.

Diomedes (myth) is one of the Greek leaders in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Diomedes' Servant is sent with a message to Cressida, in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Dion is a courtier to Leontes, who, with Cleomines delivers the oracle from Delphos in *The Winter's Tale*.

Dionyza, the wife of Cleon of Tarsus, is entrusted with the upbringing of Marina, in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. However, she comes to see Marina as a rival to her own daughter, and orders Leonine to kill Marina.

Doctor (title):

A Doctor in Cordelia's train tends the mad Lear in *King Lear*.

A Doctor suggests that the wooer can cure the Jailer's Daughter's madness by having sex with her while pretending to be Palamon, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Doctor Butts (hist) is the king's physician in Henry VIII. He alerts the king to Cranmer's humiliation in refused admittance to the council chamber.

Doctor Caius (hist-ish) is a French doctor in The Merry Wives of Windsor. He challenges Parson Hugh to a duel.

An English Doctor is a minor character in Macbeth.

A Scottish Doctor witnesses Lady Macbeth sleepwalking in Macbeth.

See also Pinch in The Comedy of Errors, who is sometimes referred to as "Doctor Pinch".

Dogberry, accompanied by Verges, is a clownish officer of the watch in Much Ado About Nothing.

Dolabella (hist) is a follower of Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra. He tells Cleopatra that Caesar intends to lead her, in triumph, through Rome.

Doll Tearsheet (fict) is a whore, who is emotionally involved with Falstaff, and is later arrested for murder in Henry IV, Part 2.

For Dolphin see Dauphin.

For Domitus see Enobarbus.

Don (title):

Don John is the bastard brother of Don Pedro, and is the chief villain in Much Ado About Nothing.

Don Pedro is the prince of Arragon in Much Ado About Nothing.

Don Adriano de Armado is an arrogant Spanish braggart in Love's Labour's Lost.

Donalbain (hist) is the second son of Duncan in Macbeth.

A Door Keeper (fict) bars the entrance of Cranmer to the council chamber, in Henry VIII.

Dorcas and Mopsa are shepherdesses, usually portrayed as rather tarty, in The Winter's Tale.

Dorset (hist) and Grey (hist), are the two sons of Queen Elizabeth from her first marriage, who are arrested and executed on the orders of Buckingham and Richard in Richard III.

The Earl of Douglas leads the Scottish rebel forces in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

The twin Dromios in a Carmel Shake-speare Festival production at the Forest Theater in Carmel, California. September, 2008

Dromio:

Dromio of Ephesus, servant to Antipholus of Ephesus and twin of Dromio of Syracuse - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in The Comedy of Errors.

Dromio of Syracuse, servant to Antipholus of Syracuse and twin of Dromio of Ephesus - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in The Comedy of Errors.

Duchess (title):

Duchess of Gloucester:

The Duchess of Gloucester (hist) is the widow of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. His murder (before the play opens) drives much of the action of Richard II.

Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (hist) is the wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 2, in which she dabbles in witchcraft with disastrous results.

Duchess of York:

The Duchess of York (1) (unnamed) character in Richard II, a composite of Isabella of Castile, Duchess of York, died 1392, the mother of Aumerle, and Joan Holland, who bore no children

The Duchess of York (2) (hist) is the wife of Richard, Duke of York (1) in Henry VI, Part 3. She outlives him to mourn the death of two of their sons in Richard III.

Duke (title):

The Duke of Albany is Goneril's husband in King Lear.

The Duke of Alençon (hist) is one of the French leaders in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Duke of Arragon is an unsuccessful suitor to Portia in The Merchant of Venice.

For Duke of Austria see Limoges.

For Duke of Bedford see Prince John of Lancaster.

The Duke of Berry (hist) is a French leader in Henry V.[2]

The Duke of Bourbon (hist) fights on the French side in Henry V.[2]

The Duke of Britain (hist) is a French leader in Henry V.[2]

Duke of Buckingham:

The Duke of Buckingham (1) (hist) is a Lancastrian in Henry VI, Part 2. His death is reported in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Duke of Buckingham (2) (hist) is a Yorkist in Henry VI, Part 3, and is a co-conspirator with Richard - although he is eventually rejected, then murdered on Richard's orders - in Richard III.

The Duke of Buckingham (3) (hist), an enemy of Wolsey, falls from grace and is executed by Henry in Henry VIII.

Duke of Burgundy:

The Duke of Burgundy (1) (hist) brokers the peace treaty between the kings of France and England in the last act of Henry V.[2]

The Duke of Burgundy (2) (hist) fights firstly in alliance with the English, and later in alliance with the French, in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Duke of Burgundy (3) refuses to marry Cordelia without a dowry, in King Lear.

Duke of Clarence:

George, Duke of Clarence (hist) is the younger brother of Edward and the elder brother of Richard in Henry VI, Part 3 and Richard III. He is often known as "perjured Clarence", having broken his oath to Warwick and fighting instead for his brother's faction. He is eventually drowned in a butt of malmesey wine.

Thomas, Duke of Clarence (hist) is Hal's younger brother, who appears in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V.[2]

The Duke of Cornwall is Regan's husband, who puts out Gloucester's eyes, in King Lear.

Duke of Exeter:

The Duke of Exeter (1) (hist) is an uncle of Henry V. He acts as emissary to the French King in Henry V. He has a more choric role in Henry VI, Part 1.[2]



The Duke of Exeter (2) (hist) is a Lancastrian leader in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Duke of Florence discusses the progress of the war with the two French Lords, the brothers Dumaine, in All's Well That Ends Well.

Duke Frederick is the villain (the usurper of Duke Senior) in As You Like It.

Duke of Gloucester:

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (hist) appears as a brother of Hal in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V. He is a much more important character as the protector in Henry VI, Part 1 and Henry VI, Part 2, in which he is murdered by his rivals.[2]

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III (hist), brave but evil, is the third son of Richard, Duke of York (1). He is a fairly minor character in Henry VI, Part 2, is more prominent in Henry VI, Part 3, and is the title character - and murderer of many other characters - in Richard III.

See also Earl of Gloucester.

Duke of Lancaster:

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (hist), uncle to King Richard and father to Bolingbroke, dies in Richard II, having delivered his famous "This sceptred isle..." speech.

See also Bolingbroke, son to John of Gaunt, who claims the dukedom of Lancaster on his father's death.

Duke of Milan

The Duke of Milan is patron to both Valentine and Proteus, and is the father of Silvia, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

See also Prospero and Antonio from The Tempest, who are dukes of Milan.[1]

Duke of Norfolk:

The Duke of Norfolk (hist) is a supporter of the Yorkists in Henry VI, Part 3 and Richard III.

The Duke of Norfolk (hist & hist) is an associate of Buckingham in Henry VIII.

Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk (hist) is Bolingbroke's enemy, exiled by Richard, in Richard II.

The Duke of Orleans (hist) fights on the French side in Henry V.[2]

Duke Senior is the father of Rosalind. He is the true duke, and has been usurped by his brother, Duke Frederick, at the start of As You Like It.

Duke of Somerset:

The Duke of Somerset (1) (hist) is a follower of King Henry in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Duke of Somerset (2) (hist) appears among the Lancastrian faction in Henry VI, Part 2. His head is carried onstage by Richard (later Richard III) in the opening scene of Henry VI, Part 3.

The Duke of Somerset (3) (hist and hist) is a conflation by Shakespeare of two historical Dukes of Somerset. He supports both factions at different stages of Henry VI, Part 3.

Duke of Suffolk:

The Duke of Suffolk (hist) is a courtier, cynical about the King's relationship with Anne Bullen, in Henry VIII.

The Duke of Suffolk (William de la Pole) (hist) is a manipulative character, loved by Queen Margaret, in Henry VI, Part 1 and Henry VI, Part 2.

The Duke of Surrey (hist) accuses Aumerle of plotting Woodstock's death in Richard II.

Duke of Venice:

The Duke of Venice tries the case between Shylock and Antonio in The Merchant of Venice.

The Duke of Venice hears Brabantio's complaint against Othello in Othello.

For Duke of Vienna see Vincentio in Measure for Measure.

Duke of York:

The Duke of York (1) (hist) is the uncle of both Richard and Bolingbroke in Richard II.

The Duke of York (2) (hist) is a minor character, the leader of the "vaward" in Henry V. (Historically this character is the same person as Aumerle.)[2]

Richard, Duke of York (1) (hist) is a central character in Henry VI, Part 1, Henry VI, Part 2, and Henry VI, Part 3. He is the Yorkist claimant to the throne of England, in opposition to Henry VI, and he is eventually killed on the orders of Queen Margaret.

Richard, Duke of York (2) (hist) is the younger of the two princes in the tower, murdered on the orders of Richard in Richard III.

For The Duke in Measure for Measure, see Vincentio.

Numerous characters are Dukes, including Antonio (from The Tempest), Orsino, Prospero, Solinus, Theseus and Vincentio (from Measure for Measure).[1]

Dull is a constable in Love's Labour's Lost.

Dumaine:

Dumaine, with Berowne and Longaville, is one of the three companions of The King of Navarre in Love's Labour's Lost.

See also the two Lords in All's Well That Ends Well, who are described as the brothers Dumaine.

Duncan (hist) is the king of Scotland, murdered in Macbeth.

A Dutchman, a Frenchman and a Spaniard are guests of Philario, in Cymbeline.

E[edit]

The historical Edward IV, a character in Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part 1, Henry VI, Part 2, and Richard III.

Earl (title):

Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby (hist) is a military leader who ultimately reveals his loyalty to the Richmond faction, in spite of his son being a hostage to Richard, in Richard III.

The Earl of Douglas (hist) leads the Scottish rebel forces in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

The Earl of Essex (hist) is a minor character in King John.

The Earl of Cambridge (hist) is one of the three conspirators against the king's life (with Scroop and Grey) in Henry V.[2]

The Earl of Gloucester is the father of Edgar and Edmund, who has his eyes put out by the Duke of Cornwall, in King Lear.

The Earl of Grandpre (fict?), a French leader, makes an unduly optimistic speech on the morning of Agincourt, in Henry V.[2]

The Earl of Huntingdon (hist) is a non-speaking follower of the king in Henry V.[2]

The Earl of Kent in King Lear is a follower of Lear who evades banishment by disguising himself as a servant, and calling himself Caius.

Earl of Northumberland:

The Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, (hist) is an important character in Richard II, where he is Bolingbroke's chief ally, and in Henry IV, Part 1[3] and Henry IV, Part 2, in which he leads the rebellion against his former ally, who is now king.

The Earl of Northumberland (hist) fights for the Lancastrians in Henry VI, Part 3.

See also Seyward in Macbeth.

The Earl of Oxford (hist) is a staunch Lancastrian, supporting Henry in Henry VI, Part 3, and Richmond in Richard III.

Earl of Pembroke:

The Earl of Pembroke (hist), together with Salisbury and Bigot, fear for the life of young Arthur, and later discover his body, in King John.

The Earl of Pembroke (hist) is a non-speaking Yorkist in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Earl of Richmond, later King Henry VII (hist) leads the rebellion against the cruel rule of Richard III, and eventually succeeds him as king.

Earl Rivers (hist), is the brother to Queen Elizabeth in Richard III. He is arrested and executed on the orders of Richard and Buckingham.

Earl of Salisbury:

The Earl of Salisbury (hist) delivers bad news to Constance, in King John.

The Earl of Salisbury (hist) remains loyal to King Richard in Richard II.

The Earl of Salisbury (hist) fights for the king in Henry V. He is killed by the Master Gunner's Boy in Henry VI, Part 1.[2]

The Earl of Salisbury (hist) supports the Yorkists in Henry VI, Part 2.

Earl of Surrey:

The Earl of Surrey (hist) is a supporter of the king in Henry IV, Part 2.

The Earl of Surrey (hist) is a son-in-law of Buckingham in Henry VIII.

Earl of Warwick:

The Earl of Warwick (1) (hist) is a supporter of the kings in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V.[2]

The Earl of Warwick (2) (hist) is an important player in the Wars of the Roses, firstly for the Yorkist party, and then for the Lancastrians. He appears in Henry VI, Part 1, Henry VI, Part 2, and Henry VI, Part 3.

Earl of Westmoreland:

The Earl of Westmoreland (1) (hist) is one of the leaders of the royal forces in Henry IV, Part 1,[3] Henry IV, Part 2, and Henry V.[2]

The Earl of Westmoreland (2) (hist) fights for King Henry in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Earl of Worcester (hist) is the brother of the Earl of Northumberland, and a leader of the rebel forces, in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

Edgar is the worthy, legitimate son of Gloucester in King Lear. He disguises himself as "Poor Tom".

Edmund:

Edmund is the bastard son of Gloucester, and the most calculating of the villains, in *King Lear*.

Edmund Mortimer (1) (hist) is a claimant to the English throne, and a leader of the rebel forces, in *Henry IV, Part 1*.<sup>[3]</sup>

Edmund Mortimer (2) (hist) explains the Yorkist claim to the crown to Richard Duke of York (1), in *Henry VI, Part 1*.

Edward IV (Travis Brazil), in a Carmel Shake-speare Festival production of *Henry VI, Part 3*, 2004

Edward:

Edward later King Edward IV (hist) is the eldest son of Richard, Duke of York (1) in *Henry VI, Part 2* and *Henry VI, Part 3* - in which he becomes king. He dies in *Richard III*.

Prince Edward:

Prince Edward (hist) is the son of Henry VI, who joins his mother Queen Margaret as a leader of the Lancastrian forces in *Henry VI, Part 3*. He is killed by the three Yorks (Edward, George and Richard).

Prince Edward of York later King Edward V (hist) is the eldest son of Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth. He appears in *Henry VI, Part 3*, and is the elder of the two princes in the tower in *Richard III*.

See also Ned.

Egeon is a merchant from Syracuse, father of the Antipholus twins in *The Comedy of Errors*. He is under Solinus's sentence of death unless he can pay a thousand marks' fine.

Egeus (myth) is the father of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He wishes to have her married, against her will, to Demetrius.

Sir Eglamour assists Silvia's escape from her father's palace, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Elbow is a dim-witted constable in *Measure for Measure*.

Eleanor:

Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (hist) is the wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester in *Henry VI, Part 2*, in which she dabbles in witchcraft with disastrous results.

Queen Eleanor (hist) is the mother of John in *King John*. She takes a liking to Philip the Bastard, and recruits him to John's court.

Queen Elizabeth (hist) is a suitor to, and then queen to, Edward IV in *Henry VI, Part 3* and *Richard III*. She is a major character in the later play, and a foil to Richard.

Ely:

The Bishop of Ely (1) (hist) conspires with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the opening scene of *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Bishop of Ely (2) (hist) ultimately shows his opposition to Richard, in *Richard III*.

Emmanuel the Clerk of Chatham (fict) is murdered by Jack Cade's rebels in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Emilia:

Emilia is the wife of Iago in Othello. She steals Desdemona's handkerchief for Iago. At the end of the play - too late to save Desdemona - she realises Iago's villainy, and exposes him, but is then murdered by him.

Emilia is Hippolyta's sister in The Two Noble Kinsmen. Both title characters fall in love with her, leading to mortal conflict.

Emilia is a lady attending on Hermione, both at court and in prison, in The Winter's Tale.

See also Aemilia.

An English Doctor is a minor character in Macbeth.

Enobarbus (hist & hist) is a major character in Antony and Cleopatra: a follower of Antony who later abandons him to join Caesar.

Ephesus:

Antipholus of Ephesus, twin of Antipholus of Syracuse - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in The Comedy of Errors.

Dromio of Ephesus, servant to Antipholus of Ephesus and twin of Dromio of Syracuse - with whom he is often confused, is a central character in The Comedy of Errors.

See also Solinus, who is Duke of Ephesus.

Epilogue:

An Epilogue and a Prologue (possibly the same player) appear in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

An Epilogue and a Prologue (possibly the same player) appear in Henry VIII.

An Epilogue (possibly the character Rumour) appears in Henry IV, Part 2.

A number of characters speak epilogues, including Chorus (in Henry V),[2] Gower, Prospero and Rosalind.

See also Prologue and Chorus.

Eros is a follower of Antony in Antony and Cleopatra, who kills himself rather than obey Antony's order to kill him.

Sir Thomas Erpingham (hist) is an officer in the English army in Henry V.[2]

Escalus:

Escalus, Prince of Verona tries to keep the peace between Montague and Capulet, in Romeo and Juliet.

Escalus is a lord involved in the government of Vienna, in Measure for Measure.

Escanes is a minor character in Pericles, Prince of Tyre. He converses with Helicanus about the strange death of Antiochus and his daughter.

The Earl of Essex (hist) is a minor character in King John.

Sir Hugh Evans is a Welsh priest in The Merry Wives of Windsor. He is challenged to a duel by Caius. He plays a fairy in the final act.

Exeter:

The Duke of Exeter (1) (hist) is an uncle of Henry V. He acts as emissary to the French King in Henry V. He has a more choric role in Henry VI, Part 1.[2]

The Duke of Exeter (2) (hist) is a Lancastrian leader in Henry VI, Part 3.

Sir Piers of Exton (fict) murders the deposed King Richard in Richard II.

F[edit]

Falstaff by Eduard von Grützner

Fabian is a servant to Olivia, and one of the conspirators against Malvolio, in Twelfth Night.

A Fairy flirts with Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Sir John Falstaff (fict, but see Sir John Oldcastle and Sir John Fastolfe) is a central character of Henry IV, Part 1, Henry IV, Part 2, and The Merry Wives of Windsor. In the Henry plays, he is "bad angel" to prince Hal, and is eventually rejected by him. He is the lecherous gull of the title characters in Merry Wives. His death is reported in Henry V, although he is not a character in that play. He is perhaps the most famous supporting role in all of Shakespeare.[2][3]

Fang is a constable in Henry IV, part 2.

Sir John Fastolfe (hist) is a coward, stripped of his garter in Henry VI, Part 1.

A Father who has killed his son at the Battle of Towton appears in Henry VI, Part 3. See also Son.

Faulconbridge:

Lady Faulconbridge (fict) confesses to her son, the Bastard, that Richard the Lionheart, and not her husband, was his true father, in King John.

Philip (the Bastard) Faulconbridge (fict) is a central character in King John, the bravest and most articulate of John's supporters.

Robert Faulconbridge (fict) is the legitimate brother of the bastard in King John. He inherits his father's property.

Feeble is pressed into military service by Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Ferdinand:

Ferdinand is the only son of Alonzo (King of Naples) in The Tempest. Ferdinand falls in love with Miranda, and his love is tested by Prospero.[1]

See also King of Navarre, whose first name is Ferdinand.

Fenton is a suitor to Anne Page in The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Feste is the clown and musician in Twelfth Night: a foil for Malvolio.

For Fidele see Imogen, who calls herself Fidele when disguised as a boy.

For "First...", see entries under the rest of the character's designation (e.g. Murderer for First Murderer, Player for First Player, etc.).

Three Fishermen befriend the shipwrecked Pericles, at Pentapolis, in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Lord Fitzwalter (hist) is among those who challenges Aumerle in Richard II.

Flaminius is a servant of Timon, sent - unsuccessfully - to seek money for his master from Lucullus, in Timon of Athens.

Flavius:

Flavius is the loyal steward to Timon in Timon of Athens, who tries - and fails - to prevent his master's collapse into poverty.

Flavius and Marullus are tribunes of the people, dismayed by the enthusiasm of the commoners for the return of Caesar, in the opening scene of Julius Caesar.

Fleance is the son of Banquo in Macbeth. He escapes when his father is murdered.

The Duke of Florence discusses the progress of the war with the two French Lords, the brothers Dumaine, in All's Well That Ends Well.

Florizel is the son of Polixines, and therefore prince of Bohemia, in *The Winter's Tale*. He elopes with Perdita when his father prevents their marriage.

The Fool is a recurring (though not continuous) character throughout the canon (see: Shakespearian fool):

The Fool serves as a foil for the King in *King Lear*.

A Fool appears briefly in *Timon of Athens*.

See also Feste, *Touchstone*.

See also Clown.

Fluellen (fict) is a Welsh captain in *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

Francis Flute is a bellows-mender in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He plays *Thisbe* in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Ford:

Master Ford is a central character in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. He suspects his wife of infidelity with Sir John Falstaff. He tests Falstaff in disguise, calling himself Master Brook.

Mistress Ford, wife of Master Ford, is a title character of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. She pretends to accept Falstaff's overtures of love to her.

A Forester, a minor character, accompanies the Princess and her ladies in waiting on a shooting expedition in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Fortinbras is a prince of Norway in *Hamlet*. He is a peripheral figure throughout the play, but arrives to take over the throne of Denmark after the death of the Danish royal family in the final act.

France:

The Constable of France (hist) leads the French forces in *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Dauphin, later King Charles VII of France (hist) leads the French forces, with Joan, in *Henry VI, Part 1*.

King of France:

The King of France (fict) is the husband of Cordelia in *King Lear*.

The King of France is cured by Helena, and in recompense he agrees to order Bertram to marry her, in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

The King of France (hist) is Henry V's enemy in *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

King Lewis XI of France (hist), insulted by Edward IV's marriage to Lady Grey, allies himself with Warwick and Margaret in *Henry VI, Part 3*.

King Philip of France (hist) allies himself with Constance in support of Arthur's claim, but later makes peace with John in *King John*.

The Princess of France leads a diplomatic mission to Navarre and becomes romantically entangled with the King, in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The Queen of France (hist) appears in the last act of *Henry V*.<sup>[2]</sup>

Francis:

Francis is a confused drawer in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2*.<sup>[3]</sup>

Francis Flute is a bellows-mender in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He plays *Thisbe* in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Friar Francis presides at the aborted marriage ceremony for Hero and Claudio, in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Francisca is a nun, senior to Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*.

Francisco:

Francisco is a soldier on watch at Elsinore, who appears briefly in the opening moments of Hamlet.

Francisco is a lord, a follower of Alonso, in The Tempest.[1]

For Frank see Master Ford, whose first name is Frank.

Duke Frederick is the villain (the usurper of Duke Senior) in As You Like It.

A Frenchman, a Dutchman and a Spaniard are guests of Philario, in Cymbeline.

Friar (title):

Friar Francis presides at the aborted marriage ceremony for Hero and Claudio, in Much Ado About Nothing.

Friar John is a minor character, who is unable to deliver a crucial letter from Friar Laurence to Romeo, in Romeo and Juliet.

Friar Laurence is confessor and confidante to Romeo in Romeo and Juliet. He instigates the unsuccessful plot involving the potion drunk by Juliet.

Friar Peter assists Isabella and Mariana in the final act of Measure for Measure.

Friar Thomas leads an order of friars, and assists Vincentio to disguise himself as a friar, in Measure for Measure.

For The Friar or Friar Lodowick in Measure for Measure, see Vincentio.

Two Friends of the Jailer bring him news of his pardon, in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

For Friz, see Countrywomen.

Froth is a foolish gentleman, among those arrested and brought before Angelo by Elbow, in Measure for Measure.

G[edit]

Goneril and Regan by Edwin Austin Abbey

Gadshill (fict) is the "setter" of the Gadshill robbery in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

For Gaius see Caius.

Gallus (hist) is a follower of Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra.

Gaoler:

A Gaoler has custody of Egeon in The Comedy of Errors.

Several Gaolers, one a speaking role, guard Mortimer in Henry VI, Part 1.

See also Jailer.

For Ganymede see Rosalind.

Gardener:

A gardener (with his men) encounters the Queen in Richard II.

Two gardener's men, with the gardener, encounter the Queen in Richard II.

Gardiner:

Gardiner (hist) is the King's secretary, later Bishop of Winchester, and Cranmer's chief enemy, in Henry VIII.

Gardiner's Page is a minor role in Henry VIII.

Gargrave (fict) fights for the English in France in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Host of the Garter is the practical-joking innkeeper in The Merry Wives of Windsor.



John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (hist), uncle to King Richard and father to Bolingbroke, dies in Richard II, having delivered his famous "This sceptred isle..." speech.

Gentleman:

A gentleman discusses the plight of mad Ophelia with Horatio in Hamlet.

A gentleman agrees to present Helena's petition to the King of France, in the last act of All's Well That Ends Well.

A gentleman reports the arrival of knights to battle for the love of Emilia, in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

Two gentlemen (fict) are ransomed for a thousand crowns each in Henry VI, Part 2.

Two gentlemen open the action of Cymbeline, explaining the backstory.

Two gentlemen of Ephesus witness Cerimon's discovery of Thaisa, in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Two gentlemen of Mytilene are converted from lives of debauchery by Marina's preaching, in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Two gentlemen (fict) are mid-sized roles in Henry VIII. Their conversations perform a choric function at the execution of Buckingham and (together with a third gentleman) at the coronation of Anne Bullen.

"Two or three" gentlemen of Tyre, one a speaking role, appear in the shipboard reconciliation scene between Pericles and Marina in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Four gentlemen, with Montano, witness the dispersal of the Turkish fleet and Othello's arrival at Cyprus in Othello.

A number of gentlemen (possibly three, although it impossible to know for certain how Shakespeare intended them to be doubled) are speaking roles in King Lear.

Gentlewoman:

A Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth witnesses her sleepwalking, with the Scottish Doctor, in Macbeth.

A Gentlewoman attends on Virgilia, in Coriolanus

George:

George (fict) is a follower of Jack Cade in Henry VI, Part 2.

George, Duke of Clarence (hist) is the younger brother of Edward and the elder brother of Richard in Henry VI, Part 3 and Richard III. He is often known as "purjured Clarence", having broken his oath to Warwick and fighting instead for his brother's faction. He is eventually drowned in a butt of malmesey wine.

George Seacoal is a member of the Watch in Much Ado About Nothing.

See also Master Page, whose first name is George.

Gerald is a pedantic schoolmaster, who leads the Maying entertainments in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

Queen Gertrude is the protagonist's mother in Hamlet. She has married Claudius.

Ghost. The following characters appear as Ghosts. See the entries under their character name:

Banquo

Julius Caesar

Old Hamlet

in Cymbeline:

Sicilius Leonantus

The Mother of Posthumus

Two brothers of Posthumus

and in Richard III:

Dorset

The Duke of Buckingham (2)

Earl Rivers

George, Duke of Clarence

Grey

Henry VI

Lady Anne

Lord Hastings

Prince Edward

Prince Edward of York

Richard Duke of York (2)

Antigonus in The Winter's Tale reports seeing the ghost of Hermione in a dream.

For "Ghost characters" in the other sense - characters mentioned in stage directions but having no lines and playing no part in the action - see Ghost character. Ghost characters in that sense are not listed on this page.

Girl (hist) in Richard III is the young daughter of the murdered Clarence.

Glansdale (fict) fights for the English in France in Henry VI, Part 1.

Owen Glendower (hist), a warrior and magician who tries the patience of Hotspur, leads the Welsh forces in the rebellion in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

Gloucester:

The Duchess of Gloucester (hist) is the widow of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. His murder (before the play opens) drives much of the action of Richard II.

The Earl of Gloucester is the father of Edgar and Edmund, who has his eyes put out by the Duke of Cornwall, in King Lear.

Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester is the wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 2, in which she dabbles in witchcraft with disastrous results.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (hist) appears as a brother of Hal in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V. He is a much more important character as the protector in Henry VI, Part 1 and Henry VI, Part 2, in which he is murdered by his rivals.[2]

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III (hist), brave but evil, is the third son of Richard, Duke of York (1). He is a fairly minor character in Henry VI, Part 2, is more prominent in Henry VI, Part 3, and is the title character - and murderer of many other characters - in Richard III.

Gobbo:

Launcelot Gobbo is a clown in The Merchant of Venice, a servant to Shylock, and later to Lorenzo.

Old Gobbo, the blind old father of Launcelot Gobbo, is a clown in The Merchant of Venice.

Goneril is the cruel eldest daughter in King Lear. She is married to the Duke of Albany.

Gonzalo is a courtier to Alonzo in The Tempest.[1]

For Robin Goodfellow see Puck.

Matthew Gough (hist) is an enemy of Jack Cade's rebels in Henry VI, Part 2.

Governor:

The Governor of Harfleur (hist) surrenders to Henry V.[2]

The Governor of Paris has an oath of allegiance administered to him by Gloucester (but has no lines of his own) in Henry VI, Part 1.

Gower:

Gower (fict) is a messenger to the Lord Chief Justice in Henry IV, Part 2.

Gower (fict) is an English captain in Henry V.[2]

John Gower (hist) is the "Presenter", or narrator, of Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

The Earl of Grandpre (fict?), a French leader, makes an unduly optimistic speech on the morning of Agincourt, in Henry V.[2]

Gratiano:

Gratiano is a hot-headed friend of Antonio and Bassanio in The Merchant of Venice. He marries Narissa.

Gratiano is Brabantio's brother in Othello.

Gravedigger. The First Gravedigger and the Second Gravedigger are clowns in Hamlet. Hamlet's conversation with the First Gravedigger over Yorick's skull is possibly the most famous scene in Shakespeare.

Green (hist) is a favourite of Richard in Richard II.

Gregory and Sampson, two men of the Capulet household, open the main action of Romeo and Juliet with their aggressive and lecherous banter.

Gremio is an elderly suitor to Bianca in The Taming of the Shrew.

Grey:

Grey (hist) and Dorset (hist) are the two sons of Queen Elizabeth from her first marriage, who are arrested and executed on the orders of Buckingham and Richard in Richard III.

Sir Thomas Grey (hist) is one of the three conspirators against the king's life (with Cambridge and Scroop) in Henry V.[2]

For Lady Grey see Queen Elizabeth.

Griffith (hist) is a gentleman usher to Katherine, in Henry VIII.

A groom of the King's stable (fict) visits the imprisoned Richard at Pontefract in Richard II.

Grumio is a servant to Petruchio in The Taming of the Shrew.

Guard/Guardsman:

Several Guards (two of them minor speaking roles), together with Dercetus, discover the mortally wounded Antony in Antony and Cleopatra.

Two Guards (or Guardsmen) keep an unsuccessful suicide watch over Cleopatra, in Antony and Cleopatra.

Guiderius (also known as Polydore) is the true heir of the kingdom in Cymbeline, stolen away in infancy by Morgan, and brought up as Morgan's child.

Guildestern and Rozencrantz, in Hamlet, are two former friends of the prince, invited to the Danish court to spy on him. They eventually accompany Hamlet towards England, but he escapes while they continue with the journey, to their deaths.

Sir Henry Guildford (hist) welcomes guests to Cardinal Wolsey's party, in Henry VIII.

Gunner:

The Master Gunner of Orleans leaves his boy in charge of the artillery, in Henry VI, Part 1.

The Master Gunner's Boy kills Salisbury, in Henry VI, Part 1.

James Gurney (fict) is a servant of Lady Faulconbridge, in King John.

H[edit]

Edwin Booth (1833–1894), as Hamlet, c. 1870. Booth is in the position on the throne where he is said to have begun the monologue: To be or not to be, that is the question. (Hamlet, Act III, Scene 1, line 64).[4]

Washington Allston's 1818 painting Hermia and Helena

A Haberdasher is verbally abused by Petruchio in The Taming of the Shrew.

Hal, later King Henry V (sometimes called The Prince of Wales, Prince Henry or just Harry) (hist) is a central character in Henry IV, Part 1 and Henry IV, Part 2 and is the title character of Henry V. He has a closer relationship with Falstaff than with his father (Henry IV), but he eventually ascends the throne, rejects Falstaff, and leads the English to victory at Agincourt.[2][3]

Hamlet:

Prince Hamlet (myth) is the central character of Hamlet. He is a prince of Denmark, called on to avenge his father's (Old Hamlet's) murder by Claudius.

Old Hamlet (myth) is the father of the protagonist in Hamlet. His ghost appears to exhort Hamlet to revenge Old Hamlet's murder by Claudius.

Harcourt is a messenger to the king in Henry IV, Part 2.

The Governor of Harfleur (hist) surrenders to Henry in Henry V.[2]

Harry:

Hotspur or Harry Percy (hist), brave and chivalrous but hot-headed and sometimes comical, is an important foil to Hal, and leader of the rebel forces, in Henry IV, Part 1.[3]

See also Hal, Bolingbroke.

See also "Henry".

Hastings:

Hastings Pursuivant is a minor character who meets his namesake, Lord Hastings, in Richard III.

Lord Hastings (hist) is the prime minister, beheaded on Richard's orders in Richard III.

For Hecat see Hecate.

Hecate is a leader of the witches in Macbeth.

Hector (myth), son of Priam, is the Trojans' champion in Troilus and Cressida.

Helen:

Helen (myth), the mythological Helen of Troy, is the wife of Menelaus who has been stolen away by Paris, and is therefore the cause of the wars fought in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Helen is a lady attending on Imogen in *Cymbeline*.

See also Nell.

See also Helena.

Helena:

Helena, the ward of the Countess of Rousillon, is the central character of *All's Well That Ends Well*. She is married to Bertram against his will, but she eventually wins his love.

Helena, formerly loved by Demetrius, has been rejected by him at the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Helenus (myth) is a priest, and brother of Hector and Troilus. He is a minor character in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Helicanus is a lord in *Pericles*, trusted with the government of Tyre during Pericles' absences.

Henry:

Bolingbroke, later King Henry IV (hist) leads a revolt against King Richard in *Richard II*. He is the title character of *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2*, which chart the rebellions against him by the Percy faction, and his difficult relationship with his eldest son, Hal.[3]

Hal, later King Henry V (sometimes called The Prince of Wales, Prince Henry or just Harry) (hist) is a central character in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2* and is the title character of *Henry V*. [2][3]

Henry VI (Jeffrey T. Heyer) and the young Earl of Richmond (Ashley Rose Miller) in the West Coast premiere of *The Plantagenets: The Rise of Edward IV*, based on *Henry VI, Part 3*, staged by Pacific Repertory Theatre in 1993.

King Henry VI (hist), the title character of *Henry VI, Part 1*, *Henry VI, Part 2*, and *Henry VI, Part 3*, is a weak and ineffectual king, and the plays chart the rebellions against him, leading to his overthrow and murder.[5][6]

The Earl of Richmond, later King Henry VII (hist) leads the rebellion against the cruel rule of Richard III, and eventually succeeds him as king.

King Henry VIII (hist) is the central character of the play *Henry VIII*, portrayed as a wise and strong ruler.

The Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, (hist) is an important character in *Richard II*, where he is Bolingbroke's chief ally, and in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2*, in which he leads the rebellion against his former ally, who is now king.[3]

Prince Henry (hist) appears towards the end of *King John*, as successor to the title character.

Sir Henry Guildford (hist) welcomes guests to Cardinal Wolsey's party, in *Henry VIII*.

See also Hotspur (whose real name is Henry Percy).

See also "Harry"

Herald:

A Herald calls for a champion to face Edmund in *King Lear*.

A Herald brings news to Theseus of noble prisoners taken in battle, including the title characters of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

A Herald announces victory celebrations in *Othello*.

A Herald announces Coriolanus' return to Rome in *Coriolanus*.

Two Heralds one French, one English, claim victory before the walls of Angers in *King John*. Neither of them persuades Hubert.

Sir Walter Herbert is a follower of Richmond in *Richard III*.

Hermia loves Lysander, and is loved by Demetrius, at the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Hermione is the wife of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*. She suffers as a result of his mistaken belief in her infidelity. At the end of the play she appears to return from the dead, having appeared as a statue.

Hero falls in love with Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*. She is wronged by Don John and Borachio, and is abandoned at the altar, and left for dead, by Claudio.

Hippolyta (myth) is a leader of the Amazons, who is the bride of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Holofernes is a pedantic schoolmaster in *Love's Labour's Lost*. He plays Judas Maccabeus in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies.

Horatio is a student, and a friend and confidante of the protagonist in *Hamlet*.

Thomas Horner (fict) fights a duel with his apprentice Peter Thump in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

Hortensio is a friend to Petruchio and suitor to Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*. He disguises himself as a music teacher in order to pursue Bianca, but ultimately loses her and marries a rich widow.

Hortensius is a servant, sent to extract payment of a debt from Timon in *Timon of Athens*.

Host:

The Host of the Garter is the practical-joking innkeeper in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

The Host of Julia's lodgings brings the disguised Julia into Proteus' company, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Hostess:

The Hostess of an alehouse throws out the unruly Sly, amidst an argument about broken glasses in the induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

See also Mistress Quickly, who is often referred to as "hostess".

For Hostilius in *Timon of Athens*, see *Strangers*.

Hotspur or Harry Percy (hist), brave and chivalrous but hot-headed and sometimes comical, is an important foil to Hal, and leader of the rebel forces, in *Henry IV, Part 1*. [3]

Hubert (hist) is a henchman of the king in King John. He resolves to put out Arthur's eyes, on John's orders, but eventually relents.

Hugh:

Hugh Oatcake is a member of the Watch in Much Ado About Nothing.

Hugh Rebeck, Simon Catling and James Soundpost are minor characters, musicians, in Romeo and Juliet.

Sir Hugh Evans is a Welsh priest in The Merry Wives of Windsor. He is challenged to a duel by Caius. He plays a fairy in the final act.

Sir Hugh Mortimer (hist) is an uncle of Richard Duke of York (1) in Henry VI, Part 3.

Hume, with Southwell, Jourdain and Bolingbroke, are the supernatural conspirators with Eleanor Duchess of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 2.

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (hist) appears as a brother of Hal in Henry IV, Part 2 and Henry V. He is a much more important character as the protector in Henry VI, Part 1 and Henry VI, Part 2, in which he is murdered by his rivals.[2]

The Earl of Huntingdon (hist) is a non-speaking follower of the king in Henry V.[2]

Several Huntsmen, two of whom are speaking roles, accompany the Lord in the induction to The Taming of the Shrew.

Hymen (myth), the Greek god of marriage, is a character in As You Like It, and is a non-speaking role in the opening scene of The Two Noble Kinsmen.

I[edit]

Iago and Othello in an illustration from Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare.

For Iachimo see Jachimo.

Iago is the villain (and the main character, measured by the number of lines spoken) of Othello.

Alexander Iden (hist) kills Jack Cade in Henry VI, Part 2.

Imogen is the daughter of the king in Cymbeline. Her husband, Posthumus, wrongly believes she has been unfaithful and orders her killed.

Iras is an attendant on Cleopatra, in Antony and Cleopatra. She dies following a kiss from Cleopatra.

Iris (myth) is depicted by a masquer in The Tempest.[1]

Isabella (sometimes addressed as Isabel) is the virtuous central female character in Measure for Measure: a novice nun who pleads to Angelo for the life of her brother Claudio.

For Isidore's Servant, see servant.

J[edit]

Joan of Arc, slandered by Shakespeare, who presented her as a whore and a witch in Henry VI, Part 1.

Jachimo is a villain in Cymbeline. He persuades Posthumus, wrongly, that he has slept with Posthumus' wife, Imogen.

Jack:

Jack Cade (hist) leads a proletarian rebellion in Henry VI, Part 2.

See also John: especially Sir John Falstaff, who is often addressed as Jack.

Jacquenetta is described as a light wench, and is the love interest of many comic characters in Love's Labour's Lost.

Jailer:

Two Jailers guard the imprisoned Posthumus in Cymbeline.

A Jailer keeps Palamon and Arcite in custody in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

The Jailer's Brother accompanies his niece in her madness, in The Two Noble Kinsmen.

The Jailer's Daughter develops an obsessive love for Palamon, and releases him from prison, in The Two Noble Kinsmen. She descends into madness.

A sympathetic Jailer guards and commiserates with Antonio in The Merchant of Venice.

See also Gaoler.

Jaques (pronounced "jake-wheeze"):

Jaques is a melancholy lord in As You Like It.

Jaques DeBoys is a brother to Oliver and Orlando in As You Like It.

James:

James Gurney (fict) is a servant of Lady Faulconbridge, in King John.

James Soundpost, Simon Catling and Hugh Rebeck are minor characters, musicians, in Romeo and Juliet.

Sir James Blunt is a supporter of Richmond in Richard III.

Sir James Tyrrell (hist) is employed to murder the princes in the tower in Richard III.

Jamy (fict) is a Scottish captain in Henry V.[2]

Jessica is Shylock's daughter in The Merchant of Venice. She elopes with Lorenzo and converts to Christianity.

A Jeweller sells a jewel to Timon in Timon of Athens.

Joan la Pucelle (hist), better known to history as Joan of Arc, leads the Dauphin's forces against Talbot and the English in Henry VI, Part 1. Shakespeare presents her as an adulterer who fakes pregnancy in order to avoid being burnt at the stake.

John:

Don John is the bastard brother of Don Pedro, and is the chief villain in Much Ado About Nothing.

Friar John is a minor character, who is unable to deliver a crucial letter from Friar Laurence to Romeo, in Romeo and Juliet.

John is a servingman of Mistress Ford: he carries Falstaff to Datchet Mead in a buck-basket, in The Merry Wives of Windsor.

John Bates (fict) is a soldier the English army in Henry V.[2]

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster (hist) is uncle to King Richard and father to Bolingbroke in Richard II.

John Gower (hist) is the "Presenter", or narrator, of Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

John Rugby is a servant to Caius in The Merry Wives of Windsor.

John Talbot is the son of Sir John Talbot. They die together bravely in battle in Henry VI, Part 1.



King John (hist) is the title character of King John: a king whose throne is under threat from the claim of his young nephew, Arthur.

Prince John of Lancaster (hist) is the younger brother of Prince Hal in Henry IV, Part 1, Henry IV, Part 2, and Henry V. He is also the Duke of Bedford who is Regent of France in Henry VI, Part 1.[2][3]

Sir John Blunt is a supporter of the king in Henry IV, Part 2.

Sir John Coleville is a rebel captured by Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Sir John Falstaff (fict, but see Sir John Oldcastle and Sir John Fastolfe) is a central character of Henry IV, Part 1, Henry IV, Part 2, and The Merry Wives of Windsor. In the Henry plays, he is "bad angel" to prince Hal, and is eventually rejected by him. He is the lecherous gull of the title characters in Merry Wives. His death is reported in Henry V, although he is not a character in that play. He is (with Hamlet) one of the two most significant roles in Shakespeare.[2][3]

Sir John Fastolfe (hist) is a coward, stripped of his garter in Henry VI, Part 1.

Sir John Montgomery (historically Thomas Montgomery) is a minor Yorkist character in Henry VI, Part 3.

Sir John Mortimer (hist) is an uncle of Richard Duke of York (1) in Henry VI, Part 3.

Sir John Stanley supervises Eleanor's penance in Henry VI, Part 2.

Sir John Talbot (hist) is the leader of the English forces in France, and therefore the chief enemy of Joan, in Henry VI, Part 1.

Joseph is a servant of Petruchio in The Taming of the Shrew.

Jourdain, with Southwell, Hume and Bolingbroke, are the supernatural conspirators with Eleanor Duchess of Gloucester in Henry VI, Part 2.

Julia is the faithful lover of Proteus, who follows him disguised as a young man and is dismayed to discover his infatuation with Silvia, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Juliet:

Juliet is a title character in Romeo and Juliet. The daughter of Capulet, she falls in love with Romeo, the son of her father's enemy Montague, with tragic results.

Juliet, lover of Claudio, becomes pregnant by him, leading to his death sentence, which begins the action of Measure for Measure.

Julius Caesar (hist) is the title character of Julius Caesar, an Emperor of Rome who is stabbed in the Capitol, on the Ides of March.

Junius Brutus and Sicinius Velutus, two of the tribunes of the people, are the hero's chief political enemies in Coriolanus, and prove more effective than his military foes.

Juno (myth) is presented by a masquer in The Tempest.[1]

Jupiter (myth) hears the pleas of the ghosts of Posthumus' family, in Cymbeline.

Justice (title):

A Justice is a minor role in the trial of Froth and Pompey, in Measure for Measure.

The Lord Chief Justice (hist) is a dramatic foil to Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2.

Justice Shallow (fict) is an elderly landowner in Henry IV, Part 2 and The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Justice Silence (fict) is an elderly friend of Justice Shallow in Henry IV, Part 2.

K[edit]

Detail from King Lear mourns Cordelia's death by James Barry.

Kate:

Kate Keepdown is a whore in Measure for Measure.

See also Lady Percy.

See also Katherine.

Katharine/Katherine:

Katharine (hist) is the French princess who marries Henry V.[2]

Katharine is a lady attending on the Princess of France, in Love's Labour's Lost. She becomes emotionally attached to Dumaine.

Katherine (sometimes "Kate" or "Katerina Minola") is the "shrew" from the title of The Taming of the Shrew, who is "tamed" by Petruchio.

Queen Katherine of Aragon (hist) is the first wife of King Henry in Henry VIII. She falls from grace, is divorced and dies.

See also Kate.

Kate Keepdown is a whore in Measure for Measure.

Keeper:

A door keeper (fict) bars the entrance of Cranmer to the council chamber, in Henry VIII.

A keeper (fict) gives Piers of Exton access to the imprisoned Richard in Richard II.

Two keepers (fict) arrest the fugitive Henry in Henry VI, Part 3.

The Earl of Kent is a follower of the King in King Lear who evades banishment by disguising himself as a servant, and calling himself Caius.

King (title):

First Player or Player King leads the company which visits Elsinore in Hamlet. He reads an excerpt as Priam, and plays the king in The Mousetrap.

King Claudius is the uncle and stepfather of the prince in Hamlet. He has murdered his brother Old Hamlet, has taken over his crown, and has married his queen, Gertrude.

King of France:

The King of France (fict) is the husband of Cordelia in King Lear.

The King of France is cured by Helena, and in recompense he agrees to order Bertram to marry her, in All's Well That Ends Well.

The King of France (hist) is Henry's enemy in Henry V.[2]

The Dauphin, later King Charles VII of France (hist) leads the French forces, with Joan, in Henry VI, Part 1.

King Lewis XI of France (hist), insulted by Edward IV's marriage to Lady Grey, allies himself with Warwick and Margaret in Henry VI, Part 3.

King Philip of France (hist) allies himself with Constance in support of Arthur's claim, but later makes peace with John in King John.

King Edward:

Edward later King Edward IV (hist) is the eldest son of Richard, Duke of York (1) in Henry VI, Part 2 and Henry VI, Part 3 - in which he becomes king. He dies in Richard III.

Prince Edward of York later King Edward V (hist) is the eldest son of Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth. He appears in Henry VI, Part 3, and is the elder of the two princes in the tower in Richard III.

For King Hamlet see Old Hamlet.

King Henry:

Bolingbroke, later King Henry IV (hist) leads a revolt against King Richard in Richard II. He is the title character of Henry IV, Part 1 and Henry IV, Part 2 which chart the rebellions against him by the Percy faction, and his difficult relationship with his eldest son, Hal.[3]

Hal, later King Henry V (sometimes called The Prince of Wales, Prince Henry or just Harry) (hist) is a central character in Henry IV, Part 1 and Henry IV, Part 2 and is the title character of Henry V. He has a closer relationship with Falstaff than with his father (Henry IV), but he eventually ascends the throne, rejects Falstaff, and leads the English to victory at Agincourt.[2][3]

King Henry VI (hist), the title character of Henry VI, Part 1, Henry VI, Part 2, and Henry VI, Part 3, is a weak and ineffectual king, and the plays chart the rebellions against him, leading to his overthrow and murder.[5][6]

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Michael D Jacobs as King Lear, in a Carmel Shake-speare Festival production at the Forest Theater, Carmel, Ca, 1999

King Lear is the central character of King Lear. He divides his kingdom among his two elder daughters, is rejected by them, runs mad, and dies.

The King of Navarre and his three noble companions, Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville, vow to study and fast for three years, at the outset of Love's Labour's Lost.

King Richard:

King Richard II (hist) is the title character of Richard II: a king who is deposed and eventually murdered.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later King Richard III (hist), brave but evil, is the third son of Richard, Duke of York (1). He is a fairly minor character in Henry VI, Part 2, is more prominent in Henry VI, Part 3, and is the title character in Richard III.

For King of Sparta see Menelaus.

For King of Troy see Priam.

A number of characters are kings, including Alonso, Antiochus, Leontes, Oberon, Polixines and Simonides.

Knight:

Five knights, plus Pericles himself, compete in a tournament for the love of Thaisa, in Pericles, Prince of Tyre.

Six knights, three of them attending Palamon, and three attending Arcite, appear in The Two Noble Kinsmen. Palamon's knights are speaking roles.

A hundred knights, three of whom are speaking parts, and most of whom will inevitably be spoken of but never seen in performance, are followers of Lear in King Lear.

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Shakespeare's plays

Title	Year written	First publications	Performances
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Authorship notes

Antony and Cleopatra	1601–1608	First published in the First Folio	Believed to have been between 1606 and 1608.
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**Summary** In a setting soon after Julius Caesar, Marc Antony is in love with Cleopatra, an Egyptian queen. What used to be a friendship between Emperor Octavius and Antony develops into a hatred as Antony rejects the Emperor's sister, his wife, in favour of Cleopatra. Antony attempts to take the throne from Octavius and fails, while Cleopatra commits suicide.

Coriolanus	First published in the First Folio	No recorded performances prior to the Restoration; the first recorded performance involved Nahum Tate's bloody 1682 adaptation at Drury Lane.
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**Summary** The Roman military leader Caius Martius, after leading Rome to several victories against the Volscans, returns home as a war hero with a new last name, Coriolanus, given for the city of Corioles which he conquered. However, after an attempt at political office turns sour, he is banished from Rome as a traitor. Hungry for revenge, Coriolanus becomes leader of the Volscan army and marches to the gates of Rome. His mother, his wife, and his son, however, beg him to stop his attack. He agrees and makes peace between Romans and Volscans, but is assassinated by enemy Volscans.

Hamlet	Likely early 17th century	First published in the so-called "bad" First Quarto, 1603	Earliest recorded performance of Hamlet was in June 1602, with Richard Burbage in the title role. Some scholars, such as Peter Alexander and Eric Sams, believe that the oft-attributed source work known as the Ur-Hamlet was actually a first draft of the play, written by Shakespeare himself sometime prior to 1589.[2]
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**Summary** Prince Hamlet is visited by his father's ghost and ordered to avenge his father's murder by killing King Claudius, his uncle. After struggling with several questions, including whether what the ghost said is true and whether it is right for him to take revenge, Hamlet, along with almost all the other major characters, is killed.



Julius Caesar 1599[3] First published in the First Folio Thomas Patter, a Swiss traveller, saw a tragedy about Julius Caesar at a Bankside theatre on 21 September 1599. This was most likely Shakespeare's play. There is no immediately obvious alternative candidate. (While the story of Julius Caesar was dramatised repeatedly in the Elizabethan/Jacobean period, none of the other plays known are as good a match with Patter's description as Shakespeare's play.)[4]

Summary Cassius persuades his friend Brutus to join a conspiracy to kill Julius Caesar, whose power seems to be growing too great for Rome's good. After killing Caesar, however, Brutus fails to convince the people that his cause was just. He and Cassius eventually commit suicide as their hope for Rome becomes a lost cause.

King Lear 1603–1606[5][6] Published in quarto in 1608[7] First recorded performance: 26 December 1606, before King James I at the Whitehall Palace.[7]

Summary An aged king divides his kingdom among two of his daughters, Regan and Goneril, and casts the youngest, Cordelia, out of his Kingdom for disloyalty. Eventually he comes to understand that it is Regan and Goneril who are disloyal, but he has already given them the kingdom. He wanders the countryside as a poor man until Cordelia comes with her husband, the King of France, to reclaim her father's lands. Regan and Goneril are defeated, but only after Cordelia has been captured and murdered. King Lear then dies of grief.

Macbeth 1603–1606[8] First published in the First Folio There are "fairly clear allusions to the play in 1607." [9] The earliest account of a performance of the play is April 1611, when Simon Forman recorded seeing it at the Globe Theatre.[10] The text of Macbeth which survives has plainly been altered by later hands. Most notable is the inclusion of two songs from Thomas Middleton's play *The Witch* (1615)[11]

Summary Macbeth, a Scottish noble, is urged by his wife to kill King Duncan to take the throne for himself. He covers the king's guards in blood to frame them for the deed, and is appointed King of Scotland. However, people suspect his sudden power, and he finds it necessary to commit more and more murders to maintain power, believing himself invincible so long as he is bloody. Finally, the old king's son Malcolm besieges Macbeth's castle, and Macduff slays Macbeth in armed combat.

Othello 1602–1604[12] (ca. 1603) First published in 1622 in quarto format by Thomas Walkley. Included in the First Folio the following year.

Probably first performed for King James I at the Whitehall Palace on 1 November 1604.[12]

Summary Othello, a Moor and military general living in Venice, elopes with Desdemona, the daughter of a senator. Later, on Cyprus, he is persuaded by his servant Iago that his wife (Desdemona) is having an affair with Michael Cassio, his lieutenant. Iago's story, however, is a lie. Desdemona and Cassio try to convince Othello of their honesty but are rejected. Pursuing a plan suggested by Iago, Othello sends assassins to attack Cassio, who is wounded, while Othello himself smothers Desdemona in her bed. Iago's plot is revealed too late, and Othello commits suicide.

**The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet** 1595–1596, with a possible early draft written in 1591[13][14] First published in 1597 in Q1[15] First performed sometime between 1591 and March 1597[16]

**Summary** In Verona, Italy, two families, the Montagues and the Capulets, are in the midst of a bloody feud. Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, fall in love and struggle to maintain their relationship in the face of familial hatred. After Romeo kills Juliet's cousin Tybalt in a fit of passion, things fall apart. Both lovers eventually commit suicide within minutes of each other, and the feuding families make peace over their recent grief.

**Timon of Athens** ca. 1607[17] First published in the First Folio[18][18] No recorded performances during Shakespeare's lifetime.[17] An adaptation was staged by Thomas Shadwell in 1678.[18] Brian Vickers and others argue that *Timon of Athens* was co-written with Thomas Middleton, though some commentators disagree.[19]

**Summary** *Timon of Athens* is an apparently wealthy man in his community who freely gives of his abundance to those around him. Eventually, it becomes apparent that he is living on credit, when all of his creditors ask for payment on the same day. Timon asks for his friends to help, but is refused. Angry at mankind's double nature, he leaves the city for the wilderness, and lives in a cave. Despite the efforts of several men to cheer his spirits, he dies full of hatred for humanity.

**Titus Andronicus** Probably late 1593[20] First published in quarto in 1594; the second quarto was published in 1600, the third in 1611.[20] First recorded performance: 24 January 1594 at the Rose, repeat performances on 29 January and 4 February. The play was performed by the Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men later that same year in June 1594 at Newington Butts. There was another performance, probably also by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, on 1 January 1596 in Sir John Harington's household at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland.[20] Brian Vickers argues that *Titus Andronicus* was co-written with George Peele.[21]

**Summary** Roman war hero Titus Andronicus returns victorious in his wars against the Goths. He kills one of the sons of the Queens of the Goths in a revenge ritual, despite her pleadings. When the queen becomes the Empress of Rome, she takes revenge on the house of Andronici for her son's blood. She has her sons rape and mutilate Titus' daughter, Lavinia, over her husband's murdered corpse, then frames Titus' own sons for the murder. Lavinia, however, manages to communicate to her father who the true murderers were, and Andronicus takes revenge, killing the queen and her two sons, but being killed in the act.

**Troilus and Cressida** 1602 (believed) 1609: two separate editions in quarto The dates of the play's earliest performances are uncertain due to contradictions in the editions published in 1609.

**Summary** The Trojans are under siege by the Grecian army of Agamemnon. Troilus, a Trojan, falls in love with Cressida, a Greek captive. When Cressida is given back to the Greeks as part of a prisoner exchange, Troilus fears that she will fall in love with one of them. His fears prove to be true when he crosses enemy lines during a truce and sees her and a Greek man together.

Comedies[edit]

Main article: Shakespearean comedy

Shakespeare's plays

Title	Year written	First publications	Performances
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Authorship notes

All's Well That Ends Well	1601–1608	First published in the First Folio	
Believed to have been between 1606 and 1608. No recorded performances before The Restoration. The earliest recorded performance was in 1741 at Goodman's Fields, with another the following year at Drury Lane.			

**Summary** Helena, a ward of the Countess of Rousillion, falls in love with the Countess's son, Bertram. Daughter of a famous doctor, and a skilled physician in her own right, Helena cures the King of France—who feared he was dying—and he grants her Bertram's hand as a reward. Bertram, however, offended by the inequality of the marriage, sets off for war, swearing he will not live with his wife until she can present him with a son, and with his own ring—two tasks which he believes impossible. However with the aid of a bed trick, Helena fulfils his tasks, Bertram realises the error of his ways, and they are reconciled.

As You Like It	1599–1600	First published in the First Folio	No recorded performances prior to the Restoration; the first recorded performance involved Nahum Tate's bloody 1682 adaptation at Drury Lane. No recorded performances before The Restoration, though there was a possible performance at Wilton House in Wiltshire; the King's Men were paid £30 to come to Wilton House and perform for the King and Court (remaining there due to an outburst of the bubonic plague) on 2 December 1603. A Herbert family tradition states the play was As You Like It.[22] The King's Company was assigned the play by royal warrant in 1669, and it was acted at Drury Lane in 1723 in an adapted form called Love in a Forest.[23]
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**Summary** It's a dramatic comedy, known for its confusing yet tantalising storyline that intrigues yet is one of the hardest by Shakespeare to understand. Like most others of its genre and age, it relies heavily on mistaken identity and desperate romance to induce humour between the artful weaving of the 16th century language.

The Comedy of Errors	1592–1594	First published in the First Folio	The first recorded performance was by "a company of base and common fellows," mentioned in the Gesta Grayorum ("The Deeds of Gray") as having occurred in Gray's Inn Hall on 28 Dec 1594. The second also took place on "Innocents' Day" but ten years later—in 1604, at Court.[note 2]
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**Summary** Egeon, about to be executed for unlawfully entering Ephesus, tells the sad tale of his search for his twin sons and wife. The Duke agrees to spare him if his family is found. Meanwhile, his twin sons, both of whom are named Antipholus, are actually in Ephesus, each unaware that he even has a twin. After a series of hilarious events involving mistaken identity almost ending in catastrophe, the twins are reunited with their mother and father, and realise their relation to each other.

**Cymbeline** This play is hard to date, though a relationship with a tragicomedy that Beaumont and Fletcher wrote ca. 1609–10 tends to support this dating around 1609; though it is not clear which play preceded the other.[24] First published in the First Folio Only one early performance is recorded with certainty,[note 3] which occurred on Wednesday night of 1 Jan 1634, at Court. Possible collaboration[note 4]

**Summary** The princess Imogen loves the commoner Posthumus, and marries him, but her father, King Cymbeline, disapproves of the match and exiles Posthumus. In exile, he meets the rogue Jachimo—who, to win a wager, persuades Posthumus, wrongly, that he (Jachimo) has slept with Imogen. Enraged, Posthumus orders a servant, Pisanio, to murder Imogen, but he cannot go through with his orders, and instead she finds herself befriended by the wild-living Polydore and Cadwal—who turn out to be her own brothers: Cymbeline's princes who had been stolen from his palace in their infancy. The repentant Posthumus fights alongside Polydore and Cadwal in a battle against the Romans, and following the intervention of the god Jupiter, the various truths are revealed, and everyone is reconciled.

**Love's Labour's Lost**

**Summary**

**Measure for Measure**

**Summary**

**The Merchant of Venice**

**Summary** Antonio borrows money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, to lend money to his friend Bassanio. Bassanio uses the money to successfully woo Portia, a wealthy and intelligent woman with a large inheritance. Unfortunately, a tragic accident makes Antonio unable to repay his debt to Shylock, and he must be punished as agreed by giving a pound of his flesh to the moneylender. Portia travels in disguise to the court and saves Antonio by pointing out that Shylock may only take flesh, and not any blood. Shylock is foiled, Portia reveals her identity, and Antonio's wealth is restored.

**Merry Wives of Windsor**

**Summary**

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** Approximately 1595 Registered in the 1600 quarto by Thomas Fisher on 8 October 1600[25] The title page assures it was "sundry times publicly acted by the Right Honorable the Lord Chamberlain and his Servants" prior to 1600 publication.

**Summary** In Athens, Hermia is in love with Lysander, defying her father's command to marry Demetrius; the couple flee to the woods to avoid the law sentencing her to death or a nunnery. Demetrius pursues them, and is in turn pursued by Helena, who is in unrequited love with him. Meanwhile a group of low-class workers decides to stage a play for the wedding of the King and Queen of Athens; they rehearse in the woods. Fairy king Oberon is quarrelling with his queen Titania; he magically causes her to fall in love with one of the actors, Bottom, whom he has transformed to have the head of an ass. He also attempts to resolve the Athenian youths' love triangle, but his servant Puck accidentally causes

both Lysander and Demetrius to fall in love with Helena instead of Hermia. In the end, Oberon has Puck restore Lysander to loving Hermia, allows Demetrius to stay in love with Helena, and returns Titania to her senses and Bottom to his shape. They return to Athens, where Lysander and Hermia are pardoned and they all watch the workers (badly) perform their play.

Much Ado about Nothing

Summary

Pericles, Prince of Tyre Either 1607–1608, or written at an earlier date and revised at that time[26] 1609 quarto[26] The Venetian ambassador to England, Zorzi Giustinian, saw a play titled Pericles during his time in London, which ran from 5 Jan 1606 to 23 Nov 1608. As far as is known, there was no other play with the same title that was acted in this era; the logical assumption is that this must have been Shakespeare's play.[27] Shakespeare is thought to be responsible for the main portion of the play after scene 9.[28][29][30][31] The first two acts were likely written by a relatively untalented reviser or collaborator, possibly George Wilkins.[32]

Summary This episodic story, covering many years, charts the history of Pericles, who believes he has lost both his daughter and his wife, but is ultimately reunited with both. His daughter Marina, sold into prostitution, proves to be a paragon of virtue; and his wife Thaisa, recovered by a skilled doctor having been buried at sea, becomes a priestess of the goddess Diana.

The Taming of the Shrew

Summary The play begins with a framing device, often referred to as the Induction, in which a drunken tinker named Sly is tricked into thinking he is a nobleman by a mischievous Lord. The Lord has a play performed for Sly's amusement, set in Padua with a primary and sub-plot.

The main plot depicts the courtship of Petruchio, a gentleman of Verona, and Katherina, the headstrong, obdurate shrew. Initially, Katherina is an unwilling participant in the relationship, but Petruchio tempers her with various psychological torments – the "taming" — until she is an obedient bride. The sub-plot features a competition between the suitors of Katherina's more tractable sister, Bianca.

The Tempest

Summary Prospero, overthrown and exiled Duke of Milan, lives on a small island with his daughter Miranda. By chance, his usurping brother Antonio, along with Alonso, King of Naples (who helped him) and his retinue, have passed near the island on a ship; Prospero, aided by his fairy servant Ariel, has magically called up a tempest to shipwreck them. Prospero toys with them but ultimately forgives Alonso (who has been betrayed in turn by Antonio) and permits Alonso's son Ferdinand to marry Miranda. Before returning to reclaim his throne, Prospero renounces magic.

Twelfth Night 1600–1601[33] First Folio Earliest known performance 2 February 1602[34]



at Court before the Flemish Ambassador. Other Court performances followed in 1612 and 1625.

#### Summary

Henry IV, Part 2 1597–1599 First published in a quarto in 1600 by Valentine Simms Philip Henslowe's diary records a performance of a Henry VI on 3 March 1592, by the Lord Strange's Men. Thomas Nashe refers in 1592 to a popular play about Lord Talbot, seen by "ten thousand spectators at least" at separate times.[38][note 5] There is stylistic evidence that Part 1 is not by Shakespeare alone, but co-written by a team with three or more unknown playwrights (though Thomas Nashe is a possibility[39]).

#### Summary

Henry V 1599 Published in a "bad quarto"[note 6] in 1600 by Thomas Millington and John Busby; reprinted in "bad" form in 1603 and 1619, it was published fully for the first time in the First Folio. A tradition, impossible to verify, holds that Henry V was the first play performed at the new Globe Theatre in the spring of 1599; the Globe would have been the "wooden O" mentioned in the Prologue. In 1600 the first printed text states that the play had been performed "sundry times", though the first recorded performance was on 7 January 1605, at Court.

#### Summary

Henry VI, Part 1 1588–1592 First published in the First Folio Philip Henslowe's diary records a performance of a Henry VI on 3 March 1592, by the Lord Strange's Men. Thomas Nashe refers in 1592 to a popular play about Lord Talbot, seen by "ten thousand spectators at least" at separate times.[38][note 7]

There is stylistic evidence that Part 1 is not by Shakespeare alone, but co-written by a team with three or more unknown playwrights (though Thomas Nashe is a possibility[39]).

#### Summary

Henry VI, Part 2 1590–1591 A version was published in 1594, and again in 1600 (Q2) and 1619 (Q3); the last as part of William Jaggrd's False Folio. See notes for Henry VI, Part I above. Parts I and III of Henry VI are known to have been playing in 1592, and it is assumed (but not reliably known) part 2 was presented at the same times.

#### Summary

Henry VI, Part 3 1590–1591 A version was published in 1594, and again in 1600 (Q2) and 1619 (Q3); the last as part of William Jaggrd's False Folio.

Performed before 1592, when Robert Greene parodied one of the play's lines in his pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*. See notes for Part II and I above.

#### Summary

Henry VIII A fire destroyed the Globe Theatre during a performance of this play on 29 June 1613, as recorded in several contemporary documents.[40] While some modern scholars believe the play was relatively new (one contemporary report states that it "had been acted not passing 2 or 3 times before").[41] Thought to be a collaboration between Shakespeare and John

Fletcher, due to the style of the verse. Shakespeare is thought to have written Act I, scenes i and ii; II, ii and iv; III, ii, lines 1–203 (to exit of King); V, i.

Summary

King John

Summary

Richard II

Summary

Richard III

Summary

Selected poems[edit]

Shakespeare's poems	Title	Year written	First publications	Performances
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Authorship notes

A Lover's Complaint

Shakespeare's Sonnets

The Phoenix and the Turtle

The Rape of Lucrece 1594[42]

The Passionate Pilgrim

Venus and Adonis 1593[42]

A Funeral Elegy

Attributed to Shakespeare

To the Queen

Attributed to Shakespeare

Apocrypha[edit]

Main article: Shakespeare Apocrypha

Shakespeare Apocrypha	Title	Year written	First publications	Performances
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Authorship notes

Edward III 1592 or 1593 Cuthbert Burby, quarto editions in 1596 and 1599

Generally considered a collaboration, but no agreement upon the collaborators.

Sir Thomas More The passages ascribed to Hand D "are now generally accepted as the work of Shakespeare." However, the identification remains debatable.

Cardenio (lost) Cardenio was apparently co-written with John Fletcher.[43]

Love's Labour's Won (lost) Before 1598[44]

The Birth of Merlin

Locrine Unknown, estimates range from the early 1580s to 1594.[45][46]  
1595 Quarto issued by the bookseller Thomas Creede[45]

The London Prodigal

The Second Maiden's Tragedy

The Puritan

Sir John Oldcastle

Thomas Lord Cromwell

A Yorkshire Tragedy



## Notes[edit]

- ^ The exact figures cannot be known. See Shakespearean authorship, Shakespeare's collaborations and Shakespeare Apocrypha for further details.
- ^ The identical dates may not be coincidental; the Pauline and Ephesian aspect of the play, noted under Sources, may have had the effect of linking The Comedy of Errors to the holiday season—much like Twelfth Night, another play secular on its surface but linked to the Christmas holidays.
- ^ There is a performance mentioned in the Book of Plays of Simon Forman; even if it is genuine (not all commentators think it is), the Book of Plays reference is undated and lacks specific information.
- ^ The Yale Shakespeare edition suggests this was a collaborative work; some scenes (Act III scene 7 and Act V scene 2) may seem less characteristic of Shakespeare than the rest of the play.
- ^ Since Henry VI, part 3 was also acted in 1592—Robert Greene parodied one of its lines in his 1592 pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*—the implication is that all three parts of the trilogy were being acted in 1592.
- ^ A "bad quarto" was a version of a play that was not the official version from the playwright themselves; often these versions were written down during a performance and printed later, leading to great inaccuracies in the text.
- ^ Since Henry VI, part 3 was also acted in 1592—Robert Greene parodied one of its lines in his 1592 pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*—the implication is that all three parts of the trilogy were being acted in 1592.

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- ^ Richard Edes's Latin play *Caesar Interfectus* (1582?) would not qualify. The Admiral's Men had an anonymous *Caesar* and *Pompey* in their repertory in 1594–5, and another play, *Caesar's Fall*, or the *Two Shapes*, written by Thomas Dekker, Michael Drayton, Thomas Middleton, Anthony Munday, and John Webster, in 1601–2, too late for Patter's reference. Neither play has survived. The anonymous *Caesar's Revenge* dates to 1606, while George Chapman's *Caesar* and *Pompey* dates from ca. 1613. E. K. Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 2, p. 179; Vol. 3, pp. 259, 309; Vol. 4, p. 4.
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William Shakespeare

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