



## ***The Diary of William Shakespeare, Gentleman***

**By Jackie French**

### **Book Summary:**

Could the world's greatest writer truly put down his pen forever to become a gentleman?

He was a boy who escaped small town life to be the most acclaimed playwright of the land. A lover whose sonnets still sing 400 years later; a glover's apprentice who became a gentleman.

But was he happy with his new riches? Who was the woman he truly loved?

The world knows the name of William Shakespeare. This book reveals the man - lover, son and poet.

Based on new documentary evidence, as well as textual examination of his plays, this fascinating book gives a tantalising glimpse at what might have been: the other hands that helped craft those plays, the secrets that must ever be hidden but - just possibly - may now be told.

### **Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes:**

English

### **Appropriate Ages:**

12+

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Notes by Ria Coffey

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### Introduction

The year is 1615 and William Shakespeare, gentleman, is putting quill to parchment, writing his personal diary from the setting of his comfortable estate in Stratford. His words share revelations about a possible life; eager student, glover's apprentice, a young man who sacrifices love to support his family, a husband and father, an entertainer who enchants with his words and a gentleman whose bowel movements and diet are of utmost importance.

The author, Jackie French, has used historical research and an understanding of the Elizabethan Era to tell a riveting story of the life of William Shakespeare. The study of this novel would be well placed in the Year 6-8 English curriculum, prior to the study of one of Shakespeare's plays, or included in a unit of study on poetry.

### About the Author/Illustrator

Jackie French has been writing fiction and non-fiction for more than 25 years. She has been the recipient of multiple literary and children's choice awards and continues to deliver outstanding works. Jackie French offers young people narratives that provide historical insight as well as exciting stories with characters that are relatable and engaging.

Jackie French lives with her husband in a stone house surrounded by gardens in the Araluen Valley in NSW. She knows a lot about wombats and is an awful speller due to her dyslexia. For more information visit [www.jackiefrench.com](http://www.jackiefrench.com)

### Study Notes on Themes and Curriculum Areas

#### Vocabulary:

Students will need to develop a glossary of definitions for the following terms to help their understanding of the text and Elizabethan England.

Rapier (1)	Travelling players (1)	Mildewed (1)	Livery (1)	Alms (2)
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Pattens (2)	Merchants (2)	Yeoman (2)	Scriveners (3)	Dowry (3)
Bracken Juice (3)	Privateers (5)	Tinker (5)	Minnows (5)	Rooks (5)
Alderman (5)	Duchy (6)	Tithe (7)	Estate (7)	Quill (7)
Bootboy (8)	Parson (9)	Hearth (9)	Usury (12)	Knaves (14)
Plague (15)	Leper (15)	Fickle (15)	Tavern (16)	Motley (18)
Effrontery (18)	Quatrain (20)	Carter (21)	Daubed in gore (21)	Parchment (25)
Neatsfoot oil (p.36)	Draught (49)	Ruttled (49)	Orris root (70)	Bailiff (105)
Garlands (107)	Codpiece (108)	Squire (118)	Reading of the banns (119)	Farthings (122)
Gunpowder plotters (129)	Doublet (132)	Yokel (133)	Retinue (133)	Tankard (136)
Privy closet (139)	Prating (159)	Biers (159)	Jackanapes (160)	Vintner (168)
Ducats (168)	Trencher (183)	Codlins (194)	Sennight (197)	Jest (203)
Burgess (205)	Charnel house (224)	Contagion (226)	Balladeers (245)	

### Social Class:

Gentleman was a title received by a man that elevated his family to the social class gentry. Wealth was vital to becoming a gentleman and birth, education and employment all contributed to determining social class. Once gentleman status was earned a coat of arms could be received, marriages into other gentle families coordinated and a more comfortable life lived.

- What did it mean to William Shakespeare to become a gentleman? How did his life change when he became a gentleman?
- What does it mean in today's society? Is gentleman still a relevant term? Is there a female equivalent? Why/Why not?

#### Dowry:

A dowry is an amount of money, property, or material goods brought to a husband by a wife on their wedding day. It played an important role in the organisation and coordination of marriages during Shakespeare's times and also throughout history in different cultures around the world.

- Do females and males in Shakespeare's time have equal opportunity?
- What role did the dowry play for William Shakespeare and later his own daughter?
- What role does a dowry play in creating different choices between genders?
- Research if paying a dowry still happens in today's society? What effect does this have on females?

#### The Elizabethan Era:

Students research one of the following topics relating to the Elizabethan Era and present their findings to the class. (This has the potential to be used as an assessment piece; students could create a multimodal presentation, research using the Internet and books, find pictures and diagrams and explore in depth the Elizabethan Era as part of their study of the text).

- Food
- Lifestyle (include weather)
- Education
- Jobs
- Clothing
- Hygiene
- Medical & dental
- Crime and punishment

- Social class
- The Globe Theatre

**Shakespeare's Words:**

Shakespeare is renowned for his use of language techniques (he added around 1700 new words to the English language). Similes, metaphors, personification and alliteration are used liberally by Jackie French to pay homage to the incredible wordsmith that Shakespeare was and to recreate his diary using his style and flair with words.

- What is a simile/metaphor/personification/alliteration? What are some examples? Find examples in the book and explain their meaning?

E.g.

Language technique:	Example from the text:	Meaning or purpose:	Your turn:
Personification	"Autumn's frosty fingers stroked the air and fringed the trees with gold." (p.1)	Makes readers visualise the effect of the Autumn weather.	The fridge hummed a repetitive tune.
Metaphor	"...I was a child again and tears were cold diamonds on my cheeks." (p.1)		
Alliteration	"Words whisper wicked wit..." (p.7)		
Simile	"I was as drunk on words as a ploughboy full of cider at the harvest feast." (p.15)		

**Shakespeare's Poems & Plays:**

Jackie French's interpretation of Shakespeare's diary includes poems, sonnets and excerpts from many of Shakespeare's most famous works.

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In this way readers are provided with a possible context for the development of his famous works.

- To assist in analysing Shakespeare's language use this interactive timeline to show readers how the English language has developed through time:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/timelines/language\\_timeline/index\\_embed.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/timelines/language_timeline/index_embed.shtml)
- Select a poem from the novel and rewrite it using modern day English. Go a step further and rewrite it using Emoticons and SMS language.
- Research an analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets and compare it to the context of this diary. Does the analysis match the context provided in this diary? Can readers think of another retelling?
- This diary is an interpretation of Shakespeare's life based on research. Can you find other research that supports a different theory, speculation or idea about Shakespeare's life? Formulate your own theories, about Shakespeare's life, particularly what he may have been doing during his 'lost years'. Prepare to present an informed case to the class.

Links to the Australian English Curriculum:

### Grade 6

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)

Understand that different social and geographical dialects or accents are used in Australia in addition to Standard Australian English (ACELA1515)

Identify and explain how choices in language, for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor, influence personal response to different texts (ACELT1615)

Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects (ACELA1518)

Identify the relationship between words, sounds, imagery and language patterns in narratives and poetry such as ballads, limericks and free verse (ACELT1617)

## Year 7

Understand the way language evolves to reflect a changing world, particularly in response to the use of new technology for presenting texts and communicating ([ACELA1528](#))

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1619](#))

Understand how accents, styles of speech and idioms express and create personal and social identities([ACELA1529](#))

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view ([ACELT1620](#))

Understand, interpret and discuss how language is compressed to produce a dramatic effect in film or drama, and to create layers of meaning in poetry, for example haiku, tankas, couplets, free verse and verse novels ([ACELT1623](#))

## Year 8

Understand the influence and impact that the English language has had on other languages or dialects and how English has been influenced in return ([ACELA1540](#))

Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups ([ACELT1626](#))

Analyse and explain how language has evolved over time and how technology and the media have influenced language use and forms of communication ([ACELY1729](#))

Identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or visual texts ([ACELT1630](#))

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and evaluate texts by reflecting on the validity of content and the credibility of sources, including finding evidence in the text for the author's point of view ([ACELY1734](#))

## Bibliography



There are an abundance of resources online to support a study into Shakespeare's life and his works. Most libraries also stock a good collection of books pertaining to the Elizabethan era, which students can use to research the life and times of Shakespeare.

<https://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/367/367-03.htm>  
<http://thelostcolony.org/bringing-history-to-life/elizabethan-era/>  
<http://www.shakespeareswords.com/Glossary>  
<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/>  
<http://www.nosweatshakespeare.com/sonnets/shakespeare-famous-sonnets/>  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/timelines/language\\_timeline/index\\_embed.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/timelines/language_timeline/index_embed.shtml)  
<http://www.literarygenius.info/william-shakespeare-lost-years.htm>

### About the Author of the Teachers' Notes

Ria Coffey was born and bred in the country town of Wycheproof in Victoria. Wycheproof boasts the smallest registered mountain in the world and a train line running through the main street. Ria now lives with her husband and daughter in Melbourne and works in a wonderful school library. She is busy making sure all the students and staff have great books to read, which is her life passion, but she always makes time to return to Wycheproof and hike up the mount to watch the sun set.