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SIR WALTER RALEIGH

(1552-1618)

Walter Raleigh was a poet and historian, a courtier and a soldier, but is most remembered by history as a sailor and explorer. As a young man he fought with the Huguenots in France, and later enlisted with the English army to fight rebels in Ireland, where he also spent some time with his good friend Edmund Spenser. He made several voyages to the Americas during his career. He searched in vain for the fabled El Dorado in South America, founded a couple of unsuccessful colonies (including the famed "lost colony" of Roanoke), and explored and claimed for England much of the eastern seaboard from the Carolinas to Florida for his Virgin Queen, for whom he named the land Virginia. His exploits in Ireland had brought him to the attention of Queen Elizabeth, who showed him great favor (though he was perennially unpopular with her courtiers) by bestowing lands and titles upon him, and financing his expeditions. As a courtier he was somewhat lacking, caring rather more for exploration and his own pursuits than currying favor and accruing power. In the late 1590s, he greatly angered Elizabeth when he married one of her ladies-in-waiting without permission, losing her fickle favor for several years. After Elizabeth's death and the ascension of James I, Raleigh, in a plot to conspire against the new king, was implicated, tried, and convicted. He spent the next fourteen years imprisoned in the Tower of London.

While in prison he undertook to write his ambitious "History of the World," which was intended as instruction for the young Prince of Wales. His text only covered ancient history, as he thought the close temporal distance of recent history did not offer enough perspective to write about it with any accuracy. This work remained unfinished when he was released in 1660. Though he was over 60 years old upon his release, he endeavored to lead another expedition to South America. This final voyage ended in disaster when his crew decided to attack a Spanish settlement, and Raleigh was arrested and executed for treason upon his return to England.

Much of Raleigh's poetry has been lost to time, but we have several complete poems of his, including "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (which is a response to Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"), "The Lie," and other occasional poems. A longer work, *Cynthia*, survives only in fragments.

THE NYMPH'S REPLY TO THE SHEPHERD

If all the world and love were young,
 And truth in every Shepherd's tongue,
 These pretty pleasures might me move,
 To live with thee, and be thy love.

- 5 Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
 When Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold,
 And Philomel becometh dumb,
 The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields,
 10 To wayward winter reckoning yields,
 A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
 Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of Roses,
 Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
 15 Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:
 In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and Ivy buds,
 The Coral clasps and amber studs,
 All these in me no means can move
 20 To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last, and love still breed,
 Had joys no date, nor age no need,
 Then these delights my mind might move
 To live with thee, and be thy love.

WHAT IS OUR LIFE?

What is our life? The play of passion.
 Our mirth? The music of division:
 Our mothers' wombs the tiring-houses¹ be,
 Where we are dressed for life's short comedy.
 5 The earth the stage; Heaven the spectator is,
 Who sits and views whosoe'er doth act amiss.
 The graves which hide us from the scorching sun
 Are like drawn curtains when the play is done.
 Thus playing post we to our latest rest,
 10 And then we die in earnest, not in jest.

1 The room or section in a theater where actors dress for the stage.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1564–1616)

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in April 1564. He attended a grammar school for at least six to seven years, and his plays display a firm grasp of English, Latin, and classical stories. There are few records of his youth other than that he married Anne Hathaway, had three children (one of whom died in childhood), and appeared in London as an actor and playwright by 1592. The Earl of Southampton was Shakespeare's first patron, followed by Lord Chamberlain, whose troupe of "Chamberlain's Men" became the "King's Men" with the accession of James I. Under Queen Elizabeth, the Chamberlain's Men built the famous Globe Theatre, of which Shakespeare was a shareholder. Around 1611, Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died there in 1616. The first collection of his works, the *First Folio*, was published in 1623 with thirty-six plays. In 1664, Pericles was added to the *Third Folio*. These thirty-seven comprise the full canon of Shakespeare's plays, though their exact dates and order are still somewhat uncertain today.

Shakespeare's plays can be divided into three categories: ten histories, ten tragedies, and seventeen comedies. Of the tragedies, most of his most important were written from 1601 to 1608, a period of sadness in Shakespeare's life when several of his friends and family suffered calamity and even death. The last few plays of his life, such as *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, exhibit a marked calmness and depth of feeling. Shakespeare seldom invented his own plots; his genius lies rather in his remarkable word usage and turn of phrase, his insights into human emotions and experiences, his compelling characters, and his mastery of both tragedy and comedy. Shakespeare's importance and influence as a playwright cannot be overstated, but he also wrote outstanding lyrical poetry, much of which is contained within his plays. He wrote two nondramatic poems at the beginning of his career, "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," as well as "The Phoenix and the Turtle" in 1601, and over 150 love sonnets published in 1609.

SONNET 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
 5 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 10 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

SONNET 29

When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
 And look upon my self and curse my fate,
 5 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least,
 Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,
 10 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 (Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate,
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

SONNET 55

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
 5 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn:
 The living record of your memory.
 'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity
 10 Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,
 Even in the eyes of all posterity
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.
 So till the judgment that your self arise,
 You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments, love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove.
 5 O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 10 Within his bending sickle's compass come,
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom:
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

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.
 5 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
 10 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.