



The Bard and the Book *How the First Folio Saved the Plays of William Shakespeare from Oblivion*

by Ann Bausum
illustrated by Marta Sevilla

★ “Bausum’s passion for the topic is infectious, making for a **joyous and engaging read** for Shakespearean enthusiasts and skeptics alike.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

★ “A beautiful, well-researched book.”

—*Booklist*, Starred Review

ABOUT THE BOOK

The unlikely true story of why readers know the name William Shakespeare today, and the four hundred-year-old book that made it possible.

Four hundred years ago, no one bothered to write down the exact words of stage plays. Characters’ lines were scribbled on small rolls of paper (as in, an actor’s role) and passed around, but no master script was saved for the future. The main reason readers have heard of Romeo, Juliet, Hamlet, and Shakespeare himself is that a group of people made the excellent choice to preserve the plays after the Bard died. If they hadn’t created the book known as the First Folio, Shakespeare and his works would surely have been lost to history.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Study the cover of the book. Define folio. Discuss the title of the book. Who is the Bard? Why is he hugging a book? What do you think are the contents of the book he is claspings?
- Describe the humor in the book. Discuss how the animals in the illustrations contribute to the humor. What is the symbolism of the owl on page 3? How do the small illustrations reveal the printing process in Shakespeare’s time? Explain how the illustrations of events like the Great Fire of London and the interior of research libraries enhance the text.
- Explain the meaning of the following quote: “Shakespeare’s words are for the ages” (p. 2). In what ways do his words have meaning to those who attend performances and read his works today?
- Read the following quote from *As You Like It*: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts” (p. 4). How is this quote a metaphor for life? Discuss the exits and entrances that Shakespeare references. What are the many parts a person may play in their lifetime?
- What is the difference between speculation and fact? Point out language in the text that is speculative. What facts are known about Shakespeare? Debate whether the information students learn about Shakespeare in textbooks is speculative or fact.

- Discuss how Shakespeare gained notoriety in London. How did he and his fellow actors acquire the title “the King’s men”? Which plays do you think he performed for King James? Explain why the women’s roles were played by men.
- Explain how the actors learned their roles when the scripts weren’t written down. Discuss the first printing of Shakespeare’s plays. Explain the concept of quartos. What is the origin of the phrase “bad quartos”?
- Discuss the meaning of the following words: quire, compositors, galley, and carriage. Which of these words do you think are still used in publishing today?
- Why is the Folio called the biggest book? Discuss the importance of the First Folio. What is the significance of each Folio? Which of the Folios is the rarest? Many of the Folios have been digitized. Why do some people still want to see the printed ones?
- Discuss the creation of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. How is the library primarily a haven for Shakespeare scholars?
- Explain the purpose of the epilogue. In what way does it summarize the entire book?

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Photo Credit: Sam Boutelle



Ann Bausum writes about history for readers of all ages from her home in southern Wisconsin. Her books frequently explore issues of social justice, including women’s voting rights, the Civil Rights Movement of the American South, free speech, immigration, and queer history. Bausum’s sixteen published books have debuted to consistent acclaim and have earned more than two dozen starred reviews. Her titles appear frequently on lists of recommended and notable books and have received numerous awards. The body of her work has been recognized nationally by the Children’s Book Guild of Washington, DC. Ann’s *The Bard and the Book: How the First Folio Saved the Plays of William Shakespeare from Oblivion* is her first book published by Peachtree. Find out more about Ann’s work at AnnBausum.com.

Photo Credit: Mario Triguero



Marta Sevilla is an illustrator and creative based in Madrid. Her professional activities focus on editorial illustration, children’s picture books, book covers, posters, and surface design. Her illustrations are colorful and quirky and tend to contain a humorous vision. Marta is the illustrator of *The Bard and the Book: How the First Folio Saved the Plays of William Shakespeare from Oblivion* by Ann Bausum. She works from her illustration studio drawing for national and international clients. Visit her at MartaSevilla.es.