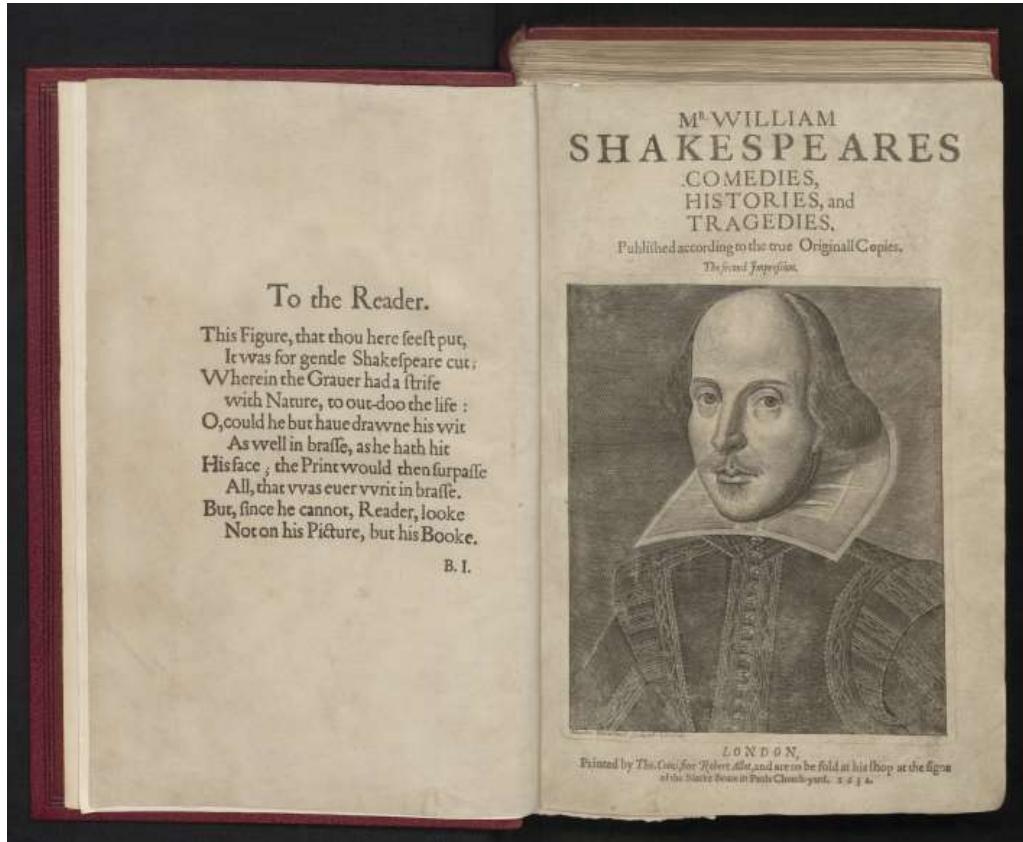


Shakespeare second folio

Rare Books Collection, University of Melbourne Library



William Shakespeare (English, 1564–1616)

Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, and tragedies. Published according to the true originall copies, the second impression ('Shakespeare second folio')

London: Printed by Tho. Cotes for Robert Allot, 1632

Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959

Rare Books Collection

University of Melbourne Library

In 1623, the first folio-sized edition of *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories and tragedies* was printed, seven years after the death of the playwright. Before this, the Bard's plays were printed exclusively in much smaller quarto editions, with numerous folds. In fact, only half of his plays were published in that fashion. The early folios published another 18 plays for the first time, including *Macbeth*, *Twelfth night* and *The tempest*, with text taken from prompt books, Shakespeare's working drafts, and transcriptions by King's Men scribe Ralph Crane. The Shakespeare folio is considered one of the most important books in history, as it ensured a continuing published presence for the playwright, preserving and disseminating his works for future generations.

The University of Melbourne Rare Books Collection holds the second edition (1632) of this volume, which was born out of the extraordinary popularity of the first folio, with minor changes and updates to the text. Although the frontispiece features a portrait of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout, the introductory verse by Ben Jonson on the opposite page encourages the reader to concentrate not on the man's image, but on his words.

Teaching ideas

The University of Melbourne's curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, [contact a collection manager](#).

Literature and Performance

Discuss the importance of the folio editions of the works of Shakespeare. How do they differ from the early quarto editions in delivery and format? Consider also how this publication affected Shakespeare's influence on future playwrights.

History of Books and Reading

Look at the Rare Books Collection's later volumes of Shakespeare that followed the first and second folios. Discuss the changes that occur in later editions (such as size, illustrations, language, number of volumes, forewords). What social factors may have contributed to changes in the presentation of Shakespeare's written plays over the following centuries?

History of Books and Reading

Look at Martin Droeshout's frontispiece portrait of Shakespeare – a portrait that became a prototype for future representations of the Bard. Discuss the anatomical peculiarities of the engraving, which was criticised by those who first saw it, and consider the role that a frontispiece plays in the reader's experience of a published written work.

Shakespeare in Performance

Using items from the Rare Books Collection and the Baillieu Library Print Collection, explore the various historical contexts in which Shakespeare has been adapted for the stage since the publication of the second folio. See in particular the illustrations in Theobald's *Works of Shakespeare* (1762), and portraits of actors found in the Baillieu Library Print Collection and in Bell's *edition of Shakspere* (1788).

The Theatre Experience

Consider the world in which Shakespeare lived, in 16th-century London. Discuss the influence this might have had on his plays, and consider other sources the Bard may have used in creating the settings for his plays.

Teaching Shakespeare

Looking at the above questions, consider areas beyond English and theatre studies in which Shakespeare can be approached (such as history, art history, and social studies). Discuss how an understanding of Shakespeare in these other fields can enrich study of the text itself.

Intersecting Objects



Ben Jonson (English, ?1573–1637)
The works of Benjamin Jonson (2 vols)
London: Printed by Will Stansby, 1616–40
Rare Books Collection
University of Melbourne Library



John Keyse Sherwin (1751–1790)
Tempest
etching and burin
illustration from William Shakespeare
(English, 1564–1616)
Bell's edition of Shakspere
London: Printed for John Bell, 1785?–88
Rare Books Collection
University of Melbourne Library

To learn more, visit the websites of the [Rare Books Collection](#) and the [Baillieu Library Print Collection](#).

References

Wallace Kirsop (curator), *Knowledge through print: A Melbourne perspective* (exhibition catalogue, Baillieu Library), University of Melbourne, 2012, p. 33.

David McInnis (curator), *After Shakespeare* (exhibition booklet, Baillieu Library), University of Melbourne Library, 2016.

Further reading

Callum Reid, 'The Bard's plays in pictures: Shakespeare in the Baillieu Library Print Collection', *University of Melbourne Collections*, issue 18, June 2016, pp. 41–7.