

SHAKESPEARE:  
*Metamorphosis* —

## Resources: Shakespearean sources

<http://shakespeare.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/resources/shakespearean-sources>

### Early editions of works which inspired Shakespeare's plays and poems.

Shakespeare used numerous sources for his plays. Listed here are some of those held at Senate House Library, in editions which Shakespeare could have used during his lifetime. Later editions may well also be present.

**Appian, An Auncient Historie and Exquisite Chronicle of the Romanes Warres, Both Ciuile and Foren (London: Henrie Bynniman, 1578)**

An influence on *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

**Ariosto, Lodovico, Orlando Furioso (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1560)**

See also editions of 1580 and 1584

— — —, *Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse, trans. by John Harington (London: Richard Field, 1591)*

A source for Margaret's impersonation of Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*; there could also be connections with *Othello, As You Like It*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**Baldwin, William, A Mirour for Magistrates (London: Felix Kynge, 1610)**

Used for the British history plays, including *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*.

**Beaumont, Francis, The Masque of the Inner Temple and Grayes Inne (London: George Norton, 1613)**

A source for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

**Belleforest, François de, Le Troisieme Tome Des Histoires Tragiques, Extraittes Des Oeuures Italiennes de Bandel (Turin: Cesar Farine, 1569)**

A direct or indirect source of *Hamlet*.

*The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament, Translated according to the Ebrue and Greke, and Conferred with the Best Translations in Diuers Langages, with Moste Profitable Annotations Vpon All the Hard Places, and Other Things of Great Importance as May Appaere in the Epistle to the Reader (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560)*

The Geneva Bible. Also present in editions of 1592, 1595, 1600, 1606, 1608, 1610, 1611 and 1612

*The Holie Bible (London: Richarde Iugge, 1572)*

The Bishops' Bible. Also present in editions of 1573, 1577, 1585 and 1588.

Various biblical echoes and allusions throughout the plays, most notably in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

**Boaistuau, Pierre, et al.,** *Histoires prodigieuses extraites de plusieurs fameux auteurs, grecs & latins, sacrez et prophanes, divisées encinq livres* (Anvers: Guislain Ianssens, 1594)

Provides a French prose version of the story of Romeo and Juliet, an intermediary source for Shakespeare.

**Boccaccio, Giovanni,** *Il Decamerone* (Venice: Vincenzo Valgriso, 1552)

Also present in an edition of 1582.

The main source for *All's Well that Ends Well* and (probably) the wager plot in *Cymbeline*.

**Bright, Timothie,** *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1586)

Possibly a subsidiary source for the depiction of Hamlet's humour.

**Buchanan, George,** *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (Edinburgh: Alexander Arbuthnet, 1582)

Also present in an edition of 1583

Used for *Macbeth*.

**Chaucer, Geoffrey,** *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer: Newly Printed, with Dyuers Workes Whiche Were Neuer in Print before*, ed. by William Thynne (London: Thomas Godfray, 1532)

Also present in editions of 1550, 1561, 1598, and 1602

'The Knight's Tale' is the main source for *The Two Noble Kinsman*; Shakespeare also uses Chaucer for *Troilus and Cressida* and elements of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**Cicero, Marcus Tullius,** *M.T. Ciceronis Tusculanorum Quaestionum Ad M. Brutum: Lib. V* (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1542)

Also present in an edition of 1549.

A source for the Duke's consolation of Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, an influence on Sonnets 44 and 45, and a source for Bolingbroke's complaint on his impending exile in *Richard II*. Cicero also provided a general rhetorical influence on Shakespeare.

**Daniel, Samuel,** *The Civile Wares Betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke* (London: Simon Watersonne, 1609)

———, *The First Part of the Historie of England* (London: Company of Stationers, 1613)

———, *The Poeticall Essayes of Sam. Danyel, Newly corrected and augmented* (London: Simon Waterson, 1599)

———, *Certaine Small Poems Lately Printed ; with The Tragedie of Philotas* (London: Simon Waterson, 1605)

———, *The Works of Samuel Daniel, Newly augmented* (London: Simon Waterson, 1602)

"[S]ince Daniel was one of the leading literary figures of his day, Shakespeare may have known almost all of Daniel's work" – Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books* (2001). Used for *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, and *3 Henry VI*, with structural influence on the Sonnets and *A Lover's Complaint*.

**Elyot, Thomas,** *The Boke Named the Governour* (Londini: Thomas Berthelet, 1544)

Also present in an edition of 1565.

Probably the main source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with connections with other plays.

**Erasmus, Desiderius,** *The Praise of Folie =: Moriae Encomium, trans. Thomas Chaloner* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1549)

———, *D. Erasmi Roterdami Opus de Conscribendis Epistolis, Quod Quidam & Me[n]dosam, & Mutilum Aedidera[n]t, Recognitum ab Autore, & Locupletatum* (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1523)

———, *Adagiorum Opus Des. Erasmi Roterodami per Eundem Exquisitiore Quàm Antehac Unquam Cura Recognitu[m], Nec Parum Copioso Locupletatu[m] Auctario: Quid Actum Sit Inindicib. Cognosces ex Ipsius in hos Praefatione* (Basileae: Officina Frobeniana, 1528)

Also present in an edition of 1539.

— — —, *Colloquiorum Familiarium Opus* (Paris: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1541) A general spirit of Erasmus and verbal reminiscences throughout the plays and in the Sonnets.

**Fabyan, Robert**, *The Chronicle of Fabyan* (London: John Reynes, 1542)

Also present in an edition of 1559.

Used sometimes for *Henry VI* and *Richard III*.

**Florio, John**, *Florio His Firste Fruites* (London: Thomas Woodcock, 1578)

— — —, *Florios Second Frutes* (London: Thomas Woodcock, 1591)

Used for some lines in *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

**Forset, Edward**, *A Comparative Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique* (London: John Bill, 1606)

A probable source of *Coriolanus*.

**Foxe, John**, *The First Volume of the Ecclesiasticall History, : Contayning the Actes & Monumentes of Things Passed in Euery Kinges Time, in This Realme, Especially in the Church of England ...*

(London: Iohn Day, 1576)

Also present in editions of 1583, 1589 (abridged) and 1596

Used for *2 Henry VI*, *King John*, and *Henry VIII*.

**Froissart, Jean**, *Here Begynneth the First Volum of Sir Iohan Froyssart of the Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spayne, Portyngale, Scotlande, Bretayne, Flau[n]ders: And Other Places Adioynynge*, trans. by John Bourchier Berners (London: Richard Pynson, 1523)

— — —, *Here Begynneth the Thirde and Fourthe Boke of Sir Johñ Froissart of the Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spaygne, Portyngale, Scotlande, Bretayne, Flaunders, and Other Places Adioynyng* (London: Richard Pynson, 1525)

A source for *Richard II*.

**Gascoigne, George**, *The Vvhole Woorkes of George Gascoigne Esquire: Newlye Compyled into One Volume* (London: Abell Ieffes, 1587)

Gascoigne's *Supposes* influences *The Taming of the Shrew*, and might underlie the double plot structure and the overall idea of the errors in *The Comedy of Errors*.

**Gerard, John**, *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: John Norton, 1597)

A song in *Love's Labour's Lost*, V.ii.889-924 is probably based this.

**Giraldi, Giambattista Cinzio**, *Hecatommithi, Ouero Cento Nouelle, 3rd edn* (Venice: Enea de Alaris, 1574)

Also present in editions of 1580 and 1584. Provides the main source for *Othello*. The story of Promos and Cassandra is related to *Measure for Measure*.

**Gower, John, Io.** *Gower De Confessione Amantis* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1554)

A source for elements of *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Pericles*.

**Grafton, Richard**, *A Chronicle at Large and Meere History of the Affayres of Englande and Kinges of the Same* (London: Richard Tottell and Humphrey Toy, 1569)

A possible source for *Henry VI*.

**Hall, Edward**, *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548)

Used for the English history plays **1-3 Henry VI**, **1-2 Henry IV**, **Henry V**, **Richard II** and **Richard III**.

**Harsnett, Samuel**, *A Discouery of the Fraudulent Practises of Iohn Darrel Bachelor of Artes, in His Proceedings Concerning the Pretended Possession and Dispossession of William Somers at Nottingham ...* (London: John Wolfe, 1599)

Exposure of puritan exorcisms may influence the treatment of Malvolio in **Twelfth Night**.

**Holinshed, Raphael**, *The Firste[-Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London: John Harrison, 1577)

———, *The First and Second Volumes of Chronicles*, ed. by John Hooker et al. (London: Henry Denham, 1587)

A major source for the English history plays, **King Lear**, **Macbeth** and **Cymbeline**, and the works later attributed at least partly to Shakespeare, **Sir Thomas More** and **Edward III**.

**Homer**, *The Iliads of Homer Prince of Poets*, trans. by George Chapman (London: Nathaniel Butter, 1611)

———, *Homer, Prince of Poets*, trans. by George Chapman (London: Samuel Macham, 1609)

The first instalment (1598) was used for **Troilus and Cressida**.

**James I**, *Daemonologie, in Forme of a Dialogue: Diuided into Three Bookes* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldgrave, 1597)

Also present in an edition of 1603, and in a Latin translation of 1604.

Used for information on the witches in **Macbeth**.

**Knolles, Richard**, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London: Adam Islip, 1603)

A source for **Othello**, I,iii.

**Lavater, Ludwig**, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght, and of Strange Noyses, Crackes, and Sundry Forewarnynges, Whiche Commonly happen before the Death of Menne, Great Slaughters, [and] Alterations of Kyngdomes* (London: Richard Watkyns, 1572)

Also present in an edition of 1596.

Possibly suggested some details for the ghosts and spectral imaginings in **Hamlet** and **Macbeth**.

**Lefèvre, Raoul**, *The Recuile of the Histories of Troie*, trans. by William Caxton (London: William Copland, 1553)

A source for **Troilus and Cressida**.

**Legh, Gerard**, *The Accedens of Armory* (London: Richard Tottell, 1562)

Has an anecdote similar to the scolding of the tailor in **The Taming of the Shrew**, and contains a version of the Lear story.

**Leslie, John**, *De Origine Moribus, et Rebus Gestis Scotorum Libri Decem* (Rome: In aedibus populi Romani, 1578)

A genealogical tree of the Stuarts may have influenced imagery in **Macbeth**.

**Livy**, *The Romane Historie*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: Adam Islip, 1600)

Also present in a Latin edition of 1599.

A source for **The Rape of Lucrece** and **Coriolanus**.

**Lyly, John**, *Euphues and His England* (London: Gabriel Cawood, 1597)

———, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, corr. and augm. (London: Gabriel Cawood, 1593)

Falstaff parodies Euphues in **1 Henry IV**. Several echoes in the comedies, especially *Love's Labour's Lost*.

**Marlowe, Christopher**, *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England* (London: Roger Barnes, 1612)

Shakespeare's *Richard II* is seen as a response to this play, and Shakespeare is thought to have developed his blank verse from Marlowe's.

**Moffett, Thomas**, *The Silkwormes, and Their Flies* (London: Nicholas Ling, 1599)

Previously thought to have been a source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**Montaigne, Michel de**, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne, ...: The First Booke*, trans. by John Florio (London: Edward Blount, 1603)

Also present in an edition of 1613.

Clear verbal echoes in *The Tempest*, with possible verbal echoes elsewhere.

**Montemayor, Jorge de**, *Los siete libros de la Diana de George de Monte-Mayor où sous le nom de bergers & bergeres sont cópris les amours des plus signalez d'Espagne*, trans. by Simon George Pavillon (Paris: Anthoine du Brueil, 1603)

———, *Los siete libros de la Diana de George de Monte Mayor Agora nuevamente añadida como se puede ver en la tabla* (Anvers: Pedro Bellerio, 1580)

———, *Diana of George of Montemayor*, trans. by Bartholomew Yong (London: George Bishop, 1598)

A source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

**Ovid**, *The xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphosis*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: William Seres, 1567)

Parodied in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Verbal traces in *The Tempest*, the *Sonnets*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Julius Caesar*.

**Painter, William**, *The Palace of Pleasure Beautified: Adorned and Well Furnished with Pleasaunt Histories and Excellent Novels, Selected out of Diuers Good and Commendable Authours, Eftsones perused, corrected and augmented* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575)

———, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure, Contayning Store of Goodlye Histories, Tragical Matters, & Other Morall Argumentes, Very Requisite for Delight and Profyte: Chose and Selected out of Diuers Good and Commendable Authors, and Now Once Agayn Corrected and Encreased* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1580)

Painter's version of Boccaccio's tale of Gilette de Nerbone may have been the source for *All's Well that Ends Well*. Shakespeare shows awareness of Painter in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Timon of Athens*.

**Plautus, Titus Maccius**, *Ex Plauti Comoediis XX Quarum Carmina Magna Ex Parte in Mensum Suum Restituta Sunt M. D. XXII* (Venice: in Aedibus Aldi et Andreae Asulani soceri, 1522)

———, *M. Accius Plautus ex Fide, atque Auctoritate Complurimum Librorum Manuscriptorum Opera Dionys. Lambini Monstroliensis Emendatus* (Paris: Jean Macé, 1577)

General resemblances with Shakespeare's comedies, and particular use of *Mostellaria* for *The Taming of the Shrew* and, especially, of *Menaechmi* as the main source for *The Comedy of Errors*.

**Pliny**, *The Historie of the Vvorld.: Commonly Called, the Naturall Historie of C. Plinius Secundus*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: Adam Islip, 1601)

Echoes in *Othello*.

**Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. by Thomas North (London: Thomas Vautroullier and John Wight, 1579)**

Also present in an edition of 1595.

The major source of the Roman plays; traces of Plutarch also appear in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, ***The Merchant of Venice***, ***Hamlet***, and ***Macbeth***.

**Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Vvitchcraft* (London: William Brome, 1584)**

Provides some of Shakespeare's information for the witches in ***Macbeth***, and possibly also inspiration for King Lear's mock trial of his daughters. Shakespeare might have used Scot's discussion of beliefs about the 'hob goblin' Robin Goodfellow and his references to asinine transformations in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***.

**Seneca, Lucius Annaeus, *L. Annaei Senec[ae] Tragoediae Pristiniae Integritati Restitutae*, ed. by Gerardus Vercellanus et al. (Paris: Officina Ascensiana, 1514)**

———, ***Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1581)**

Influences particularly ***Titus Andronicus***, ***Macbeth***, and ***Richard III***.

**Sidney, Philip, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Henry Olney, 1595)**

———, ***The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia, 3rd edn* (London: William Ponsonbie, 1598)**

Also present in editions of 1605 and 1613.

***Arcadia*** is a source for ***King Lear*** and is thought to influence the Sonnets. There are verbal echoes of ***An Apologie for Poetrie*** in ***Coriolanus***.

**Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene: Disposed into Twelue Bookes, Fashioning XII. Morall Vertues* (London: William Ponsonbie, 1596)**

Also present in an edition of 1609.

Broad analogies between Spenser and Shakespeare in the comedies from ***Much Ado about Nothing*** onwards and the late plays.

**Tacitus, Cornelius, *Gli annali di Cornelio Tacito, cavalier romano* (Venice: Giouanni Alberti, 1598)**

———, ***The Annales of Cornelius Tacitus. ; The Description of Germanie*, trans. by Richard Greenwey (London: Bonham and John Norton, 1598)**

Shakespeare may have used ***Germania*** for ***Henry V*** and ***3 Henry VI***.

**Virgil, *The xiii Bukes of Eneados of the famose poete Virgill*, trans. by Gawin Douglas (London: W. Copland, 1553)**

———, ***The Whole xii Bookes of AEneidos of Virgill*, ed. by Thomas Twyne, trans. by Thomas Phyer (London: Abraham Veale, 1573)**

Latin editions of 1517, 1532 and 1600 also present.

Used especially for ***The Rape of Lucrece*** (the sack of Troy), ***The Comedy of Errors*** (Aegeon's travels), the player's speech on Troy in ***Hamlet***, and ***The Tempest***. The story of Dido and Aeneas appears in at least half a dozen plays, and ***1 Henry IV*** contains direct allusions to the Sack of Troy and Aeneas' visit to the Underworld.