

The Taming of the Shrew/The Woman's Prize

Playwrights' biographies

***The Taming of the Shrew.* William Shakespeare** (baptized April 26, 1564; died April 23, 1616; aka "the Bard") is widely regarded as the greatest playwright in the world. His surviving works (including collaborations) consist of 38 plays, 154 sonnets, and additional poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright; they have also been adapted into other mediums (such as the film "Ran," based on *King Lear*; the musical "West Side Story," based on *Romeo and Juliet*; the musical "Kiss Me Kate," based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, etc.).



Beginning around 1585, Shakespeare built a successful career as an actor, writer, and part owner of a playing company known as the King's Men. Shakespeare's early plays were mainly comedies and histories, genres he raised to the peak of sophistication and artistry by the end of the sixteenth century. He then wrote mainly tragedies (including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*) until about 1608. In his final phase, he wrote tragicomedies and collaborated with other playwrights.

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his own day, but his reputation did not rise to its present heights until the nineteenth century. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world.

***The Woman's Prize.* John Fletcher** (baptized December 20, 1579; buried August 29, 1625) was a Jacobean playwright, the son of Richard Fletcher, Bishop of London and chaplain to the queen.



Very little is known about Fletcher until 1606, when it is recorded that he began to spend his time with other literary wits of the time, such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Francis Beaumont, at the Mermaid Tavern. One of the most theatrical partnerships of all time was that of Fletcher and Beaumont. According to gossip of the time, Fletcher and Beaumont, 'lived together on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse, both bachelors; lay together...had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same clothes and cloak, etc., between them'.

By 1610, Fletcher's plays had achieved a wide spread popularity with audiences; a popularity that at the time eclipsed that of Shakespeare's plays. Fletcher never married and he never stopped writing. Though he often collaborated with other great playwrights, such as Beaumont and Johnson (and most likely Shakespeare), he wrote numerous plays on his own, including *The Tamer Tamed*, or *The Woman's Prize*. By the time of Fletcher's death in 1625, he had produced and was credited with nearly 60 plays and his work remained a major part of the Kings Men's repertory until the closing of the theaters in 1642.