

**1. Shakespeare is not Oxford's pseudonym.** There is no credible evidence that anyone from Shakespeare's time suggested that the canon was written by anyone other than William Shakespeare, nor did anyone express an opinion or even hint that the name 'Shakespeare' might be a pen name. Even if an aristocrat did not wish to put his name on plays for the professional theatre (though at least one Earl did publish a play under his own name), Oxford can have had no possible reason for withholding his name when publishing *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. The success and quality of these poems could have secured the return to court and favour he was so earnestly (and unsuccessfully) seeking by other means.

**2. Oxford was dead before a third of the work was written.** Almost all other authorship groups have sensibly chosen candidates who were alive when the plays were written. Oxford was dead before a third of the work was complete. Oxford died in 1604. This was before Fletcher arrived on the scene, with whom Will collaborated on three plays, before the Gunpowder Plot which hangs like a miasma throughout *Macbeth*, before the food riots of 1607 which provide the entire political context of *Coriolanus*, before the move to the indoor theatre for which *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* were clearly written, before he could have seen a Masque at the court of King James or seen a play written for the new Romantic Genre or seen any of the 1610 source material for *The Tempest*. Oxfordians are entirely alone in attempting radical departure from the scholarly consensus on the dating of the plays, yet none of their attempts to establish an alternative chronology have been successful. No alternative chronology has acquired even the tiniest amount of support or respectability outside the small Oxfordian community. In addition to hundreds of topical references which post-date Oxford's death, the theatre, the language and blank verse continued to develop in the ten years Shakespeare was active after the Earl died. These changes can be seen as a progression in Will's work and are consistent with the same developments in the work of other contemporary dramatists. Given that removing this obvious disqualification is essential, the Oxfordian contention cannot currently be regarded as credible.

**3. Oxford's candidacy is supported by no evidence whatsoever.** After 100 years of occasionally extreme effort, supporters of Oxford's candidacy have nothing to offer but supposition, inference and deduction. Many Oxfordians have even tampered with evidence to improve its usefulness, such as Ogburn's distortions of Puttenham's work. To date, however, not a single item of hard evidence exists to support the idea that Oxford wrote for the professional theatre. Outside of the normal bounds of flattery and noblesse oblige, there is almost no evidence that Oxford wrote anything other than dismal poetry and perhaps an interlude or two for court performance. The Oxfordian explanation is that his authorship was covered up by a secret conspiracy. Like many conspiracy theories, it contains many obvious but unanswered questions, such as 'Since the actors would have had to know if their fellow actor was not the real author, how do you keep actors quiet? Do you threaten them? How do you threaten them without leaving a record of the threats? If people today can identify Oxford as the author, why wouldn't Oxford's friends and acquaintances have identified him as the author? Some argue that it was an open secret, but that makes no sense at all. Why go to so much trouble to keep secret an open secret? This kind of theorising is completely unacceptable without at least some hard evidence. And there is none. Absolutely none at all.

**4. Oxford's writing and use of English eliminate him as a candidate.** There is no evidence of genius or even talent in any of his writing. Although Oxford's candidacy was based on the stylistic analysis of Looney, Ogburn and Sobran who identified 'the germ' of Shakespeare in Oxford's writing, all subsequent analysis, especially the computerised stylometry which began in the 1990's, has completely and definitively ELIMINATED Oxford as a potential author of Shakespeare's work. Extensive batteries of tests statistically confirm that there is no chance that the author of Oxford's undisputed work is also the author of ANY of Shakespeare's work. An effective probability of nil. It is debatable whether science is actually needed to prove this. Oxford is obviously not Shakespeare. He is almost a stranger to metaphor and lacks any of the delicacy of expression and imagination that

is everywhere in the canon. Looney, Ogburn and Sobran were mistaken in their impressions that the work of one man could be detected in the work of the other. These supposed stylistic similarities are the foundation of the Oxfordian contention. In the absence of more recent and more stable foundations, the Oxfordian contention cannot be correct.

**5. Oxford's education and birth do not give him an advantage.** There is no elite knowledge of court life or the law in the plays which Oxford could have acquired and Will could not. In fact, only Will's last play, *Henry VIII* shows any detailed and accurate knowledge of life at court. Were the plays written by a courtier, they would be very different. Oxford did not study at Cambridge, his degrees were honorary decorations, awarded to him as part of a group of courtiers, accompanying the monarch on tour, nor is there any evidence that he studied at Gray's Inn. In his letters, Oxford's legal latin is full of basic mistakes and his prose contains eccentric fenland expressions which do not appear in Shakespeare's work. In 100 years of argument and discussion, Oxfordians have not been able to produce any examples of elite knowledge or any knowledge based on education, background or sources which make Will's authorship problematical. The argument even rebounds on them when they are asked to explain the detailed knowledge of the wool trade or the glove-making industry or detailed references to life around Stratford on Avon such as that to 'Joan Hackett, fat ale-wife of Wincot'.

**6. Oxford's background makes his authorship more unlikely, NOT more probable.** Shakespeare's background and education were certainly not atypical of playwrights of the era; we know more about some, less about others, some were better educated, some worse, some came from better upbringings, some from worse. However, none of the playwrights writing for the professional Elizabethan theatre were aristocrats. It is a very unlikely pastime for a courtier, even though many of the plays were performed at court. The Elizabethan professional theatre was the first creative meritocracy where artistic work could be judged on ratings, where money could be made from popularity rather than reputation. Where failure could be greeted by a blow to the head from a flying cabbage instead of a sympathetic shoulder to cry on. Not a pastime for amateurs. Aristocrats with literary ambitions confined their performance to courtly audiences and steered well clear of audiences that had just wandered over from the bear-baiting. Shakespeare's competitors, however they were educated and whatever evidence they left behind, were all commoners.

**7. Oxford had no experience of the professional theatre.** Playwrights and actors of the time were commoners, working under contract for money, not aristocrats. We even have details of the hierarchy and their Terms and Conditions from Ned Allyn's surviving documents. It is unthinkable that an actor could be either illiterate or be an aristocrat working anonymously. And Will was definitely an actor and one of the best. Apart from his patronage of two minor groups of players, Oxford had only slight connections to the professional theatre and none at all to the Chamberlain's/King's Men, no theatrical training of any kind, or knowledge of stagecraft both of which are necessary for writing plays. The later plays, "*Henry VIII*" and "*The Tempest*" for example, have extensive stage directions for special effects, costuming, and entrances that would require a working actor's knowledge. The plays themselves are replete with references to acting and playing a role on stage. The craft takes time to learn. Experience of being on stage would have been essential. Oxford had none.

There are, of course, many more than the seven reasons given here which confirm the impossibility of Oxford's candidature as the author of Shakespeare's work. Occam's Razor, all things being equal, favours the solution with the fewest hypotheses. Shakespeareans have one hypothesis. The man whose name is all over the work and to whom it is attributed by his contemporaries, is the man who wrote it. Oxfordians have hundreds of non-interconnecting hypotheses.

The 400th anniversary is a suitable occasion for getting rid of his fundamentally flawed and provably untenable claim.

It's time to say goodbye to Edward de Vere.

## 20 Random Questions Oxfordians can't answer.

*(For more unanswerable questions, please visit our site.)*

1. Do you believe Shakespeare's signatures are evidence that he was illiterate? Can you point to anyone qualified who believes you can prove a man illiterate by analysing his handwriting?
2. If William Shakespeare was not an actor, how do you explain his name in the charter for the King's Men and his name in the lists of actors in the folio editions of Shakespeare's and Jonson's plays?
3. If there was an actor called William Shakespeare, how could this actor possibly have been Edward de Vere. Publishing plays anonymously is one thing, but acting anonymously on the public stage?
4. If you believe in illiterate actors, why do you think the playwright made Bottom and the other rude mechanicals literate in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" If actors learned their lines by rote, do you think that was the best use of a literate man's time? Do you think it might have been more efficient for the literate man to teach the illiterate actors to read?
5. How do you explain the signatures of Susanna, Shakespeare's daughter, when you class her as 'illiterate'. She was a woman, 'witty beyond her sex' according to people who knew her. What might that mean?
6. Do you really believe Shakespeare was illiterate play broker? How could he keep track of his inventory? Deliver the right play? How would he know what to charge if he couldn't read the material he was selling?
7. How would a man who was utterly incapable of writing "Hamlet" be able to convince people that he was the author of "Hamlet"?
8. If you claim no one from Shakespeare's time associated William Shakespeare the actor with William Shakespeare the playwright, how can you explain how his audience and 300 theatre professionals all failed to make the connection between two William Shakespeares, constantly hanging round The Globe?
9. If the best way of determining the author of a play is to look for similarities between the biographies of the characters in the play and the biography of your proposed candidate, shouldn't the author of "Othello" be a black man, the author of "Richard III" a hunchback and the author of "The Tempest" a sorcerer?
10. If you think All's Well that Ends Well derives from the life of Edward de Vere, can you explain how the Earl of Oxford went back in time to give the same plot to Boccaccio for use in "The Decameron"?
11. Do you believe that a mere actor would never know anything about life at Court? How do you explain Hamlet's warning to Polonius, "Let them be well us'd; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live." Hamlet is saying the actors spread gossip about what happens at Court. Why would Hamlet say that if mere actors never know what goes on at Court?
12. If you believe it was an open secret that de Vere was the author of the plays, can you please explain why people were excused of accusing him of being a murderer, a traitor, a Catholic, a 'monstrous adversary' and a pederast, but no one ever dared to publicly accuse him of writing 'Hamlet'?
13. If you believe a playwright could not have been the son of a glover, can you please explain how Christopher Marlowe was the son of a shoemaker and Ben Jonson was the step-son of a bricklayer and why all the other Elizabethan professional playwrights (and many important 16c statesmen) were commoners?
14. Can you explain how someone who sold or mortgaged every single asset in life was never able to use his biggest secret to pecuniary advantage? He didn't even mention his talent to Robert Cecil, the boy he grew up with, in repeated and occasionally desperate requests for funds. How could the companion of his childhood be entirely unaware of his writing genius and what he was doing with it?
15. If you excuse De Vere's dismal poetry, published between the ages of 23 and 40, as "juvenilia," how can you also claim him as a dazzling, hidden prodigy, collaborating with his Uncle Golding at the age of 13?
16. If you think De Vere could astonish the court with his genius at the age of ten, why did no one wonder why he fizzled out?
17. If you believe it was considered highly improper for the nobility to write poetry, can you please explain why Queen Elizabeth was known to have written poetry? And why did so many aristocrats publish theirs?
18. Who performed the 'slow release' of new plays after De Vere died in 1604 and who got the money?
19. When so much of De Vere's writing survives, why can we not find a single line of his in blank verse?
20. Absolutely no one believes the author of the plays has an East Anglian burr, so why does De Vere's prose sometimes lapse into fenland vernacular and East Anglian dialect?

## The Poll

*We polled visitors to [oxfraud.com](http://oxfraud.com) on the least credible Oxfordian arguments. Here are the results.*

1. OXFORD'S poetry contains the germ of Shakespeare's (Looney's central thesis) There's no doubt that there is a unbridgeable gulf separating the work of the two men, so no surprise that this heads the list.
2. THERE WERE two Shakespeares, one who produced plays and one who acted as a front for the Earl. Obvious nonsense requiring heaps more supporting nonsense to make it even partially digestible.
3. BIBLE markings in the Geneva Bible ascribed to Oxford were made by the author of the plays A bit specialist, perhaps, but Stritmatter is a prominent and outspoken Oxfordian and his irritating thesis proves nothing.
4. 'SWAN OF AVON' refers to Oxford's Bilton Hall A house in Rugby, rented then sold 43 years before Jonson coins the phrase. Especially daft given the 'nearby' Avon is less than 4' wide and thought by some locals to be a drainage ditch.
5. OXFORD was the son of Elizabeth 1 How is it even possible that this still has proponents? It just won't die.
6. UP TO 12 PLAYS, almost one third of the work, were completed by a stylistically undetectable collaborator after Oxford's death. Fatal. Oxford DID die in 1604. Up to 12 plays WERE written after his death.
7. OXFORD'S contemporaries praised him as one of their leading men of letters A few pieces of obvious flattery don't count. Oxford was a drain on everyone who knew him. A 'Monstrous Adversary' with a 'fyckl hed' and very limited literary talent.
8. OXFORD studied as an undergraduate at Cambridge and studied law at Gray's Inn. There are no records and there is no evidence in his own writing that he was either a genius or had any specialist knowledge of the law. In fact all we know about Oxford's education is that his tutor left when Oxford was 13, saying he'd done all he could for him. Not a promising pupil.
9. OXFORD didn't die in 1604 but moved to the Isle of Mersea where he wrote the King James Bible Obviously crackers.
10. HAMLET is autobiographical Only if you close your eyes while reading it.
11. OXFORD'S name is encoded into the sonnets More cipher nonsense from people who don't understand ciphers.
12. DE VERE'S IDENTITY is revealed in incomplete anagrams and ciphers in books written by the likes of Henry Peacham No it isn't. See 11.
13. THE EARL OF Southampton was the son of Oxford and Elizabeth 1. Oh no he wasn't. There were no concealed Royal pregnancies in the 16c
14. YOU COULD sail from Verona to Milan. Impossible unless you could make water run uphill.