

I love the works of William Shakespeare – the plots, the characters, the settings, the themes. I have taught several of his tragedies and comedies. I have also taught or spoken about derivative stories (*West Side Story* from *Romeo and Juliet*; *Ten Things I Hate About You* from *The Taming of the Shrew*; *O* from *Othello*, *Blood on the Throne* from *Macbeth*, *The Lion King* from *Hamlet*, etc.) I have seen his plays performed on Broadway (loved Denzel Washington in *Julius Caesar*) and sitting on a stone seat in an ancient Roman theater in Italy for four hours as Hamlet tried to decide what to do. (Next time, I'll bring a cushion).

Students -- usually unwilling to put in the work to understand his language --- often ask, "What's so great about Shakespeare? Why do we have to read it?" I've already answered that question. Think about this: How many playwrights or authors whose works were first presented in the final decade of the 16th Century and the first decade of the Seventeenth Century can you name --- and if you can name any, can you name any of their works?