



The Sonnets

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)

Read by:	Elizabeth Klett	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	2 hours 27 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1126
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Genre:	Poetry		

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate...” These lines from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 18 and many others that are quoted to this day come from *The Sonnets*, a collection of 154 poems written for a private readership and published in 1609. The poems are about affairs of the heart and fall into two groups – lust for a dark complexioned married woman (the “dark lady”) and a conflicted love for a young man (the “fair youth”). It is unclear if the subjects were real people or if the voice of the author is that of Shakespeare himself. The mystery is compounded by the dedication of the 1609 edition to a “Mr W.H”, whose identity is unknown.

Whatever the particulars, it is universally agreed that *The Sonnets* are a “profound meditation on the nature of love, sexual passion, procreation, death, and time.” William Wordsworth commented that “Shakespeare unlocked his heart” in the sonnets. (*Quotations from Wikipedia*)

William Shakespeare (April 26, 1564 – April 23, 1616) was an English playwright and poet widely considered as the world’s greatest dramatist and the greatest writer in the English language. He produced 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two narrative poems and other verse, most between the years 1589 and 1613. His earlier works consist mostly of comedies and histories, considered as some of the best work ever done in these genres. He turned to tragedies from about 1600 until about 1608, producing *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* in this phase, considered the finest works in English. His last phase brought us the tragicomedies and romances such as *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. All but two of his plays were collected in the First Folio in 1623.

Little is known of his personal life apart from his marriage to Anne Hathaway at age 18, his three children, and his work as an actor and part owner of the King’s Men theatre company in addition to his writing. The paucity of information has led to speculation about his appearance, beliefs, sexuality, and even the authenticity of his works. He retired to Stratford in 1613 and died three years later.