

the riverside shakespeare

The Riverside Shakespeare: A Timeless Companion to the Bard's Works

the riverside shakespeare stands as one of the most cherished and authoritative editions of William Shakespeare's plays and poetry. Whether you are a student, a literature enthusiast, or a seasoned scholar, this comprehensive volume offers an immersive experience into the world of the Bard. Its careful editing, insightful annotations, and rich contextual information make it a must-have resource for anyone looking to explore Shakespeare's genius in depth.

What Makes The Riverside Shakespeare Special?

The Riverside Shakespeare is not just another collection of Shakespeare's works. It has earned its reputation through meticulous scholarship and a dedication to presenting the plays and poems in a form that remains true to the original texts while being accessible to modern readers. First published in the 1970s, it has undergone revisions to reflect ongoing academic research and discoveries about Shakespearean authorship, textual variants, and historical context.

This edition features the complete works, including well-known tragedies like **Hamlet** and **Macbeth**, comedies such as **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, and lesser-known but equally fascinating plays. Additionally, it includes Shakespeare's sonnets and narrative poems, offering a full spectrum of his literary output.

Authoritative Texts and Annotations

One of the key strengths of the Riverside Shakespeare lies in its editorial rigor. The editors provide carefully collated texts derived from the best available early sources, including the First Folio and various Quartos. This attention to textual accuracy ensures readers engage with Shakespeare's plays as close to their original form as possible.

Moreover, the volume is packed with explanatory notes and footnotes that clarify archaic language, cultural references, and historical allusions. For readers who might find Shakespeare's Early Modern English challenging, these annotations act as invaluable guides, illuminating the meaning behind unfamiliar phrases and expressions.

Contextual and Critical Essays

Beyond the plays themselves, the Riverside Shakespeare offers a rich array of supplementary material. Introductory essays discuss Shakespeare's life, the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, and the social and political climate of his time. These essays help readers situate the plays within their historical context, enhancing understanding and appreciation.

Critical commentary throughout the text provides insights into themes, character motivations, and dramatic techniques. This makes the Riverside Shakespeare not only a text for reading but also a tool

for analysis and discussion, ideal for classroom use or personal study.

Exploring the Editions of The Riverside Shakespeare

Over the years, The Riverside Shakespeare has appeared in multiple editions, each improving upon the last. The original edition, edited by G. Blakemore Evans, set a high standard with its comprehensive coverage and scholarly approach. Later editions have incorporated new research and refined annotations, ensuring the work remains current and relevant.

Features of the Revised Editions

Subsequent versions of the Riverside Shakespeare include updated textual variants and additional plays that were once of disputed authorship, like **The Two Noble Kinsmen** and **Edward III**. The revisions also enhance the introduction and notes, incorporating recent academic perspectives.

For readers interested in Shakespeare's poetry, the editions offer the complete sonnets along with other poems such as **Venus and Adonis** and **The Rape of Lucrece**. The inclusion of these works provides a fuller picture of Shakespeare's artistic range.

Why Choose The Riverside Shakespeare Over Other Editions?

There are many Shakespeare editions available, but the Riverside Shakespeare stands out due to its balance of scholarly depth and reader accessibility. Unlike some heavily academic editions that can overwhelm casual readers, Riverside strikes a friendly tone without sacrificing critical precision.

Its comprehensive coverage makes it a one-stop resource, saving readers from needing multiple books to access all of Shakespeare's works. Additionally, its detailed glossaries and indexes enhance usability, enabling quick reference to characters, themes, or specific passages.

Using The Riverside Shakespeare in Studies and Performance

The Riverside Shakespeare is widely used in academic settings, from high school advanced literature classes to university Shakespeare seminars. Its clear layout and thorough annotations aid students in grasping complex text and themes.

Tips for Students

- ****Take advantage of the footnotes:**** The annotations often explain difficult words or phrases and provide background that can unlock the meaning of a scene.

- **Read the introductions:** The essays at the beginning of each play offer helpful summaries and context that can prepare you for the reading.
- **Compare versions:** If you are interested, look at the textual notes to see how certain lines have changed over time or differ between sources.
- **Use the indexes:** They help you locate themes, characters, and motifs quickly for essays or presentations.

For Actors and Directors

Performers and directors benefit from the Riverside Shakespeare's detailed character analyses and stage directions. The notes often include historical staging practices and interpretations of key scenes, which can inspire creative choices or deepen understanding of character motivations.

Delving into Shakespeare's Language with Riverside

Shakespeare's language can be daunting due to its poetic complexity and the evolution of English over the centuries. The Riverside Shakespeare's annotations serve as a bridge between Shakespeare's time and ours, decoding metaphors, puns, and idiomatic expressions.

For example, the word "anon," common in Shakespeare's plays, is explained simply as "soon" or "shortly," preventing readers from stumbling over seemingly obscure terms. This attention to linguistic detail makes reading Shakespeare less intimidating and more enjoyable.

How Riverside Helps Readers Appreciate Shakespeare's Poetic Style

The editors highlight Shakespeare's inventive use of iambic pentameter, imagery, and wordplay. Through their notes, readers can see how Shakespeare crafts rhythm and sound to convey emotion and meaning, deepening appreciation for his artistry.

Where to Find The Riverside Shakespeare

The Riverside Shakespeare is widely available through bookstores, libraries, and online retailers. Both physical copies and e-book versions exist, making it accessible to different reading preferences.

For those seeking a comprehensive and reliable edition of Shakespeare's works, the Riverside Shakespeare remains a top recommendation. Its blend of thorough scholarship and reader-friendly presentation continues to make it a beloved companion for exploring the Bard's timeless plays and poems.

In the vast landscape of Shakespearean literature, the Riverside Shakespeare shines as a beacon of clarity and insight — a resource that invites readers to experience the beauty, drama, and wisdom of

Shakespeare's genius with confidence and enjoyment.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is The Riverside Shakespeare?

The Riverside Shakespeare is a comprehensive edition of William Shakespeare's works, often used in academic settings for its authoritative texts and extensive annotations.

Who edited The Riverside Shakespeare edition?

The Riverside Shakespeare was edited by G. Blakemore Evans, a renowned Shakespeare scholar.

When was The Riverside Shakespeare first published?

The Riverside Shakespeare was first published in 1974.

What makes The Riverside Shakespeare different from other Shakespeare editions?

The Riverside Shakespeare includes detailed annotations, historical context, textual variants, and critical essays, making it a valuable resource for both students and scholars.

Does The Riverside Shakespeare include all of Shakespeare's plays and poems?

Yes, The Riverside Shakespeare typically includes all of Shakespeare's plays, sonnets, and other poems.

Is The Riverside Shakespeare suitable for academic research?

Yes, The Riverside Shakespeare is widely regarded as a scholarly resource suitable for academic research and detailed study of Shakespeare's works.

Are there multiple editions of The Riverside Shakespeare?

Yes, there have been several editions of The Riverside Shakespeare, with updates and revisions to reflect ongoing Shakespeare scholarship.

Additional Resources

The Riverside Shakespeare: A Definitive Edition for Shakespearean Scholarship

the riverside shakespeare stands as one of the most respected and comprehensive editions of William Shakespeare's works. Since its initial publication in 1974 by Houghton Mifflin, this edition has

served scholars, students, and enthusiasts alike, offering an authoritative text coupled with extensive annotations. Its reputation as a critical resource reflects its meticulous editing, rich historical context, and scholarly apparatus, which together provide an invaluable lens through which to study the Bard's plays and poetry.

In-Depth Analysis of The Riverside Shakespeare

The Riverside Shakespeare distinguishes itself by striving for textual accuracy and scholarly depth. Edited originally by G. Blakemore Evans and later updated by scholars such as Jay L. Halio, the edition encompasses the complete works of Shakespeare, including plays, sonnets, and other poems. Crucially, it offers readers more than just the text; it provides introductions to each play, extensive footnotes, and critical essays that illuminate the nuances of Shakespeare's language, thematic concerns, and historical context.

This edition's commitment to textual fidelity is notable. Editors have collated various quartos and folios, comparing early versions of Shakespeare's plays to produce a text that seeks to be as close as possible to the playwright's original intentions. This scholarly rigor contrasts with more popular editions which may prioritize readability over textual precision. For academic research, this makes The Riverside Shakespeare an indispensable tool.

Features and Scholarly Contributions

One of the defining features of The Riverside Shakespeare is its comprehensive editorial apparatus. Each play is prefaced with a detailed introduction covering its historical background, performance history, and critical reception. These introductions provide essential context, helping readers understand the socio-political and literary environment in which Shakespeare wrote.

The footnotes throughout the text are another vital aspect. Rather than merely translating archaic words, the notes explain allusions, cultural references, and textual variants. This detailed annotation supports both novice readers and experts by clarifying challenging passages and shedding light on Shakespeare's use of metaphor, imagery, and rhetoric.

Additionally, the edition includes appendices with essays on Shakespearean chronology, sources, and textual criticism. The inclusion of the Shakespearean sonnets and narrative poems further enhances the edition's scope, making it a comprehensive collection rather than a mere anthology of plays.

Comparisons with Other Shakespeare Editions

When compared to other notable editions like the Arden Shakespeare or the Oxford Shakespeare, The Riverside Shakespeare occupies a middle ground. Arden editions are often lauded for their exhaustive critical commentary and multiple-volume depth, appealing primarily to specialists and advanced scholars. Oxford Shakespeare editions tend to emphasize textual scholarship with a modern editorial style and detailed variant readings.

In contrast, The Riverside Shakespeare aims to balance accessibility with scholarly rigor. Its single-

volume format (although later editions have expanded in size) makes it more practical for students and general readers, while still maintaining academic integrity. This balance has contributed to its widespread adoption in universities and academic settings.

The Impact on Shakespearean Studies and Education

The Riverside Shakespeare has played a significant role in shaping Shakespearean pedagogy. Its clear, authoritative text and comprehensive notes make it ideal for classroom use, enabling students to engage directly with Shakespeare's language without being overwhelmed by editorial decisions. Educators often praise its reliability and the breadth of supplementary material, which encourages deeper exploration of the plays' themes and histories.

Moreover, this edition has influenced digital and subsequent print adaptations, with many online Shakespeare resources referencing its textual choices and annotations. The Riverside Shakespeare remains a touchstone for those seeking a well-rounded and critically sound approach to Shakespeare's oeuvre.

Strengths and Limitations of The Riverside Shakespeare

While The Riverside Shakespeare has many virtues, it is not without limitations. Some critics argue that the single-volume format, while convenient, can lead to compromise in the depth of commentary compared to multi-volume editions. The annotations, though extensive, may occasionally lack the exhaustive detail found in Arden or Cambridge editions.

On the other hand, its strength lies in its editorial consistency and the clarity of its scholarly voice. The edition's careful balance between accessibility and academic rigor helps bridge the gap between casual readers and scholars, fostering a broader appreciation of Shakespeare's works.

Pros and Cons Summary

- **Pros:** Comprehensive collection of Shakespeare's works; detailed introductions and footnotes; balanced accessibility and scholarly depth; widely respected and used in academic contexts.
- **Cons:** Single-volume format limits extensive commentary; may not satisfy specialists seeking exhaustive critical apparatus; some editorial choices reflect mid-20th-century scholarship, which newer research may question.

Availability and Editions

The Riverside Shakespeare has undergone various revisions and reprints, with each edition refining the text and updating annotations to reflect contemporary scholarship. The most recent editions incorporate digital typesetting and sometimes include additional material like performance photographs or essays on modern adaptations.

Available in hardcover and paperback, this edition is accessible through academic bookstores, major online retailers, and university libraries. Its enduring presence in the marketplace underscores its ongoing relevance in Shakespearean studies.

In sum, The Riverside Shakespeare remains a landmark edition that continues to facilitate a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's literary genius. Its blend of textual accuracy, scholarly insight, and practical usability ensures that it holds a vital place in the study of one of the most influential writers in English literature. Whether for academic research, classroom instruction, or personal enrichment, this edition offers a reliable and enriching encounter with the Bard's timeless works.

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the riverside shakespeare: *"The" Riverside Shakespeare* William Shakespeare, 1972

the riverside shakespeare: Shakespeare's Contested Nations L. Monique Pittman, 2022-04-28 Shakespeare's Contested Nations argues that performances of Shakespearean history at British institutional venues between 2000 and 2016 manifest a post-imperial nostalgia that fails to tell the nation's story in ways that account for the agential impact of women and people of color, thus foreclosing promising opportunities to re-examine the nation's multicultural past, present, and future in more intentional, self-critical, and truly progressive ways. A cluster of interconnected stage and televisual performances and adaptations of the history play canon illustrate the function that Shakespeare's narratives of incipient British identities fulfill for the postcolonial United Kingdom. The book analyzes treatments of the plays in a range of styles—staged performances directed by

Michael Boyd with the Royal Shakespeare Company (2000–2001) and Nicholas Hytner at the National Theatre (2003, 2005), the BBC's *Hollow Crown* series (2012, 2016), the RSC and BBC adaptations of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2013, 2015), and a contemporary reinterpretation of the canon, Mike Bartlett's *King Charles III* (2014, 2017). This book will be of great interest to scholars and students of Shakespeare, theatre, and politics.

the riverside shakespeare: Communal Justice in Shakespeare's England Penelope Geng, 2021-04-09 Providing a fresh examination of the relationship between literary and legal communities, *Communal Justice in Shakespeare's England* examines the literature of the communal justice in early modern England.

the riverside shakespeare: *Beard Fetish in Early Modern England* Mark Albert Johnston, 2016-04-15 Focusing on representations of beards in English Renaissance culture, this study elucidates how fetish objects validate ideological systems of power by materializing complex value in multiple registers. Providing detailed discussions of not only bearded men but also beardless boys, bearded women, and half-bearded hermaphrodites, author Mark Albert Johnston argues that attending closely to early modern English culture's treatment of the beard as a fetish object ultimately exposes the contingency of categories like sex, gender, age, race, and sexuality. Johnston mines a diverse cross-section of contemporary discourses -- adult and children's drama, narrative verse and prose, popular ballads, epigrams and proverbs, historical accounts, pamphlet literature, diaries, letters, wills, court records and legal documents, medical and surgical manuals, lectures, sermons, almanacs, and calendars -- in order to provide proof for his cultural claims. Johnston's evidence invokes some of the period's most famous voices -- William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Lyly, Phillip Stubbes, John Marston, George Chapman, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton, and Samuel Pepys, for example -- but Johnston also introduces us to an array of lesser-known Renaissance authors and playwrights whose works support the notion that the beard was a palimpsestic site of contested meaning at which complex and contradictory values clash and converge. Johnston's reading of Marxist, Freudian, and anthropological theories of the fetish phenomenon acknowledges their divergent emphases -- erotic, economic, racial and religious -- while suggesting that the imbrication of diverse registers that fetish accomplishes facilitates its cultural and psychic naturalizing function.

the riverside shakespeare: *Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire* Jonathan Locke Hart, 2021-03-10 *Shakespeare, the Renaissance and Empire* presents Shakespeare as both a local and global writer, investigating Shakespeare's trans-cultural writing through the interrelations and interactions of binaries including theory and practice, past and present, aesthetics and ethics, freedom and tyranny, republic and empire, empires and colonies, poetry and history, rhetoric and poetics, England and America, and England and Asia. The book breaks away from traditional western-centric analysis to present a universal Shakespeare, exposing readers to the relevance and significance of Shakespeare within their local contexts and cultures. This text aims to present a global Shakespeare, utilizing a dual perspective or dialectical presentation, mainly centred on questions of (1) how Shakespeare can be viewed as both an English writer and a world writer; (2) how language operates across genres and kinds of discourse; and (3) how Shakespeare helps to articulate a poetics of both texts (literature) and contexts (cultures). The book's originality lies in its articulation of the importance and value of Shakespeare in the emerging landscape of global culture.

the riverside shakespeare: *Pronouncing Shakespeare's Words* Dale Coye, 2016-08-03 How do you pronounce zounds, Milan, housewife and hundreds of other words in Shakespeare's plays? In this ingenious book, Dale Coye has provided a guide to each significant word, line-by-line, scene-by-scene, in twenty of Shakespeare's most popular plays. More than a simple pronouncing dictionary, *Pronouncing Shakespeare's Words* pays attention to scansion, displays alternative pronunciations in different centuries and geographical areas, and provides a simple pronunciation guide requiring no knowledge of lexicographic symbols. Now available in an affordable paperback edition, *Pronouncing Shakespeare's Plays* will become a vade mecum (pronounced VAH-day MAY-cum) for actors, students, and general readers of Shakespeare.

the riverside shakespeare: Shakespeare Expressed Kathryn M. Moncrief, Kathryn R. McPherson, Sarah Enloe, 2013-08-29 A collection of essays originally presented on the Blackfriars stage at the American Shakespeare Center, Shakespeare Expressed brings together scholars and practitioners, often promoting ideas that can be translated into classroom experiences. Drawing on essays presented at the Sixth Blackfriars Conference, held in October 2011, the essays focus on Shakespeare in performance by including work from scholars, theatrical practitioners (actors, directors, dramaturgs, designers), and teachers in a format that facilitates conversations at the intersection of textual scholarship, theatrical performance, and pedagogy. The volume's thematic sections briefly represent some of the major issues occupying scholars and practitioners: how to handle staging choices, how modern actors embody early modern characters, how the physical and technical aspects of early modern theaters previously impacted and how they currently affect performance, and how the play texts can continue to enlighten theatrical and scholarly endeavors. A special essay on pedagogy that features specific classroom exercises also anchors each section in the collection. The result is an eclectic, stimulating, and forward-thinking look at the most current trends in early modern theater studies.

the riverside shakespeare: Pflöpfung - Eine Theorie der Kultur Uwe Wirth, 2025-10-29 Eine groß angelegte neue Kulturtheorie - Die Pflöpfung ist eine seit der Antike gängige Technik des Land- und Gartenbaus: Verschiedenartige Pflanzen werden miteinander verbunden, um Qualität und Ertrag zu steigern. Zugleich bündeln sich im Konzept der Pflöpfung zentrale Fragen der Kulturtheorie wie das Verhältnis von Natur und Kultur, Mensch und Umwelt, Mensch und Maschine. Darüber hinaus hat die Pflöpfung aber auch in vielen anderen Disziplinen als Metapher Karriere gemacht. Der Kulturwissenschaftler Uwe Wirth führt die aktuellen kultur- und medienwissenschaftlichen Diskussionen zusammen und zeigt, dass das Prinzip Pflöpfung in Theorie und Praxis allgegenwärtig ist.

the riverside shakespeare: Reading by Design Pauline Reid, 2019-04-29 Renaissance readers perceived the print book as both a thing and a medium - a thing that could be broken or reassembled, and a visual medium that had the power to reflect, transform, or deceive. At the same historical moment that print books remade the visual and material structures of manuscript and oral rhetoric, the relationship between vision and perception was fundamentally called into question. Investigating this crisis of perception, Pauline Reid argues that the visual crisis that suffuses early modern English thought also imbricates sixteenth- and seventeenth-century print materials. These vision troubles in turn influenced how early modern books and readers interacted. Platonic, Aristotelian, and empirical models of sight vied with one another in a culture where vision had a tenuous relationship to external reality. Through situating early modern books' design elements, such as woodcuts, engravings, page borders, and layouts, as important rhetorical components of the text, Reading by Design articulates how the early modern book responded to epistemological crises of perception and competing theories of sight.

the riverside shakespeare: Scholars in COVID Times Melissa Castillo Planas, Debra A. Castillo, 2023-09-15 Scholars in COVID Times documents the new and innovative forms of scholarship, community collaboration, and teaching brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this volume, Melissa Castillo Planas and Debra A. Castillo bring together a diverse range of texts, from research-based studies to self-reflective essays, to reexamine what it means to be a publicly engaged scholar in the era of COVID. Between social distancing, masking, and remote teaching—along with the devastating physical and emotional tolls on individuals and families—the disruption of COVID-19 in academia has given motivated scholars an opportunity (or necessitated them) to reconsider how they interact with and inspire students, conduct research, and continue collaborative projects. Addressing a broad range of factors, from anti-Asian racism to pedagogies of resilience and escapism, digital pen pals to international performance, the essays are connected by a flexible, creative approach to community engagement as a core aspect of research and teaching. Timely and urgent, but with long-term implications and applications, Scholars in COVID Times offers a heterogeneous vision of scholarly and pedagogical innovation in an era of contestation and crisis.

the riverside shakespeare: Sins of the Fathers Hilaire Kallendorf, 2013-12-06 *Sins of the Fathers* considers sins as nodes of cultural anxiety and explores the tensions between competing organizational categories for moral thought and behaviours, namely the Seven Deadly Sins and the Ten Commandments. Hilaire Kallendorf explores the decline and rise of these organizational categories against critical transformations of the early modern period, such as the accession of Spain to a position of world dominance and the arrival of a new courtly culture to replace an old warrior ethos. This ground-breaking study is the first to consider Spanish Golden Age comedias as an archive of moral knowledge. Kallendorf has examined over 800 of these plays to illustrate how they provide insight into aspects of early modern experience such as food, sex, work, and money. Finally, Kallendorf engages the theoretical terminology of Marxist literary criticism to demonstrate the inherent ambiguity of cultural change.

the riverside shakespeare: 'All the World's a Stage' Charlene Bunnell, 2013-12-16 This book examines the often tragic and nearly always disabling metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*, world-as-stage, as it plays itself out in the characters of Mary Shelley's novels.

the riverside shakespeare: Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio Don Weingust, 2006-09-27 æOriginalÆ Shakespearean theatrical architecture, texts and performance methodologies have become subjects of great popular, professional and academic theatrical interest. *Acting from Shakespeare's First Folio: Theory, Text & Performance* examines a.

the riverside shakespeare: Food and Feast in Premodern Outlaw Tales Melissa Ridley Elmes, Kristin Bovaird-Abbo, 2021-04-08 In *Food and Feast in Premodern Outlaw Tales* editors Melissa Ridley Elmes and Kristin Bovaird-Abbo gather eleven original studies examining scenes of food and feasting in premodern outlaw texts ranging from the tenth through the seventeenth centuries and forward to their cinematic adaptations. Along with fresh insights into the popular Robin Hood legend, these essays investigate the intersections of outlawry, food studies, and feasting in Old English, Middle English, and French outlaw narratives, Anglo-Scottish border ballads, early modern ballads and dramatic works, and cinematic medievalism. The range of critical and disciplinary approaches employed, including history, literary studies, cultural studies, food studies, gender studies, and film studies, highlights the inherently interdisciplinary nature of outlaw narratives. The overall volume offers an example of the ways in which examining a subject through interdisciplinary, cross-geographic and cross-temporal lenses can yield fresh insights; places canonic and well-known works in conversation with lesser-known texts to showcase the dynamic nature and cultural influence and impact of premodern outlaw tales; and presents an introductory foray into the intersection of literary and food studies in premodern contexts which will be of value and interest to specialists and a general audience, alike.

the riverside shakespeare: The Pilot James Fenimore Cooper, 1986-01-01 Epic story an aircraft carrier under attack in the Pacific Ocean--the attackers leave none alive. Except one. Tony Chappel manages to survive the horrific event and becomes stranded on a deserted island alone, without any hope of rescue. He fights for survival and has to live with what he fears most. Not only does Tony struggle with the death of his friends but also the struggle within himself to live for a greater purpose.

the riverside shakespeare: Shakespeare Only Jeffrey Knapp, 2024-05-31 Three decades of controversy in Shakespeare studies can be summed up in a single question: Was Shakespeare one of a kind? On one side of the debate are the Shakespeare lovers, the bardolatrists, who insist on Shakespeare's timeless preeminence as an author. On the other side are the theater historians who view modern claims of Shakespeare's uniqueness as a distortion of his real professional life. In *Shakespeare Only*, Knapp draws on an extraordinary array of historical evidence to reconstruct Shakespeare's authorial identity as Shakespeare and his contemporaries actually understood it. He argues that Shakespeare tried to adapt his own singular talent and ambition to the collaborative enterprise of drama by imagining himself as uniquely embodying the diverse, fractious energies of the popular theater. Rewriting our current histories of authorship as well as Renaissance drama, *Shakespeare Only* recaptures a sense of the creative force that mass entertainment exerted on

Shakespeare and that Shakespeare exerted on mass entertainment.

the riverside shakespeare: Experiencing Drama in the English Renaissance Akihiro Yamada, 2017-04-28 This book investigates the complex interactions, through experiencing drama, of readers and audiences in the English Renaissance. Around 1500 an absolute majority of population was illiterate. Henry VIII's religious reformation changed this cultural structure of society. 'The Act for the Advancement of True Religion' of 1543, which prohibited the people belonging to the lower classes of society as well as women from reading the Bible, rather suggests that there already existed a number of these folks actively engaged in reading. The Act did not ban the works of Chaucer and Gower and stories of men's lives – good reading for them. The successive sovereigns' educational policies also contributed to rising literacy. This trend was speeded up by London's growing population which invited the rise of commercial playhouses since 1567. Every citizen saw on average about seven performances every year: that is, about three per cent of London's population saw a performance a day. From 1586 onwards merchants' appearance in best-seller literature began to increase while stage representation of reading/writing scenes also increased and stimulated audiences towards reading. This was spurred by standardisation of the printing format of playbooks in the early 1580s and play-minded readers went to playbooks, eventually to create a class of playbook readers. Late in the 1590s, at last, playbooks matched with prose writings in ratio to all publications. Parts I and II of this book discuss these topics in numerical terms as much as possible and Part III discusses some monumental characteristics of contemporary readers of Chapman, Ford, Marston and Shakespeare.

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