

Question 17

Where did Shakespeare get his money?

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Shakespeare was an actor, playwright and poet with lots of opportunities to earn an income in the new theatre business.

As a young actor, he would have been paid a weekly wage.

As a playwright he could sell his plays to a company at £6-£8 a piece. (For comparison, the annual income of a goldsmith was about £8.)

As a resident playwright for about twenty years, he would have had a salary, plus a benefit for each performed new play.

Unlike other playwrights, he was also a shareholder in a most successful London theatre company, which ended up owning two theatres, the Globe and Blackfriars. This is likely to have brought him around £150 a year.

Performances at Court were another good source of money, as was patronage. Among his patrons were Lord Strange, the Earl of Southampton (to whom he dedicated *Venus and Adonis*), and King James.

In addition, Shakespeare prudently invested in land and other business ventures.