

Question 3

Is there anything in the works which require their author to have been educated at a university?

Carol Rutter

Certainly not. In the early 1590s there was a clutch of university-educated playwrights who were hopping mad that a new generation of writers, equipped with only their grammar school training, reading Ovid, Virgil and Cicero, were supplying the players with brilliant scripts for the stage. Shakespeare was one of smart grammar school lads. Ben Jonson was another. And Dekker, Heywood. Webster.

None of the big books that informed Shakespeare's mind and writing was even on the university syllabus: Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

What students on the university arts course studied was Latin, Greek, rhetoric, and overwhelmingly logic, for careers in the church, civil service, Inns of Court. You can see in Shakespeare what kind of men the university fashioned: tedious logic-choppers like Polonius, dubious schoolmasters like Lucentio in the *Shrew*, and caviar-to-the-general playwrights like Hamlet in *The Mousetrap*.

If you want to know what kind of playwright Shakespeare was have a look at Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.