

QUESTION 27

What methods are used to find evidence of multiple authorship in Shakespeare's plays?

Macdonald Jackson

Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights all had different styles. Their verse, vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, imagery, phrasing and ideas can be analysed and specific features counted in order to identify their contributions to a play. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, published as by Shakespeare and Fletcher, even trivial details help distinguish the two men's shares. Unlike Shakespeare, Fletcher prefers *ye* to *you* and avoids old fashioned *hath* and *doth*. Fletcher adds an extra unstressed syllable to the end of a verse line far more often than Shakespeare. From numerous such preferences, evident in plays written alone, we build up distinct authorial profiles.