

Question 12

Were Shakespeare's plays published under his own name in his lifetime?

Laurie Maguire

There's nothing unusual about an Elizabethan play reaching print without its author's name. The important name on the title page was the theatre company's so Shakespeare's plays were first published in editions that identified the playing company but did not name the author. *Titus Andronicus* in 1594, *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1597 – none of them said they were written by Shakespeare. But then a change crept in. When *Richard II* and *Richard III* were reprinted in 1598 their title pages advertised Shakespeare as the author. This change was not consistent. In Shakespeare's life time there were 39 editions of 16 of his plays: only 66 per cent of these editions say "Written by William Shakespeare" or "Newly corrected" or "Newly augmented by William Shakespeare".