

QUESTION 8

Do Shakespeare's works reflect aspects of life in Stratford-upon-Avon during his time?

Michael Wood

In the end the Shakespeare authorship question all boils down to a simple matter of judging historical sources. To deny Shakespeare's authorship is to deny the primary sources, above all his will.

But the plays themselves also tell us about their author. They show that he was a grammar school boy from the Stratford area. They have local dialect words, and spellings; they show specialist knowledge of wool dealing and gloving, the two trades his father did in Stratford. (Think of Feste's joke in *Twelfth Night* about chevril, the soft kidskin used in glove making). The plays show an intimate knowledge of people and places around Stratford, like the Hackets of Wilmcote (his mother's village) in 'Taming of the Shrew', or real life Cotswold wool-men like George Vizer and Clement Perkes in *Henry IV*.

So you can see from the plays themselves that the author came from the Stratford region, as all Shakespeare's contemporaries of course knew. And they knew it because it was true.