

## Question 6

Did any of Shakespeare's boyhood contemporaries achieve intellectual and professional distinction?

Nick Walton

One of Shakespeare's boyhood contemporaries called Richard Field, who grew up on Bridge Street just a stone's throw away from Henley Street, achieved intellectual and professional distinction as a prominent London publisher. Richard oversaw the printing of the first full edition of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and in 1598 he published an edition of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. He also published works such as *Orlando Furioso* and *Pandosto*, which served as primary sources for Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Winter's Tale* respectively.

Shakespeare himself chose Richard's shop in Blackfriars as the printing house for his first two printed works *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. By the early 1590s Richard was beginning to make a name for himself in London. Having served an apprenticeship to the esteemed French printer Thomas Vautrollier Richard acquired a reputation for printing sophisticated books, including language instruction manuals for English speakers trying to learn French.