

QUESTION 2

Did Shakespeare attend the King Edward VI grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon?

Lois Potter

The school's records for that period haven't survived, but he must have been there. His father was an alderman and he could have had a free education and the plays show that he knew the basic text books. For instance, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick has the rather odd line- "What, interjections? Well, then, some be of laughing, as Ha ha he he". That comes from the section on interjections in William Lily's grammar book, which every teacher in the country was supposed to use. Students had to memorise a lot of proverbs and short sayings. So Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* tells his son, "We must be neat." His son is seven, and he would have just begun learning very short Latin phrases like "Mundus esto", which means "Be neat". In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a schoolboy named William is asked questions about grammar. He doesn't do very well, but his mother is pleased anyway.