

Question 1

How would Shakespeare have had access to books growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon?

Sylvia Morris

Well, religious books like the prayer book and Bible would have been kept at the church he attended every week, and at Stratford's grammar school he would have been taught from books including William Lilly's *Latin Grammar* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Some people owned their own books. The vicar who baptised Shakespeare left a Latin-English dictionary specially for the use of the school children. The curate in a neighbouring village left one hundred and sixty-eight books on subjects including stories and hobbies as well as religion, and a man from Anne Hathaway's village, Shottery, owned law books.

Even in the unlikely setting of the isolated Cumbrian village of Troutbeck is a yeoman's farmhouse still containing books dating from Shakespeare's lifetime. Nobody knows how they got there, but it's thought they came from local markets, so books were probably also bought and sold at Stratford's fairs and markets.

Books were a source of entertainment and instruction not just for the rich.