

# William Shakespeare's will

Shakespeare's legacy meant that he was very rich and well known when he died. There was much wealth, land and property that he could pass on to both relatives and friends. He had a document called a will written up before he died, in order to set out how his riches should be shared out.

By reading the words and names in Shakespeare's will, we can find out what sort of possessions he had at the time of his death and about the people in his life who received bequests (gifts).



His wife Anne, was given the second best bed, which might seem a little bit peculiar. However, in Shakespeare's time, it was normal for the best bed to be kept downstairs for the guests to sleep in. Therefore, William gave Anne the bed that they would have shared - and beds were worth a great deal of money in those days.

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As Anne was 60 years old when Shakespeare died, it was the eldest daughter Susanna, who inherited most of the buildings, land and money. Shakespeare was a clever businessman and also owned property in London.

Amongst other things, his other daughter, Judith was given a large amount of money and a silver bowl. Elizabeth, his granddaughter, who was only eight years old at the time, was gifted a valuable plate.

In the will, William's younger sister Joan was given money, items of clothes (possibly like this gentleman's nightcap) and continued to live in their family home. He also gave money to each of her children.



New Place - Shakespeare's final home



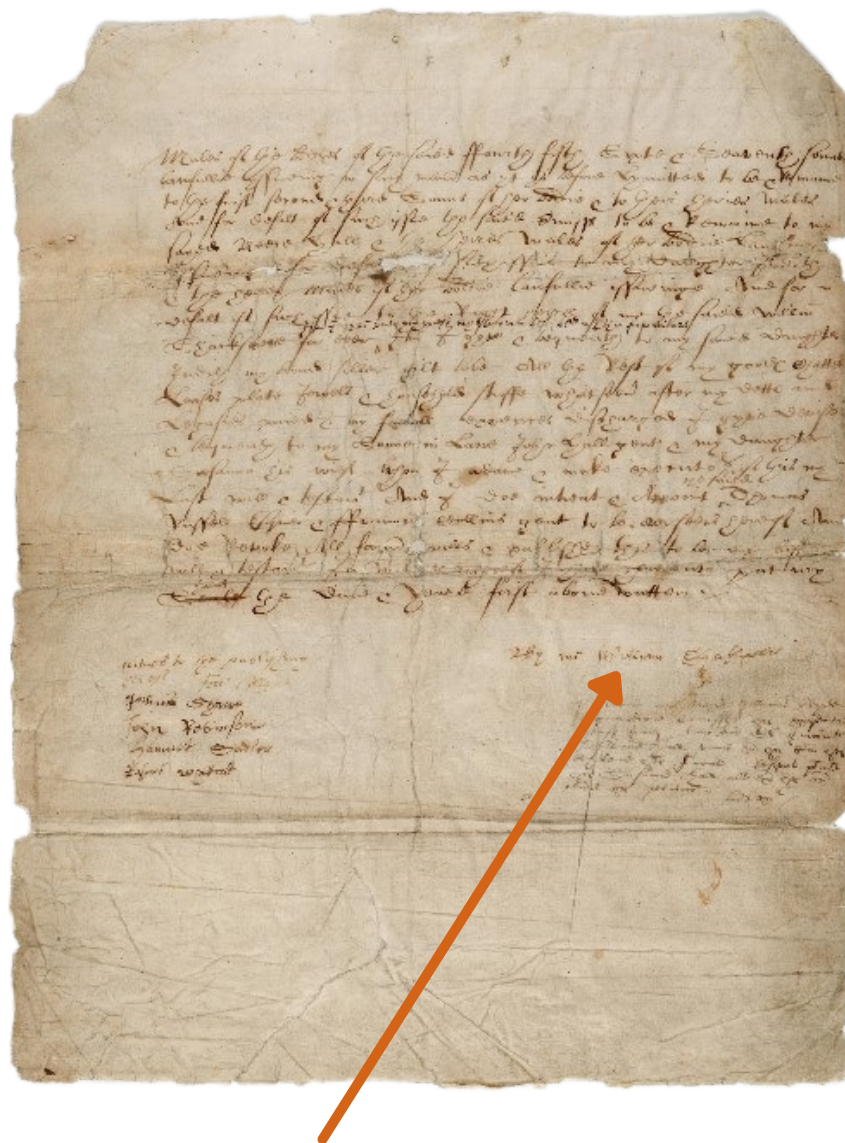
A gentleman's nightcap

Shakespeare mentions his friends in his will and they received money. A lawyer friend from Stratford, Thomas Combe, was given a sword. Richard Burbage, a famous actor and an important friend to Shakespeare, was given money to buy a mourning ring.

He also left amounts of money to his godson and the poor people of Stratford - a very generous benefactor!

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Below you will see a page from Shakespeare's will, a copy of which is held in the National Archives in Kew, London.



Here is where William Shakespeare has signed the will

For a full range of resources see: [shakespeare.org.uk/primaryresources](https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/primaryresources)