0:06Skip to 0 minutes and 6 seconds In the videos and the next steps, we join Shakespearean actor and director Ben Crystal, as he goes to some of the important places in Shakespeare's life.

0:22Skip to 0 minutes and 22 seconds This is Stratford-upon-Avon, a town that gets millions of visitors every year, thousands per day.

0:30Skip to 0 minutes and 30 seconds And they all come for one reason: William Shakespeare.

0:38Skip to 0 minutes and 38 secondsI'm Ben Crystal, an actor and stage producer of Shakespeare's plays. I'm here to find out why this small town in the centre of England produced one of the country's best ever playwrights, and why people are still visiting Stratford-upon-Avon 400 years after Shakespeare's death.

1:00Skip to 1 minute and 0 seconds When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurly-burly's done. When the battle's lost and won.

1:14Skip to 1 minute and 14 seconds I'm starting my journey at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, where, in 1564, Shakespeare was baptised, and then, 52 years later, buried.

1:29Skip to 1 minute and 29 seconds The words you can see in black and white are actually written on his grave. They're a curse warning us never to move his bones.

1:42Skip to 1 minute and 42 seconds This statue was created soon after Shakespeare's death. We think he looked very similar to this when he was alive.

1:54Skip to 1 minute and 54 seconds The next part of my journey takes me to Shakespeare's family home. This is the house where Shakespeare was born in April of 1564, just upstairs, in one of the bedrooms. They seem to be in a big, nice house. They seem to be doing well. What did his father do? Shakespeare's father was actually a glove maker. And he did not only live in this house; he also worked in here. He worked here? Yes, so it's not just a family home; it is also his workplace. His father was a craftsman, and William Shakespeare probably helped his father in the glove workshop. So he would have learned the trade a glove maker himself.

2:35Skip to 2 minutes and 35 seconds And he also managed to get quite a lot of references into his plays about gloves and leather-making. "Romeo and Juliet." Yes, exactly. Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand.

2:50Skip to 2 minutes and 50 seconds We're pretty sure Shakespeare came to school here, at King Edward's, just around the corner from the family home. William was able to attend the school for free, because his father was a town councillor. This magnificent building. Oh, wow. What do you think of that? Oh, my goodness.

3:12Skip to 3 minutes and 12 seconds What type of education would he have received? They would have taught you how to write here, how to read. But as you got later up into the school, then the teaching was all about Latin and Greek, translating Latin and Greek into English, and writing speeches, writing stories. Would you say that the education he received here shows in his plays and his poetry? Absolutely, undoubtedly. The plays are full of all those classical references, and all those great stories from Latin and Greek classical literature. Most successful playwrights of the time went to university, but Shakespeare didn't. He left King Edward's at 15. Around the same time, his father began to have financial difficulties.

4:00Skip to 4 minutes and 0 seconds Did it harm Shakespeare's career as a playwright that he didn't go to university? Well, we think, perhaps, the opposite. At the university, you were taught how to write plays. So his style, when he came into writing plays, was completely new. The text had that lovely, lyrical style. It's beautiful poetry. And all these stories that he learned here at the school were put into his plays. He certainly broke through this whole formal way of making plays, and suddenly, a new way of looking at theatre is opened up for everybody to come and see.

4:45Skip to 4 minutes and 45 seconds Stratford in Shakespeare's time was a busy place. It was a market town. People would have travelled far and wide to be here, bringing their life stories with them. If Shakespeare heard them, it would have fired his imagination, and been great ground for play-writing.

5:04Skip to 5 minutes and 4 seconds At 18, William married a local woman, Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than him. Anne was three months pregnant on their wedding day, so six months later, she gave birth to their first child, a daughter, Susanna. And two years after Susanna, twins were born, Hamnet and Judith, a boy and a girl. So he's 22, and he's got three children and a wife. It's a lot of pressure on him. And between having his three children and turning up in London a few years later, in the 1590s, Shakespeare goes missing. There's no record of him. So those years in between are called the lost years. And there are lots of strange ideas about what Shakespeare did during those lost years.

5:58Skip to 5 minutes and 58 seconds What are some of your favourite ideas about where he went? What happened to him over these years? I think that William was inspired by travelling groups of actors who came to visit Stratford-upon-Avon when he was living here. And I think that he saw some of their plays when they set up in the streets and in the taverns. And he thought, that's for me, and travelled to London with them. Did Stratford have a great influence on his writing? Stratford had a really important influence on Shakespeare's writing. He was inspired by the tradespeople he saw here, the schoolmasters, and especially the countryside. He writes a lot about trees and forests, and flowers and herbs, in all of his plays.

6:49 Skip to 6 minutes and 49 seconds So he's inspired by all the things that are happening around him.

6:57 Skip to 6 minutes and 57 seconds There are so many questions we have about Shakespeare that we'll never get answers to. But coming here to Stratford, seeing where he grew up, where he went to school, where he was buried, it brings the man that most of us are introduced to in a book, on a page, back to life. Where the place? Upon the heath. There to meet with Macbeth.