



Shakespeare the Playwright: A Companion to the Complete Tragedies, Histories, Comedies, and Romances^LUpdated, with a new Introduction

Victor L. Cahn

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When Victor Cahn's *Shakespeare the Playwright* was issued in 1991, it was highly recommended for any general public library and for academic collections at all undergraduate levels (*Choice*) and viewed as a useful guide for the general reader, as well as high school and undergraduate students *Library Journal*. Now Professor Cahn has revised his introduction to make the context of Shakespeare's plays more meaningful to the beginning researcher and to show how the plays have been performed from the 16th century onward. In addition, the bibliographies for each of the 37 plays have been updated to include the best new research. These updates and revisions will enhance the use of this guide for the general reader, student, and researcher, from high school onward.

Since their first production four centuries ago, the plays of William Shakespeare have been the most widely produced, popularly acclaimed, and critically examined works in the world's literature. In this unique book, Victor L. Cahn, an acclaimed teacher of drama, guides the reader scene by scene through each of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays, re-creating the freshness and theatrical effect of performance. Cahn has based his approach on the assumption that the fundamental appeal of Shakespeare's plays lies in the characters, and with clarity and subtlety he focuses on how the implications of the characters' actions and the nuances of their language contribute to the plays' impact.

The introduction briefly traces Shakespeare's life and career, and explains some of the social and artistic circumstances that influenced his work. The plays are grouped by genre: Tragedies, Histories, Comedies, and Romances. This structure allows Cahn to explore Shakespeare's development in all four dramatic forms, as well as to suggest relationships between characters, themes, and images throughout the works. In addition, Cahn discusses the plays as reflective of Shakespeare's age, particularly the Renaissance concern with the tension between individual rights and social responsibility. The text is free from extensive scholarly apparatus, but valuable suggestions for further reading follow the analysis of each play, and a selected bibliography concludes the volume. The comprehensiveness of the book, as well as the accessibility and quality of its interpretations, make it a valuable resource for courses in Shakespeare, drama, and British literature, and a worthy addition to high school, college, university, and public library reference collections.

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