

## *Advice from Shakespeare*

As an English major at Tennessee Tech University, perhaps it would not be surprising for me to tell you that literature courses were my favorite studies. Among all the authors, William Shakespeare had the greatest appeal to me.

Shakespeare, as most folks know, was an English poet and playwright who was born on April 26, 1564, and died on April 23, 1616. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the Bard of Avon. His surviving works, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and several other poems. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Hamlet is one of Shakespeare's most popular works. A legendary dispenser of advice, both good and bad, is the character Polonius in the play. In his conversations with members of the royal court, he was, it seems, an old windbag. But when he talked to his children, his advice was to the point and sensible. His words to his son, Laertes, immediately before the lad's departure to lands abroad are worth heeding. Some of the phrases have become axiomatic:



- *Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportioned thought his act.*
- *Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.*
- *Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hopes of steel.*
- *Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.*
- *Give every man thy ear but few thy voice; take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.*
- *Neither a borrower nor a lender be ...*
- *This above all: To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.*

More than likely, you never got up this morning expecting to find some lessons in Shakespeare.

But here they are, and we would do well to heed them – some 400 years after the Bard of Avon put them on paper.

– Beecher Hunter