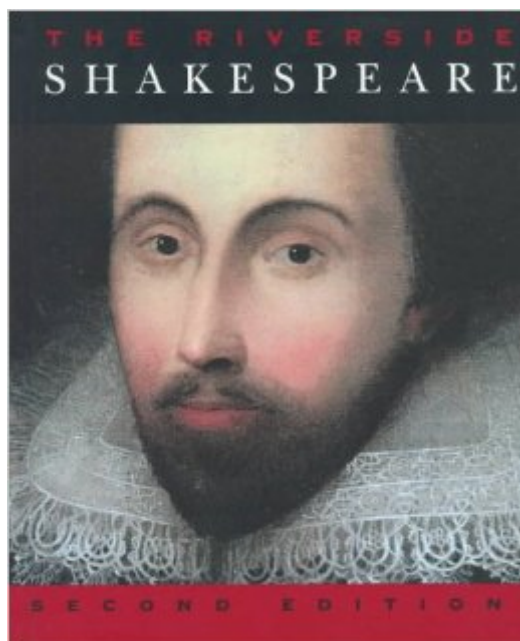


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The Riverside Shakespeare, 2nd Edition



Synopsis

The Second Edition of this complete collection of Shakespeare's plays and poems features two essays on recent criticism and productions, fully updated textual notes, a photographic insert of recent productions, and two works recently attributed to Shakespeare. The authors of the essays on recent criticism and productions are Heather DuBrow, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and William Liston, Ball State University, respectively.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While I sympathize somewhat with the review below -- the introductions do quibble a bit over the differences between Folio and Quarto versions, the exact source material etc. -- I found this to be an excellent version of the complete works. The essay before each play is very helpful toward understanding the literary context of the play--they do talk about the characters and the action of the play, in a way that nicely complements the text. The illustrations (some black and white, some color) are also interesting and helpful. The book contains both a general introduction, which is accessible, if slightly daunting, to a reader who might not be intimately familiar with all of the plays, serving to excite interest at least. It also contains an essay on 20th century Shakespeare criticism, which introduces many of the newer movements in Shakespeare criticism that are not included in the general introduction (which focuses more on the Elizabethan historical period, and more immediate reactions to the plays). The footnotes, while they are not indicated on the line itself, are located on the same page. In looking at several other editions, I found that footnotes were

sometimes actually endnotes--i.e. located in one section at the end of the play, which would be very disruptive to reading. Happily, this is not the case in this edition. The book, as the title claims, includes all of Shakespeare's plays, Sonnets, and poems. The appendices include many other interesting tidbits that help shine some light on old Billy's life, including his will, in which he enigmatically bequeathed a "second-best bed" to his wife. Other documents are included, often with explanations to help the reader to understand (as the documents are printed verbatim, the Elizabethan spelling and punctuation is a slight impediment). Overall, I found this to be the best of the paperback and hardcover editions I examined.

This one-volume edition of Shakespeare's works is the most complete I found on the market: it includes "The Two Noble Kinsmen", Shakespeare's addition to "Sir Thomas More" (with photographic reproduction of the pages believed to be in his handwrite), the currently hot debated poem "A Funeral Elegy by W. S." and, above all, "The Reign of King Edward III", a new play recently accepted in the canon by many authoritative editors (Arden, Cambridge, Oxford). The text of each work is carefully edited and accompanied by helpful glossarial notes, a textual discussion with short bibliography, and an impressive collation which allows the reader to find variant readings and emendations. An exhaustive critical introduction precedes each play and poem, dealing with authorship, date, sources, textual differences between quarto and folio texts, and of course the principal thematic issues. What makes this a superb edition - and indeed a real "companion" to Shakespeare studies! - is the great amount of subsidiary material, including a general introduction - focusing on Shakespeare's life, art, language, style, and on the Elizabethan historical and theatrical background - and a series of useful essays on various themes: critical approaches to the plays and poems, philological issues, history of the plays on the stage, television and cinema. There are also many interesting documents, synoptic tables, glossaries, indexes, illustrated tables (both coloured and b&w) , the reproduction of the introductory pages of the First Folio of 1623, and a rich bibliography. I personally consider this book a must have for every teacher, scholar, or simply amateur of the greatest of all poets. Buy it!

I bought this edition after using the Norton in my last semester Shakespeare class, and have found my reading of the plays for this semester's class much more enjoyable. The format is beautiful: the pages are thicker, lie flatter, and hold more content. Unlike the Norton, whose footnote numbers interrupt the reading of the text, forcing you to lose momentum, the Riverside's are unobtrusive, available if you need them and when you want them. The introductions are prescient, interesting,

and well-written. The text itself is more accurate, also. Harold Bloom, for example, in his introduction to *The Invention of The Human*, says he uses the Riverside and Arden, and that the Oxford (upon which the Norton is based) tries to publish the worst possible poetry. This I found amusing, if not also accurate.

This book has useful (though not terribly complete) introductions to each of the plays, focusing mainly on comparing various Folio and Quarto editions of the plays. It also contains some nice pictures, though I wish the Latin in them were translated or shown at a legible size. It has very nice appendices nothing the first appearances of all the characters in the plays, and a timeline showing what historical events were occurring in relation to works written by Shakespeare and events in his life, as well as to plays by other playwrights and other literature produced at that time. The pages are relatively thin and the print small. However (this refers to the '74 edition, maybe they have changed it since then) the plays are a royal pain to read. The pages are about a foot high and the notes are at the bottom. There is no marking to indicate whether a line has a note, so the reader must read a line or two, glance down at the notes, read another few lines, look at the notes again, and so on. Were it not for this major annoyance, this would be a very good (and very complete) edition of Shakespeare's works.

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