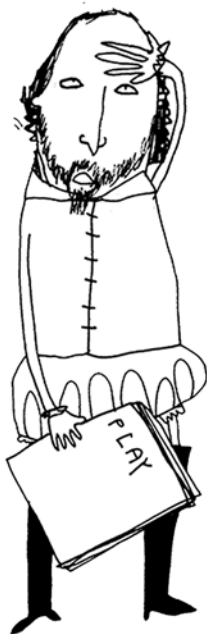
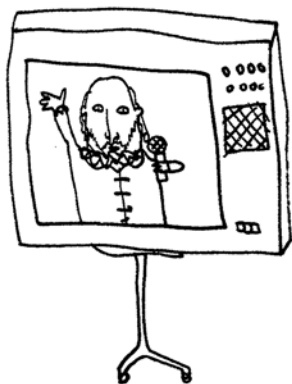
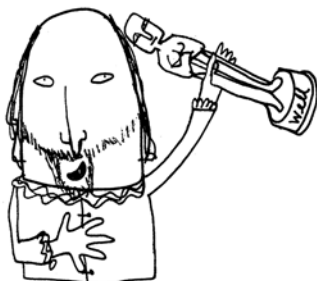
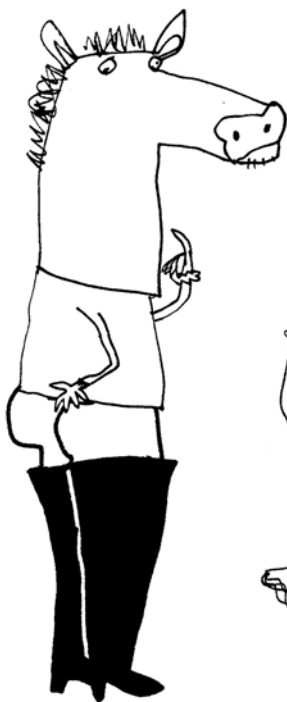


What's so special about
Shakespeare?





For Harold and Connie
who introduced me to Shaks.

M.R.

“Alas, poor Tim, he knows me well!”

S.N.

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What's so special about
Shakespeare?



MICHAEL ROSEN

illustrated by
SARAH NAYLER



**WALKER
BOOKS**

Liberty! Freedom!

Tyranny is dead!

Run hence, proclaim,

cry it about the streets.

Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene 1



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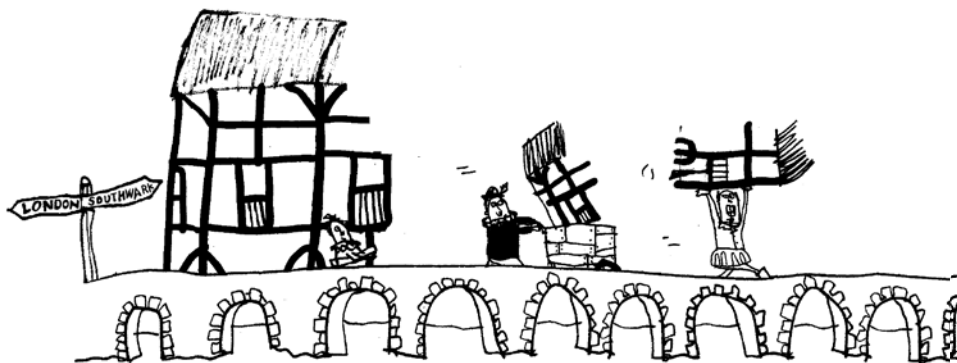
A plot! 1598

It's the middle of the night on the edge of London, a few days after Christmas day, 1598. The River Thames is frozen over, snow is falling. The roofs of the timbered houses and the nearby fields are white with it. Four buildings stand higher than the nearby houses, shops, bowling-alleys, gambling houses and taverns – a windmill, a church and two theatres. One of the theatres is called the Curtain, and the other simply the Theatre. They are tall wooden buildings that have only been there for ten years or so but in that time their walls have shaken to the sound of swords clashing in fencing matches, actors crying of murder or lost love, and audiences roaring with laughter.

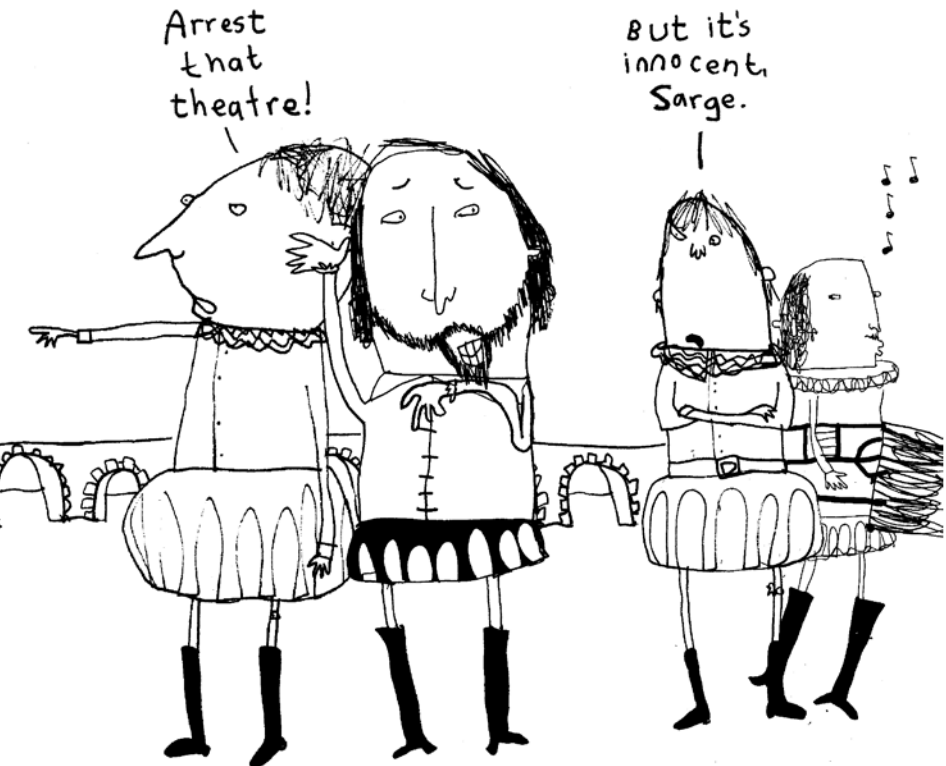
What's so special about Shakespeare?

But tonight sixteen men are pulling down the Theatre. Two of them are brothers. They run a company of actors who put on plays, and with them there's a builder and his workmen.

As the men hurry about their work, it's clear that what's going on is secret and must be done as quickly as possible. Through the night the workmen load timbers onto wagons.



Two strangers arrive and start quizzing them. The workmen lie and say they are only taking down the parts of the building that are decaying. Really, they are dismantling the whole theatre and taking it somewhere else. It's a risky business because if it can be proved that they are stealing, they will all be hanged and their



What's so special about Shakespeare?

severed heads put on show.

But before long the men are taking the timbers across London Bridge to Southwark, where the theatre will be rebuilt and become known as one of the world's most famous theatres: the Globe.

Those two theatres on the edge of London were where the first plays of William Shakespeare were put on. But Shakespeare wasn't the kind of writer who sent off his plays and sat around hoping someone might perform them. He was an actor who worked in the same company as those men who dismantled the Theatre, and what's more, he was one of the new owners of the Globe.

In the four hundred years since then, he has become one of the world's most famous writers.

To be or not
to be...

Ow, that's not
a very good
line.

you
wrote it!



What's so special about Shakespeare?

Watching Shakespeare's plays is like being invited into a house full of amazing rooms. Go through a door at the top of the house and you will meet a ghost walking the battlements of a castle at night. You will hear him telling a young man that he is the ghost of his father, the old king. What's more, the ghost reveals that he was murdered by his own brother. And then the ghost says:

If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5

What will the young man do?

What's so special about Shakespeare?



What's so special about Shakespeare?

Walk into one of the rooms and you will come across a rich man yelling at his daughter because she won't marry the man he has chosen for her.

He shouts:

An* you be mine, I'll give you to my friend.
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets...

Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 5



But the girl has secretly married another man.

What's going to happen?

*An if