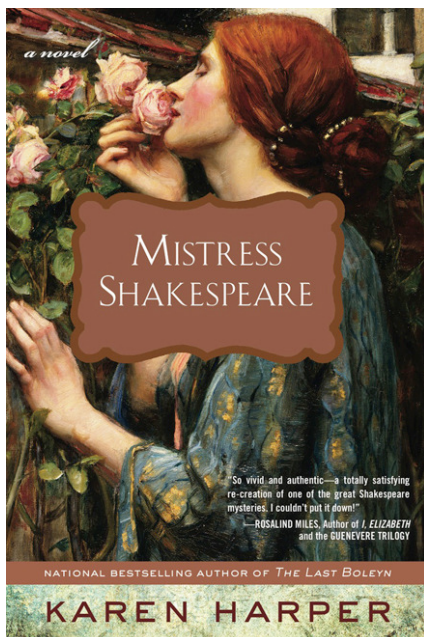


Mistress Shakespeare

by Karen Harper
A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



About the Book

As historical records show, Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton was betrothed to William Shakespeare just days before he was forced to wed the pregnant Anne Hathaway. Here, Anne Whateley takes up her pen to tell the intimate story of her daring life with Will. Obligated to acknowledge Will's publicly sanctioned marriage, Anne Whateley nevertheless follows him from rural Stratford-Upon-Avon to teeming London, where they honor their secret union, the coming together of two passionate souls. Persecution and plague, insurrection and inferno, friends and foes all play parts in Anne's lively tale.

Spanning half a century of Elizabethan and Jacobean history, and sweeping from the lowest reaches of society to the royal court, this richly textured novel tells the real story of Shakespeare in love.

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Book details:

Mistress Shakespeare by Karen Harper.

New American Library, 2010, ISBN 978-0-4512-2900-7.

<http://us.penguin.com>

Other formats: audiobook: Brilliance Audio, 2009, ISBN 978-1-4233-8156-3; ebook: New American Library, for various readers - see publisher's site.

Available through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program: <http://www.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio>.



About the Author

A life-long Ohioan, Karen Harper was born in Toledo. Her father was a designing engineer and her mother an elementary school teacher. She credits the women in her family with her early love of reading and telling stories. Harper attended DeVilbiss High School in Toledo, and majored in English and Education at Ohio University in Athens, where she was Phi Beta Kappa. She attended graduate school at The Ohio State University and taught two years of freshman English there, graduating with an MA. She specialized in early English literature and wrote her master's thesis on the Shakespeare play ***All's Well That Ends Well***.

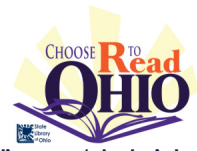
Living in Columbus since 1967, Harper taught at Whetstone High School (5 years), where her senior students presented an annual Elizabethan Festival. For 10 years, she was English department chair and teacher at Westerville North High School, where she was an advisor for the creative writing magazine. Harper became a published author in 1982 and left teaching to write full time in 1984.

Harper and her husband Don have made many trips to the British Isles to research her historical novels. England and Scotland (after Ohio!) are her "favorite places on the planet." The Harpers at one time were active in local Scottish heritage: Don played the bagpipes and Karen did Highland dancing. Now their favorite hobby is spending time with their three children's families and their grandson. The Harpers divide their time between Columbus and Naples, Florida.

Besides historical novels, Harper also writes contemporary suspense novels, which have been on the *USA Today* and *New York Times* bestseller lists. She has written four novels set in Ohio Amish country and is currently writing another trilogy set in that area. She is the winner of the Mary Higgins Clark Award for her Amish-set novel, ***Dark Angel***. Many of her novels have appeared in audiobook, large print, Braille, and e-book formats. Her work has been translated into several languages including French, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Hungarian, Polish and Turkish.

Other historical novels besides ***Mistress Shakespeare*** include ***The Queen's Governess***, ***The Last Boleyn***, ***The First Princess of Wales*** and, forthcoming in February 2011, ***The Irish Princess***.

Harper's professional organizations include The Historical Novel Society, Mystery Writers of America, International Thriller Writers, Romance Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and Central Ohio Fiction Writers. Her author's collection is housed in Rare Books and Manuscripts at The Ohio State University Libraries.



<http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>

Author Resources:

Karen Harper's Official Website

<http://www.karenharperauthor.com>

Author page on Penguin site

<http://us.penguin.com/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000013741,00.html>

Author page on Central Ohio Fiction Writers site

<http://www.cofw.org/KarenHarper.html>

Ohioana Authors: Karen Harper

<http://www.ohioana-authors.org/harper/index.php>

Includes audio of a radio feature on WOSU, plus a biography, list of Harper's works, and related essays

The Karen Harper Collection: Guide and Inventory

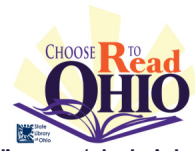
<http://www.library.osu.edu/sites/rarebooks/finding/harper.php>

Catalog of materials donated by Harper to The Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts collection

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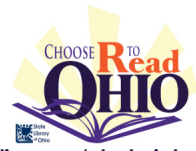
Karen Harper is able to schedule appearances in Ohio for events that take place between May and December of each year. Inquiries may be made at any time.



Talk About it!

(Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key events in the book. Do not read if you don't want to find out what happens.)

- The Elizabethan era in England was much less restrictive than the medieval centuries that preceded it, but in what ways is Anne's world radically different from our own? What are some of the strictures on personal freedom that would never be acceptable today? How do women like Anne or Jennet, or even Queen Elizabeth, find ways around the religious and cultural restrictions of the time? Does Elizabethan society also place restrictions on men?
- As a girl, Anne sees Queen Elizabeth I and says: "*However fair of face, her eyes were as dark as mine. That's why I loved her even more, from that moment on, no matter what befell.*" What traits, besides the color of her eyes, does Anne share with the queen? Are there other reasons she might identify with Elizabeth?
- Over the years, some Shakespeare critics and scholars have argued that it would be impossible for a boy with Shakespeare's small town, grammar school background to write the greatest works of English literature. What evidence of Will's brilliance do we see early on in this book? Could his small-town roots and years as an actor have actually helped rather than hindered him?
- When rehearsing ***The Taming of the Shrew***, Anne says "I had always thought I would make a fine actor, that I could learn my lines and stay in my part." Does Anne ever seem as though she's deliberately acting a part? Is she as accomplished an actor as Will?
- Anne says of Will: "*It was flattering perhaps, in some perverted way, that he was jealous of me but he had no right—.*" Why do you think Will is so jealous of Anne? Is it merely sexual jealousy about her friendships with other men or are there other reasons he might envy her lifestyle?
- Although Will and Anne Whateley are in love from their early days, they disagree—and openly conflict—about many things. Anne even says "*We argued heartily and far too often.*" Do you think this weakens or strengthens their relationship? In love, do opposites really attract?
- Many of Shakespeare's biographers have speculated on why Anne Hathaway and her husband spent most of their married years apart. Besides the possibility of Shakespeare's loving another woman, what else could have led to this arrangement? In what way might it have actually benefited them both?

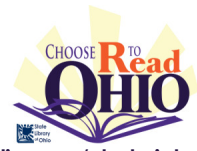


<http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctointro>

- At the end of the novel, when Lord Cecil asks Anne “*Tell me true, Mistress Anne, what is that man to you?*” she replies: “*I rather reckon it is like your relationship to and love for the queen...Will Shakespeare, sir, is a genius at what he does, as much as the queen in her realm. But they need helpers, do they not, guardian angels of a sort? So you and I are much alike in our admiration—and our love—for those we have chosen to care for?*” Do you think Anne is being completely sincere in her reply? Does she really see herself as only a muse and helpmate to Will? Do you see her that way?
- In **Henry VI**, Shakespeare wrote: “*Hasty marriages seldom proveth well.*” Do you think he might have been speaking of his marriage to Anne Whateley? Or Anne Hathaway? Or both? By the end of this novel, do we think Anne Whateley's marriage to William Shakespeare proved well?

Discussion questions courtesy Karen Harper; used with permission.

Continue the conversation! Additional discussion questions are available in the Readers Guide at the back of the New American Library paperback edition of ***Mistress Shakespeare***.



<http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>

Explore more!

Mistress Shakespeare page on Karen Harper's website

http://www.karenharperauthor.com/mistress_shakespeare.html

Includes book description, ordering information, reviews, discussion questions and more.

Interview with Karen Harper from Penguin

<http://us.penguin.com/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,,9780451229007,00.html?sym=QUE>

Karen Harper describes the writing of **Mistress Shakespeare**, her research, and her inspirations.

Shakespeare in Fiction

<http://www.akronlibrary.org/internetresources/pop/favfiction/classics-shakespeare.pdf>

This bibliography from the Akron-Summit County Public Library lists prequels, sequels, and retellings of Shakespeare's works, fictions in which Shakespeare appears as a character, and other novels inspired by Shakespeare.

In Search of Shakespeare

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/>

Website for the 2004 PBS miniseries exploring the events that shaped William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare Bookshelf

<http://www.ipl.org/div/shakespeare/>

Links to full-text online editions of Shakespeare's works, and links to many other resources including literary and historical criticism, from **ipl2: Information You Can Trust**.

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

<http://www.cofw.org>

Karen Harper is a member of Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW), a non-profit professional association for writers of all fiction genres. COFW is also a local chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA) organization.

About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio (CTRO) spotlights Ohio authors and promotes reading across Ohio. The State Library of Ohio, in partnership with Ohioana Library Association, developed this initiative to encourage Ohioans of all ages to share literature by authors native to, residing in, or associated with Ohio. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>.