

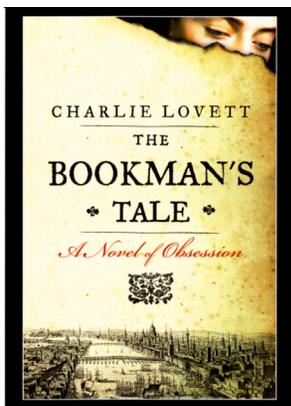
## **Study Guide for *Becoming Shakespeare* By Charlie Lovett**

- 1) *Becoming Shakespeare* begins and ends with what is called a framing device—a scene that frames the entire story. What is the framing device? Can you think of other plays, movies, or works of literature that have a framing device? Why might a writer choose to tell a story in this way?
- 2) Many of the characters in *Becoming Shakespeare* also appear in plays by Shakespeare himself. Is your character one of these? If not, can you think of a character in a Shakespeare play that might have inspired your character? Pick a character that is taken from a Shakespeare play and examine how that character is portrayed in the two plays. How are they alike? How are they different?
- 3) Historically we know very little about the youth of William Shakespeare. We do know that he married Anne Hathaway, who lived in Shottery, not far from Stratford-upon-Avon. What is your opinion of the youthful Shakespeare as portrayed in *Becoming Shakespeare*? Can you imagine that he could become the great playwright? Why do you think the playwright chose to portray him as he did? What character traits does Shakespeare, as portrayed in the play, have in common with people you know?
- 4) *Becoming Shakespeare* has many anachronisms in the text. An anachronism is a detail that does not fit the time period of the play. For instance, the play is set in 1582, but on p. 6.19, Shakespeare refers to Wikipedia. What other anachronisms can you find in the play? Why do you think the playwright introduced these anachronisms?
- 5) There are a number of elements that Shakespeare uses over and over in his comedies: boastful characters, mistaken identity, characters disguised as the opposite gender. Can you find examples of all of these in *Becoming Shakespeare*? Take one instance of one of these elements and compare it to the same element used in a Shakespeare play. Shakespeare also often uses twins in his comedies. How is the idea of twins adapted in *Becoming Shakespeare*?
- 6) On p. 5.18 Mrs. Hathaway says “the only thing worse than spinsterhood . . . married to an actor!” Why might she feel that marrying an actor is worse than marrying no one at all? What can you find out about the place of actors in Elizabethan society that might shed light on this line?
- 7) At the beginning of scene 7, the actors talk about ideas Shakespeare has had for plays. Which plays of Shakespeare’s did these ideas ultimately lead to? Can you find out where Shakespeare really got the ideas for these plays?
- 8) Beginning with scene 7, the actors act out their own ideas for plays. Can you recognize the stories they are enacting? Is it anachronistic to set these stories in 1582? Can you take a contemporary story, book, or movie and rewrite a scene in Shakespearean sounding language (in the style of Bianca’s line on 10.32 “Forsooth methinks there be no place like unto home.”)



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- 9) Dogberry and Verges often speak in malapropisms. What is a malapropism? Why is it especially appropriate that these two characters should talk this way? Find five examples of malapropisms in their lines. What words do you think they intended to say?
- 10) Each of the students in the acting troupe had a distinguishing characteristic. What are they? Why do you think the playwright chose these particular characteristics? If you had to define your friends each by a single characteristic, what would they be?
- 11) It takes some time for us to discover what Shakespeare character Edmund is based on. Can you discover which character inspired him? How does the playwright reveal the connection between Edmund and his Shakespearean inspiration? Once the connection is revealed, do you find it appropriate? In what way are the two characters alike?
- 12) On p. 22.4 Mr. Hathaway says he would “stand on the roof singing ‘Greensleeves’ if it would get” Anne married by the end of the day. What is “Greensleeves?” Why is it an appropriate thing to sing in 1582?
- 13) What would you say is the theme of *Becoming Shakespeare*? Why? Where is this theme most evident?
- 14) In his song to Anne Hathaway on p. 28, why does Edmund mention her “fine cottage?”
- 15) What Shakespeare play is presented in highly abbreviated form by the troupe of student actors on pp. 29–32. Why is it especially appropriate that this is the play they present?
- 16) *Becoming Shakespeare* is a comedy, yet it ends on a serious note. Why do you think the playwright chose to end the play this way? Do you like the ending? Why or why not? How do you think the ending will make the audience feel? How would the play be different if it had a comic ending? Can you write a comic final scene for the play?
- 17) What, in your own words, do you think Shakespeare learns at Shottery? How does what he learns make him better able to become a playwright? Can you find the origin of his speech on p. 33? How is the original context of the speech different from the way it is used in *Becoming Shakespeare*?



**Charlie Lovett's newest book is *The Bookman's Tale: A Novel of Obsession*. Published by Viking Pres, June 3, 2013.**

A mysterious portrait ignites an antiquarian bookseller's search through time and the works of Shakespeare for his lost love. Guaranteed to capture the hearts of everyone who truly loves books, *The Bookman's Tale* is a former bookseller's sparkling novel and a delightful exploration of one of literature's most tantalizing mysteries with echoes of *Shadow of the Wind* and A.S. Byatt's *Possession*.