

Compare contrast shakespeare and marlowe essay sample

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Compare/Contrast Shakespeare and Marlowe

William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe were both writers of the Elizabethan stage, living in the same town of London, at the same time, and they wrote plays while working with the same people. Their strongest similarity was in their work. They both had an innate ability to write about love, great tragedies, comedies, drama and poetry with a similar style called blank verse. Before Marlowe's time, blank verse was not an accepted verse for drama, but he was able to substitute the regular stresses of earlier blank verses and created a more departed, sincere verse. Shakespeare later followed Marlowe's example and was able to master the ordinary rhythm of this new style of blank verse. In order to learn more about the effects these two great writers had on English literature we need to examine each of their careers in greater detail, analyzing their lives and literary works. William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and was understood to have attended the Kings New School and a grammar school where he learned Latin and literature.

When he was the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway and just six months after the marriage, they had a daughter, Susanna, and then around two years later they had twins, Hamnet and Judith. He became an actor, writer, and part owner of a playing company. Most of his early works were comedies and histories and then mainly just tragedies. Towards the end of his work, he wrote mostly romances and assisted with other writers.

He was well respected for his poetry and playwrights in the 19th century and in the 20th century, his poetry was rediscovered and his plays remain popular to the present day and repeatedly studied, learned, performed and reinterpreted throughout the world. Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury. He attended The King's school in Canterbury, and Corpus Christi College where he received a scholarship. He started writing before Shakespeare, and after earning a bachelor's degree; he began to practice a Masters in art. Marlowe was an English playwright, writer and a translator for the Elizabethan era. He was known for his use of the blank verse, which would later become a great influence towards William Shakespeare works. It was Marlowe who revolutionized English drama from its rut of rambling interlude with one stroke of brilliance Marlowe was able to free the traditional blank verse of its rules regularity, and restrictions.

With out the restrictions Shakespeare was later able to play, purify and perfect the style. Marlowe broke new ground with his blank verse and it paved the way for future Elizabethan writers such as William Shakespeare. Some would say that Marlowe inspired the genius of William Shakespeare. It is quite evident that in the beginning of his career Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare was quite considerable. For example, the characters and plot line were similar in Shakespeare's Richard the second, Richard the third and Merchant of Venice were notably similar to Marlowe's Edward the second and the Jew of Malta. In some of Shakespeare's works he even quotes Marlowe's Hero and Leander directly as he uses the line "Whoever loved that, loved not at first sight?" in his As You Like It. Shakespeare's direct

mimicking of Marlowe's works clearly shows the influence that Marlowe had on Shakespeare's works. The comparison of Marlowe and Shakespeare differs greatly when it comes to their personality and mental make-up. Marlowe was an individual with great education, with a scholarship and classical learning, he was influenced by the Renaissance and in his personal life he was Bohemian and boisterous. On the other hand Shakespeare was self-schooled after the age of 15, showed little interest in current ideals or philosophic ideas. Shakespeare used his personal observation and experiences to understand human nature.

He had a more objective view of reality than Marlowe did. When we compare some of Marlowe's tragedies with those of Shakespeare's we discover several more similarities. Both Marlowe and Shakespeare create their heroes as tragic heroes with some sort of flaw in their character that eventually causes their demise, a demise that would cause feelings of pity for the hero. One difference in the two writers is that Shakespeare liked to use the supernatural to enhance the sense of mystery, for example the witches in Macbeth or the ghost in Hamlet. Whereas Marlowe's tragedies had no such mystery and one could follow the course of the events and foresee the tragic doom without much difficulty. The two writers also differed when it came to some of their development of characters. Shakespeare was far superior to Marlowe in the developing the internal and spiritual conflict in the minds of his heroes. Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth for example are far more well rounded individuals than those in Marlowe's writings.

Also it should be noted that Shakespeare was able to supply a lot of secondary characters in his tragedies like Horatio or Kent, as well as several female characters like Cleopatra, Desdemona, Lady Macbeth and others. In comparison, Marlowe's tragedies' had heroes that were great but stood alone in the center of the event, with mainly unmemorable characters to support them. It can also be said that Shakespeare was able to create a better variety of characters representing all walks of life. It is clear that William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlow were both great writers, geniuses before their time and two of the greatest writers of all time. This is evident in the expansive list of works that the two of them left behind for us to enjoy. Regardless of ones personal tastes towards the two writes style or influence their influence is undeniable. Shakespeare was able to watch the world and mimic it in his work while Marlowe had his preset views on what he wanted from life, which he in turn emulated in his works. They revolutionized the Elizabethan theater. It was Marlowe's work and adaption of the blank verse that inspired Shakespeare and allowed him the freedom to perfect the ideas that Marlowe created and forever influence English literature.