

Shakespeare's Sister Key Facts

Writer: Virginia Woolf | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Full Title:** Shakespeare's Sister (an excerpt from A Room of One's Own)
- **Writer:** Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)
- **Title of the Author:** Novelist, Essayist, Feminist, and Modernist Thinker; a central figure of the Bloomsbury Group
- **Written Time:** 1928 (originally delivered as a series of lectures at Newnham College and Girton College, Cambridge)
- **First Published:** 1929 (in A Room of One's Own)
- **Genre:** Feminist Essay / Social Criticism / Literary Imagination / Argumentative Prose
- **Tone:** Analytical, Reflective, Ironical, Sympathetic, and Persuasive
- **Form:** Prose essay blending argument, fiction, and historical imagination; uses a hypothetical narrative of Shakespeare's sister "Judith" to make a feminist point
- **Narrative Voice:** First-person reflective narrator (Virginia Woolf herself, combining intellect and imagination)
- **Point of View:** First-person (subjective, reflective, and socially critical perspective)
- **Structure:** Divided within A Room of One's Own; this section focuses mainly on,
 - The Social and Educational Inequality of Women
 - The Imagined Life of Shakespeare's Sister (Judith Shakespeare)
 - The Impact of Patriarchal Society on Women's Genius and Expression
- **Style:** Elegant and imaginative prose enriched with irony, symbolism, historical analysis, and emotional appeal. Woolf blends fact with fiction, using rhetorical questions, vivid imagery, and a conversational tone to engage readers.
- **Central Idea:** Women of genius, like men, have existed, but patriarchal society deprived them of education, independence, and creative opportunity. "Judith Shakespeare," imagined as Shakespeare's equally gifted sister, could never become a writer because society denied her freedom, education, and recognition.

- **Significance:** A landmark feminist essay exposing how social, economic, and educational inequality silenced women's voices in literature. It became a foundation text for feminist literary criticism and women's rights movements.

- **Summary in One Line:** "Genius needs freedom, and women were denied it." ("

16th-century England, where women were denied the same educational and intellectual freedoms as men. The essay argues that this lack of freedom stifled women's potential and voices. It is a foundational text for feminist literary criticism and women's rights movements.

- **Setting:**

- **Place Setting:** England (mainly Elizabethan London and Stratford, in imagination; also Woolf's Cambridge lectures)

- **Time Setting:** 16th century (Elizabethan Age), contrasted with early 20th century England (modern feminist awakening)

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