



# BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND

William Shakespeare

Blow, blow, thou winter wind.  
Thou art not so unkind

As man's ingratitude.

Thy tooth is not so keen,

5 Because thou art not seen,

Although thy breath be rude.<sup>1</sup>

Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly.

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

10 This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,

That dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot.

**keen** (kēn) *adj.* having  
a sharp cutting edge

**feigning** (fān' in) *v.*  
pretending

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1. **rude** *adj.* rough; harsh.

15            Though thou the waters warp,<sup>2</sup>  
              Thy sting is not so sharp  
                 As friend remembered not.  
              Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly.  
              Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.  
                 Then, heigh-ho, the holly!  
20            This life is most jolly.

2. **warp** v. freeze.

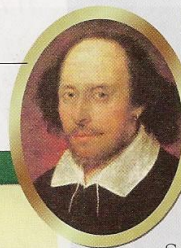
## Review and Assess

### Thinking About the Selection

1. **Respond:** Do you share the view of friendship expressed by the speaker in this poem? Explain.
2. (a) **Recall:** To whom is the speaker speaking in each of these stanzas? (b) **Interpret:** What does the speaker mean when he repeats “This life is most jolly”?
3. (a) **Recall:** What does the speaker say is more unkind than the winter wind and sharper than the sting of the bitter sky? (b) **Infer:** How does the speaker feel about friendship and love?
4. (a) **Compare and Contrast:** Explain what the poem suggests about the harshness of nature compared to the pain of human relationships. (b) **Speculate:** Based on the poem, what do you think happened to the speaker to make him feel this way?
5. **Take a Stand:** Do you think the speaker should allow the pain of a past experience to grow into bitterness?

### William Shakespeare

(1564–1616)



Probably the most famous author in English literature, William Shakespeare was born in

Stratford-on-Avon, a small town in England. The son of a glovemaking, Shakespeare made his living as an actor and writer. Although born in Stratford, he moved to London as a young man, and spent most of his adult life there. His plays were performed in special presentations for Queen Elizabeth I, as well as his theater—*The Globe*. Although written centuries ago, plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* continue to capture audiences today. In addition to writing thirty-seven plays, he also wrote poems and songs.