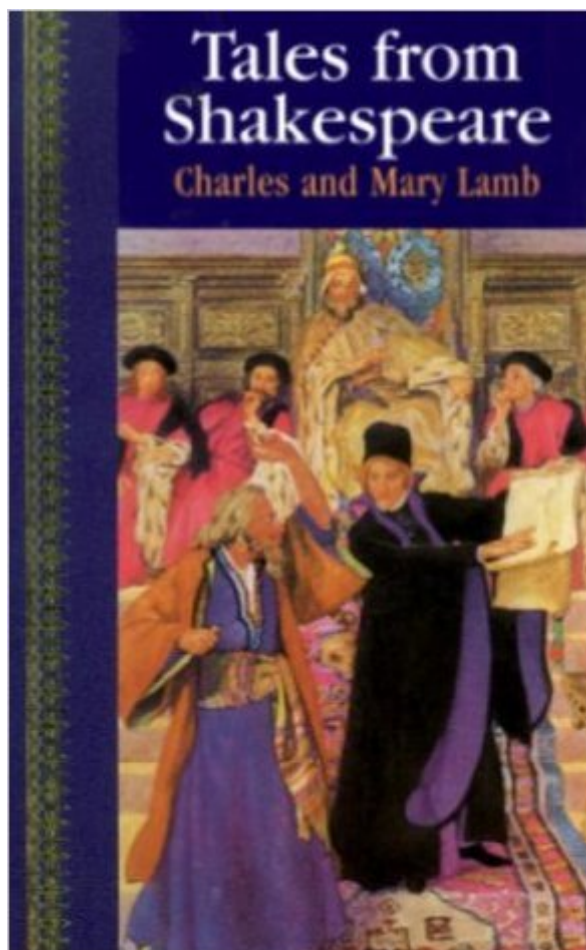


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# Tales From Shakespeare: Children's Classics



## Synopsis

In the twenty tales told in this book, Charles & Mary Lamb succeeded in paraphrasing the language of truly adult literature in children's terms. Let us not underestimate young readers: they love a complex story with many and varied characters, twists of plot, and turns of fate as much as anyone, but they draw the line at reading in unfamiliar language. The Lambs provide a real feast of plain fare, and flavor it with as many tasty tidbits of Shakespearean language as they felt the young reader could easily digest. This deluxe Children's Classic edition is produced with high-quality, leatherlike binding with gold stamping, full-color covers, colored endpapers with a book nameplate. Some of the other titles in this series include: Anne of Green Gables, Black Beauty, King Arthur and His Knights, Little Women, and Treasure Island.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although this book is written for children it is great for all ages and is great to get the basic story line before you go to a play. I read most of the plays in this book (I have not yet read all of them) when I was 11. Now that I have been reading the actual plays of Shakespeare I always start by reading the short version of the play in this book and then read the actual play. I can understand what is going on much better that way. I also recommend "Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children" by Edith Nesbit which gives about ten page versions of each story verses the thirty pages per story in this book and also has a smaller vocabulary which makes it better for younger children.

This is a beautifully crafted book. The jacket, the paper, the artwork are all of superior quality. Definitely a collectible-ish type of book. However, be warned: It is not the same Charles and Mary Lamb version as others! Those versions contain 20 abridged tales of Shakespeare's plays; this version only tells 6. I don't rightly remember all of them, but I know "Hamlet", "Midsummer Night's Dream", "Macbeth", and "Romeo and Juliet" were included. If one is satisfied with just these tales, then I can tell you to buy this book. On the other hand, if you want all 20 tales (as I did), you are better off buying another version.

When I first began homeschooling my children I came across this book. Since we were to soon see a high school production of *Midsummer's Night Dream* I read the Lamb version aloud to them before seeing the performance. The results were amazing. My children had no previous exposure to Shakespeare. The Lamb's ability to retain some of Shakespeare's original language greatly enhanced their comprehension. They loved the story and we were able to follow the play with ease, laughing and clearly enjoying themselves much to the frustration of some nearby adults who were completely lost. This book helped begin their love affair with Sir William. I am of the opinion reading a well summarized version of his plays and then watching a well done performance will make any child appreciate the genius that is Shakespeare's work.

I remember my father giving me this book when I was young. He was a junior high school English teacher and used this book in class. Together we read the stories and I loved them. Now I am a college professor and use the book in class myself. While some of the summaries are "dated," they are still useful in communicating the basic action of the play to students and the very fact that they are "dated" allows the book to serve as an illustration of how interpretations of Shakespeare's plays have changed since the Lambs' time. I recommend this book heartily.

I read this book as a child; my mother gave it to me and my brother before we went to see the plays. It was an excellent introduction to the plays and to the world of Shakespeare, and helped me understand what I was watching. I also enjoyed reading the stories themselves, and familiarized myself with Shakespeare this way. It made a huge difference, as became quite clear to me when we read *Henry IV* in ninth grade in school, a play for which I had no Lamb version. I didn't understand that play and took no pleasure in it, whereas I did enjoy much harder plays (e.g., *Othello*, *A Winter's Tale*, etc.) that I had the Lambs' help with. Depending on reading level, the Lambs' book would be appropriate for anyone from seven or eight to 13 or 14 years old.

I read this book as a child of eight (back in 1970). It was a gift from my scientist father (an avid Shakespeare fan) as an introduction to Shakespeare. The book served its purpose very well and I have now given it to my sons aged 7 and 9 who have found it extremely enjoyable. The best part of this book is the way it weaves a rich tapestry in layman's language without the confusing and often ambiguous old English of the original transcripts. Lamb's Tales makes an excellent primer for those going to see the plays in traditional old English. The book allows all the complex plot elements and characters to be understood and spotted in the live play. The prose format allows the reader to conjure up the images and situations more readily than if struggling with the poetry. I heartily recommend this book to all ages.

If you want to learn as a novice the tales of Shakespeare, then this is the book to read. A children's novel of his famous plays. Now to the English Shakespearean scholar this would seem like Shakespeare for dummies, but I would only partially agree. This is a great book to be introduced and gives a general framework before reading him. Even after reading this, it's not an easy task trying to read Elizabethan English, which even the experts argue on some of the terms and expressions used. And so, this book lets you understand and I find it's written rather well in Charles and Mary Lamb's authorship. After reading this book, which also makes good for second, third and fourth readings, I found it much easier to absorb a recent bio on Shakespeare which was very enlightening, *Will of the World* by Stephen Greenblatt and also other books which attempt explanatory meanings of Elizabethan English to his plays and sonnets. Now you know what the plays are about and go from there. This is a great book, I treasure it.

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