May 3, 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.
Which Shakespearean plays have you seen or read?
Where would you rank him on the list of the world's greatest writers?
Three years before Shakespeare died, he drafted his will. What do you think he left and to whom?

Discuss the following questions about the will and then listen to the report and check your ideas.

1. What is the first thing Shakespeare does in his will?
2. What does he say the money he leaves three of his friends should be used for?
3. Shakespeare left his wife his 'second' best bed. Who got his best bed?
4. Previously, scholars have described his will as sour, unkind and ungenerous. What logical reason do you think is behind the 'businesslike' nature of his will?
5. We now know that Shakespeare's will was not just written at one moment in time, but it was added to. What do you think that suggests?
6. What do you think prompted the writing of his last will in 1613?

Do you think it is strange that Shakespeare leaves instructions for what his friends should do with the money he leaves them, and that his wife should get his 'second' best bed?
Do you know of any other odd bequests in wills?

Discuss whether you think the following statements are true or false. Then read the article on page 2 and check your ideas.

☐ Houdini left his wife a ten-digit secret number as a code for when he contacted her from the afterlife.
☐ The creator of Star Trek included instructions in his will to have his ashes scattered via a space satellite orbiting Earth. The instructions were never followed.
☐ A Toronto-based attorney bequeathed a large sum of money to any Toronto woman who could produce the most offspring in the decade following his death.
☐ A real estate investor dubbed the “Queen of Mean” left as much to her Maltese dog as to her grandchildren.
☐ The British singer, Dusty Springfield, stated that her cat was to be fed imported baby food and serenaded with her songs.
☐ The executive editor of Captain America, Mark Gruenwald, stated that he wished for his ashes to be mixed with the ink used to print the comic books. They were.
Regardless of how much money or assets a person has, they need a last will and testament to ensure that their belongings are left to the parties they intend after death. But at times, those last words often include some unexpected details. Here are some strange will and testaments of celebrities, inventors and attorneys who made some unusual last requests.

**Harry Houdini**
The renowned master escapee and daredevil died in 1926 on Halloween. Towards the end of his life, Houdini had become mystified by the idea of an afterlife and spiritual mediums. Houdini promised his wife, Bess, that he would contact her in the afterlife, using a pre-planned ten-digit secret number that only she would know, to silence naysayers when she eventually reported his presence (she never did). His last will and testament also stated that a séance should be held each anniversary of his death.

**Gene Roddenberry**
The creator of Star Trek and inventor of the notable quote “to boldly go where no man has gone before” made certain to maintain that statement long after his passing. His last will and testament included instructions to have his ashes scattered via a space satellite orbiting Earth. The act was carried out in 1997.

**Charles Vance Miller**
This Toronto-based attorney kept on laughing straight to the grave after his death in 1926. His last will and testament bequeathed a large sum up for grabs to any Toronto woman who could produce the most offspring in the decade following his death. The result became known as the “Great Stork Derby.” Four winners emerged in a tie for nine children; each received about $125,000.

**Leona Helmsley**
The real estate investor and hotel owner dubbed the “Queen of Mean”. While she donated about $35 million to charities in the final years of her life, her good deeds were overshadowed by instructions to establish a $12 million trust to her Maltese dog in her last will and testament. The amount was later reduced to $2 million by a judge. By comparison, her grandsons were left $5 million each, but only on the condition that they visit the gravesite of their father each year.

**Dusty Springfield**
The British singer, known for such hits as “I Will Follow Him” made her cat a priority in her last will and testament. Instructions stated that the cat was to be fed imported baby food and serenaded with Springfield’s songs. The singer also arranged for the cat to marry his new guardian’s pet cat.

**Mark Gruenwald**
The executive editor of Captain America and Iron Man, as well as being involved in other Marvel Comics, Gruenwald stated that he wished for his ashes to be mixed with the ink used to print the comic books. They were.
Shakespeare’s 400th Anniversary

Which of the bequests do you think is the strangest? What odd instruction would you like to put in your will?

Write definitions for the underlined words and expressions in the article.

Complete these sentences with the correct form of the words and expressions:

1. John proved all the __________________ wrong and won the literary award for his first novel.
2. We __________________ for the goods to be delivered at the weekend because we are never at home during the week.
3. The competition ended __________________ between the two favourites and they decided to share the prize.
4. David Cameron was _______________ ‘dodgy Dave’ by some politicians because of his tax arrangements.
5. There is a $10 million prize ______________________ in this week’s lottery.
6. When he died his ______________ included his house and a bank account with $5,000 in it.
7. We __________________ the seeds around the garden so that we would have flowers everywhere.
8. Their striker’s injury _______________________ what was a very good win for the team.

Look at this extract from the article:

Investopedia

Regardless of how much money or assets a person has, they need a last will and testament to ensure that their belongings are left to the parties they intend after death.

There is often a tendency to put an interrogative structure after a question word, but it is only necessary when the word introduces a question, not when it introduces an affirmative clause, as in the extract above.

Correct the following sentences if necessary.

1. Can you tell me where is the station?
2. Do you know where has John gone?
3. I don’t know how they expect me to finish in time.
4. Could you tell me when will you be arriving?
5. They asked me what I did in the company.
6. Do you know where does he work?
7. I wonder what he knows about it.
8. I know how far is it.
9. I don’t know why is he here.
10. I’m not sure whose books they are.
11. You need to take into account how long does the journey take.
12. Don’t forget how much does it cost.
Transcript track 4

What does Shakespeare's last will and testament tell us about him and his relationship with his family? X-ray and infrared analysis of the 400-year-old document by the National Archives and the British Library has revealed that the will was drafted at three different points in time. Here's how it begins. I, William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon in the County of Warwick in perfect health and memory, God be praised, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following. That is to say, first I commend my soul into the hands of God my Creator hoping and assuredly believing through the only merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour to be partaker of life everlasting, and my body to the earth whereof it is made. It includes bequests to his family and his friends. I give and bequeath Mr John Nash 26 shillings and eight pence, and to my fellows John Hemmings, Richard Burbidge and Henry Condell 26 shillings and eight pence apiece to buy them rings. I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furniture. Well, we're joined now by Amanda Bevan, the legal records specialist at the National Archives. Good morning. Morning. And this point about the second best bed going to his wife Anne has long been regarded as evidence of a slight from Shakespeare towards her. Does this new analysis of the document change that? I think it does. I think the old analysis of the document as being written very much in 1616 has caused problems for people in the past, or for scholars, because the whole tenor of the will is described as sour, unkind, ungenerous and particularly the focus on things like the second best bed seemed to bear this out because his wife isn't mentioned otherwise. But our new dating of the will, which we think has got at least one page which was written in 1613, three years before, shows that in fact Shakespeare was using his will as kind of like a business, family document, he's planning his estate, what's to happen after his death. It's not the kind of will where you would put in mentions of my beloved wife, etc. But who did the best bed go to? Probably his daughter Susanna. What I think is interesting is he has two best beds, he was doing very well indeed. Do you mean two homes? No, no, he had a house with something like 10 bedrooms, and at least two of those beds were what you might describe as top quality, so his wife gets the second one, the best one, the real best one always go to the heir. Oh right, okay. And the fact that we now know that it was not just written at one moment in time, but it was added to, what does that suggest? Someone becoming richer and able to look at things again? Well, he's been accumulating property for quite a long time, about 20 years before he dies, and it's only sensible if you're accumulating property to actually keep your affairs up-to-date. We think he wrote the will in 1613 because he'd just invested in a major London property for the first time, something called the Blackfriars Gate House, and he bought this using trustees, and if you buy using trustees you really need to inform the trustees what you want to happen if you're no longer around, so he writes a will to say, it should go to my daughter Susanna. Amanda Bevan, thank you very much indeed.