

Who, When, Wow! Mystery Edition

Unclear about Shakespeare

Carly. Remember me? Your favorite host of a top-secret podcast that NOBODY IN THE WORLD KNOWS ABOUT (wink, wink). I'm back today with another mystery, and it's going to take us back in time and across the Atlantic Ocean to (switches to a terrible English accent) jolly old England. We're going to investigate a rumor that got started four hundred years ago. And yeah, I know... my accent is not great, but I'm going to work on it! I'm Carly Q, and this is Who, When, Wow, Mystery Edition!

(THEME SONG)

(Soundbite of office noises.)

Carly. On the way to work, I saw a beautiful blue feather on the sidewalk, so I picked it up and put it carefully in my backpack. What a nice little surprise! It was gonna be a good day, I could tell! Linda! Good morning to you Linda.

Linda. You're here? Someone said you've been out for a few days. Were you sick?

Carly. Sick? I came in every day this week so far. What are you talking about?

Linda. Oh, that's weird.

Carly. But when I got to work, I found out that everyone thought I'd been out all week long. What a strange rumor. Huh. I guess when you're down here in the basement, people forget about you. How do they think all those files get put into the computer databases? It doesn't magically happen on its own. And it's not like Lewis or Nibbles are doing it. (false dramatic voice) It's me... all me!

Carly. Well, I'm heading down to the basement. (speaks louder) Did you all hear that? I'm here and heading to my desk! Where I WORK. Because I am HERE! Not sick.

(Soundbite of basement door closing.)

Carly. I went down to the basement and sat down with my blue feather. Peak of health, I might add. Tell me, oh, magical blue feather, Why did they think I wasn't here? But the answer would have to wait.

(Soundbite of a thumb drive drops down the vacuum tube.)

Carly. And here we go! It was a new mystery, time-sealed and ready for me to investigate.

Audio File. Event:1848, publishes (BEEP) Was the famous William Shakespeare really (BEEP) Did someone else?

Carly. Shakespeare? THE William Shakespeare? The one who wrote famous plays like Romeo and Juliet? Hamlet? MacBeth?

(Soundbite of rat squeaking.)

Carly. Hi, Nibbles. I could see Nibbles come out from behind the bookshelf in the corner. You a big Shakespeare fan Nibbles? What's your name? I powered-up my company issued hand-held device. Hamstoolette?

H-dad. H-dad back in the saddle! Cowboy emoji!

Carly. And typed in all of the basic data. 1848,Shakespeare.

(Soundbite of rat squeaking.)

H-dad. Analyzing. This file refers to the rumors started in the mid-1800s about the true author of several plays attributed to William Shakespeare. Rumors swirled more than two hundred years after Shakespeare.

Carly. Or whomever!

H-dad. Wrote those plays, and it caused many people to claim Shakespeare was a fake.

Carly. Ohh! A historical rumor.

H-dad. The real identity of William Shakespeare has been called into question several times in History. Including by famous American writers like Mark Twain, and the poet Walt Whitman.

Carly. Not Whitman.

H-dad. Yes,Whitman.

Carly. If he was a fake! I bet I know who actually DID write his plays... Wanna guess, Nibbles?

(Soundbite of rat squeaking.)

Carly. That's right. Aliens.

H-dad. Some even wondered whether there was a William Shakespeare at all? Perhaps the whole identity was an invention to mask the true author of Romeo and Juliet!

Carly. Are you saying Shakespare might not have existed?

H-dad. Affirmative.

(Soundbite of Lewis coming down the stairs.)

Carly. I think I have a way to find out the truth.

Lewis. (calling out) Oh heyyy! Carly Quuuuu! Did you decide to come in today?

Carly. Oh great. Not you TOO. What is happening around here?

Lewis. You tell me

Carly. Well I'm going to England to investigate one rumor, but it seems that I am the star of one myself right here at BUTTHED.

Lewis. Wait, You're going where?

Carly. So I gave Lewis the rundown on what was in the file, and – surprise! – he says ...

Lewis. Hmmm. I'm not sure 400-year-old gossip counts as a historical mystery, but I love me some London. Count me in. See you at lunch break!

Carly. Splendid! Cheerio! Pip Pip and all that!

Lewis. (pauses) What's that now?

Carly. I'm practicing my English accent, my dear Lewis. We must always be authentic whenever possible.

Lewis. (clears throat) Ok, well, keep working on that.

Carly. I hunkered down to work, with Nibbles at my side. My brain was spinning it`s wheel. All I could think about was ... who really wrote Shakespeare's plays? And I was obviously not so secretly hoping it WAS aliens!

P.A. Voice. Attention, BUTTHED employees! Rumor has it that it's lunchtime!

Carly. No time for lunch – I got a mission. "To eat or not to eat, that is the question!"

Lewis. I believe it's "To be or not to be." It's Hamlet, Shakespeare's most famous play.

Carly. Or maybe it's someone ELSE's famous play. we gotta find out!

Lewis. You know,I'm something of a theater man myself.

Carly. Lewis? Really?

Lewis. I was once Snowman #4 in my school's winter play. I was quite good, if I may say so myself.

Carly. I grabbed Nibbles and H-DAD and Lewis and I ran for the elevator! On the way, I passed by a mirror in the hallway and got an idea! I took my hat out of my bag, and put

it on, then stuck the blue feather in the brim. (Accent) How dashing and splendid! I will certainly fit in now. Off we go Lewis. Come then. Giddie up.

(Soundbite of running to elevator.)

Carly. Ello, Odie! Lovely day, isn't it?

Lewis. Oh boy.

Odie. Carly? Why are you speaking like that? Lewis why is she speaking like that?

Carly. Because today's mystery is whether Shakespeare really wrote his own plays, or whether he even existed! So we're going back 400 years to England to sleuth around and find out.

Odie. And you need an accent to do that?

Carly. I want to fit in, don't I?

Lewis. Do you?

Odie. I know a little something about accents. And yours doesn't sound the way English people talk, especially not in 1614.

Carly. How about now?

Odie. Let me tell you a little something about William Shakespeare.

Lewis. Oh, that's not really necessary Odie. We trust theater professionals to give this sort of feedback

Odie. William Shakespeare was born in the small village, Stratford-Upon-Avon, in 1564. He moved to London, the big city, where he worked in a theater company and began to write plays of his own for the stage.

Lewis. I write my own plays too actually

Odie. In 1599, he and his men opened a new theater, the Globe Theater

Lewis. Oh the Globe theater

Odie. That's not how it's said... but sadly, it burned down in a fire in 1613.

Carly. Oh no!

Odie. Oh yes. They began rebuilding as soon as possible, so in 1614, the second Globe Theater is about to open again!

Carly. Well, we'll see if it was him or someone else... or possibly, aliens. We`re planning to find some of his fellow actors in the Globe Theater, and ask around and see if anyone actually KNOWS him and has seen him writing his plays.

(Soundbite of running footsteps.)

Odie. OK Quick review of the time travel rules: no changing anything in the past, but you can, of course, ask all the questions you like. And your time is limited – you MUST be back before the end of the lunch break. And, keep in mind...

(Soundbite of wind chimes.)

Odie. A story told over and over grows its own legs.

Carly. A story has legs huh? Not sure I ever seen that.

Lewis. To be or not to be, that is the questionnnnn.

(Soundbite of elevator travel noises then thud.)

Carly. We're here! Wow Lewis, look at everyone. It's a warm June day, and the sun is shining bright.

Nibbles. This is amazing! Look at the women in their long gowns – I've never seen so many ruffles in my life.

Carly. Beautiful!

Nibbles. And look at all the ratsssss

Lewis. They`re are scurrying all over the street.

Nibbles. Isn't it beautiful?

Lewis. That's not the word I'd use.

Nibbles. The houses are made of stone, and the roofs are made of straw? Never seen that before! Ask H-dad what that is, Carly!

Carly. OK,let me see. Tell us what you know about the 1600s and why people have straw on their roofs!

H-dad. That's called thatch – it's a medieval style of protecting a house from rain and snow. The straw is packed tight, so water doesn't get through to the inner roof of the house. House emoji, Straw emoji!

Carly. Look at all these short pants and tall socks.

H-dad. Those pants are called breeches and the socks are called hose. And they're also wearing linen shirts.

Carly. Everyone looks so splendid, so posh!

Lewis. Maybe we should ditch the awful accent Carly.

Carly. Nice try, Lewis. I am trying to fit in and I will succeed. I glanced around the street. There was a group of men standing in front of a big building under construction. Oh that must be the new Globe Theater! Come on.

(Soundbite of construction, hammering and sawing.)

Carly. I approached the group and tried to fit in.

Christopher. And the good news, my fellows, is the roof will be made of tile. That will prevent another fire! The next time they set that canon off on stage during the battle scene. Oh, hello there you two.

Lewis. (singing) Hello, fellow actors. I'm Lewissss.

Carly. Well, good day to you fine gentleman. I'm Carly. We're visiting London on this fine day to make inquiries about the playwright William Shakespeare.

Christopher. What's that? I don't understand what you're saying, madam.

Actor #1. She said something about William. That's all I caught.

Christopher. Where are you from miss? I cannot place your accent.

Nibbles. (whispers) Give it up. Just be yourself.

Carly. I'm actually just visiting from America.

Christopher. Ah the New World. We know some people are traveling there, but we haven't heard of anyone making it back.

(Soundbite of loud crowd.)

Actor #1. What's America like?

Carly. Oh you know, new.

Actor #2. How long did it take you to cross the ocean? Is it true that it takes six months?

Christopher. Calm down, everyone! Our visitors must be tired after such a long journey. Here, step inside the office of the Globe. Come on, everyone. We can all talk in here.

(Soundbite of door closing.)

Nibbles. Nice and quiet in here. Oh, I see some mice in the corner there, behind that bookshelf. There's a resemblance they could be my great ,great,great,great,great ,great cousins. I'll be right back, Carly!

Carly. So Christopher, you work for the Globe Theatre.

Christopher. Indeed. I'm one of the actors here. These men all work with me. We're known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Lewis. Catchy!

Christopher. And what are you in London for? The Globe's grand reopening, perhaps?

Carly. That is exactly right. And I'm here to see if anybody knows of a playwright named, William Shakespeare.

(Soundbite of laughter.)

Carly. What's so funny? To you also Lewis?

Christopher. Do you mean to say you don't know who William Shakespeare is? Why, he's the reason we're rebuilding this theater, my dear lady.

Lewis. (clears throat) Sorry, she's been in America a very long time. Really, it's just so embarrassing.

Carly. (stubbornly) But do you actually know him? Like, he's a real person that you've seen?

Lewis. (whispers) Because that's a normal question.

Carly. You see, there is a rumor, uhh.

Lewis. In America, you see. A rumor is growing.

Carly. That the plays are being written by someone else, not by William Shakespeare.

Christopher. You don't say.

Carly. In fact, there's a rumor that there may not even BE a William Shakespeare. So I'm here to ask, who else could possibly be writing those plays?

Lewis. Don't you dare mention your theory about aliens right now.

Christopher. This is very unusual.

Carly. I mean, how do we even know there is a real William Shakespeare?

Christopher. That's easy. We've SEEN him, he writes our plays and even performs with us.

Carly. Welll.... Maybe he's been faking the writing this whole time.! I mean, have you ever seen him actually writing his plays?

Carly. Alright, crowd that's lot of murmuring.

Lewis. They're thinking it through...just try and relax ok. Give them a minute..they're actors at work.

Actor #1. Come to think of it, I've never seen him write

Christopher. Nor have I.

Carly. None of you have seen him put pen or quill to paper?

Christopher. Well ,William is more of a business type. Selling tickets, that sort of thing but I've never doubted he also had a creative side.

Carly. Well, people say that he was from a small village.

Christopher. From Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Carly. Right. So, (pauses) a country guy, from a humble background,but his plays are filled with such elegant language. How did he learn to write like that?

Christopher. He's not from a class of nobles or royalty, but he does seem to know how they all speak.

Lewis. So it is possible he's a phony, like some fancy lord is writing Shakespeare`s plays.

Christopher. Could it be that a lord is writing William's plays, and Will is just taking credit?

Lewis. I literally just said that.

Carly. You tell me.

Christopher. I always thought it strange how quickly he made it big in London.

Carly. Strange how?

Christopher. It's like he arrived here from another planet with a drawer full of brilliant scripts.

Carly. UH-HUH.

Christopher. But if some other person is writing these plays for him, who could it be?

Carly. I know. In fact, I have a theory, bare with me, that the real authors could be.

Lewis. Oh boy. Please don't say aliens. Please don't say aliens.

(Soundbite of door opening.)

William. What's going on here? A meeting without me? (laughs)

Christopher. William!

Carly. Shakespeare?

Lewis. (aside) Saved by the bard!

William. Greetings, friends. I bring good tidings! I have recently concluded a meeting with the builder. Our new roof is almost finished, and the globe can open as soon as next week! Cheers. But who are these fine people? Good morrow, I'm William Shakespeare.

Carly. Oh. Hi.

William. "Hi"? What language is "Hi"?

Christopher. Ah, they're here from the New World Will, America.

William. Is that right? How exciting. I've written a play set in the new world... The Tempest, have you heard of it?

Lewis. I love The Tempest.

William. Thank you, kind sir.

Christopher. ctually, Will, these visitors have been asking about you and your writing.

William. Is that so? Have you heard of me in America?

Actor #1. What they heard is that you're a fake.

William. (shocked) A fake?

Actor #1. They questioned if you even existed, we said, William is our friend and fellow artist. Of course he exists.

Lewis. We can see that quite clearly.

Christopher. And they even suggested that uh ,well that someone else is writing your plays.

William. Someone else? Preposterous! Who do you think sits at my desk all day toiling on page after page, line after line, forging great works in iambic perimeter? How dare you question my integrity, my art?

Carly. W-w-wwe were just asking. Rumors have a way of getting around, you know?

Lewis. Carly, I think we're done here. And the lunch break is almost over.

Carly. Yep. I think we caused enough havoc! Where's Nibbles?

William. When you challenge Shakespeare you challenge the globe!

(Soundbite of Nibbles scurrying.)

Nibbles. I'm Here! Let's skidaddle.

Carly. I'm with you!

Lewis. Cheers! Tata Willie Shakes. Cherrio.

(Soundbite of door slamming, busy marketplace.)

Carly. Wow Shakespeare got really mad.

Lewis. And he speaks beautifully even when he's upset.

Nibbles. You know, the rumor about Shakespeare's identity didn't start until the 1800s. According to all the mice I just chatted with, nobody here and now questions him. He's a big deal!

Carly. But there had to be some fire with all that smoke.

Lewis. Seems like it was just smoke, Carly.

Carly. All this talk about smoke really reminds me that we missed lunch. I could go for some barbecue right now.

Nibbles. Barbecue would be great, then pie for dessert.

Carly. Yeah duh always pie for dessert.

Lewis. How come you two are always talking abouttttt.

(Soundbite of elevator travel noises.)

Odie. Halt! Who goes there? Just kidding, I know who you are. Find anything interesting?

Lewis. Forsooth, we met William Shakespeare himself.

Odie. Oh my goodness! What does he look like?

Carly. Mmm White shirt. Breeches. More hair than I thought.

Odie. And? Is he the author of the plays?

Carly. Seems like it, even though the rumors are pretty convincing.

(Soundbite of wind chimes.)

Odie. A story told over and over grows its own legs.

Carly. Oh now I see. It's like you said, Odie... a story can seem real simply because it's repeated so often that people will start to believe it.

Odie. Maybe I said it. Maybe I didn't. Have a great day basement companion. Lewis.

Carly. Well, it was back to the grind, back to my desk in the basement, sitting and working on entering the files. But it made me think about what Shakespeare said:

William. Preposterous! Who do they think sits at my desk all day, toiling on page after page after page, line after line?

Carly. Not so different from what I do every day... I go to work and do a good job, but people believed a rumor that I was sick and stayed home all week. Just because I sit down here, quietly finishing my tasks, everyone thought the rumor was true. I believe Mr. William Shakespeare. I've learned that rumors can grow like a fire, just catching on people's imaginations, until they're out of control.

(Soundbite of Lewis walking in and pages turning.)

Carly. What are you reading, Lewis?

Lewis. Hamlet. It's excellent. I think I'll start auditioning for plays again. And now if I die if.

Carly. Until the morrow, dear listeners. This Carly Q doth proclaim thou hast ne`ernlaid irene ears upon. That means you never heard this.