Shakespeare’s Comedies: A Very Short Introduction
Bart van Es

Shakespeare’s Comedies: A Very Short Introduction explores the full range of the playwright’s comic writing over the course of a career spanning nearly a quarter century of theatrical change, from the neat classical plotting of early works like The Comedy of Errors to the corrupt world of the so-called problem plays, written in Shakespeare’s middle years of life. It examines Shakespeare’s influences and sources; compares his plays to those of his rivals; identifies the key qualities that make Shakespearean comedy distinctive; and looks at the history of the plays in performance, from the biographies of Shakespeare’s original actors to the plays’ endless reinvention in modern stage productions and in films.

Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems: A Very Short Introduction
Jonathan F. S. Post

Shakespeare’s Sonnets and Poems: A Very Short Introduction introduces all of Shakespeare’s poetry: the Sonnets; the two great narrative poems, Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece; A Lover’s Complaint; and ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’. Describing Shakespeare’s double identity as both poet and playwright, in conjunction with several of his contemporaries, it evaluates the reciprocal advantages as well as the different strategies and strains that came with writing for the stage and the page. Exploring their reception, both with contemporary audiences and through the ages until today, this VSI explores the core themes of love and lust, and analyses how the sonnets compare with other great love poetry of the English Renaissance.

Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Very Short Introduction
Stanley Wells
Tragedy, including grief, pain, and suffering, is a common theme in Shakespeare’s plays, often leading to the death of at least one character. Yet such themes can also be found in Shakespearian plays which are classed as comedies or histories. What is it that makes a Shakespearian tragedy, and what dramatic themes and conventions did the bard draw upon when writing them? Shakespeare’s Tragedies: A Very Short Introduction considers what is meant by the word ‘tragedy’, offering a critical analysis of nine of Shakespeare’s iconic tragic plays. It concludes by discussing why tragedy is regarded as a fit subject for entertainment, and why audiences find tragic plays so enjoyable.

William Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction
Stanley Wells

William Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction provides a guide to the life and writings of one of the world’s greatest and best-known dramatists: William Shakespeare. Looking at his early life and education, it explores Shakespeare’s social and intellectual background and the literary traditions on which Shakespeare drew. Examining the theatres and theatrical profession of the time, it also considers how Shakespeare experienced this world, both as an actor and as a writer. Examining Shakespeare’s narrative poems, sonnets, and all of his plays, this VSI outlines their sources, style, and originality over the course of Shakespeare’s career, to consider the fundamental impact his work has had for subsequent generations.