

Latin in grammar school—, and erudite Seneca at Inns of Court had long since spent its force. If Shakspeare had not already studied Seneca, there was no need for him to do so either in original or in translation when eventually he tried his hand at writing popular Senecan tragedy.

As we look back at Shakspeare's Latin poets, one fact is quite significant. All are grammar school poets. While I have not presented all the parallels here, yet I have examined carefully all I have been able to locate between Shakspeare and either the Latins or Greeks. For the Latin poets, I have not found any sound parallels which I have not presented here, except for Ovid—and Terence and Plautus, if one classes them as poets. Shakspeare's Latin poets are the grammar school poets. Even there his knowledge was confined almost entirely to the major figures, who nearly always appear in the curricula. There is no sign that he was forced to master minor figures, and still less sign that he ever made any attempt to repair that neglect. But he does show a knowledge of the major poets and the typical routines upon them of the normal grammar school curriculum. Shakspeare's knowledge of the Latin poets is in its scope no more than what was expected of the normal grammarian, but it was at least the satisfactory minimum for a "learned grammarian." "Small Latin" it was indeed, but it was Latin, and it extended to the major facts in connection with the major figures. As with the rhetoric, so with the poetic, Shakspeare shows the knowledge of a "learned grammarian." If Shakspeare did not acquire this particular knowledge in this particular way in grammar school as he ought to have done, then where and how?