

Amended – 4/23/15

1. Antipholus of Syracuse and Dromio of Syracuse were wondering about their ages tonight. Is there any way to get information on what their ages possibly are?

EGEON

My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
At **eighteen years** became inquisitive
After his brother: and importuned me
That his attendant--so his case was like,
Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name--
Might bear him company in the quest of him:
Whom whilst I labour'd of a love to see,
I hazarded the loss of whom I loved.
Five summers have I spent in furthest Greece,
Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,
And, coasting homeward, came to Ephesus;
Hopeless to find, yet loath to leave unsought
Or that or any place that harbours men.
But here must end the story of my life;
And happy were I in my timely death,
Could all my travels warrant me they live

Interpreting the highlighted lines, we can assume that both sets of twins are at least 18; I would also assume that after Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse left Egeon (“and importuned me” implies that Egeon was present in Syracuse for Antipholus to ask permission to go hunting the other twins), Egeon decided to go out looking himself, ergo the “Five summers I have spent . . .” So if we base things off of these numbers in Egeon’s exposition, then the twins (all four of them) are at least 23 years old.

However, in Act V sc. i (our Act II sc. 51), Egeon says:

EGEON

Not know my voice! O time's extremity,
Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
In seven short years, that here my only son
Knows not my feeble key of untuned cares?

This would seem to indicate that Egeon began his own search 2 years after Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse departed, meaning that the twins are **25** at the time of the play.

Amendment:

As Joseph pointed out: I agree with Jessica's research and yet there is the Abbess in scene 51 saying: "Go, keep us company, and we shall make full satisfaction.– **Thirty three years have I but gone in travail Of you, my sons, and till this present hour My heavy burden Ne'er delivered**". So maybe somewhere between 25 and 33??? Pass this on the boys.

Further research indicates this discrepancy is possibly tied to the Oxfordian theory that many of the plays attributed to Shakespeare were written by Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford. This was noted in Mark Anderson's book *Shakespeare By Another Name: The Biography of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford*:

Age of the brothers ANTIPHOLI: At least, this is one of ANTIPHOLUS's *two* ages. Careful scholars have long noted the bizarre discrepancy in *The Comedy of Errors* that elsewhere ANTIPHOLUS's age is said to be thirty-three. (CHAMBERS/WS, 1:309.) Once again, this should come as no surprise. In 1583 (when de Vere was thirty-three), *A History of Error* was performed a second time at court. [*] When compiling the play for publication in the 1590s or 1600s, de Vere or one of his composers evidently overlooked the protagonist's multiple ages—a mixup that inadvertently reveals the play's multiple layers of composition.

[*]FEUILLERAT (350) transcribes the 1583 title as “A historie of fferrar.”

Regardless of authorship, I believe that the discrepancy of the twin's age is indicative of “the play's multiple layers of composition” – that perhaps there was a transcription error, or subtly different versions that got inadvertently mixed up. We know that there are a number of folios so it is entirely probable that different versions of the same play got confused at some point in the print history.