The theatre of SHAKESPEARE

1576
THE FIRST REAL THEATER IS BUILT BY JAMES BURBAGE
Before this, plays were performed in inn-yards and homes of nobles.

ZERO
THE NUMBER OF WOMEN ACTORS
Women actors were forbidden by law. Female roles were played by boys whose voices had not yet changed.

COMMONERS
GENTRY
NOBLES
ROYALS
All members of society enjoyed going to the theatre.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN’S MEN
THE PLAYING COMPANY THAT SHAKESPEARE worked with as both a writer, actor, and theatre manager for most of his career. In 1603, when King James ascended the throne, they were known as THE KING’S MEN

THE KING’S MEN

1593
1603
1608
THEATRES CLOSED
BUBONIC PLAGUE

THREE THOUSAND
The number of people who would go to a play.

THE GLOBE
OPEN AIR CIRCULAR
3 STORIES HIGH
The main stage was five feet high. Two side doors were at stage level. At the base of the stage was “the pit”, where the
GROUNDLINGs would stand to watch the play for the cost of a penny. For two pennies, the more well-to-do could sit in three levels of BALCONIES

THE AUDIENCE
Shakespeare’s audience was made up of all social classes. They would have been more rambunctious than today’s theatre-goers. The groundlings would talk through performances and even throw food at the actors. The rich, in their seats, were protected from the rowdiness of the crowds in the pit. The richest nobles had the option of sitting on a chair on the side of the stage. Outside the theatre, patrons could shop at open-air markets.

In 1613, The Globe went up in flames when a canon was used for a performance of Henry VII. It was rebuilt a year later, with the straw roof replace by tiles. The Puritans closed the theatre in 1642.