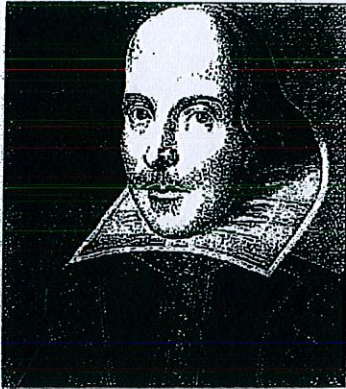


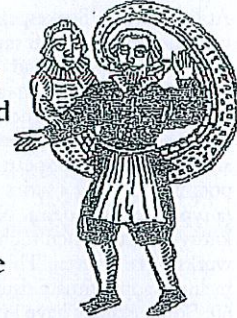
STATION 1

Who was Shakespeare?



A picture of Shakespeare which appears at the front of the first published collection of Shakespeare's works, the First Folio (1623).

William Shakespeare was an English playwright and poet who lived in the late 1500s and early 1600s (around 400 years ago). His plays are now performed all over the world in hundreds of languages, and he is known as one of the greatest writers of all time. The reason his work is so popular is that Shakespeare wrote about human nature and how people behave. That is why, although his words can be hard to understand, his ideas are as relevant now as they were four centuries ago.



Prospero and Ariel, two characters from the romance comedy *The Tempest*.

This is a scene from the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. It shows the fairies and their queen, Titania, with Bottom, a workman with an ass's head.



STATION 1

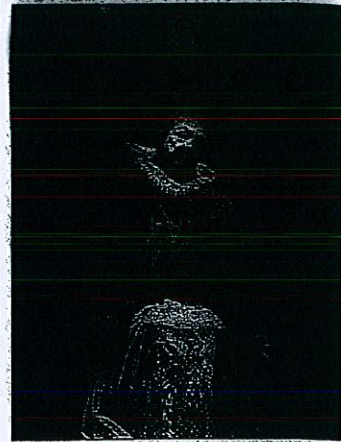
Go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com for a link to a website where you can find an excellent introduction to Shakespeare, his life and works.

Shakespeare's works

At least two of Shakespeare's plays have been lost, but 38 survive. Two of these, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, were co-written with John Fletcher. The other 36 are divided into comedies, tragedies and histories. Shakespeare also wrote poems, including a series of sonnets (a type of short poem). Nobody knows exactly when each of these works were written. This book includes approximate dates on page 60. Some experts have even said that "Shakespeare's" plays are really the work of other writers, such as Francis Bacon, a philosopher who lived at around the same time. This may be because people cannot believe that Shakespeare, who came from an ordinary background, could have written such great works of literature.

Performing Shakespeare

Whenever a new production of a Shakespeare play is staged, directors, designers and actors think of new interpretations, or ways to understand and present it. Plays can be performed in modern dress, or set in any historical period. Directors sometimes cut or change the text of a play. The same scene can be funny, frightening or exciting, depending on how the stage is set and how the actors say the words. This book shows how theatre companies prepare for Shakespeare productions and looks at some of the ways Shakespeare has been interpreted in the theatre, as well as in films, books and cartoons.



In this scene from the tragedy *Hamlet*, a troupe of actors puts on a play in which a king is murdered by having poison poured into his ear.



This woodcut shows a scene from the Roman tragedy *Julius Caesar* in which Caesar is stabbed to death by his former friend Brutus.

Shakespeare's language

Language changes all the time. The way people spoke 400 years ago was different from the way we speak now, and Shakespeare's language can be hard to understand. He used many old words like *slubber*, *lustihood* and *welkin*, as well as words such as *sad*, *fell* and *marry*, which have different meanings today. Most editions of Shakespeare's works help by providing notes which explain the meanings of words and phrases. The glossary on page 57 of this book explains some of the more unfamiliar words.

Line references

Plays are divided into sections called acts and scenes. When quotations from Shakespeare's plays are used in this book, line references like this show which section they come from.

The play's title is written in *italics*.

Macbeth, II.i.35

The line number is written as a normal number.

The act is written in capital Roman numerals.

The scene is in small Roman numerals.

The King rides proudly into battle in the history play *Henry V*.



STATION 1

Glossary of Shakespearean words

Shakespeare used hundreds of words which are unfamiliar to modern readers. This glossary explains some of these words. In a play, you can often guess what a word means from the context (the other words around it).



a sometimes used to mean "he"
abate to reduce or subdue
abuse to deceive
affection passions or feelings
affright to frighten, to make tremble
aim a guess or a suspicion
alarum a call to battle
allay to relieve or reassure
anon soon, presently
arras a curtain or wall-hanging
art are ("thou art" means "you are")
art artifice, cunning
aspect a look or glance
balm soothing oil or ointment
barn or **baïrn** a child
bastard sweet Spanish wine
beard refers to someone's manhood
beldam a grandmother or old hag
betwixt between
blunt stupid or unsophisticated
bodkin a dagger or pin
bosom heart, or heartfelt feelings
bound tied up or imprisoned
brabble to fight or quarrel
caitiff a wretch or miserable person
care a worry or concern
casques cannons
chair sometimes means the throne
chaps jaws or mouth
ciphers actors, people in disguise
clerk a scholar or academic
cock-pit a theatre
company a companion
complexion a mood or state of affairs
con to know, learn or study
conceit an idea or opinion
cony a rabbit
couch to lie down or hide
countenance false show, hypocrisy
craft craftiness or cunning
crown a king (also a type of coin)
cuckold a man whose wife is being unfaithful
cunning knowledge, skill, cleverness
date a period of time
defend to forbid
discharge to do one's duty, or to dismiss someone
disease uneasiness or trouble
dispatch to kill, to send away, or to hurry
dissemble to deceive or pretend
doff or **daff** to take off (e.g. a hat)

dole allowance or sadness
doubt to suspect or fear
ducats European coins
ecstasy excitement or madness
ere before
excrements beard, hair, fingernails
eyne eyes
face appearance, especially if false
fathom six feet in depth
fell cruel, fierce
fie! an expression of anger or shock
fig to insult
foison riches, plenty
folly foolishness, madness
fond foolish, weak, or doting
fordo to kill
foul ugly, dirty, muddy, or evil
frenzy agitation or a fever
froward rebellious, stubborn
fulsome filthy, disgusting
gaberdine a cloak
gallows a structure for public hangings
gentle noble, civilized
gib a tomcat
go to! an expression of disbelief
government self-control
gouts drops (of blood)
gramercy thank you (short for "God have mercy")
green young and inexperienced
gull to trick or cheat someone
hail greetings, welcome
happy fortunate, lucky
hast have ("thou hast" means "you have")
hath have ("he hath" means "he has")
heavy slow, sad, or stupid
hedge-pig a hedgehog
hereafter later, the future
hit to agree or succeed
hold to value someone or something
humorous changeable in mood
hurly noise
ill bad, evil, or with bad intentions
incarnadine to stain red
insensible impossible to perceive
intelligence news, information
issue children or descendants
keel to skim
kindless unnatural
kindly naturally
lease a period of time
leman sweetheart or lover
let to stop or prevent
lusthood vitality or strength
marry! indeed, certainly
match an agreement, appointment or pairing
mate to dismay or confound, also means to marry
meat any kind of food
metal strength

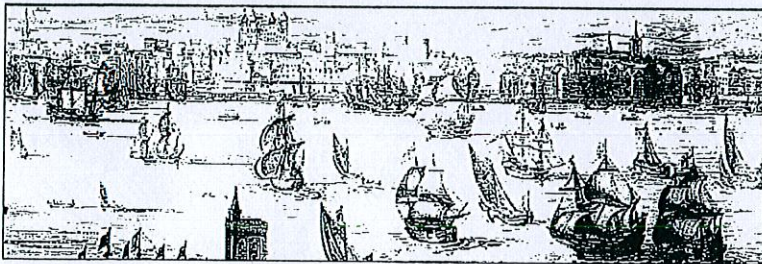
mirth comedy, jokes
misery greed
modern everyday, trivial
much strange, wonderful, very
nephew grandson, any male relative
nice delicate, precise, fussy
owe to own
pash to hit violently
pedant schoolteacher
perchance perhaps
perdee indeed
pie'd patterned with two shades
plenty wealth, abundance
points small tags or ties on clothing
pregnant full of meaning, obvious
pretty little, insignificant
prithce please (short for "I pray thee")
quat a spot, zit or pimple
quell to murder, kill or destroy
quick alive, lively
rail to scream, shout, scold or abuse
rate to tell off, or to evaluate
rear-mouse a bat
reck to care or mind
sack white wine
sad serious
saucy provocative, lascivious, sexual
scarce hardly
seamy greasy
shrew a nagging, angry woman
silly innocent, simple
simple foolish
sirrah sir
skill cunning, cleverness
slobbery sloppy
slubber to make dirty, or to hurry
sooth truth or sweetness
soothsayer fortune-teller
sport games, fun
steal to creep, sneak up
sway power, influence
tarry to wait, delay, hang around
temperate moderate, calm
thee you (used to children, friends, lovers or inferiors such as servants)
thou you (used when being polite)
thy (familiar) or **thine** (polite) your
tickle-brain strong alcoholic drink
tidings news
'tis it is
'twas it was
unrough smooth-chinned, i.e. young
use a habit or custom; also means to lend money
vasty big, vast
watch a night watchman
welkin the sky
wench a young woman
wit sense, sanity
worm a snake
ye you
zany a fool

STATION 2

London life

By the early 1590s, Shakespeare had arrived in London, England's capital city. It was a thriving port with an expanding population. His first impressions would have been of teeming crowds, the squalor of poverty, and the extravagance of the wealthy. Although none of Shakespeare's plays is set wholly in London, the city must have had a great influence on him. He would have attended lectures on new scientific discoveries, discussed the latest trends in playwriting, listened to tales of foreign lands from merchants and enjoyed the lively night life.

"From Tower to Temple"



A view of London from the south, from an etching by Claes Jan Visscher, made in 1616.

The City of London was said to stretch "from Tower to Temple" - from the Tower of London in the east, to the Temple Bar (the buildings where young men trained to be lawyers) about a mile away in the west. It was bordered to the north by a wall about two miles long, and to the south by the River Thames. Beyond these boundaries were London's suburbs, areas outside the strict control of the City authorities.

This cock-fighting scene was painted in 1615.



In the heart of the City was the great cathedral of St. Paul's. It stood on the same site as the present St. Paul's, which was built after the original was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666.

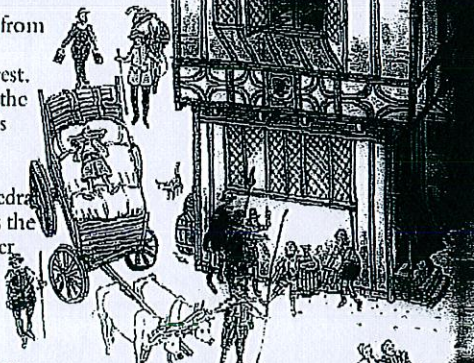
For many Elizabethan Londoners, St. Paul's was more of a general meeting place than a place of worship. Deals were struck, goods were bought and sold, and thieves, prostitutes and beggars operated within its walls. Meanwhile, lessons from the Bible were preached from the pulpits.

There was no shortage of entertainment in London. Apart from the attractions of inns and taverns, cockfighting and bear-baiting were popular sports, and many people enjoyed watching public beatings and executions.

The streets of London were narrow and dirty. This picture shows a typical street opening up into a small marketplace.

In the City, it was against the law to kill large birds such as kites and ravens. They were needed to devour the filth and rubbish in the streets.

A kite



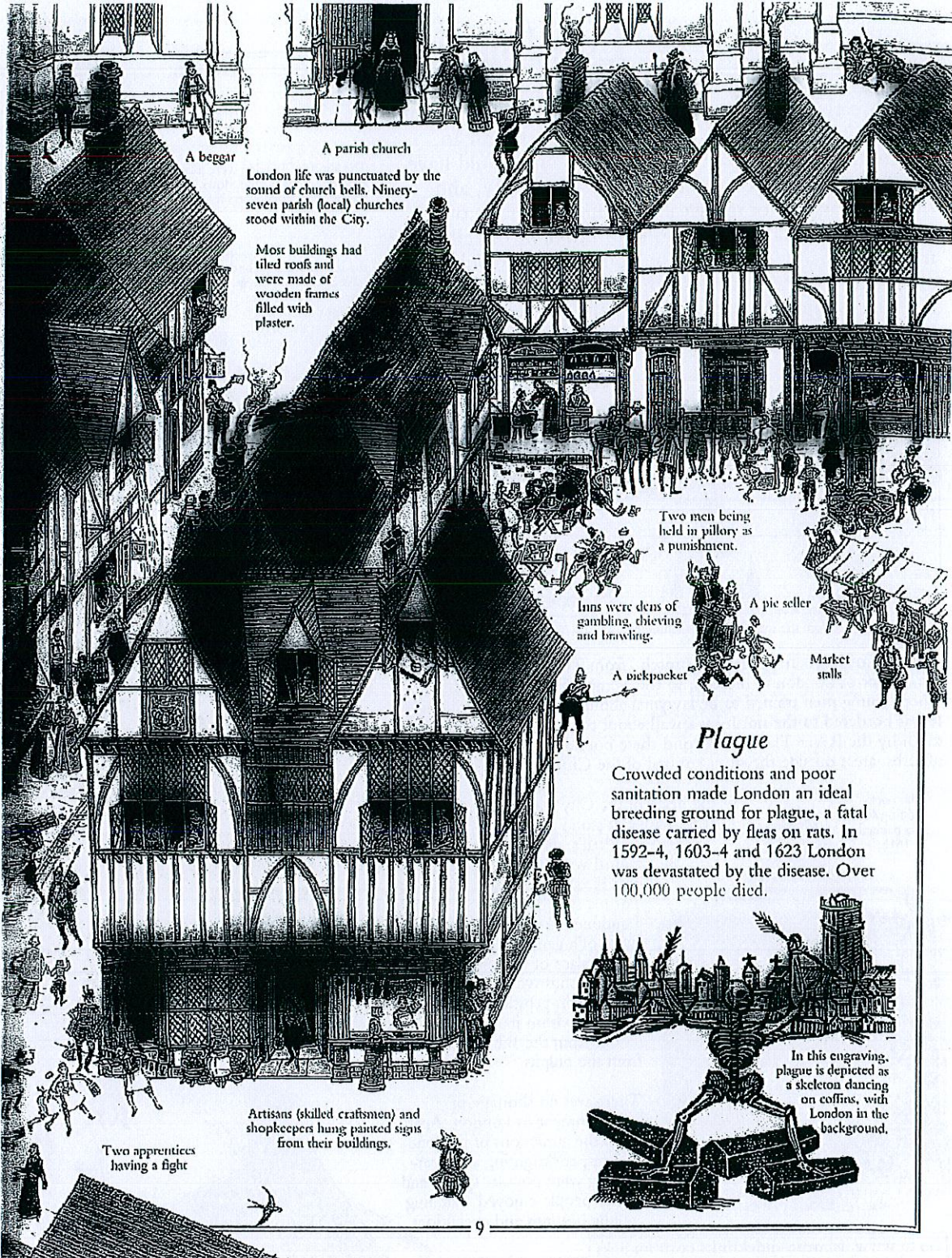
This farmer has come to London to sell bales of wool.

Sewage and waste were poured into open drains.

A raven

Go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com for links to websites about London and Elizabethan times.

STATION 2



A beggar

A parish church

London life was punctuated by the sound of church bells. Ninety-seven parish (local) churches stood within the City.

Most buildings had tiled roofs and were made of wooden frames filled with plaster.

Two men being held in pillory as a punishment.

Inns were dens of gambling, chieving and brawling.

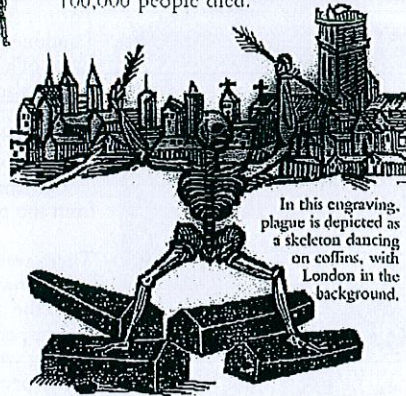
A pie seller

Market stalls

A pickpocket

Plague

Crowded conditions and poor sanitation made London an ideal breeding ground for plague, a fatal disease carried by fleas on rats. In 1592-4, 1603-4 and 1623 London was devastated by the disease. Over 100,000 people died.



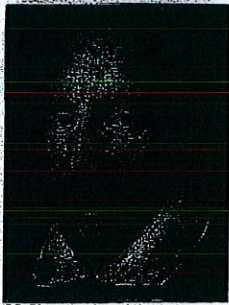
In this engraving, plague is depicted as a skeleton dancing on coffins, with London in the background.

Artisans (skilled craftsmen) and shopkeepers hung painted signs from their buildings.

Two apprentices having a fight

STATION 3

Elizabethan theatre

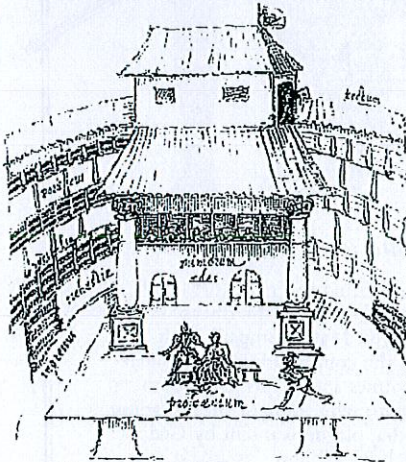


A self-portrait by Richard Burbage, one of the biggest stars of the Elizabethan stage.

Until the mid-16th century, most plays were performed outside London. Craftsmen or tradespeople put on traditional plays in town squares and on village greens. As it grew in size and importance, though, London became the centre of English theatre. In Shakespeare's lifetime, theatre became hugely popular. At first it was not considered a very respectable pastime, and most of the theatres were in the rougher parts of town.



A modern British stamp showing the Rose, one of Elizabethan London's theatres.



Left: A drawing of the inside of the Swan Theatre, based on a sketch by Johannes de Witt, a tourist from the Netherlands, who visited London in about 1596.

London's theatres

The first London theatre was called The Theatre. It was built in 1576 in north London, just outside the City walls. In 1587, the Rose Theatre was built south of the Thames, among the prisons and brothels of an area called Bankside. The Rose flourished and drew large crowds. In 1595, the huge Swan Theatre, said to hold up to 3,000 people, was built just a few yards to the west. All these theatres were deliberately built outside the City limits, so they were free from the restrictions of City regulations.

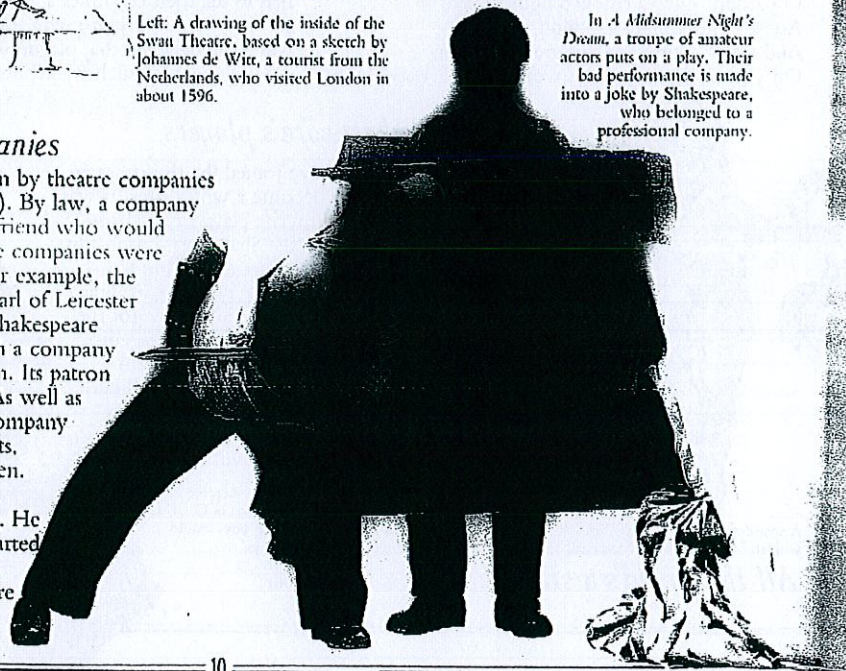
As an aspiring dramatist, Shakespeare could not have been in London at a better time. Not only were people flocking to see plays at the theatre, but Queen Elizabeth I loved the theatre and often held performances of plays at her court.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a troupe of amateur actors puts on a play. Their bad performance is made into a joke by Shakespeare, who belonged to a professional company.

Theatre companies

In London, plays were put on by theatre companies (groups of professional actors). By law, a company had to have a patron, a rich friend who would support it financially. Theatre companies were named after their patrons. For example, the company supported by the Earl of Leicester was called Leicester's Men. Shakespeare spent much of his career with a company called the Chamberlain's Men. Its patron was the Lord Chamberlain. As well as performing in theatres, the company gave private shows for students, noblemen and even the Queen.

In 1603, James I became king. He wanted to be a patron, and started supporting the Chamberlain's Men. From then on, they were known as the King's Men.



STATION 3

Go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com for links to websites where you can find out more about theatres in Shakespeare's time.

The audience

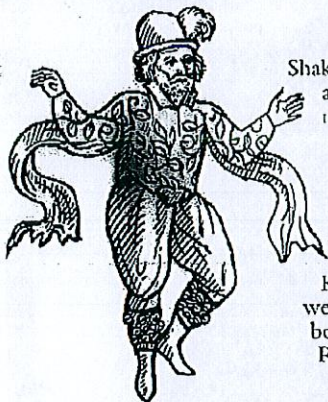
Theatre in Elizabethan London was an entertainment for everyone, a bit like the cinema today. The cheapest tickets cost one penny, which most ordinary people could afford. (Workers earned a basic wage of about 12 pence a week.) The most expensive tickets were sixpence and were bought by rich merchants and nobles. Foreign traders and tourists often made a trip to the theatre as part of their visit to London. With so many people crowded together, the theatres were also popular with thieves and pickpockets.

Audiences were not as well-behaved as they are today. People jeered at the actors and shouted out rude remarks. Some even climbed onto the stage and joined in with swordfights. People also brought food with them to eat during the performance, or to throw at bad actors.

Stagecraft

Special effects and scenery did not play a big part in Elizabethan theatre. Musicians provided sound effects with drums and trumpets, and the actors often wore extravagant, showy costumes. But audiences were expected to use their imaginations for different locations and backgrounds. This speech from *Henry V* asks the audience to imagine huge battlefields and armies, as they cannot be reproduced on stage:

Can this cock-pit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or can we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O pardon: since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million,
And let us, ciphers to this great account,
On your imaginary forces work. *Henry V*, Prologue.11-18



A woodcut of Will Kempe, who acted with the Chamberlain's Men until 1599.

All the world's a stage... *As You Like It*, II.vii.139-40



Theatrical costumes

Plague and players

Theatres were closed during severe outbreaks of plague, because it was feared that the disease spread more quickly in crowds. Many companies left London for tours of the countryside. Players often had to sell their costumes and scripts in order to survive. Some Puritans, who thought theatre-going was a sin, believed that plague was sent by God as a punishment for such wickedness.

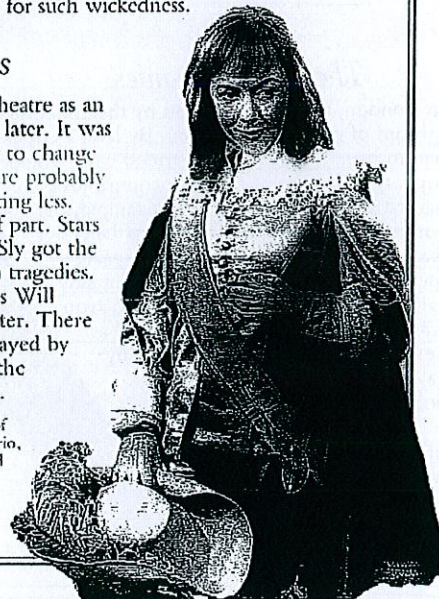
Shakespeare's players

Shakespeare is thought to have joined the theatre as an actor, or "player", and become a writer later. It was normal for actors to help write plays, or to change them a lot during rehearsals. Shakespeare probably started gradually writing more and acting less.

Actors often specialized in one type of part. Stars like Richard Burbage and William Sly got the big parts, such as leading roles in tragedies.

Comic actors or clowns, such as Will Kempe, played a fool or a comic character. There were no actresses. Women's roles were played by boys. Women did not act on stage until the Restoration, after the English Civil War.

This photograph shows Viola, the heroine of the comedy *Twelfth Night*, disguised as Cesario, a pageboy. In Elizabethan times, boys would have played women playing boys.



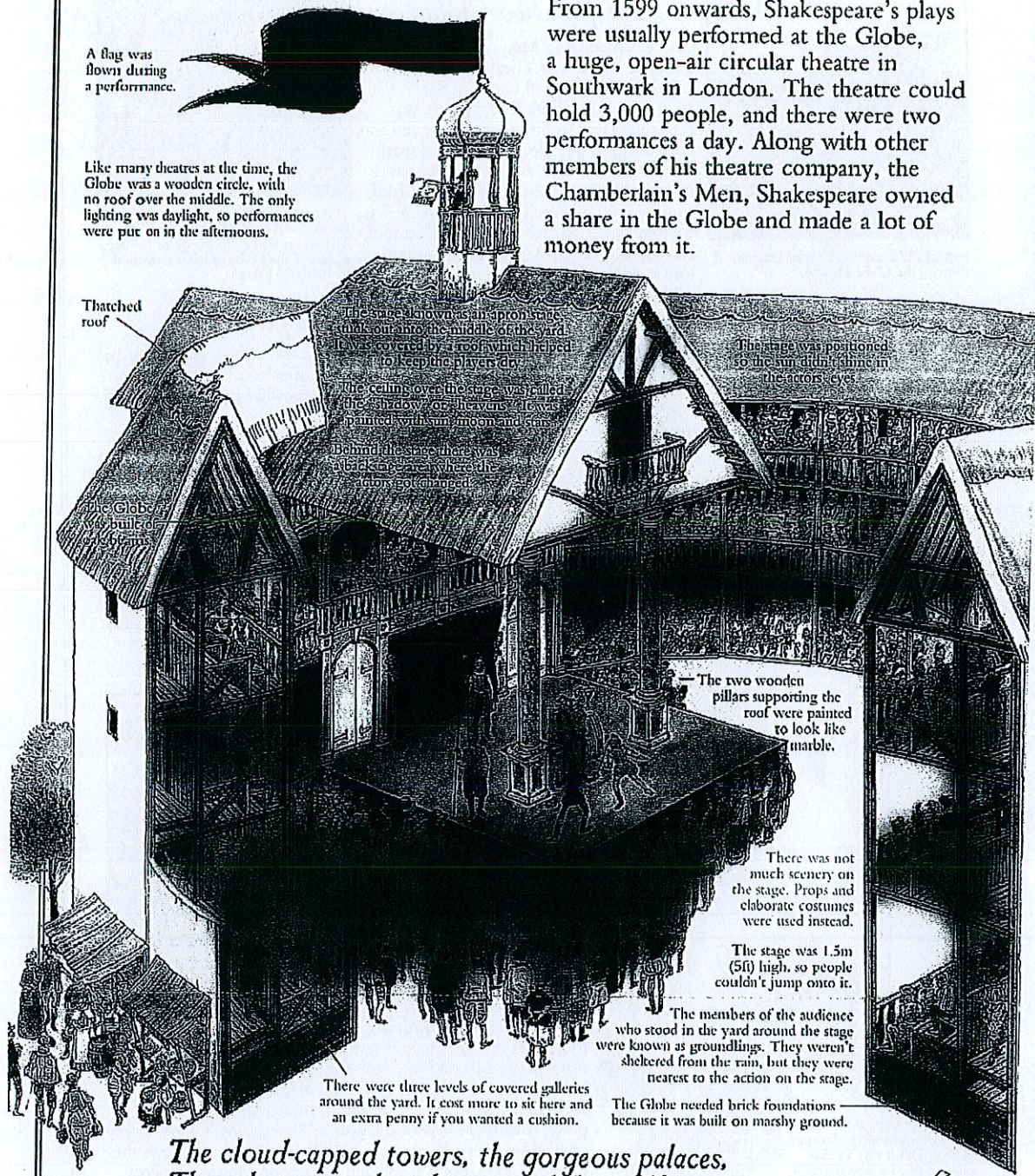
STATION 4

The Globe Theatre

A flag was flown during a performance.

Like many theatres at the time, the Globe was a wooden circle, with no roof over the middle. The only lighting was daylight, so performances were put on in the afternoons.

From 1599 onwards, Shakespeare's plays were usually performed at the Globe, a huge, open-air circular theatre in Southwark in London. The theatre could hold 3,000 people, and there were two performances a day. Along with other members of his theatre company, the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare owned a share in the Globe and made a lot of money from it.



Thatched roof

The Globe was built of wood.

The stage is known as an apron stage, that is, it projects out into the middle of the yard. It was covered by a roof which helped to keep the players dry.

The ceiling over the stage was pulled up to the shadow of the eaves. It was painted with sun, moon and stars.

Behind the stage there was a back stage area where the actors got changed.

The stage was positioned so the sun didn't shine in the actors' eyes.

The two wooden pillars supporting the roof were painted to look like marble.

There was not much scenery on the stage. Props and elaborate costumes were used instead.

The stage was 1.5m (5ft) high, so people couldn't jump onto it.

The members of the audience who stood in the yard around the stage were known as groundlings. They weren't sheltered from the rain, but they were nearest to the action on the stage.

There were three levels of covered galleries around the yard. It cost more to sit here and an extra penny if you wanted a cushion.

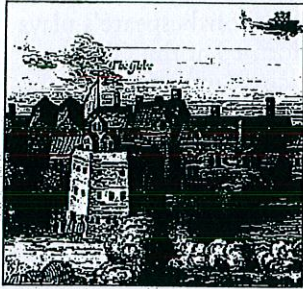
The Globe needed brick foundations because it was built on marshy ground.

*The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself...*

The Tempest, IV.i.153

STATION 4

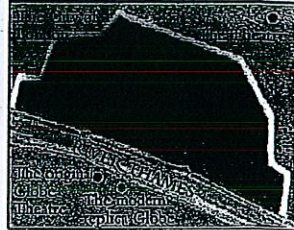
Go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com for links to websites about the original Globe and how it was reconstructed, with a virtual tour of the replica theatre.



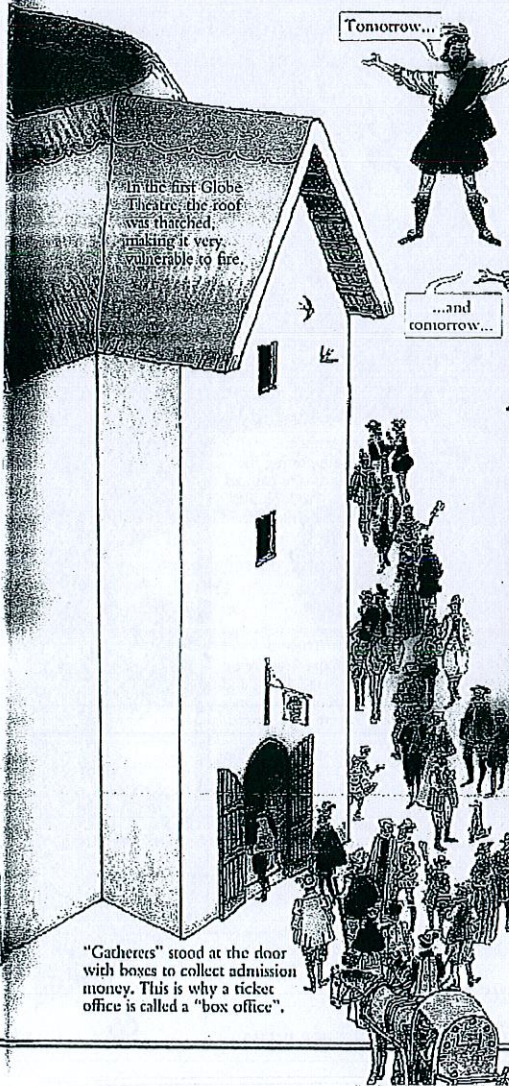
Part of a 17th-century view of London, showing the Globe Theatre.

The first two Globes

The Chamberlain's Men originally used a theatre called The Theatre, in north London. But they fell out with the landlord, and in 1599 The Theatre was dismantled and its timbers were moved and used to build the Globe. In 1613, a spark from a cannon fired during a performance of *Henry VIII* set fire to the thatched roof, and the Globe burned down. (No one was badly hurt.) It was rebuilt with a tiled roof, and stood until 1644, when the Puritans tore it down during the Civil War.



This map of 16th-century London shows the sites of The Theatre and the Globe Theatre, as well as the site of the modern replica of the Globe which was opened in 1996 (see below).



Tomorrow...



Shakespeare sometimes refers to the Globe Theatre in his works. In *The Tempest*, Prospero speaks of "the great globe itself", and in *Henry V*, the theatre is called the "wooden O".

Global language

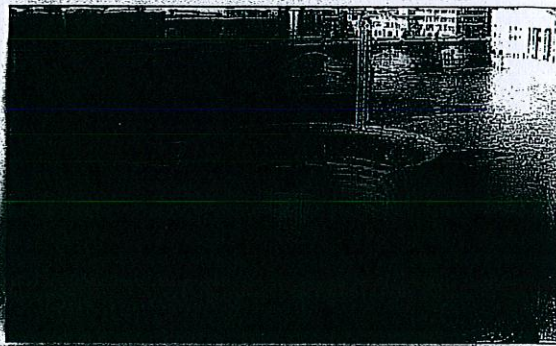
...and tomorrow



Shakespeare's writing sometimes may reflect the design of the theatre. Some of the lines in his plays have three parts, or a word repeated three times. At the Globe, lines like these allowed an actor to address the audience on all three sides of the stage, which stuck out into the middle of the yard (see picture).

...and tomorrow...

Rebuilding the Globe



The new Globe Theatre under construction in London.

In 1970, the American actor Sam Wanamaker started a project to rebuild Shakespeare's Globe Theatre near to its original site in London. Now the Globe has been completed. It is an accurate replica of the first one and is built of the same materials - brick, oak wood, thatch, animal hair and putty. It is used for performances of Shakespeare's plays. Safety regulations mean it can hold only half as many people as the original Globe, but it is still one of London's biggest theatres.

STATION 5

The tragedies

The tragedies

This is a guide to the approximate dates when the tragedies were written:

- Titus Andronicus 1592-3
- Romeo & Juliet 1595-6
- Julius Caesar 1599-1600
- Hamlet 1600-01
- Othello 1602-03
- King Lear 1604-05
- Macbeth 1605-06
- Timon of Athens 1606-07
- Antony & Cleopatra 1606-07
- Coriolanus 1607-08

A tragedy or not a tragedy?

Experts don't always agree on how to divide Shakespeare's plays into categories. Some of the plays are sometimes classed as tragedies and sometimes not. For example, *Timon of Athens*, a story of a generous man who goes insane when his friends desert him, is usually called a tragedy, but some experts think it is more like a satirical comedy. *Cymbeline* and *Troilus and Cressida* are now usually classed as comedies, but they used to be referred to as tragedies in some books.

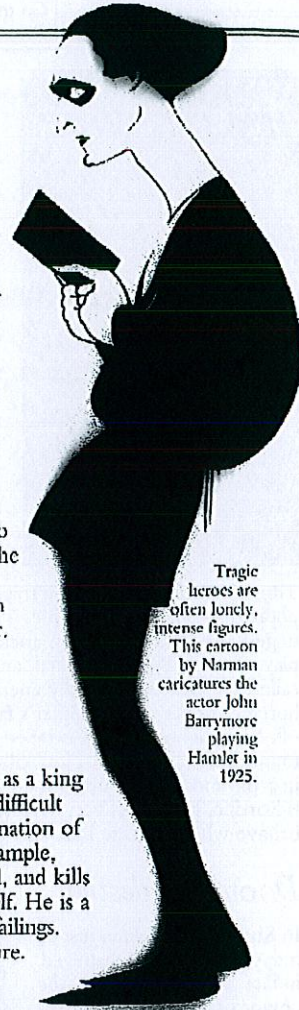
Shakespeare's tragedies are his most famous and popular plays. They contain his best known characters, such as Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Othello and Hamlet, and his most famous quotations. About ten of Shakespeare's plays are usually thought of as tragedies – though many of his other plays, such as the history plays and the problem plays, also have tragic elements.

Solo speeches

In the tragedies, characters often make speeches when by themselves, called soliloquies. For example, in Hamlet's famous speech beginning "To be, or not to be...", Hamlet thinks about whether he should commit suicide instead of trying to kill his uncle, who has murdered his father. Soliloquies can help the audience to understand the main character. They often also emphasize his loneliness.

Tragic heroes

All of Shakespeare's tragedies have a tragic hero, or "protagonist". He is often a man of high rank, such as a king or prince. The protagonist creates, or is put into, a difficult situation which he must try to resolve. But a combination of bad luck and bad decisions lead to his death. For example, Othello is tricked into thinking his wife is unfaithful, and kills her. When he finds she was innocent, he kills himself. He is a victim of an unlucky situation, but also of his own failings. The protagonist is often a relatively sympathetic figure. His soliloquies (see above) show his feelings and motives, and show the audience how easy it would be to make similar mistakes. The pictures below show how one protagonist, Macbeth, makes the wrong decisions, with tragic results...



Tragic heroes are often lonely, intense figures. This cartoon by Norman caricatures the actor John Barrymore playing Hamlet in 1925.



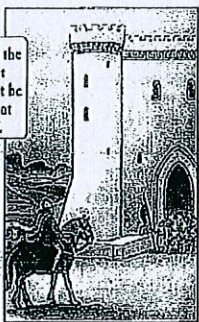
Macbeth, the Thane (Lord) of Glamis, is very ambitious. He does well in battle, but he would like more power...



He meets three witches who predict that he will be king. He realises that if he kills King Duncan, he might rule in his place.



Macbeth's wife would like him to be king too. She puts pressure on him to kill Duncan, and accuses him of being cowardly.



Duncan decides to visit Macbeth at his castle. This gives Macbeth an easy opportunity, and his wife encourages him...



The pressure is too much. Macbeth plucks up his courage and kills Duncan. He regrets it at once, but by then it is too late...

STATION 5

Go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com for links to websites about *Romeo and Juliet*, including a guide to the famous balcony scene.



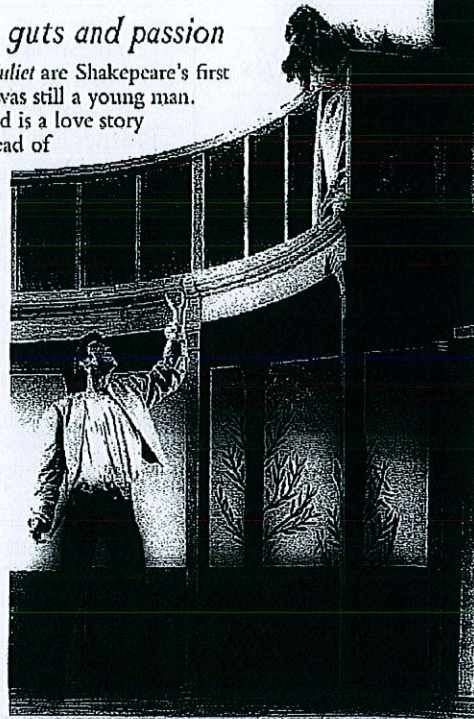
Early tragedies: blood, guts and passion

Titus Andronicus and *Romeo and Juliet* are Shakespeare's first two tragedies, written while he was still a young man.

Romeo and Juliet is set in Italy, and is a love story with many comic elements. Instead of helping to bring about their own downfall, like some of Shakespeare's later tragic heroes, Romeo and Juliet are innocent victims of a terrible mix-up. This sort of plot device is more often used in comedies. In later tragedies, characters are more responsible for their fates.

Left: in *Titus Andronicus*, a sacrifice starts off a chain of increasingly gory revenges between Titus, a Roman general, and Tamora, queen of the Goths. In this picture, Titus's daughter Lavinia has had her hands and tongue cut off by Tamora's sons.

Titus Andronicus is a revenge tragedy, a form which was very popular in Shakespeare's time. The formula for this kind of tragedy was borrowed from ancient Roman tradition. In the play, Titus, a Roman general, and Tamora, queen of a tribe called the Goths, are deadly enemies who launch a series of horrific attacks on each other's families. Titus has his hand cut off, his daughter Lavinia is raped and loses her hands and tongue, and eventually Titus kills Tamora's sons, cooks them in a pie and serves it up to their mother as a revenge. The play is horrific, but shows very vividly how savagely humans can behave when they are hurt and want revenge.



In *Romeo and Juliet*, two teenagers are in love, but their families, the Capulets and the Montagues, are enemies. Here, Romeo visits Juliet in the famous balcony scene.

Doom and destiny

In Shakespeare's time, just as today, many people believed in fate, or destiny, and in the power of the stars to foretell the future. Shakespeare uses the idea of fate or destiny to add excitement and anticipation to the tragedies. For example, he uses prophecy as a way of holding the audience's interest, because everyone wants to see if it will be fulfilled.

The three witches in *Macbeth* prophesy that Macbeth will be king. Do they really know the future? Or does the murder only take place because they put the idea into Macbeth's head?



Tragic endings

Tragedies give a very bleak view of the world. At the end of a tragedy, the hero, and usually several other characters, are dead, and the survivors are left to start again without them. Although most tragic heroes are partly to blame for their own fates, death can be a very high price to pay for what may have seemed initially like a small failing. But in most tragedies, there is also a feeling that some good may have come out of the terrible suffering. For example, at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, when the Prince tells the two lovers' families that their fighting has partly caused the tragedy, they finally resolve to end their feud.

When sorrows come they come not single spies But in battalions Hamlet, IV.v.76-7