Lesson 24

Shakespeare: Historical and Social Background

Aims

The aims of this lesson are to enable you to:

- explore the social background of Shakespeare's England; the state of travel at the time, contemporary understanding of the world order and man's place in it, and the importance of monarchy and religion.
- understand the key historical events and changes of the period, including the reigns of 'Bloody' Mary, Elizabeth I and James I of Scotland
- find out more about the world of the theatre in which Shakespeare worked and where his plays were originally performed

It may help to refer to one of the suggested texts recommended at the beginning of this course, in order to gain a broader understanding of the context in which Shakespeare's plays were written. Julia Briggs's *This Stage-Play World* is a good place to start, but any text which provides additional information on the historical and social background to Shakespeare's England is worth perusing at this stage.

Shakespeare's World

In a metaphorical sense, Shakespeare's world was larger than our own, but his cosmos was much more constricted. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Polish astronomer Copernicus had propounded the theory that the Earth and other planets revolved in fixed orbits round the Sun; a revolutionary concept which challenged the belief, first laid down in the second century by Ptolemy, that the sun, stars and planets all revolved round the Earth.

Copernicus's theory, however, was not just scoffed at by scientists: it was also regarded as heresy by the church, which saw the creation of the Earth, and then of man, as the culmination of God's purpose. It is unlikely that Shakespeare had any reason to side with Copernicus, and it was not until after his day that the supporting evidence of scientists like Galileo overthrew the concept of an Earth-centred universe.

So we find frequent references in the plays to Earth as the centre of the universe. In *Hamlet* the sky is a "majestical roof fretted with golden fire", and in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare reverses the metaphor because Lorenzo and Jessica are stretched out on the ground gazing at the stars, and he says,

> look, how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:

The ordered movement of the spheres was a sign and symbol of good order in society, and when the planets wandered in disorder the consequences were plagues, mutinies, storms, earthquakes and other disasters. Harmony was the essence of cosmic order, and Shakespeare often speaks of this attribute in terms of music.

It was a concept of the cosmos closely bound to man and his world; there was no idea of space travel and limitless distances. It was fully accepted that the Earth was round, and therefore finite, but so slow and hazardous were the means of travel, and so formidable the natural obstacles, that many parts were totally unknown, and other areas were no more clearly defined than a landscape seen through a swirling mist.

Travel and the Unknown

The world had been circumnavigated more than once; intrepid travellers like Marco Polo had earlier reached China, and books of travel, like Hakluyt's *Voyages* found an eager reading public, but Australia was totally unknown, and the great land-masses of Asia, Africa and America, with their varied races and cultures, hardly impinged at all on Shakespeare's mind. Instead, these vast regions were locations for magic islands like that of *The Tempest*, or the home of fabled beings (whom Othello claims to have met) such as:

The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.

Christendom

The known world was broadly contiguous with Christendom, and its centre was Italy. Christendom had been split in two by the Reformation, but even the Protestant countries like England looked to Italy for cultural sustenance. It is no surprise that so many of Shakespeare's plays are set there, for wealth, culture and good breeding combined to create a wide range of Italian stories into which Shakespeare and other English dramatists dipped freely for their plots. Besides Venice, Sicilia, Padua or Verona, Shakespeare's Illyria and Bohemia are essentially Italian in spirit.

Britain apart, the non-Mediterranean parts of Christendom feature little in Shakespeare's plays. Parts of *Henry V* are set in France, and *Hamlet* is, of course, set in Denmark, but Hamlet, Horatio and Claudius are all typically Renaissance figures with little that is recognisably Teutonic or Scandinavian in their make-up. There are, of course, in several plays, jokes about national characteristics, and a handful of references to Muscovites, but there is no doubt that the twin axes of nearly all Shakespeare's work are the Mediterranean and his own England.

The Historical and Social Background

Major Dates And Events

1485	Richard III defeated at Bosworth. Tudor dynasty begins with accession of Henry VII.
1532	Henry VIII breaks with Rome and becomes Supreme Head of the Church in England.
1558	Accession of Elizabeth I.
1588	Defeat of the Spanish Armada.
1593-4	Plague causes closure of theatres.
1599	Lord Chamberlain's men occupy Globe theatre.
1601	Essex's rebellion and execution.
1603	Elizabeth dies. James I arrives from Scotland, where he reigned as James VI and is appointed King of England.
1605	Gunpowder plot
1616	Death of Shakespeare.
1623	The first Folio published.

It is customary to think of Elizabethan England as a Golden Age in English history, and those who believe this point to such features as the victory over the Spanish Armada as well as the spirit of adventure which sent merchants, sailors and pirates across the world. The unprecedented flourishing of music, poetry and drama is

also used as a point of reference. Yet Shakespeare's history plays in particular often reveal a monarchy with an insecure grasp on authority and allegiance. Queen Elizabeth once remarked, "I am Richard II, know ye not that?", referring to Shakespeare's play which treats of the weakness and deposition of a King.

The Divine Right of Kings?

There is much talk in the plays of order and degree, but more as an ideal form of society than an actual one. The virtual disappearance of feudalism in Europe and the renaissance in thought and culture created a ferment which in England focussed on one central event; the assumption by Henry VIII of powers which no previous monarch had possessed. This was the headship of the English Church and implied a power given directly by God in matters temporal as well as spiritual. This idea is frequently expressed in the plays:

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm from an anointed Elinor;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord.
> (Richard II, Act 3, Sc 2).

But this concept seemed to be in contradiction to the claim of the monarchy that it governed by consent of the whole people. Since Parliaments were summoned infrequently, and few people in Shakespeare's day either had a vote or were able to use it, the conflict between these two assertions still lay in the future when Shakespeare died. However, a number of consequences of Henry's assumption of special powers were bringing the clash nearer.

First, Henry's rejection of the temporal power of the Pope brought England into conflict with the Catholic powers of Europe, and especially with Spain. Despite the victory in 1588 over the Spanish Armada, the reign of Elizabeth was overshadowed by the threat from Spain, and the constant fear that Spain might unite with France against her. It was only in 1604 that peace was finally signed.

Henry's break with Rome came because the Pope refused to grant him a divorce from his first wife Katherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn, the mother of Elizabeth. His divorce was therefore never considered lawful by the Church of Rome, and Elizabeth's right to the throne was consequently rejected. The chief Catholic claimant was her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, and until her execution in 1587 Mary was a constant threat to the stability of the reign, and many plots to depose Elizabeth were uncovered.

Moreover, Philip II of Spain had been married to Queen Mary, elder daughter of Henry, and his claim to the throne still existed, though it was less of a threat, except by outright conquest, for even patriotic Catholics could not stomach a foreign ruler. Besides, the opportunities which the war offered for immense prizes in raids on

the Spanish possessions in America bound many Catholics strongly to the Queen's policies, and the Lord High Admiral who defeated the Armada was Catholic.

A third result of the Henry VIII's action was the exacerbation of religious divisions in England. Henry's initial intention was to seize temporal power only, and not to change faith and doctrine: indeed he assumed a title which is still carried on our coinage — that of 'Defender of the Faith'. But his conduct inevitably brought doctrinal changes. The Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s removed one of the major sources of the Roman Church's wealth and position, and other pressures were forcing Henry into introducing fundamental changes of ritual and doctrine which were consummated in the English Prayer Book of 1549 during the reign of his successor, Edward VI.

'Bloody' Mary

There followed a period of persecution of Catholics who refused to accept the new disposition, which was reversed when Edward died in 1553, and was succeeded by Mary, daughter of Katherine, the 'divorced' Queen, and a devout Catholic. Her reign was marked by even more severe persecution of Protestants, with torture, executions and burning still the main punishments.

The Elizabethan Age

Puritanism

Early in Elizabeth's reign, a more tolerant attitude to Catholics prevailed, but the tensions remained. Elizabeth's settlement, however, did please one section of the people. These were the Puritans, whose threat to established social and moral beliefs Shakespeare would be particularly aware, since the theatres were institutions to which they were strongly opposed. At the outset of Elizabeth's reign the term 'Puritan' was applied to one who felt that the reformation in the Church had not gone far enough in the direction of establishing a biblical commonwealth and purging the English Church of Romish ritual.

Many of the leaders were found in the ranks of the upper classes, and included the poet Edmund Spenser and the Earl of Essex. But late in the reign a more extreme form of Puritanism, in the shape of extreme moral rigidity, became increasingly powerful; nowhere more so than among the merchants and guildsmen who governed the city of London. It was because of their opposition to the companies of players that the main public theatres were built outside the city limits. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare attacks the Puritan attitude to festivity when Sir Toby asks the puritanical steward Malvolio: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

By the 1590s, when Shakespeare's plays had begun to appear, the tensions in the country were increased by the knowledge that the Queen was getting old. It was widely known that her best counsellors were either dead or out of office, and that there was no natural successor since Elizabeth had not married. The Tudors had given England a century of order (except for the religious persecutions of Edward VI and Mary), but the reign of the last Tudor was threatening a return to the disorder of the civil wars of the fifteenth century.

This concern with civil order and disorder, and the behaviour of the monarch, is reflected in the great series of historical plays in which Shakespeare treated the century of disorder which ended with the victory of Henry Tudor on the battlefield of Bosworth in 1485. In 1601 it looked for a moment as though these worst fears were to be realised through the rebellion of the Earl of Essex. Shakespeare was, probably quite innocently involved in the preamble, for Essex's followers had paid Shakespeare's company forty shillings to perform *Richard II* at the Globe.

It was well known that Elizabeth believed Shakespeare to have aimed at her weaknesses in his portrait of Richard, and the implication was that Essex was a new Henry Bolingbroke destined to restore traditional values. But the rising petered out, Essex was executed, and statesmen quietly prepared for the Queen's death, which came peacefully in 1603. Equally quietly, James VI of Scotland assumed the throne as James I of England, and the threat of disorder receded.

James I

This must have pleased Shakespeare, who was busily buying up property in his native Stratford-upon-Avon, but there was another potential source of disorder which struck at the roots of rural society. This was poverty, along with the attendant evils of violence and vagabondage. For most of Shakespeare's adult life there was some form of war which, as he shows in *Henry V*, attracted the dregs of society by the hope of plunder. But society had little care for broken or discharged sailors and soldiers, and there was no other course than to take to robbery. "To England will I steal, and there I'll steal", declares the cowardly braggart Pistol in *Henry V*.

But other factors were swelling the ranks of the unemployed, the poor and the vagabonds. Enclosure of land for sheep farming reduced the demand for labour at a time when the population was rising, and inflation was causing distress. Primitive methods of agriculture and the shift to sheep farming meant that food production could not keep up with demand. The effects of this "hunger for bread" are vividly illustrated in *Coriolanus*, while Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* describes the disastrous effects of a bad harvest:

the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock.

So, in spite of victories in war, the expansion of trade and industry, the excitement of new discoveries, and the flowering of culture, Shakespeare and his fellow land-owners must sometimes have slept uneasily of nights, dreaming of a new Peasants Revolt. His times, then, are difficult to sum up, for they were an amalgam of sunshine and shadow, of splendour and poverty, of the exuberance of youth and the uneasiness of age. It is of such tensions and conflicts that great drama is made.

Shakespeare's Theatres

Dramatic entertainment in the form of miracle and morality plays, as well as private entertainments involving various forms of acting, had been a common feature of English life in the two or three centuries preceding the birth of Shakespeare, but three features were new in his day — the dominant importance of London, the growth of professional companies of actors, and the emergence of a class of dramatists whose livelihood depended on their writing. In so new an activity rapid change was likely, and performances at the end of Shakespeare's career will have differed greatly from those at its outset, even in theatres where the external features may have remained virtually unchanged.

In brief, theatrical performances about the time of Shakespeare's birth may be said to fall into three main categories. The first would be special performances of the cycle of religious plays appropriate to a particular religious feast, such as Easter or Corpus Christi. Most such plays were traditional and special to a particular town or city, such as York, Chester, Wakefield or Coventry. The production would be a community effort with local craft guilds assuming the major responsibility.

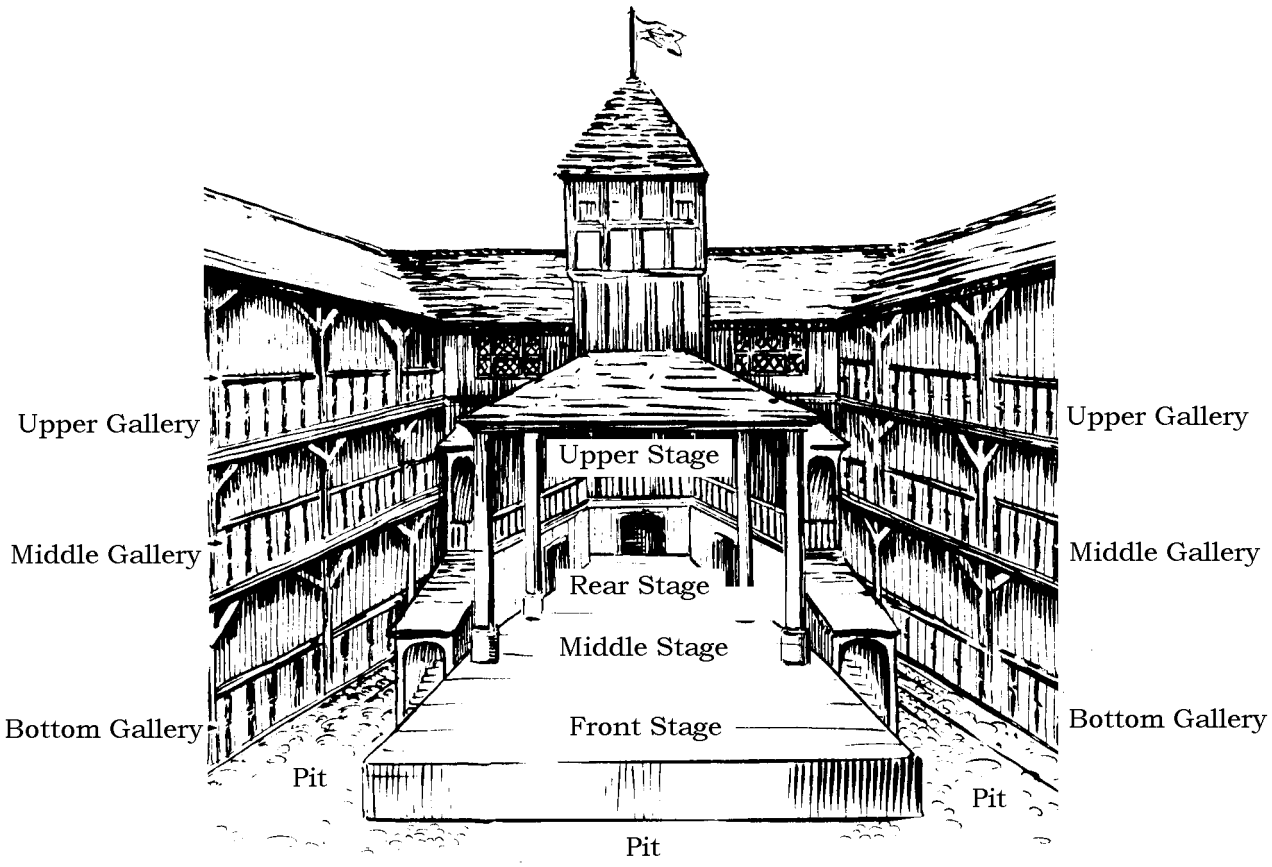
The second category of entertainment was that in the great hall of a lord's house. In some cases, the lord would maintain his own company of players, but others depended on the visits of groups of strolling players who moved about from place to place. Such a group arrives at Elsinore in *Hamlet*, is welcomed by Hamlet, and plays a major role in exposing the King's crime.

These strolling players would also give public performances, at inn-yards or in the market place, setting up a makeshift stage with a booth in the rear where they could don their costumes, and from which they make their entrances. Their lives were insecure, and, unless they were under the protection of a great lord and wore his livery, they were often classed with rogues and vagabonds. It was

these public performances which constituted the third category of which we have spoken.

Since dramatic performances were given only occasionally, players could only use buildings which normally had other functions. One, as we have seen, was the great inn-yard: the other was the animal baiting ring – the bear garden or bull ring. These had four distinguishing features.

Below is a schematised drawing of an Elizabethan theatre.



They were roughly circular in shape, they were roofless, seated spectators were ranged in tiers round the sides, and there was a central arena. To adapt them for a public dramatic entertainment the main requirement was to erect a stage against one side of the circle with a canopied tiring house or dressing room in the rear. The rest of the arena would accommodate standing spectators, much as in today's Promenade concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall.

When purpose-built theatres were erected, they naturally followed this basic design. The first permanent playhouse was *The Theatre*,

built in 1576 in Shoreditch, a London suburb. By 1592, London had three playhouses; two in Shoreditch and one in Southwark. Elizabethan drama went from strength to strength. *The Swan* was built in 1595, the first *Globe* (1599) was built from the timbers of the demolished *Theatre*, and the second *Globe* in 1614 (replacing the first *Globe* which had been destroyed by a fire started by a faulty cannon during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*.

London now boasts a new *Globe* theatre, a faithful reconstruction of the original. If you have the opportunity, go to visit this remarkable theatre. It will give you the clearest possible picture of how different Shakespeare's theatre was from its modern equivalent.

In Elizabethan drama, the divisions between scenes probably arose out of the need for the actors to remove props and themselves from the stage. An understanding of the conventions and limitations of the Elizabethan theatre can help us towards a greater appreciation of Shakespeare's style as a dramatist.

In an Elizabethan theatre there was no stage curtain to come down to mark the end of a scene or an Act, and there was no elaborate scenery to denote a change of place. Bulky props, such as chairs, tables and painted canvas bushes, had to be used sparingly, for they all had to be carried on and off stage in full view of the audience. There were no printed programmes for the audience to buy which would describe the plot, name the scenes or give useful little bits of information such as 'Nine weeks elapse' or 'Afternoon, the same day'. Dramatists therefore had to build this information into their scripts, and there are several references in *King Lear* to the time of day, the light, the moon, etc., which serve as verbal pointers to the audience.

Playhouses were generally circular or octagonal. The 'groundlings' (the poorer members of the audience) stood in the 'pit', open to the sky. Round it were three covered galleries with seats. The stage projected into the pit and lacked scenery – this was created for the audience by the actors' words. At the back was an upper stage for balcony scenes. Doors for actors' entries and exits flanked the main stage which had a trapdoor to the 'cellarage'.

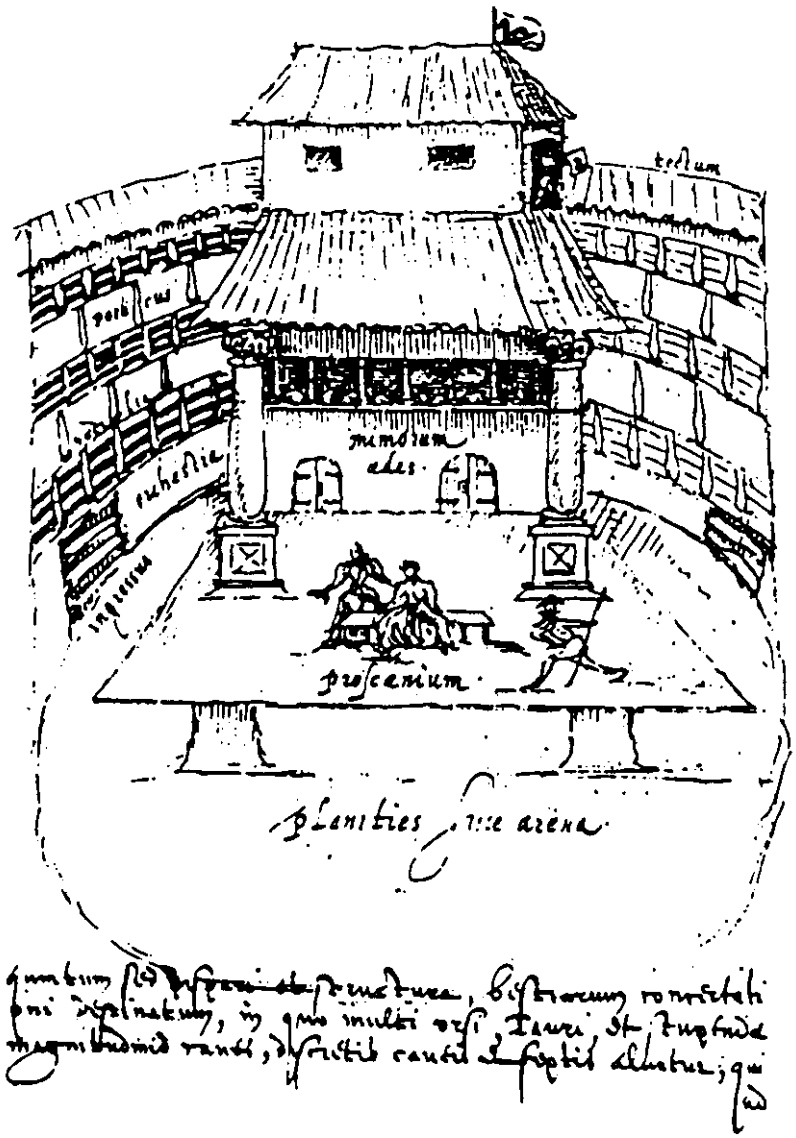
The decoration was bright and actors' costumes were colourful. With no scenery to change, and few stage props, there was no limit to the number of scenes and the action moved fast: two hours sufficed for 2,500 lines of verse.

An acting company had 10–15 full members, all partners; three or four boy actors playing all of the female parts (women were forbidden to act), and servants. It often had its own dramatist from whom it bought plays. Plays were seldom printed: they were not considered 'literature' and to print them made them would have been to make them readily available to rivals.

The major evidence which we have for the interior appearance of one of these theatres is the drawing of *The Swan* by De Wit, a visitor to England from the Netherlands. This drawing is not easy to interpret (which is one reason why we have supplied the clearer, schematised version above), but there is little doubt about the main features. The frame is circular and measures about 96 ft. in diameter. It was large enough to accommodate 3,000 spectators — not perhaps in great comfort, but this is the figure given in the notes which go with the drawing.

Three galleries run round the walls, reducing the diameter of the arena to about 70 ft. From one side of the arena a rectangular stage projects to about the middle. The drawing here is probably distorted, and the stage is likely to measure about 43 ft. in width and 27 ft in depth. The height of the stage would be about 5 ft 3 ins, and a trapdoor would give access to an area, which would serve many dramatic purposes such as Prospero's spirits rising from "the vasty deep".

At the back of De Wit's drawing of the stage are two double doors for entrances from and exits to the tiring house. An arras or curtain would cover these doors, and behind it a character could conceal himself. as Polonius does in *Hamlet*, while part of the arras might be drawn aside to reveal or 'discover' some static scene framed in the open doorway. Contrary to a long-held belief, there was no inner stage behind the curtains where acting took place.



The De Wit drawing of The Swan Playhouse

Above the tiring house is a row of six windows which have the appearance of being boxes in which spectators are sitting. Each box could be "a lord's room over the stage", referred to by Ben Jonson in *Every Man out of His Humour*, though the quality of view from such a point behind the action is very questionable. Whatever the truth of the lord's room theory, it is certain that one at least of the boxes would serve for the "appearances above", such as Richard II on the battlements of Berkeley Castle or Juliet on her balcony. Musicians might also be stationed there.

Two columns rising from the stage, and, of course, the arena below, support a cover or 'shadow' or 'heavens' which extends out over the rear part of the stage. Immediately above is the 'hut', an enclosed shed which presumably housed suspension-gear for flying effects, and props like the machine in which Jupiter descends "in thunder and lightning, sitting on an eagle." No lighting effects were possible

except for the candles and torches, which usually served a symbolic rather than practical use, and performances would take place in daylight, usually the early afternoon. The multi-scene, ever-changing locality of the action made elaborate stage scenery impossible, but the stage would be brightly decked and painted, and, as time went by, the sophistication of costume and stage properties certainly increased.

It would be wrong, however, to imagine Shakespeare's plays only in the setting of these public theatres, and a brief note must be added on three other major venues. The first is the Tudor Great Hall, where the king or lord would dine and be entertained. You should try to see a picture of Westminster Hall or the dining halls of Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Imagine the lord and his principal guests sitting on a raised dais at the end of the hall, and all other tables and benches drawn to the sides to create an arena for the action.

In the rear are two doors for servitors to enter and leave, and these correspond with the two doors to the tiring house shown in De Wit's drawing. These doors gave on to the 'screens passage' to the kitchens, and a tiring house could easily be erected in this passage. Inside the hall, but reached from the screens passage, was a gallery from which musicians could play and actors appear above. Performances here would, of course, normally be for the private entertainment of the lord, his guests, and perhaps his household, and were consequently called 'private'.

The term 'private' is also applied to a building similar in construction to the Great Hall which was adapted for use as a public theatre for paying customers, and a further word on its importance will be found in the section on 'Companies and Players'.

In the later years of Shakespeare's life, the convenience of the 'private' theatre became so obvious that specially designed covered theatres, housing some 700 audience, all seated, were built, and from 1608 onwards the King's Men played in *The Globe* in summer and the indoor *Blackfriars* in winter.

Activity 1	List (in note form) as many differences between the structure and layout of the Elizabethan theatre and a modern-day theatre.	
	**Elizabethan Theatre**	**Modern Theatre**

Shakespeare's Stage

The stage for which Shakespeare wrote was very different from the stage in a modern theatre. It was just a large bare platform stretching from the back wall into the middle of the auditorium, with the audience on three sides of it. There was no scenery to indicate where the action was supposed to be taking place, no curtain to come down to mark the end of a scene, and bulky properties would have to be used sparingly, for all had to be carried on and off the stage in full view of the audience. The theatre was roofless, and the plays were performed in daylight, so the lighting could not be altered to suit the requirements of a scene; the latter

might be midnight, but if the day happened to be a fine one, the sun would be shining brightly.

It must not, however, be supposed – as some critics assert – that all these things would be a great handicap to Shakespeare and his fellow-dramatists. They wrote for the stage as they knew it then, just as dramatists today write for the stage as they know it now. During the years it had been in use they had invented and developed methods of dealing with their problems, and there is no reason to think that they suffered from headaches on this account to any greater extent than their modern successors do. Indeed they had some advantages, and modern producers have recently been reviving some of the old devices.

The Elizabethan play could go through more smoothly and quickly because there was no waiting-period while scenery was changed. For the same reason it could have many more scenes than is possible in a modern production. All the dramatists of that time had to do was to use the accepted convention of emptying the stage of actors then on it and reoccupying it with an entirely different group for the audience to know that the stage was then representing a different place. What that place actually was could be deduced from the people present or what happened there; if more than this were needed, it could be indicated by some remark in the dialogue. The headings given in your copy of the play have all been devised by later editors; there were none in the versions published in Shakespeare's own day.

This short introduction is intended to put the matter in its right perspective; to show that it involved Shakespeare in no special problems of a kind completely unlike those that have confronted dramatists in all ages, including the present, when writing a play for performance.

Companies and Players

The Lord Chamberlain's Men, who became *The King's Men* in 1603, were among the numerous groups of players during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. Such companies were composed of three different classes of player. The most important were the senior actors who played the major roles, but also ran the business side of the company or produced the plays. The First Folio lists 26 actors who were at some time members of Shakespeare's company, but this list spans some 30 years and the group of senior actors would normally number perhaps seven or eight.

As they assumed responsibility so they shared the profits, and were consequently known as the 'sharers'. Outstanding among these actors was Richard Burbage (c.1568-1619), who played all the great tragic roles like Hamlet, King Lear and Othello. It is a sobering thought that most of Shakespeare's plays — the exceptions being a few quarto editions — might have been irretrievably lost if two of the

company, Heminge (remembered for his Falstaff) and Condell, had not kept their prompt books.

The second group would consist of hired 'extras', who would play minor parts and probably undertake other jobs in the theatre. Many would be hired by the day for a particular performance.

More interesting was the third class of actors, the boy player, who played all young female parts, since women were not permitted to act. It is this boy player who has too long been popularly misunderstood. Cleopatra's scornful

> I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness

is not meant to represent Shakespeare's view of the boy actors in his company, but rather a confirmation of the feud against the Boys' Companies already alluded to in *Hamlet*. Much more typical of the skill of the boy actor in female parts in this tribute to the player presenting Desdemona at Oxford in 1610: Desdemona "in her death moved us specially, when, as she lay in her bed, her face alone implored the pity of the audience".

There are several reasons for the success of the boys in female roles. The most important of these was training. Many would have been through the cathedral schools where their voices would have been rigorously trained in both singing and speech, and others would have attended grammar schools which gave an equally rigorous training in the arts of rhetoric.

Moreover, there are numerous minor roles in the plays in which the young actor could gain experience before moving on to the great romantic and tragic roles. Some, whose voices retained a feminine timbre, would remain with the company into adulthood, perhaps eventually becoming sharers, and playing both male and female roles. A few female roles would, in any case, be reserved for the principal adult players.

It has to be remembered also that Shakespearean heroines, such as Juliet (who was not yet fourteen when she first appeared on stage) and Desdemona, were themselves much younger than we imagine them to be today, with the experience of seeing them played by established actresses. A glance at any portrait in Elizabethan dress will show how easily such costume could conceal the sex of the wearer.

Nevertheless, the boy actors would not have succeeded had not Shakespeare known exactly what demands he could make on them. It is this fact, rather than the occasional word pictures of the heroine's beauty — such as that of Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra — that guaranteed the dramatic effect of their performances. Though Elizabethans displayed their affections freely,

Shakespeare never exposes his boy actor to the risk of ridicule in sexual scenes which the modern producer can superimpose.

Even in the most passionate scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* the lovers are either separate or revealed at a window where little more than a kiss is possible. But it is in tragic roles that Shakespeare best reveals his sureness of touch. In *Macbeth* we watch the slow transformation of Macbeth, scene by scene, from the noble soldier to the "bear-like" fiend, and in his soliloquies he portrays a kaleidoscope of passions. Lady Macbeth's passions, on the other hand, though fierce, are elemental, and her descent from the confident Queen to the tortured sleep-walker is never charted: we see her first as the one, then later as the other.

A performance of Shakespeare in *The Globe* would certainly have been vastly different from today: there is no reason to believe that its dramatic impact would have been any less powerful.

Suggested Answer to Activity One

Elizabethan Theatre	**Modern Theatre**
• no scenery available	• scenery available
• outdoors	• indoors
• performed in daylight	• performed under artificial light
• 'apron' stage projects forward, with audience all around	• stage recedes from audience
• audience have varying views of action, and see it in three dimension	• audience share same 'two-dimensional' view of action
• no stage curtain available	• stage curtain available, dividing audience from rear stage
• upper stage (gallery), 'heavens' (top of tower) and small inner curtained area available	• subdivisions of stage have to be constructed as part of set design