



History Bridging Work

Year 10 into 11 for 2025/26



Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Teacher: _____

GCSE History - Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603
2026 Historic Environment: The Globe Theatre

Student Question & Answer Booklet
Summer bridging work 2025

Instructions:

- 1) Use your historic resource pack to answer these questions. Read the resources pack and provide detailed answers to the questions below.
- 2)

Section A: Comprehension Questions - Read page 1-9 to answer this section:

Q1.1. What type of plays were popular in England before Elizabeth's reign, and why did their popularity decline?

Q1.2. Who built the first purpose-built theatre in London and what was it called?

Q1.3. Why did James Burbage build 'The Theatre' in 1576 just outside the City of London?

Q2.1. What circumstances led to the construction of the Globe Theatre in 1599?

Q2.2. Who funded the construction of the Globe Theatre?

Q2.3. What features made the Globe Theatre distinct?

Q3.1. Why were London authorities often hostile to theatres?

Q3.2. How did the design of the Globe reflect the interests of Elizabethan audiences?

Q3.3. How were plays advertised and structured?

Q4.1. Why was patronage essential for theatre companies?

Q4.2. What role did Queen Elizabeth I play in supporting theatre?

Section B: Source-Based and Analytical Questions - Use page 11-23 to answer these questions

Q5.1. (Source C) What does the Puritan preacher's complaint tell us about contemporary attitudes to theatre?

Q5.2. (Source D) How does the design of the Globe Theatre reflect Elizabethan social hierarchy?

Q6.1. What were the consequences of moving The Theatre's timbers to Southwark?

Q6.2. What were the effects of the plague on Elizabethan theatres like the Globe?

Q7.1. In what ways did the Globe Theatre represent continuity from earlier theatre practices?

Q7.2. What changes did the Globe bring to the nature of Elizabethan theatre?

Q8.1. Why was the Globe Theatre significant in the development of Elizabethan drama?

Q8.2. How did the Essex Rebellion highlight the political power of the theatre?

Section C: Application of knowledge practice Questions

Q9.1. Explain why the location of the Globe Theatre was important in Elizabethan England.

Q9.2. How far does the Globe Theatre reflect the wider developments in Elizabethan society?

Q9.3. Write an account of how the structure of Elizabethan theatre companies affected performances at the Globe.

Section D: Revision Tasks

Task 1. Create a timeline showing the development of Elizabethan theatres from 1567 to 1601.

Task 2. Write a character profile of Richard Burbage or William Shakespeare using information from the pack.

Task 3. Design a poster for the Globe Theatre, using evidence from the text to decide layout, ticket prices, and audience types.



GCSE History (8145)

Paper 2 Shaping the Nation

Resource pack for the 2026 historic environment specified site

The Globe Theatre

Elizabethan England, c. 1568–1603

The purpose of this pack is to provide you with guidance and resources to support your teaching about the Globe Theatre, the 2026 specified site for the historic environment part of Elizabethan England, c. 1568–1603. It is intended as a guide only and you may wish to use other sources of information about the Globe Theatre. The resources are provided to help you develop your students' knowledge and understanding of the specified site. They will not be tested in the examination, as the question targets AO1 (knowledge and understanding) and AO2 (explaining second order concepts).

General guidance

The study of the historic environment will focus on a particular site in its historical context and should examine the relationship between a specific site and the key events, features or developments of the period. As a result, when teaching a specified site for the historic environment element, it is useful to think about ways of linking the site to the specified content in Parts 1, 2 and/or 3 of the specification.

There is no requirement to visit the specified site as this element of the course is designed to be classroom based.

Students will be expected to answer a question that draws on second order concepts of change, continuity, causation and/or consequence, and to explore them in the context of the specified site and wider events and developments of the period studied. Students should be able to identify key features of the specified site and understand their connection to the wider historical context of the specific historical period. Sites will also illuminate how people lived at the time, how they were governed and their beliefs and values.

The following aspects of the site should be considered:

- location, function and the structure
- people connected with the site e.g. the designer, originator and occupants
- the design and how it reflects the culture, values and fashions of the people at the time
- how important events/developments from the depth study are connected to the site.

Students will be expected to understand the ways in which key features and other aspects of the site are representative of the period studied. In order to do this, students will also need to be aware of how the key features and other aspects of the site have changed from earlier periods. Students will also be expected to understand how key features and other aspects may have changed or stayed the same during the period.

We would like to thank Dr Alison Knight from Royal Holloway University for her help in producing this resource pack.

The Globe Theatre: 'this wooden O'*



An artist's impression of the Globe Theatre on the banks of the Thames at Southwark.

Theatres during Elizabeth's reign

The earliest type of drama in England was the medieval mystery play, which told Biblical stories such as 'Adam and Eve' or the 'Last Judgement' ([Resource A](#)) or 'morality' plays featuring characters like Charity or Vice. Following the Protestant Reformation, religious content became more likely to provoke disagreement and disorder. This prompted the Tudor monarchs to try to control the religious content of plays leading, in Elizabeth's reign, to less obviously religious styles of theatre. Performances usually took place in the courtyard of inns ([Resource B](#)) until the first purpose-built London theatre, the Red Lion at Whitechapel, was built in 1567 by John Brayne. It had a 40 x 30 feet stage raised 5 feet above the audience and offered a London venue to touring companies, but performances were little different from those previously seen in the courtyards of inns. As it was situated outside the city walls on open farmland, it was also a long way for London audiences to travel, particularly in winter.

Burbage and the Theatre

The second purpose-built theatre, simply called the Theatre, was built in Shoreditch by James Burbage in 1576. In the following year another theatre, the Curtain, opened close by. Both were wooden buildings with stages jutting out into open-air yards where people stood while others sat in galleries around the outside. Foreign visitors to London commented on the similarity between its wooden theatres and the amphitheatres of ancient Rome.

James Burbage was originally a carpenter but changed his career to become an actor and then a theatrical entrepreneur. As the leader of a company of actors, Burbage asked for Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester's protection and patronage. In 1574, the Earl obtained a

*'This Wooden O' is a quotation from William Shakespeare's play *Henry V*. It is thought to be referring to the Globe Theatre and became a nickname for the theatre.

licence from Queen Elizabeth I for a theatrical company which would bear his name: the Earl of Leicester's Men.

A company of actors needed official permission and patronage at this time to protect them, as they could otherwise be regarded by the authorities as vagabonds or beggars and be punished. It was particularly important for theatre companies to have permission and protection from a patron to perform in the greater London area. London was largely self-governing and run by local councillors, or aldermen, who appointed constables and watchman to keep the peace in the capital. The Lord Mayor and aldermen held their own courts and did not welcome social problems such as crime and disorder which the theatres and playhouses could encourage. They attracted large crowds which in turn attracted pickpockets, bullies and disagreements that might quickly erupt into violence and spread throughout the neighbourhood. For this reason, the city authorities were unhappy about the theatres, but, as they were outside the city walls, they could not stop them. This was why, in December 1574, the Council of London issued a set of severe restrictions on the performance of plays within the city limits. The London officials tried many times to restrict or ban performances within the city and even convinced Elizabeth's government to order the closures of the Theatre and the Curtain, which were outside city limits, in 1597. However, these attempts never tended to work well. The Theatre remained where it was until 1599, the Curtain remained in its location until at least 1624, and many unlicensed performances within the city limits took place. What actually tended to close theatres were outbreaks of plague. These occurred regularly, particularly in the years 1593, 1603, 1608 and 1610.

The Globe Theatre

Burbage's Theatre was built in Shoreditch, just outside the city limits to the north east of London. Unfortunately, it was built on land belonging to a Puritan, Giles Allen. Allen refused to renew the lease when it ran out as Puritans disapproved of the theatre ([Resource C](#)). James Burbage died in February 1597. Allen's decision meant Burbage's family stood to lose the Theatre, but there was a clause in the lease which said that what was on the site belonged to them. Knowing that Allen would be away over Christmas, Burbage's sons (Cuthbert and Richard), Will Kempe and other actors and labourers dismantled the theatre in the dead of a freezing, snow-covered December night in 1598, under the watchful eyes of Master Carpenter Peter Street. He made sure that the timbers were carefully transported so that they could be recycled into a new theatre.

This rebuilding was done during the spring and summer of 1599 at Bankside in Southwark, on the south bank of the River Thames. The money for the new theatre, called the Globe ([Resource D](#)), came from the Burbage brothers, Richard and Cuthbert, and four actors from the company: Thomas Pope, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips and William Shakespeare. Like the Theatre, the Globe was a wooden amphitheatre with a polygonal exterior surrounding a round open-air yard. It had three levels of galleries and a thatched roof. The playwright Ben Jonson praised the building shortly after it opened in his 1599 play, *Every Man Out of his Humour*, calling it 'the glory of the Bank'. The first play to be performed at the Globe was probably *Julius Caesar*, as a tourist recorded in his diary in September 1599 that he 'witnessed an excellent performance of the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar'.

How did the Globe affect Elizabethan theatre?

The construction of the Globe affected its competitors especially the nearby and ageing Rose Theatre. The Rose Theatre had been built in 1587. It was the first theatre to be built on the banks of the Thames at Southwark. Unlike the Globe, which was unique in being owned by and built for actors, the Rose was built by a businessman, Philip Henslowe. In December 1599, Henslowe and his son-in-law, the leading actor Edward Alleyn, leased land just outside the northern boundary of the City of London for a new theatre. Henslowe had made so much money from the Rose that he was able to hire the Globe's builder, Peter Street, to build the new Fortune Theatre into which the Admiral's Men company moved in 1600. Although the design of the Fortune was similar to the Globe it was square instead of round ([Resource E](#)).

As well as being an important moment in Shakespeare's career, the building of the Globe marked a turning point in Elizabethan theatre. Before the Globe was built, audiences would have seen the same type of play performed in all theatres, but, from then on, individual theatres began to become known for specific types of play. The Globe and the Chamberlain's Men gained a reputation for offering a wide range of genres such as tragedies, histories and comedies ([Resource M](#)). They continued to have close links with court, so their plays often appealed more to the gentry ([Resource F](#)). The Admiral's Men offered a narrower range of plays which were explicitly designed to have a wider appeal to the citizens of London.

Who performed the plays?

Plays were performed by companies of actors. Actors who contributed money to the company were called 'sharers' and received a share of the profits from performances. Other actors called 'hirelings' were paid a weekly wage, while boys who played the women's roles were 'apprentices' and were paid very little. In 1583, the Earl of Leicester's Men lost some of their best actors to a new company called the Queen's Men. The Earl of Leicester was unlikely to complain about the loss of his players to the Queen's company. However, Leicester's Men never fully recovered from this loss and, although they continued performing, the company no longer existed after the Earl's death in 1588. It had been the major company in Elizabethan drama at the time and one of the main companies that performed at court. It had established the pattern for the companies that followed, as it was the first to be awarded royal patronage and the first to occupy one of the new public theatres on a permanent basis.

Other theatre companies had emerged by this time, including Lord Howard's Men named after their patron, Charles Howard, Lord Howard of Effingham. It had been formed in the late 1570s, but when he was appointed as England's Lord High Admiral in 1585, the company changed its name to the Lord Admiral's Men. From 1587, they played at the Rose Theatre. It was here that some of William Shakespeare's early plays were first performed, before he joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Theatre and later the Globe.

Theatres were closed between 1592 and 1594 because of the plague, and, when they reopened, the actors' companies had reorganised and many had amalgamated. The Lord Chamberlain's Men, a new theatrical company, emerged in 1594 under the patronage of Henry Carey, Lord Hudson, who served as Lord Chamberlain to Elizabeth I. In this role, he was responsible for theatrical entertainments for the Queen. These had been disrupted due to plague in 1593, and an unstable theatrical scene in London prompted the Privy Council to

establish a 'duopoly' of two strong companies: the Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men. William Shakespeare joined this company as an actor and principal playwright, writing on average two new plays a year for them.

The appeal of the theatre

Going to see a play in Elizabethan times was immensely popular so there was no shortage of theatregoers. It has been estimated that 15,000 people visited the theatre each week in 1595 when there were only two theatres open. 25 years later, when there were 6 theatres in London, the number attending plays was nearly 25,000. The theatres were large and could hold an audience for a performance of up to 3,000 people. London's population provided a socially mixed audience, which would have been made up of different groups from Elizabethan society with different levels of literacy and education. ([Resource J](#)).

Many of Shakespeare's characters would have been recognisable types of people in Elizabethan society, even when his plays were set in different countries and in different time periods. For example, old Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* would have been recognised by the wealthy merchants of Elizabethan London. Although in the play he is a Veronese nobleman, he could be seen as a fussy and self-important London merchant bustling round making a great fuss about the running of his household. The tragic brawl that leads to the banishment of Romeo, and the Friar John's inability to deliver the letter of explanation because he was shut up in a quarantined house due to an outbreak of plague, would have had real meaning for audiences. They would have known from experience what happened when street-quarrels developed into riots and what precautions had to be taken when there were rumours of plague about. Shakespeare's plays were reminders to his audiences of the almost supreme power of London's authorities.

The plays also reminded Londoners of their own civic responsibilities. For example, in *Measure for Measure*, an elderly and inefficient constable who has no real power or qualifications has been appointed by householders who would rather pay an inadequate deputy than take their own turn at civic duty. This would have been familiar and amusing to London audiences of the time, but Shakespeare made it clear in the play that the situation was wrong and must be put right. Even a history play, such as *Richard II*, had messages for those Londoners who had the responsibility of running a household which often included journeymen and apprentices who slept in the house, ate in the kitchen and for whose behaviour the householder was responsible. Shakespeare's play was highly critical of Richard's readiness to put his kingdom into debt, and audiences may have seen parallels with the inefficient head of a household who raised money by mortgaging his assets thereby endangering those he was responsible for.

Attending the Elizabethan theatre

Seeing a play in Elizabethan times was an exciting experience. Theatres displayed coloured flags to tell the audiences the type of play they were performing and this helped theatregoers decide which play to see. White flags were for a comedy, while black was for a tragedy, and red or purple flags signalled a historical play. Plays usually started at 2 o'clock with the blowing of a trumpet. Theatregoers wanted to see the best and most famous actors such as Queen Elizabeth's favourite clown, Richard Tarlton ([Resource I](#)) who could cause laughter

simply by putting his head out from between the curtains and pulling faces. However, it was to the actors of the two main companies that most people were drawn. The Lord Chamberlain's Men had Richard Burbage, who took the lead in many of Shakespeare's plays. The Lord Admiral's Men had Edward Alleyn, a very tall and powerful man who roared out his speeches from the stage. Playwrights could write parts to suit an actor's strengths, but the appetite of Elizabethan theatre audiences for plays put pressure on both the writers and actors. The Lord Admiral's Men, for example, were producing as many as 20 new plays a year while the Lord Chamberlain's Men might perform 6 different plays a week at the Globe.

Theatre audiences were made up of men and women from all social groups and occupations such as labourers, craftsmen, shop owners, foreign tourists and the gentry. The theatre was the place to see and be seen as, for many going, to the theatre was a social as well as a cultural event. The entrance fee was relatively cheap. For a penny you could stand in an uncovered area in front of the stage where the actors were close and the experience intense ([Resource J](#) and [Resource K](#)). Another penny provided the comfort and distinction of a bench seat in a lower gallery (with a cushion for another penny) from which to view the play and the chance to see the wealthy and important members of society. The wealthy people might choose the upper galleries for 6 pence, from which they could both view the performance and, just as importantly, be seen by other people. At the back of the stage there was the 'tiring house' where the actors dressed (or 'attire') themselves, with a gallery above it which could be used for scenes such as the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* ([Resource L](#)). Sometimes this gallery was let out for those audience members who wanted to be seen by their fellow Londoners.

Because so many plays were staged each week, most of Shakespeare's plays were performed without elaborate set decoration. Instead, key props like the donkey's head in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the caskets in *The Merchant of Venice* helped convey the action. Even without props, audiences would have been impressed by the magnificent costumes on view. Plays sometimes used sound effects such as the sound of a cannon firing or of thunder which was made by rolling cannon balls across the gallery roof. Unlike modern audiences, Elizabethan audiences were much louder, holding conversations and making comments about the actors and the play. Audiences also had the chance to buy refreshments and snacks from sellers who moved amongst the crowd.

Why was Patronage important?

The achievements of the Elizabethan theatre would have been impossible without the protection of patrons and the support of the London public. Playwrights and actors had been held in low esteem during the early part of Elizabeth's reign but had risen socially by its end, due in part to their popularity with audiences. The protection of courtly patrons was important to theatre companies because a 1572 Act of Parliament threatened to punish 'common players and minstrels not belonging to any Nobleman of this realm as they shall be judged to be rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars'. Being the patron of a theatre company also had its advantages as, when the company toured areas of the country where the patron had connections, he would hope that theatregoers would be favourably reminded of him and that he would gain a reputation for his support of the arts and his good taste. Patronage cost little for the nobleman, as the audience paid to see the play, so theatre companies were self-financing.

The support of the Queen and her Court was also important for the success of the theatre at this time, as their approval no doubt convinced many Protestant leaders of churches and local government that play-going was an acceptable recreation. The patrons of theatre companies might sponsor plays and entertainments to maintain and secure their position at court. The fact that Privy Councillors supported theatres suggests that they found them useful, perhaps as a way of shaping public opinion and gaining favour with the Queen.

Queen Elizabeth I and the theatre

Although the Queen loved the arts, entertainment and plays, ([Resource G](#)), she did not go to the theatre. Instead, the theatre came to the Queen, and performances were staged wherever she was which was often at Greenwich Palace ([Resource H](#)). Great nobles could arrange and pay for private showings of plays, but it was the Master of Revels who controlled the professional theatre companies for the Queen. Working out of the Lord Chamberlain's office from 1578, he licensed those plays that were thought suitable for performance and acted as a censor by removing lines that were incendiary or offensive to the Queen. He also charged fees for the loan of more extravagant and decorative costumes to companies, if they were needed.

Queen Elizabeth seems to have preferred comedy to tragic or serious drama, and one of her early favourites was the actor Richard Tarlton ([Resource I](#)) who was one of the Queen's Men and famous as a skilled clown and stand-up comedian. The Lord Chamberlain's Men were very fashionable in the 1590s, and Shakespeare and Burbage were called on to play at court three times in 1595. It is also believed that she had enjoyed an early performance of his comedy *Love's Labour's Lost* which, when it was printed in 1598, was subtitled 'as presented before her Highness this last Christmas.'

It was the Master of Revels who was responsible for the complex and expensive organisation of plays performed at Court. Before 1572, everything to do with court performances, including the supply of costumes and scenery, was run from offices and workshops at London's Blackfriars. This location was near to the Thames so was ideal for ferrying equipment, costumes and props up and down the river, particularly to Greenwich Palace. Putting on and performing plays for the Queen was an expensive business, with costs being as high as £2,000 a year. After 1572, as the commercial theatres grew in importance, they began to take on a higher proportion of court performances (and their costs), eventually replacing the performances put on by the Revels office. In 1578, the Revels department moved their headquarters to the former Priory of St John at Clerkenwell which, although further away from the river, had large State Chambers which were similar in size to those at the Royal houses. In these chambers, theatre companies would perform their plays for approval by the Master of the Revels. Companies would usually perform over the twelve days of Christmas and, most importantly, as the Christmas period came to an end on Twelfth Night. Six plays were performed at Hampton Court over Christmas and the New Year in 1576–7 by the Earl of Warwick's servants, the Earl of Leicester's company and the Lord Sussex's Men. Many court performances were given in the Great Hall of royal residences, but, at some of Elizabeth's residences, purpose-built stages were installed. For example, in 1590 a new stage was built at Greenwich Palace, and a smaller stage of 14 feet was also constructed at Richmond Palace. Plays would be performed in the evening by oil or candlelight and followed by dancing and a banquet. The indoor spaces at court allowed theatre companies to perform when it was not possible to do so in the outdoor theatres, and performing for royalty brought prestige.

Equally, performing plays for public audiences allowed the companies to develop material before bringing it to the court.

The power of the play: censorship in Elizabethan times

Although Queen Elizabeth reportedly enjoyed plays as ‘harmless spenders of time,’ she and her government also realised the potential of plays to provoke unrest or treasonable slander, which is why all plays had to be approved by the Master of the Revels before performance or publication. In 1597 a play, *The Isle of Dogs*, written by Thomas Nashe and Ben Jonson, and performed by the Earl of Pembroke’s men at the Swan Theatre in Bankside, was immediately banned by the Privy Council and three of its actors arrested. No copies of the play survive but it was thought that the satirical comedy had made slanderous comments about the Queen.

In June 1599, the Archbishop of Canterbury banned the printing of histories without Privy Council approval or printing plays ‘except they be allowed by such as have authority’. Just a few months before this ‘Bishop’s Ban,’ action had been taken against John Hayward, who had published, *The First Part of the Life and Reign of King Henry IV*, a book dedicated to the Earl of Essex and which focused on Henry IV’s seizing the throne from Richard II. Hayward was also accused of writing the history of Henry IV in such a way as to criticise Elizabeth’s Irish campaign which Essex had command of. The Privy Council questioned Hayward, asking ‘might he think that this history would not be very dangerous come among the common people.’ The book was banned and its author sent to prison, where he remained until James I took the throne in 1603.

In 1601, plays had a part in the Essex Rebellion that arose from Essex’s ill-fated campaign to Ireland against the Earl of Tyrone and the rivalry at Court between the Earl of Essex and the Cecil factions. Essex made things worse for himself when he and his supporters chose to begin their rebellion by asking the Lord Chamberlain’s Men to perform a play at the Globe. The actors were reluctant as the play was an old one and would only attract a small audience, but Essex won them over with a massive fee of 40 shillings. The play that they staged on Essex’s behalf was *Richard II* which showed the successful removal of a monarch! The play was political dynamite and had been so controversial that the first three editions were published without Richard’s dethroning scene. At Essex’s trial in 1601, his accusers even used parts of Hayward’s book to draw up the charges against him. Fortunately for the Chamberlain’s Men, the judges realised that they had performed for money and were not part of Essex’s rebellion. However, the episode shows that authors, and playwrights, had to be careful what was printed.

Resources

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The Globe Theatre resources

Resource A A contemporary drawing of a medieval mystery play being performed in Coventry.

They were often performed on carts that could be towed around to different parts of the town or city.



Resource B An artist's impression of a play being performed in the courtyard of an inn.



Resource C A modern illustration showing a Puritan church minister criticising Elizabethans for attending the theatre.

John Stockwood, a Puritan preacher, said in a London sermon in 1578, 'Will not a filthy play, with the blast of a trumpet, call together a thousand when an hour's tolling of a bell brings to the church only a hundred people?'



Pagans and Puritans.

Resource D A cutaway drawing of the Globe Theatre.



Resource E A drawing of the Fortune Theatre.



Resource F A photograph of a scene featuring the witches in a modern performance of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*.

Plays about royalty, the court and interests of the day appealed to the gentry.



Resource G Queen Elizabeth I was a patron of artists and writers.

In this drawing, Queen Elizabeth accepts the writings of the poet George Gascoigne in 1572.



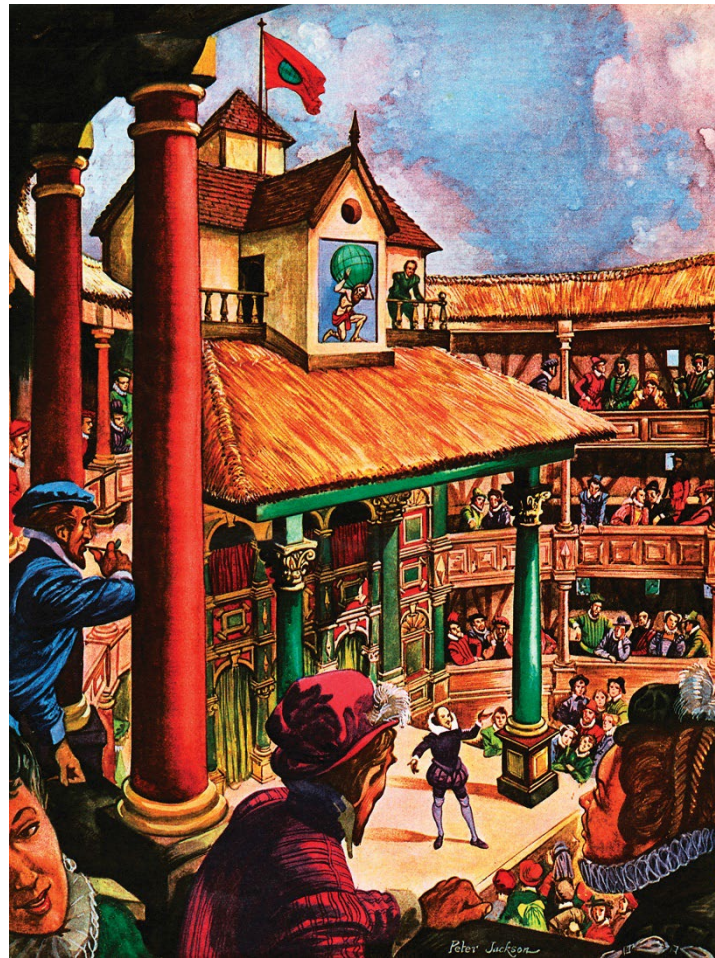
Resource H An artist's impression of a play performed before Queen Elizabeth I.
William Shakespeare stands anxiously in the wings.



Resource 1 A drawing of Richard Tarlton, Queen Elizabeth I's favourite clown/comic actor.



Resource J An artist's impression of a performance at the Globe Theatre during Elizabeth I's reign.



Resource K A photograph of a performance inside the reconstructed Globe Theatre.

This replica was built near the original site in the 1990s and opened for its first full season in 1997.



Resource L A 19th-century painting of the balcony scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.



Resource M An artist's impression of a performance of *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* in the Globe Theatre.



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