

## Discussion Questions

1. What staging effects might result from the use of daylight instead of modern, fully-controlled and focused lighting?
2. What are likely to be the effects of actors being within inches of a standing audience while being able to see the exact expressions of all 1450 people in the theatre, mostly within a distance of 50 feet?
3. What are the consequences of men and boys playing women's roles?
4. By what means can a play hold the attention of a standing audience paying only £5 (\$8) during a two-hour performance?
5. How is performance affected by having stage scenery and props limited to chairs, thrones, beds, curtains and similar portable items?
6. What are the effects of the two large pillars down-stage, near the corners of the stage, with others supporting galleries' front edges?
7. What kind of language and speech patterns may result from use of an open-air theatre such as the Globe? Does verse and poetry help?

## Essay Topics and Class Demonstrations

1. From the entry of characters to their exit show how the structure of the Globe would affect your concepts for staging a famous Shakespearean scene (e.g. the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*; II.ii; the play within the play scenes in *Hamlet*, III.ii, or *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i; over-hearing scenes in *Twelfth Night*, II.v, or *Much Ado*, II.iii).
2. How does the restored Globe differ from other modern theatres, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of both configurations?

3. Find an outdoor location with one or more characteristics of the Globe and describe how to use it to stage a short part of a Shakespeare play.
4. Choose a specific Shakespeare play's and show how having a boy act a female role in a scene alters the way one performs & reacts to it.
5. Explain the relevance of songs, dances and fights to a Shakespeare play's story line, and show how to illustrate this meaning on stage.
6. Take a play and examine a passage (e.g. *Richard III*, 1.1.1-41; *Othello*, II.iii.345-71, or *Henry IV*, Part 1, I.ii.217-39) in which the actor may address his audience directly, and then try to stage this interaction with an actual small audience reacting openly to such recognition.

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# STUDY GUIDE

## William Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

Many of Shakespeare's best known plays were written to be performed at the Globe Theatre, such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. The Globe commenced performances in 1599, having been constructed in Southwark, near the south end of London Bridge. It was built from the timbers of a dismantled playhouse (after the players lost their site-lease), which was simply called the Theatre. This first purpose-built Theatre was built in 1576 at Shoreditch outside the north wall of the city of London, thus escaping the puritanical city's repressive control, which did not cover Southwark either. Southwark was an area devoted to less tightly-regulated entertainment of all kinds, including theatres, bear-baiting and numerous inns, like the Tabard (from which the pilgrims of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* set out for Canterbury). Southwark also included the Clink Prison, noted in Dickens' *Little Dorrit*. Like the Theatre, the Globe was managed by James Burbage, father of the actor, Richard Burbage, for whom Shakespeare wrote most of his great roles.

## The First Globe Theatre

The Globe was polygonal, perhaps with twenty sides, with three internal galleries of seats stacked under a thatched roof, surrounding an unroofed courtyard for spectators to stand on three sides of a rectangular stage. This large stage faced north-east, away from the sun, projecting from the walls to almost the center of the yard. It was protected from the weather by a roof supported by two large pillars near its outer corners.

Behind the stage was a dressing room with three doors leading onto the stage. Above the doors was a balcony from which a curtain could be hung. The stage, the facade behind it, and the underside of the roof were richly painted, with classical figures on the facade and motifs such as the zodiac beneath the roof. There was a lifting machine in the roof and a trap door to the space under the stage. The Globe could probably accommodate about 3,000 spectators, with up to a third paying only a penny for standing room, while the wealthier paid more to sit in the galleries.

The theatre was partly open to the sky which favored a forceful acting style. The largeness of the stage encouraged physical energy, as did the acoustics of a partly open-air structure. With a permanent set the chief visual effects were through rich costumes and elaborate choreography. Music and dancing were important as well as duels, fights, and battles, to fill the broad space and to hold popular attention. All these effects appear in Shakespeare's plays.

### Later Theatre History

After the Globe burnt down in 1613 (due to burning wadding from a cannonade in *Henry VIII*, which fell on the thatch), it was rebuilt and prospered until the Puritan Parliament closed the London theatres in 1642 because they were held to be inappropriate in a time of Civil War against King Charles I. Soon after it closed the Globe fell into decay and was pulled down. After the Puritan Commonwealth collapsed in 1660, with restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, theatres reopened, but the new ones were modeled on the indoor ones fashionable in France and Italy, not on the old open arenas like the Globe. Only in the twentieth century did open-air theatres

become popular again, as in Ashland, San Diego, and New York's Central Park, but these have few of the other features of the Globe.

### Sam Wanamaker and the Rebuilding of the Globe

Following the arguments of William Poel that Shakespeare's plays would benefit from recreation of the Globe's original configuration, the American actor-director Sam Wanamaker decided to celebrate Shakespeare's work in Southwark by building a restored Globe on the south bank of the River Thames, near to the original theatre's site (unavailable because it is partly covered by the southern approach to Southwark Bridge). The reconstruction was based on scholars' use of Elizabethan pictures of London showing the Southwark theatres, and of other surviving theatrical allusions and documents. Plans approximating to the original theatre were drawn up, and a building based on them opened for a trial season in 1996, followed in 1997 by a full season of four Renaissance plays. The first was an Elizabethan-style production (with men and boys in the women's parts), of *Henry V*, one of the first plays performed in the original Globe, as shown by its Chorus, which discusses the new theatre as "this wooden O."

### Using the Restored Globe Theatre

The purpose of the restored Globe Theatre is not to be a static memorial, but to recreate performances with the original setting and effects for which Shakespeare wrote; to provide a venue for teaching and studying these plays in performance; and to attempt to create new work fitting this theatrical configuration. Students, scholars, and professional actors from all over the world can experiment in this

space, as did the University of California, Berkeley, Shakespeare Program with its performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* on 15 July, 1996, using a preliminary version of the restored stage. This experience allowed students to discover and discuss the ways in which the new theatre had helped them to understand Shakespeare better, and how it had changed their understanding about the acting it required, because of its use of daylight, its closer access between actors and audience, and its stress on physical and vocal vigor to fill the large open spaces.

### Dimensions and Structure

The outer circumference of the new building is 99 feet, and the inner yard is 77 feet in diameter. The stage is 44 feet wide and projects 27 feet 6 inches into the yard, from a facade across the five south-western bays, so the stage faces northeast, away from the afternoon sun. The first gallery is 11 feet high, the second 10, and the third 9. The building is made up of frames of unseasoned oak beams, with the spaces filled by laths, and covered by plaster. This is the first thatched-roof, wooden building built in London since the great fire of 1666, but it is protected by modern sprinkler systems. Otherwise Elizabethan construction principles have been closely adhered to: hand-worked surfaces, pegs not metal nails, and benches not individual seats in the galleries. Because of modern fire regulations, the new building can only admit about 1,450 spectators, 450 of them standing round the stage. Only these "groundlings" are affected by rain, as the galleries and stage are covered by the thatched roofing, so performances can continue in bad weather, and at night, when electric flood-lights are permitted, but only to maintain normal daylight levels of diffused illumination.