
Year 7
English
Introducing
Shakespeare

Lesson 3
The Shakespearean
Theatre

Overview of Lesson

L	Content	Skills
3	<p>Students learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Globe theatre and the setting in which Shakespeare's plays were performed ▪ Plays within plays 	<p>Students learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess the effect of rhetorical techniques in persuading audiences ▪ Analyse metatheatre within Shakespeare's plays
<p>Evidence of Learning: Class discussions; small text analysis exercises</p> <p>Assessment: Homework Three (creative writing task)</p>		

Get All Your Feedback

Improvement is up to you!

Your English teacher leaves valuable feedback on every paper you submit. Make sure you get the most out your Matrix experience by checking all the comments so you know exactly what you need to do next to improve.

How to find your feedback

- Log into Matrix, and select your English course
- Select 'Marks' or 'Grades' from the left-hand menu
- Click on your marked Homework submission (Step One)

This is the first step and will take you a window where you can see all your submission details and the overall comment the teacher has left on your work.

But seeing the comments on your paper requires just one more click... (Step Two)

STEP ONE

STEP TWO

The image consists of two side-by-side screenshots from the Matrix Education platform. The first screenshot, labeled 'STEP ONE', shows the 'Grades for Student X' page. The 'Marks' menu item is highlighted in the left-hand navigation bar. In the main content area, under the 'Name' column, 'Homework 1' is highlighted with a red box. A red arrow points to this box with the text 'CLICK ON YOUR MARKED PAPER'. The second screenshot, labeled 'STEP TWO', shows the 'Submission Details' page for 'Homework 1'. The 'View Feedback' button in the top right corner is highlighted with a red box. A red arrow points to this button with the text 'CLICK VIEW FEEDBACK'.

Now you can see all your teacher's comments and begin to improve your marks!

1. Speaking Shakespeare's English

You will have noticed by now that Shakespeare's language is quite different from the English we speak every day. We'll need to understand it so we can give the best reading and interpretation of his poems and plays.

The following table contains a list of phrases written in Shakespearean English in the left column and a list of modern translations in the right column. However, the translations do not match up with the original.

Match up the phrases from early modern English to their modern translation.

Early Modern English	Contemporary English
"Keep thy peace"	"Thanks."
"Hence! Follow me not!"	"That looks great."
"Even now about it!"	You liar!
"'Tis a pretty piece of work!"	"Hurry up."
"Why thou false knave!"	"From now on, stop following me!"
"I thank thee"	"Get out of here!"
"Get thee gone!"	"Be Quiet!"

2. Going to the Theatre



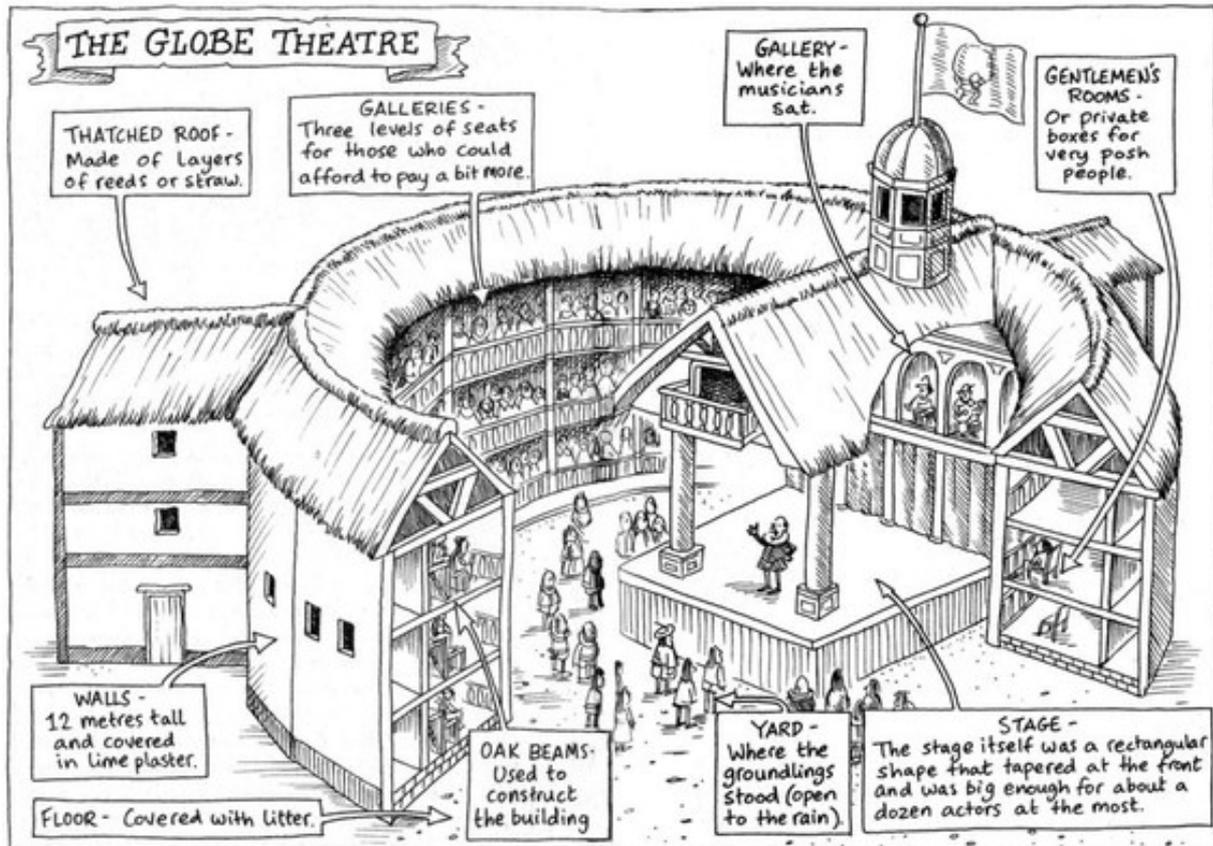
What kind of places were Shakespeare's plays performed in? What was it like to be in the audience? How were they different from theatres that we would see a play in today?

The first thing to know is that theatres in Shakespeare's time were not elaborate. There was no theatrical lighting and few stage decorations. If they needed props, like tables or chairs, they moved them on and off the stage throughout the play.

The Globe Theatre was built in 1599 by Shakespeare's playing company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. This theatre hosted some of the Bard's greatest plays until it burned down in 1613. Don't worry—it was rebuilt the next year!

²⁰ Source: C. Walter Hodges' imagined reconstruction of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 3, being performed in an Elizabethan theatre. Drawn for *The Globe Restored*, published by Ernest Benn, 1953. Folger Shakespeare Library ART Box H688 no.3.1

The Globe Theatre – Cross-Section²¹



The Yard: Admission: one penny. This was where the groundlings stood.

The Lowest Gallery: Admission: two pennies. This is where groundlings could sit if they paid the additional cost.

The Middle Gallery: Admission: two pennies. Also known as the 'Twopenny Rooms'. This is where prosperous merchants could sit with an excellent view of the play without needing to rub shoulders with the groundlings.

The Upper Galleries: Admission: at least three pennies! This is where prominent merchants and even some lower nobility would pay to see all the action, sheltered from the rain and far from the groundlings.

Gentleman's Rooms or Lord's Rooms: This section was right near the stage in the Lowest Gallery. These rooms had the best view of the stage and they were outfitted for comfort. You might get a cushion! But they were reserved for people who held a noble title.

²¹ Image Source: <http://sdcperformancens.blogspot.com.au/2015/10/>

Where you were in the audience depended on your class status. At the Globe, you paid a penny to stand in the 'Yard'. The Globe had no roof so it was open-air, and the Yard had a dirt floor; you would have to stand throughout the entire play. The yard was usually crowded, and the 'groundlings' (as people watching from the Yard were called – they were also known as 'stinkards' and 'penny-stinkers') were often noisy and mischievous. If you were of a higher class, you could pay more to sit in the seats around the side of the theatre, or in a balcony looking down on the stage. Just like the movies today, you could get snacks and drinks!

Class Discussion

What kind of environment do you think most resembles the Shakespearean theatre in our time?



The modern reconstruction of the Globe Theatre in London, it is based on the original design!²²

²² Image Source: <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/about-us/>

The Globe Theatre – Performance During Shakespeare's Time

Expand your understanding of The Globe Theatre by watching the following HarvardX tour given by Professor Stephen Greenblatt. As you watch, make sure to take notes! A list of questions has been given to help you look out for important points.

Media Viewing: Globe Theatre: Performance during Shakespeare's Time

Notes

- How many spectators did The Globe accommodate?
- Where does the term 'box office' come from?
- How much did a seat on the stage cost? Why did people want to sit there?
- What was the most important and valuable thing the theatre owned?
- Who played the female parts in Elizabethan theatre?
- What did the canopy above the stage symbolise? What did the space below the stage symbolise?
- What was the trapdoor used for?
- What was the 'discovery space'? What was the tiring-house?

Personal Reflection

Which part of the Globe Theatre would you most like to watch a play from? Explain your reasons!



²³ Image Source: Print, Exterior View of the Globe Theatre and Map Showing Its Location, after a 1612 view of London

3. Plays Within Plays

One of the exciting features of Shakespeare's plays is that there is often a moment where the characters in the play watch a play as part of the story. This means there is often a play within a play! This is usually a fun and light-hearted moment for Shakespeare's audience as the actors in these mini-plays often wear exaggerated costume and act in an extravagant or comedic way. These mini-plays can also comment on the action of the main play such as using contrast to make clear some of the important ideas and relationships from the main plot. Shakespeare also liked to draw attention to the nature of the theatre, by commenting on storytelling, fantasy, and illusion.

In Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595/6) a group of common labourers meet to rehearse a play that they hope to perform for the grand celebration before the royal wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. Peter Quince, a carpenter, tries to conduct the meeting, but the talkative weaver Nick Bottom continually interrupts him with advice and direction. Quince tells the group what play they are to perform: *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, which is supposed to be a tragic love story.



The Labourers in the Marin Theatre Company's 1996 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*²⁴

²⁴ Image Source: <https://www.marinshakespeare.org/behind-the-scene-2003-and-earlier/a-midsummer-nights-dream-1996-production/>

Quince assigns the parts as follows:

Shakespeare's Character	The Role Quince Assigns Them
Nick Bottom	Pyramus
Francis Flute	Thisbe
Robin Starveling	Thisbe's mother
Tom Snout	Pyramus's father
Peter Quince	Thisbe's father
Snug	The lion

Below is the first half of the scene, in which Quince begins the meeting and assigns the two main roles: Pyramus and Thisbe. Your teacher may ask for three players to act out the roles of Quince, Bottom, and Flute!

Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 1-45

Athens. Quince's house.

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

1

BOTTOM

You were best to call them generally, man by man,
according to the scrip.²⁵

QUINCE

Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is

²⁵ *Scrip* a scrap of paper, Bottom may also mean script. Shakespeare could be making a joke about scripts being mere scraps of paper.

thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our
interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his
wedding-day at night. 5

BOTTOM

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats
on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow
to a point.²⁶ 10

QUINCE

Marry, our play is, The Most Lamentable Comedy and
Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe.²⁷

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a
merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors
by the scroll. [...] 15

QUINCE

Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver?

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover, that kills himself, most gallant, for love. 20

BOTTOM

That will ask some tears in the true performing of

²⁶ *Grow to a point* come to a conclusion (about his casting choices)

²⁷ The subject of the play comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the title may be a parody of tragic love stories that were popular during the Elizabethan era.

it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will
move storms. 23

[...]

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?²⁸ 38

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you. 40

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?²⁹

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming.

QUINCE

That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and
you may speak as small³⁰ as you will. 45

²⁸ *Bellows-mender* a bellow is a tool made from wood and leather that blows air into fire to help it expand and radiate heat. Francis would be the man who mends these instruments which suggest he works with wood and leather.

²⁹ *Wandering knight* a popular character in early modern plays and stories. They were heroic and chivalrous young men, who wandered the land in search of adventure.

³⁰ *Speak as small as you will* with a high voice

Class Discussion

What is happening in this exchange between Quince, Bottom, and Flute?

Highlight any words that you don't recognise and ask your teacher for help defining them.

You can write the definitions around the text or in the space below.

Focus Questions

What does Flute mean when he says “Nay, faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming”?

Why do you think Shakespeare gave the character who would be cast as the female lead the name of Flute? Based on what you know about the actor's cast in female roles, what does this imply about Flute?

□ **Playing with Theatrical Language**

One of the main reasons that Shakespeare included plays within his plays was to draw attention to the theatre. He would often poke fun at the actors or use puns to draw attention to the theatrical world.

Pun	A joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings. Often referred to as a 'play on words'.
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Some of his favourite theatrical words to pun on were:

Word	Elizabethan Theatrical Meaning
Players	The Elizabethan word for actors
Company	Collective noun used for the group of actors putting on the show
Globe	Shakespeare's theatre
Stage	The raised platform at the front of the theatre, upon which the story unfolds

Focus Question

Which of these words does Shakespeare pun on in this scene? What are the two different meanings?

In addition to including complete plays within plays, Shakespeare also makes a lot of connections between drama, theatre and real life in his plays. One very famous example comes from the comedy play *As You Like It* (1599). In this play, a melancholic but talkative traveller named Jacques stands up on a platform in front of an audience and gives a very famous speech in which he uses a metaphor to compare the world to a theatrical stage.

Take a listen!

Media Viewing: “All the World’s a Stage” by William Shakespeare

Let's consider the first four lines more closely.

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7, Lines 140-43

JACQUES

All the world's a stage,	140
And all the men and women merely players;	
They have their exits and their entrances,	
And one man in his time plays many parts...	143

Class Discussion

Discuss the meaning of these lines. You can translate them in the space below.

Shakespeare begins by comparing the world to a stage, but he also makes other comparisons. Which ones stood out for you?

Focus Question

Consider the lines "all the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely". What how do you interpret this metaphor? What idea is Jacques trying to communicate? Compose your response in full sentences and make sure to use the *technique* and *example* in your answer.

<p>Metaphor</p>	<p>A comparison of two dissimilar things which does not use "like" or "as." For example "my love is a red, red rose". The object of the speaker's love is not literally a rose, but rather the object of the speaker's affection is compared to a rose. This suggests the object of affection shares certain qualities with a rose.</p>
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