

SHAKES

Born: April 23, 1564

Hometown: Stratford-upon-Avon, England

Also Known As: William Shaxberd, William Shagspere

Marriage Muddles: Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582, one day after he obtained a marriage license to wed somebody else!

Missing Years: We have almost no information about the next 10 years of his life. He must have somehow travelled to London, where in 1592...

Playwright: ...his first play, *Henry VI*, debuted. Over the next 21 years, Shakespeare would write 36 full-length plays.

And Poet: Shakespeare also penned over 150 sonnets, which demonstrate his genius and skill as well as any of his plays (see page 34 for more on sonnets).

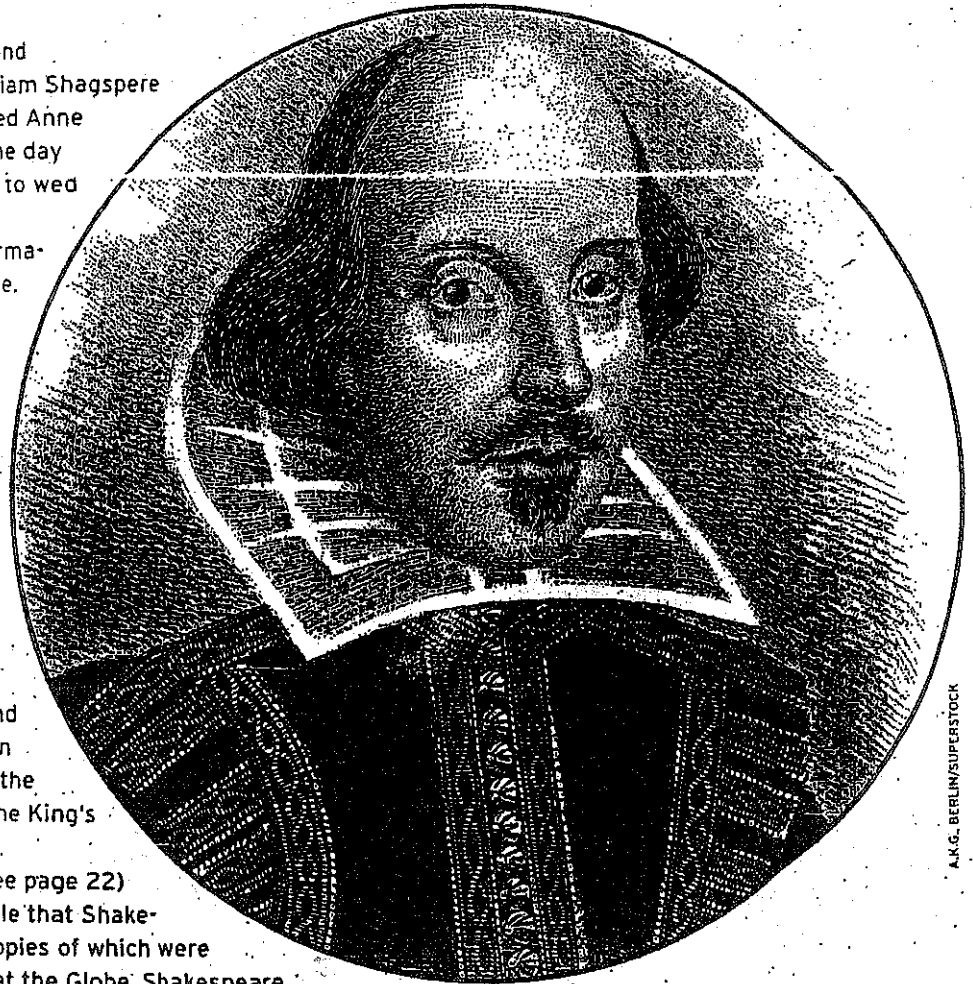
His Company: An acting troupe called Lord Chamberlain's Men produced and performed Shakespeare's plays; when James I came to the throne in 1603, the group savvily changed its name to The King's Men.

Last Call: In 1613, the Globe Theatre (see page 22) burned to the ground. It is conceivable that Shakespeare wrote other plays, the only copies of which were destroyed in that fire. After the fire at the Globe, Shakespeare never wrote again.

End of the Road: After a night of heavy drinking and a walk home in the rain, Shakespeare died in Stratford, on April 23, 1616. It was his 52nd birthday.

The Folio: Shakespeare's plays were never published in his lifetime. After his death, Shakespeare's closest friends published his works in a single volume known as the First Folio.

Quote: His friend and fellow playwright Ben Jonson said it best: "He was not for an age, but for all time."



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SUPERSTOCK

LARRY OF CONGRESS

**"When I was
at home I
was in a
better place."**

**-AS YOU LIKE IT, TOUCHSTONE,
ACT II, SCENE IV**

SHAKESPEARE

THE CASE AGAINST "SHAKESPEARE"

All speakers of English owe Shakespeare a debt for his magnificent words...
...except they might not be his words at all.

For hundreds of years, scholars have debated the most delicate topic in literature: did someone else write the plays that bear Shakespeare's name?

The plays contain deep knowledge of law and mythology, references to Greek and Latin, and passing familiarity with foreign countries, history, geography and other difficult topics. Shakespeare was a middle-class merchant and sometime actor who never left England.

Where did he find the time to learn Greek, Latin, law, and many other topics in which his characters are so well versed?

However, there are writers who knew Greek and Latin, law and mythology, courtly life, and foreign nations (see the "Most Wanted" list below). But if someone else wrote the plays, why not put his or her own name on them? In the 15th and 16th centuries, a writer who criticized the government or royal family could be imprisoned or executed. Thus, to protect himself, an upper-class writer such as de Vere or Bacon would have written under an assumed name.

Of course, it is quite possible that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon wrote the plays himself. He could have picked up Greek and Latin in his studies (enough to get by) and likely did know some mythology. As for law and courtly life, William Shakespeare had many wealthy and royal friends; he could have asked them. So, perhaps it was not necessary for the author who forever changed the English language to have been a well-educated, highborn lord. He may just as easily have been a tradesman's son whose remarkable intelligence and soaring imagination have no rival in the annals of literature.

OTHER SUSPECTS!

EDWARD DE VERE

This Earl of Oxford is the leading suspect. In his Bible, de Vere underlined and annotated the exact same verses as mentioned in the plays attributed to Shakespeare!



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

FRANCIS BACON

Some people think this worldly writer and politician was so brilliant that he wrote the plays of "Shakespeare" as well as his own massive philosophical work, *The Advancement of Learning*.



THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

This playwright was murdered in 1593—just when "Shakespeare" began his career! Did Marlowe fake his own death, flee to France, and continue his writing career there as one "William Shakespeare"?



THE GRANGER COLLECTION

SHAKESPEARE RULES... SUPERSTITION!

According to theater legend, the play *Macbeth* is cursed. It is such bad luck, in fact, that actors will not mention it by name; instead, they refer to it as "the Scottish play" (it's set in Scotland).

The trouble began during the first performance, in 1606. The actor playing Lady Macbeth became very ill; Shakespeare had to step in.

Centuries later, the curse continued. In 1937, a director dropped dead in the middle of rehearsal. And Sir Laurence Olivier, who was playing Macbeth, was

almost killed. In a 1942 production, the actor playing King Duncan dropped dead. So did two of the actors playing the witches.

In the 1950s, a theater almost burned down in the middle of a performance. In South Africa in the 1960s, stagehands were unloading sets and props for a production of *Macbeth*, and a passerby who happened to ask the name of the show was immediately killed by a spear that fell from the packing.

What's more, actors from the Scottish play who live to tell about

it may have wished they didn't. Bad reviews from the play have damaged—and even ended—actors' and directors' careers.



Why *Macbeth*? It's all the witches' fault, many theater people say. Apparently the hags' plines include a real curse. So that's what they meant by "Bubble, bubble, toil, and trouble."

GLOBE THEATRE

By Russell Cohen

More Mosh Pit Than Matinee

The crowds that went to Shakespeare plays at the Globe were about as well-dressed, attentive, and well-mannered as your typical audience at a Marilyn Manson concert. Most people ended up in "the yard," where there were no seats. Roughly 1,000 people could stand there, but lots more crammed in. Bathing was not common in those days, and the yard would get so hot and smelly that these patrons were referred to as "stinkards." The more common, slightly kinder name for these theatergoing, yard-braving apprentices, servants, shopkeepers, and soldiers was "groundlings." They were extremely vocal when the actors were not to their liking; often they'd throw apples or yell obscenities. But they would be equally as animated if they enjoyed a performance, laughing and howling. Sound familiar? Among Shakespeare's other accomplishments, he may have been the inspiration for the modern-day mosh pit!

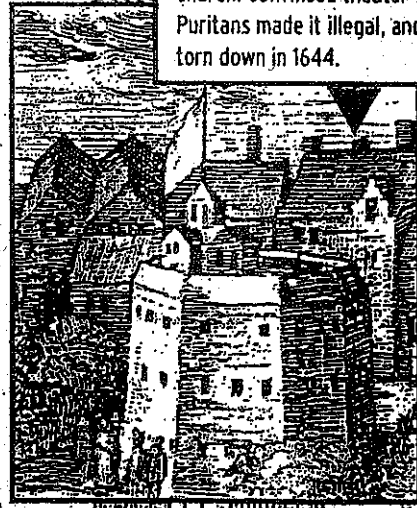
20-sided, open-air amphitheater
 built in 1599 by the Burbage brothers
 to present Shakespeare's work
 thirty-four plays created for performance
 at the Globe
 nicknamed the "Wooden O" after its
 circular architecture
 built to hold up to 2,000 theatergoers but
 often the number went as high as 3,000
 plays were presented in the afternoon—
 there was no electricity
 and the plays required the light of day

THE END OF AN ERA

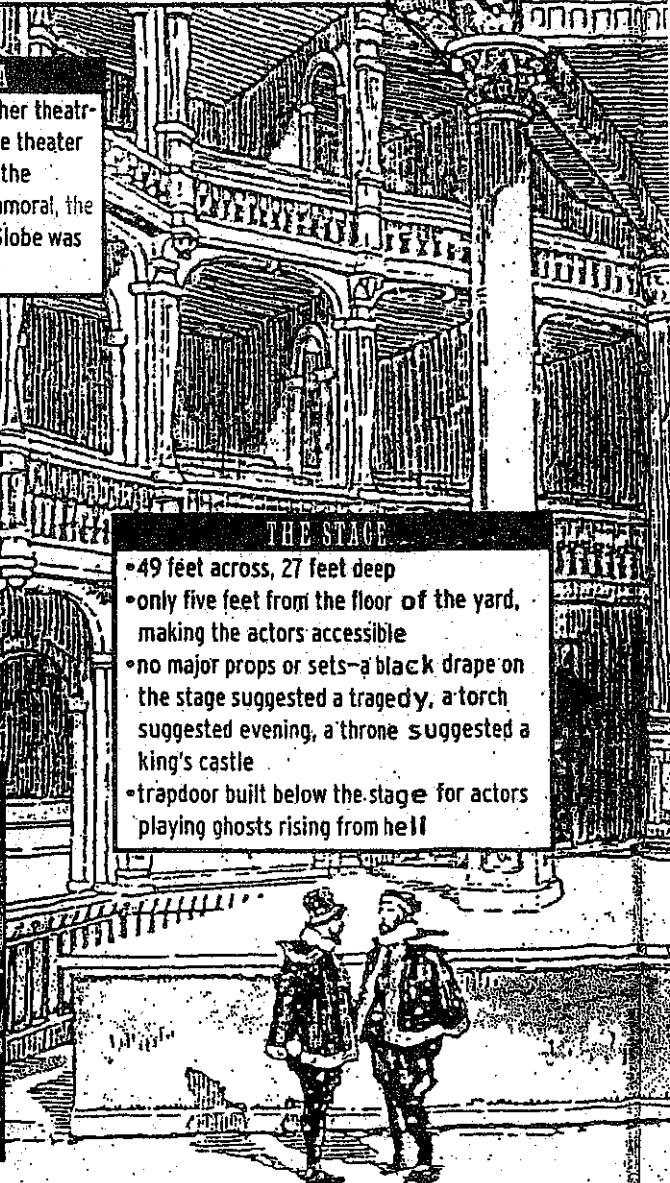
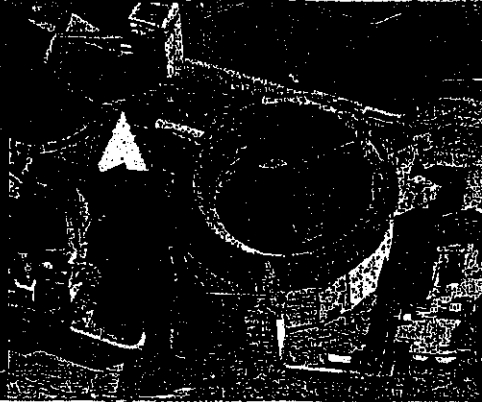
• Puritans closed the Globe (and other theaters in London) in 1642 because the theater was drawing a bigger crowd than the church. Convinced theater was immoral, the Puritans made it illegal, and the Globe was torn down in 1644.

THE STAGE

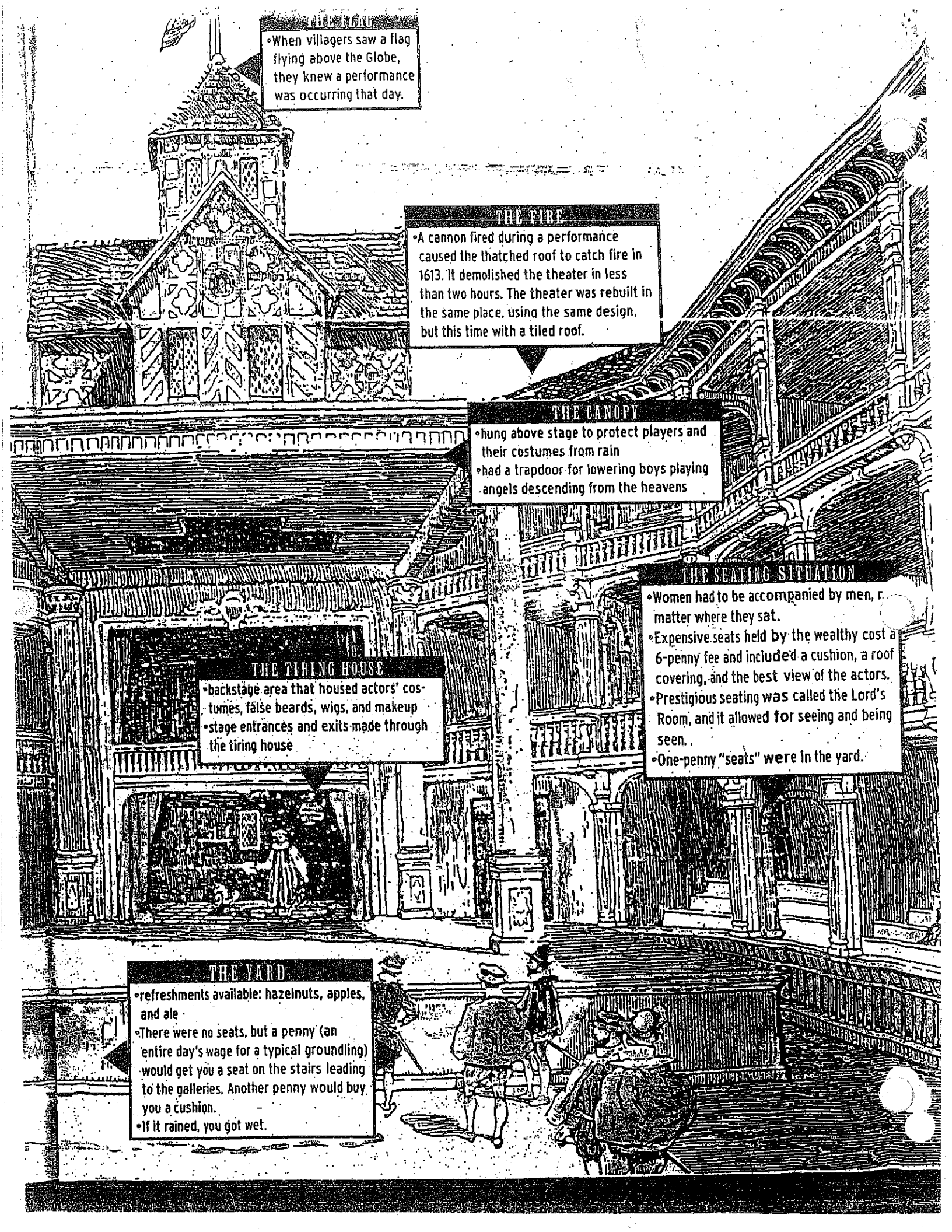
- 49 feet across, 27 feet deep
- only five feet from the floor of the yard, making the actors accessible
- no major props or sets—a black drape on the stage suggested a tragedy, a torch suggested evening, a throne suggested a king's castle
- trapdoor built below the stage for actors playing ghosts rising from hell



NEW GLOBE
 Opened in 1997 by Queen Elizabeth and less than 200 yards from the original site, the New Globe is the first building to have a thatched roof in London in over 300 years. Though it is almost an exact replica of the original, it does have electrical lighting, a sprinkler system, and a 1,400-person seating plan.



NEW YORK (OLD GLOBE 2); CORBIS/ARTIS-BERTRAND VANN (NEW GLOBE)
 THE GRANGER



•When villagers saw a flag flying above the Globe, they knew a performance was occurring that day.

•A cannon fired during a performance caused the thatched roof to catch fire in 1613. It demolished the theater in less than two hours. The theater was rebuilt in the same place, using the same design, but this time with a tiled roof.

THE CANOPY

- hung above stage to protect players and their costumes from rain
- had a trapdoor for lowering boys playing angels descending from the heavens

THE TIRING HOUSE

- backstage area that housed actors' costumes, false beards, wigs, and makeup
- stage entrances and exits made through the tiring house

THE SEATING SITUATION

- Women had to be accompanied by men, no matter where they sat.
- Expensive seats held by the wealthy cost a 6-penny fee and included a cushion, a roof covering, and the best view of the actors.
- Prestigious seating was called the Lord's Room, and it allowed for seeing and being seen.
- One-penny "seats" were in the yard.

THE YARD

- refreshments available: hazelnuts, apples, and ale
- There were no seats, but a penny (an entire day's wage for a typical groundling) would get you a seat on the stairs leading to the galleries. Another penny would buy you a cushion.
- If it rained, you got wet.