The world of the theatre
The building of permanent playhouses in London marked a break with the past.

Towards the end of the 16th century, several theatres were built: the Theatre, the Curtain, the Rose, the Globe.
The playhouses:
- were *round or octagonal* in shape;
- had a *rectangular stage* that was surrounded by the audience on three sides; there was *no curtain* to separate the audience from the actors.
- there was a roof on the galleries but they were open in the centre.
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The Globe Theatre

- Wardrobe and storage
- Hut
- Gallery
- Upper stage
- Pit
- Main stage
- Trap door
- Discovery space
- Tiring rooms
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3. Internal layout

The same basic structure consisted of:

a **stage** partially covered by a **thatched roof** supported by **two pillars** and projected into a central area.
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3. Internal layout

The structure included three rows of galleries around the stage with the actor’s dressing room at the back.
The ‘box-offices’ offered different prices:

- a cheap ticket (a penny), for the working classes, to enter into the pit. The people in the pit were standing round the stage;

- a more expensive ticket (six pence), for the city merchants and nobility, granted seated places in the covered galleries.
Performances took place in the afternoon, at daylight.
The spectators ate and drank during the performance.
They freely expressed their emotions with laughter or tears.
They were eager for sensation and emotions.
They loved chronicles and history plays with heroic deeds (strong national feeling).
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4. The audience

- People from different social classes went to the theatre and watched the same performances (mixture of refined, poetic language and vulgar expressions).

- There was no scenery and a limited number of props: the text was very important to imagine the scenes.
5. The actors

- Actors usually joined a company of a rich, important person (The *Chamberlain’s Men* of Elizabeth I and the *King’s Men* of James I).

- Actors were shareholders of the company and invested their money to buy props and costumes.
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5. The actors

- They had to vary their repertoire.
- They had no more than two weeks to prepare a new play.
- They often found themselves playing several roles in the same performance.
- They had excellent memory.
- Companies included 5/6 boys to play female roles until their voices broke. They learnt singing, dancing, diction and feminine gestures and intonation from a very young age. Contemporary audiences found them very convincing.