**William Shakespeare – The Man**

* Born April 23, 1564 and was baptised three days later in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.
* Growing up he witnessed travelling groups of actors performing plays for the local townspeople.
* From age 7 to 13, he attended grammar school (this is all the information we have on this).
* At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway who was 26 at the time (8 years older) in 1582.
* Between the ages of 18 – 26, he travelled to London and became a part of the theatre as both an actor and playwright.
* Had three children: Susannah (1583), and twins Hamnet and Judith (1585).
* Hamnet died at a young age in 1595.
* Both his daughters were unable to provide descendants so Shakespeare has no direct living descendants.
* Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in Stratford-upon-Avon.

**Shakespeare – The Playwright**

* He debuted as a playwright in 1590 with *Henry VI.*
* Between the years of 1592 and 1611, he wrote all his famous plays and sonnets.
* He is known for PERFECTING the 5 Act Play.
* In total, he wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets, 2 narrative poems and 2 lost plays.
* He was praised for his success and ability to please the audience with his creativity and knowledge.
* His first three plays were from all different genres: *Henry VI* (History), *Titus Andronicus* (Tragedy) and *The Comedy of Errors* (Comedy).
* It is said that most of his characters were based on real people he knew or encountered.
* IN 1594, he joined “The Lord Chamberlain’s Men” which was an acting group who also owned The Globe Theatre.

Early Elizabethan Theatre

* They would perform in any available space: inn-yards were common performance locations due to the narrow entrances and balconies.
* The plays would be advertised by the town crier or a flag flown above the theatre on the day of the play.
* The stage was made of planks laid on top of barrels and stables served as dressing rooms for the cast.
* The first theatre was built in 1576 called The Theatre (there was one before called The Red Lion, but it was unsuccessful).
* All the other popular theatres were built from 1577 and on (The Rose, The Curtain, The Swan, etc.”

Globe Theatre

* The original Globe Theatre was built in 1599 and was owned by The Lord Chamberlain’s Men (Shakespeare’s acting group).
* It thrived for 14 years (many of Shakespeare’s plays were performed there).
* It could hold approx. 2500 people.
* A white flag was flown to indicate a play would be performed that day.
* Performances were held everyday except Sunday and during Lent.
* Its circular shape made for a great theatre experience as the audience “surrounded” the stage.
* In 1613, a cannon lit the thatched roof on fire during a performance of *Henry VIII.* In less than two hours, the theatre had burnt to the ground, but luckily no one was killed in the fire.
* The theatre was rebuilt with a tiled roof in 1614 – Although Shakespeare may have acted in the new Globe Theatre, he did not write any new plays to be performed there.
* Due to England’s Puritan administration in 1642, all the theatres were closed so it was demolished in 1644 since it was vacant.
* It was rebuilt again in 1997 and is still standing in London – close to the original site. It is as close of a replica as they could make to the original globe (we only had so much information on the architecture of the old one). It is now known as “Shakespeare’s Globe”
* 3 classes of people attended:
* The Groundlings: Stood in the pit (made of dirt) = paid one penny.
* Lesser Nobility, Gentry, Merchants, Students from Oxford and Cambridge: Occupied the balconies = paid 2 pennies for a lower gallery seat, an extra penny if they wanted a cushion and up to six pennies if they wanted a seat in the upper gallery.
* The Great Nobility: Occupied a few expensive seats on the stage itself = paid shilling (worth 12 pennies) for a private “gentlemen’s room” or box.

Conventions of Elizabethan Theatre

* No female actresses because it was seen as immoral – female parts were played by young boys until their voice changed.
* Vigorous Acting – Voice projection, gestures, eye contact and fast paced acting.
* No real scenery – just backdrops, costumes and curtains.
* Bladders filled with pigs’ blood were worn under costumes to create stabbing effects.
* If the play was a tragedy, the floor would be draped in black.
* There was no way to indicate time of day – so a blue flag would be flown for day scenes and a dark flag would be flown for night scenes.
* Elizabethan Audiences were ignorant – they expected death, destruction, horror, blood, supernatural, romance and music.
* If they did not like it, they would make it know to you by yelling and throwing handful of peels or shells at actors. (they were allowed to eat and drink throughout the play).