

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ELA Grade 7 Unit 4 - Open Response - Print

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**At the Theater**

by Jeremy Ehrlich and Georgianna Ziegler

The Folger Shakespeare Library has a staff of librarians who answer questions about Shakespeare for scholars and the general public. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about the theaters of Shakespeare's day.

**How many people did the Globe Theater hold?**

According to theater historian Andrew Gurr, the Globe would have held approximately 1,000 people standing and 2,000 seated. The percentage might vary depending on the type of play. For example, for a play that appealed more to a popular audience, a larger number of people might have been accommodated in the standing room area.

**What were theater ticket prices?**

Prices of admission depended on the kind of theater. Outdoor theaters such as the Globe charged—in the early days—a one-penny admission fee (equal to about \$1.66 in today's money). A balcony seat was an additional penny. By the early 1600s, the entrance fee was probably a sixpence (about \$10). Admission to the private indoor theaters, which catered to a more affluent audience, generally began at a basic sixpence for a seat in the galleries. Fancy gallants who wanted to be seen could sit on the stage for two shillings (\$40), and a box could be had for half-a-crown (\$50).

**What did Shakespeare's company use for costumes and scenery?**

Clothing in Shakespeare's day was very expensive, and the costumes would have been some of the company's

most prized possessions. The majority of costumes were probably donated; wealthy patrons would sometimes leave costumes to the company in their wills. Scholars believe that the actors were generally dressed in clothes that modern Elizabethans would wear. If they were doing a play set in another time or place, they might add a costume piece to try to suggest the other setting, but they would still look like they belonged in England at the time of the production.

Scenery was probably much less elaborate than it is in many theaters today. Shakespeare's company played many different productions over the course of a week, so they would not have had the time or the money to put up large sets for each one. Most of the set pieces were probably very simple and suggestive: for example, a few characters might come in carrying torches to suggest an outdoor night scene.

**How did men cover up their beards if they played women's roles in Shakespeare's theater?**

Boys usually played women's parts on stage, so there was no problem about beards. In fact, Hamlet (the lead character in the tragedy *Hamlet*) jokes with one of the actors who visits the court in Denmark: "Why, thy face is valanced since I saw thee last," meaning that the boy has reached puberty and started to grow a beard. Since his voice would change about the same time, Hamlet says, "Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring." These lines signaled the end of female roles for him. Older men probably played female roles from time-to-time, including comic figures such as Juliet's nurse, in the play *Romeo and Juliet*. In that case, they would probably shave off any beard.

Read the excerpt from "At the Theater." Based on details provided in the passage, write a short essay discussing how producing plays in Shakespeare's day differed from how plays are produced today. How would the experience of watching a play during Shakespeare's time compare to watching a play during modern times? Be sure to:

- provide an introduction on the topic
- include facts and examples from the passage to develop the topic
- provide a concluding statement that follows from the information or explanation presented

**City Jazz**

by Dorina Lazo Gilmore

When Miles strolls through the city  
he feels jazz music.

Stoplights breathe  
green, yellow ... slow red  
green, yellow ... slow red

Syncopated rhythm  
constant like the drumbeat  
green, yellow ... slow red  
setting the place for the place.

When Miles dances through the city  
he feels jazz music.

City buses, taxis, cars  
thump-thumpin' and bump-bumpin' along  
keepin' steady time like the upright bass  
with their roarin' engines  
and honkin' horns.

Skyscrapers, all shapes, all sizes,  
litter the black, night sky  
like the wide angles  
of the trombone  
with its bitty-brr-bop-slide, bop-slide, bop-slide.

Homeless Harry tryin' on his trumpet,  
thinkin' he's Louis Armstrong  
with his shoo-wop bleep  
doody-shoo-wop bleep  
seizin' center stage on the city corner.

Rich women prancin' down the  
main street with their milk chocolate handbags  
high-pitched and showy  
blu-weee blinky-wee-EEeE  
like the screechy sax solo.

Ladies' skirts swayin'  
Teenagers struttin'  
Dogs doo-woppin'  
and babies boppin'

He feels jazz music in the  
icy winds of winter.

That music in the  
I-want-to-sit-and-be-blue rains of spring.

Jazz music in the  
heavy-heat-city-beat of summer.  
Music in the Billie Holiday voice of fall—  
crimson crashing gold melting green.

When Miles grooves through the city  
he f-e-e-l-s jazz music  
jazz music jazz music  
j a z z z z z z m u s i c

Read the poem "City Jazz" by Dorina Lazo Gilmore. Transform the poem into a dramatic or comedic monologue from the point of view of Miles. Be sure to:

- engage the audience by establishing a clear point of view
- use precise words and phrases to convey Miles's point of view
- use syntax and punctuation to create a dramatic effect where appropriate