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## **THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE**

When we talk about drama in England, we immediately think about drama during the Elizabethan period (1533-1603). And, when we speak about drama during the Elizabethan period, we immediately think about William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare wasn't the only play-writer of that period- in fact he started writing when theatre had already developed into a perfect structure- but he was surely the most important and a genius in his field.

In the Elizabethan theatre everybody could go see the comedies or tragedies performed: noblemen, poor people, and also those who didn't know how to read and write. Everyone could have the feeling to belong to the same country.

Theatre has always been very popular in England, much before the Elizabethan period, even if it is in the Elizabethan period that it surely reached fame and splendor: it was not only a source of entertainment but also a way to teach people morality, ethics or history.

During the Middle Ages for example, before the Elizabethan theatre, there were the so called "morality plays", that had the duty to teach how to behave.

Then, mainly during Renaissance, writers started to write comedies, in imitation of Plautus and other great comedians or play-writers of the past.

But it's only during the Elizabethan period, with the "university wits", that English drama reached perfection.

People liked to go see these comedies also because they were funny and amusing.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE**

In the Elizabethan stage there were three sections:

1) The first one protruded at eye level of the spectators, that had to pay one penny to see the play. The noblemen that went to see these plays could sit in surrounding galleries or sit on the stage. Actors could even speak to those around them, that were this way involved in the play.

2) The second section was used for indoor scenes.

3) The third one -the so called upper stage- was used to represent a balcony or a tower.

These stages were poor in their style and simple. This way the audience had to use their imagination. In fact those who went to theatres were ready to accept everything, like Julius Caesar wearing Elizabethan clothes, Ophelia and Juliet played by boys (since women were not allowed to act), several roles played by the same actor, and a bush was enough to turn a room into a forest or a sword to turn a peasant into a soldier.

The actors could easily play a lot of roles, or dance. And two or three of them could recreate the confusion of a battle, being careful not to bore the audience, of course.

(QUESTO STESSO TESTO -IN INGLESE- E' STATO INVIATO E PUBBLICATO ANCHE NELLA SEZIONE APPUNTI DEL SITO "SKUOLA.NET").

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