

The following information text was written by a Year 6 pupil from another school. It is not perfect, but he did very well and met the required standard.

All about Theatres

Over 4000 years ago, in ancient Greece, the first theatres were built to entertain people or to teach new things. Frank Matcham, who was the owner of the Kings Theatre, built it in 1907 when it was opened to please both rich and poor. Furthermore, The Globe Theatre was built in the Elizabethan times (1599) with the purpose of showing tragedies, comedies and histories. Despite cinemas, DVDs and Netflix, people still want live storytelling and so theatres are the place to go.

Seating and Audience

The poor:

Unfortunately, in the Edwardian times, the poorest people had to walk up 84 flights of stairs in order to get to the gallery, which is also known as 'The Gods' (because it is the closest seats to heaven). However, men were thought to be more important than ladies, so the gentlemen sat at the front. Interestingly, in the Globe Theatre, the poorest people (who were known as 'Penny Stinkers') had to stand on the yard whether it was raining or not. However, Penny Stinkers were the only ones able to see the beautiful paintings of heaven at the top of the stage.

The Rich and Wealthy:

Surprisingly, it was illegal for a lady to show her ankles, so, in the Kings Theatre, during Edwardian times, a wealthy man would sit in the front row seats to catch a glimpse of a lady's ankle. The rich and glamorous women sat in boxes, which were turned slightly towards the audience in order for everyone to see how beautiful they were. In addition, ladies in the boxes had 'hand fans' to communicate with a man whilst a play was commencing (105 different communication signals were used). Unlike the Kings Theatre, in the Globe, rich people were sat at the very top, however these seats were after often padded and surrounded by beautiful paintings.

Building and design

The Kings Theatre:

Intriguingly, on the pillars inside the Kings Theatre, an amazing method, which is called 'Scagliola', has been used to make the cheaper plaster pillars look like they are made out of very expensive marble. Another amazing fact is, because of the curved walls, sound from the stage bounces off them, so at the top of the theatre sound can still be heard beautifully. This is known as, 'perfect acoustics'.

Fortunately, as you walk into the theatre, dark colours were painted on the walls to help people's eyes adjust, so that they can see clearly inside the dark theatre.

Did you know that there are 13 dressing rooms in the Kings Theatre, but they are named: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 11a and 12 because 13 is an unlucky number. If an actor gets ready at number 13, they believe their performance will be cursed!

The Globe Theatre:

Inside the theatre, the background / setting is changed according to the play, for example, Romeo and Juliet would have a decorated balcony. Although some of the roof is thatched, the centre is left open, so natural light shows up the actors, and also adds atmosphere. Interestingly, in the Elizabethan times, there were 3 different coloured flags which represented a play about history, comedy and/or tragedy. Even though a tragedy could make you upset, at the end of every play, all the actors came onto the stage and were applauded to make the audience feel happy again.

Amazing but True:

Did you know:

- that when there was a flood at the Kings, an actor had to row across the orchestra pit to get across the stage?
- that there are 7 ghosts in the Kings Theatre? One is called 'The Falling Angel' because a 24 year old lady fell from the Gallery and died.
- there are trap doors above and below the stage at the Globe? These represent heaven and hell.

The Finale

Theatres are the most interesting and historical places to visit. They give people access to live shows, plays, songs and dances that have entertained people for decades. When you next visit one, look around and see for yourself how the theatre is structured, where the most expensive seats are and where the cheapest seats are. Look for the boxes and where the orchestra is situated. But, most of all, enjoy your time there by looking and listening.