

Year 7 Reading Homework 1:2

Please read and answer the questions before your next Drama Lesson.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Since the time of Queen Victoria people had said that Britain needed a theatre to celebrate the great traditions of British theatre, especially the plays of William Shakespeare. Even so, it took until the 1960s for the first National Theatre production, **Hamlet**, starring Peter O'Toole and directed by Laurence Olivier, to be staged at the Old Vic theatre. In 1976 the National Theatre moved from the Old Vic to its impressive home on the South Bank of the River Thames.

It doesn't stop there. Plays from the National Theatre can move to the West End of London, or tour around the country or even as far away as the USA and Japan. Some plays are filmed and screened live in cinemas around the world by National Theatre Live. But what happens at the National Theatre on a big scale is also going on in theatres up and down the country and around the world. It's the same magic, whether the venue is big or small.

THEATRE TALENT

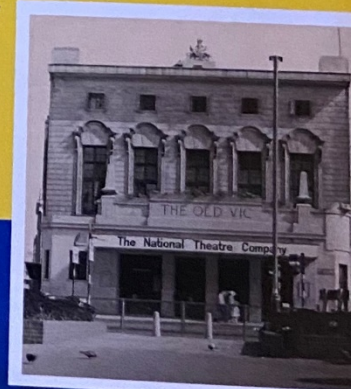
Some of the most famous actors in the world have performed at the National Theatre. Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, Benedict Cumberbatch, Helen Mirren,

Adrian Lester, Michael Gambon, Lenny Henry and Maggie Smith are just a few such names. Hundreds of other talented actors and rising stars have followed in their footsteps. Famous playwrights like Alan Bennett and Tom Stoppard have had their plays premiered (first performed) at the National Theatre.

But theatre is not just about the actors and playwrights. Behind the scenes at the National Theatre is a theatre-making factory. Hundreds of people are hard at work creating props, costumes, wigs, scenery, music and lighting to help bring the actors' performances to life.

STATS & FACTS

In total over 1,000 people work at the National Theatre. Since 1963 the National Theatre has presented more than 900 shows and almost 10,000 actors have been in its productions, playing a total of more than 37,000 roles.



The National Theatre at the Old Vic in 1963 and on the South Bank today

Questions to consider:

1. What does the National Theatre do? How many plays have been staged there?
2. What are the benefits of having a National Theatre? What was the first play staged by NT?