

# The First British Theatres

## Elizabethan Theatres in London

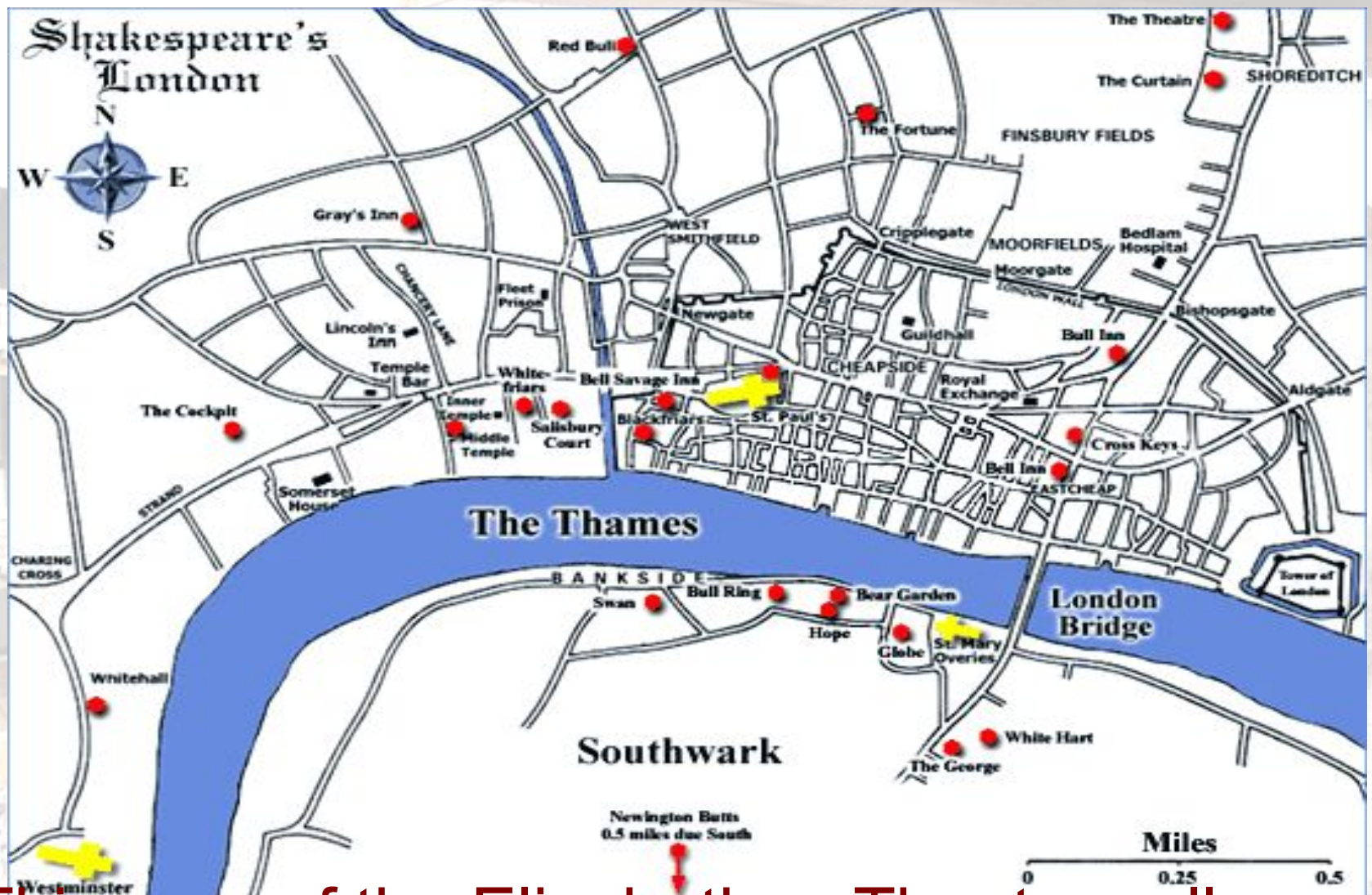
Shinkevich Natalia,  
Teacher of English



In the late 16th and early 17th centuries attending a play during the afternoon was a favorite leisure activity for many members of London society.







This map of the Elizabethan Theatres allows the viewer to gain a good insight to the location of the famous theatres.

# Development of the Elizabethan Theatre

Most people associate the Elizabethan Theatre with those built in a similar style to the Globe Theatre. But the natural development of the Elizabethan Theatre followed a logical progression:

- o The Strolling Players
- o The licensed Acting Troupes
- o The Inn-yards
- o The Elizabethan Amphitheatres
- o The Playhouses



# Wandering Minstrels

Before the 1500's there were no such thing as a theatre in England! There were wandering minstrels who travelled from one town and castle to the next, some street players who entertained people at markets and fairs. The troubadours, strolling players and minstrels were expected to memorize long poems and these recitals



# The Acting Troupes



Many of the wandering minstrels, or strolling players, had the reputation as thieves. The spread and frequent outbreaks of Black Death during the Elizabethan era resulted in regulations restricting all people who travelled around the country - licenses were required to travel. Licenses were granted to the nobles of





# The Inn-yards



Acting troupes had their patrons but the actors could make additional money by playing to ordinary Elizabethans. The Elizabethan Theatre started in the cobbled courtyards of Inns, or taverns - they were therefore called Inn-yards. As many as 500 people would

# The Inn-yards

Elizabethan Inns were always popular and were at their peak between 1576 – 1594. A small fee was charged to playgoers as they entered the inn yards and an additional fee was added on if they wanted to go up to a balcony level.

The names of some famous Elizabethan Inn Yards were:

- o The Bell Savage Inn
- o The Cross Keys Inn
- o The White Hart Inn
- o The George Inn





# The Bell Savage Inn



Elizabethan plays were performed in the Bell Savage Inn in 1576 – 1594. The name of the Inn was also known as the Belle Savage. The sign of the Bell Savage Inn was a savage man standing on a bell.



# The Cross Keys Inn

London Location of the  
Cross Keys Inn -  
Gracechurch Street,  
London.



William Shakespeare's  
acting troupe, the  
Chamberlain's Men,  
used the Cross Keys  
Inn theatre on a regular  
basis due to the  
restrictions played or  
play acting within the  
City of London limits





# The White Hart Inn

London Location of the White Hart Inn - Southwark, following the road from London Bridge.



This Inn played an important role in history and in William Shakespeare's play Henry VI. In his play, Shakespeare refers to the rebel Jack Cade choosing the White Hart Inn for his



# The George Inn



The George Inn was built around three sides of a courtyard. Its wide, double-tiered balconies became an excellent vantage point for the Elizabethan plays that would be acted out below. William Shakespeare lived and worked in the area of the George Inn. Sadly, the George Inn that Shakespeare knew was burnt down in 1676 by the house was





# The Elizabethan Amphitheatres

James Burbage built the first Elizabethan amphitheatre in 1576 following the huge success of the plays performed in the Elizabethan Inn yards.

The Elizabethan amphitheatre was designed to hold a capacity of up to 3000 people.



# The Elizabethan Amphitheatres

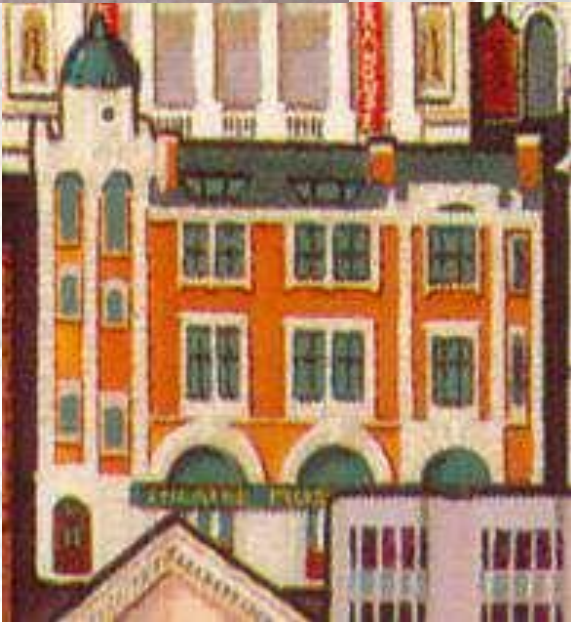
- o The Theatre
- o The Globe theatre
- o The Rose theatre
- o The Swan theatre
- o The Hope theatre
- o The Fortune Theatre





# The Theatre

THE SITE OF THIS BUILDING FORMS PART OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE PRECINCT OF THE PRIORY OF S. JOHN THE BAPTIST, HOLYWELL. WITHIN A FEW YARDS STOOD FROM 1577 TO 1598, THE FIRST LONDON BUILDING SPECIALLY DEVOTED TO THE PERFORMANCE OF PLAYS, AND KNOWN AS "THE THEATRE."



James Burbage built the 'Theatre' in 1576. The Theatre was one of the 12 massive amphitheatres, including the Globe Theatre, which were built around the City of London. The Famouse Globe was built from the timbers of the

# The Theatre



There was no heating in the Elizabethan Theatre. Plays were performed in the summer months only. The floor of the Stage was made of wood, sometimes covered with rushes. Trap doors in the floor would enable some additional special effects such as smoke.





# The Globe theatre



The Globe Theater was built in just 6 months between 1597 and 1598. The Chamberlain's men acting company, including William Shakespeare used the Globe, an open-air amphitheatre, as the venue for their summer productions. It was a huge building - made of timber and with thatched roofs.



# The Globe theatre



There were three tiers of roofed galleries with balconies and the seats in each of the three levels of galleries were tiered with three rows of wooden benches. After 1599 the plays of William Shakespeare were performed here.



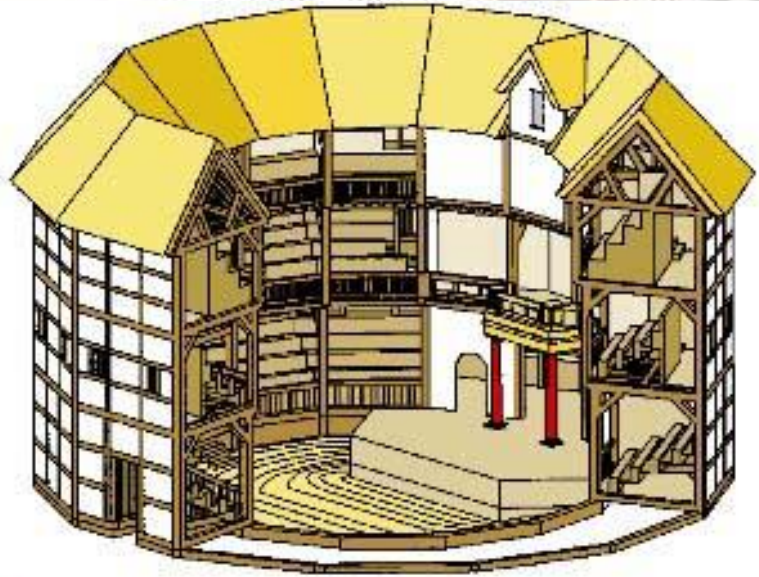


# The Rose theatre



The Rose was built in 1587 by Philip Henslowe and by a grocer named John Cholmley. The theatre was built on a messuage called the "Little Rose," which Henslowe had leased from the parish of St. Mildred in 1585.

# The Rose theatre



It contained substantial rose gardens and two buildings; The building was of timber, with a lath and plaster exterior and thatch roof.

The leading playwrights of the day, including William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlow, had their plays performed here





# The Swan theatre



The Swan was opened in 1574. It was located on the west end of the Bankside district of Southwark, across the River Thames from the City of London.

When it was new, the Swan was the most visually impressive of the existing London theatres.

# The Swan theatre



It is a wonderfully atmospheric galleried playhouse. The original Victorian building fell victim to a fire in 1928. The new building was built in 1932 and the inside has been designed to reflect an actual Elizabethan style theatre





# The Hope theatre

The Hope was built in 1613 by Philip Henslowe and Jacob Meade, on the Bankside in Southwark. It was agreed that bear baiting would occupy the theater only once every two weeks but the sport proved to be more profitable than the plays. Players left the theatre after Henslowe's death in 1616. The theatre was rarely used for plays after 1616 but bear baiting continued until



# The Fortune theatre



The Fortune Theatre was built in 1600 by theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe and his partner Edward Alleyn. The Fortune Theatre was so named for the Roman goddess “Fortuna”, who promised riches and abundance rewarding those with joyful intentions with success and prosperity. A statue of Fortuna graced the





# The Elizabethan Playhouses

An Elizabethan Playhouse was a small, private, indoor hall. The Elizabethan playhouse was designed to stage plays in an indoor environment. The great open theatres only produced plays during the summer months. It made good business sense to design an indoor theatre which would comfortable house audiences during the winter. Playhouses were open to anyone who could pay but were more expensive with generally more select

# The Elizabethan Playhouses

The Audience capacity of Elizabethan playhouses was up to 500 people.

- o The Blackfriars Playhouse
- o The Cockpit
- o The Whitehall Playhouse Theatre





# Blackfriars Playhouse



The Blackfriars Playhouse Theatre was located in the City of London on the site of a dissolved 13th-century Dominican monastery.

The famous people associated with the Blackfriars Playhouse indoor Playhouse were Richard Farrant, William Shakespeare and the



# The Cockpit



The Cockpit Theatre was originally built as a venue for cock fighting in 1609.

The Cockpit Playhouse indoor Playhouse has a special place in the history of London as it became the very first theatre to be located in Drury Lane.





# The Whitehall Playhouse Theatre

The Whitehall theatre was the elite of all Elizabethan theatres. Queen Elizabeth I was a great patron of the theatre and she enjoyed watching the latest plays of the era. The Paul's Boys (groups of young choristers from St. Paul's Cathedral, who also performed plays) were known to be a particular favourite of Queen Elizabeth and played at the Whitehall Theatre.



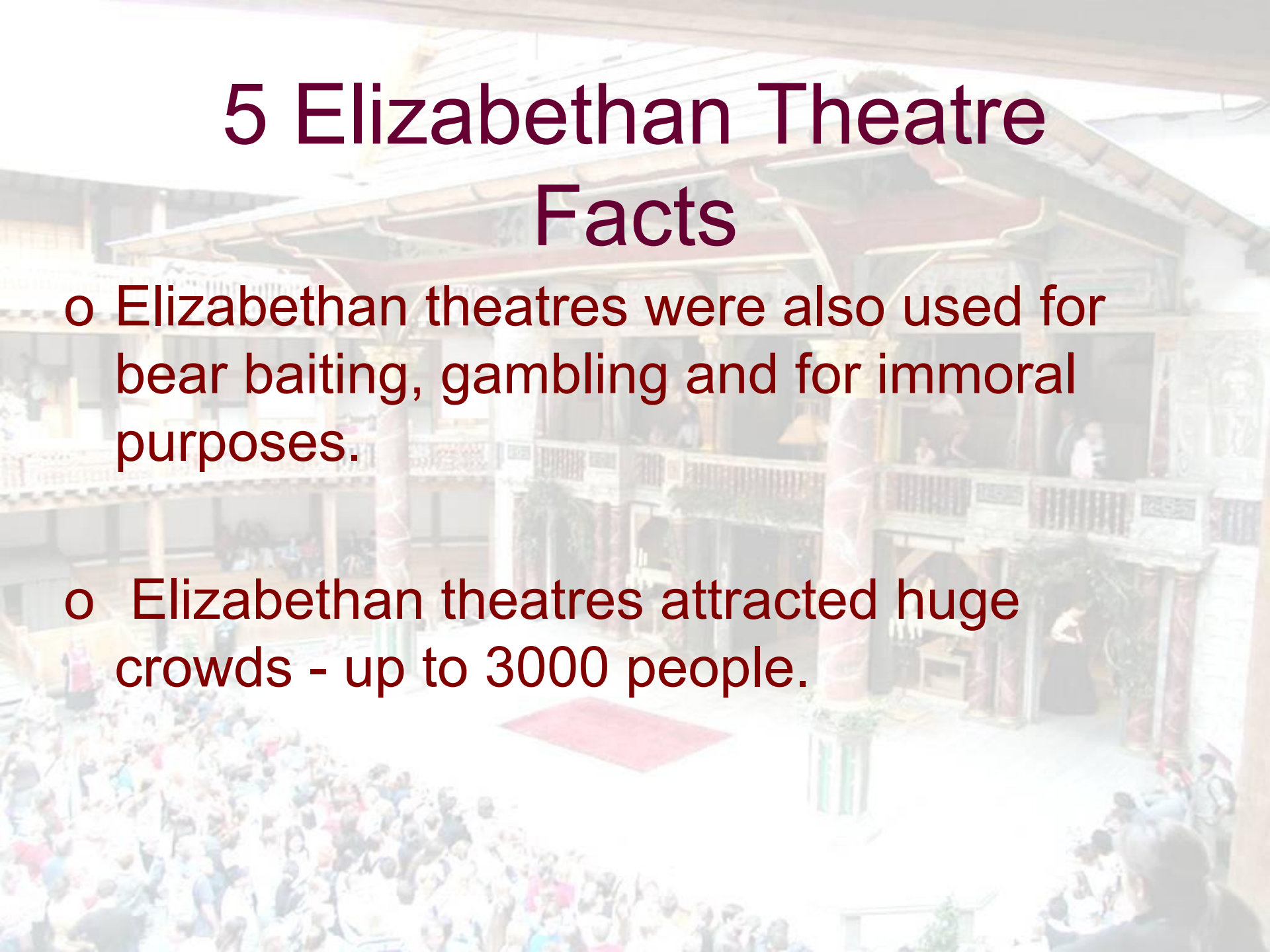
# 5 Elizabethan Theatre Facts

- o There were no Elizabethan Theatres until 1576 - plays were performed in the courtyards of inns - they were referred to as 'inn-yards'.
- o James Burbage built the very first theatre in 1576 with his brother-in-law John Brayne, appropriately named 'The Theatre'.
- o The Globe was built in a similar style to the Coliseum, but on a smaller scale.



# 5 Elizabethan Theatre Facts

- o Elizabethan theatres were also used for bear baiting, gambling and for immoral purposes.
- o Elizabethan theatres attracted huge crowds - up to 3000 people.



# List of the literature

- o [http://www.globe-theatre.org.uk/elizabet  
han-theatre.htm](http://www.globe-theatre.org.uk/elizabet<br/>han-theatre.htm)
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