

## Bitesize KS3 English Literature – Shakespeare

### About Shakespeare – Audience and social attitudes transcript

#### FEMALE PERFORMER

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear and chastise with the valour of my tongue.

#### MALE PRESENTER

Shakespeare, being enjoyed in the usual way...

#### THEATRE STAFF

Oi, sit down!

#### MALE PRESENTER

...by people sat in polite silence in a nice comfortable theatre. Wait, let me just finish this bit!

Back in Shakespeare's time, the theatre was a very different place. For one thing, you would never find a woman playing Lady Macbeth. Thank you.

Back then women belonged to their fathers, until they got married, when they belonged to their husbands which, if you ask me... [SFX – LONG BEEP]

#### CAPTION

SEXIST JOKE REMOVED BY THE BBC

#### MALE PRESENTER

...anything in a skirt!

[PRESENTER LAUGHS]

Anything in a skirt.

Women's roles in society was pretty different back then, they were rarely educated, unless they had loads of cash. They weren't allowed to be doctors, lawyers and certainly not actors; so all the female roles were played by men, which you don't really see these days.

#### CAROL

Latte mate.

#### MALE PRESENTER

Oh thanks Carol.

#### CAROL

You're welcome.

#### MALE PRESENTER

# Bitesize

And that wasn't the only way in which society was different, you didn't just have rich and poor, you had this whole multi-level class system thing that had a huge influence on Shakespeare's plays. It was all tied up in religion and... social standing which is really complicated. Hey God!

**GOD**

Yeah?

**MALE PRESENTER**

Can I ask you a favour?

**GOD**

Yeah.

Right, so at the top of the tree here you've got me and then under me, believing they were carrying out my will on earth, you've got the monarchs and then below them you've got the nobles, the lords, dukes, who kept their eyes on the King. Then you've got your middle classes, your lower classes, then the really poor people and then animals, plants, rocks, smaller rocks.

**MALE PRESENTER [OFF SCREEN]**

You're not really God are you?

**GOD**

No.

**MALE PRESENTER [OFF SCREEN]**

As I thought.

**MALE PRESENTER**

Anyway, nowhere were these social divisions clearer than in the theatres.

The rich nobles would pay to sit up right on the stage itself, partly to get the best view and to be close to the actors. But mainly so that they would be admired by all the poorer people.

**MALE MEMBER OF PUBLIC**

You going to the shopping centre?

**MALE PRESENTER**

You going to the shopping centre?

**BUS DRIVER**

Get off me.

**MALE PRESENTER**

Merchants and other middle class types would sit in boxes next to the stage, which would have been a little more comfortable than this.

Of course not everybody could afford a box, but sadly, poor people couldn't even get a seat.

# Bitesize

Are you poor? Shift then. And the rich people sat upstairs in the gallery.

**BUS PASSENGER**

Gallery?

**MALE PRESENTER**

It's a bus mate, I'm improvising.

While the lower classes stood at the front, they were called groundlings or sometimes stinkards. No offence.

**BUS PASSENGER**

No, it's a fair point.

**MALE PRESENTER**

Well these guys generally like the funny stuff, even the serious place had bawdy or ruder bits to keep them entertained, as they weren't always the most attentive audience.

**BUS PASSENGER**

Huh?

**MALE PRESENTER**

This audience would start wandering around, shouting, swearing, [SHOUTING HEARD IN BACKGROUND] much like this in fact. They'd even chuck stuff at the actors if they didn't like what they were do...don't! That was my actual eye! You're supposed to throw fruit! Who would throw binoculars? You see what I have to deal with?