**A Visit to the Theatre in the Time of Shakespeare**

1. **William Harrison (1577)**

‘There are diverse ferries, and small wherries of nimble fashion, which continually pass to and fro between the banks, laden with all sorts of people, rich and poor alike, who for a penny fare are conveyed safely over.’

1. **Phillip Stubbes (1583)**

‘There you shall have, with harlotry, drunkenness, swearing, and such like abominations: a resort of all who seek the devil’s works under the guise of sport and pastime.’

1. **John Stow (1598)**

‘In Southwark are many fair inns for travellers, and places of public resort for pleasure, as the playhouses, bowling alleys, and gardens. Not far from the bridge are the bear gardens, where great crowds assemble to see the sport of bears and bulls baited.’

1. **Ben Johnson (1600)**

‘The taverns are filled with poets, scholars, and gentlemen, exchanging wit and argument.’

1. **John Stockwood (1578)**

‘The blast of a trumpet will call a thousand people to see a filthy play: an hour’s tolling of a bell would only bring a hundred people to a sermon.’

1. **Thomas Platter (1599)**

‘Daily at two in the afternoon in the city of London, the plays begin and continue for two hours, and they are so dearly loved by the people that they will sometimes go and pay a penny to watch them, which is why they prefer to forgo other entertainments.’

1. **Stephen Gosson (1579)**

‘In the playhouses at London, it is the fashion of youths to go first into the yard and to carry their eye through every gallery, then they go and sit as near to the fairest as they can.’

1. **Paul Hentzer (1598)**

‘Without the city are some wooden houses where the common people assemble to see plays. These are built in a circular form, with galleries all around. If the spectators grow tired of the play, they may refresh themselves with wine, ale, and beer, and tobacco.’

**Creative Writing**

**Extract from *A Time Traveller’s Guide to Elizabethan England*, by Ian Mortimer**

‘If you are heading to the Swan, the Rose or the Globe, you will cross London Bridge or take a wherry across the river and then walk through Paris Garden. All sorts of people will be heading in the same direction: working men in groups, shop owners, gentlemen, householders’ wives accompanied by their servants or husbands, foreign tourists, boys and girls. As you approach the theatres, you will notice that they all seem to be round. Whichever one you choose, you can expect to queue with two thousand other people to get in. You will see people standing in hats with pipe in hand, and women in their headdresses, all chatting, with an eye open for people they know.’

‘Entrance costs a penny: this allows you to stand in the yard in front of the stage. As you sit there watching a performance of a play, the crowd will fade into the background. Instead, you will be struck by the language. There are words and phrases that you will not find funny, but which will make the crowd roar with laughter. Your familiarity with the meanings of Shakespeare’s words will rise and fall as you see and hear the actors’ deliveries and notice the audience’s reaction.’

**Write about traveling across the Thames** Source **A**

* What can you see and hear on the boat?
* Who else is traveling with you?
* Are they excited, nervous or distracted?

**Write about walking through the streets of Southwark** Sources **B**, **C** and **D**

* What can you see and hear on the streets?
* What are the other people doing?
* Do you stop to watch the attractions?

**Describe your first impressions of the theatre** Sources **E** and **F**

* What does the theatre look like as you approach?
* How do you feel about the crowd?
* Are you jostled by eager theatre-goers?

**Explain what it’s like to be part of the crowd** Sources **G** and **H**

* Does you feel overwhelmed by the noise?
* Who can you see in the upper galleries?
* Do you enjoy the lively atmosphere?