

Main Characteristics of Elizabethan Theatre

- 1- Plays were often written for a particular troupe or company, and often at their direction. Many plays might be considered as the combined effort of dramatists and actors.
- 2- The actors expressed themselves in a highly operatic manner with colorful expressions. The gestures were stylized according to certain traditions. Rhetoric books of the time told exactly how to use one's hands to express fear or anger or other emotional states.
- 3- The Elizabethan stage was a "presentational theater" in that there was no attempt to persuade the audience that they were not in a theater and no attempt was made to create any dramatic illusions because there was very little scenery.
- 4- The actors could speak directly to the audience; the soliloquy, a speech spoken directly to the audience, was a typical characteristic of Elizabethan drama.
- 5- The stage was relatively bare; the actors depended upon the visual color and display of their elaborate costumes to give colour to the play. Sometimes there was an attempt to wear historical costumes, but most often the actors wore decorative and elaborate Elizabethan dress.
- 6- The Elizabethan stage was a performance stage, meaning an actor would have memorized certain roles for a limited number of plays.
- 7- A play would never be presented on two following days. Six out of the ten plays would be new works for the season, two would be carry-overs from the previous year, and two others would be older

plays which had been revised. The alteration of plays was generally irregular. But with a new play, there seems to have been a general pattern of presentation. The play would be repeated several times after it had been first staged, then it would be acted two times a month for the first months and gradually would be repeated less frequently until in a year and a half it would generally fade from the repertory.