

THE GEORGIAN THEATRE ROYAL EDUCATION PACK



During the 1700s going to the theatre became very popular.

Wealthy people sat in expensive boxes on or next to the stage. The cheaper tickets were high up in the gallery or below the stage in the pit.

Label this picture of a Georgian theatre with the words below

CURTAIN

PROSCENIUM ARCH

SCENERY

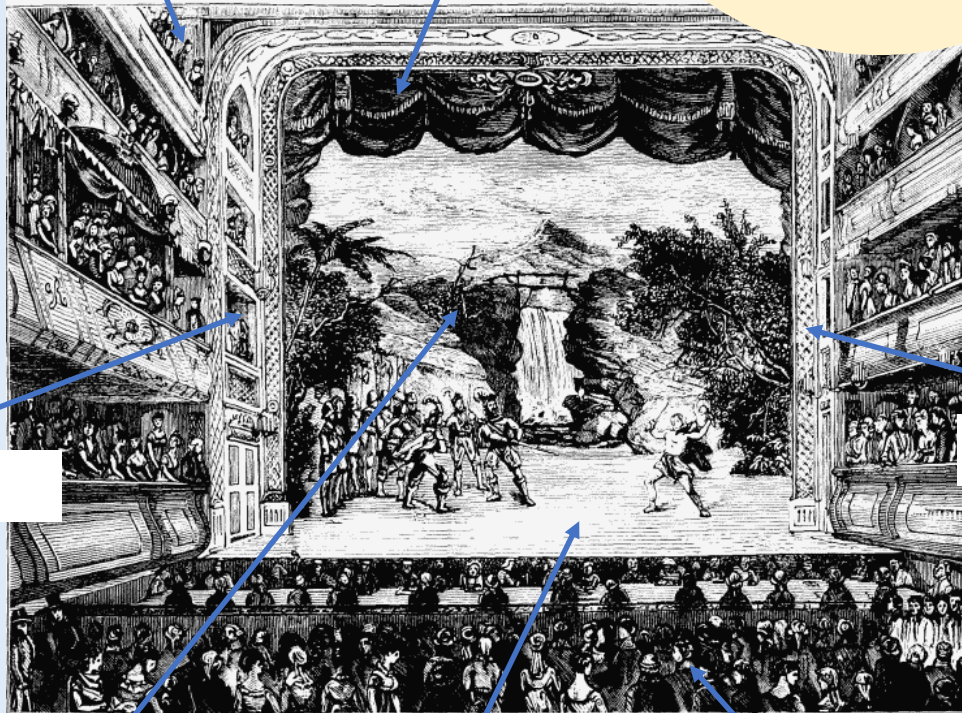
BOX

GALLERY

STAGE

PIT

A PROSCENIUM is the frame or arch that separates the stage from the audience, most theatres built in the Georgian Period had one, but not all theatres today do.



Theatre-goers behaved very differently from audiences today, they came and went throughout the performance, shouted at the actors and threw things.

This is a cartoon from 1809 showing audience members protesting a rise in ticket prices at the Covent Garden Theatre



Look at the picture and list all the different ways that the audience are making noise

Audiences were also sometimes violent.

This is a picture of the Covent Garden Theatre from 1763, what do you think is happening in it?



Can you think of other ways that going to the theatre now might be different to going to the theatre in the 1700s?
Can you find any clues in the picture?

COSTUMES

What people wore changed a great deal during the Georgian Period. Whilst poor people might only have one or two outfits of clothes, the rich spent huge amounts of money to keep up with new fashions.

Compare these images.
How have the clothes
changed between the
two?

1754



Gainsborough, *The Gravenor Family*

1806



Barbier-Walbonne, *The Comte de Chabaud-Latour and Family*

BODICE – the part of a dress above the waist

PANNIERS – frames that caused the skirt to stick out at either side but not at the back and front

Stage costumes needed to show what type of character the actor was playing – for instance whether they were rich or poor; young or old. Rich characters often wore very fashionable clothes.

Here is a picture from 1747 showing David Garrick and Hannah Pritchard, famous actors in the Georgian Period. They are performing a scene from the play *The Suspicious Husband*



Pick one of the actors and describe what they are wearing. Some of these words might help you.

TRICORN: a three-cornered hat

BRITCHES: short trousers which usually ended above the knee

THEATRE EFFECTS

Theatre effects create the atmosphere of a play, adding sounds, lights, smoke and other tricks to help tell the story.

In the Theatre Royal it was possible to create all sorts of effects from the machine room beneath the stage.

LIGHTING

Plays were lit with candles and oil lamps

Fill in the missing words:

_____ were oil lamps or candles that were placed at floor level on the front of the stage

The wick is the piece of string in the middle of a candle which acts as a bridge between the wax and the flame, it has to be _____ regularly to keep the candle burning _____

With so many candles and lamps, Georgian theatres would have been very _____ and were at risk of catching _____

Lighting effects could be created by placing _____ glass in front of a candle or lamp

FOOTLIGHTS

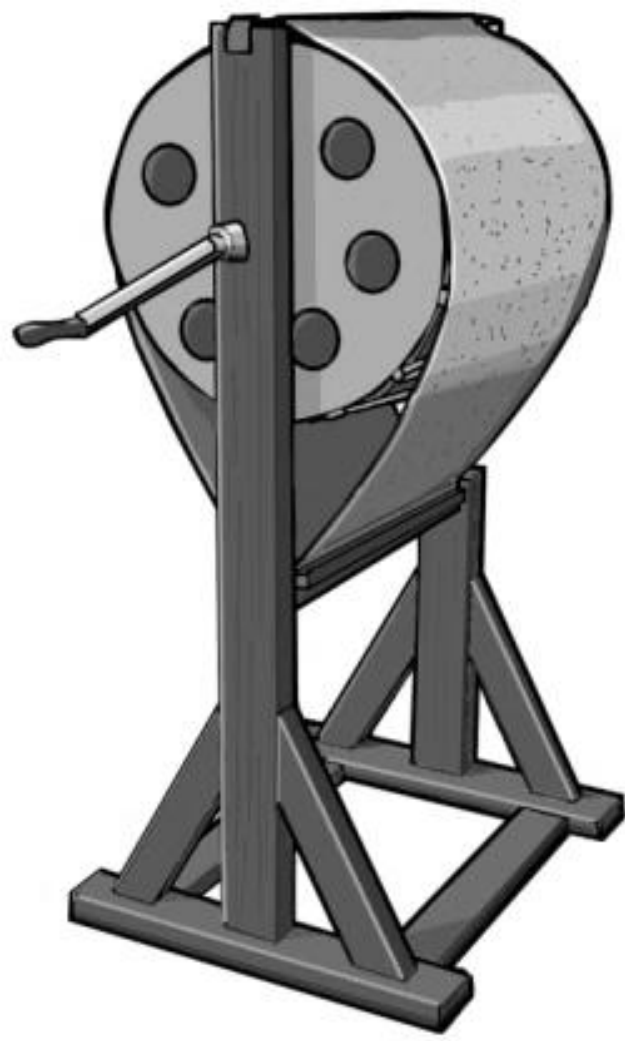
TRIMMED

SMOKY

FIRE

BRIGHTLY

COLOURED



SOUND

Sound effects were created during the performance using a range of mechanical devices like this one.

What sound do you think this machine made?

How does it work?

Although it has a more common name, this machine is known as an aeoliphone!

This is the opening scene from *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare.

What is happening?

What sound and lighting effects are mentioned in the script?
Highlight or circle them

SCENE I. *On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a Master and a Boatswain*

MASTER: Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN: Here, master: what cheer?

MASTER: Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely,
or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

Enter MARINERS

BOATSWAIN: Take in the topsail. Tend to the
master's whistle.

Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND and GONZALO

ALONSO: Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?

BOATSWAIN: I pray now, keep below.

ANTONIO: Where is the master, boatswain?

BOATSWAIN: Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your
cabins: you do assist the storm.

GONZALO: Nay, good, be patient.

BOATSWAIN: When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers
for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not.

ADVERTISING

Improvements in printing presses in the 1700s meant that playbills (small printed sheets used to advertise a performance) could be produced quickly and cheaply.

On the next page is playbill for The Theatre Royal from 1818
How is it different from posters today? Why do you think this is?

How much does it cost for a ticket in the pit?

Who printed the playbill?

How many people were in the company?

How many different types of entertainment are being performed?

How long do you think the evening would have lasted in total?

The playbill notes that “Ladies and Gentlemen who take places, are requested to send servants in time to keep them” what do you think this means?

Theatre Royal, Richmond.

On WEDNESDAY, 28th of OCTOBER, 1818

Will be presented Colman's admired Comedy of THE

POOR GENTLEMAN.

Sir Robert Bramble, - - - Mr. ANDREWS,
(From the Theatre, Nottingham.)

Lieut. Worthington -	Mr. HOLMES	Ollapod - - - -	Mr. JEFFERSON
Corporal Foss - -	Mr. MELVILLE	Frederic - - - -	Mr. TYRER.
Sir Charles Cropland -	Mr SAUNDERS	Miss Lucretia Mac Tab	Mrs. MURRAY
Humphrey Dobbins -	Mr. GEORGE	Mary - - - - -	Mrs. ANDREWS
Farmer Harrowby -	Mr. FITZOWEN	Dame Harrowby - -	Mrs JEFFERSON
Stephen Harrowby -	Mr. BUTLER		

Emily Worthington - - - - Miss HODSON,
(Her first appearance on any stage.)

In the course of the evening the following entertainments.

Dancing by Mr & Mrs Saunders.

SONGS:

“RUDDY AURORA”,

By Mrs. Melville.

“LITTLE MARY OF THE DEE,”

By Miss Hill.

A Comic Song by Mr. Jefferson.

To conclude with the FAUCE of the

WEDDING-DAY.

Sir Adam Contest -	Mr ANDREWS	William - - - -	Mr STOKER
Lord Rakeland - -	Mr SAUNDERS	Mrs. Hamford - -	Mrs MURRAY
Mr Contest - - -	Mr MELVILLE	Hannah - - - -	Mrs SAUNDERS
Mr Millden - - -	Mr GEORGE	Lady Contest - -	Mrs TYRER.

BOXES, — 3s. — PIT, 2s. — GALLERY, 1s. — Doors to be opened at six, and to begin at seven o'clock.

Places for the Boxes to be taken of T. BOWMAN, Bookseller, Market-place.

Tickets delivered when places are taken.

Ladies and Gentlemen who take places, are requested to send Servants in time to keep them.
SHAKESPEARE'S celebrated Tragedy of KING LEAR and his THREE DAUGHTERS, is in Rehearsal, and will be speedily brought forward.

PRINTED BY T. BOWMAN, RICHMOND.

It says on the playbill that the next play to be performed will be *King Lear and his Three Daughters*.

Design your own playbill for this performance. Assume it will be performed by the same company. What other information do you need to include?

TEACHERS' NOTES

THE GEORGIAN PERIOD

The Georgian Period (1714-1830) covers the reign of the kings, George I, George II, George III and George IV and incorporates the Regency period (1811-1820) when the future George IV acted as Prince Regent during the illness of his father George III. The Georgian Period is often extended to include the reign of William IV which ended in his death in 1837 and the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE

The Georgian Period was a time of wide-reaching changes including the Agricultural Revolution, the start of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the two party political system. Despite losing America in the War of Independence, Britain continued to expand, taking control of Canada and India and sowing the seeds for the worldwide Empire of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

ENTERTAINMENT

The concepts of leisure, entertainment and consumption developed significantly in the Georgian Period with a range of activities available including sports, dancing, gambling, theatre and exhibitions. These varied widely in cost and engaging with the most expensive pursuits became a sign of social status.

Reading was a popular pastime and advances in printing meant that newspapers, books and magazines were more easily and cheaply available, popular authors included Jane Austen, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. Family and friends would often play cards with one another and sketching and watercolour painting were also widespread. Well off women might undertake decorative sewing or embroidery or would go shopping.

Sports included horse racing, golf, cricket, rowing, sailing, fencing, boxing, bowls and football (although this was generally only played by the lower classes and wasn't regulated until the creation of the Football Association in 1863).

THEATRE

Theatre in the eighteenth century became increasingly popular and actor managers such as David Garrick (1717-1779) were influential in a move towards higher production values and a greater realism in style and performance. Venues around Covent Gardens and Drury Lane held royal patents, which allowed them to put on a range of productions. The Licensing Act of 1737, however, stopped anyone, outside of these licensed London venues, charging for their performances.

This was circumvented by regional companies who would charge audiences to attend a concert and then put on a 'free' play in the interval. In 1788 the Theatrical Representations Act relaxed the 1737 act and legalised theatre performances in the provinces, allowing local magistrates the power to grant licenses to travelling companies for up to 60 days at a time.

Theatre-going in the Georgian Period was a very different experience from that of today. Audiences could be loud, rowdy and rude, they talked throughout the performance and sometimes pelted actors with rotten fruit and vegetables. They also consumed a great deal of food and alcohol. Kicking boards were placed around the front of the gallery and members of the audience would kick these vigorously to show approval or disapproval at plays and individual performances. Members of the upper classes would be seated in boxes alongside the stage, for which they paid extra. The cheapest tickets were in the gallery, which would be very crowded.

RICHMOND AND THE THEATRE ROYAL

Richmond was a fashionable social centre and visitors came for the picturesque views and ancient ruins. Dances were held in the Richmond Assembly Room (built in 1756 and now the Town Hall) and horse racing was popular including the Richmond Gold Cup which was run from 1759. There was also a bowling green and cock-fighting pit.

In 1788 Samuel Butler, manager of a well-known local company of travelling players, signed a lease on a property in Friars Wynd, Richmond, this opened as a theatre in the September of the same year. Many towns were unable to support a full-time theatrical company and so companies often developed a circuit of venues, ensuring work throughout the year, with the company in residence when the towns were busiest such as during local militia meets or race weeks. For this reason, Butler also opened venues in Harrogate (1788), Kendal (1790), Ripon (1792), Whitby (1793), Ulverston (1796), Northallerton (1800) and Beverley (1805). The company continued to use this circuit until 1816 when Beverley and, later, Whitby, were dropped from it.

From here, the company and theatre at Richmond went into decline and in 1830 the theatre company did not renew their lease on the building. It continued to be run occasionally as a theatre until 1848 when it closed. It was then used for a variety of purposes including a furniture depot, wine merchants and paper store. A theatre restoration fund was established in the 1940s and the building finally reopened in 1963.

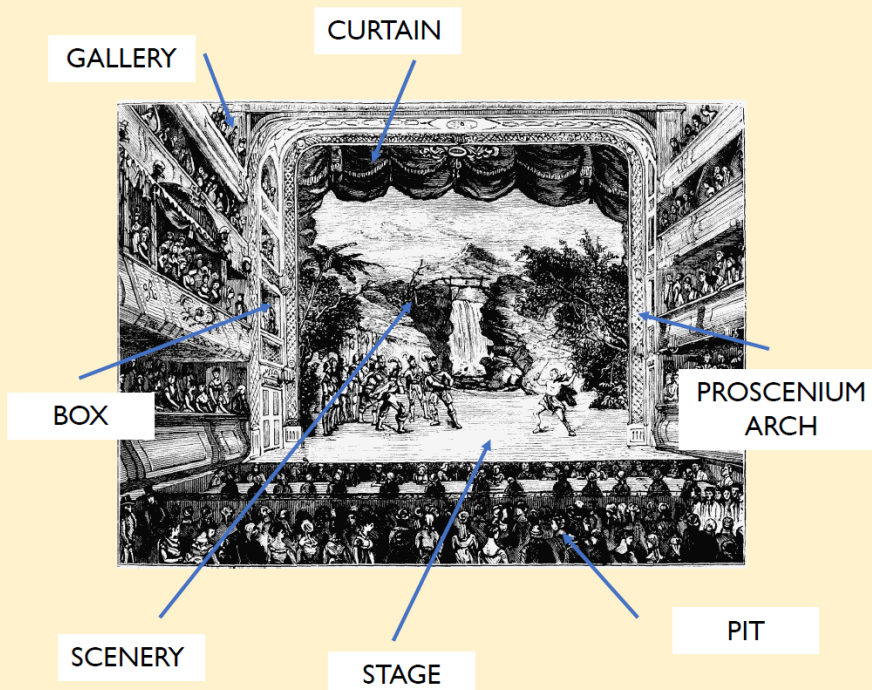
KEY DATES

- 1714 When Queen Anne dies without surviving heirs, the Act of Succession causes the throne to pass to her nearest protestant relative, George Ludwig of Hanover (George I).
- 1720 South Sea Bubble
- 1721 Sir Robert Walpole becomes the first prime minister
- 1727 George I dies and is succeeded to the throne by his son, George II
- 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie (Charles Edward Stuart) lands in Scotland to claim the British throne, he was the grandson of the deposed James II
- 1756 Bonnie Prince Charlie is defeated at the Battle of Culloden
Richmond Town Hall is built
- 1757 The Seven Year War with France begins
- 1757 The first canal in Britain is completed
- 1759 Canada and India are brought under British rule
- 1760 George II dies and is succeeded by his son, George III
- 1771 The first cotton mill in Britain opens
- 1775 American War of Independence begins
- 1776 America declares independence from Britain
- 1779 The world's first cast iron bridge is built in Ironbridge
- 1778 The first edition of The Times is published
- 1783 Arkwright designs the first steam powered cotton mill
- 1788 The Theatre Licensing Act is passed
The Richmond Theatre Royal is opened by Samuel Butler
- 1793 Britain goes to war with France, this continues until the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815
- 1796 Edward Jenner produces a vaccine for smallpox
- 1801 The Act of Union joins together England, Scotland and Wales to form the United Kingdom
Britain holds its first census
- 1804 Richard Trevithick builds the first steam locomotive
- 1804 The slave trade is abolished in the British Empire
- 1811 The Regency Period begins
- 1820 George III dies and is succeeded by his son, George IV
- 1829 Robert Peel creates the first Metropolitan Police Force
- 1830 George IV dies and is succeeded by his brother William IV
The Butler Company do not renew the lease on the Theatre Royal
- 1837 William IV dies and is succeeded by his niece Victoria
- 1848 The Richmond Theatre Royal closes

ANSWERS AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

GEORGIAN	TODAY	BOTH
WATCHING COCKFIGHTING	WATCHING TELEVISION	GOING FOR A WALK
	PLAYING COMPUTER GAMES	DRAWING OR PAINTING
		NEEDLEWORK
		READING
		SINGING
		DANCING
		PLAYING CRICKET
		WRITING LETTERS
		GOING TO THE THEATRE
		HORSE RIDING



WAYS OF MAKING NOISE

Instruments - a pipe and several kinds of horns and trumpets

A wooden rattle

A hand bell

Voices

This image is part of H. Beard Print Collection © V&A

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The picture is a satirical illustration of a riot that occurred at the Covent Garden Theatre. Traditionally people could buy a half price ticket for late admission. In March 1763 the management of the theatre announced that only full price tickets would be available. The response was an organised riot which destroyed the interior of the theatre and forced the reinstatement of the half price concession. The performance underway is the English opera, Artaxerxes.

KEY DIFFERENCES

The theatre is lit by candles

Audience members in the pit are standing instead of seated, they are tightly packed

The clothes worn by the audience are very different from those worn today

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Write a letter to a friend about a trip to the Theatre Royal in Richmond during the Georgian Period

COSTUMES

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Look up some pictures of other famous actors and actresses from the Georgian Period performing (such as Sarah Siddons, Edmund Kean or John Philip Kemble). What are they wearing?

Actors sometimes incorporated theatrical elements into their clothing and accessories. When playing Hamlet, David Garrick had a wig designed for him that could stand on end to indicate his fear at the sight of his father's ghost. Research the wig and how audiences reacted to it.

Garrick playing Hamlet:

http://britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=647549001&objectId=1648189&partId=1

Garrick possibly wearing the wig:

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/readingroom/art/seg2/f10054099.htm>

THEATRE EFFECTS

FOOTLIGHTS were oil lamps or candles that were placed at floor level on the front of the stage

The wick is the piece of string in the middle of a candle which acts as a bridge between the wax and the flame, it has to be **TRIMMED** regularly to keep the candle burning **BRIGHTLY**

With so many candles and lamps, Georgian theatres would have been very **SMOKY** and were at risk of catching **FIRE**

Lighting effects could be created by placing **COLOURED** glass in front of a candle or lamp

MYSTERY MACHINE

This is a wind machine, when the drum is rotated the fabric rubs against the wooden struts of the drum to make the sound.

See one in action: <https://youtu.be/pmYoAmFcD3o>

Piece about the Old Vic using eighteenth century sound effects:

<https://dailymotion.com/video/x3mapkx>

HIGHLIGHT THE SOUND/LIGHTING EFFECTS

SCENE I. *On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard. Enter a Master and a Boatswain*

MASTER: Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN: Here, master: what cheer?

MASTER: Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely, or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

Enter MARINERS

BOATSWAIN: *Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle.*

Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND and GONZALO

ALONSO: Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?

BOATSWAIN: I pray now, keep below.

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BOATSWAIN: Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your cabins: you do assist the storm.

GONZALO: Nay, good, be patient.

BOATSWAIN: When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Design devices to make storm sound effects. Read the extract from *The Tempest* and use these to create the right atmosphere.

ADVERTISING

PRINTING

Although colour printing was possible in the eighteenth century it was an expensive and complicated process that was not suitable for commercial production. Images did not appear on playbills until the mid-nineteenth century

COMPREHENSION

How much does it cost for a ticket in the Pit?

2s

Who printed the playbill?

T. Bowman, Richmond

How many people were in the company?

18 (17 excluding Mr Andrews who joins the company from the Theatre, Nottingham for a guest appearance)

How many different types of entertainment are being performed? How long do you think the evening would have lasted in total?

3 – plays (Poor Gentleman and Wedding-Day), songs (Ruddy Aurora, Little Mary of the Dee and ‘a comic song’) and dancing.

It was not unusual for an evening at the theatre to last 4-5 hours.

The playbill notes that “Ladies and Gentlemen who take places, are requested to send servants in time to keep them” what do you think this means?

Wealthy people who have pre-bought tickets for the boxes would send a servant to be there when the doors opened at 6pm to get the best seats and ensure that no one else took their places, they would then arrive later.

DESIGN A POSTER

Cast list of King Lear:

King Lear

Cordelia, *Lear's daughter*

Goneril, *Lear's daughter*

Regan, *Lear's daughter*

Gloucester

Edmund, *Gloucester's son*

Edgar, *Gloucester's son*

Kent

Albany, *husband to Goneril*

Cornwall, *husband to Regan*

Fool

Oswald, *Goneril's servant*

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Research how printing was done in the eighteenth century