

# Contents

|                                                     |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Prefatory Note</i>                               | vii       |
| Introduction: Approaching Shakespeare and His Stage | 1         |
| <b>1 Life and Times</b>                             | <b>7</b>  |
| Life                                                | 7         |
| Shakespeare's Context                               | 19        |
| Politics and History                                | 21        |
| Social Models                                       | 29        |
| London                                              | 36        |
| Beliefs and Myths                                   | 39        |
| <b>2 Theatrical Professions</b>                     | <b>55</b> |
| The Rise of Playing                                 | 56        |
| The Professional Public Theatre                     | 63        |
| The Playhouses                                      | 74        |
| Actors and Acting                                   | 80        |
| Playwrights                                         | 87        |
| Audiences                                           | 89        |
| Control and Censorship                              | 93        |
| <b>3 The Plays</b>                                  | <b>97</b> |
| Canon, Texts and Chronology                         | 97        |
| Sources and Materials                               | 107       |
| Language and Style                                  | 111       |
| Drama and Metadrama                                 | 121       |
| Criticism and 'Meaning'                             | 127       |
| Genre                                               | 131       |
| Comedies                                            | 134       |
| Histories                                           | 161       |
| Tragedies                                           | 182       |
| <i>Notes</i>                                        | 202       |
| <i>Chronology</i>                                   | 206       |
| <i>Suggested Reading</i>                            | 207       |
| <i>Index</i>                                        | 211       |