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This second edition of the Companion offers students up-to-date factual and interpretative material about the principal theatres, playwrights and plays of the most important period of English drama, from 1580-1642. Three wide-ranging chapters on theatres, dramaturgy and the social, cultural and political conditions of the drama are followed by chapters describing and illustrating various theatrical genres: private and occasional drama, political plays, heroic plays, burlesque, comedy, tragedy, with a final essay on the drama produced during the reign of Charles I. All the essays have been revised and their references updated. An expanded biographical and bibliographical section details the work of the dramatists discussed in the book and the best sources for further study. A chronological table provides a full listing of new plays performed from 1497-1642, with a parallel list of major political and theatrical events.