



# The Origin of Drama





Do you know  
where did  
drama start in  
England?





Any  
options?

Well, you would not  
believe it, but the  
answer is : in  
**CHURCH**







You should not, living tableaux were introduced into sacred services as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century

Are you surprised?

They developed in time into Mystery Plays





# The Mystery Plays

- The plays were *tropes*, that is, verbal embellishments of liturgical texts, ex: “The nativity”
- Slowly became more elaborate adding prose dialogues.
- These performances were given in **Latin**, but were preceded by a **vernacular** prologue about the synopsis of the events.
- The writers and directors were probably **monks**.
- When these liturgical dramas increased in popularity, **vernacular** forms emerged.
- **Themes:** BIBLICAL





Remember, there  
was no Netflix at  
the time

Therefore, a religious  
play in a language you  
could understand, was a  
great diversion.

One more thing,  
YOU could have been  
one of the actors!!





# Outcomes of Popularity

- Pope Innocent III issued a papal edict **forbidding clergy** from acting on a public stage.
- Hence, the organization of the dramas passed from church to **town guilds**.
- Vernacular **replaced** Latin completely .
- Non-biblical passages were added along with comic scenes.
- Acting and characterization became more elaborate.





# Where did the performances take place?

1. Churchyard
  2. Public marketplaces
- They were performed and produced by **guilds** now
  - Each guild took responsibility for a particular piece of scriptural history.







We wouldn't be far from  
the truth if we said that  
this was an early form  
of ADVERTISING



A guild of carpenters, for  
example, was very likely  
to perform «the  
Nativity» and St.  
Joseph.





# Further Development

- The plays dealt with all the major events in the Christian calendar.
- By the end of the 15th century, the practice of acting these plays in **cycles** on festival days had become common in Europe.
- Plays were often performed on **pageant carts**.
- Actors were both professionals and amateurs.



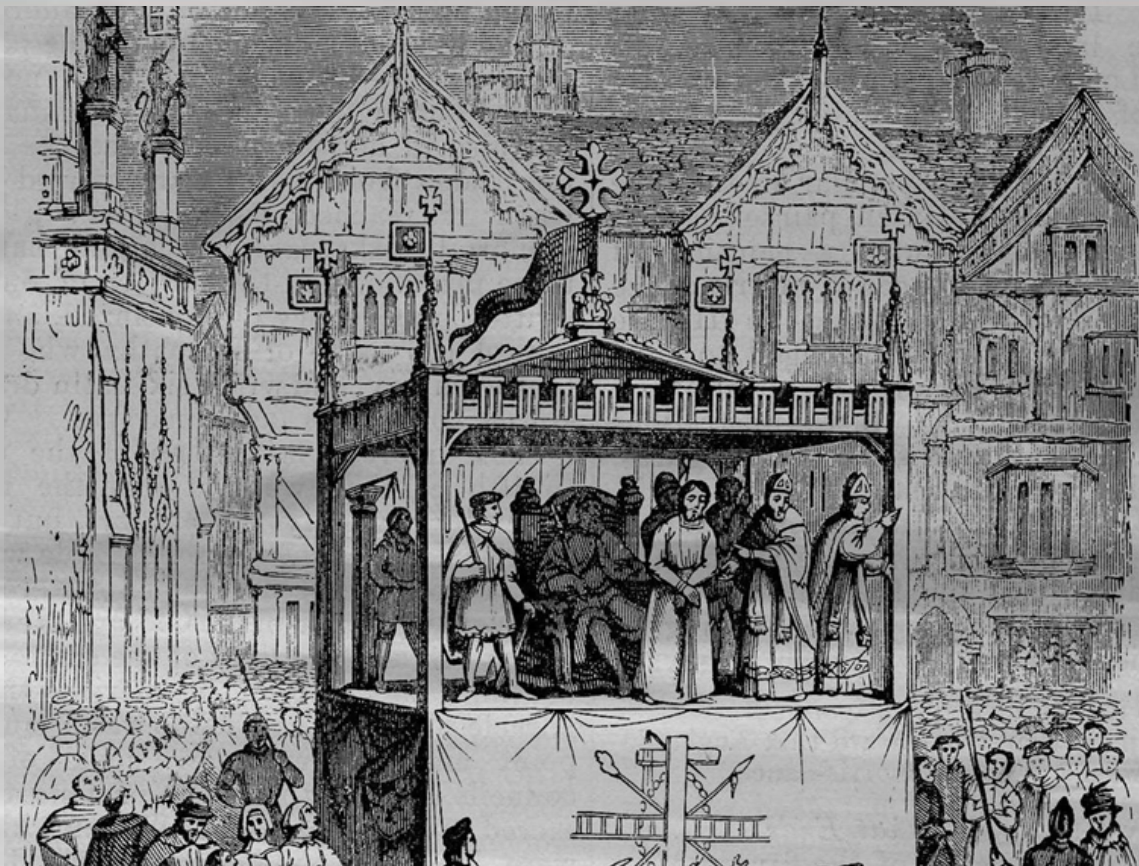


# Pageants

- Pageant carts moved about the city to allow different crowds to watch each play.
- They provided actors with a **dressing room** as well as a **stage**.
- The entire cycle could take up to twenty hours to perform .
- Sets were often extravagant.
- ‘Special effects’ were employed .







## Pageant cart among the crowd

*These temporary wheeled stages were used to present the dramas.*







Had performances  
been only about  
religion, I  
wouldn't have  
become so famous.

Topics  
started to  
vary in time





# Morality Plays

- An **intermediate step** in the transition from **liturgical** to **professional** secular drama
- Widespread in Europe during the 15<sup>o</sup> and 16<sup>o</sup> centuries.
- Allegorical drama .
- Characters personified:
  1. moral qualities (such as charity or vice)
  2. abstractions (as death or youth)
- Aimed at **teaching a moral**.
- Vernacular drama.





# The Morality Play Pattern

- The action of the morality play centres on a **hero**, such as Mankind (Everyman).
- His weaknesses are assaulted by personified diabolic forces as the Seven Deadly Sins.
- He may choose redemption thanks to the aid of such figures as the Four Daughters of God (Mercy, Justice, Temperance, and Truth).
- The plays were usually short.
- **Serious** themes tempered by elements of **farce**.
- **Everyman** is the greatest of all morality plays and it is still performed.





In a way the  
topic of the  
Moralties was  
modern

As it was a  
dramatization of the  
battle between the  
forces of good and evil  
in the human soul. My  
favourite topic!!!







# Performing at Court

- At the end of the 15<sup>o</sup> century **professional actors** began to appear in England and Europe.
- Richard III and Henry VII both maintained **small companies** of professional actors.
- Their plays were performed in the great hall of a nobleman's residence.
- Raised platform at one end for the audience and a "screen" at the other for the actors.
- Court masques (singing, dancing, acting) were vastly popular.





When I was born  
the time was ripe  
for further  
developments

People from  
every station  
enjoyed  
watching plays.

Larger  
spaces were  
needed





But, having lived  
under the reign of  
the greatest Queen  
ever was my greatest  
fortune! I'm talking  
about.....

Queen  
Elizabeth I





# The Elizabethan Era

- The Elizabethan era (1558 – 1603) was a major turning point for London's theatrical scene.
- Queen Elizabeth I was a prominent patron of the arts.
- Under her reign the first permanent theatre in the city was built, called “The Theatre” in in Shoreditch.
- The making of many others will follow.







My acting  
company will  
own a theatre  
too....

But this is  
another story,  
oooops....ppt.



