



Synopsis of *EVERYMAN*:

This morality play seeks to answer the important religious question: "What must a man do to be saved?" God sends Death to summon Everyman, who represents all mankind. Good and Evil will be tallied like pluses and minuses in an account book. The play is the story of Everyman's journey to this final reckoning. Along the way, Everyman tries to convince other characters to accompany him in the hope of improving his account. The other characters are also allegorical; that is, each character personifies an abstract idea. The conflict between good and evil is dramatized by the interactions between characters. The play shows us not only how every man should meet death but also how every man should live.

Everyman is a dramatized allegory. An allegory is a narrative in which the characters and action, and sometimes the setting as well, have two levels of meaning. The first level is literal -- a man is going on a trip. The second level is symbolic -- Everyman's life is a journey from birth to death, and every man makes this same trip. An allegory must make sense at both levels. All of the literal pieces will fit together to tell a story -- what happens. In addition, all of the symbolic pieces will fit together to teach a moral -- what the story means.

For example, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory teaching the doctrines of Christian salvation. The hero, named Christian, is warned by Evangelist to flee the City of Destruction and seek the Celestial City. En route Christian encounters such characters as Faithful, the Giant Despair, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman. He passes through places like the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair. On the literal level, this is an exciting adventure story. On the symbolic level, however, each adventure also teaches a moral lesson.