

Origins of Medieval Drama

came through the church, but not directly

4th century A.D. - church had forbidden drama
(due to association with pagan gods, and immorality)

9th century A.D. - drama slowly made a comeback in the medieval church

used as an instructional tool

started with readings of scripture by multiple people, eventually added some action, then props, then sets.

10th century A.D.. - the story of Christ's death and resurrection was dramatized

11th century A.D. - the Christmas story portrayed

Types of Medieval Drama

Over time, these individual dramatizations developed into Mystery Cycles (possibly because they were sponsored by the craft guilds, the *mysteres*, possibly simply because they depict the mysteries of the life of Christ)

These Mystery Cycles eventually encompassed the whole Biblical story.

They grew more complex and were removed from the church service, first to the courtyard, then out of the church entirely, becoming the responsibility of the craft guilds to perform.

Festivals were given regularly, with performances given on pageant wagons that paraded throughout the city.

In addition to mystery plays, there were also

- 1) miracle plays -- which celebrated the lives of saints, were very realistic & charming

and

morality plays - influenced mostly by homilies and sermons rather than liturgy were dramatized allegories of vices and virtues mostly dealt with temptations in this life and the inevitability of death.

Everyman is one of the two most celebrated examples of medieval drama -- drama that grew out of the church and is prized for its depiction of the mysteries of the Christian faith and its exploration of vice and virtue.

Questions for *Everyman*

1. What are the roles of confession, penance and sacrament in *Everyman's* salvation?
2. Why are the Good Deeds weak before confession?
3. Why do Beauty, Discretion, Strength, and the Five Wits go with him as far as the grave and then depart, whereas Fellowship, Material Goods, and Kindred do not go with him even that far?
4. What is the role of Knowledge in the play?
5. If *Everyman* is an example of an allegory (a type of literature), try to define allegory. Please don't look it up. Hint: what's different about this play?