



7

History of Drama

This scene depicts costumes and masks similar to those used in the *commedia dell'arte*. The painting, by Claude Gillot, is entitled *The Two Coaches*.



All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *As You Like It*

SETTING THE SCENE

Focus Questions

How did the drama begin?

What characterized the drama of ancient Greece?

How did drama change during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance?

Who were the great Elizabethan playwrights?

How has American drama developed?

Vocabulary

trilogy

closet dramas

Saint plays

Mystery plays

Passion Play

mansions

cycle

folk drama

Morality play

Moral Interludes

commedia dell'arte

raked

Peking Opera

No (Noh)

Bunraku

Kabuki

The history of drama is closely related to the history of humanity. When the first hunters recounted their adventures using pantomime, when the first storytellers told their tales in rhythmic chants, and when the first organized groups of people found expression in the pantomime of war and fertility dances, the dramatic impulse demonstrated itself. Later, primitive actors used masks to portray gods or animals.

As civilization developed in different cultures, drama took definite forms. People worshiped gods and glorified earthly rulers with elaborate pageantry. Tales were told of the epic adventures of noble characters engaged in mighty conflicts or of humorous characters bumbling through their comic paces. These tales led to dramatic presentations, ultimately to be written and acted out again and again as societal ritual.

Origins of Western Drama

The earliest record of something very much like a theatrical performance comes from Egypt. Carved on a stone tablet about four thousand years ago, this account tells how Ikhnofret of Abydos arranged and played the leading role in a three-day pageant made up of actual battles, boat processions, and intricate ceremonies that told the story of the murder, dismemberment, and resurrection of the god Osiris.

GREEK DRAMA

CUE

Greek tradition holds that Thespis, an actor-playwright, introduced masks into Greek plays.

Western drama started to develop in Greece in the sixth century B.C. as part of the worship of the Greek god Dionysus. To commemorate the god's death, a group of chanters, called the chorus, danced around an altar on which a goat was sacrificed. Therefore, this chorus was called the goat-singers, and their ritualistic chant was called the goat-song, or *tragos*. From *tragos* the word *tragedy* was derived. These ceremonies in honor of Dionysus evolved into dramatic contests. According to Greek folklore, Thespis won the first competition. Legend says that when Thespis stepped from the chorus and engaged in a dialogue with the other members, he became the first actor. The term *thespian* has been given to actors ever since.

The dramatic contests became part of a festival that lasted five or six days. On each of the last three days, a different playwright would present four plays. The first three plays were tragedies, often forming a **trilogy**—three plays related by theme, myth, or characters. The fourth play was customarily an irreverent, bawdy burlesque called a satyr play. Playwrights competed fiercely to win the laurel wreath at these dramatic contests.

Production in the Greek theater was a highly complex art form that used many clever mechanical devices. At first, performances were held in the open on hillsides surrounding a circular area called the orchestra, where the chorus danced. Wooden (later stone) seats were added to form the theater. It is believed that some theaters seated more than seventeen thousand patrons.

At the rear of the acting area was a small hut called the *skene*, where the actors changed masks and costumes. Later, the *skene* was enlarged into a stone building. A second story and wings were added, and scenery was painted on the front. On the roof of the *skene* was the god walk, from which the actors portraying the gods delivered their monologues.

Another device used in Greek plays was the *machina*, a cranelike hoist that permitted actors to appear above the stage as if flying. The *machina* could also lower actors from the roof of the *skene* to the orchestra. The *machina* was sturdy enough to carry a chariot and horses or sev-



This is the Theater of Dionysus as it looks today. You can still see the stone seats that at one time seated up to 17,000 spectators.

eral persons. Usually the character lowered by the *machina* represented a god from Mount Olympus who came to earth to settle the affairs of human beings, including the dilemma of the playwright who could not resolve the conflict satisfactorily without intervention from the gods. From the use of this contrivance came the term *deus ex machina* (god from the machine). This term is still used today to indicate an artificial plot device an author introduces late in a play to resolve difficulties. An unknown relative who leaves a legacy, a long-lost letter, and the discovery of a relative assumed dead are typical of *deus ex machina*. (Usually such a plot resolution weakens the play and works out acceptably only in farce, melodrama, or fantasy.)

The chorus was an integral part of early Greek plays. The chorus served to explain the situation, to bring the audience up-to-date, to make a commentary on the action from the point of view of established ideas, and to engage in dialogue with the actors. Over time, the responsibilities of the chorus diminished as the scope of the actors' roles expanded. Still, vestiges of the Greek chorus are found in theater today. The chorus in Anouilh's *Antigone*, the stage manager in *Our Town*, and El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* are three well-known examples of a modern chorus.



CUE

Originally the theater was for men only, both as performers and spectators. Women did not attend the theater until the fourth century B.C.

CUE

To ensure audience recognition, Greek tragic actors customarily wore masks, padded costumes, and boots with thick soles, called *cothurni* or *buskins*. Comic actors typically wore rather grotesque masks, costumes with exaggerated padding, and a type of sandal called a *sock*.

Any discussion of Greek theater must begin with tragedy. The Greek tragedies, considered classics of Western literature, involve conflicts that evolve from the clash between the will of the gods and the ambitions and desires of humanity. The plays show how useless human efforts are in the face of fate. The greatest writers of Greek tragedy are Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, who wrote in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.

Aeschylus expanded the number of actors and reduced the size of the chorus. He is noted for the elevation and majesty of his language, which many feel has never been surpassed. Many critics refer to him as the father of tragedy. Of his ninety plays, only seven have been preserved. Aeschylus left us the only surviving Greek trilogy, the *Oresteia*. It tells the story of the murder of Agamemnon, the revenge taken by his children, and the punishment and final acquittal of his son.

One of the greatest Greek tragedians, ranked with Shakespeare as one of the great playwrights of all time, is Sophocles. A writer of exquisitely crafted plays, he refined plot structure to create beautifully unified works. Believing that human beings have divine qualities that elevate their struggles against fate, he achieved an amazing balance between the power of the gods and the importance of humanity. Inquisitive, yet reverent, Sophocles allows his characters to question fate and the wills of the gods. As a result, his characters are among the strongest ever to walk on a stage. He wrote more than one hundred plays, of which only seven have survived.



In Sophocles' tragedies, such as *Antigone*, pictured here, characters attain deep insights into the human condition. This wisdom, though, is only attained through suffering and loss.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* stands as one of the world's most powerful examples of dramatic irony. Aristotle described it as the ideal tragedy. It is the story of a man who, through a combination of fate and his own character, unwittingly kills his own father and marries his mother. When he realizes the truth of his situation, he puts out his eyes in horror.

Sophocles' *Antigone* is also one of the world's great tragedies. Antigone is Oedipus's daughter. Her two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, having disagreed about who should rule, have killed each other. Their uncle, Creon, having taken over the throne, has decreed that Polynices was in the wrong and, consequently, must remain unburied. The Greeks believed that desecration of the dead was offensive to the gods and that the soul of a body not given proper burial was doomed to wander eternally. Antigone defies Creon's decree in order to fulfill her higher loyalties to her family and the gods. She attempts to bury Polynices, is caught, and is placed in a cave to die. It is not until his own world crumbles around him that Creon realizes that human laws cannot supplant the laws of the gods.

The playwright Euripides became more interested in people's lives than in the religious views of his day. He emphasized human relationships and became the master of **pathos**, human sorrow and compassion. Of the ninety-two plays written by Euripides, seventeen tragedies and one satyr play exist in their entirety. *The Trojan Women* is one of literature's strongest indictments of war. *Medea* is the tragedy of a woman who seeks revenge on her husband to the extent of killing her own sons in order to grieve him. *Medea*, as well as *Antigone*, still ranks among the most poignant portrayals of women in dramatic literature.

One of the outstanding authors of Greek comedy is Aristophanes, who contributed forty plays, eleven of which have been preserved. Aristophanes, who considered nothing sacred, was a skilled **satirist** and a keen observer of humanity. His barbed wit mocked the leaders of Athens and the gods themselves. Three of his best-known plays are *The Frogs*, a writers' contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in Hades, judged by Dionysus himself; *The Clouds*, a travesty on Socrates and Greek education; and *Lysistrata*, a scathing attack on war.

Aristophanes' first nine plays represent what has come to be known as Old Comedy, which is noted for its wild comic fantasy. His last two plays are classified as Middle Comedy, being quieter and more coherent. Roman and, later, Renaissance writers were more influenced by the gentle treatment of everyday life in the New Comedy of Menander. Menander was a Greek playwright who wrote approximately one hundred years after Aristophanes. Although Menander wrote more than one hundred comedies, only one of his scripts—*Dyskolos*—has survived in its entirety.



A modern version of *Antigone*, by Jean Anouilh, has been widely performed in colleges and high schools.

ROMAN DRAMA

CUE

As the Roman Empire grew, the cultural life of Rome began to decay. To gain the favor of the Roman mob, the emperors knew they must continue to amuse them with such spectacles as gladiatorial fights, wild-beast shows, and chariot races.

Roman drama was largely an imitation of Greek drama. In fact, the first work of Roman drama was commissioned to Andronicus, an author from a Greek colony. This first Roman tragedy was most likely a translation from a Greek play, and most Roman dramas that followed were adaptations of Greek plays. There were, however, a few plays written about the history of Rome. The majority of original Roman plays were comic representations of daily life, focusing on comical business rather than the development of plot or character. Plautus and Terence were two notable writers of Roman comedy. Only Terence's plays, however, showed appreciable improvement on their Greek counterparts.

At the time Terence and Plautus were writing, there were no permanent theaters. The stage was erected only when needed for a presentation. Over the next two hundred years interest in entertainment evolved, and theaters expanded into **amphitheaters**, large circular arenas that were surrounded by tiers of seats. At this time, the beginning of the first century A.D., Seneca, a writer of bombastic tragedies, was the only author to attempt anything like a play. Ironically, his plays, called **closet dramas**, were intended to be read rather than performed.

MEDIEVAL DRAMA

During the Middle Ages, drama developed along different lines throughout Europe. It is impossible to positively track this development because few records exist. The earliest evidence of drama in the Middle Ages is a partial manuscript from a western European liturgical drama dating to the tenth century. However, the prohibitions established by the Roman Catholic church against secular drama suggest the existence of other performances: acrobats, mimes, and dancers. The liturgical drama of this time was definitely influential in the development of drama, but did not direct the course of later secular plays.

The liturgical drama first came into existence as a question-and-answer song performed by monks on Easter. These "plays" were sung in Latin, and the performers eventually included priests, choirboys, and, later, nuns. Soon after the rise in popularity of the Easter service, liturgical dramas became a Christmas tradition also. As the occasions for performances grew, the dramas were translated from the Latin into the vernacular of the region and members of the congregation were allowed to perform in the plays. Saint and Mystery plays became popular forms of church drama.

Saint plays are based on legends of saints, and **Mystery plays** are based on biblical history. **The Passion Play**, which addresses the last week of Christ's life, is a well-known liturgical drama performed for the Easter service.

The early Saint and Mystery plays were staged in the churches on platforms called **mansions**. These mansions represented biblical settings such as Heaven, Hell, and the Sea of Galilee. As the popularity of these dramas increased, they were moved out of the church to the town square where the mansions were placed in a straight line. Some of these stages were permanent, but evidence exists that the players toured from city to city using these settings.

By the late fourteenth century, the medieval craft guilds had taken over the presentation of the Saint and Mystery plays in England. Most were performed during the festival of Corpus Christi, which had been officially instituted in A.D. 1311. Even though these guilds were secular, the members were associated with the church. Each guild presented one part of the story; for example the shipwrights presented the *Noah* pageant.

The craft guilds would tour through the country and present the liturgical plays on pageant wagons, which were stages on wheels. The **pageant wagons** were divided into two levels: the upper level was a platform stage, the lower level was a dressing room. Each guild had its pageant wagon decorated according to which play in the **cycle**—a series of short plays depict-



The Passion Play, written in the medieval mystery play tradition, is still performed in Europe at Oberammergau, Germany, by the citizens of the Bavarian village where it was first performed in 1634. It has been produced every ten years since 1760.

Shown here is a scene from the Passion Play performed every ten years at Oberammergau, Germany.



ing religious history from creation through doomsday—they presented. The guilds moved through town as they presented their plays.

While the liturgical dramas were developing, the secular dramas, called **folk dramas**, were developing simultaneously. The first record of a folk play comes from twelfth-century England. Folk plays usually took place during planting time, harvest time, and Christmas and were staged outdoors. These plays were presented for folk festivals, which often coincided with Christian holidays. Out of these performances arose the famous Robin Hood plays (c. 1300), with the hero stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. An increasing amount of secular material, especially humorous incidents, made it into the liturgical performances. Also, the secular actors began presenting the popular liturgical dramas.

Since the popularity of drama was increasing by the fifteenth century, the church began presenting plays that were not for a specific holiday celebration. These **Morality plays** were didactic in nature, teaching the difference between right and wrong in the context of the devil and God battling for souls. These plays usually took the form of allegories dramatized by symbolic characters who represented abstract qualities, such as the title character who represents humankind in *Everyman*, the only Morality play that is still performed.

Since the church did not approve of the secular presentations of the traditional liturgical drama, the secular dramatists began presenting Morality plays, which evolved into Moral Interludes by the early sixteenth century. **Moral Interludes** were shorter than the traditional Morality play, and they included more humorous characters and incidents.

These secular dramatists became the first acting companies, and eventually came under the patronage of the nobility. Under the influence of the nobility, forms of drama evolved even further to include chronicle plays, productions based on historical events, and masques, highly artistic spectacles glorifying the nobility for which they were written and performed.

Application ACTIVITY

Choose one of the historical cultures covered in the previous pages and research the trends in drama at that time. Prepare a presentation for the class in which you tell how the time period and the culture influenced the theater. You should note the effects the government, as well as the popular religion of the period, had on drama.

The Renaissance and Drama

Renaissance (meaning “rebirth”) is the term commonly used to describe the transition from the medieval to the modern world in western Europe. Beginning in Italy in the early fourteenth century, the Renaissance eventually reached all of Europe and England. This rebirth of interest in the classics and belief in the potential for human perfection touched almost every aspect of life. Painting, sculpture, and architecture flourished, but drama did not—at least not for many years.

THE RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

Although the early offerings of Italian playwrights featured weak imitations of classical plays, cheap obscenities, or poorly constructed scripts, some advances in the dramatic arts were made in Italy during the Renaissance. Theater architecture was developed, as was stage equipment. Sets with perspective and colored lighting were introduced.

Another contribution to drama made by Italy during the Renaissance was the opera, an attempt to revive the simplicity and humanism of ancient Greek drama. Originally opera was an attempt by a group of



Opera is still a popular form of drama, regularly performed in most major American cities. Because opera originated in Italy, Italian remains the international language of opera.



THEATER HISTORY

This French character, Scaramouche, is evolved from the Italian Scaramuccia, a stock character in the *commedia dell'arte*.

scholars in Florence to imagine how the music of ancient Greek drama sounded. Opera introduced to theater music that emphasized the words with a solo vocal line and simple instrumental accompaniment. By the early seventeenth century, this form of Italian drama was being imitated in England and France.

Commedia dell'arte ("comedy of the profession") was performed by professional troupes specializing in comic improvisation that provided much of the new interest in theater from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. *Commedia dell'arte* troupes had mastered the art of playing out their comic **scenarios**, plot

outlines posted backstage before each performance. There were no fully composed play scripts. Instead, the scenarios were detailed plot outlines that included *lazzi* and certain memorized lines. The *lazzi* were special humorous bits of stage business, usually set apart from the main action. A well-known *lazzi* was one in which the stage action continued while a comic actor laboriously caught a fly. Actors memorized set speeches, such as declarations of love, hate, and madness. The troupes also learned stock jokes, proverbs, songs, exit speeches, and comments on extraneous matters that could be used whenever convenient.

A manager led each troupe and usually wrote the scripts for it. Most plots were based on comic intrigue involving fathers who put obstacles in the way of their children's romances. Servants were very important characters, often successfully completing the matchmaking.

All the characters of the *commedia dell'arte* were stock types representing two social classes: the upper class and the servant class. The characters were identified by their costumes and, generally, by their masks; the **innamorati** and **innamoratee**, however, did not wear masks. The chart on the opposite page describes the most common characters in the *commedia dell'arte*.

CUE

Typically, the *zanni* characters were either clever, wise-cracking clowns or buffoons who acted foolishly to amuse others. Either way, their behavior explains the derivation of the word *zany*.

Stock Characters of Commedia Dell'Arte

Upper-class characters

Innamorati/
Innamoratae
Pantalone

Beautifully dressed young lovers; speak a refined language

A middle-aged or elderly man

- a father who competes romantically with his son
- a husband deceived by a young wife
- an overly protective father guarding his young daughter from suitors

Dottore

Elderly gentleman; friend, sometimes rival of Pantalone; originally a law professor, later a medical man lacking common sense; ancestor of absent-minded professor; master of doubletalk and jargon

Male servant characters

Arlecchino/Harlequin
(zanni)

Usually clever persuaders and schemers; excellent at ad-libbing and acrobatics; clever pranksters, agile in mind and body

Brighella

A thief and bully; street-wise; later becomes lackey

Scapino

Crafty and unprincipled; runs away from danger

Pulcinella

A hump-backed, doltish male character

Pedrolino

A simple, awkward male character

Capitano

A boastful, cowardly Spaniard who brags of battles never fought and romances never experienced

Scaramuccia

A mustached servant; sometimes clever, sometimes cruel

Female servant character

Fontesca

A serving maid; appears in many plays as Columbina, a clever and high-spirited flirt

Many stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte* have evolved into characters we recognize today. Pulcinella was a sometimes foolish, sometimes malicious character with a hooked nose and high-peaked hat. He was the ancestor of Punch of the Punch and Judy shows, puppet shows popular on the streets of cities in Great Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Still another of the male servants was Pedrolino, who later became known as Pierrot, the moonstruck eternal lover—melancholy and gentle, but always too romantic and too sad. Later, a sincerely devoted sweetheart, Pierrette, was paired with him, and they became the eternal lovers. To this duo, the temptress Columbina was added to form the eternal triangle. Another variation of the servant character, Pagliacci, was the man who must make others laugh while his own heart breaks. Scaramuccia later became the French character Scaramouche, who is considered to be the ancestor of the wicked mustached villain common in Victorian melodramas.



THE RENAISSANCE ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

Written drama evolved in Spain, where Cervantes (1547–1616), Lope de Vega (1562–1635), and Calderón (1600–1681) contributed to the mounting interest in theater. One of Spain's foremost the-

THEATER HISTORY

Shown here is a poster advertising a French production of *Life Is a Dream*, a Renaissance play by Spanish playwright Calderón de la Barca. During the Renaissance, common people gained regular access to the arts, and it became profitable for producers to advertise upcoming plays.

atrical contributions is Don Juan, a character derived from a Spanish legend. This sensual character recurs in dramas from the fifteenth to twentieth centuries.

France developed professional theater under the patronage of the state with such great plays as *The Cid* by Corneille (1606–1684); *The Miser*, *The Misanthrope*, and *The Imaginary Invalid* by Molière (1622–1673); and *Phaedra* by Racine (1639–1699).

Strolling players kept the drama alive during this period by appearing before the public in village squares and before the nobility in their castles. They created melodramatic history plays, rowdy comedies, and romantic love stories that were the origins of the great dramas of later generations.

THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

The climax of Renaissance drama came during the Elizabethan Age in England. This was a period in which drama was the expression of the soul of a nation, and theater became a vital force in the lives of the people.

One of the first English comedies, *Ralph Roister Doister*, was produced in 1552. The author, Nicholas Udall (1504–1556), modeled his comedy on Plautus's plays. The first true English tragedy was *Gorboduc*, which was performed in 1562. Many other notable plays were written in England during this period.

Famous Elizabethan Plays	
Author	Play
John Webster (c.1580–1634)	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>
Thomas Heywood (c.1570–1641)	<i>A Woman Killed with Kindness</i>
Thomas Kyd (1558–1594)	<i>The Spanish Tragedy</i>
Francis Beaumont (1584–1616)	<i>The Knight of the Burning Pestle</i>
Beaumont and John Fletcher (1579–1625)	<i>The Maid's Tragedy</i>

THREE ELIZABETHAN DRAMATISTS

Towering above all the brilliant actor-playwrights responsible for the glory of the Elizabethan period, three produced plays that have never lost their appeal. The plays of Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare continue to be produced today.

Christopher Marlowe Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) introduced the first important use of blank (unrhymed) verse, the

CUE

In the Elizabethan theater, specially trained boys played all female roles.

“mighty line” of English poetic drama. Combining an extraordinary use of language and the excitement of melodramatic plots, he wrote *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*. These plays present the glory and the horror of the age. It is his *Doctor Faustus*, the story of a man who sells his soul, however, that brilliantly bridges the gap between the medieval age and the Renaissance.

Ben Jonson Ben Jonson (1572–1637) was a master of English comedy. He wrote *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Every Man in His Humour*.

To the Elizabethans, the word *humor* (or *humour*, as the British spell it) referred not to an attitude of amusement, but to a personality trait. The Renaissance was a period in which anatomical study, as well as the arts, was developing. Scholars believed that all matter was made of four elements—air, earth, fire, and water—and that the human body was composed of these same four elements, each having its own effect on the personality. The balance of the four in each person’s body decided his or her type.

The Humors		
Element	Body Fluid	Personality
air fire water earth	blood yellow bile phlegm black bile	sanguine—light-hearted, happy-go-lucky choleric—angry, hot-tempered phlegmatic—dull, listless melancholy

The humor of most interest in Elizabethan plays is that of black bile, represented by earth and the melancholy personality. The melancholy character fell into three main types: the lover, the malcontent, and the intellectual. Hamlet is an excellent example of the intellectual melancholy humor. Although most stage figures had a predominating humor, a balanced personality was the most desired. This is evidenced by Mark Antony’s tribute to Brutus in *Julius Caesar*: “. . . the elements [were] so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, this was a man.”

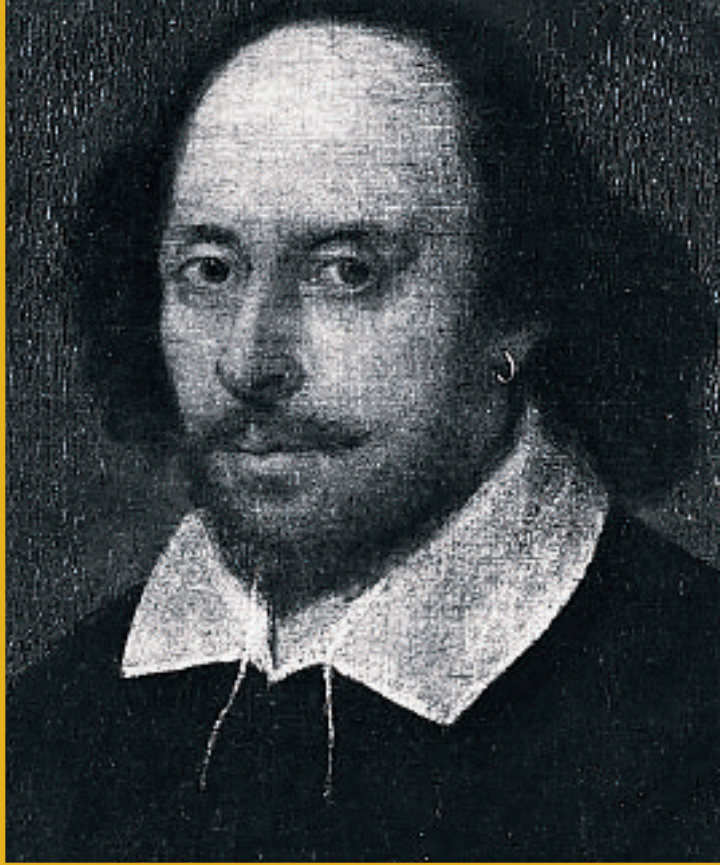
Jonson widened the scope of the humors to include any strong personality trait, especially a weakness, a foible, or a folly that could make a character laughable.

William Shakespeare William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is considered by many people to be not only the greatest Elizabethan dramatist but perhaps

the greatest dramatist of all time. He is a towering literary figure whose characterizations, beautiful poetry, and never-to-be-forgotten lines echo a majesty best expressed by his friendly rival, Ben Jonson, who said that Shakespeare “was not of an age but for all time.”

The ideal way to become acquainted with Shakespeare is to see his plays, not merely to read them or read about them. The plays were written by a practical man of the theater who intended them to be seen—not read—by a loud, boisterous audience accustomed to shouting its approval or hissing its displeasure. A play had to be exciting, moving, and violent, filled with fury, humor, and truth, in order to keep such an audience interested. Shakespeare’s characters felt emotions—love, jealousy, ambition, joy, and grief—that are as universal today as they were four hundred years ago.

The characters form the center of interest in Shakespeare’s plays. Note exactly how each is introduced and how well defined the personality immediately becomes. Because in his day theatergoers did not receive programs to provide explanations, Shakespeare used the soliloquy and accurate descriptions by other actors to delineate his characters. A **soliloquy** is a speech delivered by an actor alone on the stage that reveals the character’s innermost thoughts.



THE GREATS



Elizabethan playwright William Shakespeare produced some of the world’s most enduring plays.

Application ACTIVITY

Read any of Shakespeare’s plays and find examples of dialogues apparently intended for the people who viewed his productions from the area surrounding the pit (the groundlings). Look especially for remarks identified as asides.

CUE

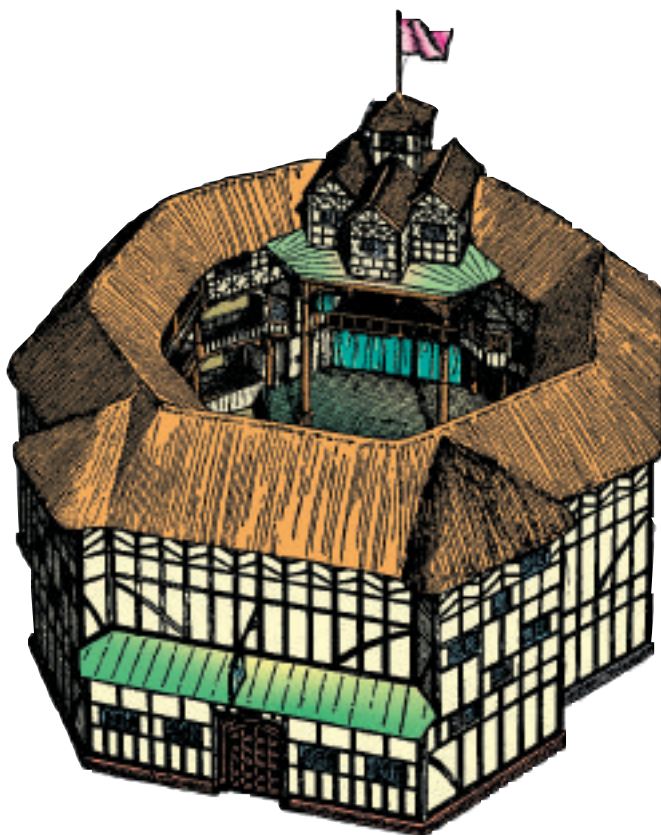
Built in 1576 by James Burbage, the first English public playhouse, the Theatre, was located outside London. His son Cuthbert Burbage was the manager of the company later housed in the famous Globe theater, with which Shakespeare was associated as actor-playwright.

THE ELIZABETHAN PLAYHOUSE

The design of Elizabethan theaters was inspired by inn yards, where the audience stood around a platform stage or watched the onstage action from rooms surrounding a courtyard. These playhouses were many-sided buildings with two levels for acting and three for seating. The acting platform, usually five to six feet above ground level, has been called an unlocalized platform stage because little or no scenery was used to indicate locale. A line from the play, or possibly a symbolic object, was usually enough to inform the audience of the play's geographical setting.

Behind the stage was the **tiring house**, a room that functioned as the actors' dressing room. In the center rear of the stage

ELIZABETHAN THEATER



was a curtained recess called the **study**, or inner below. This area was used to reveal particular settings, such as a bedroom or the tent of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the center of the second-level acting area was a shallow balcony, the **tarras**, behind which a curtain called the **arras** was often hung to conceal another recess called the **chamber**. This area might have been used by musicians, or even members of the audience. Under the stage was a cellar that held the devices used to project ghosts and demons through trapdoors in the floor of the stage. These trapdoors were used in scenes like that of the gravediggers in *Hamlet*.

The **Heavens**, a roof supported by two ornate columns, was above the stage. The sun, moon, stars, clouds, and the signs of the zodiac were painted on the underside of the roof. An actor who spoke of the heavens and earth had only to point to the roof over-



CUE

In some of his plays, Shakespeare commented sharply on the lack of discernment of the people standing in the pit, who reeked of garlic and body odor, ate and drank during the performances, and reacted loudly to what they liked and disliked.

The original Globe theater opened in 1599 but burned in 1613. It was immediately rebuilt and operated until 1642. In 1989 excavation began to find the original foundation—five percent of which was uncovered. Historians used that portion of foundation along with other archaeological evidence to rebuild the twenty-sided theater. Its opening season was the summer of 1997.



head and the stage floor beneath to create the illusion of a microcosmic universe. The back wall of the stage looked like the outside of a multistoried Elizabethan house.

Above the Heavens was what appeared to be a small house, which was appropriately called the **scenery hut**. This structure housed the machinery that raised and lowered actors to the stage, often implying these actors were ghosts or supernatural creatures. When a play was to be performed, a trumpeter played in the tower above the scenery hut. A flag was flown from the tower on the days of performances, too.

Because there was no electricity at this time, the area surrounding the stage, known as the pit, was open to the sky to supply sunlight. Since these structures were not protected from the elements, the floor was sloped toward a central drain to carry off rainfall. The members of the audience who paid a penny to stand in the pit were called **groundlings**. The groundlings were typically apprentices, soldiers, sailors, country folk, and “cut purses,” the Elizabethan equivalent of present-day pickpockets. The surface of the pit consisted of a mixture of ash, sand, silt, and hazelnut shells, partially because the audience amused itself during the play by eating nuts and apples. The more refined audience occupied the gallery seats, for which an additional fee was charged. The most expensive seats were next to, above, or even on the stage.

The stage of the reconstructed Globe features an ornate back wall that has three openings. The pillars on each side of the stage are made of oak and painted to look like marble. They support the Heavens, the name given to the painted ceiling of the stage.



Later Drama in England

Following the Elizabethan era, England experienced a period of civil war, beginning in 1642, that ended with the formation of a republican government controlled by the Puritans. For eighteen years, all theater was banned. It was not until the Restoration in 1660, when the monarchy was restored and Charles II became king, that theater became legal again.

RESTORATION DRAMA

Important innovations were made in drama during the Restoration. (Most of them, however, were incorporations of developments in Europe.) With the English Royal Patent of 1662, which awarded a theater monopoly to two entrepreneurs, women appeared as players for the first time. The patent said that “all women’s parts should be performed by women” and that plays and acting should be considered “not only harmless delights but useful and instructive representations of human life.”

Theater buildings influenced by Italian theater practice and closed to the sky were built during this period. Audiences were seated on level floors. So that they could all see the performance, the stage floor was **raked**, that is, sloped upward away from the viewers. The actors, therefore, moved “up” and “down” the stage. This is how the terms *upstage* and *downstage* came into existence. It was also during the Restoration that elaborate scenery and mechanical equipment came into use in England.

Among the Restoration dramatists are a few whose plays are still performed today. William Wycherley (1640–1716), with *The Country Wife*, started the fashionable trend in comedies. William Congreve’s (1670–1729) *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World* set a standard for later comedies of manners. George Farquhar (1678–1707), with *The Beaux’ Stratagem*, brought a refreshing breath of the country into the dissolute city life depicted on the stage.

ENGLISH DRAMA SINCE 1700

The eighteenth century produced only two outstanding playwrights. Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816) wrote two social comedies: *The School for Scandal* and *The Rivals*, which features the immortal Mrs. Malaprop, the world’s greatest misuser of words. Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774) was a dramatist whose fame in the theater rests on one play, *She Stoops to Conquer*.

CUE

During the Restoration, only two playhouses had official sanction. Their names are still famous: the Drury Lane Theater and Lincoln’s Inn Fields. From these two theaters came the term *legitimate theater*, which we now use to refer to professional stage plays.

This is a nineteenth century playbill from Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado*. Comedy saw a revival in popularity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



The London stage of the nineteenth century established the trends that have given it the prestige it holds today. Gilbert and Sullivan created their clever comic operas, among them *The Mikado*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Oscar Wilde, with his genius for epigrams and brilliant dialogue, wrote *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the end of the century.

Of all English dramatists, many people feel that Irish-born Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) ranks as the greatest playwright next to Shakespeare. Shaw was a playwright dedicated to the exploration of ideas through drama. His satiric humor and fascinating characters keep alive such plays as *Saint Joan*, *Candida*, *Man and Superman*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Pygmalion*, *Androcles and the Lion*, and *Arms and the Man*.

Shaw stresses two concepts in his plays. The first of these was what he called the “Life Force”—the belief that humanity will improve and

strengthen in spite of itself. Shaw states this philosophy strongly in the third act of *Man and Superman* in a dream sequence often presented alone as “Don Juan in Hell.” The second idea is called the “Thinking Person’s Society.” Shaw said that of every group of 1,000 people, there are 700 who do not think, 299 idealists, and 1 thinking person. Shaw hoped to turn the idealists into thinkers through engagement with his dramas.

England is still a center for theater lovers today. They flock to London to the National Theatre, the Barbican, and the West End, where they can choose from any number of productions of all types. They are assured versatile and superlative acting at reasonable prices.

Summer theater festivals flourish throughout Great Britain. Of these, the Royal Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, the Edinburgh International Festival, and the Malvern Festival offer the most varied and exciting fare.

You may be familiar with the works of such modern British playwrights as John Osborne, who introduced the “angry young men” in *Look Back in Anger*; J. B. Priestley (*An Inspector Calls*); T. S. Eliot (*Murder in the Cathedral*); Harold Pinter (*The Caretaker*); Tom Stoppard (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*); Caryl Churchill (*Top Girls*); Peter Shaffer (*Amadeus*); and Alan Ayckbourn (*Absurd Person Singular*).

Later Drama Elsewhere in Europe

Drama has flourished throughout Europe for three centuries. European dramatists have initiated trends that have been followed in other parts of the world.

Czechoslovakia The Čapek brothers in the former Czechoslovakia achieved fame in the 1920s and 1930s with expressionistic plays that deal with social issues. The theme of *R. U. R. (Rossum’s Universal Robots)*, for example, is robots taking over humanity.

Germany Goethe (gœ•tə), who wrote from the 1770s to the early 1800s, towers above all other German writers. His poetic drama *Faust* tells the tragedy of a man who sold his soul to the devil to attain all his worldly desires and regain his youth. It is written in verse and has inspired three operas as well as literary works in languages other than German. Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller developed an approach to theater and acting that influenced actors and playwrights far beyond their geographical sphere.

In the 1890s, Gerhart Hauptmann began the new era of realism, called naturalism, in the German theater. His most noted work is *The Weavers*, a great drama that sets forth a social issue built around a group protagonist.



Henrik Ibsen, a nineteenth-century Norwegian playwright, is sometimes referred to as the father of modern drama. The scene shown is from one of his masterpieces, *Hedda Gabler*.

From the 1920s through the 1950s, Bertolt Brecht developed epic theater. *Mother Courage*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* are among his plays most often produced in the United States.

France Molière, Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Alexandre Dumas in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, produced important drama in France. In the late nineteenth century, Edmond Rostand wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac*, the romance of a poet-swordsman with a huge nose. The story is world-famous, and several movies have retold the tale. Many French writers found success in the last half of the twentieth century. Among them are Jean Giraudoux (*Tiger at the Gates*, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*) and Jean Anouilh (*The Lark*, *Antigone*, *Becket*), who have been popular in the United States. Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* and *The Flies* reflect an existential outlook. Although he was born in Ireland, Samuel Beckett's plays were written in France.

He is especially known for *Waiting for Godot*. The musicals *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon* by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg have made a major impression on theater audiences in recent years.

Ireland Drama in Ireland has a brief but brilliant history, starting at the turn of the twentieth century with the plays of William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory. Yeats was dedicated to retelling the ancient tales of Ireland through poetic drama. *At the Hawk's Well* beautifully combines myth, dance, and poetry. Augusta (Lady) Gregory was mainly responsible, along with Yeats, for establishing theater in Ireland. Her own plays include *Spreading the News* and *Hyacinth Halvey*, and she collaborated with Yeats on several others. John Millington Synge, who wrote in the early 1900s, is considered by many to be one of the finest Irish dramatists. *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Riders to the Sea* are frequently produced today. Sean O'Casey, with *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, was the prominent mid-century voice of Irish theater. Late twentieth-century Irish playwrights include Brian Friel (*Dancing at Lughnasa*) and Brendan Behan (*The Hostage*).

Italy Luigi Pirandello, who wrote in the early 1900's, held the conviction that people are not what they appear. This is central to the themes of his plays. His works are complicated and intriguing. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Henry IV* are the most frequently produced of his works.

Norway During the last half of the nineteenth century, Henrik Ibsen of Norway, sometimes called the father of modern drama and the father of

realism, introduced realism in dialogue and characterization. His chief theme—that society must protect and develop the individual rights of each person—had a special appeal for Americans. Ibsen wrote two magnificent dramas in the Romantic style, *Peer Gynt* and *Brand*, but it is his realistic dramas—*A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Master Builder*—that account for his widespread popularity.

Russia Two Russians are especially influential in their contributions to the theater. The early realist playwright Anton Chekhov was perhaps the greatest Russian dramatist. Written primarily in the late 1890s, his plays include *The Sea Gull*, *The Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. Konstantin Stanislavski, Chekhov's greatest interpreter, had a tremendous influence on acting. Portions of his writings are used as the basis for defining Method acting, the acting theory centered on the inner understanding of a role plus the perfecting of the physical response. (More can be found about Stanislavski in Chapter 4.) The Moscow Art Theater, which Stanislavski founded and directed, became the finest in the world from the viewpoint of ensemble and realistic production.

Spain José Echegaray employed the verse form and the imagery of the Romantics, but his plays often deal with controversial social issues of the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was the only Spanish dramatist whose plays were acted abroad until Jacinto Benavente won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1922 for *The Passion Flower*. Symbolist playwright Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, written in the 1930s, is frequently seen in university theaters.

Drama in Asia

China Drama in China dates to A.D. 200, beginning with rituals that combined song, dance, gestures, and costumes. When theater captured the interest of the ruling dynasties, drama based on traditional Chinese myths and legends became an important art form.

Chinese drama has traditionally been linked to the government and the country's political situation. Translated Western dramas of the early twentieth century, such as the stage adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, were brought to China from Europe and the United States. When the Japanese invaded China in 1937, playwrights wrote new plays and reworked old plays to include patriotic propaganda. With the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 came more government involvement in the arts, but this time it was in the form of censorship. At the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1972, the regulation of theater ended and a strong dramatic tradition that had been suppressed for twenty-three years emerged.

FROM THE PROS

"I hope that theater and the arts will eventually take their rightful place in this country, like elections to preserve our freedom and education to nurture our minds."

—MING CHO LEE,
CHINESE SET DESIGNER

Actors of Kabuki theater devote their entire lives to their art. As a result, Kabuki productions are characterized by extraordinary richness.

Peking Opera, developed early in the nineteenth century, incorporates aspects of historical drama, spoken drama, song drama, dance drama, and ballet—the five main types of drama in China today. Despite the history of governmental regulation, many traditional aspects have remained intact in the various types of Chinese drama. The stage settings are scarce and symbolic; for example, a desk might symbolize a mountain if an actor stands on it, or it might symbolize an altar if the actor kneels. Costumes are often stylized, representing traditional characters and social classes throughout Chinese history. Symbolic colors and designs that represent different human qualities are used in makeup. Even though these traditions prevail, the tradition of exclusively using male actors has not, and today both women and men appear onstage.

Japan Three forms of drama that are uniquely Japanese—*No*, *Bunraku*, or doll theater; and *Kabuki*—have been introduced to the rest of the world.

No In an attempt to create a form of drama suitable for the Japanese nobility, fourteenth-century actor Zeami Motokiyo fused and refined two earlier, rougher forms of entertainment. The result was *No* drama. Zeami looked to classical Japanese literature for the subject matter of *No*, bringing to life brave warriors, honorable young women, and revered gods and demons. *No* combines words, dance, and music that are rhythmically coordinated to the events of the story.

These traditional forms of *No* have been passed down from generation to generation by actors who dedicate their lives to the art form. There are generally three parts in a *No* production: *jo-ha-kyu*. To understand these parts, think of the *jo* as the introduction, the *ha* as the body, and the *kyu* as the conclusion. However, the *ha* of a *No* production is also broken down into the *jo*, *ha*, and *kyu*. This highly-structured form of drama usually starts with a story about a god and progresses to include a warrior play, a love story with a beautiful woman, and a frenzied closing dance by a god or demon.

No is still performed in Japan much as it was performed almost six hundred years ago. In keeping with tradition, only men are players in *No*. However, due to the changing tastes of audiences, the tempo of *No* has slowed over the centuries.



Bunraku In the late 1600s, puppets, chanting, and music were combined in **Bunraku**, or Japanese doll theater. *Bunraku* puppets are four-foot tall marionettes carved from wood in intricate detail—including realistic, moveable eyes, eyebrows, and mouths. Each puppet is manipulated by three puppeteers dressed in black who hold the puppet close to their bodies as they move around the stage. Dialogue is assigned to specialized chanters who appear onstage to perform each scene. As in *No*, only men are players in *Bunraku*.

Kabuki In the seventeenth century, **Kabuki** developed as a form of entertainment for the general population. Striving to be fashionable and up-to-date, *Kabuki* borrows the popular aspects of many Japanese drama styles, including *No* and *Bunraku*. Like these two forms of drama, *Kabuki* permits only male performers; however, *Kabuki* distinguishes itself through characteristic makeup and costuming, assorted musical styles, demanding vocal displays, and production-enhancing stage settings. Today *Kabuki* is enjoying a revival with Japanese youth as it continues to be an innovative art form.



CUE

The special *No* theater is like a temple, with an eighteen-foot square extending into the audience. The square is supported by four wooden pillars that form part of the action.



Drama in the United States

The American Company, managed by David Douglass, was the first professional company to produce plays in the American colonies. The first play was *The Prince of Parthia*, by Thomas Godfrey, presented on April 24, 1767, in Philadelphia. It was strictly an imitation of British blank-verse tragedies and had only one performance. *The Contrast*, by Royall Tyler, which opened at the John Street Theater in New York City on April 16, 1787, was the first comedy to achieve professional success in the United States. It introduced Jonathon, the original typical Yankee—shrewd, wholesome, and humorous—who has appeared in many guises since. *Fashion*, by Anna Cora Mowatt, produced in 1845, however, is considered to be the first uniquely American comedy. It, like *The Contrast*, satirizes social pretenders.

Actors The first actors on American stages were English professional troupes who presented popular London plays. The legendary family that links the early American stage with the modern is the Barrymores. John Drew was an Irish actor who came to America in 1846; he married Louise Lane, the first female American actor-manager. They had three children: John Drew; Sidney; and Georgiana, who married Maurice Barrymore, a dashing Irish actor. The Barrymores were the parents of Lionel, Ethel, and John, who were America's leading actors for years.



CUE

The first theater in America was built in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1716, but there was no trace of it left by the time the city was restored in the 1920s.

Two noteworthy American actors broke new ground when they found success abroad. Ira Aldridge (1804–1867) was the first great African American actor to achieve international fame when he appeared as Othello in London. He was also critically acclaimed for his portrayal of King Lear in Russia. Charlotte Cushman (1816–1876) became the first American woman to find success on the stage abroad. She popularized the nineteenth-century practice of women playing male roles with her portrayals of such Shakespearean characters as Hamlet and Romeo.

Edwin Booth (1833–1893) is one of the greatest romantic actors America has produced. His illustrious career suffered an eclipse when his brother, John Wilkes Booth, also a well-known actor, assassinated Abraham Lincoln. Edwin Booth retired temporarily after the assassination and never appeared again in Washington, D.C.

Playwrights Well into the early part of the twentieth century, American playwrights continued to follow prevailing conventions. Beginning in the 1920s, however, American theater became more innovative, sometimes even experimental. The social problems of the twentieth century have

In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller depicts the Salem witch trials so evocatively that audience members can often feel disturbing connections to the past.



In *A Raisin in the Sun*, playwright Lorraine Hansberry explores the stresses that pull at and the ties that bind family members.

been explained and dramatized in the plays of many American playwrights. Whatever the type of play or the style in which it was written, most have one factor in common: they explore and explain issues and problems that have long affected the lives of American citizens. Topics once too controversial for public discussion could now be safely examined in the anonymity of a darkened theater.

Leading the way was Eugene O'Neill; his neo-Aristotelian tragedies deal with issues ranging from interpersonal relationships to faith. *The Emperor Jones*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* are only a few of his gripping dramas. Clifford Odets developed a theater of social protest in the 1930s. His plays included *Waiting for Lefty* and *Country Girl*. In 1949 Arthur Miller won the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics Circle Award for what was to become known as a classic American tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*. Miller's other moral and political tragedies include *The Crucible* and *All My Sons*. Thornton Wilder examines life in a small town in the classic *Our Town*. *The Matchmaker* (from which *Hello, Dolly!* was adapted) and *The Skin of Our Teeth* are other contributions from Wilder.

As the twentieth century progressed, new playwrights wrote in earnest about problems of American society. Although James Baldwin was best known for other forms of literature, his plays *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *Amen Corner* were important influences on the civil rights movement



of the 1960s. Lillian Hellman explores the moral landscape of the South in her plays *The Children's Hour* and *Little Foxes*. Lorraine Hansberry wrote about a variety of social issues, such as equality for women and family solidarity. She was the first African American and the youngest person to win the New York Drama Critics Circle Award when she won in 1959 for *A Raisin in the Sun*. Known as the “playwright of woman’s selfhood,” Susan Glaspell wrote plays that were influences in the feminist movement in the early twentieth century. Her most critically acclaimed works include *Alison’s House*, for which she won a Pulitzer Prize, and *Trifles*.

Charles Fuller won the Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for his play about problems in the military, *A Soldier’s Play*. Alice Childress deals forthrightly with racism in her plays *Wine in the Wilderness* and *Trouble in Mind*. The first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama, Charles Gordone won in 1970 for *No Place to Be Somebody*, in which he explored what motivates people to survive against fantastic odds. Neil Simon, one of the most prolific writers of the twentieth century, writes comedies that are both personal and universal. *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and *Biloxi Blues* are just a few of his many successful efforts.

David Henry Hwang skillfully blends Eastern and Western cultures in his plays *M. Butterfly* and *FOB*. Loneliness, gender conflict, and the paradox of reality and myth are presented in terse, pointed dialogue in the plays of David Mamet. *Glengarry Glen Ross*, which won the Pulitzer in



This scene is from *FOB* by David Henry Hwang, who also wrote *M. Butterfly*.

1984, and *Oleanna* are two of his best-known efforts. August Wilson's plays examine African Americans throughout the twentieth century. Wilson's goal is to ask one question for each decade of the century and to answer it in a play. *Fences* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1987, and *The Piano Lesson* won in 1990. Wendy Wasserstein has been dubbed the "voice of her generation" for her comedies dealing with how bright, well-educated women cope with the often-conflicting demands of career and family in the age of feminism. The *Heidi Chronicles* is her best-known play. Music, dance, and poetry are combined in Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*. This coming-of-age play probes the experiences of women who feel isolated from the rest of society. Beth Henley, whose best-known plays are *Crimes of the Heart* and *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, examines the emotional struggles of Southern women and their families. Henley's offbeat humor and intimate tone shed a unique light on the conflict between freedom and responsibility. John Guare uses farcical comedy to look at domestic relations, society, politics, and religion. His most popular plays are *The House of Blue Leaves* and *Six Degrees of Separation*. Known mostly for his off-Broadway successes, Sam Shepard employs a unique blend of styles to expose the myths of the American culture. His *Buried Child* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1979.

Henley's *Crimes of the Heart* provides the actors with a challenging opportunity to portray roles of depth and humor. The actors playing the three sisters must portray their feelings toward each other with an understanding of their past life together.





CHAPTER

7

REVIEW

Summary and Key Ideas

Summarize the chapter by answering the following questions.

1. How did drama probably originate?
2. What was the function of the Greek chorus?
3. Name three authors of Greek tragedies and some of their works.
4. How did the Saint and Mystery plays change drama?
5. What is the Renaissance? How did it affect drama?
6. Describe some of the characters of the commedia dell'arte.
7. Who were the great Elizabethan dramatists?
8. What is the essence of the *No* theater?
9. Identify the following playwrights: Shaw, Cervantes, O'Neill, Goethe, Ibsen, Marlowe, Miller.

Discussing Ideas

1. If you could choose one period in the history of the theater in which to be an actor, which would it be? Why?
2. Shakespeare was an actor as well as a playwright. How do you think his stage experience affected his writing?
3. Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage. . . ." What do you think this means?

FOCUS ON

Theater and American Society

What do medieval craft guilds and the playwrights of recent times have in common?

In their style and subject matter, both show the influence of the social concerns of the people of their day.

Analyzing Theater and Society In *A Raisin in the Sun*, playwright Lorraine Hansberry explored the relationships in an African American family struggling to overcome poverty. Her topic matter was so fresh that writer James Baldwin commented, "Never before, in the entire history of the American theater, had so much of the truth about black people's lives been seen on stage." Hansberry was continuing a tradition of

playwrights interested in social change. Do research to help you find two American playwrights who were influenced by the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. After learning about their work, write a one-page paper analyzing how the playwrights were influenced by events in American society.

Exploring Criticism Comparing the views of different critics can help you understand a work better. Find two pieces of dramatic criticism—or critical writing—about the work of one of the playwrights you found in your research. Give the class a short presentation comparing and contrasting the pieces of criticism.

REVIEW WORKSHOP

HISTORY OF DRAMA

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

Modern Morality Play Choose one of Aesop's fables, such as "The Fox and the Hare" or "The Boy Who Cried 'Wolf'," and use it as the basis of a short morality play. Keep in mind that your goal is to illustrate and teach a lesson about right and wrong behavior. The characters should personify virtues or qualities. Sketch out the conflict and its resolution and have a classmate help

you present your play. Ask the class to identify what the characters represent.

Shakespearean Interpretation Choose a particularly moving or meaningful monologue from a Shakespearean play. Use the role-scoring questions in Chapter 4 to analyze your character; then present your monologue to the class. Discuss why this character, and so many of Shakespeare's characters, are still recognizable today. What might explain the survival of Shakespeare's work?



Cooperative Learning Activity

Tragic Greek Myths Greek tragedy and some myths have

in common the theme of conflict between the gods and a mortal who fights to be in control of his or her destiny. In fighting for such a goal, however, a person is guilty of hubris, or overwhelming pride, and there are consequences. With a group of classmates, choose a myth that embodies this theme and turn it into a Greek tragedy, complete with chorus. Have the class suggest alternative ways of resolving the conflict.

Across the CURRICULUM Activity

History Drama has evolved from rough pantomimes of wars and hunts to the more

refined productions of the Renaissance through drama today. To better understand the importance of drama, research the historical and cultural developments in theatrical styles and genres. Perhaps you will find it easier to narrow your search to a certain century or a certain culture. Look for some reflection of the life of the times in the theatrical trends. Use your findings to argue in favor of one of the following:

- Drama is a mere form of entertainment.
- Drama is a reflection of the lives and times of cultures.

Discuss your research in a group and see if anyone has found evidence to support or refute your argument.



Puppet Theater

Puppets have long been a part of theater throughout the world. From the earliest forms of Asian drama to the most recent American television programs, puppet theater has engaged and delighted both sophisticated adults and naive children.

Skilled puppeteers can generate a drama as intense and powerful as any found on the traditional stage or as whimsical and imaginative as *The Muppets* or *Sesame Street*. In fact, it is this versatility that affords the student of drama great challenges and great opportunities.

KINDS OF PUPPETS

Puppets are as diverse as the art of puppetry itself, ranging from elaborate, costumed characters to a few dabs of paint on a puppeteer's hand. In American theater and television three types of puppets are most frequently used.

Hand Puppets

The most common type of puppet is the glove or hand puppet. In its simplest form, this puppet consists of a cloth tube into which the puppeteer inserts his or her hand. By manipulating the fingers and thumb, a face and mouth are formed and contorted into various expressions. Eyes, nose, ears, and whiskers can be suggested by attaching

Bunraku, ancient Japanese puppet theater, is still performed today. The puppeteers dress in black, and all but the master puppeteer wear black gauze hoods.



buttons or similar items. Some hand puppets incorporate rigid material around the mouth to form movable jaws. By opening and closing the jaws, the puppeteer can create the illusion of speech. The three-finger puppet allows the puppeteer to insert the fingers or the thumb into both arms and the head.

When using any of the hand puppets, the puppeteer must exercise care to conceal the junction of his or her arm and the puppet. This is accomplished by covering his or her wrist and arm with a black sleeve or a material that matches the skirt of the puppet.

Rod Puppets

A second type of puppet is the rod puppet. Rod puppets are controlled from below by rods made of wire or thin strips of wood. Usually a main rod supports the weight of the puppet while smaller rods operate individual parts of the puppet's body. Like most puppets, rod puppets can be constructed either from simple materials like tongue depressors and plastic spoons or from highly crafted synthetic materials, using swivel



The Muppets, shown in both photos, are popular examples of rod puppets.





connections at various body joints. Some of the familiar puppets seen on television are complex combinations of hand puppets and rod puppets that require several puppeteers to operate.

Marionettes

Marionettes, a third type of puppet, are controlled by strings from above. As with rod puppets, the strings are attached to various parts of a jointed body. These strings are operated from a wooden control bar. Black or clear nylon strings are used because they cannot easily be seen by the audience.

THE CHALLENGE OF PUPPETRY

The challenge lies in merging oneself with a lifeless bundle of cloth, Styrofoam™, string, and similar materials to create a single performer. With the challenge, however, comes opportunity; puppets provide a mask behind which an inexperienced actor can feel safe to experiment with imaginative characterizations. Through the medium of the puppet, it is possible for an actor truly to “let go.”

The manipulation of a puppet, especially the marionette or rod types, requires practice and experimentation. Once you have become skillful at handling the puppet, however, the possibilities for puppet theater are virtually limitless. Some puppet theater is entirely visual, using only the actions of the puppet to tell the story. Others use adaptations of existing scripts. Still others rely on entirely original material. Before deciding on a script, however, you must determine a purpose for the puppet show and identify the audience. Is the performance intended to entertain, to teach, or to attain some special goal? Will the audience be familiar with the story? What are the ages and interests of the people in the audience?

It is usually a good idea to write a scenario or a walk-through for the puppets to determine the sequence of action, puppet and voice changes, and similar requirements. This might be followed with a reading or a performance before a trial audience.

It is particularly important to know the size of the puppet theater and the audience's view of the stage. One good strategy is to videotape a rehearsal to be certain that the audience is seeing what you intend and not what you wish to conceal.