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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA

The Medieval period is also called the middle ages. It lasted from fifth to fifteenth century. Medieval drama was preceded by Greek and Roman drama and followed by Elizabethan drama. Medieval English Drama provides a fresh introduction to the dramatic and festive practices of England in the late middle ages.

This concept places particular emphasis on the importance of the performance theatre buildings when performance took place in a wide variety of locations and had to fight to attract and maintain the attention of an audience.

Medieval drama arose from the ashes of Roman drama. At the last stage of Roman drama, just before it evolved into medieval drama, there was that element of infamy which entered it and which was vehemently opposed by the church. That was why some critics described it as degenerate theatre and its disappearance during the barbaric invasions of the sixth century was the immediate aftermath of that degeneration.

Two most popular vernacular dramas that sprang up during this period were the Mystery Plays, which dramatized Biblical events, and the Miracle plays which were based on the lives of saints. The Morality plays were also example of a typical morality play. In the morality plays, medieval drama nearly spurned its Biblical and theological grave clothes, but this was not achieved because principles explored in these plays can be heard in any Sunday sermon. Farcical interlude, short dramas that were presented between events at entertainments and feasts, also developed during this period.

The medieval stage at the time when drama was with the church was by no means crude, but it was a stage that was wholly devoted to expounding religious philosophy and nothing else.

Renaissance is used to describe a period intellectual and artistic achievements. Renaissance is word which means 'rebirth'. The Renaissance therefore, means the period cultural rebirth. It was that marked the rediscovery of past heritage, an age which epitomized in the rediscovery of Greek and Roman civilizations.

The renaissance age is marked with a number of inventions- the invention of printing, the establishment of universities, and the fall of Constantinople which caused scholars of Classical literature to spread all over Europe. The invention of the printing press made it possible for classical literature to be printed and taken to Western Europe.

English Renaissance drama grew out of the established Medieval tradition of the mystery and morality plays. These public spectacles focused on religious subjects and were generally enacted by either choristers and monks or a town's tradesmen as later seen lovingly memorized by Shakespeare's 'mechanicals' in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

At the end of the fifteenth century, a new type of play appeared. These short plays and revels were performed at noble households and at court, especially at holiday times. These short entertainments called 'interludes' started the move away from the didactic nature of the earlier plays toward purely secular plays and often added more comedy than was present in the medieval predecessors.