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DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA

TOPIC: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA USING A TEXT AS AN EXAMPLE TO BOTH.

The relationship between medieval and Renaissance drama is seen in its contents. The medieval drama came about after the fifth century collapse of the Roman Empire, and ascension of Christian churches into power. It arose from the ashes of Roman drama. It characterizes the activities of the church with its main focus on propagating faith through drama, expanding religion and philosophy. It centers on Biblical and theological activities thus, sermonization which were brought about through morality plays miracle plays and mystery plays. For instance "Every man", by Ben Jonson. The work/text include such abstractions and generic representations as every man; death, strength, God and five wit. Every man teaches important lesson through its allegorical characters which were mostly biblical principles filled with humor and volpone. These were the plays invented by the mystery cycles when they became independent of the church. Thus; they got it established as a secular entertainment. The church facade

became the setting but with time, the invention of *Quem quaeritis* through impersonation appeared in the medieval drama.

Due to the peculiarities of certain church celebrations, the medieval drama started declining as the Catholic Church withdrew its support from them because they said it weakened the church. The Protestants regarding it as a tool for propagation of the Catholic doctrine also made Queen Elizabeth II to ban it.

These medieval dramas did not just die but with its secular quality, it overthrew its religious qualities and paved way for the development of the renaissance drama. Its relationship with the renaissance is seen in its secular qualities that make up the renaissance drama and the fact that its decline preceded the renaissance coming.

The Renaissance drama, witnessed a kind of cultural rebirth or awakening of the Greek and Roman heritage and its rediscovery. It was a period of greater invention that comprises the invention of the printing, establishment of Universities and the spread of classical literature all over Europe due to the death of the Neo classical age. Ancients particularly the Greeks and Romans thus; paving away for the rebirth of comic form, *commedia dell'arte*, just like the farcical interlude introduced during the medieval drama period for entertainments. This period gave rise to the spirit of humanism. It adopted also the interlude: a popular

drama of the medieval period and its activities were also drawn from religious activities of the Greek and Rome, just like medieval drama also drew its religious activities from the bible. For instance, most of Shakespearian works institute the renaissance drama. Hamlet a case study; we see in the work, the invention of cosmic forces, ghost, and struggle which also characterized the Greek period drama that make up the renaissance period. The serious atmosphere and the tension created in the text were associated with the death of Hamlets father. We also saw an invention of play introduce to release tension, which introduces a kind of fun or comedy to the work; the issue of using an arrow to play in other to test their strengths by the guards. The Renaissance drama characterization of richness and romance make it a more serious and adventurous work.