

**UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA,
NSUKKA**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS EDUCATION
(EDUCATION – ENGLISH)**

TOPIC:

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIEVAL DRAMA
AND RENAISSANCE DRAMA**

AN ASSIGNMENT

**PREPARED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT OF THE COURSE ELS 140
(INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA)**

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REG. NO: 2016/238197

LECTURER: MR. OYEKA ODOH

JULY, 2017

MEDIEVAL DRAMA

The middle Ages or the Medieval era lasted from 5th century to the 15th century. Therefore, the literature that belongs to this period is known as medieval literature. However, it is important to note that English literature is said to begin with the epic poem Beowulf, which was written somewhere between 8th and 11th century. One of the most important features of the early medieval literature is that most of the literary work were written in Old English, such as the case of Beowulf. Most of the early literature of the middle ages were also anonymous.

Religion occupied an important place in the medieval literature; most of the work used Christian themes such as death and resurrection, good and evil, and heaven and Earth. The code of chivalry and courtly love were also famous themes medieval literature. These themes were commonly used in a genre called romances or chivalric romance which generally about the adventures of a knight-errant having many heroic and chivalric qualities. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a perfect example of this genre.

Pearl Poet's Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Langland's Piers Plowman, John Gower's Confessio Amantis, and the works of Geoffrey Chaucer including Canterbury Tales are some examples of literature in the medieval era.

RENAISSANCE DRAMA

The Renaissance was a cultural and artistic movement which bridges the gap between the middle ages and modern history. The English renaissance dates from the late 15th to the early 17th century. The introduction of the printing press was a major event in this period which led to the flourish of literature.

Renaissance Literature was mainly influenced by the ideas of Renaissance art, politics, and religion; in addition, it was also heavily influenced by Greek and Roman literature. Drama and poetry were the most popular forms of renaissance literature.

The renaissance writers explored religious and social themes in their work; the religious themes were often explored with a completely different approach than the medieval writers. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* are some examples for this theme.

William Shakespeare is one of the most popular examples of Renaissance writers. His writing was influenced by Greek tragedy, historical and social issues.

Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Sir Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, John Donne and George Herbert are some notable figures in Renaissance literature.