

Mystery Plays:

Mystery plays originated in the Middle Ages. When the churchgoers were lack of interest to the typical church services and were ignorance of latin language, this mystery lays were flourished. Initially, these mystery plays were played in the church complex, but in later ages, were staged outside of the church. Theatricals became more popular among the common folks. At first, the mystery plays were composed on religious issues, but gradually, these issues got less importance when the plays came out of the church authority. The religious themes began to disappear from such mystery plays. In 1210 A.D. there was a ban of Mystery Plays. Pope innocent III banned the Mystery Plays. This ban causes its performances in small town guilds. Ultimately, there was a cut off tie between the plays and the church. The town guilds began to stage their plays according to their wishes. Day by7 day, the audience to see the plays was growing more and more. Therefore, the town guilds introduced Corpus Christy festival in 1311. This happened 57 days after Easter. The performances of plays were grouped together. The plays consisted of “ Noah and Flood”, “The Creation of the World”, “The Fall of Adam”. From these small groups came the four most prominent collections of mystery plays. Each group has its own plays named pageants. The York Cycle has 48 pageants; the Townly plays with 32 pageants, the Chester cycle with 24 pageants, and the Wakefield (N-town) plays with 42 pageants.

The ‘Mystery’ is derived from Latin word, *ministerium*. The meaning of this term is an association of clergy from different religious groups. This term was used to mean the guilds which performed these plays. Gradually, these plays were less interested among the people in the end of 15th century and in the beginning of Reformation, these plays were replaced in popularity by Morality plays.

The Mystery plays have some characteristics. The Old and New Testament miracles were dramatized in Mystery plays. Christ and his crucifixion, and resurrections are another trait of Mystery plays. In the beginning of these plays, the clergymen and other church members performed roles in Mystery plays. Later of time, it came out of church and lost its spiritual control. The performers were of guild of crafts background. The other characteristic is that these mystery plays did not maintain the unities: time, place and action.