**Mystery Plays (Miracles)**

For the most part, authors in the Middle Ages knew nothing of Greek drama, where theater was born -

Drama in Medieval times was primarily ***religious*** in nature

The basis for all Medieval drama was **the Latin mass**.

Its sole purpose was to keep remembrance of the ***Passion***, its antecedents and its implications, before the eyes and in the minds of the people.

Dramatic performances were held during festivals of the church exclusively.

**Easter**

**Christmas**

**Whitsun (Pentecost)**

Plays were devised and written by the clergy and were performed by pious laymen of the church. Plays or performances were known as **cycles**.

**Cycles** could have, as their subject matter, things like the story of the birth of Jesus, the biblical story of mankind from Creation and Fall to Redemption and Judgement, the Passion of Christ, etc. - always, the purpose of Medieval drama remained sacred.

Most of the towns where plays were preformed were located in the north of England - YORK and WAKEFIELD are the most famous - and in the Midlands (at COVENTRY in Warwickshire)

The **cycles** were played from dawn to dusk, in the open, at set points in the city on ***pageants***, wagons that consisted of roofed platforms on wheels that were moved from point to point - the audience was able to see successive stages of the **cycle** while remaining in one place!

Scenery was scanty and not very realistic - however, costumes, in the style of the time, were often elaborate.

One of the best known examples of the mystery play still in existence is the ***Wakefield Second Shepherd’s Play*** (1400-1450)

**Morality Plays**

Unlike the mystery play, the **morality play** was a single play, not a cylce.

Where the mystery play dramatized biblical events in order to show their relevance to everyday life, the **morality** dramatized the conflict between good and evil - the struggle between opposing qualities - between virtue and vice, which Christianity teaches is always in progress within the soul of the individual Christian.

In the morality play, this contest was presented through personification allegory - with the virtues and vices contending for the soul of man.

Everyman remains the most famous surviving form of the Medieval morality play.