

Middle Ages (1100-1500)

The most respected and famed writer of the middle age was Geoffrey Chaucer. He is known as the father-figure in English literature. In the 13th century, the English literature prospered at a distinguished rate. Chaucer introduced the Iambic Pentameter. His greatest works are mostly narratives like The Canterbury Tales, The House of Fame etc.

Medieval theatre included Mysteries, Miracle and Morality plays. We will be discussing the Miracle and Morality plays only because these two are the ones which are widely discussed upon.

(A) Miracle plays - They are also known as Saints play as they present a real or fictitious account of their life. They are the principal kind of vernacular drama of European Middle Ages. By the 13th century, they became vernacularized.

In miracle plays, the actual story revolves around the main characters and on the other hand, the other characters were short reckoned or undervalued. Comic scenes were also a part of Miracle plays. Moreover, there were devil characters present in those plays. The structure of the play is basically unpleasant.

It is based on the biblical story of the life of the religious persons. The Miracle plays were banned in England because of the teachings of the Roman Catholic. The language of the play shifted to English because that made the play less religious. Moreover, they were performing in town festivals. Most plays were about Saint Nicolas and Virgin Mary.

(B) Morality Plays - In morality plays, the protagonist of the play generally meets various moral attributes through personification. The other characters in the play signify moral qualities and the hero of the play represents mankind and humanity. Supporting characters in the play are personifications of either good or bad. So, moral lessons can be learned from these plays. The hero or the protagonist shows the difference between good and bad.

These type of plays were developed at the later 14th c. It gained more popularity in the 15th c.