DRAMA *Works*

Understanding Drama

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DEFINING DRAMA AND THEATRE

What is drama? And what is theatre? What are the differences between the two? This seems to be the most important starting point for someone beginning a drama course.

To get to grips with the differences and so as not to confuse, I am leaving out the other ways the word 'drama' is used, as in 'Stop making such a drama about things ' or 'She's a real drama queen' or 'A very dramatic series of events led up to the sinking of the ferryboat.' All of these are watered-down, non-specific ways of using the word in a non-theatre context, just as people use the word 'love' in a watered-down context: 'I love chocolate,' etc.

The clearest diffence I can think of is:

Drama is the process, something that is ongoing and theatre is a] a place and b] the finished product, a performance in front of an audience. Thus 'drama' can cover rehearsals and work up to a performance and also the process of learning. You might hear of a written play-text called a 'drama' too. If you think of this playtext as something that is still in embryo - something that has to have a lot of input before it becomes a finished piece performed before an audience, then you will see that the play text - the 'drama' - is also something that is ongoing, unfinished. This is something to bear in mind if you are studying a play as part of an English course; a play is always meant for performance. Playwrights will differ in the amount of information they give about characters and staging; all playwrights recognise that the writing of the play is only the first part of what will then be a process of creation involving large numbers of people - actors, designers, director - before it becomes a finished entity and consequently a piece of theatre.

So, too, a student studying the subject is a 'drama' student. The student is in process, not a finished product, and studying what leads up to and makes theatre via exploring and understanding the process, performance spaces and the finished product which takes place in such a space.

I thought of calling this book 'Understanding Drama and Theatre' but it's a bit of a mouthful even though it is more properly accurate. The first half of the book talks about the development of drama and of the theatre spaces in which plays were performed. Every effort is made to help students understand through practical work the kind of conditions of the time and what it might have been like to be a part of them.

By the time we get to the end of the nineteenth century things become ever more complicated. How to help a student to experience all the rich variety of what develops into the Modern Age? It is too vast a canvas to fill adequately. So I have had to pick and choose and the most sensible way of doing this appeared to be by following 'strands': the strand of Naturalism, which includes Stanislavski, who formulated the acting style; the strand of political and epic theatre, which includes Brecht and his acting style; the strand from *Woyzeck* through Surrealism, which includes Artaud, and which leads into numerous other off-shoots of what is loosely called Physical Theatre. This is what the second part of the book is about. It aims to help the student encounter as much of the range of theatre still prevalent as is feasible in a limited study-period.

The final section of the book shows 'time-lines.' It aims to follow clearly such things as the development of lighting; how the stage changed from one shape to another; how the Greek Phylax plays developed over the centuries into pantomime. And so on.

I have tried to be as accurate as possible, though there are differences of opinion about a large number of things mentioned. I apologise if the research I have done doesn't concur always with yours. I apologise too for leaving out your favourite playwright or if I have dismissed with a mere wave of the hand something you are passionate about. This is the trouble with a book which tries to cover so much in such a short span. There will be gaps; there will be shortfalls. Uppermost in my mind has always been what is within reach of a student doing what will probably be no more than a short block of time within a two-year course.

In the end, this is a resource book. You can of course pick and choose what in it

you use. You do not need to follow it slavishly. But it might be wise, in the history section, to at least give students something of what comes before and after whatever section you decide to use, in the photocopiable form in which I offer it. A perspective is hard for students, many of whom will have no idea of the order of events or which king reigned when. [Historical periods are also given in the time-line section.]

PART ONE: DRAMA AND THEATRE THROUGH THE AGES: THE HISTORY

THE EARLIEST DRAMA

We can only imagine how theatre began. It may have emerged partly as a means of communication, before language was very specific.

In groups, allocating as far as you can a different scenario to each group, imagine you are very early primitive human beings. One member of the group has been out on his own and seen
either: **a huge herd of bison or deer which, if hunted, will ensure food for the tribe through the cold winter months**
or: **a place to set up temporary camp which is safe, sheltered and close to water**
or: **a rival tribe who are coming too close for comfort to the small herd of deer   which your tribe are hoping to use as a food   supply**
or: **signs that spring is coming: green shoots, ice melting, the sun feeling warm on the skin. The long cold and harsh winter is nearly over**
Keeping words to a minimum [preferably not at all - use sounds instead] and using wherever possible body language, facial expression and sounds with appropriate intonation as your means of communication, the solo member reports to his 'tribe' and 'answers' any questions which are 'asked'. How does the tribe respond to his news?

When you have watched the outcome of this exercise, ask yourselves:
How far did the bringer of the news affect the response? That is, did he have to work hard to gain the attention he wanted?
Did how he put over his news affect the way the rest of the tribe received it - e.g. did enthusiasm create an answering enthusiasm?
Were messages more successfully put over if the message-bringer found actions and intonations that manipulated a response in the others?
How far did the 'messenger' have to perform/act his news? Did he at any time find it easier to communicate what he wanted to if he took on a 'role' other than himself [e.g. becoming an animal]?

Now try repeating the exercise, but this time use two messengers who are attracting the attention of and communicating to the rest of the tribe.
Again, after you have watched the results, ask yourselves:

>What subtleties can be introduced in this way?
>Does it make it more exciting or watchable having more than one 'performer'?
>Did anything else of interest happen [a splitting into different 'roles' - one as member of rival tribe or as animal to be killed, for instance]?

Even though we are not cavemen, it is still easy to see how important, even in daily life, it can be to put on a bit of a performance as part of how you communicate. Talk about people you know who are good story-tellers, or can put over a joke successfully - not actually something that comes easily to everyone, by any means! Try to analyse what it is about these people that hold their 'audience's' attention.

>It could be helpful to have individuals in the group tell a joke they know to the others. Without being cruel or flattening at this early stage, analyse how far body language, facial expression, intonation, eye contact, timing, pace etc.etc. helped those who were more successful.

>Note that for those starting out on a drama course, many of these terms: intonation, timing, and so on - will be new, something they haven't considered before. As the analysis of what makes a good joke proceeds, make a list of each attribute that makes for successful acting.

Of course, our joke-tellers are a product of centuries of reliance on language as our primary means of communication. Our cavemen are on the beginning of this road; language is only one of many means of communication they have and is not yet able to cope with complex ideas. Often, like small children, whose language also is at an early stage, the cavemen will rely on their feelings, expressed by sound and through physical means as a more immediate form of communication.

So, communication is perhaps one of the reasons for the beginnings of drama - and here, note that drama and theatre are pretty well one and the same thing. The process of drama is not rehearsed, except perhaps in the active mind of the 'actor'/messenger as he runs to where the tribe is, thinking to himself how best he might instil urgency/ fear/ excitement or whatever into the others. As soon as he is back with the tribe, his message becomes the performance - the act of theatre - and the success of the message - whether it will infect the audience to do something about what the messenger has to say - depends on how successfully it has been transmitted.

The most important strand of primitive drama - and this we do know about because it spills over into pictures on pyramids and on early fragments of pottery - is hinted at in the last one of the above practical ideas. This is the idea of the coming of spring.

>For our cavemen, the seasons and their changes are a really big deal. Imagine what it must be like for them. Winter is harsh, food is scarce, many of the tribe die. Spring starts to come with all the hope for better things that the change will encourage. But it is not straightforward. Sometimes the seasons seem to take a step backwards. Another snowstorm comes and kills the buds on the trees, freezes the stream again. One thing, the only thing, the cavemen are sure of is that nothing is certain. There are no guarantees. Without the knowledge of science and logic that we have, how does our caveman know for certain that spring really will come? And further, that day will follow night? That the sun hasn't disappeared for good in an eclipse? And so on.

>In your groups, imagine what it would be like looking around at the world of nature with no understanding at all of how it works. See how many things you can come up with that could be mysterious, frightening or wonderful. When you have a good list, share them with the whole class and add their ideas too to your own list.

For a homework, take one of the following myths, legends, fairytales. Try to find out the full myth behind it, if possible how old the story is, and what natural occurrence the story seeks to 'explain.' Use your library, reference books like Larousse's Mythology, and the internet.

> Mother Holly's shaking of her feather mattress
> The old man in the sky turning over in bed
> Thor hurling weapons at his enemies
> Persephone stolen by Hades to live below ground as his queen
> Typhon buried by Zeus in battle under a chunk of land off the bottom of Italy
> The Fates, who were blind and who spun cloth and cut threads
> The story of Echo and Narcissus
> The story of Arachne
> The story of Atlas
> The character of Cupid
> The story of Pandora

There are countless other stories that would serve. Allow any others they might come up with, e.g. creation myths, and so on. I have deliberately avoided these, not wanting to stray into the area of religious beliefs. Greek and Roman, ancient Celtic, Norse, Australian aboriginal and Native American mythologies are a rich source.

Discuss as a class which stories arise out of a need to explain natural phenomena, which arise out of fear. For instance, the story of the death of Hyacinth explains the existence of a particular flower but the story of Zeus, or Thor, throwing shafts of lightning may arise out of the need to give an understandable reason for a very frightening phenomenon.

Look back at the list you made of natural things that might be difficult for a primitive person to understand. Which things are beautiful or miraculous in a pleasant way and which might instil fear in a primitive people, do you think? For instance, you might decide that the coming of night at the end of each day is a frightening thing. What guarantee does a person without science have that the day will dawn the following morning? And without the day, of course, famine would occur, the tribe would die. On the other hand, a huge quantity of flowers stretching as far as the eye can see might simply be a cause for the celebration of beauty. But who made these flowers? Who caused them to appear? And will it ever happen again?

Much of these phenomena gave rise to the invention of 'gods' which were little more than the spirits of earth, sky, sea and so on. The more complex the social structures of man, the more complex and various became the gods to explain and serve that society.The earliest men explained their world by means of gods of earth and sky, water, trees, the sun, the moon and so on. Later, men had townships, farms, went to war with each other, and so their inventions included gods of war, of the hearth, of the crops, and so on.

Of course, I am simplifying a long and complex growth in the brains and imaginations of our earliest ancestors. I must simplify, otherwise we'll disappear into a long [and fascinating] exploration of primitive cultures.

Simplified, I think it would be fair to say that natural phenomena were explained by stories and by the creation of gods and spirits of these phenomena. Thus the sun, so important to human beings, becomes humanised as a shining god who rides a chariot across the sky and disappears into his palace at night, for instance. The only way to understand these things is through human terms. So these early gods often become petty, suffering from jealousies and anger like human beings. These gods could easily decide not to get up in the morning, or might turn against a human being or even a whole tribe. They must therefore be kept sweet, be propitiated, so that they stay on your side. If you manage to please the individual gods you will ensure that spring will return, that dawn will happen, that the fire won't go out, that the bison will return to feed the tribe.

Much of the earliest performances arose out a desire to please a god or gods. Many of these early dramas were ritual in nature. So what is ritual? It is a series of actions, and/or words and sometimes music too always done in the same way. Words, actions and so on are repeated. Most rituals are associated with religion in some way, so there is an element of awe, of the celebration of a mystery. Often the doings of the gods could not be understood by early Man - why did a loved one die? why did a flood destroy all the crops? A ritual enactment of the event or a repetition of praises in hope of pleasing the gods to stop such a thing recurring, or to signify humble acceptance of their will, helps keep a sense of order and justice in a confusing world.

In groups, devise a short ritual designed to please one of these primitive gods and reassure him or her that you are properly respectful. Piece your ritual together by building it up from the following:
a series of repeated actions. These may be danced. The actions might involve use of a prop or props: e.g. sticks, coloured cloths or just a single cloth, an offering of some kind - a gift
a series of repeated sounds. These may just be made by the voice, may be sung or chanted, or may be a combination of voice and instruments

After watching each others' work discuss the atmosphere created by the piece. Has a group gone for pleasing the god through beauty, through joy, through religious awe, through fear? What is the atmosphere generated by the piece? Did the end result match with the group's original intention? If you feel it could have been more effective, what constructive ideas might you suggest?

In groups of a minimum of five or six, devise a ritual around one of the following [a different one per group]:
the scattering of rosepetals, tiny pieces of coloured paper or similar
the unrolling of a cloth on the floor as a pathway - red, black or white [Will the colour change the significance of the piece?]
the lighting of a candle or a number of candles
the striking of a gong, clash of a cymbal, roll of a drum, or similar
a loud triumphant cry
the pouring of water from one receptacle to another
the carrying of one of the group by other members of the group
In each case, it must be clear that the chosen stimulus is the climax of the piece, the central focus. The choice of stimulus will dictate the nature of the actions and sounds leading up to [and perhaps out of] the main focus. For instance, it is likely that the choice of the loud, triumphant cry will mean that the movements and sounds could be strong, loud, even aggressive and the cry might be the end point of the series. The pouring of water from one receptacle to another might lead to curved, peaceful movements and soft sounds. The pouring might be the central part of a sequence rather than the end point.

Ritual dramas in these earliest times might come from a desire to please or flatter the gods, as I've stated, but there are other ways of doing this too. Sometimes early rituals enacted the lives or deeds of their gods. This is another way of flattering them, with the added bonus that it delivers familiar stories down the generations. Repetition of the birth, the life and the wonderful deeds of the god are a way of perpetuating the primitive belief of these people and teaching them to a new generation. So the young people too will understand that thunder and lightning, for instance, is caused by the bad temper of their god, that they must behave themselves to prevent this temper turning on them. And thus out of the fabric of these stories arises a whole social structure, a way of behaving.

Now look back at the list of stories you researched and found. Each group should choose one of them to work with.

First of all act out the story, or try to represent the phenomenon and the ancient's 'explanation' for it.

Next, instil it with a sense of awe; you are explaining a mystery. Use musical instruments, different colour cloths or other props as appropriate, repeated sounds and movements to make your rendering of this story 'a wonder.'

Our knowledge of this earliest period is patchy. We don't know much about where and when. Ancient vases, Egyptian pyramids, scraps and fragments - that is all we have to go on. And much of the above is little more than surmisal - guesswork. We don't know where these earliest performances might have taken place, but probably on dedicated holy ground - a temple to the god or similar.

We know a little more about the Greeks and this is where we are going next: to the Classical period of Greek drama, five hundred years before Christ was born.

Extract One

We'll neither curse him nor fight,
Bite nor smite,
But have done quick
And toss him in canvas.

They toss Mak in a blanket.
The Shepherds return to their fold with the sheep. The play then turns into the nativity proper. Angels sing to them in the fields and they proceed to Bethlehem. Their mercy to Mak, who would, with his wife, most likely have been hung for this theft, prepares the way for Christian charity, making them blessed enough to receive the Christmas message.

In groups of five, having read the play as a class, read and act as far as possible the script, improvising the interlinking sections. The finished product should go, then:

1.] Improvisation: the three Shepherds settle down for the night, checking their sheep are safely locked in their fold. They talk about their hard lives, how cold it is, and so on. Try to show the difference in their characters. The 1st Shepherd is the most sensible and the cleverest. The 2nd is the youngest and the gentlest; he may not be very bright and is certainly gullible. The 3rd Shepherd is the oldest and the crabbiest. He is the least trusting and feels himself the most hard-done-by.

2.] The entrance of Mak - Extract 1 from the script.

3.] Improvisation. Mak and his wife, Gill. Mak knows the Shepherds will suspect him so decides to hide the sheep in the cradle. Gill has to do her bit and pretend she's just given birth. Gill practices her moaning and groaning. Both comment on the fine stew the sheep will make and try their hardest to make him keep still and look as like a baby as possible.

4.] The second extract. The arrival of the shepherds and the discovery of the deception up to the punishment of Mak, bumped in a blanket.

5.] Improvisation. The Shepherds hear an angel telling of a new-born child. They decide to visit Him, this time being properly prepared with simple gifts: an apple, a penny whistle, a warm scarf or a fleece to keep him warm in his cradle. Think of appropriate gifts such as very poor people might bring. As soon as the angel speaks to them the mood changes. Observe the change from comedy, even slapstick, to reverence.

Once you have worked through the above and are clear about the characters and the story-line, try improvising the whole thing through using your own words.

Notice how even in this play, which would have taken place on and around a single pageant wagon, a convention is already established. The audience are happy to understand that several 'places' can be indicated in one space. Thus, the single pageant can be the shepherd's field, Mak's cottage and the stable at Bethlehem, as well as places between. This acceptance of a stage being 'anywhere' prefigures Shakespeare's theatre, where the words of the actors alone, plus a few apt props, will tell the audience where they are.

Decide what 'apt props' would be needed to perform the second Shepherd's pageant. Keep these to the bare minimum.

If you were performing this today, how would you dress these characters? Consider 'beanies', scarves, gloves and greatcoats, for instance - it is cold. How about Mak and his wife? Remember that the trade guild actors used the clothes they were familiar with, so doing this will bring you closer to their way of thinking.

Using your improvised version of the play, try an experiment which helps you

understand the two alternative methods of staging of the period.

First, perform it as you have - i.e. in one place, which changes scene through the use of props, acting and the actor's words alone. This helps you realise what a performance on the small stage of a pageant-wagon may have felt like.

Next, try allocating different parts of your drama studio as different areas: the fields, Mak's cottage, the stable at Bethlehem. Set up these places as far as possible and discuss what additions, if you were doing a full performance of the play, you might want to add to make the settings clear to an audience. Then perform the play, using these different places and moving between them. The audience will need to follow the actors as they walk between.

This kind of performance is called 'promenade', from the French meaning 'walk'. It is the kind of style that must have been used in the Cornish round, which had locations all around the outside, but also some elsewhere within the 'theatre' space. Audience followed from one location to another. The problem, and the skill, is to find a way of attracting the audience to follow in a disciplined fashion. You may find it is enough just to follow the purposeful movement of the actors themselves as they progress from, say, the field to Bethlehem.

Morality Plays

Another form of drama that existed in the medieval times are the Morality plays. No one knows quite how or where these plays were performed. They may have been done on pageants, like the Mystery plays. Individual plays such as the life of a favourite saint were often done [called Miracle Plays] and it may have been that other one-off plays were added onto a cycle similarly. Or they could have been performed in the Church. They are certainly religious in their tone and had a strong message, like a dramatised sermon. Though this does not sound interesting, the stories can be very dramatic as is the most famous of them: *The Summoning of Everyman*. It is known that some of these plays were performed in Universities and in the houses of noblemen. They were very popular and had a profound influence on Tudor and on Elizabethan drama.

The story of The Summoning of Everyman is as follows. Everyman is having a good time enjoying life and living it to the full when God sends Death to visit him. Death tells Everyman that he must settle his affairs and get ready to leave his life. Everyman does not want to go alone. He asks his family and his friends to accompany him, but they will not. He asks Goods [his own possessions] to come, but he will not. Then he asks various personified parts of his own physical body and personality to come: Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and his Five Wits. All leave him along the way, the journey towards his own death. Finally he reaches the graveside where he meets Confession. Accompanying him this far is only one friend - and this friend will come with him even into death. This is his Good Deeds. Good Deeds has seemed weak and crippled on the way but when Everyman has confessed his sins, Good Deeds regains his strength and goes into the grave with him.

Here is the moment when Death stops Everyman as he dances merrily with his friends:
EVERYMAN   I know thee not. What messenger art thou?
DEATH   I am Death, that no man dreadeth.   = *that fears no one*
That every man arrests and no man spareth;
For it is God's commandment
That all to me should be obedient.
EVERYMAN   O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind;
In thy power it lieth me to save,
Yet of my goods will I give thee, if ye will be kind,
Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have,
But defer this matter till another day!
DEATH   Everyman, it may not be by no way;
I set not by gold, silver, nor riches,
Nor by pope, emperor, king, duke, nor princes,
For if I would receive gifts great,
All the world I might get;
But my custom is clean contrary.

I give thee no respite. Come, do not tarry!
EVERYMAN Alas, shall I have no longer respite?
I may say death giveth no warning.
To think on thee it maketh my heart sick,
For all unready is my book of reckoning....

Death tells him to get ready and gives him a little time.
First of all Friendship arrives and tells him he's looking glum. He says he will do anything to cheer him up; he will go to Hell for him, doesn't he know that? He makes huge promises that he will 'die for him', but when Everyman, much cheered, tries to take him up on his promise, Friendship backpedals pretty fast. 'I'd kill for you, if it would help,' he says, 'but not go with you on the lone journey into death.'
Much the same thing happens when Everyman talks to his relations, represented by characters called Kindred and Cousin. Both of these let him down, having said how fond they are of him. Kindred offers his Maidservant to go instead; Cousin says he has a cramp in his toe, too bad to be able to walk on a long journey.

Improvise a scene now between Everyman, Friendship, Kindred and Cousin. Try to characterise them and give them contrasting voices and mannerisms, as well as excuses. There is humour in the original, so there can be humour in your version too.

Beauty, Strength, Discretion and Five Wits accompany Everyman on his journey, but all four desert him - Beauty first - at the graveside. In the end only Good Deeds accompanies him. **Improvise this scene, too, giving appropriate characters to each of the five.**

Interestingly, this idea of personifying different parts of the human character is a favourite for examination devised work. Sometimes I have seen a struggle between the good and bad sides of a person dramatised very successfully, showing that this kind of drama is just as effective today as it ever was.

Try out your own Morality play, taking one of the following ideas:
a] a soul is standing before the Pearly Gates, waiting to hear if he will end up in Heaven or Hell. His Good Deeds and his Bad Deeds present excerpts from his life and an angel decides which Deeds weigh the heaviest on a large pair of scales he has standing in front of the Gates.
b] a young person leaves school and tries to make his way in the world. Work tries to tell him that it is his duty to buckle down and follow him but the young person finds him strict and unattractive. Temptation offers him all sorts of other more attractive prospects: Dancing, Drink, Drugs, the Opposite Sex - all of whom are characterised, as is Work and Temptation. What happens in the end is up to you. Perhaps another character, Good Sense, talks our young person around, or perhaps not. Either way, a good 'moral' ending must be found.
c] An older person taking stock of his life is made by a Devil to face up to the sins he has indulged in. These are the 7 Deadly Sins: Sloth [Laziness]; Gluttony; Avarice - greed for money and possessions; Envy - the state of always feeling that other people's lives or belongings are better than your own; Lust ; Pride - feeling that you are superior to others; Anger - which includes complaining, nagging and so on. A scene is shown in which the personified sin takes the place of the subject being shown and enacts an example from his life. [The Seven Deadly Sins are popular medieval concepts. They are most famously used by the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus*, which contains many spillovers from the Medieval period.]
d] madness - the inner workings of a schizophrenic perhaps, whose different sides are given separate characterisation
e] an allegory for love - another famous medieval tradition. The young man enters a garden and there casts his eye over the flowers there on offer. The flower he wants is the red Rose, most beautiful of all, but she is guarded

by thorns and hard to reach. Briefly he is tempted by the shy Violet and the cool Lily but in the end he decides, despite the difficulty, to seek to earn the Rose. He sends Courtesy with messages to her. He goes on a journey with Courage to try to earn her love through some difficult task. But in the end it is the purity of his love, which never wavers, that earns her answering love. This last character - call it Constancy - needs to show that it is perhaps starving for want of her notice and is close to death before it attracts the Rose's attention and reward.

With this exercise we will leave the role of amateur acting in the history of the theatre. Though Mystery cycles lasted for hundreds of years, well into the Elizabethan era, they are not really in the mainstream of theatre tradition except that they certainly trained audiences to accept certain conventions and, more importantly, to see theatre as a source of entertainment as well as of learning. Morality plays appealed to the educated classes, broadening the appeal of drama. In this age we have the beginnings of a living drama that appeals to a wide spectrum of people from courtier and nobleman to the ordinary townspeople and villagers.

Before leaving the Medieval era completely, we need to revisit those professional companies who still plied their trade around the country in travelling groups. These players also appealed to a wide spectrum. Sometimes they erected their wooden platform stages in village streets or in the courtyards of an inn. Often, too, players might be invited into the hall of some nobleman to entertain the family and guests. Their stages were quick and easy to assemble, a simple wooden platform, using a back-cloth behind which actors could change and wait for entrances. Like the mansion stages of the Mysteries, they employed the idea of a 'platea' - a place which means 'anywhere' - which lies in front of and around the raised platform.

Depending on who had invited these players to perform, the actors could undertake low farce - similar to those early satyr-plays which have been carried through the ages from the earliest Greek and Roman times - but also Moralities and Miracle plays. In other words, they could cater to all tastes and it is the versatility of their repertoire which ensured their continuing success.

Extract Two

Too far i' th' land: 'tis like to be loud weather;
Besides, this place is famous for the creatures
Of prey that keep upon't.   from *The Winter's Tale*

c] **DUNCAN**   This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.
BANQUO   This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate.   from *Macbeth*

Having read through the three examples above, all from different Shakespeare plays, try the following:
First, discuss the place and weather conditions that are being described in each. It doesn't matter that you may find the language difficult because he conveys a sense of place and a feeling by his choice of words. However, it may help you to know that in b] Bohemia is a desolate wild place, not a desert. What kind of landscape is it, do you think? Does the thought of wild beasts lurking there help this impression?
In c] it will help you to know that a martlet is a house-marten, a swallow-like bird that likes to nest in tall buildings like churches and castles. How does Banquo's description of the hanging nests of the house-martens, help us to visualise the look of the castle?

Next, putting one of the above in your own words, in pairs for b] and c], as a solo for a] try to convey in the bare place of your studio or stage the same sense of place. Use the words as pictures which you are painting for the audience.

You could finish this exercise to help you see how place, weather and time of day has to be suggested when the stage is open and cannot present scenic effects, by choosing one of the following. In all cases, be aware of the need to give enough detail to the audience for them to visualise where you are. Imagine you are in the open air and lighting too has to be conveyed by words alone.

> **a prison where you are being held**
> **stranded in the desert**
> **a palace to which you have been invited for tea**
> **the top of a tall tower from which you can see miles**
> **your own bedroom**
> **a shopping mall**
> **a cave deep under the ground**
> **you are on a rather small boat in a storm**
> **lost in the jungle**

I am sure you will quickly have found that to do this exercise well you need to find a character. Your feelings about the place will help to convey the right sense to the audience, because they will be conveyed through your face and body language as well as the tone of your voice and the words you choose to use.

Make sure you perform all the above in a way that is as close to the conditions we are learning about as possible. All of the above are

monologues. Spread out the rest of the class so that they are seated or standing [like groundlings] on three sides of your performing area. What difficulties does this present for performing a monologue? Being able to see your audience clearly can be both scary and beneficial.

  Having completed the exercise, discuss the pros and cons. Where did you find it best to place yourself? Did you have to move more - or was it sufficient to find a good vantage point from which to direct your acting, just turning your head or making eye contact with people on all three sides? Ask your audience how successful you were. Did any parts of the audience feel left out? If so, what could be done to prevent that?

Though the more intellectual playwrights read the classics and Aristotle, who set out the models of the perfect tragedy and the nature of comedy, Shakespeare, and many of his contemporaries, blended their knowledge into a particularly English form of drama, springing directly from the Mystery and Morality plays. The Mystery plays in particular mixed comedy and tragedy in what would have been considered by the ancients an entirely inappropriate way. Consider the Roman soldiers joking together as they hammer nails into Christ's hands and feet. Or the comedy of Mak and the shepherds followed by the solemnity of the nativity.

  It is this habitual blend that gives rise to the mix of comedy and tragedy even in the darkest of Shakespeare's plays. None are without their comic character: the Porter in *Macbeth*, the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, and so on. **Add to this list if you can and, if any of the group know others, the reverse can be shown too: how so many of the comedies teeter on the edge of tragedy at certain points, for instance. Pool together the group knowledge for their files.**

  Some of the above is evidence of the English tradition of theatre, already established. Other reasons for this blend of comedy and tragedy, this particularly English tradition, might be the need for a playwright to write for the particular troupe he is working with, all of whom would have a popular comedy actor as part of the company, who would need accommodating.

The Jacobeans

As we progress into the beginning of the Stuart dynasty, beginning with James 1, a darker kind of drama begins to emerge. Towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth a more unsettled feeling descended on the country and was reflected in the arts. Elizabeth would not name an heir and all were worried about what would happen when she died. In fact, at the last moment she named James VI of Scotland, son of her cousin Mary Queen of Scots, whom she had had to put to death earlier in her reign. James VI of Scotland became James Ist of England, bringing Scotland into unity with his new kingdom.

  England had undergone an age of peace and prosperity under Elizabeth that had allowed for a flowering of trade as well as of the arts. But James was a different kind of ruler. He had suffered the death of his mother and had witnessed as a young boy the murder of his father, Lord Darnley. He had spent much of his youth afraid for his life. He wore padded clothes against potential assassins and surrounded himself with spies and guards. The court became a place of competition and shadows, suspicion and oneupmanship. All of this is reflected in the popular style of drama that accompanied this reign.

  Shakespeare was still writing at this time. The company he was part of became 'The King's Men.' This period is the age of his great tragedies: *Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet, King Lear*. Other writers were John Webster, Tourneur, Middleton, Beaumont and Fletcher. The plays were often Revenge Tragedies, where a murder has been committed and the Revenger must find out who it is and then kill that person. A world is offered to us where there is no justice, not even God appears to be protecting the innocent. *Hamlet* is a take on this popular genre, though Shakespeare gives it a twist: the reluctant revenger, who questions the veracity of the ghost of his father, who has called him to avenge his murder.

Extract Three

So she agrees to marry him anyway, all protest and complaint, but one suspects a lot of love behind it.

MRS MILLAMANT   Well, you ridiculous thing, you, I'll have you - I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked - Here kiss my hand though.

See if you can go back over this from the beginning and work out the many things Congreve is satirising. Some of the satire is a kind of side-swipe - a passing remark,

often said as a witticism, as for instance when he has Mrs Millamant saying that it is like 'enquiring after an old fashion' to ask a husband where his wife is. Husbands are the last persons to know, in this society, what their wives are up to!

The main point of this couple is also a satirical one. They are contrasted with the unfaithful husbands and wives, and the lax morals, which surround them. Despite her flightiness, Mrs Millamant is innocent; she plays for safety in numbers. Mirabell is clearly smitten from the start and does not look at another woman throughout. One suspects that these two are completely suited to each other and will be as true to each other in marriage as their society is not.

Having read through the scene and understood it with the help of my many notes, read it through again in small groups, aiming for the lightness of touch and the sparkling wit of the scene.

The plays are full of the language of polite insincerity, social 'airs and graces' and posed positions. A greater understanding of what it was to be an actor in this type of play will be gained if you attempt the following exercises.

Firstly, we'll look at the movement. This is exaggerated and posed. Men were in the habit of standing with one leg turned out to display the shapeliness of the calf. Hands of both men and women were displayed in a variety of graceful ways. The costumes of the time had falls of lace around the wrists for the men and pretty gloves for the women, which would have enhanced and shown-off the hand movements. Heads were high; backs straight.
Scatter some chairs around the room and practice moving around, walking, sitting and standing. On a clap, make a pose in whatever position you are in.

There is a kind of patterning to the movement of these plays. In groups of four or six, devise a series of patterned movements, which include entrances, exits, poses and freezes. In group poses, go for pleasingly choreographed shapes.

Make solo, and then group poses, expressing the following sentiments:
shock   excitement   happiness
sadness   anxiety   flirtatiousness
anger

Now let us look at the speech. Many of the plays explore what I call the language of polite insincerity. In pairs, try one of the following:
Two girls meet out walking. Both are going to that evening's ball. Both like the same young man. They hate each other but pretend to like each other immensely.
Two men meet in the interval of a play. They complement each other on the mistresses they have in tow. One of the men has already started an affair with the other's mistress, which he is of course concealing. He may be jealous or smug - your choice.
A man and a woman meet. She thinks he's a creep, but is concealing

this. He admires her tremendously.

A man and a woman meet, she thinks for a love-tryst. He has come, in fact to break things off, because he has an assignation [a meeting] with another woman. In the end, because she loves him so, he has not quite the heart to be so cruel.

Having done the above exercise, add the idea of the 'aside' in to the scene. The aside is a useful device to make clear what is going on behind the polite insincerity which colours all the outward conversation. In Stanislavskian terms, you could say it is exposing the 'sub-text'. It shows the innermost 'real' thoughts of the character.

The exercise requires concentration and is not as easy as it sounds. You need to establish a movement - a flick of the head to the side perhaps and/ or a hand movement towards the audience - accompanied by a change of tone, appropriate for the rage, or jealousy, or sorrow, the character is really feeling. Then go back to the polite posey speech and movement of insincerity.

Look at the first passage quoted above where asides are used and see if you can improve on the way you read/ perform the lines this time.

Notice the names of the characters in both these extracts. These show that the plays are in a direct line from the Morality plays with their Vices and Virtues, through Ben Jonson. Witwoud means 'wooden brain' or perhaps 'mad brain', since 'woud' spelled in that way can have that meaning. Fainall means 'pretend all.' Pinchwife means 'restrict wife'. Here are some other character's names from the two plays. From *The Country Wife* we have: Mrs Dainty Fidget and Mrs Squeamish and Mr Sparkish. From *The Way of the World* we have: Foible and Mincing as the two maids, and such as Petulant [sulky] as a gentleman admirer of Mrs Millamant to match Witwoud.

Invent a scene between any of the above named characters, revealing the characteristics that their names suggest.

Or you can invent your own scene, using made-up modern names that are used in the same way to suggest characters. Some of the above names work well in either context. Here are some suggestions to start you off: Jack Flash; Dolly Bubble; Idle Larry; Garry Gloom; Susie Snicker; Mrs Loud….etc.

Put the people in a social situation. Some of the characters could be servants. Though you are using modern characters and situations, try to give the whole thing a patterned feel, as if it were a Restoration comedy.

Finally, see if you can improvise:

Either: a meeting of Mrs Millamant and Mirabell in your own words. Millamant tries to prevent him talking love at her and is trying to avoid giving an answer to a proposal she received earlier from him, which she is not sure she is ready for. She doesn't really know what she wants, but she does know she likes him. Mirabell is trying to get her to be serious, so that he can pin her down to an answer - preferably the right answer.

Or: Mirabell knows he is winning, she is yielding to him - though not without a fight. Now, she is inventing a whole lot of silly rules she wants to have as part of the marriage contract - only then will she marry him - perhaps. He decides to play her at her own game and comes back with some outrageous rules of his own. Finally, they agree to marry.

You can do this using your own words, and even modern rules. Try to give it the flavour of the times, though, by putting in asides where appropriate - though the original doesn't in this scene. And keep to the witty characters so far as you can.

Extract Four

an extreme. Then move randomly around the room. On a hand-clap, react to the person nearest to you, who you should recognise by the body-language, and make a new pose.

Then take either the plot of the Red Barn, described before the excerpt, or the following scenario to act out. Since the words are pretty minimal in any case, making your own up serves very nicely!

Characters: Father, Mother, Villain, Hero, Heroine.
Scene: A cottage. Father and Mother bemoan the fact they have not enough money to pay the rent or to buy food. They will have to place themselves at the mercy of the landlord [the Villain] or go to the workhouse. Mother is sick, and the cold and damp of the workhouse will surely kill her. Enter the Villain, who demands the rent. Father tells him he is out of work and unable to pay. The Villain fully understands and will make no more demands if ... the father gives permission for his daughter [the heroine] to marry him. Although the daughter protests, the father can see no alternative. The Villain takes the protesting daughter with him.
Pause.
The daughter's sweetheart [the hero], long thought dead, returns from adventures abroad with enough gold to buy a mansion. Father explains what has happened. The hero goes in pursuit.

Scene: a Churchyard. The villain and the daughter are about to marry. The hero arrives just in time. There is a tremendous fight in which the Villain is defeated. The Daughter is now free to marry the Hero.

Have as much fun with either of these story-lines as you can. If you can provide music, even if it is just sung by those not involved in the scene, then that would add considerably. Speech is only a minor part of this style of theatre.
Part of the fun for the audience was the sentiment and, as in later pantomime, the participation of 'oohs', 'aahs', cheers and boos. So encourage the rest of the group as audience to participate in this way. You could even raise placards telling them when to, if you like.

Melodrama became so popular that even the big traditional theatres had to embrace it. The versions they put on were less rough around the edges, of course - well-rehearsed, scripted and acted by such as Mrs Siddons and Charles Kean. Even as late as the end of the nineteenth century, brilliant actors like Henry Irving took part in these tidied up melodramas. *The Bells* was one in which he famously excelled.

Towards the end of the century, Oscar Wilde wrote very popular plays which are a sort of extension to the long line of Comedy of Manners. They sparkle with wit, clever turns of phrase and memorable lines. Like the Comedy of Manners, they centre on the upper classes and satirise their leisure activities, their absurdities and their attitudes to love and life. What they lack is the raunchiness of the Restoration plays. Oscar Wilde's plays observe Victorian values, not those of Charles II.*The Importance of Being Earnest* is familiar to a lot of people and is still very popular. The title is a play on words. Earnest = serious and also sounds like the slightly differently spelled name, Ernest. Here are two famous excerpts from it, which are none the worse for being so well-known.

The plot revolves around the absurd idea that two young women have set their heart on marrying a man called Ernest. Two young men, Algernon and Jack, who are friends, have both, unbeknown to

Extract Five

PART TWO: THE MODERN AGE

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

For this second half I am going to change direction somewhat. The field of modern drama is a vast one. It is fair to say that by the latter part of the twentieth century every kind of stage shape: Greek arenas, trestle platform stages, Elizabethan thrust stages, Georgian apron stages, indoor and outdoor theatres, proscenium arches, intimate studio theatres, theatres in the round, traverse stages, promenade performances - and many more styles and forms of presentation existed. I will detail as many of these as is possible and follow the main strands of drama through the practitioners.

Because the field is vast, I have found it best to follow various strands or trends rather than the linear approach which has been possible so far. This means that I have kept going back, when dealing with each separate strand, to the beginning of the modern period and then followed through to the present-day, covering the plays and the practitioners associated with that style so far as is feasible. Throughout, practical work is built in, as it has been in the history section.

NATURALISM

The Forerunners
We left the nineteenth century in the 1860s with the beginnings of Realism. At the same time as Tom Robertson was writing 'cup-and-saucer dramas', Henrik Ibsen in Norway was beginning to write plays that not only dealt with ordinary people in real surroundings, but dealt more importantly with their inner workings. Ibsen is not just a writer of naturalistic plays, he combines the best of them with symbolism that lifts them to an enduring greatness.

You will notice that I have used the term 'Naturalism' for Ibsen and 'Realism' for Robertson. There is a difference. Realism is concerned more with the look of things: real sets, real props, real copies of costumes, all meticulously researched. 'Naturalism' is

Extract Six

PART 3:TIME LINES

THEATRE PERIODS

1] THE GREEKS: FIFTH > FOURTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST [388 B.C.]

2] THE ROMANS: 250 B.C. > 65 A.D.[Anno Domini - A.D. = 'the year of our Lord' so after Christ's birth. 0000 = Christ's birth.] [Roman Republic nearly up to birth of Christ - then the Emperors]

3]THE DARK AGES: SIXTH CENTURY A.D.> TENTH CENTURY A.D.

4] THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD: TENTH CENTURY>SIXTEENTH CENTURY A.D.

5] THE ELIZABETHANS: SIXTEENTH CENTURY: [Elizabeth I =1538-1603 the last Tudor]

6] THE JACOBEANS: EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: [JAMES I = 1603-1625]. The first Stuart. Theatre-wise, includes his son CHARLES I [1625-1649] executed in the Civil War

7] THE COMMONWEALTH - Oliver Cromwell. 1649-1660

8] THE RESTORATION of CharlesI's son. CHARLES II 1660-1685

9] EIGHTEENTH CENTURY starts with the last of the Stuarts, Queen Anne 1702-1714. Then the first of the Hanovers: GEORGE I, II & III

10] NINETEENTH CENTURY: George IV, William IV, VICTORIA: 1837-1901

11] THE MODERN AGE, theatre-wise, begins in the middle of Victoria's reign, in the 19th century and goes through the 20th century to the present day.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
background to the drama

Rulers: Victoria - died 1901; Edward VII 1901-1910; George V 1910-1936; Edward VIII 1936 [abdicated to marry Mrs Simpson]; George VI 1936- 1952; Elizabeth I 1952-

FIRST WORLD WAR 1914-1918
RUSSIA embraces Communism 1921
            beginning of Stalin's 'rule' 1929. [Died 1953]
HITLER appointed Chancellor 1933
THE GREAT DEPRESSION the 1930s
SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936-1939
SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-19

STAGE SHAPES THROUGH HISTORY

GREEK: circular 'arena'
ROMAN: half and full circle arena, various

MEDIEVAL: inside church > west door of church > platform rectangular stages on
       1] pageant wagons
       2] simultaneous settings [many platforms
             a] in a line e.g.Valenciennes
             b] in a circle e.g. Cornwall].
       3] platform 'trestle' stage in rich man's hall, market square, inn yard

ELIZABETHAN & JACOBEAN: platform 'trestle' stages > public theatres: thrust
       stage > also private theatres: rectangular stage

RESTORATION: thrust stage in front of proscenium arch

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: thrust reduced to apron in front of proscenium arch

NINETEENTH CENTURY: proscenium arch 'picture frame' stages; other theatres, e.g.
       Astley's - circus-ring type amphitheatre. Some experiments., e.g. Craig

THE MODERN AGE: Up to Second World War = proscenium arch stages are the
       rule.
      Post- Second World War: the whole range of stage shape possible:
          arena - amphitheatre;
          thrust;
          apron;
          trestle platform stages;
          open stages [no proscenium - open to the audience];
          traverse stages - where the audience is on two opposite sides and the
             playing area is like a corridor in between;
          theatre-in the-round, where the audience surrounds the performance
             space, leaving only gangways for the actors. [Can be square or
             octagonal, etc. not necessarily round!]
          promenade performance. A style which involves the audience moving
             from place to place with the actors. This can be as in some
             community theatre experiments around different sites in a town, for
             instance, or in different rooms in a house, or where the theatre has
             been turned into an empty space where actors and audience
             mingle; actors and, perhaps, light define different playing locations
             in this space for different scenes.This style comes from the
             Medieval idea of simultaneous settings, where similarly the
             audience followed the action from place to place.
      plus many individual experiments by numerous practitioners.

DEVELOPMENT OF SCENERY

GREEK = no scenery, indications of place on three-sides revolving structures called
      periaktoi. A symbol on each side told the audience where the setting was: a
      pillar=city; a tree = country, the 3rd side adaptable to a play's needs. The front of
      the scene-building was in itself a setting, the doors leading to a palace interior.

ROMAN = no scenery, highly decorated front of the scene-building indicating grandeur
      of palaces, etc.

MEDIEVAL = highly decorated platforms, use of machinery, Hell's mouth, heaven,
      suspended clouds and so on.

ELIZABETHAN & JACOBEAN = no scenery, helpful props to indicate interiors, e.g.
      throne, or night, e.g. a lantern
      Court Masques = lavish scenery. machines. perspective backgrounds, brought
      in by Inigo Jones

RESTORATION & EIGHTEENTH CENTURY = grooved flats, painted scenery,
      perspective backgrounds

NINETEENTH CENTURY = bigger and better, huge sets, historical accuracy begins
      and leads to meticulously researched Greek or Roman buildings on stage, for
      instance; trains, horse races, working machines of all kinds

THE MODERN AGE - Naturalism = box sets, 'real' rooms built on stage, ornaments, furniture, clutter etc.

Political theatre = minimal scenery, just indications; placards to describe place

Total theatre = Surrealistic huge props, hanging masks, dream-like, or nightmare like settings

Symbolism, Expressionism [from Craig etc.] = harmonious suggestive settings which include the audience, brooding shapes, steps, forms that move in space

Brook etc - a return to the empty space of Shakespeare.

DEVELOPMENT OF LIGHTING.

Greek, Roman, Medieval, Elizabethan = daylight - because open-air theatres
Elizabethan indoor theatres: candlelight > many candlebra in **Restoration and Eighteenth century**; audience lit > some attempt to control candles with shuttered lamps by **end of Eighteenth Century** > **1817** beginning of gaslight, more control possible; audience in dim light > **1880s** beginning of electric lighting; audience darkened; little subtlety or colour used. Potential not realised > **Stanislavski** = realistic lighting; sun slanting through windows, moonlight, etc; > **Appia & Craig** - painting with light - light symbolism, atmosphere and mood > **Brecht** - anti-realistic light - bright and white, including audience > **nowadays** - the whole range suggested here.

COSTUMES

GREEK/ROMAN: more decorated versions of everyday dress. tragedy - long robes; comedy - short tunics with leather phallus addition.
MEDIEVAL: the costume of the time
ELIZABETHAN/ JACOBEAN - costume of the time, but rich because given by righ patrons
RESTORATION: as above, courtiers liked to donate clothes to the actors
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY - towards end, some attempts at realism and historical accuracy
NINETEENTH CENTURY: even more researched historical accuracy
TWENTIETH CENTURY: costume appropriate to play and style e.g. Brecht deliberate anachronisms, or used gestically; costume to expose theme, or to enhance set, etc.

USE OF MASKS

Greek drama > Roman drama > certain characters in Medieval drama [devils, etc.] > Elizabethan & Jacobean Court Masques, also Commedia dell'Arte > Brecht, Artaud, Brook, LeCoq and many more, influenced as much by Far Eastern theatre traditions [Japanese Noh, Balinese, etc. all involving masks] Belief in the negation of the actor through losing himself in the mask with all these practitioners.

STATUS OF ACTORS, AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL

GREEK: high status, priests at first, then professional actors thought to be 'chosen by the god' > ROMAN: at first high status professionals then gradually debased under the Empire, professional farce players and mimes, but also many amateurs in arena;

MEDIEVAL: priests to start, then amateur actors; professional actors -travelling players, low status > ELIZABETHAN & JACOBEAN low status professional actors > mix of high and low, dependent on patronage; amateur Court Masquers; amateur Boy's Companies > RESTORATION professional players started low, especially women; gained favour and became admired and accorded star status; one or two, like Betterton, became actor-managers, highly respected > EIGHTEENTH, NINETEENTH & BEGIN OF TWENTIETH CENTURY: high status 'star' actors and actor-managers > NOWADAYS: a mixture of star status commercial actors and acting companies happy to pursue less fame and more ideals, personal satisfaction

THEATRE SIZE/ACTING STYLE

GREEK: large - acting style: stylised, big clear gestures, masks
ROMAN: large - acting style: far more stylised, help needed via masks and costumes to aid projection of character
MEDIEVAL: platforms in church setting - acting style - formalised clear gestures > small platform stages - intimate acting style
ELIZABETHAN/ JACOBEAN: quite large public theatres with thrust stages - acting style intimate though larger gestures than real life > private theatres: smaller, still intimate acting; Great Halls, etc. - Court Masques - formal, attitudes and poses, dance
RESTORATION: small > larger than life acting because a] Comedy of Manners and b] rowdy audiences
NINETEENTH CENTURY: large - acting style over-the-top melodrama etc. > from mid-century, growth of realism - large = huge sets, machinery etc. > as realism progresses into naturalism, theatres adapt to smaller sizes as does acting.

The above concentrates on theatre buildings. Throughout - the travelling players with their simple trestle stages would have used a knockabout intimate style of acting and clowning with direct address of the audience. Here the largeness of the style is because of the use of masks [Commedia] and the need to attract an audience in the open-air setting - as in any type of street theatre.

THE EMPTY SPACE.

In **Medieval** theatre, the *platea* is the space around a setting which can be anywhere > **Elizabethan** stages have no scenery and can stand for anywhere > after many years of addiction to scenery, **modern theatre** tries to reclaim the idea of the stage being 'empty' , waiting to be filled by the imagination. **Peter Brook** gave us the phrase 'The empty space' with his influential book of that title.

INFLUENCE OF GREEK LOW FARCES - VARIOUS STRANDS
Ancient Greek folk slapstick comedies, using stock characters

1]Megarean comedies > Sicily -Phylax comedies > Southern Italy - Atellane farces > travelling players > Commedia dell'Arte > Harlequin & Colombine mimes & ballets > Punch & Judy > Pierrot shows > Pantomime + review shows and music-hall
2] Megarean comedies > Menander's written comedies > Plautus & Terence written

comedies > Shakespeare et.al. via Renaissance translations of Roman playwrights > sentimental dramas > melodramas

3] Megarean comedies > Phylax comedy > Atellane farce > travelling players > Commedia dell'Arte > Moliere > Comedy of Manners > Oscar Wilde > Noel Coward > poss. Alan Ayckbourn & similar

4] Megarean comedies > Phylax comedies > Atellane farces > travelling players > Commedia > folk drama based on satires, political broadsheets etc. > Beggar's Opera > continuing fairground entertainment > pub entertainment > reviews, cabaret, music hall etc. > Joan Littlewood, Brecht, political theatre and 'rough theatre' as Brook calls it.

CHARACTERS WHO ARE PERSONIFICATIONS
[e.g. Vice, Virtue, Beauty etc.]

Morality Plays > Christopher Marlowe [Faustus], Ben Jonson, Tourneur > Comedy of Manners > Sentimental Drama

NON-LITERARY DRAMA

Greek Megarean farce>Phylax Farce > Roman Atellane farce > travelling players > Commedia dell'Arte > satirical drama > Colombine & Harlequin pantomime > melodrama > musichall etc. > emphasis on devised work with many twentieth century practitioners + return to Commedia skills and mime skills

CHANGES TO LITERARY COMEDY

GREEK, ROMAN: anything with an invented plot. Need not be funny, though it often was.
ELIZABETHAN: romantic, endings which ended happily
RESTORATION: Comedy of Manners, from Moliere - mildly satirical in intention
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY onwards: three strands = biting satire, political folk drama at fairgrounds etc; Comedy of Manners type; Romantic happy ending type

CHANGES TO TRAGEDY

GREEK/ ROMAN: 'historical' plots or tales of their religion. High status heroic figures. Some of what we might call myths, were history to them.
ELIZABETHAN/JACOBEAN: mixture of Aristotle's ideas: tragic hero must be status figure and fatally flawed [e.g. Macbeth/ ambition] and English tradition, e.g. some comic characters
RESTORATION onwards: 'Purer' form of tragedy, from French Classical models - Corneille; 3 Unities, and so on. Rhetorical speech
LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY onwards: top-heavy grandeur and 'bombast'; over the top style; middle-class heroes rather than kings, generals, etc. melodrama = working-class heroes
TWENTIETH CENTURY: quieter, naturalistic tragedies - ordinary people. best examples Arthur Miller.