

Protestant Reformation



In the 14th and 15th century the Roman Catholic Church used to be the most powerful religious, political and financial institution. In other words, Catholic Church was the economic and political head of all the institutions. It claimed to control the keys to terrestrial as well as the divine world. With the sale of the papal indulgences the Roman Catholic Church asserted its POWER. The Church began to be inspected as a result of the Renaissance, the Black Death, and other disasters, as well as some internal struggle (three popes were ousted, one after the other). There was a call to return to the Bible because they discovered a significant discrepancy between what the Catholic Church was doing and what the Bible actually says.

The primary intention of the Protestant Reformation was to reform the existing Catholic Church and not to take it down initially. But in many places Protestant reformation ended up replacing the Catholic Church. People like John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, William Tyndale and Dutch theologian Desiderius Erasmus tried to investigate into this matter.

John Wycliffe, who is considered to be the 'morning star of the Reformation,' brought Bible closer to the people by translating it into their own language. He introduced a series of controversial thinking patterns. He died in 1384 and in 1415 Catholic Church declared him heretic. That plainly demonstrates the Church's control over people's lives and afterlives.



Martin Luther, a German monk, pasted 95 theses against the sale of papal indulgences in 1517.

William Tyndale translated the Bible from original Greek and Hebrew texts. This influenced the later translations (also the KJV). Condemned for heresy, he was burned to death in 1536.

Erasmus (Dutch) rejected Catholic monasticism, condemned corruption, practiced within the Catholic Church and returned to the values and habits of the early Church.

Renaissance as the intellectual background

New geographical discoveries

Influences of Italian poets like Dante, Ariosto and Petrarch

England was very slow to question the established church but when it finally did, it broke away from the church.

The Political History of England from 1487 to 1558



67 years – From the ascension of Queen Elizabeth I (1558) to the death of King James I (1625)

21 years – Queen's reign – a time of preparation

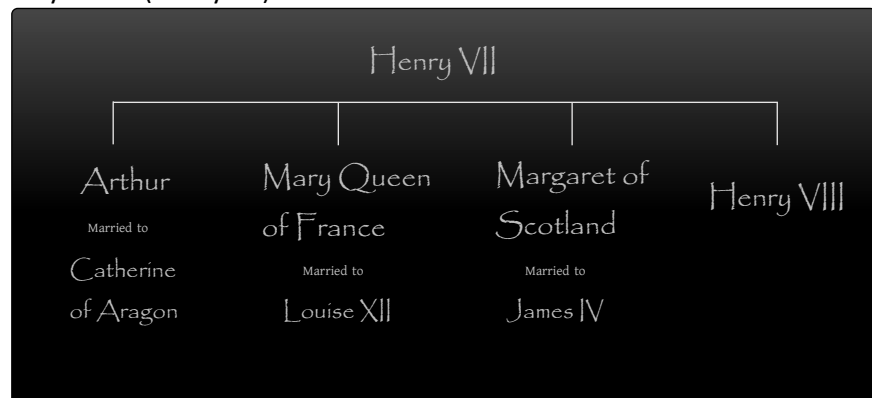
24 years – publication of Spencer's *The Fairy Queen* to queen's death – full bloom

22 years of James I – decline (Jacobean period)

Historian John Guy has mentioned, "England was economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors than at any time in a thousand years"

Events of English Reformation are closely associated with the personal affairs and marriages of Henry VIII. King Henry VIII, a defender of Catholic faith and church, ended up marrying six times against the Catholic norms. The story of Henry VIII and the break-up between Catholic Church and Anglican Church started with the end of the War of the Roses.

In 1487, the **War of the Roses** ended, and the **Tudor dynasty** began. Henry Tudor (Henry VII) married Elizabeth of York and had four children with her.



Arthur was the chosen prince but his untimely death made **Henry, Duke of Richmond (Henry VIII)** the king. By the order of his father, he married the widow of Arthur, **Catherine of Aragon**. With Catherine he had a daughter **Mary** (b. 1516). During that time, England tightly enforced the law of primogeniture, and Catherine was unable to provide Henry with a male heir. She had a series of events where she lost her children one after another through miscarriages. She had a couple of still-born babies and also one son who was born in between but ultimately died after 52 days. Henry made the decision to remarry. He had

Previously - Great rapture with Roman Catholic Church – Protestantism, the official religion – Formation of the church of England.

Upper hand of Anglican Church – Roman Catholic Church was deliberately contained and marginalized.

Religious Persecution – The Puritan's historic journey to the 'new world' - colonies in Virginia and Pennsylvania – the USA.

1591 – Conversion to Catholicism – an act of high treason (to prevent threats from the Catholic Church, to counter the claims of Catholic Mary Stuart, Elizabeth's cousin)

Religion and Politics – interconnected – doctrinal choices and political identity not separate.

Radical shift in England's relation with the rest of Europe – politically isolated

feelings for **Anne Boleyn**, the queen's attendant. However, Catholic law forbade him from doing so. He made many petitions to the priests, but the church's decision remained unaltered. He eventually demolished all the church buildings and seized political and religious control. And eventually, he married Anne Boleyn. However, this marriage was also doomed to fail because she had also given birth to a girl child, **Elizabeth** (b. 1533). The king then remarried to Jane Seymore for a third time. This time, a baby boy was born, called **Edward** (b. 1537). But the king went on marrying until he died in 1547. His next wives were Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr respectively.



Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr respectively.

Edward VI became the new king as he was the only male heir of Henry VIII. But he was too young at that time to be a king (he ascended the throne at the age of 9). So, the council, on behalf of him, had decided that Catholicism should never return to England. England at that time was a protestant nation. The young king could not make it for a long time. He fell terminally ill and he named his distant cousin **Lady Jane Grey** to be the next successor. But she reigned barely for 9 days.

Mary I, the firstborn of Henry VIII became the next queen. She was raised a Catholic as her mother Catherine was a Catholic. She wanted to re-establish Catholicism in England and abolish Protestantism completely and to reunite England with Rome. However, the English people were very unhappy under the Catholic church. But Mary started to persecute those who did not have faith in Catholicism. She had suspicion even on many of her supporters. She eliminated most of them. She prioritized religion above everything else, implementing reforms and restrictions aimed at restoring the Catholic Church's ascendancy in England. Most controversially, she ordered 280 Protestants burned at the stake as heretics.

By doing so, she became highly unpopular among the people. Thus, she got the name **Bloody Mary**. She led very lonely and bitter life and died ultimately in 1558. She was succeeded by Elizabeth I who introduced Protestantism again. In other words, Protestantism did not spread smoothly in England. There were numerous ups and downs.



The victory over the Spanish Armada marked the rise of the British Empire. Until then, Spain was designated with “the empire on which the sun never sets”.

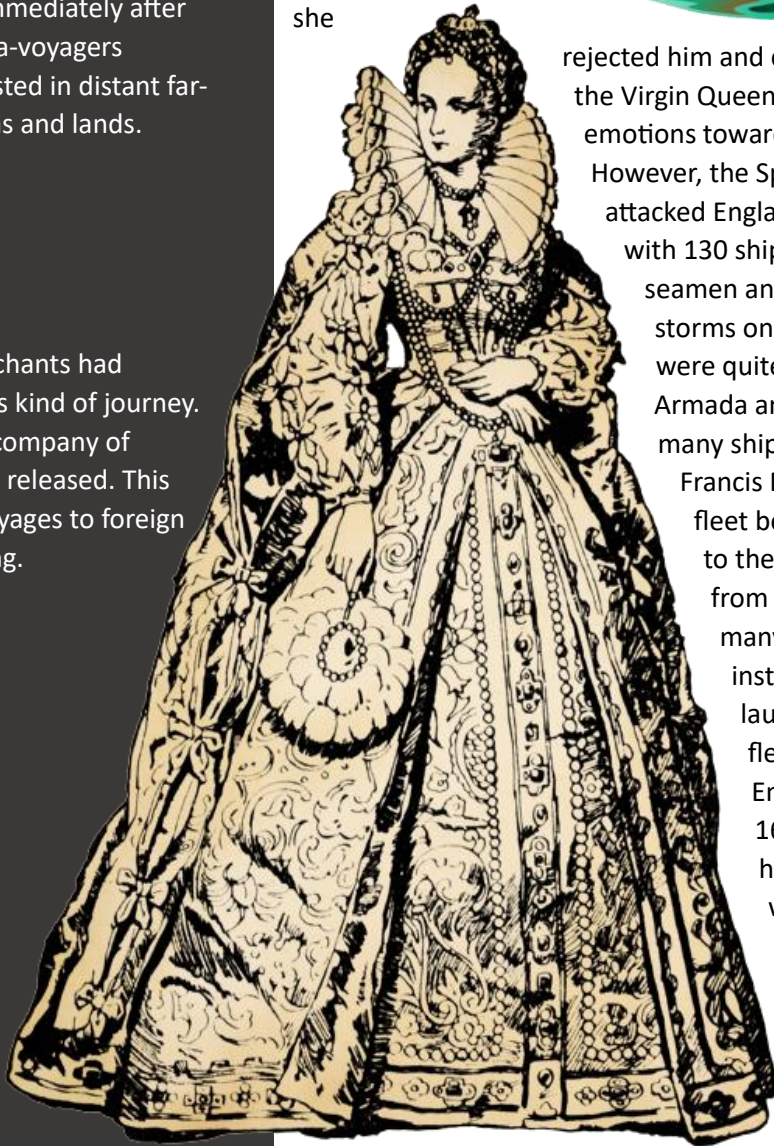
England became the most powerful force on the sea. With the formation of the new English navy, the conquest began.

East India Company was formed in 1600, and immediately after this, a lot of sea-voyagers became interested in distant far-reaching oceans and lands.

Groups of merchants had undertaken this kind of journey. A charter to a company of merchants was released. This encouraged voyages to foreign lands for trading.

The next legitimate heir of King Henry VIII was **Elizabeth I**. It was the time of prosperity and growth for England. But there were lots of threats to the crowns and most of them were from the Tudor dynasty. One of the major threats of this period was from Mary, queen of Scots. She was the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor and James IV of Scotland. She was executed by Elizabeth after a 20-year waiting period.

One of the most prominent achievements of Queen Elizabeth was **the victory over the Spanish Armada** in 1588. When Mary I was queen of England, her husband **Philip II** of Spain was controlling both England and Spain. When Elizabeth I comes to the throne, he sent an ambassador with a marriage proposal but she



rejected him and continued to remain the Virgin Queen. He didn't have any emotions towards **Elizabeth I** either. However, the Spanish Armada attacked England in 29th July 1588 with 130 ships, 2500 guns, 8000 seamen and 20000 soldiers. The storms on the English shore were quite unfavourable for the Armada and already had lost many ships. In addition, Sir Francis Drake had attacked the fleet before they could reach to the English shore. Apart from that, England used so many new techniques. For instance, fire ships were launched to destroy the fleet. And eventually, England kissed victory. In 1604, ending the hostility, a new treaty was signed by the successor of Elizabeth and the successor Philip II.

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“Every breeze was dusty with the pollen of Greece, Rome and Italy”

– Henry Hudson

Discovery of new worlds kindled the curiosity for adventure. The explorers started using use of compass and maps extensively. Along with this expansion of the geographical boundaries it enlarged the boundaries of minds also.

At this time, we begin to see religious moderation (as Elizabeth’s court was more secular and more tolerant).

Due to the advices of the council in her reign, she also she started persecuting some of the Catholics (not as Mary I).

Some of the Catholics lost their positions in the court, some of them were fired.

England became a safe haven for the Protestants.

Sir Thomas More, the first English author to write under the influence of Gk. Studies, wrote *Utopia*. This work was greatly inspired by *Plato’s Republic*.

Another significant work of that time was **Tottel’s Miscellany (1557)**, the first English anthology of poetry, published by **Richard Tottel**. It went through many editions. This anthology changed people’s thoughts about literary writings. Caxton’s printing press had given a wide currency to this work. This was the first work to be printed for the pleasure of the common reader.

It consists of 271 poems by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Eventually this work inaugurated a long series of Poetic anthologies in Elizabethan England.

As a result of the Reformation, the **Bible** came out in translation. Though the translation of the Bible has long history.

In 8th century **Venerable Bede** translated the gospel of St. John into OE prose.

Wycliff (1320-84) translated two complete versions.

William Tyndale gave Bible the modern shape.

Miles Coverdale extended that version of Tyndale with exquisite phrase and rhythm. It was the first complete English bible to be printed.

The Great Bible (1539) was commissioned by translators under **Henry VIII**.

Sir Rowland Hill published **Geneva Bible** in 1560.

The Bishop’s Bible came out in 1568.

In 1611, **King James’** Version came out as the authorised version.

Literary events of the Tudor Period

before Elizabethan Era



History of English Literature



Life in the Age of Elizabeth

5% of the children died within a week.

40% of them died within their 15th birthday.

1 out of 100 women died after childbirth.

During the time of plague Queen Elizabeth shifted her residence from London to Windsor castle. All kinds of imports of goods were prohibited to stop the spreading of the plague. It is said that she executed all the visitors from London to Windsor Castle to keep her court safe from any kind of infection.

In a week, 1000 - 1800 deaths were reported.

Though England was undergoing through certain changes in terms of internal peace, prosperity and political stability but it was not an easy life for the Elizabethan people. Alongside the transition politically and religiously, they (common people) had to encounter a lot of other problems.

Elizabethan Age was not so promising in terms of life expectancy (40 years). Though a female monarch was on the throne but outside the court patriarchy prevails ironically. Formal education was restricted to boys. Very few wealthy boys used to go to the University. Women were trained at home to become wife and mother. The female had no power of inheritance because of The rule of **Primogeniture** (Right of inheritance belongs exclusively to the eldest son). In the court also the same rule was applied. The best example can be drawn of Henry VIII's heir.

In the Elizabethan age England could be divided into two parts i.e., the **South and the East** and the **North and West**. Everything ended in the South and East, notably in London.

The Mass migration to London makes it a breeding ground for all kind of diseases because of the poor hygiene, very poor sanitization, drainage, overpopulation.

The most important one being Black Death or Bubonic Plague appeared in the Elizabethan England consecutively in 1563, 1593, 1603 and 1608.

SOCIAL CLASSES

THE MONARCH

(King and Queen)

NOBILITY

(Dukes, Barons, Earls)

GENTRY

(Knights, Gentlemen, Squires,
Members of Parliament)

MERCHANTS

(Mayors, Wealthy people)

YEOMEN

(Common Citizens)

LABOURERS

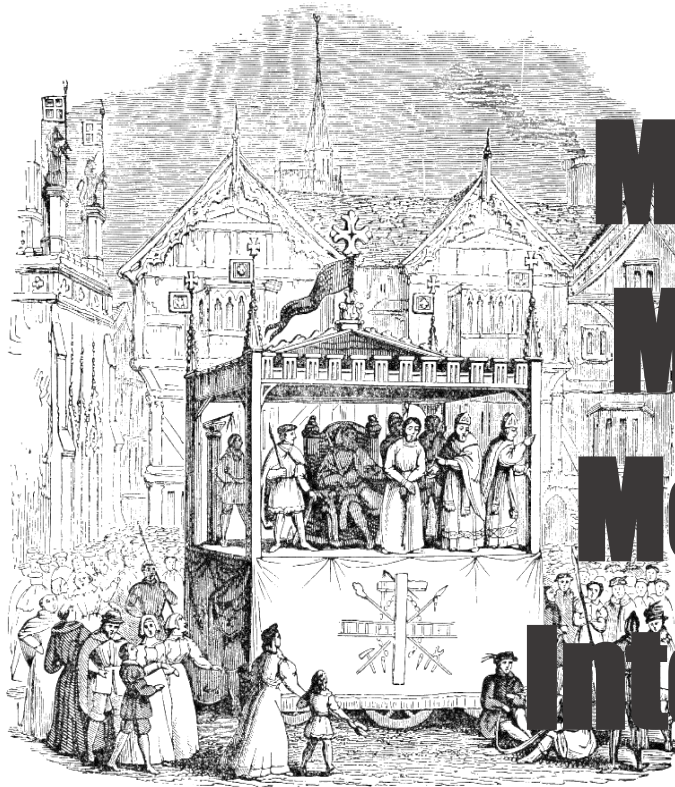
(Landless, Carpenter)

In order to compete with the upper classes (the Nobility and the Gentry), the merchants and lawyers acquired property.

"A merchant may be rich, but if he has no education of manners, is disqualified to rule".

The Book Named the Governor
(1531)

Sir Thomas Elyot



Mystery Miracle Morality Interlude

The 16th century English drama was very little influenced by the ancient classical drama i.e., Greek and Roman. It had its own indigenous history. By the time of the Norman Conquest a form of religious drama had already established itself in France. And soon it found its way to England. It was written by ecclesiastical authors with a clear instructional intent. They utilised it to teach the unlettered masses the fundamental truths of their religion.

To begin with, the **Mystery Play** evolved in 11th and 12th centuries. The rebirth of drama in Church and its liturgy developed as a part of ceremonial religious feasts such as Easter. These liturgical dramas were served as a way to teach Bible to the illiterate commoners. Initially the Church had this drama under complete control; performances were given in the church buildings, the priests were the actors, and the language employed was Latin. But the insane popularity of these dramas forced the church to let the performances outside the church buildings, in the town squares while the vernacular tongue – first French and then English – was substituted for the original Latin.



In the ancient Greece, dramas were performed at the festivals of Dionysius, the Gk. God of wine, merry-making and fertility. Tragedy used to dominate the scene in Greece. In Rome, though, the comedy was more successful. These Roman dramatic entertainments were notorious for their vulgarity, cruelty and licentiousness. As the Catholic church grew in power, plays in Rome were prohibited. It was ironic that the Church, that drove the Roman drama out of existence, became the very source from which modern drama was to rise.

“Men lived intensely, thought intensely and wrote intensely”

England witnessed a great rise in patriotic feeling. A keen interest was seen in exploring England's past and England's greatness. There was a common hatred for England's enemies and extravagant loyalty to the Queen. The Queen ruled without any internal threats (except few in the beginning).

The merchant class enjoyed a lot of power. Few of them are appointed as the mayors of various cities. One document shows that the mayor of London shut the theatres down in London against the Queen's order during the plague outbreak.

Many historians believed Mystery and **Miracle plays** to be the same. Attempts have been made to distinguish between these two forms on the ground that the Mystery plays dealt with the subjects taken from the Bible, the Miracle with the lives of the saints. Common people and tradesmen used to be the actors. These dramas were staged in about 40 districts in England. After the edict of 1210, these performances were organised and funded by the **Trading Guilds**. In the beginning of the 14th century, there were instances of plays being performed once a year in the many of the principal towns of England. They took the names of the cities where they were performed. As they performed within a cycle, arranged to exhibit the whole history from the Creation to the Fall of man and his redemption, these are known as 'cycle-plays'. These plays were also called 'Corpus Christi' play as they were performed in the Corpus Christi festival. Four of these cycles have come down to us complete: York cycle of 48 plays, Chester cycle of 25, the Coventry of 42, the Wakefield of 31. These Corpus Christi plays were also known as 'collective mysteries.' *The Three Maries* and *The Second Shepherd's Play* are two great examples of these dramas. These plays must have survived to the age of Shakespeare as well because some of the historical documents reveal that Shakespeare must have witnessed one of these plays in the 16th century at Coventry. During these performances lots of people gathered from different corner to enjoy these plays. Thus, it became the place of mass and collective entertainment.



PAGEANTS & GUILDS

When the venue of the dramatic performances moved outside the Churches into the town squares, the pageants came to the forefront. The Pageants were travelling drama companies. They used to have boxes in huge vehicles which had actors, players elaborators and arrangements within it. They used to travel across the town and people gather in different corners to watch the drama. In 1210, suspicious of the growing popularity of miracle plays, Pope Innocent III issued a papal edict forbidding clergy from acting on a public stage. This had the effect of transferring the organization of the dramas to town guilds.

The story of *Everyman* appears to have similarities with a Dutch morality play, *Elckerlijck* (1495) and may have been derived from it. Its authorship being disputed, left to anonymous.

'*Fulgens and Lucrece*' by Henry Medwall was probably the first completely secular play written in English.

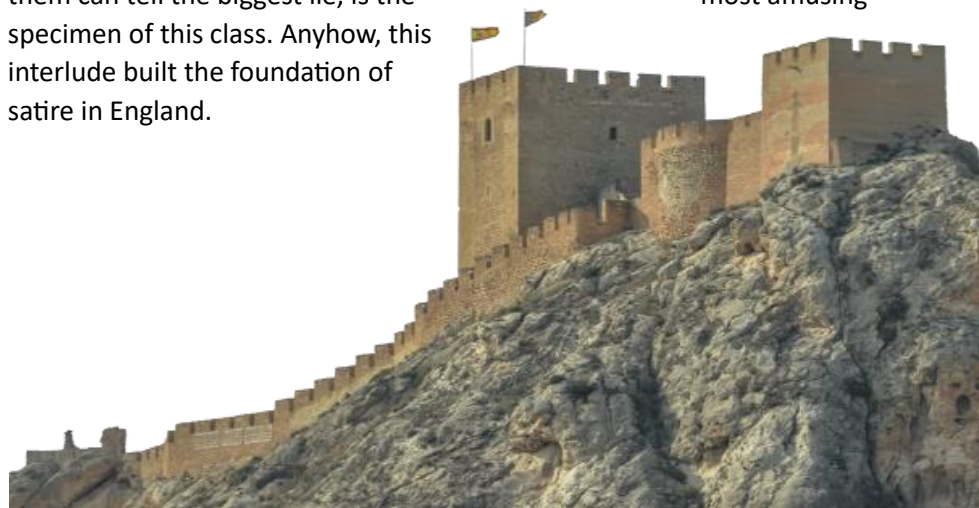


A later stage in the evolution of the drama is marked by the **Morality Play**. With the morality play the general development of the drama takes a paradigm shift. This, like the miracle play, was didactic; but its characters, instead of being drawn from sacred narratives or the lives of the saints, were personified abstractions, such as Faith, Truth, Charity, Good Deeds, Mercy, and on the antagonist side, Falsehood, Covetousness, Gluttony, and Vice etc. In essence, a morality play is a dramatization of the battle between the forces of sin and righteousness for the possession of the human soul. The character of Vice was presented with a comic note. The best known and the most rounded morality play was ***Everyman*** (c.1500). The central character, Everyman has to find a companion to go with him to God when Death comes. He approached almost everyone but only good deed agreed to join him. Another impressive morality play of the 15th century is *The Castle of Perseverance*.

These plays brought in a theological discussion among the commoners and made them think about the reality of materiality and afterlife. Though these plays were advertently moralistic but ironically, they were not always about morality. In fact, a lot of immoral activities were celebrated which the general English public grabbed wholeheartedly.

During the **mid-15th century**, due to the Plague, the Church cancelled all dramatic performances. As a result, the theatre houses started to be built outside the city walls.

Towards the end of the 15th century, there developed a type of morality play which dealt in the same allegorical way with general moral problems though with more pronounced realistic and comic elements. These plays were known as **Interludes**. These short secular plays started to be performed during the intervals of banquets at court, in the houses of nobility, in the universities and at the Inns of the Courts. The best known of the interlude-writers was **John Heywood**. His ***Four P's***, a dialogue in which a Palmer, a Pedlar, a Pardoner and a Potheary (apothecary), exchange racy stories and finally entered into a competition as to which of them can tell the biggest lie, is the most amusing specimen of this class. Anyhow, this interlude built the foundation of satire in England.



16th century English drama

All mystery, miracle and morality plays gradually paved the way for the proper English drama.



By the 1550's there was a renewed interest in the pagan antiquity. With fresh vigour, men turned to the classics for guidance and inspiration in theatre as well as in other creative enterprises. They took the works of the Latin playwrights and not the Greek playwrights as their primary inspiration. Initially, they modelled their

works upon the comedies of Plautus and Terence and the tragedies of Seneca. They were acted in the Universities and elsewhere on special occasions.



Then came the Latin imitations and in the course of time, some attempts had been made to fashion

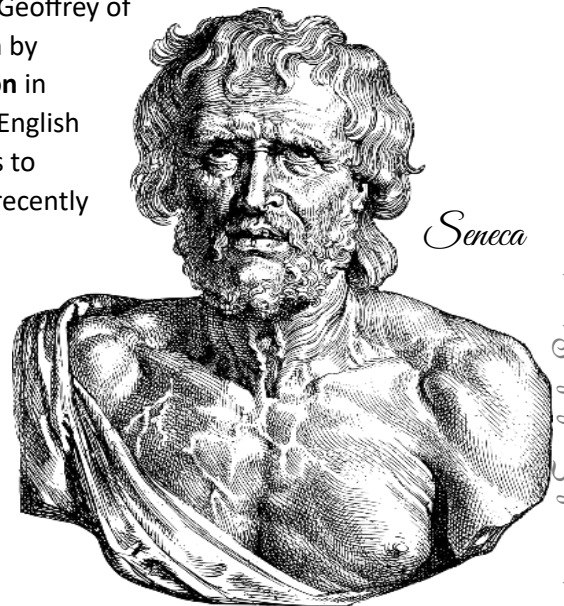
All these changes led to the emergence of Romantic Drama in English scene in the Elizabethan era.

English plays in the manner of the original Latin. In these attempts the English writers learned many dramatic techniques. Meanwhile, it became fashionable for the schoolmasters to present these comedies on stage with students as actors. The headmaster of Eton, **Nicholas Udall**, wrote the first regular English comedy, **Ralph Roister Doister** which was performed in 1553. The next notable comedy of this period is, **Gammer Gurton's Needle** (first acted in 1566), a verse play, now attributed to William Stevenson ("Mr. S.").

The classical influence was even greater on tragedy. The extraordinary impact of Seneca is the most marked feature of English tragedies. The sharp line, drawn between classical tragedy and comedy, became blurred in English drama. The first real English tragedy, **Gorboduc**, or **The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex**, is based upon an episode in Geoffrey of Monmouth's History and was written by **Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton** in 1561. It's worth noting that this first English tragedy was also the first of our plays to employ blank verse, which had only recently been introduced into English poetry.

In the Senecan model, there were neither any shift in tone nor in emotion.

To talk of the universities, Latin comedies were popular at Cambridge in the 1580's. **Gammer Gurton's Needle** was first acted in the University of Cambridge. Meanwhile, Oxford was producing Senecan tragedy in Latin.



Seneca