



English Renaissance Drama

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Popular in their own time, the 27 plays included here by Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton, among many others reveal why these playwrights' achievements, like Shakespeare's, deserve reading, teaching, and performing afresh in our time. Edited by a team of exceptional scholars and teachers, this anthology opens an extraordinary tradition in drama to new readers and audiences."

English Renaissance Drama Details

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Alan says

What a collection! I'm so glad I was able to read this anthology. I didn't really know much about the English renaissance theater, so I had no idea what to expect going into this. It should come as no surprise that Shakespeare's contemporaries were not as far off, in terms of talent, from him - many of these plays prove it. From the early Elizabethan plays (such as The Spanish Tragedy) to the late Jacobean plays (such as The Duchess of Malfi) it's pretty much impossible to get bored with the seemingly endless dramas, conspiracies and twists that occupied the English zeitgeist. Every play was prefaced with a deep analyses and summary by an array of PhD professors. So much work was put into this anthology that I can only give it 5 stars.

Tanya Merchant says

I wish I were back in school, studying more English Renaissance Literature. I miss it! Unfortunately, most of these plays are inappropriate for a high school setting (which is where I teach)...

Vicki says

If you like Shakespeare, you must read some (or all!) of the plays in this anthology. Some personal favorites: A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, The Alchemist, Epicene, and The Roaring Girl.

Amy says

Read for English Renaissance Dramas capstone class. From this anthology we read The Spanish Tragedy, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta, The Shoemaker's Holiday, Bartholomew Fair, The Revenger's Tragedy, The Roaring Girl, and The Duchess of Malfi. I think The Duchess of Malfi and The Spanish Tragedy were my favorites. :)

Mike Jensen says

This is an essential collection for anybody who has read Shakespeare and now wants to sample the other best plays of the era. Everything that must be in such a collection is in this one, and there are a half-dozen great bonus plays as well. Do not skip the fine contextualizing introduction by Katharine Eisaman Maus with an assist from David Bevington.

Catherine Osborne says

I took a course with Katherine Maus (one of the editors of this excellent collection) and it was fascinating. So much fun, and important for lovers of Shakespeare.

Jeremy says

This was the only textbook for my 16th-century seminar with Dr. Maurice Hunt at Baylor (Spring 2013). We were not assigned every play in the book, but we did read some plays not included in the book.

Dyani says

Excellent anthology. Good intro and notes, fascinating plays.

Mkfs says

Before purchasing this collection, I had read the Thomas Kyd play, all of the Marlowe plays, the Marston play, both of the Webster plays, the John Ford play, Jonson's *The Alchemist*, and Middleton's *The Revenger's tragedy*. Gathering dust on my to-read shelves are a collections of the complete (as far as possible) plays of Jonson, Middleton, and Kyd.

Despite this, I forked over the cost of the collection for a few reasons: the remaining plays are difficult to come by, except singly; the quality of the Norton introductory essays is excellent; and the quality of the volume itself is much greater than many of the included plays that I have read, or am intending to read (in particular, the Kyd and the Jonson).

In regards to the content, if you aren't reading this for a class, you obviously like the period and its dramatic literature. Perhaps you have enjoyed the Norton Shakespeare, and want the same coverage of other plays from the period. Perhaps exposure to Marlowe's works has heightened your curiosity. Perhaps you have even read the small Oxford World's Classics collections, such as Four Revenge Tragedies. If you are nodding your head knowingly, this anthology is for you.

An excellent point is made in the General Introduction (xxiii) about why these plays hold their appeal, even to a modern audience:

"Despite their differences, all these plays assume that the audience shares the characters' intense susceptibility to and delight in impressive language. The aim is not necessarily simple, straightforward comprehension, but a poetic effect elicited by strangeness and imagined as pleasurable even in, or perhaps especially in, the absence of total comprehension."

Alex says

It is not a surprise to me that some people (historically) would try to make the performance of these plays

illegal.

James says

I've read, so far, "The Roaring Girl" and "A Chaste Maid in Cheapside." The plays are great. The glosses are sometimes helpful but just as often pointless and distracting. The footnotes are more balanced, usually informative on points of history, culture and language. There is a tendency to paraphrase passages that are clear enough, and this can become tedious. Mostly, I wish this had been broken down into two volumes with better paper and less cumbersome dimensions. I really hate this onion paper bullshit. Yea, Norton!

D'Argo Agathon says

Obviously, I didn't read all the Renaissance tragedies, but this is a wonderful collection. Fascinating introductions, good glosses and notes, and a wide selection. Great book.
