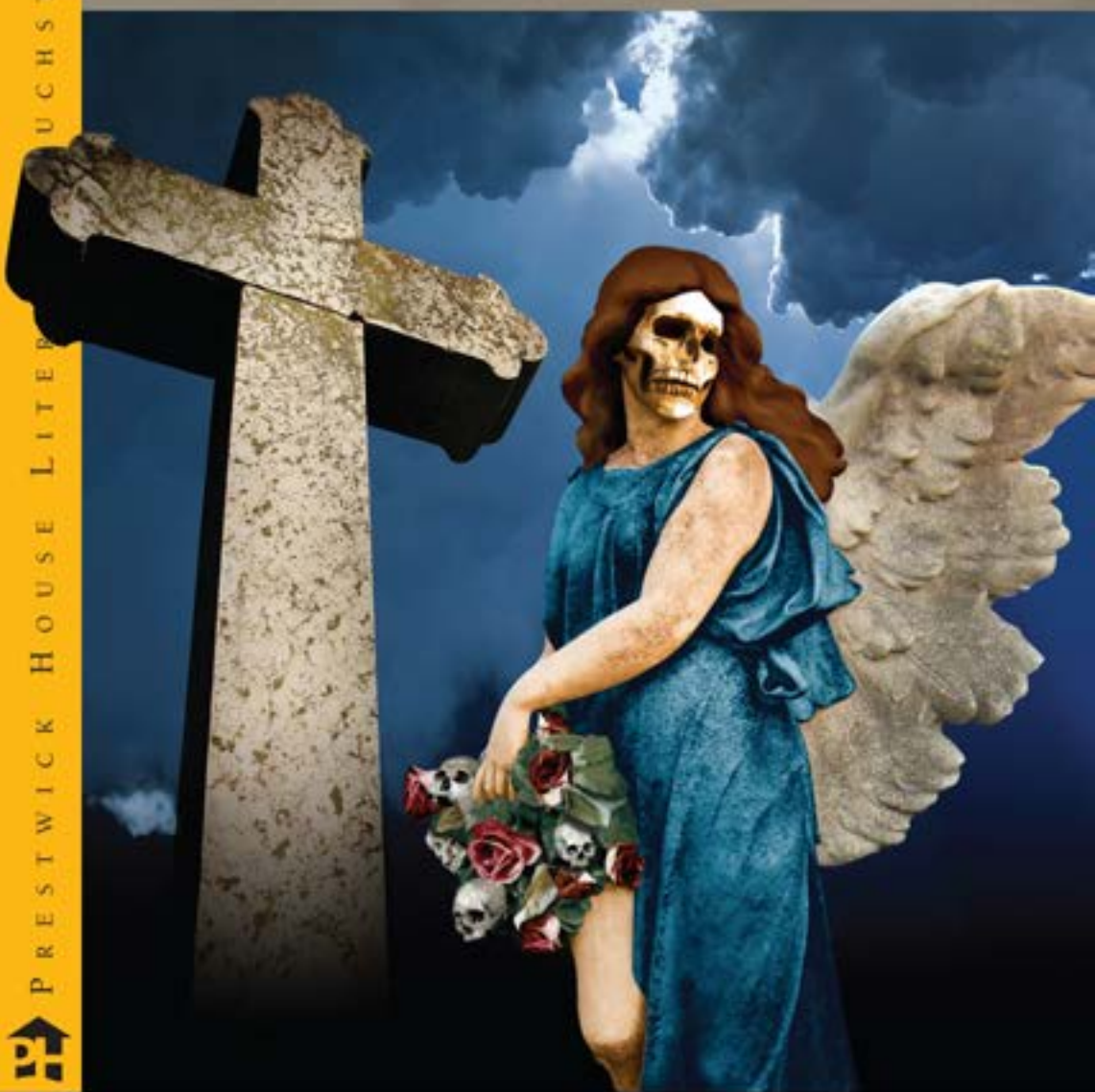


EVERYMAN

& The Second Shepherd's Play

Anonymous



UCHSTONE CLASSICS

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERATURE



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

EVERYMAN

& The Second Shepherd's Play



A n o n y m o u s



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Notes

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

The use of plays to educate the 16th century English audience on virtues, the predominance of archetypes and flat characters, and the simplicity of plot are staples of the genres known as Cycle and Morality Plays. Most members of a typical audience of the time could barely read or write, and the teachings of the Church were predominantly in Latin; therefore, the theater was a seemingly perfect way to reach and instruct the population. The drama evolved from the Bible, so the stories were familiar and could be capitalized upon; the plays were, therefore, sanctioned by the religious authorities, which had in the past and would in the future, condemn actors and acting. Traveling “troupes” of players would set up a stage in a small town and perform for the residents. Frequently, members of trade guilds also were part of the cast.

While the characters in *Everyman* and *The Second Shepherds' Play* are one-dimensional, they do provide the impetus for some later Elizabethan drama (Marlowe's *Faust*, for example), and these two are considered the epitome of this type. However, audiences soon lost interest in the simplistic drama being presented and demanded more realistic, elaborate, and compelling theater, which set the stage for the rise of Elizabethan drama.

EVERYMAN

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

Everyman is one of the last and most well known plays of the 15th century genre called Morality Plays. The author of *Everyman* is unknown, but the play is believed to be the English translation of an earlier Dutch version, *Elckerlyc*, written in 1495. Although it's unclear exactly when *Everyman* was written, the last early editions of the play were printed between 1521 and 1537. The following information will assist you in understanding *Everyman* and the role it played in medieval society:

- Morality Plays were developed as allegorical presentations of the conflict between virtue and vice. Most of the people during this time were illiterate, and morality plays were used to instruct people in a manner they could identify with.
- These plays were often parables (i.e., stories that teach a lesson). The lesson for *Everyman*, the character, is that death is inevitable, so one must prepare for God's judgment by leading a virtuous life.
- The Catholic Church was an integral part of medieval society. People led their lives based on the doctrines of the Church, as presented by priests, who frequently used stories to teach biblical precepts.
- In addition to morality, religious ideology was the focus of many plays, including these two.

Characters:

In contrast to modern plays that use multi-dimensional characters who have individual qualities, *Everyman*, as is typical of most Morality Plays, employs one-dimensional characters to represent people, things, events, or symbols. For example, some characters in the play stand for specific traits, occurrences, or people:

- Everyman – the common individual; the ordinary church attendee
- Fellowship – friends, acquaintances, colleagues
- Goods – material possessions, wealth
- Good Deeds – virtues
- Knowledge – intellect



EVERYMAN

NOTE

The opinion has been commonly accepted that the English version of the play was a translation from the Dutch version *Elckerlyc* ascribed to Dorlandus. The chief support of this view is the fact that the Dutch version was printed before the English. It may be safer to consider the question still open, for either may be the earlier, and both may go back to an earlier version, now lost.

Here beginneth a treatise how the High Father of Heaven sendeth Death to summon every creature to come and give an account of their lives in this world, and is in manner of a moral play.

[The Messenger enters.]

Messenger.

I pray you all give your audience,
And hear this matter with reverence,
In form a moral play.

The Summoning of Everyman it is called so,
That of our lives and ending maketh show

5

How transitory we be every day.
This matter is wondrous precious,
But the meaning of it is more gracious
And sweet to bear away.

The story saith: Man, in the beginning

10

Watch well, and take good heed of the ending,
 Be you never so gay!
 Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet,
 Which, in the end, causeth the soul to weep,
 When the body lieth in clay. 15
 Here shall you see how Fellowship and Jollity,
 Both Strength, Pleasure, and Beauty,
 Will fade from thee as flower in May,
 For ye shall hear how our Heaven's King
 Calleth Everyman to a general reckoning. 20
 Give audience and hear what he doth say.
 [*The Messenger goes.*]

God speaketh:

I perceive, here in my majesty,
 How that all creatures be to me unkind,
 Living, without fear, in worldly prosperity.
 In spiritual vision the people be so blind, 25
 Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God;
 In worldly riches is all their mind.
 They fear not my righteousness, the sharp rod.
 My law that I disclosed, when I for them died,
 They clean forget, and shedding of my blood red. 30
 I hung between two it cannot be denied,
 To get them life I suffered to be dead,
 I healed their feet, with thorns was hurt my head.
 I could do no more than I did truly,
 And now I see the people do clean forsake me; 35
 They use the seven deadly sins[†] damnable
 In such wise that pride, covetousness, wrath, and lechery,
 Now in this world be made commendable,
 And thus they leave of angels the heavenly company.
 Every man liveth so after his own pleasure, 40
 And yet of their lives they be nothing sure.
 The more I them forbear, I see
 The worse from year to year they be;
 All that live grow more evil apace;
 Therefore I will, in briefest space,[†] 45
 From every man in person have a reckoning shown.
 For, if I leave the people thus alone
 In their way of life and wicked passions to be,[†]
 They will become much worse than beasts, verily.
 Now for envy would one eat up another, and tarry not 50

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.

Charity is by all clean forgot.
 I hoped well that every man
 In my glory should make his mansion,
 And thereto I made them all elect,
 But now I see, like traitors abject, 55
 They thank me not for the pleasure that I for them meant,
 Nor yet for their being that I them have lent.
 I proffered the people great multitude of mercy,
 And few there be that ask it heartily.
 They be so cumbered with worldly riches, thereto 60
 I must needs upon them justice do,—
 On every man living without fear.
 Where art thou, Death, thou mighty messenger?
 [Death enters.

Death.

Almighty God, I am here at your will,
 Your commandment to fulfil. 65

God.

Go thou to Everyman,
 And show him in my name
 A pilgrimage he must on him take,
 Which he in no wise may escape,
 And that he bring with him a sure reckoning 70
 Without delay or any tarrying.

Death.

Lord, I will in the world go run over all,
 And cruelly search out both great and small.
 Every man will I beset that liveth beastly
 Out of God's law, and doth not dread folly. 75
 He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart
 His sight to blind and him from heaven to part—
 Except if Alms be his good friend—
 In hell for to dwell, world without end.
 Lo, yonder I see Everyman walking. 80
 Full little he thinketh on my coming!
 His mind is on fleshly lusts and his treasure,
 And great pain it shall cause him to endure
 Before the Lord, of Heaven the King.
 Everyman, stand still! Whither art thou going 85
 Thus gayly? Hast thou thy Maker forgot?

[Everyman enters.]

Everyman.

Why askest thou?
Wouldest thou know? For what?

Death.

Yea, sir, I will show you now.
In great haste I am sent to thee 90
From God, out of his majesty.

Everyman.

What, sent to me!

Death.

Yea, certainly.
Though thou hast forgot him here,
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere, 95
As, ere we part, thou shalt know.

Everyman.

What desireth God of me?

Death.

That shall I show thee.
A reckoning he will needs have
Without any longer respite. 100

Everyman.

To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave.
This blind matter troubleth my wit.

Death.

Upon thee thou must take a long journey,
Therefore, do thou thine accounting-book with thee bring. 105
For turn again thou canst not by no way,
And look thou be sure in thy reckoning,
For before God thou shalt answer, and show true
Thy many bad deeds and good but a few,
How thou hast spent thy life and in what wise
Before the Chief Lord of Paradise. 110
Get thee prepared that we may be upon that journey,
For well thou knowest thou shalt make none for thee attorney.†

Everyman.

Full unready I am such reckoning to give.
I know thee not. What messenger art thou?

Glossary for *Everyman*

the seven deadly sins – These are the seven characteristics identified in Christianity as sinful: Lust/Lechery (excessive sexual desire), Gluttony (overindulgence in alcohol or food), Greed (obsession with wealth or material things), Sloth (laziness), Wrath (violent anger), Envy/Covetousness (wanting what another has), Pride (vanity, too high opinion of oneself).

in briefest space – in all haste

passions to be – tempests; temptations

thou shalt make none for thee attorney – Death will not negotiate on his behalf.

prince, or peer – During that time, a Duke was sometimes referred to as a prince.

Adam's sin – This refers to Adam and Eve. They ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge and were banished from Eden (paradise) as punishment for giving in to temptation.

Saint Charity – “Holy Charity”; compared to Saint Cross, Saint Sepulchre; Everyman is asking Death to show him charity.

vale terrestrial – mortal life on earth

wits five – the five senses: memory, imagination, estimation, fantasy, and common sense

would be – had been

by this day! – a medieval exclamation

gramercy – The word is from the from the French expression, *grant merci*. It literally means “great thanks,” or “thanks exceedingly.”

Adonai – a Hebrew name for God as an indication of respect

Pardy – This is derived from the French exclamation, “pardi,” which is a contraction of the words *par Dieu*. The literal translation is “by God.”

“Nature will creep where it may not go.” – This proverb is used to assert the force of “nature,” which enables it to produce effects from causes, even in cases where obstacles, apparently insuperable, are in the way. The meaning here is that blood relationship will force Everyman's kin to aid him in his distress, even though they want to refuse him.

Cousin – The word is used here as a general, as well as specific, title of relationship. Cousin, could mean a relative, friend, or acquaintance.

Vocabulary for *Everyman*

abide – to continue for a long time

abstinence – the self-denial of something, especially alcohol, unhealthy food, or sexual relations

acquaintance – a person one knows, but not very well

acquittance – the release of a debt or obligation

adversity – a state of hardship or misfortune

Alack! – an exclamation of regret or sorrow

alms – money or goods given to the poor

begot – fathered; produced

behoof – an advantage, benefit

benign – gentle, not harmful

bequeath – to pass on to another

blind – hard to understand

caitiff – a detestable and cowardly person

celestial – relating to heaven

chastened – punished

clamorous – very loud or insistent

cognition – the act of knowing

commendable – worthy of approval or praise

commission – to charge with a task

consecrate – to make holy

consign – to entrust or assign

consume – to decay

contrition – sincere remorse for wrongdoing or sin

covetous – [*covet*] to want what another has

damnation – eternal punishment for sin

deliberation – careful thought before actions or decisions

discretion – the ability to make choices for oneself

doctrines – the teachings of a specific subject

dolor – grief, sorrow

dread – detest

ere – before

fain – eagerly, willingly

fellowship – a friendly relationship, companionship

forbear – to hold back, resist

forfeited – lost or gave up as a penalty