

## Romanticism and Realism

Romanticism was the major literary and artistic form during most of the 19th century. It presented life as people wished it would be, rather than as it really was. Romantic plays used heroes to fight for individual rights against unjust societies. These heroes relied on emotions and feelings to guide them. The Romantic plays stressed the importance of the worth of the individual.

Romanticism began in Germany and soon spread to other countries. One of the early Romantic playwrights from Germany was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe whose most famous play was *Faust*. In France, noted playwrights included Victor Hugo. His play, *Hernani*, was so different that it caused audience members to riot in the streets. Later, Alexander Dumas made play versions of his famous novels *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

The most popular type of Romanticism was the *melodrama*. The hero in a melodrama always succeeded. Playwrights made clear distinctions between good and evil. The forces of good always won at the end of the play. Melodrama emphasized the story rather than the characters. Many of the plays used spectacular special effects. The theaters showed fires, floods, earthquakes, horse races, and even train crashes on stage.

Realism was the next major artistic form. It began as a reaction against Romanticism. As the name implies, Realism presented things as they were in real life. Realism often dealt with social problems. The latest scientific discoveries were incorporated into the storylines of these plays. In Realism, the mind ruled over emotions.

The first major Realistic playwright was Henrik Ibsen. He wrote about subjects that had never been in plays before. His plays were often controversial. Ibsen's most important plays included *Hedda Gabler*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *A Doll's House*. Ibsen earned the title "the father of Realism."

Other early Realistic playwrights included August Strindberg, Anton Chekhov, and George Bernard Shaw. Strindberg's plays, such as *The Father*, often explored the psychology of the characters. Chekhov wrote about the changing society of Russia. Shaw's plays often dealt with political and social issues of the time.

Many Realistic plays did not have happy endings. At first, many members of the audience did not like the new Realism; they preferred Romanticism. Eventually, however, Realism became popular, and it is still a major artistic form today.

A new acting style became necessary for performing Realism. Romantic actors used exaggerated vocal techniques and gestures. The new Realism needed a more subtle and believable style. Constantin Stanislavsky, a Russian actor and director, developed a new approach to Realistic acting. He and his fellow actors of The Moscow Art Theater developed a new acting style referred to today as "The Method." Stanislavsky's method has had a great impact on acting techniques through the twentieth century.



Romantic plays were based on emotions and feelings.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions for Consideration**

1. When was Romanticism the major art form?  
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2. On what did Romantic heroes rely to guide them?  
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3. Where did the Romantic movement begin?  
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4. What was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's most famous play?  
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5. What play written by Victor Hugo caused rioting in the streets?  
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6. Who wrote the play and novel, *The Three Musketeers*?  
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7. What was the most popular type of Romantic play?  
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8. What artistic form began as a reaction against Romanticism?  
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9. Who is known as the father of Realism?  
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10. Who wrote plays about the changing Russian society?  
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11. Whose plays emphasized the psychology of the characters?  
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12. What two issues are the subjects of George Bernard Shaw's plays?  
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13. What theater company is associated with Constantin Stanislavsky?  
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14. What is Stanislavsky's approach to acting called?  
\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Word Search Puzzle**

Find the words listed below and circle them in the puzzle. The words may be printed forward or backward, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

X N T H E M E T H O D L L S T K O T G H  
 X W V O H K E H C O H T F U D O W W B N  
 Q D R E L P O E P E H T F O Y M E N E O  
 S R S M P L T U E A S T R I N D B E R G  
 T C O R E S U O H S L L O D U F Y R D K  
 C U S M E L E B L T Q R Z S Y N A Z Z T  
 E G S X A E U B Z S I X W E M E T O P T  
 F I T E M N T Z X U N E Y O K S M U J R  
 F P A X K W T E D A B Z Q R C B S L G E  
 E P N W G D C I K F B C T E D I I R W H  
 L M I B B S T O C S X P E H J S L E K T  
 A O S S G G R G J I U E U M N N A X M E  
 I Z L W U E F U X T S M F V O K E M W  
 C Z A I U M A H O E K M E I C T R N A G  
 E E V G A S F A X S G V F E L B I X X I  
 P K S M H R L L E H G H P K R L Z O D O  
 S V K I V U T P L A T J Y F I H A W N F  
 Y P Y R J N S A E W P L M E X K T E A S  
 R L M I X A M A R D O L E M D K Y H R Z  
 J Q C O U N T O F M O N T E C R I S T O

**WORD LIST**

Chekhov  
 emotions  
 Goethe  
 Ibsen  
 real life  
 special effects  
 The Method

Count of Monte Cristo  
 Enemy of the People  
 heroes  
 melodrama  
 Romanticism  
 Stanislavsky  
 Three Musketeers

Doll's House  
 Faust  
 Hugo  
 Realism  
 Shaw  
 Strindberg