

## The Origins of Theater

In seeking to describe the origins of theater, one must rely primarily on speculation, since there is little concrete evidence on which to draw. The most widely accepted theory, championed by anthropologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, envisions theater as emerging out of myth and ritual. The process perceived by these anthropologists may be summarized briefly. During the early stages of its development, a society becomes aware of forces that appear to influence or control its food supply and well-being. Having little understanding of natural causes, it attributes both desirable and undesirable occurrences to supernatural or magical forces, and it searches for means to win the favor of these forces. Perceiving an apparent connection between certain actions performed by the group and the result it desires, the group repeats, refines and formalizes those actions into fixed ceremonies, or rituals.

Stories (myths) may then grow up around a ritual. Frequently the myths include representatives of those supernatural forces that the rites celebrate or hope to influence. Performers may wear costumes and masks to represent the mythical characters or supernatural forces in the rituals or in accompanying celebrations. As a people becomes more sophisticated, its conceptions of supernatural forces and causal relationships may change. As a result, it may abandon or modify some rites. But the myths that have grown up around the rites may continue as part of the group's oral tradition and may even come to be acted out under conditions divorced from these rites. When this occurs, the first step has been taken toward theater as an autonomous activity, and thereafter entertainment and aesthetic values may gradually replace the former mystical and socially efficacious concerns.

■ Although origin in ritual has long been the most popular, it is by no means the only theory about how the theater came into being. ■ Storytelling has been proposed as one alternative. ■ Under this theory, relating and listening to stories are seen as fundamental human pleasures. ■ Thus, the recalling of an event (a hunt, battle, or other feat) is elaborated through the narrator's pantomime and impersonation and eventually through each role being assumed by a different person.

A closely related theory sees theater as evolving out of dances that are primarily pantomimic, rhythmical or gymnastic, or from imitations of animal noises and sounds. Admiration for the performer's skill, virtuosity, and grace are seen as motivation for elaborating the activities into fully realized theatrical performances.

In addition to exploring the possible antecedents of theater, scholars have also theorized about the motives that led people to develop theater. Why did theater develop, and why was it valued after it ceased to fulfill the function of ritual? Most answers fall back on the theories about the human mind and basic human needs. One, set forth by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C., sees humans as naturally imitative—as taking pleasure in imitating persons, things, and actions and in seeing such imitations. Another, advanced in the twentieth century, suggests that humans have a gift for fantasy, through which they seek to reshape reality into more satisfying forms than those encountered in daily life. Thus, fantasy or fiction (of which drama is one form) permits people to objectify their anxieties and fears, confront them, and fulfill their hopes in fiction if not fact. The theater, then, is one tool whereby people define and understand their world or escape from unpleasant realities.

But neither the human imitative instinct nor a penchant for fantasy by itself leads to an autonomous theater. Therefore, additional explanations are needed. One necessary condition seems to be a somewhat detached view of human problems. For example, one sign of this condition is the appearance of the comic vision, since comedy requires sufficient detachment to view some deviations from social norms as ridiculous rather than as serious threats to the welfare of the entire group. Another condition that contributes to the development of autonomous theater is the emergence of the aesthetic sense. **For example, some early societies ceased to consider certain rites essential to their well-being and abandoned them, nevertheless, they retained as parts of their oral tradition the myths that had grown up around the rites and admired them for their artistic qualities rather than for their religious usefulness.**

1. The word “**championed**” in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - (A) changed
  - (B) debated
  - (C) created
  - (D) supported
2. The word “**attributes**” in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - (A) ascribes
  - (B) leaves
  - (C) limits
  - (D) contrasts
3. According to paragraph 1, theories of the origins of theater
  - (A) are mainly hypothetical
  - (B) are well supported by factual evidence
  - (C) have rarely been agreed upon by anthropologists
  - (D) were expressed in the early stages of theater’s development
4. According to paragraph 1, why did some societies develop and repeat ceremonial actions?
  - (A) To establish a positive connection between the members of the society
  - (B) To help society members better understand the forces controlling their food supply
  - (C) To distinguish their beliefs from those of other societies
  - (D) To increase the society’s prosperity
5. The word “**this**” in the passage refers to
  - (A) the acting out of rites
  - (B) the divorce of ritual performers from the rest of society
  - (C) the separation of myths from rites
  - (D) the celebration of supernatural forces
6. The word “**autonomous**” in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - (A) artistic
  - (B) important
  - (C) independent
  - (D) established
7. According to paragraph 2, what may cause societies to abandon certain rites?
  - (A) Emphasizing theater as entertainment
  - (B) Developing a new understanding of why events occur
  - (C) Finding a more sophisticated way of representing mythical characters
  - (D) Moving from a primarily oral tradition to a more written tradition
8. All of following are mentioned in paragraph 5 as possible reasons that led societies to develop theater EXCEPT
  - (A) Theater allows people to face that they are afraid of.
  - (B) Theater gives an opportunity to imagine a better reality.
  - (C) Theater is a way to enjoy imitating other people.
  - (D) Theater provides people the opportunity to better understand the human mind.
9. Which of the following best describes the organization of paragraph 5?
  - (A) The author presents two theories for a historical phenomenon.
  - (B) The author argues against theories expressed earlier in the passage.
  - (C) The author argues for replacing older theories with a new one.
  - (D) The author points out problems with two popular theories.
10. The word “**penchant**” in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - (A) compromise
  - (B) inclination
  - (C) tradition
  - (D) respect
11. Why does the author mention “**comedy**”?

- (A) To give an example of early types of theater
- (B) To explain how theater helps a society respond to threats to its welfare
- (C) To help explain why detachment is needed for the development of theater
- (D) To show how theatrical performers become detached from other members of society

**12. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.**

- (A) A society's rites were more likely to be retained in the oral tradition if its myths were admired for artistic qualities.
- (B) The artistic quality of a myth was sometimes an essential reason for a society to abandon it from the oral tradition.
- (C) Some early societies stopped using myths in their religious practices when rites ceased to be seen as useful for social well-being.
- (D) Myths sometimes survived in a society's tradition because of their artistic qualities even after they were no longer deemed religiously beneficial.

**13. Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.**

To enhance their listeners' enjoyment, storytellers continually make their stories more engaging and memorable.

**Where would the sentence best fit?**

**14. Directions: An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. This question is worth 2 points.**

Anthropologists have developed many theories to help understand why and how theater originated.

**Answer choices**

- (A) The presence of theater in almost all societies is thought to have occurred because early storytellers traveled to different groups to tell their stories.
- (B) Many theorists believe that theater arises when societies act out myths to preserve social well-being.
- (C) The more sophisticated societies became, the better they could influence desirable occurrences through ritualized theater.
- (D) Some theories of theater development focus on how theater was used by group leaders to group leaders govern other members of society.
- (E) Theater may have come from pleasure humans receive from storytelling and moving rhythmically.
- (F) The human capacities for imitation and fantasy are considered possible reasons why societies develop theater.

参考答案与解析

- 选 **D**。champion 最常见的意思是冠军，但这里的 champion 是个动词，但他的意思应该与冠军有关，其实是拥护、支持的意思。A 改变 B 争论 C 创造都错。
- 选 **A**。attribute 是归因于之意，表示因果关系，所以 ascribe 归因于正确。
- 选 **A**。以 origins of theater 为关键词定位至本段第一句，one must rely primarily on speculation，主要靠推测，也就是 A，主要是推论的。不认识 hypothetical 的话之后有解释说没有事实证据，所以也能说明是推论的。
- 选 **D**。ceremonial action 做关键词定位至全段最后一句，说人们是感觉到了他们的仪式性的活动和他们所期望的那种结果之间的联系之后他们才做这些事情的。前一句说他们把无论好坏的结果都归因于超自然的力量，他们做这些事情是为了赢得超自然力量的眷顾，所以 D 为了整个社会的繁荣是正确答案。
- 选 **C**。就近原则往前，而且 this 不指代单个的名词，而指代整个词组或者句子，所以指代的应该是前面的 the myths may even come to be acted out under conditions divorced from these rites，指的是仪式与神话的分离，C 正确，注意 divorce 不仅仅可以表示离婚，等于 separation。
- 选 **C**。autonomous 自主的，自治的，自发的，从这个词本身看，auto 是自动的意思，所以跟它最有关联的就是 independent 独立了。
- 选 **B**。以 abandon rites 做关键词定位至全段倒数第三句，有个 as a result，说明之前的句子是导致人们放弃这种仪式的原因，也正是问题的答案。随着人们越来越智慧，他们对超自然的能力的认识，还有超自然能力和他们所期待的结果之间的因果关系会变化，也就是很多人不再认为是超自然的能力在左右他们，所以 B 有了新的认识是正确答案。
- 选 **D**。排除法，原文第二句问 Why did theater develop，接着给出了两个原因，一个是人们乐于模仿，一个是人们想要把现实理想化，A 答案对应原文倒数第二句 objectify their anxieties and fears，B 答案对应第二个原因，C 答案对应第一个原因，所以 D 没说。
- 选 **A**。正如上题所解释的那样，先问了一个问题 Why did theater develop，接着给出了两个原因，所以答案是 A，D 虽然也说了两个理论，但原文没说这两个理论有什么问题，所以 D 错。
- 选 **B**。pendant 的意思是强烈倾向，嗜好，趣味。原文与 pendant 并列的词是 imitative instinct，对于幻想的什么什么，上面两题都说了人们弄出戏剧的两个原因，一个是模仿，对应这道题里的 imitative instinct，另外一个就是把现实理想化，也就是爱幻想。所以 pendant 应该表示喜欢，喜爱之意。compromise 妥协和 tradition 传统都不靠谱，respect 尊敬有些靠谱，但和 inclination 倾向比起来明显不是正确答案。
- 选 **C**。修辞目的题，for example 标志着应该往前看，前面是观点后面是例子。前文说已经给出的两个原因都不对，所以需要额外的解释，那么 for example 之前的句子就是额外的解释。detached view of human problems 指的是人们现实中遇到的问题和戏剧之间的分离，不是演戏的人和社会上其他人的分离，所以 C 对 D 错。
- 选 **D**。原句转折，说仪式虽然被抛弃了，但随着仪式产生的戏剧却保留了下来。A 是条件，错，而且原文说 rites 没保留，A 反了；B 和 A 错的原因类似，首先因果关系错，其次 myths 没抛弃，说反了；C 也错在抛弃了 myths，与原文相反，D 正确。
- 选 **D**。待插入句中有 listener 和 storyteller，所以必须插在原文 storytelling 句之后，A 和 B 排除，C 的 under this theory 说明前面必须得有一个理论，Storytelling has been proposed as one alternative 刚好是个理论，所以过渡紧密，不插入任何句子，答案应该是 D，而且 pleasures 和待插入句中的 enjoyment 重复。
- 选 **BEF**。原文没说 storyteller 会到处走，所以 A 选项不对；B 选项对应第一段倒数第二句，解释见第四题，正确；原文第二段第四句说人越来越聪明之后，对超自然力量的认识会变化，没说好事越来越多，C 选项错；D 选项原文没说，错；E 选项对应原文第三段的第二三句，正确；F 选项对应原文第五段提出的那两个原因，解释见第八题，正确。