

Elizabethan Entertainment

Entertainment was extremely important to people who lived in the Elizabethan era. The lives of Elizabethans were hard, the mortality rate was high due to frequent outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague and life expectancy was low. Elizabethan entertainment was popular whenever there was something to celebrate! A betrothal, wedding, victories and festivals could be reason enough to have entertainment.

Court entertainment was regular, often a nightly occurrence combined with feasts, jousts and banquets often accompanied by music and dancing.

But the poor people enjoyed entertainment from acting troupes, tournaments, dancing, trained animals, mummers (dancers), mystery plays, jugglers and strolling players. Tournaments, Games, Sports, Gaming and Gambling also played an important part in Elizabethan entertainment.

There were many different types of Elizabethan Entertainment many of which are detailed as follows:

- Feasts - A large, elaborately prepared meal, usually for many persons and often accompanied by court entertainment. Often celebrated religious festivals.
- Banquets - A ceremonial dinner honoring a particular guest
- Fairs - The Annual Summer Fair was often a bawdy affair
- Plays - Starting as plays enacted in town squares followed by the actors using the court yards of taverns or inns (referred to as Inn-yards) followed by the first theatres (great open air amphitheaters built in the same style as the Roman Coliseum) and then the introduction of indoor theatres called Playhouses.

- Mystery Plays - Re-enacting stories from the Bible
- Festivals - Celebrating Church festivals
- Dancing - Elizabethan dances enjoyed by the Upper Classes, Royalty and Nobility included the Cinquepace, Galliard, Pavane, Roundel, Tordion and the Volta
- Jousts/Tournaments - A series of tilting matches between knights
- Games and Sports - Sports and games which included archery, bowling, cards, dice, hammer-throwing, quarter-staff contests, quoits, skittles and wrestling
- Animal Sports - Including Bear and Bull baiting. Dog and Cock fighting
- Hunting - Sport followed by the nobility often using dogs
- Hawking - Sport followed by the nobility with hawks

The Names of Elizabethan Entertainers were as follows :

- Jesters - A fool or buffoon at Elizabethan courts
- Mummers - A masked or costumed merrymaker or dancer especially at a festival
- Minstrels - Travelling musician who sang of legends (declined in the Elizabethan era)
- Troubadours - Travelling musician who sang of courtly love (declined in the Elizabethan era)

- Acting Troupes - Travelling actors
- Jugglers - Also used tricks, deception, or fraud

Elizabethan people loved entertainment, the more the better! Feasts, Fairs, and Festivals were all common occurrences and were celebrated during specific times of the year, most of which were dictated by the Church and religious festivals.