Theatre History

Origins of theatre…

* African Tribal Dances
	+ movements/motions tell a story
	+ started off as a part of religious ceremonies
	+ part of ritual to drive off spirits
* Storytelling
	+ oral tradition – passed down by word of mouth

Greek Theatre

* Thespis
	+ First Greek actor to step forward from the chorus
	+ The word “thespian” meaning “actor” is derived from his name
	+ During his time, masks were introduced as part of costuming
* Tragedy
	+ Aeschylus – “Father of Tragedy”
		- Two actors were introduced with a smaller chorus
		- \*Write the *Oresteia* Trilogy
	+ Sophocles – his works are considered the essence of Greek drama
		- \*Electra \*Oedipus Rex \*Antigone
	+ Euripides
		- \*Medea \*Alcestis
* Comedy
	+ Aristophanes - incorporated SATIRE and wrote about aspects of public life
		- \*The Birds, The Frogs, and The Clouds
	+ Menander – incorporated physical/slapstick comedy and wrote about domestic/private life
		- \*The Curmudgeon

Roman Theatre

* Translations of Greek plays
* For the lower classes – frowned upon by the higher ups
	+ Stage: wooden platforms around which the audience stood
* Theatre became more respected and the stage got bigger
	+ Stage: 2 wooden frames that faced each other
	+ 1st to use a front curtain
* \*Cloque – got the audience to shout and cheer (like a modern day opening act gets the crowd excited at a concert for the headlining performer)
* The Writers
	+ Seneca – dramatist – wrote gory stories that were more effective as closet dramas
		- Closet drama – read rather than performed
	+ Plautus – comedic – writings served as a pattern for later writers
		- Shakespeare based his *Comedy of Errors* on one of Plautus’ works
* Theatre became overshadowed by the gladiator games
* When Rome fell, the church banned all theatrical activity
	+ Theatre was dormant for hundreds of years on that continent