



Peer Gynt (Dover Thrift Editions)

By Henrik Ibsen

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Among the masterpieces of world literature, this early verse drama by the celebrated Norwegian playwright humorously yet profoundly explores the virtues, vices, and follies common to all humanity — as represented in the person of Peer Gynt, a charming but irresponsible young peasant. Based on Norwegian folklore and Ibsen's own imaginative inventions, the play relates the roguish life of the world-wandering Peer, who finds wealth and fame — but never happiness — although he is redeemed by love in the end.

As the play opens the young farmer attends a wedding and meets Solveig, the woman who is eventually to be his salvation. However, the rascally Peer then kidnaps the bride and later abandons her in the wilderness. This dismal performance is followed by a string of adventures (many of which do not reflect well on Peer) in many lands. After these soul-chilling exploits, an old and embittered Peer returns to Norway, eventually finding solace in the arms of the faithful Solveig.

Like other early Ibsen plays, such as *Brand* (1866) and *Emperor and Galilean* (1874), the work is imbued with poetic mysticism and romanticism, and in *Peer* we find a rebellious central character in search of an ultimate truth that always seems just out of reach. In this sense Peer can be seen as an alter ego of Ibsen himself, whose lifelong search for artistic and moral certainties resulted in the great later plays (*Hedda Gabler*, *The Wild Duck*, *An Enemy of the People*, etc.) upon which his reputation chiefly rests. This rich, poetic version of *Peer Gynt* is considered the standard translation.

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Editorial Review

Review

Five-act verse play by Henrik Ibsen, published in Norwegian in 1867 and produced in 1876. The title character, based on a legendary Norwegian folk hero, is a rogue who is saved by the love of a woman. Peer Gynt is a charming but arrogant peasant youth who leaves his widowed mother in order to seek his fortune. Confident of success, he has one disastrous adventure after another. In one, he attends the wedding of the wealthy young woman he himself might have married. There he meets Solveig, who falls in love with him. He impulsively abducts the bride from her wedding celebration and subsequently abandons her. Peer Gynt embarks on a series of fantastic voyages around the world, finding wealth and fame but never happiness. Finally, as an old, disillusioned man, he returns to Norway, where Solveig, ever faithful, welcomes him lovingly, and he is redeemed. -- *The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Norwegian

About the Author

Only Shakespeare's plays are performed more frequently than those of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). The Norwegian playwright, theater director, and poet scandalized many of his contemporaries as he led the theater into the modern era by exploring the realities behind 19th-century social conventions.

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