



Everyman

Sample Pages from Everyman

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EVERYMAN

by
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Everyman

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Characters

This translation is a modern retelling of the original text. The story and character genders are largely unchanged, meant to allow modern students to read it with full understanding of the original's intent.

Please feel free to adapt the genders to suit your needs. This is why we've indicated the casting as 17 actors, any gender.

Everyman

God

Death

Messenger

Fellowship

Cousin

Kindred

Goods

Good-Deeds

Knowledge

Confession

Strength

Discretion

Five-Wits

Beauty

Angel

Doctor

About Everyman

Everyman is the best-known Morality Play. What are the elements of a Morality Play?

- The main character is a common man - represents humanity.
- The theme of every Morality Play deals with struggle with salvation: how can man save his soul?
- The theme is more important than characters or story.
- The main character makes a conscious decision against temptation.

The play was written anonymously in the 15th century. It may have been based on a Finish play called **Elckerlijc**, which tells the appeared in 1495 and tells the same story. No one knows which one came first.

Being a Morality Play, **Everyman** is an allegory – a message or meaning expressed through symbolic representation. Ideas, values, vice and virtue become characters.

The majority of the characters are personified ideas. They represent concepts rather than people. In this play the characters represent different aspects of the main character: Goods, Good-Deeds, Knowledge, Strength, and Beauty. The characters are there to teach a moral lesson.

Is this play archaic and outdated? Even in the 15th century there was a concern that man was too materialistic. And it's somewhat shocking to see doubt about priests in a text from this time period:

KNOWLEDGE: Some priests are good, this is true. Sinful priests set a bad example. Some have children who sit by other men's fires. Some haunt the company of women.

Maybe we haven't changed so much in over 600 years.

The Story

The full title of the play is ***The Summoning of Everyman***.

God is upset with how materialistic Man has become. He tells Death to summon Everyman so that he may make account of the good and evil deeds in his life. Everyman is reluctant to go, seeing as his good deeds are rather slim. Not only that, but in order to stand before God

he has to die.

Not wanting to be alone, Everyman seeks a companion to go with him. Those around him (friends, family, his wealth) refuse Everyman in his time of need.

Everyman realizes his early pursuits will mean nothing in the afterlife. If he wants a companion to stand with him, he must acknowledge his sins, confess and atone. Only then will Good-Deeds stand beside him. The only companion you can have in the afterworld is the good you do in life.

After his atonement, an angel takes Everyman's spirit up to heaven.

There are two levels to the story. First, Everyman's physical journey to find a companion, and to death.

Secondly, there is his spiritual journey from a frivolous young man to one who is prepared to stand before God. **Everyman** is a play that looks at what a man must do to save his soul. The physical body and material wealth mean nothing. Focusing on earthly pursuits will only bring about his own downfall.

This Translation

If you're studying Medieval Theatre, it's important to read **Everyman**. But the original version of the text can be hard to understand:

Here begynneth a treatyse how yt hye
fader of heuen sendeth dethe to so-
mon euery creature to come and
gyue counte of theyr liues in
this worlde and is in maner
of a morall playe.

This translation is a modern retelling of the original text. This is not an adaptation - the play doesn't take place in a modern setting or include modern characters. There is no playwright vision or interpretation of the story. It is strictly a more comprehensible version.

The story in this version is the story of the original, meant to allow modern students to read it with full understanding of the original's

intent.

A great creative thinking exercise for this play would be to take the text and adapt it into a modern story. How would students change the setting, the characters, and the actions while still maintaining the elements of a Morality Play?

The MESSENGER enters to the sound of a trumpet fanfare.

MESSENGER: Greetings one and all. Pay heed to what you are about to witness with great care. For here we present a moral play that shows life is not ours to keep. Pay heed! No matter how you spend your days never forget the end to come. Sin which feels so sweet in the here and now will cause your soul to weep at the end of days. And when God calls your name and commands an account of your life, there is no turning back. Pay heed to the story of The Summoning of Everyman.

The MESSENGER exits and up above, GOD paces back and forth, looking below.

GOD: All I see, everywhere I look – there is not one creature who thinks of me, who knows me as their God. Look at them! All of mankind drowning in their sin, blinded by their riches – Do they spend one moment considering the end of days? How can they treat me so? No fear of my holiness, no consideration for what I have done for them. I died for them, shed blood for them. I gave them life from my very own. How dare they desert me! Traitors! They blindly ignore that the life they have so filled with material goods, they have because I lent it to them. This cannot be left alone. The longer they sink in sin, the faster they will end up worse than animals. I must deliver swift justice. Everyman lives for pleasure alone without fear. I will demand a reckoning and account. Death! Where are you?

DEATH: (*entering*) Here at your command, Almighty God.

GOD: Go to Everyman. Tell him he must come to God, now without delay. He must take on this pilgrimage in my name and present an account of his life.

DEATH: So I will. (*GOD exits. DEATH turns to the audience.*) Every man who lives in mockery of God's laws, every man who lives in frivolity and lounges in riches, every man who lives so, I will strike down to hell.

EVERYMAN enters. He walks jauntily as if he doesn't have a care in the world. He holds a large book in his hands. This is the record of his life.

DEATH: And so comes Everyman. I can see the lust of the world in his eyes and hear the jangle of riches in his walk. He has no idea what's coming. (*calling out*) Everyman! Hold! Where do you think you go so foolishly? Have you not a single thought for your Maker?

EVERYMAN: Why do you want to know? What's it to you?

DEATH: I've been sent to you by God.

EVERYMAN: Why?

DEATH: Even though you clearly have forgotten him, he has not forgotten you.

EVERYMAN: Ah, what does God want with me?

DEATH: The time has come to present the account of your life. (*pointing at the book*) He wants a reckoning from you. Now.

EVERYMAN: (*looking at the book, he knows there's not much good in it*) I can't be expected to present an account, just like that without thinking about it. I need more time.

DEATH: This is not a pilgrimage you can turn from. You will stand before God and show your many bad deeds and your...few good ones. You will stand before God and speak on how you have spent your life. (*turning*) We must be off.

EVERYMAN: I'm not ready! Who are you anyway? Why would I go with you?

DEATH: I am Death. I fear no man. I spare no man. And it is God's will that all obey me.

EVERYMAN: Death? Death. I wasn't expecting that. You could, if you wanted to, it is within your power to save me. I could surely from the goodness of my heart, kind Death, part with a thousand dollars? We could just delay this journey, this "pilgrimage" for awhile.

DEATH: No.

EVERYMAN: No?

DEATH: I could own the world. Do you know that? I could receive gifts beyond your wildest dreams.

EVERYMAN: So...

DEATH: I care not for gold or riches. I care not for emperors, kings or princes and I never will. We must be off.

EVERYMAN: It's not fair! I deserve more time. You show up here without warning, why, it makes me sick just thinking about it. Because, you see, my book of life is not, exactly, ready. Give me twelve years. I'll really turn my life around. I'll have the cleanest book by then and it won't... frighten... me so much to stand before God. Death. Oh Death. Spare me till I can become a better man. I swear I'll do it.

DEATH: No.

EVERYMAN: No?

DEATH: Death waits for no man. We must be off.

EVERYMAN: All right, all right. Let's say I take this pilgrimage. Let's say I stand before God with my book of life and make account of how I have lived. When do I get to come back?

DEATH: Never.

EVERYMAN: What?

DEATH: Death is permanent, Everyman.

EVERYMAN: What?

DEATH: Once you are there, there is no return. We must be off.

EVERYMAN: Wait a minute, wait a minute. God have mercy on me! Do I have to go alone? Can't I take a friend, what if I found someone to go with me?

DEATH: If you can find one so hardy to die with you and stand by your side before God, then by all means. We must be off.
(turns, EVERYMAN doesn't move) Did you think your life was yours Everyman? That all you own was yours to keep?

EVERYMAN: Well, yes. Isn't that the idea?

DEATH: (*makes a sweeping gesture*) This is only a loan. All of it. Once you are gone it all goes to another. And once they are gone another still. Your time has come, Everyman. I am here for you.

EVERYMAN: (*one last hurrah*) No! I don't accept this, you disgusting rat, I don't accept this at all. I could run from here you know, I could run far, far away.

DEATH: No.

EVERYMAN: No? (*he deflates*) Will you give me till tomorrow? You must give me time to find a travelling companion.

DEATH: We make our journey today.

EVERYMAN: But –

DEATH: Today. Find your companion, Everyman. Make yourself ready. There is no escape from this day.

He exits. EVERYMAN watches him go and gives a little temper tantrum.

EVERYMAN: I wish to God I had never been born! To travel alone, my book unfinished. How was I to know that a life of joy and profit would lead to great pain? God help me! What do I do? Who do I ask to come with me? Time is running out. (*he stops and takes a breath*) My best friend Fellowship has always stood by my side. There's no one in the world I trust more. We have celebrated much together – (*looking off*) There he is! He's my best friend, there's no way he would desert me in my time of need. (*calling off*) Fellowship!

FELLOWSHIP: (*entering*) Everyman! How are you! How – why Everyman you look bad. Really bad. What's wrong, tell me so I can help you.

EVERYMAN: It's true. I am in a bad place.

FELLOWSHIP: So, tell me everything.

EVERYMAN: I want to but –

FELLOWSHIP: But nothing. I'm your friend till the end of time!

EVERYMAN: But what if you hear what I have to say and run? That would ruin me.

FELLOWSHIP: Would I do that? Would I do that to you?

EVERYMAN: You don't know what I'm about to say!

FELLOWSHIP: If I say I'm going to stand by your side, that's what I'm going to do. I'm a man of my word. And know that whoever has wronged you, I will deal with them. Whatever needs revenged, I will revenge! If I end up sliced through the middle my last thought will be how I have stood up for a friend. We'll stand together to hell and back!

EVERYMAN: That's the nicest thing anyone has ever said for me.

FELLOWSHIP: We're friends through life and death!

EVERYMAN: You are a true friend. I don't deserve such a friend.

FELLOWSHIP: Don't talk like that. A man who only spouts words is worthless. The man who acts on his word is a man indeed. Here I stand, your loving friend. Tell me your troubles.

EVERYMAN: All right. Here it is. (*takes a deep breath*) I must go on a journey. Some might call it a pilgrimage. Some might call it dangerous for at its end I must stand before God and give an account of my life. And nothing would please me more, good friend, than if you would be my companion. If you would go on this journey with me. If you would stand by my side.

FELLOWSHIP: (*doubles over in laughter*) Ha, ha! Ha, ha! You're kidding. Ha, ha! Ha... ha? (*sees EVERYMAN is not laughing*) You're not kidding? You're serious? Well. Huh. That is some trouble. Yes, indeed. I did promise to stand with you but you have to admit that is some trouble. Some scary trouble and a troublesome journey. Just talking about it scares the life out of me. It'd do the same for anyone.

EVERYMAN: My friend. You just said you would stand with me to hell and back.

FELLOWSHIP: Well yes but you can't seriously expect – if we did take this journey when do we get to come back?

EVERYMAN: Never.

FELLOWSHIP: Never?

EVERYMAN: It's kind of permanent.

FELLOWSHIP: You're out of your mind. You want me to die for you?
For you? Who on earth delivered this horrible news to you?

EVERYMAN: Death.

FELLOWSHIP: Of course he did. Death has commanded you to stand before God and you want me to go too? There is not a soul living that I would take that trip for, not even my own father.

EVERYMAN: But, you promised.

FELLOWSHIP: I know what I said. I thought we were going to go eat a good meal, or drown our sorrows, or chase girls. For a good time I'd stand by you forever. But you want me to die for you? Not a chance.

EVERYMAN: So if my troubles were thirst and a lack of girls you'd go with me but not when I'm really in need?

FELLOWSHIP: Not a chance. But if you wanted to kill someone, I'm your man.

EVERYMAN: Great. Fellowship, I need you now. I need a friend, we've been friends forever – doesn't that count for anything?

FELLOWSHIP: No.

EVERYMAN: No?

FELLOWSHIP: I don't care how long we've been friends. I'm not going.

EVERYMAN: I beg of you. Walk with me a little.

FELLOWSHIP: I won't go one step with you. In fact, I'm out of here.
(starts to leave) God be with you.

EVERYMAN: (trying to stop him) Really? You're going to leave just like that?

FELLOWSHIP: Yeah. Sorry. (puts a hand on EVERYMAN's shoulder)
Every time I think of you I'll cry. See ya! (exits on the run)

EVERYMAN: (*calling after*) You won't, you know! Well, now what do I do? If my best friend will only stand by me if we're doing something fun, and run in my time of need who else can I turn to? If I can't choose my companion, I'll look to someone who has to stand by me. My family will help me. (*calling out*) Where are you, my family?

KINDRED and COUSIN enter.

KINDRED: Hello Everyman, here we are.

COUSIN: What do you need? Tell us what you desire and where you need to go. You know we live and die together.

KINDRED: In sickness and in health, in good times and bad, we will stand by you. Without family what does a man have?

EVERYMAN: (*hugging both of them*) Thank you my family, my loving family. I will tell you my troubles. (*stands back*) I have been commanded to take a journey from which I will never return. I must leave immediately to stand before God and give account.

KINDRED: What account?

EVERYMAN: (*holding up his book*) The account of my life. How I have lived, how I spend my days, my good and bad deeds, an account of this life that has been lent to me. My family, please be my companions. Stand by my side and help me make my account.

COUSIN: Go? With you? On your account? That's what you want us to do?

EVERYMAN: Yes.

COUSIN: No.

EVERYMAN: No?

COUSIN: No. I would rather fast on bread and water for five years.

EVERYMAN: Woe that I was ever born! I'll plunge into the depth of despair if my family deserts me.

KINDRED: What are you talking about? Stop complaining, you're always in a good mood.

EVERYMAN: Then you'll go with me?

KINDRED: You're on your own, Everyman.

EVERYMAN: (to COUSIN) Won't you go with me?

COUSIN: (*limping away*) I have a cramp in my toe. I'd just be a nuisance.

KINDRED: Really, there's no point in begging. I might have a maid who'd go, at least for the beginning.

EVERYMAN: (to KINDRED) Tell me straight, will you go with me or stay behind?

KINDRED: Oh, I'm staying behind. Farewell! (*exits*)

EVERYMAN: How could I ever be happy again? All these promises made, all these promises broken.

COUSIN: Face it Everyman, we're not going. Besides, my own book is far from ready. I shouldn't be wasting time standing around here. Good luck! (*exit*)

EVERYMAN: Has it come to this? Nothing but fairweather friends surround me. My family, my friends run as fast as they can and the longer I stand here, the more time slips through my fingers. (*has a thought*) What about this? All my life I have loved riches. If there was any time my treasure could help... (*calling out*) Where are you, my Goods? My riches? Where are you?

GOODS lies at the back of the stage, she sits up slowly.

GOODS: Who calls me? Everyman? What's the panic? Where's the fire? I cannot come, I lie here in corners, piled so high, locked into chests and stuffed in bags, can't you see? I cannot rise, I lie in tied bundles and packs. What do you want?

EVERYMAN: Come here and come quickly. I must talk to you.

With a sigh, GOODS slowly makes her way downstage. She is totally covered in jewels and coins. She holds bundles of money and wears sacks of gold around her neck.

GOODS: What worldly troubles can I help you with?

EVERYMAN: My troubles are not of this world. I am called to stand before God and give account. All my life you have given me nothing but joy and pleasure. Go with me to make my account. You must be able to purify my record. Doesn't money make everything wrong right?

GOODS: (*laughing*) Everyman, you are a fool.

EVERYMAN: Why are you laughing?

GOODS: I follow no man. I will not take any such journey. And have you no idea that if I did, I'd make things worse? You're a blind man if you think I'd help your account, how can you have a clean book with all your love focused on material goods? If you love me, you cannot love God.

EVERYMAN: No, it's not true. Please, go with me.

GOODS: I follow no man. I am too delicate.

EVERYMAN: But my goods has given me nothing but good times and pleasure.

GOODS: All the worse for you. It's your own damning. I don't love anyone and could really care less for your love. If you had loved me a little less, if you had given some of your goods to the poor, you wouldn't be in this trouble.

EVERYMAN: It's not my fault, I was fooled. I wasn't aware. I'm not to blame!

GOODS: Did you think I was yours, Everyman?

EVERYMAN: I thought so.

GOODS: Only a loan, poor boy. You may have risen to the top, temporarily, but don't you understand? My job is to kill men's souls. And say I save one, there's a thousand I drag down. Go with you? I'll never go with you.

EVERYMAN: I thought differently.

GOODS: Your goods will steal your soul, Everyman. When you're dead I'll do it to another. I'll do it to everyone.

EVERYMAN: Traitor! You're a traitor to me and to God! I can't believe you purposefully deceived and trapped me.

GOODS: You came rather willingly, don't you think?

EVERYMAN: My Goods. Certainly, I gave you love when I should have been thinking of God. But will you not go with me? Be my companion?

GOODS: Have a nice day, Everyman. (exits)

EVERYMAN: Who will I turn to now? My friends, my family and my wealth have all turned their back on me. And I deserve it. I am totally to blame. Who now? I can try my Good-Deeds but she is so weak she can hardly talk let alone walk with me. I can still try – Good-Deeds? Where are you?

GOOD-DEEDS is lying on the floor, stage right, wrapped in a sheet. She has been there the whole time, not moving.

GOOD-DEEDS: (a voice) Here I am.

EVERYMAN: (looking around) Where?

GOOD-DEEDS: Lying cold on the ground. Your sins bind me so, I cannot move.

EVERYMAN: Good-Deeds, I'm so afraid. I need your help.

GOOD-DEEDS: I have heard about your journey and your account before God. If you accept my advice, I will go with you.

EVERYMAN: I am on my knees, I pray that you will go.

GOOD-DEEDS: I would gladly, but cannot stand.

EVERYMAN: What happened to you?

GOOD-DEEDS: Why, I have you to thank. If you had taken care of me, your book of life would be full and ready. Look here, underneath my feet. (she moves the sheet to reveal two more books) The books of your actions and your choices. See how they lie underneath me? That speaks to the heaviness in your soul, God help me!

EVERYMAN: (*picking up a book*) I can't read a word.

GOOD-DEEDS: Your blindness blurs the text.

EVERYMAN: Good-Deeds please help me in this time of need or else I'm damned forever. Help me make my account, stand beside me before God.

GOOD-DEEDS: I would were I able to stand.

EVERYMAN: What is your advice? I'll take anything.

GOOD-DEEDS: So I shall. Though I must remain still, I have a sister, Knowledge. She shall help.

GOOD-DEEDS gestures off and KNOWLEDGE enters.

KNOWLEDGE: I will go with you Everyman, I'll stand by you and be your guide.

EVERYMAN: Thank God. I am so glad to be in your care.

GOOD-DEEDS: When she has brought you to the place where you shall heal your wounds then we will go to God together.

EVERYMAN: Thank you, thank you! Such sweet words.

KNOWLEDGE guides EVERYMAN to the side of the stage.

KNOWLEDGE: First Everyman, we must go to Confession. You must be cleansed.

EVERYMAN: I wish we were there this instant! Where does he live?

KNOWLEDGE: In the house of salvation where you shall find comfort in God's grace. Here Everyman, kneel down and ask for mercy. Confession is in good stead with God almighty.

CONFESSION enters and EVERYMAN kneels.

EVERYMAN: O glorious fountain, wash from me my unclean vices. Wash this sin from me. I kneel before you with Knowledge ready to repent and full of remorse. I must take a journey and make an account of my life before God. I pray with pity, help me so that my Good-Deeds may stand by my side.

CONFESSION: Everyman, I know your troubles well. Since you come before me with Knowledge I'll give as much comfort as I can. If you confess your sins in sorrow they will be forgiven. But first you must undertake a punishment. A penance. Your body must be punished in order to wipe your slate clean. To wash the sin away. You must undergo pain to remind you that God went through pain for you. You must undergo a scourge to remind you that God was scourged for you. (*CONFESSION hands a whip to EVERYMAN*) He suffered with much patience and so must you, if you wish to escape pain on your journey. Knowledge, keep by him and soon Good-Deeds will be able to stand. Your time is running out Everyman, but you can be saved. Ask God for mercy and he will grant it. The pain of penance will be followed by the oil of forgiveness.

EVERYMAN: (*looking at the whip*) Thanks be to God for what he has done. This fills my heart with joy though the knots be hard to bear. I will take my penance.

KNOWLEDGE: Whatever your pain, look to Knowledge, look to me for council on how to make your account clean.

EVERYMAN: (*he places down the whip and takes off his shirt*) Oh eternal God. Oh heavenly figure. Oh way of righteousness. Thank you for looking down on me and give me the chance to redeem myself. Forgive me and forgive my sins. I beg for mercy, though my cries come so late. Receive my prayers, though they be unworthy because of my heavy life. I am a sinner of the worst kind yet let my name be written in Moses' table. Oh Mary pray for me, I ask for help in my hour of need. Save me from the power of the Devil as Death approaches. I beg you, through your prayers, help save my soul. Knowledge, I am ready for my punishment. I will now begin if God will allow it.

KNOWLEDGE: God will give you time and space. And so I place you in the hands of our Saviour so you may make your account.

EVERYMAN: In the name of the Father, the Son and the holy Ghost I accept my punishment. (*he begins to whip himself*) Take this body for the sins of the flesh! I accept this punishment so that I may walk clean from the water. I accept this punishment to save me from hell, to save me from the fire.



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