

There are many theories about the beginning of drama in ancient Greece.

The one most widely accepted today is based on the assumption that drama evolved from ritual.

The argument for this view goes as follows.

In the beginning, human beings viewed the natural forces of the world, even the seasonal changes, as unpredictable, and they sought, through various means, to control these unknown and feared powers.

Those measures which appeared to bring the desired results were then retained and repeated until they hardened into fixed rituals.

Eventually stories arose which explained or veiled the mysteries of the rites.

As time passed some rituals were abandoned, but the stories, later called myths, persisted and provided material for art and drama.

Those who believe that drama evolved out of ritual also argue that those rites contained the seed of theater because music, dance, masks, and costumes were almost always used.

Furthermore, a suitable site had to be provided for performances, and when the entire community did not participate, a clear division was usually made between the "acting area" and the "auditorium".

In addition, there were performers, and, since considerable importance was attached to avoiding mistakes in the enactment of rites, religious leaders usually assumed that task.

Wearing masks and costumes, they often impersonated other people, animals, or supernatural beings, and mimed the desired effect – success in hunt or battle, the coming rain, the revival of the Sun – as an actor might.

Eventually such dramatic representations were separated from religious activities.

Another theory traces the theater's origin from the human interest in storytelling.

According to this view, tales (about the hunt, war, or other feats) are gradually elaborated, at first through the use of impersonation, action, and dialogue by a narrator and then through the assumption of each of the roles by a different person.

A closely related theory traces theater to those dances that are primarily rhythmical and gymnastic or that are imitations of animal movements and sounds.