

# Nineteenth-Century American Drama: Popular Culture and Entertainment, 1820-1900

*A comprehensive digital record of the American stage spanning 80 years*



## Quick Facts

Contains virtually every play published during the time period—more than 4,700 in total

Fills a major gap in institutional collections, enabling exciting new discoveries on U.S. culture across all classes of society

Based on authoritative bibliographies and collected from dozens of institutions over nearly four decades

## Overview

The nineteenth century witnessed unprecedented growth and sweeping changes in the dramatic arts with the number of theaters in the United States growing a hundredfold. Music hall and variety theater came to rival the “legitimate” theater in popularity. Romance gave way to realism, the musical stage proliferated, and the stage became a platform for social and political commentary. As a result, drama became the most popular form of entertainment in America. It was popular across all classes of society and took myriad forms: historical plays, melodramas, political satires, black minstrel shows, comic operas, musical extravaganzas, parlor entertainments, adaptations of novels and many others. All of these can be found in *Nineteenth-Century American Drama: Popular Culture and Entertainment, 1820-1900*.

### A digital museum of 19th-century American culture

This unique and authoritative collection of America’s most popular entertainment form opens a door on U.S. culture that has been closed until now due to the challenge of access. The wide-ranging materials in *Nineteenth-Century American Drama* will shed light on areas of study generally supported to this point only by imprints and newspapers: daily life in the United States; politics, both local and national; culture in all of its forms; and the shifting and evolving tastes of Americans from across the country. Subjects covered by these works include women’s movements, temperance, street life, westward expansion, slavery and abolition, immigration, wars and countless others.

Also included here are hundreds of prompt books and manuscripts—annotated copies that help reveal the changing intentions of authors and the artistic views of directors. Together, these unique materials written by both the famous and the obscure provide students and scholars with rich new opportunities to study the dramatic arts and the American past from diverse perspectives.

### A treasure trove of previously unavailable plays

*Nineteenth-Century American Drama* represents a goldmine for Drama and Theater programs around the world. Broad geographic coverage—the stages of New York, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, for example—offers opportunities for many layers of analysis. Critical multi-disciplinary support is provided not only for American history and literature but also for economics, political science, religious studies, ethnic studies and sociology. In addition, a helpful “Suggested Searches” feature makes it easy for users to pinpoint the exact plays of interest—by type, subject matter, setting, character ethnicity and other criteria.

### Filling a major gap in institution collections

Allowing researchers of all kinds greater insight into this increasingly studied time period, *Nineteenth-Century America Drama* is an essential complement to *Early American Imprints, 1690-1820*; *American Pamphlets, 1820-1922*; *American Broad-sides and Ephemera, 1749-1900* and other collections in the fully integrated family of *America’s Historical Imprints*. Students and scholars using *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1922*, will access both newspapers and plays with *Readex AllSearch*—a streamlined platform for efficiently searching across all Readex collections.



## UNLOCK HISTORY.

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