

**Module #2 – Section A Handout 2**

**PLAUTUS (TITUS MACCIUS PLAUTUS) (255/4? - 184 BC)**

Comic playwright. His comedies are **the earliest Latin literary works** to have survived complete.

- freed slave?
- actor himself?
- **21 plays preserved** – they are all **palliatus (adaptations of earlier Greek comedies)**

✓ **Plautus's Greek Models = Plays of the 'Greek New Comedy'**

✓ **Greek New Comedy** developed in Greece between about 330 and 250 BC; most famous playwright was **Menander**.

- **What is the relationship between Plautus's plays and the Greek comedies he adapts?**
- **Originality of Plautus?**

✓ **Some Features of Plautus's Comedies**

**1) Predictability of the plot.**

- 2 basic types of plots can be identified:
  - **"SLAVE'S COMEDY"**
  - **"COMEDY OF RECOGNITION"**

**2) Set of character types (Stock Characters)**

**'THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS' (MENAECHMI)**

- **Greek model?**
- **Plot**
- **Setting**
- **Main Characters**
  
- **Function of the Prologue**
  - Original elements of Plautus' style

- Importance of pleasing the audience (use of dramatic irony)
- Roman elements in a “Greek” comedy

**Study Questions:**

- Why do you think Plautus used a prologue to introduce his play? What was its function? What type of information does the prologue of the play convey?
- Where is the comedy set?
- Why are there two brothers called Menaechmus?
- You might have noticed that in this play the characters on stage address the audience? On which occasions? Why did Plautus use this theatrical device?
- Why is this comedy funny? Identify the comic elements of the play and of Plautus’ style in general.