(North Wind Picture Archives)

STOCK CHARACTERS
The comedies of Terence feature a number of stock characters, such as the two shown in the drawing seen here—the Parasite (on the left) and the Soldier. Stock characters in Roman comedy had predictable traits and were usually dressed in the same type of costume in every drama.

While Terence's plots are as complicated as Plautus's, Terence's style is different: more literary and less exaggerated. Terence's *Phormio* dramatizes the attempts of two cousins, Antipho and Phaedria, to overcome their fathers' objections to their lovers. Both young men are aided by Phormio—a tricky parasite—and by dramatic coincidences. The plot complications and stock characters are similar to those in Plautus's *The Menaechmi,* but *Phormio* is less farcical and less slapstick. Much of its humor is verbal; there is less physical comic action but more sparring with words—which makes Terence's work less theatrical than Plautus's. It should also be noted that whereas much of Plautus's dialogue was meant to be accompanied by music, Terence's dialogue had much less musical accompaniment.

Subsequent periods, such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, held the plays of Terence in great esteem. His plays—more than those of any other Roman dramatist or any Greek dramatist—were used as literary models in medieval convents and monasteries and in Renaissance schools. Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, for example, was called a "Christian Terence." (Hrosvitha is discussed in Chapter 5.) The simple style of Terence's Latin and the high moral tone of his plays made them popular with teachers and scholars.

Terence wrote six plays, all of which have survived: *Andria* (166 B.C.E.); *The Mother-in-Law* (165 B.C.E.); *The Self-Tormentor* (163 B.C.E.); *The Eunuch* (161 B.C.E.); *Phormio* (161 B.C.E.); and *The Brothers* (160 B.C.E.).