ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ
ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਟੇਟ ਓਪਨ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ
ਪਟਿਆਲਾ

JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV
PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)

The Motto of the University

(SEWA)

SKILL ENHANCEMENT EMPLOYABILITY WISDOM ACCESSIBILITY



BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA)
Semester IV
Course Code:BAB32402T
Reading Drama

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PREFACE

Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala, established in December 2019 by Act 19 of the Legislature of State of Punjab, is the first and only Open University of the State, entrusted with the responsibility of making higher education accessible to all especially to those sections of society who do not have the means, time or opportunity to pursue regular education.

In keeping with the nature of an Open University, this University provides a flexible education system to suit every need. The time given to complete a programme is double the duration of a regular mode programme. Well-designed study material has been prepared in consultation with experts in their respective fields.

The University offers programmes which have been designed to provide relevant, skill-based and employability-enhancing education. The study material provided in this booklet is self-instructional, with self-assessment exercises, and recommendations for further readings. The syllabus has been divided in sections, and provided as units for simplification.

The Learner Support Centres/Study Centres are located in the Government and Government aided colleges of Punjab, to enable students to make use of reading facilities, and for curriculum-based counselling and practicals. We, at the University, welcome you to be a part of this institution of knowledge.

Prof. G. S. Batra,
Dean Academic Affairs

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MAX.MARKS: 100
EXTERNAL: 70
INTERNAL: 30
PASS: 35%
Total Credits: 6

Objective:

The main objective of the course is to familiarize the learners with the history of the theatre and its sub-genres through a detailed study of selected canonical British and American plays. They will be engaged in a study of the relative concepts that would further sharpen their intellectual faculties and help in developing a requisite critical insight.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:

Candidates are required to attempt any two questions each from the sections A and B of the question paper and any ten short questions from Section C. They have to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.

Section A

Unit 1: Understanding Drama-I: Definition and Essence, Drama vs. Novel, Drama and Theatre

Unit 2: Understanding Drama-II: Dramatic action Structure, Characterization, Dialogue, Stage Directions, Dramatic Conventions

Unit 3: Important terms pertaining to drama and stage:

- Comic Relief
- Pathos
- Aside
- Soliloquy

Unit 4: William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar-1

Unit 5: William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar-II

Section B

Unit 6: Origin and Rise of Drama in English

Unit 7: Restoration Comedy, Closet Drama, The Problem Play

Unit 8: Theatre of the Absurd, Poetic Drama

Unit 9: Arthur Miller: The Death of a Salesman -1

Unit 10: Arthur Miller: The Death of a Salesman -II

Suggested Readings:

- Brown, John Russel, ed. The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre. New York: Oxford University Press,.1997.
- Leggat, Alexander. Shakespearian Tragedies. Cambridge: CUP, 2005
- Scott, McMillin. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy. New York: Norton, 1973
- Bertolt Brecht, 'The Street Scene', 'Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction',and 'Dramatic Theatre vs Epic Theatre', in Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, ed. and tr. John Willet (London: Methuen, 1992) pp. 68–76, 121–8.
- George Steiner, 'On Modern Tragedy', in The Death of Tragedy (London: Faber, 1995) pp. 303–24.

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SECTION A

UNIT NO.	UNIT NAME
UNIT 1	UNDERSTANDING DRAMA-I
UNIT 2	UNDERSTANDING DRAMA-II
UNIT 3	IMPORTANT TERMS PERTAINING TO DRAMA AND STAGE
UNIT 4	WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: JULIUS CAESAR-I
UNIT 5	WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: JULIUS CAESAR-II

SECTION B

UNIT NO.	UNIT NAME
UNIT 6	ORIGIN AND RISE OF DRAMA IN ENGLISH
UNIT 7	RESTORATION COMEDY, CLOSET DRAMA, THE PROBLEM PLAY
UNIT 8	THEATRE OF THE ABSURD, POETIC DRAMA
UNIT 9	ARTHUR MILLER: THE DEATH OF A SALESMAN -I
UNIT 10	ARTHUR MILLER: THE DEATH OF A SALESMAN -II

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UNIT 1: UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

STRUCTURE

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Understanding Drama

1.3 Definition and Essence

1.4 Check your Progress-I

1.5 Drama vs. Novel

1.6 Drama and Theatre

1.7 Check your Progress-II

1.8 Summing Up

1.9 Suggested Readings

1.10 Questions for Practice

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After a careful reading of this unit, students will be able to define drama as a literary form. They will be able to analyze the difference between drama and novel, appreciate the various elements of drama and theatre and will be able to answer the questions based on this unit.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama is one of the literary forms like poetry and novel. It is written for performance in the theatre. The actors enact the roles of various characters in the drama, which is the printed text. They utter dialogues and participate in the action of the play. Actors, dialogue, plot and setting of the play thus are essential ingredients of a play. The audience, as it is said, is the soul of drama. It is the spectators who are the real motivation behind a stage performance. Contemporary drama has evolved, in other words it has come to us in the present times, after passing through many stages. Not only the stage, but the themes as also the techniques in the production of a play have undergone a sea change. The present unit concerns with all these aspects of drama.

1.2 UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

Drama originated in about sixth century B.C. in ancient Greece. The culture of theatre created by Athenians is the foundation of world theatre. Even today, the ancient Greek plays written by its master dramatists, stand as one of the finest works ever written. Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher, informs us in his treatise, *Poetics* that drama originated as a song, as part of a religious ceremony in Athens. On certain religious days, a group of devotees sang and danced around the statue of Apollo, the sun god in Greek mythology. Also known as the 'dithyramb' or the choric hymns, these songs celebrated the Greek gods like Athena, Apollo and Dionysus. Singing was accompanied by both music and dance. The tradition of dialogues among this group of performers started when one of them asked questions and the others answered. Drama, thus evolved into a theatrical act to be presented on the stage for the onlookers who assembled to participate in religious festivities. It is known that the worshippers of God Dionysus led themselves into an ecstasy for a powerful release of emotions or purification. Gradually, the dances became elaborate as a plot was introduced, mainly drawing on the adventures of Dionysus.

These festival acts became so popular among the citizens that theatres came to be constructed for more and more people to watch. The Theater of Delphi, the Attic Theatre, and the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens were the first theatres to have come up in Athens. The growth of drama in ancient Greece continued with its first dramatists, namely Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. These three playwrights concentrated on writing pure tragedies. Their plots were based on Greek mythology in which Gods decided the fate of the characters, especially the hero. So, drama was still religious in its roots. There were a maximum of three characters, and masks were used so that a single actor could perform the roles of all three. During this period, chorus and scenery were introduced. Chorus was a group of citizens who commented on the happenings in the play. And scenery was mainly a painted cloth to depict a forest or a palace on stage. When Greece was conquered by the Romans, they imparted their own cultural flavor to the models of tragedy which they seized from the Greek tragedians. Especially Seneca, the representative Roman dramatist, influenced drama with a lot of violence and bloodshed. His other belief went alongside that life is full of suffering and one must endure it. After the fall of Western Roman Empire in the fourth century, drama became scarce.

In England, it was not until the tenth century, when the first dramas were recorded. The English drama like the ancient Greek drama, had its roots in religion. To begin with, theater became the privilege of the church. The clergy found theatre as a means to educate and instruct poor illiterate masses in Christian faith. The first staged plays are known to be mystery and miracle plays. Mystery plays were based on stories from the Bible whereas the miracle plays were based on the lives of saints and martyrs in Christian religion. These were shown to people on religious days like Christmas, Easter or Corpus Christi in England. Initially, the plays were performed within the church building. After these acts caught the attention of more and more people, the stage was shifted from the altar of the church to the church porch outside. Gradually theatre guilds were founded and plays began to be performed

in the marketplace of different counties or towns. Mystery and miracle plays led to Morality and Interludes. Morality plays were serious in nature, characters portrayed abstract virtues and vices. For example, a character called Goodness was pitted against a character named Evil in a play. The morality plays served as instructions for the masses to follow virtuous path in life. The Interludes were mostly comic in nature. Gradually, drama became more democratic, in the sense that it took itself away from the confluence of the church. The first full-fledged English drama is known to be 'Gorboduc' written by Sackville and Norton, performed in 1562. And after almost a decade, England had its first permanent built theatre, in the year 1576, called, The Theatre.

Only two other periods in the history of theatre are truly remarkable after the Greek period namely the Elizabethan period and the Twentieth century drama in England. These two periods are said to approach the greatness of ancient Athenian theatre. The Elizabethan period in drama is considered the golden age in the history of English drama. Shakespeare is the chief exponent in this period. He gave us many memorable characters. His plays present not just the populace of England but the whole humanity. Therefore, his plays have a universal appeal. Drama again grew scarce during the most part of the seventeenth century and the whole of eighteenth century. Restoration theatre of the 1700s, with its 'Comedy of Manners' became quite popular but it could not outshine the art and literary merits of Shakespearean plays. Eighteenth century, on the English literary scene, was largely an age of prose, satirical poetry and novel. Novel originated in the latter part of the eighteenth century which we shall discuss under another head in this unit.

Hence, the next important juncture in the history of drama after Shakespeare is the twentieth century. The new century, with a scar of the World War on its mind, introduced new kinds of innovations and themes in the plays. Drama became political in nature. It became a tool for reformation than a want for pleasure and entertainment. In England, the early practitioners were T.S Eliot, Christopher Fry and W. H Auden. In Ireland, W.B Yeats revived Old Irish myths in theatre. American drama, which developed mainly in the twentieth century, followed the English dramatic conventions largely. All periods in literary expression have a form and content of their own. Playwrights Eugene O Neill, T.Williams, Arthur Miller introduced new techniques in their plays. The hero of the ancient tragedies gave place to the common man, subject to social forces. Tragedy became the tragedy of a common man. Fate, destiny and gods were given new names. Themes of the self, identity, social issues like poverty, racism etc. came to be highlighted in modern drama.

Genres of Drama

Drama has evolved during many stages. Furthermore, every age has its own socio-cultural and political complexion, its own milieu. Addressing the needs and trends of the time, many kinds of plays began to be performed from time to time. Problem plays, satirical plays, poetic plays, absurd theatre etc. are some of the available types of drama. All these kinds of drama, in a strict sense can be classified as tragedies or comedies. Broadly, there are four major genres of drama discussed as below:

Tragedy

Tragedy is a type of drama which presents its central character undergo some kind of a misfortune. He is shown as a victim of forces outside himself. These forces can be those of the society or larger forces like fate and destiny as in the ancient classical drama. A tragedy, in the words of Aristotle is "the imitation of an action that is serious and also having magnitude, complete in itself". Besides, Aristotle also emphasises the therapeutic nature of tragedy. By witnessing a tragic act, the audiences experience a release of emotions, especially the emotions of pity and fear. This release balances them into becoming saner. Oedipus Rex, Antigone, King Lear and Julius Caesar are some examples of tragedies.

Comedy

Comedy is the other type which has stood alongside tragedy through all periods of drama. Unlike tragedy, comedy does not concern the fate of noble human beings or their suffering. Comedy deals with lesser beings, "worse than the average" and is satirical in nature because it makes fun of the follies and morals of others. This type of drama is intended for pleasure and amusement of the audiences and ends on a happy note. 'Taming of the Shrew', 'The Alchemist' are examples of comedies.

Tragicomedy

Comedy and tragedy have been the two outstanding forms of drama, handed down by the Greek theatre. Tragedy being the serious play and comedy its comic counterpart. Tragicomedy is an admixture of both these types. It blends both the serious and humorous elements in one play. The Roman dramatist, Plautus is believed to have begun this trend in his plays. The early Elizabethan drama too practised this form and Shakespeare perfected it. The canvas of his plays was peopled by both kings and clowns. Such an admixture of the two genres or forms is not an error if the play achieves an artistic effect as a whole. As Allardyce Nicoll observes, "The final test for a work of dramatic literature in which these elements are combined must be one based not on 'nature' but on the artistic effect of the whole…". 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'The Tempest' are examples of tragicomedies.

Melodrama

Melodrama is an exaggerated version or could even be called a poor version of tragedy. The protagonists in such a drama are generally 'flat' characters. The hero is too good hearted a man. The heroine is too pure and sentimental. The characters provoke the audience to tears and great sadness. The villain is a horrible monster. The plot is far-fetched that it does not seem credible. Actions seem improbable and its dialogue artificial. Violence and thrill are generally the chief elements in melodramas which capture the attention of the audience. All in all, a melodrama is incapable of achieving the illusion of reality for the audience.

Farce

Farce is an exaggeration of comedy. Plot and character are not of much importance in this kind of a drama and are improbable. The whole play, in a series of incidents, abounds in surprises and co-incidents. Dialogues are full of wit and the only aim is to provoke unbridled laughter and amusement. Characters throwing objects on each other and indulging in

buffoonery, are trademarks of a farcical drama. Some popular farcical plays in English are, 'The Importance of being Ernest' and 'She stoops to Conquer'.

1.3 DEFINITION AND ESSENCE

The word drama has been derived from the Greek word 'dran' which means 'to do'. Hence, drama is a series of actions, arranged in an order, to achieve artistic effects. It is a literary composition, meant to be performed by actors in a theatre, before an audience. The actors interpret the text of the written work on stage, through dialogue and action. Plot, character, action, dialogue, setting, are essential elements of a drama. Conflict is at its heart. Without conflict, no complication will arise, hence the story cannot proceed. The conflict can be between two persons, their thought processes, between an individual and social forces. In ancient tragedies, the conflict would be between the hero and his destiny or larger forces like gods and goddesses. A drama which is intended by its dramatist to be read only is called a 'closet drama.' Milton's 'Samson Agonistes' and Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound' are closet dramas. A classic 'stage drama' on the other hand, is staged in an auditorium, with the audience as its sole receptor. Drama abounds in acts and scenes. Whereas scenes indicate a shift of place, an act is a broader division related to the structure of drama.

From times immemorial, drama has enjoyed an inseparable relationship with stage. As Marjorie Boulton writes, "A drama is essentially performative". Real pleasure awaits us if we see the printed text of a dramatic work interpreted by seasoned actors on the stage. The costumes and make-up of actors as well as stage display and lighting effects, captivate us as an audience. No movie screen can equal the pleasure which live theatre affords. The audience at once becomes a social group, partaking of the sadness or joy provided by real action, happening in front of them. It is essentially in the performance of drama that its essence lies.

Secondly, the essence of drama, as that of any literary work for that matter, lies in its meaning and concept. What elements are essential to drama? how is the action being unfolded? how well is it interpreted through character and dialogue? and finally, what is the outcome of the play? are some of the questions that arise in mind when one thinks about the meaning and concept of drama. In his *Poetics,* Aristotle defines drama as composed of six main elements. These elements according to him, constitute the essence of a tragedy. These are namely plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle and melody; plot or action being the most important component of a play. Action is rooted in conflict. Hence the **plot** of a tragedy has to be such that it unfolds the conflict in a proper and credible sequence of events. He says that the plot must be an organic whole in the sense that there is harmony between all its parts. It should have a beginning, a middle and an end. These should be linked with each other, there should be a logic behind these, as the parts of an organism, the human body for example. It should present the sequence of events in a unified way, in other words. He further suggests that it should follow the three unities of time, place and action.

As for the purpose of tragedy, Aristotle opines that it should affect a catharsis of the emotions. While watching a tragic action on the stage, emotions of pity and fear are aroused

in the spectators. The arousal of these emotions is such that they get purified or purged of all negative elements. After witnessing much suffering of the hero, we become wiser in dealing with life and its many trials. Such is the impact of a good play on us. The second element of drama, according to Aristotle is **Character**. A character is somebody who has a moral purpose in life. His worth should be great and he should be consistent. It is basically the actions of the characters which make them either happy or wretched. **Thought** according to Aristotle is the faculty which assists man in doing a particular action. It has the power which enables a character to say what he should, befitting an occasion. **Diction** is language. Language used in a tragedy should be such that it is able to express the meaning of words. **Melody** is music which should accompany action. It is an embellishment of tragedy. By **Spectacle**, Aristotle implies stage craft, like scenery and elaborate masks, popular in his times. It is a machination, a design to attract the audience. It is something imposed from the outside, hence an unnecessary according to him.

However, the essence of drama as prescribed by Aristotle in his dramatic theory, may not be as relevant today. In the ever-changing scenario of different socio-cultural and political tidings, the essence of drama too has its shifts. To Aristotle, action and organicity of a play is the essence. However, in Absurd theatre of the 1950s, these two are grossly overlooked. In an absurd play like 'Waiting for Godot', there is no logical sequencing of action as in traditional drama. Nothing in fact happens at all in the course of the play, leave alone the main action. The characters wait for a person called Godot. All through the play, the wait continues and Godot does not come. At the end, the characters even ask who Godot actually is and what the purpose of their wait is, thereby terming the whole action into something absurd and incomprehensible. In a play like this, both action and the characters suffer from a lack as against the Aristotelian models. In Absurd theatre, artistic purpose is achieved through portraying the sheer absurdity of life. Likewise, Aristotle suggests that the audience should associate with the protagonist's fortunes and misfortunes in such a way that it experiences being on the similar emotional platform as the protagonist. However, Epic theatre of the 1920s, interprets drama in a different way. In such a theatre, the audience is made to analyse the situations in the drama by participating in it as critics. By using the technique of alienation and other methods, the dramatist avoids all illusion of reality. Aristotle also insists that tragedy should be purely a tragedy without any intermingling of the comic. But during the Elizabethan period, we see Shakespeare achieves a perfect theatre even with his tragi-comedies.

Hence, as argued above, the essence of drama is not a fixity. It is very fluid. In accordance with the changing socio-political and cultural environment of a particular time, the essence of drama also undergoes a change. One can say that the essence of drama lies in its performance and in its fluidity which together respond to the cultural, social and political environment of the times.

1.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I

Answer the following questions:-

a. When and where did drama originate?

b. Comment on miracle and mystery plays.

c. What are the four major types of drama?

d. List the six main elements of drama, as given by Aristotle.

e. Which is the most important element of drama and why?

1.5 DRAMA VS. NOVEL

Drama as has already been studied, is one of the oldest literary forms. It originated in ancient Greece about sixth century B.C. To begin with, it was a hymn sung by a chorus, that is a group of men, who sang and danced around the statue of the sun god Apollo. Also called the dithyramb, this song was performed on religious days in Athens. Men, mostly free citizens, excluding women and slaves, assembled to watch it in great numbers. Gradually, this form of singing and dancing evolved into a dramatic act. One of the group members became the group leader and started asking questions to which the others replied. It was here that dialogue was born. From the ancient Greek drama, to the miracle and mysteries in England, to the Elizabethan period and Restoration up to the twentieth century drama has had a variegated journey. The contemporary drama has come a long way. It is technically sound, deals with day-to-day issues and relatable characters. In other words, contemporary drama has become democratic.

Novel is a relatively new form or genre as compared to drama. Novel emerged in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. After the last glorious days of the Restoration theater in 1700s, drama became a hollow force in England. But this absence was filled up by the novel, with the first English novel called 'Pamela or Virtue Rewarded', written by Samuel Richardson. It was published in the year 1740. After the success of Pamela, novel continued to gain popularity throughout the coming centuries. The emerging middle class in the England of those times, embraced novel as their own genre. Novel dealt with the stories of common people who were an intrinsic part of an industrial society. The genre continued to be written and relished by its readers in the Romantic period, Victorian period, and in the modern period of twentieth century England. Since then, it has emerged as a dominant literary form today. Poetry had detached itself long from drama because it was not concerned with the representation of character in action. Hence, novel, as Robert Liddell observes, is "the rightful heir to drama." Undoubtedly, both drama and novel, are rooted in an exploration of characters and incidents pertaining to their lives. But despite these originary similarities, both these forms are different from each other. Let us consider the factors which make them both two different and diverse forms of literature.

Drama

- The essence of drama lies in its performance. 'Closet drama' is written to be read in private or aloud. A classic 'stage drama' is performed on the stage.
- Drama has an important relationship with its audience. It is written to be performed before an assembled audience.

- Drama adheres to strict unities of time, place and action. It has a beginning, a middle and an end.
- In a drama, action is concentrated. It cannot allow digressions, sub plots or two three stories running parallel to the main plot.
- It has to have a logical connection between incidents so that the audience sitting right in front can understand and appreciate.
- Stage drama is a temporal act. It is situated in time and place and the audience understands that they are enjoying an illusion of reality…
- The purpose of drama lies in effecting the catharsis of emotions. It is proposed as a healer and has a therapeutic value.
- Dramatic art allows only the method of showing. Except minimal stage directions, the dramatist cannot intervene and tell us about characters and their thoughts directly.

Novel

- Novel is a long narrative work written in prose. There are verse novels too but prose novels have become the dominant literary expression.
- Novel is written for the pleasure and entertainment of a solitary reader.
- Novel has no unities to follow. It can begin anywhere, at any point of a person's life. The period of a novel can span several generations of a character's life.
- Novel has the scope to introduce a few more small stories along with the main plot. It can be of any length. A very short novel is called 'novella'.
- Incidents in a novel are related with each other but there is no strict logical connection between every incident happening in the course of the novel. Sometimes some incidents occur to serve a symbolic purpose.
- Novel can be read and appreciated anytime, anywhere. It has no limitations of time and place imposed on it as averse to a stage act.
- Novel does not come with any cathartic purpose. But it is definitely a form of literature that instructs, pleases and entertains.
- It has an omnipresent narrator. He can intervene any time and give his comments on characters actions and their thought processes.

1.6 DRAMA AND THEATRE

Drama is a literary composition. It is a written text, divided into acts and scenes. It has a plot and characters. Incidents are so arranged that these have a logical conclusion. As a narrative work, drama is concerned with the telling of a story through dialogues. As a performing art, drama is concerned with its production on stage. Actors play their part on the stage and interpret the text through dialogues. Technical effects, aid and enhance its presentation in the theatre before an audience. Drama has an inseparable bond with theatre. As Marjorie Boulton writes, "A printed play is only the recipe for a performance; the play must be 'cooked'." The word 'theatre' has been derived from the Greek word 'theatron', meaning a 'seeing place'. The first outdoor stages built up for dramatic acts in ancient times, had a performance platter and seating areas for the audience, from where they could easily view the action. Apart from being the place for a dramatic presentation, the word theatre is implied variously. When we evaluate a play in terms of its quality, we call it 'good theatre' or 'bad theatre'. Theatre also

refers to the collective works or oeuvre of a dramatist and the techniques he uses, for example, the theatre of Ibsen, the theatre of Brecht. Basically, theatre is a representation of action with all the stage-craft in place.

The two terms namely drama and theatre are generally used interchangeably. But both are different. As Allardyce Nicoll rightly observes that theatre basically refers to the performance given by a group of persons namely actors, before an audience. Drama on the other hand, is a literary work written by an author which is suitable for performance on stage. The range of theatre is enormous. It is not restricted for the presentation of plays alone. Various other performing arts like opera, ballet and pantomime etc. are staged in a theatre. In an opera, music and poetry combine in such a way that it tells a story. A ballet on the other hand does not use any words at all. The dancer's movements provide the whole story. In a pantomime, a form of dumb speech is used. The actors use gestures instead of words, to communicate. Nowadays, stand-up comedy has begun to be appreciated. A person uses dialogues on the stage, he has an audience to speak to, and it is purely a stage performance. But can all these other arts, be called theatre? The answer is 'no'. Only literature, which is classified as dramatic, like the drama, can be called theatre. For rest other arts, theatre serves the function of a premises.

In order that a drama is successfully executed on stage, a number of factors are looked at by the dramatist. Aristotle, who was the most original and seminal thinker of dramatic theory has devoted a large part of his discussion of Tragedy in his work. Aristotle discusses that action or plot is the soul of a tragedy. There should be a unity of action, the characters should be significant, diction should be such that it can clearly express the meaning of words. The whole structure of the work should be interesting enough to capture the audiences. Though he doesn't speak highly of spectacle, or stage-craft. In the twenty first century, his view may not seem relevant. The production and aspects of performance on stage have progressed in all these ages to perfection.

The purpose of theatre or a play is fundamentally pleasure and entertainment. The very origin of theatre in ancient Greece, was singing accompanied by dancing. The religious celebrations centered around Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, Apollo the Greek god of Sun and Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry. Theatre also had a ritualistic and didactic purpose then. Theatres, world over are preservers of cultural heritage of their specific geographical regions. They acquaint us with the customs and manners of different societies in different place and time. The biggest role of theatre is its connection with the masses. It speaks to a large number of people who go to watch drama. Therefore, theatre emerges as a significant medium for the education of people. It awakens the society to its ills and malice. From ancient histories of kings and queens, loves and wars to contemporary issues like man woman relationship, female feticide, casteism, theatre embraces life in general.

Theater can be said to be a fine art in the sense that it sharpens and fines human sensibilities by interpreting sensitive moments in the lives of the characters. The audio-visual aids assist in deepening the vision which the audience grasps from sensitive portrayals on the stage. Theatre also has an emotional hold on the audience. One feels greatly relieved or elevated after watching an act on the stage. Theatre is live and intimate and direct and has a greater advantage over other media that deals with human experience.

Drama like any other literary work, is an escape into an imaginary world, which appeals to us. A drama can be read also, as we are familiar with the 'closet drama'. But while reading in private, one cannot visualize the movements. Only by watching a beautiful play, only by having an experience of the theatre can one find the real essence of the drama. There is a story, which the famous playwright, Tom Stoppard shares elsewhere. Once he was watching a stage performance of Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest'. The play was being performed in the lawns of Oxford, and the stage extended backwards towards a waterway. Ariel, the character in the play, was to make an exit, after his final speech in the play. The audiences were utterly caught up with surprise and wonder as they saw the character running down the stage, on the grass, further walking and jumping in the water till the time he was out of sight. Just at that moment on his exit, there was a loud boom of a firecracker and there were sparkles all over the sky. The audience was thrilled over the enfolding of an action in the most innovative way. In the written part of the drama, the stage directions simply read "Exit, Aeriel". A simple exit of a character was made a memorable and remarkable act. Hence, one can say that theatre has the power to transform and recreate the written text of drama.

1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II

Answer the following questions:-

a. When and where did novel originate?
b. Give a few factors which differentiate novel from a drama.
c. How are drama and theatre related to each other?
d. How is theatre different from other performing arts?
e. Explain the role of theatre in our lives.

1.8 SUMMING UP

In Unit1, namely **Understanding Drama,** we have discussed the origin of drama in ancient Greece and medieval England, tracing its history to the modern times. The definition of drama and its essence are explained in detail to the students. After these two related topics, short questions have been given under **Check your Progress-I**. Space has been provided so that students can write the answers themselves. In the next two topics, drama is studied in relation with novel and significant differences between these two forms are listed. Theatre has a bearing on the written text of drama, which is discussed in the last topic of this Unit. Under **Check your Progress-II**, questions have been given which are seminal to the understanding of drama, novel and theatre.

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Allardyce Nicoll: *British Drama*

2. Allardyce Nicoll: *The Theatre and Dramatic Theory*

3. Marjorie Boulton: *The Anatomy of Drama*

4. Robert Liddell: *A Treatise on the Novel*

5. M.H Abrams: *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

1.10 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

Answer any two questions in about 200-250 words:

1. Trace the origin and early history of drama in England.
2. Define drama. What according to you constitutes the essence of drama?

Answer any two questions in about100-150 words:

1. Write down in brief, the difference between drama and novel.
2. What do you understand by the word ‘theatre’?

UNIT 2 DRAMATIC ACTION STRUCTURE

STRUCTURE

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Dramatic Action Structure

2.3 Characterization

2.4 Dialogue

2.5 Check your Progress-I

2.6 Stage Directions

2.7 Dramatic Conventions

2.8 Check your Progress-II

2.9 Summing Up

2.10 Suggested Readings

2.11 Questions for Practice

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Students will be introduced to dramatic action structure. After going through the unit, the students will be able to answer questions pertaining to dramatic action and its structure as well as other components like characterization, dialogue, stage directions etc. which together make up action. The section under study, also has some questions appended to it. The students are expected to write down the answers in their note-books for practice.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama is one of the oldest of literary forms which originated in ancient Greece. The word ‘drama’ is derived from the Greek word ‘dran’, which means ‘to do’. Drama is essentially performative. A drama cannot merely be scripted and put on the paper. It’s soul is in its performance. As Marjorie Boulton writes, “A printed play is only the recipe for a performance; the play must be cooked.” For the performance of a play, it is important to have a director, actors, stage, venue, props, costumes and spectators. These can be said to be the physical aspects of the play. If we go deeper into it, we understand that a play can be interesting and hold our attention only if it has the capacity to generate meaning even for the audience who have an average intelligence. An ill constructed drama with a poor storyline,

without any suspense, cannot hold our attention. The same is true of television soaps and silver screen movies. Hence, what binds the attention of the audience is basically a well-constructed and an interesting plot, a logically structured action which has all the essential ingredients like conflict, crisis etc. in it. The present unit is an attempt to study and analyse the structure of action in a drama. Action is incident and we cannot have incidents without characters, dialogue and stage for that matter. Hence, all other components which are essential to dramatic action will be discussed in this unit.

2.2 DRAMATIC ACTION STRUCTURE

Everything, every object has its own structure. It is made up of parts which together give that object its form and concreteness. In this sense, drama is made up of several incidents or actions as we can say. "It is a complete and an ordered structure of actions, intended towards a desired effect," as according to M.H Abrams. The term dramatic action structure refers to the structure of action in a drama. How does drama unfold? what should be the duration of actions taking place? how should the incidents be so linked that they make a causal connection? These are some of the questions which the structure of a drama answers.

The essence of drama lies in action. Furthermore, action is rooted in conflict. Conflict is a disturbing and an unsettling force. It can be between two persons, between a person and the society or between a person and his destiny. Conflict furthers action and the resultant sequence of events is what we call the plot of a drama. Now, what is a plot? While narrating any story, we give a simple account of the happenings with a sprinkle of emotion and personal candour. This, as we feel, binds us to the listener. **Plot** is a story in that sense but a more inclusive term. It takes into account the way the events or happenings take place in a dramatic or a narrative work and how one happening is related to another, as if it were a chain. A plot makes us familiar with the nature of characters that we begin to think and ponder over their actions. It takes us into the message it finally speaks out at the end. In short, a plot reveals the overall significance of the play.

Aristotle in his treatise *Poetics*, which is fragmentary in nature, defines plot of a tragedy, thus. He says that it must be an organic whole. Now what is organic? Organic is from an organism that grows, like a tree branching out in equal proportions. There is harmony between all its parts. Likewise, a plot has to be harmonious, it should have a beginning, a middle and an end. These should be linked with each other, there should be a logic behind these, as if it were the parts of an organism, a human body for example. It should present the sequence of events in a unified way, in other words.

The structure of dramatic action of a tragedy is somewhat like this. The beginning of a play is called **exposition**, it indicates the presence of a conflict and initiates the action. The rising action introduces **complication** in the life of the central character. The middle is a reflection of actions having happened earlier and leads us further forward towards **climax** of dramatic action. The protagonist experiences a **crisis** in his or her life at this stage of climax. Crisis can be understood as a hard fact, a bitter experience that impacts the life of the protagonist. Crisis in other words is also called **reversal** or the turning point of the character's fortunes that is from happiness to misery. **Reversal** is dependent upon **discovery** or **recognition.** It is almost

a sudden understanding of something of great importance about which the character had no knowledge earlier. The character recognises that he is in a complete grip of the forces over which he has no control. Reversal or ***peripety*** as in Aristotle, leads to the **denouement**, which is also called the **resolution** of the conflict. It is like unknotting the knots of complication which happened at the start. The resolution is the outcome of a plot, success in case of a comedy or failure in case of a tragedy.

To strengthen action in a drama, Aristotle speaks of the three unities namely, the unity of action, place and time. The unity of action means that there should be a logical connection between the events of the play presented. Besides there should be no loose episodes or digressions which take the audience astray from the main action. Tragedy should conform to the rules of a tragedy. It should not have comic elements in it. Comedy according to Aristotle, is a species of the ridiculous and the ugly. It is therefore, unworthy of enjoying the stature of a tragedy. There should be no admixture of the two, as Aristotle suggests.

The unity of time denotes that dramatic action should be completed in a single circuit of sun, that is the events presented on the stage should happen within a time span of twenty-four hours. There can be past events in the background. But the action on stage, should concentrate on the present. And the unity of place demands that incidents should happen at a single location rather than showing a shift from one place to another. The unities of time and place are sometimes not strictly followed by dramatists. Aristotle emphasises to adhere to the unity of action.

As for the purpose of tragedy, Aristotle opines that it should have a cathartic effect. He uses the word ***catharsis*** in Greek, meaning that the action of a tragedy should be so creditable that it should arouse the emotions of pity and fear in the audience. The arousal of these emotions, purges or cleanses any dross or negative elements. It makes us grow into better and saner human beings. After seeing much suffering of the hero, we become wiser in dealing with life and its many trials and tribulations. Such is the impact of a good play on us, as a whole.

2.3 CHARACTERIZATION

Characters are an integral part of a drama. We cannot have an action without characters. They are the persons who further any action. Hence, plot and character are inseparable. Characterization is the art of establishing different characters by giving them their identities. In a scripted drama or the written-drama, the persons are called characters. People who play the roles of these characters on the stage, are called actors.

A memorable character in a work of art is the one who has the best possible words to say, in the best possible manner. The main character around whom the plot of the drama revolves is called the **protagonist**. His opponent is the **antagonist** or whom we call the villain. A character whose actions spring from the inner logic of the plot is credible or believable. He or she may evince a radical change through the course of the drama but that change should be consistent throughout. It cannot be abrupt and sudden. Besides, it is through the character that we know a drama. Their dialogues, feelings and emotions should be presented by the actors on stage in such a way that the audience is engaged in the act.

Characters can be distinguished as **individual** and **type** characters. Characters who evolve during the course of the drama, triumph or suffer a downfall, are generally the characters who win our hearts. Whereas characters who show no change, remain the same throughout are static characters and do not impress. The former, belong to the category of individual characters and the latter, to the category of type characters. To the category of types, one could add **stock characters** also. They have similar characteristics in almost every work they appear, for example, a cruel stepmother, a jealous husband or a dishonest moneylender. E.M Forster famously distinguished between **round** and **flat** characters in his book *Aspects of the Novel.* According to Foster, characters who grow during the course of action are called, round characters. Such characters are complex in their personalities. They are deep and it is often challenging to understand the psychology behind their actions. A flat character, according to Foster is built around a single idea or quality and is called a type or two-dimensional character. Such characters remain the same from start till finish, showing little or no change.

Aristotle was an ancient philosopher of Greece. His treatise **Poetics** is the earliest available theoretical work on drama. Aristotle discusses the nature of drama, especially tragedy in his work. While referring to the protagonist in drama, he speaks about ***hamartia*** which is Greek for 'tragic error'. According to Aristotle, a great tragedy has a noble man as its hero. He is virtuous, superior in knowledge and has a great responsibility on his shoulders towards the welfare of his society. But due to a tragic flaw in his character, he suffers a downfall. This 'tragic error' becomes the cause of his tragedy. The prescribed play in your course, *Julius Caesar* is a tragedy of a great Roman emperor but his hamartia or tragic flaw, is his ambition and arrogance. His thirst for power distances him from his senators. They all become afraid of him. And a day comes when they conspire and put his life to a tragic end. In *Death of a Salesman,* another play prescribed in your syllabus, Willy Loman is the central character. Though as per the ancient standards of tragedy, he is not a hero or a noble man. He is a commoner. His tragedy is the tragedy of a common man. Yet, he suffers because of an identity crisis. He has an insane demand for recognition without his fitting into the parameters which have been laid down by a capitalist society. He becomes a victim of the capitalist system which encourages the notions of smartness and saleability.

Characterization is done by two different techniques namely, showing and telling. In showing, which is the dramatic method, the author simply presents the characters talking and acting, without much intervention on the author's part. It is the characters themselves who reveal themselves through dialogues and actions. In telling, which is often a method where the author intervenes, let's say, through stage directions *that two characters are stamping their feet in rage and enter stage,* we get to know that the circumstances are not so good and we are soon going to have a brawl or a fight on the stage. This method of telling the audience beforehand is not appreciated. It is considered a violation of artistic craft. So only by showing and not by predicting the behavior or actions of characters, the authors are able to engage the audience. And we exercise our mental faculties as to why this particular character said or behaved in a particular way. A minimal of stage directions are required, but these cannot be elaborate. As a dramatist, Shakespeare is considered a master of characterization. He imbued his characters with an unfailing humanity. He has given us many immortal and plausible

characters like Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Julius Ceaser with their intense speeches to remember.

2.4 DIALOGUE

The utterances made by characters in verse or in prose, in a drama are called dialogues. A character is made immortal not solely because of his or her acting prowess but also because of the dialogues he or she speaks. Unlike in a novel, where the thought process of a character is told in the third person sometimes, which means the author tells us about that character, a drama speaks its thoughts. Marjorie Boulton rightly says, "A play is its dialogue". One of the most important differences between a play and a novel is that every idea in the play has to be conveyed to the audience through speech. The dramatist cannot intervene and supply us with thoughts and explanations. We, as an audience, gather the drama by listening to the conversation going on at the stage. The bodily gestures and movements only add to the dialogue.

The dialogue of a drama should be written in such a way that an actor can speak it clearly and effectively. The audience for whom the play is written should receive it in the way it has been conveyed. There should be no room for ambiguity unless ambiguity is deliberately used as a device. In a short length of time, there is no time for irrelevant dialogues. Economy of speech should be practiced which means using less words instead of using more to say the same thing.

The function of dialogue is not only to carry the incident forward but also to please and entertain with beauty and wit. Dialogue should be attractive. It should not be circumlocutory. Dramatic art does not allow that. Clear and crisp dialogues are an art which only careful artists know. A dramatist like Shakespeare had a natural genius to handle dialogue. He put long and memorable poetic stanzas in the mouths of his actors, that were sheer poetry. In part, it was the trend of the times and a dedicated actor-director as he was, Shakespeare also gave his actors an opportunity to showcase their skills in acting.

A good dramatist knows that speech in drama differs from both ordinary and formal speech. It is said that when Shakespeare took charge of the stage, the available form of language on stage, was 'rime royal' used by kings and courtiers which was too formal. He had to tone it down to make it suitable for the common folk. He used blank verse and couplets instead of the complicated measures of 'rime royal'. In contrast, a contemporary dramatist has to work on a speech which is spoken by the masses. He has the task to refine and elevate it to make it suitable for a dramatic presentation. Hence, a careful selection of language is required for dialogues of the characters.

Every character has a personal idiom of his or her own. The dramatist has to be careful while writing dialogues for each character in the drama. An unintelligent character, for example, cannot speak intelligently. Similarly, a character who is shy by nature or ineffectual, cannot be given long speeches to say. An exception in this case is Shakespeare's clown. Legouis and Cazamian observe that Shakespeare received the figure of the clown from his predecessors, the dramatists who were writing plays before him. Those dramatists had shown the clown typically as a ridiculous figure, but Shakespeare a genius as he was, did not carry on with the

clown figure like that. He packed wisdom even in the dialogues of his clowns in his dramas. Shakespearean clowns are therefore, memorable philosophers instead of being farcical or useless.

A drama, we must remember is a heightened representation of life. In a short period of time, we are taken to some critical and important junctures of a character's life. Actors carry lots of emotion and truth on the vehicle of dialogues to make it a memorable act.

2.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I

Answer the following questions:-

a. Define plot.
b. Explain crisis and resolution.
c. Explain the difference between a protagonist and an antagonist.
d. What is *hamartia*?
e. How should the dialogues in a play be written?

2.6 STAGE DIRECTIONS

Stage directions are the instructions written generally in italics, in the script of a drama. These are variously written for various movements onstage. These serve as instructions given to an actor, which movements he should make at a particular moment, how he should enter the stage, whether grim or in a happy mood. These directions also pertain to the effects on the stage like light and sound effects. Overall, stage directions are written by its author as also improvised by the director of that particular play for an impressive performance.

There are two kinds of dramas. A 'closet drama' is written to be read aloud or in private by a solitary reader. Whereas a classic 'stage drama' is performed. In case of a stage drama, the stage is generally a raised platform or any demarcated space for the performance of a drama. A stage can be temporarily erected or constructed. It is a permanent feature in theatres where production of plays is a regular feature. In a modern auditorium, the audience is seated opposite the performers. In villages, people would see actors perform, from all four sides. Generally, three kinds of stages can be seen in the present times. Let us have a brief understanding of these as given below:

The Proscenium stage

The Proscenium stage is also called the Proscenium arch theatre. It is surrounded on the top and the sides by a built arch. The purpose of the arch is to separate or distance the audience from the stage. The audience sitting below views the stage as if it were a picture frame. The audience can sit within a square or a rectangular seating area. There are one to three levels of rows of seats from which the stage is visible. More often the stage here is a raised semi-circular platform and the audience seats are also slightly curved at the edges of the rows that they form an arch. Because the platform is quite big enough, the sides of such a stage are

used for different purposes. Canvas and other displays are placed on the sides or wings, to create lighting on the stage in a sophisticated way. Wings are the sides of the stage not visible to the audience. These are masked areas from where an actor can enter through. These are also used to place certain objects, to be brought in for use as props on the stage. Furthermore, the stage is divided into upstage and downstage. The former meaning where the actor is far from the audience near the rear wall and the latter meaning the actor is performing right opposite and quite near the audience. The rear or back wall is covered with scenes denoting the place of action. Proscenium stage is the traditional stage used in Greek and Roman theatre and also of much use in contemporary times.

Arena stage

Also called Theatre-in-the-round, Arena stage is a type of a theatre where the audience is seated on all four sides of the stage. The audience is closely watching the performance of the actors and there is no such distance as in the Proscenium theatre. The audience feels involved with the action as there is no intervention of curtains or elaborate scenery. Sophisticated light effect to enhance the stage is a challenge here. The entry of the actors on stage is also a bit awkward. Either the actors make entry from where the audience is seated or from the corners of the stage, where there might be some hidden walk-way.

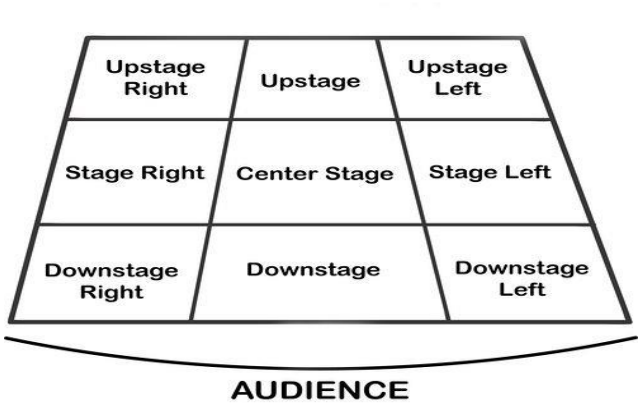
Thrust theatre

The Thrust stage is a modern kind of a stage which extends into the audience cavity from all three sides and is connected to the backstage with its upstage end. A thrust has a greater opportunity of involvement and proximity with its audience than the proscenium stage. Here the actors also have the benefit from the utility of having a backstage area as in proscenium.

Furthermore, some makeshift stages can also be constructed. Stages can be improvised as well for example in a street, on a hillside. Such theatres are made by demarcating boundaries of the performing area such as laying a carpet and arranging the seats for the audience. These are message-oriented performances and don't consider stylistic effects.

Let us discuss stage directions. For movement directions, the dramatist will generally write 'stage left' or 'centre stage'. These are terms used to describe the positions of the actor. 'Stage left' will be the left side of the actor. As we can observe by looking at the diagram given below that when an actor faces the audience, the actor's right is the audience's left and vice-versa. This creates a lot of confusion for the actor as well as the director. As a solution to this problem, the actor's right and left sides are termed 'stage right' and 'stage left' respectively, while audience's right and left sides are termed 'house right' and 'house left' respectively. The centre of the stage is the centre only whereas 'upstage' is the part furthest from the audience or upstage can also be understood as the rear or the back part of the stage. 'Downstage' is the term used when the actors are engaged more on the front part of the stage, towards the audience.

Diagram picture



Apart from movement directions, there are scenic stage directions. '*Tall poplars growing on one side of the house'* or something like '*there was an eerie feeling about that place'* make way for certain objects to be planted onstage as also there arises a need to create some atmosphere to validate the eerie feeling, a sort of fear by displaying a terrifying night scenery. Lighting and sound effect is the technical aspect of stage directions. It increases the dramatic effect of the play on the mood of the audience as well as the actors. This aids the performance of the actors also. Music is often used to enhance the emotional effect of the play. Use of flute music in *Death of a Salesman* is symbolic of the mental states of the protagonist. In lighting, a harsh light is always associated with the colour of red. Softer tones are done with lilac or like colours. There are also performative stage directions which are related with the expressions the actors which they are to wear while performing. The way the playwright thinks that this is how the dialogue has to be delivered. For example:

She gave it a long thought and then she spoke to him (smiling)-

He narrated the whole story with a sad face.

Apart from these, costumes, masks and makeup are also significant directions which bring the play alive before the audience. Appearance of a character is very important on stage. The physical characteristics, his age, his clothes are markers to understand a character. If a character is left undefined, without any directions, we cannot connect with him or her as an audience. While writing a work, the dramatist has a vision. It can only be brought alive conclusively on the stage by adhering to stage directions which are a key to the unlocking of the mystery of a work.

2.7 DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS

Dramatic conventions, put in the simplest way, are the rules that govern a drama. These can be described as established practices in the theatre when it comes to represent reality on the stage. Audience accepts those conventions and does not question the reality. The audience believes the stage can become a house, a classroom, even a sports hall and the characters are

actually passing through what they depict on stage. Dramatic conventions can be divided into the following sub heads:

Structural conventions

Structural conventions are the rules that govern the structure of a drama. The plot, characters, and unities are important elements of the structure of a play. As we have already discussed with reference to Aristotle that plot of a drama, tragedy mainly as Aristotle opined, should be an organic whole. There has to be a logical connection within all its parts as there is harmony in different parts of a growing living thing. Plot should be of certain length, neither should it be too long a story nor too short. Aristotle emphasised the completeness of a plot. He discouraged the use of episodes and digressions in a drama. Too many episodes which are not related with the main action are harmful to the unity of a play. The main action gets out of focus if there are too many events happening at the same time. The three unities of time, place and action namely the play should span over some acceptable time period and events should not happen over a long period of time. But this was a real question before dramatists. For this the convention of chorus was evolved in Greek theatre. The purpose of the chorus was not only to comment on the play but also to acquaint the audience with the happenings that happened elsewhere other than the stage. So that the unity of place could be preserved. As for the unity of time, when there was a considerable lapse of time, chorus would convey that too in their song.

Contemporary dramas don't always follow the ancient convention of the chorus. They are constructed in such a way that the unities of time and place are not flouted. A day in the life of characters is enough to bring forward the issues facing them. As for the unity of action, events should be so linked as to naturally arise into a crisis and a climax. The law of probability must be followed. Probability is when we don't doubt the end result or the outcome of a character's actions. Virtue is rewarded and evil is eventually punished. The modern realist plays sometimes don't end with such a convention of poetic justice. A good, virtuous man sometimes meets a sad fate. This is realistic drama where reality is presented to the audience.

Theatrical conventions

The drama enacted on the stage gives the audience an illusion of reality. It is expected from the audience that it does not disbelieve any of the happenings onstage. The believability factor is achieved through a set of dramatic conventions in the theatre itself. In real, day to day life, events happen at their own pace. The place of happenings is also varied. It is never the same. You may be one moment at your home, at quite another, you are in the college building and then somewhere else. So, the places of your action and movement are different. But dramatic conventions condense real time and place. Everything happens in a small duration of time in the same place that is the stage. Furthermore, every incident is linked to the other that follows it which does not happen in real life ever. As an audience we cannot question it. This is the rule, a convention of theatre, we accept without questioning. Secondly, the situations depicted on the stage too may not be real. For example, a murder actually does not happen on stage, it is an enactment. But the rule or the convention exists that the audience believes it as a real situation. Thirdly, actors speak loudly. Their dialogues are emotionally

charged. This is because the dialogues and expression are made clear to the audience. The audience reciprocates with similar states of mind as the actors. In real life, we may not be as charged or super grim. Makeup, clothing, scenery and lighting are used in certain ways to create a semblance of truth. Some of the terms have been listed below which serve as important techniques as part of theatre conventions:

Soliloquy: The speech of an actor which he speaks aloud to himself, in private.

Aside: When a character speaks to the audience. By convention the audience understands that the speech is intended to be heard by the audience only and unheard by other actors on the stage.

Chorus: A group of actors who serve as the dramatist's vehicle for commentary on the play.

Music: Music is generally played in the background in plays where a heightened emotional effect is produced by a particular situation.

Pantomime: Also called dumb-show is gestural or body movements made by an actor to produce an intense and telling impression on the audiences without using speech.

Flashback: Past events in a character's life are presented in a way that the audience grasps that flashback technique is being used.

Split-stage: Marking divisions on the stage so that the spaces marked, represent different locations.

2.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II

Answer the following questions:-

a. Explain 'closet drama' and 'stage drama'.
b. What is the difference between 'upstage' and 'downstage'?
c. Write a note on Proscenium theatre.
d. What are structural conventions?
e. Explain the difference between soliloquy and aside.

2.9 SUMMING UP

In Unit 2, namely **Dramatic Action Structure,** we have discussed the structure of drama in detail. The structure of drama constitutes plot, character and dialogue. After these three related topics, **Check your Progress-I** tests the understanding of students with the given relevant questions. Stage conventions and stage directions are the last two topics in the unit which shed light on the various kinds of stages used in the enactment of plays. An analysis of stage directions and stage conventions will help students learn about the performative aspects of drama.

2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Allardyce Nicoll: *British Drama*

2. Allardyce Nicoll: *The Theatre and Dramatic Theory*

3. Marjorie Boulton: *The Anatomy of Drama*

4. M.H Abrams: *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

2.11 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

Answer the following questions in about 200-250 words:

1. Write in brief the structure of action or plot in a drama.
2. Write a note on characterisation, in a dramatic work.

Answer the following short answers in about 150 words:

1. Describe the Proscenium arch theatre.
2. What are dramatic conventions? List a few conventions.

UNIT 3: IMPORTANT TERMS PERTAINING TO DRAMA AND STAGE

STRUCTURE

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction to the unit

3.2 What is drama and literary terms pertaining to it

3.3 Comic relief

3.4 Pathos

3.5 Aside

3.6 Soliloquy

3.6.1 Difference between soliloquy and aside

3.6.2 Difference between soliloquy and monologue

3.7 Suggested Reading

3.8 Conclusion

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After a careful reading of the play, the student will be able to:

- Understand what drama is and have fair idea of literary terms associated with it
- Comprehend the use of Comic relief
- Understand Pathos
- Know the meaning and use of Aside
- Get to know what Soliloquy is

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

In this unit, we are going to have a quick look at the definition of drama. The terms in our course are pertaining to drama, so we have to understand what drama is. But since we have covered it in other units as well, so we will not go too deep into it. We will concentrate on some terms which are associated with drama. The first term that we will take up is Comic relief. We will understand its meaning, how and why it is used and also read some examples

of comic relief from various literary texts to understand the term better. Similarly, we will take up Pathos, aside and soliloquy respectively with a fair attention on examples. After understanding the terms, there is going to be a small quiz to check whether you have understood the concepts. Finally, there will be short and long questions for the benefit of the students that are important from examination point of view.

3.2 What is drama? An overview of literary terms pertaining to drama and stage.

Abrams defines drama as a literary genre that is 'designed for performance in the theatre in which actors take the role of the characters, perform the indicated actions and utter the written dialogue'. It depicts life or a slice of it or portrays a character with its complexities and emotions that the audience can associate with. The action in the play moves forward with the help of the dialogues that are mouthed by the actors who are playing specific roles. The dialogues could be in prose or in verse (blank verse was used by Shakespeare in his plays and heroic couplets were used in Restoration comedies). The author of the drama is called a dramatist or a playwright. He gives stage directions (instructions in the text of a play which include what actions or movements are to be made by the performers or what objects are placed where on the stage or who enters and who exits in this make believe world) wherever required.

A drama is played directly before the audience in a theatre so there is a one to one relation of the actors with the viewers and the author can't intervene himself at places where he wants to inform the audience of something important. Here techniques like aside and soliloquy are introduced so that the audience is aware of the undercurrents in the play. These literary techniques are also used to highlight and emphasize the importance of certain parts of the piece or to convey to the audience, through the performers, the reality of the characters or the truth of the incidents or to simply decorate and embellish the play. These literary devices enhance the overall impact of the play and are crucial in creating a 'suspension of disbelief'. The detailing is usually important for character development and a better understanding of the plot. The literary devices like monologue, metaphor, soliloquy, aside, pathos and comic relief work alongside the plot and characters to upgrade the drama.

The knowledge of these devices, hence, becomes essential to understand the drama and to also enjoy it. When we know these terms, the nuances in the play seem clearer. These are meant to be subtle, yet they stand out in a well-structured drama. The terms that are there in our course in this semester are:

a) Comic relief
b) Pathos
c) Aside
d) Soliloquy

Let us begin with the terms.

3.3 COMIC RELIEF

Comic relief is understood as a comic episode or a dialogue or a character or just a witty remark (Shakespeare's fools are famous for delivering them) or a funny comment that is

introduced in an otherwise serious piece of work to relieve the mounting tension in a piece of fiction. Normally, the term comic relief is associated with tragedies (because comic relief can't be provided in an already light situation). Etymologically, the phrase 'comic relief' is made of two words – comic and relief, and the meaning is evident in the phrase itself, which is the relief provided to the audience through something comic, that provides a solace, however transient, from the ongoing pain and trauma.

The students already know that Aristotle, the scholar, writer, critic (4 BC), in his mega critique 'Poetics' has defined tragedy as 'the imitation of an action that is serious and also as having magnitude, and is complete in itself', is presented in a dramatic manner and involves 'incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish the catharsis of emotions.' Now, catharsis is a Greek term that means 'purgation' and 'purification' of the soul through watching the sad piece. This happens when the audience, on witnessing the suffering and trauma of the tragic hero, are filled with pity for him, and, afraid of meeting the same fate themselves, cry with the protagonist, and thus feel relieved after the release of emotion. The tragedy, hence, works on the emotions of the viewers. But while providing the pleasure of 'pity and fear', the intensity mounts to such a level that it is nerve wrecking, and the dramatist feels the need to introduce something light or humorous to provide a temporary relief from the outpouring sea of sorrow. As some might wish to believe, it doesn't mitigate the impact, but simply prolongs the climax of the drama.

Yes, comic relief is included as a short breather for the audience and it provides a moment of respite from the physical and mental violence under way in the play. And its purpose doesn't end here. More importantly, comic relief is poured into the middle of a tragedy to imitate life in the real sense, to prove that life is not dark alone or sunshine alone, it is a mixture of joys and sorrows, it is a true representation of life- where both joys and sorrows coexist, where life would show a happy occasion of birth at one place and death at another. So it is a tragedy for one character and a comedy for the other at the same time. This symbiosis of sorrow and laughter are essential to life and so should it be in dramas. This doesn't mean that the addition of comic episodes makes the tragedy less intense. It is not a diversion, but is a crucial part of the drama that advances the action of the play. By presenting a contrast, it highlights the tragic elements on one hand and also offers a moment's relief on the other. The children's movie, 'The Lion King', presents some intense serious themes of jealousy, lust for power and death amidst political upheaval when the good lion king Mufasa is cheated and killed by one of his own. In the movie, the script writer has introduced Timon and Pumba, two minor characters that keep providing silly humour to keep the theme light for children. This is the simplest example of comic relief.

Let's read some examples of Comic relief from literary pieces.

King Lear is an intense tragedy by William Shakespeare. The king divided his kingdom, while he was still alive, between his daughters, Regan and Goneril and banished the youngest Cordelia because she had refused to pamper him with lies. Once they got the power, Regan and Goneril began to mistreat their father who had to leave his own palace in storm. He is frustrated, with no place to go to and almost half mad with grief. The fool who followed him everywhere comes up with an apt funny dialogue:

"Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind

But fathers that wear bags,

Shall see their children kind". He and also tells the king:

"I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou are nothing."

The audience who had been crying with the king at his misfortunes are surprised at this light intervention by the wise fool and welcome this little solace.

Example 2. The porter's scene in Shakespeare's Macbeth is a very famous example of comic relief. Macbeth is an immensely tragic piece of work, that is abundant in murder and necromancy, with hardly a joyous episode in it. The porter's scene comes after a succession of tense scenes in Act II scene iii, leading to King Duncan's murder. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth come back after stabbing the king in his bedchamber and they have blood all over them when they hear a knocking on the door of the castle that is also heard by the drunken porter. He doesn't open the door, instead, he imagines he is standing on the gates of hell and the audience begins to enjoy his drunken comedy. The knocking on the gate of the castle seems to him to be first of a farmer, then an equivocator and then a tailor. "Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in tailor; here you may roast your goose." Then he decides to leave off his playacting and allows Mcduff and Lennox to enter. His bawdy jokes don't end here. He continues, "..drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things ..nose-painting, sleep and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes, and un provokes; it provokes the desire but takes away the performance". For the audience that had just witnessed a murder in the previous scene, the porter's scene is indeed a breather. The scene has been strategically placed between the murder and its discovery. This comic relief lessens the tension for a while by postponing the climax of discovering Duncan's death and gives audience time to wipe away their tears.

How well have you understood comic relief?

Check your progress I:

Ques 1. In which literary genre is the comic relief used?

a) Essay
b) Plays
c) Novel
d) Any genre

Ques 2 How do you define comic relief?

a) The inclusion of comedy in a serious work to break the tension
b) The inclusion of comedy in a comic work
c) The inclusion of comedy in a serious work for no reason
d) The inclusion of a short episode which is different

Ques. 3. The inclusion of porter's scene in 'Macbeth' is an example of:

a) Pathos
b) Tragedy

c) Comic relief
d) Tragedy

Ques. 4 The tools for presenting comic relief are:

a) Comic characters
b) Comic dialogues
c) Comic episode
d) Any of the above

3.4 PATHOS

The Oxford dictionary defines Pathos as 'a quality that evokes pity and sadness' in the minds of the viewers or the readers on witnessing a specific heart wrenching scene. The audience feels sympathy for the tragic character, and are filled with compassion for him. Like 'the dying soldier's words evoked a lot of pathos'. This, however is only one side of the term. Pathos is a literary device that is used by the author to invoke emotions of any kind from readers. It is definitely a mode of persuasion, something that coaxes the reader and sways him towards a point of view. It can be called a way or a method that is used to convince people with an argument through an emotional response from the viewers (and readers).

Pathos has a Greek origin that means grief or suffering. The term was used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in 'Rhetoric' along with ethos and logos. Pathos, ethos and logos were the three basic tools or 'primary modes' of persuasion. Ethos was an ethical appeal to the audience that built its case on the writer's knowledge and credibility as a righteous man who would present the case right, logos was a logical appeal that dealt with issues in the plot methodically and in a rational manner. It presented all the facts and figures to the viewers and strove to maintain a "reasoned discourse". Pathos, on the other hand, in contrast to both ethos and logos was an appeal to the emotions of the audience. It targeted the feelings of the audience and tried to turn their sympathies in favour of the speaker (usually the tragic hero). The audience mostly melts at the sad turn of events and empathize with the character and all sense of right and wrong seem to go out of their minds. This is because passion can be all consuming and very compelling and can go astray. Aristotle himself emphasized the importance of logos, against pathos and ethos.

Before Aristotle, his teacher and eminent philosopher, Plato, had also written about pathos, but not in a flattering way. Plato was not in favour of using pathos because he felt that it was not too correct to impress the audience with sentimental talk. He said that the audience became week when they witness pathos and could be manipulated easily. A good plot should be built rationally or ethically. Also, argument that is built on emotions and feelings alone is often flawed.

To sum up, pathos, as a literary deice evokes certain feelings from the viewers. It creates a mood and sets a tone. It can influence the minds of the audience by making them feel sad or happy, passionate or aggressive with the words the writers choose and the plot they develop. In simplest terms when a salesperson implores his customer to buy some commodities from him because he needs the money to support his poor family, he is using the technique of pathos to make a profit. Here the reason tugs at our heart and stirs up our emotions instead of

a logical explanation. This is pathos. Or when a child convinces his mother to buy him a new dress because this will show how much his mother cares for him, the child is trying to emotionally sway his mother into buying the dress. This is also pathos.

In literature for example W H Auden's poem 'Funeral Blues' is a perfect example of pathos.

Stop all the clocks… Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is dead'.

….

He was my North, my South, my East and West,

My working week and my Sunday rest,

My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;

I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out everyone,

Pick up the moon and dismantle the sun,

Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;

For nothing now can ever come to any good.

In this poem, Auden laments the loss of his loved one and presents the extent of his grief in the above lines. He wishes everything to stop just as life has seemed to stop for the poet because his companion has just died. He seems to be lost in sorrows and compares his love to the four cardinal directions and says that his life completely revolved around his love and now that he has lost him, he is distraught. Even the sun and the stars are useless to him and these elements of nature may well be removed because he is sure that they will not bring any good to him ever.

These lines evoke sympathy from the readers and Auden's words successfully tug at the reader's heart though temporarily.

Example 2: King Lear by William Shakespeare also has many episodes that are strewn with some classic examples of pathos. Lear divides his kingdom between his two daughters and banishes the third one who was actually genuine. When she says that she can say 'nothing' about her love for her father, he says 'Nothing will come out of nothing', the audience wishes to stop the king from doing this foolish act. The audience has begun to be affected by the emotional lows in this drama and this was just the beginning. When he has given his all away, and his daughters Goneril and Regan confront him about his regal behavior as he is no longer the king anymore, he can't believe that it is his own daughters who are talking to him in such a manner. In shock, he asks, "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" He is upset and angry and sarcastically asks who he is. He couldn't be the royal old king Lear to be spoken to in such a rude manner and he is questioning his own identity. Humiliated and hurt, he soon leaves the palace in a fit of rage. He has no roof over his head in the ongoing storm and cries:

"why then let fall

Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,

A poor, infirm, week, and despised old man." Act III, Scene ii

The audience is full of sympathy for the old man and his own follies are forgotten. The viewers actually see him as 'poor' and 'week' and 'despised'. The fall of a royal at the hands of his own children bring tears in the eyes of the audience. Lear is crazy with sorrow and so are the viewers. When Cordelia arrives to help him and Lear gains consciousness but can not recognize his own daughter. He introduces himself:

"I am a very foolish, fond old man.

Four score and upward, not an hour more or less,

And to deal plainly

I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

The most effective example of pathos is in the end of the play when Cordelia dies in the arms of her father. She had been blameless and died for no fault of hers, her death was morally incorrect. Lear cries,

"O thou'll come no more

Never, never, never, never, never" Act V, Scene viii

The repetition of the word 'never' aggravates the pain of not only the bereaved parent but the audience as well. The audience is shattered at the brutal turn of events and become extremely emotional.

How well have you understood Pathos?

<u>Check your progress II</u>

Ques. 1. A piece that uses reason and logic to explain its point of view is

a) Pathos
b) Logos
c) Ethos
d) Argument

Ques. 2. An appeal to emotion is:

a) Pathos
b) Tragedy
c) Ethos
d) Love story

Ques 3. Which of the following is true for pathos?

a) It should include a thorough research
b) It should make people laugh
c) It should evoke the feelings of pity
d) It should be sensible

Ques. 4. The three modes of persuasion are:

a) Pathos, ethos and comedy
b) Pathos, ethos and joyous
c) Pathos, ethos and logos
d) Tragedy, comedy and tragi comedy

Ques.5 An appeal to credibility and ethics is:

a) Pathos
b) Ethos
c) Logos

3.5 ASIDE

Aside is a literary term that is mostly specific to drama and the reason lies in its mode of dramatic presentation. The dictionary defines the word as 'to one side' or 'out of the way' and further explains it in the context of theatre as 'a remark or a passage in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters in the play'. 'It is not intended to be heard by everyone present'.

Drama, we know, is a literary genre written to be performed in a theatre. It has major and minor characters that are played by actors who have dialogues written for them. The development of plot is carried forward through interchange or repartee. Now, actors have a one to one relation with the audience because though the dialogues that they utter are between the characters present on the stage, they are meant for the audience who are viewing them. The audience understand only that what is being shown to them and from all that they gather through the conversations of the stage. They have no inclination as to what the character is thinking or what his ulterior motives are. Sometimes, it is important for the audience to know of the undercurrents of the play and is difficult for the playwright to express them. For situations like these, the playwright uses various literary devices to make his point of view and those of the characters clear. One of those literary devices is *aside.*

Aside is a dramatic device in which the character speaks directly to the audience. Only the audience knows that the character has said something to them. This way they reveal their inner thoughts. It is understood that the characters present on the stage are unable to hear this. Aside reveals a character's true motives. This definitely breaks the fourth wall between the fictional world and the real world.

An effective aside increases the dramatic irony of the plot. There are things that the audience knows but which the other characters don't know. This aggravates the tension in the audience who are left guessing as to when the truth about a specific character and the situation is going to come out. The audience delves deeper in the 'suspension of disbelief'. The use of aside goes well for characters who carry more than one face. For example, Iago in Shakespeare's Othello is the quintessential double faced man. On one hand, he feigns friendship with Othello and wants to present himself as his well-wisher and someone who is happy in Othello's good fortune to have married someone as worthy as Desdemona. His 'asides' in the play show his true character (nature) to the audience and the audience waits with waited breath as to when the protagonist will find out of Iago's treachery. In Act II Scene I, Iago sees Cassio talking to Desdemona, Othello's wife and in this famous aside, he turns towards the

audience to tell them that he will use this as a 'web' to catch 'Cassio' because he'll let Othello believe that his fair wife is having an extra marital affair with Cassio.

"He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said, whisper! With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do. I will give thee in thine own courtship. You say true, it is so indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play sir in. Very good, well kissed. And excellent courtesy! It is so indeed, Yet again your fingers to your lips? Would they be clyster pipes for your sake! The Moor! I know his trumpet."

Iago had been watching Cassio being polite and courteous to Desdemona in a way that could be interpreted as an affair, which he intends to use later.

Example 2: *Aside from Twelfth Night (by William Shakespeare*): The play Twelfth Night is full of disguises. This might have made it difficult for the audience (and readers) to comprehend the real intentions of the characters. Shakespeare uses asides to keep the audience informed of what is going on in the minds of his characters.

Viola is dressed as shepherd Cesario and is speaking to Curio who can't recognise his shepherd friend to be Voila. She is comforting Curio that she would find a suitable wife for him but then interrupts her own dialogue to break into an aside to inform the audience finding a wife for Curio would be a difficult task as she intends to be his wife.

Voila: I'll do my best to woo your lady:

Aside

yet, a barful strife!

Whoever I woo, myself would be his wife.

Example 3: Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' also works on more than two levels. Prince Hamlet is a man with two personas. On one hand, he wants to convince Claudius that he has turned mad with grief because of his father's death and on the other hand he wants to prove that there was something not right in the way his father was found dead. He doubts that his uncle Claudius (now his stepfather) had plotted against his father. When he talks about Claudius, he breaks into an aside in Act I, Scene ii: "A little more than kin and less than kind"

This makes the audience learn of his true intentions for Claudius*?*

How well have you understood Aside?

<u>Check your progress III</u>

Ques. 1. In which device do the characters talk directly to the audience?

a) Soliloquy
b) Pathos
c) Soliloquy
d) Aside

Ques. 2 What is true for aside?

a) Only characters on the stage are able to hear it

b) Only the audience is able to hear it
c) Both audience and the characters on stage are able to hear it
d) Only speaker knows what he has said

Ques. 3Complete the sentence

An effective aside-------

a) Keeps the secrets intact
b) Let's the audience know of everything that is going on in the mind of the character
c) Is a short crisp hint of the character's true feelings?
d) None of the above

3.6 SOLILOQUY

Etymologically, soliloquy comes from Latin root words: *solus* that means 'by oneself' or alone and *loqus* that means 'to speak'. The act of speaking to oneself is, thus, soliloquy. The Merriam Webster dictionary further explains soliloquy as 'a poem, discourse, or utterance of a character in a drama that has the form of a monologue or gives the illusion of being a series of unspoken reflections'.

Soliloquy, as a literary device, is deployed by dramatists to let the audience know of the inner thoughts and ulterior motives of the character or for the purpose of explaining something or many times to impress upon the judgement and reflexes of the viewers. Simply put, the dramatist can, through the dialogues, reveal what a character is saying to the other but it becomes difficult for him to exhibit what all is going on in the minds of his characters because his dramatis personae are human and speak and act differently owing to their complex interiors. For these instances, when the character has more than one face, the dramatist uses literary devices like soliloquy. In a soliloquy, the character's real thoughts are heard clearly by the audience. A character might think aloud or in quiet (though a silent soliloquy holds no meaning in drama because then the purpose of this literary device which is to let the audience know about the essential being of the character stands mitigated).

The soliloquy became very popular during the Elizabethan age especially in the hands of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Gradually, by 19th century, its use became less. How-ever some dramatists like Eugene O'Neil revived and modified soliloquy in his drama 'Strange Interlude' (1928).

Macbeth is a violent tale of power hungry and over ambitious Macbeth who murders the king who has bestowed honours upon him and who is a guest in his castle because he was driven by greed and his evil wish to become the king himself. He doesn't hesitate to attack his sleeping master, King Duncan. He becomes the king amidst more bloodshed and a scarred conscience. Shakespeare has decorated this drama with many soliloquies to open Macbeth's heart and soul and his thoughts to the audience. Macbeth bares himself at many occasions through various soliloquies and the play ends with a famous one when Macbeth is sinking into the abyss of despair and gloom on learning that Lady Macbeth has died. He comes to realize of the futility of life.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time,

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more: it is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

Act V, Scene v

Hamlet is another play that is famous for its beautiful soliloquies. It contains the famous soliloquy 'To be or not to be' along with six more soliloquies. Hamlet is the quintessential thinking hero and in this sense he becomes a modern man with a complex subconscious. In fact, critics claim that his hamartia is that he thinks too much. Shakespeare let the audience know of everything that passes in Hamlet's mind: his loneliness, his despair, his disillusionment with life, his ideas on death, suicide and revenge and his passivity.

To be, or not to be? That is the question-

Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against the sea of troubles,

And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep-

No more- and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache and a thousand natural shocks

……..for who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

…thus conscience does make cowards of us all,

Thus the native hue of resolution

..be all my sins remembered.

Act III, Scene i

3.6.1 Difference between a soliloquy and an aside:

Both soliloquy and aside serve the same purpose of letting the audience know of what is going on in the mind of the characters. But aside is shorter, consisting of only a few lines and conveying a single thought and not delving too deep into details. In comparison, a soliloquy

can be very long and conveys many complex thoughts. Secondly, aside is spoken directly to the audience where as in a soliloquy, the character is speaking to himself. He is thinking aloud and he does not require to look at the audience.

3.6.2 Difference between a monologue and a soliloquy:

In a monologue, one character is speaking for a considerable time. It means that it could be even longer than a soliloquy and unlike in a soliloquy, there are characters on the stage who are listening to this long speech. They either respond with body expressions or would respond when this over. The monologue is directed the characters on the stage.

How well have you understood soliloquy?

Check your progress IV

Ques. 1. Soliloquy can be heard by the characters on the stage.

a) True
b) False
c) Both the above, depending on the situation

Ques. 2. The main difference between a soliloquy and an aside is:

a) Other characters can be there on the stage during a soliloquy and they hear all
b) Other characters can be there during an aside but they don't hear anything
c) Aside is comic relief
d) Characters don't speak during a soliloquy

Ques. 3 During which period did soliloquy become very popular?

a) Neo classical age
b) Age of Chaucer
c) Post Modern Age
d) Elizabethan Age

3.7 SUGGESTED READING

A glossary of literary terms by M.H.Abrams

A History of English Literature by David Daiches

3.8 CONCLUSION

We have had a detailed study of Comic relief, pathos, aside and soliloquy with examples from various plays. These literary devices help us to comprehend drama in a better manner. And the terms in this course are just a hand full from the deep ocean of literature. And though all efforts have been made to cover all important points for the above topics, there is always a scope of widening one's horizon with more reading.

Answers to questions in 'Check your Progress':

Check your Progress (I)

1. (b) Plays
2. (a) the inclusion of comedy in a serious work to break the tension
3. Comic Relief
4. (d) all the above

Check your Progress (II)

1. (b) Logos
2. (a) Pathos
3. (c) he should evoke the feelings of pity
4. (c) Pathos, Ethos and Logos
5. (b) Ethos

Check your Progress (III)

1. (d) aside
2. (b) only the audience is able to hear
3. (c) is a short crisp hint of the character's true feelings

Check your Progress (IV)

1. False
2. (b) other characters can be there during an aside but they can't hear anything
3. (d) Elizabethan age

Long Questions:

Ques 1. What does Comic relief do? Explain it with the help of examples from drama?

Ques.2 Shakespeare has included Comic Relief in his tragedies? Do you agree? Explain by giving examples.

Ques.3 What kind of literary devices were used by dramatists of Elizabethan Age to let the audience know of the characters' intentions? Explain.

Ques. 4 Explain Soliloquy. How has Shakespeare used it for his characters?

Short Questions:

Ques. 1 How is aside different from soliloquy? Explain.

Ques.2 How will you explain Pathos? Give examples.

Ques.3 What is aside? Write a detailed note on its use with examples.

UNIT 4 JULIUS CAESER: PART I

STRUCTURE:

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 What is Drama? Various kinds of Drama with a special thrust on Tragedy.

4.3 The English Drama: A Historical Perspective (The tradition of Drama in England)

4.4 William Shakespeare: the bard of England - a dramatist par excellence

4.5 An Introduction to Julius Caesar

4.5.1 Probable date of its composition

4.5.2 Julius Caesar is a History Play

4.6 Conclusion

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit diligently, the students will be able to:

- Define drama as a literary form
- Trace the origin of drama and its growth through ages: miracle, mystery, morality plays and interludes that led to the regular Elizabethan drama
- Understand the genius of William Shakespeare and his place in the history of English theatre
- Be introduced to the play Julius Caesar

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

In this unit, we shall try to understand what drama is, its various forms viz. comedy, tragedy, chronicle and history plays. Then we will have a look at the historical background of the tradition of drama in England. We will read about the beginnings of drama and how they metamorphose from liturgical plays to Elizabethan drama and why Elizabethan age is called the golden period of theatre. Then we will be familiarized with the remarkable works of William Shakespeare and then we will narrow down to Julius Caesar. This unit could include the introduction to the play only. The remaining discussion on the play will be resumed in the next unit.

4.2 WHAT IS A DRAMA?

M.H.Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham define drama as "the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of characters, perform the indicated actions and utter the written dialogue"; it is a genre of fiction that is written to be performed on stage where characters perform with dialogues written for them. The actors on the stage enact their roles directly in front of the audience. The dialogues, since the beginning, were in verse, (mostly blank verse), so they were poetic dramas and they attained perfection during the Elizabethan Age in the hands of dramatists like Marlowe and Shakespeare. The blank verse was replaced with heroic couplets (lines are rhymed in pairs as in a couplet and were in iambic pentameter) during the Restoration Age to suit the temperament of the heroic drama till prose took over.

The term drama comes from the Greek word 'drago' that means 'to do or to act'. The symbol of two masks, the laughing mask and the crying mask represented the two kinds drama: Comedy and Tragedy.



Thalia was the muse of comedy and Melpomene was the muse of Tragedy.

Comedy is defined as a fictional work that is written to entertain, interest and amuse the audience. It is a happy tale of lighthearted events. Even when the characters witness a slight discomfort, it is rather pleasurable because the audience knows that no catastrophe will occur

and the play will have a happy ending. The most popular has been the Romantic Comedy that was developed by the Elizabethans. It usually has a love story as its main theme with a beautiful heroine and a passionate hero. Their path is strewn with little difficulties but they conquer all odds to have a happy ending. Famous examples are Shakespeare's 'As You Like It', Twelfth Night and A Mid-Summer Night's Dream. Thomas Lodge's Rosalynde was an inspiration to many such comedies. The Romantic Comedy was essentially filled with joie de vivre that would fill the audience with mirth and laughter. In contrast was the Satiric Comedy that intended to satirize and poke fun at the deviations from standard behavior or social and political philosophies. They were modelled on Aristophanes' (450- 385 BC) Greek comedies. Ben Jonson (author of Volpone, The Alchemist) was a master of these 'corrective comedies'. Next in order is the Restoration Comedy that was influenced by the French dramatist Moliere. They mirrored the court life of King Charles II, and the so called sophisticated men and women of upper class with all their intrigues and sparkle. William Congreve's The Way of the World is its classic example. The neo classical age brought the Sentimental Comedy and the Comedy of Manners that satirized the men and manners of this affected age. Famous examples were Oliver Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer and Richard Sheridan's 'The School of Scandal. Farce (with exaggerated characters and ludicrous situations that creates laughter) and Comedy of humours (based on the ancient theory of four humours and developed by Ben Jonson in Every Man in His Humour and Every Man Out of His Humour) are another two kinds of comedies.

Tragedy is a tale of misfortune and suffering and mostly ends in the death of the hero. Bradley says about Shakespearean tragedy that it is 'essentially a tale of suffering and calamity concluding in death". Tragedy is defined by Aristotle as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself"; it is in verse and follows the dramatic mode of narration and involves "incidents arousing pity and fear, where in to accomplish the catharsis of such emotions." Catharsis is a Greek term that means 'purgation' or 'purification' or both. When Aristotle talks of the pleasure of tragedy, he probably means that the tragic representation of hardships and suffering that are inflicted upon the characters in a tragedy, impacts the audience but not in a depressing way. Instead, when the audience witnesses the sufferings on the stage, they feel pity for the tragic characters and fear that this may not happen to them as well and cry with them, spend their pent up emotions and emerge relieved. This is how Aristotle explains the 'pleasure of pity and fear'. Now, this becomes the dramatist's responsibility to produce this effect in the highest degree.

The definition of tragedy would be incomplete if we don't talk about the ***tragic hero***. He is the main protagonist who is levied with sorrows and he is the one around whom the tragic plot revolves. Aristotle defines the tragic hero as someone who is neither too good nor too bad i.e. neither a saint nor a villain. This is because the misfortunes of a saint don't invoke any pity as it is more like martyrdom and a villain also doesn't invoke any sympathy from the audience as he seems to deserve his share of sorrows. It is only for people like ourselves, a mixture of good and bad, though more good than bad who get more unhappiness than they deserve, we actually feel for. Aristotle further continues that the tragic hero should also be of a superior rank- he could be a royal or a semi God who suffers because of a mistaken choice of action. The larger his status, the more obvious and painful is the fall. He

has a tragic flaw (hamartia) that makes him err or misunderstand. Like Othello's hamartia is his jealousy and Macbeth's hamartia lies in his overambitious nature. A common form of hamartia is hubris. In literature, hubris is explained as a characteristic of a person who is too proud of his achievements and judgements and ignores all warnings. For Aristotle, Sophocles' Oedipus, the King (429 BC) is a perfect tragedy and Oedipus is the true Aristotelian tragic hero, who moves the audience to pity. He is not an evil man and he suffers more than he deserves. He moves us to pity as well because the audience fears similar errors of judgement in their own lives as well.

Other terms that require attention are *anagnorisis, peripeteia and catastrophe*. Anagnorisis is the point in the play where the protagonist (the tragic hero) discovers the facts that were earlier hidden from him or he learns the truth of the other characters' true identity or the truth about the circumstances. When Oedipus finds out that he is the son of Laius and Jocasta, and that he indeed has committed the heinous sin of killing his own father and marrying his mother, that is the moment of anagnorisis. Anagnorisis guides the character from ignorance to knowledge, that often is the turning point of the plot. It causes sudden reversal of fortune of the tragic hero, from good to bad. This is Peripeteia. Oedipus, in his attempt to cure Thebes of the curse, calls for his own ruin. Aristotle, in Poetics calls it "a change by which action veers round to its opposite". He also said that anagnorisis and peripeteia are the most crucial literary devices for a tragedy to be effective. They aggravate the impact. Catastrophe is the misfortune that has befallen on the tragic hero from where there is no escape.

Other than Comedy and Tragedy, there is Tragicomedy (a genre that contains both the characteristics of tragedy and comedy. Shakespeare's The Tempest is a Tragicomedy because it is not that light hearted in its tone and plot like some other of his romantic comedies but ends happily for all) and Melodrama as well. There is another kind of drama what is relevant in our course and that is the *CHRONICLE PLAY* or the History Play. Abrams defines Chronicles as "Chronicles, the predecessors of modern histories were written accounts, in prose or verse, of national or worldwide events over a considerable period of time…the most important English examples are the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, started by King Alfred in the ninth century and continued till the twelfth century and the Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (1577-87) by Raphael Holinshed and others." Now, the dramatic pieces in which the author borrowed his plots and characters from these chronicles were the Chronicle Plays. The chronicle plays were based on the historical material of these chronicles. Shakespeare's plays Richard II, Henry IV, V, VIII and Marlowe's Edward II are chronicle plays. They had become increasingly popular after the defeat of the Spanish Armada at the hands of England when a patriotic fervor had set in. History play is a broader term that refers to a play based on historical events, not necessarily English. Antony and Cleopatra and Julius Caesar are history plays by William Shakespeare that are based on Roman ancient history.

Check your progress I :

Ques. 1. What is comedy?

Ques. 2. What is tragedy?

Ques. 3. Which genre is performed on stage?

a) Essay
b) Drama
c) Novel
d) Mock epic

Ques. 4 The muse of comedy is----------

Ques. 5 The muse of tragedy is ----------.

Ques. 6 Comedy that is intended to poke fun at deviation from standard behavior is called:

a) Intentional Comedy
b) Elizabethan comedy
c) Satiric Comedy
d) Tragic Comedy

Ques. 7 The most popular comedy during the Elizabethan Age is:

a) Mock Epic
b) Satiric Comedy
c) Comedy of Manners
d) Romantic Comedy

Ques 7 Sentimental Comedy became famous during:

a) Elizabethan Age
b) Age of Chaucer
c) Neo Classic Age
d) Renaissance Period

4.3 THE ENGLISH DRAMA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE - From the beginning to Shakespeare

In England as in Greece and many other countries, drama has had a religious origin. It arose from the church service. Drama developed from tropes to the liturgical plays to miracle and mystery plays that graduated to morality plays and interludes and from that arose the Elizabethan drama. (Elizabethan Drama derives its name from Queen Elizabeth who ruled over England from 1558 to 1603. This was a period of remarkable growth of the theatre; this period is also called the golden age of theatre)

Drama and religion have been interconnected and religion has had a love hate relationship with drama since the beginning. A critic has very aptly put that “attitude of

religion and drama towards each other has been varied. Sometimes it has been one of intimate alliance, sometimes of active hostility, but never of indifference." Sir Ifor Evans further puts in that "while at the beginning of the Dark Ages the church attempted to suppress the drama, at the beginning of the Middle Ages something very much like the drama was instituted by the church itself".

In the beginning the church was hostile to drama and never encouraged it. All through the Dark Ages, there has been a dearth of dramatic activity. It was only during the 9th and the 10th century, when the church needed it to kill the extreme boredom of severe sermons and introduced tropes in a dialogue form or some times passages were adorned with religious music to make them interesting and keeping the masses engaged. Tropes were extended and moulded to be presented as the liturgical drama. The themes of these plays were derived from the entertaining Biblical tales. The themes varied from the birth and the crucification and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the tale of Daniel in the lion's den, the story of the foolish virgins, the story of the last meal and the betrayal and the death of Jesus Christ to the fictitious and real stories of the magical lives of the saints. Because of their growing popularity, they were presented on special occasions like Christmas or Easter on their own without the church service. These liturgical plays were essentially a part of the church service initially but gradually were detached from it for the people had begun to enjoy them too much and wanted to watch them independently. They were moved from inside the church to the church yard and then subsequently to the market place to accommodate the vast crowds. When the liturgical plays were presented in the church premises, the roles were enacted by the clergy men themselves and the script was also written by them in Latin and later they might have begun to hire learned people to write for them.

*Liturgical plays: They emerged during the Middle Ages and were enacted within or near the church. They dealt with the themes from the Bible or from the lives of the saints and were included in the regular church service. They were in Latin and musical in nature as they were accompanied by ecclesiastic music. Their genesis may be traced back to 10th century and it is guessed by critics that it lay in the holy chant "Quem quaeritis" (Whom do you seek?). Bishop of Winchester, Aethelwold in his volume 'Regularis Concordia' has described that "Quem quaeritis was performed during the Easter mass. It depicts the story of the three Marys approaching the tomb of Jesus. They are asked, "Whom do you seek?" "Jesus of Nazareth" "He is not here. He has arisen as was prophesied. Go. Announce that he has arisen from dead".

THE MIRACLE AND MYSTERY PLAYS

The plays that dealt with and presented real or fictitious accounts of the miraculous lives of the saints, their sacrifices and their martyrdom were the miracle plays. Mostly Virgin Mary and Saint Nicholas were the most frequently presented saints and people believed in the healing powers of their relics. In these plays Virgin Mary would come to help the distressed folks who invoked her and she would pull them out of their abyss when they asked for

pardon. A popular play of those times was one titled St. John the Hairy with a similar theme. Likewise, Jean Bodel's Le Jeude Saint Nicholas (c. 1200) talks of how Saint Nicholas delivers a cruel crusader when he seeks forgiveness for his sins.

Mystery plays portrayed the episodes and incidents from the Bible like the stories of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden and the murder of Abel and so on. These were better developed than the liturgical plays for they had an improved plot structure and dialogues. By the 13th century they had become vernacularize and had completely severed ties from the church. These had by now fallen into the hands of the laymen who wrote the dialogues and enacted roles because the ecclesiastics couldn't follow them once they were out of the church premises. In England, groups of 25 to 50 plays were organized into lengthy cycles such as Chester Cycles and Wakefield's plays and they were also called the 'Saint's Plays'. The church no longer supported them because of their negligible religious value. In fact, Henry VIII banned them. Also the Renaissance scholars found little interest in them, Reformation had brought in a new dimension to religion and miracle and mystery plays died a natural death but not before they had paved way for the morality plays.

MORALITY PLAYS

As the name suggests these plays intended to preach and always had a moral in the end. They were allegorical or symbolic in nature and usually had virtues and vices and abstractions (like Perseverance or Death or Life) who fought for man's soul.

The quintessential protagonist of morality plays would be somebody representing the Humanity whose weaknesses are used by the deadly Sins like Greed, Sloth, Gluttony, Lust, Despair etc. for their benefit which is to get the soul for the Devil. He can pray for redemption only if he walks on the righteous path, sticks to virtues of Truth and ask for God's mercy. These plays definitely guided the audience to do good and presented lessons on how to conduct one's life with morality. The best known morality plays are The Castle or Perseverance (c. 1425) and Everyman (in the end of 15th century). David Daiches sums up the summary of Everyman like this:

"Everyman is summoned by Death to a long journey from which there is no return. Unprepared, he looks for friends to accompany him but neither Fellowship nor Goods will go; Good deeds are willing to act as guide and companion, but her sins have rendered her too week to stand. She recommends her to Knowledge, who leads Everyman to Confession, and after he has done penance Good Deeds grow…as the time comes for everyman to creep into the grave, all the companions except Good Deeds decline to go with him… enters the grave with Good Deeds.. concludes by pointing the moral." Daiches observes that the morality plays "has more direct links with Elizabethan Drama". With morality plays, we are almost near the Elizabethans.

The Interludes are a significant step of transition from the allegorical morality plays of the Middle Ages to the more realistic Tudor drama. Interludes removed the symbolic

elements of the morality plays but continued to be didactic in nature. They got their name from the fact that they were performed at intervals between some other entertainment such as an opera or they might also be played before or after or in between the acts. David Daiches says that they "emphasized more on amusement than instruction". But in fact, today some of the interludes are classed along with morality plays. John Heywood brought them to perfection in 'The Play of the Wether' (1533) and the play called 'The Four Ps '(c. 1544).

The Beginning of Regular Drama in the beginning of 16th century

Renaissance had come knocking and had opened again the doors of the ancient Greek and Roman dramatists. The English dramatists began to look up to the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripedes for tragedies and Aristophanes, Plautus and Terence for comedy. The first English tragedy was Gorboduc and was written in blank verse by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. It was enacted on 18 January 1561 before the Queen herself at White Hall. It was based on the Senecan model and was characterized by excessive bloodshed, massive rhetorical speeches and even had a Ghost as one of the dramatic personae. Gorboduc was the king of England who in his lifetime divided his kingdom between his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex. One brother murders the other and in revenge is killed by their mother. In horror, the people rise against the king and the Queen and kill them. A civil war ensues and the whole country is ruined. But instead of invoking the feelings of pity and fear in the minds of the audience, this invokes horror. So it is not considered in the same plane as the other tragedies which were to be penned by in the coming future. Because of its political nature however, it can be called a forerunner of the trend that produced Titus Andronicus and King Lear. In spite of the gory details, Gorboduc remains the first English tragedy to be written in blank verse. Its *five acts* (first three acts were written by Norton and the next two were by Sackville) became a universal tradition in case of tragedies.

The first comedy was Ralph Roister Doister was written by Nicholas Udall in 1550, the headmaster of the Eton, London. It was intended for performance by his students (all boys and they dressed up for the role of the women folk in the play as well). It marked the rise of the English Comedy from the clutches of the medieval morality plays. Its central idea is derived from Plautus' Miles Gloriasis and is written in rhyming couplets and divided into acts and scenes in the manner of Latin plays. The hero Ralph Roister thinks too much of himself and of his impact on others. He imagines he is the apple of everyone's eyes and decided that the heroine (who is married to somebody else) loves him. He is assisted in his endeavors by Matthew Merrygreeke, a good for nothing fellow himself. Dame Constance shuns his advances and after many follies and silly attempts, he comes to terms with the harsh reality. The play is full of comic episodes and appears similar to Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor.

THE UNIVERSITY WITS

Till the end of 15th century, drama was being handled by 'not so literary' men as has been discussed earlier. But because of the Renaissance and other reasons, there was an increasing interest in reading and learning. In the second half of the 16th century a new group of learned

and well educated scholars of Oxford and Cambridge Universities began to make their presence felt in the literary circle of England. They were academically brilliant, were members of several literary societies and were true embodiments of the spirit of Renaissance They were all associated with the theatre of the times which was actually considered right for these scholars. They were highly intellectual and smart and they were the products of the new ideas of Reformation and didn't think much of the old world of morality and the so called 'righteous, approach towards life. They lived a free life and didn't bind their spirits to the old order. In fact, one of the most impressive of the university wits, Christopher Marlowe was drunk when he was killed in a street brawl for bargirls. Their reckless attitude cut short their careers in more ways than one. Their contribution to English drama has been great though it could have been more had they had a better approach towards life; but then their 'better' approach would have taken the spark out of them. They definitely laid the foundation stone of the new drama, the Elizabethan drama and made way for the very special: William Shakespeare.

The university wits were:

- John Lyly (1554-1606) better known for his prose romance 'Eupheus'
- Robert Greene (1558-1592) –wrote five plays in all. Friar bacon and Friar Bungay is the most popular of all. Nicoll has given him the credit to have been "the first to draw the Rosalinds and Celias of the Elizabethan times.". But he died young and frustrated, friendless and penniless.
- George Peele (1558-1597)
- Thomas Lodge (1558-1625)
- Thomas Nashe (1567-1601)
- Thomas Kyd (1557-1597)- His only play, The Spanish Tragedy is on the Senecan model. He introduced a new tragic hero who was ordinary and given to introspection. In a way he made way for the thinking heroes like Hamlet.
- Christopher Marlowe(1564-1593) he was 'the most talented of the pre-Shakespeareans'.
  All of his five plays are special but one that definitely stands out is Doctor Faustus. His contribution to English drama is remarkable for he gave a new approach to not only the handling of the tragic hero but also the structural unity of the play and the themes.

These were the very worthy predecessors of the literary genius of WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Check Your Progress II:

Ques. 1 Drama had its origin in:

a) Church
b) Universities
c) Villages
d) The Royal Courts

Ques. 2 What is liturgical drama?

Ques.3 What are miracle and mystery plays?

Ques. 4 How do morality plays have a direct link with the Elizabethan Drama?

Ques. 5 Who were the University wits?

4.4 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: THE BARD OF ENGLAND AND A DRAMATIST PAR EXCELLENCE (April 23, 1564-April 23, 1616)

All words fail and all epithets seem small when critics begin to introduce the genius of William Shakespeare. To borrow from Ben Jonson, "I loved the man". He was:

"…. Soul of the age!

The applause! Delight! The wonder of our stage!

…….

Triumph, my Britain! Thou hast one to show,

To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.

He was not of an age, but for all time".

And indeed he was a 'wonder of the stage' and "the greatest poetic dramatist of Europe". Even after five hundred years, his characters and his plot structures continue to be relevant and they have transcended their age because he had captured the essence of the basic nature of man, he presented men and women as they actually are - ripe with the emotions of love, jealousy, insecurity and friendship, greed, affectation and ambition. These feelings are eternal and so are his unforgettable lovers Romeo and Juliet, Orlando and Rosalind; Iago is the quintessential symbol of motiveless malignity and Macbeth represents greed and over ambition, Othello was insecure and Desdemona naïve, Shylock was greedy and revengeful and Portia intelligent, King Lear immature in his conduct and over thinking was Hamlet's hamartia. Not only his tragic heroes, but even his petite heroines leave an indelible mark in the minds of the readers. His fools are the wisest beings that often come up with the most philosophical observations of life. Even in a historical play like Julius Caesar, Shakespeare delineates the historical events but what stand out are the characters Brutus, Cassius and Caesar who have traits that anybody could identify with and the dialogues are so apt and thought provoking that even ordinary mortal folks have had it easy because Shakespeare has provided us with a line for every occasion. Look at this very ordinary yet extraordinary line by Caesar, "Et tu Brutus?" It means "You too?" Caesar says this line when he is stabbed by his so called friends because of political rivalry. He looks at all the faces around him but

when he finds Brutus there, he is genuinely shocked because he expected insincerity from anyone but never thought that Brutus could back stab.

He captured the real essence of human nature. The neo classic critic Alexander Pope insisted that

"Nature herself was proud of his designs,

And joyed to wear the dressings of his lines.

Shakespeare showed us how the human mind worked and with his special characterization skills and his poetry is wonderful. Hazlitt speaks of his "magic power over words" and it is indeed incomparable: it fits every situation.

In spite of uncountable epithets on his super skill as a poet and a dramatist, Shakespeare was oblivious of his genius. He moved casually from one play to the other, play acting or writing. He was occupied with their performance rather than their publication for posterity. This sometimes leaves the readers in a flux because there is hardly any evidence on which the scholars have arranged his plays in a chronological order. Historians over the decades have meticulously noted the casual references in the play that hint at the approximate date and year of the presentation of the play.

This is also true that Shakespeare's plots are borrowed, that he derived his plots from someone else's works. But this should not work to his discredit because even the classic Greek dramatists borrowed from the popular myths and legends. Moreover, this is Shakespeare's special talent that he could mould any clay, any alien material to reshape it into something uniquely spectacular and completely his own and when he clothed them in befitting words from the sea of his poetry, it only called attention to his amazing imagination skills.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford in Warwickshire to John Shakespeare, a trader and Mary Arden. He might have had to leave school early to help support his family. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. His plays present both happy and sad aspects of his married life, which doesn't enlighten much about his own family life. About 1587, he went to London and joined Burbage's company of actors. He blended into the life of London in the same manner as he had understood his native land. He was a keen observer as is obvious from the vividity with which he narrates his episodes. His early works show him interested in a variety of themes and genres. The Comedy of Errors (1590) was an experiment with comedy, the three Henry plays (1590-92) were history plays that were in vogue during that period and Titus Andronicus (ca 1593) was based on the Senecan model of Revenge Tragedy. He could very well be checking the taste of his London audience.

His poem 'Venus and Adonis', written during this period was dedicated to the Earl of Southampton that brought him a great amount of money as a gift from the Earl. Shakespeare might have invested this money smartly to buy a share in the Globe Theatre and the Blackfriars Theatre. He was also a very important member of the Lord Chamberlaine's

Men. Within a decade of his arrival in London, he became a prominent literary man and a successful man of the theatre.

Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic career can be divided into four periods paralleling his experiences in life and the growth of his mind. The first period was one of experimentation (1590-1595) when he was juggling with a variety of genres as already discussed in the above paragraphs. If Shakespeare was to be judged on these works alone, he might have survived the test of time but in comparison to his later works, these are not as mature in characterization. There is a superficial quality to them, as they are written in clever language that is rich in the use of puns and conceits, one meant to impress. However, plays like 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Romeo and Juliet' written during this period are rich in imagination and youthful love which uplifts the heart. The second period from 1595 to 1601 is 'The Balanced Period', the period of Great comedies and the Chronicle Plays. There is less superficiality more reality, more understanding of the human nature and great poetry in the works of this period. As You Like it, The Merchant of Venice, King John, The Merry wives of Windsor, Much Ado about nothing, Twelfth Night, Henry IV, V were composed during this period. These are light hearted works that are capable to lift up sullen spirits. 1601-1607 was a sad period for the playwright. His father died and his friend, the Earl of Southampton was tried for treason. Some say his young son also died during this period, hence the period of despondency. More over life can't always be all fun and frolic and there are somber shades of life as well. Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, All Is well that Ends well, Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure belong to this period. They are masterpieces and have a philosophical angle to them as they present a grey picture of life. The last period is from 1608 onwards. By this time, Shakespeare seems to have come to terms with his turmoil and must have realized that life is neither completely dark nor all sunny. It has to be a mix of joys and sorrows. Hence the Tragi-Comedies like The Tempest, Cymbeline or the winter's tale. This is definitely a mellowed version of the dramatist but these works are not as great as his comedies and tragedies of the second and third period.

Check your Progress III:

Ques. 1 Give some examples of Shakespeare's comedies.

Ques. 2 Name some tragedies written by Shakespeare.

Ques. 3 In how many periods are Shakespeare's plays divided?

Ques 4 The Tempest, Cymbeline are examples of:

a) Tragedy
b) Comedy
c) Tragi Comedies
d) Epics

4.5 AN INTRODUCTION TO JULIUS CAESAR

PROBABLE DATE OF PRSENTATION: As discussed in the previous sections, Shakespeare has not mentioned the dates of composition or presentation of his plays anywhere and so is the case with this play. However, the critics and historians have guessed the date to be between 1598 to 1601. John Weevers' The Mirror of Martyrs(1600) refers to the Forum Scene of Julius Caesar in a passage. The passage talks of how the Roman crowd is drawn to Brutus' speech and the crowd agrees with him that Caesar was an ambitious man and at the same time, they agree with Mark Antony as well when he talks of Caesar's virtues. Also Ben Jonson in Everyman out of his humor writes a dialogue that is very similar to one in Julius Caesar. Either could have borrowed from either. Another evidence that supports that the play was composed after 1598 is that Francis Meres brought out a list of Shakespeare's plays in Sept 1598 and Julius Caesar was not among them.

Julius Caesar is a history play and that is derived from ancient Roman history. All the major and minor characters are Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, Cassius, Octavius, Portia, Calpurnia or the Tribunes actually existed between 44 BC and 42 BC in Rome. The major and minor events have also been recorded in history. As is the case with Shakespeare's other history and chronicle plays, he has borrowed from Sir Thomas North's translation of 'The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans (pub. 1579) in England originally written by Plutarch in Greek. But like all chronicle plays, the dramatist could take liberties here. Some historical events have been adjusted and sequence of happenings have been reversed slightly to suit the aesthetics of the drama. But all the additions and omissions and squeezing of facts have been in a remarkable manner that highlights Shakespeare's fertile imagination. Like for example, the events that took place over a period of two years were completed in a matter of six days. Of course the play couldn't have stretched over 2 years because that would have been a gross violation of the unity of time.

Scene I and ii of Act I are of 15 February in 44 BC

Scene iii of Act II is of 14 March 44 BC

Act II and III take place on 15 March

Scene ii and iii Act IV are of a day in October, 42 BC

And Act V is of next day October, 42 BC

Also Caesar's victory over Pompey's sons was in October 45 BC and the celebration of Lupercalia festival was in February 44 BC but Shakespeare brought both the events on the same day. Brutus' and Antony's speeches were also on consecutive days but Shakespeare had presented them on the same day. Also, Octavius (Caesar's nephew and heir) was seen arriving to Rome on the same day as Caesar's assassination whereas according to Plutus' historical account, Octavius reached Rome after six weeks of the incident. Moreover, Antony and Octavius were not so thick with each other as they were shown in this play.

Check your progress IV:

Ques. 1 Julius Caesar is a -------- play.

a) Romantic Comedy
b) Chronicle play
c) Royal play
d) Comedy of manners

Ques. 2 Julius Caesar was written during the period:

a) 1598-1601
b) After 1601
c) 1590-1593
d) 1566

Ques. 3 The play Julius Caesar is derived from:

a) Ancient English history
b) Greek history
c) Ancient roman history
d) Indian history

Ques. 4 Shakespeare has borrowed the material of the play Julius Caesar from the book:

a) Every man in his Humour
b) Aristotle's Poetics
c) History of Julius Caesar
d) The lives of Noble Grecians and Romans

Ques.5 Julius Caesar traces the events from ------- of Roman history.

a) 44 BC to 42 BC
b) 1 BC to 5 BC
c) 1598 to 1601 AD
d) After 1601

Ques. 6 Julius Caesar is divided into ----- acts.

a) 2
b) 3
c) 4
d) 5

CONCLUSION:

In this unit, we understood what drama is and also read about the two kinds of drama, comedy and tragedy. Then we traced the beginnings of English drama and found that drama has its origin in church. Earlier, church had condemned drama but then used it for its own popularity. We read about miracle plays, mystery plays and morality plays and how they eventually gave rise to the Elizabethan drama. The age of Queen Elizabeth was appropriate for the rise of drama and it saw the best playwrights like the university wits and the master

himself: William Shakespeare. Finally we were introduced to Julius Caesar as a chronicle play. Further discussion of the play would be carried on in the next chapter.

Answers of 'Check your progress':

Check your progress I:

Ans. 3 (b) drama

Ans. 4 Thalia

Ans.5 Melpomene

Ans. 6 Satiric Comedy

Ans.7 Romantic Comedy

Ans.8 (d) Neo Classical Age

Check your progress II

Ans.1 (a) Church

Check your progress III

Ans. 4 © Tragi Comedy

Check your progress IV:

Ans. 1 (a) 1598-1601

Ans. 2 © Ancient Roman history

Ans.3 (d) 'The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans'

Ans.4 (a) 44 BC to 42 BC Ans. 5 (d) 5

ASSIGNMENT FOR UNIT 4:

Long Questions:

Ques. 1 What is drama? Describe tragedy as a special kind of drama.

Ques. 2. Write a detailed note on the university wits. How did they contribute in making the Elizabethan age the golden age of theatre?

Ques. 3 Why is Shakespeare called the dramatist of all times? What is his contribution towards drama?

Short Questions:

Ques. 1. Write short notes on:

a) Hamartia
b) Peripeteia
c) Anagnorisis
d) Tragic Hero

Ques.2. Explain with examples the difference between miracle plays and mystery plays.

UNIT 5: JULIUS CAESAR, PART II

STRUCTURE

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Introduction to the Unit

5.2 The Plot of Julius Caesar in Brief

5.3 Dramatis Personae

5.4 Scene-wise summary of the play

5.5 Important passages from the play

5.6 Theme of the play

5.7 Character sketch of Julius Caesar

5.8 Character sketch of Brutus

5.9 Suggested Reading

5.10 Conclusion

5.0 OBJECTIVES:

After reading this unit, the students should be able to:

- Know the plot of the play Julius Caesar
- Know about the major and minor characters of the play
- Understand the occurrences in the scenes and Acts
- Know about the important dialogues/passages of the play

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIT

We have already learnt about the important aspects of this play in the previous unit. We traced a short history of drama from the beginning to Shakespeare, who is the playwright of Julius Caesar and is a master craftsman whose charm refuses to fade even after five hundred years of his death. We found that his poetry, his themes and his characters are ever new. We also saw what kind of plays were being written in Elizabethan age. A small introduction of the play was also given. In this unit we are going to begin with a brief summary of the plot of

Julius Caesar and then the author has provided a list of the main characters of the play for the benefit of the students. Then we will proceed to the scene wise summary of the play for a detailed understanding of the plot and the characters and then there will be important dialogues from the play. In the end, the theme of the play and important characters will be discussed. With this, we will come to the end of the play with the hope that students have completely understood the nuances of this play. This unit however, would not be so complete if you don't read the original text for that is a masterpiece in itself.

5.2 THE PLOT OF JULIUS CAESAR IN BRIEF

The play opens in Rome on 15 February 44 BC where the mood was festive because of twin reasons. It was the occasion of the festival called Lupercalia and the other reason for the celebration was that Julius Caesar had returned from the battlefield after defeating the sons of Pompey. Pompey himself had been defeated in 48 BC (he had died soon after) and now that his sons had also lost the battle, Caesar would become the undisputed ruler of Italy. The Roman Senate would also assist him in this endeavor.

People had begun to gather to pay their tributes and offer their salutations to the victor. But where most of the Romans were jubilant, there were some who were not happy with Caesar's win. In the very first scene, the two Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius were seen scolding the public for their fickle loyalty that had shifted from Pompey to Caesar too soon. They were asking them to remove all decorations and even pulled out garlands from Caesar's statues' themselves. Not only the two Tribunes, there were some members in the Roman Senate who didn't want Caesar to be the king. The main among them was Cassius who was jealous of Caesar's growing power. He initiated a conspiracy and turned many a minds against Caesar. His real victory was when he was able to turn Caesar's dear friend Brutus against him through fair and foul means. Brutus was an idealist and a highly respectable figure in Rome and his inclusion in this team would lend some credibility and respect to this plan. Brutus was made to believe that Caesar was becoming arrogant and had dictatorial tendencies and that people were wary of his growing power. And for the larger benefit of Rome, he joined hands with Cassius.

Next day, when Metellus Cimber requested Caesar to forgive his brother who was being

banished from Rome, Caesar refused his plea and even ruled out Brutus' and Cassius' request on Cimber's behalf. It was now that the conspirators stabbed him with daggers and he died. Caesar's another friend Mark Antony was shocked how things had turned out. He knew he had to be diplomatic or he too would be finished. When Brutus was going to announce the killing of Caesar to the public, Antony requested to be given an opportunity to talk to the crowd and to take Caesar's body to the public so they could pay their respects to the dead and Brutus, being the idealist he was, agreed. When Brutus began to speak, people began to agree with him and had almost given their approval to the deed done as Brutus convinced them that he had done that for the love of people. But when Antony's turn came, he spoke so cleverly and effectively that the tables were turned and people began to blame the conspirators. The crowd was so moved by Antony's words that they vowed to take revenge at those who had

killed Caesar. A battle ensued between the conspirators comprising Brutus, Cassius and the others and their soldiers and between Caesar's supporters Antony, Octavius, who was Caesar's nephew and his heir, and the army. In time, Brutus and Cassius were defeated and committed suicide and Octavius and Antony emerged victorious.

Check your progress I:

Ques.1 In the play Julius Caesar, the exact date of the opening scene is ----------and it opens in the streets of --------.

Ques.2 When Julius Caesar returns to Rome, a festival I going on in the city. It is the ----------.

Ques.3 The two Tribunes who were not happy with Julius Caesar's victory were named

---------- and ----------.

Ques.4 Who is the main character who plots against Caesar?

a) Casca
b) Cassius
c) Brutus
d) Antony

Ques.5 Julius Caesar's wife is

a) Portia
b) Calpurnia
c) Anne
d) Rosalynd

Ques.6 Who wanted to take a revenge when Caesar was murdered?

a) Brutus
b) Cassius
c) Calpurnia
d) Mark Antony

Ques.7 Whose army won the battle, Octavius and Antony's army or Brutus and Cassius's army in the play Julius Caesar?

a) Octavius and Antony
b) Brutus and Cassius
c) Both sides lose

Ques.8 Who became the king after Julius Caesar died?

a) Brutus
b) Cassius
c) Antony
d) Octavius Caesar

Ques.9 Who got fake letters planted in Brutus's house?

a) Cassius

b) Julius Caesar
c) Antony
d) Calpurnia

Ques.10 Julius Caesar defeated ------

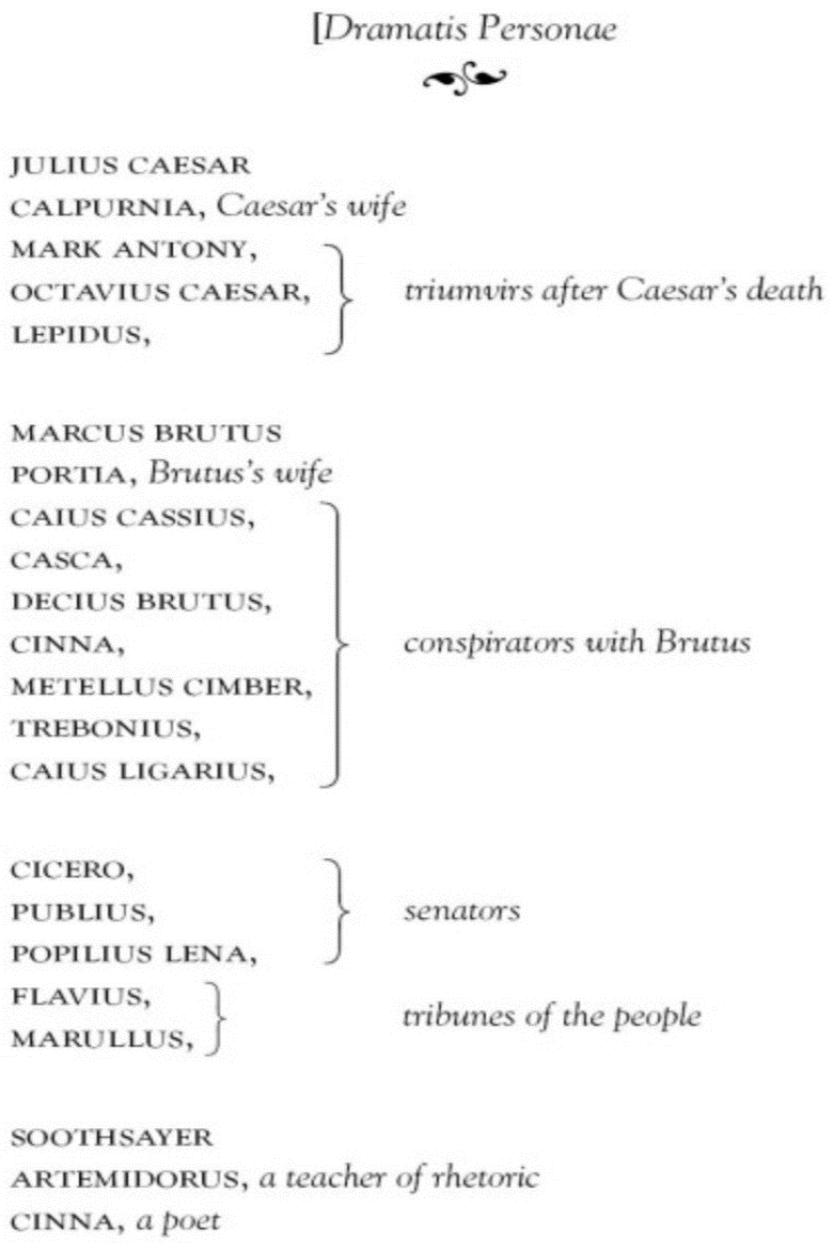
a) Brutus
b) Metellus Cimber
c) Pompey
d) Hamlet

Scene: During a great part of the Play, at Rome, afterwards near Sardis, and near Philippi.

5.4 Scene wise summary of the play:

Act I Scene (i)

The play opened in the streets of Rome with the two Tribunes Flavius and Marullus (Tribunes were officials whose duty is to protect the rights of the common citizens). Those who also entered the stage were the Roman populace who were celebrating Julius Caesar's victory over Pompey's sons. (Pompey was the previous ruler of Rome who had been defeated


[*Dramatis Personae*

JULIUS CAESAR
CALPURNIA, *Caesar's wife*
MARK ANTONY,
OCTAVIUS CAESAR,
LEPIDUS, } *triumvirs after Caesar's death*

MARCUS BRUTUS
PORTIA, *Brutus's wife*
CAIUS CASSIUS,
CASCA,
DECIUS BRUTUS,
CINNA,
METELLUS CIMBER,
TREBONIUS,
CAIUS LIGARIUS, } *conspirators with Brutus*

CICERO,
PUBLIUS,
POPILIUS LENA, } *senators*

FLAVIUS,
MARULLUS, } *tribunes of the people*

SOOTHSAYER
ARTEMIDORUS, *a teacher of rhetoric*
CINNA, *a poet*

by Caesar three years back and had died soon after). Flavius and Marullus were sympathetic towards Pompey and showed their dislike for Caesar. They scolded the people and asked them all to go away.

Flavius: Hence! Home you idle creatures, get you home:

.O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,

Knew you not Pompey?

It is obvious that the Romans were divided on the matter of having Caesar as their ruler and it is interesting to note what would happen next. There is a lot of use of puns in this part; one of the few fun elements in the play as the forthcoming scenes would be serious.

Act I Scene (ii)

The scene opened in a public place in Rome and enter Caesar, his wife Calpurnia, Brutus, his wife Portia, Decius, Cicero, Cassius, Casca, a Soothsayer, and a great crowd. We were face to face with Caesar and others and got to know them better in this scene. Caesar, the great warrior and a Colossus himself, was deaf in one ear, had occasional fits of epilepsy and was very superstitious. He asked his wife to stand in the way when Antony would run the races (which were a part of the Lupercal festival) because the myth went that if a childless woman was touched by a participant of these holy races, the curse of infertility would be removed. Caesar was also very observant and rightly wary of Cassius. He said of Cassius "…Cassius has a lean and hungry look, He thinks too much: such men are dangerous". This scene is also important for the warning that was given to Caesar by the soothsayer (fortune teller). He had warned Caesar to "Beware the ides of March". Further, Cassius came across as a shrewd man with a skill of manipulation because he began to play on the mind of Brutus against Caesar and initiated the conspiracy and Brutus seemed to be falling for the trick.

To instigate Brutus against Caesar, Cassius said:

"No, Caesar hath it not (the falling sickness); but you; and I,

And honest Casca, we have the falling sickness.

This means that they were the ones who were sick and diseased because of their subservient attitude that stopped them from doing anything against Caesar.

Antony was introduced briefly as a hearty sportsperson and a dear friend of Caesar's.

Act I Scene (iii)

The scene opened in the same street and Casca and Cicero entered the stage. It was evening time and there was lightning and thunder. Shakespeare was very fond of using this technique of pathetic fallacy where nature mirrored the kind of events that were happening in the play. Like in the storm scene of King Lear, there was a storm outside and a storm within King Lear himself. In Julius Caesar, this horrifying storm was symbolic of the catastrophe that was about to fall on the mighty Julius Caesar. Also Casca and Cicero both witnessed strange scary supernatural happenings on the road. All these pointed towards the tragedy that was going to strike Rome. Casca said:

"they are portentous things unto the climate that they point upon". And Cicero answers, "In deed, it is a strange disposed time". These supernatural happenings highlight the dramatic impact and prepares the audience for the mega action: the assassination of Caesar.

This scene is high in imagery. Towards the end of the scene when Casca and Cassius were in conversation, they also commented why they wish to have Brutus to be their accomplice.

They accepted that he was a highly respectable man and the Romans held him dearly and his participation in this enterprise would "like richest alchemy, will change (their sin) to virtue and to worthiness."

Check your progress II

Ques.1 What do Flavius and Marullus do when they reach the temple at the capitol?

Ques.2 Why is Scene i of Act I important?

Ques.3 What does Caesar want Calpurnia to do at the holy races?

a) She should run.
b) She should let Antony touch her.
c) She should give a speech.
d) She shouldn't go to the races.

Ques.4 Casca and Cicero witness scary supernatural happenings on the road. They were symbolic of-----

a) The good times that were to come.
b) Something bad is about to happen in Rome.
c) A civil war is about to begin in Rome.

Act II Scene (i)

The scene began in Brutus's house with his soliloquy in which he convinced his conscience that he was doing the right thing by plotting to kill Caesar. He had come to believe that Caesar would change when he would be crowned the ruler. His dictatorial attitude would come in the way of his goodness and he then would not bother about the welfare of people. Through this soliloquy, the audience got to know of all that was going on in the mind of Brutus. Next, Brutus found the letters that contained messages from the common people to save them from Caesar. Little did he realise that they were planted by Cassius to turn him against Caesar. Two more soliloquys followed and finally took the final decision to join Cassius in this endeavor. All conspirators gathered at Brutus' house and planned to kill Caesar. Cassius suggested that Antony should also be killed along with Caesar but Brutus, being the idealist he was, refused to do so. In fact he stated that he didn't even want to kill Caesar but their enemy was Caesarism, the autocratic spirit that Caesar stood for.

"Let's be sacrificers , not butchers Cassius,

We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar"

It was 3 at night by the time they left Brutus' house and planned to meet at 8 in the morning at Caesar's house. The scene also had a domestic episode between Brutus and his wife Portia. She was worried about her husband because he couldn't sleep and wished to help him sleep better.

Act II Scene (ii)

It opened at Caesar's house. We see Caesar in a night gown asking his servant to ask the priests to carry out the sacrifices to please the Gods as he was not feeling too good. He was superstitious that something wrong was about to happen. His wife Calpurnia also didn't want him to go out. The storm outside seemed to be a warning from the Gods. She says:

" When beggars die , there are no comets seen :

The heaven themselves blaze forth the death of princes"

He gave in to his wife's wishes but then Decius entered and he with his cunning reasoning and flattery convinces Caesar to meet the Senate.

Act II Scene (iii)

The scene opened in a street near the capitol and we meet Artemidorous with a scroll of paper in his hand. He is a minor character in the play and one of the two people who wanted to warn Caesar against the impending danger. He had written the names of all the conspirators in the paper that he wishes to give Caesar. He was Caesar's well wisher and a loyal subject. He says:

"here will I stand till Caesar pass along,

……. If thou read this, O Caesar, thou may'st live;"

Act II Scene (iv)

The scene opened in another part of the same street outside the house of Brutus. It opened with Portia and the servant boy Lucius when the soothsayer came along. He warned Portia of the danger Caesar was in but Portia was worried for her husband alone. She said:

"…how week a thing the heart of a woman is!

O Brutus! The heavens speed thee in thine endeavor."

The scene thus ended with Portia's little prayer.

Check your progress III

Ques. 1 All conspirators gathered at ------- house to plot against Caesar

a) Brutus
b) Caesar
c) They gathered in the street

Ques.2 Julius Caesar had decided to stay in because Calpurnia had had scary dreams. Who convinced him to come out?

a) Decius
b) Antony
c) Cassius
d) Cimber

Ques. 3 Other than the soothsayer, which other character wants to warn Caesar against a plot against him

a) Artemidorous
b) Portia
c) Flavius

Ques 4 “Let’s be sacrificers, not butchers Cassius”

Who is the speaker of above lines? In what context does he speak the above lines?

Act III Scene (i)

It opened in the street again. There was a large crowd that is gathered outside the capitol. The Soothsayer and Artemidorus were also waiting to warn Caesar. On spotting the soothsayer, Caesar joked, “the ides of March are come” and he answers, “Ay, Caesar, but not gone yet”

Caesar mocked the Soothsayer and chose to ignore Artemidorus’ petition that hid the warning. Had Caesar been polite enough to accept his scroll, he could have had a fair idea of the conspiracy against him. Destiny indeed plays by its own rules. Once inside, Metellus Cimber had to present a petition to save his brother which is refused by Caesar even when Brutus and Cassius kneel down before him with the same request. His adamant refusal seemed to be the last straw and the conspirators began to stab him. Brutus stabbed him last and when Caesar saw that Brutus was attacking him he was shattered. He exclaimed, “Et tu, Brutus? – Then fall Caesar”. (This translates to “You too, Brutus?” and is a popular dialogue when somebody wants to complain of betrayal). Caesar finally lay dead before them. The conspirators next wanted Brutus to speak to the crowd outside because they knew that only Brutus could calm them. Antony, who must have got to know of Caesar’s killing sent a message to Brutus to allow him to come and meet him and also to clear the doubts that he had regarding the killing of Caesar. Brutus assured his safety and Antony entered the stage. He acted cleverly and diplomatically, addressing Caesar’s dead body on one hand and talking to the conspirators on the other. He didn’t seem fake and was able to convince Brutus of his respect for him. Brutus explained to Antony that his reason for killing Caesar was the welfare of Romans. Antony then requested Brutus to be allowed to show Caesar’s body to the people so they could pay respects to the dead and against Cassius’s advice fair Brutus agreed. He even allowed Antony to give a funeral speech before the crowd after he had finished addressing the people. The scene ended when the conspirators left and Antony was left alone with Caesar’s body. Here his motives got clearer. He wanted punishment for the murderers and that he would do it smartly. He also sent a message to Octavius informing him of the events of Rome and asked him to come soon.

Act III Scene (ii)

Began at the public platform in the market place. Brutus and Cassius entered the stage before the crowd. People wanted to know what had happened and why. Brutus explained to the citizens,

"Why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer; Not

That I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."

He told everybody of Caesar's dictatorial tendencies and told them that they would all have become slaves had he continue to rule. He further said:

"Had you rather Caesar were living , and all die slaves?

…As Caesar loved me, I weep for him,

As he was fortunate, I rejoice at it,

As he was valiant, I honour him,

But as he was ambitious, I slew him"

People were satisfied with Brutus' sincere and genuine explanations and began to hail Brutus. But then entered Antony with Caesar's body. Brutus made it clear that Antony had no role in the killing and left the stage so the populace could bid farewell to their dead ruler. As Antony took the stage, he requested people to hear him for the sake of Brutus and very cleverly, he began to play on the minds of the people. He began to explain to people that Caesar was not ambitious as claimed by Brutus. He had filled the treasuries with his conquests, had sympathized with people and had even refused the crown many times when it was offered to him. With his manipulative passionate speech, people began to agree with Antony and wanted to know more. On the pretext of showing them Caesar's will, he called them near Caesar's body and showed them the marks how Brutus and others had stabbed him mercilessly. Then he showed people Caesar's will in which he had promised 75 drachmas to each citizen and had also promised the people his private resting places, his gardens and all other property. Antony had won over the people. He also learnt that Octavius, Caesar's nephew and heir had reached Rome.

Act III Scene (iii)

This scene was of a street in Rome and showed how people were angry and were looking for the conspirators to kill them. In their rage, they misunderstand Cinna, the poet, to be one of the conspirators and attacked him.

Check your progress IV:

Ques 1. Who was Cinna-the poet?

Ques.2 How did Calpurnia's dream come true?

Ques.3 What did Brutus tell the frightened senators after Caesar's assassination?

Ques.4 How does Antony turn the crowd against the conspirators?

Ques.5 What was written in Caesar's will?

Act IV Scene (i)

The scene opened in Antony's house and showed Octavius, Antony and Lepidus. They were planning to change the will to reduce the money to be given away to people this showed that Antony wasn't as good as he seemed and he too loved power. Later, Antony and Octavius discussed the possibility of including Lepidus in their triumvirate.

Act IV scene (ii)

Opened at a camp near Sardis outside Brutus' tent. A civil war seemed to have ensued and the troops were getting ready for it.

Act IV Scene (iii)

Brutus and Cassius had an argument over Lucilius whom Brutus had punished because he was taking bribe whereas Cassius wanted otherwise. Cassius complained that Brutus loved Caesar more. Later the two relented and patched up. Then Brutus admitted to Cassius that he was feeling mentally unstable as Portia had committed suicide. Octavius and Antony had taken control and Cicero too had been killed. This scene is made special by the appearance of Caesar's ghost who promised Brutus to see him again at Philippi.

Act V Scene (i)

It opened in Phillipi with both the armies face to face. They stopped for a dialogue but only hurled insults at each other and nothing came out of it. Brutus and Cassius bid an emotional farewell to each other.

Act V Scene (ii)

The scene contained Brutus' single dialogue where he asked Messala to run faster to attack the opponents.

Act V Scene (iii)

It opened in a part of the battleground. When Cassius saw his soldiers running away from the field, he misunderstood that his dear friend Titinius had been captured by the enemies and fearing defeat, Cassius asked Pindarus to kill him which he did.

Act V Scene (iv)

Cato was captured and killed and Lucillius was also captured. Brutus committed suicide acknowledging that with his death, Caesar would be avenged. Strato held a sword and Brutus ran upon it. Octavius and Antony were victorious. They however agreed that Brutus was indeed "the noblest of Romans" who did what he did because he actually believed in it and should be given an honourable burial.

Check your progress V:

Ques.1 Why did Cassius commit suicide? How?

Ques.2 Why does Brutus commit suicide? How?

Ques. 3 Who was "the noblest of Romans"? Who called him so?

5.5 IMPORTANT PASSAGES FROM THE PLAY

a) "Poor Brutus, with himself at war,
Forgets the show of love to others" Act I Sc i

These lines have been spoken by Brutus about himself when he is talking to Cassius. He says the words to tell Cassius that the reason he wasn't showing courtesies Cassius because of his conflicting state of mind.

b) "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves that we are underlings." Act I Sc ii

The lines were spoken by Cassius to Brutus when he was instigating him against Caesar. He was saying that men had the power to determine their lives and stars shouldn't be blamed for anything. We don't achieve a thing because we don't work for it.

c) "I know where I will wear this dagger then;
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius" Act I Sc. iii

The lines are spoken by Cassius. He is speaking to Casca when he is saying that if Caesar is crowned the king, he would kill himself.

d) "O, he sits high in all people's hearts:
And that would appear offence in us,
His countenance , his rich alchemy,
Will change to worthy and to worthiness" Act I Scene iii

These line shave been spoken by Casca about Brutus when he is discussing that Brutus is highly respectable in Rome and his name is enough to attach virtue to something.

e) "it must be his death; and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general." Act II sc. I
Lines are from Brutus' soliloquy where he says that he has no personal enmity against Brutus. He wants to just protect the welfare of the people.

f) "it's a common proof that lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upward turns his face,
But when he once attains the uppermost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back" Act II Sc i
From Brutus' soliloquy that says that one needs to be humble to achieve success. But the irony of the situation is that when one has climbed the ladder, he discards the same ladder that he had used to achieve success. Brutus is talking about Caesar.

g) "Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once"
…Seeing that death is a necessary end,
and will come when it will come" Act II Sc.ii
These famous lines have spoken by Julius Caesar himself. He is telling his wife Calpurnia that the fear of death is a death in itself. Cowards experience the fear of death many times in their live but the brave face it only once. Death is the final truth and will come when it has to.

h) "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears,
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is often interred with their bones" Act III Sc ii
These line were spoken by Mark Antony after Caesar's death. He was addressing the people of Rome from a public platform. This philosophical statement was made by him to say that people forget the good deeds of a person but remember his misdeeds even after his death. This is also a very famous dialogue from the play.

5.6 THEME AND THE PLOT OF THE PLAY

Julius Caesar is a political drama that is also historical. Its characters are straight out of ancient Roman history. It is also called a chronicle play. Because the play ends in the deaths of so many characters, it is a tragedy as well. Since the theme of the play is the political happenings after Julius Caesar took over Rome after defeating Pompey, we need to be thorough with the summary of the play. For this refer to section 5.2 of this unit.

5.7 CHARACTER SKETCH OF JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar, the protagonist around whom the play revolves dies in the middle of the play in Act III. Although his death is a murder, and that to at the hands of some of his so called friends, one doesn't feel too much sympathy for him because he didn't have the traits of a true tragic hero. His arrogance, lack of kindness, his overconfidence takes the positives away from him. He compares himself to a northern star:

"I could be well moved, if I were as you….

But I am constant as the northern star,

Of whose true fix and resting quality

There is no fellow in the firmament"

He thinks too much of himself. When Decius asks him as to what reason would he give for his absence from the Senate, he proudly answers:

"the cause is my will, I will not come;

That is enough to satisfy the Senate"

He says that he is not answerable to anybody and that his wish should be a command that everybody should pay heed to. This cannot be challenged that he is a great warrior, a Colossus among men. But then he has his share of weaknesses as well. He is very superstitious, is deaf in one ear and has occasional fits of epilepsy. He is however very observant and a good judge of people. He is rightly wary of Cassius whom he calls 'too thin' who also didn't 'like music' was too observant, 'he thinks too much: such men are dangerous'. He was a skilled politician but he came to a sad end. Even gentle Brutus turned against him although he loved him. His story is not a happy one but doesn't invoke any pity in the audience. Although he dies before the audience could find whether he would be actually corrupted with power but Shakespeare had shown him enough or us to judge that he too was power hungry and ambitious.

But the play revolves around Julius Caesar, and even when he is no more, he still drives the plot of the drama. Thus, the title is also apt.

5.8 CHARACTER SKETCH OF BRUTUS

Brutus is the real hero of the play and he takes the audience's heart away. People cry for Brutus and because he trusted Cassius blindly, made an error in judging Cassius, did he fell so badly. He didn't doubt for a second that the letters could also be planted to turn him against Caesar. He removed Caesar because as he said "he loved Rome more" and wanted to keep Rome away from the dictatorship of Caesar. Even his competitor Antony called him "the noblest of all Romans". He always played fair throughout the play and was guided by his idealism that became a reason for his fall. He refused Cassius's practical decision to kill Antony as well in spite of the fact that Antony could jeopardize their plan because Brutus was very fair in his dealings. In fact he said that he didn't even want to kill Caesar but only wished to remove the dangers of autocracy. He agreed to give Caesar a good burial and even allowed Antony to give a funeral speech. After his own speech, he left the podium. Antony was the manipulator who turned the tables against Brutus and his companions. The audience feels pity for Brutus and he emerges the true tragic hero of the play. Many critics have also argued that not Caesar but Brutus is the hero of this drama.

5.9 SUGGESTED READING:

Even though the author has tried her best to cover all the aspects of the play in detail, these are not a substitute for the original text of the play. Do read the text for a better understanding of Julius Caesar. Shakespeare had his own special world that is fun to explore.

Also recommended are:

A History of English literature Vol. 2 by David Daiches

Happy Reading!

5.10 CONCLUSION:

This unit began with a list of the dramatis personae i.e. the major and minor characters of the play Julius Caesar and then the summary of the plot was laid bare to help the students know of the basic structure and of the play. Then scene wise summary of the play ought to help the students know of every shall happening in the play. Next, the important passages from the play were taken up to let the readers feel the text and read the actual vocabulary used by Shakespeare. Finally, the theme and the important characters of the play were discussed so as to cover every aspect of this chronicle play.

Answers of Check your progress:

Check your progress I:

1. 15 February 44 BC, Rome
2. The Feast of Lupercal

3. Flavius and Marullus
4. (b) Cassius
5. (b) Calpurnia
6. (d) Antony
7. Octavius Caesar and Antony
8. Octavius Caesar
9. (a) Cassius
10. © Pompey

Check your progress II:

3. (b) She should let Antony touch her.
4. (b) Something bad is about to happen in Rome

Check your progress III:

1. (a) Brutus
2. (a) Decius
3. Artemidorous

ASSIGNMENT

Long Questions:

Ques.1. Describe the character sketch of Julius Caesar. How is he more of an antihero than a hero even though the play is titled after him?

Also highlight the other antagonists in the play 'Julius Caesar'

Ques 2. What impression do you form of Brutus when you read the play Julius Caesar? Compare and contrast his character against Mark Antony.

Short Questions:

Ques.1 a) What is the role of the Soothsayer in the play?

b) Does Portia have any role in the play Julius Caesar or is she a forgettable character?

c) Is Cassius also an example of motiveless malignity in Julius Caesar who has gone down in history as the one who thrusted a war on Europe?

Ques.2. Who plants the forged letters in Brutus's house? Why?

UNIT 6: ORIGIN AND RISE OF DRAMA IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Origin of Drama

6.3 Growth of Drama

- **6.3.1 Mystery Plays**
- **6.3.2 Miracle Plays**
- **6.3.3 Morality Plays**
- **6.3.4 Interludes**

6.4 Beginning of Regular Drama

6.5 University Wits

6.6 Shakespearean Drama

6.7 Restoration Drama

6.8 Drama in the Twentieth Century

6.9 Summing Up

6.10 Check Your Progress

6.11 Suggested Readings

6.12 Important Questions

6.0 OBJECTIVES:

This lesson aims at providing an understanding of the origin of drama in English literature and its subsequent rise. After reading this lesson, the students will be well acquainted with the factors that led to the origin of drama since the times of the Greeks. Along with this, they will develop an understanding of the important landmarks in the growth of drama in English right up to the twentieth century. Important terms associated with the rise of drama will also be explained.

6.1 INTRODUCTION:

Drama refers to the genre of literature which is mainly written to be performed on stage. While writing a drama, the aim of the dramatist is to make it a theatrical success. Unlike a poet or a novelist, a dramatist writes drama keeping in mind the requirements of the theatre. A theatre is a place where audiences come to enjoy a performance based on the drama being enacted by the actors. It involves physical action on the stage, the effect of which is enhanced by the dramatic conventions, the dialogues, scenery, lighting, sound and music, costumes and the atmosphere. The characters reveal themselves in the course of action through their dialogues or just through their acting in some cases. Compton Rickett defines drama as "an articulate story presented in action". In the execution of drama, actors take "the role of characters, perform the indicated action, and utter the written dialogue" following the instructions given by the dramatist (qtd. from A Glossary of Literary terms by M.H. Abrams). Marjourie Boulton has defined drama as a "three dimensional genre", a literature that "walks and talks before our eyes". Webster's English Dictionary defines drama as "a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue and typically designed for theatrical performance".

6.2 ORIGIN OF DRAMA:

The genre of drama may be said to have evolved in antiquity from the art of storytelling when it was combined with some sort of performances by the storytellers. It can be understood to be as old as human myths and beliefs themselves. But Greece, and in particular, Athens, is credited with the beginnings of performing plays in front of an audience as we understand drama today. Originally, the term drama simply denoted "action". William J. Long argues that "drama is an old story told in the eye, a story put into action by living performers".

Between 600 and 200 B.C., Western theatre was born in Athens, Greece. The ancient Athenians created a theatre culture whose form, technique and terminology lasted for a long period of time and the plays they wrote are still considered among the greatest works of drama. Their achievement is truly remarkable when one considers that there have been only two other periods in the history of theatre that could be said to have approached the greatness of ancient Athens - Elizabethan age and the Twentieth century. Let us now discuss the origin and growth of English drama in detail.

In the words of Gassner:

... there is not a single human impulse, moral or otherwise, that cannot be associated with the growth of the stage; the masters of the drama are the children of life . . . . The first playwright began indeed as a player and a magic maker. But he gradually took the whole world of

experience and thought for his field. ... in copying movements or gestures, repeating sounds, and employing human, animal and even vegetable disguises, primitive man was instinctively bringing himself in touch with his environment. And in playing he was not only discharging excess energy but preparing himself for purposeful action. ... Man danced out his desires until the pantomimic dance became the most finished early form of drama. ... The playwright leads the pantomime since the form and execution of the performances requires a guiding intellect ... he is also a social philosopher, for it is he who organizes the performance as a commercial activity and extends the psychological reality of commune.

The origin of drama is deeply rooted in the religious inclinations of mankind. Religious interests and leanings contributed a great deal in the emergence of drama as a genre. As already said above, the emergence of the European theatrical art began in ancient Greece and Rome, many important Greek tragedies were written by dramatists like Aeschylus (who is also known as the Father of Greek Tragedy), Sophocles (who mastered the device of tragic suspense and tragic irony), Euripides (who is credited with adding the Prologue to the dramatic form which set the stage at the beginning of the play). Greek drama also produced comedians like Cratinus, Aristophanes and later Menander.

The contribution of the Romans to drama is certainly praiseworthy. The influence of the Senecan tragedy prevailed for a long period of time. At the same time comedians like Plautus and Terence produced comedies which were closer to a type of musical theatre. They upgraded original Greek comedies by eliminating the chorus and expanding the use of music. The most popular forms of theatrical entertainment in this period were mime and pantomime. Particularly in England, the Romans established the tradition of amphitheaters for the production of plays. Roman theatres were temporary wooden structures taken down after the performances. With the fall of Rome, drama also suffered a setback. It remained dormant for several years.

In the middle ages, dramatic art was revived but the form was changed. Instead of proper dramas, initially only jesters, clowns, tumblers and minstrels came to the scene. However, the church had a significant role in the life of the people of those times. During the tenth century, the church brought back drama into England though earlier it had itself condemned the theatre of the Roman Empire on account of its spectacle and scenes. In other words, the church was hostile to drama and all along the Dark Ages i.e through the 6^{th} Century to the 10^{th}, there is no record of dramatic activity.

In order to preach the ignorant masses, the clergy regarded the visual medium of drama as an important source of disseminating religious knowledge. They dramatized many biblical incidents and exhibited spiritual tales in dramatic form during Christmas and Easter celebrations. Bits of chanted dialogue called tropes were added to these celebrations. The Gospel stories were illustrated in the form of performances by the actors who were mainly monks, priests and choir boys of the church. These plays were performed only inside the church.

Initially, the language of the church was only Latin. After the Norman Conquest, in place of Latin, the plays followed the pattern of French and much later, the English language replaced French in the fourteenth century.

Gradually, what began as mimetic representations of religious history enacted by the clergymen inside the church, expanded to the composition of cycles dramatizing the full range of spiritual events from Creation to the Last Judgement. The scenes from the Easter and

Christmas were presented to the general public. So far, these compositions were known as Liturgical Plays, because they formed a part of the church. The increasing interest of laymen in these performances resulted in a shift from the churchyards into the open market place. Thus the organization of religious dramatic acts passed on from ecclesiastical to lay hands.

6.3 GROWTH OF DRAMA:

The secularization of drama finally led to the control first into the hands of the social and religious guilds and then to the trade guilds. These guilds were wealthy and held the responsibility of the production of plays. Drama now became a social activity and instead of priests, professional actors with skilled craftsmanship performed on stage. This victory of the dramatic element over religious purpose may be seen as a significant development in the growth of drama and the dramatic activity spread far and wide.

Hence, the three main types of drama that emerged in the late medieval period were the mystery, miracle and morality plays. These plays varied in subject matter, purpose and style of presentation. However, the very first plays to be performed in England were the Cycle plays. They were called so because they were performed in cycles. These plays were popular during the late middle ages and into the renaissance. The most well-known cycles are the Chester, York, Wakefield (Townley) and the Coventry (N-Town) plays. They were named after the names of the towns. The list of plays commonly included these themes: the Fall of Lucifer, the Creation of the World and the Fall of Adam, Noah and the Flood, a Procession of the Prophets, events from the Gospel, and the Day of Judgement. The longest cycle (York cycle) consisted of fifty days or more. The manner of presentation of the cycles varied from town to town. Sometimes the entire cycle was given at a single spot which could be the market-place or some central square, but often, to accommodate great crowds, there were several stations at convenient intervals.

6.3.1 Mystery Plays:

The term “mystery” has been taken by literary scholars from the medieval French usage. It is not connected with our usual word “mystery”, but is possibly derived from the Latin term “ministerium”, which was the name applied to the trade-guild as an organization. The plays performed in Cycles in connected form were often referred to as “mystery plays”. They were actually sequences of performances that made up a cycle of short plays. They were generally performed on pageant wagons, which provided both scaffold stage and dressing room and could be easily moved from one place to another. Throughout the 15th and the 16th century, around 3000 years before the building of the London playhouses, these cycles were the most popular and enduring from of theatre in Britain.

These plays were known as Mystery Plays for two reasons. Firstly, the mysteries of God were their primary theme. They aimed at presenting the whole history of the universe from the creation of Heaven and Earth to the Day of Judgement - the end of the world, the day when God would judge everyone on the Earth. Secondly, these plays were funded, organized and produced by guilds, which were known as “mysteries” in the middle ages. Guilds were associations of artisans and tradesmen. They were usually wealthy and technically competent and hence wielded considerable power. The mystery plays gave these guilds an opportunity to advertise and increase their trade. For instance, the play based on ‘Noah’s Ark and the Flood’ was often sponsored by the shipbuilders, who would provide their arks to be used in the production of the play. They also outsourced actors for the plays. These actors were not professionals but ordinary people with a taste for drama. However,

with the onset of the Reformation movement, the form in which the mystery plays developed itself contributed to their demise at the end of the 16th century. The church no longer supported them, Renaissance scholars could not be attracted by their great rambling texts, and the general public seemed to prefer professional travelling companies arriving from Italy.

6.3.2 Miracle Plays:

Miracle Plays got their name from the Latin term, "miracula" which referred to mimetic presentations or spectacles of an unspecified kind. These were popular during the medieval era and represented non-scriptural legends of saints. Miracle plays first appeared in France in the 13th century and became widespread in Western Europe in the 14th century. The term is sometimes confusingly applied to the mystery plays. From the liturgical, drama evolved to Miracle and Mystery plays. In France, 'Miracle' used to represent the lives of the saints and 'Mystery' used to represent any scene taken from the scriptures. Miracle plays can also be differentiated from Mystery plays on the basis of ecclesiastical origin of the mystery plays whereas Miracle plays dealt with incidents from the lives of Saints and Martyrs. Therefore, Miracle plays were also called 'Saint Plays' as they presented a real or fictitious account of the life of Saints. The earliest recorded miracle play was *Ludus Santa de Katherina* which was written anonymously. Some other examples of Miracle plays are *The Harrowing of Hell, St. John, the Hairy, St. Nicholas* and *Raising of Lazarus*.

6.3.3 Morality Plays:

The Mystery and Miracle plays gave rise to the Morality plays. In the former, serious and comic elements were interwoven but in the Morality plays, only the serious element was restored. These plays were didactic in nature i.e they were written and performed with an intention to impart a moral lesson. They could be categorized as allegorical drama in which the characters were typifications of certain human qualities like Grace, Sin, Repentance etc. or abstractions like death and youth. In other words, a morality was a dramatized moral allegory.

Moralities began to be acted in the reign of Henry VI in the 15th century and like the miracle and mystery plays continued to flourish till the 16th century. In morality plays, the characters were allegorical, symbolical and abstract. The allegorical characters owed their importance to religious sources. One of the earliest morality plays was *The Castle of Perseverance.* It presents the spiritual progress of mankind from the day of his birth to the Day of Judgement. The hero in moralities is generally a tall figure standing for all Mankind. For the control of the hero, the two opposing forces of Virtues and Vices contend. The most amusing characters in a morality were the Vice and the Devil. The former was usually displayed in grotesque costume and armed with sword or dagger and the latter appeared generally with horns, a long beard and a hairy chest. The commonest type of Morality presents the entire story of the hero's life; that is of the life of every man. It shows how he yields to temptation and lives for the most part in reckless sin but at the end in spite of his folly, he is saved by Perseverance and Repentance, pardoned through God's mercy and assured of salvation. The best known Morality play is *Everyman,* which appeared at the end of the 15th century and enjoyed vast popularity till the end of the sixteenth century. Some other examples of morality plays are *The Pride of Life, Mankind, Wisdom* and *Occupation and Idleness.*

6.3.4 Interludes:

Interludes appeared towards the end of the 15th century but could not replace the moralities which continued to enjoy popularity till the end of the 16th century. Interludes marked a complete break with the religious type of drama, and dispensed with the allegorical figures of the morality play. However, they retained some of its didactic features. W. H. Hudson describes an interlude as "any short dramatic piece of a satiric rather than of a directly religious or ethical character and in tone and purpose far less serious than the morality proper".

Interludes signify a transition from symbolism to realism. The most notable writer of interludes was John Heywood (1497-1580). His play *The Four P's* is a farcical interlude that satirizes shrewd and impatient women. The four P's referred to in the title of the play are a Pardoner, a Palmer, a Pothecary and a Pedlar who indulge in a sort of lying competition in which the most offensive liar is to be awarded. Another well-known interlude by Heywood is *The Play of Weathers*. Most of his plays carry an element of farce and are full of wit and humour. They are undoubtedly a realistic portrayal of men and manners. David Daiches observes that in John Heywood's interludes, "the emphasis is more on amusement than on instruction".

In the sixteenth century, the mystery, miracle and morality plays paved way for regular drama. Between 1530 and 1580, the drama in England underwent a significant change. The dawn of renaissance brought about a revival of ancient Greek and Roman drama. The English dramatists of this period were more influenced by the works of the Roman dramatists than those of the Greek. In other words, the tragedies of Seneca and the comedies of Plautus and Terence had a greater effect on them than the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripedes and the comedies of Aristophanes.

6.4 BEGINNING OF REGULAR DRAMA:

The first regular English drama was based on the Senecan model. It was a tragedy titled *Gorboduc* (also titled Ferrex and Porrex) written by Thomas Sackville (1536-1608) and Thomas Norton (1531-1584), first published in 1561. It was enacted before Queen Elizabeth for the first time in 1562. It imitates the Senecan tragedy in excessive bloodshed, the device of narration, long rhetorical speeches, theme of revenge, chorus and many other features. Gorboduc is also known to be the first play to have used blank verse. It is divided into five acts.

Plot of *Gorboduc*: Gorboduc, the king of England, divides his kingdom between his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex. In the course of time, both the brothers fall out with each other. One brother murders the other. In revenge, the queen kills the murderer. The people of the kingdom rise and kill both the king and the queen. The assassins are killed by the nobles and a civil war ensues between them. The whole country is ruined.

The first regular comedy was *Ralph Roister Doister* written by Nicholas Udall around 1550 but not published until 1567. Udall was a headmaster in a school in Eton, London. It is written in rhyming couplets and divided into acts and scenes.

Plot of *Ralph Roister Doister*: The plot is laid in London and it offers a representation of the manners and ideas of the middle classes of those times. It is divided into

five acts. The character of the hero, Ralph Roister is based on the nature of Plautus's Miles Gloriosus. A rich widow Christian Custance is betrothed to Gawyn Goodluck, a merchant. However, Ralph Roister Doister imagines her to be in love with him and is encouraged throughout by a con-man trickster, Matthew Merrygreeke to woo Christian Custance. But his repeated attempts do not succeed. Ralph then tries to break in and take Christian Custance by force, but is defeated by her maids and has to run away. At last, he comes to terms with the reality and recognizes the truth. The play concludes happily on a note of reconciliation.

Shortly after, another comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was written by John Still. It is a crude representation of low country life. It narrates the story of a country widow, Gammer Gurton who is the proud possessor of a needle. While mending the breeches of her servant, Hodge, she loses the needle. In order to find the needle, she creates a chaos in the entire village. Peace is restored when she finds the needle stuck in the breeches of Hodge. Broad jokes and extravagant language, and funny situations created on the discomfiture of the characters made this play popular in its day.

The foundation of a truly national theatre was helped by the formation of companies of professional players. In 1576, the first theatre was built in Finsbury Fields, London. Gradually the Rose, the Swan, the Globe and the Fortune came up.

6.5 THE UNIVERSITY WITS:

The University Wits were a group of well-educated scholars cum men of letters who were closely associated with drama and contributed to the development of the same. They were John Lyly, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe. To quote Allardyce Nicolle, the University Wits "laid a sure basis for the English theatre". The first plays which marked the beginning of regular drama exhibited ample awareness of classical form but were devoid of the vigour of the native plays. The function of the University Wits was to combine form with fire. The dramatic works of these writers paved way for Shakespeare who inherited literary grace and power from his predecessors. They made extensive use of blank verse which was later acknowledged as a great dramatic medium.

6.6 SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA:

William Shakespeare is known as the Father of English Drama. He wrote 38 plays in all which largely contributed to the acknowledgement of the Elizabethan age as the golden period of English literature. His dramas can be divided into histories, tragedies and comedies. His writings were based on the philosophy that human nature essentially remains the same. That is why he has stood the test of time and his plays are read and appreciated even today. His final plays move against the wave of Jacobean Theatre that focused on blood tragedy and social comedy. He broke away from the Classicals in their strict adherence to form and introduced a new form of drama called tragicomedies which exhibited a combination of the elements of a tragedy and a comedy.

6.7 RESTORATION DRAMA:

The genre of drama suffered a setback during the period 1642-1660 due to the complete closure of theatres in London. But with the Restoration, drama also revived and

witnessed many changes. The Restoration age is chiefly associated with the rise and development of "the comedy of manners". The manners which this form revealed were the manners of the courtly classes only. They were satirical in nature. The major practitioners of the comedy of manners were George Etherege, William Wycherly, William Congreve, George Farquhar and John Vanbrugh.

After the restoration, drama survived for quite some time and saw the period of heroic plays of John Dryden and his contemporaries. The vogue of heroic plays lasted through the reign of Charles II (1660-1685). By the end of the 17th century, the restoration drama started declining and gave way to the forms of prose and poetry which flourished in the succeeding centuries until the twentieth Century.

6.8 DRAMA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:

The Twentieth Century English drama is marked by excessive realism. Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy left an indelible mark on the history of English literature with their poetic drama. With the death of G.B. Shaw in 1950, once again a big vacuum was created in the British theatre. However, with the introduction of the Absurd drama and epic theatre, drama was once again revived and was inclined to be even more naturalistic.

6.9 SUMMING UP:

Thus, we see how English Drama has undergone significant changes with the passage of time. It gradually developed from liturgical plays to miracle, mystery and morality plays giving way to interludes. The tradition of interludes was followed by the influence of the Classical models of the Greeks and the Romans giving birth to a regular form of drama which was highly artistic. After the beginning of the regular drama, dramatic forms underwent a lot of changes with time. Some centuries even saw almost no growth in the field of drama whereas others witnessed drama as a major form of literature much closer to human interests than other genres. Moving through these ups and downs, drama has evolved into the modern form which we know today.

6.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

i) Discuss the origins of English Drama.
ii) Make a chart depicting the various stages in the development of drama.

UNIT-7 RESTORATION COMEDY, CLOSET DRAMA, THE PROBLEM PLAY

STRUCTURE

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Restoration Drama

- **7.1.1 Introduction**
- **7.1.2 Historical Background**
- **7.1.3 Major influences**
- **7.1.4 The heroic tragedy of the Restoration period**
- **7.1.5 Restoration Comedy of Manners**
- **7.1.6 Major Playwrights and their important works**
- **7.1.7 Conclusion**

7.2 Closet Play

- **7.2.1 Introduction**
- **7.2.2 Historical Background**
- **7.2.3 Popularity of Closet Plays**
- **7.2.4 Conclusion**

7.3 Problem Play

- **7.3.1 Introduction**
- **7.3.2 Background**
- **7.3.3 Major Themes**
- **7.3.4 Structure and Characterization**
- **7.3.5 G.B. Shaw**
- **7.3.6 Problem play as the propaganda play**
- **7.3.7 Conclusion**

7.4 Summing Up

7.5 Check Your Progress

7.6 Important Questions

7.7 Suggested Readings

7.0 OBJECTIVES:

In the previous unit, you have learned about the origin and rise of English drama. Since the beginning of the regular drama in the sixteenth century, English drama underwent a lot of phases which were characterized by different kinds of features. This unit will introduce the students to

i. the Restoration drama, Closet Plays and Problem Plays.

ii. The historical and social backgrounds of the above mentioned drama.

iii. Major dramatists belonging to these sub-genres of drama along with their important works.

7.1 RESTORATION DRAMA:

7.1.1 Introduction:

In the years following 1660, a distinct type of drama arose which spelt a break from the preceding Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The theatres which were closed in 1642 were opened during the Restoration. The newly released theatrical freedom had little respect for the Elizabethan ideals. The Restoration dramatists tried their hand on both comedy and tragedy. The age witnessed the rise of the heroic tragedy and the development of the comedy of manners. The heroic tragedy appealed to the classes with artificial, aristocratic sentiments on the subject of honour. And the Restoration comedy of manners reflected the morally vicious but intellectually brilliant atmosphere of the pubs, cafes and the chocolate houses.

7.1.2 Historical Background:

The restoration of King Charles II to the English throne in 1660 marked the decisive birth of a new age, known as the Restoration Age. The change of the government from Commonwealth to Kingship corresponded to a change in the mood of the nation. In this period the ideals of Renaissance and the unlimited possibilities of the exploration of the world, and the moral zeal and the earnestness of the Puritan period could no more fascinate the people of England. There was a lot of bloodshed, religious persecution and a series of political disasters that created a mood of disillusionment everywhere. Profligacy was glorified in the royal court. Corruption was rampant in all walks of life. The Great Fire of 1665 and the Plague that followed were popularly regarded as suitable punishments for the sins of the profligate and the selfish King. While London was burning and the people were suffering, the King and his nobles kept up their revels. The beginning of the Restoration began the process of social transformation. The atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness, of licentiousness and moral laxity was restored. The theatres were reopened. There was a stern reaction against the morality of the Puritans. Morality was on the wane and there was laxity everywhere in life. All these tendencies of the age are clearly reflected in the literature of the

period. The religious controversy and the revolution of 1688 deeply influenced the social life and the literary movements of the age. This period is understood to have continued till 1700.

7.1.3 Major influences:

Whereas English tragedy has always been known to accept foreign influences, English comedy has been less amenable to them. However, the Restoration comedy was shaped both by native and French influences. It drew its inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of theatres in 1642. It was also influenced by continental writers, especially by Moliere. It reflected closely the dissolute court life of the period. English dramatists borrowed brilliant ideas of plots and some fine examples of comic characterization from Moliere. The strong element of intrigue in the plot was the result of influence from the Spanish drama. Comparing with the predecessors of the Restoration comedy, the latter lacked the warmth and depth of Elizabethan comedy but eschewed its extravagance and lack of realism. Although William Shakespeare was not much favoured by the dramatists of this age, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher were respected and appreciated by them. They borrowed a sense of hard realism and hard-hitting satire from Ben Jonson and a courtly spirit from Beaumont and Fletcher. It may also be noted that the Restoration comedy of manners resembled Ben Jonson's comedy of humours in being realistic and satiric.

7.1.4 The heroic tragedy of the Restoration period:

The Restoration tragedy is also known as the Heroic Tragedy. The influence of French romance and drama produced its first important result in the form of the heroic play. A heroic play is generally built around a larger than life heroic warrior who is a master of swordsmanship and stagy rhetoric. The hero is either a king, prince or an army general. The plot involves the fate of an empire. The recurrent themes in heroic plays are gallantry, adventure, love and honour. The writers of heroic plays aimed at arousing tragic emotions of fear and pity in the audience. According to Bonamy Dobree," the fantastic ideas of valour, the absurd notions of dauntless, unquenchable love of Restoration Tragedy do not correspond with experience". It mainly deals with conflict between love and honour. John Dryden was the principal writer of the Heroic tragedy. His famous tragedies are *Tyrannic Love*, *Conquest of Granada* and *All for Love.* Dryden's heroic plays usually include a hero of superhuman powers and with superhuman ideals. Alongside, there is a heroine of unsurpassed beauty and constancy. There exists an inner conflict in the minds of several characters between love and honour; and there is a striving story of fighting and martial enthusiasm, filled with intense dramatic interest. Other famous writers of Restoration heroic tragedy were Sir William Davenant, Elkanah Settle, Nat Lee and Thomas Otway. The Restoration Tragedy was often criticized on account of being artificial and stilted. Although it was popular, but was certainly less representative of the ethos of Restoration society than the comedy of manners.

7.1.5 Restoration Comedy of Manners:

The Restoration Age is chiefly associated with the rise and development of "the comedy of manners". This type of comedy was a true mirror of the temper and outlook of the society of the age. These comedies expressed a reaction against Puritanism and the sexual repression enforced by this school. Fashionable intrigues, sex, marriage and adultery were treated with cynicism, with worldly wit and a sense of the comedy of life. The characters in these plays owed much to the courtiers, the wits, and the men about town as well as to ladies of fashion, citizens, wives and country girls. Thus the manners which the comedy of manners depicted were not the manners of all classes of society but of the courtly classes only. It concentrated on the activities, intrigues and amorous achievements of gay, frivolous, rakish type of young men and women. In the words of Allardyce Nicoll,

> Restoration Comedy is wholly aristocratic, the manners displayed being not those of men in general but the affectations and cultural veneer of finer society. For these men, a manner was not a trait native to an individual, but a quality acquired by him from social intercourse.

The comedy of manners is conspicuous for intellectual and refined tone. It is devoid of romantic passions and sentiments. It replaces emotion by wit and poetry by a clear, concise prose. The plays show a close and satirical observation of life and manners.

It is characterized by realism, social analysis and satire. These dramatists held a mirror to the finer society of their age. The setting of comedy of manners is mostly in London, more specifically - its coffee-houses, clubs and gambling houses which were frequented by corrupt and fashionable men and women of this age. Apart from these ladies and gentleman, the typical characters found in these plays were the foolish country squire, the male bawd, etc.

Restoration comedy has often been condemned for its immorality. The society of the age was immoral, so was its representation in these plays. Scenes and acts suggestive of sexual grossness were commonplace. There was a persistent attack on the sanctity of the marital bond and a parallel advocacy of free love.

As Aristotle had said that plot is the soul of the tragedy, the writers of the comedy of manners gave much importance to the construction of plot. Love intrigues usually formed the basis of their plots. However, they did not mind incorporating multiple plots and sub-plots in a play. The dialogues in these plays are crisp, witty and well-polished.

The chief practitioners of the comedy of manners were Sir George Etherege, William Wycherly, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh and George Farquhar.

7.1.6 Major Playwrights of Comedy of Manners and their important works :

Playwright	**Drama**
Sir George Etherege	*Love in a Tub*, *She Wou'd If She Cou'd*,

	The Man of Mode
William Wycherly	*Love in a Wood, The Gentleman Dancing Master, The Country Wife, The Plain Dealer*
William Congreve	*The Old Bachelor, The Double Dealer, Love for Love, The Way of the World*
Sir John Vanbrugh	*The Relapse, The Provoked Wife, The Confederacy*
George Farquhar	*The Recruiting Officer, The Beaux's Stratagem*

7.1.7 Conclusion:

After 1700, a change began to be discernible in stage production. It was felt that the appeal of the Restoration Comedy of Manners was restricted only to the aristocratic society. The immoral and antisocial influence of these plays was clearly perceived and the voice of protest was also heard. Jeremy Collier raised a powerful voice against the immorality of the Restoration age. The need of a more human note was needed. The rise of the bourgeois class changed the moral standards. Moreover, soon the upcoming genre of periodical essay and newspapers which expressed the moral code of the rising middle class replaced the comedy of manners.

7.2 CLOSET PLAY

7.2.1 Introduction:

A closet drama is a play that is not intended to be performed on stage, but meant only to be read privately or silently. Sometimes, this form of literature is written for reading aloud among small groups of friends. Hence, a closet drama is non-performative in nature. Henry A. Bears, a literary historian considers closet drama "a quite legitimate product of literary art". Closet dramas may be seen as belonging to the genre of dramatic writing unconcerned with stage techniques. As regards publication of closet dramas, they were published in manuscript form including dramatis personae and elaborate stage directions which helped the readers to imagine the text as if it were being performed.

7.2.2 Historical Background:

The history of closet plays may date back to the philosophical dialogues of ancient Greek and Roman writers (such as Plato) which were written in the form of conversations between different characters. Some Senecan tragedies were also written with the purpose of being read rather than being performed. However, there is not any evidence in its favour.

Some dramatic works of the Middle Ages including the drama Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim and some debate poems also exhibited features of closet drama.

In the age of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, dramatists like Fulke, Greville, Samuel Daniel, Sir William Alexander and Mary Sidney wrote closet plays. During the years 1642 to 1660, the playhouses remained closed. Closet drama was a major form of drama written during this period as "playgoing" was replaced with "playreading". Many playwrights turned to closet dramas during this period. One of them was Thomas Killigrew. He was in exile during the English Civil War and started writing closet plays because his plays could no longer be produced during this period.

Post restoration, some dramatists continued to favour closet drama as they believed that closet plays served a "cultural function" that was different from commercial drama. *Samson Agonistes* (1671) by John Milton is an example of early modern drama. By the end of the 18th century, closet dramas came to be clearly distinguished from classical stage dramas, though they were still inspired by classical models. *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was written as a closet play though it was often staged.

By the nineteenth century, many famous writers like Percy Bysshe Shelley and Alexander Pushkin had tried their hand on closet drama. Verse tragedy writers had to resign themselves to writing for readers rather than actors and audiences.

7.2.3 Popularity of Closet Plays:

Closet dramas became popular as a way of escaping the requirements and conditions of work that were needed to be commercially successful. When released as a bound book, a closet drama could be sent out to its audience rather than requiring the audience to congregate. In this manner, these plays allowed for works that were not appealing in their time to be released. In the nineteenth century, due to the decline of the verse tragedy on the European stage, closet drama came to be popularized.

Women writers also found closet drama as a suitable medium as it gave them a chance to express their opinions and participate in political discourse. Margaret Lucas Cavendish, who also wrote in exile was a famous woman writer of closet plays. Other well-known writers in this genre are Anne Finch, Jane Lumley and Elizabeth Cary. Robert Browning's *Pippa Passes* and *My Last Duchess*, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* also fall in the category of closet play.

7.2.4 Conclusion:

In a nutshell, closet dramas are plays meant to be read and not performed. Their strength and value is in the play itself, not in the performance of the play. Generally, a play is written to be performed on stage but in the case of closet drama, the playwright intends just the opposite. A new form related to closet play, known as "closet screenplay" developed during the 20th century and they are written till date. However, these days some closet plays are also performed on stage even though they are not meant to be performed.

7.3 PROBLEM PLAY

7.3.1 Introduction:

Problem play is a term used for the type of drama that began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in England. In the twentieth century England, it was popularized by the dramatists of the school of realism and naturalism in drama. Thus it flourished in England in the period between the last years of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth.

Problem play refers to the sub-genre of drama popularized by the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen addressed a range of problems, most notably the restriction of women's lives in *A Doll's House* (1879), sexually transmitted disease in *Ghosts* (1882) and provincial greed in *An Enemy of the People* (1882). Ibsen's dramas proved immensely influential, spawning variants of the problem play in works by George Bernard Shaw and other later dramatists. Along with Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy, and Granville Braker were the main exponents of problem plays. A problem play is sometimes referred to as “Drama of ideas”, “thesis play”, “discussion play” or “comedy of ideas”.

7.3.2 Background:

While plays in ancient Greece and ancient Rome, mystery plays, and Elizabethan plays are clearly classified as tragedy, comedy, and satyr plays, there are some plays that exhibit the characteristics of problem plays, such as *Alcestis* by Euripides.

William Shakespeare’s “bitter comedies” were also known as problem plays. The critic F. S. Boas adapted the term to characterize certain plays by William Shakespeare that he considered to have characteristics similar to Ibsen's 19th-century problem plays. The examples of the same include *Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, A Winter’s Tale,* and *All’s Well that Ends Well*.

Victorian age was a socially conscious age. The literature of this age - mainly its poetry and novels reflect its anxieties and agonies. The problems of the society of this age were stark in the face of advancement on one hand and degeneration of human values on the other. Both these aspects - progress and stagnation was reflected in the works of the literary writers. The genre of drama could not remain unaffected.

The problem play was introduced into England towards the end of the nineteenth century by Henry Arthur Jones and Sir A.W. Pinero. They were undoubtedly influenced by Ibsen but in dramatic talent, they were quite different. In problem plays, the situation faced by the protagonist is presented by the author as an instance of a contemporary social problem. This is usually done through a character who speaks through the author. Sometimes it is done by the evolution of plot and a solution to the problem is proposed.

Critic Chris Baldick writes that the genre emerged “from the ferment of the 1890s ... for the most part inspired by the example of Ibsen's realistic stage representations of serious familial and social conflicts”. He summarizes it as follows:

> Rejecting the frivolity of intricately plotted romantic intrigues in the nineteenth-century French tradition of the 'well-made play', it favoured instead the form of the 'problem play', which would bring to life some contemporary controversy of public importance— women's rights, unemployment, penal reform, class privilege—in a vivid but responsibly accurate presentation.

7.3.3 Major Themes:

Problem plays began to be written in the form of realistic plays on romantic and historical themes which later turned their way to family themes. Wrong and injustice inflicted by the society are the chief **elements of problem play**. The problem playwrights focused on needless torture and suffering imposed by the law of the particular land and firmly adhered to the dictums of justice and equality to all.

Disintegration in the life of middle class families and values originated the problem play in England. Problem play turned into a powerful medium of social criticism and vindicated the right of the individual unfettered by bias and conventions of the society.

7.3.4 Structure and Characterization :

The problem playwrights totally discarded the traditional craftsmanship. They did not set aside the plot construction, but attempted to unfold social, political and family problems. But the unities of time, place and action were observed in a problem play in order to maintain economy and structural compactness to enforce the theme in the plays.

The characters in problem plays were based on concrete situations and living men and women. The characters of these plays were natural, complex, immortal and realistic.

Ibsen's characters were not "embodied humours" but they are natural and complex personalities. In his plays, sometimes, ideas are treated as abstract characters. Most of the characters are gifted with extraordinary vitality. In the problem plays of G.B. Shaw, the major characters like Candida, Broadbent, Undershaft, Ann Tanner, and Father Keegan are a gallery of immortals. They are round and distinct personalities. Besides, Falder, Clare, Ferrand, Anthony and Roberts are creatures of flash and blood.

Granville Barker's characters consist of specific individuals like Philip, Alice, Trebell, Edward and Ann who are complex personalities. Mighty heroes and downright villains are included to represent stigmas on the face of society. In the absence of these qualities in the characters, **problem play** would turn into a mere treatise without convincing and life like characters.

7.3.5 G.B. Shaw:

Shaw is undoubtedly a great dramatist known for his problem plays. He is renowned for his wit and intellectual brilliance. He was a dramatist of immense talent. Shaw dominated the thought of the early twentieth century England. In the words of E. Strauss:

> Its greatness consists in being irreplaceable, Bernard Shaw's greatness is assured. It was not long before people began to talk about him as the English or Irish Moliere, or the Voltaire of the twentieth century, and undoubtedly he combines in himself some of the qualities of both these great men.

J.W. Marriott remarks about G.B. Shaw:

> He saw things as they are and had the courage to tell in compromising language exactly what he saw. He thought for himself, resolutely refused to accept ready-made opinions and judged solely on evidence or on logic. He set his mind free from prejudice, superstitions, illusions, and popular delusions.

He offered powerful and penetrating ideas on a variety of subjects like prostitution, husband hunting, marriage, questions of conscience, crime, injustice, conservatism, domestic life and relationship, poverty etc. The problem was generally of a sociological nature. However, sometimes, problem play arose above the immediate context of a problem and addressed larger universal issues. For example, in the play *Man and Superman* by G.B. Shaw, the chief concern is not with a contemporary social problem of husband hunting but with the concept of "Life Force".

Shaw fearlessly put forth his ideas in his dramas and hoped to convert the nation to his way of thinking through the medium of his plays. Each drama of Shaw sought to present his original ideas on the subject underlying the play. *The Widower's Houses* presented his ideas on the subject of slum - landlordism, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* on the subject of prostitution, *Candida* on marriage, *Arms and the Man* on the subject of romantic love and *Apple Cart* on monarchy and democracy.

The popularity of the problem plays increased rapidly because of the growing complexity in life and great change in the view points. These plays directly appealed to thoughtful minds and contributed largely to human progress but for creating dramatic effects.

7.3.6 Problem play as the propaganda play:

The problem play is also called "the propaganda play" as G. B. Shaw believed that "all great art or literature is propaganda". In order to present his view point before readers, problem playwrights introduce a raisonneur (a character in a play or novel, or the like who voices the central theme, philosophy, or point of view of the work) who become a philosophic spectator for the whole play and is considered as the recognized representative of the playwright. The dialogues of the raisonneur have the superior wisdom and his statements have peculiar authority to penetrate the minds of readers with wisdom. Like Greek chorus, he assesses the problem given by playwright and clears the playwright's opinion for readers or audience. It gives an impartial representation of conflict in the society and cannot be called a treatise for propagating the principles of life.

7.3.7 Conclusion:

W.R. Goodman referred to problem play as the "Cinderella of the dramatic art". As an art form, it answered the various critical problems of the time and besides its didactic purpose it also fulfilled the requirement of high level of craftsmanship and dramatic art. The genre was especially prevalent in early 20th century.

7.4 SUMMING UP:

In this unit, we have discussed three facets of drama namely restoration drama, closet play and problem play. The emphasis has been on the dramatic activity in the Restoration period, need of writing closet plays and problem plays as representative of the problems and their proposed solutions.

7.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

- Show your acquaintance with the following terms:
  - Problem Play
  - Closet Drama
  - Restoration Comedy
  - Heroic Tragedy
  - Bitter comedies
  - Realism
  - Beginning of the Restoration age
- **Choose the correct option**

Q-1. The most popular form of drama in the restoration period was

A. Elizabethan drama
B. Tragicomedy
C. Comedy of Manners

Q-2. Who was the chief practitioner of heroic tragedy in the Restoration period?

A. Ben Jonson
B. John Dryden
C. William Congreve

Q-3. Which form of drama is considered to be cynical, elegant and witty, almost as if it were the amoral realism of courtly life?

A. Comedy of Manners
B. Problem Play
C. Heroic Tragedy

Q-4. Identify the author of 'Love in a Wood' and 'The Country Wife'.

A. Goerge Etherege
B. William Wycherly
C. William Congreve

Q-5. Which of these authors wrote Closet Dramas?

A. Shelley
B. Browning
C. Byron
D. All of the answers are correct.

Q-6. Unlike the Shakespearean plays, The ''closet dramas'' of the nineteenth century were meant to be _____ rather than _____ .

A. seen - acted
B. produced - acted
C. read - performed

Q-7. In which year was Shaw awarded the Nobel Prize for literature?

A. 1925
B. 1927
C. 1930
D. 1932

Q-8. Problem play is also known as

A. Propaganda play
B. Discussion Play
C. Both of these

Q-9. Who is the writer of the plays Warren's Profession, Candida, Arms and the Man?

A. John Milton
B. G.B. Shaw
C. John Dryden

Q-10. Problem plays were _____ plays.

A. Emotional
B. Realistic
C. Scientific

7.6 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

1. Write an essay on Restoration Comedy of Manners.
2. Discuss the various factors that gave rise to the popularity of closet plays.
3. Discuss the rise and growth of problem play.

7.7 SUGGESTED READINGS:

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7.11 SUGGESTED READINGS:

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- Nayar, Pramod K. *A Short History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India Pvt. Ltd, 2015. Print.

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7.12 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

A. Answer the following questions in detail.

i) Discuss the influence of the Greeks and Romans on the rise of drama.
ii) How did religion play an important role in the origin and rise of drama?

iii) Write an essay on the major landmarks in the development of drama in English.

B. Write a brief note on the following:

i) Early origins of English drama.
ii) Contribution of the Greeks to drama
iii) Morality Plays
iv) Miracle and Mystery Plays
v) Interludes
vi) Beginning of regular drama
vii) University Wits
viii) Restoration Drama
ix) Shakespearean Drama

UNIT - 8 : THEATRE OF THE ABSURD, POETIC DRAMA

STRUCTURE

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Theatre of the Absurd

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8.1.2 The Philosophical Basis

8.1.3 Form and Content

8.1.4 Existentialism

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8.1.7 Summing Up

8.2 Poetic Drama

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8.2.2 Revival of Poetic Drama in the Twentieth Century

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8.2.6 Chief characteristics of Poetic Drama

8.2.7 Some major poetic dramatists and their notable works

8.2.8 The Contribution of T.S. Eliot to Poetic Drama

8.2.9 Summing Up

8.3 Check Your Progress

8.4 Important Questions

8.5 Suggested Readings

8.0 OBJECTIVES:

This unit aims at explaining in detail two important sub-genres of drama – the Theatre of the Absurd and Poetic Drama. Both these types of drama marked a break from the highly naturalistic drama which flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century. The various characteristic features defining the absurd theatre and the poetic drama have been made a part of this unit. Along with this, the students will be acquainted with the major dramatists of both the sub-genres along with their important works.

8.1 THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

8.1.1 Introduction

"The Theatre of the Absurd" is a term applied to drama that reflects the idea that the universe is without purpose and human life is futile and meaningless. The phrase "The Theatre of the Absurd" was conceptualized from Albert Camus' philosophy of "the absurd" as explained by him in his essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942) and was later popularized by Martin Esslin's book *The Theatre of Absurd* (1961). In the words of Martin Esslin,

> A term like 'Theatre of the Absurd' must be understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method and convention of shared philosophical and artistic premises whether conscious or subconscious, and of inferences from a common store of transition.

In *The Theatre of Absurd*, Esslin applied the term to the dramatic works of four main French playwrights - Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov and Jean Genet.

Absurd drama gained popularity from early 1950s till 1980s. In England, the theatre of the absurd became famous with the staging of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in 1955. It envisaged a total departure from all kinds of conventional drama. It brought a kind of revolution in the field of drama.

Some critics believed that Theatre of the Absurd arose as a movement from the doubts and fears surrounding World War II and what many people saw as the degeneration of traditional moral and political values. The movement flourished in France, Germany, and England, as well as in Scandinavian countries. Some of the founding works of the movement include Jean Genet's *The Maids*, Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, Arthur Adamov's *Ping-Pong*, and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

8.1.2 The Philosophical Basis:

The Theatre of the Absurd has its roots in the existential philosophy of the French philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The Absurdist philosophy of Camus and the existentialist philosophy of Sartre were the main sources which influenced and shaped the theatre of the absurd. Having witnessed the World Wars and the consequent disillusionment experienced by humanity, Camus came to believe in the meaninglessness of life. Camus in his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) defined "absurd" as the "tension" which arises from man's efforts to discover purpose and order in the world. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was a cruel king condemned by the Gods forever to roll a huge stone up a hill in Hades, only to have it roll down the hill just before reaching the top. Based on this myth, Camus suggested that all the efforts of man in this world are as futile as Sisyphus' eternal labour.

The theatre of the absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. "It does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation" says Martin Esslin. The chaos of existence as conceptualized by Camus and Sartre is the basis of absurd drama. According to their philosophy, the universe and man's existence in this universe are meaningless. All attempts made by the human mind to understand the world are futile. Their theory failed all philosophies and religious systems which claimed that they were capable of enabling man make a sense of this world. The sense of loss of meaning due to political and social upheavals in the first half of the twentieth century inevitably led to a questioning of the recognized instrument for communication of meaning - Language. According to the existentialists, conversation is absurd and nonsensical as the language reflects the preoccupation of contemporary philosophy with the discovery of reality and it emphasizes the basic absurdity of human condition.

8.1.3 Form and Content:

The form and structure of these plays is dictated by the very idea that forms the basis of these plays. In both form and content, it portrays human beings as isolated from others. There is no conventional plot, dialogue or character motivation. This formlessness and apparent irrationality are an expression of the absurd predicament of man, whose existence has no reason. Eugene Ionesco, the proponent of this kind of drama described the dramatic technique as "anti-play" or "anti-theatre" which discarded the conventional notions of plot, characterization, dialogues, setting etc. which had been in use since the times of the Greeks.

Since the absurdist works rarely follow a clear plot, whatever action occurs serves only to heighten the sense that the characters are mere victims of unknown, arbitrary forces beyond their control. The dialogue is often redundant, setting and passage of time within the play is unclear, and the characters express frustration with deep, philosophical questions, such as the meaning of life and death and the existence of God.

There is little dramatic action as traditionally understood; however frantically the characters perform, their business serves to underscore the fact that nothing happens to change their existence. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, there is no plot, and a timeless, circular quality emerges as two lost creatures, usually played as tramps, spend their days waiting - but without any certainty of whom they are waiting for or of whether he will ever come.

Language in an absurdist play is often dislocated, full of cliches, puns, repetitions, and the conclusions don't logically follow from the previous statements. For instance, the characters in Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* sit and talk, repeating the obvious until it sounds like nonsense, thus revealing the inadequacies of verbal communication. The

ridiculous, purposeless behaviour and conversation give the plays a sometimes dazzling comic surface, but there is undoubtedly an underlying serious message of metaphysical distress.

The essence of absurd drama is clearly expressed through a dialogue by a character named Estragon in Act I of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot.* He says:

"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful".

An absurd existence is captured in this situation through the two tramps, Lucky and Pozzo. Vladimir, who is waiting for Godot, constructs a sort of parable in which Godot stands for God, or for a mythical human being or for the meaning of life or even death.

8.1.4 Existentialism:

Existentialism is a 20th century philosophy concerned with human existence, finding self, and the meaning of life through free will, choice, and personal responsibility without the help of laws, ethnic rules or traditions. It is based on the assumption that a person's judgment is the determining factor for what is to be believed rather than by religious or secular world values. Existentialism takes into consideration the following concepts:

- free will of human beings,
- human nature is chosen through life choices,
- a person is best when struggling against his individual nature, fighting for life,
- decisions cannot be taken without stress and consequences,
- the world consists of irrational ideas,
- personal responsibility and discipline is crucial,
- society is unnatural and its traditional religious and secular rules are arbitrary,
- worldly desire is futile.

The Theatre of the Absurd was heavily influenced by existential philosophy. It aligned best with the philosophy in Albert Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942). In this essay, Camus attempts to present a reasonable answer as to why man should not commit suicide in face of a meaningless, absurd existence. As already explained, Camus describes the fate of Sisyphus and at the end of the essay, he concludes that, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus). He means that the struggle of life alone should bring one happiness. Essentially, we can find meaning in living even without knowing why we exist. An existentialist could either be a religious moralist, agnostic relativist, or an amoral atheist. Soren Kierkegaard, a religious philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, an anti-Christian, Jean-Paul Sartre, an atheist, and Albert Camus, an atheist, are credited for their works and writings about existentialism. Sartre is noted for bringing the most international attention to existentialism in the 20th Century.

Human life is in no way complete and fully satisfying because of suffering and losses that occur when considering the lack of perfection, power, and control one has over their life. Even though life is not optimally satisfying, it nonetheless has meaning. Existentialism is the search and journey for true self and true personal meaning in life. It stresses that a person's judgment is the determining factor for what is to be believed rather than by arbitrary religious or secular world values.

8.1.5 Chief Characteristics of Absurd Drama:

a) It was largely influenced by the disillusionment caused by the two world wars and had the underlying notion that human existence was essentially absurd and meaningless.

No doubt, the theatre of the Absurd was a post - world war creation. It provided the people a dignified way to confront the universe deprived of what was once its centre and its living purpose- the God and Faith.

b) It marked a complete break from the tenets of drama as propounded by the Greeks or other dramatists of antiquity.
c) It was clearly a reaction against the drawing room naturalism of the early twentieth century plays.
d) Most of the absurd plays characteristically concentrated on two or three people maneuvering for sexual or social superiority in a claustrophobic room or a strange place. Works such as *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Homecoming* (1965), *No Man's Land* (1975), and *Moonlight* (1993) are potent dramas of menace in which a slightly surreal atmosphere contrasts with and undermines dialogue of tape-recorder authenticity. Sometimes these characters are specifically unrecognizable - almost mechanical puppets.
e) These plays lacked objectivity and focused on the personal world of the author.

8.1.6 Some major absurdist playwrights and their notable works:

Playwright	**Absurd Plays**
Samuel Beckett	*Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Krapp's Last Tape*
Edward Albee	*Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, The Zoo Story*
Eugene Ionesco,	*The Bald Saprano, Rhinoceros, The Chairs*
Harold Pinter	*The Birthday Party, The Homecoming*
Jean Genet	*The Maids, The Balcony*

8.1.7 Summing Up:

Absurd plays of the 1950s are characterized by boredom, habit, monotony, impotence and ignorance which enveloped the world after the wars and created an absurd existence. Originally shocking in its flouting of theatrical convention while popular for its apt expression of the preoccupations of the mid-20th century, the Theatre of the Absurd declined somewhat by the mid-1960s; some of its innovations had been absorbed into the mainstream of theatre even while serving to inspire further experiments. However, Beckett's death in 1989 is said to mark the close of the movement's popularity.

8.2 POETIC DRAMA

8.2.1 Introduction

Poetic drama is drama written significantly in verse with the aim of being performed by an actor before the audience. Verse drama had remained a dominant form of drama in Europe for a long period of time. Most of Greek tragedy and Racine's plays were written in verse. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides wrote great **poetic plays** which were saturated with intense emotions. In the context of English drama, many plays of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and John Fletcher were also written in verse. After Shakespeare, there came a steady decline in poetic drama. However, John Milton pulled the tradition along with his famous poetic drama *Samson Agonistes.* Moving further, Goethe's *Faust* and Henrik Ibsen's early plays also fall in the category of poetic plays. All through the 19th century, practically all the great poets -William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Robert Browning, Mathew Arnold, and Lord Alfred Tennyson, tried their hands at poetic drama, but failed to bring about a revival of this literary genre.

8.2.2 Revival of Poetic Drama in the Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century, poetic drama arose as a reaction to the naturalistic prose drama of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. By 1930s, prose drama, in the words of G.S. Fraser, "had reached a dead end". It could no longer hold the depth, tension and complexity of contemporary life. It was limited to the social and economic problems of the times and entirely excluded deeper and more fundamental issues. Drama in the hands of the naturalist playwrights ceased to be the representation of "emotional reality" and became a handmaid of social criticism. The use of flowery language in realistic plays was out of place, and drama, dealing with social problems, was prosaic rather than poetic. These conditions led some dramatists to revive poetic plays in what was termed as "little theatres". As an opposition to the highly realistic drama of the early twentieth century, there arose a need for imaginative thinking which was met by the poetic drama of William Butler Yeats, T.S. Eliot and other writers of poetic drama. Allardyce Nicoll describes this change as a "renascence of imagination".

Thus, this revival was pioneered by William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Isherwood and Christopher Fry. However, in the early years of the twentieth century, some dramatists like Stephen Phillips did try their hand on poetic drama. Stephen Phillips wrote famous verse plays like *Paolo and Francesca*, *Herod*, *Ulysses*, *The Sin of David*, and *Nero*. But his plays could not cause the desired sensation and failed to create an appreciable demand for poetic drama. Because of his uncritical admiration of the Elizabethans, he was referred to as a "fossilized Elizabethan". Other dramatists who followed Stephen Phillips were Rudolf Besier and J.E.Flecker. Famous poets like John Masefield and John Drinkwater also wrote a few poetic plays. Whereas Masefield is known for the combination of prose and verse in his plays like *Good Friday*, *A King's Daughter, The Trail of Jesus* and *The Coming of Christ*, Drinkwater is best known for his poetic dramas which include *The Storm*, *The God of Quiet* and *X=O: A Night of the Trojan War.*

8.2.3 Major Themes:

Twentieth century poetic dramas have been written on a variety of subjects. Some plays have been written on the glorification and exaltation of religion and the church, while a number of them have atheism and denunciation of God and priests as their subjects. Some

plays are symbolical and mystical in character while many of them have Celtic mythology and Irish life as their subjects. Some plays have oriental grandeur and are inspired by oriental setting while others have aesthetic enjoyment and glorification of sex-urge as their main spring. Thus, the poetic plays of the twentieth century range over a wide variety of subjects.

8.2.4 The contribution of W.B. Yeats and the Irish Movement:

The Irish Movement contributed a lot to the twentieth century drama and poetry. The leaders of the Irish Movement were W.B. Yeats and J. M. Synge. Of these two, W. B. Yeats was a poet of considerable powers. His poetic plays were poetic both in form and spirit. They were characterized by symbolism, mysticism and delicate refinement. Some of his prominent plays are *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, *The King's Threshold* and *On Baile's Strand*. In almost all his verse plays, Yeats probes the mystique of human nature and quest for answer to deeper esoteric questions.

8.2.5 Difference between poetic drama and prose drama

Comparing verse and prose as the media of drama, T.S. Eliot stated that "poetry is the natural and complete medium of drama, that the prose play is a kind of abstraction capable of giving you only a part of what the theatre can give, and that the verse play is capable of something much more intense and exciting". However the main points of difference between the twentieth poetic drama and prose drama are as follows:

a) In verse **drama**, the dialogues are written in verse and the characters talk in verse while in prose drama, the dialogues are written in prose and the characters also deliver their dialogues in prose.
b) Poetic drama focuses on the innermost reality of life whereas prose drama concentrates its imitation on the outer reality of the world. The latter is naturalistic in character.
c) Poetic drama induces the deepest sense of joy in life and strongly reminds its readers and audiences that they have the power of being conscious of their own lives, while in prose drama, simple description wrapped in reality is presented.
d) The poetic equipment used in poetic drama gives us sensuous joy, while prose drama gives us merely a detailed description of events.

8.2.6 Chief characteristics of Poetic Drama

a) The pictorial quality and expressive sensuousness of **poetic drama** is vivid. The images and language presented in a poetic drama make it intensely picturesque and serves as the total image of distilled human reality we observe in it.
b) Poetry introduces sensory experience into drama which always remains abstract and along with that it interprets the action by setting it in a large context of moral and spiritual world.
c) The poetic dramatist must unite whole drama in a way analogous with music. This organic order coming from within not as technical order imposed from within is quite impossible to prose because poetry has greater scope and flexibility.
d) Religious attitude to human life is essential for writing a true **verse drama**. Except W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, all the major poetic drama of the last thirty years have been religious to the core. The significant **phase of poetic drama** began

when drama retreated to its origin inside the church. Then, from church, it moved to commercial theaters.

e) It is a mixture of high seriousness and colloquial element. It is the combination of the tradition and the experiment and of the ancient and the new.
f) Eliot in his *Rhetoric and Poetic Dramas* asserted that rhetoric is an indispensable element of poetic drama. Rhetoric contains a truly dramatic element, whereby, the characters in the play support their dramatic importance, gaining their own objectivity by being independent of the subjectivity of the playwrights. Modern realistic dramas lacked this dramatic importance.
g) In the twentieth century English poetic drama, dialogue was usually written in blank verse. *Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion* , *The Cocktail Party* are popular examples of poetic drama by Eliot.

8.2.7 Some major poetic dramatists and their notable works:

Poetic Dramatists	**Poetic Drama**
William Shakespeare	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*
John Milton	*Samson Agonistes*
William Wordsworth	*The Borderers*
PB Shelley	***The Cenci***
Stephen Phillips	*Herod, Ulysses, Nero*
John Masefield	*Good Friday, A King's Daughter*
John Drinkwater	*X=O: The Night of the Trojan War*, *The God of Quiet*
Thomas Hardy	*The Dynasts*
W. B. Yeats	*The Shadowy Waters*, *The King's Threshold*
John Millington Synge	*The Well of the Saints*, *Riders to the Sea*

T. S. Eliot	***Murder in Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion***

8.2.8 The Contribution of T.S. Eliot to Poetic Drama:

T.S. Eliot is well known for his poetic plays. He has been a shaping force in the twentieth century literature. In his critical works, he always defended poetic drama long before he started writing verse dramas himself. T. S. Eliot demonstrated that a tradition of poetic drama could be established in the 20th century and that contemporary setting and themes can be dealt with this literary species. In *The Possibility of a Poetic Drama*, *The Need for Poetic Drama*, *Aims of Poetic Drama* and *Poetry and Drama*, he strongly advocated the use of poetic drama. He himself wrote many poetic plays which include *Sweeny Agonistes*, *The Rock, Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman*. His plays are marked by vigorous and bold use of all devices proper to the form of verse drama, emphatic melody, alliterative values, arresting imagery. They exhibited close links with religious and political beliefs. Of all his plays, *Murder in the Cathedral* is the most famous. It was written to be performed in Canterbury Cathedral "to commemorate the martyrdom of St. Thomas Beckett" who had been murdered in the Cathedral. It is written in the manner of the classical tragedy and has made use of medieval allegorical elements of the morality plays. Bamber Gascoigne in his book *Twentieth Century Drama* has written about Eliot's play, *Murder in the Cathedral* that "it is the highest tribute to poetic drama to say, as one can of *Murder in the Cathedral*, that it is both intensely dramatic and inconceivable in prose". Eliot's plays are complex like his poetry but in his plays, he evokes the desired moods by handling the verse medium wonderfully. He succeeded in developing a flexible verse form from the contemporary idiom, which suggests the contemporary environment. He demolished certain misconceptions about poetic drama such as the idea that a nation can enjoy only one great age of poetic drama. He emphasized that verse is the natural language of men at moments of intense, emotional excitement and expresses the deeper passions of men, and as such it has a quality of universality and permanence. Nor is the use of verse artificial if used flexibly and to suit all situations and all characters.

8.2.9 Summing Up:

Poetic Drama is a great achievement of the modern age. It combines the qualities of both poetry and drama that give deep impact of dramatist's emotions on the readers. In fact, poetry combined with drama increases seriousness in tragedy. With the revival of poetic drama, after a long period of time, churches once again housed the performance of these plays along with small theatres.

In modern verse plays, myths, religion, and politics have been well represented. The future of the poetic plays in English drama may be summed up with a quote by Galsworthy,

> "…there will always remain a twisting and delicious stream which will bear on its breast new barks of poetry, shaped, it may be, like prose, but prose incarnating through its fantasy, and symbolism all the deeper aspirations, yearnings, doubts and mysterious strivings of the human spirit".

8.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q-1 Theatre of the Absurd refers to:

A. A literary movement of drama that explores the human condition as random and chaotic in a godless universe.
B. Comical Theatre.
C. Theatrical performances about madness.
D. None of the above.

Q-2 Which of the following is considered to be a founding work in Theater of the Absurd?

A. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard
B. The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter
C. Hamlet by William Shakespeare
D. Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett

Q-3 Theatre of the Absurd was popular as a literary movement during:

A. World War II.
B. the American Revolution.
C. From the 1940s to the 1980s
D. the Great Depression.

Q-4 *Riders to the Sea* is a famous poetic drama written by

A. Anton Chekov
B. Samuel Beckett
C. J.M. Synge
D. Christopher Fry

Q-5 Who is the author of the famous poetic plays - *The Shadowy Waters* , *The Golden Hemet*, *Deirdre* etc.

A. W.B. Yeats
B. G.B. Shaw
C. Gordon Bottomley
D. Stephen Phillips

Q-6 Who is the speaker of these famous lines, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful"?

A. Pozzo
B. Lucky
C. Estragon
D. Vladimir

Q-7 Identify the author of the famous absurdist play, *The Birthday Party*?

A. Eugene Ionesco
B. Harold Pinter
C. Samuel Beckett
D. Albert Camus

Q-8 The Irish Movement is also known as

A. Restoration period
B. Modern Movement
C. Celtic Revival
D. Absurdist Movement

Q-9 Who is the author of *The Myth of Sisyphus*?

A. Martin Esslin
B. Samuel Beckett
C. Edward Albee
D. Albert Camus

8.4 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions in detail:

1) What do you mean by the term "The Theatre of the Absurd"? What are the salient features of this school of drama?
2) Reflect on the common themes in the Absurd drama.
3) Write an essay on the major features of the twentieth century poetic drama.
4) What were the factors that led to the revival of poetic drama in the twentieth century?

Give brief answers to the following questions:

1) Write a short note on the influence of the Celtic Revival on the emergence of poetic drama.
2) Write a note on the points of difference between poetic drama and prose drama.
3) Define Poetic Drama.
4) Define existentialism.

8.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Banham, Martin. The Cambridge Guide To Theatre. New York: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 1996.
- Brustein, Robert. The Theatre Of Revolt; An Approach to the Modern Drama.
- Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964.
- Cuddon, J.A.. Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. New York: Penguin Group, 1998.
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- Matlaw, Myron. "Theatre of the Absurd." Modern World Drama: An Encyclopedia. 1972.

UNIT 9: ARTHUR MILLER – *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

STRUCTURE

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Arthur Miller: life and works

9.3 Introduction to the play

9.4 Check your progress-1

9.5 Summary and critical analysis

9.5.1 Act I

9.5.2 Critical analysis of Act I

9.5.3 Act II

9.5.4 Critical Analysis of Act II

9.6 Summing up

9.7 Check your progress-2

9.8 Suggested reading and references

9.9 Questions for practice

9.9.1 Long answer questions

9.9.2 Short answer questions

9.0 OBJECTIVES:

This unit introduces you to

- The author Arthur Miller and his work
- Origin and historical context of *Death of a Salesman*, major influences like Economic Depression and American Dream
- Scene wise summary of the play with its critical analysis

9.1 INTRODUCTION:

You are now familiar with the terms pertaining to drama, growth of drama as a genre and new movements in theatre. In this unit, we will try to understand the underlying themes and techniques of modern drama through a reading of the summary and analysis of *Death of a Salesman*. It bears the influence of Expressionism, a movement in art and literature in the 20th Century. It will be interesting to note how it differs in form and matter from the traditional drama. The play stands out due to its juxtaposition of the past and the present and its symbolism.

9.2 ARTHUR MILLER: LIFE AND WORKS

Arthur Miller was born in Manhattan, New York, in 1915. His father, a Jew, was devastated by the great economic Depression of 1930s. His family moved to a poor neighbourhood of the city called Brooklyn in 1929. Miller finished his schooling in Brooklyn but could not join college. He did a lot of odd jobs before joining a course in journalism at the University of Michigan. He began to write plays like *Honors at Dawn* (1936) and *No Villain* (1937) while studying. His work caught the attention of the audience.

Miller won the Theatre Guild National Award for his play *They Too Arise* (1938). *All My Sons* (1947) is his first commercially successful play which won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. The play under study *Death of a Salesman* was written in 1948. It won him accolades. His next *The Crucible* (1953) deals with a witch hunt in 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts. *A View from the Bridge* (1955) is a tragedy based on the theme of sexual betrayal. In 1957, Miller's collection of plays *Collected Plays* was published. His plays *After the Fall* and *Incident at Vichy* were performed in 1964 and *The Price* in 1968.

After the Fall traces his strained relationship with his second wife, the celebrated actress Marilyn Monroe. They got divorced in 1961. Monroe later committed suicide. The only novel written by Arthur Miller in 1945 is titled *Focus*.

As if his childhood hardships and strained marriage were not enough, Miller was persecuted for his social and political commitments. He had been under scrutiny for his communist affiliation but he remained true to his ideals.

9.3 *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*: INTRODUCTION, ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

Death of a Salesman is one of Miller's critically acclaimed plays. The play captures the last day of a salesman's life. It revolves around a family of four including Willy Loman, his wife Linda, their grown-up sons Biff and Happy. The protagonist, the sixty-three-year-old salesman Willy Loman, is never able to reconcile himself to his failure to make it big in the world of sales. He stumbles never to get up again when he stops selling. Willy Loman keeps believing in the American dream of achieving success through hard work and impressive personality. *Death of a Salesman* followed long after the Depression of the 1930s which shattered the American dream but it bears the imprint of this watershed moment in American history. Willy lives in a world of make believe and instils the same values into his sons. The hollowness of these values is proved when he and his sons fail to fit into any job. Linda, instead of removing the blinkers of illusion from the eyes of her husband and sons, plays her part in the farce of a promising life, bright future and imagined success. Built on flimsy

grounds, Willy's world collapses very soon. He is guilty of not facing the reality even after the failure of his ideals. Willy's neighbour Charles and his son Bernard represent the real world and its ethics. Willy also fails as a role model to Biff who idolized his father. As a teenager, Biff is shocked to know about his father's adultery. His career spirals down after this incident. Unable to bear the decline of his son Biff, Willy crashes his car outside his house. Miller brilliantly weaves the conscious and subconscious life of Willy Loman as he slips in and out of his past. This technique helps bring out the tragic element in the character of Willy Loman who constantly fights to live up to his beliefs.

Written in 1948, the play became a hit with 742 performances on Broadway. Supposedly the idea of the play was brewing in his mind for ten years before it took shape. Miller wrote the first act of *Death of a Salesman* in less than a day at a small studio that he built in Roxbury, Connecticut. It opened on February 10, 1949 at the Morosco Theatre, and was appreciated by public and critics alike. *Salesman* won Arthur Miller all the accolades of theatrical craftsmanship: the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and a Tony. The play was also made into a film.

The origin of the play can be traced to a short story written by Miller at the age of seventeen. He was the same age as young Biff Loman. The story is about an old salesman who is not able to sell anything, is scorned and shunned by his customers. He used to borrow his fare from the narrator. The salesman had committed suicide by throwing himself under a subway train. Miller, however, could trace the roots of the play in his extended family itself. Willy Loman closely resembles Miller's salesman uncle Manny Newman. Manny seemed to be competing with his sons in a never-ending race. In Miller's words, in Newman household one was never allowed to lose hope. "It was a house . . . trembling with resolutions and shouts of victories that had not yet taken place" (Miller 122). Manny's son Buddy was a sports hero like Biff Loman and popular among girls like Happy Loman. But having failed in studies, he could not go to college. Manny, his family and other salesmen like him tried to play out the American dream. Willy Loman belongs to this class of actors who, as Charley remarks, put "on a smile and a shoeshine" and set out to sell their wares in the world, a world that either ignores or rejects them. The success of *Death of a Salesman* rides on Miller's ability to bring out the cruelty of the materialistic society and the vulnerability of a human being fighting with its mores. The play stands out as the tragic life and death of Willy Loman is portrayed on a deeper, psychological level.

9.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - 1

Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. Which play of Arthur Miller deals with his strained relationship with Marilyn Monroe?
2. Which are the different awards won by *Death of a Salesman*?
3. Name two major factors that influenced the play.
4. Who in Arthur Miller's family is the inspiration behind Willy's character?
5. What is the occupation of Willy Loman? How does Charley describe a salesman?

9.5 SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

9.5.1 Act I

Lomans' house is seen surrounded by high rise apartments. Willy Loman comes back exhausted from a business trip, rather earlier than expected. Linda is a little worried. She has been observing for some time that Willy's mental condition is deteriorating. Willy admits that he is not able to focus on things and he nearly killed himself that day by veering off the road. She advises her husband to slow down a little and take rest. She also suggests Willy to talk to his boss about giving him work in New York itself. Linda happily shares with Willy how their younger son Happy took Biff on a date that day. Apparently, Willy had had an argument with his son that morning as Biff, although thirty-four, is still to settle down in life. Willy calls Biff lazy, but in the same breath swears by his son's personal attractiveness. He is reminded of Biff's popularity in school. Willy feels suffocated and asks Linda to open the window. Willy's behaviour is strange as the window is already open. He also regrets that there is no greenery left around their house. While driving that day, he felt as if he had been driving their old car, a red Chevvy. Willy goes to the kitchen for some cheese while Linda tries to sleep.

In the second scene, Biff and Happy are seen talking in their bunkbeds upstairs. Both are well-built. Happy is two years younger than his brother but seemingly more confident than him, especially with women. They hear their father talking to himself and discuss what could possibly be wrong with him. Biff has come back home after a long period. He tells Happy that he enjoys a simple life on farm and he has been working on one recently. He is upset with his father, still sour over their morning argument. Happy cheers him up saying that their father just wants Biff to succeed. Biff and Happy smoke, talk about girls and their jobs. Biff is not happy with the way his future is shaping. Actually, he can't make up his mind what he wants to do in life. Happy, too, is restless and gets frustrated at times. He has got a rented apartment, a car and lots of women in his life, but he still feels lonely. He feels he is more intelligent than his boss and deserves more in return. Biff asks Happy if they can work jointly. They may own a ranch and enjoy a life of outdoors. Happy shares with Biff that he has been flirting with a lot of women. It gives him a feeling of achievement when he steals others' girlfriends. Biff plans to meet Bill Oliver, his earlier boss, and strike a deal with him. His only worry is that Bill might remember the carton of basketballs Biff stole from him.

The boys hear their father talking to himself. They go off to sleep determined to talk to their father in the morning. The scene shifts to the past. There is music in the background and surroundings become covered with green. Willy is talking to his boys. Biff and Happy are young boys and they are washing their old car while Willy is giving them directions. Willy's behaviour with his boys is quite friendly. He takes a lot of pride in his boys, especially Biff. He cautions young Biff to stay away from girls and focus on his studies. He is enjoying his boys' company presenting a congenial picture. Getting gifts for his boys, encouraging Biff to play football, promising outings to his boys, Willy is the picture of a happy and proud father. But he fails as a father when he turns a blind eye to Biff's tendency to steal. Biff's neighbour and classmate Bernard tells Willy that their maths teacher is going to flunk him if Biff does not start studying. Willy dismisses it saying that "Bernard is not well liked" and he is unlikely to succeed in the business world where personality is synonymous with success. He tells his

boys to help their mother with the household work when Linda appears on the scene with her wash. The boys get to work and they call to their help other boys from the neighbourhood.

Linda and Willy take stock of Willy's earnings and the pending bills that week. Willy begins confidently announcing his profits on sales in different cities but soon realises that his income is dwindling along with his charisma. People seem to laugh at him. The expenditure on running his home exceeds his earning. Linda reassures him complementing that he is the most handsome man to her. A woman's laugh is heard and Willy finds himself with a woman on one of his business trips in the past. It is Willy's guilt that haunts him and reminds him of his infidelity to his wife. He gifts stockings to the woman. When he comes back to the present scene, he sees Linda mending his stockings. He is frustrated at his own failure as a husband. Bernard arrives on the scene to warn Willy against Biff's non-seriousness in studies but Willy does not listen to him. He is so swept away by Biff's popularity in school that he ignores the warnings of Bernard.

Happy comes downstairs and talks to Willy. Willy regrets not following his brother Ben to Alaska. He idolizes Ben. "There was a man started with the clothes on his back and ended up with diamond mines." He confesses in front of Happy that he can no longer drive a car without risking his life. He could not go beyond Yonkers that day.

Willy's neighbour Charley enters. His attitude towards Willy is full of pity and fear. Charley offers to play cards with Willy. As they play, Willy keeps denigrating Charley. He feels insulted when Charley offers him a job and so he declines it. During the game, Uncle Ben keeps impinging on the scene. Ben talks about Alaska and the opportunities it offers. Apparently, Uncle Ben is a figment of Willy's imagination because Charley can't understand what Willy is talking about. Frustrated over Willy's behaviour, Charley leaves. Willy wants to know the secret of Ben's success. They talk about their past. Willy enquires about their father from Ben. Their father, Ben claims, was very enterprising. He used to make and sell flutes and earn profits. Willy wants Ben to share the secret of his success with Biff and Happy. He calls Happy and Biff. Ben challenges Biff to a boxing fight. Willy encourages his son to fight with Ben though Linda is opposed to it. Charley enters the stage and complains that Biff has been stealing lumber from an under-construction apartment. Willy refuses to admit Biff's faults. Ben assures Willy that he is bringing up his sons rightly.

Ben leaves and the scene changes to present. Linda asks Willy if he has got the cheese. Willy is unwilling to go to bed. He goes out for a walk in his slippers. Biff discusses with Linda his father's strange behaviour. She accuses her sons of being thankless. She also accuses them of tormenting Willy whose condition worsens every time Biff comes home. She desperately asks them to save their father who is exhausted and can't go on like that for long. There is evidence that Willy has been deliberately trying to smash his car against the bridge railing. He has also attempted suicide at home using a rubber tube. She is constantly living in fear that something terrible would happen to him. Biff and Happy, moved by their mother's pleas, think of a career move together. Biff plans to go to his old employer Bill Oliver to ask for investment money into a business of sporting goods. Willy's faith in his elder son is quickly restored. He swears by his intelligence and dashing personality. During his conversation with his sons, he is very rude to his wife and interrupts her every time she tries to speak. Act one ends on a promising note with Willy looking forward to his son's meeting with Bill Oliver.

As he is about to sleep, he also promises Linda that he would ask his boss Howard to let him work in New York. Biff is horrified to see the length of rubber tubing behind the heater.

9.5.2 Critical Analysis of Act I

Death of a Salesman addresses multiple issues ailing the American society of the time. The first and foremost is the American dream of being successful through personal charm and charisma. It is the failure of this formula that the protagonist Willy Loman represents. Arthur Miller uses a disjointed time frame to bring out the gap between Willy's aspirations and achievements.

The surname "Loman" can be read as "low man" which signifies a man of meagre status and achievement. Willy Loman, a salesman, is falling into an abyss. He is disintegrating under the weight of his failed dreams. He is not able to distinguish between the real and the unreal. He is losing touch with reality. He relapses into the world of his imagination frequently and is driven to suicide. His sense of failure worsens when he encounters Biff. Biff has not been able to settle down and there are sufficient clues that Willy Loman is responsible for his son's predicament. Willy's emphasis on physical appearance and sports, completely disregarding the value of hard work and studies, derail the careers of Biff and Happy. They become perpetual adolescents. Biff is still looking for a stable job and Happy is looking for a stable relationship. Happy idolises his mother and wishes to marry a girl who is as steadfast as his mother is.

Linda is used to suppressing her desires and does not object to Willy's decisions. She supports Willy unconditionally out of her sense of duty though Willy has been unfaithful to her. It is with a sense of horror that she is witnessing the slow decline of her husband. Usually tolerant and passive, she rebukes her sons and asks them to save their father. Willy Loman is almost living on the edge and any small disruption in the form of his son's failure can push him into the eternal abyss. Arthur Miller draws attention to the fragility of a human being in the face of cutthroat competition and materialistic idea of success. Charley and Bernard represent the kind who rise by dint of their hard work and consistency. Willy looks down upon them as they are not "well liked." Ben on the other hand represents the romanticised idea of success coveted by Willy Loman. Ben's achievements seem to be unreal. They are in the nature of daydreams Willy Loman is prone to having. The encounters and give and take between Willy and Ben have enough clues to show Willy's delusional state of mind. He not only entertains a false image of himself but also believes in the prosperity of his brother Ben.

In order to unravel the aberrations of Willy's mind including his diving into the past and the present, talking to imaginary characters, Arthur Miller makes use of curtains as walls. The use of flute to represent the idyllic past is also very effective. Willy is afraid of the urban jungle the city is fast becoming. He wants to grow plants in his backyard. Perhaps Biff has inherited his love of outdoors from him.

Death of a Salesman strikes a chord as the protagonist is an ordinary salesman who is trapped in the expectations of the world around him. He and his family are doomed as they have internalised the wrong set of values. The psychological portrayal of Willy's character and life is truly heart rending.

9.5.3 Act II

Willy Loman is having breakfast at the kitchen table. He looks well rested after a good night's sleep. Biff and Loman have left for their work. Biff is supposed to meet Oliver that day. Willy Loman's hope and faith in Biff have been rekindled. Willy plans to talk to his boss Howard for relieving him from the touring job. Linda reminds Willy about the payments due on repair and instalments.

Linda tells Willy Loman that Biff and Happy want to treat him to a big meal at Frank's Chop House that evening. This infuses a new life in Willy. He is very upbeat about meeting his boss, getting an advance and a possible transfer to New York. He leaves for the meeting with great zeal and hope. Biff calls up Linda to ask whether she has extended the invitation to Willy. Biff is still waiting to meet Oliver. He discloses that it is he who had taken the rubber tubing attached to heater. Though Linda thought Willy himself had removed the tube as he was in a happy frame of mind now.

The scene changes to that of Howard's office. Willy tells Howard that he has come to have a word with him. Howard hardly pays any attention to Willy's request. He is more interested in listening to the recorded voices of his children. When he does listen to Willy's request to give him a settled job, he expresses his helplessness. Howard says he can't offer Willy any job in New York. A salesman has got to travel. Willy's entreaties fail to move Howard. Willy is ready to settle for less money but Howard, a hard-core businessman, refuses. Willy protests, "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away – a man is not a piece of fruit." Instead, Howard politely asks Willy to take a break which implies he is firing Willy. When Willy boasts about his sons, he advises him, "This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you are tired."

Howard leaves to meet other people. Willy is dejected and exhausted. Ben enters the scene and music is heard. Ben offers to take Willy along to Alaska but Linda opposes it. Willy too is sure of Biff's bright future in America which is a land of opportunities and where a person with a smiling face and contacts is sure to be successful. Biff enters as a high school student ready for a prestigious football match at Ebbets Field. Bernard and Happy are accompanying him carrying his shoulder guards. Willy is very excited about Biff's performance. He treats Biff like a hero already.

Bernard is seen sitting in his office with his feet up. He is a quiet self-assured young man. He has dropped by on his way to Washington where he is to argue a case in the Supreme Court. Willy is surprised to see him. He wants to know the secret of his success. Willy is aware that Biff had started really well but now lagged behind most of his contemporaries. He asks Bernard if he knows the reason behind Biff's downfall. Bernard points out that Biff could never regain balance once he flunked in maths. Biff could have joined the summer school and made up for that subject. Bernard asks if Biff had gone to meet Willy in Boston after he flunked. Willy confirms Biff had visited the hotel he was staying at. Bernard tells Willy that Biff had given up after his return. He had burnt his favourite sneakers. Bernard leaves as his father Charley enters. Charley lends Willy some money as he has been doing for some months. He also offers Willy a job in his company but Willy takes it as an insult and leaves.

The scene shifts to the restaurant where Loman brothers have planned a party with their father. Happy is making arrangements along with Stanley, a young waiter. He tells the waiter that the family is celebrating his brother's new venture. His brother Biff is going to strike a big deal with Bill Oliver. While Happy is waiting for his brother and father, a girl enters the

restaurant. Happy starts flirting with the girl. Biff arrives on the scene a little bewildered. Happy tries to hook his brother to the girl Miss Forsythe but Biff's mind is occupied with something more serious. He tells his brother that he kept waiting for Bill Oliver for six hours but Bill didn't even recognise him. Biff confesses, "I realised what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been! We have been talking in a dream for fifteen years." He got so angry and frustrated that he stole a fountain pen from Oliver's office. Biff wants to tell the truth to his father but Happy discourages him to do that. Willy joins his boys. Biff tries to explain what happened at Oliver's office but Willy is in a state of denial. He is not ready to accept that Biff has a made a fool of himself by visiting Oliver. His mind begins to play tricks with him. He sees young Bernard telling Linda that Biff has flunked maths. Willy is again delusional and talking to himself. Biff gets scared. He is compelled to tell another false story to please his father.

A woman's laugh is heard. Willy is transported to a hotel room in Boston where he is staying with a woman. He is dressing up when somebody knocks at the door repeatedly. Willy asks the woman to hide in the bathroom. Willy is surprised to see Biff at the door. Biff looks crestfallen as he has failed in maths. He asks his father to do something about it. The woman calls out though Willy had told her to keep her mouth shut. She demands the stockings Willy has gifted her. Biff is shocked to see a woman in his father's room. Willy tries to explain but cannot convince Biff that the woman was her customer.

Willy is seen sitting in the restaurant again. He is talking to himself about flunking in maths. Biff and Happy get confused at their father's behaviour. There is an argument between Biff and his father. Miss Forsythe comes with her friend Letta. The boys leave with the girls abandoning their father. Willy asks the waiter for the address of any seed store as he wants to plant some vegetables in his backyard.

Linda is bursting with anger when the boys come back. She calls them animals and tells them to get out of the house. She does not want them to see Willy who is again hallucinating. He is in the backyard planting seeds at this hour. Willy refers to Linda as a woman who has suffered for the family. He is probably discussing with Ben about insurance money which the family may receive after his death. He can also see a grand funeral, ironically his own. This anticipates his decision to kill himself. Through this last effort, he wants to win over his estranged son.

Biff comes to his father in the backyard and informs him about his decision to leave. He dares to admit, "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!" He confronts Willy about the rubber tube in the cellar and bluntly tells his father that it is not going to make a hero out of him. Biff tries to make his father realise that they are no heroes, but ordinary people living out on daily basis. Willy thinks that Biff is being spiteful. He softens when Biff breaks down in front of him. Linda and the boys go upstairs to sleep. Willy assures Linda that he too is coming upstairs. Again, Willy is seen talking to Ben about leaving together in search of diamonds. It also indicates his exit from the world. Willy drives off and smashes his car.

In Requiem, Linda, Biff, Happy and Charley are seen at Willy's grave. Nobody has come to attend the funeral as Willy had expected. Willy's suicide leaves many questions unanswered. Willy's true friend Charley explains, "He's (salesman) man out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a Shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back – that's an earthquake." Linda

stays for a while at the grave to tell Willy that she has paid the last payment on the house and they are finally "free."

9.5.4 Critical Analysis of Act II

The complications that begin in Act I reach a climax in Act II. The second act introduces the audience to an optimistic Willy Loman. He is full of hope for his son Biff and himself. But his hopes again prove to be delusions with the turn of events. His dreams of big deals are shattered. He is fired from his job and Biff cuts a sorry figure at Oliver's office. The theme of betrayal dominates the second act. Willy's disloyalty to his wife and betrayal of his own dreams crush his spirit and push him to the point of no return. Willy's claims seem hollow in contrast with the steady toil of Charley's son Bernard. Biff idolised his father till he finds out about his father's affair. He too is struck by this bolt and never recovers from this betrayal. Biff fails in maths and Willy fails him as father. Biff never regains control over his life and becomes rudderless. This guilt is tearing Willy apart and he becomes a fragmented personality. The interaction between his past and present, reality and fantasy intensifies making Willy a lost soul. His last attempt to redeem his failure is fatal. He continues struggling to the end and emerge as something of a hero, albeit a flawed one. Ironically, this hero does not get the adulation he wanted from people even after his death. The house Willy owned is finally free as Linda submits at his grave. Willy does not get to enjoy the fruit of his labour.

9.6 SUMMING UP

This unit acquaints the students with the outline of the story of the play. Through the detailed study and critical analysis of the play, students can apply the theory and history of drama to the text and appreciate the techniques and themes of modern American drama deftly used by Arthur Miller. A reading of the text is recommended for deeper understanding of the play.

9.7 Check your progress - 2

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What happened to Willy while driving?
2. Who is Willy's brother? Which country did he go to?
3. What did Willy and Biff fight over in the morning in Act I?
4. What is Linda's attitude towards her husband?
5. Describe Willy's meeting with Howard? What was its outcome?

9.8 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCES

9.8.1 Suggested reading:

- *Arthur Miller* by Leonard Moss in *Twayne's United States Authors Series*
- *Arthur Miller: Portrait of a Playwright* by Benjamin Nelson
- *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem* with an introduction by Christopher Bigsby

9.8.2 References:

Timebends: A Life by Arthur Miller (2013)

9.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

9.9.1 Long Answer Questions

a. Which incident is a turning point in Biff's life? How does it affect him?
b. Describe the restaurant scene in detail.

9.9.2 Short Answer Questions

a. What are the techniques used by Miller to show Willy drifting into his past?
b. What are the clues in the play betraying Willy's suicidal tendencies?

UNIT 10: ARTHUR MILLER – *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

STRUCTURE

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Themes

10.2.1 American Dream and materialism

10.2.2 Relationships and Betrayal

10.2.3 Pastoral vs Urban

10.3 Check your progress I

10.4 Characters

10.4.1 Willy Loman

10.4.2 Biff Loman

10.4.3 Linda Loman

10.4.4 Happy Loman

Minor Characters

10.4.5 Ben Loman

10.4.6 Charley

10.4.7 Bernard

10.4.8 Howard Wagner

10.5 Technical Aspects

10.5.1 Structure and plot

10.5.2 Expressionism

10.6 Summing up

10.7 Check your progress-2

10.8 Suggested reading and references

10.9 Questions for practice

10.9.1 Long answer questions
10.9.2 Short answer questions

10.0 OBJECTIVES:

This unit examines

- Major themes of the play
- Major and minor characters, their portrayal and role in the play
- Form of the play including its plot, technique and symbols used by Arthur Miller

10.1INTRODUCTION:

In Unit I of *Death of a Salesman*, you studied the origin and historical background of the play. It also gave you a detailed summary of the play. We will critically engage with the play in this unit. It would enlighten you about the issues addressed by Arthur Miller in this play. The structure of the play is integral to its theme. This unit will also throw light on the various techniques and methods that make the appeal of the play long lasting. Miller employs a combination of realism and expressionism in the play which gives it a psychological dimension.

10.2THEMES:

10.2.1 American Dream and materialism

Death of a Salesman cannot fit into one single category. It addresses many problems at the same time. The major preoccupation of Miller seems to be the American Dream. America offers itself to its people as a land of opportunities. It implies that anyone who strives can achieve financial and material success. Miller not only plays with this concept but also makes use of various elements of a dream. Willy Loman aspires to be successful in material terms, he sets out every morning wearing "a smile and shoeshine." He believes that any man who is smart, charismatic, and well-liked is bound to be successful. However, Willy and his sons fail to live up to this dream. When Willy stops selling, it is the end of the world for him. Miller is not opposed to the idea of the American dream, he only draws attention towards the materialistic definition of success and the human cost of such a pursuit.

Willy's brother Ben stands for the realization of American dream. He wanders into a jungle in his teen age, explores continents namely Alaska and Africa, and strikes a fortune by discovering a diamond mine. But Ben appears only in the reconstructed past and there is no evidence that his achievements are real.

Charley and Bernard, who stay next door, represent another version of the dream. Unlike Willy, their life is not driven by denial and lies. Bernard who was considered a bookworm as a young boy, becomes a successful lawyer through hard work. His slow ascension to success

proves that Miller does not reject the dream of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, the architects of America. Instead, it is the misinterpretation of the dream Miller is concerned with. When ambition replaces human need, the dream turns into a nightmare.

It is true that Willy Loman fails to achieve the financial success promised by the American dream. But that is not the real tragedy. Willy is so blinded by its glitter that he loses sight of the vital human values and feelings. Too much emphasis on appearances and false pride lead to the downfall of Willy and his sons. Crashing his car in the end is his last attempt at heroism by providing financial security to his family with his insurance money. Willy dies at the altar of American dream that has inspired generations of Americans. Miller's point is while the American dream can be a powerful source of motivation, it can reduce a human being into a commodity.

10.2.2 Relationships and Betrayal

While Miller directed the production of the play in China in 1983, he remarked, "*Death of a Salesman* is a love story between a man and his son, and in a crazy way between both of them and America" (*Beijing* 49). The relationship and conflict between Willy and his elder son Biff are central to the play. They are seen struggling with each other for their existence in the last twenty-four hours of Willy's life. In the idyllic past, Willy is Biff's hero and Biff is growing up to be a hero in Willy's eyes. In terms of time, money and energy, Willy has invested heavily in Biff for the realization of his dream of success. He shows off his son like a trophy. And Biff too showed great promise as a young footballer. On the other hand, Biff adored his father till he finds out his father's clandestine affair with a woman. He had come to meet his father in Boston when he flunked in maths. He was looking for support to tide over this crisis but his crisis deepens due to the betrayal of his father. Biff's career spirals down after that. As he grows up, he becomes a thief and a rudderless person.

Over the years, neither has been able to let go of the other because to do so would be to let go of a dream which, however tainted, still has the glitter of possibility, except that now Biff has begun to understand that there is something wrong, something profoundly inadequate about a vision so at odds with his instincts. (Bigsby xxii)

Biff comes back to resolve the conflict with his father, to finally liberate himself from the dream that Willy has instilled in him. However, he gets involved in the conspiracy to keep Willy happy by encouraging his illusions. He soon realises its futility and wants his father to confront the reality. He could save his father only at the cost of his freedom and fulfilment. This tension forms the crux of the play. The thought of Biff leaving home and city for farming breaks Willy's spirit and heart.

Willy's relationship with Linda is unequal. While Linda is extremely devoted and docile, Willy has been cheating on her. He yells at her, gets irritated when she interrupts. He tries to make amends towards the end of the play when he realises that Linda has suffered a lot. Willy's brother Ben and their father have also betrayed him by deserting him when he was a child.

Willy's other son, Happy, while moderately successful, is superficial. He has inherited Willy's tendency to betray in relationships. Unlike Biff, he vows to continue in his father's

footsteps after his father's death, pursuing an American Dream that will leave him hollow and alone.

10.2.3 Pastoral vs Urban

The theme of urbanisation and destruction of green cover recurs in the play. Urbanisation is closely associated with materialism and commercialisation. As the curtain rises, Willy Loman's house is seen surrounded by tall buildings. Its backdrop is made of towering angular shapes. So many high-rise buildings have eclipsed the natural beauty. Willy feels claustrophobic due to this landscape which also affects his mindscape. Christopher Bigsby remarks it is not only the house that has lost its protection and experienced the closing down of space and withering away of trees. He implies that Willy Loman too meets the same fate. Willy laments the felling of trees around his house. He can only see bricks and windows now and nothing grows in his backyard because plants don't get enough sunlight there.

Miller also uses pastoral or green as a metaphor for idyllic past of Willy Loman. Every time he drifts into an imaginary past, flute, also a symbol of pastoral, plays in the background. Willy Loman dreams of venturing into wild like his brother Ben and father. However, he can only fantasize about adventure as he is either too timid or too late for such an adventure. The city of concrete seems to frustrate him. Material possessions do not gratify Willy Loman and unfortunately, he lacks the insight to know what gives him fulfilment. It is too late in the night and in life when he is trying to sow the seeds of a pastoral future in his backyard.

Biff has known the pleasure of working on a farm. He is a self-professed man of the outdoors. But Willy undermines the satisfaction of working in the field. He is opposed to Biff's decision of working on a farm. Eventually Biff makes his own decision to leave the city dwelling of his father and go to a place where he feels more at home.

Death of a Salesman is a critique of the artificial world of the city with all its commercialisation, superficiality and indifference. Willy Loman cannot follow his brother as the world of a wild frontier waiting to be explored no longer exists. Instead, the green cover is shrinking and urban centres are fast encroaching upon the countryside. Willy's world is an urban dystopia where only buying and selling matter.

Willy thinks of his own death in terms of finally venturing into nature, the dark jungle that he could not enter during his lifetime.

10.3CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - 1

Answer the following questions in 50-100 words:

1. Why does Willy Loman commit suicide?
2. Discuss the theme of pastoral vs urban in *Death of a Salesman*.
3. How has Willy betrayed his wife Linda?
4. Discuss the father-son relationship in *Death of a Salesman.*
5. What do you understand by the American dream?

10.4 CHARACTERS

10.4.1 Willy Loman

In *Death of a Salesman,* Miller places Willy in the centre of all action. The play traces the happenings on the last day of Willy's life. In choosing a salesman as the protagonist, Miller chooses an icon of the American dream. Willy is representative of a class of people who lived like artists, whose product in a materialistic society is above all themselves. They carry on with their work wearing "a smile and a shoeshine." The play unfolds as Willy interacts with other characters whether real or imaginary, in real or psychic time.

Willy's chief trait is his denial of reality. Miller once said of Willy Loman that Willy cannot bear reality and is unable to change it and hence he keeps on changing his idea of reality. He slips into his idyllic past whenever faced with a harsh situation. He is an aging salesman. All his claims of selling big are exaggerated. He could not achieve material success after a lifetime of daily grind. Travelling from store to store, humiliating himself, he can't earn enough to pay his bills. Willy is compelled to work for Howard, the son of his old boss, who fails to appreciate Willy's experience and expertise. When Howard fires Willy, the latter feels worthless and discarded. He derives satisfaction from his brother's success. He keeps hallucinating about his brother Ben who is an adventurer, a true icon of the American dream. Ben has travelled to far off continents and hit upon a diamond mine. Willy imagines Ben beckoning to him promising unlimited wealth. He does not wish to face the unpleasant facts of his present life, one of them being Biff's failure to settle down. Willy's selective memory glosses over Biff's downfall and Willy only remembers the glorious moments of Biff's youth and also believes in the promise of a bright future for his son.

Willy's longing for natural, green and open surroundings symbolises his longing for a tranquil and less demanding life. It also shows man's affinity with nature whose appeal is long lasting in contrast to material possessions which cannot provide fulfilment for long.

Willy constantly shifts in time and place resulting in his arbitrary and angry behaviour. He ends up looking absurd and crazy to his employer, buyers and family. He refers to Biff as a lazy bum and a bright young man in the same breath. Although he adores Biff as a teenager, he is unable to communicate with Biff in the present. He forgets or chooses not to remember memories of a past affair until the end of Act II. In the restaurant, he harps on the memory of Biff flunking maths. His memories interfere with his present and they are disrupting his daily life. This eventually drives Willy to commit suicide.

Willy is not a pure victim of the materialistic American society. He is at fault as he has adopted only the glitter of the American dream whereas Charley, his neighbour, is grounded and his son Bernard has risen by dint of hard work. Willy replaces determination and hard work with false pride and delusion. As a result, his sons become directionless and their careers get derailed. Willy's quest of material success while being unaware of the wealth of relationships is another serious flaw in his personality. He lacks sufficient insight into his situation. He enjoys growing plants but underestimates the value of simple pleasures.

Willy is guilty of betrayal also. He not only betrays the ideals of the American dream but also his family. Willy betrays Linda by having an extramarital relationship. Linda seemingly is ignorant about the affair, but Biff is badly hurt on learning about the affair.

Willy has a fragmented self consisting of memories, recollections, and re-constructions of the past. He is going to pieces trying to make sense of his life. Willy not only remembers an event the way normal human beings do. Rather, he relives it, losing himself in the situation as if it is happening at that moment.

Willy is quite attached to Biff and is sure of his son's ability to achieve success that has eluded Willy so far. Biff miserably fails in the exam of life as he has inherited his father's flawed value system. Willy is guilty of passing on to Biff his phoney belief that it is important to be well-liked to create an impression. Apart from this he is haunted by an act of adultery that ruined his son's life.

By the end of the play, Willy is in turmoil as the gap between his dreams and reality widens. Here Miller treats Willy as a tragic hero. He remarks, "There is nobility, in fact, in Willy's struggle. Maybe it comes from his refusal ever to relent, to give up . . . . (*Beijing* 27). Willy decides to kill himself as he wants to leave a mark at least while dying. His exit from the world would help the family with insurance money and the suicide may reinstate Willy in Biff's eyes.

10.4.2 Biff Loman

Biff represents Willy's idyllic past and promising future. Willy treats him like a trophy. Every time Willy dives into the past, Biff is there like a happy memory. Biff brightens up Willy's dreams of future. As a young footballer he has received so much adulation that he strays from his path. He gets the welcome of a hero at home and his peers vied for his attention. His Adonis like looks, inflated self and encouragement from his father become his undoing. Biff takes to stealing in his youth. He steals a football from the locker room but Willy ignores it and rather praises his son. It is not surprising that Biff's habit of stealing continues throughout his adult life.

Biff looks up to his father for everything. He follows his father's philosophy that anybody who is "well-liked" is bound to be successful. Like his father he pays more attention to appearances and he never questions Willy.

Biff's impression of Willy as an ideal father is destroyed after Biff's trip to Boston. When Biff comes to know about his father's affair, he rejects Willy and his philosophy. He accuses Willy of cheating on Linda and calls him "fake." As Biff's role model turns out to be fake, he loses balance and direction. He tries his hand at many professions but is never able to settle down. Having lost faith in Willy's grand fantasies of success, he despises his father. Biff never gets along with his father after this incident.

Biff has a love-hate relationship with Willy. However hard he tries to dissociate with his father, he cannot turn a blind eye to his father's deteriorating condition. Linda draws the attention of the boys to their father's suicide attempts. Overwhelmed, Biff again gets carried away by his father's delusions. Believing that he was a salesman, he goes to his former boss Oliver for a meeting. Despite waiting till evening, he doesn't get to meet Bill Oliver. To make matters worse, he steals Oliver's fountain pen. This meeting, however, turns out to be an eye opener.

Unlike Willy, Biff finally accepts the truth that they never spoke truth for ten minutes in Lomans' house. Biff is relieved of the burden of his father's expectations. He realizes who he

is and what he wants. Biff is no longer a willing participant in Willy's make-believe world. He openly refuses to live by Willy's philosophy any longer. Ironically, Biff acknowledges that he, too, is a "fake," and both Willy and Biff are ordinary people.

Biff has a soft corner for Linda and he acknowledges Linda's contribution as a homemaker. He does not like Willy's shouting and interrupting his mother. He feels ashamed when Linda rebukes him for abandoning Willy. Biff loves outdoors and working with hands. His experience of working on a farm proves satisfying. Biff loses his father in the end but he finds himself.

10.4.3 Linda Loman

Linda is a devoted wife and homemaker. She is always seen doing household chores. She loves Willy unconditionally and wants to protect him at all costs. Willy bullies her, shuts her up and feels irritated quite often but she bears everything patiently. She is also aware that Willy has been borrowing money from Charley to run the house but never mentions it. She is often seen mending her stockings which reminds Willy of his failure as a provider and also as a spouse.

She is a tough woman as she has sustained her family whereas Willy has begun to daydream. She is living with the knowledge of Willy's suicidal tendencies. She is furious when Biff and Happy abandon their father in the restaurant. She threatens to throw them out. She, however, is not able to stall Willy's slow movement towards death. She is ready to accord him dignity by not confronting Willy on his suicide attempts. Her love and support are not enough to change Willy's decision to kill himself.

In fact, Linda too subscribes to the same societal norms of material success which cost Willy his life. While mourning at Willy's grave, Linda declares that having paid their debts, her family is finally free.

10.4.4 Happy Loman

Happy Loman, younger son of Willy Loman, is moderately successful. He has a job, a car and an apartment. Like Willy he trades in exaggerated claims and unrealistic goals. He is an assistant's assistant but always tells lies about his position. He thinks himself to be more intelligent than his boss. His plan to start a business of sporting goods with his brother Biff is total bluff, still he encourages his brother to meet his former boss Bill Oliver.

Happy is good looking, a fact Willy is proud of. As a growing boy in Willy's imagination, he keeps telling Willy that he is losing weight. He exploits his good looks to the full. Happy is a womanizer. He seduces one woman after the other, especially fiancées of his bosses, to have a sense of victory and power over them. Still he feels hollow and unfulfilled. He gets quite lonely at times and wants to marry someone as devoted as his mother. As compared to Biff, he is more indifferent to his father's plight. He abandons his father in the restaurant to chase girls and does not regret his act at all.

As Willy always preferred personal charm to substance, Happy never grows up and always remains a teenager whereas Biff is enlightened towards the end of the play. He becomes aware of what he is and what he wants to do. Truth dawns upon him that they had been living a fake life. Happy does not show any signs of change. At Willy's grave, Happy vows to continue his father's pursuit of the mirage of success.

Minor Characters

10.4.5 Ben Loman

Ben Loman is the elder brother of Willy. In the play, he exists only in Willy's imagination or his past. As an adventurer and enterprising man, he is a symbol of the American dream. Willy keeps talking to Ben in his daydreams. Ben has the typical American streak if Willy's conversations with him are to be believed. Ben entered the jungle as a teenager and came out rich. He went to Alaska and Africa and found diamonds. The descriptions of his travels and success seem larger than life given Willy's tendency to exaggerate. Ben also urges Willy to come along and explore the world but Willy is too timid to join him.

Ben had deserted Willy to pursue his dream of material success completely disregarding his relationships. Still Willy idolizes him and wants his advice in parenting his sons. He introduces Biff to his uncle Ben who challenges Biff to a boxing match playfully. Ben beats the child through trickery. It shows the unscrupulousness that goes with being rich and successful.

Willy, in his imagination, consults Ben on his decision to quit the world. Ben asks him not to make a fool of himself. However, Ben relents and is ready to take Willy along on an unknown journey.

Miller does not portray Ben as a character in the real time. He appears in Willy's reveries only to endorse Willy's views and decisions.

10.4.6 Charley

Charley is Willy's next-door neighbour. He runs his own business and is doing well. He disagrees with Willy Loman on many issues. He does not believe that appearance can replace hard work or sports can compensate for studies. He is not impressed with Biff's athletic achievements. He gives the right direction to his son Bernard who eventually becomes a competent lawyer.

Charley is the greatest well-wisher of Willy Loman. He is kindhearted and lends money to Willy whenever he comes asking for it. He even offers a job to Willy in his own company but Willy is too proud to accept the offer.

Charley understands Willy perfectly. When Biff criticizes his father after his death, Charley defends Willy saying, "A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory."

10.4.7 Bernard

Bernard is Charley's son. He is very studious and is looked upon as a bookworm by the Loman family. In the past Willy Loman used to think that Bernard is no match for his sons who are handsome and well-liked. Bernard keeps reminding Willy about Biff's loss in studies but Willy pays no attention to his warnings.

Bernard becomes a successful lawyer as he consistently works towards his goal. But he is quiet and modest about his success. He already has a family and is well settled. He seems to be leading a quality life.

When Willy happens to meet Bernard in Act II, Bernard reveals that Biff had changed drastically after he returned from Boston. He never enrolled in summer school to make up in the failed subject.

10.4.8 Howard Wagner

Howard Wagner is Willy's present employer and son of his earlier boss Frank Wagner. He is the face of the society driven by money. When Willy's sales decline, Howard shows him the door despite the fact that Willy had been working for the company for a long time. His obsession with recorder shows his love for machines. He conveys to Willy that business has to be run mechanically and it has no room for emotions.

10.5TECHNICAL ASPECTS

10.5.1 Structure and plot

The greatest challenge for Miller in *Death of a Salesman* was to handle its instantaneous time shifts. Unlike his earlier more traditional plays, *Death of a Salesman* is modern and innovative. Miller longed to write a play that would "cut through time like a knife through a layer of cake or a road through a mountain revealing its geologic layers, and instead of one incident in one time-frame succeeding another, display past and present concurrently, with neither one ever coming to a stop" (Miller 131). According to Christopher Bigsby, Miller compared the structure of the play to geological strata in which different times are present in the same moment. The time scale of the play is really intricate revealing the inside and outside of Willy's life.

In *Death of a Salesman,* Miller chose a form that could simultaneously address its social and psychological concerns. The twenty-four-hour time of the play is divided into "social time" and "psychic time." The social time consists of the give and take of Willy with the real world which provides the context of the play. The psychic time on the other hand consists of moments when Willy's memories encroach upon his present. The structure of the play is built on the interaction between his social and psychic time. The scheme of events is psychological instead of chronological. Whenever Willy receives a setback in the current time, he retreats into his idyllic past. His past or imaginary time is reinforced by music, light and backdrop of trees and leaves. Sound has been effectively used to create Willy's nostalgic moments. Certain sounds are associated with certain characters. Flute accompanies Willy's memories, Ben has his own music, laughter triggers the memory of the Woman. On stage, curtains are made to function like walls so the characters can easily shift places. Light also plays its part in creating a dream like impression. In fact, the stage directions in Act I describe the house as follows: "An air of the dream clings to the place, a dream arising out of reality."

The play has a basic plot and contains standard dramatic elements such as exposition, rising action, conflict and climax. However, Miller's introduction of fluid time creates an unsettling atmosphere that mirrors Willy's mental state. Audience watch Willy going to pieces slowly. Miller succeeds in evoking a sense of tragic while portraying Willy. However, the play does not fall into the category of classical tragedy as its protagonist is from working class background. Unlike Greek tragedy, Miller does not follow the chronological unfolding of the plot.

10.5.2 Expressionism

The use of music, light and symbols to express extreme mental turbulence and emotional upheavals of characters is characteristic of modern expressionism which came into vogue in the 20th century. Modern playwrights found the realism of the 19th century inadequate and passive. They developed several devices to translate the hidden reality of a character into theatre. *Death of a Salesman* has been written in truly expressionistic tradition.

Willy Loman does not remember his past in the usual manner. On the contrary, his whole past comes back and severs him from the present. Miller makes use of symbols seamlessly combining the past and present of Willy lending the play a lyrical quality. Stockings is the symbol of Willy's infidelity and rubber hose represents Willy's suicidal tendencies. Flute, as explained above, transports Willy into his pleasant idyllic past.

Arthur Miller has divided the play into two Acts only. He has avoided extensive division of the play into acts and scenes to keep the unity of time and action intact. This has helped to establish an expressionist reality in which the world is seen through Willy's eyes subjectively. It is a world where past and present do not have strict demarcations, they mingle freely leading to chaos.

10.6 SUMMING UP

This unit acquaints you with the major themes, characters and techniques dealt with in *Death of a Salesman*. As part of the course "Reading Drama", it familiarises you with modern drama in the American context. Its critical study in this unit gives you an insight into the prevailing issues in the 20th century American society, introduces you to the new technologies, innovative forms and literary movements in the field of drama. It also enables you to differentiate between the classic and the modern drama.

10.7 Check your progress - 2

Answer the following in 50-100 words:

1. What is Linda's role in Willy's life?
2. How does Miller present time in *Death of a Salesman*?
3. Compare Biff and Happy Loman.
4. Describe how the structure of the play is made to present illusion and reality?
5. Who is Ben? Is he a real or an imaginary character? Give arguments to support your answer.

10.8 SUGGESTED READING AND REFERENCE

10.8.1 Suggested reading:

- *Arthur Miller* by Leonard Moss in *Twayne's United States Authors Series*
- *Arthur Miller: Portrait of a Playwright* by Benjamin Nelson
- *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem* with an introduction by Christopher Bigsby

10.8.2 References:

- *Timebends: A Life* by Arthur Miller (2013)
- *Salesman in Beijing* by Arthur Miller (1984)
- Introduction to *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem* by Christopher Bigsby

10.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

10.9.1 Long Answer Questions

a. Discuss Willy Loman as a pathetically tragic figure. What is the cause of his troubles?
b. Discuss *Death of a Salesman* as a critique of the American dream.

10.9.2 Short Answer Questions

a. How is Loman family different from its next-door neighbour Charley and his family?
b. Comment on the symbolism of *Death of a Salesman*.