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UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

By: Kshyama Sagar Meher

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CONTENTS

UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

Question Bank – (Previous Year Solved Question Papers)

<i>Question Paper—June, 2019 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—December, 2018 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—June, 2018 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—December, 2017 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—June, 2017 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—December, 2016 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—June, 2016 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—December, 2015 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—June, 2015 (Solved)</i>	1-3
<i>Question Paper—June, 2014 (Solved)</i>	1-2
<i>Question Paper—June, 2013 (Solved)</i>	1
<i>Question Paper—December, 2012 (Solved)</i>	1
<i>Question Paper—June, 2012 (Solved)</i>	1
<i>Question Paper—December, 2011 (Solved)</i>	1

S.No.

Chapterwise Reference Book

Page

DRAMA AND INTRODUCTION

1. Drama and Theatre	1
2. One Act Plays	7
3. Aspects of Drama	11
4. Different Types of Drama	15
5. Developments in 20th Century Drama	22

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
JULIUS CAESAR		
6.	Drama around Shakespeare	31
7.	Shakespeare's Life and Works	35
8.	Structure and Style of The Play <i>Julius Caesar</i>	40
9.	Theme and Characterization	48
ARTHUR MILLER		
10.	American Drama Around Arthur Miller	53
11.	All My Sons: A Detailed Study	61
12.	Thematic Concerns in <i>All My Sons</i>	68
13.	Characterisation in <i>All My Sons</i>	72
HALFWAY HOUSE		
14.	Mohan Rakesh: Life, Times, Works	75
15.	<i>Halfway House</i> : A Reading	80
16.	Middle Class Concerns in <i>Halfway House</i>	87
17.	Women and Society In <i>Halfway House</i>	93
18.	Dramatic Form in Mohan Rakesh's <i>Halfway House</i>	97
THE TRIAL OF DEDAN KIMATHI		
19.	African and Kenyan History and Drama in Kenya	102
20.	Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's Life, Literature and Ideology	109

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
21.	The Trial of <i>Dedan Kimathi</i> – Critical Summary	114
22.	<i>The Trial of Dedan Kimathi</i> - An Evaluation	124
GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: A STUDY GUIDE		
23.	Ghashiram Kotwal	131
24.	Background and Plot	136
25.	Themes and Characterisation	142
26.	Dramatic Techniques	147
		□□

**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

(June – 2019)

(Solved)

UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer **all** the questions.

Q. 1. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Morality Plays

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 4, 'Native Drama'.

(b) Characterisation

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 11, 'Characterisation'.

(c) Theatre of the Absurd

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 19, 'Theatre of the Absurd'.

(d) Prologue

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 80, 'Prologue'.

(e) History Play

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 17, 'History Plays'.

Q. 2. Critically examine, with reference to the context, the following :

(a) Look ! I've given my beloved into the jaws of that wolf ! Look. Look at this father.

Putting the child of his heart up for sale.

Look at my innocent daughter — a whore.

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Ghashiram Kotwal* by Vijay Tendulkar.

Explanation: Ghashiram clearly understood that his innocent daughter's life has been ruined because of his egoistic nature but still his mad desires for power makes him to continue his evil designs. Tendulkar makes the fun of police force whose salient characteristics is corruption from ancient times to the modern eras. The so called police force should be the protector of law and order. In reality, Tendulkar has shown them with cruelty, oppression and arrogance. When Ghashiram comes in search of fortune to Poona,

he was wrongly accused to theft, humiliated and arrested without any flaw. In addition to this, they prevent Ghashiram from attending the feast given by Peshwas. This horrible humiliation suffered in the hands of policemen hits his ego and makes him challenge.

(b) None of us changed, Georgie. We all love you. Joe was just talking about the day you were born and the water got shut off. People were carrying basins from a block away ... A stranger would have thought the whole neighbourhood was on fire !

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller.

Explanation: Although Chris and Ann have become engaged, Chris avoids telling his mother. Their next door neighbor Sue emerges, revealing that everyone on the block thinks Joe is equally guilty of the crime of supplying faulty aircraft engines. Shortly afterwards, George Deever arrives and reveals that he has just visited the prison to see his father Steve. The latter has confirmed that Joe told him by phone to cover up the cracked cylinders and to send them out, and later gave a false promise to Steve that he would account for the shipment on the day of arrest. George insists his sister Ann cannot marry Chris Keller, son of the man who destroyed the Deevers. Meanwhile, Frank reveals his horoscope, implying that Larry is alive, which is just what Kate wants to hear. Joe maintains that on the fateful day of dispatch, the flu laid him up, but Kate says that Joe has not been sick in fifteen years. Despite George's protests, Ann sends him away.

- (c) **I've seen how, in your desire to get what you do not have, you've slowly lost even what you did have. I've seen fear mounting up in you and driving you at times towards your home, at times away from it. I've seen that fear turn into terror and shock ... in your last futile attempt.**

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Halfway House* by Mohan Rakesh.

Explanation: Unfortunately, it can happen but while it can be a sign of depression it can also be a sign that you have changed your interest or are too stressed out to do your hobbies. In these case it's important to be in touch with our inner self and find the reason why you have stopped these activities. You might want to take a moment to ask yourself or find a trusted friend or listener to talk about this. If you cannot find a reason why you have suddenly stopped most of your activity or if you think it's because of depression you might want to go see a counsellor or even a psychologist who can help you professionally. However, sometimes, simply scheduling time out of your day to do the activities can help you and if you are suffering depression it can help you start doing things again. At first it might feel like you are being forced to do something but in the long run it might help you connect (or reconnect) with people or even things that makes you happy.

- (d) **Break these chains. Unchain my heart, my soul ! Unchain four centuries of chains. Kenya, our dearly bought, fought for motherland.**

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from the *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi Wa Thiong.

Explanation: The Business Executive represents the Kenyan traitors — sycophants of the imperial authority. He appeals to Kimathi to give up the struggle. But Kimathi, recognizing the hypocrisy of the Business Executive, becomes more frenzied and more determined to fight this problem of political alienation, which has put the whole of his society into psychological "Prison." He refuses to join the Black traitors who have betrayed the Kenyan independence struggle. Indeed, this play describes an "Abnormal" political and social alienation. In the play, we see that the "Collective Order" of the ruling imperial authority is unjust.

Q. 3. Discuss the various themes as highlighted by Miller in his play *All My Sons*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 70, Q. No. 1 and Page No. 71, Q. No. 2 and 4.

Q. 4. Write a detailed note on characterisation in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 125, 'Characters in the Play'.

Q. 5. What are the issues involved in the fight between Savitri and Mahendranath in *Halfway House*? Discuss.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 89, 'Culture and Society in *Halfway House*'.

Q. 6. Critically analyse the character of Nana in *Ghasiram Kotwal*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-25, Page No. 144, 'Nana Phadnavis'.

Q. 7. Write an analytical note on Calpurnia in *Julius Caesar*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 50, 'Calpurnia' and Page No. 51, Q. No. 3.

■ ■

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

DRAMA AND INTRODUCTION

1

Drama and Theatre

INTRODUCTION

Drama can be defined as a literary work acted by players on a stage. It involves action, a plot, conflict, crisis and atmosphere. Drama can be a motion picture as well traditional stage play. Abram defines drama as a form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors play the role of different characters, perform action and speak the written dialogue. Actors, dialogue, setting, plot and action are the essential parts of a drama. It is performed on the stage and the audience is important. According to Marjorie Boulton, "A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes." A drama is different from other literary forms because of the time. A narrative art tells the events which happen in the past, present or future. A performing art has its existence in time.

Tom F. Driver says drama is "a miniature reflection of historical action taking place within the limit imposed by the conventions of the theatre". It is a narrative of temporal events as well as an enactment taking place within a moment of time. He says drama is the earliest of imitative arts. The mimetic instinct is universal and exposes one of the most primitive of human emotions.

According to Compton-Rickett, drama is a story in action. He says for effective drama conflict is essential. If the conflict is trivial one, it becomes a farce. If the conflict is serious with a happy ending, the drama becomes a comedy. If the conflict is serious with unhappy ending, it becomes a tragedy.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

ORIGINS OF DRAMA/THEATRE

Western drama has its origin in Athens, Greece, between 600 and 200 B.C. The ancient Athenians created

plays that are still among the greatest works of drama. The form, technique and terminology applied by the Athenians are still relevant. It can be said that the greatness of ancient Athens has not been reached by any period except Elizabethan England and the 20th century.

In Greece, the theatre is believed to have evolved from religious rites. In about 1200 B.C. primitive tribes in Thrace in northern Greece used to worship Dionysus, the god of fertility and procreation. They practiced ritual celebration which included uninhibited dancing and emotional displays with an altered mental state, called "ecstasies". Another part of the rites of Dionysus was the dithyramb, which means "choric hymn". This chant was accompanied by mimic gestures and music. It was performed by men, group of dancers and band of revellers. Over a period of time, dithyramb evolved into stories in play which is now called as drama.

Greek Theatre: The rites of Dionysus evolved into theatre in Athens by 600 B.C. Arion of Mehtymna (Corinth) wrote the formal lyrics for the dithyramb for the first time during that period. Thespis of Attica later added an actor to interact with the chorus. The actor was called the protagonist or the main character. Dialogue was born when Thespis, the director of choruses, smeared with white lead on his face, stood on a table and addressed the leader of the chorus. The table, which was the altar for animal, was the first indication of a stage. Later a second speaker was introduced. Gradually other related details taken from the many tales of ancestral and local heroes were included in the dithyramb. Later dramatic plot was introduced in dithyrambic dances. In 534 B.C. the ruler

2 / NEERAJ : UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

of Athens, Pisistratus, organised drama competitions which became popular annual event. The government authority called the *archon* select the participants and the wealthy patrons, called the *Choregoes*, financed the productions. The theatre of Delphi, the Attic Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus were built in Athens. The term “theatre” is derived from the Greek word “theatron” which means the wooden spectator and the term “orchestra” is derived from the Greek word for a platform. Thespis acquired the theatre building, a permanent circular dancing ground of stone and a stone temple in the background. There was no scenery on the background. Plays were staged during the daytime. Actors wore masks and buskins, leather boots laced up to the knees. They had little or no make up. In 484 B.C. a playwright named Aeschylus appeared on the Athenian theatre scene. He introduced props and scenery and reduced members of the chorus from 50 to 12. *Aeschylus’ Persians*, written in 472 B.C., is the earliest play in existence. His crowning work was *The Orestia*, which tells the legend of Agamemnon, the Greek war hero who was murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and pursuit of justice by his children, Orestes and Electra. It is about the tragedy of excessive human pride, arrogance or hubris. Aeschylus is the father of tragedy. Seven of his ninety-two plays he had written has survived. He added colour to his characters. Many of his characters were supernatural and barbaric. He also introduced metaphorical dialogue. His *Prometheus Bound* is an unforgettable work. Its theme is the god himself. In his last two tragedies of which one is *Agamemnon*, he wrote about the man. It is believed that in 468 B.C., Aeschylus was defeated by Sophocles in the tragedy competition.

Sophocles added more actors and put emphasis on humans instead of humans and Gods. He introduced different styles and worked for perfection. He wrote one play for each plot and included all actions into it. The shorter form provided the greater dramatic possibilities. His resembled the architecture and sculpture of his time which was in favour of small temples and statues of gods. He introduced tragic suspense and tragic irony. Sophocles also introduced comic details in his tragedies to give contrast and variety. His famous works included *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone* and *Philoctetes*.

Euripides, another contemporary Greek playwright, wrote about real people. He put equal weight to all his characters whether they were princes or peasants. He tried to present the reality of war, criticized religion and

portrayed women, slaves and old people. Euripides introduced the *Prologue*. His famous works included *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Hippolyttrs*, *Cyclops* and *Alcestis*.

Athenians theatres also staged comedy. Greek comedy is divided into two periods: Old comedy and New Comedy. Old Comedy is represented by Cratinus and Aristophanes and New Comedy by Menander. Aristophanes used three actors, a chorus that sang, danced and sometimes took part in the dialogue. His two first two comedies *The Banqueters* and *The Babylonians* were lost but were a satire on new education and a political satire respectively. His *The Acharnians* is considered as the first anti-war comedy. *The Wmps*, *Peace*, *The Frogs* and *Plutus* are his comedies.

Menander introduced ordinary people as his characters. He also added the chorus which provided fillers between acts. He put emphasis on mistaken identity, romance and situational humour which later influenced the Romans to Shakespeare to Broadway. His famous works included *The Girl From Samos*, *The Shearing of Glycera* and *The Arbitration*.

GROWTH OF DRAMA

Describing the growth of drama, Gassner says the development of stage is associated with all human impulses. He says the playwrights are the children of life. The first playwright started as a player and a magic maker. Gradually the dramatist took the whole world of experience and copied movements or gestures and sounds. He discharged excess energy with plays and prepared for purposeful action. Man used dance to express his desires. The playwright gradually organized the performance as a commercial activity.

After Greece, Rome was the next place that saw development of drama. The theatre vanished with the fall of Rome in the fourth century. The medieval theatre in England in tenth century developed out of the religious services in the Church. The clergy used the gospel stories to teach and explain the doctrinal truths of religion. The performers acted the gospel stories in dumb show. Gradually the actors used dialogue and acted. These early plays were called Mysteries and Miracles. Mystery plays were based on stories taken from the Scripture narrative, while Miracle plays were based on the incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs.

Miracle plays originated from the liturgy including its rites and the chants between priest and congregation. They gradually became short dialogues. These dialogues developed into title plays which were acted in the

church. One of the most important Miracle plays was that of Adam written in the twelfth century by a Norman. Another important play was *Noah*. These plays depicted scenes from the Life of Christ, unfolded scenes from the Scriptures and celebrated Christmas and Easter.

Miracles plays were staged regularly in some important towns such as Chester, York, Coventry, Norwich, Newcastle and Wakefield. These plays were known by the names of these places. The guilds of these places played an important role in the organization of these plays. *Abraham and Issac* is one of the most touching Miracle plays of that period.

Moralities and Interludes developed out of mystery and miracle plays. Morality plays were the serious and the Interludes had the lighter elements. The characters in these plays typified qualities like sin, grace and repentance. Moralities were based on allegory. The characters were from the Bible. Morality plays needed a fixed stage and were concerned with wider issues. They presented human life wavering between God and the Devil and good and evil. Some famous morality plays were *Castell of Perseverance*, *Everyman and Mankind*. The characters in the mystery plays were given individual names. It was also based on reality. These plays were staged by local amateurs who formed association for the purpose of acting. The miracle plays were staged until about 1600 when the regular dramas were staged.

During 1520-1578 AD, not a single masterpiece was produced.

Interludes included comic dialogues and aimed at amusement. One of the best known interludes is *The Four P's* – Palmer, Pardoner, Potheary and Pedlar. Another famous interlude is Heywood's *The Mery Play Between the Pardoner and the Frere*.

Sackville and Norton wrote the first English drama, *Gorboduc*, which was staged in 1562 before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall. It was later published as *Ferrex and Porrex*. It is a tragedy divided into five acts. Sackville wrote the first three acts. Written in blank verse, each act ended with a chorus. It was an imitation of Seneca's tragedies.

In 1553, Nicholas Udall wrote the first regular English comedy titled, *Ralph Roister Doister*. Udall is considered as the Father of English Comedy. Mr. S. wrote the second English comedy, *Gammer Gurton S Needle*.

The first theatre was built in 1576 at Shoreditch. Later several other theatres including the Rose, the Globe, the Swan and the Fortune were built.

TYPES OF STAGE

On the basis of different periods, drama can be divided into the following broad categories:

- (i) Classical Theatre (Greek and Roman).
- (ii) Native Drama (1066-1500).
- (iii) Renaissance Drama (1500-1660).
- (a) Elizabethan Drama: Shakespeare and Contemporaries.
- (b) Jacobean and Caroline.
- (iv) The Neoclassical Period or Restoration Drama (1660-1700).
- (v) Drama in 18th, 19th and 20th Century.

Greek Theatre

Amphitheatres were used to stage plays in ancient Greece. Amphitheatres had a round stage three quarters of which were surrounded by the audience. They were very large and could accommodate up to 25,000 people. The stage used the real landscape surrounding the amphitheatre. Plays were performed in day light. The actors spoke in a loud, declamatory voice. They had masks and symbolical costumes and used large gestures. The chorus was an important part of Greek Theatre.

The audience included only of free men. Slaves and women were excluded from the audience. Ancient Greek drama had a more ritual, symbolic and didactic purpose since it was performed on special occasions such as religious ceremonies.

The Theatre in Epidaurus (Theatre in Stone): It is an open-air Greek theatre. The seats for the audience are made on the slope of a hill. It had a large dancing orchestra for the chorus. There are passageways or *paradoi* at the right side for entry and exit of the chorus and processions. The ruins of the stone scene building, the *skene*, are set on back. The *skene* could be the replica of a temple or a palace. During 5th century B.C., the *skene* was a two-storey stone building. The upper storey or *episkenion* was used for the stage machinery. There was a colonnade or *proskenion* on the front of the lower story. Most of the acting happened in front of this structure on a low platform. There were three doors in the low platform flanked by projecting wings as *paraskenia*. This theatre belongs to the Hellenistic period (4th century B.C.), but these architectural features were there in the theatre of Dionysus. Gradually it was further developed. The *Skene* was rectangular and divided into rooms. It had a series of pillars and painted wooden panels or *pinakes* in between. The stage was 8 to 10 feet deep and about a foot high. The colonnaded front wall of the second story with three doors served as the background. *Pinakes* might be placed between

4 / NEERAJ : UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

the columns of the upper colonnade. The actors and the chorus had less inter-mingling.

The Greek theatre saw changes under Roman influence. The stage became lower by a few feet but deeper. The front of the stage became a highly decorated even as it lost its colonnade. The orchestra was no longer a complete circle. The actors got training in dance, dialogue and pantomime.

Native Drama

Mysteries and Moralities plays during Medieval period were staged on wagons (pageants) during religious festivities. The wagons had to stop market places for the performance and the audience surrounded it. All the mystery plays were staged out of doors. It was convenient because of simultaneous setting or multiple setting. After the liturgical plays became the part of the mystery cycles, the small platforms developed into mansions or little rooms by using curtains at the sides and back. The stages were often decorated with scenery. The mansions were presented by the stationary set in a curving row facing the viewers. The actors belonged to various guilds or companies. They were generally paid for their services. Left and right sides or top and bottom were represented as Heaven and Hell. Costuming was gorgeous and imaginative. Live animals such as rabbits and lambs were employed in multiple stage settings. Placards were also used. Acting includes gestures and delivery of monologues. Nobody played the role of women. The audience was heterogeneous and willing to be taught and edified. The ingredients of drama: life, humour and pathos were appreciated by the audience.

Apron Stage

During the Elizabethan period, dramas were staged in public theatres. It was not performed outdoors. The stage was however still open air theatre. During 1580-1642, a number of plays both old and new were staged at London theatres. Theatres were mostly circular in form and simple in structure. It generally had an open courtyard with two or three tiers of covered galleries around it. A platform projected at one side of the courtyard formed the stage. Two pillars supported the ceiling on either side of the platform in the centre. There was another stage overlooked by a gallery with balcony and windows between two doors which served for the entrance and exit of the actors at the back. Only elementary accessories were used. The front stage was used for all purposes. During Renaissance period, the open stage surrounded by the audience on three sides was the most common stage form. There was close

vicinity between audience and actors in such type of stage. The apron referred to the vestigial platform. Such stage stood in front of the proscenium arch and most of the acting was held on the stage. The actors gave long speeches which are embellished with rhetoric. They also used asides and soliloquies. Up to 2,000 people could sit in the Elizabethan theatre. The audience was heterogeneous. Plays combined different subject matters since they tried to appeal to wider audience. After the middle of the 19th century, the apron was cut down and finally discarded entirely. The actor played close to the scenery as per the setting.

Restoration Stage

During the 17th and 18th centuries, theatres were smaller than the Elizabethan theatre. They could accommodate about 500 people. Dramas were staged in closed rooms. Artificial lightings were used on the stage. People sit in the illuminated room. A decorative frame was used to close the stage. They did not use curtain and scene changed happened in front of the audience. A highly stylized image of characters, scenery, language and subject of matter were used. A major development during the 17th and 18th century was the emergence of Patent theatres and minor playhouses.

The middle classes started to enter the playhouses and playhouses set up their own tradition. According to Nicoll, four popular species of entertainment during the period were the operatic, the terpsichorean, the mimic and the spectacular. People liked show, music and dances. People also like extravagant and satirical plays. The ballad-opera invented by John Gay proved this point.

Proscenium Stage

The proscenium stage means picture frame stage. It was the stage developed during the 19th and 20th centuries. Actors and audience were separated by the ramp. The stage was illuminated when the actors performed. The auditorium remained dark during the performance. Scenery were elaborate and true-to-life. New technologies were introduced for more detailed stage props, lighting and sound system. The play Different types of stage have been developed in the present era. Gradually artistry has refined and dramatic power heightened.

UNIT END QUESTIONS

Q.1. Elaborate Boulton's statement; "A true play is three dimensional".

Ans. A true play is three dimensional means a drama should have actions and dialogue to be performed and