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AMERICAN LITERATURE

B.E.G.C.-105

B.A. English (Hons.) - 3rd Semester

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**Sample Preview
of the
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Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

AMERICAN LITERATURE

B.E.G.C.-105

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Attempt all the questions. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION – A

Q. 1. Explain the meaning of the following stanzas with reference to the context:

(a) If the red slayer thinks he slays
Or if the slain thinks he is slain
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from 'Brahma' by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Explanation: Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 115, 'Stanza 1'.

(b) In the old world, the east, the Suez Canal
The New by its mighty railroad spanne'd
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;
Yet first to sound, and ever sound,
the cry with thee O soul

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from *Passage to India* by Walt Whitman.

Explanation: Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 127, 'Outline of the Poem'.

(c) But O heart ! heart ! heart !
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from 'O Captain! My Captain' by Walt Whitman.

Explanation: Whitman was greatly impressed by three great engineering achievements: the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), the laying of the Transatlantic Undersea Cable (1866), and the joining of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Utah to produce the nation's First Transcontinental Railway (1869). These events resulted in improved communication and travel, thus making possible a shorter passage to India. But in Whitman's poem, the completion of the physical

journey to India is only a prelude to the spiritual pathway to India, the East, and, ultimately, to God.

(d) Because I could not stop for Death–
He kindly stopped for me–
The carriage held just ourselves
And Immortality

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death' by Emily Dickinson.

Explanation: Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 144, Q. No. 9 and Q. No. 10.

(e) A thought went up my mind today
That I have had before,
But did not finish, – some ways back,
I could not fix the year.

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from 'A Thought Went up My Mind Today' by Emily Dickinson.

Explanation: The poem begins by referring to a very commonplace occurrence. A thought pops up in the poet's mind. It is a thought that she had had before. But then the thought was not a finished, clearly defined one. She does not remember how long before she had this thought first. She cannot remember the exact time of its previous occurrence. So the description is rather vague. But the poet is not telling us about something concrete, which registers through the senses. The poet is attempting to convey something – a thought – which is abstract. Therefore, the vague description suits the theme of the poem.

Furthermore thoughts spring from the mind which too, cannot be defined in concrete terms. The poet cannot remember where the thought went to or why such a thought occurred to her. That is, the occasion of the thought or the source which inspired it is also kept in the dark. Why it recurred too, is unknown.

SECTION-B

Q. 2. Answer the following questions:

(a) Discuss one of the major themes of *All My Sons*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 23, Q. No. 4.

(b) Write a note on the visual imagery in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 61, Q. No. 3.

(c) Examine the theme of 'Snows of Kilimanjaro' and the techniques Hemingway employs to project this theme.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 109, Q. No. 2.

(d) Write an extended note on the poetic devices used in 'Passage to India'.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 128, 'Poetic Devices in Passage to India'.

(e) How do you account for the characteristic vagueness of the poem 'A thought went up my mind today'?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 139, Q. No. 1 and 'An Analysis of the Poem'.

SECTION-C

Q. 3. Answer the following questions:

(a) Do you think that the title of the play *All My Sons* is justified? Give a reasoned answer.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 23, Q. No. 4 (Theme of Social Responsibility).

(b) How does Hawthorne present the organic-mechanical contrast in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 57, 'The Organic and the Mechanical'.

(c) Write a detailed note on 'Realism' in American Drama.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'Introduction' and Page No. 2, 'Realism in American Drama' and 'American Drama in the 19th Century'.



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Sample Preview of The Chapter

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

BLOCK-1 : ARTHUR MILLER @ ALL MY SONS



American Drama: An Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the 17th century in the American colonies, development of American Drama continued till now. During the 18th and 19th centuries the American Drama's were predominantly influenced by British only till 1910. Due to the readiness of British plays and actors and also because of the common language more of the British shows were displayed, compared to American plays in the New York City theatre. Only around the 1830's American Drama started getting depart from British Drama, but still most American plays continue to copy British model till the early 20th century. According to the critics, American Drama was born only at the end of World War I with Eugene O' Niell in the 1920's. By the end of the 19th century American Drama had shifted to realism by the end of the 19th century and dominated both comedies and tragedies. American Drama had also taken up broader issues of race, gender, sexuality and death in the 20th century.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

AMERICAN DRAMA AROUND ARTHUR MILLER

Beginnings of American Drama: 1600s and 1700s

This history of American literature begins with the arrival of English-speaking Europeans in what would become the United States. At first American literature was naturally a colonial literature, by authors who were Englishmen and who thought and wrote as such. John Smith, a soldier of fortune, is credited with initiating American literature. His chief books included: *A True Relation of...Virginia...* (1608) and *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England,* and *the Summer Isles* (1624). Although these volumes often

glorified their author, they were avowedly written to explain colonizing opportunities to Englishmen. In time, each colony was similarly described: Daniel Denton's *Brief Description of New York* (1670), William Penn's *Brief Account of the Province of Pennsylvania* (1682), and Thomas Ashe's *Carolina* (1682) were only a few of many works praising America as a land of economic promise. On August 27, 1665 William Darby, Cornelius Watkinson, and Philip Howard performed the first known play in America entitled *Ye Bare and Ye Cubbe* (Modern: *The Bear and the Cub*). Darby wrote the play and the troupe performed at the Fowlkes Tavern in Accomack, Virginia. The play drew a strong and immediate reaction from one audience member, an Edward Martin, who claimed the play was profane and blasphemous. The first play *Androboros* (1774) was written by Robert Hunter, an English Governor, in the 17th century to benefit the students to practice their speech skills in their careers such as business and law in several colonies. There were many popular plays during the period were: *The Paxton Boys* (1732), *The Trial of Atticus* (1771) whose authorship is not known and Robert Munford's *The Candidates of the Humours of a Virginia Election* (1770). During the 1750s a group of British professional actors formed a touring circuit which was known as *The American Company* in the 1760s who staged a play *The Prince of Parthia*, a tragedy by Thomas Godfrey, the first professional production of a play written in America.

American Drama: 1800s

Melodrama was introduced by William Dunlop in his plays, the most accepted dramatic form in the 19th century which had the most important characteristic, dramatic conflict. His plays were adaptations or translations from the French and German. Major John

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Andre, who was a protagonist in his Dunlop's play *Andre* (1798), had shown magnificent qualities by saving a young American Captain despite George Washington's unqualified antagonism towards him for conspiring to destroy an American garrison.

In the 19th century most of the plays written in America were mainly produced for commercial purposes to benefit the heterogeneous public residing all over America whose primary interest was seeing the shows and their favourite actors performing in these plays.

One of Dunlop's contemporaries James Nelson Barker produced some of the best-known works *Marmion* (1812) and *Superstition* (1824), *The Indian Princess* (1808). Some other was *Metamora* (1828) by John Augustus Stone. The popularity of the Indian plays that began in 1820's continued through the 1840's.

There was a shift in focus from a nationalistic cause to the aesthetic values of romanticism in the early 19th century. An extremely popular actor, Edwin Forrest, inspired the writing of American romantic play. *Francesca da Rimini* (1855), a romantic verse staged by George Henry Boker was the best American play of the time. Some of the other American tragedies were: *Brutus: The Fall of Tarquin* (1819) by John Howard Payne and *The Gladiator* (1831) by Robert Montgomery Bird, these simply promoted the aesthetic values of romanticism without furthering the cause of the American Drama.

Annual awards for new plays with American themes introduced by Edwin Forrest in 1828 which was first received by *Metamora*. Harriet Beecher Stone in his novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has represented the racial, social and economic tensions in America that brought about the civil war. In the 20th century, G. L. Aiken familiarised the novel on the stage all over America and was a great success.

American Drama in the 19th Century

American drama in the 19th century was the most widespread dramatic genre called Melodrama. It was like the Hindi cinema where a strong hero saves the heroine from a cruel villain who troubles the heroine. It used to represent issues of family, social position and wealth, a pre-occupation of every individual. The great flexibility of those plays made them easily adaptable to any type of audience, allowing actors to use their talents freely, taking advantage of a wide range of materials. Popular plays of this genre were Boucicault's *The Poor of the New York* (1857), Daly's

Under the Gaslight (1857), and Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West* and *The Heart of Maryland* (1857). The Melodramatic form started in the 18th century and continued through the 19th century.

Realism in American Drama

Realism in drama occurs when a play resembles real life, such as showing political events that occurred within a country. Depending on the era, these events were relevant to society, but until the late 1860s, these depictions were not common on stage. After the Civil war, the drama intensively shifted towards realism illuminating the scene of humble life, criticizing social conditions and creating believable characters. After the 1860s, many plays incorporated different types of social events into their works. This action known as realism was meant as a way for the audience to connect with the overall arc of the stage performance. Many believe that realism was a combination of the arts and science, which meant the performance needed to be verifiable. American Realism in literature was a late 19th-century movement that began as a reaction against romanticism and the sentimental tradition associated primarily with women writers. Chief among the authors writing in this genre were: William Dean Howells, Henry James, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Jack London, Kate Chopin, and Stephen Crane.

ARTHUR MILLER: LIFE AND WORKS

In 1920 when World War I had come to an end, it was time in America of the great depression that had deeply wounded the American economy and also its psyche. The U.S. prosperity in the 1930s had faced a steep though short decline. On October 17, 1915, Arthur Miller, son of Jewish immigrants, was born in Manhattan in New York. His father, Isadore, ran a prosperous garment business, and his mother, Augusta Barnett, was at one time a school teacher. When Isadore's firm began to fail in 1928, the Millers moved to Brooklyn, an area that would be the model for the settings of *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949). He inherited a strong sense of mysticism from his mother that would inform his later work. As a young boy, Miller came to resent his father's withdrawal from failure. The figure of the failed father would play a significant role in Miller's plays. The sudden change in fortune had a strong impact on Miller. Miller was fortunate enough to withdraw his entire savings of twelve dollars a day to buy himself a bicycle before the United States Bank closed down. Miller, though, was not very lucky as his bicycle was stolen the same week and he realized that no one was

immune from the disaster of Depression. Because of the effects of Depression, Miller's condition was financially unsound and he could not attend the university in 1932 after graduating from high school. After talking admission at the University of Michigan in 1934 Miller took up a succession of small jobs such as delivery boy, dishwasher, waiter, warehouse clerk, singer in a local radio station, mice attendant in a laboratory, truck driver, tanker, seaman, factory labour, and shop fitter's helper to pay for his tuition.

Later on, Miller moved to Michigan and joined the city's university. He studied journalism and participated in a variety of school projects, which allowed him to be exposed as a writer. Additionally, Arthur won an award for one of the works that earned him recognition and decided to focus on playwright as a career. He enrolled in a playwriting seminar, which was taught by Kenneth Rowe, an influential person in the field ("*Arthur Miller Biography*"). By having a guide and instructor, Miller was able to win more awards such as Avery Hopwood Award for his work titled "Honours at Dawn." After the completion of the course, Arthur joined the theatre and worked for the Federal Theatre Project. Nevertheless, the project he was working on was abolished, and he moved to Brooklyn Navy Yard. While he was there, he managed to write scripts for plays that were to be showcased on radio broadcasts such as CBS. After courting Mary Grace Slattery, Miller married her, and they had two children, Jane and Robert.

Arthur Miller defined American theatre in the 1950s with seminal plays such as *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*. But he was not simply a literary phenomenon. He became a pop-culture sensation when he married Marilyn Monroe in 1956. On the whole, his works are about an individual's struggle with an oftentimes indifferent, harsh, or irrational society – something he learned about firsthand when he stood against Senator Eugene McCarthy's House Committee on Un-American Activities. Before his death in 1996, Miller had also written screenplays, novels, short stories, nonfiction, and an auto-biography. He based his works on his family, his friends, and his own life, and he filled them with the rage, the love, and the self-doubt that Miller himself felt. He went to Chicago while having vacations and saw the performance of Clifford Odet's play '*Awake and Sing*'. The play's message 'Life should have some dignity' had a deep and lasting impact on him. Miller wrote his first work *No Villain* for which he won the Avery Hopwood

Award. In 1937 Miller wrote another play *Honours at Dawn* which also won the Avery Hopwood Award. This play is about the Depression era, dealing with the hopes and heartbreaks of the Zabriski family.

Miller joined a group of writers, publishers and journalists in the early fifties whose objective was to write articles attacking Senator Joseph MacCarthy. None of the newspapers were willing to publish their articles. The FBI infiltrated their group as a result of which the group broke up. Miller was called before the HUAC in 1956 to identify those who attended the meetings which he refused and as a punishment he was fined and sentenced to prison for contempt of Congress and denied passport to attend the Belgium opening of *The Crucible* in 1954. In 1958 the court of appeal overturned his conviction, ruling that the chairman of HUAC had misled Miller.

A year later Marilyn Monroe died of overdose of drugs and in February 1962, Miller married for the third time, Austrian photographer Inge Morath. Their first child Rebecca was born in September the same year followed by their second child Daniel in November, 1966.

In 1964 Miller's next play *After the Fall* was released several years later after his last work. In 1965, he was elected international Pen's president, an international writers organization that spoke in defense of imprisoned writers. In 1980 Miller returned to his past by writing a play *The American Clock* that is set during the depression years. In the 1990s Miller wrote plays such as *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* that was produced in 1993 and *The Last Yankee* produced in 1993. In 1994 he wrote another play *Broken Glass* set in 1938 set in the times of Nazi persecution of the Jews, but relates to a moral and political paralysis recreated in contemporary Europe. Miller died of heart failure at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut, on February 10, 2005 at the age of 89. At the time of his death Arthur Miller was considered one of the greatest American playwrights.

MILLER'S MAJOR PLAYS

Miller's first play to make it to Broadway, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), was a dismal failure, closing after only four performances. This early setback almost discouraged Miller from writing completely, but he gave himself one more try. Three years later, *All My Sons* won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best play of 1947, launching Miller into theatrical stardom. *All My Sons*, a drama about a manufacturer of faulty war materials,

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was strongly influenced by the naturalist drama of Henrik Ibsen. Along with *Death of a Salesman* (his most enduring success), *All My Sons* and *The Man Who Had All the Luck* form a thematic trilogy of plays about love triangles involving fathers and sons. The drama of the family is at the core of all of Miller's major plays, but nowhere is it more prominent than in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*.

Death of a Salesman (1949) secured Miller's reputation as one of the nation's foremost playwrights. In this play, Miller mixes the tradition of social realism that informs most of his work with a more experimental structure that includes fluid leaps in time as the protagonist, Willy Loman, drifts into memories of his sons as teenagers. Loman represents an American archetype: a victim of his own delusions of grandeur and obsession with success, and haunted by a sense of failure.

Miller won a Tony Award for *Death of a Salesman* as well as a Pulitzer Prize. The play has been frequently revived in film, television, and stage versions that have included actors such as Dustin Hoffman, George C. Scott and, most recently, Brian Dennehy in the part of Willy Loman.

Miller followed *Death of a Salesman* with his most politically significant work, *The Crucible* (1953), a tale of the Salem witch trials that contains obvious analogies to the McCarthy anti-communist hearings in 1950s America. The highly controversial nature of the politics of *The Crucible*, which lauds those who refuse to name names, led to the plays mixed response. In later years, however, it has become one of the most studied and performed plays of American theatre.

Three years after *The Crucible*, in 1956, Miller found himself persecuted by the very force that he warned against, when he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Miller refused to name people he allegedly saw at a Communist writers' meeting a decade before, and he was convicted of contempt. He later won an appeal.

Also in 1956, Miller married actress Marilyn Monroe. The two divorced in 1961, one year before her death. That year Monroe appeared in her last film, *The Misfits*, which is based on an original screenplay by Miller. After divorcing Monroe, Miller wed Ingeborg Morath, to whom he remained married until his death in 2005. The pair had a son and a daughter.

Miller also wrote the plays *A Memory of Two Mondays* and the short *A View from the Bridge*, which were both staged in 1955. His other works include

After the Fall (1964), a thinly veiled account of his marriage to Monroe, as well as *The Prince* (1967), *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), and *The American Clock* (1980). His most recent works include the plays *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1993), and *Broken Glass* (1993), which won the Olivier Award for Best Play.

Arthur's works became more recognized beyond the United States and were highly appreciated. One of the play was titled "A View from the Bridge," and the other was "A Memory of Two Mondays." The work was unsuccessful and did not receive many audiences as people were not familiar with the version he had produced. Later, he decided to review the play and make an adjustment that would fit his viewers and make them understand the message he was trying to portray. Upon revising the play "A View from the Bridge" to entail two acts, it was directed in Europe, and a co-production was produced based on Miller's play (Abbotson 51). It relays a story of a man, Eddie living with his wife Beatrice and her orphaned niece Catherine. The play explores how Eddie manages his obsession with Catherine. It also relays the extent that Eddie is determined to protecting her and revealing his affection for her. Arthur later admitted that the plot is based on a true story relayed to him by a lawyer he once encountered. While working on different projects, Miller met Marilyn Monroe, with whom they had a relationship. Arthur decided to leave his wife Mary Slattery and marry Marilyn Monroe. With the pressure from the work and her surrounding, Monroe left Hollywood and ventured to begin a new life apart from the one she was used to before. Furthermore, she converted to Judaism as a way to reveal to Miller and her parent; she was loyal and was ready for a family with Arthur. Soon after her conversion, Egypt prohibited Monroe's movies in the country.

TERMINAL EXERCISE

Q. 1. Name the major plays of Arthur Miller.

Ans. The major plays of Arthur Miller are as follows:

1. *All My Sons* (1947),
2. *Death of a Salesman* (1949),
3. *The Crucible* (1953),
4. *After the Fall* (1964)
5. *Incident at Vichy* (1964)
6. *A View from the Bridge* (1956)
7. *The Prince* (1968)