

CHAPTER 4 Review of Drama

This chapter is an overview of what we did in the Chapter Four of Book One. Under the title “Introduction to Drama”, we have examined the definition and given insight into the common terms related to drama.

Drama is different from the other two aspects of literature because it relies more on dialogue. In drama or play, the actors are seen on stage as they interact and discuss issues of concern. The origin of drama has many traditions but the most popular tradition links the origin of drama to a ritual ceremony of Dionysus, the god of fertility in ancient Greece.

The first kind of drama is **tragedy**. A tragic play is that play where the hero comes to a sad end due to a flaw in his character. One of the earliest tragic plays is Sophocles, *King Oedipus*; the play was later adopted by Ola Rotimi as *The Gods are not to Blame*. The plot of tragedy, in the beginning, was centred on the rich. A play was considered a tragic presentation if it had something to do with the leaders of the society or the rich. But that tradition has since changed, and what we retain as the right definition of tragedy today is any play that has unhappy ending, especially for the major character.

Another aspect of drama is **comedy**. **Comedy plays** present light atmosphere of laughter and always end happily for all the actors. However, the scope of comedy today has become very wide. Apart from the comedy types that we are familiar with such as comedy of errors and comedy of manners, we now have satiric comedy, for example Wole Soyinka’s *The Trials of Brother Jero*, and comedy of performance presented by professional entertainers or actors like Basket Mouth, Gbenga Adeyinka, Lepacious Bose, Holy Mallam, and Osuofia. This category is called **Standup Comedy**.

There is also **Tragi-comedy**. The play ends happily but there are those serious inclinations of tragedy in the play. An example of tragic-comedy is William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

There is a connection between **drama** and **theatre**. The play or drama finds life in the theatre where it is put on stage for the **audience** to see. The staging of a play always comes after series of **rehearsal** schedules that will enable actors to master their **lines** and know when or how to take their **cues**. The actors undergo **audition** before roles are assigned to them. Such an exercise is always supervised by the play **director**.

In some plays, the playwrights make use of **prologue** and **epilogue**. A prologue is an initial statement or action before the act one in a play while an epilogue is a closing statement or action in a play. In most cases where we have the use of prologue and epilogue, they are so labelled.

The conversation between actors on stage is called **dialogue**. An **aside** occurs when an actor speaks to the audience, the other actors are on stage with him but they do not ‘hear’ what he is saying. **Soliloquy** is the inner musings of the actor; the actor’s voice is pre-recorded and relayed to the audience at the time of prompting. A **monologue** occurs when the actor is alone on stage and speaks aloud to the audience.

When a play is performed on stage, the drawing of the **curtain** marks the close of an act or scene. Climax is the term used to mark the point of friction but **anti-climax** or **denouement** occurs in the situation when the knotty issues have all been resolved.

Practice Questions on Drama Texts

1. Kobina Sekyi’s *The Blinkards*

The play is set in Cape Coast, Ghana during the colonial period. It is a time when many Africans hold to the erroneous belief that the culture of the Whiteman is superior to theirs. In the play, Mrs. Borofosem just acquires the Whiteman's education from England. Mr. Tsiba is impressed by this and sends his daughter, Miss Tsiba, to her to be trained. Another fairly educated man, Mr. Onyimde, has Okadu as apprentice learning the ways of the "been to". The reason why Okadu wants the training is to be in the right position of getting married to Miss Tsiba so that he becomes son-in-law to Mr Tsiba, a cocoa trader.

The plan succeeds and the two of them fall in love. Wedding plans, which follow the pattern of the whites, begin but the death of Na Sompa creates a problem. Despite the death of Miss Tsiba's mother, the wedding continues, and this gets to the knowledge of Nana Katawerwa, the grandmother of Miss Tsiba. Nana Katawerwa is opposed to the wedding on account of its contradiction of cultural practice. She smuggles Miss Tsiba out of the wedding reception venue and marries her off in the village.

Okadu heads to court to challenge the decision of Nana Katawerwa but in the end, the court rules in favour of Miss Tsiba. In the end, we witness a triumph of tradition in the play.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of clash of culture in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
2. Examine Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards* as a satiric comedy.
3. Analyse the relationship between Marriage and subject of culture in Kobena Sekyi's *Blinkards*.
4. What is the relationship between language and subject matter in Kobena Sekyi's *Blinkards*?
5. Discuss the crisis of betrayal in Kobena Sekyi's *Blinkards*.
6. Examine the effects of Kobina Sekyi's polarization of characters in *The Blinkards*.
7. Write short notes on the following characters:
 - (a) Mrs Borofosem. (b) Mr Onyimde. (c) Okadu.
8. What is Kobina Sekyi's prescription on Hybridity in *The Blinkards*?
9. Discuss the effect of setting to the subject matter in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
10. Discuss the effects of Kobina Sekyi's use of language in *The Blinkards*.
11. Examine the dramatic devices deployed by Kobina Sekyi in *The Blinkards*.
12. Exhibit the contemporary importance of Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*
13. Critically examine Kobina Sekyi's use of poetry in *The Blinkards*.
14. Discuss the literary imports of matriarchy in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
15. Discuss the contradictions of comedy and seriousness in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
16. Examine the effects of cosmopolitanism in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
17. Identify Kobina Sekyi's artistic use of the social club in *The Blinkards*.
18. How does Kobina Sekyi's philosophy of life reflect in *The Blinkards*?
19. Critically examine the cultural values in Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*.
20. Write short notes on:
 - (a) The professional class in the play. (b) The court scene in the play.
 - (c) The two Fanti Christian converts. (d) The metropolitan club.

2. Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*

The play is connected to diverse threads. The Yoruba history, myth and classical literary tradition. Lawumi starts a process of revenge against the Owu people for desecrating the Ife shrine. In the battle that ensues between the

Owus and the people of Ife, there are heavy casualties and many people are captured. Among those captured is Iyunloye, wife of Okunade. Okunade is hurt by the development and enrolls in the army to recover his wife. The Owus are selling people as slaves at the Apomu market against the laws of Ife which happens to be the ancestral root of all Yorubas. The reaction of Ife is a failure because their army is not strong enough to deal with the Owu forces. Lawumi mobilizes mercenaries, and they eventually dislodge Owu.

The allied forces led by Okunade lay siege around Owu for seven years before they succeed. Although the bounties of the war are shared, it increases the acrimony, intolerance and strife among people of the same origin. The play ends with emphasis on peaceful co-existence and love.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the interface between the spiritual and the physical in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
2. Examine the theme of vengeance in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
3. Discuss Femi Osofisan's perspective of War in *Women of Owu*.
4. Explain the traditional values of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
5. Justify the appropriateness of Femi Osofisan's title of *Women of Owu*.
6. Discuss the importance of metaphysics to the subject matter in *Women of Owu*.
7. Discuss the effectiveness of setting in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
8. Analyse the import of Femi Osofisan's allusions in *Women of Owu*.
9. Explain the artistic uses of song in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
10. Discuss Femi Osofisan's use of language in *Women of Owu*.
11. Give a perspective of Africa's cosmology, using Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
12. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Gesinde. (b) Lawumi. (c) Okunade.
13. Discuss Femi Osofisan's treatment of the themes of war and vengeance in *Women of Owu*.
14. Exhibit the dramatic elements in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
15. Explain the importance of myth in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
16. Discuss the relationship between literature and history using Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as a guide.
17. What are the religious and cultural implications of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*?
18. Discuss the contemporary relevance of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
19. Critically examine the plot structure of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*.
20. "War dehumanizes, man humanizes gods and goddesses." Discuss this using Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*

3. Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

The play centres on the culture of marriage in Britain in the 19th century. It is a time when people go into marriage with very wrong motives, and the marriage institution is on the ebb. The playwright has issues of homosexuality with the authorities, and this probably influences his satire of the marriage institution. The playwright places high premium on the importance of love in relationships. The play ends with emphasis on honesty and high moral standard as pre-requisite to successful marriage relationship.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the importance of Oscar Wilde's title to the content of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
2. Examine Oscar Wilde's discourse of the theme of honesty in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
3. Exhibit Oscar Wilde's philosophy on marriage in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
4. Identify the religious undertones of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
5. Explain the satiric import of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
6. Discuss Oscar Wilde's use of motif in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
7. Comment on the setting of the play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
8. Examine the importance of being honest in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
9. Discuss the themes of Openness and Sincerity in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
10. Explain the value of religion in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
11. What are the social implications in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
12. Discuss the plot in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
13. What is the importance of setting to the subject matter of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
14. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) Jack (b) Algernon (c) Lady Bracknell (d) Gwendolen.
15. Discuss the theme of conflict in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
16. Discuss the influence of society to dramatic composition as demonstrated by Oscar Wilde in *The Importance of Being Honest*.
17. Explain Oscar Wilde's use of allusion in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
18. Examine the relationship between Love, Marriage and Honesty in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
19. Identify the elements of drama in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Honest*.
20. What are the peculiar stylistic devices deployed by Oscar Wilde in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

4. George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*

The play is about war and marriage. The battle at Slivnitz, between the Serbs and the Bulgarians, has ended. The Serbs who lost the battle are running away because of fear of being killed. Raina, the daughter of Petkoff aids the escape of Bluntschli who is a Swiss fighting for the Serbs. She gives him her father's old coat as disguise to make his way of escape, but they have fallen in love. Raina has been betrothed to Major Saranof but the Major has his eyes on Louka.

At the end of the war, Bluntschli returns with the coat. Despite the initial hiccups, he gets married to Raina, and Major Saranof to Louka at the end of the play.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of war in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
2. Examine the theme of marriage in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
3. Critically analyse George Bernard's Shaw's treatments of war in *Arms and the Man*.
4. Exhibit the moral values of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
5. Write short notes on the following: (a) Major Saranof (b) Raina (c) Bluntschli (d) Major Petkoff.
6. Discuss "The man" and "The arms" in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*
7. Show the importance of (a) Madame Petkoff (b) Louka (c) Nikola in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

8. Examine the importance of setting to the subject matter in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and The Man*.
9. Comment on George Bernard Shaw's use of language in *Arms and the Man*.
10. Discuss George Bernard Shaw's treatment of the theme of heroism in *Arms and the Man*.
11. Discuss the use of suspense in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
12. What are the dramatic elements in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and The Man*?
13. What is the *impact of plot* to the subject matter of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*?
14. Discuss George Bernard Shaw's treatment of the theme of love in *Arms and the Man*.
15. What are the modern values of George Bernard Shaw' *Arms and the Man*?
16. What are the effects of characterization in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*?
17. Examine the theme of materialism in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
18. Highlight and discuss the importance of family life in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.
19. What are the impacts of dramatic ironies in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*?
20. Examine the literary devices in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

5. William Shakespeare's *Richard II*

This is one of William Shakespeare's historical plays. The play centres on King Richard II who ruled England between 1377 and 1399. In the play, the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk—Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray respectively—exchange insults over accusations of misdeeds. This extends to the palace of the king, and it is decided that the conflict be settled by combat at Coventry on September 17, which is St. Lambert's Day.

King Richard aborts the contest and later hears the news of rebellion in Ireland. He needs money to finance the fight and so he puts the people under heavy tax regime. This further compounds his problem as he becomes unpopular with the people. He does not back down from his ride on excesses, and this eventually leads to his loss of the throne to Bolingbroke—King Henry IV. King Richard is killed in prison by Sir Pierce Exton, and the play ends with the new king, Henry IV, planning a trip of penance to the holy land.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theme of futility in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
2. Examine the evils of flattery and sycophancy in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
3. Discuss the theme of double standards in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
4. "All that glitters is not gold". Discuss this statement using William Shakespeare's *Richard II* as guide.
5. Comment on the excesses of power in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
6. Discuss the connection between power and loyalty in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
7. What is William Shakespeare's philosophy on revenge in *Richard II*?
8. Compare and contrast the characters of King Richard and King Henry IV in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
9. Discuss the roles of Duke of Hereford and Duke of Norfolk in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
10. "Human beings can never be God no matter how highly placed." Discuss this statement using William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
11. Examine the tragic import of William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
12. Discuss William Shakespeare's use of language in *Richard II*.
13. Analyse the relevance of history to literature using William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
14. Comment on William Shakespeare's obligation to antecedents in *Richard II*.

15. Identify and analyse the elements of drama in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
16. Comment on the roles of (i) Sir Henry Green (ii) Sir John Bushy (iii) Sir John Bagot in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
17. What is the connection between leadership and followership in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
18. What are the dramatic devices in William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
19. Discuss the contemporary literal imports of William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.
20. Examine the political themes of William Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

6. William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The key character in the play is a magician called Prospero; he lives on an Island with his daughter, Miranda. Prospero's initiated storm causes a lot of troubles for the King of Naples, Alonso, and his team who are on their way back from the marriage ceremony of princess Claribel. The reason of Prospero's grievance being that he is denied right to the throne and abandoned to die on the Island. His brother who offends him is on the king's entourage.

The ship losses its bearing and all crew members get scattered on the Island where a weird looking half human creature, Caliban, lives. Sycorax, the witch parent of Caliba, rules the Island and has made Ariel subservient until he is freed by Prospero. Caliban mingles with the king's entourage and is plotting to kill Prospero for dealing with his unruly behaviour. In the end, the king and those who plot against Prospero renege. Prospero forgives his brother and the king, and Ariel is set free. Prospero is restored to his position as Duke of Milan.

Questions

1. Discuss the subject of romance in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
2. Do a detailed analysis of these characters in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: (i) Propero (ii) Miranda and (iii) Caliban.
3. Discuss the theme of power in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
4. Examine the connection between treachery and betrayal in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
5. Discuss the themes of appearance and reality in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
6. "Appearance can be deceptive." Discuss using William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
7. Discuss the themes of reconciliation and forgiveness in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
8. Examine William Shakespeare's use of symbols in *The Tempest*.
9. Discuss the dramatic devices in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
10. Examine the theme of conflict in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
11. What is William Shakespeare's perspective on the conflict between man and nature in *The Tempest*.
12. Discuss the style of William Shakespeare's in *The Tempest*.
13. How appropriate is the title of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*?
14. What is the import of tempest to the subject matter of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
15. Discuss the theme of isolation in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
16. Discuss the theme of alienation in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
17. Examine the dramatic techniques in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
18. What is the importance of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to the present society?
19. Analyse William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a tragi-comedy.
20. Discuss the themes of love and justice in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.