



SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI COLLEGE

(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University)

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Tiruchirappalli - 620 002

Study material

DRAMA

22ACCEN7

Fill in the blanks:

1. Dr. Faustus is a play written by _____.
Answer: Christopher Marlowe
2. Dr. Faustus makes a pact with _____.
Answer: Mephistophilis (the Devil)
3. The main theme of *Dr. Faustus* is the conflict between knowledge and _____.
Answer: salvation
4. Dr. Faustus sells his soul for _____ years of service from the devil.
Answer: 24
5. The character who represents the temptation and damnation of Faustus is called _____.
Answer: Mephistophilis
6. *The Duchess of Malfi* was written by _____.
Answer: John Webster
7. The Duchess marries _____ secretly against her brothers' wishes.
Answer: Antonio
8. The two brothers who oppose the Duchess are _____ and _____.
Answer: Ferdinand and the Cardinal
9. The genre of *The Duchess of Malfi* is primarily _____.
Answer: tragedy
10. The Duchess's brother who becomes a Cardinal is named _____.
Answer: The Cardinal
11. *The Rivals* was written by _____.
Answer: Richard Brinsley Sheridan

12. The character known for his eccentric language and malapropisms is _____.
Answer: Mrs. Malaprop
13. The play *The Rivals* is a classic example of _____ comedy.
Answer: comedy of manners
14. The young lover who disguises himself as a poor soldier is _____.
Answer: Captain Jack Absolute
15. Lydia Languish is in love with _____ in *The Rivals*.
Answer: Ensign Beverley
16. *Pygmalion* was written by _____.
Answer: George Bernard Shaw
17. The main character who is a flower girl is named _____.
Answer: Eliza Doolittle
18. Professor Henry Higgins is a specialist in _____.
Answer: phonetics
19. The play *Pygmalion* explores themes of class and _____.
Answer: identity
20. Eliza Doolittle wants to improve her speech to work in a _____.
Answer: flower shop
21. *The Birthday Party* was written by _____.
Answer: Harold Pinter
22. The play *The Birthday Party* belongs to the genre of _____ drama.
Answer: absurdist or existential
23. The main character in *The Birthday Party* is named _____.
Answer: Stanley Webber
24. The two mysterious men who arrive at the boarding house are called _____ and _____.
Answer: Goldberg and McCann
25. The setting of *The Birthday Party* is a _____.
Answer: boarding house

Answer in a line or two:

1. **Question:** Who is Dr. Faustus, and what is his tragic flaw?
Answer: Dr. Faustus is a scholar who sells his soul to the devil for knowledge and power. His tragic flaw is his excessive pride and desire to transcend human limits.
2. **Question:** What role does Mephistophilis play in the play?
Answer: Mephistophilis is the demon who serves Faustus after the pact. He acts as a tempter and warns Faustus about the consequences of his bargain.

3. **Question:** What is the significance of the Good Angel and the Evil Angel in *Dr. Faustus*?
Answer: The Good Angel urges Faustus to repent and seek salvation, while the Evil Angel encourages him to continue his pact with the devil, representing his internal moral conflict.
4. **Question:** How does *Dr. Faustus* end?
Answer: Faustus is ultimately damned and taken to hell because he fails to repent before his time runs out. The play ends as a moral warning against overreaching ambition.
5. **Question:** What is the central conflict in *The Duchess of Malfi*?
Answer: The conflict revolves around the Duchess's secret marriage and her brothers' violent opposition. It highlights themes of power, control, and corruption.
6. **Question:** How are the brothers Ferdinand and the Cardinal different?
Answer: Ferdinand is passionate and unstable, driven by jealousy, while the Cardinal is cold, manipulative, and politically cunning.
7. **Question:** What role does the Duchess play in the play?
Answer: The Duchess is a strong, independent woman who defies social conventions by remarrying. She symbolizes virtue and resilience despite tragic circumstances.
8. **Question:** How does Webster use violence in the play?
Answer: Webster uses graphic violence and dark imagery to underscore the brutality and corruption of the court, intensifying the play's tragic tone.
9. **Question:** What is the main plot of *The Rivals*?
Answer: The play centers on romantic misunderstandings and social satire, especially around the love lives of Lydia Languish and Captain Absolute.
10. **Question:** Who is Mrs. Malaprop, and why is she famous?
Answer: Mrs. Malaprop is a comic character known for her humorous misuse of words, called malapropisms, which add wit and satire to the play.
11. **Question:** What themes are explored in *The Rivals*?
Answer: Themes include love, social class, and the folly of pretension, all explored through witty dialogue and comedic situations.
12. **Question:** How does disguise function in the play?
Answer: Disguise is used by Captain Absolute to test Lydia's love, creating comic confusion and advancing the plot.
13. **Question:** What is the premise of *Pygmalion*?
Answer: The play follows Professor Higgins as he transforms Eliza Doolittle, a flower girl, into a refined lady through speech training.
14. **Question:** How does *Pygmalion* address social class issues?
Answer: It critiques the rigid British class system by showing how speech and manners can change perceptions of social status.
15. **Question:** What role does Eliza's transformation play in the story?
Answer: Eliza's transformation challenges ideas about identity and self-worth, questioning whether external changes can affect inner value.

16. **Question:** How is the relationship between Higgins and Eliza portrayed?
Answer: Their relationship is complex, marked by power dynamics, conflict, and eventual mutual respect, reflecting social and gender tensions.
17. **Question:** What is the setting of *The Birthday Party*, and why is it important?
Answer: The play is set in a shabby boarding house, symbolizing entrapment and the claustrophobic nature of the characters' lives.
18. **Question:** Who are Goldberg and McCann, and what do they represent?
Answer: They are mysterious men who threaten Stanley, representing oppressive authority and menace.
19. **Question:** What is the significance of the birthday party in the play?
Answer: The birthday party is a disturbing event that disrupts the characters' lives, symbolizing chaos and loss of control.
20. **Question:** How does Pinter create a sense of menace in the play?
Answer: Through ambiguous dialogue, pauses, and unexplained threats, Pinter builds tension and unease throughout the play.

Paragraph questions:

Explain the character of Dr. Faustus and his tragic flaws. How do these flaws lead to his downfall?

Dr. Faustus is a highly learned scholar whose insatiable desire for knowledge and power leads him to make a pact with the devil. He embodies the Renaissance spirit of inquiry but takes it to a dangerous extreme, reflecting the human thirst to transcend natural limits. Faustus's tragic flaws are primarily his hubris and pride. He is not content with the limits of human knowledge and mortal existence, so he turns to dark forces for forbidden knowledge and magical powers. Despite repeated warnings from his conscience, represented by the Good Angel, and from Mephistophilis himself, Faustus ignores the consequences of his actions. He believes that worldly pleasures and power are worth the cost of his eternal soul. This excessive pride blinds him to the importance of repentance and humility. As the play progresses, Faustus's failure to repent seals his doom, showing that overreaching ambition without moral restraint leads to destruction. His downfall is both personal and universal: it is a warning about the dangers of unchecked human desire and the limits of knowledge without ethical considerations. Marlowe presents Faustus as a tragic hero whose potential greatness is destroyed by his own flaws, making the play a profound meditation on human aspiration and sin.

5. Examine the character of the Duchess of Malfi as a symbol of virtue and resistance. How does she challenge the social norms of her time?

The Duchess of Malfi is a remarkable character who embodies strength, virtue, and independence in a male-dominated and oppressive society. Unlike many women of her time, the Duchess refuses to be controlled by her brothers or society's strictures. Her decision to marry Antonio, a man of lower social rank, secretly defies the rigid class and gender norms of the period, showing her desire to follow her heart rather than obey patriarchal dictates. Throughout the play, she demonstrates intelligence, compassion, and dignity, even when facing betrayal and death. Her strength lies in her ability to maintain her humanity and moral integrity in the face of tyranny and cruelty. The Duchess's

character challenges the prevailing ideas about women's roles, as she actively asserts her autonomy and refuses to be silenced or subjugated. Her tragic fate underscores the dangers of defying entrenched power but also highlights the resilience of personal virtue in corrupt societies. Webster uses the Duchess as a symbol of resistance against injustice, and through her, critiques the brutal exercise of power and control by her brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal.

9. Describe the use of comedy of manners in *The Rivals*. How does Sheridan satirize social behavior and class distinctions?

The Rivals is a quintessential example of the comedy of manners genre, where Sheridan uses wit, humor, and irony to expose the pretensions and affectations of the upper class. Through exaggerated characters and sharp dialogue, Sheridan mocks the social rituals surrounding love, courtship, and status. The play highlights how people often behave superficially to maintain or improve their social standing, and how love is frequently entangled with social ambitions rather than genuine emotions. Characters like Mrs. Malaprop, with her amusing misuse of words (malapropisms), serve to ridicule those who try to appear more educated or sophisticated than they really are. The social satire extends to the portrayal of characters who disguise themselves or adopt false identities to navigate social expectations. Sheridan cleverly exposes the absurdities of the rigid class distinctions of his time by showing how easily such distinctions can be manipulated or misunderstood. The play's humor invites audiences to reflect on the hypocrisy and superficiality of societal norms, making *The Rivals* not just entertaining but also a pointed critique of 18th-century English society.

13. Discuss the social commentary in *Pygmalion* on class and identity. How does Shaw critique the British class system through the characters?

In *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw offers a sharp critique of the British class system by exploring how superficial markers such as speech and manners determine a person's social status. The transformation of Eliza Doolittle, a poor flower girl, into a lady who can pass in high society simply by changing her accent and vocabulary exposes the arbitrary and constructed nature of class distinctions. Shaw suggests that class divisions are more about appearance and external behaviors than inherent worth or ability. This idea challenges the rigid social hierarchy of Edwardian England by implying that anyone can cross class boundaries if given the right opportunities. Through Professor Higgins's experiments, Shaw questions the validity of judging individuals based on their social origins or mannerisms. However, the play also highlights the complexities and limitations of social mobility, as Eliza struggles to find her identity after her transformation and is not fully accepted by either the upper or lower classes. Shaw uses this tension to critique societal attitudes toward class and identity, emphasizing the need for personal dignity and respect beyond social labels. Ultimately, *Pygmalion* advocates for a more equitable society where individuals are valued for who they are, not merely how they speak or dress.

17. Describe the atmosphere of menace and ambiguity in *The Birthday Party*. How does Pinter use dialogue and setting to create this mood?

Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* is renowned for its atmosphere of menace and ambiguity, created through sparse but loaded dialogue, frequent pauses, and an unsettling setting. The play is set almost entirely in a shabby, claustrophobic boarding house, a confined space that mirrors the

psychological imprisonment of its inhabitants. The dialogue often feels fragmented and circular, with characters speaking in half-truths or contradictions, which heightens the sense of confusion and unease. Pinter's use of silence and pauses is as important as spoken words, creating tension and suspense. The arrival of Goldberg and McCann, two mysterious visitors, introduces an inexplicable threat that looms over the other characters, particularly Stanley. Their ambiguous motives and the vague references to Stanley's past add to the play's mystery and menace. The combination of an oppressive setting, uncertain characters, and disjointed conversation results in a mood where nothing is quite as it seems, and the audience is left in a state of discomfort and questioning. Pinter masterfully evokes the anxieties of post-war existence and the fear of loss of identity and control.

Essay questions

Discuss the theme of ambition and its consequences in *Dr. Faustus*. How does Marlowe explore the limits of human knowledge and power?

Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* is a powerful exploration of ambition and its catastrophic consequences. Faustus is a brilliant scholar whose desire to transcend human limitations drives him to make a pact with Lucifer, exchanging his soul for magical powers and worldly pleasures. Marlowe portrays ambition as a double-edged sword: it reflects the Renaissance spirit of inquiry but also the danger of pride and overreaching.

Faustus's ambition initially seems noble—he wants to acquire knowledge beyond normal human capacities. However, his refusal to recognize moral boundaries leads to his downfall. Faustus ignores repeated warnings from his conscience and the Good Angel, choosing instead to indulge in fleeting entertainments. This unchecked ambition reveals the limits of human power: despite his powers, Faustus remains mortal and ultimately powerless to avoid eternal damnation.

Marlowe suggests that knowledge divorced from ethical responsibility becomes destructive. Faustus's tragic flaw—hubris—blinds him to the spiritual consequences of his pact. The play warns against the dangers of excessive pride and ambition when not balanced by humility. The theme serves as a timeless meditation on human desire, the pursuit of knowledge, and the limits imposed by morality and fate.

2. Analyze the role of Mephistophilis in *Dr. Faustus*. How does he function both as a tempter and a tragic figure?

Mephistophilis is both a tempter and a tragic figure in *Dr. Faustus*. As the devil's agent, he facilitates Faustus's pact with Lucifer, granting him magical powers and tempting him with worldly delights. His role as tempter is crucial: he entices Faustus to trade his soul, embodying the dangers of temptation and moral weakness.

However, Mephistophilis is also portrayed as a tragic character. He laments his own damnation, expressing sorrow and regret over his fall from heaven. His suffering and inability to return to God

add complexity to his character, making him more than a mere villain. This tragic dimension highlights the play's themes of free will and the consequences of rebellion.

Mephistophilis warns Faustus about hell and urges repentance, though ultimately bound by his infernal duty to keep Faustus damned. His dual role deepens the moral conflict, showing the human struggle between temptation and conscience. Through Mephistophilis, Marlowe examines the nature of evil, repentance, and spiritual loss.

3. Examine the theme of power and corruption in *The Duchess of Malfi*. How do the characters illustrate these concepts?

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster vividly explores power's corrupting influence. The Duchess's brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal, wield absolute power but are morally corrupt. Their obsessive control and cruelty, driven by jealousy and paranoia, demonstrate how power breeds tyranny and madness.

The Duchess represents virtue and moral strength but becomes a victim of her brothers' corruption. Her secret marriage to Antonio threatens their authority, leading to tragic consequences. Ferdinand's descent into madness and the Cardinal's cold manipulation show power's capacity to destroy both rulers and subjects.

The play's dark imagery and violence underscore the decay of a corrupt society. Webster critiques the abuse of power, illustrating its destructive effects on individuals and families. The Duchess's martyrdom symbolizes resistance against tyranny, making the play a timeless reflection on power's dangers.

4. Discuss the role of the Duchess as a figure of female resistance in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

The Duchess is a pioneering figure of female resistance. In a male-dominated world, she asserts her autonomy by secretly marrying Antonio, defying social and familial expectations. Her strength lies in her dignity, intelligence, and compassion despite the oppressive forces around her.

Unlike submissive female characters typical of the period, the Duchess exercises control over her life and estate. Her courage in facing persecution and death highlights her moral authority and challenges patriarchal norms. Through her, Webster critiques societal restrictions on women and portrays resilience against injustice.

The Duchess's tragic fate underscores the costs of resistance but also elevates her as a symbol of female empowerment and virtue in a corrupt world.

5. Analyze how Sheridan uses Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals* to create comedy and social satire.

Mrs. Malaprop's comic misuse of words (malapropisms) creates humor and satirizes social pretensions. Her attempts to sound educated are undermined by her linguistic blunders, exposing the superficiality of social ambition.

Through Mrs. Malaprop, Sheridan mocks the desire to appear sophisticated without substance, criticizing class-consciousness and affectation. She embodies the folly of valuing status over genuine knowledge, making her a humorous yet pointed symbol of social satire.

Her role also highlights language as a marker of class, emphasizing how social identity can be constructed or deconstructed through speech. Mrs. Malaprop remains one of the play's most enduring comedic and critical figures.

6. Discuss the use of disguise and mistaken identity in *The Rivals* and their significance to the plot and themes.

Disguise and mistaken identity drive much of the play's comedy and social commentary. Captain Absolute's disguise as Ensign Beverley tests Lydia's love and challenges class barriers.

These deceptions create humorous misunderstandings and highlight themes of authenticity versus appearance. Sheridan uses disguise to critique rigid class distinctions and show that love and character transcend social status.

The confusion generated by mistaken identities also provides dramatic irony, keeping audiences engaged and emphasizing the superficiality of social divisions. The play advocates for sincerity and challenges social pretenses through these comic devices.

UNIT IV: George Bernard Shaw – *Pygmalion*

7. How does Shaw use *Pygmalion* to critique the British class system and explore issues of identity and transformation?

In *Pygmalion*, Shaw critiques the British class system by showing how superficial markers—speech and manners—determine social status. Eliza's transformation from a flower girl to a lady capable of passing in high society exposes the arbitrary nature of class distinctions.

Shaw highlights how identity is performative and socially constructed. Eliza's struggle to reconcile her new social role with her original identity reveals the limitations of social mobility and the artificiality of class boundaries.

The play challenges the audience to question the fairness of judging people by accents and appearances. Shaw advocates for social equality and respect for individual dignity beyond external markers.

8. Discuss the complex relationship between Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. How does it reflect issues of power and gender?

The relationship between Higgins and Eliza is marked by imbalance and complexity. Higgins exerts control over Eliza through language training, symbolizing patriarchal authority and social power.

Eliza's transformation empowers her but also highlights tensions between dependence and independence. She struggles to assert her identity beyond Higgins's influence, reflecting gender dynamics and social hierarchies.

Shaw critiques traditional gender roles and power imbalances, showing Eliza's growth as a challenge to Higgins's authority. Their relationship raises questions about respect, autonomy, and the social construction of identity.

9. Describe how Pinter creates an atmosphere of menace and ambiguity in *The Birthday Party*. How do dialogue and setting contribute to this mood?

Pinter creates a pervasive atmosphere of menace through fragmented dialogue, frequent pauses, and an oppressive setting—a shabby boarding house that feels claustrophobic.

The characters' conversations are often disjointed and circular, filled with silences that build tension and uncertainty. The arrival of mysterious visitors Goldberg and McCann introduces a threatening unknown, amplifying paranoia.

The setting's confinement mirrors psychological entrapment. The vague backstories and unclear motivations heighten ambiguity, making the audience uneasy and unsure of what will happen next.

Together, dialogue and setting create a mood of existential dread, reflecting themes of identity loss and control.

10. Analyze the theme of power and control in *The Birthday Party*. How are these themes developed through characters and plot?

Power and control dominate *The Birthday Party*. Goldberg and McCann wield mysterious authority over Stanley, symbolizing forces beyond his understanding and control.

Stanley's resistance and ultimate submission illustrate the fragility of individual autonomy. The play suggests that power can be arbitrary and totalizing, crushing identity and freedom.

Pinter's ambiguous narrative denies clear answers, making power an elusive and frightening force. The characters' interactions expose psychological domination and the vulnerability of the individual within social and political systems.
