

UNIT

**5**

**Drama**



*A RING TO ME IS BONDAGE -*

*I look at the sea with envy*

*And say to myself:*

*"How small you are!"*

*Perhaps the sea*

*Also feels the same*

*When it joins the ocean!*

*Mina Asadi - an Iranian Woman Poet*

# Lesson 1

## *Introduction*

By now you must have read many plays as a part of your curriculum and maybe out of your own interest too. Many of you may *not* have acted, directed or produced plays. But surely all of you have read plays.

Have you seen plays staged in your city during Dusshera?

Do you watch Television serials?

Do you watch movies?

I am sure all of you have been exposed to at least one of these modes of drama presentation.

*Activity 1 : What features of the above do you think place them under the umbrella term Drama?*

- A playwright to write a script?
  - A producer :
    - to bring out the work of art skillfully?
    - to control finances?
  - A director to tell actors and cameramen what they should do ?
  - An audience?
- Would you like to add something else here?

*Read and answer the following:*

- a) **Who is the audience in a drama which is a live performance?**
- (i) An individual
  - (ii) A collective set of people

## b) Who is the audience in a movie or TV serial ?

- (i) An individual
- (ii) A collective set of people

### *What is Drama?*

The word drama is said to have its origins in the word *dran* which means *to do or act*. The word scene is said to have come from the word *scena* which means *stage*.

*Aristotle* suggested six focal points when you read /watch/ interpret a play:

<b>Plot (Mythos)</b>	:	It includes the story, the plot , the narrative and the causality behind it. This is where all interpretation starts.
<b>Environment (Ethos)</b>	:	The environment of a play - the intellectual climate, the cultural settings, the social customs, behaviour relevant to the play makes the ethos of the play.
<b>Style (Lexis)</b>	:	You have studied lexis in Poetry. What kind of style does the dramatist adopt? Is it harsh? poetic? heavy-handed? What kind of language is used? Is there a dialect or register? All these come under lexis.
<b>Ideology (Dianoia)</b>	:	Dianoia is the emotion evoked in the readers as they read along . Is there an ideology you can identify with? What are the feelings, the sentiments of the dramatist? Are they similar to yours?
<b>Props (Opsis)</b>	:	Opsis refers to what you can see on stage - the setting, the props, the costumes. Look carefully at the stage directions which will help you understand its features.
<b>Music (Melos)</b>	:	Melos is the integral part of drama-music . Are there chants by a chorus? Are there dance rhythms? Do the songs help to elaborate the characterization?

*Activity 2 : Read the following extract. It is scene one from Tennessee Williams, 'The Glass Menagerie'.*

*The characters are:*

**Amanda Wingfield** : the mother  
**Laura** : daughter  
**Tom** : son  
**Jim O'Connor** : the gentleman caller

### *Scene One*

*[The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hivelike conglomerations of cellular living - units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centres of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.*

*The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always - burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire-escape is included in the set --- that is, the landing of it and steps descending from it.*

*The scene is nonrealistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic.*

*At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building, which runs parallel to the footlights, is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clotheslines, garbage cans and the 'sinister lattice work of neighbouring fire-escapes. It is up and down these side alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. At the end of TOM'S opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly reveals (by means of a transparency) the interior of the ground floor Wingfield apartment.*

*Downstage is the living room, which also serves as a sleeping room for LAURA, the sofa unfolding to make her bed. Upstage, center, and divided by a wide arch with' transparent faded portieres (or second curtain), is the dining room. In an old-fashioned what-not in the living room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living room, facing the audience, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say, "I will be smiling forever,"*

*The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portieres of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends, out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during TOM'S final speech.*

*The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever license with dramatic convention as is convenient to his purposes.*

**TOM:** *(enters dressed as a merchant sailor from the alley, stage left, and strolls across the front of the stage to the firescape. There he stops and addresses the audience.)*

**TOM:** *Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed . ' forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy. In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion . Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis ... This is the social background of the play.*

### *Music*

*The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic. In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings. I am the narrator of the play and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother, Amanda, my sister, Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes. He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from but since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long delayed but always expected something that we live for. There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than life photograph over the mantel. This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town ... The last we heard of him was a picture post-card from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words -- "Hello -- Good-bye!" and no address. I think the rest of the play", will explain itself ....*

*[Amanda's voice becomes audible through the portieres.] [Legend On Screen]*

*[He divides the portieres and enters the upstage area.]*

*(Amanda and Laura are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by gestures without food or utensils. Amanda faces the audience. Tom and Laura are seated in profile.)*

*[The interior' has lit up softly and through the screen we see AMANDA and LAURA seated at the table in the upstage area.]*

**Amanda :** *[calling]* Tom?

**Tom:** Yes, Mother.

**Amanda:** We can't say grace until you come to the table!

**Tom:** Coming, Mother. *(He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.)*

**Amanda :** *[to her son]* Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew -chew! Animals have sections in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A wellcooked meal has lots of delicate flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

*[Tom deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and pushes his chair back from the table.]*

**Tom :** I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening -- spoils my appetite -- all this discussion of animals' secretion--salivary glands mastication!

**Amanda :** *[lightly]* Temperament like a Metropolitan star! *[He rises and crosses downstage.]* You're not excused from the table.

*[Laura rises.]*

**Laura :** I'll bring in the dessert.

**Amanda :** *[rising]* No, no, sister -- you be the lady this time and I'll be the darky.

**Laura :** I'm already up.

**Amanda :** Resume your seat, little sister -- I want you to stay fresh and ~pretty -- for gentlemen callers!

**Laura :** I'm not expecting any gentlemen callers.

**Amanda :** *[Going 'out to kitchenette. Airily].* Sometimes they come when they are least expected! I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain *[Enters kitchenette.]*

**Tom :** I know what's coming'

**Laura :** Yes but let her tell it.

**Tom.** Again?

**Laura :** She loves to tell it.

*[Amanda returns with a bowl of dessert.]*

**Amanda :** *One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain -- your mother received -- seventeen! -- gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to bring in folding chairs.*

**Tom :** *[Remaining at portieres] How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?*

**Amanda :** *I understood the art of conversation! [remaining at portieres].*

**Tom :** *I bet you could talk.*

**Amanda :** *They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure -- although I wasn't slighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.*

**Tom :** *What did you talk about?*

**Amanda :** *Things of importance going on in the world! Never anything coarse or common or vulgar. [She addresses TOM as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by portieres. He plays this scene . as though he held the book.] My callers were gentlemen - all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta - planters and sons of planters!*

**[Tom motions for music and a spot of light on Amanda.]**

**[Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.] [screen Legend:**

*There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank. Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds. There were' the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casino. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well-provided for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound, never loved her -- carried my picture on him the night he died! And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta, had set her cap for! That beautiful, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!*

**Tom :** *What did he leave his widow?*

**Amanda :** *He never married ! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies!*

**Tom :** *Isn't this the first you've' mentioned that still survives?*

**Amanda :** *That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune -- came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold! And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J.Fitzhugh, mind you! But I picked your father!*

**Laura :** *[rising] Mother, let me clear the table.*

**Amanda :** *No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practice your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty!-- It's almost time for our*



gentlemen callers to start arriving. [She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.] How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?

[Tom throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.]

**Laura :** [alone in the dining room] I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

**Amanda :** [reappearing, airily] What? No one, not one? You must be joking! Laura nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portieres and draws them gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains. [Music: "the Glass Menagerie" under faintly. Lightly] Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

**Laura :** It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain .... [Tom utters another groan. LAURA glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile, her voice catching a little.] Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.

*The scene dims out with "Glass Menagerie" music.*

*Activity 3 : After your reading and dramatising the plays, interpret and analyse the scene based on the general inputs given below. Use these broad guidelines to understand the play better. Some facts from the play are also given to facilitate your understanding. Add more facts from the text to substantiate your answer.*

#### The props :

- The set : the atmosphere that you can visualize.

*Shabby apartment, tangled clothesline, garbage, realistic picture, the description of the room, the sofa cum bed, curio stand, Glass Menagerie*

- The play is about America in the 1930's.
- Description of the apartment/the alleys

*(The interior of the Wingfield apartment as revealed through the transparent, rear wall of the Wingfield tenement flanked by Alley way fire escape, the transparent curtains - leading to a dream like atmosphere reminding us that the play is memory)*

- Costumes

*(Tom as a merchant, his first speech : Tom yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. To begin with, I turn back time.)*

### The music :

- Is music an integral part of the play?  
*(The tune which runs through the scene is given the title of the play" The Glass Menagerie")*
- When does the music play?  
*(After Tom's depiction of the social background of the play at Tom's call when Amanda is reminiscing as the scene ends)*
- What does it indicate?  
*(What does the music tell you about the mood of each of these persons when it is played for example in the end when the tune Glass Menagerie plays, the focus is on Laura. It probably symbolizes Laura's feelings in life, as if she is in a cage of some kind.)*

### The environment :

- What kind of people are Tom, Amanda and Laura?  
Amanda : mother, quite domineering, obsessed with gentlemen callers.  
Laura : daughter, nervous, slips in a fugitive manner.
- What kind of scathing comment does the playwright make on the middle class Americans?  
*'matriculating in a school for the blind'*  
*'the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy'*
- The customs and manners of Amanda's youth?  
*An obsession with the idea of gentleman callers, she wants to duplicate the customs of her times for her daughter.*

## End of Lesson Review Questions

### 1. Comprehension

- What is Drama?
- How does Aristotle suggest using ideology of the play to interpret it?
- List three differences between reading a play and watching a play and watching a movie.

### 2. Vocabulary

What do you understand by:

- music in a play
- Props of a play
- Environment of a play

### 3. Writing for the Portfolio

- What is the difference between reading a play and watching a play and watching a movie? The differences are mixed up. Put them in the right column. Some experiences maybe common to both. Add some of your own too.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The effort is my own.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I just sit back and enjoy.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The action takes place in my mind.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I have to visualize the set and hold the mental picture throughout my reading.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Words, silences, sound effects, background music, facial expressions, gestures, movements across the stage, lighting, groupings, shadows, shapes and colours in the costumes and décor tell me something about the play.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A zoom lens / close up tells me about the character or situation in focus.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I have to visualize the sound of the spoken word or even stage directions.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The instructions to the actors in parentheses gives me an indication of the particular kind of person a character is supposed to be or about a particular situation.</li></ul>

<i>Watching a play</i>	<i>Reading a play</i>	<i>Watching a movie</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6		

*b. Read the two situations given below: Write a short script with one scene on each of the situations. Remember to give details of plot, environment and music as you write the scene. You may not need all the information given.*

#### **Situation 1 : A**

Children in Gudda stand on rooftops near a solar panel. Solar power first arrived two years ago.

"When the lanterns first arrived, the villagers asked, what is this?" says Hanuman Ram, the local solar engineer. "I explained to them how it worked. Then slowly, as people saw it, they said, "Wow, what a thing this is!"

There are no real roads that lead to the tiny village in the state of Rajasthan in northwestern India, home to about 100 families. There are only thin strips of tar dotted with massive potholes that force vehicles into thick brush. Other time, cars have to maneuver over just dirt.

There is no electricity—power lines don't extend out here. Water is scarce, too. At the village well, women balance jugs of water on their heads, deftly evading the livestock that saunters along.

It's a simple lifestyle of farming, tending to goats, caring for children and carrying out household chores – a daily routine that hasn't changed much over the centuries.

That's why light transformed Gudda. Villagers could play music at night. Children could study well past sundown. Watch villagers smile as they light their solar lamps.

As Yamouna Groomis kneads dough for her family's evening meal, she blows through a pipe every once in a while to keep a flame burning in an outdoor clay pit. Her days came to end when the sun went down. She smiles as she proudly flicks on a solar lamp.

### *Situation 1 : B*

About Gudda

**Location** : Gudda is about 300 miles southwest of Delhi.

**Population** : About 500 people live in the village.

**Works** : Most residents are farmers and sheep breeders.

**Main crop** : Millet

**Other facts** : Water is scarce and there is no power except for solar electricity.

"When I saw this light coming on for the first time, I was very happy." she says.

The light is powered by a solar in her roof that charges a battery. Panels can be seen on almost every rooftop in Gudda.

Ram, the man credited with the transformation, doesn't have a high school degree. But he did attend an institution about an hour away called Barefoot College, established 35 years ago with an emphasis on helping India's rural population find solutions for their problems among themselves.

The college, in part funded by the Indian government, trains villagers all over India who have little or no education, giving them a range of skills to change their lives. The entire campus which has amenities such as a library, meeting halls, open-air theater and labs, uses solar power.

On a recent visit to the main collage campus, a group of village women were hard at work making solar cookers, which can boil a liter of water in eight minutes. They are part of the "Women Barefoot Solar Cooker Engineer Society" - six women who came together and started their own business.

### *Situation 2 : A*

#### **One Dollar And Eighty Seven Cents**

That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies saved one and two at a time by bull-doing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles and smiles with sniffles predominating. While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnish flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letterbox into which no letter would go and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining there unto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week.

Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D.

But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above, he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della, which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result.

Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

# Lesson 2 *Modes of Theatrical presentation*

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A study of the various schools of drama is helpful to know which school of drama a play belongs to. Each school of drama came into existence as a reaction to the previous school. Old gives way to the new. With changing social/political/religious situations newer norms come into existence. Some modes of theatrical presentations are given below:

**Classical:** This term refers to art forms in accordance with ancient Greek or Roman models. It had its origin in religion. The fifth century was considered the high period of Greek drama. (*Aeschylus* 525-455 BC)

**Neoclassicism:** The Neoclassic period is usually taken to be the hundred-odd years 1660-1780; in other words, from Dryden's maturity to Johnson's death (1784). Apart from the dramatists the main English authors in this period were: Dryden (1631 - 1700), Swift (1667 - 1745), Addison (1672 1719), Steele (1672 - 1729), Pope (1688 - 1744), Lord Chesterfield (1694 - 1773), Fielding (1707 - 54), Johnson (1709 - 84), Goldsmith (1730 - 74) and Gibbon (1737 - 94). In literary theory and practice most writers of this period were traditionalists and they had a great respect for Classical authors, and especially the Romans who, they believed, had established and perfected the principal literary genres for all time. Literature was regarded as an art, in which excellence could be attained only by prolonged study. Thus the writers of the period were painstaking craftsmen who had a deep respect for the rules of their art. These rules could best be learnt from close study of the Classical authors (Horace was a favourite). Their approach was thoroughly professional. They thought that reason and judgement were the most admirable faculties (the 18<sup>th</sup> century was, after all, the Age of Reason), and that decorum was essential. In prose, as in verse, the most desirable qualities were harmony, proportion, balance and restraint. It follows, therefore, that the Neoclassical writers aimed at correctness. This was nowhere more evident than in their use of the heroic couplet. They strictly adhered to the chorus as an integral part of the whole to comment or interpret or share an action. There was insistence on a language that was poetic and correct. The avoidance of violence on stage were some of the rigid rules of neoclassicism.

**Romanticism:** A few aspects of romanticism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are: (a) an increasing interest in Nature and in the natural, primitive and uncivilized way of life; (b) a growing interest in scenery, especially its more untamed and disorderly manifestations; (c) an association of human moods with the moods of Nature - and thus a subjective feeling for it and interpretation of it; (d) a considerable emphasis on natural religion; (e) emphasis on the need for spontaneity in thought and action and in the expression of thought; (f)

increasing importance attached to natural genius and the power of the imagination; (g) a tendency to exalt the individual and his needs and emphasis on the need for a freer and more personal expression; In all these connections Rousseau is a major figure in the 18<sup>th</sup> century followed by Goethe.

The main figures associated with it are primarily Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly, Byron and Sir Walter Scott. Their political and social beliefs were expressed in their works. This was a prominent movement as a result of the rigid rules of neoclassicism. They felt the only rules to be followed are the rules of nature.

**Realism:** The realists believed in the portrayal of life with fidelity. They avoided poetic language. Their characters used the language of everyday life. They wanted their audience to be completely convinced of the reality of the world on stage. The realist thought they should concern themselves with the here and now, with everyday events and immediate environment. They wanted nothing to distract the audience from being one with the play. *Ibsen, Shaw and Stindberg* were some exponents of this form.

**Naturalism:** Drama which seeks to mirror life with the utmost fidelity. It became established and popular late in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century stemming from the naturalism of Zola and going beyond the realism of Ibsen. Other dramatists of note were Galsworthy and Terence Rattigan. Here in addition to being realistic there was an added dimension. The Naturalists felt that every human being was a creature of circumstances and was not always responsible for what happens. *Strindberg* moved on to become a Naturalist writer.

**Symbolism:** The word symbol derives from the Greek verb '*syballein*' to throw together, and its noun '*symbolon*' mark, emblem, token or sign. It is an objective, animate or inanimate, which represents or 'stands for' something else. As Coleridge put it, a symbol 'is characterized by a translucence of the special [i.e. the species] in the individual'. A symbol differs from an allegorical sign in that it has a real existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary.

Scales, for example, symbolize justice; the orb and sceptre, monarchy and rule; a dove, peace; a goat, lust; the lion, strength and courage; the bulldog, tenacity; the rose beauty; the lily, purity; the Cross, Christianity; The scales of justice may also be allegorical; as might, for instance, a dove, a goat or a lion.

Actions and gestures are also symbolic. The clenched fist symbolizes aggression. Arms raised denote surrender. Hands clasped and raised suggest supplication.

A literary symbol combines an image with a concept (words themselves are a kind of symbol). It may be public or private, universal or local. They exist, so to speak.

Dante's *Divina Commedia* is structurally symbolic. In *Macbeth* there is a recurrence of the blood image symbolizing guilt and violence. In *Hamlet* weeds and disease symbolize corruption and decay. In *King Lear* clothes symbolize appearances and authority; and the storm scene in this play may be taken as symbolic of cosmic and domestic chaos to which



'unaccommodated' man's is exposed. The poetry of *Blake* and *Shelley* is heavily marked with symbols. The shooting of the albatross in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is symbolic of all sin and stands for a lack of respect for life and a proper humility towards the natural order. Here concrete things stood for something abstract. In realism mode of presentation if a wall had to be there a realistic looking wall was kept as a prop. But in symbolistic modes of presentation an actor could stand for a wall. Very often the actors wore masks. Use of height and space, vertical and horizontal lines, lighting creating elongated shadows, were some of the techniques used to symbolize the mood of actors. T.S. Eliot represented the symbolist drama tradition.

**Theatre of the Absurd:** It also falls within the symbolist tradition. These plays have no formal plot or characterization and because of this it seems as if they have no purpose in life and emphasise the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs. The playwrights adopt stylistic methods which lend themselves to farce and comic form, reinforcing the concept of absurd. This tradition was made famous by Samuel *Beckett* in his *Waiting for Godot*. This was followed by Harold Pinter in his later plays like *Old Times* and others such as Camus and Sartre.

**Expressionism:** The central vision of the plays seems to be fundamentally of human beings struggling with the irrationality of experience. The plays may lack a conventional structure, so that both form and content support the representation of what may be called the absurd predicament. It is a movement that tries to present a reality of the mind, the internal world, rather than external realities or the external world. The atmosphere in these plays is dreamlike, the décor has bizarre shapes and loud colors. The plot and structure consist of a sequence of episodes or incidents strung together. The characters frequently, are not given names emphasizing their collective nature representing a particular social group. The dialogue is largely poetic. The actors and directors have freedom to experiment. August Strindberg with his *The Ghost Sonata* and Eugene O'Neil with his *The Hairy Ape* are some major exponents of this kind of drama.

**Epic theatre:** A form of drama and a method of presentation that developed in Germany in the 1920. In the words of its greatest dramatist, *Bertolt Brecht*, the essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason. It is a form of narrative and didactic play which is not restricted by the unity of time and which presents a series of episodes in a simple and direct way. This is an offshoot of expressionism. *Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and her children*, *The Caucasian Chalk* are some representatives of this kind of drama. It insists on the detachment of audience from the action on stage. This theater is a comment on the social or political conditions of other epochs, providing important information to the audience. It is anti-illusionist where the stage becomes a lecture platform, a laboratory in which models of human behaviour are examined, tested and evaluated.

### *+ A word of caution:*

- ◆ The concepts have been simplified for easy understanding.
- ◆ It is not always possible to put a playwright under any one of the labels above.
- ◆ Sometimes dramatists use a combination of approaches.
  - i) *Tennessee Williams* and *Arthur Miller*, though predominantly realistic, also combine expressionism in their plays.
  - ii) *Anton Chekov*, though basically a realist, introduced symbolism in some of his plays.
  - iii) *Johan August Strindberg* started writing historical plays, moved to realism and naturalism and ended up with expressionism.

The details you studied above are only guidelines to help you identify the modes of presentation a playwright uses and to help you interpret plays.

### *Shakespeare*

*Shakespeare* still remains the most read and the most performed of all dramatists. Each director has given a different interpretation to each of Shakespeare's plays. *Shakespeare* has no specific stage settings. This gives the directors and the stage designer an opportunity to interpret the play in whichever mode they want to. His stage direction just say (Venice, a street) / (A ship at sea) / (A state room in King Lear's Palace).

*Tennessee Williams* in his play *The Glass Menagerie* on the other hand gives a two page description of the stage setting, so does *Arthur Miller* in *All my Sons* and *Sean O'Casey* in *Red Roses for me*. This limits the scope of reinterpretation.

*Activity 1 : A popular play of our century - 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller should be read individually and then discussed in class in detail.*

Text of the play may be procured as separate course material. The summary of the play is given below.

#### *Arthur Miller and his times:*

*Arthur Miller* was awarded the *Pulitzer Prize* the year *Death of a Salesman* was published. Miller was born in 1915 in New York in a middle class Jewish family and lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic crisis shattered the faith that America was the land of opportunities. Miller's family too had to face hardships. Miller's plays reflect all this - the struggles of individuals in society and the failure of the American dream.

## Plot Summary

Willy Loman, a sixty-year-old traveling salesman, is having trouble lately because he can't seem to keep his mind on the present. He keeps drifting back and forth between reality and memory, looking for exactly where his life went wrong. Having been demoted to a strictly commissions salesman, as he was in the beginning of his career, Willy begins to wonder what missed opportunity or wrong turn led his life to this dismal existence. Willy always believed that being well liked was the key to success - it's not what you know, it's who you know. But now, as he nears the end of his life, he realizes that the only things you can count on are the things you can touch. You can't touch appointments and half-hearted sentiments. This was something that his brother, Ben, a man independently wealthy by the age of twenty one, tried to tell him years ago. Despite this, Willy insisted that his success would come from being well liked.

Throughout his life, Willy attempted to show his sons the keys to success and to prepare them, or at least Biff, his oldest son, for excellence in the business world. Willy pretended to be an important, respected, and successful salesman to win the love and respect of his family (and himself in some ways). He even started believing that he was as important as he convinced the boys he was, whenever he couldn't live up to that expectation, and reality contradicted the image he tried to put forth, his whole life began to crumble. He realizes that he is a failure and he has wasted his life. Not only that may be has taught his sons the wrong things. Now Biff is a bum who can't hold a job anywhere but in the West as a farmhand, and Hap is a philandering assistant's assistant who is just as deluded about his importance as Willy. Willy taught his sons the wrong things, and now their lives are mediocre because of it.

Willy and Biff, although close when Biff was younger, are always at odds because Biff hasn't lived up to Willy's great expectations for him. Biff was never given the proper direction to fulfill these expectations. Willy encouraged him only to be well liked and popular; Biff learned he never had to work for anything or take orders from anyone, and as a result, he couldn't keep a job in the business world. Willy even encouraged his boys to steal: another reason Biff couldn't hold job, because he kept getting in trouble for stealing. Integrity was never an emphasized characteristic in the Loman house. Now Biff has come home and he realizes that he's just an ordinary guy who was meant for a life outside the business world. He is happy only when he is honest with himself. This realization prompts an entire overhaul of the values taught to him by father, and Biff wants to expose the lies Willy has been telling for years Willy won't have it. After a series of long arguments, Biff decides it's best if he leaves for good; he will never fulfill his father's dreams, nor will he convince Willy to confront reality.

Willy, now unemployed and completely broken down, decides that he must do something magnificent to prove to Biff his life wasn't useless and completely wasted. Feeling he will be of greater value dead, he kills himself so that Biff can use the insurance money to start his own business. His son will consider his father a hero, and appreciate the sacrifice that

he made for his son. He also wants to prove that his importance and success as a salesman was not taken, expecting a grand funeral attended by many buyers in New England (Similar to the funeral of Dave Singleman). It doesn't work out that way. The insurance doesn't cover suicide and only Willy's family and their two neighbours attend the funeral. In the end, Willy's legacy is one of a broken man, whose life had become a sad failure.

*1. Now answer the following short questions:*

- a) Which are two places where the play is set?
- b) What is the name of the salesman?
- c) Which title suits the play better? *The Death of A Salesman* or *The Inside of His Head*.

*2. Give your opinion in about 200 words.*

- a) Did you feel sorry for the salesman? Give reasons.
- b) Did you feel that his tragedy could have been averted?
- c) Did you identify with any of the characters in the play? Give reasons.
- d) Were you able to empathize with the family?
- e) Did you sense the joy which Willy Loman feels as he approaches the end?

*3. Read Miller's own feelings at the end of the play as exultation and use the appropriate statements to complete the cause and effect table.*

- Willy finally knows he is loved by his son.
- Willy is a weak individual
- Willy achieves fatherhood, something he strives for all his life.
- Willy kills himself in an auto accident so that he is able to provide for his family by selling himself or his insurance policy.
- Willy is completely committed to the idea of selling
- Willy sells himself as a last resort

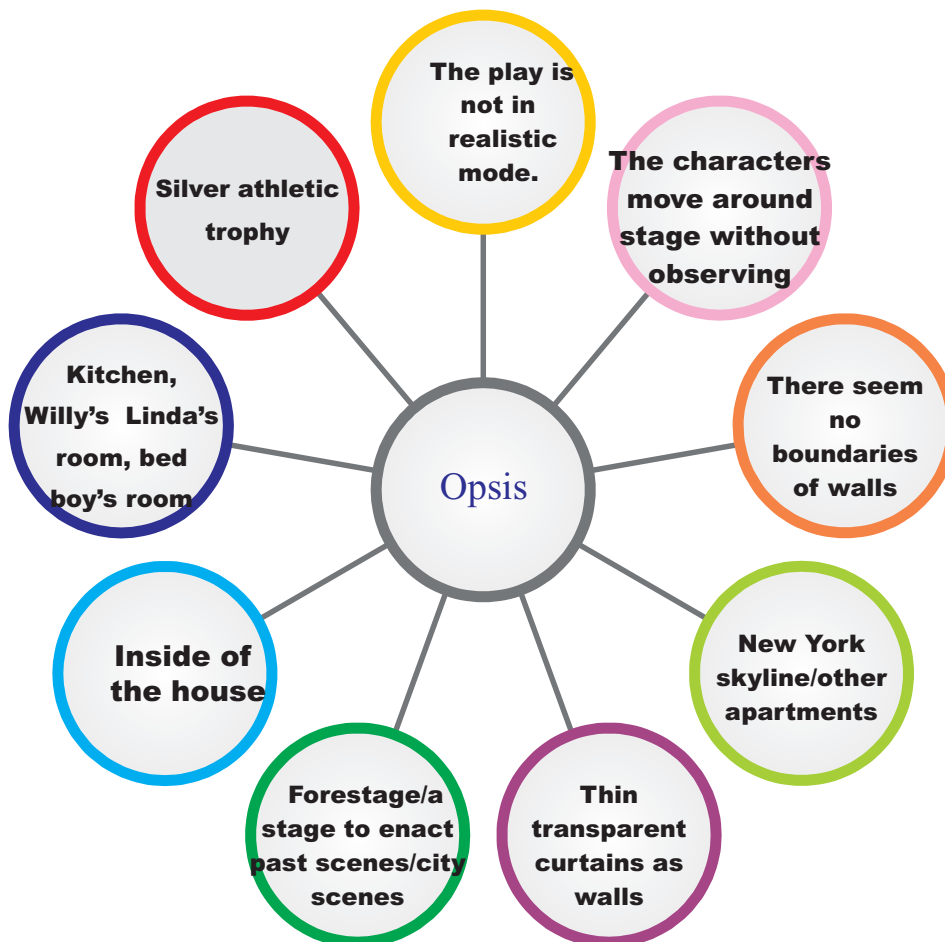
Cause	Effect
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

*Writing for the Portfolio*

4. Answer the following in about 500 words.

a) If you were to direct this play what kind of stage would you set up?

You can use the suggestions given below as guidelines to complete your answer.



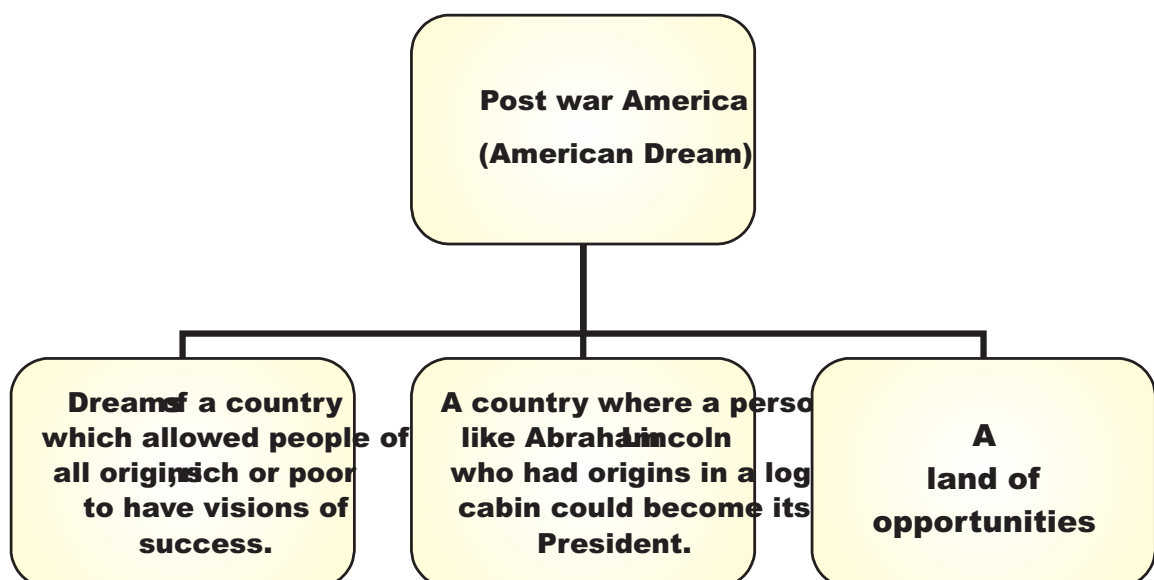
b) Comment on the important role of music in this play. Use the inputs given below to develop and process your understanding.

- What is the significance of the flute? Let us look at some instances in the play.

The flute plays on as the curtain rises, as Willy Loman comes on to the stage and through out the opening conversation with Linda, his wife, Willy talks of being tired and this is when we realize the music has faded away.

- We also hear the flute when Willy converses about the past.
- We also learn Willy's father not only played the flute but also made flutes and sold them.
- We hear the flute after Ben and Happy have deserted their father at the restaurant. The requiem in the play ends with flute. It plays with Linda 's monologue at Willy's grave. Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage.
- The music that is played when Ben and Happy are in encounter with women is loud, 'raucous', 'raw sensuous music', symbolizing the shallowness of their relationships.
- Flute as a unifying actor - linking Willy with his brother and father; linking Willy with his sons - as something that bonds generations despite differences.
- Different kinds of Music : Ben's idyllic music, reminder of a simple happy country life. Gay Music of the boys, symbolic of youth, of the energy and the joy of life that young people have. Willy's theme when he is left alone by his sons. Linda *hums a soft lullaby* which later becomes 'desperate and monotonous'.

- c) What kind of a society did the characters of this play live in? What kind of people were they? Analyse the ethos depicted in the play. A background of the social context and some leading questions from the text of the play are given below to help you formulate your analysis.



### *What happens when these dreams fail?*

- To a man like Willy Loman success was equated with wealth, power and rank.
- Who was the hero at school? Bernard or Biff?
- Who goes on to become a success?
- Charley warns Willy about his sons stealing from the construction site....*'but I got a couple of fearless characters there.'* What does Willy's response tell you about him?
- Willy is paying the price of instilling false values in his children?
- When Biff flunks in maths he goes to Boston to tell Willy and what does he find?
- Willy's brother is a success in comparison. Why?
- Willy is responsible for establishing the Wagner's company. Wagner's son has no special feelings for Willy. What changing values in society do you observe here?
- Is the family a typical patriarchal one with Linda as the proverbial selfless submissive caring wife and doting mother who keeps the family together and who manages the house on whatever money her husband brings?
- What is Linda to Willy? She darns her stockings while Willy gives the other woman a pair of new stockings. How do the boys look at Linda? Happy says, *"What a woman! They broke the mould when they made her."*
- Is there a balanced view of middle class American society. Is Miller trying to show hard work coupled with honesty helps one succeed? Charley and his son Bernard work hard and attain their aims in life. Willy and his sons are left unhappy though they belong to the same class and same neighbourhood. Why?

*End of Lesson Review questions:*

*I Comprehension*

a. Given below is a table. Complete it based on your reading of modes of presentation.

<i>Theatrical Mode</i>	<i>Major exponents</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Other relevant information</i>
Realism		• Normal everyday	
Naturalism			
Symbolism			
Theater of the Absurd	Beckett		
Expressionism			
Epic theatre			

*Vocabulary:*

**What do the following terms mean?**

- a) Realism
- b) Symbolism
- c) Theater of the Absurd
- d) Expressionism
- e) Epic theatre

*Writing for the Portfolio*

Read the two contexts given below. Write them in the Play form. The mode of presentation for context 1 will be largely realistic. The mode of presentation for context 2 will be largely Symbolic.



### *Context 1*

While creating the play make the language, plot, environment as realistic as possible.

An open ground in a neighbourhood park brimming with young boys between the ages of nine and eighteen. The boys are playing a boisterous game of cricket. Raju, Moti, Azeem, Pyaad Prem and Sushil are discussing animatedly what they would be doing if they were educated.

### *Context 2*

Use symbolic representations of plot, music and environment to depict Sujata's inner struggle.

When Sujata Reumade, 45, moved from Ratnagiri to Mumbai in her early 20s, she was determined to build a career. Even as her professional accomplishments anchoring, and acting in TV roles grew, she married a software engineer, as per her parents wishes. Children followed, combined with stints in foreign countries where her husband was posted. Before she knew it, Reumade was caught up in a maze of familial responsibilities.

# Lesson 3

## Forms of Drama

A few forms of drama have been dealt with in this chapter.

### *A. Radio Play writing*

#### *Introduction*

The radio play is, first of all, a drama. It is a form of audio storytelling broadcast on radio. With no visual component, radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the story (*melos*).

It can take place in an aeroplane, down a goldmine, on a ship; it can also take place within the confines of somebody's mind. All this can be done for a fraction of what it would cost to do the same in film. But in every case the audience has to be attracted, and its kept in mind held by the means of sound alone.

Here are some suggestions on what you should and what you should not do while writing a Radio Play.

#### *1. Act 1 Scene 1..... NO!*

Radio has no *scenes* in the way a stage play has. A sequence in a radio play might be one line long, or last for 20 pages but no single sequence should go beyond its natural length. Beware of boring the listener. Radio is fatally easy to turn off.

#### *2. Geoff, Arun, Alice, Ritu and Richie are in a crowded Restaurant with some other Friends..... No!*

The only means of establishing a character's presence is to have them speak or be referred to by name. If there are too many characters in a scene the listener will lose track.

#### *3. Geoff (looking angrily at ashwina, his pale face flushed) "I will not"..... No!*

"Stage directions" for the producer's or actor's benefit are to be avoided. If it is important it should be there in the dialogue or as voice directions.

4. *A car draws up. Engine off. Door opens and shuts. Feet walk to the front door. Key in the lock. Door opens . . . . feet walk down the hall to the kitchen. "I'm home darling" . . . . No!*

Sound effects should be used judiciously. They should work with the dialogue. Out of context they will mean little. Effects are useful in setting a scene but the sign posts must be subtle.

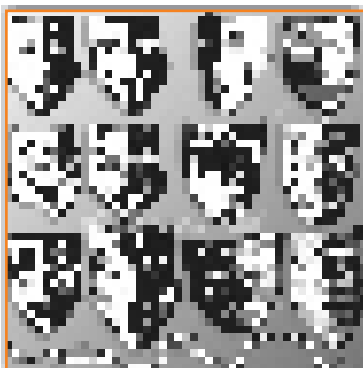
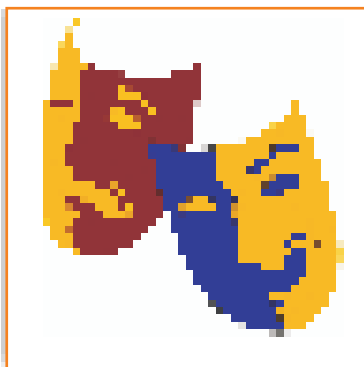
5. *Ayush's breathing in the phone box becomes more laboured; painful. Behind him a violin plays, at first quietly, gradually the sound builds up to a crescendo . . . . Yes, think in sound!*

As, we cannot see dramatic movements in radio plays to convey emotions and ideas we need to:

- represent gestures through sounds.
- The pounding of a fist, the rocking of a chair, singing, hard breathing-all give us our sense of a character's response to a situation.
- Knowing what to listen for is the key to the dramatic impact. As the radio play depends entirely on sound, the "props" of drama as a form are adapted.
- Noises replace visual aids that would be placed on a stage, and so the radio dramatist must be ingenious with how props—sound-bells, doors, machines, furniture, musical instruments, clothing, traffic-all of these build the dramatist's repertoire of communication.

*Activity 1 : Developing the high vocabulary to exemplify moods. Look at expressions given below. Divide yourself in to groups and write down as many moods as you can. Base it on the discussions you have in your groups.*





*Guessing moods based on small verbal inputs:*

- Two actors improvise a scene.
- Each speaks a line or they can even get into a dialogue.
- The Actor who replies must make a comment on the mood of the tone/voice/pitch. The whole class can do this in pairs. You will have a whole set of words describing voice moods. Note them down and use this as a warm up for your writing a complete Radio play.

E.g. ACTOR 1: (to another actor) Hello, how are you?

ACTOR 2: (as reply) I couldn't help but notice the cheerful tone in your greetings! I am ....

Now that you have some voice moods vocabulary, get ready to write radio play scripts. Some situations are listed below. Use these situations to write a Radio Play. You can make variations in the situation. In a Radio play keep the characters to a minimum .You may confuse the listener if the plot is too complicated with many characters in it.

*Activity 2 : Let us now write a whodunit which is some kind of a murder mystery.*

- Have an idea building session in your classroom over two sessions. Divide yourself into groups so that you can share ideas and develop the plot.

*Here are some way to organize your idea building sessions:*

- Sit or stand in a circle .
- Say a word from a pile of word cards.
- Indicate the first student to start the game. This student steps into the circle and either mimes the meaning of the word with body/hand movements or says the word with a voice reflecting the meaning of the word.

*For example:*

- Slow = said very slowly or a slow swaying movement of the arms.
- Frightened = a tone of terror.
- This will give you an idea of all details you will have to put down in your play for watching and enacting is proof of the script written well.

Keep the movement around the circle fairly rapid.

Develop a murder mystery situation. Give each other roles. Now enact the roles and as your situation develops , so will your ideas. This is not a rehearsal but just an input to trigger off your playwriting skills.

- watch and study the faces and body movements of the characters and put it into words.
- look at one character. Alternatively each one in the group can have a character to focus on.

- Notice how important tonal variations and sound effects are for a Radio Play. Someone might 'sound foreign' by the way they vary their accent or tone.

It is now time to write your Murder mystery. This play is to be enacted at a friends Party. It should be a play for a maximum time of 10 mins. So your script should be crisp and fast paced. The script maybe short but for the script writer the details of *ethos / melos* and *opsis* take up maximum writing space.

A whodunit situation for you:

*A full South Indian meal, dessert and entertainment. In the story, the mob tries to beat up one of its villagers, Arjuna, who went missing months ago and is presumed to be "living in the forest amidst animals". Since Arjuna's departure, this family has been a little less than organized, and not able to manage their finances. So, to make a little money, the family gives part of the house on rent. Unfortunately, they've given it on rent to..... To make matters worse, the hard-of-hearing father and mother.....the daughter who is married to a Police Inspector has gone to attend a wedding..... Subedar Kumaraswamy is keeping a close eye on....*

*Activity 3 : In the future, house robots will be designed to do everything their Human masters tell them. But one day Sophie and Sam's robot develops a mind of his own. This is how the Play begins. Complete it now. . .*

*The play is set in the future, and opens to the sound of a hover-bus coming to a halt near Sophie's home. The robot driving the bus speaks in a flat voice to Sophie.*

**Bus - robot:** *Here you are, Sophie. We have arrived at your home. The time is four twenty-eight precisely.*

**Sophie:** *Thanks. But you've dropped me outside the wrong house again!*

**Bus - robot:** *I apologize. My destination circuits must be a little worn. I will have to get them fixed.*

**Sophie:** *That's what you always say.*

**Bus - robot:** *I will see you on Monday morning, Sophie, at eight twenty-six precisely.*

**Sophie:** *Yes. And try and come to the right house this time.*

**Bus - robot:** *Of course. Goodbye.*

*The hover-bus moves away. Sophie narrates.*

*My name's Sophie Nova. The hover-bus has just brought me home from school - to the wrong house, as usual. And, as I run up to the door of our house, I wonder why, if all these robots are supposed to be so efficient do they still make mistakes. But at least our house computer works properly. When I speak to it, it recognizes my voice straight away.*

*The house computer speaks in a flat voice to Sophie.*

**Computer:** *Good afternoon, Sophie. I am pleased to hear your voice again.*

**Sophie:** *Thanks. Can you open the door and let me in, please.*

*There is a crackling sound.*

**Computer:** *Just one moment.*

**Sophie:** *What's the matter?*

**Computer:** *There appears to be a loose connection. Trying again. The door slides open. Sophie enters the house.*

*The door is now open.*

**Sophie:** *Thanks. Did you know, Computer, that people used to have things called keys to open doors for them?*

**Computer:** *Keys?*

**Sophie:** *Little bits of metal. You stuck them in a hole in the door, and turned them, and the door opened. We learned about them in Ancient History at school today.*

**Computer:** *What a primitive idea. We computers are much more efficient.*

*Sophie narrates.*

**Sophie:** *I wonder about that, too, as the door crackles again, then slides shut behind me. All these machines' we've got these days, do they really make life any better than it was in the old times? Some of them do, I suppose. But there's one that definitely doesn't. The Ultra-Reality Machine.*

*Sophie is in the living room now, and we hear Mum and Dad speaking aloud, plugged into the Ultra-Reality Machine.*

**Mum:** *Watch out! Enemy starships coming in from the rear!*

**Dad:** *Avast there, me hearties! Shiver me timbers!*

**Sophie:** *Mum! Dad! I'm home!*

**Mum:** *Swing round! Blast them with your laser!*

**Dad:** *You scurvy dog! I'll make you walk the plank!*

*Sophie narrates.*

**Sophie :** *There they are, as usual, with their helmets on, and both plugged into it. The machine plays a film in the helmet, and it's as if you're in it. It seems like the real world, but it isn't. Me and my brother Sam aren't allowed to go on it, but Mum and Dad are on it all the time. Mum's favourite is the Space Wars programme.*

**Mum:** *Got them! Set 'controls to Warp Speed Factor 9 and let's get out of here!*

**Sophie:** *And Dad's is the Pirate programme.*

**Dad:** *Yo ho ho, mateys! Set a course for the Spanish Main!*

*Sophie narrates.*

**Sophie:** *I look at them and think how stupid they look, talking to themselves with those daft helmets on. Then I decide I'd be better off going into the kitchen and talking to Petey instead.*

*We move to the kitchen, where Petey the robot is busy preparing food in the Food Dispenser. When Petey speaks, his voice is flat and robotic.*

**Petey:** *Good afternoon. Please wait while I scan my data banks for your name. Ah, there it is. Hello, Sophie.*

**Sophie:** *Hello, Petey. What are you up to?*

**Petey:** *I am preparing your meal in the Food Dispenser, Sophie. It will be ready for you soon.*

*Sophie narrates.*

**Sophie:** *Petey's our domestic robot - a model PT-3000. That's how he got his name - Petey. He's really old-fashioned and his memory-circuits are slow. Dad was going to get a new one, but then he went and bought that stupid Ultra-Reality Machine instead. I'm glad, though. I like Petey. He's been around for as long as I can remember.*

*We go back to the kitchen.*

**Petey:** *Terrible weather we're having, aren't we ... Sophie?*

**Sophie:** *No, Petey, we're not. We're in the middle of a heat-wave.*

**Petey:** *Are we? I'm so glad. If you will excuse me, I must return to my work now.*

**Sophie:** *Of course*

*Petey goes back to work, and we hear the Food Dispenser grinding and whirring. Then there is the sound of a buzzer, and the house computer speaks.*

**Computer:** *Good afternoon. I am pleased to announce that you have a visitor.*

**Sophie:** *A visitor? Who is it?*

**Computer:** *He says his name is Sam.*

**Sophie:** *Sam? That's not a visitor! That's my brother!*

**Computer:** *Oh, Of course. I do apologize for my error. I shall let Sam in straight away. Sophie speaks to Petey.*



**Sophie:** *There's something definitely wrong with our house computer, Petey. That's the second mistake it's made.*

**Petey:** *You should ask your father to have it repaired.*

**Sophie:** *I will - if he ever turns off that stupid Ultra Reality Machine.  
Sam enters. He sounds fed up.*

**Sam:** *The computer wouldn't let me in!*

**Sophie:** *I know.*

**Sam:** *I kept telling it my name, but it didn't recognize my voice.*

**Sophie:** *There's some kind of loose connection. We'll have to get it looked at.*

**Sam:** *You can say that again.*

**Petey:** *Good afternoon, Sam. You are looking very cheerful.*

**Sophie:** *I don't think he is, Petey. Cheerful is the last thing he looks.*

**Sam:** *(Miserably) You're right. I'm fed up. Really fed up.*

**Sophie:** *How come?*

**Sam:** *It's Friday, isn't it? And we play jet-football on Fridays.*

**Sophie:** *Oh. I see. How did you get on?*

**Sam:** *The usual. We lost. Eight-nil. And they said it was my fault.*

**Sophie:** *It wasn't, though, was it?*

**Sam:** *It wasn't all my fault. It's my jet-pack. I just can't control it. If I want to go one way, it goes the other way! If I want to go up, it goes down! If I want to go down, it goes up! The other boys can control theirs, so why can't I?*

**Sophie:** *Maybe you just need some practice.*

**Sam:** *I know. Dad said he'd practise with me, but he never has. And I don't think he ever will.*

**Sophie:** *Well, it's all over now, Sam. We've got the whole weekend to look forward to.*

**Sam:** *(Cheering up) And dinner! I'm starving. What have we got to eat, Petey?  
Petey whirrs and buzzes.....*

## *B. Street plays*

Street theatre as a form of creative expression and communication is deeply rooted in the Indian tradition. It has been innovatively used to convey social and political messages and to create an awareness amongst the masses regarding critical issues. Street theatre breaks the formal barriers and approaches the people directly.

It can be performed in the most unexpected places:

- in a vegetable market ,
- at a park,
- at the bus stop
- or perhaps even on the street in front of your school

The Actors in a street play are not just philanthropists providing free entertainment. For them this is a means of reaching people of all strata and creating an awareness of events around them, calling them to make changes in order to improve the quality of their lives and in turn contribute in a meaningful way to the society at large.

- Street theater is a situation where the audience has not come prepared to watch a play and people may not have much time on hand.
- So they need to be kept short.

The exchange with the audience is close, direct and intimate and to be more effective, needs to be loud and larger than life.

- The script and direction is always significant.
- In order to draw crowds from all walks of life, the plays are humorous.
- Songs based on popular catchy tunes are included to add to its appeal.
- The choreography of the play varies from script to script.
- The play must be as inexpensive and mobile as possible, since no stage props are used.

So arose the need for a means of communication which would break barriers of stage and ticketed entries.

Some Effective Street Plays in India:

Women have become an important theme for street plays.

- The story play "Om Swaha" which deal with demands for dowry resulting in harassment and sometimes death.
- There have been several productions which give a short summary to the life of a woman in India and some have gone on to make the girl question her dependence, her need to get married and her ability to lead a full, purposeful life by herself.

**Other themes in Street Plays**

- There have been several plays exposing the mechanism of black-marketing and hoarding.

- Some talk of the use of political power for pressurizing people.
- Others highlight social conflicts or ideas about hygiene and health.
- Street theatre is also used as a means to encourage literacy amongst villagers.
- One effective play on environment projected a beautiful relationship of trust and friendship between a little boy and a tree.

#### **How effective have these street plays been?**

- The history of street theatre dates back to the 19th century when labourers and party workers wrote and produced plays during the Industrial Revolution in Europe.
- Women also produced plays like "how the vote was won" during the suffragate movement in London at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Many productions came up during the Russian Revolution to reach illiterate people in remote areas.
- During World War II, street theatre played a role in whipping up an anti-war movement.
- Mid century also saw plays in America and England addressing the issues related to student's movement, women's movement, racial discrimination and the Vietnam War.
- Indian People's Theater Association (IPTA), formed in 1943, was the first organised body to channelise progressive ideas, give correct picture of current problems like imperialism and suggest solutions. IPTA became the pioneer of the people's theatre movement in India. With the passage of time themes changed from national consciousness to capitalism, peasant and labour movement, environment, communalism, Mandal, dowry, girl child, sexual harassment, AIDS and globalisation etc.

According to Feisal Alkazi who teaches street theater at the Jamia Millia University in Delhi, "If the communication has been worthwhile then there must be some tangible impact. What is important is that" the plays make the people think. The play is seen by many people of different age groups who then question and discuss the contents of the play. This evocation of questioning is by itself an impact. Alkazi recalled an interesting experience he had while travelling by a DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation) bus. He was very surprised to hear a passenger sing the words of a song from his street play based on a popular film tune. "At an unconscious level at least the message had got across." He claims most street theater groups have had members of the audience coming up to them for a discussion on the play they had just witnessed.

For Badal Sircar and his group the reward for their tireless efforts came in a different way. While touring the villages in Bengal they came across audiences willing to sit through a performance in any kind of weather. He recalls one night when they performed through a continuous drizzle interspersed with heavy showers. So

enraptured was the audience, that about 3000 people sat through the play for about three hours. Finally, when showers came down heavily Badal Sircar called it a day and begged leave of his audience. That they were interested enough to sit through the rain meant that the message was getting across.

When talking about street theater it is mandatory to talk about Safdar Hashmi. Originally a stage actor, he moved on to street theater adopting it as a cause, bringing about a social and political awareness. His message obviously hit home for while performing a play in the town of Ghaziabad near Delhi he and his group were attacked. He succumbed to his injuries a day later.

Habib Tanvir and Utpal Dutt used street theater as a political catalyst in the 40s and 50s. It was revived in the 1970s and now the movement has spread all over the country.

As we said earlier street theater aims at sensitizing masses to social issues, enrolling them in the process of social change and promoting peace and harmony. It does not necessarily provide answers to the issues raised, but tries to analyse the problems. Using humor and satire it can be an incisive comment on current problems or issues of social import.

*Activity 1 : Read this street play by women of a village wanting to become economically independent:*

*I want to ...*

A circular acting area. Choreographed into a circle with hands on each other's shoulders, six actors enter from one side. In the middle is an actress. They all stop when they reach the center. They all turn together to face the audience and then sit down. The actress is seen standing in the middle.

**Actress:** I am a mother

I'm a sister

A daughter

A faithful spouse

A woman.

**Actor 1:** A woman, who, from the beginning, was just a yes yes person.

**Actress:** I'm from the distant villages of the north...

**Actor 2:** A woman who from the beginning,  
Has worked to the limits of her power  
In the paddy fields and tea gardens.

**Actress:** Who along with my skinny cow

*In the threshing field, from dawn to dusk,  
Has felt the weight of pain.*

**Actor 3:** *A woman who gives birth to her babe*

*In the mountains,  
Loses her goat in the expanse of the plains  
To sit, mourning.*

**Actress:** *I'm a woman*

*I too was working from morning till night unquestioning.*

**Actor 4:** *A worker whose hands turn*

*The household from shacks to paradise  
When each day I feel more and more wasted.  
My children are gone, my husband is away and life gone by  
Did I ever do anything?*

*A woman but not the woman you see on television.*

*The one whose hands are unsoiled*

*Whose body is supple*

*Whose skin is soft*

*And hair perfumed.*

**Actor 5:** *I'm that woman but you see me as that glamour woman only.*

*I too work like you all day*

**Actor 6:** *By the sharp blades of pain's knives*

*Whose body has been broken*

*By your endless, humiliating and back breaking labor.*

*A woman whose skin is like a desert*

*And whose hair smells of factory smoke*

**Actress7:** *But I am an independent woman*

*She steps outside the circle and goes forward with her fists up in the air.*

*The rest of the actors also move forward a step on their knees, fists held high.*

**Actor 1:** *Who with her male comrades*

*Walks shoulder to shoulder*

*To cross the fields?*

**Actor 2:** *A woman who has comrades  
The powerful muscles of workers  
And the strong hands of peasants?  
In whose eyes  
Dance the red shadows  
Of liberty? Respect? Treated as human not just a Woman?*

*The rest of the actors sit as they are; the actress delivers the following dialogue zigzagging among them.*

*Once she finishes questioning the rest of the actors change direction to sit in a circle facing each other.*

**Actress:** *I am myself a worker  
I am myself a peasant, too.  
My heart is a study in pain  
The fire of hatred burns in my veins  
And you shamelessly claim  
That my hunger is an illusion  
And my nakedness all make believe!  
I am a woman for whom in your shameless vocabulary  
There is no word  
Which can describe her significance.  
The rest of the actors change direction to sit in a circle facing each other*

**Actor 5:** *A woman in whose chest  
Is hidden a heart  
Full of festering wounds of wrath.*

**Actor 4:** *In whose eyes  
Dance the red shadows  
Of liberty*

**Actress:** *A woman,  
Whose hands have learnt,  
Through years of toil,*

*Now complete it and take it in the direction you wish to. . . .*

**Activity 2:** *Read the context of the children given below and attempt to write a street play on I am a child! I am a human being!*

This play will showcase the "real India". The play will be about India's street kids. The main character can be a journalist who plans to take the play around the country and generate awareness about social issues. He also plans to make the other actors who are real life street kids, self-reliant and provide them with vocational training. He will be using theatre as a medium to build self-confidence in the children and also build awareness in society on key social issues related to the lives and stories of children, especially street children. Fortunately, a few NGOs working with street children donate money, clothes, food and old books for the boys.

Shaukat Ali, 16, was a child labourer working in a masala factory in Faridabad. Now he studies in Class X at a senior secondary school in Delhi. He is also an 'informer' for NGOs and goes on regular raids to homes where child labour is employed. "I want to become a CBI officer when I grow up," Ali says confidently.

- Mohan, 19, works as a typist at the local Courts and earns Rs 4,000 a month. When he was eight he was sold by his parents for Rs 400 and forced to work in a carpet factory for two years before Jamghat took him under its wing.
- Harim, Rajan, Aajam and Rahul -- all in their teens -- come from similarly underprivileged backgrounds. They are all studying in local schools and doing street theatre to earn a living.
- The journalist wants the theatre to equip street children with life skills. Many of the boys who initially joined the outfit have moved on.

Mainly your street play should try to convey the message that like all like human beings, Children who are at work face physical and mental harassment by their employers. They also have their own rights; Education rights, protection rights, cultural rights.

**Activity 3:** *The following facts are about a particular tribe in a part of the country. You may choose any other tribal group and help them channelize their talents.*

**Give us a chance:**

- "No jobs, no respect. The shadow of a police lock-up ever-present. That is the harsh reality of the tribals.

- ◉ Dubbed criminals by the British, treated as thieves by independent India.
- ◉ "I'm not in favour of stealing. We have problems, okay. We don't get jobs, we get arrested, and people call us thieves. But I've avoided stealing. Why can't others?" asks photographer and a community member. He jovially slaps his brother-in-law on the back, "He is into stealing. Daily he goes out to support himself." The portly young man blushes. "No, no. I don't steal," he objects vigorously.

The community is a denotified and nomadic tribe (DNT) of approximately 15,000 people inhabiting an urban village on the outskirts of the city. They are infamous for having made petty thievery (pursued by an estimated 20 per cent of the community) and the production of home brewed liquor (an estimated 60 per cent) their primary sources of income. The police visit every day. Every month, the same set of mothers and fathers are thrust into a van and thrown into jail. When a community member is identified in town - even if he is merely enjoying the annual rath yatra from a street corner - he is, more often than not, arrested without explanation. The back seat of the police van is a place every adult member of the community is acquainted with.

The community's children accept this police presence in their lives with equanimity. Says 13-year-old Haresh, "Our parents make a lot of alcohol, but if they didn't we would starve. When they return from jail they warn me, 'when you grow up don't become like us, otherwise the police will beat you as well.'" His parents needn't worry. The young people want to change the lives of their community's youth. Explains one member of the tribe, "We abhor violence; our thefts never involve murder. We draw the victim into conversation, captivate him so he never realises when his bag has been snatched from his hand. Such talent can be used for both good and bad.

It was in 1998 however, that activists of the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group visited the community and encouraged the crystallisation of a formal group for therapy and rehabilitation. "The primary objective of our street play script is to sensitise the children against illegal activities.

**The main character could be a guide who is talking informally to the members of the tribe, collates information, gets some members together, evolves a play with suggestions to alternative ways of life through discussion and presents it before the community .**

*Activity 4: Read the extract given below and try to complete the play. This street play will reflect on the hard realities of communalism. The script should gradually empower the common man to raise his voice and make the audience aware of their role in making Democracy a meaningful form of government.*

*No hatred No violence No deaths*

A MAN in a very passionate voice is speaking these dialogues with many dead bodies



*lying around him.*

*I don't want this dance of hatred...*

*I do not want to witness this city burning ...*

*Nor this celebration of death.... violence and death.*

*I don't want power ...*

*No thumping political speeches for me ...*

*I don't want sacrifices in the name of religion.*

*I just want a roof, a tree and a home.*

## *End of the Lesson Review Questions*

### *1. Comprehension*

- a) Write five features of the Radio play you consider most important.
- b) Which focal points of drama seem most important in Street Theatre.
- c) Write the name of three well known street play artists. Find two more using the net and write a paragraph on the works of the two you have found material on.

### *2. Vocabulary*

Give the meaning of the following words:

- a) Gesture:
- b) Dramatic impact:
- c) Ingenious
- d) Dramatist's repertoire
- e) Pitch

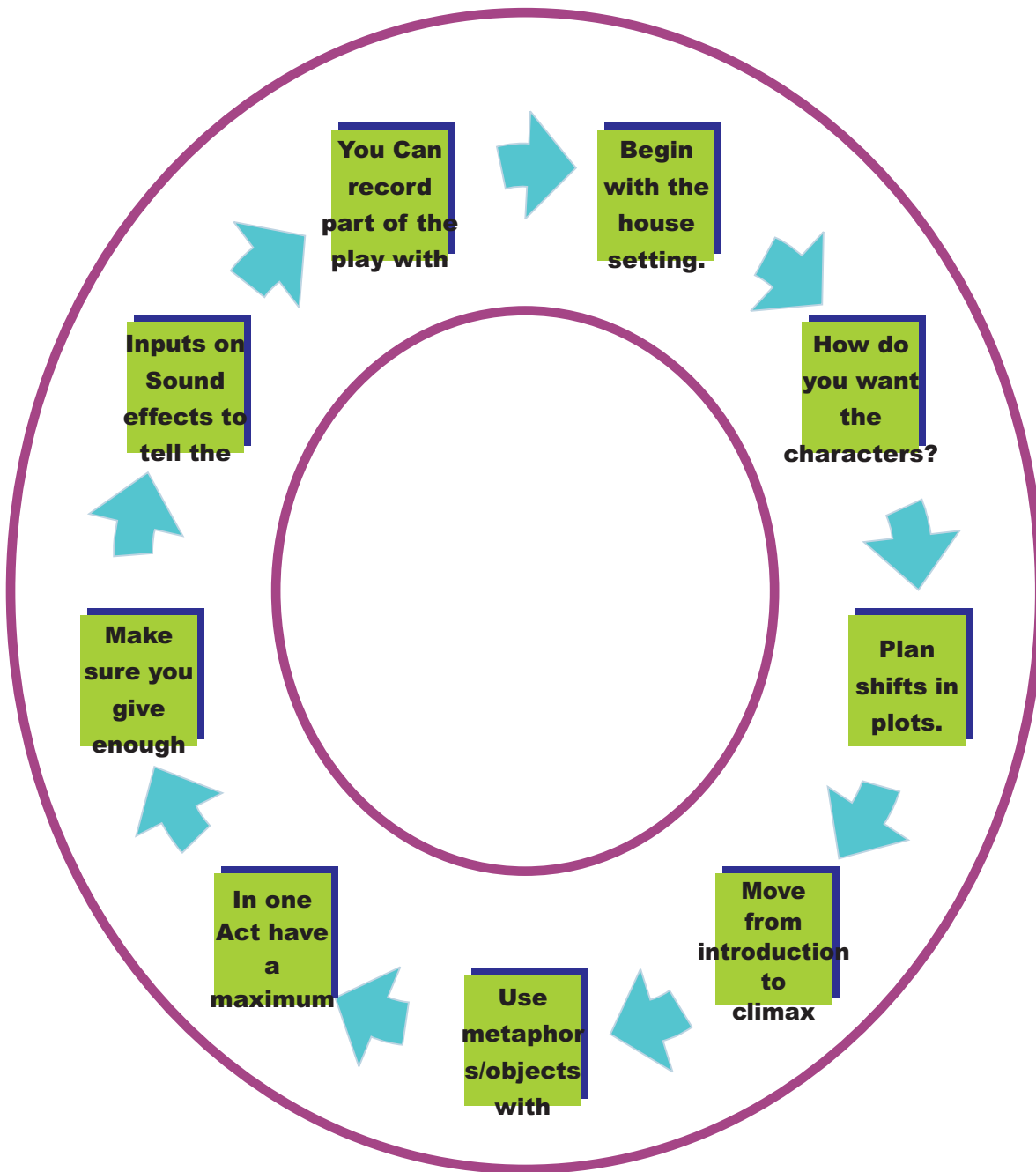
### *3. Writing for the Portfolio:*

**Record these scripts in your Portfolio.**

*A. Write a Radio Play based on the guidelines given below:*

#### **Movie Promotion**

- ★ Three people are sitting at home and reviewing a movie they have just seen.
- ★ After describing (arguing) about a portion of the movie, they go to the soundtrack which is played out to the audience.
- ★ The soundtrack should be fairly short.
- ★ The three people can carry on with their argument and play the soundtrack, intermittently.
- ★ The people talking need to give the framework of the movie, but not describe it completely, just enough to trigger off an interest in the listener, to make him want to see the movie.



When you listen to a good story you can see everything that's happening in the story right there in your mind. Sometimes this can make it more real than if you were watching it on screen or stage. A Radio Play can do that. Only make it seem real **AND BRING IT TO LIFE.**

## End of the Unit Review Questions

### Drama

#### 1. Comprehension

- a. What do you understand about the origins of the word *drama*?
- b. What are six focal points suggested by Aristotle when you read / watch / interpret a play?
- c. What appeals to you better? Is it watching a play or watching a movie? Why?

#### Answer the following questions based on your reading of plays

- a. Now that you have read the play, *'The Death of a Salesman'* do you think Arthur Miller paints a balanced view of middle class American society?
- b. Is Miller trying to show hard work coupled with honesty helps one succeed?
- c. Charley and his son Bernard work hard and attain their aims in life. Willy and his sons are left unhappy-same class, same neighbourhood. Why?
- d. What kind of emotions were evoked in you as you read along the play, *'The glass Menagerie'*? Which character's ideology/feelings/sentiments could you identify with?
- e. Choose any one mode of theatrical presentation. Read a play which you think is a representative of that mode. Justify your reasons for categorising the play in that particular mode of presentation.

#### 2 Vocabulary

#### What do you understand by :

- a. lexis in a play
- b. Ideology of a play
- c. Music of a play