

English Special I
Catharsis and Resolution: The Evolution of Tragedy and Comedy

Semester III Subject Code: A 31614 Lectures: 60

Objectives:

- To introduce the main genres of tragedy and comedy, in both classical drama and modern drama.
- To read distinguished works of tragedy and comedy, within different historical and cultural framework so as to trace the evolution of classical drama to its modern form.
- To analyse and critically appreciate certain universal literary themes present in drama.
- The students will gain:
 - An overview of the history of Drama from its origins in classical Greece until its modern development in the 20th and 21st centuries.
 - An introduction to the key elements of dramatic theory such as theme, conflict, characterization, plot, climax, tragic hero, etc.
 - A study of the performative aspects like stage, costumes, masks, setting and theatre technology in both Classical and Modern Drama.
 - An understanding of the differences and similarities in the subject and structure of ancient drama against modern dramatic forms.

Unit 1: Introduction to Classical Tragedy

12

- The origin and development of Greek tragedy in Athens in the 6th and 5th centuries BC.
- The structure of Greek drama, the role of characters and role of the chorus to be considered.
- Aristotle's study on Tragedy in the *Poetics*, with special reference to the concept of 'Catharsis'.
- Basic concepts of Drama according to Aristotle (unity of action, of place, of time) as well as key elements of dramatic theory such as: theme, conflict, characterization, plot, climax, tragic hero.

Unit 2: Classical Tragedy

12

- Sophocles: Oedipus the King



Unit 3: Introduction to Modern Tragedy

12

- The development of modern tragedy.
- The 20th century theatrical experimentation in form and content.
- An overview of modern dramatic genres from Realism to Naturalism, Expressionism, Symbolism, Epic Theatre, and Absurdist drama.
- Modern themes, and its treatment, that essentially mean to disrupt, question, challenge and cause change in society and especially its political systems.
- Context of modern tragedy and its location in things germane to modernity especially religion, economic systems, social structures and human psychology.

Unit 4: Modern Tragedy

12

- Arthur Miller: *Death of a Salesman*

***Assignments and library hours – 12 hours**

Recommended Text Books:

5. Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 2008
6. Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998

Reference Books:

29. Easterling, P.E. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997
30. Ormand, Kirk. ed. *A Companion to Sophocles*. Blackwell Publishing, 2012
31. Styan, J.L. *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, 3 vols.* Cambridge University Press, 1981
32. Bigsby, Christopher. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*. Cambridge: CUP, 2006



English Special I
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IV

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Unit 1: Introduction to Classical Comedy

12

- The origin and development of comedy, its historical and literary antecedents – in ancient Greece, Athens. Brief overview of Aristophanes and Old Comedy (5th century BC), Menander and New Comedy (4th century BC) and Roman New Comedy
- Two traditions of comedy
 - Vulgar, slapstick
 - Refined, witty
- Shakespearean Comedy, blending the two traditions together.
- Elements of Comedy, types of Comedy, aspects and theories of Comic Drama

12

Unit 2: Elizabethan Comedy

- Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream



Unit 3: Introduction to Modern Comedy

12

- Introduction to elements and structure of modern comedy.
- Modern themes and its treatment: Socio - political satire and double-edged cultural laughter; central focus - decaying and disintegrating traditional orders.
- The 20th century theatrical experimentation in form and content: Black humour, farce, intellectual comedy, interweaving of fantasy and reality, naturalistic, psychological sketches.

Unit 4: Modern Comedy

12

- Bertolt Brecht: The Threepenny Opera

***Assignments and library hours – 12 hours**

Recommended Text Books:

1. Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1979 *Nobu Press*
2. Brecht, Bertolt. *The Threepenny Opera*. Trans. Desmond Ivo Vesey. ed. Eric Bentley. New York: Grove Press, 1960

Reference Books:

1. Hokenson, Jan. *The Idea of Comedy: History, Theory, Critique*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006
2. Barber, C.L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011
3. Thomson, Peter. Sacks, Glendyr. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Bertolt Brecht*. Cambridge: CUP, 2006

