

MEG – 02: BRITISH DRAMA ASSIGNMENT 2018 - 2019

1. Would you call the character of Dr. Faustus 'heroic'? Give reasons for your answer. (20)

Answer- Dr. Faustus, believe it or not, can be categorized as a hero, only he would be a Tragic Hero.

He is a hero because, as all heroes denote, they are born with unique qualities, amazing potential, immense power and a wealth of knowledge. However, a TRAGIC hero uses all these innate elements to destroy himself, and make his life miserable.

In the case of Faustus, here we have a superbly intelligent scholar with tremendous influence among the academic community. He has a talent for arts, music, everything. He has a great job, he lectures, teaches, travels...he is the epitome of the Renaissance man: One who can do it all.

Yet, he completely overrules all these great qualities and opts for aspiring to "have it all" through becoming a magician. An illusionist that could bring about anything he ever thought of...but..for what reason exactly? He didn't even know himself!

He wandered through life, and even made that ridiculous pact with the devil, also not knowing exactly why, until he finally died in fear loneliness and misery. If anyone was a winner, was the devil himself. Faustus was also victorious: Victorious in ending his quest of destroying his life.

Hence, here we have the typical tragic hero tale of a man too big for himself, and too smart for any capacity of common sense.

Understanding of Christopher Marlowe's Elizabethan tragedy, Dr. Faustus, can be framed in terms of the Renaissance philosophy and the Elizabethan tragedy, which takes a different turn on some points from the Aristotelian tragedy, for instance such as the Elizabethan tragedy's requisite death of the tragic hero. Dr. Faustus demonstrates the Renaissance philosophy that pits the dichotomy of good, angelic humanity against evil, depraved humanity. Marlowe's play also is a model of the Elizabethan tragedy.

Marlowe constructed the character of Dr. Faustus to represent within himself both characteristics of the Renaissance view of humanity as divinely good and hellishly evil. First, Dr. Faustus is presented as a scholar of all things including divinity, the highest Renaissance scholarly discipline. Then, Faustus is shown as dissatisfied with the limitations of humanity and

grasping for unlimited knowledge, which is a Biblical allusion to Adam and Eve who ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Throughout the play, Faustus descends to lower and lower planes of knowledge in his pursuit for the "power" and "omnipotence" that comes from knowledge. At the beginning, Mephistopheles answers all Faustus' questions but draws the line on talk of the universe, which can be seen to stand for astronomical and cosmological studies--the very studies that science is deeply involved in today: CERN; Hubble; SoHo; etc). Faustus must be content with merely mapping the universe instead of understanding it. Marlowe ultimately shows in Dr. Faustus the futility of the quest for ultimate knowledge and the inevitable end result of abandoning moral integrity for omnipotent knowledge.

Dr. Faustus also represents a Classic Elizabethan tragedy. First, the tragic hero has a flaw or makes an error in judgment that leads to his own doom. It's hard to say whether Faustus had a fatal flaw in his character or whether he was doomed by a faulty understanding that lead to a fatally disastrous error in judgment. All along the way, Faustus has doubts and hesitations which speak for an integrity of his moral character. If he has a fatal flaw, it might be that he did not reckon the power of evil highly enough, that he thought that with omnipotent knowledge, he could free himself from the chains of evil he wrapped so blithely around himself. Adam and Eve also fell to the punishment from the lure of knowledge. Of course, quite often Faustus' fatal flaw is said to be greed and irreverent disregard for goodness. One clue to forming a literary stance on the question lies in examining his hesitations and second thoughts.

2. Discuss the play within the play in A Midsummer Night's Dream. (20)

Answer- One of the notable characteristics of the dramatic construction and presentation of William Shakespeare's play A Midsummer Night's Dream is the fact that it contains two distinctly different plays within the larger framework of the main play. The author's skillful development and juxtaposition of these simultaneously unfolding plays serves the function of reiterating some of A Midsummer Night's Dream's principal themes. Similarly, the utilization of this multiple play structure also situates Shakespeare in relationship to the creative process and his own work. Furthermore, the three-play structure allows the reader to question the very nature of creativity and of love. The play staged by the mechanicals is particularly effective in this regard. The comic, lighthearted tone of the players as they prepare for and fulfill their roles in Pyramus and Thisbe serves as a welcome contrast to the more dramatic circumstances between the women characters in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and Hermia, Lysander, Helen, and Demetrius, as well as the more fanciful plot involving the faeries. Even more than these other plays, the play of the mechanicals raises a number of important questions about life, love, and creative production and performance.

The lower class laborers who comprise the unlikely dramatic troupe which will perform Pyramus and Thisbe are introduced to the reader in Act I, Scene II of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Everything about these players is comical, from their most superficial characteristics to their deeply embedded personality traits which include a habit of bumbling, mispronouncing words so that the meanings of their sentences are completely and comically misconstrued, and generally playing the part of fools. As soon as the reader learns of the rag-tag actors' names—Bottom,

Flute, Snug, Snout, Starveling, and Quince— he or she becomes immediately oriented to the fact that the introduction of these characters is intended to disrupt the larger narrative of the play and if anything, provide further comic relief to the slightly more serious (although still lighthearted) main narrative. Additionally, these goofy characters also exist to raise questions about the subjects and themes in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” that are most present throughout the work. This observation is confirmed with each new detail that the reader learns about each of the tradesmen/actor characters. Nick Bottom is a weaver who, like his fellow tradesmen, has no previous acting credentials. In fact, it is not entirely clear how these men have come together or who decided that they were “worthy” of putting on a play. This issue of worthiness, or fitness, for playing certain roles, whether on the stage or on life, is a central theme and preoccupation in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Upon learning that he will be assigned to play the lead role of Pyramus, “a lover that kills himself most gallant for love” (Shakespeare 17), Bottom asserts that he will be so effective in his role that he will elicit the audience members’ tears: “I will move storms,” he proclaims to his fellow actors (Shakespeare 17). Flute is also comical and in many ways, he acts as a comic foil for Bottom, especially as Bottom ends up taking himself seriously, despite the fact that the audience is well aware of the situation. For Flute’s part, he begs not to be cast as a female character because he has “a beard coming” (Shakespeare 18). Bottom will also evidence a preoccupation with his beard later in the play, as he questions the other cast members how he should wear his beard so that it will be most appropriate and most convincing for his role. While these details may seem to be little more than humorous distractions, they actually serve much more profound purposes in the overall scheme of the play. In a certain sense, Shakespeare seems to be using these amateur actors as a way of opening a conversation both with himself and with the reader about the nature of the creative process. The actors are so preoccupied with the minutiae of their newfound dramatic craft, yet they fail to engage more important creative concerns, such as correct pronunciation and the mastery of crucial dramatic resources and techniques, including memorization, line cues, timing, and the congruence of affect with speech. Quince spends much of the troupe’s rehearsal time trying to harmonize the untutored actors so that their performance will eventually, hopefully, play out seamlessly. While it can be suggested that Shakespeare is merely offering a comical interlude to discuss the creative process, there is also the dual purpose of how these issues make the reader even more keenly aware of some of the major themes in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by William Shakespeare

Shakespeare was, of course, masterful in the use of all of these resources and techniques, so perhaps his preoccupation with them in this play within a play was more intended to be a larger critique of creative processes, and the dramatic process in particular. Shakespeare seems to be asking, through the clever staging of this subplot or sub-play, what elements of the creative process are most important, and which elements are most likely to determine the effect of the play in terms of the degree to which it engages the viewer and helps him or her to comprehend the play’s central themes.

This hypothesis about Shakespeare's intentions seems to gain additional evidence when one considers the extended conversation among the tradesmen-turned-actors regarding the nature of the setting and the props that can be employed in order to faithfully render the scene that conversation about the nature of the setting and the props that can be employed in order to faithfully render the scene that they believe Pyramus and Thisbe requires. The actors are most preoccupied with the ways in which moonlight can be evoked and how a wall, which they consider central to the development of dynamic tension in the plot, can be represented. One character asserts in one of the important quotes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "we must have a wall in the great chamber... for Paramus [sic] and This by [sic]... did talk through a chink in the wall" (Shakespeare 47). The players debate whether an actual wall could be brought to the stage, and conclude that it would not be possible to do so. Instead, given the importance of the wall to the development of the story, it is determined that one of the tradesmen/actors will play the part of a wall. Again, while these may seem to be petty details hardly deserving of the several lines of dialogue which they occupy in the text of the play, Shakespeare allows the men the liberty to explore these issues, perhaps as a means for he himself, as well as the reader, to reflect upon the different elements that comprise the dramatic product and process. Indeed, this particular conversation among the Pyramus and Thisbe players is very process oriented, and invites the reader to consider what thoughts and actions are required in order to bring a play before an audience. The conversation also causes the reader to consider who is responsible for bringing the play before an audience. There is shared responsibility between the playwright and the actors, the latter being the party responsible for interpreting the former's intentions.

4. Can The Alchemist be considered an allegory? Give a reasoned answer. (20)

Answer- To start with, the definition of an allegory is that it is a type of writing that has a double meaning. On one level, it is a romance or adventure etc (e.g., Spenser's Faerie Queene) while on another level, it is a description of a moral, spiritual or political reality common to all people either actually or potentially (e.g., Animal Farm is an allegory of Soviet Communism that was then potentially universal to all people). Dr. L. Kip Wheeler of Carson-Newman College in Tennessee, USA, excerpts a passage from J. A. Cuddon's Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, 3rd edition that is exceptionally illustrative.

I believe the book "The Alchemist" is an allegory. Quite often in life people have dreams that they never try to fulfill. They talk about them, even plan them, but when an obstacle gets in their way, they let their dreams go. It is also human nature to make a journey but not to see the beauty in the trip.

In the story Santiago has a dream about a treasure. To fulfill his dream he has to make some drastic changes and take chances. He also has to learn to listen to his inner voice.

Santiago sells his sheep, works for different people, and gradually moves towards finding the treasure. His journey to find the treasure introduces him to new skills and new people. He even finds his love on the way.

Santiago never finds the tangible treasure but he learns that the things he had seen such as the pyramids, and done such as working for the merchant, and the people he had met such as his girlfriend have been rewarding.

In *The Alchemist*, Santiago's journey from his home in Andalusia reveals deep insights about life and self-discovery. His trip is not simply a physical trek. It is an archetypal hero's journey, combining physical movement and changes in setting with changes in the hero's ideas, knowledge, and beliefs. These archetypes, present in hero stories from around the world, were identified by American researcher Joseph Campbell in his influential work *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Thus, the hero takes a spiritual journey as well as a geographical one. The stages in Santiago's journey include:

Call to Adventure: Santiago has a recurring dream and responds to it.

Crossing First Threshold: Santiago sells his sheep and sails to Tangier.

Road of Trials: Santiago is robbed and has to find a job without being able to speak the local language; later, he trades learning styles with the Englishman.

Rescue from Without: Robbers release Santiago when they discount his dream of buried treasure.

Ultimate Boon/Crossing Return Threshold: Santiago achieves the goal of his quest (finding the treasure) when he returns to the sycamore tree in Andalusia.

Santiago completes his hero's journey and returns home transformed by the wisdom he has gained along the way.

The Alchemist is an allegory, or a story that reveals a deeper, hidden meaning. Often the purpose of an allegory is to teach a moral lesson or principle. Allegories can take many forms—short stories, novels, poems, and even pictures—and convey any number of hidden meanings through character archetypes, character development, dialogue, settings, plot, and other elements. Some archetypes Coelho employs are:

Hero/shepherd: Santiago

Ally: The Englishman

Herald: Gypsy woman

Helper/wise old man: Melchizedek

Mentor/scientist: Alchemist

Temptress: Fatima

Threshold guardian: Crystal merchant

7. Discuss Murder in the Cathedral as a poetic drama. (20)

Answer- English poetic drama in the twentieth century arose as a reaction to the deteriorating naturalistic prose plays of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. Its photographic realism failed to convey the tension and complexity of contemporary life. Stephen Phillips perhaps initiated the revival of poetic drama with Herod (1901), with great Irish writers like Yeats, Synge and O'Casey later reinforcing the movement. Eliot took to writing plays late while already enjoying colossal poetic fame. Also a mature critic, he was well acquainted with the nature of poetic drama, its failure in the nineteenth century, and the problems, technical or otherwise, that a verse dramatist might face in his time. Through his criticisms, he frequently advocated for the poetic drama and crossed the misconceptions about it. In Matthew Arnold's words, he created "a current of fresh ideas" to help it flourish.

"The craving for poetic drama is permanent in human nature", Eliot once remarked. He knew that it was still possible in the twentieth century, only "it cannot be the work of one generation working together, but has to evolve by the small contributions of a number of people in succession, each contributing a little." He placed a high ideal of poetic plays before his age, beginning with Murder in the Cathedral, for which he did a lot of experimentation.

First, he asserted that "no play should be written in verse for which prose is dramatically adequate." Clearly, the poetic drama needed to symbolise the emotional realities, in contrary to the socio economic issues that constituted the naturalistic plays. In Murder in the Cathedral, he chose to retell the inner conflict of Becket to win over temptations and be a martyr by losing "his will in the will of God". The Family Reunion, on the other hand, deals with the guilt complex of the protagonist, while The Cocktail Party examines personal inadequacies of married life in the modern context. These plays demonstrate religion as the ultimate meaning of human existence, leading people "to think in Christian categories." As David Jones puts it, Eliot was thus "contributing to the creation of the kind of wholeness of outlook without which the poetic drama cannot be accepted as the normal mode of drama."

Poetic drama still needed a suitable verse form, as the Elizabethan blank verse became cliché in excessive use. Also a poetic drama written on the same theme, Tennyson's Becket tried to be Shakespearean and met an even worse reception than its predecessors. Murder in the Cathedral marks the maturing stage of Eliot's experimentation with verse forms, culminating in The Family Reunion. Nevertheless, the author was not much pleased with his structural achievement in the first play: "it succeeded in avoiding what had to be avoided, but it arrived at no positive novelty."

Some of the best poetry comes with the Chorus, as in Part I:
"Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay."

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger.
O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year;
Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey."

This artistic repetition resounds the famous lines in *The Waste Land*: "Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop", or "Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug". According to Chinmoy Guha, these are further influences of Laforgue on Eliot. This is rather dramatic poetry than poetic drama. In Part II the Chorus cries:

"Clean the air! Clean the sky! wash the wind! Take stone from stone and wash them.
The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood.
A rain of blood has blinded my eyes."

The failure of the poetic drama in the bygone centuries chiefly rooted from its focus on outward decorations. Poetry must not be an embellishment to look at, but a medium to look through. Eliot distinguishes between true and false rhetoric, saying that the latter spoils the dramatic detachment of the audience. Poetry in *Murder in the Cathedral* is not merely decorative. It helps revealing the personae of the characters as the objective correlative of their minds, while its symbolism works out the thematic implications. Its long speeches indeed shine with rhetoric but at the same time build up the mood, the opening choric speech being a good example.

Eliot emphasised that instead of limiting the emotional range, the use of verse enlarges the appeal of the play, and can reach the most varied audience: "For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually." Like the successors to follow, *Murder in the Cathedral* unquestionably enjoys this wide range of possibilities.

8. Comment on the title of *Look Back in Anger*. (20)

Answer- *Look back in anger* is a suitable title for the play. It has two part-look back and- in anger. Certainly there is enough anger in the play. Its hero Jimmy Porter, is an angry youngman. As one critic puts it he is furious with life. The title of the play is apt and appropriate. It is significant and suggestive. It hints the theme of the play. The story of the play moves around the play. In the play Osborne has depicted the mood of despair, anger, and frustration of the postwar generation. It is study of class conflict and frustration caused by it. The title of the play indicate it. Seeing the title reader comes to know what the play is about.

The title of John Osborne's play "*Look Back in Anger*" is very much with the flow of the theme of the play. The entire play experiences the tremors of Jimmy's violently angry tirades directed at his fellow inhabitants in the play. Jimmy's anger is one of the predominant theme of the play affecting all those characters related to him. Another recurrent motive is Looking Back as most of the characters including Alison, Helena and Colin Redfern reassess the past as they remember it. Unlike Jimmy who isn't able to transcend bygone sufferings, the others acknowledge their previous mistakes and express regret or repentance.

Hence the title not only signifies the emotional and psychological condition of the characters, it also stands representative for that age of the disgruntled young men of England without employment, opportunity and hope. The people found anger and directionless disillusionment following their every step.

Look Back In Anger received an overwhelming response from the audience when it was first produced. It appealed to the audience because of the realistic subject-matter. Through the character of the protagonist, Osborne revealed his feeling for the contemporary scene and the frustration and the temperament of the post war Britain found expression through the speeches of Jimmy. The use of contemporary idiom the sharp comments on matters ranging from “posh” Sunday newspaper and “while tile” universities to the bishop and the hydrogen bomb.

Jimmy's anger seems to be deep rooted. For him “the misery of the world are misery and will not then rest”. He suffers for others and likes other people's lives. As a young boy he watched his dying father and learned more about love-death and betrayal than people like Helena would know all their lives. He recalls the experience with bitterness and says that every time he had sat near his father's bed and listen to his father's talk he had to fight back his tears. He says he had become a “veteran after his experience of remaining by his father's bed side for twelve months. He also suffers for Mrs. Tanner, Augh's mother who according to him went “through the sordid process of dying.”

Incompatibility between Jimmy and His Wife

Social disparity between his working class origin and the upper middle class to which his wife belongs is also a reason for Jimmy's anger. He wages an unending battle against the upper middle class whom he holds in contempt and treats Alison as a “hostage”. He constantly bullies his wife and provokes her to retaliate Alison's silence, her withdrawal into detached indifference makes communication between him and herself impossible. “That girl there can twist your arm off with' her silence,” he comments on.