# Drama

# INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA

## A Play

- is a story to be acted
- is told in action
- combines two arts-writing and acting

Plays are divided into **two main types**, tragedy and comedy.

- **tragedy -** unhappy ending which results from the main character's fatal flaw. Eg - in Hamlet, the hero's fatal flaw is that his brilliant mind thinks too precisely on 'the event'. In the Monkey's paw, Mr. White disregards a warning and chooses to bank on a sinister promise linked to a dead monkey's paw.

  **comedy -** is a play that ends happily. If it elicits laughter through improbable situations, it is called a farce.

  - it focuses on characters who come under attack for flouting the positive values of society.
  - human follies are sought to be corrected by making us laugh at them. *Eg. A Comedy of Errors.*

## Structure

- A **good beginning which** informs the audience about the situation or circumstance from which the action of the play starts. It could be someone speaking into a telephone or reading a letter aloud or starting with an absurd guess. It should be **natural.**
- The **middle** of a play is the most absorbing, gripping and turning point in the development of the story/play.
- The **end** of a play should come, especially in a one-act play, as soon as possible after the crisis or 'middle'.
- Some plays have **little** or **no structure**. They aim at being realistic. There's hardly and plot; their stress in on characterization.

  Eg. Chekov's 'A Marriage Proposal'.

## Conventions

- All accepted substitutes for reality in drama are called conventions.
- For a play, enter into the play-wright's make-believe world; let him take you to any period in history so that half a lifetime may pass in half-an-hour.
- Soliloquies and asides are conventions which were once common, but are now usually avoided in modern plays.

## The One-Act Play

- Full length play is like a novel while the one-act play is like a short story which concentrates on a single idea or emotion.
- Most full length plays last for two-end-a-half hours and have three acts (Shakespeare's had five).

- Initially one-act plays were usually a filler item before the main entertainment and some of them received more acclaim from the audience than the main play.

## Performance in Plays

- Be natural.
- Understand your lines and speak them from the bottom of your heart.
- Speak distinctly, your voice should reach the back of the hall.
- Avoid interval in between lines.
- Do not clutter up the stage to give the impression of 'reality'.
- Create a mood or atmosphere by using simplistic objects as props.
- Face the audience with confidence.

## Appreciation of Plays

- Ask the following questions if you are a critic using the pragmatic or impressionistic approach. 'How does the play impress you personally? Does it hold your interest? Does it teach you something?
- The mimetic or imitative approach owes much to the father of all art criticism, the Greek Philosopher Aristotle. The critic would end up asking – Does this play portray a good imitation of life? Does this actually happen? **Would** it happen, given **another** character, in **different** circumstances? For eg. In *'The Monkey's Paw'*, are the parents true to type?
- The third type of critic conforms to traditional rules. The opening should evolve clearly and slowly. A conflict provides interest and suspense. It could be between two people or two opposing interior forces within the same person – selfishness and purity or between people and the demands of the situation as in 'The Monkey's Paw'.
- Some critics recommend a stress on the sordid, and gruesome. Others thrive on a sustained series of surprises as in the plays of Bernard Shaw. Most critics would try to find in the play the richness of language and beauty of imagery. The real test of a play lies in the performance of the artists, both on stage and off stage, dialogue delivery, spontaneity, interpretation of the characters and incidents, lighting, scenery, and direction which contributes to the overall effect of the production.

# Remember Caesar

by Gordon Daviot

**Warm up:**

1. a) Given below is an extract from Shakespeare's play 'Julius Caesar' Act I, Scene 2.Pick out the key phrases / sentence in the conversation.

> **Caesar:** Who is it in the press that calls on me. I hear a tongue shriller than all the music cry "Caeser! Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear."
>
> **Soothsayer:** Beware the **ides of March**
>
> **Caesar:** What man is that?
>
> **Brutus:** A Soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

b) Based on your observation, choose the option which best describes the "intent"

1. threat ☐
2. warning ☐
3. portent ☐
4. advice ☐

2. The **Ides of March** bears a reference to the 15th of March. Julius Caesar was assassinated on that day in 44 B.C.

- Relate this reference to the title of the play, and predict the theme of the play before you start reading it.

**Now read the play.**

The play centres round the efforts made by a panic-stricken judge to secure himself against what he considers an imminent catastrophe. The theme sustains its suspense till the truth about the scrap of paper is revealed at the end of the play. The contrast between the conceited, pompous Judge Weston who takes a morbidly serious view of the matter and the light-hearted but sensible Lady Weston who is obviously used to her husband's explosive reaction to trivialities, provides the humour.

**REMEMBER CAESAR**

by Gordon Daviot [pen name of Elizabeth McKintosh, Scottish]

**Characters**

LORD WESTON
ROGER CHETWYND
LADY WESTON

***SCENE:*** *A room in the house of Richard, LORD WESTON, on a spring morning in the layout of room is such that it is a combination of study and withdrawing-room. Up right is the door to the landing (it is a first-floor room), in the rear wall a large casement window looking out to the front of the house, in*

*the left wall the fireplace and, down, another window through which one can see the trees in the garden. Up from the fireplace a cupboard in the wall. Hanging on the walls and over the fireplace are family portraits.*

***LORD WESTON** is seated by the fireplace, a table of books and papers beside him. He is engaged in filling his pipe. And talking.*

*Downright, where the light from the side window falls across his small writing-table, is seated MR ROGER CHETWYND, a thin, earnest, absent-minded, and conscientious youth. So conscientious is he that his mind, even when absent, is absent on his employer's business. He has begun by listening to his master's lecture, but the lure of his work has been gradually too much for him, and he is now blissfully copying from one paper on to another while the measured words flow over him, his lips forming the phrases while he writes.*

**WESTON:** And furthermore (*he pauses to arrange the tobacco*) it is not alone a question of duty; there is your own success in the world to be considered. It is not your intention to be a secretary all your life, is it? No. Very well. Diligence, and a respect for detail should be your care. I did not become Lord Weston by **twiddling my thumbs** and hoping for favours. I won my honours by hard work and zealous service. Men who were at **Corpus Christi** with me are to-day copying documents for a living, while I - let us not mince matters - am the best-known, and certainly the most impartial, judge in England, and a favoured servant of his gracious majesty, Charles the Second. That, I submit, my good Roger , is an example to be studied. It is not only unbecoming in you to ask for a half-holiday, but it is greatly unlike you. I fear....(*He has turned towards his secretary, and discovers his misplaced diligence. After a pause, coldly*) Can it be, Mr Chetwynd, that you have not been listening to my discourse?

**ROGER** (*brought to the surface by the cessation of the word music*): What, my lord? Oh, no. Yes, certainly, sir, I am listening.

**WESTON:** What was I talking of?

**ROGER:** Yourself, sir. (*amending*) I mean, of your rise to success, my lord. (*It is apparent that it is an oft-heard tale.*)

**WESTON:** We were talking of your extraordinary request for a half-holiday, when you had one only last month. Would it be straining courtesy too far if I were to inquire what prompts this new demand for heedless leisure?

**ROGER:** I thought perhaps if you did not need me this afternoon, my lord, I might personally interview the clerk of the Awards Committee, and find out why he has not sent that document.

**WESTON:** (*a little taken aback*): Oh, Oh, indeed.

**ROGER:** The lack of it greatly hinders. It holds up my work, you see. And at this most interesting point.... (*His glance goes longingly to his desk.*)

**WESTON:** That, of course, is a different matter. I see no reason (*he looks for a spill for his pipe, first on the table and then, rising, by the fire*) why you should not take a walk to Mr Clay's in the afternoon if the weather is fine. I am relieved that your thoughts are on sober matters, as befits a rising young man. Diligence, courage, and attention to detail: these are the three. Without an orderly mind no man can hope (*ROGER has gone back to his work*) to excel in any of the learned professions. (*He has found a scrap*

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**Twiddling my thumbs:** by being idle
**Corpus Christi:** One of the colleges at Oxford

*of paper, rather crushed, in his pocket and smoothes it out, uninterestedly, to make a rough spill*). Detail, my good Roger, attention to detail. That is the beginning of greatness. That is the…(*reading automatically and with some difficulty what is written on the scrap of paper*) 'Remember Caesar'. (*Repeating, with vague interest. He turns the paper back and forth, at a loss. And then a new idea occurs to him, a rather horrible idea. To ROGER*) What is the date to-day? (*As ROGER, buried again in his work, does not answer*) Roger! I said, what day of the month is it?

**ROGER** (*Hardly pausing*): It is the fifteenth, my lord.

**WESTON:** The fifteenth! The fifteenth of March. The Ides of March! (*Looking at the paper again; in a horrified whisper*) 'Remember Caesar'! (*Louder*) So they want to kill me, do they? They want to kill me? (*ROGER comes to the surface, surprised.*) That is what it is to be a judge over men (*all his pompousness is dissolving in agitation*) an instrument of justice. Sooner or later revenge lies await in the by-ways. And the juster a judge has been, the more fearless (*he waves the paper in the astonished ROGER's face*), so much greater will be the hate that pursues -

**ROGER:** What is it, my lord? What is it?

**WESTON:** My death warrant if I am not careful. What cases have we had lately? The treason affair - I refused to be bribed! (*The boast gives him a passing comfort.*) The piracy - both sides hate me for that. Or there was that **footpad -**

**ROGER:** Is it a threat, the paper? Where did it come from?

**WESTON:** It was in my pocket. Someone must have …. Yes, now I remember. A man brushed against me yesterday as I was leaving the courts. A small, evil-looking fellow, very sly.

**ROGER:** What does it say, the paper?

**WESTON** (*much too occupied with his own fate to attend to his secretary's curiosity*): Just at the door, it was, and he didn't wait for apology. I remember. Well, I can only thank them for the warning. I may die before my time but it will not be to-day if I can help it. Go downstairs at once, Roger, and lock, bar and chain all the doors. And ask my wife to come to me at once. At once. Stop! Are there any strangers in the house? Workmen or such?

**ROGER:** Only Joel the gardener, my lord; he is cleaning the windows on the landing. (*He indicates with his head that Joel is just outside*).

**WESTON:** Send him away at once. Tell him to leave everything and go and lock the door behind him. And the windows - see that the windows, too, are closed.

(*ROGER goes with speed. One can hear him begin his order to Joel before he shuts the door; Joel, his lordship says that you must… and the whistling which has become audible through the opened door dies away. WESTON left alone, peers cautiously from each window, in turn. Then his mind, temporarily relieved goes to the cupboard and is greatly exercised again. He stares at it fearfully for a moment or two, and then puts his fear to the rest. He takes a pistol from the drawer of his desk.*)

**WESTON** (*facing the cupboard with levelled pistol*): Come out! Come out! I say. (*There is silence*) Drop your weapon and come out or I shall shoot you now. (*As there is still silence he forces himself to close in on the cupboard door, and standing to the side pulls it quickly open. It is empty. As soon as his relief abates he is ashamed, and hastily returns the pistol to its drawer.*)

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**foot pad:**highway-man (robber) who goes about on foot.
(Highwaymen on horseback were more common in those days)

(*Enter, bright and purposeful, LADY WESTON. A charming creature. One knows at a glance that she is an excellent housewife, but to the last one is never sure how much intelligence and sweet malice there lies behind her practical simplicity.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*looking back as she comes in*): I do wish that Joel wouldn't leave pails of water on the landing! What is it, Richard? It's baking morning.

**WESTON:** My dear, your husband's life is in grave danger.

**LADY WESTON:** The last time it was in danger you had been eating **game pie.** What is it this time?

**WESTON** (*annihilating her flippancy with one broadside*): Assassination!

**LADY WESTON:** Well, well! You always wanted to be a great man and now you have got your wish!

**WESTON:** What do you mean?

**LADY WESTON:** They don't assassinate nobodies.

**WESTON** (*showing her the paper*): Read that, and see if you can laugh.

**LADY WESTON:** I'm not laughing. (*Trying to read*): What a dreadful scrawl.

**WESTON: (***Yes, the venomous scribbling of an illiterate.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*deciphering*): 'Remember Caesar'. Is it a riddle?

**WESTON:** It is a death warrant. Do you know what day this is?

**LADY WESTON:** Thursday.

**WESTON:** What day of the month?

**LADY WESTON:** About the twelfth, I should guess.

**WESTON** *(with meaning)***:** It is the fifteenth. The fifteenth of March.

**LADY WESTON: Lawdamussy!** Your good sister's birthday! And we haven't sent her as much as a lily!

**WESTON:** I have deplored before, Frances, the incurable lightness of your mind. On the fifteenth of March Caesar was murdered in the Forum.

**LADY WESTON:** Yes, of course, I remember. They couldn't stand his airs any longer.

**WESTON** (*reproving*): He was a great man.

**LADY WESTON** (*kindly*): Yes, my dear, I am sure he was. (*Looking again at the scrap of paper*) And is someone thinking of murdering you?

**WESTON:** Obviously.

**LADY WESTON:** I wonder someone hasn't done it long ago. (*Before the look of wonder can grow in his eye*) A great many people must hate judges. And you are a strict judge, they say.

**WESTON:** It is the law that is strict. I am a judge, my good Frances, not a juggler. I have never twisted the law to please the mob, and, I shall not please them by dying on the day of their choice.

**LADY WESTON:** No, of course not. You shall not go out of the house to-day. A nice light dinner and a good glass of -

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**game pie:** meat (of animals or birds hunted and killed) covered with pastry and baked
**lawdamussy:** an exclamation (Lord have mercy)

**WESTON:** I have sent Roger to barricade all the doors, and I think it would be wise to close the ground floor shutters and see that they are not opened for any -

**LADY WESTON:** Is it the French and the Dutch together you are expecting! And this is the morning Mr. Gammon's boy comes with the groceries. How am I to -

**WESTON:** My dear, is a little pepper more to you than your husband's life?

**LADY WESTON:** It isn't a little pepper, it's a great deal of flour. And you would be the first to complain if the bread were short, or the gravy thin. (*Giving him back the paper*) How do you know that the little paper was meant for you?

**WESTON:** Because it was in my pocket. I found it there when I was looking for something to light my pipe. (*With meaning*) There were no spills.

**LADY WESTON:** No spills. What, again? Richard, you smoke far too much.

**WESTON** (*continuing hastily*): It was slipped into my pocket by a man who brushed against me yesterday. A dark , lean fellow with an evil face.

**LADY WESTON:** I don't think he was very evil.

**WESTON:** What do you know about it?

**LADY WESTON:** It was kind of him to warn you. And wasn't it a mercy that the spills were finished and that no one had made any more! If there had been even one there you would never have seen the paper. You would have gone for your noon walk down the Strand and someone would have stuck you like a goose on a spit, and I should have been a widow before diner-time -

**WESTON** (*sinking into a chair*): Stop, Frances, stop! It upsets me to -

(*Enter ROGER a little out of breath after his flying tour round the house.*)

**WESTON:** Ah, Roger. Have you seen to it all? Every door barred, every window shut, all workmen out -

**ROGER** (*a little embarrassed*): Every door except the kitchen one, my lord.

**WESTON** (*angry*): And why not the kitchen one?

**ROGER** (*stammering*): The cook seemed to think…. That is, she said…..

**WESTON:** Well, speak, man, what did she say, and how does what the cook thinks affect my order to bar the kitchen door?

**ROGER** (*in a rush*): The cook said she was a respectable woman and had never been behind bars in her life and she wasn't going to begin at her age, and she was quite capable of dealing with anyone who came to the kitchen door -

**WESTON:** Tell her to pack her things and leave the house at once.

**LADY WESTON:** And who will cook your pet dishes? I shall also see that all the downstairs windows are shuttered as you suggest. We can always haul the groceries through an upper window.

**WESTON** (*controlling himself*): I think that so frivolous a suggestion at so anxious a time is in poor taste, Frances and unworthy of you -

**LADY WESTON:** Did it appear frivolous to you? How strange! I had thought it odd to shutter the walls and yet leave openings in the roof that one could drive a coach and horses through. However! (*She comes back into the room, takes two candelabra from different places in the room, and goes to the door*).

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**minutiae:** minute details (often trivial)

**WESTON:** What do you want with these?

**LADY WESTON:** If we are to be in darkness below we shall want all the candles we can gather. (*Exit.*)

**WESTON:** The aptness of the female mind to busy itself about irrelevant and inconsiderable **minutiae** is a source of endless wonder to me. (*Almost without noticing what he is doing he moves over to the fireplace and sticks his head into the chimney to view the width of it. As he withdraws it, he becomes aware of ROGER, standing watching*). I see no reason now why you should not resume your work, Roger.

**ROGER:** Oh, my lord, it is beyond my power to work while you are in danger. Is there not something I could do?

**WESTON** (*mightily flattered*): Nonsense, my good Roger, nonsense! Nothing is going to happen to me.

**ROGER:** I could perhaps go and warn the authorities, and so prevent -

**WESTON** (*very brave*): No, no, no. Am I to spend the rest of my life with a guard at my heels? A pretty figure I should cut! Go on with your work and... (*his eye has lighted on a package which is lying on a chair against the right wall. The box is oblong - roughly 18 in. by 10 in. by 4 in. - and tied with cord. Sharply*) What is this?

**ROGER:** That came for you this morning, sir.

**WESTON:** What is it?

**ROGER** (*with the faint beginnings of doubt in his voice*): I don't know, my lord. A man came with it and said that it was important that you should have it to-day.

**WESTON:** And you didn't ask what it was! You fool!

**ROGER** (*humbly*): It didn't seem to be my business. I never do ask about the contents of your lordship's .... I showed your lordship the package when it came, and you said to leave it there.

**WESTON** (*peering with growing uneasiness at the thing*): The man who brought it, what did he look like? Was he small? Dark?

**ROGER** (*who obviously had taken no notice*): I think he was smallish. But as to dark - his hat was pulled over his face, I think - I think he appeared to have a mole on his chin, but I would not .... It may have been just a -

**WESTON:** A mole? (*his imagination at work*): A mole ! Yes. Yes. That man had a mole. The man who brushed against me. On the right side of his jaw. I can see it as if he were standing here. We must get rid of this. At once.

**ROGER:** Do you think it is some infernal machine, sir? What shall we do with it?

**WESTON** (*indicating the side window*): Open the window and I shall throw it as far into the garden as I can.

**ROGER:** But it may explode, sir, if we throw it.

**WESTON:** What is certain is that it will explode if we do not! How long has it been lying here?

**ROGER:** It came about nine o'clock, my lord.

**WESTON** (*in agony*): Nearly three hours ago! Open the window, Roger.

**ROGER:** No, sir. You open the window. Let me handle the thing. My life is nothing. Yours is of great value to England.

**infernal:** A concealed or disguised device intended to destroy life or property

**WESTON:** No, Roger, no. You are young. I have had my life. There are still great things for you to do in the world. You must live, and write my life for posterity. Do as I say. I promise you shall exercise the greatest care. (*As ROGER rushes to the window*) No. Wait. A better idea. the gardener's pail. It is still on the landing!

**ROGER:** Yes! Yes, of course! (*He is out of the room and back in a moment with the wooden pail of water, which still has the wet cleaning rag hung over its edge.*)

**WESTON:** Stand back. (*He picks up the parcel* ***gingerly***). We do not know what satanic thing may happen. (*He inserts the parcel lengthwise into the pail, at full stretch of his arm, his head averted, his eyes watching from their extreme corners*) There is not enough water! Not enough to cover it.

**ROGER:** I'll get some. I shall not be a moment.

**WESTON:** No. Don't go. The flowers! (*He indicates a bowl of daffodils*).

**ROGER:** Of course! (*He pulls the daffodils from their setting, throwing them on the desk in his agitation and pours the water into the pail*). Ah! That has done it!

**WESTON** (*dismayed, as he takes his hand from the package*): Now it is going to float! It must be wet through, or it is no use.

**ROGER:** We must put something heavy on top, to keep it down.

**WESTON:** Yes, yes. Get something.

**ROGER:** What shall I get?

**WESTON:** Anything, anything that is heavy and that will fit into the pail. Books, anything!

**ROGER** (*to whom books are objects of reverence, if not awe*): Books sir? But they'll get very wet, won't they?

**WESTON:** In the name of heaven bring the first six books off the shelf!

**ROGER** (*snatching the books and bringing them*): I suppose it cannot be helped. Such beautiful bindings too! *(He picks the wet cloth off the edge of the pail, dropping it on the carpet, and plunges the books into the water, which very naturally overflows at this new incursion).*

**WESTON (*letting go his hold on the package and siting back on his heels with a sigh of relief*):** Ah! Well and truly drowned. (*He mops his forehead and ROGER collapses into the nearest chair*).

(*Enter LADY WESTON, with a tray on which is a glass of wine and some biscuits.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*seeing their strange occupation*): Lawdamussy, Richard! What have you got in the pail?

**WESTON:** A package that came this morning. The man who brought it was the same fellow that knocked against me yesterday and slipped that paper into my pocket. They thought I would open it, the fools! *(He is beginning to feel better)* But we have been one too many for them!

**LADY WESTON** (*in wild dismay*) You are making a mess of the beautiful, brand-new----

**WESTON** (*interrupting her angrily*): Frances! (*The thunder of her name quenches her speech.*) What does your 'beautiful brand-new' carpet matter when your husband's life is at stake? You shock me.

**LADY WESTON** (*who has not been going to say 'carpet'*): Carpet? (*After a pause, mildly*) No, of course not, my dear. I should never dream of weighing your safety against even the finest product of Asia. Come

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**gingerly:** hesitantly
**infernal:** A concealed or disguised device intended to destroy life or property

and sit down and have a glass of wine. (*She puts the tray on his desk, gathering up the scattered daffodils as she does so*) You know how the doctor disapproves of excitement for you.

**WESTON:** Perhaps the doctor has never had an **infernal** machine handed in at his door of a spring morning.

(*LADY WESTON picks up the cloth from the floor, mops the spilt water, and pauses to look curiously at the contents of the pail as they catch her eye.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*in mild conversational tones*): That looks like **Mr. Spencer** in the water.

**ROGER:** Yes, it is. The thing floated, you see. And time was all important. So it was imperative to take whatever was nearest to weigh it down.

**LADY WESTON:** I See. (*Handling him the wet cloth, and the flowers*) Would you be kind enough to take these downstairs?

(*She adds the empty flower bowl to his load) One of the maids will fill that for you.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*contemplative, her eyes on the portrait which hangs opposite the side window*): Do you think we had better remove Great-aunt Cicely?

**WESTON:** In the name of heaven, why?

**LADY WESTON:** She is in the direct line of shots coming through that window.

**WESTON:** And why should any shots come through the window, may I ask?

**LADY WESTON** (*mildly objecting to the tone*): I was merely taking thought for your property, my dear Richard. And anyone sitting in the ilex tree out there would be in a -

**WESTON** (*on his feet*): Frances! What made you think of the ilex tree?

**LADY WESTON:** That is where I would shoot you from. I mean, if I were going to shoot you. The leaves are thick enough to hide anyone sitting there, and yet not enough to obscure their view.

**WESTON:** Come away from that window.

**LADY WESTON:** What?

**WESTON:** Come away from that window!

**LADY WESTON** (*moving to him*): No one is going to shoot me.

**WESTON** (*running out of the room, and calling to ROGER from the landing*): Roger! Roger!

**ROGER** (*very distan*t): My lord?

**WESTON:** Has the gardener gone away yet?

**ROGER:** No, my lord. He is eating his dinner outside the kitchen window.

**WESTON:** Tell him to sit under the ilex tree until I give him leave to move.

**ROGER:** The **ilex tree?** Yes, my lord.

(*WESTON comes back and goes to the drawer of the table where his pistol is kept.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*as he takes out the pistol*): Oh, Richard dear, be careful. That is a very dangerous weapon.

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**Mr. Spencer:** book written
**Ilex tree:** evergreen oak tree also called holm oak

**WESTON** (*grimly important*): I know it!

**LADY WESTON:** It is so rusty that it is liable to do anything. (*As her husband proceeds to load the weapon*) You know that you haven't used it.

**WESTON:** There is nothing wrong with my pistol but a little dust.

**LADY WESTON:** Well, I think it is a poor way **to foil** an assassin.

**WESTON:** What is?

**LADY WESTON:** Blowing oneself up.

(*Enter ROGER with the bowl of daffodils.*)

**WESTON** (*looking round at him as he comes in*): Has Joel gone to sit under the tree?

**ROGER:** Yes, sir. (*Putting down the bowl and making for the side window*) At least, I gave him your message -

**WESTON:** Keep away from that window! (*As ROGER looks astonished*) There may be someone in the Ilex tree.

**ROGER:** But do you think they would try to shoot you as well as - as.... (*he indicates the bucket*).

**WESTON:** Who knows? When you have dealt with the criminal mind as long as I have... Did you open the door to speak to the gardener?

**ROGER:** Oh, no, my lord. I spoke through the shutter.

**WESTON** (*snapping the lock of his pistol*): Now we shall see whether there is anyone lurking in the tree. (*He moves over to the side of the window, peering out with the fraction of an eye.*)

**LADY WESTON:** Richard, if you are going to shoot off that thing, you will please wait until I -

(*She is interrupted by a loud knocking on the front door downstairs. This is such an unexpected development that all there are momentarily quite still, at a loss. ROGER is the first to recover*).

**ROGER:** Someone at the front door.

(*He moves over to the window in the rear wall, from which one can see the street. He is about to open the casement so that he may lean out to inspect the knocker, when LORD WESTON stops him.*)

**WESTON** (*still at the fireplace*): Don't open that window!

**ROGER:** But I cannot see otherwise, my lord, who it is.

**WESTON:** If you put your head out of that window they may shoot without waiting to ask questions.

**LADY WESTON:** But, Richard, it may be some perfectly innocent visitor.

(*The knocking is repeated.*)

**ROGER:** If I were to stand on a chair..... (*He brings a chair to the window and stands on it, but he is still not high enough to look down on whoever waits at the front door*).

**WESTON:** Well? Well? Can you tell who it is?

**ROGER:** I am still not high enough, my lord.

**LADY WESTON:** Add the footstool, Roger.

(*Roger adds the footstool to the chair, and aided by LADY WESTON climbs on to the precarious object*).

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**to foil:**to frustrate or thwart the efforts of the assassin
(i.e. to kill himself by handling the rusty pistol is a poor way of outwitting the assassin)

**LADY WESTON:** Now, can you see anyone?

**ROGER** (*having seen, scrambling downing*): All is well, my lord.

(*He throws open the casement, and calls to someone below*) It is only Mr. Caesar. (*As this information is succeeded by a blank pause*) Shall I let him in?

**WESTON:** Who did you say?

**ROGER:** Mr. Caesar. You remember. The man you met on Tuesday at Hampton, my lord. He was to come to see you this morning about rose trees. You made a note of it.

**WESTON** (*taking the crumpled piece of paper from his pocket in a dazed way*): I made a note? 'Remember Caesar'. Is that my writing? Yes, it must be - Dear me!

**LADY WESTON** (*kindly*): I shouldn't have said it was the venomous scribbling of an illiterate. You had better go down and let Mr. Caesar in, Roger. Put the pistol away, Richard, dear; your visitor might misunderstand it. (*She speaks cheerfully, as to a child; it is obvious from her lack of surprise that* ***excursions and alarms*** *created by her husband over trifles are a normal part of existence for her*). And if you take Mr Spencer out of the water, I shall send Joel to take away the bucket. Perhaps **Mr. Brutus** would like some **cordial?**

**WESTON:** Mr. Caesar. (*He moves towards the bucket.*)

**LADY WESTON:** Of course. How could anyone forget a name like that? And now if you'll forgive me..... It's my busy morning.

**WESTON** (*arresting her as she is going out of the door*): Oh Frances! What was in the parcel, do you think?

**LADY WESTON:** That was your new velvet cloak, dear. I did try to tell you, you know.

*(The curtain comes down on LORD WESTON ruefully taking the first dripping book from the water).*

(Exit).

Elizabeth Mackintosh was born in Inverness, the daughter of Colin Mackintosh and Josephine. She attended Inverness Royal Academy and then Anstey Physical Training College in Erdington, a suburb of Birmingham. She taught at various schools in England and Scotland, but in 1926 she had to return to Inverness to care for her invalid father. There she began her career as a writer. Mackintosh's best-known books were written under the name of Josephine Tey. Josephine was her mother's first name and Tey ,the surname of an English grandmother.

About a dozen one-act plays and another dozen full-length plays were written under the name of **Gordon Daviot**. How she chose the name of Gordon is unknown, but Daviot was the name of a scenic locale near Inverness where she had spent many happy holidays with her family. Only four of her plays were produced during her lifetime.

**Excursions and alarms:**(alarms and excursions) noise and bustle
(as those made on the stage to represent battles etc.)
**Mr. Brutus:**She refers to the visitor as Mr. Brutus. (It was Brutus who led the conspirators in the assassination of Julius Caesar)
**Cordial:** beverage

**Understanding the play:**

**I. Answer the following questions briefly.**

a) What was Lord Weston's advice to Roger, his secretary?

b) Why did Lord Weston suddenly declare that his life was in danger?

c) Lord Weston tries to protect himself from his 'assassin'? What are the immediate steps taken by him?

d) How did Lady Weston react to the 'death threat'?

e) How does Lord Weston 'defuse' the 'infernal machine'?

f) What was the truth about the crumpled piece of paper?

g) Why did Lady Weston refer to Mr. Caesar as 'Mr. Brutus'?

**II. Answer the questions given below the extracts.**

a) "What is the date to-day? Roger, I said what day of the month is it?"

1. Who is the speaker?
2. Why is the speaker keen to know what day it was?
3. What impact does the day and date referred to have on the speaker?

b) "You always wanted to be a great man and now you have got your wish".

1. What was his wish?
2. How had her husband's wish been granted?
3. Comment on the speaker's tone as she says these words.

c) "Let me handle the thing. My life is nothing. Yours is of great value to England".

1. What is 'the thing' referred to here?
2. Why did it pose a threat to life?
3. Whose life is of 'great value' to England? In what way?
4. Why does the speaker consider his life less important? What do these lines convey about the speaker?

d) "Well, I think it is a poor way to foil an assassin."

1. What was Lady Weston reacting to?
2. Was she right in her assumption? Give a reason.
3. Do you approve of Lady Weston's reaction to the situation?

e) "I made a note? 'Remember Caesar' Is that my writing? Yes, it must be.

Dear me"

1. What had Lord Weston made a note of?
2. How had he described his writing earlier?
3. What is ironical about it?

**III. Appreciation:**

a) 1. "Remember Caesar is a light-hearted comedy". Working in a group, discuss the statement. Identify various aspects of the play that contribute to the humour

i) title

ii) plot

iii) characterisation

2. After the discussion, write a paragraph of 150-200 words bringing out the humour in the play.

**IV. Writing Skills:**

a) Given below are extracts from the play. Study each of these carefully and based on your inference write a character sketch of Lord Weston in about 150-200 words.

| | |
|---|---|
| I did not become Lord Weston by twiddling my thumbs and hoping for favours. | The treason affair - I refused to be bribed. The Piracy - both sides hate me. |
| What does your 'beautiful carpet' matter when your husband's life is at stake. "You shock me". | Come out! Come out. Drop your weapon. |
| We do not know what satanic thing may happen. | Should I spend the rest of my life with a guard at my heels? A pretty figure I should cut. |

Weston: "The venomous scribbling of an illiterate

(Later)" Is that my writing?. "Yes, it must be."

b) Lady Weston's reaction to the Lord Weston's predicament presents an interesting character study in contrast. Write a paragraph in about 150-200 words highlighting the contrast, giving relevant instances from the play.

c) "Detail, my good Roger, attention to detail that is the beginning of greatness." Discuss how ironically, Lord, Weston lands himself in trouble by "paying attention to detail", in about 150-200 words.

**V. Group Work: Speaking Skills**

The play revolves around a 'perceived threat' and how Weston and Lady Weston react to it. Reverse their roles with a panic-stricken Lady Weston and a frivolous Lord Weston. In a small group, choose a piece of dialogue from the play and rewrite it to suit the changed roles. Share it by taking parts and reading your script aloud with suitable tone and expression.

# Drama

# INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA

## A Play

- is a story to be acted
- is told in action
- combines two arts-writing and acting

Plays are divided into **two main types**, tragedy and comedy.

- **tragedy -** unhappy ending which results from the main character's fatal flaw. Eg - in Hamlet, the hero's fatal flaw is that his brilliant mind thinks too precisely on 'the event'. In the Monkey's paw, Mr. White disregards a warning and chooses to bank on a sinister promise linked to a dead monkey's paw.

  **comedy -** is a play that ends happily. If it elicits laughter through improbable situations, it is called a farce.

  - it focuses on characters who come under attack for flouting the positive values of society.
  - human follies are sought to be corrected by making us laugh at them. *Eg. A Comedy of Errors.*

## Structure

- A **good beginning which** informs the audience about the situation or circumstance from which the action of the play starts. It could be someone speaking into a telephone or reading a letter aloud or starting with an absurd guess. It should be **natural.**
- The **middle** of a play is the most absorbing, gripping and turning point in the development of the story/play.
- The **end** of a play should come, especially in a one-act play, as soon as possible after the crisis or 'middle'.
- Some plays have **little** or **no structure**. They aim at being realistic. There's hardly and plot; their stress in on characterization.

  Eg. Chekov's 'A Marriage Proposal'.

## Conventions

- All accepted substitutes for reality in drama are called conventions.
- For a play, enter into the play-wright's make-believe world; let him take you to any period in history so that half a lifetime may pass in half-an-hour.
- Soliloquies and asides are conventions which were once common, but are now usually avoided in modern plays.

## The One-Act Play

- Full length play is like a novel while the one-act play is like a short story which concentrates on a single idea or emotion.
- Most full length plays last for two-end-a-half hours and have three acts (Shakespeare's had five).

- Initially one-act plays were usually a filler item before the main entertainment and some of them received more acclaim from the audience than the main play.

## Performance in Plays

- Be natural.
- Understand your lines and speak them from the bottom of your heart.
- Speak distinctly, your voice should reach the back of the hall.
- Avoid interval in between lines.
- Do not clutter up the stage to give the impression of 'reality'.
- Create a mood or atmosphere by using simplistic objects as props.
- Face the audience with confidence.

## Appreciation of Plays

- Ask the following questions if you are a critic using the pragmatic or impressionistic approach. 'How does the play impress you personally? Does it hold your interest? Does it teach you something?
- The mimetic or imitative approach owes much to the father of all art criticism, the Greek Philosopher Aristotle. The critic would end up asking – Does this play portray a good imitation of life? Does this actually happen? **Would** it happen, given **another** character, in **different** circumstances? For eg. In *'The Monkey's Paw'*, are the parents true to type?
- The third type of critic conforms to traditional rules. The opening should evolve clearly and slowly. A conflict provides interest and suspense. It could be between two people or two opposing interior forces within the same person – selfishness and purity or between people and the demands of the situation as in 'The Monkey's Paw'.
- Some critics recommend a stress on the sordid, and gruesome. Others thrive on a sustained series of surprises as in the plays of Bernard Shaw. Most critics would try to find in the play the richness of language and beauty of imagery. The real test of a play lies in the performance of the artists, both on stage and off stage, dialogue delivery, spontaneity, interpretation of the characters and incidents, lighting, scenery, and direction which contributes to the overall effect of the production.

# Remember Caesar

by Gordon Daviot

**Warm up:**

1. a) Given below is an extract from Shakespeare's play 'Julius Caesar' Act I, Scene 2.Pick out the key phrases / sentence in the conversation.

> **Caesar:** Who is it in the press that calls on me. I hear a tongue shriller than all the music cry "Caeser! Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear."
>
> **Soothsayer:** Beware the **ides of March**
>
> **Caesar:** What man is that?
>
> **Brutus:** A Soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

b) Based on your observation, choose the option which best describes the "intent"

1. threat ☐
2. warning ☐
3. portent ☐
4. advice ☐

2. The **Ides of March** bears a reference to the 15th of March. Julius Caesar was assassinated on that day in 44 B.C.

- Relate this reference to the title of the play, and predict the theme of the play before you start reading it.

**Now read the play.**

The play centres round the efforts made by a panic-stricken judge to secure himself against what he considers an imminent catastrophe. The theme sustains its suspense till the truth about the scrap of paper is revealed at the end of the play. The contrast between the conceited, pompous Judge Weston who takes a morbidly serious view of the matter and the light-hearted but sensible Lady Weston who is obviously used to her husband's explosive reaction to trivialities, provides the humour.

**REMEMBER CAESAR**

by Gordon Daviot [pen name of Elizabeth McKintosh, Scottish]

**Characters**

LORD WESTON
ROGER CHETWYND
LADY WESTON

***SCENE:*** *A room in the house of Richard, LORD WESTON, on a spring morning in the layout of room is such that it is a combination of study and withdrawing-room. Up right is the door to the landing (it is a first-floor room), in the rear wall a large casement window looking out to the front of the house, in*

*the left wall the fireplace and, down, another window through which one can see the trees in the garden. Up from the fireplace a cupboard in the wall. Hanging on the walls and over the fireplace are family portraits.*

***LORD WESTON** is seated by the fireplace, a table of books and papers beside him. He is engaged in filling his pipe. And talking.*

*Downright, where the light from the side window falls across his small writing-table, is seated MR ROGER CHETWYND, a thin, earnest, absent-minded, and conscientious youth. So conscientious is he that his mind, even when absent, is absent on his employer's business. He has begun by listening to his master's lecture, but the lure of his work has been gradually too much for him, and he is now blissfully copying from one paper on to another while the measured words flow over him, his lips forming the phrases while he writes.*

**WESTON:** And furthermore (*he pauses to arrange the tobacco*) it is not alone a question of duty; there is your own success in the world to be considered. It is not your intention to be a secretary all your life, is it? No. Very well. Diligence, and a respect for detail should be your care. I did not become Lord Weston by **twiddling my thumbs** and hoping for favours. I won my honours by hard work and zealous service. Men who were at **Corpus Christi** with me are to-day copying documents for a living, while I - let us not mince matters - am the best-known, and certainly the most impartial, judge in England, and a favoured servant of his gracious majesty, Charles the Second. That, I submit, my good Roger , is an example to be studied. It is not only unbecoming in you to ask for a half-holiday, but it is greatly unlike you. I fear....(*He has turned towards his secretary, and discovers his misplaced diligence. After a pause, coldly*) Can it be, Mr Chetwynd, that you have not been listening to my discourse?

**ROGER** (*brought to the surface by the cessation of the word music*): What, my lord? Oh, no. Yes, certainly, sir, I am listening.

**WESTON:** What was I talking of?

**ROGER:** Yourself, sir. (*amending*) I mean, of your rise to success, my lord. (*It is apparent that it is an oft-heard tale.*)

**WESTON:** We were talking of your extraordinary request for a half-holiday, when you had one only last month. Would it be straining courtesy too far if I were to inquire what prompts this new demand for heedless leisure?

**ROGER:** I thought perhaps if you did not need me this afternoon, my lord, I might personally interview the clerk of the Awards Committee, and find out why he has not sent that document.

**WESTON:** (*a little taken aback*): Oh, Oh, indeed.

**ROGER:** The lack of it greatly hinders. It holds up my work, you see. And at this most interesting point.... (*His glance goes longingly to his desk.*)

**WESTON:** That, of course, is a different matter. I see no reason (*he looks for a spill for his pipe, first on the table and then, rising, by the fire*) why you should not take a walk to Mr Clay's in the afternoon if the weather is fine. I am relieved that your thoughts are on sober matters, as befits a rising young man. Diligence, courage, and attention to detail: these are the three. Without an orderly mind no man can hope (*ROGER has gone back to his work*) to excel in any of the learned professions. (*He has found a scrap*

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**Twiddling my thumbs:** by being idle
**Corpus Christi:** One of the colleges at Oxford

*of paper, rather crushed, in his pocket and smoothes it out, uninterestedly, to make a rough spill*). Detail, my good Roger, attention to detail. That is the beginning of greatness. That is the…(*reading automatically and with some difficulty what is written on the scrap of paper*) 'Remember Caesar'. (*Repeating, with vague interest. He turns the paper back and forth, at a loss. And then a new idea occurs to him, a rather horrible idea. To ROGER*) What is the date to-day? (*As ROGER, buried again in his work, does not answer*) Roger! I said, what day of the month is it?

**ROGER** (*Hardly pausing*): It is the fifteenth, my lord.

**WESTON:** The fifteenth! The fifteenth of March. The Ides of March! (*Looking at the paper again; in a horrified whisper*) 'Remember Caesar'! (*Louder*) So they want to kill me, do they? They want to kill me? (*ROGER comes to the surface, surprised.*) That is what it is to be a judge over men (*all his pompousness is dissolving in agitation*) an instrument of justice. Sooner or later revenge lies await in the by-ways. And the juster a judge has been, the more fearless (*he waves the paper in the astonished ROGER's face*), so much greater will be the hate that pursues -

**ROGER:** What is it, my lord? What is it?

**WESTON:** My death warrant if I am not careful. What cases have we had lately? The treason affair - I refused to be bribed! (*The boast gives him a passing comfort.*) The piracy - both sides hate me for that. Or there was that **footpad -**

**ROGER:** Is it a threat, the paper? Where did it come from?

**WESTON:** It was in my pocket. Someone must have …. Yes, now I remember. A man brushed against me yesterday as I was leaving the courts. A small, evil-looking fellow, very sly.

**ROGER:** What does it say, the paper?

**WESTON** (*much too occupied with his own fate to attend to his secretary's curiosity*): Just at the door, it was, and he didn't wait for apology. I remember. Well, I can only thank them for the warning. I may die before my time but it will not be to-day if I can help it. Go downstairs at once, Roger, and lock, bar and chain all the doors. And ask my wife to come to me at once. At once. Stop! Are there any strangers in the house? Workmen or such?

**ROGER:** Only Joel the gardener, my lord; he is cleaning the windows on the landing. (*He indicates with his head that Joel is just outside*).

**WESTON:** Send him away at once. Tell him to leave everything and go and lock the door behind him. And the windows - see that the windows, too, are closed.

(*ROGER goes with speed. One can hear him begin his order to Joel before he shuts the door; Joel, his lordship says that you must… and the whistling which has become audible through the opened door dies away. WESTON left alone, peers cautiously from each window, in turn. Then his mind, temporarily relieved goes to the cupboard and is greatly exercised again. He stares at it fearfully for a moment or two, and then puts his fear to the rest. He takes a pistol from the drawer of his desk.*)

**WESTON** (*facing the cupboard with levelled pistol*): Come out! Come out! I say. (*There is silence*) Drop your weapon and come out or I shall shoot you now. (*As there is still silence he forces himself to close in on the cupboard door, and standing to the side pulls it quickly open. It is empty. As soon as his relief abates he is ashamed, and hastily returns the pistol to its drawer.*)

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**foot pad:**highway-man (robber) who goes about on foot.
(Highwaymen on horseback were more common in those days)

(*Enter, bright and purposeful, LADY WESTON. A charming creature. One knows at a glance that she is an excellent housewife, but to the last one is never sure how much intelligence and sweet malice there lies behind her practical simplicity.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*looking back as she comes in*): I do wish that Joel wouldn't leave pails of water on the landing! What is it, Richard? It's baking morning.

**WESTON:** My dear, your husband's life is in grave danger.

**LADY WESTON:** The last time it was in danger you had been eating **game pie.** What is it this time?

**WESTON** (*annihilating her flippancy with one broadside*): Assassination!

**LADY WESTON:** Well, well! You always wanted to be a great man and now you have got your wish!

**WESTON:** What do you mean?

**LADY WESTON:** They don't assassinate nobodies.

**WESTON** (*showing her the paper*): Read that, and see if you can laugh.

**LADY WESTON:** I'm not laughing. (*Trying to read*): What a dreadful scrawl.

**WESTON: (***Yes, the venomous scribbling of an illiterate.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*deciphering*): 'Remember Caesar'. Is it a riddle?

**WESTON:** It is a death warrant. Do you know what day this is?

**LADY WESTON:** Thursday.

**WESTON:** What day of the month?

**LADY WESTON:** About the twelfth, I should guess.

**WESTON** *(with meaning)***:** It is the fifteenth. The fifteenth of March.

**LADY WESTON: Lawdamussy!** Your good sister's birthday! And we haven't sent her as much as a lily!

**WESTON:** I have deplored before, Frances, the incurable lightness of your mind. On the fifteenth of March Caesar was murdered in the Forum.

**LADY WESTON:** Yes, of course, I remember. They couldn't stand his airs any longer.

**WESTON** (*reproving*): He was a great man.

**LADY WESTON** (*kindly*): Yes, my dear, I am sure he was. (*Looking again at the scrap of paper*) And is someone thinking of murdering you?

**WESTON:** Obviously.

**LADY WESTON:** I wonder someone hasn't done it long ago. (*Before the look of wonder can grow in his eye*) A great many people must hate judges. And you are a strict judge, they say.

**WESTON:** It is the law that is strict. I am a judge, my good Frances, not a juggler. I have never twisted the law to please the mob, and, I shall not please them by dying on the day of their choice.

**LADY WESTON:** No, of course not. You shall not go out of the house to-day. A nice light dinner and a good glass of -

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**game pie:** meat (of animals or birds hunted and killed) covered with pastry and baked
**lawdamussy:** an exclamation (Lord have mercy)

**WESTON:** I have sent Roger to barricade all the doors, and I think it would be wise to close the ground floor shutters and see that they are not opened for any -

**LADY WESTON:** Is it the French and the Dutch together you are expecting! And this is the morning Mr. Gammon's boy comes with the groceries. How am I to -

**WESTON:** My dear, is a little pepper more to you than your husband's life?

**LADY WESTON:** It isn't a little pepper, it's a great deal of flour. And you would be the first to complain if the bread were short, or the gravy thin. (*Giving him back the paper*) How do you know that the little paper was meant for you?

**WESTON:** Because it was in my pocket. I found it there when I was looking for something to light my pipe. (*With meaning*) There were no spills.

**LADY WESTON:** No spills. What, again? Richard, you smoke far too much.

**WESTON** (*continuing hastily*): It was slipped into my pocket by a man who brushed against me yesterday. A dark , lean fellow with an evil face.

**LADY WESTON:** I don't think he was very evil.

**WESTON:** What do you know about it?

**LADY WESTON:** It was kind of him to warn you. And wasn't it a mercy that the spills were finished and that no one had made any more! If there had been even one there you would never have seen the paper. You would have gone for your noon walk down the Strand and someone would have stuck you like a goose on a spit, and I should have been a widow before diner-time -

**WESTON** (*sinking into a chair*): Stop, Frances, stop! It upsets me to -

(*Enter ROGER a little out of breath after his flying tour round the house.*)

**WESTON:** Ah, Roger. Have you seen to it all? Every door barred, every window shut, all workmen out -

**ROGER** (*a little embarrassed*): Every door except the kitchen one, my lord.

**WESTON** (*angry*): And why not the kitchen one?

**ROGER** (*stammering*): The cook seemed to think…. That is, she said…..

**WESTON:** Well, speak, man, what did she say, and how does what the cook thinks affect my order to bar the kitchen door?

**ROGER** (*in a rush*): The cook said she was a respectable woman and had never been behind bars in her life and she wasn't going to begin at her age, and she was quite capable of dealing with anyone who came to the kitchen door -

**WESTON:** Tell her to pack her things and leave the house at once.

**LADY WESTON:** And who will cook your pet dishes? I shall also see that all the downstairs windows are shuttered as you suggest. We can always haul the groceries through an upper window.

**WESTON** (*controlling himself*): I think that so frivolous a suggestion at so anxious a time is in poor taste, Frances and unworthy of you -

**LADY WESTON:** Did it appear frivolous to you? How strange! I had thought it odd to shutter the walls and yet leave openings in the roof that one could drive a coach and horses through. However! (*She comes back into the room, takes two candelabra from different places in the room, and goes to the door*).

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**minutiae:** minute details (often trivial)

**WESTON:** What do you want with these?

**LADY WESTON:** If we are to be in darkness below we shall want all the candles we can gather. (*Exit.*)

**WESTON:** The aptness of the female mind to busy itself about irrelevant and inconsiderable **minutiae** is a source of endless wonder to me. (*Almost without noticing what he is doing he moves over to the fireplace and sticks his head into the chimney to view the width of it. As he withdraws it, he becomes aware of ROGER, standing watching*). I see no reason now why you should not resume your work, Roger.

**ROGER:** Oh, my lord, it is beyond my power to work while you are in danger. Is there not something I could do?

**WESTON** (*mightily flattered*): Nonsense, my good Roger, nonsense! Nothing is going to happen to me.

**ROGER:** I could perhaps go and warn the authorities, and so prevent -

**WESTON** (*very brave*): No, no, no. Am I to spend the rest of my life with a guard at my heels? A pretty figure I should cut! Go on with your work and... (*his eye has lighted on a package which is lying on a chair against the right wall. The box is oblong - roughly 18 in. by 10 in. by 4 in. - and tied with cord. Sharply*) What is this?

**ROGER:** That came for you this morning, sir.

**WESTON:** What is it?

**ROGER** (*with the faint beginnings of doubt in his voice*): I don't know, my lord. A man came with it and said that it was important that you should have it to-day.

**WESTON:** And you didn't ask what it was! You fool!

**ROGER** (*humbly*): It didn't seem to be my business. I never do ask about the contents of your lordship's .... I showed your lordship the package when it came, and you said to leave it there.

**WESTON** (*peering with growing uneasiness at the thing*): The man who brought it, what did he look like? Was he small? Dark?

**ROGER** (*who obviously had taken no notice*): I think he was smallish. But as to dark - his hat was pulled over his face, I think - I think he appeared to have a mole on his chin, but I would not .... It may have been just a -

**WESTON:** A mole? (*his imagination at work*): A mole ! Yes. Yes. That man had a mole. The man who brushed against me. On the right side of his jaw. I can see it as if he were standing here. We must get rid of this. At once.

**ROGER:** Do you think it is some infernal machine, sir? What shall we do with it?

**WESTON** (*indicating the side window*): Open the window and I shall throw it as far into the garden as I can.

**ROGER:** But it may explode, sir, if we throw it.

**WESTON:** What is certain is that it will explode if we do not! How long has it been lying here?

**ROGER:** It came about nine o'clock, my lord.

**WESTON** (*in agony*): Nearly three hours ago! Open the window, Roger.

**ROGER:** No, sir. You open the window. Let me handle the thing. My life is nothing. Yours is of great value to England.

**infernal:** A concealed or disguised device intended to destroy life or property

**WESTON:** No, Roger, no. You are young. I have had my life. There are still great things for you to do in the world. You must live, and write my life for posterity. Do as I say. I promise you shall exercise the greatest care. (*As ROGER rushes to the window*) No. Wait. A better idea. the gardener's pail. It is still on the landing!

**ROGER:** Yes! Yes, of course! (*He is out of the room and back in a moment with the wooden pail of water, which still has the wet cleaning rag hung over its edge.*)

**WESTON:** Stand back. (*He picks up the parcel* ***gingerly***). We do not know what satanic thing may happen. (*He inserts the parcel lengthwise into the pail, at full stretch of his arm, his head averted, his eyes watching from their extreme corners*) There is not enough water! Not enough to cover it.

**ROGER:** I'll get some. I shall not be a moment.

**WESTON:** No. Don't go. The flowers! (*He indicates a bowl of daffodils*).

**ROGER:** Of course! (*He pulls the daffodils from their setting, throwing them on the desk in his agitation and pours the water into the pail*). Ah! That has done it!

**WESTON** (*dismayed, as he takes his hand from the package*): Now it is going to float! It must be wet through, or it is no use.

**ROGER:** We must put something heavy on top, to keep it down.

**WESTON:** Yes, yes. Get something.

**ROGER:** What shall I get?

**WESTON:** Anything, anything that is heavy and that will fit into the pail. Books, anything!

**ROGER** (*to whom books are objects of reverence, if not awe*): Books sir? But they'll get very wet, won't they?

**WESTON:** In the name of heaven bring the first six books off the shelf!

**ROGER** (*snatching the books and bringing them*): I suppose it cannot be helped. Such beautiful bindings too! *(He picks the wet cloth off the edge of the pail, dropping it on the carpet, and plunges the books into the water, which very naturally overflows at this new incursion).*

**WESTON (*letting go his hold on the package and siting back on his heels with a sigh of relief*):** Ah! Well and truly drowned. (*He mops his forehead and ROGER collapses into the nearest chair*).

(*Enter LADY WESTON, with a tray on which is a glass of wine and some biscuits.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*seeing their strange occupation*): Lawdamussy, Richard! What have you got in the pail?

**WESTON:** A package that came this morning. The man who brought it was the same fellow that knocked against me yesterday and slipped that paper into my pocket. They thought I would open it, the fools! *(He is beginning to feel better)* But we have been one too many for them!

**LADY WESTON** (*in wild dismay*) You are making a mess of the beautiful, brand-new----

**WESTON** (*interrupting her angrily*): Frances! (*The thunder of her name quenches her speech.*) What does your 'beautiful brand-new' carpet matter when your husband's life is at stake? You shock me.

**LADY WESTON** (*who has not been going to say 'carpet'*): Carpet? (*After a pause, mildly*) No, of course not, my dear. I should never dream of weighing your safety against even the finest product of Asia. Come

---

**gingerly:** hesitantly
**infernal:** A concealed or disguised device intended to destroy life or property

and sit down and have a glass of wine. (*She puts the tray on his desk, gathering up the scattered daffodils as she does so*) You know how the doctor disapproves of excitement for you.

**WESTON:** Perhaps the doctor has never had an **infernal** machine handed in at his door of a spring morning.

(*LADY WESTON picks up the cloth from the floor, mops the spilt water, and pauses to look curiously at the contents of the pail as they catch her eye.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*in mild conversational tones*): That looks like **Mr. Spencer** in the water.

**ROGER:** Yes, it is. The thing floated, you see. And time was all important. So it was imperative to take whatever was nearest to weigh it down.

**LADY WESTON:** I See. (*Handling him the wet cloth, and the flowers*) Would you be kind enough to take these downstairs?

(*She adds the empty flower bowl to his load) One of the maids will fill that for you.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*contemplative, her eyes on the portrait which hangs opposite the side window*): Do you think we had better remove Great-aunt Cicely?

**WESTON:** In the name of heaven, why?

**LADY WESTON:** She is in the direct line of shots coming through that window.

**WESTON:** And why should any shots come through the window, may I ask?

**LADY WESTON** (*mildly objecting to the tone*): I was merely taking thought for your property, my dear Richard. And anyone sitting in the ilex tree out there would be in a -

**WESTON** (*on his feet*): Frances! What made you think of the ilex tree?

**LADY WESTON:** That is where I would shoot you from. I mean, if I were going to shoot you. The leaves are thick enough to hide anyone sitting there, and yet not enough to obscure their view.

**WESTON:** Come away from that window.

**LADY WESTON:** What?

**WESTON:** Come away from that window!

**LADY WESTON** (*moving to him*): No one is going to shoot me.

**WESTON** (*running out of the room, and calling to ROGER from the landing*): Roger! Roger!

**ROGER** (*very distan*t): My lord?

**WESTON:** Has the gardener gone away yet?

**ROGER:** No, my lord. He is eating his dinner outside the kitchen window.

**WESTON:** Tell him to sit under the ilex tree until I give him leave to move.

**ROGER:** The **ilex tree?** Yes, my lord.

(*WESTON comes back and goes to the drawer of the table where his pistol is kept.*)

**LADY WESTON** (*as he takes out the pistol*): Oh, Richard dear, be careful. That is a very dangerous weapon.

---

**Mr. Spencer:** book written
**Ilex tree:** evergreen oak tree also called holm oak

**WESTON** (*grimly important*): I know it!

**LADY WESTON:** It is so rusty that it is liable to do anything. (*As her husband proceeds to load the weapon*) You know that you haven't used it.

**WESTON:** There is nothing wrong with my pistol but a little dust.

**LADY WESTON:** Well, I think it is a poor way **to foil** an assassin.

**WESTON:** What is?

**LADY WESTON:** Blowing oneself up.

(*Enter ROGER with the bowl of daffodils.*)

**WESTON** (*looking round at him as he comes in*): Has Joel gone to sit under the tree?

**ROGER:** Yes, sir. (*Putting down the bowl and making for the side window*) At least, I gave him your message -

**WESTON:** Keep away from that window! (*As ROGER looks astonished*) There may be someone in the Ilex tree.

**ROGER:** But do you think they would try to shoot you as well as - as.... (*he indicates the bucket*).

**WESTON:** Who knows? When you have dealt with the criminal mind as long as I have... Did you open the door to speak to the gardener?

**ROGER:** Oh, no, my lord. I spoke through the shutter.

**WESTON** (*snapping the lock of his pistol*): Now we shall see whether there is anyone lurking in the tree. (*He moves over to the side of the window, peering out with the fraction of an eye.*)

**LADY WESTON:** Richard, if you are going to shoot off that thing, you will please wait until I -

(*She is interrupted by a loud knocking on the front door downstairs. This is such an unexpected development that all there are momentarily quite still, at a loss. ROGER is the first to recover*).

**ROGER:** Someone at the front door.

(*He moves over to the window in the rear wall, from which one can see the street. He is about to open the casement so that he may lean out to inspect the knocker, when LORD WESTON stops him.*)

**WESTON** (*still at the fireplace*): Don't open that window!

**ROGER:** But I cannot see otherwise, my lord, who it is.

**WESTON:** If you put your head out of that window they may shoot without waiting to ask questions.

**LADY WESTON:** But, Richard, it may be some perfectly innocent visitor.

(*The knocking is repeated.*)

**ROGER:** If I were to stand on a chair..... (*He brings a chair to the window and stands on it, but he is still not high enough to look down on whoever waits at the front door*).

**WESTON:** Well? Well? Can you tell who it is?

**ROGER:** I am still not high enough, my lord.

**LADY WESTON:** Add the footstool, Roger.

(*Roger adds the footstool to the chair, and aided by LADY WESTON climbs on to the precarious object*).

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**to foil:**to frustrate or thwart the efforts of the assassin
(i.e. to kill himself by handling the rusty pistol is a poor way of outwitting the assassin)

**LADY WESTON:** Now, can you see anyone?

**ROGER** (*having seen, scrambling downing*): All is well, my lord.

(*He throws open the casement, and calls to someone below*) It is only Mr. Caesar. (*As this information is succeeded by a blank pause*) Shall I let him in?

**WESTON:** Who did you say?

**ROGER:** Mr. Caesar. You remember. The man you met on Tuesday at Hampton, my lord. He was to come to see you this morning about rose trees. You made a note of it.

**WESTON** (*taking the crumpled piece of paper from his pocket in a dazed way*): I made a note? 'Remember Caesar'. Is that my writing? Yes, it must be - Dear me!

**LADY WESTON** (*kindly*): I shouldn't have said it was the venomous scribbling of an illiterate. You had better go down and let Mr. Caesar in, Roger. Put the pistol away, Richard, dear; your visitor might misunderstand it. (*She speaks cheerfully, as to a child; it is obvious from her lack of surprise that* ***excursions and alarms*** *created by her husband over trifles are a normal part of existence for her*). And if you take Mr Spencer out of the water, I shall send Joel to take away the bucket. Perhaps **Mr. Brutus** would like some **cordial?**

**WESTON:** Mr. Caesar. (*He moves towards the bucket.*)

**LADY WESTON:** Of course. How could anyone forget a name like that? And now if you'll forgive me..... It's my busy morning.

**WESTON** (*arresting her as she is going out of the door*): Oh Frances! What was in the parcel, do you think?

**LADY WESTON:** That was your new velvet cloak, dear. I did try to tell you, you know.

*(The curtain comes down on LORD WESTON ruefully taking the first dripping book from the water).*

(Exit).

Elizabeth Mackintosh was born in Inverness, the daughter of Colin Mackintosh and Josephine. She attended Inverness Royal Academy and then Anstey Physical Training College in Erdington, a suburb of Birmingham. She taught at various schools in England and Scotland, but in 1926 she had to return to Inverness to care for her invalid father. There she began her career as a writer. Mackintosh's best-known books were written under the name of Josephine Tey. Josephine was her mother's first name and Tey ,the surname of an English grandmother.

About a dozen one-act plays and another dozen full-length plays were written under the name of **Gordon Daviot**. How she chose the name of Gordon is unknown, but Daviot was the name of a scenic locale near Inverness where she had spent many happy holidays with her family. Only four of her plays were produced during her lifetime.

**Excursions and alarms:**(alarms and excursions) noise and bustle
(as those made on the stage to represent battles etc.)
**Mr. Brutus:**She refers to the visitor as Mr. Brutus. (It was Brutus who led the conspirators in the assassination of Julius Caesar)
**Cordial:** beverage

**Understanding the play:**

**I. Answer the following questions briefly.**

a) What was Lord Weston's advice to Roger, his secretary?

b) Why did Lord Weston suddenly declare that his life was in danger?

c) Lord Weston tries to protect himself from his 'assassin'? What are the immediate steps taken by him?

d) How did Lady Weston react to the 'death threat'?

e) How does Lord Weston 'defuse' the 'infernal machine'?

f) What was the truth about the crumpled piece of paper?

g) Why did Lady Weston refer to Mr. Caesar as 'Mr. Brutus'?

**II. Answer the questions given below the extracts.**

a) "What is the date to-day? Roger, I said what day of the month is it?"

1. Who is the speaker?
2. Why is the speaker keen to know what day it was?
3. What impact does the day and date referred to have on the speaker?

b) "You always wanted to be a great man and now you have got your wish".

1. What was his wish?
2. How had her husband's wish been granted?
3. Comment on the speaker's tone as she says these words.

c) "Let me handle the thing. My life is nothing. Yours is of great value to England".

1. What is 'the thing' referred to here?
2. Why did it pose a threat to life?
3. Whose life is of 'great value' to England? In what way?
4. Why does the speaker consider his life less important? What do these lines convey about the speaker?

d) "Well, I think it is a poor way to foil an assassin."

1. What was Lady Weston reacting to?
2. Was she right in her assumption? Give a reason.
3. Do you approve of Lady Weston's reaction to the situation?

e) "I made a note? 'Remember Caesar' Is that my writing? Yes, it must be.

Dear me"

1. What had Lord Weston made a note of?
2. How had he described his writing earlier?
3. What is ironical about it?

**III. Appreciation:**

a) 1. "Remember Caesar is a light-hearted comedy". Working in a group, discuss the statement. Identify various aspects of the play that contribute to the humour

i) title

ii) plot

iii) characterisation

2. After the discussion, write a paragraph of 150-200 words bringing out the humour in the play.

**IV. Writing Skills:**

a) Given below are extracts from the play. Study each of these carefully and based on your inference write a character sketch of Lord Weston in about 150-200 words.

| | |
|---|---|
| I did not become Lord Weston by twiddling my thumbs and hoping for favours. | The treason affair - I refused to be bribed. The Piracy - both sides hate me. |
| What does your 'beautiful carpet' matter when your husband's life is at stake. "You shock me". | Come out! Come out. Drop your weapon. |
| We do not know what satanic thing may happen. | Should I spend the rest of my life with a guard at my heels? A pretty figure I should cut. |

Weston: "The venomous scribbling of an illiterate

(Later)" Is that my writing?. "Yes, it must be."

b) Lady Weston's reaction to the Lord Weston's predicament presents an interesting character study in contrast. Write a paragraph in about 150-200 words highlighting the contrast, giving relevant instances from the play.

c) "Detail, my good Roger, attention to detail that is the beginning of greatness." Discuss how ironically, Lord, Weston lands himself in trouble by "paying attention to detail", in about 150-200 words.

**V. Group Work: Speaking Skills**

The play revolves around a 'perceived threat' and how Weston and Lady Weston react to it. Reverse their roles with a panic-stricken Lady Weston and a frivolous Lord Weston. In a small group, choose a piece of dialogue from the play and rewrite it to suit the changed roles. Share it by taking parts and reading your script aloud with suitable tone and expression.

# The Monkey's Paw

by W.W. Jacobs

**Warm up:**

a) Students are divided into two groups. Students debate the motion:

**People have no control over the events in their lives. Each speaker gets to express his/her viewpoint for a minute. The teacher moderates the discussion with points being posted on the board for easy reference.**

'The Monkey's Paw' is a macabre story. It is neatly contrived and is capable of inducing us to suspend our disbelief so long as we are in the world of make-believe. The dramatized version of the story has become very popular with amateur performers.

b) Class discussion: Do you believe in the supernatural? Have you heard incidents/stories related to the supernatural? Share you story/incident with the class.

**Now read and enact scene I of the play**

**Characters in the Play**

Mr. White

Mrs. White

Herbert

Sergeant- Major Morris

Mr. Sampson

**(When enacting the play in class, use simple props)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Mr. White:** | a muffler round his neck |
| **Mrs. White:** | an apron around her waist/ shawl around her shoulders |
| **Herbert:** | overalls/dungarees of a factory worker (any colour) |
| **Sergeant-Major Morris:** | a coat/jacket, and a hat |
| **Mr. Sampson:** | black suit |

(for Scene I) 3-4 chairs - a table, kettle, cups and saucers

**SCENE - I**

***Scene:*** *The living-room of an old-fashioned cottage on the outskirts of Fulham. Set corner-wise in the left angle at the back is a deep window; further front, L., three or four steps load up to a door. Further forward a dresser, with plates, glasses, etc. R.C. at back is an alcove with the street door fully visible.*

*On the inside of the street door, a wire letter-box. On the right is a cupboard, then a fireplace. In the centre is a round table. Against the wall, L. back, is an old-fashioned piano. A comfortable armchair is on each side of the fireplace. There are other chairs. On the mantelpiece are a clock, old china figures, etc. An air of comfort pervades the room.*

*At the rise of the curtain,* ***Mrs. White,*** *a pleasant-looking old woman, is serving tea to Mr. White and Herbert and Sergeant-Major Morris (in his military coat). Mr. White's hair is ruffled; his spectacles are high up on his forehead. Herbert, is a fine young fellow. There is a shaded lamp on the table. The door is tightly shut. The curtains of the window are drawn; but every now and then the wind is heard whistling outside. The three are listening to Sergeant-Major Morris, even as Mrs. White pours out tea for them.*

**Mr. White:** What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw, or something?

*[He nudges Herbert, and winks at Mrs. White]*

**Sergeant:** [*gravely*]: Nothing, Leastways, nothing worth hearing.

**Mr. White:** Ah - you was tellin' me-

**Sergeant:** Nothing. Don't go on about it. [*Puts his empty cup to his lips - then stares at it.*] What? Empty again? There! When I begin thinking' o' the paw, it makes, me that absent-minded-

**Mrs. White:** [*rises and fills the cup*]: you said you always carried it on you.

**Sergeant:** So I do, for fear o' what might happen. [*Sunk in thought*] Ay!-ay!

**Mrs. White:** [*handing him his cup refilled*]; There,

[*He sits again in the same chair.*]

**Mrs. White:** What's it for?

**Sergeant:** You wouldn't believe me, if I was to tell you.

**Herbert:** I will, every word.

**Sergeant:** Magic, then! - Don't you laugh!

**Herbert:** I'm not. Got it on you now?

**Sergeant:** Of course.

**Herbert:** Let's see it.

**Sergeant:** Oh, it's nothing to look at. [*Hunting in his pocket*] Just an ordinary - little paw dried to a mummy. [*Produces it and holds it towards Mrs. White.*] Here.

**Mrs. White:** [*who has leant forward eagerly to see it, starts back with a little cry of disgust*]; Oh!

**Herbert:** Give us a look. [*Morris passes the paw to Mr. White, from whom Herbert takes it.*] Why, it's all dried up!

**Sergeant:** I said so. [*Wind*]

**Mrs. White:** [*with a slight shudder*]: Hark at the wind!

[*She sits again in her old place.*]

**Mr. White:** [*taking the paw from Herbert*]: And what might there be special about it?

**Sergeant:** [*impressively*]: That there paw has had a spell put upon it!

**Mr. White:** No?

[*In great alarm he thrusts the paw back into Morris's hand.*]

**Sergeant:** [*pensively, holding the paw in the palm of his hand*]: Ah! By an old fakir. And he wanted to show that fate ruled people. That everything was cut and dried from the beginning, as you might say. That there wasn't any gettin' away from it. [*He pauses solemnly.*] So he put a spell on this bit of a paw. It might ha' been anything else, but he took the first thing that came handy. Ah! He put a spell on it, and made it so that there people [*looking at them and with deep meaning*] could each have three wishes.

[*All but Mrs. White laugh rather nervously.*]

**Mrs. White:** Ssh! Don't!

**Sergeant:** [*more gravely*]: But - ! But, mark you, though the wishes were granted, those three people would have cause to wish they hadn't been.

**Mr. White:** But how could the wishes be granted?

**Sergeant:** He didn't say. It would all happen so naturally, you might think it a coincidence if so disposed.

**Herbert:** Why haven't you tried it, sir?

**Sergeant:** [*gravely, after a pause*]. I have.

**Herbert:** [*eagerly*]: You've had your three wishes?

**Sergeant:** [*gravely*]: yes.

**Mrs. White:** Were they granted?

**Sergeant:** [*staring at the fire*]: They were. [*A pause*].

**Mr. White:** Has anybody else wished?

**Sergeant:** Yes. The first owner had his three wish - [*Lost in recollection*]. Yes, oh yes, he had his three wishes all right. I don't know what his first two were, [*very impressively*] but the third was for death. [*All shudder*]. That's how I got the paw. [*A pause*.]

**Herbert:** [*cheerfully*]: Well! Seems to me you've only got to wish for things that can't have any bad luck about 'em- [*He rises*]

**Sergeant:** [*shaking his head*]: Ah!

**Mr. White:** [*tentatively*]: Morris - if you've had your three wishes - it's no good to you, now - what do you keep it for?

**Sergeant:** [*still holding the paw; looking at it*]: Fancy, I s'pose. I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It's done mischief enough already. Besides, people won't buy. Some of 'em think it's a fairy-tale. And some want to try it first, and pay after.

[*There is a nervous laugh from the others.*]

**Mrs. White:** If you could have another three wishes, would you?

**Sergeant:** [*slowly - weighing the paw in his hand, and looking at it*]: I don't know - I don't know - [*Suddenly, with violence, flinging it in the fire*] No! I'm damned if I would! [*Movement from all*]

**Mr. White:** [*rises and quickly snatches it out of the fire*]: What are you doing?

[*He goes R.C.*]

**Sergeant:** [*rising and following him and trying to prevent him*]: Let it burn! Let it burn, Father!

**Mr. White:** [*wiping it on his coat-sleeve*]: No. If you don't want it, give it to me.

**Sergeant:** [*violently*]: I won't! I won't! My hands are clear of it. I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don't blame me, whatever happens. Here! Pitch it back again.

**Mr. White:** [*stubbornly*]: I'm going to keep it. What do you say, Herbert?

**Herbert:** [*L.C., laughing*]: I say, keep it if you want to. Stuff and nonsense, anyhow.

**Mr. White:** [*looking at the paw thoughtfully*]: Stuff and nonsense. Yes, I wonder - [*casually*] I wish -

[*He was going to say some ordinary thing, like 'I wish I were certain.'*]

**Sergeant:** [*misunderstanding him; violently*]: Stop! Mind what you're doing. That's not the way.

**Mr. White:** What is the way?

**Mrs. White:** [*moving away, up R.C. to the back of the table, and beginning to put the tumblers straight, and the chairs in their places*]: Oh, don't have anything to do with it, John.

[*She takes the cups on the tray to the dresser, L., busies herself, there, rinsing them in a bowl of water on the dresser, and wiping them with a cloth.*]

**Sergeant:** That's what I say, marm. But if I warn't to tell him, he might go wishing something he didn't mean to. You hold it in your right hand, and wish aloud. But I warn you! I warn you!

**Mrs. White:** Sounds like The Arabian Nights. Don't you think you might wish me four pair o' hands?

**Mr. White:** [*laughing*]: Right you are, Mother! - I wish-

**Sergeant:** [*pulling his arm down*]: Stop it! If you must wish, wish for something sensible. Look here! I can't stand his. Gets on my nerves. Where's my coat?

[*He goes into the alcove.*]

[*Mr. White crosses to the fireplace and carefully puts the paw on the mantelpiece. He is absorbed in it to the end of the tableau.*]

**Herbert:** I'm coming your way, to the works, in a minute, Won't you wait?

[*He goes up C. and helps Morris with his coat.*]

**Sergeant:** [*putting on his coat*]: No. I want fresh air. I don't want to be here when you wish. And wish you will as soon's my back's turned, I know. I Know. But I've warned you, mind.

**Mr. White:** [*helping him into his coat*]: All right, Morris. [*He gives him money.*] Don't you fret about us.

**Sergeant:** [*refusing it*]: No, I won't_____

**Mr. White:** [*forcing if into his hand*]: Yes, you will. [*He opens the door.*]

**Sergeant:** [*turning to the room*]: Well, good night all. [*To Mr. White*] Put it in the fire.

**All:** Good night.

[*Exit Sergeant. Mr. White closes the door, comes towards the fireplace, absorbed in the paw.*]

**Mr. White:** I wonder - [*He has the paw in his hand.]* I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact. *[He looks about him with a happy smile.]* I seem to've got all I want.

**Herbert:** [*with his hands on the old man's shoulders*]: Old Dad! If you'd only cleared the debt on the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you! [*Laughing*] Well - go ahead! - wish for the two hundred pounds: that'll just do it.

**Mr. White:** [*half laughing*]: Shall I? [*Cross to R.C.*]

**Herbert:** Go on! Here! - I'll play slow music.

[*He crosses to the piano.*]

**Mrs. White:** Don't 'ee, John. Don't have nothing to do with it!

**Herbert:** Now, Dad! [*He plays.*]

**Mr. White:** I will! [*He holds up the paw, as if half ashamed.*] I wish for two hundred pounds. [*Crash on the piano. At the same instant Mr. White utters a cry and lets the paw drop.*]

**Mrs. White and Herbert:** What's the matter?

**Mr. White:** [*gazing with horror at the paw*]: It moved! As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake.

**Herbert:** [*goes down R., and picks the paw up*]: Nonsense. Dad. Why, It's as stiff as a bone. [*Lays it on the mantelpiece.*]

**Mrs. White:** Must have been your fancy, Father.

**Herbert:** [*laughing*]: Well - ? [*Looking around the room*] I don't see the money; and I bet I never shall.

**Mr. White:** [*relieved*]: Thank God, there's no harm done! But it gave me a shock.

**Herbert:** Half-past eleven. I must get along. I'm on at midnight. [*He goes up C., fetches his coat, etc.*] We've had quite a merry evening.

**Mrs. White:** I'm off to bed. Don't be late for breakfast, Herbert.

**Herbert:** I shall walk home as usual. Does me good. I shall be with you about nine. Don't wait, though.

**Mrs. White:** You know your father never waits.

**Herbert:** Good night. Mother.

[*He kisses her. She lights the candle on the dresser, L., goes up the stairs and exits.*]

**Herbert:** [*coming to his father, R., who is sunk in thought*]: Good night, Dad, You'll find the cash tied up in the middle of the bed.

**Mr. White:** [*staring, seizes Herbert's hand*]: It moved, Herbert.

**Herbert:** Ah! And a monkey hanging by his tail from the bed-post, watching you count the golden sovereigns.

**Mr. White:** [*accompanying him to the door*]: I wish you wouldn't joke, my boy.

**Herbert:** All right, Dad. [*He opens the door.*] Lord! What weather! God night. [*Exit.*]

[*The old man shakes his head, closes the door, locks it, puts the chain up and slips the lower bolt, but has some difficulty with the upper bolt.*]

**Mr. White:** This bolt's stiff again, I must get Herbert to look to it in the morning.

[*He comes into the room, puts out the lamp and crosses towards steps; but is irresistibly attracted towards the fire-place. He sits down and stares into the fire. His expression changes; he sees something horrible.*]

**Mr. White:** [*with an involuntary cry*]: Mother! Mother!

**Mrs. White:** [*appearing at the door at the top of the steps with a candle*]: What's the matter?

[*She comes down R.C.*]

**Mr. White:** [*Mastering himself. He rises*]: Nothing - I - ha ha! - I saw faces in the fire.

**Mrs. White:** Come along.

[*She takes his arm and draws him towards the steps. He looks back frightened towards the fireplace as they reach the first step.*]

**TABLEAU**
**CURTAIN**

**I. Answer the following questions briefly:**

a) What does Sergeant Morris give Mr. White?
b) What had he actually wanted to do with it? Why?
c) Did Herbert believe what Sergeant Morris had told them? Which words tell us this?
d) Did anyone make his/her wish before the paw was handed over to Mr. White?
e) Why does Morris stop Mr. White from saying, 'I wish...'?
f) What did Mr. White experience as he held the paw in his hand and wished?
g) What does Mr. White see in the fire? Is it possible? Justify.

**II. Answer in about 150 words.**

a) 'It moved! As I wished, it twisted in my hand, it twisted in my hand like a snake.'

'Nothing ... I ... haha! ... I saw faces in the fire'. How far did Herbert and Mrs. White believe Mr. White's remarks? Justify your answer by quoting from the text.

b) Why did the fakir put the spell on the paw? What did he want to prove to the people? Did he do anything good to the world by doing this? Justify?

**III. Speaking Skills:**

a) Working in pairs, imagine the following scene:

- Mr. White's living room
- Midnight; Herbert's gone to work
- Mrs. and Mr. White seated on the armchairs, on each side of the fireplace; both watching faces in the fire with horror.

Role play Mrs. and Mr. White. Discuss what you are seeing and your plans to avert the impending disaster that might befall your household.

b) Work in groups of four: One of you should act as Herbert and the other three as his friends at work. Two of the friends are superstitious and warn Herbert about the premonition, whereas the other one is happy-go-lucky, like Herbert. They are talking about Herbert's experience the previous evening at home.

- Convince Herbert to take some precautions before it is too late.
- At the end of the conversation, write a message as Herbert to Mr. White, suggesting to him what precautions the family should take.

**Now, enact Scene II**

Mrs. White is still wearing an apron, but different from what she was wearing the previous evening. Mr. White is wearing a dressing gown. Sampson, the lawyer, wears the black suit and the postman wears a cap and carries a bag full of letters across his left shoulder.

**SCENE-II**

***Scene:*** *Bright sunshine. The table, which has been moved nearer the window, is laid for breakfast. Mrs. White is busy about the table. Mr. White is standing in the window looking off R. The inner door is open, showing the outer door.*

**Mr. White:** What a morning Herbert's got for walking home!

**Mrs. White [*L.C.*]:** What's clock [She looks at clock on the mantelpiece.] Quarter to nine, I declare. He's off at eight. [*She crosses to the fire*].

**Mr. White:** Takes him half an hour to change and wash. He's just by the cemetery now.

**Mrs. White:** He'll be here in ten minutes.

**Mr. White:** [*coming to the table*]: What's for breakfast?

**Mrs. White:** Sausages. [*At the mantelpiece*] Why, if here isn't that dirty monkey's paw! [*She picks it up, looks at it with disgust and puts it back. She takes some sausages in a dish from before the fire and places them on the table.*] Silly thing! The idea of us listening to such nonsense!

**Mr. White:** [*goes up to the window again*]: Ay - the Sergeant - Major and his yarns! I suppose all old soldiers are alike-

**Mrs. White:** Come on, Father Herbert hates us to wait. [*They both sit and begin breakfast*].

**Mrs. White:** How could wishes be granted, nowadays?

**Mr. White:** Ah! Been thinking about it all night, have you?

**Mrs. White:** You kept me awake, with your tossing and bumbling-

**Mr. White:** Ay, I had a bad night.

**Mrs. White:** It was the storm, I expect. How it blew!

**Mr. White:** I didn't hear it. I was asleep and not asleep, if you know what I mean.

**Mrs. White:** And all that rubbish about its making you unhappy if your wish was granted! How could two hundred pounds hurt you, eh, Father?

**Mr. White:** Might drop on my head in a lump. Don't see any other way. And I'd try to bear that. Though, mind you, Morris said it would all happen so naturally that you might take it for a coincidence, if so

disposed.

**Mrs. White:** Well - it hasn't happened. That' all I know. And it isn't going to. [*A letter is seen to drop in the letter box.*] And how you can sit there and tall about it - [*There's a sharp postman's knock; she jumps to her feet.*] What's that?

**Mr. White:** Postman, 'o course.

**Mrs. White:** [*seeing the letter from a distance; in an awed whisper*]: He's brought a letter, John!

**Mr. White:** *[laughing*]: What did you think he'd bring? Ton o' coals?

**Mrs. White:** John - ! John - ! Suppose - ?

**Mr. White:** Suppose what?

**Mrs. White:** Suppose it was two hundred pounds!

**Mr. White:** [*Suppressing his excitement*]: Eh! - Here! Don't talk nonsense. Why don't you fetch it?

**Mr. White:** [*crosses and takes the letter out of the box*]: It's thick, John - [*She feels it*] - and - and it's got something crisp inside it.

[*She takes letter to Mr. White R.C.*]

**Mr. White:** Who - who's it for?

**Mrs. White:** You.

**Mr. White:** Hand it over, then. [*Feeling and examining it with ill-concealed excitement*] The idea! What a superstitious old woman you are! Where are my specs?

**Mrs. White:** Let me open it.

**Mr. White:** Don't you touch it. Where are my specs? [*Goes to R.*]

**Mrs. White:** Don't let sudden wealth sour your temper, John.

**Mr. White:** Will you find my specs?

**Mrs. White:** [*taking them off the mantelpiece*]: Here, John, here. [As the opens the letter] Take care! Don't tear it!

**Mr. White:** Tear what?

**Mrs. White:** If it was banknotes, John!

**Mr. White:** [*taking a thick, formal document out of the envelope and a crisp-looking slip*]: You've gone dotty - You've made me nervous. [*He reads.*] 'Sir, Enclosed please find receipt for interest on the mortgages of £200 on your house, duly received.'

[*They look at each other. Mr. White sits down to finish his breakfast silently. Mrs. White goes to the window.*]

**Mrs. White:** You thought there was banknotes in it.

**Mr. White:** [*injured*]: I didn't! I said all along-

**Mrs. White:** How Herbert will laugh, when I tell him!

**Mr. White:** [*with gruff good-humour*]: You're not going to tell him. You're going to keep your mouth shut.

Why, I should never bear the last of it.

**Mrs. White:** Serve you right. I shall tell him. You know you like his fun. See how he joked with you last night when you said the paw moved. [*She is looking through the window towards R.*]

**Mr. White:** So it did. It did move. That I'll swear to.

**Mrs. White:** [*abstractedly. She is watching something outside.*]: You thought it did.

**Mr. White:** I say it did. There was no thinking about it. You saw how it upset me, didn't you? [*She doesn't answer.*] Didn't you? - Why don't you listen? [*She turns round.*] What is it?

**Mrs. White:** Nothing.

**Mr. White:** [*turns back to his breakfast*]: Do you see Herbert coming?

**Mrs. White:** No.

**Mr. White:** He's about due. What is it?

**Mrs. White:** Nothing. Only a man. Looks like a gentleman. Leastways, he's in black.

**Mr. White:** What about him? [*He is not interested; goes on eating.*]

**Mrs. White:** He stood at the garden gate as if he wanted to come in. But he couldn't seem to make up his mind.

**Mr. White:** Oh, go on! You're full o' fancies.

**Mrs. White:** He's going - no; he's coming back.

**Mr. White:** Don't let him see you peeping.

**Mrs. White:** [*with increasing excitement*]: He's looking at the house. He's got his hand on the latch. No. He turns away again. [*Eagerly*] John! He looks like a sort of a lawyer.

**Mr. White:** What of it?

**Mrs. White:** Oh, you'll only laugh again. But suppose - suppose he's coming about the two hundred-

**Mr. White:** You're not to mention it again! - You're a foolish old woman - Come and eat your breakfast. [*Eagerly*] Where is he now?

**Mrs. White:** Gone down the road. He has turned back. Ho seems to have made up his mind. Here he comes! - Oh, John, and me all untidy! [*She crosses to the fire.*]

[*A knock is heard.*]

**Mr. White:** [*to Mrs. White, who is hastily smoothing her hair, etc.*]: What's it matter? He's made a mistake. Come to the wrong house. [*He crosses to the fireplace.*]

[*Mrs. White opens the door. Mr. Sampson, dressed from head to foot in solemn black, stands in the doorway.*]

**Sampson:** [*outside*]: Is this Mr. White's?

**Mrs. White:** Come in, sir. Please step in.

[*She shows him into the room; goes R., he is awkward and nervous.*]

**Sampson:** [*to Mr. White*]: Morning. My name is Sampson.

**Mrs. White:** [*offering a chair*]: Won't you please be seated? [*Sampson stands quite still up C.*]

**Sampson:** Ah - thank you - no, I think not - I think not. [*A pause.*]

**Mr. White:** [*awkwardly, trying to help him*]: Fine weather for the time o' year.

**Sampson:** Ah - yes - yes [*A pause; he makes a renewed effort.*] My name is Sampson - I've come-

**Mrs. White:** Perhaps you was wishful to see Herbert; he'll be home in a minute. [*Pointing*] Here's his breakfast waiting-

**Sampson:** [*interrupting her hastily*]: No, no! [*A pause*] I've come from the electrical works-

**Mrs. White:** Why, you might have come with him. [*Mr. White sees something is wrong, tenderly puts his hand on her arm.*]

**Sampson:** No - no - I've come - alone.

**Mrs. White:** [*with a little anxiety*]: Is anything the matter?

**Sampson:** I was asked to call-

**Mrs. White:** [*abruptly*]: Herbert! Has anything happened? Is he hurt? Is he hurt?

**Mr. White:** [*soothing her*]: There, there, Mother. Don't you jump to conclusion. Let the gentleman speak. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir.

**Sampson:** I'm - sorry-

**Mrs. White:** Is he hurt? [*Sampson bows.*]

**Mrs. White:** Badly?

**Sampson:** Very badly.

**Mrs. White:** [*with a cry*]: John - ! [*She instinctively moves towards Mr. White.*]

**Mr. White:** Is he in pain?

**Sampson:** He is not in pain.

**Mrs. White:** Oh, thank God! Thank God for that! Thank - [*She looks in a startled fashion at Mr. White - realizes what Sampson means, catches his arm and tries to turn him towards her.*] Do you mean - ?

[*Sampson avoids her look; she gropes for her husband; he takes her two hands in his, and gently lets her sink into the armchair above the fireplace, then he stands on her right, between her and Sampson.*]

**Mr. White:** [*hoarsely*]: Go on, sir.

**Sampson:** He was telling his mates a story. Something that had happened here last night. He was laughing, and wasn't noticing and - and - [*hushed*] the machinery caught him-

[*A little cry from Mrs. White, her face shows her horror and agony.*]

**Mr. White:** [*vague, holding Mrs. White's hand*]: The machinery caught him - yes - and him the only child - it's hard, sir - very hard-

**Sampson:** [*subdued*]: The Company wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss-

**Sampson:** I was to say further - [*as if apologizing*] I am only their servant - I am only obeying orders-

**Mr. White:** Our - great - loss-

**Sampson:** [*laying an envelope on the table and edging towards the door*]: I was to say, the Company disclaim all responsibility, but, in consideration of your son's services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation.

**Mr. White:** Our - great - loss - [*Suddenly, with horror*] How - how much?

**Sampson:** [*in the doorway*]. Two hundred pounds. [*Exit*.]

[*Mrs. White gives a cry. The old man takes no heed of her, smiles, faintly, puts out his hands like a sightless man, and drops, a senseless heap, to the floor. Mrs. White stares at him blankly and her hands go out helplessly towards him*.]

**TABLEAU**
**CURTAIN**

**I. Answer the following questions briefly:**

a) '... I was asleep and not asleep, ... 'what state of mind of the speaker is indicated here? What / who is responsible for this state?

b) Why do you think Sampson was not able to decide about entering White's house?

c) Has Sampson brought good news to the White couple?

d) What did the company wish Sampson to convey to Herbert's parents?

e) '... he is not in pain'. What does Sampson mean by saying so?

**II. Answer in about 150 words.**

a) The night following sergeant Morris' visit was restless for Mrs. and Mr. White as much as the next morning was full of expectations. What has the White couple been expecting? Did their expectations came true? Explain.

b) "Our-great-loss-". What is the loss? How has it been caused? What would they do to make up the loss?

c) Morris had said that the wish would be fulfilled so naturally that one might take it for a coincidence. How was Mr. White's wish for £200 granted?

**SCENE-III**

*Night. On the table a candle is flickering at its last gasp. The room looks neglected. Mr. White is dozing fitfully in the armchair, Mrs. White is in the window peering through the blinds towards L.*

*[Mr. White starts, wakes, looks around him*.]

**Mr. White:** [*fretfully*]: Jenny - Jenny.

**Mrs. White:** [*in the window*]: Yes.

**Mr. White:** Where are you?

**Mrs. White:** At the window.

**Mr. White:** What are you doing?

**Mrs. White:** Looking up the road.

**Mr. White:** [*falling back*]: What' the use, Jenny? What's the use?

**Mrs. White:** That's where the cemetery is; that's where we've laid him.

**Mr. White:** Ay - ay - a week today - what o'clock is it?

**Mrs. White:** I don't know.

**Mr. White:** We don't take much account of time now, Jenny, do we?

**Mrs. White:** Why should we? He'll never come home again. There's nothing to think about-

**Mr. White: O**r to talk about. [*A pause*] Come away from the window; you'll get cold.

**Mrs. White:** It's colder where he is.

**Mr. White:** Ay - gone for ever-

**Mrs. White:** And taken all our hopes with him-

**Mr. White:** And all our wishes-

**Mrs. White:** Ay, and all our - [*With a sudden cry*] John!

[*She comes quickly to him; he rises.*]

**Mr. White:** Jenny! For God's sake! What's the matter?

**Mrs. White:** [*with dreadful eagerness*]; The paw! The monkey's paw!

**Mr. White** [*bewildered*]: Where? Where is it? What's wrong with it?

**Mrs. White:** I want it! you haven't done away with it?

**Mr. White:** I haven't seen it - since - why?

**Mrs. White:** I want it! Find it! Find it!

**Mr. White:** [*groping on the matelpiece*]: Here! Here it is! What do you want of it?

[*He leaves it there.*]

**Mrs. White:** Why didn't I think of it? Why didn't you think of it?

**Mr. White:** Think of what?

**Mrs. White:** The other two wishes!

**Mr. White:** [*with horror*]: What?

**Mrs. White:** We've only had one.

**Mr. White:** [*tragically*]: Wasn't that enough?

**Mrs. White:** No! We'll have one more. [*Mr. White crosses to R.C. Mrs. White takes the paw and follows him.*] Take it. Take it quickly. And wish-

**Mr. White:** [*avoiding the paw*]: Wish what?

**Mrs. White:** Oh, John! John! Wish our boy alive again!

**Mr. White:** Good God! Are you mad!

**Mrs. White:** Take it. Take it and wish. [With a paroxysm of grief] Oh, my boy! My boy!

**Ms. White:** Get to bed. Get to sleep. You don't know what you're saying.

**Mrs. White:** We had the first wish granted - why not the second?

**Mr. White:** [*hushed*]: He's been dead ten days, and - Jenny! Jenny! I only knew him by his clothing - you were not allowed to see him then - how could you bear to see him now?

**Mrs. White:** I don't care. Bring him back.

**Mrs. White:** [*shrinking from the paw*]: I daren't touch it!

**Mrs. White:** [*thrusting it in his hand*]: Here! Here! Wish!

**Mr. White:** [*trembling*]: Jenny!

**Mrs. White:** [*fiercely*]: Wish. [*She goes on frantically whispering 'Wish'.*]

**Mr. White:** [*shuddering, but overcome by her insistence*]: - I - wish - my - son - alive again.

[*He drops it with a cry. The candle goes out. There is utter darkness. He sinks into a chair. Mrs. White hurries to the window and draws the blind back. She stands in the moonlight. A pause.*]

**Mrs. White:** [*drearily*]: Nothing.

**Mr. White:** Thank God! Thank God!

**Mrs. White:** Nothing at all. Along the whole length of the road not a living thing. [*She closes the blind.*] And nothing, nothing, nothing left in our lives. John.

**Mr. White:** Except each other, Jenny - and memories.

**Mrs. White:** [*coming back slowly to the fireplace*]: We're too old. We were only alive in him. We can't begin again. We can't feel anything now, John, but emptiness and darkness.

[*She sinks into armchair*]

**Mr. White:** 'Isn't for long, Jenny, There's that to look forward to.

**Mrs. White:** Every minute's long, now.

**Mr. White:** [*rising*]: I can't bear the darkness!

**Mrs. White:** It's dreary - dreary.

**Mr. White:** [*crosses to the dresser*]: Where's the candle?

[*Finds it and brings it to the table.*] And the matches? Where are the matches? We mustn't sit in the dark. "Tisn't wholesome. [*He lights a match; the other candle-stick is close to him.*] There, [*Turning with the lighted match towards Mrs. White, who is rocking and moaning*] Don't take on so, Mother.

**Mrs. White:** I'm a mother no longer.

**Mr. White:** [*lights candle*]: There now; there now. Go on up to bed. Go on, now - I'm a coming.

**Mrs. White:** Whether I'm here or in bed, or wherever I am, I'm with my boy, I'm with-

[*A low single knock at the street door.*]

**Mrs. White:** [*starting*]: What's that!

**Mr. White:** [*mastering his horror*]: A rat. The house is full of'em.

[*There is a louder single knock; she starts up. He catches her by the arm.*]

Stop! What are going to do?

**Mrs. White:** [*wildly*]: It's my boy! It's Herbert! I forgot it was a mile away! What are you holding me for? I must open the door!

[*The knocking continues in single knocks at irregular intervals, constantly growing louder and more insistent.*]

**Mr. White:** [*Still holding her*]: For God's sake!

**Mrs. White:** [*struggling*]: Let me go!

**Mr. White:** Don't open the door! [*He drags her towards L. front.*]

**Mrs. White:** Let me go!

**Mr. White:** Think what you might see!

**Mrs. White:** [*struggling fiercely*]: Do you think I fear the child I bore! Let me go! [*She wrenches herself loose and rushes to the door which she tears open.*] I'm coming, Herbert! I'm coming!

**Mr. White:** [*cowering in the exteme corner, left front*]: Don't 'ee do it! Don't 'ee do it!

[*Mrs. White is at work on the outer door, where the knocking still continues. She slips the chain, slips the lower bolt and unlocks the door.*]

**Mr. White:** [*suddenly*]: The paw! Where's the monkey's paw?

[*He gets on his knees and feels along the floor for it.*]

**Mrs. White:** [*tugging at the top bolt*]: John! The top bolt's stuck. I can't move it. Come and help. Quick!

**Mr. White:** [*wildly groping*]: The paw! There's a wish left.

[*The knocking is now loud, and in groups of increasing length between the speeches.*]

**Mrs. White:** D'ye hear him? John! Your child's knocking!

**Mr. White:** Where is it? Where did it fall?

**Mrs. White:** [*tugging desperately at the bolt*]: John! The top bolt's stuck. I can't move it. Come and help. Quick!

**Mr. White:** [*wildly grouping*]: The paw! There's a wish left.

[*The knocking is now loud, and in groups of increasing length between the speeches.*]

**Mrs. White:** D'ye hear him? John! Your child's knocking!

**Mr. White:** Where is it? Where did it fall?

**Mrs. White:** [*tugging desperately at the bolt*]: Help! Help! Will you keep your child from his home?

**Mr. White:** Where did it fall? I can't find it - I can't find-

[*The knocking is now tempestuous, and there are blows upon the door as of a body beating against it.*]

**Mrs. White:** Herbert! Herbert! My Boy! Wait! Your mother's opening to you! Ah! It's moving!

**Mr. White:** God forbid! [*He finds the paw.*] Ah!

**Mrs. White:** [*slipping the bolt*]: Herbert!

**Mr. White:** [*has raised himself to his knees; he holds the paw high*]: I wish him dead. [*The knocking stops abruptly*] I wish him dead and at peace!

**Mrs. White:** [*flinging the door open simultaneously*]: Herbert - [*There is a flood of moonlight, but only emptiness. The old man sways in prayer on his knees. The old woman lies half swooning, wailing against the door-post.*]

William Wymark Jacobs (1863-1943), writer of short stories and one-act plays, was born in London. He grew up near the docks on the river Thames. At sixteen he became a clerk in the post office, and turned to writing as a hobby.Much of his work was written for periodicals. A gentle and distinctive humour pervades his writing. Realism and a sympathetic rendering of the working-class marks his work. Among his works are: *The Lady of the Barge and Other Stories, Many Cargoes, Salt Haven,* and *Snug Harbour.*

**I. Understanding the play:**

1. Answer the following questions briefly.
   a) Why is it colder where Herbert is?
   b) Where is Mrs. White looking for the monkey's paw?
   c) What according to Mr. White, could have made the first knock on the door?
   d) Why can Mrs. White not open the door?
   e) What is Mr. White's third wish?
2. Read the lines given below and answer the questions that follow.
   a) Mrs. W: Why didn't I think it? Why did'nt you think of it?

      Mr. W: Think of what?

      Mrs. W: The other two wishes.

      i) What makes Mrs. White think about 'the other two wishes'?

      ii) Do they use the two wishes? What was the consequence of their decision?
   b) 'Nothing at all. Along the whole length of the road not a living thing...'

      i) Who says these words?

      ii) What/Who are they waiting for? Why?
   c) '...I wish him dead'.

      i) Who is 'I'? Whom does 'him' refer to?

      ii) Why does the speaker make such a wish?

**II. Speaking Skills:**

a) 'Should the sergeant have handed over the paw to someone?' Work in groups of five. Two members should support the argument and the other two should speak against it. The fifth member is the chairperson. The chairperson should report the observations and comments by the group to the class at the end of fifteen minutes.

b) **Mobility** is one of the most important characteristics of a play. The 'Monkey's Paw' amply depicts this feature. Quoting examples from the play, explain movement of the story, characters, scene and locations.

**III. Writing Skills:**

a) How does the monkey's paw ruin the White family?

b) What apprehensions might Sergeant Morris have had in handing over the paw to anyone else? What was the basis of his apprehension?

c) Read the following extracts from the play carefully and draw your inferences about the kind of person Herbert is.

Sergeant: You wouldn't believe me if I was to tell you.

Herbert: I will, every word

I'll play slow music

I say, keep it if you want to, stuff and nonsense, anywhere

I shall be with you about nine. Don't wait through

You'll find the cash tied up in the middle of the bed

Herbert! hates us to wait

d) Attempt a character sketch of each of the following, in about 150 words. Quote from the play to support your answer.

i) Mrs. White

ii) Mr. White

# Sample Questions

## PROSE

### Unit -1: WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?

**1. Answer the following in about 40-50 words.**

a) According to the beggar, how can one sustain a dream?

b) What do the 'pearls of wisdom' refer to in the story 'What's your Dream'? Do you think the narrator benefited by them?

c) How did the boy's meeting with the beggar help realise his dream?

d) How does the beggar define a dream? What was the boy's dream? What was the beggar's final advice to the boy in achieving it?

**2. Answer the following in about 100 words.**

a) 'An individual's avarice and ambition bring about his or her ruin'. Bring out the truth of this statement in the light of the story 'What's your Dream'?

b) What are the beggar's practical tips to achieve one's goal?

### Unit -2: A DEVOTED SON

**1. Answer the following in about 40-50 words.**

a) The villagers felt that all Indian boys went abroad to marry an ' American girl'. How was Rakesh an exception?

b) Rakesh is being described as 'pearl amongst pearls'. Why is he described so?

**2. Answer the following in about 100 words.**

a) The Varmaji household wore a festive look when Rakesh topped the country. How did the villagers participate in this?

b) 'Old Varma nodded with ` melancholy triumph'. Why did he become melancholic?

c) For a first - generation learner, Rakesh's success was meteoric. Elucidate.

### Unit - 3: THE HUM OF INSECTS

**1. Answer the following in about 40-50 words.**

a) How is the hum of insects a pleasure to reminiscence?

b) What is the Noah's Ark? How can this world be turned into one, according to Robert Lynd?

c) Why is the hum of insects enchanting to humanity?

d) Why can't grown ups continue to submit themselves to the illusion in the garden?

**2. Answer the following in about 100 words.**

a) The essay, 'The Hum of Insects' journeys from a lighthearted mood to a serious note. Explain how.

b) Humanity has lost the capacity to enjoy the simple pleasures by life. Based on your understanding of the essay 'The Hum of Insects', suggest some ways in which one can recover this pleasure.

c) How does Lynd change the a person'srevulsion and fear towards insects?

## Unit - 4: THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS

**1. Answer the following in about 50 words.**

a) Why did Robichon not suspect that the Marquis was not Quinquart in reality?

b) What effect did Robichon's speech have on the audience?

c) How did Robichon help himself by agreeing to help the Executioner?

d) How did Quinquart prove himself worthy of Suzanne's hand?

e) Why did Robichon and Quinquart decide they must distinguish themselves in a solemn role? What was the draw back of the plan?

**2. Answer the following in about 100 words.**

a) 'Quinquart's duping of Robichon was more dramatic than Robichon's duping an audience'. Justify with reference to 'The Judgement of Paris'.

b) Quinquart's performance was exemplary and therefore deserved to be awarded the palm without dissent. Justify with reference the events in the story , 'The Judgement of Paris'.

c) How did Quinquart prove that he was the more versatile actor than Robichon?

## Unit - 5: ON EDUCATION

**1. Answer in about 50 words**

a) Why does Einstein highlight the importance of 'schools' in our contemporary society?

b) What are Einstein's views on education based on ?

c) The teacher plays a significant in shaping young minds. How ?

**2. Answer in about 100 words**

a) What are the psychological forces that schools should strive to strengthen in young learners?

b) "Education is that which remains if one has forgotten he learned in school". Based on your understanding of the statement, write a paragraph highlighting Einstein's views on the real purpose of education.

c) How does Einstein strike a balance between individual development and development of society?

## Unit – 6: I CAN PLAY SCHOOLS

1. **Answer the following in about 50 words.**
   a) Write a pen-portrait of Anne, Marian's mother.
   b) How did Freda's persistence help Anne get rid of her foolish longing?
   c) To whom was Anne writing a letter? What thoughts were in her mind then?
2. **Answer the following in about 100 words.**
   a) Bring out the significance of the title "I can Play Schools'.
   b) Marian rapidly 'spoke on her fingers' asking her mother if she would rather have Freda than herself. How poignant is her question?

## Unit – 7: THE LAST LETTER

1. **Answer in about 40-50 words.**
   a) Why does Nehru call himself a 'dabbler'?
   b) How should one view the past ?
   c) What can we infer from the innumerable pictures from the gallery of history ?
2. **Answer in about 100 words.**
   a) "To live in a world of thought and imagination is no sign of courage." Justify the statement.
   b) We have a choice of living in the valleys or of climbing high mountains. Which according to Nehru, is the better option ? Why ?

# POETRY

## Unit – 1: a. The Darkling Thrush

## 1: b. Hope is the Thing

1. **Read the extracts given below and answer briefly the questions that follow**
   a) 'And Winter's dregs made desolate
   The weakening eye of day'
      1. What is the season referred to here?
      2. Explain 'Winter's dregs'
      3. What does the poet mean by 'weakening eye of day'?
      4. Identify the poet's tone .
   b) 'The land's sharp features seemed to be
   The Century's corpse outleant,'
      1. How is the land described?

2. What is the poet speaking about?
3. Explain the following
   a) 'century's corpse'
   b) outleant

c) "Hope" is the thing with feathers-
That perches in the soul"
1. How does the poet describe 'hope'?
2. Where is it perched?
3. Explain the figure of speech .

d) 'I've heard it in the chillest land-
And on the strangest Sea'
1. Name the poem and the poet.
2. How does the bird brave hardships?
3. Pick out the definite words of contrast in the lines given

**2. Answer the questions in about 80 - 100 words**

a) Hardy blends the bleakness of the dying year with the thrush's song. Explain how he has achieved this in his poem.

b) 'All of a sudden, it *heard* a voice coming from above.' How does Hardy bring about in a change of tone in the poem here ?

c) Why does Dickinson use a bird imagery to describe hope?

d) Compare and contrast the attitude of the poets in the poems, 'Hope' and 'The Darkling Thrush'.

## Unit - 2: Survivors

**1. Answer the following in about 80 words.**

a) What does the poem highlight?

b) What is the irony that Sassoon conveys through the poem?

c) How does the poem expose the grim reality of a survivor's life?

d) How does war affect the mental state of the survivors?

e) 'War has nothing positive to it'. Comment with reference to the poem 'Survivors'.

f) How does Sassoon refute the callous statement of non - combatants that they 'are longing to go out again'?

g) According to Sassoon, war can make men 'broken and mad'. Give reasons.

**2. Read the following extracts and answer the questions given below.**

a) 'They`ll soon forget their haunted nights; their cowed
Subjection to the ghosts of friends who died,

Their dreams that drip with murder; and they'll be proud

Of glorious war that shatter'd all their pride ...'

i. Who does 'their' refer to?

ii. Explain 'cowed subjection to the ghosts of friends'.

iii. What does this compel them to do?

iv. Who do they subject meekly to? Why?

v. How has war shattered all their pride?

b) 'Their dreams that drip with murder; and they'll be proud

Of glorious war that shatter'd all their pride ...

Men who went out to battle, grim and glad;

Children, with eyes that hate you, broken and mad.'

i. Bring out the paradox in the above lines.

ii. Who do 'men' and 'children' refer to? Explain

iii. What do they dream of?

iv. What will they soon forget?

## Unit – 3: At a Potato Digging

**1. Read the extracts given below and answer briefly the questions that follow**

a) 'A mechanical digger wrecks the drill,

Spins up a dark shower of roots and mould.

Labourers swarm in behind, stoop to fill

Wicker creels.'

1. Name the poem and the poet
2. Describe the scene portrayed ?
3. How are humans presented here ?Why?
4. Pick out two expressions that best describe human existence.

b) 'Like crows attacking crow-black fields, they stretch

A higgledy line from hedge to headland'

1. Identify and explain the figure of speech.
2. How does the poet depict the potato gatherers in these lines?
3. What does the poet suggest by the expression 'higgledy line' ?
4. Mention the tone and the image conjured by the poet.

c) '... these knobbed and slit-eyed tubers seem
the petrified hearts of drills'

1. What does the poet refer to here?
2. Explain "petrified hearts of drills"
3. Why does the poet use the word 'petrified'?
4. Mention the change in focus from stanza one to two.

d) 'Mouths tightened in, eyes died hard,
faces chilled to a plucked bird.
In a million wicker huts
beaks of famine snipped at guts.'

1. What does the poet depict in line one?
2. What does the image of 'a plucked bird' suggest?
3. Explain the bird imagery used here.
4. How does the poet intensify the vision of starvation?

**2 Answer the following questions in 80 - 100 words**

a) Seamus Heaney in 'At a Potato Digging', depicts two different potato harvests. Explain.

b) There is a vivid image of the power of the machine over land . Justify

c) How does the poet suggest 'life-long 'hunger and misery in the last few lines of the poem?

d) Heaney describes the false hope of a sound new potato which rots and dies in the pit. Explain.

## Unit – 4: Curtain

**1. Answer the following in about 80 words.**

a) What kind of separation takes place in the poem 'Curtain'?

b) How does 'two worlds' focus on the theme of the poem?

c) How does the poet depict the benumbed state of the speaker after his/her separation from his/her beloved?

d) Why does Spalding refer to 'Hamlet' and 'Soliloquies'
Why does the poet use the word 'two' repeatedly?

**2. Read the following and answer the questions given below.**

a) 'Incredulously the laced fingers loosen'
Slowly, sensation by sensation, from their warm interchange,
And stiffen like frosted flowers in the November garden '

1. Name the poem and poet.

2. What is the theme of the poem?
3. Whose fingers are referred to in the extract?
4. With reference to the theme of the poem, what do the following expressions convey?
   i) laced fingers loosen
   ii) frosted flowers in the November garden.
5. Why has the poet used the word 'incredulously'?

3. 'Goodbye.
There is no touch now. The wave has broken
That for a moment charged the desolate sea.
There is a word, or two, left to be spoken'
Yet who would hear it? When so swiftly distance
Out measures time, engulfs identity?'

a) Pick out a word which describes the theme?
b) Explain the line 'The wave ... desolate sea.
c) How has ` distance out measured time' for the two separated individuals?
d) i) What is the identity referred to here?
   ii) How has it changed?

## Unit - 5: Ode: To Autumn

**1. Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow:**

a) 'Close bosom friend of the maturing sun.
Conspiring with him how to load and bless ...'
   1. Who are the two friends referred to here?
   2. Pick out the phrase that describes their closeness.
   3. Give the meaning of 'conspiring'. What do the 'conspirators' do?

b) 'Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o`er -brimmed their clammy cells '
   1. Who does `they refer to?
   2. What do they think? Why?
   3. What meaning do the use of words like 'over brimmed' and 'clammy convey'?
   4. What is the impact of the given lines?

c) 'Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;'

1. Who is being referred to as 'thee'?
2. Where is she seated?
3. How is she described?
4. Identify the figure of speech in line 2.

d) 'Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-'

1. What does the poet wonder?
2. Does he get an answer? If so what?
3. What does the poet mean by 'thy music too'?
4. How does he describe that music?

**2. Answer the following in 80 words each.**

a) Describe in a paragraph 'the songs of spring'

b) What are the images evolved towards the end of the poem? Elaborate.

c) How does Keats in his description of autumn, build up an imagery of abundance, sometimes leading to satiety?

d) What wistful question does the poet ask in the poem? How does he describe, through various visual and sound images, the end of the season and the onset of winter?

e) How does the poet depict Autumn as a season of optimism with an underlying sadness?

f) What are the various static positions that Autumn could be found in?

g) What are the sounds of Autumn?

h) How does Keats blend happiness and sorrow to bring out the true essence of autumn in the poem 'Ode: To Autumn'?

## Unit - 6: Hamlet's Dilemma

**1. Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow:**

a) 'The heart ache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to'

1. What are the 'natural shocks'?
2. What does 'flesh is heir' to mean?
3. Is 'sleep' the best way to handle these shocks? Why/Why not?

b) "And enterprises of great pitch and moment with this regard their currents turn awry"

1. Give the meanings of *pitch and awry*
2. What weakens a person's action ?
3. Is conscience a saviour or a malefactor? Explain

**2. Answer in about 80 words**

a) What was Hamlet's dilemma?

b) According to Hamlet what are the situations that force an individual to think of death as possible solution?

c) According to the soliloquy, does anyone know of life after death?

d) However resolute one may be what enfeebles one's resolution?

## Unit - 7: A Walk by Moonlight

**Answer the following in about 80 words each.**

1. Describe the stages of awakening of the senses in the poem by Derozio.
2. What is life's meaning in everything that the poet found?
3. In your own words, narrate the incident which made his "heart so very light" and thought "it could have flown".
4. Derozio describes the night even as he personifies the moon. Explain the poetic device used here.

**Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow.**

1. 'There was a dance among the leaves

   Rejoicing at her power,

   Who robes for them of silver weaves

   Within one mystic hour.'

   a. Who is the narrator here?

   b. Whose power were the leaves responding to?

   c. Explain the poetic device used in the phrase 'silver weaves'. How effective is it in this context?

   d. Why is the hour 'mystical' ?

2. 'When, like a thing that is not ours.

   This earthliness goes by,

   And we behold the spiritualness

   Of all that cannot die.'

   a. Why do earthy things seem to pass one by?

   b. Why does the poet feel that nothing on earth belongs to us?

   c. What is his observation about being spiritual?

   d. Bring out the paradox in the given extract

# DRAMA

## Unit – 1: Remember Caesar

**1. Read the following dialogues and answer the questions that follow.**

a) "It is a death warrant. Do you know what day this is?"

1) What is the cause of Lord Weston's anxiety?

2) What does the 'death warrant' convey?

3) Identify two aspects of 'coincidence' in the situation above.

b) "That was your new velvet cloak

I did try to tell you."

1) What had Lady Weston tried to convey to Weston?

2) Why did she find in her attempt?

3) How does the velvet cloak heighten element of suspense in the role?

**2. Answer in about 80 - 100 words.**

a) What precautions does Lord Weston take to protect himself from assassination?

b) Why does Lady Weston make a mockery of her husband's fears?

## Unit – 2: The Monkey's Paw

**1. Read the dialogues from the play and answer the questions that follow:**

a) 'Herbert: I don't see the money; and I bet I never shall.'

1. What money is Herbert referring to?

2. In what context does it make the above comment. What was his mood?

3. What was ironical about the statement?

b) 'Mr. White: Ay, I had a bad night

Mrs. White: It was the storm I expect.' Was Mr. White's sleep disturbed because of the storm? Give reasons for your answer.

c) 'It's thick, John - and - and it's got something crisp inside'.

i) What is the reason for the excitement of the White couple?

ii) How did their excitement take a tragic turn later?

iii) Who / what do you think was responsible for the tragedy? Justify your answer .

**2. Answer in about 80 - 100 words.**

a) Compare the circumstances under which Mr. White made the first and last wish.

b) Why did Sergeant Morris warn the Whites about the paw? How did his fears come true?

c) How is the play a reflection of human greed?

d) Who made the third wish? What was it?

e) Describe the circumstances that led to the making of the third wish?

f) Does Herbert believe in the powers of the Monkey's Paw? Does it have any effect on him? Give reasons for your answer.

g) Describe the change in Mr. White's attitude from the time he received the paw till he made the last wish.

h) Was it fate or greed that was responsible for the tragedy in the White family. Justify with suitable instances from the play.

i) Were all Mr. Whites's three wishes fulfilled as if they were co-incidences? Justify.


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