



**Banha University - Faculty of Education
English Department
Fourth Grade
Drama
Second Term
2014/2015**

- 1. Write on ABSURD DRAMA focusing on defining the term, its characteristic features, and its pioneers as well as their masterpieces.**

Answer

Absurd Drama - Martin Esslin

Introduction to "Absurd Drama" (Penguin Books, 1965)¹

'The Theatre of the Absurd' has become a catch-phrase, much used and much abused. What does it stand for? And how can such a label be

¹ <http://www.samuel-beckett.net/AbsurdEsslin.html>

justified? Perhaps it will be best to attempt to answer the second question first. There is no organised movement, no school of artists, who claim the label for themselves. A good many playwrights who have been classed under this label, when asked if they belong to the Theatre of the Absurd, will indignantly reply that they belong to no such movement - and quite rightly so. For each of the playwrights concerned seeks to express no more and no less his own personal vision of the world.

A term like the Theatre of the Absurd must therefore be understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method, and convention, of shared philosophical and artistic premises, whether conscious or subconscious, and of influences from a common store of tradition. A label of this kind therefore is an aid to understanding, valid only in so far as it helps to gain insight into a work of art. It is not a binding classification; it is certainly not all-embracing or exclusive. A play may contain some elements that can best be understood in the light of such a label, while other elements in the same play derive from and can best be understood in the light of a different convention.

These plays flout all the standards by which drama has been judged for many centuries; they must therefore appear as a provocation to people who have come into the theatre expecting to find what they would recognize as a well-made play. A well-made play is expected to present characters that are well-observed and convincingly motivated: these plays often contain hardly any recognizable human beings and present completely unmotivated actions. A well-made play is expected to entertain

by the ding-dong of witty and logically built-up dialogue: in some of these plays dialogue seems to have degenerated into meaningless babble. A well-made play is expected to have a beginning, a middle, and a neatly tied-up ending: these plays often start at an arbitrary point and seem to end just as arbitrarily. By all the traditional standards of of critical appreciation of the drama, these plays are not only abominably bad, they do not even deserve the name drama.

2. Comment *briefly* on the following terms

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- **Stock character**

A character who reappears in various forms in many plays. Comedy is particularly a fruitful source of such figures, including the miles gloriosus or boastful soldier (a man who claims great valor but proves to be a coward when tested), the irascible old man (the source of elements in the character of Polonius), the witty servant, the coquette, the prude, the fop, and others. A stock character from another genre is the revenger of Renaissance tragedy. The role of Hamlet demonstrates how such a stereotype is modified by an author to create a great role, combining the stock elements with individual ones.

- **foil**

A foil is a character who defines certain characteristics in the protagonist by exhibiting opposite traits or the same traits in a greater or lesser degree.