**Drama (Assignment 2):**

**Analysis of Hamlet**

* This ***assignment*** will help you to revise the basic elements of the play and will also lead you to do a simple analysis of *Hamlet*.
* At this level, analyzing a play means being able to identify (find out) the elements you have seen in the classroom.

* A successful analysis of any play starts with a good understanding of the text and its events. Being able to identify the type of the play with the elements you have seen in the class/lecture is the key of your analysis (Opening scenes/ Characters/ /Themes/ Plot/Dramatic techniques).
* Read about William Shakespeare (the playwright) and the theatre in his days.
* Answer the following questions:

1. **Opening scenes:**

* What is an opening scene in a play?
* What are its major functions?
* Why did William Shakespeare choose to open his play (**Hamlet**) at midnight? Why did he choose to introduce the character of the Ghost at this step in the play?

1. **Characters:**

* What is a character? How do we know about characters in a given text?
* Name the contributing characters in **Hamlet**.
* Divide them into major and minor figures.
* You have seen in the first semester how to describe a character. Use this Knowledge to introduce & describe the characters of the play briefly.
* **Hamlet** is certainly the most important character in the play. Describe this character is details.

1. **Characterization:**

* What is the difference between character & characterization?
* Compare between characterization is “Fiction” & “Drama.”
* Characterization in drama relies on special techniques (dramatic techniques/methods). You have seen three ones: Stage Direction- Aside- Soliloquy.
* Define each of these techniques.
* Learn how to identify these techniques in the play:
* **(a) Stage Direction**: anything between parentheses in a play is considered as a stage direction:

**Ex**: (Short stage direction)

**(Francisco is at his post before the castle in Elsinore. Bernardo enters.)/ p3**

\_\_\_\_this is a stage direction which indicates the position of the actors on the stage, their names, and number.

**Ex**: (Long stage direction)

**(Trumpets are heard offstage. A mime show enters. The actor king and queen very lovingly embrace. He rests his head upon her shoulder, and she lays him down on a bed of flowers. Then, seeing that he is asleep, she leaves. A short time later, in comes another man. He takes off the king’s crown, kisses it, pours poison in the king’s ears, and exits. The queen returns, finds the king dead, and mourns loudly. The poisoner comes in again, with three or four others, seeming to mourn with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the queen with gifts. For a while, she seems put off and unwilling, but in the end she accepts his love. All the actors exit.) / p49—50.**

\_\_\_\_this is a long stage direction which shows the participating characters in this scene , their actions on the stage, the kind of music heard by the audience. Most importantly, it highlights supporting details of the basic aim of Hamlet behind the play of the “Mousetrap”.

**Activity**: Identify other short & long stage directions in **Hamlet** and explain their functions.

* **(b) Aside**: it is easy to find the aside in the play because it is shown directly through writing the word “aside” between parentheses.
* -- Consider the following example:

**Ex:**

**HAMLET** (**aside**): I may be your nephew,

But I will never be your son! / (**p 10)**

\_\_\_\_this is an aside which reveals Hamlet’s real feelings towards his uncle.

**Activity**: Identify other asides in **Hamlet** and explain their functions.

* **(c) Soliloquy**: in a play, you can know the soliloquy with the help of a stage direction which indicates that all the characters leave the stage except one character. Have a look at this example :

**POLONIUS**: He’s going to his mother’s room.

Behind the drapes I’ll hide and listen.

I’m sure she’ll find out what’s wrong.

Before you go to bed I’ll call on you

And tell you what I know.

**KING**: Thanks, my dear sir.

**(Polonius exits.)**

Oh, my crime is terrible! It smells to heaven!

Like Cain in the Bible story, I have

Murdered my own brother! I cannot pray,

Though I want to so badly.

My stronger guilt defeats my strong desire.

Like a man with two things to do,

I stand here, wondering where to begin

And neglect both. This cursed hand seems

Thicker than itself with brother’s blood.

Is there not rain enough in the heavens

To wash it white as snow? What prayer

Could I use? “Forgive me my foul murder”?

That cannot be, since I still have

All those things for which I did the murder:

My crown, my ambition, and my queen.

May one be pardoned and keep the goods?

In this evil world, money buys justice.

It can often buy the law, too. But it is not so

In heaven. No trickery there. What then?

What happens when one cannot repent?

Oh, wretched state! Oh, soul black as death!

Bow, stubborn knees! And, heart like steel,

Be soft as a newborn babe’s skin!

All may be well.

\_\_\_\_ in this soliloquy, Claudius kneels to pray and to confess his torturing crime.

**Activity**: 1/ Identify other soliloquies in **Hamlet** and explain them.

2/ Hamlet’s soliloquy ***“To be or not to be***” is certainly the most important in this play. Pay special attention to this soliloquy by:

* Finding its position is the play.
* Explaining its meaning.
* Reading more about its significance.

**Activity**: Consider the following quote from **Hamlet**, then answer the questions:

**POLONIUS** (aside): Though this be madness, yet

there is a method in it.

* How many Dramatic techniques are there in this passage?
* Define & show the function of each of them.

1. **Plot:**

Understanding the type and structure of the plot requires a good reading of the play. For this reason:

* Revise what you have learnt in the class about the plot structure of Shakespeare’s plays (see you lecture and the Five-Act structure of Shakespeare’s play).
* Sum up the main events of each Act (5Acts).
* What is the event that can be considered as the climax of the play?
* On the basis of your understanding, how are the events ordered in Hamlet? So, what is the type of the plot?
* Draw a diagram to represent the five-act plot structure of Hamlet. Place the main events in it.

1. **Themes:**

William Shakespeare’s play **Hamlet** is commonly known as a **revenge** tragedy. Thus, the basic theme around which all the remaining themes revolve is “revenge.”

To arrive at a good explanation of a particular theme, you need to know the characters that are related to it. For example, it is wrong to say that Hamlet is the only character that is supposed to take revenge in the play because Laertes is also supposed to avenge the death of his father.

* Explain the following themes in **Hamlet** on the basis of your reading.
* Read about them in other sources.
* Death & corruption.
* Revenge
* Delay
* Madness
* Action vs Inaction

1. **Type of the Play:**

In addition to the previous elements, the lecture of “Drama” has guided you to the main forms/types that Drama can take. Your readings have certainly highlighted **Hamlet** as a revenge tragedy.

* **What are the aspects that make Hamlet a typical Elizabethan “Tragedy”?**

All tragedies feature a special type of protagonist who is known as a “**tragic hero**”, and Hamlet is unquestionably one.

* **What makes Hamlet a “tragic hero”?**

The tragic hero is called so because a terrible destiny and a disastrous ending await him because of his decisions. This process is referred to in Drama as “the tragic flaw of the character”.

* **Describe the “tragic flaw” of Hamlet (the character).**