MEG 02: BRITISH DRAMA
Assignment
July 2026 and January 2027 Sessions
(Based on Blocks (1-9)

MEG-02/TMA 01/2026-27
Max. Marks: 100

Instructions
Section A is compulsory.
Attempt any four questions from Section B.
Answer each question according to the prescribed word limit.
Support your answers with relevant textual references and critical arguments wherever appropriate.

Section A

1. Critically comment on the following passages with reference to their context, significance, and dramatic implications, in not more than 150 words each: $4 \times 5 = 20$
   a. "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
      And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"
   b. "The course of true love never did run smooth."
   c. "The play's the thing
      Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."
   d. "Nothing to be done."

Section B

Attempt any four of the following questions. $4 \times 20 = 80$

1. Discuss *Doctor Faustus* as a Renaissance drama. How does Marlowe present the conflict between medieval Christian morality and the Renaissance spirit of individual aspiration, knowledge, and ambition?

2. Examine the significance of the supernatural and the world of dreams in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. How does Shakespeare use the fairy world to question and transform the experiences of the human characters?
3. "Hamlet is a play about the difficulty of translating thought into action." Discuss this statement with reference to Hamlet's character, his soliloquies, and his response to his father's murder.

4. Discuss *The Alchemist* as a satire on human greed, credulity, and social ambition. How does Ben Jonson use deception and comic intrigue to expose the weaknesses of his society?

5. Examine the significance of language, storytelling, and reputation in *The Playboy of the Western World*. How does Christy Mahon's transformation reveal the power of storytelling in shaping individual identity?

6. Analyse *Pygmalion* as a critique of class and social hierarchy. How does Shaw use Eliza Doolittle's transformation to raise questions about language, identity, education, and social mobility?

7. Discuss the conflict between individual conscience and institutional authority in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. How does Thomas Becket's understanding of martyrdom develop through the play?

8. Examine *Look Back in Anger* as a representation of post-war British society. How do class, education, marriage, gender, and generational tensions shape Jimmy Porter's anger and alienation?

9. Discuss *Waiting for Godot* as a significant example of the Theatre of the Absurd. How does Beckett use repetition, silence, circular structure, uncertainty, and humour to represent the human condition?

10. Write short notes on any two of the following in about 200 words each: $2 \times 10 = 20$

    a. The role of the Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral*

    b. The significance of the title *Pygmalion*

    c. The theme of illusion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

    d. The significance of the setting in *Look Back in Anger*

    e. The role of the Foolishness and deception in *The Alchemist*

    f. The significance of silence and pause in *Waiting for Godot*

    g. The theme of ambition in *Doctor Faustus*

    h. The construction of heroic identity in *The Playboy of the Western World*

1. Critically comment on the following passages with reference to their context, significance, and dramatic implications, in not more than 150 words each: 4 × 5 = 20

a. “Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?”

Answer

The lines are spoken by Doctor Faustus when Helen of Troy is conjured before him near the end of Marlowe’s play. By this stage Faustus has used his extraordinary bargain not for lasting knowledge or human benefit, but increasingly for spectacle and sensual escape. Helen therefore becomes both an image of classical beauty and a sign of Faustus’s spiritual decline. His famous question enlarges her beauty through the legendary Trojan War, yet it also reveals his desire to lose himself in illusion. He asks Helen to make him “immortal with a kiss,” but the audience knows that no earthly or magical beauty can cancel his pact with Lucifer. Dramatically, the passage mixes lyrical splendour with tragic irony. The language reaches a poetic height at precisely the moment when Faustus is closest to damnation. His attraction to Helen shows how classical admiration, detached from moral responsibility, can become self-deception.

b. “The course of true love never did run smooth.”

Answer

This line is spoken by Lysander in A Midsummer Night’s Dream while he and Hermia discuss the obstacles to their marriage. Hermia’s father wants her to marry Demetrius, and Athenian law supports the father’s authority. Lysander’s statement turns their private difficulty into a general truth: genuine love rarely develops without resistance. The line prepares the audience for the play’s comic complications in the forest, where magic disturbs affection even further and the lovers repeatedly change partners. Its significance lies in the contrast between ideal love and unstable human desire. Shakespeare does not simply celebrate romance; he shows how love can be shaped by law, social expectation, imagination and accident. Dramatically, the line also anticipates the movement from conflict to harmony. The lovers must pass through confusion before the final marriages become possible. The sentence is both a serious reflection on love and a forecast of the comedy’s tangled plot.