BA English Major (BAFEG)
Understanding Drama (BEGM–162)
BEGM -162

Course Code: BEGM-162/2026-27

Max. Marks: 100

Answer the following questions:

Section A

1. Write short notes in about 100 words each: 4x5 = 20

   a) History plays

   b) Epic theatre

   c) Theatre of the absurd

   d) Farce

   e) Comedy of humour

Section B

a. Examine the growth of American drama during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 20

b. How is Larry's letter instrumental in forcing Keller to realise his guilt? 20

c. Critically analyze the character portrayal of Savitri in the play *Halfway House*? 20

d. Comment on the concept of time in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. 20

1. Write short notes in about 100 words each: 4x5 = 20

a) History plays

Answer

History plays dramatise events and personalities associated with a nation's past. Rather than merely presenting dates and facts, they turn political conflict, leadership, loyalty, ambition and public responsibility into dramatic action. Such plays often involve kings, wars, succession disputes and the relationship between rulers and their subjects. Historical incidents provide the framework, but playwrights select and shape them to explore questions relevant to their own age.

William Shakespeare's English history plays are familiar examples. *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry V* examine legitimacy, rebellion, kingship and national identity. Characters such as Falstaff also bring ordinary experience and comedy into the larger political story. Shakespeare does not behave like a modern academic historian: he compresses events, invents conversations and arranges scenes for dramatic effect.

History plays can praise national heroes, challenge official versions of the past, or reveal the suffering caused by political power. Their effectiveness depends on combining a recognisable historical world with credible human choices. They remind audiences that history is not just an account of what happened; it is also an ongoing debate about who exercises power, whose memories survive, and how a society interprets its past. Their historical setting can therefore illuminate both the age represented and the playwright’s contemporary concerns.

b) Epic theatre

Answer

Epic theatre is a modern dramatic approach closely associated with the German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht. It encourages the audience to observe events critically rather than becoming so emotionally absorbed that social problems appear inevitable. The stage is presented as a place for questioning how society works and how it might be changed.

Brecht used techniques such as songs, projected captions, a narrator, visible scene changes and actors who reveal rather than completely merge with their roles. These devices interrupt the illusion of continuous action. The well-known alienation effect, or *Verfremdungseffekt*, makes familiar behaviour appear strange enough to invite thought. For example, a character's hardship may be shown as the result of economic arrangements rather than simply personal fate.