

Grade 12 English A

Paper 2 Mock Examination

The Taming of the Shrew, The Importance of Being Earnest, and A Streetcar Named Desire

Drama—

1. In everyday usage the word "theatrical" often means extravagant or is used to describe behavior that exhibits exaggerated emotion. To what extent, and in what ways, do at least two of the plays you have studied exemplify this definition of "theatrical"?

Wednesday, March 19, 2014

English A HL - Paper 2 Mock

The plays "The Importance of Being Earnest" by Oscar Wilde and "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams are substantially unlike in fitting the definition of "theatrical" in everyday usage, i.e. exhibition of extravagance and exaggeration of emotion, while each still retaining ~~different~~ different extents of defining aspects in that regard. Although their distinguished treatment of the plays' contents in the theatrical notion vary significantly due to the genre difference (~~tragedy~~ of ~~manners~~ as opposed to tragedy), both plays rely ~~on~~ profoundly on their "theatrical" qualities to further their genre-related purpose.

Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest", as a comedy of manners, is bound to refer to its "theatrical" elements of extravagance and ^{more so,} exaggerated emotion in order to achieve the desired effect: through ~~grotesquely~~ ^{grotesquely} painting a grotesquely exaggerated picture of typical Victorian manners, especially in relation to love and marriage, the ^{ridiculing} play comedy of the play is driven; in this sense, ~~also~~ in order to achieve its comical core, the notion of being "theatrical" is imperative for "The Importance of Being Earnest".

On the other hand, while the same ^{concept} notion is almost equally ^{critical} important, Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire" concentrates the "theatrical" concept in the ~~play~~ its protagonist, Blanche duBois, as the ~~big~~ tragic and defining flaw of the character, which ultimately, though fuelled by antagonist Stanley Kowalski, leads to her downfall. Thus, because this notion of being "theatrical" is ^{almost} so antithetical to tragedy, it is used to bring down Blanche and thereby ~~defines~~ is

defining of this piece ^{such} ^{opposite} ~~to~~ ^{tragedy} it is ^{the}.

The theatrical characterisation of all characters - or the protagonist Blanche respectively, - is a key stylistic means to achieve the plays' purpose. "I don't want realism, I want magic!" is a statement by Blanche which sums up her theatrical character perfectly: striving for elegance, gentleness and extravagance in order to ~~break the curse of her age~~ ^{in order to feel} disguise her age and to attract men for feeling loved and protected, Blanche's desperate effort to maintain her magic, ^{good} by ~~the~~ dressing ~~expensively~~ in expensive clothing, using exquisite perfume, ~~and~~ acting superior ^{and} as well as poetically passionate, is exemplifying of ^{her} theatrical characterisation. The association of French with her, renowned as a language of beauty and elegance, as well as ~~the~~ the literal meaning of certain words, such as Belle Reve (meaning Beautiful Dream), further underlines this - especially as it is extravagant in an American context. Her attraction to ^{and kissing of} a stranger young man who, according to her, looks "like a young Prince out of the Arabian Nights" - again the magical, fairy-tale connotation - serves as a good example of her theatrical behaviour and speech.

In "The Importance of Being Earnest", the theatrical characterisation extends across all characters, thus in coherence with the comedy of manners, ridiculing everyone's ~~the~~ "theatrical" behaviour. "We live... in an age of ideals... my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest." Gwendolen's sincere ^{don't leave alone} statement, ~~mirrored~~ presenting herself so pompously as an idealist yet doing so in connection with something so trivial as a name, not only contradicts the idealist notion but is also blatantly absurd and ridiculous. Furthermore, the ~~them~~ motive of "Bunburying" is a ^{laughable} ~~ridiculous~~ concept in itself, practised by both Jack and Algernon, in order to win their love. Both [&] its name and the notion of assuming someone else's identity are ridiculous and absurd, even more so as in the end, though both discovered, Jack and Algernon win their ~~loved~~ ^{loved} ~~one~~ ^{one} ~~paramour's~~ ^{paramour's} hearts. Thus, the theatrical concept of Wilde's play is exemplified by the exaggerated.

No mention of
Bracknell?

often ridiculous extravagance of his characters.

Thus, the common understanding of "theatrical" can
evidently be witnessed in both Williams's and Wilde's
piece of theatre as critical to achieving their genre-related
aim.