

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

SECTION 1: STYLE AND GENRE WITHIN THE CHOSEN DISCIPLINE (DRAMA)

SAMPLE 1

Style: refers to **how** the drama is presented eg, commedia dell' Arte, naturalism, absurdism

Genre: refers to the **category** into which a piece of drama fits eg, comedy, tragedy, farce, musical theatre etc

My published extract is taken from “*Juno and the Paycock*,” by Sean O’ Casey (1924). Its genre may be defined as “tragi-comedy” and its style as “realism.”

Genre: Tragi-comedy defines this play as tragedy and comedy co-exist to produce a mixed tragicomic response in the audience.

During the Renaissance, tragi-comedy developed as a deviation from classical tragedy. The term was used to define a play which moves towards a tragic climax but an unexpected turn of events brings about a happy ending. The plot is moved forward by mistaken identities, averted catastrophes, timely recognitions etc. which prevent disasters.

Tragi-comedy was defined by Roman playwright Plautus in the prologue to his play. *Amphitryon* as an excuse for incorporating both slaves and Gods, since according to the principles of classical drama, Gods and Kings belonged to tragedy and ordinary people to comedy.

Examples: Measure for Measure 1623 and The Merchant of Venice 1600 – both by Shakespeare.

Battista Guarini (1538-1612) defined tragi-comedy as a unique genre in its own right. He contended that it was neither tragedy nor comedy but a genre combining both elements. His pastoral tragicomedy *Il Pastor Fido* included scenes of great tragedy juxtaposed with comic scenes.

John Fletcher, English dramatist (1579-1625) was inspired by *Guarini*; his pastoral tragicomedy. *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1609) was firmly of the genre as were the plays he wrote with *Francis Beaumont*, in particular *Philaster* (1609).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, other dramatic genres such as romantic drama, serious drama and the problem play blurred the boundaries of tragicomedy but melodrama provided a useful bridge to modern tragicomedy, eg, “*The Wild Duck*” and “*Ghosts*” by *Henrik Ibsen* (1828-1906) and *Chekov’s* “*The Cherry Orchard*.” *George Bernard Shaw* (1856-1950) said: “Ibsen was the dramatic poet who firmly established tragicomedy as a much deeper and grimmer entertainment than tragedy.”

In the 20th Century, dramatists such as *Tennessee Williams* (1911-1938); *Synge* (1871-1907); *Strindberg* (1849-1912) and *O’Casey* established tragicomedy as a serious dramatic genre.

Post-war dramatists such as *Samuel Beckett* (1906-1989); *Pinter* (1930-2008); *Ionesco* (1909-1994) and *Stoppard* (1937-) reveal the contradictions of life by means of the grotesque and the absurd. They extend the genre of tragicomedy to show how comic situations arising from human alienation, lack of meaningful communication and irrational behaviour, emphasise the spiritual emptiness of the modern world.

Style: Realism

- Realism originated from naturalism and superseded it.
- It portrays characters on stage who are close to real life and realistic settings.
- It draws attention to the difficulties people experience in their interaction with others in their physical and psychological contexts.
- Characters are seen as victims of forces larger than themselves; individuals are comforted with a rapidly accelerating world.
- Playwrights are unafraid to show characters as ordinary, impotent and unable to reach answers to their predicaments.
- The audience can identify with and empathise with the plot and situations.