

Year	Subject Title	Sem.	Sub.Code
2018-19 onwards	CORE-V-DRAMA	V	18BEN51C

Objectives

- To expose students to English Drama
- To help students read, understand and appreciate selected English Plays
- To instruct students in studying plays and some of its aspects such as plot, characters, action, etc

Unit I : **Non- Detailed:** Satire: *The Alchemist*

Unit II : **Detailed:** Tragedy: Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Unit III: **Detailed:** Comedy: Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*

Unit IV: **Detailed:** Anti-Sentimental Comedy: Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*

Unit V: **Non-Detailed:** Absurd Play: Tom Stoppards' *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

CORE-V-DRAMA

18BEN51C

SEMESTER: V

III BA ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNIT - I NON-DETAILED: BEN JONSON'S *THE ALCHEMIST*

DR. S. JOY ISABELLA

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

PG AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

COIMBATORE - 641 018.

BEN JONSON LIFE AND WORKS

- Born in London on 11 June 1572
- Education at the Westminster school
- Married Anne Lewis
- Playwright, actor and poet

Works

- ▶ A tale of a Tub
- ▶ Every Man in his Humour
- ▶ Cynthia's Revels
- ▶ Volpone
- ▶ Epicone or The Silent Woman
- ▶ The Alchemist
- ▶ Bartholomew Fair

COMEDY OF HUMOURS

- ▶ Human body held a balance of four liquids
- ▶ Blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm
- ▶ The humour of blood- optimistic
- ▶ Phlegm-calm and docile
- ▶ Cholera or yellow bile- highly ill-tempered
- ▶ Black bile- melancholy

The Alchemist

- ▶ Comedy in five acts
- ▶ Performed in 1610 and published in 1612
- ▶ It is a satire
- ▶ Exposure of the folly to which greed will drive men
- ▶ Vivid picture of Elizabethan society
- ▶ Title of the play- thought- provoking
- ▶ Greed- widespread social evil of the times

Subtle, the alchemist

- ▶ The Alchemist is a comedy by the English playwright, Ben Jonson. It is considered his best comedy.
- ▶ An outbreak of plague in London forces a gentleman, Lovewit, to flee to the country. He leaves his house under the sole charge of his butler, Jeremy.
- ▶ Jeremy uses the opportunity to use the house as the headquarters for fraudulent acts.

Contd.,

- ▶ He transforms himself into 'Captain Face', and enlists the aid of Subtle, a fellow conman and Dol Common.
- ▶ The play opens with a violent argument between Subtle and Face concerning the division of the riches which they have.

Intelligence of Subtle

- ▶ Their first customer is Dapper, a lawyer's clerk
- ▶ He wishes Subtle to use his skills to summon a spirit to help in his gambling ambitions
- ▶ Face tells Dapper that he has all the signs of a lucky man and, with the help of his spirit, he will win at all games.
- ▶ Their second gull is Drugger, a tobacconist, who is keen to establish a profitable business.

Contd.,

- ▶ Subtle tells him that he is already on the high road to prosperity. He instructs him in the way of arranging his shop in a particular way.
- ▶ A wealthy nobleman, Sir Epicure Mammon arrives there. He expresses the desire to gain himself the philosopher's stone which he believes will bring him huge material and spiritual wealth.
- ▶ He is accompanied by Surly, a skeptic and debunker of the whole idea of alchemy. Surly however, suspects Subtle of being a thief.
- ▶ Mammon accidentally sees Dol and is told that she is a Lord's sister who is suffering from madness

Cunning ways of the alchemist

- ▶ Subtle contrives to become angry with Ananias, a Puritan. He demands that he should return with a more senior member of his sect.
- ▶ Druggler returns and is given false and ludicrous advice about setting up his shop.
- ▶ He also brings news that a rich young widow (Dame Pliant) and her brother (Kastril) have arrived in London.
- ▶ Both Subtle and Face in their greed and ambition seek out to win the widow.

Arrival of Lovewit

- ▶ Lovewit interrogates the neighbours as to what has been going on during his absence.
- ▶ Face is now the plausible Jeremy again. He explains that there cannot have been any visitors to the house because he has kept it locked up because of the plague.
- ▶ Surly, Mammon, Kastril and the Puritans return. Face tells Subtle and Dol that he has confessed to Lovewit, and that officers are on the way
- ▶ Subtle and Dol have to flee, empty handed. The victims come back again. Lovewit has married the widow and has claimed Mammon's goods.

Marriage of Lovewit and Dame Pliant

- ▶ Doll and Subtle leave angrily, having been tricked and robbed by Face.
- ▶ Lovewit convinces the police that criminal conmen broke into his house in his absence, and he chases off Face's angry victims.
- ▶ Lovewit turns to the audience and says he is very happy with his new wife, Dame Pliant, and Face says he is happy to get off clean from his crimes .

The Three Unities

- ▶ The unity of place -the entire action takes place either in the house of Lovewit or on the road in front of it.
- ▶ The unity of time has been maintained.
- ▶ Jonson begins on the most crucial day in the action.
- ▶ The unity of action has been faithfully maintained. There is no superfluity. Every incident and every character contributes to the development of the action.
 - ▶ -By Dr.S.Joy Isabella