

One Act Play

A One Act Play:

is a short drama depicting a particular incident in the life of a particular character. The incident invariably is significant in revealing of the person's life in a way that from the part it is easy to understand. The whole, sometimes a plurality of incidents and characters may also occur but even so they are intensely concentrated towards an isolated purpose.

The One Act Play chooses its theme from a large variety of ideas much as politics, war, religion, society, sex and what not. Naturally, this contributes to its immense value and universal appeal which, along with absolute economy of words and a keen, brisk treatment, make the One Act play a powerful weapon in the hands of modern writers.

In its way, the One Act play is closely comparable with the short story. The former has the same place in drama as the latter has in fiction. In neither can the writer invent situations and characters with anything like the complexity and fullness of interest that can be achieved in the full length play or novel. But out of these very limitations, arise the many attracting qualities that make a good one act play or a good short story irresistible for discerning tastes. The most vivid of these qualities are precision and concentration which find strong expression in all their intensity and simplicity through the medium of the One Act play, making it so rich, sensitive and powerful at the same time.

For all its attractive qualities, the One Act play, however, has not achieved the same place in modern literature as the short story, which is largely due to practical obstacles. The good short story lines in magazines and books but no play, of any kind is really alive until it is performed. Needless to say, the professional theatres have all along given pride of place in entertainment to the full length play while the short play, known as 'the curtain-raiser' in stage parlance, has hardly ever found favour and has since gone almost completely out of fashion. Very recently, however, the One Act play has made its re-appearance on the stage and won much applause from the audience. Indeed, masterpieces like 'The Browning Version' have wonderfully demonstrated how rich and sensitive a short play can be. Another good reason to be hopeful for the future of the One Act play is that sound broadcasting and more recently, television have come to demand short plays in abundance and attracted seasoned writers to apply their craft to the form. But, more hopeful than anything else, is the popularity of One Act plays in the schools and colleges of English speaking countries which has come to be established all too firmly for they offer splendid entertainment without making large demands upon time, effort and property. Besides, they have a high practical value for the student of a language; it demonstrates the use of the spoken language in vivid, meaningful contexts. For types of language study are at once as useful and enjoyable as the study of a good play.

Two One Act Play

The Count's Revenge

(By J.H. Wash)

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Introduction: - 'The Count's Revenge' is a fine One-Act play presented as a striking piece of melodrama. The author, J.H. Wash, skillfully, adopts an incident from "The Count of Monte Cristo", a famous novel of the 19th century by the French writer Alexander Dumas.

ANALYTICAL STUDY:

Edmund Dantes - The Sailor of Marseilles:

Long, long ago there lived a poor sailor in Marseilles, a large port on the Mediterranean sea coast of France. His name was Edmund Dantes, and he was young and handsome, once he went on a long voyage and returned home after many years.

Mercedes - The Girl from Catalonia:

Not far from his place, lived a girl from Catalonia, a region of Spain. She was called Mercedes. She, too, was young and beautiful. Dantes fell in love with her. Soon he was betrothed to her. He was happy for now he had hopes of being married shortly to his sweet heart.

Fernand Mondego: The Fisherman

But there was also in that city another young man, a fisherman, Fernand Mondego, by name. He was a wicked villain. He resolved to win the Catalan girl from the young sailor.

The Most Devilish: (Plot ever hatched against Mortal)

So he hatched a plot against Dantes. Indeed it was the most devilish plot ever hatched against mortal man. He produced false evidence to show that the sailor was a spy, an agent of the exiled Napoleon Buonaparte, once emperor of France. He was tried in court, convicted as a spy and condemned to imprisonment for life, and then the poor innocent sailor was cast in an underground dungeon on an island fortress to pass the rest of his life as a victim of the black treachery of his rival.

Fernand Mondego Marries Mercedes:

Later on, Mercedes was falsely informed that Dantes had died in goal. All men assured her of his death. Sometimes after, his cunning rival, the fisherman, asked her for her hand in marriage. She knew nothing of this villainy and his wickedness. Quite unaware of the deadly wrong he had done, the simple girl was easily taken in and gave her consent. Eventually Fernand Mondego and Mercedes were married together.

Fernand Mondego: (becomes the Count of Morcerf)

Now ever, the wicked rogue got on extremely well in life. He became an officer in the French Army and rose so far as to be a well-to-do nobleman with a distinguished place in society. In due course of time, he became the Count of Morcerf and lived in luxuriously furnished apartments in the Rue-du-Helder in Paris. Weak and fearful as he was always known to be, his pale face, his thin compressed lips and his crafty expression easily defined him as a mean coward, a wicked, heartless villain.

Mercedes (become the Countess of Morcerf)

Needless to say, Mercedes, his wife now became the Countess of Morcerf. The unfortunate woman, soon after her marriage, discovered how mean and heartless her husband was indeed. True to his evil nature, he was often cruel not only to her but also to Albert, their only son. Husband and wife had never been good friends before or they likely to be better friends now. On the other hand, Mercedes had never ceased to respect and admire Dantes and regard him noble.

Albert: Albert, a young French nobleman, was the only son of the Count and the Countess of Morcerf. Extremely sentimental by nature, he was a man of honour and a man of word. He was a close friend of the Count of Monte Cristo.

Beauchamp: Beauchamp was the editor of a Paris newspaper. He, also, was a fast friend of Albert.

The Escape of 'Edmund Dantes' from the Dungeon:

The victim of the villainous Mondego, the innocent Dantes, betrayed to a living death, suffered slow, profound external torture in wrongful imprisonment in the underground dungeon on the island fortress for fourteen years. At last chance favoured him. He escaped from the dreadful place.

Edmund Dantes: (become the Count of Monte Cristo)

He travelled and flourished. He re-established himself in life with wonderful speed and success. He grew rich and powerful. Within the short period of six years, he acquired wealth, influence, a title and a dazzling place in French society. He lived like a prince, in the champs Elysses, a fashionable quarter of Paris, as the Count of Monte Cristo, the mysterious stranger, who cloaked the person of Dantes splendidly dressed, handsome, gay, cymical, not very young, with a touch of the devil in him, he was ever his ordinary smiling self. No wonder, he had taken all Paris by storm with his noble, charming, even obliging manners so that he was loved and admired by all. Moreover, the spirit of chivalry, romance and adventure raged a strong in him. He was a good swordsman and a wonderful shot. His pistol never missed its aim, so excellent was his marksmanship indeed. He often travelled on holidays to Rome, to Normandy, to any place that caught his fancy.

He always made it his first duty on returning to Paris from any journey to pay his compliments to the Countess of Morcerf. He was a close friend of her son Albert as well. He often went with him to spend his holidays together to places like Rome and Normandy. Once he had actually saved his life from death. He was like a father to Albert. In fact, many were the kindnesses he had shown to mother and son and helped them in many ways. But there was one thing that struck singularity strange about him. He never broke bread in the house of Morcerf. He strictly followed the Arab custom not to eat in the house of a deadly enemy who was Cristo's enemy. All his enmity was directed against Morcerf who had so mortally offended him in the past.

The Count's Revenge:

(**Searching Investigations:-**His one and only aim of life all along was to seek vengeance upon Fernand Mondego, now the count of Morcerf, the man who had done him deadly wrong for fourteen years which, unmistakably, is a large slice from a man's life. There was time enough for him to plan his revenge. Determined to pay back his bitter rival and enemy in his own coins, he made 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' the motto of his own life. Ruthlessly, relentlessly, he pursued his wrong - door and ferreted his secrets. At last yet another gross, act of villainy committed by Morcerf came to light during the searching investigations.

The crime of High Treason:- In 1823 when the French and the Turks were at war, Morcerf then a captain in the French Army, received bribes from the Turks and surrendered the French Fortress of Yanins to them. The Count of Monte Cristo unearthed documents, signed, sealed and witnessed, which were unassailable proofs of Morcerf's guilt. He even found out an eye witness, a woman, who was actually present at the scene of the crime. So, it was not he but Morcerf, who was a traitor to his people, who had betrayed his country, and who had committed the heinous crime of high treason against the motherland.

The Count of Monte Cristo wreaks his vengeance: - At last the count of Monte Cristo wreaked his vengeance. Keeping himself in the background, he brought the accusations of the crime first in the press and then in parliament. Notes written by al-saudia Expert English Language Home Tutor in Karachi.