

11**UNIT**

The Dear Departed

(One-Act Play)

Stanley Houghton

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit students will:

- Explore simple to complex ideas and issues in one act play, or assembly/class presentation
- Analyse organisational patterns in a text to list/ sequence of ideas/events, comparison-contrast, cause-effect, problem-solution, reasons/ assumptions-conclusion
- Change into indirect/direct speech (present, past and perfect tenses, future, modals, time and questions, orders, requests, suggestions and advice) in speech and writing.
- Write multiple paragraphs essays or stories, poems or playscript using mechanics for correct writing.
- Write a dialogue between multiple people, giving narration/background in brackets, using conventions of the director's notes. Use vocabulary, tone and style appropriate to the context and relationship between the addresser and addressee.

Pre-reading:

- What is a one-act play?
- What is the focus of one-act plays?

Characters

Mrs. Slater	}	→	sisters
Mrs. Jordan			
Henry Slater	}	→	their husbands
Ben Jordan			
Victoria Slater	}	→	a girl of ten
Abel Merryweather			
	}	→	grandfather

For the Teacher:

- Explain about one-act plays and their common characteristics.
- Tell students about this playwright --- Stanley Houghton.
- Tell students about the elements/ essentials of one-act plays. Help them understand the difference between a one-act play and a multiple-act play.

■ Scene

(The scene is the sitting room of a small house in a lower middle-class district of a provincial town. On the spectator's left is the window, with the blinds down. A sofa is in front of it. On his right is a fireplace with an armchair by it. In the middle of the wall facing the spectator is the door into the passage. To the left of the door a cheap, shabby chest of drawers, to the right a sideboard. In the middle of the room is a table, with chairs round it. Ornaments and a cheap American clock are on the mantelpiece, in the hearth a kettle. By the sideboard a pair of gaudy new carpet slippers. The table is partly laid for tea, and the necessaries for the meal are on the sideboard, as also are copies of an evening paper and of TIT-BITS and PEARSON'S WEEKLY. Turning to the left through the door takes you to the front door; to the right, up-stairs. In the passage a hat-stand is visible.)

When the curtain rises Mrs. Slater is seen laying the table. She is a vigorous, plump, red-faced, vulgar woman, prepared to do any amount of straight talking to get her own way. She is in black, but not in complete mourning. She listens a moment and then goes to the window, opens it and calls into the street.)

Mrs. Slater	<i>(sharply)</i> Victoria, Victoria! D'ye hear? Come in, will you? <i>(Mrs. Slater closes window and puts the blind straight and then returns to her work at the table. Victoria, a precocious girl often, dressed in colours, enters.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	I'm amazed at you, Victoria; I really am. How you can gallivanting about in the street with your grandfather lying dead and cold upstairs, I don't know. Be off now, and change your dress before your Aunt Elizabeth and your Uncle Ben come. It would never do for them to find you in colours.
Victoria	What are they coming for? They haven't been here for ages.
Mrs. Slater	They're coming to talk over poor grandpa's affairs. Your father sent them a telegram as soon as we found he was dead. <i>(A noise is heard.)</i> Good gracious, that's never them. <i>(Mrs. Slater: hurries to the door and opens it.)</i> No, thank goodness! It's only your father. <i>(Henry Slater, a stooping, heavy man with a drooping moustache, enters. He is wearing a black tailcoat, grey trousers, a black tie and a bowler hat. He carries a little paper parcel.)</i>
Henry	Not come yet, eh?
Mrs. Slater	You can see they haven't, can't you? Now, Victoria, be off upstairs and that quick. Put your white frock on with a black sash. <i>(Victoria goes out.)</i>

Mrs. Slater	(to Henry): I'm not satisfied, but it's the best we can do till our new black's ready, and Ben and Elizabeth will never have thought about mourning yet, so we'll outshine them there- (Henry <i>sits in the armchair by the fire.</i>) Get your boots off, Henry; Elizabeth's that prying she notices the least speck of dirt.
Henry	I'm wondering if they'll come at all. When you an Elizabeth quarrelled she said she'd never set foot in your house again.
Mrs. Slater	She'll come fast enough after her share of what grandfather's left. You know how hard she can be when she likes. Where she gets it from, I can't tell (Mrs. Slater: <i>unwraps the parcel Henry has brought. It contains an apple pie, which she puts on a dish on the table.</i>)
Henry	I suppose it's in the family.
Mrs. Slater	What do you mean by that. Henry Slater?
Henry	I was referring to your father, not to you. Where are my slippers?
Mrs. Slater	In the kitchen; but you want a new pair, those old ones, are nearly worn out. (<i>Nearly breaking down.</i>) You don't seem to realize what it's costing me to bear up like I am doing. My heart's fit to break when I see the little trifles that belonged to grandfather lying around, and think he'll never use them again. (<i>Briskly</i>) Here! You'd better wear these slippers of grandfather's now. It's lucky he'd just got a new pair-
Henry	They'll be very small for me, my dear.
Mrs. Slater	They'll stretch, won't they? I'm not going to have them wasted. (<i>She has finished laying the table.</i>) Henry, I've been thinking about that bureau of grandfather's that's in his bedroom. You know I always wanted to have it after he died.
Henry	You must arrange with Elizabeth when you're dividing things up.
Mrs. Slater	Elizabeth's that sharp she'll see I'm after it, and she'll drive a hard bargain over it. Eh, what it is to have a low money – grubbing spirit!
Henry	Perhaps she's got her eye on the bureau as well.
Mrs. Slater	She's never been here since grandfather bought it. If it was only down here instead of in his room, she'd never guess it wasn't our own.
Henry	(<i>startled</i>) Amelia! (<i>He rises.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	Henry, why shouldn't we bring that bureau down here now? We could do it before they come.
Henry	(<i>stupefied</i>) I wouldn't care to.

Mrs. Slater	Don't look so daft. Why not?
Henry	It doesn't seem delicate, somehow.
Mrs. Slater	We could put that shabby old chest of drawers upstairs where the bureau is now. Elizabeth could have that and welcome. I've always wanted to get rid of it. (<i>She points to the drawers.</i>)
Henry	Suppose they come when we're doing it.
Mrs. Slater	I'll fasten the front door. Get your coat off. Henry; we'll change it. (<i>Mrs. Slater goes out to fasten the front door. Henry takes his coat off Mrs. Slater reappears.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	I'll run up and move the chairs out of the way. (<i>Victoria appears, dressed according to her mother's instructions.</i>)
Victoria	Will you fasten my frock up the back, mother?
Mrs. Slater	I'm busy; get your father to do it. (<i>Mrs. Slater: hurries upstairs, and Henry fastens the frock.</i>)
Victoria	What have you got your coat off for, Father?
Henry	Mother and me is going to bring grandfather's bureau down here.
Victoria	(<i>after a moment's thought.</i>) Are we pinching it before Aunt Elizabeth comes?
Henry	(<i>shocked</i>) No, my child. Grandpa gave it to your mother before he died.
Victoria	This morning?
Henry	Yes.
Victoria	Ah! He was drunk this morning.
Henry	Hush; you mustn't ever say he was drunk, now. (<i>Henry has fastened the frock, and Mrs. Slater appears carrying a handsome clock under her arm.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	I thought I'd fetch this down as well. (<i>She puts it on the mantelpiece.</i>) Our clock's worth nothing and this always appealed to me.
Victoria	That's grandpa's clock.
Mrs. Slater	Chut! Be quit! It's ours now. Come Henry, lift your end. Victoria, don't breathe a word to your aunt about the clock and the bureau. (<i>They carry the chest of drawers through the doorway.</i>)
Victoria	(<i>to herself</i>) I thought we'd pinched them. (<i>After a short pause there is a sharp knock at the front door.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	(<i>from upstairs</i>) Victoria, if that's your aunt and uncle you're not to open the door. (<i>Victoria peeps through the window.</i>)

Victoria	Mother, It's them.
Mrs. Slater	You're not to open the door till I come down. (<i>Knocking repeated.</i>) Let them knock away. (<i>There is a heavy bumping noise.</i>) Mind the wall. Henry. (<i>Henry and Mrs. Slater, very hot and flushed, stagger in with a pretty old-fashioned bureau containing a locked desk. They put it where the chest of drawers was, and straighten the ornaments, etc. The knocking is repeated.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	That was a near thing. Open the door, Victoria. Now, Henry, get your coat on. (<i>She helps him.</i>)
Henry	Did we knock much plaster off the wall?
Mrs. Slater	Never mind the plaster. Do I look ail right? (<i>Straightening her hair at the glass.</i>) Just watch Elizabeth's face when she sees we're all in half-mourning. (<i>Throwing him Tit-Bits.</i>) Take this and sit down. Try and look as if we'd been waiting for them. (<i>Henry sits in the armchair and Mrs. Slater left of table. They read ostentatiously. Victoria ushers in Ben and Mrs. Jordan. The latter is a stout, complacent woman with an impassive and an irritating air of being always right. She is wearing a complete and deadly outfit of new mourning crowned by a great black hat with plumes. Ben is also in complete new mourning, with black gloves and a band round his hat. He is rather a jolly little man, accustomed to be humorous, but at present trying to adapt himself to the regrettable occasion. He has a bright, chirpy little voice. Mrs. Jordan sails into the room and solemnly goes straight to Mrs. Slater and kisses her. The men shake hands. Mrs. Jordan Not a word is spoken. Mrs. Slater furtively inspects the new mourning.</i>)
Mrs. Jordan	Well, Amelia, and he's gone at last.
Mrs. Slater	Yes, he's gone. He was seventy-two a fortnight last Sunday. (<i>She sniffs back a tear. Mrs. Jordan sits on the left of the table. Mrs. Slater on the right. Henry in the armchair. Ben on the sofa with Victoria near him.</i>)
Ben	(<i>chirpily</i>) Now, Amelia, you mustn't give way. We've all got to die some time or other. It might have been worse.
Mrs. Slater	I don't see how.
Ben	It might have been one of us.
Henry	It's taken you a long time to get here, Elizabeth.
Mrs. Jordan	Oh, I couldn't do it. I really couldn't do it.
Mrs. Slater	(<i>suspiciously</i>) Couldn't do what?

Mrs. Jordan	I couldn't start without getting the mourning. (<i>Glancing at her sister.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	We've ordered ours, you may be sure. (<i>Acidly</i>) I never could fancy buying ready-made things.
Mrs. Jordan	No? For myself it's such a relief to get into the black. And now perhaps you'll tell us all about it. What did the doctor say?
Mrs. Slater	Oh, he's not been near yet.
Mrs. Jordan	Not been near?
Ben	(<i>in the same breath</i>) Didn't you send for him at once?
Mrs. Slater	Of course I did. Do you take me for a fool? I sent Henry at once for Dr. Pringle but he was out.
Ben	You should have gone for another. Eh, Eliza?
Mrs. Jordan	Oh, yes. It's a fatal mistake.
Mrs. Slater	Pringle attended him when he was alive and Pringle shall attend him when he's dead. That's professional etiquette.
Ben	Well, you know your own business best, but-
Mrs. Jordan	Yes—it's a fatal mistake.
Mrs. Slater	Don't talk so silly, Elizabeth. What good could a doctor have done?
Mrs. Jordan	Look at the many cases of persons being restored to life hours after they were thought to be gone!
Henry	That's when they've been drowned. Your father wasn't drowned, Elizabeth.
Ben	(<i>humorously</i>) There wasn't much fear of that. If there was one thing he couldn't bear it was water. (<i>He laughs, but no else does.</i>)
Mrs. Jordan	(<i>pained</i>) Ben! (<i>Ben is crushed at once.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	(<i>piqued</i>) I'm sure he washed regular enough.
Mrs. Jordan	If he did take a drop too much at times, we'll not dwell on that, now.
Mrs. Slater	Father had been 'merry' this morning. He went out soon after breakfast to pay his insurance.
Ben	My word, it's a good thing he did.
Mrs. Jordan	He always was thoughtful in that way. He was too honourable to have 'gone' without paying his premium.
Mrs. Slater	Well, he must have gone round to the 'Rine-o'-Bells' afterwards, for he came in as merry as a sand boy. I says, 'We're only waiting Henry to start dinner'. 'Dinner', he says 'I don't want no dinner. I'm going to bed!'

Ben	<i>(shaking his head)</i> Ah! Dear, dear.
Henry	And when I came in I found him undressed sure enough and snug in bed. <i>(He rises and stands on the hearth rug.)</i>
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(definitely)</i> Yes, he'd had a 'warning'. I'm sure of that. Did he know you?
Henry	Yes. He spoke to me.
Mrs. Jordan	Did he say he'd had a 'warning'?
Henry	No. He said, 'Henry, would you mind taking my boots off? I forgot before I got into bed'.
Mrs. Jordan	He must have been wandering.
Henry	No, he'd got 'em on all right.
Mrs. Slater	And when we'd finished dinner, I thought I'd take up a bit of something on a tray. He was lying there for all the world as if he was asleep, so I put the tray down on the bureau - <i>(correcting herself)</i> on the chest of drawers - and went to waken him. <i>(A pause.)</i> He was quite cold.
Henry	Then I heard Amelia calling for me, and I ran upstairs.
Mrs. Slater	Of course we could do nothing.
Mrs. Jordan	He was 'gone'?
Henry	There wasn't any doubt.
Mrs. Jordan	I always knew he'd go sudden in the end. <i>(A pause. They -wipe their eyes and sniff back tears.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	<i>(rising briskly at length in a business-like tone)</i> Well, will you go up and look at him now, or shall we have tea?
Mrs. Jordan	What do you say, Ben?
Ben	I'm not particular.
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(surveying the table)</i> Well, then, if the kettle's ready we may as well have tea first. <i>(Mrs. Slater puts the kettle on the fire and gets tea ready.)</i>
Henry	One thing we may as well decide now; the announcement in the papers.
Mrs. Jordan	I was thinking of that. What would you put?
Mrs. Slater	At the residence of his daughter, 235 Upper Corn bank Street, etc.
Henry	You wouldn't care for a bit of poetry?
Mrs. Jordan	I like 'Never Forgotten'. It's refined.
Henry	Yes, but it's rather soon for that.

Ben	You couldn't very well have forgot him the day after
Mrs. Slater	I always fancy, 'A loving husband, a kind father, and a faithful friend'
Ben	(doubtfully) Do you think that's right?
Henry	I don't think it matters whether it's right or not.
Mrs. Jordan	No, it's more for the look of the thing.
Henry	I saw a verse in the Evening News yesterday. Proper poetry it was. It rhymed. (He gets the paper and reads.) "Despised and forgotten by some you may be But the spot that contains you is sacred to we."
Mrs. Jordan	That'll never do. You don't say 'scared to we'.
Henry	It's in the paper.
Mrs. Slater	You wouldn't say it if you were speaking properly, but it's different in poetry.
Henry	Poetic license, you know.
Mrs. Jordan	No, that'll never do. We want a verse that says how much we loved him and refers to all his good qualities and says what a heavy loss we've had.
Mrs. Slater	You want a whole poem. That'll cost a good lot.
Mrs. Jordan	Well, we'll think about it after tea, and then we'll look through his bits of things and make a list of them. There's all the furniture in his room.
Henry	There's no jewellery or valuables of that sort.
Mrs. Jordan	Except his gold watch. He promised that to our Jimmy.
Mrs. Slater	Promised your Jimmy! I never heard of that.
Mrs. Jordan	Oh, but he did, Amelia, when he was living with us. He was very fond of Jimmy.
Mrs. Slater	Well. (<i>Amazed.</i>) I don't know!
Ben	Anyhow, there's his insurance money. Have you got the receipt for the premium he paid this morning?
Mrs. Slater	I've not seen it. (<i>Victoria, jumps up from the sofa and comes behind the table.</i>)
Victoria	Mother, I don't think Grandpa went to pay his insurance this morning.
Mrs. Slater	He went out.
Victoria	Yes, but he didn't go into the town. He met old Mr. Tattersall down the street, and they went off past St. Philip's Church.

Mrs. Slater	To the 'Ring-o'-Bells', I'll be bound.
Ben	The -Ring-o'-Bells'?
Mrs. Slater	That public-house that John Shorrocks's widow keeps. He is always hanging about there. Oh, if he hasn't paid it –
Ben	Do you think he hasn't paid it? Was it overdue?
Mrs. Slater	I should think it was overdue.
Mrs. Jordan	Something tells me he's not paid it. I've a 'warning', I know it; he's not paid it.
Ben	The drunken old beggar.
Mrs. Jordan	He's done it on purpose, just to annoy us.
Mrs. Slater	After all I've done for him, having to put up with him in the house these three years. It's nothing short of swindling.
Mrs. Jordan	I had to put up with him for five years.
Mrs. Slater	And you were trying to turn him over to us all the time.
Henry	But we don't know for certain that he's not paid the premium.
Mrs. Jordan	I do. It's come over me all at once that he hasn't.
Mrs. Slater	Victoria, run upstairs and fetch that bunch of keys that's on your grandpa's dressing table.
Victoria	<i>(timidly)</i> In Grandpa's room?
Mrs. Slater	Yes.
Victoria	I — I don't like to.
Mrs. Slater	Don't talk so silly. There's no one can hurt you. <i>(Victoria goes out reluctantly.)</i> We'll see if he's locked the receipt up in the bureau.
Ben	In where? In this thing? <i>(He rises and examines it.)</i>
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(also rising)</i> Where did you pick that up, Amelia? It's new since last I was here. <i>(They examine it closely.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	Oh—Henry picked it up one day.
Mrs. Jordan	I like it. It's artistic. Did you buy it at an auction?
Henry	Eh! Where did I buy it, Amelia?
Mrs. Slater	Yes, at an auction.
Ben	<i>(disparagingly)</i> Oh, second-hand.
Mrs. Jordan	Don't show your ignorance, Ben. All artistic things are second-hand. Look at those old masters. <i>(Victoria returns, very scared. She closes the door after her.)</i>
Victoria	Mother! Mother!
Mrs. Slater	What is it, child?

Victoria	Grandpa's getting up.
Ben	What?
Mrs. Slater	What do you say?
Victoria	Grandpa's getting up.
Mrs. Jordan	The child's crazy.
Mrs. Slater	Don't talk so silly. Don't you know your grandpa's dead?
Victoria	No, no; he's getting up. I saw him. <i>(They are transfixed with amazement: Ben and Mrs. Jordan left of Victoria clings to Mrs. Slater, right of table; Henry near fireplace.)</i>
Mrs. Jordan	You'd better go up and see for yourself, Amelia.
Mrs. Slater	Here — come with me, Henry. <i>(Henry draws back terrified.)</i>
Ben	<i>(suddenly)</i> Hist! Listen. <i>(They look at the door. A slight chuckling is heard outside. The door opens, revealing an old man clad in a faded but gay dressing-gown. He is in his stockinged feet. Although over seventy he is vigorous and well coloured; his bright, malicious eyes twinkle under his heavy, reddish-grey eyebrows. He is obviously either Grandfather Abel Merryweather or else his ghost.)</i>
Abel	What's the matter with little Vicky? <i>(He sees Ben and Mrs. Jordan; Hello! What brings you here? How's yourself, Ben? (Abel thrusts his hand at Ben, who skips back smartly and retreats with Mrs. Jordan to a safe distance below the sofa.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	<i>(approaching Abel gingerly)</i> Grandfather, is that you? <i>(She pokes him with her hand to see if he is solid.)</i>
Abel	Of course it's me. Don't do that, 'Melia. What the devil do you mean by this tomfoolery?
Mrs. Slater	<i>(to the others)</i> He's not dead.
Ben	Doesn't seem like it.
Abel	<i>(irritated by the whispering)</i> You've kept away long enough, Lizzie; and now you've come you don't seem over-pleased to see me.
Mrs. Jordan	You took us by surprise, father. Are you keeping quite well?
Abel	<i>(trying to catch the words.)</i> Eh? What?
Mrs. Jordan	Are you quite well?
Abel	Aye, I'm right enough but for a bit of a headache. I wouldn't mind betting that I'm not the first in this house to be carried to the cemetery. I always think Henry there looks none too healthy.
Mrs. Jordan	Well, I never! <i>(Abel crosses to the armchair and Henry gets out of his way to the front of the table.)</i>

Abel	'Melia, what the dickens did I do with my new slippers?
Mrs. Slater	<i>(confused)</i> Aren't they by the hearth, grandfather?
Abel	I don't see them. <i>(Observing Henry trying to remove the slippers.)</i> Why, you've got 'em on. Henry.
Mrs. Slater	<i>(promptly)</i> I told him to put them on to stretch them; they were that new and hard. Now, Henry. <i>(Mrs. Slater snatches the slippers from Henry and gives them to Abel, who puts them on and sits in armchair)</i>
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(to Ben)</i> Well, I don't call that delicate, stepping into a dead man's shoes in such haste. <i>(Henry goes up to the window and pulls up the blind Victoria runs across to Abel and sits on the floor at his feet.)</i>
Victoria	Oh, Grandpa, I'm so glad you're not dead.
Mrs. Slater	<i>(in a vindictive whisper)</i> Hold your tongue, Victoria.
Abel	Eh? What's that? Who's gone dead?
Mrs. Slater	<i>(Loudly)</i> Victoria says she's sorry about your head.
Abel	Ah, thank you, Vicky, but I'm feeling better.
Mrs. Slater	<i>(to Mrs. Jordan)</i> He's so fond of Victoria.
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(to Mrs. Slater)</i> Yes, he's fond of our Jimmy, too.
Mrs. Slater	You'd better ask him if he promised your Jimmy his gold watch.
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(disconcerted)</i> I couldn't just now. I don't feel equal to it.
Abel	Why, Ben, you're in mourning! And Lizzie too. And 'Melia, and Henry and little Vicky! Who's gone dead? It's someone in the family. <i>(He chuckles.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	No one you know, father. A relation of Ben's.
Abel	And what relation of Ben's?
Mrs. Slater	His brother.
Ben	<i>(to Mrs. Slater)</i> Hang it, I never had one.
Abel	Dear, dear. And what was his name, Ben?
Ben	<i>(at a loss)</i> Er - er. <i>(He crosses to front of table.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	<i>(R. of table, prompting)</i> Frederick.
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(L. of table, prompting)</i> Albert.
Ben	Er—Fed Alb—Issac.
Abel	Issac? And where did your brother Isaac die?
Ben	In — er — in Australia.
Abel	Dear, dear. He'd be older than you, eh?
Ben	Yes, five years.

Abel	Aye, aye. Are you going to the funeral?
Ben	Oh, yes.
Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Jordan	No, no.
Ben	No, of course not. (He retires to L.)
Abel	<i>(rising)</i> Well, I suppose you've only been waiting for me to begin tea. I'm feeling hungry.
Mrs. Slater	<i>(taking up the kettle)</i> I'll make tea.
Abel	Come along, now; sit you down and let's be jolly. <i>(Abel sits at the head of the table, facing spectators. Ben and Mrs. Jordan on the left. Victoria brings a chair and sits by Abel. Mrs. Slater and Henry sit on the right. Both the women are next to Abel.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	Henry, give grandpa some pie.
Abel	Thank you. I'll make a start. <i>(He helps himself to bread and butter.) (Henry serves the pie and Mrs. Slater pours out tea. Only Abel eats with any heartiness.)</i>
Ben	Glad to see you've got an appetite, Mr. Merryweather, although you've not been so well.
Abel	Nothing serious. I've been lying down for a bit.
Mrs. Slater	Been to sleep, grandfather?
Abel	No, I've not been to sleep.
Mrs. Slater	Oh!
Abel	<i>(eating and drinking)</i> I can't exactly call everything to mind, but I remember I was a bit dazed, like- I couldn't move an inch, hand or foot.
Ben	And could you see and hear, Mr. Merryweather?
Abel	Yes, but I don't remember seeing anything particular. Mustard Ben. <i>(Ben passes the mustard.)</i>
Mrs. Slater	Of course not, grandfather. It was all your fancy. You must have been asleep.
Abel	<i>(snappishly)</i> I tell you I wasn't asleep. 'Melia. Damn it, I ought to know.
Mrs. Jordan	Didn't you see Henry or Amelia come into the room?
Abel	<i>(scratching his head)</i> Now let me think----

Mrs. Slater	I wouldn't press him Elizabeth. Don't press him.
Henry	I wouldn't worry him.
Abel	<i>(suddenly recollecting)</i> Ay, begad! 'Melia and Henry, what the devil did you mean by shifting my bureau out of my bedroom? <i>(Henry and Mrs. Slater are speechless)</i> . D' you hear me? Henry! 'Melia!
Mrs. Jordan	What bureau was that, Father?
Abel	Why, my bureau, the one I bought -----
Mrs. Jordan	<i>(pointing to the bureau)</i> Was it that one, Father?
Abel	Ah, that's it. What's it doing here? Eh? <i>(A pause. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes six. Everyone looks at it.)</i> Drat me if that isn't my clock too. What the devil's been going on in this house? <i>(A slight pause.)</i>
Ben	Well, I'll be hanged.
Mrs. Jordan	I'll tell you what's been going on in this house. Father. Nothing short or robbery.
Mrs. Slater	Be quiet, Elizabeth.
Mrs. Jordan	I'll not be quiet. Oh, I call it double-----faced.
Henry	Not now, Elizabeth.
Mrs. Jordan	And you, too. Are you such a poor creature that you must do every dirty thing she tell you?
Mrs. Slater	<i>(rising)</i> Remember where you are, Elizabeth.
Henry	<i>(rising)</i> Come, come. No quarrelling.
Ben	<i>(rising)</i> My wife's every right to speak her own mind.
Mrs. Slater	Then she can speak it outside, not here.
Abel	<i>(rising: thumping the table)</i> Damn it all, will some one tell me what's been going on?
Mrs. Jordan	Yes, I will. I'll not see you robbed.
Abel	Who's been robbing me?
Mrs. Jordan	Amelia and Henry. They've stolen your clock and bureau. <i>(Working herself up.)</i> They sneaked into your room like a thief in the night and stole them after you were dead.
Henry and Mrs. Slater	Hush! Quiet, Elizabeth!
Mrs. Jordan	I'll not be stopped. After you were dead, I say.
Abel	After who was dead?
Mrs. Jordan	You.
Abel	But I'm not dead.

Mrs. Jordan	No, but they thought you were. (<i>A pause, Abel gazes round at them.</i>)
Abel	Oho! So that's why you're all in black today. You thought I was dead. (<i>He chuckles.</i>) That was a big mistake. (<i>He sits and resumes his tea.</i>)
Mrs. Slater	(<i>sobbing</i>) Grandfather.
Abel	It didn't take you long to start dividing my things between you.
Mrs. Jordan	No, father; you mustn't think that. Amelia was simply getting hold of them on her own account.
Abel	You always were a keen one, Amelia. I suppose you thought the will wasn't fair.
Henry	Did you make a will?
Abel	Yes, it was locked up in the bureau.
Mrs. Jordan	And what was in it, father?
Abel	That doesn't matter now. I'm thinking of destroying it and making another.
Mrs. Slater	(<i>sobbing</i>) Grandfather, you'll not be hard on me.
Abel	I'll trouble you for another cup of tea, 'Melia; two lumps and plenty of milk.
Mrs. Slater	With pleasure, Grandfather. (<i>She pours out the tea.</i>)
Abel	I don't want to be hard on anyone. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Since your mother died, I've lived part of the time with you, 'Melia, and part with you, Lizzie. Well, I shall make a new will, leaving all my bits of things to whomever I'm living with when I die. How does that strike you?
Henry	It's a bit of a lottery, like.
Mrs. Jordan	And who do you intend to live with from now?
Abel	(<i>drinking his tea</i>) I'm just coming to that.
Mrs. Jordan	You know, father, it's quite time you came to live with us again. We'd make you very comfortable.
Mrs. Slater	No, he's not been with us as long as he was with you.
Mrs. Jordan	I may be wrong, but I don't think father will fancy living on with you after what's happened today.
Abel	So you'd like to have me again, Lizzie?
Mrs. Jordan	You know we're ready for you to make your home with us for a long you please.
Abel	What do you say to that, 'Melia?

Mrs. Slater	All I can say is that Elizabeth's changed her mind in the last two years. (<i>Rising</i>). Grandfather, do you know what the quarrel between us was about?
Mrs. Jordan	Amelia, don't be a fool; sit down.
Mrs. Slater	No, if I'm not to have him, you shan't either. We quarrelled because Elizabeth said she wouldn't take you off our hands at any price. She said she'd enough of you to last a lifetime, and we'd got to keep you.
Abel	It seems to me that neither of you has any cause to feel proud about the way you've treated me.
Mrs. Slater	If I've done anything wrong. I'm sure I'm sorry for it.
Mrs. Jordan	And I can't say more than that, too.
Abel	It's a bit late to say it, now. You neither of you cared to put up with me.
Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Jordan	No, no grandfather.
Abel	Aye, you both say that because of what I've told you about leaving my money. Well, since you don't want me I'll go to someone that does.
Ben	Come Mr. Merryweather, you've got to live with one of your daughters.
Abel	I'll tell you what I've got to do. On Monday next I've got to do three things. I've got to go to the lawyer's and alter my will; and I've got to go to the insurance office and pay my premium; and I've got to go to St. Philip's Church and get married.
Ben and Henry	What!
Mrs. Jordan	Get married!
Mrs. Slater	He's out of his senses. (General consternation.)
Abel	I say I'm going to get married.
Mrs. Slater	Who to?
Abel	To Mrs. John Shorrocks who keeps the 'Ring-o'-Bells. We've had it fixed up a good while now, but I was keeping it for a pleasant surprise. (He rises.) I felt I was a bit of a burden to you, so I found someone who'd think it a pleasure to look after me. We shall be very glad to see you at the ceremony. (<i>He gets to the door.</i>) Till

Monday, then. Twelve o' clock at St. Philip's Church. (Opening the door.) It's a good thing you brought that bureau downstairs, 'Melia. It'll be handier to carry across to the 'Ring-o' -Bells on Monday. (He goes out.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Stanley Houghton (1881—1913)

Stanley Houghton was an English playwright and drama critic. He was born in Manchester (UK), where he worked in the cotton trade. Here he kept on his passion for the theatre. The *Dear Departed* (1908) was performed by Miss Horniman's Repertory Theatre. His plays such as **Independent Means (1909)**, **The Younger Generation (1910)**, **Master of the House (1910)**, **Fancy-Free (1911)** led up to the highly successful **Hindle Wakes (1912)**. His works often focused on contemporary social issues and human relationships, with a keen sense of satire, particularly focusing on the middle and working classes. He used humor to expose the flaws and contradictions in society, making his plays both thought-provoking and entertaining.



Glossary:

Words

Meanings

shabby	(of buildings, clothes, objects, etc.) in poor condition because they have been used a lot.
precocious	(sometimes disapproving) (of a child) having developed particular abilities and ways of behaving at a much younger age than usual
hearth	the floor at the bottom of a fireplace
gallivanting	to go from place to place enjoying yourself
speck	a small piece of dirt
bureau	a desk with drawers and usually a top that opens down to make a table to write on
stupefied	to surprise or shock somebody, to make somebody unable to think clearly
impassive	not showing any feeling or emotion
piqued	to make somebody annoyed or upset
sacred	very important and treated with great respect
malicious	having or showing hatred and desire to harm somebody or hurt their feelings

Reading and Critical Thinking

Comprehension

A. Answer the following questions:

1. How are family relationships portrayed in "The Dear Departed"?
2. Describe the character of Mrs. Slater regarding her plan to outshine the Jordans.
3. What is the central conflict in "The Dear Departed"?
4. How do the characters react when they find out Abel is still alive?
5. What is the significance of the title "The Dear Departed"?
6. How does Stanley Houghton use dialogues to reveal characters and advance the plot?
7. What is the message in this play?
8. What is the effect of the new will of grandfather on his daughters?

B. Critically evaluate the characters of Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Jordan.

C. Discuss the plot of the play. Use the 'Plot Diagram' given in the Unit 6 to discuss one-act play.

Vocabulary

A. Give the meanings and two synonyms of the following words using dictionary and thesaurus. Also use the words in your own sentences.

bureau, heartiness, jolly, delicate, fable, cemetery

B. Choose the correct option.

1. The antonym of shabby:
a. cooperative b. elegant c. jolly d. sincere
2. The antonym of impassive:
a. greedy b. fast c. coward d. expressive



For the Teacher:

- Facilitate students to read, view and analyse a variety of reading like poems of William Wordsworth, William Shakespear and John Keats, etc., short stories, advertisements in the newspapers, notices and emails, motivational books on personality development, more plays of Stanley Houghton and of other playwrights etc. from print material in the school library and internet sources.

3. The antonym of delicate:

- a. passionate b. loyal c. tough d. robust

4. The antonym of precocious:

- a. gifted b. advanced c. talented d. belated

5. The antonym of heartiness:

- a. indifference b. enthusiasm c. friendliness d. cheerfulness

C. Make as many words as you can from these root words.

An example is given for you.

Aud (hear): audio, audible, audition, audience, auditorium

colour: _____

count: _____

play: _____

work: _____

faith: _____

Grammar

Direct and Indirect Narration

Direct speech means the actual words of a speaker. These are enclosed with quotation marks, which are called inverted commas.

Indirect speech does not consist of the actual words of the speaker but conveys the full sense of what he said.

Examples

- 1. Direct speech:** He said, "I am happy."
Indirect speech: He said that he was happy.
- 2.** They said, "We love our country."
They said that they loved their country.
- 3.** Rubab said, "I will buy a computer."
Rubab said that she would buy a computer.
- 4.** She said, "She can drive a car."
She said that she could drive a car.
- 5.** Ali said, "Guests might come today."
Ali said that guests might come that day.
- 6.** They said, "They will come tomorrow."
They said that they would come the next day.

A. Recapitulate your previous knowledge about Direct and Indirect Narration and change the narration of the following sentences:

1. My father said to me, "My son, never cheat anyone."
2. My friend said to me, "Let us watch a documentary."
3. The captain said to the soldier angrily, "Always obey your seniors."
4. My mother said, "May you prosper!"
5. He said, "He did not go to school yesterday."
6. The officer said, "Call the next visitor."
7. The teacher said, "Whose pen is it?"
8. She said to me, "What are you looking for?"
9. Ali said, "Alas! I have failed the examination."
10. He said, "Where are you going?"
11. He said to me, "Please excuse me I am too tired to go market."
12. She said, "Listen! Can you hear someone coming?"
13. Our teacher said, "The Sun always rises from the east."
14. He requested his teacher to explain that theory again.
15. He applauded them that they had played well.
16. He bade me good morning.
17. He said to me, "When will you have completed your work?"

B. Change the following passage into Direct Speech.

The father explained to his daughter that the internet had many useful applications. He mentioned that it could be used for educational purposes, such as researching information for school projects and accessing online courses. He also told her that the internet was a valuable tool for communication, allowing people to stay in touch with friends and family through email and social media. However, he warned her that it was important to use the internet responsibly. He emphasized the need to be cautious about sharing personal information. He suggested that she should balance her internet use with other activities, such as reading books, playing outside, and spending time with family.



For the Teacher:

- Help students understand the rules of changing the direct speech into indirect speech and vice versa regarding present, past and perfect tenses, future, modals, time and questions, orders, requests, suggestions and advice in speech and writing.
- Engage students in changing narration with more diverse examples.

Oral Communication Skills

- A. Work in groups. Each group will discuss the theme/ message in this one-act play with regard to human relationships in a society.
- B. Watch this one-act play on YouTube. Comment on the characters of Mrs. Slater, Mrs. Jordan and Ben in your own words.
- C. Enact this one-act play in the class.
- D. What role does humor play in "The Dear Departed"?
- E. Can you relate any part of this one-act play to your own experiences with regard to family relationships or societal expectations?

Writing Skills

For effective, appealing and purposeful writing, the writer must focus on spelling, punctuation, captilization, and grammar which are mechanics for correct writing. Students are advised to consider all this while writing multiple paragraphs, essays, stories, poems or playscripts. You should do some writing regularly because you will learn to write by writing practice.



- A. Write a dialogue between a doctor and a patient highlighting the idea 'Prevention is better than cure'.

Tone: Tone is an author's or speaker's attitude, as revealed in selection of language or quality of voice.

Style: It means aspects of writing or speech which have an identifiable character generally used in a positive sense to express pleasing effects.

- C. Recapitulate the elements of a story.