

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY  
HYDERABAD 500 007



*School of Distance Education*

*POST-GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH*  
**(THIS ASSIGNMENT CONSISTS OF 08 PRINTED PAGES)**

**INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE**

**ASSIGNMENT - I**  
**(BASED ON BLOCK I, II and III)**

**Q- I)** In Block I, we examined our understanding of the term “literature” on the basis of definitions and views that have evolved over the ages. In addition to that, we also have been introduced to various schools of literary theories and interpretations. Now, based on the criteria discussed in the Block:

Read the passage/essay given below and decide whether it has “literary” qualities.  
Give reasons for your answer substantiating it with examples from the passage.  
(1000-1500 words)

*Of Marriage and Single Life*  
By- Francis Bacon

HE that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men; which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times; unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. Some there are, who though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences. 1 Nay, there are some other that account wife and children but as bills of charges. Nay more, there are some foolish rich covetous men, that take a pride in having no children, because they may be thought so much the richer. For perhaps they have heard some talk, Such an one is a great rich man, and another except to it, Yea, but he hath a great charge of children; as if it were an abatement to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous 2 minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away; and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen; for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates; for if they be facile and corrupt, you shall have a servant five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly in their hortatives put men in mind of their wives and children; and I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity;

and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hardhearted (good to make severe inquisitors), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. Grave natures, led by custom, and therefore constant, are commonly loving husbands, as was said of Ulysses, *vetulam suam prætulit immortalitati* [he preferred his old wife to immortality]. Chaste women are often proud and froward, as presuming upon the merit of their chastity. It is one of the best bonds both of chastity and obedience in the wife, if she think her husband wise; which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses. So as a man may have a quarrel 3 to marry when he will. But yet he 4 was reputed one of the wise men, that made answer to the question, when a man should marry,—A young man not yet, an elder man not at all. It is often seen that bad husbands have very good wives; whether it be that it raiseth the price of their husband's kindness when it comes; or that the wives take a pride in their patience. But this never fails, if the bad husbands were of their own choosing, against their friends' consent; for then they will be sure to make good their own folly.

**Q-II) Read the Extract**, attached with this question paper, which contains a one-act play, *The Beggar And The King* By Winthrop Parkhurst and then analyse the following:  
(1000 – 1500 words)

- a) Ethos of the play
- b) Lexis of the play
- c) Mode of Presentation of the play

**Q-III) Read the poem *If You Forget Me* by Pablo Neruda** given below and arrive at an interpretation of it based on an analysis of its imagery, syntax, diction and rhythm.  
(600-800 words)

#### **If You Forget Me by Pablo Neruda**

I want you to know  
one thing.

You know how this is:  
if I look  
at the crystal moon, at the red branch  
of the slow autumn at my window,  
if I touch  
near the fire  
the impalpable ash  
or the wrinkled body of the log,  
everything carries me to you,  
as if everything that exists,  
aromas, light, metals,  
were little boats  
that sail  
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,

if little by little you stop loving me  
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly  
you forget me  
do not look for me,  
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,  
the wind of banners  
that passes through my life,  
and you decide  
to leave me at the shore  
of the heart where I have roots,  
remember  
that on that day,  
at that hour,  
I shall lift my arms  
and my roots will set off  
to seek another land.

But  
if each day,  
each hour,  
you feel that you are destined for me  
with implacable sweetness,  
if each day a flower  
climbs up to your lips to seek me,  
ah my love, ah my own,  
in me all that fire is repeated,  
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,  
my love feeds on your love, beloved,  
and as long as you live it will be in your arms  
without leaving mine

**\*\*\*Extract For Question II**

**THE BEGGAR AND THE KING**  
A play in one-act  
By Winthrop Parkhurst

**CHARACTERS**

- THE KING OF A GREAT COUNTRY
- HIS SERVANT
- A BEGGAR

[A chamber in the palace overlooks a courtyard. The season is midsummer. The windows of the palace are open, and from a distance there comes the sound of a man's voice crying for bread.]

[THE KING sits in a golden chair. A golden crown is on his head, and he holds in his hand a sceptre which is also of gold. A SERVANT stands by his side, fanning him with an enormous fan of peacock feathers.]

THE BEGGAR: (*outside*) Bread. Bread. Bread. Give me some bread.

THE KING: (*languidly*) Who is that crying in the street for bread?

THE SERVANT: (*fanning*) O king, it is a beggar.

THE KING: Why does he cry for bread?

THE SERVANT: O king, he cries for bread in order that he may fill his belly.

THE KING: I do not like the sound of his voice. It annoys me very much. Send him away.

THE SERVANT: (*bowing*) O king, he *has* been sent away.

THE KING: If that is so, then why do I hear his voice?

THE SERVANT: O king, he has been sent away many times, yet each time that he is sent away he returns again, crying louder than he did before.

THE KING: He is very unwise to annoy me on such a warm day. He must be punished for his impudence. Use the lash on him.

THE SERVANT: O king, it has been done.

THE KING: Then bring out the spears.

THE SERVANT: O king, the guards have already bloodied their swords many times driving him away from the palace gates. But it is of no avail.

THE KING: Then bind him and gag him if necessary. If need be cut out his tongue. I do not like the sound of the fellow's voice. It annoys me very much.

THE SERVANT: O king, thy orders were obeyed even yesterday.

THE KING: (*frowning*) No. That cannot be. A beggar cannot cry for bread who has no tongue.

THE SERVANT: Behold he can--if he has grown another.

THE KING: What! Why, men are not given more than one tongue in a lifetime. To have more than one tongue is treason.

THE SERVANT: If it is treason to have more than one tongue, O king, then is this beggar surely guilty of treason.

THE KING: (*pompously*) The punishment for treason is death. See to it that the fellow is slain. And do not fan me so languidly. I am very warm.

THE SERVANT: (*fanning more rapidly*) Behold, O great and illustrious king, all thy commands were obeyed even yesterday.

THE KING: How! Do not jest with thy king.

THE SERVANT: If I jest, then there is truth in a jest. Even yesterday, O king, as I have told thee, the beggar which thou now hearest crying aloud in the street was slain by thy soldiers with a sword.

THE KING: Do ghosts eat bread? Forsooth, men who have been slain with a sword do not go about in the streets crying for a piece of bread.

THE SERVANT: Forsooth, they do if they are fashioned as this beggar.

THE KING: Why, he is but a man. Surely he cannot have more than one life in a lifetime.

THE SERVANT: Listen to a tale, O king, which happened yesterday.

THE KING: I am listening.

THE SERVANT: Thy soldiers smote this beggar for crying aloud in the streets for bread, but his wounds are already healed. They cut out his tongue, but he immediately grew another. They slew him, yet he is now alive.

THE KING: Ah! that is a tale which I cannot understand at all.

THE SERVANT: O king, it may be well.

THE KING: I cannot understand what thou sayest, either.  
THE SERVANT: O king, that may be well also.  
THE KING: Thou art speaking now in riddles. I do not like riddles. They confuse my brain.  
THE SERVANT: Behold, O king, if I speak in riddles it is because a riddle has come to pass.  
*[THE BEGGAR'S voice suddenly cries out loudly.]*  
THE BEGGAR: *(outside)* Bread. Bread. Give me some bread.  
THE KING: Ah! He is crying out again. His voice seems to me louder than it was before.  
THE SERVANT: Hunger is as food to the lungs, O king.  
THE KING: His lungs I will wager are well fed. Ha, ha!  
THE SERVANT: But alas! his stomach is quite empty.  
THE KING: That is not my business.  
THE SERVANT: Should I not perhaps fling him a crust from the window?  
THE KING: No! To feed a beggar is always foolish. Every crumb that is given to a beggar is an evil seed from which springs another fellow like him.  
THE BEGGAR: *(outside)* Bread. Bread. Give me some bread.  
THE SERVANT: He seems very hungry, O king.  
THE KING: Yes. So I should judge.  
THE SERVANT: If thou wilt not let me fling, him a piece of bread thine ears must pay the debts of thy hand.  
THE KING: A king can have no debts.  
THE SERVANT: That is true, O king. Even so, the noise of this fellow's begging must annoy thee greatly.  
THE KING: It does.  
THE SERVANT: Doubtless he craves only a small crust from thy table and he would be content.  
THE KING: Yea, doubtless he craves only to be a king and he would be very happy indeed.  
THE SERVANT: Do not be hard, O king. Thou art ever wise and just. This fellow is exceedingly hungry. Dost thou not command me to fling him just one small crust from the window?  
THE KING: My commands I have already given thee. See that the beggar is driven away.  
THE SERVANT: But alas! O king, if he is driven away he will return again even as he did before.  
THE KING: Then see to it that he is slain. I cannot be annoyed with the sound of his voice.  
THE SERVANT: But alas! O great and illustrious king, if he is slain he will come to life again even as he did before.  
THE KING: Ah! that is true. But his voice troubles me. I do not like to hear it.  
THE SERVANT: His lungs are fattened with hunger. Of a truth they are quite strong.  
THE KING: Well, propose a remedy to weaken them.  
THE SERVANT: A remedy, O king?  
*[He stops fanning.]*  
THE KING: That is what I said. A remedy--and do not stop fanning me. I am exceedingly warm.  
THE SERVANT: *(fanning vigorously)* A crust of bread, O king, dropped from yonder window--forsooth that might prove a remedy.  
THE KING: *(angrily)* I have said I will not give him a crust of bread. If I gave him a crust to-day he would be just as hungry again to-morrow, and my troubles would be as great as before.  
THE SERVANT: That is true, O king. Thy mind is surely filled with great learning.  
THE KING: Therefore, some other remedy must be found.  
THE SERVANT: O king, the words of thy illustrious mouth are as very meat-balls of wisdom.  
THE KING: *(musing)* Now let me consider. Thou sayest he does not suffer pain--  
THE SERVANT: Therefore he cannot be tortured.  
THE KING: And he will not die--  
THE SERVANT: Therefore it is useless to kill him.  
THE KING: Now let me consider. I must think of some other way.  
THE SERVANT: Perhaps a small crust of bread, O king--

THE KING: Ha! I have it. I have it. I myself will order him to stop.

THE SERVANT: (*horrified*) O king!

THE KING: Send the beggar here.

THE SERVANT: O king!

THE KING: Ha! I rather fancy the fellow will stop his noise when the king commands him to. Ha, ha, ha!

THE SERVANT: O king, thou wilt not have a beggar brought into thy royal chamber!

THE KING: (*pleased with his idea*) Yea. Go outside and tell this fellow that the king desires his presence.

THE SERVANT: O great and illustrious king, thou wilt surely not do this thing. Thou wilt surely not soil thy royal eyes by looking on such a filthy creature. Thou wilt surely not contaminate thy lips by speaking to a common beggar who cries aloud in the streets for bread.

THE KING: My ears have been soiled too much already. Therefore go now and do as I have commanded thee.

THE SERVANT: O great and illustrious king, thou wilt surely not--

THE KING: (*roaring at him*) I said, Go! (*THE SERVANT, abashed, goes out.*) Forsooth, I fancy the fellow will stop his bawling when I order him to. Forsooth, I fancy he will be pretty well frightened when he hears that the king desires his presence. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

THE SERVANT: (*returning*) O king, here is the beggar.

[*A shambling creature hung in filthy rags follows THE SERVANT slowly into the royal chamber.*]

THE KING: Ha! A magnificent sight, to be sure. Art thou the beggar who has been crying aloud in the streets for bread?

THE BEGGAR: (*in a faint voice, after a slight pause*) Art thou the king?

THE KING: I am the king.

THE SERVANT: (*aside to THE BEGGAR*) It is not proper for a beggar to ask a question of a king. Speak only as thou art spoken to.

THE KING: (*to THE SERVANT*) Do thou likewise. (*To THE BEGGAR*) I have ordered thee here to speak to thee concerning a very grave matter. Thou art the beggar, I understand, who often cries aloud in the streets for bread. Now, the complaint of thy voice annoys me greatly. Therefore, do not beg any more.

THE BEGGAR: (*faintly*) I--I do not understand.

THE KING: I said, do not beg any more.

THE BEGGAR: I--I do not understand.

THE SERVANT: (*aside to THE BEGGAR*) The king has commanded thee not to beg for bread any more. The noise of thy voice is as garbage in his ears.

THE KING: (*to THE SERVANT*) Ha! An excellent flower of speech. Pin it in thy buttonhole. (*To THE BEGGAR*) Thine ears, I see, are in need of a bath even more than thy body. I said, *Do not beg any more.*

THE BEGGAR: I--I do not understand.

THE KING: (*making a trumpet of his hands and shouting*). **DO NOT BEG ANY MORE.**

THE BEGGAR: I--I do not understand.

THE KING: Heavens! He is deafer than a stone wall.

THE SERVANT: O king, he cannot be deaf, for he understood me quite easily when I spoke to him in the street.

THE KING: (*to THE BEGGAR*) Art thou deaf? Canst thou hear what I am saying to thee now?

THE BEGGAR: Alas! I can hear every word perfectly.

THE KING: Fft! The impudence. Thy tongue shall be cut out for this.

THE SERVANT: O king, to cut out his tongue is useless, for he will grow another.

THE KING: No matter. It shall be cut out anyway. (*To THE BEGGAR*) I have ordered thee not to beg any more in the streets. What meanest thou by saying thou dost not understand?

THE BEGGAR: The words of thy mouth I can hear perfectly. But their noise is only a foolish tinkling in my ears.

THE KING: Fft! Only a--! A lash will tinkle thy hide for thee if thou dost not cure thy tongue of impudence. I, thy king, have ordered thee not to beg any more in the streets for bread. Signify, therefore, that thou wilt obey the orders of thy king by quickly touching thy forehead thrice to the floor.

THE BEGGAR: That is impossible.

THE SERVANT: (*aside to THE BEGGAR*) Come. It is not safe to tempt the patience of the king too long. His patience is truly great, but he loses it most wondrous quickly.

THE KING: Come, now: I have ordered thee to touch thy forehead to the floor.

THE SERVANT: (*nudging him*) And quickly.

THE BEGGAR: Wherefore should I touch my forehead to the floor?

THE KING: In order to seal thy promise to thy king.

THE BEGGAR: But I have made no promise. Neither have I any king.

THE KING: Ho! He has made no promise. Neither has he any king. Ha, ha, ha. I have commanded thee not to beg any more, for the sound of thy voice is grievous unto my ears. Touch thy forehead now to the floor, as I have commanded thee, and thou shall go from this palace a free man. Refuse, and thou wilt be sorry before an hour that thy father ever came within twenty paces of thy mother.

THE BEGGAR: I have ever lamented that he did. For to be born into this world a beggar is a more unhappy thing than any that I know--unless it is to be born a king.

THE KING: Fft! Thy tongue of a truth is too lively for thy health. Come, now, touch thy forehead thrice to the floor and promise solemnly that thou wilt never beg in the streets again. And hurry!

THE SERVANT: (*aside*) It is wise to do as thy king commands thee. His patience is near an end.

THE KING: Do not be afraid to soil the floor with thy forehead. I will graciously forgive thee for that. [*THE BEGGAR stands motionless.*]

THE SERVANT: I said, it is not wise to keep the king waiting.

[*THE BEGGAR does not move.*]

THE KING: Well? (*A pause.*) Well? (*In a rage*) WELL?

THE BEGGAR: O king, thou hast commanded me not to beg in the streets for bread, for the noise of my voice offends thee. Now therefore do I likewise command thee to remove thy crown from thy forehead and throw it from yonder window into the street. For when thou hast thrown thy crown into the street, then will I no longer be obliged to beg.

THE KING: Fft! *Thou* commandest *me!* *Thou*, a beggar from the streets, commandest *me*, a king, to remove my crown from my forehead and throw it from yonder window into the street!

THE BEGGAR: That is what I said.

THE KING: Why, dost thou not know I can have thee slain for such words?

THE BEGGAR: No. Thou canst not have me slain. The spears of thy soldiers are as straws against my body.

THE KING: Ha! We shall see if they are. We shall see!

THE SERVANT: O king, it is indeed true. It is even as he has told thee.

THE BEGGAR: I have required thee to remove thy crown from thy forehead. If so be thou wilt throw it from yonder window into the street, my voice will cease to annoy thee any more. But if thou refuse, then thou wilt wish thou hadst never had any crown at all. For thy days will be filled with a terrible boding and thy nights will be full of horrors, even as a ship is full of rats.

THE KING: Why, this is insolence. This is treason!

THE BEGGAR: Wilt thou throw thy crown from yonder window?

THE KING: Why, this is high treason!

THE BEGGAR: I ask thee, wilt thou throw thy crown from yonder window?

THE SERVANT: (*aside to THE KING*) Perhaps it were wise to humor him, O king. After thou hast thrown thy crown away I can go outside and bring it to thee again.

THE BEGGAR: Well? Well? (*He points to the window.*) Well?

THE KING: No! I will not throw my crown from that window--no, nor from any other window. What! Shall I obey the orders of a beggar? Never!

THE BEGGAR: (*preparing to leave*) Truly, that is spoken like a king. Thou art a king, so thou wouldst prefer to lose thy head than that silly circle of gold that so foolishly sits upon it. But it is well. Thou art a king. Thou couldst not prefer otherwise.

*[He walks calmly toward the door.]*

THE KING: (*to THE SERVANT*) Stop him! Seize him! Does he think to get off so easily with his impudence!

THE BEGGAR: (*coolly*) One of thy servants cannot stop me. Neither can ten thousand of them do me any harm. I am stronger than a mountain. I am stronger than the sea!

THE KING: Ha! We will see about that, we will see about that. (*To THE SERVANT*) Hold him, I say. Call the guards. He shall be put in chains.

THE BEGGAR: My strength is greater than a mountain and my words are more fearful than a hurricane. This servant of thine cannot even touch me. With one breath of my mouth I can blow over this whole palace.

THE KING: Dost thou hear the impudence he is offering me? Why dost thou not seize him? What is the matter with thee? Why dost thou not call the guards?

THE BEGGAR: I will not harm thee now. I will only cry aloud in the streets for bread wherewith to fill my belly. But one day I will not be so kind to thee. On that day my mouth will be filled with a rushing wind and my arms will become as strong as steel rods, and I will blow over this palace, and all the bones in thy foolish body I will snap between my fingers. I will beat upon a large drum and thy head will be my drumstick. I will not do these things now. But one day I will do them. Therefore, when my voice sounds again in thine ears, begging for bread, remember what I have told thee. Remember, O king, and be afraid!

*[He walks out. THE SERVANT, struck dumb, stares after him. THE KING sits in his chair, dazed.]*

THE KING: (*suddenly collecting his wits*) After him! After him! He must not be allowed to escape! After him!

THE SERVANT: (*faltering*) O king--I cannot seem to move.

THE KING: Quick, then. Call the guards. He must be caught and put in chains. Quick, I say. Call the guards!

THE SERVANT: O king--I cannot seem to call them.

THE KING: How! Art thou dumb? Ah!

*[THE BEGGAR'S voice is heard outside.]*

THE BEGGAR: Bread. Bread. Give me some bread.

THE KING: Ah. *[He turns toward the window, half-frightened, and then, almost instinctively, raises his hands toward his crown, and seems on the point of tossing it out the window. But with an oath he replaces it and presses it firmly on his head.]* How! Am I afraid of a beggar!

THE BEGGAR: (*continuing outside*) Bread. Bread. Give me some bread.

THE KING: (*with terrible anger*) Close that window!

*[THE SERVANT stands stupidly, and the voice of THE BEGGAR grows louder as the curtain falls.]*

CURTAIN



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INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

ASSIGNMENT - II  
(BASED ON BLOCK IV and V)

**Q-I)** Read the short story *A Matter of Husbands* by Ferenc Molnar provided with this assignment as an extract and analyse the following aspects of the story:

- a) Characterisation
- b) Setting
- c) Structure
- d) Conclusion

(1000)

\*\*\***(EXTRACT)**

**A MATTER OF HUSBANDS**

(A play in one-act)

By Ferenc Molnar

Translated by Benjamin Glazer

**CHARACTERS**

- Famous Actress
- Earnest Young Woman

*[The scene is a drawing room, but a screen, a sofa and a chair will do, provided that the design and colorings are exotic and suggestive of the apartment of the famous Hungarian actress in which this dialogue takes place. The time is late afternoon, and when the curtain rises the Earnest Young Woman is discovered, poised nervously on the edge of a gilt chair. It is plain she has been sitting there a long time. For perhaps the fiftieth time she is studying the furnishings of the room and regarding the curtained door with a glance that would be impatient if it were not so palpably frightened. And now and then she licks her lips as if her mouth was dry. She is dressed in a very modest frock and wears her hat and furs. At last the Famous Actress enters through the curtained door at the right which leads to her boudoir.]*

FAMOUS ACTRESS: You wished to see me?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: *[She gulps emotionally]* Yes.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: What can I do for you?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: *[Extends her arms in a beseeching gesture]* Give me back my husband!

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Give you back your husband!

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes. *[The FAMOUS ACTRESS only stares at her in speechless bewilderment.]* You are wondering which one he is.... He is a blond man, not very tall, wears spectacles. He is a lawyer, your manager's lawyer. Alfred is his first name.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Oh! I have met him--yes.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: I know you have. I implore you, give him back to me.

*[There is a long pause.]*

FAMOUS ACTRESS: You mustn't mistake my silence for embarrassment. I am at a loss because--I don't quite see how I can give you back your husband when I haven't got him to give.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: You just admitted that you knew him.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: That scarcely implies that I have taken him from you. Of course I know him. He drew up my last contract. And it seems to me I have seen him once or twice since then--backstage. A rather nice-spoken, fair-haired man. Did you say he wore spectacles?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I don't remember him with spectacles.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: He probably took them off. He wanted to look his best to you. He is in love with you. He never takes them off when I'm around. He doesn't care how he looks when I'm around. He doesn't love me. I implore you, give him back to me!

FAMOUS ACTRESS: If you weren't such a very foolish young woman I should be very angry with you. Wherever did you get the idea that I have taken your husband from you?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: He sends you flowers all the time.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: That's not true.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: It is!

FAMOUS ACTRESS: It isn't. He never sent me a flower in all his life. Did he tell you he did?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: No. I found out at the florist's. The flowers are sent to your dressing room twice a week and charged to him.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: That's a lie.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Do you mean to say that *I* am lying?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I mean to say that *someone* is lying to you.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*Fumbles in her bag for a letter*] And what about this letter?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Letter?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: He wrote it to you. And he said--

FAMOUS ACTRESS: He wrote it to me? Let me see.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: No. I'll read it to you. [*She opens it and reads mournfully*] "My darling, Shan't be able to call for you at the theater tonight. Urgent business. A thousand apologies. Ten thousand kisses. Alfred."

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Oh!

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: I found it on his desk this morning. He probably intended to send it to the theater by messenger. But he forgot it. And I opened it. [*She weeps.*]

FAMOUS ACTRESS: You mustn't cry.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*Sobbing*] Why mustn't I? You steal my husband and I mustn't cry! Oh, I know how little it means to you. And how easy it is for you. One night you dress like a royal princess, and the next night you undress like a Greek goddess. You blacken your eyebrows and redden your lips and wax your lashes and paint your face. You have cosmetics and bright lights to make you seem beautiful. An author's lines to make you seem witty and wise. No wonder a poor, simple-minded lawyer falls in love with you. What chance have I against you in my cheap little frock, my own lips and eyebrows, my own unstudied ways? I don't know how to strut and pose and lure a man. I haven't got Mr. Shakespeare to write beautiful speeches for me. In reality you may be more stupid than I am, but I admit that when it comes to alluring men I am no match for you.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: [*Without anger, slowly, regards her appraisingly*] This is a very interesting case.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: What is?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Yours.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Mine? What do you mean?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I mean that I never received a flower, or a letter, or anything else from your husband. Tell me, haven't you and your husband been getting on rather badly of late?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes, of course.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: You used to be very affectionate to each other?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Why, yes.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: And of late you have been quite cold?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Of course! A typical case.... My dear, if you knew how often we actresses meet this sort of thing! It is perfectly clear that your husband has been playing a little comedy to make you jealous, to revive your interest in him.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*Dumbfounded, staring*] Do you really think that? Do you mean to say such a thing has happened to you before?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Endless times. It happens to every actress who is moderately pretty and successful. It is one of the oldest expedients in the world, and we actresses are such conspicuous targets for it! There is scarcely a man connected with the theater who doesn't make use of us in that way some time or another--authors, composers, scene designers, lawyers, orchestra leaders, even the managers themselves. To regain a wife or sweetheart's affections all they need to do is invent a love affair with one of us. The wife is always so ready to believe it. Usually we don't know a thing about it. But even when it is brought to our notice we don't mind so much. At least we have the consolation of knowing that we are the means of making many a marriage happy which might otherwise have ended in the divorce court.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: But how--how could I know?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: [*With a gracious little laugh*] There, dear, you mustn't apologize. You couldn't know, of course. It seems so plausible. You fancy your husband in an atmosphere of perpetual temptation, in a backstage world full of beautiful sirens without scruples or morals. One actress, you suppose, is more dangerous than a hundred ordinary women. You hate us and fear us. None understands that better than your husband, who is evidently a very cunning lawyer. And so he plays on your fear and jealousy to regain the love you deny him. He writes a letter and leaves it behind him on the desk. Trust a lawyer never to do that unintentionally. He orders flowers for me by telephone in the morning and probably cancels the order the moment he reaches his office. By the way, hasn't he a lock of my hair?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes. In his desk drawer. I brought it with me.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Yes. They bribe my hair-dresser to steal from me. It is a wonder I have any hair left at all.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*Happily*] Is that how he got it?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I can't imagine how else. Tell me, hasn't he left any of my love letters lying around?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*In alarm*] No.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Don't be alarmed. I haven't written him any.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Then what made you--?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I might have if he had come to me frankly and said: "I say, Sara, will you do something for me? My wife and I aren't getting on so well. Would you write me a passionate love letter that I can leave lying around at home where she may find it?" I should certainly have done it for him. I'd have written a letter that would have made you weep into your pillow for a fortnight. I wrote ten like that for a very eminent playwright once. But he had no luck with them. His wife was such a proper person she returned them all to him unread.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: How clever you are! How good!

FAMOUS ACTRESS: I'm neither better nor worse than any other girl in the theater. Even though you do consider us such monsters.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: [*Contritely*] I have been a perfect fool.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Well, you do look a bit silly, standing there with tears in your eyes, and your face flushed with happiness because you have discovered that a little blond man with spectacles loves you, after all. My dear, no man deserves to be adored as much as that. But then it's your own affair, isn't it?

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: Yes.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Yet I want to give you a parting bit of advice: don't let him fool you like this again.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: He won't. Never fear!

FAMOUS ACTRESS: No matter what you may find in his pockets--letters, handkerchiefs, my photograph, no matter what flowers he sends, or letters he writes, or appointments he makes--don't be taken in a second time.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: You may be sure of that. And you won't say anything to him about my coming here, will you?

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Not a word. I'm angry with him for not having come to me frankly for permission to use my name the way he did.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: You are a dear, and I don't know how to thank you.

FAMOUS ACTRESS: Now you mustn't begin crying all over again.

EARNEST YOUNG WOMAN: You have made me so happy!

*[She kisses the FAMOUS ACTRESS impetuously, wetting her cheek with tears; then she rushes out. The door closes behind her. There is a pause.]*

FAMOUS ACTRESS: [*Goes to the door of her boudoir, calls*] All right, Alfred. You can come in now. She has gone.

### THE CURTAIN FALLS

**Q- II** Write an elaborative essay on the role of women characters in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Examine the roles of Marlow and Kurtz make a case for either or both of them as the protagonists of the novel. (1000 words)

