	INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2026-27) CLASS – XI QB – MOTHER'S DAY

J.B. Priestley's one-act play **"Mother's Day"** breaks down the social satire into key themes, characters, and plot points.

Play Overview

- **Author:** J.B. Priestley
- **Genre:** Social satire and comedy
- **Setting:** The living room of the Pearson family's house in a London suburb
- **Core Theme:** Mothers are frequently taken for granted; families must respect and appreciate their unpaid labour and emotional contributions.

Main Characters

- **Annie Pearson:** A pleasant, gentle, and overworked mother who is treated like a servant by her family.
- **Mrs. Fitzgerald:** Annie's bold, fortune-telling neighbour with a strong, assertive personality (learned magic/tricks in the East).
- **George Pearson:** Annie's pompous husband who cares more about his club standing and what others think of him than his wife's feelings.
- **Doris Pearson:** Annie's self-absorbed 20-something daughter who expects her mother to iron her yellow silk dress.
- **Cyril Pearson:** Annie's lazy son who orders his mother around as if she has no life of her own.

Plot Structure & Key Events

- **The Problem:** Annie yields to her family's demands, serving them endlessly while they run off to have fun or treat her with disrespect.
- **The Intervention:** Mrs. Fitzgerald visits, sees how Annie is mistreated, and uses magic/spells to **swap their bodies and personalities**.
- **The Lesson (Body Swap Action):** *As Mrs. Fitzgerald in Annie's body:* Annie refuses to iron Doris's dress, mocks Cyril's work habits, and shatters George's ego by revealing that people at the club laugh behind his back. *As Annie in Mrs. Fitzgerald's body:* The real Annie watches in horror/awe as her family is shocked into reality and brought to tears.
- **The Resolution:** The personalities swap back to normal. The family is humbled, stops bossing Annie around, and decides to stay home to spend a quiet evening together playing a game of Rummy.

Morals & Key Takeaways

- **Appreciation:** Love and sacrifice must be matched with gratitude and mutual respect.
- **Equality at Home:** Housework is real work; a mother is a person, not an automated servant.
- **Assertiveness:** Sometimes boundaries and firmness are required to reset toxic family dynamics.

Plot Summary

1. The Problem

Mrs. Pearson spends all day doing endless chores for her husband and grown children. Despite working harder than an 8-hour shift without any wages, she is treated like an unpaid servant. Her family comes and goes as they please, ordering her around without a word of thanks.

2. The Intervention

Her neighbour, Mrs. Fitzgerald, visits and notices how miserable Annie is. Mrs. Fitzgerald uses a magic spell to swap their personalities and bodies. Now, Mrs. Fitzgerald's bold and dominant personality resides inside Mrs. Pearson's body (while Annie's mind is trapped in Mrs. Fitzgerald's body).

3. Shocking the Family

- **Doris** comes home and rudely demands her tea and ironed dress. The new "Mrs. Pearson" calmly refuses, smokes a cigarette, drinks stout (dark beer), and mocks Doris's date (Charlie Spence) to tears.
- **Cyril** enters next, demanding tea and order. He is stunned when he is told there is no tea and that everyone will start looking after themselves. She points out that she works just as many hours as they do, only without pay or respect.
- **George** arrives home, upset that his wife did not make him tea and surprised to see her drinking stout. She casually cuts him down to size, revealing that the men at his club laugh behind his back and call him "Pompy-ompy Pearson" because he is slow and pompous.

4. The Resolution

Overwhelmed and broken of their arrogant habits, the family sits in stunned silence. Mrs. Fitzgerald (in her own body) returns and helps reverse the spell, putting each woman back into her rightful body.

However, the lesson stays put. When the spell breaks, Mrs. Pearson retains her firm, self-respecting demeanor. Instead of demanding things from her, a chastised and cooperative family humbly agrees to stay home, cook the supper together, and play a game of rummy with her.

Core Themes

- **Recognition of Emotional Labor:** Unpaid domestic work done by mothers holds immense value and should never be taken for granted.
- **Mutual Respect:** Family dynamics function best when built on equality and shared responsibilities rather than servitude.
- **Self-Assertion:** Standing up for one's dignity is necessary when kindness is repeatedly exploited.

This play, written in the 1950s, is a humorous and satirical depiction of the status of the mother in the family.

(i) What are the issues it raises?

Ans. The play has thrown light upon crucial and common life issues. The first and foremost concern is the plight of housewives in a household. The husband or the children, all 8-hour shifts a day people overlook the housewife's 24 hour efforts to make their life comfortable. A housewife constantly does work she is never appreciated and accounted for. The other subject being talked about in the lesson is the reason why a housewife's efforts are overlooked. It is because they never boast about what they do and don't ask for anything in return. They don't even speak up for the respect they deserve just because they do not want to make their families realize they are insensitive.

One more issue that has been highlighted by somehow lost its essence is that, mothers and wives shower love unconditionally and unapologetically. The flow of their love is one-way. They never ask for anything in return even if it is the simple things they want like their family to spend time with them. The lesson talks about how precious mothers and housewives are and how they deserve a lot more than that is given.

2. Is drama a good medium for conveying a social message? Discuss.

Ans. Drama is a mode of fictional representation through dialogue and performance. Since it consists of both visual and hearing elements, it is known to have a substantial effect on the minds of people. The effect is known to be better than something that is read or just simply heard. Thus, if a social message that holds a lot of importance, is brought to life through drama, it holds immense potential for change. The play "Mother's Day" makes the viewers/readers hear what is unsaid, feel what is not explicitly mentioned and conclude what is right or wrong on their own. This motivates them to bring changes in their own lives. This is the power of Drama. Hence, drama can be considered a medium good enough for conveying a social message.

Mother's Day extract based questions answers

A. *''[As she is about to rise, Mrs. Fitzgerald reaches out across the table and pulls her down.]*

Mrs. Fitzgerald: Let 'em wait or look after themselves for once. This is where your foot goes down. Start now. [She lights a cigarette from the one she has just finished.]

Mrs. Pearson: [Embarrassed]

Mrs. Fitzgerald—I know you mean well—in fact, I agree with you— but I just can't—and it's no use trying to make me. If I promise you I'd really have it out with them, I know I wouldn't be able to keep my promise.

Mrs. Fitzgerald: Then let me do it.

Mrs. Pearson [Flustered]: Oh no—thank you very much, Mrs Fitzgerald—but that wouldn't do at all. It couldn't possibly be somebody else— they'd resent it at once and wouldn't listen— and really I couldn't blame them. I know I ought to do it—but you see how it is? [She

looks apologetically across the table, smiling rather miserably.]
Mrs. Fitzgerald [Coolly: You haven't got the idea.''

1 What is the contrast in the personalities of the two women?
(A) Polite vs Assertive
(B) Gentle vs Sensible
(C) Scared vs Brave
(D) They have nothing to contrast
Ans.(A) Polite vs Assertive

2 Which of the following explains "This is where your foot goes down"?
(A) To physically fix your foot down to the floor
(B) To restraint yourself against a strong person
(C) To adopt a firm policy when faced with opposition or disobedience
(D) To give into what is expected
Ans. (C) To adopt a firm policy when faced with opposition or disobedience

3 Who are the women talking about in the passage above?
(A) About a neighboring family
(B) About Mrs. Fitzgeralds's family
(C) About a group of their friends
(D) About Mrs. Pearson's family
Ans. (D) About Mrs. Pearson's family

4 What does Mrs. Fitzgerald mean by 'let me do it'? Select the option that explains it.
(A) She wants to confront Mrs. Pearson's family
(B) She has an unusual solution to the problem
(C) It is unclear that she wants to help
(D) She wants to teach confrontational skills to Mrs. Pearson
Ans. (B) She has an unusual solution to the problem

5 Why does Mrs. Fitzgerald's idea embarrass Mrs. Pearson?
(A) Because she knows her family will disrespect her
(B) Because she knows that it would be useless
(C) Because she doesn't want anything to change
(D) Because she hadn't expected such a solution
Ans. (B) Because she knows that it would be useless

B. *'Mrs. Pearson: I might. Who d'you think?*
Doris [Staring at her]: Mum—what's the matter with you?
Mrs. Pearson: Don't be silly.
Doris: [Indignantly] It's not me that's being silly— and I must say it's a bit much when I've been working hard all day and you can't even bother to get my tea ready. Did you hear what I said about my yellow silk?
Mrs. Pearson: No. Don't you like it now? I never did.
Doris [Indignantly]: Of course I like it. And I'm going to wear it tonight. So I want it ironed.
Mrs. Pearson: Want it ironed? What d'you think it's going to do—iron itself?'

1 Identify the tone in which Mrs. Pearson talks.
(A) Cool and incisive
(B) Flattering and apologetic
(C) Brave and strong
(D) Taunting and angry
Ans. (A) Cool and incisive

2 Why is Doris consistently reacting 'indignantly' towards her mother Mrs. Pearson?
(A) The mother is not listening to her
(B) The mother is angry at her as well

(C) The mother is acting unusual
(D) All of the above
Ans. (C) The mother is acting unusual
3 Choose the words that describe Doris's personality, on the basis of the passage.
I. Spoilt
II. Independent
III. Bad tempered
IV. Kind
(A) I and II
(B) I and III
(C) II and IV
(D) II and III
Ans. (B) I and III
4 What does the passage reflect upon the relationship between Doris and Mrs. Pearson?
(A) Doris only talks to her mother to get her work done
(B) Doris cherishes her mother and likes to spend time with her
(C) Doris uses her mother's dresses to look better
(D) Both (b) and (c)
Ans. (A) Doris only talks to her mother to get her work done
5 Mrs. Pearson is …… Doris for getting over dependent on her.
(A) taunting
(B) scolding
(C) hinting
(D) comical
Ans. (B) scolding
C. *No doubt about it at all. Who's the better for being spoilt; grown man, lad or girl? Nobody. You think it does them good when you run after them all the time, take their orders as if you were the servant in the house, stay at home every night while they go out enjoying themselves? Never in all your life. It's the ruin of them as well as you. Husbands, sons, daughters should be taking notice of wives and mothers, not giving them orders and treating them like dirt. And don't tell me you don't know what I mean, for I know more than you've told me.*
1 Who is the speaker of these lines?
A) Cyril
B) Doris
C) George
D) None of these
Ans. D) None of these
2 How do the children of Mrs. Pearson treat her?
A) Like servant
B) Like dirt
C) Pay no attention to her
D) All of these
Ans. D) All of these
3 Why did Mrs. Fitzgerald have to speak the above paragraph to Mrs. Pearson?
A) Mrs. Pearson's family was treating her poorly
B) Mrs. Pearson was naive
C) Mrs. Pearson's family paid no attention to her
D) Only A and C
Ans. D) Only A and C

4 Who deals poorly with Mrs. Pearson?
A) Cyril
B) Doris
C) George
D) All of these
Ans. D) All of these
D. *Doris: Mum, you'll have to iron my yellow silk. I must wear it tonight. [She now sees what is happening, and is astounded.] What are you doing?*
Mrs. Pearson: [not even looking up] What do you think I'm doing, whitewashing the ceiling?
Doris: But you're smoking!
Mrs. Pearson: That's right, dear. No law against it, is there?
Doris: But I thought you didn't smoke.
1 Who is Doris?
A) Mrs. Pearson's son
B) Mrs. Pearson's daughter
C) Mrs. Pearson's husband
D) Mrs. Pearson's neighbour
Ans. B) Mrs. Pearson's daughter
2 Where does Doris want to go?
A) To meet Danny Casey
B) To meet Geoff
C) To meet George
D) To meet Charlie Spence
Ans. D) To meet Charlie Spence
3 What is the tone of 'Doris' in 'But you are smoking"?
A) Astounding
B) Ravishing
C) Pleasing
D) Rejoicing
Ans. A) Astounding
4 What made Dorris astounded?
A) Drinking of her mother
B) Smoking of her mother
C) Gambling of her mother
D) None of these
Ans. B) Smoking of her mother
E. *CYRIL: [briskly] Hello-Mum. Tea ready?*
MRS PEARSON: No.
CYRIL: [moving to the table; annoyed] Why not?
MRS PEARSON: [coolly] I couldn't bother.
CYRIL: Feeling off- colour or something?
MRS PEARSON: Never felt better in my life.
CYRIL: [aggressively] What's the idea then?
MRS PEARSON: Just a change.
CYRIL: [briskly] Well, snap out of it, Ma, and get cracking. Haven't too much time.
1 Who is Cyril?
A) Mrs. Pearson's son
B) Mrs. Pearson's daughter
C) Mrs. Pearson's husband

4) Mrs. Pearson's neighbour

Ans. A) Mrs. Pearson's son

2 What does Cyril want from Mrs. Pearson?

A) Coffee

B) Beer

C) Drink

D) Tea

Ans. D) Tea

3 What does feeling 'Off-colour' mean?

A) Slightly confident

B) Slightly sad

C) Slightly ill

D) Slightly mad

Ans. C) Slightly ill

4 Who had exchanged personality with Mrs. Pearson?

A) Cyril

B) Doris

C) George

D) Mrs. Fitzgerald

Ans. D) Mrs. Fitzgeral

Q1. How did Mrs. Fitzgerald utilized her husband's posting in the East?

Answer. Mrs. Fitzgerald's husband was stationed in the East (British colonies in Asia) for a period of twelve years. She made the most of her time there by learning fortune telling and magic spells to exchange personalities. She used this knowledge to help her resolve family problems by temporarily exchanging her strong personality for Mrs. Annie Pearson's weak personality.

Q2. What advice did Mrs. Fitzgerald give to Annie after reversion to their original personalities??

Answer Mrs Fitzgerald advises Mrs Pearson not to go soft on the members of her family again. She should not start explaining or apologizing. She should give them a look or a rough tone of voice now and then to suggest that she might be tough with them if she wanted to be so.

Q3. "Then let me do it." What did Mrs Fitzgerald want to do?

Answer. Annie was treated horribly at home. Her family mistreated her. Annie, on the other hand, couldn't even raise her voice, let alone teach her family a lesson. Mrs Fitzgerald was concerned about her friend and wanted her to be respected. She suggested that if Annie couldn't handle them, she would teach them a lesson by changing her behaviour temporarily.

Q4. Who is the first one to face the mother's ire and how?

Answer. Annie's daughter, Doris, is the first to face her wrath (anger). She returns home and inquires about her yellow dress. Mrs. Fitzgerald, in Annie's body, does not even pay close attention to her. Doris inquires about tea, to which Mrs. Fitzgerald responds that she should make it herself. She even mocks her boyfriend, and Doris begins to cry as a result of her unusual behaviour.

Q5. Who is Cyril? How does he behave with his mother?

Answer. Cyril is Annie's son. He shows no regard for his mother. He desires that whatever he orders his mother to do be completed as soon as possible. He has no concern for his mother and works eight hours a day to demonstrate that he is a busy man.

Q6. Mention some remarkable changes in Mrs Annie Pearson's behavior that shocked both Doris and Cyril. What possible reasons for this change were thought of by her

children?
Answer. Mrs Annie Pearson's behaviour had changed dramatically, shocking both of her children.
She was smoking (which she had never done before her family) and playing cards with herself, both of which were unusual.
She had not done any of her usual tasks, such as making tea for the family or ironing their clothes, and
the children assumed that she had either hit her head so hard that it had affected her brain or that she had gone insane.
Q7. How does Annie plan to spend her weekends in future?
Answer. Annie informs her children that she will also work only eight hours per day and will take two days off each week, Saturday and Sunday. She stated that she would only do some work on these days, depending on how she was treated and whether or not they requested her to do the work.
Q8. George was angry that there was no tea even though he didn't want any. What does this reflect about his character?
Answer. George arrived home and announced that he would not be having tea. His wife, on the other hand, rudely responded that she had not bothered to prepare any in the first place. Even though he didn't want to drink tea, he became agitated. This demonstrates that he is domineering and self-centered, in addition to expecting his wife to act as his servant.
Q9. What change can be seen in Annie's family in the end?
Answer. Following Mrs. Fitzgerald's rude and rough treatment, all of the family members respond appropriately to Mrs. Annie Pearson's smile and decide to stay and spend time with her. They also responded appropriately to everything she says.
Q10. Mrs. Annie Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald are totally opposite to each other in their attitude. Show the difference in their personalities.
Answer. Mrs. Annie Pearson is submissive, soft-spoken, and concerned, as she is treated more like a slave than a mother or wife. Mrs Fitzgerald is well-versed in many arts, assertive and firm in her beliefs, and knows how to get people to behave properly. Annie does not want to hurt people, but Mrs Fitzgerald is willing to go to any length to discipline them, even if it means hurting their feelings.

1. Assertion (A): Mrs. Fitzgerald uses her magic, learned in the East, to swap her personality and body with Mrs. Annie Pearson.

Reason (R): Mrs. Fitzgerald wants to permanently live Annie's life to escape her own abusive and difficult husband, Colonel Fitzgerald.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is true but R is false

D. A is false but R is true

2. Assertion (A): George Pearson returns home deeply upset and humiliated after visiting the local club.

Reason (R): The club members mock him and call him 'Pompy-ompy Pearson' behind his back because they think he is pompous and slow.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is true but R is false

D. A is false but R is true

3. Assertion (A): Doris Pearson immediately understands and appreciates the underlying reasons for her mother's sudden rebellious behaviour.

Reason (R): The children and husband in the Pearson household are completely accustomed to taking Mrs. Pearson's selfless labour for granted.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is true but R is false

D. A is false but R is true

4. Assertion (A): George Pearson is bewildered when Mrs. Pearson addresses him directly by his first name, "George," instead of showing her usual meek deference.

Reason (R): George spends a significant amount of his leisure time socializing and drinking at the local club.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is true but R is false

D. A is false but R is true

5. Assertion (A): The play "Mother's Day" serves as a social critique of how families exploit the unpaid domestic labour of homemakers.

Reason (R): By reversing the power dynamics through a humorous personality swap, J.B. Priestley exposes the selfishness of the Pearson family and advocates for mutual respect and appreciation.

A. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is true but R is false

D. A is false but R is true

Question 1: The play *Mother's Day* is a satirical depiction of the status of a mother in a family. Discuss the central themes and issues raised by the playwright.

Answer:
The play *Mother's Day* by J.B. Priestley is a sharp satire that exposes the undervalued, overworked, and exploited status of housewives in modern families. The primary issue raised

is that a mother's 24-hour unpaid domestic labour is completely overlooked and taken for granted.

The family members—husband George, daughter Doris, and son Cyril—treat Mrs. Pearson like a domestic slave. They demand her services without offering any gratitude or respect. While the rest of the family works a fixed eight-hour day and enjoys weekends off, the mother works around the clock without any holidays or appreciation.

Priestley utilizes humour and a supernatural personality swap to deliver a serious social message. The play argues that a household cannot achieve true harmony unless its foundation is built on mutual respect, equality, and shared responsibility, rather than the silent suffering of the homemaker.

Question 2: Compare and contrast the characters of Mrs. Annie Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald. How do their differences drive the plot forward? (Scribd)

Answer:
Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Fitzgerald are diametric opposites in personality, demeanor, and attitude. Mrs. Annie Pearson is a pleasant but anxious woman in her forties. She is a deeply loving, submissive, and meek housewife who is terrified of causing any unpleasantness in her family. Despite being taken for granted, she blindly runs around fulfilling her family's thoughtless demands.

On the other hand, Mrs. Fitzgerald is older, heavier, and possesses a commanding, strong-willed, and liberated personality. Having spent time in the East, she knows magic and has an aggressive, practical outlook on life.

These stark differences drive the plot forward. Realizing that Mrs. Pearson lacks the courage to stand up for herself, Mrs. Fitzgerald takes charge (Scribd). She initiates the magical personality swap, stepping into Mrs. Pearson's household to deliver the much-needed "shock treatment" to the spoiled Pearson family. Without Mrs. Fitzgerald's bold intervention, Mrs. Pearson would have remained a domestic slave forever.

Question 3: Describe the "shock treatment" given to the Pearson family. How did it change their behaviour by the end of the play?

Answer:
The "shock treatment" begins when Mrs. Fitzgerald temporary assumes Mrs. Pearson's body and adopts a defiant, harsh, and uncompromising attitude. When Doris and Cyril walk in demanding tea and ironed clothes, they find their mother smoking, playing cards, and drinking stout. She flatly refuses to do their chores and mocks Doris's choice of a boyfriend, leaving her in tears (YouTube). Next, she confronts her husband, George, ruthlessly exposing how his friends at the club laugh at him behind his back (YouTube).

This sudden shift utterly deflates the family's egos. Used to an obedient and quiet mother, they are left powerless and bewildered.

By the end of the play, when the personalities are reverted, the Pearson family has transformed completely. They become subdued, mindful of her feelings, and readily agree to stay back home, help cook dinner, and spend the evening playing a family game of rummy.

Question 4: Do you think the title of the play *Mother's Day* is appropriate? Justify your answer with reasons.

Answer:
Yes, the title *Mother's Day* is highly appropriate and layered with irony. Generally, "Mother's Day" is viewed as a singular, celebratory day where families pamper mothers with cards and gifts, only to return to treating them like automated machines the rest of the year.

Priestley's play flips this concept entirely. The day depicted in the play becomes a real "Mother's Day" because it marks the dawn of the mother's empowerment, liberation, and self-respect within her home. The entire narrative revolves around reclaiming the rights of Mrs. Pearson as an individual.

By forcing the family to confront their selfishness and take up domestic responsibilities, the play successfully establishes that every single day ought to be a Mother's Day. It teaches the audience that true celebration of a mother lies in giving her continuous respect, gratitude, and equality every day of the year.