

American drama in the twentieth century

Task 1. Read and complete the text with the pronouns.

Out, off, of, with, since, because, in, on, by, for

When discussing drama it is important to point (1) ... that theatrical art is the slowest to change (2) ... plays are expensive to stage. At any rate, it was only in 1920, (3) ... Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*, that America could boast its own, distinctly American dramatist. (4) ... the 17th century, American Puritans suppressed any entertaining art, including theater. However, performances based (5) ... the Bible plots were very popular. (6) ... addition, the Negro theater staged peculiar minstrel plays, and Shakespeare enjoyed wide recognition.

Resisting the unsympathetic public attitude, theater fought its way onward after the American Revolution, first with travelling English actors and then with American companies starting in Boston, Philadelphia, New York City.

When the Great Depression crushed many hopes of the 1920s and communism seemed to give new ideas, many radically minded companies took to propaganda plays. Clifford Odets's (1906–1963) *Waiting for Lefty*, which dramatizes a taxidriver's strike, backs up the idea that art should be a weapon. Moreover, the Group Theater company, which first staged *Lefty*, applied the principles (7) ... psychological realism in acting.

Two triumphant plays, *The Glass Menagerie*, by Tennessee Williams (1911–1983), and *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller (1915–2005), were produced in the 1940s. Other important plays of the same generation include *Picnic* and *Bus Stop* (8) ... William Inge (1913–1973), *Crucible* by Arthur Miller, *The Zoo Story* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee (born in 1928).

Experimental productions, however, could not exist in the conventional atmosphere and too expensive conditions of Broadway of the 1940s–50s, so they were done (9) ... Broadway, mostly in Greenwich Village. "Off Broadway" was an alternative center (10) ... both new and established playwrights. The premiere of O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* in the Square Theatrical Company gave the playwright a fresh public interest.

"American theater is beginning to discover Black Americans and women's theater, Asian American and Hispanic theater", wrote Asian American playwright, David Henry Hwang, speaking about writers like Imamu Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins, Tina Howe, and Marsha Norman. Their theatrical output, as well as plays by great American

playwrights Tennessee Williams, Edvar Albee, William Inge, Arthur Miller and William Saroyan proved that drama may be a self-sustaining branch of any national literature.

Task 2. Match the beginnings (1–6) with their endings (a–f).

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) theatrical art | a) any entertaining art |
| 2) American Puritans suppressed | b) are expensive to stage. |
| 3) Resisting the unsympathetic public attitude, | c) is the slowest to change |
| 4) Experimental productions | d) gave the playwright a fresh public interest |
| 5) plays | e) could not exist in the conventional atmosphere and too expensive conditions of Broadway |
| 6) The premiere of O'Neill's <i>The Iceman Cometh</i> (1956) | f) theater fought its way onward |