

Ministry of Higher education
University of Tikrit
College of Basic Education / Al-
Shirqat



*An Introduction to Drama, One Act Play
and Hamlet*

English Department

Third Stage

First Semester

Instructor
Shakir Hussein

RIDERS TO THE SEA

BY: J. M SYNGE

John Millington Synge was born at Ratharnham near Dublin, Ireland. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He spent one time in Paris where he was encouraged in 1899 by William Butler Yeats, a famous Irish poet and dramatist, to write about the Irish peasant life. Hence most of Synge's plays revolve about this subject. The most famous plays written by Synge are 'The Shadow of the Glen' (1903), 'Riders to the Sea' (1904), 'The Well of the Saints' (1905) and 'The Playboy of the Western World' (1907). He joined the Irish League and first became the literary adviser and then the director of the Abbey Theatre. He died in Dublin in 1909 suffering from a long illness.

Synge attended the first production of his play, 'Riders to the Sea' for the opening of the Abbey Theatre in 1904.

Setting:

- **Place:** A small kitchen in a cottage which is situated in the west of Ireland. There are some boards, oil-skin and spinning wheel. We have two girls, Cathleen and Nora. Cathleen is about twenty years old. She finished making a cake and puts it down in the pot oven by the fire, then wipes her hands. She begins to spin at the wheel. Nora is a young girl, she puts her head in at the door.

- **Time:-** The time is winter in the afternoon.

Plot: This play is a tragedy of a woman who loses her son in the sea which has already devoured her husband and her four other sons. It is a struggle between life and death, patience and passions. The play is a good representative of Irish drama and is full of emotion, realism and mysticism.

1. What does the priest bring to the cottage?

The priest brings a bundle which contains some clothes that belongs to a drowned man. It is-brought to the Island by two fishermen. They found the dead body in the sea, but they could not bring It because It was decayed.

2. The Girls are unwilling to tell their mother about the bundle? Why?

The Girls are unwilling to tell their mother about the bundle because they are not sure that the bundle belongs to their brother and they are afraid that their mother would be shocked and died once.

3. Why do the girls send their mother to the spring well?

They send her to the spring well because they want to be sure whether the clothes the bundle contains belong to their brother Michael or not. They also wanted their mother to give Bartley some food and her blessing.

4. Were the girls able to recognize the clothes In the bundle?

The girls were able to recognize that the clothes were Michael's by counting the stitches on the clothes.

5. What do you know about Michael?

Michael was Murray's missing son. He was a good fisherman. He was a strong rower. He once went by a small boat for fishing, he did not come back for nine days. His mother Was very worried about him. His floating body was found by two fishermen. They brought his clothes to the church and then the priest asked the girls to have a look at them to be sure whether they belong to their brother Michael or not.

6. Who is Bartley and where did he go?

Bartley is supposed to early out his responsibilities as the only man left for the family. The mother has lost her husband and her sons In the sea. Bartley is supposed to look after his old mother and two lonely sisters. Being a selfish, reckless and ambitious boy, he decided to start his journey. He wants to be rich by selling their two horses in Galway Fair.

7. Why did the mother want Bartley to stay In the island?

The mother has lost her husband and her sons In the sea, therefore she wants Bartley the only son living to stay. She loves him too much and she is very worried about the Idea of being alone with her two daughters. She feels that she will lose him the moment he leaves.

8. Is the priest successful in preventing Bartley from leaving the island?

The priest successful in preventing Bartley from leaving the island because Bartley is a very ambitious young man and he is proud of himself therefore he refused to listen to his mother, his sisters and the priest.

9. What does the mother see in her vision?

The mother sees a very horrible vision. She sees both Michael and Bartley riding the two horses and they are dressed well. She tries to bless them but she cannot. Therefore she realizes that she has lost them forever.

10.Does the mother accept the idea of her son's death?

The mother accepts the idea of her son's death because she is a religious woman. She has both patience and faith in God. She is better than others in accepting the idea of death because she knows that death is the natural and fatal end of all human beings.