



The End of the Beginning

Seán O'Casey (1880–1964)

(A one-act Irish farcical comedy exploring gender roles, domestic life, and humility through humour.)

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- establish characters, roles and apply dramatic techniques like plot development, closure with confidence, especially in two to three-act play.
- choose words and phrases for effect.
- read, view and analyse a variety of readings grade-appropriate and high-interest books and texts from print and non-print sources: drama (play scripts).
- verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- apply editing and proofreading skills to a wide range of texts and contexts.

About the Playwright

Seán O'Casey (1880–1964) was an Irish dramatist known for his powerful plays depicting Irish life, often blending humour and social commentary. "The End of the Beginning" is a one-act farce that humorously questions gender roles and domestic abilities.

Pre-reading:

- Have you ever thought something was easy until you tried it?
- Who usually does housework at home? Could it be different?

Character	Description
Darry Berrill	A middle-aged, overconfident farmer who underestimates the challenges of household chores.
Lizzie Berrill	Darry's practical and competent wife, who manages both domestic and farm duties with efficiency.
Barry Derrill	Darry's well-meaning but inept friend, whose involvement exacerbates the household chaos.

Setting:

- **Location:** A rural Irish cottage, simple and modest.
- **Time:** Early 20th century.
- **Stage Layout:** A small kitchen with basic furniture, a gramophone, a table, and chairs.

Scene

A big, comfortable kitchen. Steep stairs, almost like a ladder, leading to upper room, top right. Huge fireplace, right. Some chairs, one heavy, with rubbered castors. Small settee, and table. Chest of drawers, left, on top of which stands a gramophone. Door back, and to left of door a window. To right of door, a dresser, on which is, as well as delf, a large clock of the alarm type. To right of dresser, on a nail, hangs a whip; to the left of dresser hangs a mandolin. On table, a quantity of unwashed delf. To right of fireplace, a lumber room. The room, at night, is lighted by an electric bulb, hanging from centre of ceiling. It is a fine early autumn evening, with the sun low in the heavens. On wall, back, large red card on which "Do It Now" is written in white letters. A sink under the window.

Darry: [at door of room above. He is shaving, and his chin is covered with lather]. This shaving water's dead cold, woman. D'ye hear me? This shaving water's dead cold.

Lizzie: [busy about the room - quietly]. Come down and heat it, then.

Darry: [scornfully]. Too much to do, I suppose. I'd do all that has to be done here, three times over, 'n when all was finished, I'd be **sighing** for something to do.

Lizzie: If you had half of what I have to do here, at the end of the evening you'd be picked up dead out of the **debris**.

Darry: I would?

Lizzie: You would.

Darry: Sure?

Lizzie: Certain.

Darry: If I only had half to do?

Lizzie: Or less.

Darry: I'd be picked up out of the debris?

Lizzie: Out of the middle of it.

Darry: Dead?

Lizzie: As a mackerel.

Darry: [fiercely]. I'm always challenging you to change places for a few hours, but you won't do it. I'd show you what a sinecure of a job you had here, while I'm sweating out in the fields.

Lizzie: Go out 'n finish the mowing of the meadow. It'll take you only half an hour or so, 'n there's plenty of light in the sky still.

Darry: [who has been shaving himself during this argument]. The meadow 'll do to be done tomorrow. Why don't you let me do what's to be done in the house, an' you go 'n mow the meadow? Why don't you do that? 'don't you do that? 'you do that? **Agony** to look at you; agony to listen to you; agony, agony to be anywhere near you.

Lizzie: I'd just like to see you doing what's to be done about the house - I'd just like to

see you.

Darry: What is there to be done about the house - will you tell us that?

Lizzie: There's the lamb 'n the heifer 'n the hens to be fed 'n tended. There's ironing, cooking, washing, 'n sewing to be done.

Darry: Sewing! An' only a button back 'n front of me so that it's next thing to a miracle that my trousers are kept from starting the neighbours talking.

Lizzie: If you say much more, I'll go 'n mow the meadow, 'n leave you to see what you can make of the house-work.

Darry: [angrily]. Buzz off, buzz off, then, an' I'll show you how the work of a house is done. Done quietly: done with speed, 'n without a **whisper** of fuss in its doing. Buzz off, if you want to, 'n I'll show you 'n all your gender how the work of a house is done!

[Lizzie violently pulls off a jazz-coloured overall she is wearing, and flings it on the floor].

Lizzie: [furiously]. Put that on you, 'n do what remains to be done about the house, while I go an' mow the meadow. Get into it, 'n show the world an' your poor wife the wonders you can do when you're under a woman's overall.

Darry: [a little frightened]. Oh, I'll manage all right.

Lizzie: An' don't you let that Alice Lanigan in here while I'm away either, d'ye hear?

Darry: What Alice Lanigan?

Lizzie: [in a temper]. What Alice Lanigan! The Alice Lanigan, I caught you chattering to yesterday, when you should have been mowing the meadow. The Alice Lanigan, that's setting you on to nag at me about the little I have to do in the house. The Alice Lanigan, that's **goad**ing you into the idea that if you were a little slimmer round the belly, you'd be a shevaleer, an' getting you to deliver more and effectively. The Alice Lanigan that's on the margin of fifty, 'n assembles her self together as if she was a girl in her teens, deliberately moulding her body posture like the Lady of Shalott, to captivate all around her - that's the Alice Lanigan I mean.

Darry: I don't be thinking of Alice Lanigan.

Lizzie: I've seen you, when you thought I **slumbered** 'n slept, doing gestures in front of the looking-glass, imaginatively expressing your appreciative thoughts for Alice Lanigan. Maybe you don't know that she has a kid who has never had a pat on the head from a father.

Darry: You buzz off now, 'n I'll show how the work of house is done.

Lizzie: [while she is putting a broad-brimmed hat on her head, pulling a pair of old gloves over her hands, and taking down a whip hanging from a nail in the wall]. I'm telling you it's a dangerous thing to associate with Alice Lanigan, even with a priest giving the introduction. The day'll come soon when you'll know she's making mechanical toys of you 'n that other old fool, Barry Derrill, who's so near-sighted that he

can't see the sky, unless the moon's shining in it!

Darry: Cheerio.

Lizzie: [at the door]. I'm going now, 'n we'll see how you do the work of the house.

Darry: Hail 'n farewell to you. An' mind you, this'll be only the beginning of things.

Lizzie: God grant that it won't be the end, an' that when I come back, I'll at least find the four walls standing.

[She goes out. Darry strolls to the door, and watches her going down the road].

Darry: [scornfully to himself]. Mow the meadow! Well, let her see her folly out.

[As he shuts the door, the clock in the distant Town Hall strikes eight. Darry-returns, glances at the clock on the dresser, notices that it has stopped, takes it up, puts his ear against it, shakes it, begins to wind it, finds it difficult to turn, puts added strength into the turning, and, a whirring rattle, like a strong spring breaking, comes from the inside of the clock. He hastily replaces the clock on the dresser. After a few seconds' thought, he takes it up again, removes the back, and part of a big, broken spring darts out, which he hurriedly crams in again, and puts the clock back on the dresser].

Darry: Lizzie again!

[He catches sight of the gramophone, looks at it, thinks for a second, goes over to the chest of drawers, takes some records from behind it, and fixes one on the disc of the gramophone. He takes off his waistcoat, loosens his braces, stands stiff, strokes his thighs, pats his belly, and tries to push it back a little. He starts the gramophone going, runs to the centre of the room, and lies down on the broad of his back. The gramophone begins to give directions for physical exercises, to which Darry listens and, awkwardly, clumsily and **puffingly**, tries to follow the movements detailed in the words spoken by the gramophone when the music commences.

Gramophone. Lie on back; hands behind the head; feet together - are you ready? Bend the right knee; draw it into the waistline, towards the chest -commence!

[Darry is too slow, or the gramophone is too quick, for he can't keep up with the time of the music. When he finds that he is behind the time of the music, Darry increases his speed by partial performance of the movements, and so gets into touch with the time, but presently, blowing and panting, he is out of time again by a beat or two. He climbs stiffly on to his feet, goes over to gramophone, and puts the indicator to "Slow".

Darry: Phuh. Too quick, altogether.

[He starts the gramophone going, runs to the centre of the room, and again lies down on the broad of his back. When the music begins he goes through the movements as before; but the music is playing so slowly now that he finds it impossible to go slowly enough to keep to the time of the tune. When he finds himself in front of a beat, he stops and puffs and waits for the beat to catch up with him before he recommences. As he is

going through these movements, the door opens, and Barry Derrill comes into the room. He has a **mandolin** under his arm, and is wearing wide-rimmed, thick-lensed spectacles].

Barry: [briskly]. Come 'n greet me what are you trying to do?

Darry: Can't you see what I'm trying to do? Take off your spectacles 'n get a closer look. Keeping myself fit 'n flexible - that's what I'm trying to do.

Barry: The rhythm's too slow, man; tense your muscles; you're not tun'd into the movements properly, man.

Darry: The indicator must have shifted. Slip over 'n put it to the point marked medium, 'n then get down here 'n give us a hand.

Barry: What about the prologue of playing the song we're to sing at the Town Hall concert?

Darry: Get down 'n have five minutes of this, first; we'll both sing the better for it.

Barry: [dubiously]. Never done it to music, 'n I wouldn't be able to keep in touch with the - with the measure.

Darry: The music makes it easier, man. Keep your eye on me, 'n move when I move.

[Barry reluctantly takes off his coat and waistcoat, goes over to the gramophone, puts his nose against the instrument, and puts the indicator to "Fast"].

Darry: To do this thing properly you'd want to be wearing shorts. Right; now keep in touch with the rhythm, or you'll mar everything. Start her off, and stretch yourself down.

[Barry starts the gramophone, runs over and lies down opposite to Darry, so that the soles of their feet are only a few inches apart].

Gramophone [very rapidly]. Lie on back; hands behind the head; feet together - are you ready? Bend the right knee; draw it into the waistline towards the chest; breathe out - commence!

[The tempo of the tune forces them to do the exercises in a frantic way, till it dawns on Darry, who is nearly exhausted, that there's something wrong. He stops while Barry goes on manfully].

Darry: [scornfully]. Eh, eh, there, wait a minute, wait a minute, man. Don't you see anything wrong?

Barry: [stopping]. No; what's wrong?

Darry: [testily]. Aw, what's wrong! We're congestin' ourselves with speed; that's what's wrong. You must have jammed the indicator hard to Fast. [He gets up, goes to the gramophone, and puts it right.] We're entertainin' ourselves, an' not tryin' to say the Rosary.

[He comes back and stretches himself again on the floor. The music begins and the two men commence the exercises. After a few moments, Darry slows down a little, misses

several beats, and tries to blame Barry].

Darry: [excitedly keeping up the movements, but out of time, as he talks]. Try to keep the proper rhythm up, man. [He hums the tune of "Coming thro' the Rye".] Dad th' didee dah th' diddy dah th' diddy dee - that way, man. Dah th' diddy dah th' diddy [rapidly]. Keep your eye on me. Dah th' diddy dee.

[After a few moments Darry is out of time and breathless; he stops and sits up to complain, but he really wants to get a rest].

Darry: [with aggravated patience]. Barry, you're spoiling the whole thing by getting out of time. Don't let your arms and legs go **limber**, tense your muscles. Three beats to the bar, see'? Now!

[They start again; Darry is soon behind time, blowing and puffing out of him. Barry keeps to the beat of the tune splendidly].

Darry: [angrily]. You're going too quick altogether, now, man!

Barry: No, I'm not - I'm there to the tick every time.

Darry: [violently]. There to the tick - how is it you're not in the line with me, then, if you're there to the tick '? I don't know whether you're in front of me or behind me. Are you too stiff or what?

Barry: I'm there to the second every time. It's you that's missin' a beat in the bar.

Darry: [indignantly, stopping to talk, while Barry goes on]. I'm missin' it because I'm trying to foster you into the right balance 'n rhythm of the movements. That's why I'm missin' it. [Loudly] An' I'm wastin' me time!

Barry: [sharply]. I'm doin' me best, amn't I?

Darry: [more sharply still]. "Your best effort, though underway, but still falls short of what's required. It's pitiful 'n painful to be watchin' you, man. [He stands up and looks at Barry, who keeps going.] Eh, eh, you'll do yourself an injury, Barry. Get up 'n we'll do the song. [As Barry goes on] Oh, get up 'n we'll do the song.

[Barry gets up **reluctantly**, and Darry goes over and stops the gramophone].

Barry: I was doin' it well enough, if you'd let me alone.

Darry: [scornfully]. Yes; like the Londonderry Air play'd in march time.

[They get their mandolins and stand side by side at the back].

Darry: Now we walk in a semicircle down to the front, 'n bow, you remember? Ready?

Barry: Yep.

Darry: Go!

[They both step off to the right, take a few steps, and then they halt.

Barry: Something wrong; we don't go round the same way, do we?

Darry: [testily]. Of course there's something wrong; of course we don't go round the same way. Can't you try to remember, Barry'? You're to go to the left, to the left.

Barry: I remember distinctly I was to go to the right.

Darry: [irritably]. Oh, don't be such an egotist, Barry. Now think for a minute. [A pause.] Now make up your mind - d'ye want to go to the left or the right '?

Barry: [testily]. Oh, left, right - any way.

Darry: Left, then. Go.

[They march round, one to the right, the other to the left, meet in the front, and bow].

Darry: You start, Barry, my boy.

Barry: [singing]. One summer eve a handsome man met a handsome maiden strolling,

Darry: Down where the bees were hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing;

Barry: Said she, we'll sit down here a while, all selfish thoughts controlling,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing:

Barry: Said she, we'll meditate on things, things high 'n edifying,

How all things live 'n have their day 'n end their day by dying.

He murmur'd, Life is trying,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

Barry: The moon glanc'd down also when they were sitting

Darry: Down where the bees were hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing;

Barry: Then th' moon murmur'd, I feel hot, 'n fear a storm is brewing,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

Barry: She talk'd so well of things so high, he started to appreciate her,

Meanwhile, the moon ran in behind a cloud,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

Barry: White-featur'd 'n thin goodie-goodies rush around excited,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing;

Barry: Proclaiming that the dignity of living has been blighted,

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

Barry: But when the light is soft 'n dim, the **modest** moon is still behind the clouds.

Young maidens, in their graceful and modest way, still continue delightful conversation.

Darry: Down where the bees are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

[When the song has ended, Darry cocks his ear and listens].

Barry: Shall we try it once more?

Darry: Shush, shut up, can't you?

[Darry goes over to the door, opens it, and listens intently. There is heard the rattling whirr caused by the steady and regular movement of a mowing machine. The distant Town Hall clock strikes nine.

Darry: [hastily putting the mandolin away]. I forgot. I'll have to get going.

Barry: Get going at what?

Darry: House-work. [He begins to get into the overall left off by Lizzie.] I dared her, an' she left me to do the work of the house while she was mowing the meadow. If it isn't done when she comes back, then sweet good bye to the status I had in the home. [He finds it difficult to get the overall on.] Dih dih dih, where's the back 'n where's the front, 'n which is which is the bottom 'n which is the top?

Barry: Take it quietly, take it quietly, Darry.

Darry [resently]. Take it quietly? An' the time **galloping** by? I can't stand up on a chair 'n say to the sun, stand thou still there, over the meadow th' missus is mowing, can I?

Barry: I know too well you can't, but you're not going to expedite matters by rushing around in a hurry.

Darry: [he has struggled into the overall]. Expedite matters! It doesn't seem to strike you that when you do things quickly, things are quickly done. Expedite matters! I suppose loitering to look at you lying on the broad of your back, jiggling your legs about, was one way of expediting matters; an' listening to you plucking curious sounds out of a mandolin, an' singing a song, was another way of expediting matters?

Barry: You pioneered me into doing two of them yourself.

Darry: [busy with the pot on the fire]. I pioneered you into doing them! Barry Derrill, there's such a thing in the world as a libel. You came strutting in with a mandolin under your arm, didn't you?

Barry: I did, but--

Darry: An' you _sang your song.

Barry: Yes, but--

Darry: When you waltz'd in, I was doing **callisthenics**, wasn't I?

Barry: I know you were; but all the same--

Darry: An' you flung yourself down on the floor, and got yourself into a tangle trying to do them too, didn't you?

Barry: Hold on a second---

Darry: Now, I can't carry the conversation into a debate, for I have to get going. So, if you can't give a hand, go, 'n let me do the things that have to be done, in an orderly 'n quiet way.

Barry: 'Course I'll give a hand - only waiting to be asked.

Darry: [looking at the clock, suddenly]. Is the clock stopped?

Barry: [taking up clock and putting it close to his ear]. There's no ticking, 'n it's hours slow.

Darry: Lizzie again! Forgot to wind it. Give the key a few turns, Barry, an' put the hands on to half-past nine.

[Barry starts to wind the dock. Darry goes over to table, gets a basin of water, begins to

wash the delf, humming to himself the air of the song, "Down where the bees art humming". Barry winds and winds away, but no sign is given of a tightening of the spring inside. He looks puzzled, winds again, and is about to silently put the clock back where he found it, when Darry turns and looks at him questioningly].

Darry: You've broken the clock, have you?

Barry: I didn't touch it.

Darry: Didn't touch it? Amn't I after looking at you twisting an' tearing at it for nearly an hour? [He comes over to Barry.] Show me that. [He takes the clock from Barry and opens the back, and the spring darts out.] Didn't touch it. Oh, for God's sake be more careful when you're handling things in this house! Dih dih dih. [He pushes the spring back, and slaps the clock down on the dresser.] You must have the hands of a gorilla, man. Here, come over 'n wipe while I wash.

[A slight pause while the two of them work at the delf. Darry **anxiously** watches Barry, who, being very near sighted, holds everything he wipes close up to his spectacles.

Darry: [suddenly]. Look out, look out, there -you're not leaving that jug on the table at all; you're depositing it in the air, man!

Barry: [peering down at the table]. Am I? Don't be afraid, I won't let anything drop.

Darry: [humming the song]. Dum dah de de dum da dee dee dum dah dee dee dee dah ah dum.

Barry: [swinging his arm to the tune]. Down where the bee are hummin' an' the wild flowers gaily growing.

Darry: Fine swing, you know. Dum dah dee dee dum dah dee dee dum dah dee dee dee dah ah dum.

Barry: [swinging his arm]. Down where the bees are hummin' -
[Barry's arm sends the jug flying off the table on to the floor].

Darry: [yelling]. You snaky - arm'd candle - power - ey'd elephant, look at what you're after doing!

Barry: [heatedly]. It's only a tiny jug, anyhow, 'n you can hardly see the pieces on the floor!

Darry: [just as heatedly]. An' if I let you do much more, they would soon be big enough to bury us! Sit down, sit down in the corner there; do nothing, say nothing, an', if I could, I'd put a safety curtain round you. For God's sake, touch nothing while I run out an' give the fodder to the lamb.

[Darry dashes over to the fire, whips the pot off, and runs out. He leaves the door open, and again the rattling whirr of a mowing machine can be heard. Barry sits **dejectedly** in a corner. After a few moments a bump is heard outside, followed by a yell from Darry, who, a second later, comes rushing madly in, a bloody handkerchief pressed to his nose. He

flings himself flat on the floor on his back, elevating his nose as much as possible.

Darry: Get me something cold to put down the back of my neck, quick!

Barry: [frightened]. What the hell did you do to yourself?

Darry: I didn't bend low enough when I was going in, 'n I gave myself such a-oh, such a bang on my nose on the concrete. Get something cold, man, to shove down the back of my neck 'n stop the bleeding!

Barry: Keep the nose sticking up in the air as high as you can. I don't know where to get something cold to shove down the back of your neck. I knew this rushing round wouldn't expedite matters.

Darry: [with a moan of resentment as he hears "expedite matters"]. Oh, pull yourself together, man, 'n remember we're in the middle of an emergency.

Barry: A little block of ice, now, would come in handy.

Darry: A little - oh, a little block of ice! An' will you tell us where you're going to get a little block of ice? An', even if we had one, how could you fasten it down the back of my neck? Eh? Can't you answer - where are you going to get a block of ice?

Barry: How the hell do I know where I'm going to get it?

Darry: D'ye expect me to keep lying here till the winter comes?

[During this dialogue Barry is moving round the room **aimlessly**, peering into drawers, rattling the delf on the dresser with his nose as he looks along the shelves].

Darry: [as he hears the **crockery** rattling]. Mind, mind, or you'll break something. I must be losing a lot of blood, Barry, an' I won't be able to keep my nose sticking up in the air much longer. Can't you find anything?

Barry: I can see nothing.

Darry: Run upstairs 'n get the key of the big shed that's hanging on the wall, somewhere over the mantelpiece at the far end of the room. Go quick, man!

[Barry runs upstairs, goes into room, comes out again, and looks down at Darry].

Darry: [up to him]. Did you get it?

Barry: Where's the switch? It's as dark as pitch in there.

[Darry, with a moan of exasperation, sits up, but immediately plunges down on his back again].

Darry: Starts pumping out again the minute I sit up. [To Barry] The e's no switch in that room. We can't have a switch in every corner of the room just to suit you! You've only got to move down the centre of the room till you come to the fireplace; then brush your hand over the mantelpiece, along the wall, till you feel the key hanging there.

[Barry goes back into the room. After a few seconds' silence, there is a crash of falling crockery. Darry, after a second of silent consternation, sits up with a jerk, but immediately plunges down on his back again].

Darry: [sinking supine on the floor]. What has he done now; oh, what has he done now?
[Shouting up to Barry] Eh, you up there -what have you done now?

Barry: [sticking his head out of door above] Nothing much - the washhand-stand fell over.

Darry: [angrily]. Nothing much. It sounded a hell of a lot, then. You're the kind of man if you're not chained up, 'Il pull everything in the house asundher! Come down, come down, 'n stop down, or that delicate little hand of yours 'Il smash everything in the house!

Barry: My eyes are used to the darkness, now, 'n I can see. I'll get the key for you.

[He goes back into the room, leaving Darry speechless. After a few seconds, he comes out of the room in a sweat of fright and anger, one hand tightly clasped over the other. He rushes down the stairs, and begins to pull the things out of the chest of drawers, every other moment leaving off to **clasp** one hand over the other.

Barry: [frantically]. Get your own key, get your own key. Half slaughtering myself for your sake! Why don't you keep your razor-blades in a safe place, an'not leave them scattered about in heaps all over the mantelpiece? Where is there a bit of old rag till I bind up my wounds? Get your own key yourself, I'm tellin' you.

Darry: Amn't I nicely handicapped, wanting help an' having only the help of a half-blind man?

Barry: D'ye know I'm nearly after mowing my fingers off with your blasted razor-blades?
[Coming near to Darry, with a handkerchief in his hand, and showing the injured fingers to him] Look at them, uh, look at them - one looks as if only a thin thread of flesh was keeping it on. How am I going to play the mandolin now?

Darry: You'd play it better if all your fingers were off.

Barry: [keeping the wounded hand in the air, and holding out the handkerchief to Darry with the other]. Here, get a grip of this 'n help me to bind up me wounds.

[Barry kneels down beside the prostrate Darry, who takes the handkerchief and proceeds to tie it round Barry's wounded fingers.

Darry: [keeping his nose well up in the air]. You give that an unexpected honour, if you call that a wound!

[Darry ties the handkerchief round Barry's hand, who stands looking at it].

Barry: [reflectively]. Won't be able to do much for you with it now.

Darry: It'll limit your capacity for breakin' things.

[A pause.]

Darry: Slip out, Barry, old son, 'n see if the heifer's safe on the bank beside the house.

[Barry goes outside the door and stands looking up towards the top of the house. The light has been fading, and it is getting dark. Again, can be heard the whirr of the mowing

machine, and the Town Hall clock strikes ten.

Barry: I think I can hear her croppin' the grass all right but it doesn't seem wise to leave her there 'n the dusk fallin'.

Darry: [testily]. I can't do anything till this bleeding stops, can I?

Barry: The **spuds** are all scattered about here where you let them fall when you were runnin' in.

Darry: [moaning]. 'N can't you get the broom 'n sweep them up into a corner, 'n not be trampling them into the ground; you see the state I'm in!

[Barry gets the broom and starts to sweep outside the door.

Barry: [in to Darry]. How's it now?

Darry: [cautiously sitting up]. It's nearly stopped now, but I'll have to go cautious.

[Barry, sweeping with one band, manages to bring the broom-handle into contact with the window, and breaks a pane. A silent pause].

Barry: [as if he didn't know]. What's that, what's that?

Darry: [in an agony of anger]. What's that, what's that! Can't you see, man, that you're after thrustin' the handle of the broom through one of the windows?

Barry: [peering down at the hole in the window]. That's curious, now, for I never felt the handle touchin' the window; but there's a hole in it, right enough.

Darry: [with angry mockery]. No, you wouldn't feel it touchin' it, either. A hole in it - of course there's a hole in it! My God Almighty, I've a destroyin' neighbour in the house!

Barry: Well, not much use of lookin' at it now.

Darry: [vehemently]. Oh, come in, come in, come in, man. Didn't you hear the clock strikin' ten? I'll have to get goin now.

[He gets up **gingerly**, feeling his nose, and still keeping it at a high angle.

Barry: [introducing another subject]. Hadn't you better stable the heifer before you do anything?

Darry: [violently]. Haven't I to clean out the cowhouse first before I stable her, man? With your exercisin', 'n your singin', 'n your great 'n ability of expeditin' matters, I haven't made a bit of headway! I hadn't a chance to give her the graze she needs, so let her get all she can on the bank at the back of the house.

Barry: Supposing she wanders to the edge of the bank 'n tumbles off?

Darry: I don't know what to do about that.

Barry: Couldn't you tie her to something?

Darry: [angrily]. There's nothing to tie her to, man.

Darry: What about putting a rope down the chimney 'n tying it to something in the room?

Darry [after a few seconds' thought]. That's a good idea, Barry. There's a rope outside, an' I'll sling one end round her neck, let the other end down the chimney, an' tie it to a chair. Wait here a second 'n get it when it comes down.

[Darry rushes out. After a few moment his voice is heard faintly from above calling, "Hello, hello!" Barry, who has his head a little up the chimney, the smoke making him cough, answers, " Righto, let her come." The rope comes down; Barry catches the end and pulls it into the room, Darry returns, and they tie the rope to a chair.

Barry: Put the chair at the far end of the room, an' if the heifer wanders too far, we'll see the chair moving across the room.

Darry: [with enthusiasm]. Now you're beginnin' to use your brains at last, Barry, me boy. [He shifts the chair to the far end of the room.] Now we can get goin' 'n get everything shipshape before the missus toddles back. Let's put on the light and see what we're doin'.

[He snaps down the switch, but no light comes into the bulb].

Darry: [annoyed]. Dih di dih - must be the meter again.

[He hurries into the lumber room, stepping over the rope.

Barry: [speaking in to Darry]. I wouldn't do much tamperin' with that.

Darry: [inside room - **emphatically**]. Oh, I know what I'm doin'.

[Darry rushes out again, snaps down the switch, but no light comes.

Darry: [irritably]. Must be the blasted bulb. [He rushes to a drawer.] There's a bulb here, somewhere, we've had for a long time, 'n never used. [He takes one from the drawer.] Here we are. [He pulls a chair to the centre of the room, stands on it, takes off the old bulb, and gives it to Barry.] See if you can see anything wrong with it.

Barry: [holding it to his nose]. Can't see anything.

Darry: Leave it down, leave it down.

Barry: Sure, the one you're fixing's the right voltage?

Darry: [stopping to look at Barry]. Course it's the right voltage. Why wouldn't it be the right voltage?

Barry: If it wasn't, it might fuse.

Darry. Fuse? No fear of it fusing.

[He starts to work again. [The chair to which the rope is tied begins to move across the floor].

Barry: [startled]. Look out, look out - the heifer's moving!

Darry, catch hold of it, catch hold of it, before she disappears up the chimney! [Barry catches the chair, but the strain is too much, and he is pulled along. Darry jumps down off the chair, leaves the bulb on the table, catches hold of the rope, and helps Barry to tug

the chair back to the far end of the room.

Darry: You sit on the chair, 'n then she can't move without our knowledge.

[Barry sits on the chair; Darry mounts the chair again, and starts to fix the bulb. The chair begins to move with Barry sitting on it.

Barry [excitedly]. Eh, quick again, get down, the heifer's movin'!

[Darry jumps down again, and the two of them pull the chair back to its place].

Darry: The missus'll be back 'n nothin' done but damage.

[He gets up again and fixes the bulb; there is a flash, and the room is darker than ever.

Barry: [like a **magnanimous** person]. I warned you, Darry; I saw it comin'.

Darry: [forcibly]. What are you blatherin' about? We're no worse off than we were before we fixed it. There's a drum of oil in the lumber room, 'n if there's any left in it we can light the lamps. You light the one hangin' on the wall, while I see how we stand.

[He runs into the lumber room. Barry takes the lamp from the wall, removes the chimney, and tries to light the wick, but he can't see it, and holds the match anywhere but near the wick. Darry comes out of cellar.

Darry: [jubilantly]. Plenty of oil in it. Aw, you're not holding the match within a mile of the wick, man. Show it to me, show it to me.

[He takes the match from Barry, and lights the lamp].

Darry: Out with you now, 'n get one of the old lamps you'll find on one of the shelves to the right in the shed at the back of the yard.

Barry: How'll I see?

Darry: Strike a match 'n look. You'll see them staring at you. I'll take a canful of oil from the drum to put in it when you bring it back, 'n then we'll have lashin's of light.

Barry: [going out by door]. I know I won't be able to see.

[Darry, with a can that has a long snout on it, runs back into the lumber room. Barry has left the door open, and the **rattling** whirr of the mowing machine can be heard again. There is a slight pause. Suddenly Darry rushes out of the lumber room over to the open door.

Darry: [shouting madly] Barry, Barry, come here quick, man! I turned the key of the tap too much, 'n it slipped out of me hand into a heap of rubbish 'n I can't turn off the cock, 'n I can't find the key in the dark. Come quick, man, or there won't be a drop of oil left in the drum!

[He rushes wildly back into the lumber room. Another slight pause. He rushes out again, with the drum in his arms, his thumb pressed to the tap outlet, and runs over to the door.

Darry: [calling madly]. Eh, Barry, Barry, d'ye hear me callin' you, man? I won't be able to keep this oil in much longer. Have you fallen asleep, or what?

[There is heard outside a rattle, followed by a crash of falling pots, tins, and tools; then a dead silence for a moment.]

Darry: [staggering against the wall]. Aw, Oh' God, what's he after doin' now!

Barry: [outside, in a loud voice of great distress]. Darry, oh, Darry, I'm after nearly destroyin' meself! Where's the doorway? - I can't see!

Darry: [going over and standing in the doorway]. Here, here, man; no, to the left. [As Barry staggers in, dusty and frightened] What ruin are you after causin' now?

Barry: [moaningly]. I'm after gettin' an awful shock!

Darry: [appealingly]. Pull yourself together, for God's sake, man, 'n tell us what's happened.

Barry: [as he sinks down on a chair]. The blasted lamps were on top of the top shelf; there was nothing to stand on; I had to climb upon the shelves, and climbing up, the shelves 'n all that was on them came down on top of me!

[Darry goes over and rests the drum in the sink, his hand still pressed over the outlet of the tap.]

Darry: 'N why did you climb the shelves? What did you want to do that for? Couldn't you see, you sap, that they weren't fixed well in the wall? Why did you insist on climbing the shelves?

Barry: I was just tryin' to expedite matters.

Darry: [with a wail]. Tryin' to expedite matters. Oh, there'll be a nice panorama of ruin in front of Lizzie when she comes back!

Barry: 'N me spectacles were sent flyin' when the shelves fell.

Darry: 'N why didn't you grab them before they fell to the ground?

Barry: [hotly]. How could I grab them 'n they fallin', when I was fallin' too!

Darry: [impatiently]. Well, get the lamp then, 'n look for the lost key in the lumber room.

Barry: 'N maybe let it fall, 'n set the house on fire?

Darry: [woefully]. Oh, amn't I in a nice predic-The chair, the chair -the heifer's movin'!

[The chair to which the rope is tied begins to move across the floor. Barry catches it, tugs manfully, but he is carried on towards the fireplace].

Barry: [anxiously]. Give us a hand, give us a hand, or I'll be up the chimney!

[Darry leaving the drum, runs over to Barry's side, grips the rope in front of Barry, and, to get a safer hold, takes the rope off the chair and puts it round him under his arms. With great pulling, they get the rope a little back. The oil flows from the drum into the sink unnoticed.]

Darry: [panting]. Keep a strain, or we'll be up the chimney!

Barry: How'm I goin' to get home to-night without me spectacles?

Darry: [loudly]. Keep a sthrain on her, man, keep a sthrain on her; we have to get this straightened out first, before we can **brood** over your spectacles!

Barry: [suddenly noticing the oil drum]. The oil, the oil!

[He lets go of the rope, and runs over to the oil drum.

Darry disappears up the chimney.

Barry: [lifting the drum and shaking it]. Not a drop left in it, not a single drop! What're we goin' to do n--

[He turns and sees that Darry has disappeared].

Lizzie: [speaking outside in a voice of horror]. The heifer, the heifer!

Darry: [calling out]. Lizzie, Lizzie!

[Lizzie rushes in as Darry falls down the chimney. He crawls out from the fireplace on his hands and knees, and halts there, exhausted and sooty.

Lizzie: [horrified]. Oh, God! What has happened?

Darry: [to Lizzie]. Now you see the result of havin' your own way! Why the hell didn't you hold on to the rope when you took it off the heifer, so that I wouldn't come down with a bump?

Lizzie: How'd I know you were hangin' on the other end?

Darry: [indignantly]. You didn't know - my God, woman, can you do nothin' right!

CURTAIN

Theme of the Play

Seán O'Casey's play "**The End of the Beginning**" primarily explores the theme of gender roles and stereotypes, using humour to challenge traditional assumptions about domestic work. The play depicts Darry, an overconfident husband, who believes that household chores are simple and that he can manage them better than his wife, Lizzie. However, his arrogance quickly turns to chaos when he struggles with tasks he thought were easy, exposing his ignorance and lack of experience. This comic disaster not only highlights the value of domestic work but also leads to Darry's journey from overconfidence to humility. O'Casey's use of farcical comedy—marked by exaggerated situations and clumsy mistakes—delivers a serious message in an entertaining manner, emphasising that skill is determined by experience, not gender.

Glossary:

Words	Meanings
agony	extreme physical or mental pain
aimlessly	in a way that shows no direction or plan
anxiously	in a worried or nervous way
brood	to think a lot about something that makes you annoyed, anxious or upset
callisthenics	physical exercises intended to develop a strong and attractive body
clasp	to hold something tightly in your hand
crockery	plates, cups, dishes, etc.
debris	pieces of wood, metal, building materials, etc. that are left after something has been destroyed
dejectedly	in an unhappy and disappointed way
emphatically	in a very clear way that involves speaking with force
expedite	to make a process happen more quickly
galloping	increasing or spreading rapidly
gingerly	in a careful way, because you are afraid of being hurt, of making a noise, etc.
goad	to keep annoying somebody/something until they react
limber	flexible; able to bend or move easily
magnanimous	kind, generous and forgiving, especially towards an enemy or competitor
mandolin	a musical instrument with metal strings (usually eight) arranged in pairs, and a curved back, played with a plectrum
modest	not very large, expensive, important, etc.
puffingly	to breathe loudly and quickly, especially after you have been running
rattling	to make a series of short loud sounds when shaking or hitting against something hard; to make something do this
reluctantly	in a way that involves hesitating before doing something because you do not want to do it or because you are not sure that it is the right thing to do

Words	Meanings
sighing	to take and then let out a long deep breath that can be heard, to show that you are disappointed, sad, tired, etc.
slumber	sleep; a time when somebody is sleeping

Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. In what ways does the play critique traditional gender roles, especially concerning domestic work?
2. Do you think the play suggests that certain tasks are gender-specific, or does it emphasize the importance of experience over gender? Explain your answer.
3. How does Darry's overconfidence serve as a lesson for the audience? What might the playwright be trying to teach about pride and humility?
4. Do you think the farcical elements of the play are effective in conveying a deeper message? Why or why not?
5. The play uses humour to explore serious themes. Do you believe that comedy is an effective medium for addressing social issues? Why or why not?
6. How might the play's themes be relevant to contemporary audiences? Are the issues raised still present in today's society?
7. What role does the humour play in the play? How does it contribute to the plot and character development?
8. What is the significance of Darry's mistakes and failures in the play?

B. Choose the correct option for each question.

1. What task does Darry attempt to do in the play?
 - a. cook a meal
 - b. do the laundry
 - c. complete the household chores
 - d. wash the car
2. What is the primary theme explored in the play?
 - a. love and romance
 - b. gender roles and stereotypes in domestic life
 - c. the importance of career success
 - d. political issues in society
3. How does Darry feel about doing the housework before he attempts it?
 - a. nervous
 - b. confident
 - c. indifferent
 - d. reluctant
4. Which literary technique is primarily used in the play to highlight the absurdity of Darry's attempts?
 - a. irony
 - b. farce
 - c. allegory
 - d. symbolism

5. What lesson does Darry learn by the end of the play?

- a. to be more independent
- b. to respect the work Lizzie does
- c. to avoid doing any housework
- d. to never boast about his abilities again

Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Guess the meaning of each word listed below. Check the meaning in a dictionary (print or digital). Complete the table by comparing your guess with the dictionary definition.

Word	Your Guess (Context)	Dictionary Meaning	Comparison (Correct/Incorrect)
slaughter			
clasp			
handicap			
plunige			
shove			

Sentence: A group of words, which makes **complete sense**, is called a **Sentence**. A **sentence** contains:

1. a **subject** (what the sentence is about, the topic of the sentence), and
2. a **predicate** (what is said about the subject)

Types of Sentences

There are four different kinds of sentences in English grammar and they are as follows:

Type of Sentence	Definition	Punctuation	Example from the Play
Declarative	Makes a statement or provides information.	Ends with a full stop (.)	I can do it better than you.
Interrogative	Asks a question.	Ends with a question mark (?)	Can you really manage the house?
Imperative	Gives a command, makes a request, or offers advice.	Ends with a full stop or (!)	Clean up the kitchen.
Exclamatory	Expresses strong emotion or surprise.	Ends with an exclamation mark (!)	Oh no! What a disaster!

- B. Read each sentence below and identify its type (Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative, or Exclamatory).**

Sentence	Type
1. I can fix this easily.	
2. Can you help me with this?	
3. Please don't touch that.	
4. Hurray! We did it perfectly!	
5. I don't think this will work.	
6. Why are you laughing?	
7. Be careful with the glass.	
8. Wow! That's amazing!	
9. Pass me the book, please.	
10. The kitchen looks perfect now.	

Oral Communication

Character Role-Play

1. Choose a Character:

- Select either Darry or Lizzie from the play "*The End of the Beginning*."
- Understand your character's personality (Darry - stubborn but clueless, Lizzie - practical and sharp-tongued).

2. Prepare Your Dialogue:

- Pick a short scene or a few lines from the play.
- Make sure the dialogue has a clear beginning, middle, and end (plot development).
- Add an expressive closure (final impactful line or action).

Writing Skills

- A. Read the following paragraph carefully. It contains several grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Apply your editing and proofreading skills to correct them.**

Paragraph for Editing and Proofreading

Ali loves playing football with his friends, they often play at the park near there

house. last saturday, they decided to play a match against another team. However, when they arrived the ground was crowded, so they had to wait. finally, they got the chance to play but it started to rain heavily. Ali slipped and fell but his friends help him up. Despite the rain they continued playing and enjoy the game. it was a exciting experience for all of them.

B. Dialogue Writing

Instructions

- Read the situation carefully.
- Write a dialogue between Darry Berrill and Barry Derrill, with Lizzie Berrill appearing later.
- Use at least 10 exchanges between the characters.
- Use clear, realistic dialogue to capture Darry's overconfidence, Barry's humour, and Lizzie's practical wisdom.
- Maintain the playful, farcical tone of the play, blending humour with a subtle critique of gender roles.

Situation

The House in Chaos

Inside Darry Berrill's cottage, chaos reigns. The broken crockery lies scattered, a chair wobbles dangerously, and an overturned bucket of soapy water seeps across the floor. A missing curtain flaps in the chilly breeze from a shattered windowpane. Darry stands in the middle, wiping sweat from his brow, his face a mix of stubborn pride and frustration. Barry Derrill, his cheerful but unhelpful friend, leans against the wall, grinning, a feather duster in one hand like a scepter.

Suddenly, the door creaks open, and Lizzie Berrill's shadow appears on the doorstep. Secrecy is replaced by surprise and embarrassment as Darry tries to explain the chaos. The room is silent for a heartbeat, then...