1. Define Epic Theatre.
Theatrical movement from the early to mid-twentieth century that responded to the political climate of the time to a new political theater
Erwin Piscator
   – German theater director
   Encouraged playwrights to address issues related to “contemporary existence”
   Staging: documentary effects (projections on screens), audience interaction, use of chorus

The Epic Theatre was a reaction against the psychological realism in writing and staging associated with playwrights like Henrik Ibsen. At the same time, it recalls techniques employed by the Classical Greeks, like Euripides. One of the goals of Epic Theatre was to remove the audience from being emotionally involved in the characters so that they could respond and be moved to action by the message of the play. This involved a practice called verfremdungseffekt.

2. What is verfremdungseffekt?
   A.

   B.

   C.

   D. Why?

3. Some theatrical techniques (technical/performance) to achieve verfremdungseffekt:
   A.

      i. Origin: Classical theater

   B.

      i. Origin: Classical theater
ii. long soliloquies that are narrative and self-revelatory

C.

i. light the house as well as the stage
ii. place lighting equipment on the stage

D.

i. play characters believably without convincing either themselves or the audience that they have “become” the characters

4. Some dramatic techniques to achieve verfremdungseffekt:

A.

B.

i. Notes describe minimalistic staging.
ii. Stage directions do not describe psychological characterization – only physical.

C.

D.

E.

F.

5. The Epic Theatre movement was most developed by Bertolt Brecht; who is he?

A. German poet, playwright, and theatrical reformer (1898-1956)

B. Uses the term “dialectical theater”
   i. Theater is not meant to entertain, but to instruct the audience.
   ii. A play is intended to be a dialogue with the audience.
   iii. A play uncovers society by exposing its greed and viciousness.
   iv. A play compels the audience to question themselves and tries to persuade them to change the social order.
Friedrich Dürrenmatt refused to be formally attached to any theatre or literary movement, although his works are clearly characterized by aspects of Epic Theatre. In addition to reflecting the Epic Theatre movement, Dürrenmatt’s works espouse characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd.

6. What is the Theatre of the Absurd?
   - post WWII theatrical movement that focused largely on the idea of existentialism (what happens when human existence has no meaning or purpose; communication and logic gives way to irrational and illogical speech)

7. Absurd in the context of absurdism can mean:
   - without purpose; illogical; out of harmony; useless; devoid of reason; meaningless hopeless; chaotic; lacking order; uncertain

8. Production concept (technical) in the Theatre of the Absurd:
   A.

   B.

9. Plot (dramatic) in the Theatre of the Absurd:
   A.

   B.

   C.

   D.

   E.

   F.

10. Acting and characterization (technical/performance) in the Theatre of the Absurd:
    A.

    B.
C.  
i. Absurd characters lack the motivation found in characters of realistic dramas, which highlights their purposelessness.

D.

E.

11. Dialogue (dramatic) in the Theatre of the Absurd:
   A.
   B.
   C.
   D.

In the 1954 essay, “The Problems of the Theatre,” Dürrenmatt reflected, “Tragedy presupposes guilt, despair, moderation, lucidity, vision, a sense of responsibility. In…the 20th century…there are no more guilty and also, no responsible men. It is always, ‘We couldn’t help it’ and ‘We didn’t really want that to happen.’ And indeed, things happen without anyone in particular being responsible for them…We are all collectively guilty.”

12. Who is Friedrich Dürrenmatt?
   A. (1921-1971)
   B. Wrote fiction, political writing, philosophy, drama, and also worked in the visual arts;
   C. Born Konolfingen, Switzerland (outside Bern); wrote in German
   D. Thought the Swiss were narrow-minded
      i. viewpoint: hypocrisy and material self-interest propels politics
      ii. Especially critical of the United States and then U.S.S.R. post-WWII
   E. Viewpoint: Hero and pure tragedy are obsolete.
      i. In modern society, a dramatic hero is impossible.
      ii. Democracy has no place for heroes.
      iii. The celebration of ordinary heroes (firemen, military) is short-lived.
   F. Viewpoint: Justice and freedom (cannot exist side by side in any human society)

13. The Visit (1956)
   A. Deemed a tragicomedy by the playwright
B. Protagonist (not hero) Alfred III is killed by a fate constructed by a fatal human flaw: greed.
C. Makes audience witness to the moral collapse of society
D. Ill’s death is not a resolution, but an invitation for self-reflection

14. Review the term **black comedy**.
A. 
   i. Black coffin, daily procession of funeral wreaths, artificial limbs

B. **Central ideas in The Visit**
   A. Buying justice (Ill buys men to perjure themselves; Claire buys Boby the Butler, who was a judge in Güllen; Claire buys Roby and Toby from the American justice system; Claire buys Ill’s murder)
   B. Prostitution (purchasing sex is a physical manifestation of power and presses the prostitute into a corrupt state)
      i. Claire inherited her fortune from the Armenian billionaire who hired her.
      ii. Claire attempts to turn the world into her own personal brothel.
      iii. Motivation: Claire has learned from the sexual marketplace that anyone can be bought, if one has the money.
   C. Women’s rights (no voting rights for women until 1971 in Switzerland)
      i. Symbol: Claire lacks a hand and a foot: tools to control her destiny
   D. Rule of law (governs society; all citizens submit to it; Claire imposes her own rule of law)
   E. Vengeance as justice (Koby and Loby – the perjured men; Ill’s suffering and fear)
   F. Romantic love
      i. Claire’s string of marriages symbolizes the emptiness of the institution.
      ii. Ill rejects Claire’s love and marries Matilda for her store.
      iii. Setting: pastoral; Claire and Ill’s affair took place in Peterson’s Barn and Konrad’s Village Wood.
      iv. Satire: staging in Act Two reconstructs the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*
   G. Dichotomy of East and West
      i. Buying American convicts sentenced to death
   H. Dehumanization vs. humanism
      i. Claire’s rhyming nicknames systematically dehumanize everyone around her; demonstrates her power
      ii. Physical attributes of Claire
         -prosthetic leg and ivory hand= “not quite human”
         -as a prostitute, she was an animal
         -as a billionaire, she is a god
      iii. The role of the Teacher
         -The town’s history is emphasized.
As society becomes increasingly capitalistic/materialistic, humanist ideals wither.

16. Miscellaneous:
   A. **Setting** of Güllen – translates as “liquid manure” in a Swiss dialect of German
   B. **Symbol**: railway station (industry)
   C. **Allusions and aptronym**: Claire Zachanassian (Basil Zaharoff – arms dealer;
      Aristotle Onassis – ship owner; Calouste Gulbenkian – oil magnate)
   D. **Allusion and symbol**: Claire’s pet panther alludes to her adolescent nickname for Ill