

GYC101 Greening Your Curriculum

Rosen, Introduction to Dramatic Literature, LIT 218

Has “Gas” Ever Been Sustainable? An analysis and contextualization of Georg Kaiser’s *Gas* Trilogy

Course End Competencies:

- A. Define and give examples of major types of drama: tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrama, etc.
- B. Describe the organization of a plot: including crisis, climax, denouement, etc.
- C. Identify use of literary techniques in plays: rhyme, rhythm, meter, irony, alliteration, etc.
- D. Compare and contrast styles of dramatic writing from ancient Greece to present day.

Assignment Competencies:

- A. Identify genre and structure of the *Gas* trilogy by Georg Kaiser
- B. Draw parallels of theme to contemporary society
- C. Contextualize historical and sociopolitical aspects of the *Gas* trilogy
- D. Consider contemporary concerns regarding sustainability, using Kaiser’s trilogy as a parable

Students will use critical thinking skills as they read Georg Kaiser’s *Gas* trilogy (*Gas I*, *Gas II*, *The Coral*). *Gas*, written during WW I, revolves around an industrialist and his family who run a factory that produces gas. Eventually the factory workers (Think of the mechanized world of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*) are presented with the option of continuing their mundane existence or move to world full of natural wonder. The workers cannot make the sacrifices that would lead to change and decide to continue their life as is. Ultimately the hero’s son finds out that the gas being produced is poisonous and blows up the factory in order to save the world.

The students will read the trilogy in the context of a parable for the audience in 1917-1920, as well as today’s audience. Research, writing, and discussion will be a major part of the assessment as well. A creative component might require students to “update” the script using today’s corporate environment as a context.

Assignment Guidelines:

Each student will read the three plays that make up Georg Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy, and then research and write about one of the following topics (assigned at random):

- Sustainability and business
- Sustainability and workforce
- Sustainability and environment
- Sustainability and family
- Sustainability and war

The paper must be 5-7 pages in length (thoroughly cited) and take into account Kaiser's perspective. Once you demonstrate your understanding of Kaiser's society, take the next step and relate it to our own.

Make sure your research focuses on aspects of the dramatic literature *AND* sustainability. Ask yourself if society learned any lessons from Kaiser and how it would be relevant today. Consider updating portions of the text to make them suitable for an audience in 2013. Don't forget to take into account the style (Expressionism) and consider the reason the playwright chose this style to best communicate his point.