

# **MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**(ADDITIONAL LESSONS - MODULE III)**

**BA ENGLISH**

**VI SEMESTER**

**CORE COURSE**

**(2011 Admission)**



**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O. MALAPPURAM, KERALA, INDIA - 673 635**

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STUDY MATERIAL

**BA ENGLISH**

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## MODULE III

# DRAMA

### LOOK BACK IN ANGER

- John Osborne

#### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

##### About the Author

The Oscar winning screen writer **John Osborne**, better known as one of the most important British playwrights of the 1950's-a generation that revolutionized English speaking theatre- was born on December 12, 1929 in London, England. His father Thomas Godfrey Osborne was a commercial artist and advertising copywriter of South Welsh extraction, and his mother Nellie Beatrice was a Cockney barmaid. In 1935 the working-class family moved to the Surrey suburb of Stoneleigh, in search of a better life, though Osborne would regard it as a cultural desert. Osborne adored his father and hated his mother and described her as "hypocritical, self-absorbed, calculating and indifferent."

His father died in 1941, leaving the young boy an insurance settlement which he used to finance a private education at Belmont College, a minor public school in Devon. He entered the school in 1943, but was expelled in the summer term of 1945, after whacking the headmaster, who had struck him for listening to a forbidden broadcast by Frank Sinatra. School Certificate was the only formal qualification he acquired, but he possessed a native intelligence.

After school, Osborne went home to his mother in London and briefly tried trade journalism. A job tutoring a touring company of junior actors introduced him to the theatre. He soon became involved as a stage manager and actor, joining Anthony Creighton's provincial touring company. Osborne tried his hand at writing plays, co-writing his first, *The Devil Inside Him*, with his mentor Stella Linden, who then directed it at the Theatre Royal in Huddersfield in 1950. Around this time he also married Pamela Lane. His second play *Personal Enemy* was written with Anthony Creighton (with whom he later wrote *Epitaph for George Dillon* staged at the Royal Court in 1958). *Personal Enemy* was staged in regional theatres before he submitted *Look Back in Anger*.

In a productive life of more than 40 years, Osborne explored many themes and genres, writing for stage, film and TV. The success of his 1956 play '*Look Back in Anger*' transformed English theatre. His personal life was extravagant and iconoclastic. He was

notorious for the ornate violence of his language, not only on behalf of the political causes he supported but also against his own family, including his wives and children.

Osborne was one of the first writers to address Britain's purpose in the post-imperial age. He was the first to question the point of the monarchy on a prominent public stage. During his peak (1956–1966), he helped make contempt an acceptable and now even clichéd onstage emotion, argued for the cleansing wisdom of bad behaviour and bad taste, and combined unsparing truthfulness with devastating wit.

## **LOOK BACK IN ANGER**

Written in seventeen days in a deck chair on Morecambe pier where Osborne was performing in a creaky rep show called *Seagulls over Sorrento*, *Look Back in Anger* was a strongly autobiographical piece based on Osborne's unhappy marriage to actress Pamela Lane and their life in cramped accommodation in Derby. While Osborne aspired towards a career in theatre, Lane was of a more practical and materialistic persuasion, not taking Osborne's ambitions seriously while cuckolding him with a local dentist. It was submitted to agents all over London and returned with great rapidity. Finally it was sent to the newly formed English Stage Company at London's Royal Court Theatre.

Formed by actor-manager and artistic director George Devine, the company had seen its first three productions flop and urgently needed a success if it was to survive. Devine was prepared to gamble on this play because he saw in it a ferocious and scowling articulation of a new post-war spirit. *Look Back in Anger* (1959), which opened on May 8, 1956 at the Royal Court, was revolutionary, as it gave voice to the working class. A press agent came up with the phrase "Angry Young Man" that would stick to Osborne and his compatriots, who created a new type of theater rooted in Bertolt Brecht and class consciousness. Though it initially received mixed reviews, the play was a smash in London, and it made the transfer to Broadway, where it ran for a year. "Look Back in Anger" was nominated for a 1958 Tony Award for Best Play (Osborne and producer David Merrick, Best Actress in a Play (Mary Ure, whom Osborne made his second wife), and Best Costume Design (The Motley). It eventually was made into a movie starring Richard Burton and directed by Tony Richardson. The play turned Osborne from a struggling playwright into a wealthy and famous angry young man and won him the Evening Standard Drama Award as the most promising playwright of the year.

His second play *The Entertainer* (1960) was also a great success. Osborne's career continued strong in the 1960s. He won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for Tony Richardson's movie version of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1963). He followed this success up with his last great play *Luther* (1974).

Other important plays of Osborne include "Inadmissible Evidence" (1964) and "The Hotel in Amsterdam" (1968). The year 1968 was a watershed in Osborne's professional life. It was the year of his last successful play, "The Hotel in Amsterdam", and the year that Tony Richardson's masterful satire *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968) -- based on a

screenplay by Osborne -- was released. He would not enjoy the same success as he had in the 1950s and '60s in the latter part of his life.

The five-time married Osborne died from complications of diabetes on December 24, 1994, two weeks after his 65th birthday. His last produced play was "Déjà Vu" (1991), a sequel to his first great success, "Look Back in Anger". His legacy was a transformed British theater, which had broken its links to the ossified D'OlyD'Carte of the former generation, in which the theater was more about elocution by actors playing toffs than it was about life as lived by most Britons. Osborne and the legions of playwrights he influenced made language important, as well as introduced an emotional intensity into the theater. Osborne and his brethren used the theater as a soapbox on which to attack class barriers (and a theater which reinforced those class distinctions).

### **THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN**

Osborne's play was the first to explore the theme of the "Angry Young Man." This term describes a generation of post-World War II artists and working class men who generally ascribed to leftist, sometimes anarchist, politics and social views. According to cultural critics, these young men were not a part of any organized movement but were, instead, individuals angry at a post-Victorian Britain that refused to acknowledge their social and class alienation.

Jimmy Porter is often considered to be literature's seminal example of the angry young man. Jimmy is angry at the social and political structures that he believes has kept him from achieving his dreams and aspirations. He directs this anger towards his friends and, most notably, his wife Alison.

### **LOOK BACK IN ANGER: CHARACTER LIST**

- Jimmy porter - the protagonist of the play, a working class man.
- Alison Porter - Jimmy's wife, an upper class woman.
- Cliff Lewis - friend to both Jimmy and Alison, a working class Welsh man.
- Helena Charles - Alison's best friend, an upper class woman.
- Colonel Redfern - Alison's father. He was a military officer in India for many years

### **DETAILED ACT-WISE SUMMARY WITH CRITICAL COMMENTS**

#### **Act I**

Act I takes place on an evening in April. The setting is the Porter's attic apartment. It is a small room with simple, sparse furniture. There are "books, neckties, and odds and ends, including a large, tattered toy teddy bear and soft, woolly squirrel." The only light comes from a skylight, so the room is somewhat dim. As the curtain rises, Jimmy Porter

and Cliff Lewis are seated in two shabby armchairs reading newspapers. Jimmy is smoking a cigar.

The opening of the play gives detailed descriptions of the disposition of each character. Jimmy, who is about 25 years old, is described as “a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike.” Cliff, who is about the same age as Jimmy, is almost the opposite of Jimmy. He is relaxed and easy going. Cliff demands other people’s love, while Jimmy mostly repels it. Also in the attic is Alison Porter, Jimmy’s wife. She is a tall, slim, dark girl whose personality is not immediately apparent to the audience. She is ironing a pile of laundry.

Jimmy complains that all the book reviews sound the same and that the papers provide no intellectual stimulation. He asks Cliff antagonistically if the papers make him feel ignorant. He calls Cliff “a peasant.” Jimmy then turns towards Alison who is only half listening to his rantings. Jimmy then becomes upset that nobody is listening to him when he speaks and he steals the newspaper from Cliff.

Jimmy tells the other two that he is hungry and Cliff tells him that he will end up being fat one day, but Jimmy tells him that won’t happen because “We just burn everything up.” Cliff is kind to Alison. He tells her to leave the laundry and comments that she’s beautiful. Jimmy is not bothered by this. They begin to discuss the articles in the paper by the Bishop of Bromley who urges all Christians to support the manufacture of the H-bomb and denies the existence of class distinctions. Jimmy discusses some of the other odd articles in the paper. When Alison suggests that they go to the movies, Jimmy declares that he will not have his evening ruined.

Cliff’s trousers are wrinkled and Alison offers to iron them. Cliff wants a pipe, but cannot stand the smell of it and so starts to smoke a cigarette even though Jimmy warns him they will upset his ulcers. Jimmy talks about Alison’s brother, Nigel and makes some bad comments on him. Jimmy continues to disparage Alison and her family. He calls them “sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous.” Alison’s face contorts in anger, but the feeling passes and she returns to ironing.

Jimmy tries to listen to a concert on the radio and complains at the noise made by Alison's ironing and Cliff's rustling of the newspaper. Alison chides him for acting like a child. He yells at her and uses abusive words to describe her. Church bells start ringing outside and this noise upsets Jimmy even more. Cliff, trying to improve the mood, pretends to dance with Jimmy. Jimmy tries to listen to a concert on the radio and complains at the noise made by Alison's ironing and Cliff's rustling of the newspaper. He then harangues against women in general, Alison, and even Mrs. Drury, their landlady. Cliff and Jimmy then playfully wrestle and accidentally push over Alison and the ironing board. Alison has burnt her arm and finally tells Jimmy to get out. Cliff ministers to Alison's burn and calms her. Alison confides to him that “I don’t think I can take much more...I don’t think I want anything more to do with love.”

As Cliff continues to bandage her arm, she tells him that she is pregnant and that she has not told Jimmy. He urges her to tell Jimmy because Jimmy does love her, even though

he is cruel. She believes that Jimmy will suspect that she is attempting to trap him in a life with her. She tells Cliff that Jimmy has “his own private morality” and that he had been angry when he had slept with her on their wedding night and found out she was a virgin, as if “an untouched woman would defile him.”

Cliff tells her that he understands Jimmy in some way. They both come from working class people and Jimmy likes him for that. Jimmy reenters the room and sees Cliff and Alison close together but he doesn't say anything and sits down to read the paper. Jimmy makes some funny remarks on Alison and Cliff. As Jimmy reestablishes himself Cliff goes out for cigarettes. Jimmy apologizes Alison for pushing her down and tells her that he wants her. He and Alison tease each other, him calling her a squirrel and she calling him a bear. She makes squirrel noises as they hug each other.

They play a private and affectionate game of “squirrels and bears” and Alison is about to tell him of her pregnancy when Cliff returns to say Helena Charles, an actress friend of Alison, is on the phone downstairs. When Alison returns she says she has invited Helena to stay with them during her engagement at the local theatre and Jimmy launches his most shocking diatribe yet. He tells Alison that if she were to have a child and if that child would die, then she might suffer enough to become a human being. The act ends with Jimmy saying of Alison, “She'll go on sleeping and devouring until there is nothing left of me.”

## CRITICAL COMMENTS

The play begins with Osborne's very specific stage directions. Osborne attempts to give definition to each character through an analysis of their physical traits and their emotional makeup. Jimmy is a study in dualisms: he is angry and bitter, yet he is also tender and intense in his zealous love. Osborne attempts to paint Jimmy as a very masculine character, though the audience is left to decide how much of that is real and how much of that is an act. Alison Porter is described as a woman that has been beaten down by life. Osborne uses the word “malaise” to describe her, denoting the fact that her life has not turned out as she hoped it would. Cliff is described as a likable man, unimposing in his physical characteristics. He suffers Jimmy's abuse with good nature. The opening scene uses stereotypical gender references to define the characters. Jimmy is smoking a pipe and reading a paper while Alison is ironing.

Their apartment flat is a symbol of 1950's domesticity. The room is filled with old furniture, half-read newspapers, and pieces of worn clothing. This is representative of the characters and the characters' lifestyle. The cramped space contains all of the trappings of a meager domestic life. Jimmy's political and social persuasions become evident here as well when he mocks a faux column in the paper written by the “Bishop of Bromley.” He is opposed to any kind of organization whether it is politics or religion.

The playful banter between Cliff and Jimmy belies the deep tension and anger beneath the surface of the relationships between the three characters. Jimmy is concerned with “enthusiasm” and “living.” He portrays others as slothful and lazy. Alison and Cliff are

included in this judgment. Jimmy's anger is a result of his inability to excite similar feelings in the people around him.

The play's title alludes to a running theme: anger over the political, military, and social prominence of the British past. For Jimmy, the British Empire represents a point in history in which the Englishman was allowed to truly live as himself. This American age is "dreary" in comparison.

Jimmy's trumpet playing is an allusion to the twentieth century British fascination for the Black American jazz culture. When Jimmy plays the trumpet, it represents his affinity for a culture which he believes is truly alive. This is a common theme in several works of mid-twentieth century white English culture, from literature to popular music. Osborne here suggests that black jazz culture is an embodiment of a "natural" humanity. Jimmy's anger is a result of not being able to live in such a society and his trumpet playing is a symbol of his attempt to connect with such a life.

Alison's own fear is revealed in her private conversation with Cliff. She tells Cliff that she is afraid to tell him of her pregnancy because she does not want to "trap him." This is an ironic statement since Jimmy is already trapped in a sleepy, domestic life that he does not want. Such a statement also demonstrates the tension that is at the heart of the character of Alison. On the one hand, she is dedicated to the conservative familial structure of her upbringing. On the other hand, she is in love with Jimmy and wants more than all to put his needs above her own.

Alison and Cliff's affectionate relationship is also revealed in this scene. It is a strange relationship because the two seem to have a close physical connection -- they often touch and hug -- yet this does not seem to inspire any jealousy or emotion in Jimmy. This relationship between the three shows how Cliff's character is integral to Jimmy and Alison's relationship with each other. Alison is able to get the affection that she desires from Cliff while Cliff also provides the masculine friendship and confidence that Jimmy desires.

Jimmy becomes angry at Alison for allowing Helena to stay with them during her visit and his rant towards her at the end of the first act is one of his most vicious. This rant makes clear what Jimmy considers necessary in order to be truly alive. One must suffer as he did when he watched his father die in order to understand what it truly means to live. When Jimmy tells Alison that he wishes that she could see her child die, it is a moment of both dramatic irony and foreshadowing. It is ironic because the audience already knows that Alison is pregnant. Jimmy's attack on her foreshadows the death of her child and her future hardships.

Jimmy's anger is representative of Osborne's critique of the feminization of society in the 1950's. Osborne later wrote that Jimmy's anger is a manifestation of the subliminal anger felt by a generation of men domesticated by a feminine culture. Jimmy's anger is Osborne's attempt to return genuine masculine emotion to cultural life. This is one of the reasons that Osborne's play received such attention and critical reception, both good and bad. Some critics argued that his attempt was ultimately misogynistic.

## ACT II, SCENE 1

Act II opens two weeks later. Alison is boiling water for tea on a Sunday afternoon. The newspapers are again spread out across the floor of the attic apartment. Alison is only wearing a slip and as she begins to dress, Helena enters. Helena is described as the same age and build as Alison, but with a “sense of matriarchal authority”

Helena places a bowl of salad on the table. Alison expresses her gratitude for her helps. Jimmy is in Cliff’s room playing his trumpet very loudly. Alison worries that Mrs. Drury is going to kick them out of the apartment. Helena notes that even his trumpet playing sounds angry.

Helena asks Alison if she is in love with Cliff, and Alison denies it. She tells Helena the story of their first few months of marriage. Without any money or jobs, they went to live with Hugh Tanner, a friend of Jimmy’s. Alison and Hugh could tell immediately that they didn’t like each other. Hugh was even more angry and insulting than Jimmy and Alison realized that for the first time in her life she was cut off from all the people in her life. Her mother and father had made her sign over all her money and assets when she married Jimmy because they believed him to be “utterly ruthless.” Her brother, Nigel, had been running for Parliament at the time and so didn’t have the time for anyone but his constituents.

Helena changes the conversation and tells Alison that she must either tell Jimmy that he is going to be a father or else leave him. Alison points towards the stuffed squirrel and teddy bear in the corner of the room and tells Helena that those animals represent the two of them. She tells her about the game they play in which she pretends to be a squirrel and he pretends to be a bear. It was the one way of escaping from everything. Helena warns that she must fight Jimmy or else he will kill her.

Cliff enters. Cliff rejects the invitation to accompany Helena and Alison to the church telling that he hasn’t yet read the papers. Jimmy enters and begins bantering with Cliff and then turning to Alison and her family.

Jimmy begins to sing a song that himself composed. It’s a song about how he is tired of women and would rather drink and be alone than have to deal with their problems.

He sees Alison dressing in the room and asks her where she is going. She tells him she is going to church. He asks her if she has lost her mind.

Jimmy then goes on a rant on Alison’s mother. He is trying to prod Alison into anger. Cliff tries to calm the situation. Jimmy accuses Alison of having been influenced by Helena. Helena tries to tell Jimmy to back off his anger, but this only makes him more eager to fight. Jimmy tells them that one day, when he is done running his sweet-stall, he will write a book about everyone in the room, a recollection of their time together.

Helena asks why Jimmy is being so obstinate. She asks him if he thinks the world has treated him badly and Alison interjects, telling her to not take away his suffering because “he’d be lost without it.” Jimmy tries to figure out why Helena is still staying with them since her play finished eight days earlier. He believes that she is trying to influence Alison in some way.

Jimmy then abuses Helena. He says that she is “an expert in the New Economics -- the Economics of the Supernature.” Helena calmly tells him that she will slap his face. He asks her if she has ever seen someone die. She answers “no.” Jimmy then proceeds to tell her about how he watched his father die for a year when he was ten years old. Jimmy recounts how his family had abandoned the old man and only Jimmy had been there to listen to his father’s ramblings. He tells Helena that “I knew more about -- love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.” Helena rises, tells Alison that it’s time to go, and exits.

Jimmy wants to know why his suffering means nothing to Alison. He calls her a “Judas” and “phlegm” and, finally fed up, Alison throws a glass across the room where it shatters. She tells him that all she wants is peace and goes to the bed to put on her shoes while Jimmy continues to rant. Helena enters with two prayer books and tells Jimmy that there is a phone call for him. Jimmy exits.

Helena tells Alison that she has sent a wire to Alison’s father to come and get her. She asks if Alison will agree to leave Jimmy and return home and Alison says that she will. Jimmy enters solemnly. He tells Cliff that Hugh’s mom has had a stroke and is dying and that he must leave to go see her. Cliff leaves to make arrangements for Jimmy’s trip. Jimmy tells Alison that he needs her to come with him. She walks over to the table and picks up her prayer book and leaves. Jimmy, stunned, leans on the chest of drawers and picks up the teddy bear. He throws it across the room and then falls on the bed, burying himself in the covers.

## CRITICAL COMMENTS

Helena Charles is introduced. She is, in many ways, the opposite of Alison, though both share a common upbringing. Helena is upper class and self-assured while Alison is working class and tired. Alison lacks Helena’s sophistication because of her relationship with Jimmy, though she had once had it. Like Alison, Helena takes on a domestic role while with the Porters, but the audience sees that she is not a domesticated female figure.

In attempting to explain her relationship to Cliff, Alison actually proves how Jimmy is partly right in his assessment that both of them have not found a way to truly live, embracing a slothfulness to their lives instead. Alison suggests that while their relationship is both emotional and physical, they are too comfortable in the way things are between them to be consumed with any real passion towards each other. Jimmy also suffers from this emotional slothfulness since he does not seem to feel jealousy.

Alison explains to Helena why she is with Jimmy. This scene allows Osborne to explore the idea of masculine chivalry in the twentieth century. Alison uses her stories of meeting Jimmy and the party crashing that she, Jimmy, and Hugh undertook as an allusion to English folklore. In Alison’s telling of the event, Jimmy becomes a knight in shining armor, though Alison admits his armor never shone very brightly.

It is in this scene that Alison explains the symbolism of the bear and squirrel. She explains that by taking on the persona of these stuffed animals they both are able to have

“dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other.” Their games of squirrel and bear show how the only way that both can truly love each other is to completely detach themselves from the world. It is also an expression of a lost childhood that both share. The condition of their real lives is often too much to bear, and so the game offers a time of retreat into a childishness that neither had growing up.

Alison’s declaration that she is attending church with Helena is one of the only times in the play that Jimmy expresses genuine surprise and shock at his wife’s actions. Jimmy equates church going with Alison’s past, a past that like a knight in shining armor, he rescued her from.

Alison’s going to church, Jimmy considers, is a breach of allegiance to him and this proves to be a justification for his further vicious humiliation of her.

Jimmy’s attacks on Alison’s mother are the best examples for the misogynistic nature of Jimmy. Jimmy is particularly cruel to older, upper class women. Alison’s mother is the archetype of such a character.

Jimmy then turns his hatred towards Helena and begins to attack her character and her worldview. Jimmy claims to hold an understanding of the world that Helena and most everyone else in the world do not hold. He understands that traditional morality has no meaning in the modern world. Jimmy understands the church to be simply a puppet of political and social power.

The audience then learns of Jimmy’s own personal suffering, of how he watched his father die at a young age and how his family did nothing to help him. It is this early case of suffering that haunts Jimmy and allows him to feel both superior to others and to long for a more real way of living. Since neither Helena nor Alison has suffered in this way, Jimmy believes that they have not truly been born into the world. This is ironic since it is Alison who suffers most under Jimmy’s cruel moods. The end of the scene makes suffering a central breaking point between Alison and Jimmy. With Hugh’s mother on her deathbed, Jimmy cannot handle her suffering alone and begs Alison to come with him to visit her. Alison, knowing that her father is coming to pick her up the next day, chooses to go with Helena. It is a choice for a world that Jimmy feels is unreal in some way and he is devastated by her choice.

## **ACT II, SCENE 2**

It is the following evening and Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, is visiting. The Colonel is a handsome man in his late sixties. He is slightly withdrawn. He was a dedicated and strict soldier for forty years but now he has an air of kindness and gentleness to him. He feels disturbed and bewildered by everything that is happening to his daughter. The Colonel asks where Jimmy has gone and Alison tells him that he’s gone to visit Mrs. Tanner in London.

Alison and her father begin to discuss her life with Jimmy. She tells him of how Jimmy hates all of them and how he believes it is “high treason” for Alison to be in touch with her family. The colonel sees some right on Jimmy's side and was horrified by his

wife's brutal attempts to prevent Alison from marrying Jimmy. Alison says that she believes her mother was only trying to protect her and the Colonel says that he wishes they had never interfered with their daughter's life.

He says he and Alison are much alike in that they both "like to sit on a fence. It is rather comfortable." Alison tries to explain why she married Jimmy: "I'd lived a happy, uncomplicated life and suddenly this—this spiritual barbarian—throws down a gauntlet at me."

Alison tells the Colonel what Jimmy said about him and her mother. She tells the Colonel that Jimmy called her mother an "over privileged old bitch" and called the Colonel a plant left over "from the Edwardian Wilderness that can't understand why the sun isn't shining anymore." The Colonel asks her why he married her if he felt like this. She says that he perhaps married her for revenge. The Colonel only answers that he doesn't understand why young people cannot simply marry for love.

Alison picks up the squirrel from the dresser and begins to put it in her suitcase, and then she stops and puts it back. For a moment, "she seems to be standing on the edge of choice." She makes a choice and goes to her father, leans against him and weeps. The Colonel tells her she's taking a big step in deciding to leave with him. Helena enters and Alison and the Colonel prepare to leave. The Colonel asks if Helena is coming with them, and she tells him that she has a job interview the next day in Birmingham and will stay one more night. Cliff enters and Alison introduces the two men. The Colonel takes Alison's bag and exits.

Alison hands Cliff a letter and she leaves. Cliff and Helena are alone in the apartment. Cliff tells Helena that the apartment is going to be "really cock-eyed" now. Helena wonders if Jimmy will look up one of his old girlfriends, Madeline, but Cliff doesn't think so. Cliff loses his sense of good humor for the first time and he snaps at Helena. He throws Alison's letter at Helena and tells her to give it to Jimmy.

Helena goes to the dresser and picks up the bear. She falls on the bed clutching it. Suddenly, Jimmy bursts in the room "almost giddy with anger...." He yells at her that the Colonel almost ran him down with his car and that Cliff walked away from him on the street without speaking. Helena throws the letter at him and he opens it. He reads the first few lines. Alison expresses that she desperately needs peace and that she needs time. She ends the letter by writing that "I shall always have a deep, loving need of you...."

Jimmy is incensed. He calls her a phony. He wants to know why Helena is still here at the apartment. She tells him that Alison is pregnant with his child. He is taken aback by this news but then he gets in Helena's face and tells her he doesn't care. He dares Helena to slap his face and recounts how for the past eleven hours he watched Hugh's mother die. He tells her that when he goes to the funeral, he will be alone because "that bitch won't even send her a bunch of flowers...." He believes that Alison did not take Hugh's mother seriously and so he doesn't care if she is going to have a baby. He tells Helena to leave and she slaps his face. He is surprised at first, but then he lets the painful emotions of the situation come over him. He lets out a "muffled cry of despair" and then Helena grabs him and they passionately kiss.

## CRITICAL COMMENTS

Colonel Redfern is, perhaps, the play's most sympathetic character. He is described as a former military man. This description suggests his strict rigidity in matters of emotion. His strict rigidity and lack of emotion is a fictionalized caricature created in Jimmy's mind. The Colonel's physical characteristics are described as relaxed and softened. He is worried about his daughter and he shows a range of emotion towards her. The fact that he has come to her rescue with such short notice suggests that Jimmy does not quite understand the complexity of his motivations.

Jimmy is partly correct, however, in his assessment that the Colonel represents the past. Alison relays Jimmy's insults towards him. She tells him that Jimmy believes he is a leftover from the "Edwardian Wilderness." The Edwardian period in British culture was a period in the early twentieth century during the reign of King Edward VII in which elite British culture was influential in both fashion and ideas throughout Continental Europe. This period in British history represents both the high water mark of British culture but also the beginning of the end for the prominence of Great Britain.

This scene in the play is in some ways the least consequential. Its function is largely symbolic. Critics have noted that the kiss that Jimmy and Helena share at the end of the scene is forced and rushed and ultimately unneeded. The point of the scene is to provide a complex understanding of Jimmy's view of the past. The scene can be summed up in Alison's observation that Jimmy and the Colonel are alike in many ways. The Colonel is upset because the present is not like the past. He sees his best days as behind him. Jimmy is upset because he views the present as the same as the past and sees no future for himself or anyone else. This is the same problem viewed from different angles. Osborne's point here is that the past has definite consequences for the present. In the Colonel's case, the past creates resignation and bewilderment in the present. For Jimmy, the past creates stagnation and anger.

## ACT III - SCENE 1

The scene opens several months later. Jimmy and Cliff are sprawled in their armchairs reading the Sunday newspapers and Helena is at the ironing board. All seems very relaxed. They talk about a newspaper article and Jimmy starts in on religion and politics. They then go into a vaudeville routine and Helena joins in. Jimmy and Cliff do a song and dance and end with playful wrestling. Cliff's shirt gets dirty and Helena leaves to wash it.

Cliff then tells Jimmy that he is thinking of leaving. He says he is tired of the sweet stall and that he would not be such a burden on Helena if he left. Jimmy takes this news casually and tells him that maybe he can find one of Helena's "posh girl friends with lots of money, and no brains" to take care of him.

Helena enters and gives Cliff his shirt. Jimmy tells him to dry it quickly so they can all go out for drinks. Jimmy tells Helena to cheer up and that he wished her "heart stirred a little" when she looked at him. She tells him that it does and that she knows Cliff is leaving.

Helena goes over and sits on the arm of Jimmy's chair, running her hand through his hair. Helena tells him that she loves him.

Helena and Jimmy share a tender moment, embracing. He tells her that they should leave and start their act, "T.S. Eliot and Pam," and that he'll "close that damned sweet-stall and...start everything from scratch." Helena tells him that this is wonderful. She goes to change out of her shirt and Jimmy goes to hurry up Cliff when there is a knock at the door. Jimmy opens it and finds Alison, standing in a raincoat and looking ill. Jimmy tells Helena that she has a visitor and walks out of the room, leaving the two women together.

### **CRITICAL COMMENTS**

This opening scene of Act III mirrors the play's first scene. It is, once again, a domestic scene. Jimmy and Cliff are in their same places. They read the papers and Jimmy complains about the lack of imagination in what are supposed to be the "posh" papers. Helena irons in a corner just as Alison did in Act I. This suggests that, even though the audience witnessed a great disturbance in previous scenes, things have changed only slightly in their lives.

We soon learn that Jimmy is mostly unchanged from his relationship with Helena. Helena only brings a new antagonism into their relationship: religion. Jimmy is ardently opposed to her religious tendencies. Jimmy believes that traditional religion represents the past. Religion has no place in modern society, or if it does it must take a vastly different form, such as African American religion which relies on strong expressions of emotion and personal feeling.

This scene also contains Jimmy's most famous speech in the play. He believes that there are no longer any worthy causes to die for. Previous generations, represented by Colonel Redfern, were the last to sacrifice themselves for their country and their belief in a right way to live. According to Jimmy, the world is a subjective place now. There is a poverty of ideals in the modern world. Jimmy, thus, is a character trapped between his nostalgia for the past and his assessment of his present prospects.

This nostalgia for the past is also the reason why Jimmy is able to calmly accept Cliff's desire to leave. Cliff sees the present as changed in a fundamental way; Helena entered their household and the dynamic between the three characters changed. Jimmy, however, finds solace and a sense of stability in the past. In his reassurance that Cliff has been a good friend, he is already memorializing Cliff. Jimmy idealizes Cliff's friendship just as he does Hugh and Mrs. Tanner and every other relationship in his life. The audience should remember how Jimmy consistently requires allegiance to the people in his life. Cliff now enters that nostalgic sphere.

### ACT III - SCENE 2

It is only moments later and Jimmy is in Cliff's room playing his trumpet. Helena is pouring Alison a cup of tea. She gives her the tea to help her feel better. Alison tells her that she feels mad for coming. She tells Helena that she came "to convince myself that everything I remembered about this place had really happened to me once."

Alison tells Helena that she knows she's done something wrong by coming to their apartment and doesn't want there to be a breach between her and Jimmy. Helena tells her that she believes her and that it is Alison that should chastise her for her behavior. Helena admits that she knows what she is doing is wrong, but that at least she believes in right and wrong.

Alison asks her if the reason she called for her father those months ago was because she was in love with Jimmy. Helena tells her it is true. Alison says it was difficult to believe at first but that then she understood. Helena says that she has discovered what is wrong with Jimmy -- "he was born out of his time." Alison agrees. Helena then tells her that things are over between her and Jimmy. She still believes in good and evil and she knows she cannot continue to live in this way with him.

Alison begs her to stay because Jimmy will have no one. Helena tells her she can do what she wants, but that she'd be a fool to return to Jimmy and that he'll find someone to take care of him. Helena asks Jimmy to stop playing trumpet and to join them.

When Jimmy enters he sees Alison. Helena begins to mention that Alison has lost her baby, but Jimmy stops her and tells her he knows what has happened. Jimmy begins to gain authority in the room when Helena stops him and tells him that she's leaving. She tells him that though she loves him, she can't take part "in all this suffering."

Jimmy tells them they are both trying to escape the pain of being alive and that one cannot fall into love "without dirtying up your hands." As Helena leaves, Jimmy leans against the window and cries, "Oh, those bells!" Alison begins to leave but Jimmy stops her. He tells her she denied him something when she didn't send any flowers to the funeral. He asks her if she remembers the night they met. He tells her he admired her relaxed spirit and that he knew she was what he wanted. Alison moves to the table and cries silently.

Alison cries out that none of it matters. She wants to be "a lost cause" and "corrupt and futile." She tells him when she lost the child she wished he could have seen her, "so stupid, and ugly and ridiculous. This is what he's been longing for me to feel...I'm in the fire and all I want is to die!" She tells him she is "in the mud at last!" Realizing her pain, he stops her and kneels with her. He tries to comfort her and then, with a "mocking, tender irony" begins to tell her that they'll be together as a bear and a squirrel. He tells her he's "a bit of a sappy, scruffy sort of a bear" but that he'll protect her from the cruel traps even though she's "none too bright." She laughs a bit and then softly adds, "Oh, poor, poor, bears!" They embrace as the curtain closes.

**CRITICAL COMMENTS**

This scene brings closure to the emotions and confusion that the characters have felt up to this point. Cliff has decided to leave. His motivations are not completely understood; he claims that things have simply changed too much for him, though it may also be the case that his realization that Jimmy will never change no matter which woman he is with has worn him down. It could also be that he realizes his relationship with Alison is over. Cliff moves on in his life; Jimmy does not.

Alison and Helena come to a deeper understanding of Jimmy and his motivations. Helena claims that she sees Jimmy as still being stuck in “the French Revolution,” meaning that his extreme emotion and turmoil seems to bring anarchy to his life and to the lives of those around him. Alison has a slightly different view; she understands him as an “Eminent Victorian,” meaning that he is chiefly nostalgic for an idealized past. Alison realizes this judgment on her husband is an echo of the previous conversation she held with her father. In both cases, Alison comes to understand Jimmy’s life is lived in the suffering he experienced at the death of his father.

Helena’s conclusion at the end of the play establishes her as the moral compass of all the characters. Alison tells her on the one hand that she should not feel guilty for staying with Jimmy while on the other hand her questions and reassurance makes Helena reevaluate her decisions. In the end, it is her sense of wrong-doing -- stealing Alison’s husband from her -- that makes her leave to start her own new life. This morality is represented by the church bells that ring throughout various scenes of the play and which ring at the end. With her renewed sense of right and wrong Helena represents an alternative to the subjective meaninglessness that Jimmy projects onto the modern world. Helena retains her moral center.

In this final scene, Jimmy’s power over the other people in his life is contrasted with his helplessness. Alison begs Helena to stay with Jimmy precisely for the reason that he will have no one to care for him if she leaves. The images of earlier scenes -- of Alison or Helena ironing -- take on a different meaning now. They were participating in such domestic activity not because Jimmy forced them to do so, but because they feel a tenderness for a man who is ultimately helpless. Helena is able to let this tenderness go as she leaves; Alison is not able to forget Jimmy.

This leads to the play’s end. Alison makes Jimmy realize she has become the person he wanted her to be. In Act I, Jimmy berated Alison as something less than a human being because she had not gone through the kind of suffering that he had once gone through at the death of his father. Now, with the death of her unborn child, Alison tells him that she understands suffering. Jimmy’s ultimate reaction to this news, and to Alison herself, is left unexplored. Their immediate reaction, however, is to return to their game of bear and squirrel. They now both understand, even if not consciously, that the only way to escape the suffering of the real world is to create a fantasy world that is just as powerful and stable. This is Osborne’s ultimate statement with the play: the only way for people of modernity to truly understand and cope with the world around them is to create fiction. As a playwright,

this is the course that Osborne himself has charted with *Look Back in Anger*. His fiction, no matter how realistic, is a diversion from the rest of the world.

## GLOSSARY

### Glossary of Terms

Anglican	: The Anglican Church is the largest Protestant denomination in Britain.
Chivalry	: Chivalry is the medieval term related to the institution of knighthood. It is often related to virtues such as bravery and self-sacrifice.
Cockerel	: A cockerel is a young rooster.
Dark Ages	: The "Dark Ages" is a term for medieval European society.
Edwardian Age	: The Edwardian Age corresponds to the height of the British Empire and colonial expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century.
Flat	: A flat is a British term for a small apartment.
Genuflect	: A term to denote one that bends or bows at the knees.
H-bom	: H-bomb is a short hand term for hydrogen bomb.
Half-crown	: A half-crown is a denomination of British currency.
Indiarubber	: This term alludes to one of Britain's most important exports from their Indian colonies - rubber.
Liberal	: A Liberal is a member of the Liberal British political party. This party is in opposition to the more conservative Tory party.
Misogynist	: A misogynist is a person who shows a hatred towards women. Jimmy Porter's character has been criticized for his misogynistic attitudes.
Port Said	: Port Said is an Egyptian shipping port on the Suez Canal. The Canal was an integral British shipping territory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Posh	: Posh is a British term for "trendy," or "popular."
Pusillanimous	: Pusillanimous is a negative connotation for a mean spirited or cowardly person.
Sweet Stall	: A sweet stall is a small shop that sells candy and other confectionaries.
Sycophantic	: To be sycophantic is to be a servile self-seeker who attempts to gain advantage by flattering important people.

- Victorian : The Victorian Age was a period in British history in the late nineteenth century of great British expansion and cultural influence.
- Welsh : A Welsh person is a person from the country of Wales. It often denotes a working class background.

## **REVISIONARY EXERCISES**

### *Short questions and answers*

1. Who is the Angry Young Man in the play?

Jimmy porter is the Angry Young Man in the play who expresses his frustration for the lack of feelings in his placid domestic life.

2. What are the major themes in Look Back in Anger?

There are many themes in this play like loss of childhood, living a "real" life and "laziness" in British culture.

3. How Look Back in Anger becomes autobiographical?

Look Back in Anger is autobiographical and portrays the playwright's relationship with his first wife, as well as the subsequent end of their marriage.

4. What does Colonel Redfern represent in the play?

Colonel Redfern is Alison's father. He represents Britain's great Edwardian past. He was a military leader in India for many years before returning with his family to England.

5. Who is the moral compass in the play?

Helena Charles is the play's moral compass. Helena's strong sense of right and wrong allows her to make a final judgment in the play's last act that her relationship with Jimmy is an illusion of love.

6. What imagery does Osborne use to explore the ideas of modern chivalry?

Osborne uses imagery of knights, a medieval British institution of soldiers, to explore themes of modern chivalry.

7. What are the differences between Alison and Helena?

Both Alison and Helena come from upper class families yet live in working class England. They differ in their situations. Helena is not attached to a working class man. Where Alison, for much of the story, is at the mercy of her husband Jimmy, Helena attempts to gently convince Alison to leave. Helena is not weighed down by the baggage that her friend Alison is under. Helena is very much the strong moral compass of the play.

8. Why could Jimmy be called a hero of his time?

Jimmy is not a hero in the classical sense. He's a modern day anti-hero. He's the angry, young man fighting against society and challenges the limitations of his own life and

place in the world. His anger is destructive, his actions would often be considered pure violence, and he is not to be blamed for it. It is the society who evokes the destructive nature in Jimmy. He is the mouth piece of the frustrated and dissatisfied young people, affected by the 2nd world war.

9. Explain the role of “angry young man” movement.

After his play ‘Look Back in Anger’ burst onto the stage in London in 1956, John Osborne was described in the press as an “angry young man.” The label came to be associated with the dominant British literary movement of the decade, which was characterized by disdain for the establishment and its class distinctions and mannerisms.

10. Who is Nigel and what comment does Jimmy make on him?

Nigel is Alison’s brother. He was a soldier in the British army and is moving up in the world. Jimmy thinks that he’ll be in Parliament one day, though he also believes that Nigel “seek(s) sanctuary in his own stupidity.”

11. What does the word “pusillanimous” mean, according to Jimmy?

Jimmy tells Alison that “pusillanimous” means “Wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, and timid of mind.”

### *Paragraph Questions and answers*

#### **1. Consider Look Back in Anger as a kitchen sink drama.**

Kitchen Sink drama is a term used to denote plays that rely on realism to explore domestic social relations. Realism, in British theater, was first experimented with in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by such playwrights as George Bernard Shaw. This genre attempted to capture the lives of the British upper class in a way that realistically reflected the ordinary drama of ruling class British society.

Look Back in Anger is considered to be a “Kitchen Sink drama.” This means that it is a play that delves into the deep meanings and psychology of ordinary British characters and their everyday working class lives. According to many critics, by the mid-twentieth century the genre of realism had become tired and unimaginative. Osborne's play returned imagination to the Realist genre by capturing the anger and immediacy of post-war youth culture and the alienation that resulted in the British working classes. Look Back in Anger was able to comment on a range of domestic social dilemmas in this time period. Most importantly, it was able to capture, through the character of Jimmy Porter, the anger of this generation that festered just below the surface of elite British culture.

#### **2. How does Osborne treat the loss of childhood in Look Back in Anger?**

A theme that impacts the characters of Jimmy and Alison Porter is the idea of a lost childhood. Osborne uses specific examples -- the death of Jimmy's father when Jimmy was only ten, and how he was forced to watch the physical and mental demise of the man -- to demonstrate the way in which Jimmy is forced to deal with suffering from an early age. Alison's loss of childhood is best seen in the way that she was forced to grow up too fast by

marrying Jimmy. Her youth is wasted in the anger and abuse that her husband levels upon her.

Osborne suggests that a generation of British youth has experienced this same loss of childhood innocence. Osborne uses the examples of World War, the development of the atomic bomb, and the decline of the British Empire to show how an entire culture has lost the innocence that other generations were able to maintain.

### **3. Osborne's idea of real life in *Look Back in Anger*.**

In the play, Jimmy Porter is consumed with the desire to live a more real and full life. He compares this burning desire to the empty actions and attitudes of others. At first, he generalizes this emptiness by criticizing the lax writing and opinions of those in the newspapers. He then turns his angry gaze to those around him and close to him, Alison, Helena, and Cliff.

Osborne's argument in the play for a real life is one in which men are allowed to feel a full range of emotions. The most real of these emotions is anger and Jimmy believes that this anger is his way of truly living. This idea was unique in British theater during the play's original run. Osborne argued in essays and criticisms that, until his play, British theater had subsumed the emotions of characters rendering them less realistic. Jimmy's desire for a real life is an attempt to restore raw emotion to the theater.

### **4. Do you believe that Osborne is misogynistic in the play?**

Osborne has been accused by critics of misogynistic views in his plays. Many point to *Look Back in Anger* as the chief example. These critics accuse Osborne of glorifying young male anger and cruelty towards women and homosexuals. This is seen in the play in specific examples in which Jimmy Porter emotionally distresses Alison, his wife, and delivers a grisly monologue in which he wishes for Alison's mother's death.

Osborne, however, asserts that he is attempting to restore a vision of true masculinity into a twentieth century culture that he sees as becoming increasingly feminized. This feminization is seen in the way that British culture shows an "indifference to anything but immediate, personal suffering." This causes a deadness within which Jimmy's visceral anger and masculine emotion is a retaliation against.

### **5. Comment on the language in *Look Back in Anger***

Osborne's use of language is basically in the realistic tradition. The characters' speech and rhythms reflect their class and education. Helena is very proper and conventional and so is her speech. Cliff is humble, Colonel Redfern is calm and reflective, and Alison is proper and non-judgmental and noncommittal. Jimmy Porter, though, broke with tradition. Working class characters were not new to the English stage, but previously they had been comic figures that were usually inarticulate, or even angry figures that were inarticulate and thus held back by their class and lack of language skills and could thus be pitied. Jimmy is extremely articulate and self-confident. Whatever one thinks of Jimmy, it is not going to be pity. His passion is overwhelming and he has the language to overwhelm others with that passion. His language is not polite, though one suspects it would be a great deal more impolite if theatre censorship had not been in effect when it was written. Jimmy can also be very humorous and even poetic, as when he describes Colonel Redfern as a

"sturdy old plant left over from the Edwardian Wilderness." Indeed, the powerful use of language seems almost to be a second form of structure for the whole play, one that covers various other faults.

**6. What does Jimmy and Alison's playful game of bear and squirrel represent?**

Alison describes their game of bear and squirrel as the only way the two have found to cope with the anger and viciousness that both direct towards each other. The closing lines of the play are the best representation of this: Alison has returned to show Jimmy that she has suffered greatly after losing their child to miscarriage. Both have now undergone intense suffering in their lives. They find that the real world is harsh and unforgiving and so they create a fantasy world to live in. This is also Osborne's self-referential moment; the playwright engages in this same work of the creation of fantasy worlds. Theater, no matter how realistic, is also an escape from the real world.

**7. Why or why not is Helena Charles the moral compass of the play?**

Helena Charles is the play's moral compass. Though her behavior might suggest otherwise, Helena's strong sense of right and wrong allows her to make a final judgment in the play's last act that her relationship with Jimmy is an illusion of love. Helena's morality is contrasted with Jimmy's moral subjectivity. Jimmy sees a moral bankruptcy in the modern world and is nostalgic for a time when previous generations were able to make firm judgments on the right and the wrong.

**8. What imagery does Osborne use to explore the ideas of modern chivalry?**

Osborne uses imagery of knights, a medieval British institution of soldiers, to explore themes of modern chivalry. Alison describes Jimmy in chivalrous terms, but it is not an admiring view. The audience sees that Osborne takes a very pessimistic view of modern chivalrous action. Jimmy is described as a knight in tarnished armor who bluntly swings his weapons of hate and anger, destroying anything and anyone around him. Osborne attributes this loss of chivalry to a feminization of modern culture that steals the ideals of masculinity from the play's male characters.

**9. What is the purpose of Cliff's character in the play?**

Cliff represents two sides of the relationship between Jimmy and Alison. For Alison, Cliff provides the masculine affection and tenderness that Jimmy is incapable of providing for his wife. For Jimmy, Cliff provides masculine friendship and understanding, things that Jimmy cannot find in his relationship with his wife. Cliff's absence at the play's end, and Jimmy and Alison's reversion into a fantasy world, suggest that Cliff was the character that connected Jimmy and Alison to the real world. Without him, these characters have no choice but to escape the hardships and loneliness of real life and descend into a fantasy world.

**10. Why does Jimmy see suffering as a crucial event for living a "real" life?**

Throughout the play, Jimmy is chiefly concerned with living a full and real life. This is a life of emotion and experience. He feels as though he is being kept from living such a life because of his domestic ties to Alison. He believes that she has not been born into the real world because she has not undergone the intense suffering that he has. Therefore, in Jimmy's estimation, she cannot feel real emotion. Jimmy's suffering first occurred when he

witnessed the death of his father. Alison is born into Jimmy's world of emotion and suffering after her miscarriage of their child. In a larger sense, Alison represents the feminine domestic life of working class England. Osborne sees this part of society as lacking in energy and emotion.

**11. Discuss Osborne's view of religion in the play?**

In the play, Jimmy sees organized traditional Anglican religion as the antithesis of everything he believes in. The modern world, he believes, is a world of moral subjectivity. The church offers a worldview in which there is clear right and wrong, salvation and damnation, and this is a world that Jimmy simply believes no longer exists. Jimmy's relationship to religion is more complicated, however, because he does allude to African American evangelical religion as an example of pure emotion. It is probable that Jimmy does not value the morality or spirituality of African American religion as much as he values the way in which such religious expression gives voice to real and true emotion.

**12. As Alison prepares to leave, she tells her father that, "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it." What does Alison mean by this?**

One of the play's over-arching themes is the relationship between the past and the present. It can be said that Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, and Jimmy represent two sides of the same coin. Both are nostalgic for a past that no longer exists and that was probably not as idealistic as either understands it to be. Jimmy sees the Colonel's generation as both the last great generation of noble characters, but also as a failure because they did not pass on a vibrant culture full of life and meaning. The Colonel is hurt because Jimmy's generation seems to lack objectivity and morality of his age. In both cases, the past and present weave a complicated web of nostalgia, memory, and meaning.

**13. What does Colonel Redfern represent in the play?**

The character of Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, represents the decline of and nostalgia for the British Empire. The Colonel had been stationed for many years in India, a symbol of Britain's imperial reach into the world. The Edwardian age which corresponded to Britain's height of power, had been the happiest of his life. His nostalgia is representative of the denial that Osborne sees in the psyche of the British people. The world has moved on into an American age, he argues, and the people of the nation cannot understand why they are no longer the world's greatest power. He was a military leader in India for many years before returning with his family to England.

**14. What is the significance of Jimmy's trumpet playing in the play?**

Jimmy's trumpet playing is an allusion to the twentieth century British fascination for the Black American jazz culture. When Jimmy plays the trumpet, it represents his affinity for a culture which he believes is truly alive. This is a common theme in several works of mid-twentieth century white English culture, from literature to popular music. Osborne here suggests that black jazz culture is an embodiment of a "natural" humanity. Jimmy's anger is a result of not being able to live in such a society and his trumpet playing is a symbol of his attempt to connect with such a life. Moreover, the sound of trumpet playing shows the dominance of Jimmy even in his absence on the stage.

## **THE DUMB WAITER**

**-HAROLD PINTER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### ***About the playwright***

Harold Pinter, (10 October 1930 – 24 December 2008) was a Nobel Prize-winning English playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. He was born in the working-class neighborhood of East London's Hackney in 1930, as the son of a Jewish tailor. He evacuated to Cornwall, England, at the outbreak of World War II in 1939, and returned to London when he was 14. He began acting in plays at his grammar school, and later received a grant to study at London's prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. He left the school after two years, and spent most of the 1950s writing poetry (under the name Harold Pinter) and acting in small theater productions (often under the pseudonym David Baron). Pinter wrote his first play, *The Room* (1957), in just a few days for a university drama festival. His first produced play—*The Birthday Party* came a year later. The reception was unfavorable and it closed within a week. Two years later Pinter came back with *The Caretaker*, an instant success. *The Dumb Waiter*, staged in 1960, helped to cement Pinter's status as a major theatrical figure.

Throughout the 1960s Pinter wrote for television, film and stage, gaining popularity and respect, and in 1966 he was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Throughout his career Pinter not only wrote plays, but directed and even acted in his own work. Pinter received over 50 awards, prizes, and other honours, including the David Cohen Prize (1995), Laurence Olivier Award (1996), Companion of Honour (2002), Nobel Prize in Literature (2005), and the French Légion d'honneur (2007).

A conscientious objector of war when he was eighteen (for which he was fined by the Royal Academy), Pinter was motivated to be more political—both in his works and in his public life. He was particularly distressed by the dictatorial coup that overthrew Chilean President Salvador Allende in 1973. He had since become an outspoken advocate of human rights, and had criticized the Gulf War bombings and other military actions. His actions were not without controversy or contradiction—he attacked the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, and in 2001 joined The International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic, the former Serbian president arrested by the United Nations for crimes against humanity.

Harold Pinter's plays have an air of mystery, as characters' personal qualities, situations and motivations are left unexplained. Subtext dominates both the dialogue and the silences: what is unspoken is often more important than what is spoken. The plays begin in a light, often comical tone that gradually changes to one of anxiety, conflict and fear where the threat of an unknown, powerful, often omniscient danger prevails. This dark

presence controls everything, including the characters' lives. The characters' reaction to this danger is the source of conflict and action in Pinter's plays.

Despite frail health after being diagnosed with liver cancer in December 2001, Pinter continued to act on stage and screen. He died from liver cancer on 24 December 2008.

## **THE DUMB WAITER**

'The Dumb Waiter' is a one act play in which the mystery and menace of an offstage character dictate the actions of the men trapped on the stage. The play was written by Harold Pinter in 1957. The play is comparable to Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' in many respects. There are two hit-men (Gus and Ben) as the protagonists of the play who are waiting in a basement room for their assignment. The play was premiered at the Hampstead Theatre Club, on 21 January 1960.

### **CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY:**

- Ben -** Ben is the senior hit man, the dominant foil to his submissive partner Gus. He runs their outfit, but pays strict attention to the demands of Wilson, their boss.
- Gus -** Gus is a submissive junior hit man who is constantly bossed around by Ben. Gus is more sensitive, has a conscience about his job, and is bored by the stale routine of his lower-class life. He also questions the inner workings of their job more, especially with regards to the mysterious Wilson.
- Wilson -** Wilson is a mysterious figure, the boss of Gus and Ben. He never shows up but the messages from the dumb waiter may be from him. He may also own the café in which the play is set. Regardless of his physical reality or lack thereof, he plays an important role in the other characters' minds.

## **SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

### ***Part One: Beginning Until the Envelope***

The setting is a basement with two beds, a serving hatch, a kitchen and bathroom to the left, and another passage to the right. In silence, Ben reads a newspaper on his bed while Gus ties his shoelaces on his bed. Gus walks to the kitchen door, then stops and takes a flattened matchbox out of one shoe, and a flattened cigarette carton out of the other. He puts both items in his pocket and leaves for the bathroom. There's a sound of the toilet chain being pulled without it flushing, and Gus returns. Ben reports to Gus a newspaper article about a truck running over an elderly man. Gus again tries to flush the toilet, but it doesn't work.

Ben orders Gus to make tea. Gus hopes, "it won't be a long job." Ben reports on an article about a child who kills a cat. Gus asks if Ben has noticed how long it takes for the toilet tank to fill.

Gus complains that he didn't sleep well on the bed and then sees a picture on the wall of cricket players entitled "The First Eleven". He wishes for a window in the room and laments that his life revolves around entering a dark room he's never seen before, sleeping all day, doing a job and then leaving at night. Ben tells him they are fortunate to be employed. Gus asks if Ben ever gets fed up, but they soon fall silent. The toilet finally flushes. Ben commands him to make tea, as they will go to work very soon. Gus asks Ben why he stopped the car that morning in the middle of the road. Ben says they were early. Gus has forgotten what town they are in and Ben tells him that they are in Birmingham. Gus wants to watch the Birmingham soccer team tomorrow (Saturday), but Ben says that there is no time and that they have to get back. Gus speaks about a Birmingham game they once saw together, but Ben denies it. An envelope slides under the door.

### *Analysis*

The influence of Irish playwright Samuel Beckett on Harold Pinter is apparent in this play, and numerous similarities and allusions to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* crop up in this section. As with *Godot*, there are two characters, one dominant, one submissive. Gus's difficulty in putting on his shoe corresponds to a similar problem with a boot in Beckett's play. In both plays, moreover, the characters have been stranded in one place with a purpose. The single location is a staple of Pinter's other plays, as well.

Pinter has said that silence is a form of nakedness, and that speech is an attempt to cover this nakedness. Gus keeps wanting to ask Ben something but is interrupted, an exchange that will repeat throughout the play.

The toilet serves as a base for Gus throughout the play. It represents repetition, and the futility of repetition. The defective toilet transfers human waste to the receptacle of the sewers. The waste, however, does not disappear; it will return in some form, and is part of the cyclical nature of life that bores Gus, the dull repetition of work and sleep.

The characters' complete separation from the upper class is also introduced and will be explored in further depth later. Their unfamiliarity with the sporting terms of posh cricket and their affection for the more working-class game of soccer immediately defines their social standing.

### *Part Two: From the Envelope to Ben's Gun*

Neither Ben nor Gus knows what is in the envelope. Ben orders Gus to pick it up and open it. He does, and empties out twelve matches. They are confused, and Ben commands Gus to open the door and see if anyone's outside. With a revolver from under his pillow for protection, Gus investigates but finds no one. Gus says the matches will come in handy, as he always runs out. Ben reprimands him for probing his ear with a match, telling him not to waste them and to light the kettle instead. They debate the phrase "light the kettle"; Gus feels one should say the "gas," since that is what is being lit, or "put on the kettle," a phrase his mother used. Ben will have none of this, and challenges Gus to remember the last time he saw his mother (he can't remember). After further arguments about the phrase, in which

Ben reminds Gus that he's the senior partner, Ben chokes Gus and screams "THE KETTLE, YOU FOOL!"

Gus acquiesces and tries to see if the matches light; they don't on the flattened box, but they work on his foot. Ben says, "Put on the bloody kettle," then realizes he's used Gus's phrase, and looks at Gus until his partner leaves. Gus comes back, having put on the kettle, and wonders, "who it'll be tonight." He says he wants to ask Ben something, and sits on Ben's bed, which annoys him. Ben asks Gus why he barrages him with so many questions, and tells him to do his job and shut up. After Gus repeatedly asks who it's going to be tonight and a moment of silence, Ben orders him to make tea. After he leaves, Ben checks his revolver under his pillow for ammunition.

### *Analysis*

Ben's dominance and Gus's submission intensify in this section. Ben continually bosses Gus around, and even puts him in danger when he tells him to open the door. It is becoming clear that they are hit-men—the "who" in "who it'll be tonight" refers to their victim—and Pinter contrasts the violence of their jobs with their commonplace language and concerns. The argument over "light the kettle" is seemingly trivial but divulges key information about the men: Gus no longer sees his mother, and Ben is the senior partner.

The debate also produces the men's first physical confrontation after much verbal build-up. The violence is offset by the comic effect, which occurs after the confrontation, when Ben unconsciously uses the same language as Gus. Moreover, his comical use of Gus's phrase after displaying intense hostility to it implies that repetition of language can dull its effect, and that it can mechanically flow between people as an unconscious transaction.

Pinter reinforces the mechanical feeling with his use of repetition. Gus twice says that he doesn't know what the envelope is, and twice that "no one" and "nothing" were outside. Ben deflects Gus's question referring to who they will victimize, answering with silence and then ordering Gus to make tea. The other theme behind repetitiveness in the play is how it dulls life into a cyclical routine, and we can view Gus's running out of matches as a symbol of how life continually burns down and then refuels. Ben's scolding Gus over not wasting the matches is almost pointless. Sooner or later, they will be wasted, but their supply will be replenished.

### *Part Three: After Ben Checks his Gun*

Gus returns and says that the gas has gone out, as the meter needs to be refilled with coins. Ben says they'll have to wait for Wilson. Gus says that Wilson doesn't always come—that he sometimes sends only a message—and complains about not having a cup of tea "before." He believes that, as it's his place, Wilson should pay for the meter. Ben denies this, saying Wilson has only rented it. Gus is insistent, arguing that since no one ever complains or hears anything, Wilson must own all the places they go to. He also finds it hard to talk to Wilson, and says that he's been thinking about the "last one"—a girl. When

Ben reads his newspaper instead of answering him, he and Gus get into an argument. Gus continues talking about the girl. The job was a "mess," he recalls, as women don't "hold together like men." He wonders who cleans up for them after they leave. Ben reminds him that other departments take care of those matters.

A clattering sound from the wall between their beds interrupts them. With guns in hand, they investigate and find a box on a dumb waiter (a small elevator controlled by pulleys that delivers food or other goods between floors, usually in restaurants or hotels). Gus pulls a piece of paper out, and Ben tells him to read it. It lists an order for food. The dumb waiter ascends. Ben explains that the upstairs used to be a café, the basement was the kitchen, and that these places change ownership quickly. Gus loudly wonders who has moved in. The dumb waiter descends again, and Gus pulls out another order for food. Gus looks up the hatch, but Ben pushes him away. Ben decides that they should send something up, but they have only a little food. Gus keeps revealing more food, however—a cake, and a bag of chips. They put everything on a plate, but the dumb waiter ascends before they can put the plate on it.

They decide to wait until the dumb waiter returns. Gus wonders how it could be a café if the gas stove is so inefficient. The box descends again with another order, this time for "high class" exotic food such as "Ormitha Macarounada." Ben pretends to know how to make the dish. They put the plate on the dumb waiter and Gus yells up the hatch, announcing the brand names of the food. Ben tells him that he shouldn't shout. Ben warns Gus not to lose sight of their job and tells him to get ready and polish his gun. Gus wonders about the possibility of another nearby kitchen, which Ben supports. Gus then discusses, without Ben's answering, his feelings of anxiety about the job and Wilson. Another order comes down the passage for more food with which they are unfamiliar. Much to Ben's chagrin, the packet of tea they sent up has also returned, perhaps because, as Gus suggests, it isn't teatime.

### *Analysis*

The influence of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* deepens in this section, in which it becomes clearer that Ben is perhaps not telling Gus the complete truth about their operation. In *Godot*, the two men wait around for a man named Godot who never arrives, yet who exercises great power over them. In *The Dumb Waiter*, Ben and Gus are at the beck and call of Wilson, a mysterious character who dominates the duo even when he's not around—or perhaps especially when he's not around. Ben is more reverent of Wilson, while Gus is wary of their relationship to the mysterious figure. It is therefore not surprising that Gus is the one who looks up and wants to shout up the hatch—investigating the god upstairs, so to speak—and not Ben, who seems fearful of angering the gods and who is anxious to please them. He is noticeably embarrassed when the tea is returned. Gus also seems to hold a greater sensitivity to his job. He is not only disturbed about their murder of the girl, but he wonders who has the task of cleaning up the remains.

The characters' anxiety over their lower-class status hangs over the food sequence. It begins with their inability to pay for the meter, which inhibits their ability to make their

own food, or at least to brew their own tea. Their anxiety amplifies when they feel they need to send more food back up the hatch, and then with the orders for increasingly fancy food with which they are not familiar. Much of this class tension is bound up in language. Gus tries to dress up their own standard food by announcing the brand names associated with the items, names that pale in comparison to the exotic names of the ordered dishes, such as "Ormitha Macarounada." Ben noticeably tries to cover up his lower-class status by pretending that he knows how to make the dish.

Ben and Gus's communication with the upstairs via the dumb waiter has been based on written notes with abbreviated sentences at that. This limited communication will assume a more symbolic form in the next section.

#### *Part Four: Speaking Tube until End*

Ben decides that they should write a note telling the people upstairs that they can't fill the orders and, while looking for a pencil, he finds a speaking tube (an intercom-like device for communicating upstairs). Gus whistles into the tube, to alert the people, and says, "The larder's bare!" Ben takes the tube from him and more formally states that they are out of food. He listens into the tube and reports to Gus that the food they sent up was stale or went bad, and apologizes through the tube. When he hangs up, he informs Gus that the person on the other end used the phrase "Light the kettle" when he asked for a cup of tea. They then realize that they can't light the kettle, for there is no gas. Gus is upset because he is thirsty and hungry, while the man upstairs, who probably has food, wants tea from them.

Ben, quietly and with fatigue, gives Gus the instructions for the job, instructions that Gus repeats out loud. Ben instructs Gus to stand behind a door, but to not answer a knock on the door. He must shut the door behind the man who comes in without exposing himself (Gus), allowing the man to see and approach Ben. When Ben takes out his gun they will have cornered the man. At this point, Gus reminds Ben that so far he hasn't taken his own gun out, but Ben then includes that Gus should have taken his gun out when he closed the door. Moreover, Ben states, the man—or girl—will look at them in silence.

Gus excuses himself to the bathroom, where the toilet again does not flush, and returns. He paces about, looking troubled, and asks why they were sent matches if the man upstairs knew there was no gas. He repeats the question and then asks Ben if he knows who is upstairs. They argue, and Gus reminds Ben that he told him who owned the place, and wants to know why he's playing these games. Ben hits him twice on the shoulder. Gus wants to know why they're being toyed with since they passed their tests years ago and proved themselves. Another order comes, accompanied by a whistle from the speaking tube. Gus reads the order and yells into the tube that they have nothing left. Ben pushes Gus away and slaps him, ordering him to stop.

They retreat into silence—Ben reading his newspaper—as the dumb waiter goes up and come down again. Gus leaves to get a drink of water, and the speaking tube whistle blows. Ben listens through the tube and repeats out loud the order that the man has arrived and they will be commencing their job shortly. He hangs up and calls for Gus, and shifts his

jacket to obscure his gun. He levels his gun at the door and Gus stumbles in, stripped of some of his clothes and his gun. He looks up at Ben, and they stare at each other through a long silence.

### *Analysis*

The dumb waiter, with its accompanying speaking tube, becomes an agent for murder as the play ends, but the device is also a metaphor for the type of communication that has already split apart Ben and Gus. Whenever Gus broaches an important topic—here, especially, Wilson and his "games"—Ben deflects the question or descends into silence. They communicate as if with a dumb waiter; one says something, it travels to and registers with the other, and then a reply is made (if at all). It is impossible for both men to speak their minds at once, just as the dumb waiter restricts language (either in the form of a note or the speaking tube) to one person at a time; its very name indicates muteness. They do not converse in true dialogue with one other. Fittingly, when he finds the speaking tube, Gus ironically says, "Funny I never noticed it before." He and Ben have had a block in their communication with each other that is highlighted by his reference to the tube used for communication.

This lack of communication heightens the sense that Ben has been withholding information from Gus and perhaps even betraying his partner. Whenever Gus strays too close to the truth—a truth Ben seems to be more aware of—Ben withholds and alters crucial information. His language throughout the play, then, stands on its own as a betrayal, a closely monitored transaction of information that takes pains not to give too much away. Betrayal is a constant theme in Pinter's work—he has a play titled *Betrayal*—and here we must take Ben's word that the job is about to commence, but we do not know if it will be carried out the way he originally indicated or whether he will end up actually shooting Gus.

But the repetitive, mechanical quality of language is the ultimate murderer here. The characters' repetition of their newspaper routine—an act that surely occurs every day—is part of the slow approach to death that Gus spoke of at the start of the play when he bemoaned his dull, cyclical life. Ben's instructions, which Gus repeats, similarly drain the life out of an act that itself seeks to end life. Gus's toneless echo is actually a form of silence that seeks to avoid having to perform the horrifying act.

## **REVISIONARY EXERCISES**

### *Short Questions And Answers*

1. How does Ben communicate with the person upstairs, other than through the dumb waiter?

It is the speaking tube that Ben uses other than the dumb waiter to communicate with the persons upstairs.

2. What town are the men in?

When Gus asks Ben in which town they are in, Ben replies that they are in Birmingham.

3. Harold Pinter was heavily influenced by which Irish playwright?

Pinter was heavily influenced by the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett.

4. What is a dumb waiter?

Dumb waiter is a small elevator controlled by pulleys that delivers food or other goods between floors, usually in restaurants or hotels.

5. What does Gus say he always runs out of?

Gus says he always runs short of matches.

6. Which of the characters has not seen his mother in a long time?

Gus is the character who has not seen his mother for a long time.

7. What prevents Ben and Gus from making tea?

They don't have money for the gas meter

8. What is "The First Eleven"?

"The First Eleven" refers to a school's top cricket players.

9. What sport does Gus like to watch?

Gus likes to watch Soccer (British football)

10. What dish does Ben pretend to know how to make?

Ormitha Macarounda is the dish that Ben pretends to know how to make.

### ***Paragraph Questions And Answers***

#### **1. Anxiety over Social Class in 'The Dumb Waiter'**

Gus and Ben are both lower-class criminals. The play emphasizes their social status with appropriate dialects and accents. Ben repeatedly admonishes Gus for his "slack" appearance and habits, urging him to make himself more presentable, but Ben also seems more resigned to his lowly criminal life; he considers them fortunate for having jobs. His profound shame over his class emerges in interactions with those upstairs via the dumb waiter, and much of this shame is tied to language. The food orders from the dumb waiter are for increasingly exotic foods with unfamiliar names, and Ben pretends to know how to make them. When they decide to send up their cache of food, even Gus feels he has to impress those upstairs by announcing the brand names of their pedestrian foodstuffs. Ben also happily reports that the man upstairs, presumably of higher social standing, uses the same debated phrase—"Light the kettle"—as he does, and he warns Gus to observe decorum when talking to the upstairs, as he demonstrates with his formal apology. Ben is far more reverent of Wilson than the inquiring Gus, and his deference is attributed less to

feelings of respect than to an overriding inferiority complex; Wilson is their leader for a reason, and he must obey him at all costs, even if it means betraying his friend. In this light, *The Dumb Waiter* can be read as an anti-corporate update of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, an allegory of in-fighting and what corporate workers will do to please their superiors.

## **2. Repetition in the play 'The Dumb Waiter'**

Repetition appears as a powerful motif in 'The Dumb Waiter'. At the play's start and end, Ben expresses outrage at an article in the newspaper while Gus sympathizes. Similar repetitions mark the action throughout the play. The toilet serves as a base for Gus throughout the play. It represents repetition, and the futility of repetition. Early on, Gus bemoans the dull sleep-and-work routine of his life, and various repetitive actions—from Gus's tendency to run out matches to his recurring trips to the bathroom—emerge as the basis of this cyclical fatigue. Language, however, is where Pinter's use of repetition points to violence and the nearness of death. Gus almost always has to repeat and rephrase his important questions to Ben, questions that touch upon darker issues Ben does not wish to reveal. Ben's mechanical instructions to Gus on how to execute their murder are repeated by Gus with similar detachment, and when Ben echoes through the speaking tube his own mission to kill Gus, it likewise echoes the previous interaction with Gus. Pinter has compared echoes to silence, and if one views the silences in his plays as indications of violence, then linguistic echoes and repetitive actions suggest violence as well.

## **3. The symbolic significance of the dumb waiter in the play**

The dumb waiter serves as a symbol for the broken, one-sided communication between Gus and Ben. If messages are to be sent via the dumb waiter, then only one person at a time can send them, and one cannot simultaneously speak and listen through the dumb waiter's speaking tube. Correspondingly, Gus and Ben never have a fully open dialogue—minimized even more by Ben's knowledge of his impending betrayal of Gus—and whenever Gus tries to bring up something emotional, Ben refuses to speak with him. This disconnection is the essence of their relationship. They do not speak with, but to each other. They are like the dumb waiter—mute carriers of information, not sharers of it. Moreover, Ben, especially, is manipulated by Wilson in the same way that the dumb waiter is controlled by its system of pulleys.

## **4. Comment on Gus's frequent trips to the bathroom.**

Gus bemoans the dull routine of life, and nothing is more mundane and repetitive than the act of going to the bathroom; one fills up, then empties out. Moreover, the waste itself returns in some form, so even that is recycled. He cannot escape the routines of life and is thus highly aware of them, especially in the way they relate to his poverty. Ben, on the other hand, does not go to the bathroom throughout *The Dumb Waiter* and seems less concerned with his own repetitive station, and feels they are "fortunate" to have their jobs. Finally, the toilet flushes on a delay, so that after each trip to the bathroom there is a silence from the toilet—one that complements the many silences in conversation—and then it often interrupts the men later—one of the frequent interruptions by objects (the dumb waiter, speaking tube, and envelope are the others).

## **5. Comment on the setting of the play**

**Or**

### **What is the effect of having the play set in one place without time stoppage?**

Many of Pinter's plays take place in one location. As in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the single location takes on the form of a prison for the characters, a space from which they either cannot leave or are afraid to do so. Rather than bore the audience with lack of variation, the repetitive actions that come along with the single space generally constitute one of Pinter's (and Beckett's) main themes. The environment also assumes attributes beyond its scope. The serving hatch, for instance, becomes a symbolic channel to a higher power, or God, whom Ben fears, while the bathroom develops into a place of mundane repetition for Gus (see second question above). The basement also functions as part of the mystery and betrayal of *The Dumb Waiter*. Who owns the building? Is it still a café? Is Wilson inside?

Compare the silences of Ben with the silences of Gus, especially with respect to Pinter's belief that speech covers the nakedness of silence. Are both vulnerable? Do their silences protect this vulnerability, or hide it?

### *Essay*

## **1. The silence and violence of language in *The Dumb Waiter*?**

**Or**

### **Comment on the language used in *The Dumb Waiter***

Harold Pinter, the Nobel Prize-winning English playwright, is well known for the silence and violence of language in his plays. Pinter's works are heavily influenced by Samuel Beckett, who used silence-filled pauses for a revolutionary theatrical effect. Pinter has spoken of speech as a stratagem designed to cover the nakedness of silence, and these aims are often evident in the dialogue of Gus and Ben in his play *'The Dumb Waiter'*. Ben's most prominent response to Gus's constant questions about the nature of their jobs is silence. Lurking underneath this silence is always the threat of violence, the anticipation of something deathly—the play ends as Ben trains his gun on Gus in silence.

Gus's questions and lamentations are also deflected, delayed, or interrupted. Ben frequently changes the conversation and never replies with any emotional depth to Gus's more probing questions. In the same way, they both avoid discussing with any profundity the newspaper articles about death, skipping past them to more trivial matters, such as the malfunctioning toilet. Ben sometimes delays his response until they are interrupted—by the sound of an inanimate object, such as the toilet (which flushes on a delay) and the dumb waiter.

The language itself is also tinged with violence, especially when the topic is something seemingly trivial. The men's argument over the phrase "Light the kettle" is filled with Ben's barbs that intimidate and shame Gus. Moreover, when Ben screams "THE

KETTLE, YOU FOOL!" and chokes Gus, one gets the feeling that his words are intertwined with the act of physical violence. Language is often echoed in the play as one character is forced to repeat the words of another.

Pinter's dialogue deploys in terse rhythms that, while easy on the ears, often suggest the mechanization of language, the use of words as nothing but muted carriers of information. Words no longer have any emotional impact on the speaker. The very title of *The Dumb Waiter* highlights this notion of language as nothing but an emotionally silent conveyor of something out of the speakers' control. The characters are actually "dumb waiters," manipulated by someone more powerful (Gus by Ben, Ben by Wilson) to do his bidding.

In a sense, the looming presence of Wilson is the most dominating silence in the play. Assuming Wilson is the one sending the men messages through the dumb waiter and the speaking tube (and Gus does say at one point that sometimes Wilson only sends messages), then the audience never gets a chance to hear him, but only hears him through a secondary mouthpiece as the men read or repeat his orders. His mysteriousness is one of the more sinister components of the play, for Wilson seems to be everywhere through his multi-tiered organization. He performs an off-stage role similar to that of Godot in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, but whereas Godot symbolizes a neutral god-like figure for whom the characters wait, Wilson is a malevolent god whom the characters wait for in violent silence.

**MODULE IV**  
**DRAMA FOR SCREENING**

SHAW : Pygmalion

(After a brief introduction the play is to be screened and discussed. The play and/or 'My Fair Lady' are recommended. )

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