

Educational material

Educational material: *The Dumb Waiter and The Lover*
Produced for Ian Burns/That-Theatre /Autumn 2007

Teacher's note

Harold Pinter is a very famous playwright whose speciality is among other things ambiguity – ambiguity about e.g language and characters.

Pinter denies his readers the satisfaction of knowing exactly what is happening in his plays. Therefore, it is up to the reader to work out his or her own interpretation, to fill in the gaps, so to speak.

This is not normally something students are used to. They have primarily been taught to search for answers, but when dealing with Pinter's plays everything they have been taught is turned upside down!

On the surface Pinter's plays appear to be simple and uncomplicated. However, Pinter plays hide and seek with his readers – i.e nothing is quite what it seems on the surface. Just when we think what is going on, another twist from Pinter's hand throws us off in another direction.

Luckily, That-Theatre company i.e the actors on stage help the students to gain an understanding of Pinter's plays, because it is often in the transformation from page to stage that the depth and ambiguity of Pinter's plays become more apparent and vivid to the students.

Hope the following educational material will be of use to you.

*Birgitte Holm Halkjær
Borupgaard Gymnasium
Ballerup*

Harold Pinter/ Exit

Task: Mind-map

- a) In Class: Note down all the words and expressions you associate with the word “theatre”. Draw e.g. a mind-map.
- b) In Pairs: Match the words in the column on the left with the definitions on the right..

box-office	a person who performs on the stage, on tv or in films
stage directions	one of the main divisions of a stage play
Playwright	where you buy tickets for the play
actor	a writer of plays
act	instructions to actors and directors about how the play should be performed

Task: Fact-finding

- a). Pair Work: Check the internet for information about Harold Pinter’s life and works
- b) Pair Work: Check the internet for information about “the Theatre of the Absurd”

Task: Translation

a). In Class: Translate the following excerpt about Harold Pinter into Danish

“Harold Pinter was born on 10 October 1930 in Hackney, a working-class suburb in East London. His parents were Jewish, of either Hungarian or Portuguese stock. Hyman (Jack) Pinter was a ladies’ tailor, hard-working and mildly prosperous, and Harold was his only child. Harold spent his first nine years living in the East End of London. Pinter’s home may have been quite comfortable (his mother was an excellent cook, and his father brought home a reasonable income), but life could not always have been easy for a Jewish boy in London’s East End in the 1930’s”.

Task: Background reading.

Read the articles “*Writing for the Theatre*” (Pinter collection Vol.1. Faber & Faber) and “*Writing for Myself*”(Pinter Collection Vol. 2. Faber & Faber.)

Reading Comprehension:

1. It is often said that Pinter’s plays are all about “failure of communication”. Pinter himself is very tired of having this statement labelled to his plays. Why is that?
2. Pinter says himself that “the desire for verification is understandable” but according to him it cannot always be satisfied. Why not?
3. Pinter points out two types of silences in his plays. Comment on these two.
4. Comment on Pinter’s life as a writer. Why does Pinter write?
5. Pinter himself has been an actor for about 9 years. Has his own experiences on the stage influenced his life as a writer?

The Dumb Waiter/Harold Pinter (Pinter Plays.Vol. 1.Faber & faber)

1. The Dumb Waiter/PRE- READING

Task: The title

a) Individually: The title of the play you are going to read is called “The Dumb Waiter”.

Look up the concept of the word in a dictionary.

Note down all the words and expressions you associate with the word.

b) In Class: From the title what do you think the play is all about?

2. The Dumb Waiter/ WHILE **READING**

Scene 1: p.113 to p.122 (until stage direction; “*An envelope slides under the door*”)

Reading Comprehension:

1. How does the play begin?
2. How are we introduced to the two characters? What are they talking about?
3. Give a first-hand characterization of the two men- in- crime (the two hit-men/criminals)
4. What is your first-hand impression of the relationship between the two men?
5. How is the social standing of the characters defined in the first part?
6. Account for the differences between the lives of the two men.
7. Comment on the way the two men differ when it comes to the way they look upon their job.

Scene 2: p.122 to p. 128 (Stage direction:... ”*He then takes out his revolver...* ”).

Reading Comprehension

1. Explain how the dominance and submission relationship between the two characters is established in this section? (give examples)

2. The argument over the phrase “light the kettle” gives the readers some key information about the two characters? What kind of information?
3. As Ben insults and intimidates Gus because of his lower-class phrase “light the gas” his language becomes more menacing. Find essential places (quotations) which point in this direction.
4. Why is it that we, as readers, get the impression that Ben represents (or wants to represent) a belonging to a higher class than Gus?
5. When do we first learn that a third (invisible) character is present in the play?

Scene 3: p. 128: From stage direction: (“*He then takes his revolver...*”) to p.138 , (“*turning for a pencil*”).

Reading comprehension

1. Comment on and characterize Gus’s attitude to Wilson
2. Comment on and characterize Ben’s attitude to Wilson
3. How can Ben’s attitude to Wilson be said to be reflected in Gus’s attitude to Ben?
4. Through Gus we get to know something about their last job. Comment on Gus’s reaction to and evaluation of their last job. What does this tell us about Gus? Does Gus get any reaction from Ben when he starts questioning their last job? Why not?
5. Discuss. Do you think Ben is a character to be trusted? Why/why not?
6. Explain how the characters` lower-class-status hangs over the food-sequence? How do they try to cover up for their lower-class status?
7. Why has Gus concealed the fact that he did possess some food?
8. As the orders come in, the tension between the two criminals mounts. Explain how? And why?
9. Why does Ben pretend that he knows how to make the foreign dish? Gus, too, feels he has to prove his concern for the “somebody” upstairs, how is this shown?
10. How can Wilson’s power be said to be derived from his very invisibility?

Scene 4: p. 138 (Stage direction:” *turning for a pencil...*”) until end of the play

Reading Comprehension

1. Account for the differences in the way/ways the two men- in- crime approach the speaking-tube
2. What is a speaking-tube? (look up the concept in a dictionary)
3. Comment on the way Ben instructs Gus to carry out the job.
4. Explain how it becomes more and more clear to Gus that something is wrong?
5. Throughout the play Gus seems to be the more intelligent of the two hit- men. Try and find examples?
6. Gus does not respect Wilson in the same way as Ben does. Why is that? How is this shown?
7. How and why does Ben defend Wilson?
8. Gus gives us a couple of clues as to what kind of man (boss) Wilson is. Try and find these clues.
9. Give an outline of Gus’s instructions at the end of the play. Next, account for the way(s) that Ben or Wilson intends the instructions to mislead Gus.
10. How does the play end?

3. The Dumb Waiter/POST-READING

Reading Comprehension

1. Throughout the play how is it shown that Gus is thinking of them as a couple in-crime and not vice versa?
2. Comment on the development and change in the power - relationship between Gus and Ben.
3. At a certain point it seems as if Gus gets stronger – more in control of himself and the situation. They seem to switch roles. When does that take place?
4. Do you think Ben is a character to be trusted? Why/why not?
5. When does the point of no return (the climax) occur?
6. Comment on the use of dramatic irony in “The Dumb Waiter”. The following quotations may help you: “I’m only looking after your interests, Gus. You’ve got to learn mate”, (p.126.) - “You’re playing a dirty game, my lad!”, (p.134)
7. Find element(s) of comic in the play. Which of the characters, if any, bring about the comic element?
8. How does Pinter succeed in establishing an atmosphere of menace? Find element(s) of aggressive behaviour (menace) in the play. Which of the characters, bring about this behaviour?
9. In Pinter’s plays the menace is often said to come from “the outside”. Is that also true of *the Dumb Waiter*?
10. Pinter’s characters do not converse in true dialogue. Comment on the way silences/pauses are used in the play. Explain how this lack of communication is shown in the relationship between Ben and Gus? Do the men break the silences themselves?
11. Explain how the lack of communication may be reflected in the title?
12. Comment on the use of symbols in the play. Symbolically speaking what does e.g. the flattened matchbox and the dumb waiter represent?
13. Comment on the reader’s position. Does the writer want us to sympathize with one of the characters in particular? Who? How? Why?

Task: Give an oral summary

- a) Individually: Give a summary of the play (write down key-words)
Use as many words as possible from the box below.

A dispute –two hit-men– waiting – a message – an invisible third person – a contract– a basement room – two single beds -two revolvers - a crime.

b) In Class: Present your summary.

Task: Pointing out essential quotations.

a) Individually: Point out/ choose two quotations from the box below which to you would seem to be the play's most important ones?

1. "you come into a place when it's still dark"
2. "the kettle, you fool"
3. "what time is he getting in touch"
4. "I'm only looking after your interests, Gus. You've got to learn, mate".
5. "We send him up all we've got and he's not satisfied.
No, honest, it's enough to make the cat laugh".

b). In Pairs: Compare and, if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Talking about food/dishes

The two hit men in the play "The Dumb Waiter" receive several orders for increasingly fancy food from upstairs.

a) In Pairs: Translate the following dishes into Danish

- soup of the day

- liver and onions
- jam tart
- macaroni pastitsio
- ormitha macarounada
- bamboo shoots
- water chestnuts and chicken
- char sin and beansprouts

b). In Class: Compare and, if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Themes

a). In Pairs: Comment on the theme(s) of the play. How do the following themes apply to the play?

a play about dominance and submission – the question of an anxiety over social class – the silence and violence of language – a power –struggle relationship – failure of communication – betrayal – the true natures and motivations of characters – alienation from society – physical and mental violence of character(s) – how people use language for personal advantage.

b). In Class: Discuss and, if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Talking about genre

a) In Pairs:

Look up the definitions of the following concepts up in a dictionary:

a tragedy – a comedy – a comedy of menace – a comedy of suspense – a tragic-comedy.

Define the concepts.

b) Next, discuss in class which genre description best fits the play “The Dumb Waiter”.

Task: Pro- and against the Dumb Waiter

a) In Pairs: Discuss objections for and against the *Dumb Waiter* in general.

E.g What about the ending of the play. How satisfactory do you think it is?

b) In Class: Write down your objections for and against the *Dumb Waiter* on the blackboard. Discuss, and if possible reach agreement.

4. The Dumb Waiter/ **CREATIVE WRITING**

Task: Make-up a scene

a.) In Pairs: Improvise a scene between Ben or Gus and the “invisible” Mr. Wilson in “The Dumb Waiter”.

Write down the scene.

b) Next, act out your scene in class.

Task: Questions to the characters

a) Individually: If you had the chance of talking to Ben, Gus or Wilson, whom would you most like to meet? And why?

- b) Write down three questions to the person in question?
- c) Any line(s) in the play that you would ask him to explain to you?

Task: Writing character sketches

- a) Individually: Write character sketches of Gus and Ben. The following words may be of help to you.

calculating- aggressive-heartless- arrogant – domineering-brave-submissive-rational-impatient-
 funny-immature-hysterical-incompetent – intelligent- narrow-minded – suspicious – unfair –
 obstinate- headstrong- firm- assertive – loyal- reliable – twofaced- callous – unkind – foolish.

- b) In Class: Present your sketches.

Task: Write on

As readers we do not know for sure how the play will end. However, the implication is that Gus is the person Ben has been employed to kill.

In Pairs: Write a continuation of the play. Your first line takes place after the final stage direction:
“They stare at each other and suddenly Ben”

Task: Comment on

Individually: Comment on the following quotation. How does the interpretation of the play fit your view(s) of the text?

“ Like the dumb waiter itself. The characters are governed and controlled by forces beyond their ability to know and understand. The strings by which the dumb waiter is manipulated and controlled are no more visible and no more understandable than those which control not only the environment but also the behaviour of the characters in the play” (“Pinter in Play”, p.72)

Task: Write a letter to Mr. Wilson

a) Individually: Try to put yourself in Gus’s shoes.

Write an anonymous letter to Mr. Wilson.

You must among other things tell him that you are not at all satisfied with your job, e.g that you want him to bother much more about your working conditions.

b). In Class: Read aloud your letter

Task : Write a Blurb

a) Individually: Look up the concept of a “blurb” in a dictionary.

b) Write a blurb in English directed at a Danish audience. Your primary concern is how would you sell the play in Denmark?

Write down three points you would like to include in your blurb and find arguments for including the points.

Points

1
2
3

c) Show your teacher your points before writing the blurb.

5. The Dumb Waiter / **LANGUAGE AND** **GRAMMAR TASKS**

Task: Pinter's language

a) In Pairs: What is so special about Pinter's language? Give examples from the text.

Why do you think "silences" and "pauses" play such a large and essential part in Pinter's plays?

b) In Class: Discuss Pinter's language and style of writing.

Task: Language and style

The following quotations are examples of informal language (slang/colloquial language).

a) In Pairs. Turn (convert) the following sentences into Standard English:

Slang	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kaw (p.113) - “I wouldn’t like to live in this dump”, (p.117) - You wanted to kip (p.119) - I thought they ponged a bit (p.120) - “We showed out on the dot”, (p.120) - I didn’t think the other bloke (p.121) - “He laid him out flat”, (p.121) - “You never used to ask me so many damn questions”, (p.127) - Scrub round it (p.130) - “A bloody liberty”, (p.130) - You birk (p.131) - A loser texture, (p.131) - ...send us down a bob (p.133) - “An Ormitha -! Buck your ideas up, will you?”, (p.137) - “That beats the band, that does”, (p.141) 	

Task: Working with verbs

a) In Class: Talk about “verbs” in general.

b) Individually: Find the imperative in each sentence.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Well, go on make it”, (p.114) - “Well, you’d better eat them quick”, (p.115) |
|--|

- “We’re not staying long. Make the tea(p.119)
- “Pick it up”, (p.123)
- “Open it”, (p.123)
- “Show it to me”, (p.124)
- “Go on, go on and light it”, (p.125)
- Put on , (p.127)
- “Why don’t you just do it and shut up”, (p.127)
- ... watch your step (p.130)
- Fetch (p.134)
- Get (p.134)
- “Wait a minute!”, (p.134)
- “Look here. We’d better tell them”
- “Yes, take it out. Pull it out”, (p.139)
- “Blow into it”, (p.139)
- “Now you speak! Speak into it!
- “Give me that”, (p.139)
- “Shut the door behind him”, (p.143)
- “Stop it! You maniac!”, (p.146)

c). Next, write the verb in the present tense and the past tense. Compare with your partner.

Task: Connect an adjective with a noun

a) In Class: What is a noun? (Give examples)
What is an adjective? (Give examples)

b) Connect the following adjectives (from the box below) with a noun (from the box below).

Adjectives:

stale, ardent, long, clean, melted, wide, busy, splitting, flattened, sour, braised, sago, stupid, restful, mouldy, cold, roll, white, hardboiled, empty, nice, small, biggest, loud, sound-proof, dirty

Nouns:

meat, city, football fan, silence, chocolate, stomach, walls, stripe, sleep, cake, milk, biscuits, eggs, mops, crockery, cigarette packet, bag, box, headache sheets, man, clatter, steak, puddings, game, fault

The Lover/ Harold Pinter **(Pinter Plays. Vol 2. Faber & faber)**

1. The Lover : PRE-READING

Task: The title

The title of the play you are going to read is called “The Lover”.

- a) Individually: From the title what do you think the play is all about? (Creative writing 2 min.)
- b) In Class: Write down all your associations in connection with this word.

Task: What kind of story?

The play you are going to read starts like this:

- *“Is your lover coming today?”*
- *“Mmmn”*
- *“What time?”*
- *“Three”.*
- *“Will you be going out ... or staying in?”*
- *“Oh ... I think we’ll stay in”*
- *“I thought you wanted to go to that exhibition”*
- *“I did, yes ... but I think I’d prefer to stay in with him today”*
- *“Mmn –hmmn. Well, I must be off”, p.(149)*

In Class. From the title and the beginning of the play what kind of story do you think it will be? And why?

Task: Speech

Individually: Give a two-minute-speech on married life. Or give a two-minute-speech on adultery.

Use at least two words from the box below and make sure that your audience (class-mates) will remember them after your speech.

dull- boring- exciting – life-giving – dead-end of routines – erotic fantasy – attention – love – young
– children – work – cooking – sexual satisfaction.

Task: Practising voice and intonation

- *“Is your lover coming today?”*

- *“Mmmn”*
- *“What time?”*
- *“Three”.*
- *“Will you be going out ... or staying in?”*
- *“Oh ... I think we’ll stay in”*
- *“I thought you wanted to go to that exhibition”*
- *“I did, yes ... but I think I’d prefer to stay in with him today”*
- *“Mmm –hmmn. Well, I must be off”, p.(149)*

a) In Class. Find three pairs.

First Pair: Practise reading the passage above in a neutral tone of voice (15 min). Think about tone of voice as well as speed: slow or fast, and volume: loud or soft. Afterwards you have to read (all together) the passage to the whole class.

Second Pair: Practise reading the passage in an angry tone of voice. Think about how angry you want to sound: tone of voice, speed: slow or fast, volume: loud or soft. Afterwards you have to read (all together) the passage to the whole class.

Third Pair : Practise reading the passage in a happy tone of voice. Think about tone of voice, as well as speed: slow or fast, and volume: loud or soft.

b) Next, the pairs read out their versions of the passage to the rest of the class.

c) In Class. Discuss which reading of the passage was closest to the tone of the text.

2. The Lover/ WHILE READING

Opening Scenes: (Pinter Plays Vol 2: p.149- ...top of p.155)

Reading Comprehension

1. Why is it that the opening scenes make the reader think he/she is going to read a very different kind of play?
2. What words and sentences denote that our first image of a domestic married life is shattered?
3. Describe and comment on the relationship between husband (Richard) and wife (Sarah)
4. For how many years have this “fictitious life” been going on? Do we get any clues as to what started these role-playing games?
5. Why does Sarah need a lover? Do you think her need arise out of some deficiency of Richard’s? Or what? Find arguments in the text to support your point of view.

Task: Prediction

a) In Class: Individual prediction.

Can Sarah do without Richard? Why/why not? (Individual creative writing 2 min)

Can Richard do without Sarah? Why/why not (individual creative writing 2 min.)

b) Next, discuss and read aloud your prediction in class

Task: Talking about feelings

a) Individually: Underline the words in the box which you think describe Richard's attitude to/feelings for Sarah and vice versa:

Like – be in love with – be attracted to – quite like – be interested in – have a crush on – feel affection for – adore – worship – be fond of – be infatuated with – love – be attached to.

b) Next, support your choice of words by referring to the play.

c) In Pairs: Compare, discuss, and if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Arranging words on a -/+ scale

a) Individually: Arrange the words below in the box along a -/+ scale

Be fond of – be infatuated with – love – be in love with – feel affection for – be attached to – adore – like – be attracted to

b) In Pairs: Compare, discuss, and if possible, reach agreement

The “Mistress” Scene: p.155 (“*Because I knew you weren’t there...*”) - p.162 (“*Cream ...*”)

Reading Comprehension:

1. Sarah, herself introduces the subject of the “mistress”. However, it seems as if she is not ready to accept the fact that Richard has one. How does that come to the surface?
2. Comment on her attitude to Richard having a “mistress”
3. Sarah wonders, how Richard, who attaches so much importance to wit and elegance in women, could be interested in a mistress. What is Richard’s answer?
4. Why do you think Richard tries to depersonalize his whore (mistress) in the eyes of Sarah?

The Role –playing (erotic rituals) scenes

Reading Comprehension:

1. Sarah and Richard spice up their married life by playing games. In these ritualized scenes Sarah is another woman, and so is Richard in his role-playing as Max. Give characterizations of their alter-egos.

2. On one hand there is something aggressive about the way Sarah and her husband (partner) force each other into their role playing games. On the other hand there is also something ridiculous (comic) about it as well. How is this shown?
3. Give examples of the way(s) Richard and Sarah play a kind of power-relationship-game (a dominant and submissive game).
4. Discuss whether or not their games tend to turn into sado-masochistic games.
5. Explain how the two characters in the play are constantly on the verge of turning into Mr and Ms Hyde?

1. Ritual Scene:

Sarah plays a victim in a park. Max plays the part of a man who molests Sarah p.163 ("*Hallo, Max*") - p.165, ("*Are you all right miss*").

In Class: Comment on, and discuss this scene.

2. Ritual Scene:

Sarah plays a seducer of the park- keeper, p.165, ("*Are you all right miss..*") - p.167, (*You can't get out darling ...*). Max plays a kind gentleman who rescues her from a potential rapist.

In Class: Comment on, and discuss this scene

3. Ritual Scene:

Sarah plays a trapped victim in a locked room: p.167 ("*You can't get out darling..*") - p.167 ("*Max!*"). Max plays the kind gentleman who offers to sit the rain out with her in the park-keeper's hut.

In Class: Comment on, and discuss this scene.

4. Ritual Scene

The essential Tea-scene. p.167, (“Max!”) – p. 173, (“It’s no joke”), where Sarah and her lover/husband are having tea. At a certain point Max/Richard, the lover, comes to the conclusion that their affair must stop.

In Class: Comment on, and discuss this scene.

“Home again” – Scene, p.173 (“Hello”)-p.180, (“Adulteress”)

Reading Comprehension

1. Compare this scene with the opening scenes.
2. Why is it that Richard “has great pride in being seen with” Sarah?
3. Richard feels he has been “too kind” towards Sarah. Why is that?
4. At a certain point Richard gets very excited. Explain why?
5. Comment on the way their conversation takes a turning.

“The Bongo-drum”- Scene (p. 180 “Adulteress” – end of play)

Reading Comprehension:

1. What happens as the play progresses? Comment on the development of the characters’ “fictitious” lives.
2. Richard discovers a bongo drum and suddenly he slips into the afternoon ritual. What is Sarah’s first reaction to this breach of the rules of the game?
3. By taking out the bongo drum two worlds seem to clash. Explain how?
4. Comment on the quotation: “*You have no right to question me. No right at all. It was our arrangement. No questions of this kind. Please. Don’t, don’t. It was our arrangement*”, (p.181).

5. How does the play end?

3. The Lover/POST-READING

Task: How were you left feeling at the end of the play?

a). In Class: Discuss. When does the climax (turning point) occur in “The Lover”?

b).Individually: Choose three words from the box which best describe your state of mind at the end of the play. Explain your choice of words. Finally, add one yourself:

Desperate – uplifted – heavy-hearted – hopeful- resigned – disheartened – desolate – dejected – light-hearted – depressed – accepting – confident – optimistic – numb- dazed – broken-hearted – melancholic – distressed – aggrieved – woeful – disillusioned – sad.

c). In Pairs/groups. Discuss, and if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Statements for discussion in class.

a) Individually: Complete the following table indicating which controversial statements you think are true, which are false, or if you are not certain, tick the column headed (?).

	True	False	?
Women are more sensitive than men			
Married people are happier than unmarried people			
What a man needs in a woman is a whore			
Love is a battlefield			
What a woman needs in a man is a lover			
We need roles to keep a marriage "alive"			
People need masks to allow their darker/hidden desires to come out			
The daily routines of married life socks out all lust and desires			
You should always be ready to forgive your wife for a one-night stand			
Men lose all their charm and wit when they marry			

b). In Pairs: Compare your answers, and if possible, reach agreement.

When discussing you may find some of the words in the boxes below useful:

Argue – argument – disagree – be in favour of – be right – be wrong – object – be opposed to – prove- suggest – criticize – overestimate – relevance – convince – be aware – realise – be prejudiced against/in favour of – up to a point – contradict – suppose – point of view – support – pros and cons – irrelevant – insist – maintain – contradict – generalize – to object – interrupt – surely- point out – valid – convincing – underestimate .

Moreover, some of the following gambits and linkers may be useful to you:

I honestly feel that ..., I strongly believe that ..., I am convinced that ..., Without a doubt ..., I am positive ..., I am absolutely certain that ..., In my opinion ... I personally believe/think/feel ..Perhaps you will not agree with me, but ... To my mind .., What I am more concerned with is .., In my case ..., But the question is ..., Don't misunderstand me..., If I said that, I did not mean to .., Let me rephrase what I just said.., That is not what I said at all ..., The fact of the matter is .., There are exceptions, of course .., But what about .., In general .. One exception is .., You are absolutely right ... I agree .., Rubbish ... That is not true .., Sorry, I do not follow you ... I would like to comment on that ... As far as I am concerned ... On the other hand ..

Task: Give characterizations

a) Individually: Which of the following adjectives would you use to characterize Sarah?

sensitive – naïve – romantic – affectionate – kind – nervous – miserable – lonely – insecure – inconsiderate – desperate – arrogant – amusing – light-hearted – patronising – emotional – foolish – bored- anxious – miserable- arrogant – unreliable – passionate- insensitive – vulnerable – weak – deceitful – childish.

b) Individually: Which of the adjectives below would you use to characterize Richard?

Cruel – ruthless- rational – reserved – straightforward – insensitive – determined – considerate – content – self-centred – sincere – unaffected – outgoing – impulsive – hostile – prejudiced – strong-willed- provoked – worried – submissive – brave-cowardly- afraid – dependable – reliable -

c). In Class: Write down your characterizations on the blackboard.

Task: Talking about themes

a) Individually: What are the themes in the text? Any of the following?

lustful fantasies – split identities/the question of character/personality – social repression – sexual displacement – lustful desires/sexual yearnings - civilised adultery –love-hate relationship – fact (reality) versus fiction (fantasy) -emotional disorder – despair between the sexes – the necessity and danger of fantasy- hatred – obsession – jealousy – erotic fantasies.

b) In Pairs: Compare your choices, and if possible, reach agreement.

4. The Lover/CREATIVE WRITING

Task: Write an article

Individually: You are a literary journalist.

Write an article telling your readers why they should /should not read the play you have just read.

Useful vocabulary:

To begin with .. secondly ...another reason is ... the main thing is .. the most important aspect ..
oddly/surprisingly/strangely enough .. as a rule ...on the whole.. the point is... in my opinion ...
from my point of view... well, personally ... what I am more concerned with ... what I find
particularly the play conveys ... in the opening scenes ..what fascinated me ... I will/will not
recommend this play to ..

Task: Write on

Individually:

Write a continuation of the play and concentrate on the kind of life Richard and Sarah will have in the years to come. How do you think their relationship will/ will not continue?

Your first line has been given: *In the years to come Richard and Sarah got more and more*

Task: Argue for your point of view

a) Individually: Find three interesting sentences in the play called *The Lover*.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

b) Next, write your immediate response to each sentence and argue for your choice

My immediate response:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

c) In Pairs: Compare, and if possible, reach agreement.

Task: Pinter's message?

a) Individually: Comment on the message of the play (2 min. creative writing).

b) In class. Discuss:

Do you think Pinter wants to tell us that we must accept both our social selves and our inherent instinctive/more primitive selves and by that acceptance learn to live with both?

Or do you think Pinter wants to tell us that we must learn to suppress our instinctive more primitive selves?

Task: Write a short story

Individually: Use the play *The Lover* as an inspiration to write a short story about Sarah and Richard. Your short story must contain some of the elements of the play.

Task: Letter to the editor

Letter to the editor: Dear Madam. I have lived together with Richard for many years now, but I do not think I have ever loved him. He is more like a very good friend of mine. Richard will be very hurt if he knew I have fallen in love with the milkman. What shall I do? Yours Sincerely, Sarah

Individually: Write an answer to Sarah.

Task: The Milkman - Scene

Actually, there are 3 characters in “The Lover”, i. e Sarah, her husband, and the milkman.

The third character has by many critics been called “*an innocent irrelevance*”. Moreover, “*a wicked slight of hand on Pinter’s part*”.

What is your personal opinion of “the milkman episode”? Ought Pinter to have left out the milkman episode (scene)?

Write a paper where you discuss the relevance/irrelevance of this episode.

Task: Reality or fantasy?

Sarah and Richard have created quite a complicated little world for themselves, and we, as readers, are lead to question whether this lover who has been causing so many problems actually exists.

a) Individually: Write a paper with the title: *Is Pinter playing hide and seek with his readers?*

When writing your paper, consider the following questions:

1. Is Sarah, deep down, a whore forced by society into a guise of respectability and married life? Or is she a respectable woman seeking an occasional outlet for her desires in erotic fantasy?
2. Is Richard unable to find sexual satisfaction with his wife, and therefore compelled to buy satisfaction from another woman?
- 3 Is the lover a separate person or a separate persona?
4. Does the play represent reality, or is it just a dream in the mind of Sarah or Richard? .
5. Is Pinter to be trusted? Will we ever know the truth ... are we supposed to know the truth?

5. The Lover/ LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR TASKS

Task: Talking about and working with adverbs

a) In Class: What is an adverb?

b) Individually: Find the adverb(s) in the following sentences and comment on its use.

1. The light was terribly strong
2. The thing is it gets so awfully hot in here with the blinds down
3. Mmm. But, in fact, I'm not completely forgotten?
4. I mean, you're utterly frank with me, aren't you?
5. Wit, yes. Terribly important, wit, for a man
6. I must say I never expected you to admit it so readily
7. No. He's obliged to leave before sunset, unfortunately
8. He's terribly sweet
9. Must be terribly dampening
10. Good. Because I think things are beautifully balanced
11. She hastily looks at herself in the mirror. Suddenly notices she is wearing low-heeled shoes
12. She goes quickly to cupboard ...
13. I can never thank you enough. I'm terribly grateful, I really am
14. They struggle silently

Task: Talking about and working with prepositions

a) In Class: Talk about prepositions.

b) Individually: Insert prepositions in the following sentences:

1. Take him out the fields.
2. I bought it a jumble sale.
3. A drum my cupboard?
4. Do you play it while I´m ... the office
5. I give them strawberries ... season
6. And then they stay tea .
7. After all, think my marriage
8. I was the village this morning
9. The dignity is ... my marriage
10. He enters, fully dressedhis suit. Kisses her ... the cheek
11. My husband´s A late-night conference.
12. There was a bit jam on the bridge

QUOTATIONS

The Lover is ambiguous about character. Is the lover, about whom the husband questions his wife, really who we think he is? Where is the boundary between reality and fantasy? The pleasant house near Windsor seems normal enough when we first meet Richard and Sarah, but do they mean what they are saying to each other? If they do, is their pleasantness feigned? Or is the whole thing a sort of game? Shall we ever know?" (<http://www.questors.org.uk/onstage/prod/prod67/twoplays.html>)

“Truth in drama is forever elusive. You never quite find it but the search for it is compulsive. The search is clearly what drives the endeavour. The search is your task. More often than not you stumble upon the truth in the dark, colliding with it or just glimpsing an image or a shape which seems to correspond to the truth, often without realising that you have done so. But the real truth is that there is any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art. There are many. These truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect each other, ignore each other, tease each other, are blind to each other. Sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost”, (Art, Truth & Politics – Harold Pinter, Nobel Lecture, 2005; <http://www.tamilnation.org/intframe/pinter.htm>).

“I have often been said how my plays come about. I cannot say. Nor can I ever sum up my plays, except to say that this is what happened. That is what they said. That is what they did”, (*Art, Truth & Politics – Harold Pinter, Nobel Lecture, 2005*).

“The author’s position is an odd one. In a sense he is not welcomed by the characters. The characters resist him, they are not easy to live with, and they are impossible to define. You certainly can’t dictate to them. To a certain extent you play a never-ending game with them, cat and mouse, blind man’s buff, hide and seek. But finally you find that you have people of flesh and blood on your hands, people with will and an individual sensibility of their own, made out of component parts you are unable to change, manipulate or distort”, (*Art, Truth & Politics*)

References

Cahn, L. Victor, *Gender and Power in the Plays of Harold Pinter*, MacMillan, 1994

Esslin, Martin, *Pinter- The Playwright*, Methuen, G.B. 1970

Esslin, Martin, *Pinter- A Study of his Plays*”, Eyre Methuen London 1970

Merritt, Hollis, Susan, *Pinter in Play - Critical Strategies and the Plays of Harold Pinter*, Durham and London Uni. Press.1990

Any comments on this material can be sent to Ian@burns.to - www.that-theatre.com

A really good link for information about Harold Pinter is:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Pinter

Plus his own website is invaluable: www.haroldpinter.org

HAROLD PINTER**2007**

Born 10 October 1930 in East London.

Plays in chronological order are: *THE ROOM* (1957); *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY* (1957); *THE DUMB WAITER* (1957); *A SLIGHT ACHE* (1958); *THE HOTHOUSE* (1958); *THE CARETAKER* (1959); *A NIGHT OUT* (1959); *NIGHT SCHOOL* (1960); *THE DWARFS* (1960); *THE COLLECTION* (1961); *THE LOVER* (1962); *TEA PARTY* (1964); *THE HOMECOMING* (1964); *THE BASEMENT* (1966); *LANDSCAPE* (1967); *SILENCE* (1968); *OLD TIMES* (1970); *MONOLOGUE* (1972); *NO MAN'S LAND* (1974); *BETRAYAL* (1978); *OTHER PLACES* (1982) comprising *FAMILY VOICES* (1980), *VICTORIA STATION* and *A KIND OF ALASKA*; *ONE FOR THE ROAD* (1984); *MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE* (1988); *PRECISELY* (1984); *THE NEW WORLD ORDER* (1991); *PARTY TIME* (1991); *MOONLIGHT* (1993); *ASHES TO ASHES* (1996); *CELEBRATION* (1999); *REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST* by Marcel Proust adapted by Harold Pinter and Di Trevis (2000); *THE DWARFS* adapted from his novel by Kerry Lee Crabbe (2003)

Screenplays: *THE SERVANT*; *THE PUMPKIN EATER*; *THE QUILLER MEMORANDUM*; *ACCIDENT*; *THE GO-BETWEEN*; *LANGRISHE GO DOWN*; *THE LAST TYCOON*; *A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU*; *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*; *TURTLE DIARY*; *REUNION*; *HEAT OF THE DAY*; *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*; *THE COMFORT OF STRANGERS*; *THE TRIAL*; *THE DREAMING CHILD* and *THE CARETAKER*, *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY*, *THE HOMECOMING* and *BETRAYAL*.

For Television: *PARTY TIME* (C4, writer and director); *BUTLEY*; *THE REAR COLUMN* (BBC, written by Simon Gray); *THE HOTHOUSE* (BBC); *LANDSCAPE* (BBC); *MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE* (BBC); *ASHES TO ASHES* (RAI Television, Italy).

VARIOUS VOICES: Prose Poetry, Politics 1948-1998

Directed for the stage: *THE COLLECTION* (with Peter Hall); *THE LOVER*; *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY*; *THE HOTHOUSE*; Robert Shaw's *THE MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH* (London and New York); James Joyce's *EXILES* (New York); John Hopkin's *NEXT OF KIN* (New York); Noel Coward's *BLITHE SPIRIT* (New York); William Archibald's *THE INNOCENTS* (New York); seven plays by Simon Gray: *BUTLEY*, *OTHERWISE ENGAGED*, (London and New York), *THE REAR COLUMN*, *CLOSE OF PLAY*, *QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS*, *THE COMMON PURSUIT*, *LIFE SUPPORT* and *THE LATE MIDDLE CLASSES*; *LANDSCAPE* (Gate Theatre, Dublin, 1994 transferred to RNT, 1994, televised by BBC, 1995); Tennessee Williams' *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH*; Donald Freed's *CIRCE AND BRAVO*; Jane Stanton Hitchcock's *VANILLA*; *PARTY TIME* and *MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE* (Almeida Theatre, London); David Mamet's *OLEANNA* (Royal Court Theatre and The Duke of York's, London); Ronald Harwood's *TAKING SIDES* (Minerva Theatre, Chichester Festival Theatre, on tour and at The Criterion Theatre); Reginald Rose's *TWELVE ANGRY MEN* (on tour and at The Comedy Theatre); first production of *ASHES TO ASHES* (The Royal Court Theatre at The Ambassadors Theatre, 1996, then in Barcelona as part of the Otoño Pinter Festival, 1996); Italian premier production of *ASHES TO ASHES* (Palermo Festival and Italian tour); French language premier of *ASHES TO ASHES* (Rond Point, Paris, 1998); *CELEBRATION* and

THE ROOM (Almeida Theatre, March 2000); NO MAN'S LAND (Royal National Theatre, 2001), THE OLD MASTERS (Comedy Theatre 2004).

He has acted as "Deeley" in OLD TIMES (with Liv Ullman and Nicola Pagett, St Louis and Los Angeles); "Goldberg" in THE BIRTHDAY PARTY (BBC, June 1987); "Hirst" in NO MAN'S LAND (Almeida Theatre and subsequently The Comedy Theatre); "Roote" in THE HOTHOUSE (Chichester, on tour and then at The Comedy Theatre, 1995); "Harry" in THE COLLECTION (Gate Theatre Dublin's 1997 Pinter Festival). He has also appeared in BREAKING THE CODE (BBC), the film of Jez Butterworth's MOJO (released 1997), THE COLLECTION (Donmar Warehouse, 1998), the film of MANSFIELD PARK (Hal/Miramax, released 1999) and alongside Sir John Gielgud in the film version of Samuel Beckett's CATASTROPHE, directed by David Mamet (2000). In July 2001, he played "Nicolas" in ONE FOR THE ROAD as part of the Gate Theatre Dublin's 2001 Pinter Festival at the Lincoln Center in New York. In February 2002 he played the role of "Minister" in his new sketch PRESS CONFERENCE at the National Theatre. In October 2006 he performed Samuel Beckett's KRAPP'S LAST TAPE at the Royal Court Theatre.

Harold Pinter has received honorary degrees from the Universities of Reading, Birmingham, Glasgow, East Anglia, Stirling, Hull, Brown (Rhode Island), Sussex, Bristol, East London, Sofia (Bulgaria), East Anglia, Goldsmiths, University of London, University of Aristotle, Thessaloniki and Florence. He is an honorary fellow of Queen Mary College, London.

He has been awarded: CBE; Shakespeare Prize (Hamburg); European Prize for Literature (Vienna); Pirandello Prize (Palermo); The David Cohen British Literature Prize; Laurence Olivier Special Award; Molière d'Honneur (Paris, 1997); Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence (1997); BAFTA Fellowship (1997); Companion of Literature, RSL (1998); The Critics' Circle Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts (2000); The Brianza Poetry Prize (Italy, 2000); South Bank Show Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts (2001); The Hermann Kesten Medallion for outstanding commitment on behalf of persecuted and imprisoned writers, awarded by German P.E.N., (Berlin, 2001); World Leader's Award (Toronto, 2001); 10th European Theatre Prize (Italy, 2002).

Harold Pinter was made a Companion of Honour in the Queen's 2002 Birthday Honours List for services to literature and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005.

He is married to Lady Antonia Fraser.