

By the end of studying **Act 2, Scene 1** I need to know;

Plot: The men talk about gardening which shows how peaceful their life was before war. Raleigh writes a letter home to report on life in the trenches.

Ideas: Censorship- Stanhope has the power to read letters. Sherriff shows the futility of war as the men are bored of waiting for the war to start so they discuss their life before joining the war and references are made to how pointless the war is.

Vocabulary	<p>Shaft: a long, narrow part or section forming the handle of a tool or club, the body of a spear or arrow, or a similar implement.</p> <p>Pluck: spirited and determined courage.</p> <p>Lux: a soap brand, used for cleaning dishes</p> <p>Uncanny: strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way.</p> <p>Phosgene: a colorless poisonous gas made by the reaction of chlorine and carbon monoxide. It was used as a poison gas, notably in World War I. It gave off a sickly sweet scent, one that Trotter likens to pear drops.</p> <p>Tuppence: two old or new British pence; in the phrase 'tuppence to me know'- Osborne is suggesting how his time playing for England is worthless now he is at war.</p> <p>Bucked: cheerful</p> <p>Rigged: assemble and adjust (the equipment of a sailboat, aircraft, etc.) to make it ready for operation.</p> <p>Foul: offensive to the senses, especially through having a disgusting smell or taste or being unpleasantly soiled/ wicked or immoral/ an unfair or invalid stroke or piece of play, especially one involving interference with an opponent.</p> <p>Potty: Somewhat silly or crazy</p> <p>Churned: To agitate or stir (milk or cream) in order to make butter/ To agitate vigorously or turn over repeatedly:</p> <p>Pouches: a small bag or other flexible receptacle, typically carried in a pocket or attached to a belt.</p> <p>Battalion: A military unit made up of many soldiers divided into companies.</p> <p>Censor: To examine something and decide whether to cut out parts which may be offensive. In World War One, it was commonplace for officers to censor the letters of their subordinates to ensure they weren't revealing sensitive information</p> <p>Dugout: A shelter for soldiers in the trenches, made by digging a hole in the ground and covering it with a roof.</p>
Context	<p>Censorship: In World War One it was normal practice to check and sometimes censor soldiers' letters home, but officers' letters were usually allowed through unchecked. In WW1, there were only a few ways to communicate between home and the trenches. Many soldiers would write letters home to their family and loved ones, however, these would have to go through a process called censorship. Censorship allowed the British Army to control what information made it home from the trenches. However, Stanhope - because he is so worried about Raleigh revealing his alcoholism to his sister - insists on checking his letter home. On reading it he finds that Raleigh has only the highest praise for Stanhope, describing him to Madge as "the finest officer in the battalion and the men simply love him". Stanhope seems to feel ashamed at his initial mistrust.</p> <p>Propaganda: The propaganda presented the Germans as barbaric- a key idea that is challenged throughout this scene. The government needed to recruit lots of soldiers and wanted people to support them. Posters were printed that made the army look exciting. Other posters told men it was their duty to join, that they would feel proud if they did and guilty or embarrassed if they didn't join. Propaganda is used to try to make people think a certain way. Stories about bad things the Germans had done were told to make people angry and frightened, so everyone would want Britain to beat them in the war. But many tales were untrue, and Germany told the same stories about Britain. This can be seen in the play on the portrayal of the German army as Raleigh says, "The Germans are really quite decent, aren't they? I mean, outside the newspapers?" this shows how propaganda has given misleading information. Osborne and Trotter comment on the silence and waiting e.g. "Too damn quiet", "I'm sick of waiting" shows how the propaganda posters were misleading as it suggested it would be exciting, but they spent most of the time waiting for war to start.</p> <p>Conditions of the trenches: Sherriff reminds us of how the conditions of the trenches aren't conducive to fighting in the war. Soldiers were expected to be physically fit, yet the food does not provide adequate nutrition for the soldiers- the bacon being mostly fat with little lean. It's worth noting here as well that, being officers, the conditions we are seeing are better than the privates would have got.</p>

Reading:

Read the stage directions- it tells you the actions of the characters and the way they are described.

Links across the text:

Osborne reads 'Alice in Wonderland' as a form of escapism - just like the talk of gardening is a way to escape reality in Act 2 Scene 2.

The big attack links to the raid in Act 3 Scene 1 and to the final battle scene at the end of Act 3.

Stanhope's aggressive behaviour is linked to the way he treated Hibbert in Act 2 Scene 2.

The soldiers do not get help from the company can be linked to the Colonel's lack of concern of the death of Osborne and the soldiers after the raid in Act 3 Scene 1

	<p>Realism depicted real life and everyday situations with people behaving naturally. Words such as "rigger" and "skipper" place the play firmly in its setting and era. It is the language of the 1920's public schoolboy, the language of the typical army officer of the time.</p>
<p>Themes</p>	<p>Courage and cowardice: The men all deal with the horrors of war differently and Sheriff uses each character to show the various things soldiers did to cope. We are immediately made aware of Stanhope's drinking problem in the opening dialogue between Osborne and Hardy, who asks if Stanhope is "drinking like a fish as usual? in Act 1." It becomes clear throughout the play that Stanhope is a brave soldier and a courageous leader. However, he uses alcohol to give him 'Dutch courage' - a term believed to have originated in a much earlier war because of soldiers' reliance on Dutch gin to prepare them for the horrors of battle. Raleigh's boyish patriotic myth of the hero as some kind of knight in shining armour - and his "hero-worship" of Stanhope - introduces us to the concept of heroism. Supporting the war effort and fighting for one's country was glorified by propaganda and poets such as Jesse Pope, who painted a romantic picture of the heroes doing their duty for England. This led to soldiers and officers being pressurised to live up to the expectation of heroism. We see that Stanhope's real fear is that his reputation back home as a 'hero' will be ruined if anyone finds out about his alcoholism. This is shown in the desperate way he "clutches Raleigh's wrist and tears the letter from his hand" - a letter which could reveal the truth about his drinking to his girlfriend, Madge.</p> <p>Comradeship: The relationships between the men in the dugout point to a sense of trust and community that seems to help them cope with the horrors of trench life. The idea of an 'enemy' is brought into question as we are reminded by Raleigh that Germans are just ordinary people. He says, "The Germans are really quite decent, aren't they? I mean, outside the newspapers?" The audience reflects that German soldiers too were mostly naïve and enthusiastic young men, like the characters in the play. This is reinforced when we see the fear of the German soldier, called "bo y" in the stage directions and described as "sobbing bitterly". The men are shown in a claustrophobic setting, stuck together day and night in cramped surroundings. As so much of the time is spent waiting, we see them getting to know each other well. The use of formal surnames - normal in public schools and the army - is something the audience are forced to think about at the end of the play. When Raleigh is dying he calls Stanhope "Dennis". Stanhope replies - to the audience's surprise - with "Jimmy". While there is a hierarchy in the army, Sherriff shows that these men were - underneath it all - friends and comrades.</p> <p>The futility of war: The play shows that for most of the time it's a matter of waiting. What soldiers do to fill the hours under such horrendous stress is a major theme. Sherriff wanted his audiences to understand just how this tense prolonged waiting was an untold horror of war. This helps create a subtle anti-war message. One of Sherriff's skills is to construct a tense plot, whilst also showing the boredom of trench life. The humour and friendly banter between the officers is juxtaposed with talk of battle and fear. This reminds us that they are on the front line, and also has the effect of showing us that these are human beings. We see the men being concerned about what is for breakfast, discussing gardening and sports, and feeling nervous and scared before going into battle. This removes the glamour and heroism sometimes associated with fighting for one's country in the propaganda of the time.</p>
<p>Deeper understanding</p>	<p>Sheriff uses food as light relief after the tension of Act 1 and Stanhope's decision to censor Raleigh's letters. Trotter's love of eating is once more evident and serves as a source of comedy. The fact that a bird sounds funny to Trotter is significant: it is as if Sheriff is saying that men at war feel separated from the real world. Normal rules of nature no longer apply. This is made even more obvious when Trotter tells his story about the may-tree mix up. When Stanhope's character is discussed his strong sense of duty is made clear. Trotter says "Nobody'd be well who went on like he does"- this is a reminder of Stanhope's continuous work ethic. His service to his country is recognised by his company and he is respected for this. However, his men are not unaware of the effects of such service on their commander. They see as we do that he is 'ill' and that his behaviour is erratic. His telling Raleigh to go to bed 'just as if Raleigh'd been a school kid' seems strange to Trotter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the conversation moves to gardening we see how sharing memories of home comforts the two older and married officers, Osborne and Trotter. • The talk of rugby symbolises the life these men had outside of war where the only games were not those of politicians but of sport. <p>The smell of bacon: Sherriff draws a contrast between Trotter and Stanhope's opinion of the bacon. Trotter comes 'whistling down the steps' and proclaims 'what a lovely smell of bacon!'; thus reflecting his love of food, as well as generally optimistic demeanour. This contrasts with Stanhope who describes the 'foul smell of bacon'. Whilst subtle, this becomes symbolic of the character's outlook: Trotter's positivity against Stanhope's negativity. However, it also reveals more than this- the depiction of the bacon being mostly fat with a little lean 'that appears to have shrunk up when cooking' means the smell would be an unpleasant one- of fried fat. This unpleasantness is reinforced in Act 2 Scene 2 when the Colonel comments on how the smell of bacon 'clings to the walls', implying that the smell is an unwanted one. Therefore, Trotter is most likely lying- he doesn't link the smell of bacon (or indeed the majority of the food- 'onion tea; 'yellow soup and indistinguishable 'cutlet'), instead he focuses his attention on positivity as his coping mechanism. This is equally evident in the only story Trotter retells of his experiences of war. He tells a time to Osborne when he was out on patrol and could smell a sweet smell akin to the smell of phosgene gas; after all of the men panicked, putting their gas masks on, they realised it was a 'blinkin' may tree'. In some ways Trotter and Osborne are similar- as Osborne tells Raleigh about the time that German soldiers shone a light over no-man's-land to allow a wounded soldier to be carried to safety; Trotter looks for the humour in war and Osborne looks for the humanity. These both juxtapose Stanhope's retelling of war- as he recounts to Osborne about how the 'awful affair on Vimy Ridge' led to his reliance on drinking- he can only focus on the horrors of war.</p> <p>Expectations around masculinity- Osborne and Stanhope's conversation here is very revealing. Stanhope expresses his concerns around whether he's is 'going potty'. Osborne attempts to reassure him, stating 'everyone feels more keenly out here' and that Stanhope just has 'a bit of nerve strain'. The euphemistic language here is important- what Osborne is talking about is</p>

fear. The fact that this topic of fear and showing emotions needs to be concealed reinforces the expectations around masculinity- men weren't expected to share their emotions, so a mere acknowledgement that people feel emotions differently is all that can be said. Stanhope's mention that he 'sees through things' and feels differently here to at home is something that is hinted at with other characters- Osborne himself talks about how he never 'saw so many colours' at dawn at home. This again draws comparison between the characters' coping mechanisms, Osborne attempts to focus on something positive, whereas Stanhope struggles to escape the constant reminders that he is at war. Trotter and Osborne's conversations about home: **building rockeries, growing hollyhocks** reveal the importance of staying positive and 'escaping' from the world they are in. For Stanhope, detailed discussion of home isn't possible- he feels like he has let his family down and so doesn't want reminding of how he has changed.

Futility and pointlessness of war- Raleigh and Osborne's conversation is revealing here: war is not what Raleigh had expected. Raleigh states how he 'can't imagine the end of six days here' and how '[he] feel[s] like [he] hasn't seen a tree in ages', something that reflects the boredom of life in the trenches, particularly since Raleigh has only been there for twelve hours. These differences between expectations and reality are also reinforced through Raleigh suggesting the '**Germans are nice really... outside of the newspapers**' followed by Osborne's story about the Germans shining a light over No-mans-land to help the injured British soldier only for them to '**blow each other to bits**' the next day. The ideologies perpetuated by the propaganda that the Germans are barbaric is undermined here. This also leads Raleigh to suggest that war seems 'silly'- the fact that Raleigh, the most naive character, can see this futility after merely 12 hours reinforces the disparity between the presentation of war at home and the reality of life in the trenches. The influence of propaganda on the young is also represented by Osborne's son- Osborne tells Stanhope about how his sons played with '**tin soldiers**' and '**lured [Osborne's] men into a trap**'; their idolisation of soldiers is evident here, another way in which the propaganda has indoctrinated the young. This futility is equally reinforced through the fact that they won't be receiving reinforcements, despite the government's awareness of the number of German soldiers coming up the line every night. The message is clear: these men are being left to die.

Quotes

"**Too damn quiet**" References to the silence is a reminder that the attack is imminent.

"**The big attack soon**" It is a reminder to the audience that the soldiers are waiting for the war to start. It is also a reminder that the play is a tragedy and it foreshadows their deaths.

"**He just said 'Better go to bed, Raleigh'- just as if Raleigh'd been a school kid**" This seems strange to Trotter but it is a reminder to us that they had known each other before the war and of Stanhope's desire to protect Raleigh as he once did at school.

"**I feel like I've been here ages**" shows the futility of war as the soldiers are left waiting.

"**It seems so frightfully quiet and uncanny**" Sheriff presents the unreality of war in a realistic way. He shows the men are forced to endure a world that is quiet and uncanny, and where natural laws dissolve, and time takes on a new dimension.

"**It doesn't make much difference out here!**" Osborne recognises that the natural rules which Raleigh longs for no longer applies as Raleigh wants Osborne to share his experience of playing for England, but it doesn't seem important.

"**The Germans are really quite decent, aren't they? I mean, outside the newspapers?**" Raleigh highlights how propaganda has portrayed a negative view of the Germans as Raleigh believes they were nice outside of the newspaper reports.

"**A big German officer stood up in their trenches and called out: 'Carry him!'- and our fellows stood up and carried the man back and the German officer fired some lights for them to see by**" Osborne tells a story which suggest the humanity exists on both sides.

"**Next day we blew each other's trenches to blazes**" Sheriff demonstrates the futility of war when Osborne goes on to describe how despite the enemy soldier's compassion they killed each other the next day.

"**It all seems rather- silly, doesn't it?**" Raleigh recognises how silly everything seems to be.

"**Only that when the attack comes we can't expect any help from behind**" This creates further tension as the company will be left alone without any support.

"**Well, I'm glad it's coming at last. I'm sick of waiting**" Osborne reminds the audience of the torturous effect of time.

"**At the end of the forty-fifth circle I'm going to draw a picture of Trotter being blown up in four pieces**" Stanhope's reaction to Trotter's chart is telling; it is as if Stanhope envies Trotter's lack of imagination because he believes it keeps him sane.

"**I wonder how a worm knows when it's going up or down"/" Worms haven't got any blood**" Stanhope's discussion about worms and seeing through things demonstrates his frailty and recognition of his coming end. Worms are a metaphor for Stanhope's feelings of hopelessness.

"**Officially I'm supposed to read all of your letters**" Stanhope has the power to read the letters to censor them. He is concerned about Raleigh telling his sister about his drinking problem.

"**Why can't you treat him like any other youngster?**" Osborne does not understand why Stanhope cannot treat Raleigh the same as the other soldiers.

"**Give me that letter!**" Stanhope is commanding and aggressive towards Raleigh as he orders him to give him the letter. Raleigh is unaware of censorship but doesn't see what he has done wrong.

"**Stanhope clutches Raleigh's wrist and tears the letter from his hand**" The stage directions show how violent and aggressive Stanhope becomes towards Raleigh.

"**Don't Dennis me! Stanhope's my name! You're not at school! Go and inspect your rifles!**" Stanhope's use of exclamative sentences show his frustration as Raleigh tries to speak to him as a friend but he exerts his power and superiority as his commanding officer.

"**Dennis is the finest officer in the battalion, and the men simply love him.**" Raleigh portrays Stanhope in a positive manner in the letter and how he is well respected by others.

"**I'm awfully proud to think he's my friend**" Raleigh is proud to be friends with Stanhope, he looks up to him as a hero throughout the war and admires how he is well respected.

Terminology	<p>Dramatic irony - is clear when Raleigh refers to writing a letter just as Stanhope enters. We are reminded of the latter's desire to censor material and we expect some sort of quarrel.</p> <p>Irony - Sheriff has built us up to believe that Raleigh will have told his sister about Stanhope being a drunkard so that when we hear, as Stanhope does, of his admiration and praise for him we are filled with regret.</p> <p>Symbolism- "The sun is shining quite brightly in the trench outside" the shining sun at the end of this scene is symbolic of the light of knowledge that the letter brings for all of us.</p> <p>"he rises heavily and crosses the shadows" Stanhope moves to the shadows on stage when he wants to conceal himself because of sadness and shame.</p>
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