

# Journeys end revision essay sample



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## OCR Drama Exam Tasks

Students have to choose one question to answer from a choice of three. The first of the three choices will always be extract-based. The extract is usually one to one and a half pages in length with the questions focusing directly on the extract (referring to ‘this moment’ or ‘this extract’, or using the word ‘here’). These questions do require an understanding of the whole text, but close attention to the printed extract is the key requirement for successful answers.

At least one task will focus on a broader topic than the extract-based question. Questions often ask for a response to a character or a relationship, but not just as a neutral character study where you show what you think of the character and why, but more as a weighing up of what the character adds to the impact of the play. The Drama texts are the only area of the specification which can offer an empathic/re-creative task inviting students to write as one of the characters. Such questions will not necessarily be set, but they often appear as the third choice. Empathic questions are a popular and successful option for many candidates who enjoy the opportunity to think and feel as a character at a particular moment in the play rather than adopt the more conventional essay approaches.

## Journey’s End

Set in the trenches at Saint-Quentin, Aisne, in 1918 towards the end of the First World War, Journey’s End gives a glimpse into the experiences of the officers of a British Army infantry company in World War I. The entire story

plays out in the officers' dugout over four days from 18 March 1918 to 21 March 1918.

Plot summary

Act I

In the British trenches before St Quentin, Captain Hardy converses with Lieutenant Osborne, an older man and public school master, who has come to relieve him. Hardy jokes about the behaviour of Captain Stanhope, who has turned to alcohol in order to cope with the stress which the war has caused him. While Hardy jokes, Osborne defends Stanhope and describes him as "the best company commander we've got". Private Mason, a servant cook, is forever not caring about the lack of ingredients and quality of food he serves up. Second Lieutenant Trotter is a rotund soldier who likes his food; he can't stand the war and counts down each hour that he serves in the front line by drawing circles onto a piece of paper and then colouring them in. Second Lieutenant Raleigh is a young and naive officer who joins the company. Raleigh knew Stanhope from school where he was skipper at rugby and refers to him as Dennis. He admits that he requested to be sent to Stanhope's company. Osborne hints to him that Stanhope will not be the same person he knew from school as the experiences of war have changed him; however Raleigh does not seem to understand. Stanhope is angry that Raleigh has been allowed to join him and describes the boy as a hero-worshipper.

As Stanhope is in a relationship with Raleigh's sister Madge, he is concerned that Raleigh will write home and inform his sister of Stanhope's drinking. Stanhope tells Osborne that he will censor Raleigh's letters so that this does

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not happen; Osborne does not approve. Stanhope has a keen sense of duty and feels that he must continue to serve rather than take leave to which he is entitled. He criticises another soldier, Second Lieutenant Hibbert, who he thinks is faking neuralgia so that he can be sent home instead of continuing fighting. Osborne puts a tired and somewhat drunk Stanhope to bed.

Stanhope (and the other officers) refers to Osborne as ' Uncle'. Act II

### Scene 1

Trotter and Mason converse about the bacon rashers which the company has to eat. Trotter talks about how the start of spring makes him feel youthful; he also talks about the hollyhocks which he has planted. These conversations are a way of escaping the trenches and the reality of the war. Osborne and Raleigh discuss how slowly time passes at the front, and the fact that both of them played rugby before the war and that Osborne was a schoolmaster before he signed up to fight; while Raleigh appears interested, Osborne points out that it is of little use now. Osborne describes the madness of war when describing how German soldiers allowed the British to rescue a wounded soldier in No Man's Land and the next day the two sides shelled each other heavily.

He describes the war as " silly". Stanhope announces that the barbed wire around the trenches needs to be mended. It is announced that an advance will occur on Thursday morning and that this information has been gathered from a captured German soldier. They state that this means the attack is only two days away. Stanhope confiscates a letter from Raleigh insisting on his right to censor it. Stanhope is in a relationship with Raleigh's sister and is worried that, in the letter, Raleigh will reveal Stanhope's growing alcoholism.

Full of self-loathing, Stanhope accedes to Osborne's offer to read the letter for him; the letter is in fact full of praise for Stanhope. The scene ends with Stanhope quietly demurring from Osborne's suggestion to re-seal the envelope. Scene 2

In a meeting with the Sergeant Major it is announced that the attack is taking place on Thursday. Stanhope and the Sergeant-Major discuss battle plans. The Colonel relays orders that the General wants a raid to take place on the German trench prior to the attack, " a surprise daylight raid", all previous raids having made under cover of dark, and that they want to be informed of the outcome by seven p. m. Stanhope states that such a plan is absurd and that the General and his staff merely want this so their dinner will not be delayed. The Colonel agrees with Stanhope but says that orders are orders and that they must be obeyed. Later it is stated that in a similar raid, after the British artillery bombardment, the Germans had tied red rag to the gaps in the barbed wire so that their soldiers knew exactly where to train their machine guns.

It is decided that Osborne and Raleigh will be the officers to go on the raid despite the fact that Raleigh has only recently entered the war. Hibbert goes to Stanhope to complain about the neuralgia he states he has been suffering from. Stanhope states that it would be better for him to die from the pain, than for being shot for desertion. Hibbert maintains that he does have neuralgia but when Stanhope threatens to shoot him if he goes, he breaks down crying. The two soldiers admit to each other that they feel exactly the same way, and are struggling to cope with the stresses that the war is putting on them. Osborne reads aloud to Trotter from Lewis Carroll's Alice's

Adventures in Wonderland, his chosen reading and another attempt to escape from the realities of the war. The scene ends with the idealistic Raleigh, who is untouched by the war, stating that it is “ frightfully exciting” that he has been picked for the raid. Act III

### Scene 1

There is confirmation that the raid is still going ahead. The Colonel states that a German soldier needs to be captured so that intelligence can be extracted from him. Osborne admits to Stanhope that he knows he’s probably not coming back and asks Stanhope to look after his most cherished possessions and send them to his wife if he does not come back after the raid. In the minutes before going over the top Raleigh and Osborne talk about home - the New Forest and the town of Lyndhurst, in order to pass the time. Smoke-bombs are fired and the soldiers move towards the German trench, a young German soldier is captured. However Stanhope finds out that Osborne has been killed although Raleigh has survived. Stanhope sarcastically states: “ It’ll be awfully nice the Brigadier’s pleased” when the Colonel’s first concern is whether information has been gathered, not whether all the soldiers have returned safely; six of ten enlisted men have been killed. Scene 2

Trotter, Stanhope and Hibbert drink and talk about women. They all appear to be enjoying themselves until Hibbert is annoyed when Stanhope tells him to go to bed, and he tells Stanhope to go to bed instead, then Stanhope suddenly becomes angry and begins to shout at him and tells him to clear off and get out. Stanhope also becomes angry at Raleigh, who did not eat with the officers that night but preferred to eat with men below his rank.

Stanhope is offended by this and Raleigh eventually admits that he feels he cannot eat while he thinks that Osborne is dead and his body is in No Man's Land. Stanhope is angry because Raleigh had seemed to imply that he didn't care about Osborne's death because he was eating and drinking. Stanhope yells at Raleigh that he drinks to cope with the fact that Osborne died, to forget. Stanhope asks to be left alone and angrily tells Raleigh to leave.

### Scene 3

The German attack on the British trenches approaches, and the Sergeant Major tells Stanhope they should expect heavy losses. When it arrives, Hibbert is reluctant to get out of bed and into the trenches. A message is relayed to Stanhope telling him that Raleigh has been injured by a shell and that his spine is damaged meaning that he can't move his legs. Stanhope orders that Raleigh be brought into his dugout. He comforts Raleigh while he lies in bed. Raleigh says that he is cold and that it is becoming dark; Stanhope moves the candle to his bed and goes deeper into the dugout to fetch a blanket, but, by the time he returns, Raleigh has died. The shells continue to explode in the background. Stanhope receives a message that he is needed. He gets up to leave and, after he has exited, a mortar hits the dugout causing it to collapse and entomb Raleigh's corpse.

### Characters Discussed

#### Captain Dennis Stanhope

Captain Dennis Stanhope, a British officer whose three years in the front lines have made him a hard, cynical, and heavy-drinking man. Stanhope is first and foremost a soldier, however, and when his young friend is fatally

wounded, he returns immediately to his duties as commanding officer.

#### Lieutenant Osborne

Lieutenant Osborne, Stanhope's second in command. He is a middle-aged man who was a schoolteacher in civilian life. Osborne is anxious to keep peace in the company. He is killed, along with several other members of a raiding party sent out to capture some prisoners from whom the colonel of the regiment hopes to obtain information. Lieutenant Raleigh

Lieutenant Raleigh, a school friend of Stanhope and the brother of Stanhope's fiancée. Raleigh worships Stanhope as a hero and can hardly recognize his old friend when he meets him in the front lines. Raleigh is a callow youth, full of vitality, who soon makes friends with Osborne. He cannot understand how the other men in the company can celebrate after Osborne and several others are killed in the raiding party. Raleigh is fatally wounded in a German attack. Second Lieutenant Hibbert

Second Lieutenant Hibbert, an officer in Stanhope's company who is a malingerer and a coward. Stanhope bullies Hibbert into staying on duty after Hibbert tries to get a doctor to give him a medical excuse for being relieved from duty.

#### Quotes

' CAPTAIN HARDY, a red faced, cheerful-looking man...intently drying a sock over a candle flame .' - Sherriff chooses to start his play with a humorous image that causes the audience to let down their guard. Everything seems happy and relaxed: the contrast when the real situation becomes clear is all



the more effective. The audience are made to focus first on a candle which will become significant at the end of the play.

' Don't have too much water. It's rather strong today' - underlines the unpleasantness of army life (water tasting of disinfectant), but also strikes a note on the first page that will be echoed at the very end of the play: both Hibbert and Raleigh ask for water just before their deaths.

' and those horrid little things like pineapples - you know' - The use of babyish language is frequent and helps make the war seem bearable.

Compare Osborne reading Alice in Wonderland .

' A dug-out got blown up and came down in the men's tea. They were frightfully annoyed.// Osb . There's nothing worse than dirt in your tea.' - A lot of trench talk is ' counter-intuitive' humour. Nobody makes much of the fact that, apparently, no one died or was seriously injured, instead the focus is on the comparatively minor calamity of contaminated tea.

' By the way, you know the big German attack is expected any day now?' - Sherriff begins to build up audience tension. This is the first indication of what this play is really going to be about. Historically, the ' big attack' was the Kaiserschlacht, the last big German offensive of the war. The prong of the attack at Saint-Quentin, where Journey's End is set, was called Operation Michael.

' There's more transport than usual coming up...bringing up loads and loads of men' - Sherriff again increasing the tension.

'... my last officer. He got lumbago the first night and went home' - This introduces the theme of 'going sick' which will involve Stanhope and Hibbert. Hardy doesn't seem to care much about losing an officer with 'backache' (another difficult illness to diagnose, like Hibbert's neuralgia), and this will contrast starkly with Stanhope's attitude.

'I hope we're lucky and get a youngster straight from school. They're the kind that do best.' - so much of the play revolves around school, specifically because Osborne was a teacher and Stanhope and Raleigh are just out of school. This is a serious comment from Osborne: young men of 18/19 apparently tended to keep their nerve longer than older soldiers. Although Osborne is serious, we can see Sherriff stressing the shocking aspect of the extreme youth of those fighting in 1918.

'You keep yourself in by hanging your arms and legs over the side.' - Army life is presented as appalling - no proper beds, no decent water...

'115 rifle grenades - I shouldn't use them if I were you; they upset Jerry and make him offensive. Besides, they are rusty, in any case' - Hardy's attitude to the war is exceptionally easy-going. He doesn't care about rusty rifle-grenades. Sherriff includes this example of an (older) poor company commander to contrast with Stanhope who enters after this brief introductory scene which serves, among other things, to build up the audience's interest in his character before he appears.

"Because he's stuck it till his nerves have got battered to bits, he's called a drunkard" This quote shows how much Osborne cares about Stanhope and also how much he respects him.

“ You’ll find the other officers call me uncle” Shows how kind and dependable Osborne can be.

“ Drinking like a fish as usual?” (says Hardy). This quote just backs up the fact that Stanhope is an alcoholic.

“ You know you mustn’t expect to find him quite the same” Osborne kindly warns Raleigh so he doesn’t get a shock when he meets Stanhope.

“ How frightfully quiet it is” Raleigh says - this shows how strange the atmosphere must have been in the front line.

“ Another little worm trying to wriggle home” Says Stanhope talking about Hibbert whom he disrespects because he is trying to go home.

“ Yes, I’m a hero” sarcastically says Stanhope as he doesn’t consider himself to be the hero Raleigh believes him to be.

“ Without being doped with whisky - I’d go mad with fright” Stanhope knows he has a drinking problem.

“ He’ll write and tell her I reek of whisky all day” Stanhope is worried that Raleigh will write home and tell his sister about him. This gives him the idea to censor Raleigh’s letters.

“ Dear old Uncle, tuck me up” Says Stanhope to Osborne - their relationship is almost father to son at times.

“ You keen on gardening” Trying to talk about something else rather than war is common throughout the play.

“ You don’t think i’m going potty?” Asks Stanhope to Osborne which again shows how much Stanhope trusts Osborne.

“ D’you understand an order? Give me that letter!” Stanhope demands the letter from Raleigh as he thinks there is something about him in it.

“ I’m fiddling with my revolver...going off by accident” Stanhope threatens to shoot Hibbert if he deserts.

“ How awfully nice - if the brigadier’s pleased” sarcastically after Osborne’s death Stanhope shows little respect for those above him.

“ Steady, old boy. Just lie there quietly for a bit” The caring side of Stanhope when Raleigh has been seriously injured.

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During Raleigh’s school years, Stanhope had been his hero. Stanhope had already won the Military Cross and had the experience of three years’ war service, one year of which was as a company commander. His reputation stands high with his officers and men, and Raleigh hears many good comments about Stanhope being the best company commander in the battalion. Raleigh joined the company as a direct result of his school experience. He wanted to continue in the war the hero worship of Stanhope that he had indulged in at school. It was a natural development that the brilliant rugby captain and house prefect should become a splendid war hero. Osborne knew that Raleigh still saw Stanhope as a hero even though Stanhope himself could not believe or recognise it: Osborne: Small boys at school often have their heroes. Stanhope: Yes. Small boys at school do.

Osborne: Often it goes on as long as Stanhope: -as long as the hero's a hero.

Osborne: It often goes on all through life.

After Raleigh's arrival, Stanhope addresses only two curt remarks to him in Act One and for most of the meal Raleigh remains silent. Thus, there is no indication of Raleigh's reaction to the change of attitude in his former friend. Stanhope suspects what he must be feeling and his own despair at knowing that his alcoholic state will be reported Raleigh's letter home embitters him. This is only Stanhope's view, however, as Osborne tells him: 'You imagine things'. The reality is shown a few minutes later when Raleigh's letter is read out: 'I'm awfully proud to think he's my friend'. Osborne's previous expressed opinion that Raleigh would go on liking him proved to be true: 'I

## Journey's End Essay 2

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believe Raleigh'll go on liking you - and looking up to you - through everything. There's something very deep, and rather fine, about hero-worship'. Comradeship

Hibbert's one aim is to get away from the front line as soon as possible and to achieve this he feigns sickness. He prepares the ground as soon as he enters the dugout by refusing supper, owing to 'this beastly neuralgia'. Stanhope is unimpressed and characterizes him to Osborne as 'another little worm trying to wriggle home'. The crisis is reached the following afternoon when Hibbert makes a determined effort to report sick before the attack. He emerges from his sleeping-quarters to announce his departure and, despite Stanhope's opposition, takes his pack and stick and attempts to leave. The

confrontation between the two men is highly dramatic; Hibbert alternately shouts hysterically and pleads, and eventually he strikes his commander. The climax is reached when Stanhope threatens to shoot him if he tries to leave and Hibbert, with surprising control, faces being shot rather than going back into the trenches. The comradeship engendered by the war is more than a mere friendship; it is a special kind of bond partly imposed by the constant threat of death or mutilation: Hibbert: Do please let me go

Stanhope -

Stanhope: If you went - and left Osborne and Trotter and Raleigh and all those men up there to do your work - could you ever look a man straight in the face again - in all your life" The Horror of War

Stanhope finds himself looking beyond surface reality and a habit has grown on him of looking `right through things, and on and on - till I get frightened and stop'. He has sensations of everything going farther and farther away until he is the only thing left in the universe and he finds difficulty in struggling back to normality. The feeling had come over him only that morning as he had looked across no man's land and beyond: Journey's End Essay 3

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Stanhope: `I was looking across at the Boche trenches and right beyond - not a sound or a soul; just an enormous plain, all churned up like a sea that's got muddier till it's so stiff that it can't move. You could have heard a pin drop in the quiet; yet you knew thousands of guns were hidden there, all ready cleaned and oiled - millions of bullets lying in pouches - thousands of

Germans, waiting and thinking. Then gradually, the feeling came - Trotter is fully aware of their situation and finds his own way to cope with it. Drawing one hundred and forty-four circles to represent the hours they must spend in the line and then marking them off one by one is, for him a device to control the anxiety he shares with the others; each circle filled in will bring the time of relief nearer and nearer. We catch a glimpse of his deeper feelings in his conversation with Stanhope: Stanhope: 'I envy you Trotter.

Nothing upsets you, does it? You're always the same.' Trotter: 'Always the same, am I? (He sighs) Little you know -' He does not enlarge on this, but we are aware that under his happy-go-lucky exterior he is hiding the fears that afflict them all. Hibbert is the officer who cannot take it anymore. He doesn't want to carry on; he wants to be out of the trenches as soon as he possibly can. He owes it to 'this beastly neuralgia'. As the final attack begins, his lack of fibre is shown again. He delays going to his post in the trenches by asking for some water and drinking it very slowly, and he is only persuaded to leave by the necessity to accompany Mason from the dugout. Even Hibbert will not disgrace himself in front of a servant.

Conflict: Stanhope and Hibbert

In most plays there is conflict: this could be a struggle or fight between characters, or within an individual character. It may be a physical struggle, but in most cases it is a clash between characters over what they want. In Journey's End, there is a physical conflict, in the very obvious war between the British and the Germans. Osborne is killed, off-stage, by a grenade; and the six men who die with him on the raid are probably killed by machine-gun bullets. Raleigh dies onstage of a shell wound to his back. The play ends with

a shell falling on the dug-out. There is also physical conflict when Hibbert strikes at Stanhope on page 55. Stanhope breaks the stick and prepares to shoot Hibbert for striking an officer and deserting. However, there is also conflict between characters here. Hibbert is determined to leave the Front Line; Stanhope is determined he stays.

#### Conflict: Stanhope and Raleigh

There is a constant conflict between Stanhope and Raleigh, caused by Raleigh being posted to Stanhope's company. It begins on page 18, when Stanhope considers Raleigh's arrival to be more than a coincidence, making him afraid of what Raleigh will think of him and what he might write about him to Madge. It ends movingly at the end of the play when Raleigh is brought, dying, to Stanhope in the dug-out. One very powerful moment in this conflict starts on page 88 when Raleigh comes into the dug-out after missing the dinner on the night of Osborne's death, and ends on page 91, the conclusion of the scene.