

# Butterworth's use of dramatic method in scene 1:



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Butterworth, through his use of dramatic method, makes Scene One significant, particularly the extract where Ginger recounts Johnny's antics at the fair 'twenty years' ago, by his characterisation of Johnny and his implicit comment on society. Butterworth uses comedy throughout the duration of Ginger's tale of when 'Johnny Byron was the Flintock fair', yet adds a layer of complexity to the scene by subtly highlighting the blandness of society today now that the 'Council stepped in [and] Made daredevilling illegal.' The lack of stage directions in the extract places the focus solely on the dialogue between characters, emphasizing the idea of myths surrounding Johnny Byron and enabling the audience to gain insight into other characters' views on him. The past and present, a key theme throughout the play, is also evident in the passage as Gingers's story of Johnny 'twenty years back' is reminiscent of an English folk tale or legend, reiterated through the recurring allusions to King Arthur and stone both in this passage and throughout the play as a whole. Through the development of these themes and ideas, Butterworth makes this passage a significant scene in the context of the play as a whole.

The characterization of Johnny Byron is central to this passage of the play, making it a significant scene by establishing Johnny as a character shrouded in myth and legend, aided by allusions to King Arthur and stone, therefore developing the audience's understanding of him. The character of Johnny is off stage throughout the duration of this passage, placing the focus on the passage on the onstage characters, (Ginger, Lee, Pea, Tanya and Davey), and their opinions of him; a clever use of dramatic effect by Butterworth as it furthers the idea of Johnny being a myth as he, the truth, is absent. The lack

of stage directions also reiterates this concept as the focus is solely on the dialogue. Butterworth writes Ginger's lines in an almost list format citing one action of Johnny Byron after another, perhaps embedding an implicit stage direction that the dialogue should be delivered as if this is a well known story that has been told before which is once again drawing on the idea of Johnny Byron's connection to myth. Ginger's tale of Johnny is ridiculous, creating comic effect through the sheer impossibility of anyone 'jumping all [the] eighteen-wheelers' and walking off after being pronounced 'stone dead.' Yet Butterworth contorts the implausible nature of Ginger's tale by peppering it with very specific details that seem to add authenticity to the tale; the exact use of place names, bouncing 'twenty-five times', the 'lorry doing a hundred miles an hour'. This blurring of the truth and lies is explored again through the characters' reactions to Ginger's story about Johnny, as although they know it's 'bollocks' no one tells Ginger to stop and characters such as Davey and Tanya are explicitly in awe of him, with Tanya stating 'they should put him in the town square.' Lee, Pea and Tanya all reference 'King Arthur' when describing Johnny and his antics, likening him to an old English hero and one of the most famous myths in English history. Butterworth presents the audience with a strange juxtaposition of Johnny Byron, 'some ogre living in a wood', beside King Arthur, a noble and great Old English King. The paradox of Johnny Byron and the question of whether he is good or evil is a debate Butterworth encourages the audience to wrestle with throughout the duration of the play, therefore inducing audience engagement. The significance of the scene is primarily due to the characterization of Johnny through his likening to a myth, which accentuates the key theme of storytelling and truth which is prevalent throughout the play as a whole.

Butterworth makes this scene significant through his merging of the past and present, achieved through his use of dramatic effect, once again through the characterization of Johnny Byron. Stone is repeatedly associated with Johnny throughout the passage, he 'lies stone still', he is 'stone dead' and the onstage characters feel he is deserving of a 'statue', as well as being a recurrent symbol throughout the play, with Johnny later declaring himself a 'heavy stone' and a 'lump of granite.' The theme of past and present is explored through this image as stone is considered timeless; it existed when the earth was created and will exist until the earth is destroyed. Johnny's association with stone links in with the idea of him being a myth and that he himself exists in a kind of time-warp within the play, as he held parties for the Flintock locals when they were 15 and 16 and is now continuing to do so but only with their children, a clear example being Troy and Phaedra. The image of King Arthur also helps to merge the past and present as although King Arthur represents the past and Old England, legend claims he and his knights are waiting under the ground ready to ride forth and save the country again. Johnny, like King Arthur and stone, is representative of both the past and the present. The passage is significant to the play as a whole as Butterworth cleverly builds up these incredible, crazy stories about Johnny being a hero so that it is all the more shocking for the audience when Dawn, his wife, strips away all the myth surrounding the past Johnny and reveals his present state; a failed father and a drug addicted 'gyppo'. Butterworth's exploration of the past and present, especially in this passage, enables the plot of the play to further and heighten the tension between Dawn and Johnny when they meet in Act Two.

Butterworth, despite masking it with comedy, uses the onstage characters to comment on society and how lifeless it has become since the ' Council stepped in,' making this a significant scene due to its deeper meaning. Johnny Byron represents excitement and eccentricity of life in what has become a bland, anemic society since the ' Council made daredevilling illegal.' However, Butterworth presents the audience with a paradox as although Johnny is representative of what the Council has withdrawn from society, he is equally representative of why the Council has ' made daredevilling illegal'; to prevent ' broken leg[s]... broken arm[s]...broken jaw[s], no teeth, compressed spine[s]' and people ending up ' stone dead'. Johnny Byron is a likable character, and characters such as Lee and Davey reminisce the ' simple...pure' days of the old Flintock fair where you could ' hoof [farmers] in the bollocks' which is a humorous memory, yet the question of what society would be like without these regulations leads the audience to question whether or not they are perhaps the lesser of two evils. The dramatic effect initiates audience engagement and the scene is of utmost significance due to the societal questions it implicitly raises to the audience, giving the play itself a deeper meaning through its comment on modern day society.

Butterworth's characterization of Johnny, implicit comment on society and development of the theme of past and present through his use of dramatic method make this such a significant scene. The audience engagement is necessary for them to begin to tackle the bigger societal questions asked by the characters in Jerusalem while also enjoying Butterworth's slick and effective use of comedy.