

'journey's end' by r c sheriff essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Focusing on the exchange between Stanhope and Hibbert in act two, consider how R.

C Sheriff presents the comradeship felt by the men fighting in the 1st World War. On the 4th August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany. Germany had dishonoured the Belgian treaty of neutrality. Millions of British men and younger boys volunteered for war, it later became compulsory for British citizens.

The play I am studying is 'journey's end', written by the English novelist R. C Sheriff. He was born in 1896 and served as an officer in the East Surrey regiment. Journey's end is based upon some of Sheriff's real-life experiences, highlighting the comradeship between the soldiers in the trenches.

Of all Sheriff's plays and films, Journey's end seems to have become the most remembered. In 1928, the anniversary of the armistice, a huge flood of memoirs and recollections of peoples experiences at war. This included stories, plays and a huge number of poems written by men from the trenches. Novels speaking of all the horrors of war and the treacherous conditions became coming about when in 1928 people started to become disillusioned about the peace. This came about after in 1919, everyone was speaking of having won the 'war to end all wars'. One the most famous war films of all time was also released in this period – Erich Maria Remarque's 'All quiet on the western front' written in 1929.

Famous wartime novelist Stigfried Sassoon also wrote a superb retake of being an officer at war name 'Memoirs of an infantry officer'. Journey's end was also written in this period, around 1928-9. In the trenches, the soldiers

had to spend all the hours of the day living in treacherous conditions, life threatening filth and grime. The only way these men escaped insanity through their daily lives, was comradeship.

Comradeship is the tight, family-like bond between fellow soldiers experiencing the same conditions. It is a relentless compassion between the mates that calms the suffering. Many men, who did not have a strong bond with comrades, slowly drifted away into insanity. Journey's end strongly highlights the bond between the comrades in the trench, Stanhope, Hibbert, Trotter, Raleigh, Osbourne, Hardy and Mason. Journey's end is based around men sent to fight at the war between Britain and Germany in France/Belgium. It follows the daily routine of the seven men through pain, loss and great anticipation.

The two characters, which the play mainly focuses on, is Stanhope and Raleigh, two men who knew each other from before the war. Stanhope's girlfriend was Raleigh's sister, so that is how they knew each other. Many incidents occur during the play, which shows the realistic emotion endured by the men, for example the main focus of this piece, Hibbert's confrontation with Stanhope. It is towards the middle of the play (Act two, scene two) that the incident between Stanhope and Hibbert occurs.

It happens a little while after the time when Stanhope made Raleigh leave his letter unsealed. At this time Stanhope is under a lot of stress and pressure due to the forthcoming raid. The other big factor on his shoulders seems to be the arrival of Raleigh. You can sense that they do not get on by Stanhope's reaction to Raleigh's greeting, 'Hullo Stanhope!' 'How did you-

get here? ' (Act one, page 9) As you can see, Stanhope reacts sharply, as though Raleigh has upset or annoyed him in the past.

When Stanhope gets Raleigh's letter, he immediately gives it to Osbourne to read to him. The letter contained only admiration about Stanhope, Raleigh did not realise the pressure that he was under. A factor, which is sitting at the back of Stanhopes mind, is the thought of the forthcoming raid. This together with the arrival of Raleigh, is building up stress in the back of Stanhopes mind, being an officer means he has great responsibility thus putting more pressure on him.

R. C Sheriff has used a clever order of events in the play. The reason he has put the Stanhope and Hibbert confrontation in the middle of the play is to create a sense of beginning, middle and end. The beginning sets the scene of the play, Stanhope under great stress. The middle is building up to the end, the climax of the play, the raid. The confrontation has been put right in front of the climax, the raid, to create a sense of tension, and to show how that confrontations at war are always forgiven and forgotten.

This is proved by what Stanhope says after he threatened Hibbert with, ' If you went, I'd have you shot- for desertion' (Act two, page 56), Stanhope then offers Hibbert an ultimatum to which he says, ' Good man Hibbert. I like the way you stuck that' (Act two, page 56). This displays how men in the same situation as one and another, stick together and put past confrontations behind them. The author R. C Sheriff relies on his clever use of staging and language to shape his impression of the two characters.

In a novel or play, there is no visual effect to produce an image of a character, so therefore, the best written works are the books which have a great sense of imagination, a very realistic feel. This is produced by clever and imaginative use of staging and especially language. In the scene with the Hibbert and Stanhope confrontation, it is the staging, which works best in shaping the two characters. When Hibbert arrives out of bed to talk to Stanhope, he begins by saying, ' This neuralgia of mine. I'm awfully sorry. I'm afraid I can't stick it any longer-.

' (Act two, page 54) His apologetic sounding tone in this sentence highlights that he is quite a timid character, and that what he is going to say Stanhope may not like. When Stanhope refuses him to leave, he becomes aggressive, sounding like a scared man, ' What the hell-! (Act two, page 54) It highlights his character as a selfish and narrow-minded individual. Or maybe it just shows what length people go to, so that they can escape the treachery of war. When Hibbert realises that Stanhope will not back down, he begins to plead with him, ' I tell you, I can't- the pain's nearly sending me mad. ' (Act two, page 55) Hibbert can still see that Stanhope is not going to back down, so this time he tries a violent approach towards Stanhope. As Hibbert tries to walk off behind Stanhope, Stanhope thrusts him against a wall.

Quickly, Hibbert reacts and raises his stick to Stanhope, who grabs it and breaks it across his knee. Hibbert is bewildered, Stanhope reacts fiercely and Hibbert again, pleads with Stanhope, ' Let me go-. ' (Act two, page 56) From Hibberts use of language, you can tell that he is a very scared man. He has pleaded, and demanded that Stanhope should let him go. He even goes to the extreme of nearly being shot to escape the treacherous conditions. As

for the stage directions, they also show the scared and weary attitude of Hibbert.

Words like ' hysterically' and ' pleadingly' show the emotion Hibbert is experiencing. Before the incident where he tries to strike Stanhope, the stage direction shows that he walks slowly behind Stanhope. This proves that he is a very timid character who is very scared. Stanhope is a very different character to Hibbert, he is able to hide his emotions, whereas Hibbert always shows how he feels.

Stanhope is also very clever, he knows when Hibbert is ' trying to pull the wool over his eyes. ' When Hibbert tells Stanhope about his neuralgia, he realises what Hibbert is up to and cuts in sharply with, ' I know. It's rotten, isn't it? I've got it like hell-. ' (Act two, page 54)Hibbert is taken aback by this as he knows that Stanhope is on to him. Stanhope plays dumb by replying to Hibberts request, ' Go down- where? ' (Act two, page54) While Hibbert is pleading and begging Stanhope to let him go and see the doctor, Stanhope remains calm and just rejects all of Hibberts requests. Hibbert demands Stanhope to let him go because he is an officer to which Stanhope replies, ' No man's sent down unless he's very ill.

There's nothing wrong with you, Hibbert. ' (Act two, page 54) Throughout the confrontation, Stanhope ignores all of Hibberts requests. When Hibbert gets restless and tries to strike Stanhope, it makes him angry. He smashes Hibberts stick across his knee and says, ' God! – You little swine.

You know what that means don't you? Striking a superior officer! ' (Act two, page 55) By this time Stanhope has lost his temper with Hibbert, he is fed up

with Hibberts vague attempts at being allowed to leave. You can tell from Stanhopes language that he is a very strong character. He doesn't show much emotion towards situations where other not so strong men would. Stanhopes stage directions do not help to show his character, but do show the tone of his language. For example, he says, ' You're going to stay here. ' (Act two, page 54) The stage directions state that he speaks this in a quiet voice.

This is he politely telling Hibbert that he does not want an argument, and that he should back down. Hibbert does not back down, and replies, ' What the hell! ' (Act two, page 54) The stage direction is that he speaks this in a fierce voice, he has lost his temper with Hibbert, and bluntly refuses his request. Stanhope also shows a bit of consideration and understanding for Hibbert as shown in one of his stage directions. After the violent incident, Stanhope got Hibbert to sit and talk with him, he also offers him a glass of whisky to settle him down.

Stanhope is in the same situation as Hibbert, and Hibbert soon realises this, when he backs down. From this incident, Stanhope will most probably feel let down by his fellow officer in charge Hibbert. Stanhope is in the same situation as Hibbert, who is so wrapped with his own affairs, does not stop and think about that. Hibbert shows no consideration and respect to Stanhope. He showed no respect and more importantly, comradeship. It is as though Hibbert has ' stabbed Stanhope in the back'.

At first, when Hibbert is pleading to Stanhope, there is no problem, Stanhope realises that he is just highlighting the emotion that he feels inside. When he

realises that Stanhope is not going to back down, he starts to become aggressive and violent. ' Striking a superior officer' (Act two, page 55), as Stanhope quotes, is just what Hibbert did, a seriously punishable offence. Hibbert has turned his back on Stanhope and displayed no sense of comradeship towards him.

Stanhope is quite the opposite of Hibbert. Throughout the affair, Stanhope kept calm and herd Hibbert through. Even if he wanted to, he could not accept Hibberts request. He showed a kind understanding to Hibbert, he tries to persuade Hibbert to stick it through, ' Stay here, old chap- and see it through-.

' (Act two, page 57) To which, Hibbert breaks down in tears. Even after Hibbert ' stabbed him in the back', Stanhope still showed consideration. Stanhope is in exactly the same position as except under a much greater pressure. Stanhope shows true and great comradeship to Hibbert in this incident, by just forgiving him.

The occurrence of this incident almost brings the group, or Hibbert and Stanhope, closer together. This is shown in act three, page 81, where Stanhope, Hibbert and Trotter share an evening meal together after the raid. The meal is after Osbournes death, and the men are using it as something to take their mind s away from the loss. They all have a laugh and a joke about old times when they were younger. They talk of times when they got drunk and tell jokes.

They all are talking like they have been friends for a long while. It is comradeship, which has brought them together. It is a bond, which makes

them look like they have been friends for years. The comradeship between Stanhope and Hibbert is again shown up when Hibbert is scared about going out to fight.

Stanhope again offers Hibbert support and a huge reassurance. Act three, page 98, Stanhope gives Hibbert a drink and some reassurance so that he can go out to fight. This Stanhope and Hibbert incident also sheds some light on the end of the play, where Raleigh is killed in battle. Hibbert and Stanhope are closer, as well as the other men, provide support for each other in coping with the tragedy.

In my opinion, I think that R. C Sheriff has portrayed comradeship extremely well in 'journey's end.' The lives of seven men, Stanhope, Raleigh, Hardy, Osbourne, Hibbert, Mason and Trotter are followed through a treacherous journey, their lives in the trenches at war with Germany. Many events happen along the way that portrays the intended impression of each character. R. C Sheriff cleverly uses these events to present the theme of comradeship.

Mainly fall-outs and deaths occur which bring the seven men closer together each time. The most comradeship is displayed throughout the play from Stanhope. He shows good leadership to his men and is always there for him. The thing that makes him stand out more as showing comradeship to the men, is because he himself is under great pressure. For example, he shows great comradeship to Hibbert right before the raid. He is under great pressure, thinking about the forthcoming raid.

R. C Sheriff successfully presents the theme of comradeship in the play, comradeship is one of the main themes of the play, and it helps to add to the realistic theme of the play. At war, comradeship is the one thing that keeps the men together. ' Journey's end' is a good re-creation of men in the trenches. From ' journey's end,' I have learned a lot about the treachery of war. The treacherous conditions, which the men had to endure, sometimes can seem quite distressing.

I have also learned from this play, about how comradeship keeps the men so close together. It keeps the men from the verge of insanity, and keeps their will to live. The comradeship also gives some of the men something to live for, they're other comrades, in the same position as one and another.