

Cosi – louis nowra



**ASSIGN
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Cosi by Louis Nowra conveys significant ideas about human nature. Through the play Cosi, the audience witnesses the lives of mentally ill people unfold before them. Central characters Lewis, Doug and Julie each show and express a different view upon the world and work towards their own idea of reality. They each express their individual ideas of the norm and work together to escape reality. Many themes such as love and infidelity as well as change are conveyed throughout the play. Cosi is a comic play written by Australian playwright, Louis Nowra.

An interesting feature of the play is the use of the 'play within a play' device, which gives the play a distinctive quality. This allows the issues and concerns of the play to be reflected and commented upon in the other play as both plays are juxtaposed. The themes of "Cosi Fan Tutte" deal with love, sex and fidelity are illustrated and commented upon in the modern context as seen through Henry's emotive language "Free love, women are not to be trusted" His opinion is generated through various experiences and general knowledge.

The theme of love and fidelity causes controversy as the characters have different opinions which differ from each other. One of the main themes in Cosi, is the central idea of personal growth. All characters experience growth, however, Lewis' personal growth is the most significant as his simple dialogue states "no one can sing" exemplifying his negativity towards the patients. This is juxtaposed to his dialogue. "This comes first" when Lewis begins to see the play as his top priority. His transformation is outlined through Lucy's dialogue "Working with these people has changed you." showing Lucy's thoughts concerning Lewis. Lewis' inner journey has provided

him with a new understanding of not only himself but the world around him. Lewis is the protagonist of the play. To begin with, Lewis lacks confidence; the stage directions describe him as “not knowing what to say,” and talking “hesitantly” and “uncertainly.” Putting on the play for Lewis is motivated by his need for some quick cash. ‘What if someone forgets to take their medicine and-’ Is one of the many quotes that Lewis says that expresses his uncertainty.

The play opens to a dark stage. This darkness is symbolic of many things. Firstly, it represents Lewis entering into a new world- very different from his own. The juxtaposition of light and dark represents his understanding of each world. The second idea represented is the loneliness of the patients within the institution. Like a child pulling the bed covers over his head, afraid of what he can't see and therefore could be lurking in the dark, society feared and misunderstood these people, keeping them locked away.

Out of sight and therefore, seemingly out of mind. The final idea is that this opening symbolises Lewis entering into this world and shining a light into their darkness. That is, coming into a world that he did not understand and therefore feared and offering the patients improvement in their lives and the potential for belonging, understanding and friendship. Doug is a pyromaniac - a firelighter - both in reality and symbolically. His actions threaten to get the show cancelled in its early stages when he sets fire to a toilet.

Doug is the most sexually frank character asking questions like: “Was Lucy a virgin when you first had her?” and “How many did Lucy have before you?” He comes across as a crass character but his questions serve an important

purpose. Like fires, his frank questions tend to spark actions or reactions. They are catalysts for thought. It's Doug who reveals to Lucy that Julie has "gone for" Lewis, which leads to the final confrontation between Lucy and Lewis. Julie's character is significant in a number of ways.

Firstly, her views about love seem to be in direct opposition to Lucy's (Lewis' girlfriend). Julie has, "always thought that love was being foolish and stupid. It's about being on the edge and I like being on the edge." Whereas Lucy sees love as well down the list of priorities in life: "After bread, a shelter, equality, health, procreation, money comes maybe love." However, interestingly, their characters are also similar. Julie says about men and fidelity: "I don't like men's double standards, I guess.

Men want women to deceive them because it'll prove their worst thoughts about women..." While Lucy says that men want women to "pretend they're true and faithful" because "that's how they want us to be, even if they're not true and faithful themselves." Julie, in a way, is an altered version of Lucy in the world of the mental institution. She is the character who completely brings Lewis into this new, strange world. Her kiss with him in the dark marks the full transition of Lewis. "I like the dark," Julie says; because it's in the dark that you can be who you really want to be.