

# Equus by peter shaffer

[Entertainment](#), [Theatre](#)



**Summary:**

Dysart and Alan are in the office of Dysart, however they are pretending to be at the stables. Dysart asks questions to Alan and Alan answers all of them. Alan tells about his ritual in the stable. He does this ritual every time before he rides a horse. In this ritual he gives the horse sandals and the “Chinkle-chankle”. Later they go to the place of Ha Ha, which is a big field Alan describes to be full of mist and covered with nettles.

**Setting:**

The place is actually in Dysart’s office but they pretend to be in the stable. This is at night or late in the evening, which we can know because Dysart says: “Dalton may still be awake” and because Alan says: “he doesn’t like it so late”. In this sentence he refers to ‘ he’ as Nugget the horse and ‘ it’ as the “Chinkle-chankle”. The stable Alan talks about is home to a couple of horses, including Nugget. Plot development: This scene was actually very predictable. During the previous scene, so scene 19, the events in scene 20 were foreshadowed.

In scene 19 Dysart asked many questions to Alan about his rituals with the horses. In this scene Dysart goes on with questioning and asks Alan to do the rituals that he told Dysart about in the previous scene. Alan accepted this and that is why they pretend to be at the stable. This scene builds up tension and again foreshadows what will happen in the next scene, because it has an open end. The next scene will probably be about the rituals too Character development: Alan is different in this scene. In the previous scenes, he did not like to give answers to Dysart’s questions.

He wanted to ask him questions in return or he used tools such as the tape recorder. In this scene Alan answers all of Dysart's questions without being ashamed, without using tools and without playing games. Next to that, he seems to follow all of Dysart's instructions without any hesitation. He is not the only character who has developed. Dysart has also developed. In the previous scenes he was someone who did not like his job. He said that he did the job because he had to. In this scene, Dysart seems very interested and wants to know more about Alan.

He still is careful with Alan, but he has to watch out because he could become too curious and make actions without thinking about them. Themes: The theme of this scene is religion, because Alan tells more about his god equus. He tells us about the rituals which he has to do in order to ride on Equus. Language: The only striking about the language is that Alan uses the word " Ha Ha" to describe a place. Alan mysteriously tells Dysart: " It's his place of Ha Ha". Dysart does not ask for more information about this place, so we don't get to know what happens there... yet.

### **Symbolism:**

The sandals in the scene are used as a symbol. He gives the sandals to the horse and he kisses them before he does that. There can be two views however. One of them is religious. Alan gives Nugget the sandals. Alan is a boy who knows a lot about the bible so he also knew that Jesus always wore sandals. In this way, Alan symbolizes Jesus. He sees the horse as Jesus. Therefore he gives the horse the sandals to wear, just like Jesus. The other view however is simply to reduce the noise that the horse makes. It is night and Alan wants to do his rituals and ride on the horse.

This will make a lot of noise. So in order to prevent people from noticing this or prevent to wake them up, he gives sandals to the horse.

### **Equus scene 21 Summary:**

Alan and Dysart move on to the huge field. Alan goes on with his rituals. He completely undresses in front of the horse. Next to that he gets his “Manbit”. It is a sacred stick on which he bites. After that he touches the horse everywhere; On its belly, ribs, flank, eyes etc. After that Alan offers Nugget some sugar, in order to take his sins away. Then he mounts the horse and he says that it hurts because of little knives in his skin.

Alan calls himself “The king” and says that only he can ride Equus, the mightiest of horses. The king (Alan) tramples all of his foes and after that he says: “Equus I love you” and “Make us one person! ”. Finally he drops of the horse to the ground and ends with: “Amen”.

### **Setting:**

Alan and Dysart are still in the office of Dysart, however they are still pretending as if they weren't. Now they pretend to have walked to the huge field. This huge field is full of mist. They went from the stable to the field so we can assume that it is still dark outside.

We can also assume that it is night because Alan told us in the previous scenes that he does his rituals during the night. It probably is not very cold, otherwise Alan would have had difficulties to stay outside without his clothes. There is also a gate and a tree in the field. We know this because Alan mentioned it. Plot development: This scene is in chronological order with the previous scene. So it was predictable that Alan would go on with his

ritual. But the ritual itself was very surprising. It turned from a simple ritual to a very extreme one.

We can see that some of these rituals come from Christianity. Alan bows for his god Equus and he talks about sins. The tension from the previous scene gets to its climax where Alan has an intense moment riding Nugget. After that, the action drops significantly when Alan says: “ Amen”. Character development: Alan was already excited during the previous scene, but we have not seen him this excited yet. There is no sign left of the shame that Alan had previously. He reveals everything. In the previous scene he just demonstrated a part of his rituals, but now he has shown the extremes of his ritual.

He stands firmly behind his thoughts and he shows his love towards his god, Equus. It seems as if he has turned into a radical believer of his own religion. Dysart is still very curious and does not show any signs of feeling weird. He acts as if everything is normal, as if he is a child wanting to know more about football. From all the sentences that Dysart says, only 2 do not end with a question mark. This shows that Dysart is very curious.

### **Theme:**

The themes of scene 21 are religion and normality. In this scene we learn a lot about the rituals and the religion of Alan.

That is why one of the themes is religion. The rituals can be seen as weird. It challenges our sense of what is normal and what is not. With the help of this scene the writer wants to standardize our view on the strange. That is why the second theme of scene 21 is normality.

**Language:**

Alan's use of the language is very striking. He does not use colloquialism. Instead he uses very holy and sacred words. He has created a lot of names for his religion. When Dysart asks him about who his enemies are, Alan gives a lot of new names. He tells us that he is the king and therefore he talks like a king.

He also uses heroic language such as: "Equus the Mighty rose against all!" and "His enemies scatter, his enemies fall!".

**Symbolism:**

The sugar that Alan gives to the horse is a symbol that is linked to Christianity. By giving the sugar, he offers up his sins to Equus. So the sugar stands for sins. He says that this is his last supper, which refers to the last supper of Jesus. Conclusion: Finally, we could say that scene 20 and 21 are quite strange scenes. We discover what the real Alan is like and we get to understand him better. Especially scene 21 seems to be a very important scene for the whole play,