

# "a night out" by harold pinter essay sample

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



## **“ A Night Out” by Harold Pinter Essay Sample**

The play, “ a night out”, written by Pinter, and designed for television, is the story of a single night in the life of a 28 year old man, named Albert Stokes. The night starts out with him at home, getting ready for a party for someone he works with, and it ends in events that could have not been much more unusual. Albert is a young man, who lives at home with his Mother. His father and grandmother are dead, and, although the story doesn't tell us directly, his mother seems to be his only remaining relative. The main part of this story is the fact that his mother still treats him like a small boy. Maybe she is mad, maybe she loves him dearly, but the fact remains that she tends to ‘ molly-cuddle’ him. This essay is about his relationships with women in the text, and when referring to women in his life, you cannot ignore his mother.

Right from the start, how his mother acts is obvious. In the very first act, on the very first page, her attitude towards him is evident. She treats him like a child, and what is even more obvious, doesn't listen to him. When presented with these details, and how they are portrayed in the text, it would be easy for anybody to say that she had a conscious problem with him seeing anyone else. However, in my opinion it is not that she does not want him to see other people, but it is that she does not want him to leave her. Those are two very different things, and when I compare those ‘ scenarios’ with my own experiences, I come up with the opinion that she is merely a loving mother, but also too loving.

Albert reacts to her mothering in a variety of ways. Mostly he accepts it, but sometimes he gets annoyed, and reacts slightly different, only slightly, but still differently. This can tell us that he is used to how she acts, but he knows how to cope with it. It annoys him, but he loves her. Their relationship, from what we've seen so far, is very one sided in two ways. The mother does all the talking, and Albert does all the listening, but when he stops listening, their relationship seems to get better. As well as that point, Albert seems to do most of the thinking between them. The Mother, as far as I can tell, was brought up to be a mother and a wife, and nothing else, and you could almost assume that she was not brought up to think. That is, or could be, a large fault in their relationship. They do not communicate properly. True, they love each other, but they do not coexist as a family. The Mother just talks, and never listens, and Albert just listens. That can never be a good thing for any relationship.

For example, on the first page, there is a selection of text that gives a good example of that point:

Albert: " my tie, the striped one, the blue one."

And then his mother replies with a completely different point, having not listened

Mother: " The bulbs gone in Grandma's room."

The next line also demonstrates a point about their relationship: That Albert ' listens'

Albert: " Has it?"

There are a lot of other examples in the text, of this point, I could go on for pages at length about how Albert's Mother never listens, but I do not think I need to. That example is 'persuasive' enough of the fact I am trying to prove.

Another point is that Albert seems tense when with his mother. As I have said, she dominates the conversation almost entirely, and when neither of them is talking, I could easily imagine an uneasy silence. They could get on normally, easily if they had slightly different attitudes, but the mother tends to compare Albert constantly. His father, when he was alive, would have played a prominent part in his wife's life. Without that part of her life, she relies on Albert to supply her with it. However, if I were Albert, I would feel like I could never fill my father's 'shoes' (to use a familiar phrase), and that I was fighting a losing battle to be something that I was not. This is not saying that his mother is vindictive or anything of the sort, it is stating that she does not know what she is doing most of the time.

Albert's mother does not realise the fact that Albert is going out, on page 45, until he has almost left, and even before that, she was trying to persuade him to do things for her. For example, even when he has come up with reasons why he cannot do something (eg. Go down to the cellar to get a bulb) his mother persists, and keeps at him until he either leaves, or does it. I have already said that she does not do much of the 'deep' thinking in the family, but, when she gets her heart set on something, there is no dissuading he from the task in hand. There are a lot of examples that occur in the text,

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but the smallest of them stretches at least a page. I can provide an example, but not give the actual text. On Page 44 and 45 in the text, Albert's mother goes on at great length about getting a bulb for ' grandma's room', and does not stop until he forces the idea that he is going to a party onto her. She is persistent, and perhaps that is because she loves him, but maybe, and more likely, because she needs him, and is scared of life without him. The word pathetic could be used, but only in the sense of her being pitiful, rather than that of being feeble.

However, not all of Albert's relationships are with his mother. He does talk to other girls, admittedly, sometimes not willingly, but he does. In Act Two, Scene One (about page 58), there is a party, it is held in ' Mr Ryan's' honour. He was a worker at Albert's office, who is retiring ' after many years of fine service', and Albert's manager, Mr King, is holding a leaving party, with all of Albert's ' co-workers'. There are a number of women in this act; Betty, Joyce and Eileen are the main named characters featured. At the very start of the Act, Albert is shown as shy and almost reclusive in company, laughing only when he needs to, talking only when talked to, and it seems to continue on in that way for most of the party. Albert gets on very well with Kedge and Seeley, two other men, about the same age as him. They appear to be confident and can fit in easily with their surroundings. However, Albert could be described as almost the opposite of these two. He is a quiet person from what we can tell. Even when with his friends he does not talk excessively.

The main part of this act, or at least the most relevant, is when Albert is ' cornered' by Joyce and Eileen. They had been put up to talk to him by one of

Albert's co-workers, 'Gidney'. Albert neither liked Gidney, nor even got on with him, as far as we can tell. Gidney encouraged the girls to go up to Albert and bait him, see what his reaction would be. However, how Albert reacts to this 'intrusion' into his personal space is very important to this essay. When he talks to the girls, it becomes obvious, even to him that they have no serious intentions for him, and that they are merely playing with him.

Albert seems to realise this, and reacts without especial 'vigour'. After a small conversation, he tries to lose them by going to the bar, but they keep on after him. The topic raised before Albert tries to leave is that of his mother, and based on the speed with which he reacts, it is obvious that he does not want to talk about his mother. Apart from this conversation, with the girls, there is one other major 'event'. Somebody "takes a liberty" with Eileen, and immediately the blame is pointed at Albert. Everyone knows that the quiet shy one is always to blame, but in this case, it is quite obvious that Albert is not to blame. The text points out at great length that the person that committed the deed, was Mr Ryan, the person in whose honour the party was being held. When everyone accuses Albert, he reacts normally, for the circumstances, and tries to leave. He is not at ease with women, and this entire paragraph points that out.

Another very relevant section of the text is when Albert returns home from the party, at twelve o'clock, and his mother talks to him. This section occurs in the second act, the second scene. From the very start, it is obvious that Albert does not want to talk to his mother. She corners him, and entirely dominates the conversation. For the first few pages, Albert does not say

anything. His mother could be said to be nagging him, and you can almost feel the tension building up. His mother starts off by getting his dinner out of the oven, and then goes on at great length about how he should not be "mucking about with girls", and how his father would be "disgusted with him coming home at this time of night after mucking around with girls". After a large speech from his mother, Albert finally 'cracks'. To me it is obvious that his reaction had been brewing for some time, and it does not surprise me that much.

He basically threatens his mother with a clock, he doesn't say anything in the whole scene, but his stance and actions could be described as menacing. Throughout the scene, you can see Albert's reaction constantly brewing. Finally he was going to do something about his mother, and in the way the text presents this scene, you can tell that 'thing' would be final. However, as you can tell later on in the story, he merely threatens her, but even so, it is something more than he usually does. He and his mother love each other, but they seem to annoy each other at the same time. Albert's mother frustrates him, and gives him cause to challenge her, by not letting him speak his mind, and be his own person. She does mother him, and he does not react well, as a young man, to that kind of mothering. In my experience, this kind of relationship needs something more than love, and that thing is communication.

They talk enough, I would imagine, but they do not actually talk about anything that matters. As the main essay question asks, this is one of the main faults in their relationships. Albert feels he cannot, or just cannot

express his true feelings. From experience, I feel that this kind of outburst is characteristic of the kind of relationship they have, and it all signifies a major problem in how they get on. This scene ends very suddenly, and very mysteriously with Albert raising a clock above his head to strike his mother. However, although the story gives you the impression that he has actually killed her, by giving away certain details later on in the text (Eg. When in the girls house (act three), Albert chuckles about a statement made from the girl about blood on the carpet), it turns out very different to your first perceptions. I will go on to talk about the last section connected with Albert's mother later on in this essay.

Another major section is where Albert is invited into a girl's home. From the start it is obvious that the girl is some kind of prostitute, and no matter which way you phrase it, it always comes out the same way. Albert reacts to meeting her in different ways. The whole time he is there, until the end, he barely says anything. He is ill at ease, and does not get on well with the girl. The text shows us that she is a fraud. She tries to convince him that she is better than she really is, and not just a 'common tart'. Albert does not say much to how she portrays herself, and indeed, only becomes active near to the end of the act. When she calls him 'retarded', through what could be called accident, he reacts fiercely. He has already threatened his mother with a clock, and here, he seems to break, let all his feelings out. Of hatred, annoyance, love, and everything in between. It shows, rather than how he feels about the girl (that is insignificant compared to the true issue), how he feels about his mother, and this text is extremely important to even begin to understand their relationship. True, the girl does bring out these feelings in



him, but she is not the actual cause for them, and the cause, was the reason for the feelings in the first place.

When considering the question of this essay, and especially when considering Albert's mother, you must raise the point of the last scene (3) of the last act (3). It is concerned with Albert coming home after his encounter with the girl. Again, as before in the second scene of the second act, Albert says absolutely nothing. When he first returns home, he is confident. He sits in his home like it is his own. However, when he hears his mother calling him, he immediately 'stiffens up'. As the text states in stage directions, "His body freezes. His gaze comes down. His legs slowly come together. He looks in front of him".

I can imagine him feeling that he has finally won, set his mother straight, but then the harsh moment of reality, realising that he has neither won, nor put her straight. Albert's outburst must have been a distinctive event for him, but it did not turn out, as he wanted. His mother acts exactly the same as before the 'incident'. This means, to me, that this might as well be the end of their relationship. All the events have come to a head. They might love each other, but whatever happens from now on, after the end of the play, would neither be real, or normal.