

The forms and structure of vinegar tom by churchill



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The overall play is made up of twenty-one scenes.

There are no acts that separate the scenes from each other. The effect of this is that the play is continual, therefore the action will not stop until the end. This forces the audience to question what they see and not be given the chance to switch off until the play is over. The way the audience questions and reacts to what they see is very much apart of the theatrical vision we have for this performance. Therefore, although we're inevitably cutting parts of scenes to fit around the size of grouping were working with, were still however, desperate to allow the audience to be made aware of the crucial themes Vinegar Tom brings therefore were not separating the scenes with acts of any type.

I believe there are elements of varied genres within this play, as Churchill was influenced by her own views and values on the age old condition of the oppression of women she therefore linked this to the American witch-trials in the late seventeenth century. So her foundation was based on real events however there is no reference to any of the events or locations in the play itself. With that base, a story line and characters emerged so the play centres around realism. However Brecht influenced Churchill and although there are no banners or headlines within the play's original script there is room to use them if felt appropriate by the company. Vinegar tom has traits of Epic theatre, through not trying to "fool" the audience, the actors do not arrive from backstage or try to cleverly bring on props.

The idea that the audience are always aware they are in a theatre is a feeling strongly stressed. Non-illusionistic theatre is a collective term, which

refers to the very idea of using minimal props and scenery on stage. This is to help engage the audience into the issues of the play. Direct audience address is where an actor(s) speaking his or her lines directly to the audience to create a reaction. This happens several times within Vinegar Tom because the theatrical vision is to connect the audience with these characters and convey an understanding which is enabling the audience to recognise the injustice of each situation and ask questions.

An example of this is the final scene involving the characters Kramer and Sprenger. This scene is very separate from the others as it isn't linked to the story line in any way but what is being expressed through the delivery of their lines is a harsh, crude image of the way they perceive women. This is a blatant attack at the overall theme of the play. The way the actors play the showy roles allows the audience to express frustration to what is being presented. The idea through making light of such a serious subject causes the audience to respond more strongly to this attitude expressed by the characters, because they going to have very contradicting feelings and this is exactly what Churchill wanted and what as a company is in our vision. For the audience to get involved in what they hear, and feel the need to speak back.

Monologues are used to create reactions from the audience similarly to the idea of direct audience address. An example of a monologue and the effect it creates is in scene fifteen involving the character of Goody. The lines being delivered are a celebration of the character of Packer and the methods of torture for "witches." Although Goody is a female character her beliefs are hypocritically against women and this monologue is bringing light to her evil

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character. The audience is able to understand her more personally as she's speaking to them and therefore conveys her attitudes and displays her disgust for the women involved. This particular monologue is there to open the eyes of the audience to the hypocrisy, a central theme within the play.

Flashback is a technique we put in ourselves in the opening scene of the play to give the audience a stronger awareness of events that were to take place. Through allowing the audience to see a flashback of an event, their own understanding of that particular section is broadened leaving them to focus on asking deeper questions. This technique adds a different approach to the presentation of a scene and also enables the other actors to be used out of character but still remain acting. Physicalisation/ vocalisation: The way the characters move and speak very much reflects their personality as a character. Churchill aimed to show bold differences between characters movement and speech especially as far as women were concerned. For example Packer, a dominant male character with power and authority should contain heavy, harsh tones when dealing with the women, as he's there to judge and intimidate.

His posture should portray his status, having his back straight, taking huge strides when walking in role. Susan on the other hand is a character with worries and problems, vulnerable and naive to the world and lacking self-esteem and confidence in all areas. Her physicalisation and vocal qualities should reflect that. Therefore walking with her head hung low, almost accepting she's as filthy as she's made out to be, hair in front of her eyes, biting her nails, glancing at people, never really staring into anyone's eyes for very long. These are all traits that need to be shown with a character like <https://assignbuster.com/the-forms-and-structure-of-vinegar-tom-by-churchill/>

Susan. The more the women are seen as lower the more the theme of oppression of women is being stressed and attacked.

The dialogue is the words expressed between two or more characters. Much of the dialogue between characters has a strong sense of panic behind it therefore, as an audience you become to recognise what results from these events; fear and panic. An example between Jack and Margery " What can we do? Nothing. Can't do nothing. Oh oh" " What have I done to deserve it? Why me? Why my calves shaking? why my wife falling down? " " Alice what have you done? Oh Alice, Alice" This is effective however, as it raises tension and allows the actors to be able to experiment with levels of sound and texture. Vocally within the dialogue when tone, pitch and accent is strongly stressed the audience are able to interpret the feelings of the characters more.

Poetry/chanting is used in the play, (Margery) " Come butter come, come butter come, Jonny's standing at the gate waiting for a butter cake, come butter come... " This is the first time we hear any evidence of a spell being concocted and from Margery, a character that believes she is religious and is getting back at Joan who she believes to have cursed her.

The rhythm is effective and it conveys the theme of hypocrisy to the audience. The songs are directed to be sung in modern dress, and by actors not characters. Churchill didn't want the play to be seen as something that was only relevant to an audience of that era because the themes that she was desperate to convey are still ongoing. Therefore, by having this freedom of putting the songs on in modern dress allows the audience to recognise

that these issues still happen today and we shouldn't be swayed by the era the play is set in. The songs hold messages in their own right and often using song to declare these messages holds the audience's attention to recognise them more.

In many cases songs also remain in people's minds longer than dialogue therefore the messages can be more impactful.