

A cream cracker  
under the settee, alan  
bennett essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

"A cream cracker under the settee" is a humorous play in the form of monologue. It was written by Alan Bennett who wrote the play in 1940s, Doris is the main character played by Thora Hird, who is an old lonely lady who's in her seventies and thinks of her present life and reminisces about her past. Doris loves cleaning, she links everything to cleanliness.

But sadly in her poor conditions she finds hard to maintain this cleanliness that she's mad about. Instead a cleaner called Zulema from the social services comes to her house every week to clean for her. Zulema always try's to persuade Doris to move to Stafford house which is an old peoples home however Doris despises the thought of Stafford house. In the monologue are some major events such as the finding of a cream cracker under Doris's settee which seriously upsets Doris as she knows Zulema cant be doing a good job another key event in the play is the injury that Doris sustains from falling off her stool while trying to dust. In the play we hear Doris describing the still born birth of her baby and the nurse wrapping it up in news paper as if it was worthless this is a shocking event in the play and also a key one as it spurs Doris's hygienic obsession. The play begins and we see Doris sat awkwardly in her chair rubbing her leg.

She begins talking to the audience in a very relaxed genuine tone of voice that draws the audiences attention. We also hear a confrontation between Doris and Zulema after Zulema finds out that Doris has been dusting again however Zulema disagrees with this because she feels Doris is too old to dust. Doris feels Zulema doesn't do a very good job and is better off without her 'home help. Home hindrance your better off doing it yourself. ' The Director

Stuart Burge worked along with Alan Bennett used to great techniques to keep the audience interested and entertained.

One of the techniques Bennet and Burge used really well was the use of movement and how they moved Doris around the house. They keep the play varied and fluent by moving Doris around the stage. Instead of watching Doris move around the rooms the directors used lights that they dimmed whenever they moved her around, the screen would fade to black which emphasises time. When the screen is shown again Doris is seen in another room usually with well chosen props in the background like a picture frames or other items related to Doris.

Bennet uses many techniques to keep the character of Doris interesting. For instance we can tell that she is an old woman and that she comes from Yorkshire and we can also tell what social class she comes from. As she says things like 'the flaming buffet went over' these mild swearwords keep the audience entertained. The way in which Doris speaks makes her seem a riveting character, her language is colourful and vibrant. Doris's obsession with cleanliness is often humorous as she sometimes gets annoyed with it, she says things like, 'but Zulema doesn't dust she half-dusts. I know when a place is clean'.

Doris reveals important events through trivial detail. She doesn't get emotional, she doesn't break down and cry. It's just little simple things that make it more powerful. e.

g. baby wrapped in newspaper. Doris's relationship with Zulema is very interesting as they are both under constant confrontation. The audience only  
<https://assignbuster.com/a-cream-cracker-under-the-settee-alan-bennett-essay/>

see Zulema from Doris's point of view and from this Zulema seems quite a cheerful person that just really wants to help, With good intentions. However Doris sees things differently and sees Zulema as quite a threat even though she is the only thing standing between Doris and Stafford house.

However Doris's relationship with Wilfred is quite different. Wilfred represents the world that Doris once found kindly. Wilfred is very much loved by Doris one of the things that annoys Doris is Wilfred's unorganised messy life quite the opposite of Doris's clean tidy one. These relationships with two different characters hold the audiences attention very well and tell us lots of detail about the people surrounding Doris's life, we know so much about Wilfred even though he does not feature in the play and has died. We find out in the play that Doris lost a baby due to it being still born, this effected Doris's life in many ways it spurred her hygienic obsession because she remembers the nurse asking for newspaper to throw the baby away as if it was dirty or unclean. Strengthened her relationship with Wilfred as it is the only thing she has left.

We find out that Wilfred also wanted the baby . He bought the pram too early into the home, this was one of the first time he had everything organised however it all went wrong. This could have affected why he is never organised. Wilfred felt responsible and guilty for buying the pram too early.

When Wilfred dies Doris is left with no family or support. The audience feels sorry for Doris and Wilfred when all this is revealed. One of Doris's biggest fears is Stafford house she really doesn't want to go even though she is in her seventies. When Zulema try's to explain to Doris about Stafford house ,

Doris says ' yes smelling of pee' talking about the residents of Stafford house.

This is humours and slightly prejudiced of Doris's and grabs the audiences attention. Doris gives the opinion that she would rather die then go to Stafford house. At the end of the play there is a conversation in which Doris dismisses the policeman who is checking if Doris is ok. Even though Doris is in desperate need of help. We believe Doris dose this because she fears that she will end up in Stafford House. This shows how much she despises the thought of going in to Stafford House.

At the end of the play Doris's last words are quite sad as there is a long pause and then Doris says ' you've done it now, Doris. Done it now, Wilfred. The audience is left questioning what Doris means here. In my Opinion Doris thinks she is going to die and feels she has accomplished into going into Stafford house I think this because at the very end she says ' never mind. Its done with now, anyway. I think she is talking about Stafford house.

In my opinion the play ' A Cream cracker Under The Settee' is a very well thought out interesting monologue. Bennett has made very careful choices to keep the audience entertained. The simplicity in which the way he dose this is also very good. Bennet exchanges props and special effects for well thought out dialogue that keeps the audience entertained.