

# Equus by peter shaffer essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

'Equus' is a deeply moving play, which explores different issues and ideas. 'Equus' can be thought of by some people, of simply being about a deranged teenager that blinds six horses with a sharp object, and is sent to a psychiatrist, which is in fact true about the play. But the issues and ideas that the play concentrates on are deeper than that. Sending the boy to the psychiatrist shows us how the interest and yearning for other things along with convenience have killed our capacity for worship, passion and consequently our capacity for pain. 'Equus' also focuses upon the idea of 'normality' in humans.

What is 'normal'? Is it good for all humans to be 'normal'? In this scene there are several characters to know about, Alan, the teenage boy, guilty of blinding the six horses, and has two passions. He is the patient of the psychiatrist. Dysart is the psychiatrist. The man who gets the truth out of Alan as to why he committed such an awful act of cruelty, and also shows us something else to do with one of the ideas of the play (normality, and if it's good for people to be). Jill is one Alan's passions. She is very comforting, forgiving and loving towards Alan.

Equus - Nugget is Alan's other passion a God, a horse and a love. The stage/set of the play, is like a boxing ring, that is capable of rotating three hundred and sixty degrees, as it is mounted upon metal ball bearings. The boxing ring represents Alan's current situation. Everything for him is a fight (like boxing). It's as if he's been put into a boxing ring with Dysart and Dysart has to fight Alan to obtain the truth and his feelings. Also Alan's life is like one big fight in trying to have two passions and either way he is betraying the one passion.

Set just off stage are several benches which is where Dysart sits throughout scene thirty three, as if to be listening to what Alan is saying, but offstage since he is not involved in Alan's events, but just listening. There are also three other benches on stage. He is not on stage since this may confuse the audience because it would look like Dysart was there that night, which he was not. Scene thirty three, is continuing to tell the story of what happened on the night of the blinding of the six horses.

Alan believes he is under the influence of the world's most powerful truth drug. He wants to tell someone what happened that night and thinking that he's under the influence of the drug is almost an excuse for Alan to be telling Dysart. A rich light falls upon the stage representing the presence of Equus, but is also how Alan sees it. Everything we're seeing in scene thirty-three is what Alan is seeing and it's as if we've been put in his shoes. This scene is where Alan and Jill return from the cinema and are in the stable together.

The horses can be seen exiting the stage from each side going down the tunnel as if to hide for now, but Nugget is standing there in the tunnel, not moving and can be seen by the audience. Alan enters from the top end of the stage with Jill following inconspicuously. Alan is telling Dysart (the psychiatrist) what is happening. In the stable the two passions of Alan's begin to clash. On one side every teenagers' passion, love and expressing it, but on the other, for Alan is Equus. This whole section of the play is performed in the same area as where Dysart's office is.

Alan is telling Dysart what happened that night and Alan's words are being performed to the audience. Using the same stage area (the boxing ring) as

Dysart's office, reminds the audience that Alan is telling the story to Dysart and the audience are shown what Alan is saying. Alan feels he is betraying Equus by devoting his love and passion towards Jill rather than Equus. Alan is scared, as well as distressed and anxious since he is so close to what he is betraying (the horses below) and this can be seen when he at first asks Jill to close the doors, but then snaps when she doesn't comply with what he asks.

Jill eventually follows Alan's demands by closing the heavy door. Jill mimes this section of closing the door, since potentially such a large and heavy door cannot be placed on the type of stage used for Equus. What the audience sees on stage is what Alan is saying to Dysart. Jill closing the door obviously is not seen upon as a major aspect by Alan when telling Dysart the story, and so is simply mimed. Dysart then asks Alan to describe the barn to him. Alan begins to walk about the stage, describing the place. He looks to Dysart. Alan describes the area as, " Large room.

Straw everywhere. Some tools.... [As if picking it up off the rail where he left it in Act One. ] A hoof pick!... [He ' drops' it hastily, and dashes away from the spot. ]" Alan picks up the pick, but then drops it in trepidation, and dashes away from the area where the tools lie, in fright. It was as if the thought of what is to come crossed his mind, but then realisation hit him and the idea of thinking such a thing was frightening for Alan. Dysart urges Alan to continue his story since he is ever closer to seeing, hearing and knowing what really happened that night.

Dysart can even begin to predict what Alan is to say next. For example when Alan, describing the barn, mentions a large door and behind it... Dysart

interrupts and answers, " horses. " Dysart takes the words right out of Alan's mouth a couple of times later on in this scene which is to let us know that Dysart is beginning to really get involved and follow the story. Dysart asks Alan two more questions that include how many horses there were, and verifies with Alan that Jill closed the door, so you couldn't see the horses. Alan answers confidently and clearly to both.

The first being, " six... " (horses) and the other agreeing with Dysart by confirming his verification of why Jill closed the door, by answering " Yes. " Dysart then urges Alan to continue the story, and so it continues. Jill comforts Alan by persuading him it's shut, telling him it's just the two of them now and says they should sit down. They sit together on one of the on stage benches to the left. Jill breaks the nervous silence by saying, " Hallo. " Alan answers hastily, " Hallo. " [She kisses him lightly. He responds.

Suddenly a faint trampling of hooves, off stage, makes him jump up. This is Equus realising and warning Alan that he is watching and is becoming angry and uneasy with what Alan is doing with Jill. Jill questions Alan asking him, " What is wrong. " [He turns his head upstage, listening. ] Alan appears uneasy and nervous with a regretful look upon his face. Jill continues to comfort Alan by telling him to relax and reassuring him there's no one there. She then tells him to come to her. [She touches his hand. He turns to her again. ] She continues to tell Alan how gentle he is and how she loves it. Alan answers, " So are you.... I mean... Alan is obviously unsure of what he is really saying, as if he has something else on his mind. Jill or Equus? [He kisses her spontaneously.

The hooves trample again, harder. He breaks away from her abruptly towards the upstage corner. ] It appears Equus is becoming maddened with what Alan thinks is him, for betraying him (Equus). Alan backs off Jill in a scared and anxious manner as he is scared of what Equus is seeing, thinking and what he is going to do to him. Jill rises from the bench and asks Alan, “ What is wrong? ” Alan answers, “ Nothing! ” [She moves towards him. He turns and moves past her.

He is clearly distressed. She contemplates him for a moment. ] Jill then gently tells Alan to take his sweater off. Alan questions Jill’s comment and asks, “ What? ” Jill answers, “ I will, if you will. ” Jill is desperately trying to persuade Alan to relax and to take his clothes off, but Alan is becoming more and more uneasy and concerned. For Alan it seems Equus is watching him all the time and when ever he expresses his passion towards Jill, it’s as if Equus knows and is warning and telling Alan that, when the sounds of horses stamping and trampling can be heard near by. A long stage direction now moves the play on.

Alan stares at Jill. There’s a pause. She lifts her sweater over her head he watches her and he then unzips his. They both begin to strip, taking every item of clothing off their bodies. They are now naked and are looking at each other diagonally across the square. At this point the light is beginning to increase gradually. With the light increasing, there is also tension increasing too, with the audience thinking Alan and Jill are going to make love, but how will Equus react to it? The pause of the two staring at each other is broken by Alan saying, “ You’re... You’re very... ”

Jill interrupts his nervous comment, " So are you... [Pause. ] Come here. "

[He goes to her. She comes to him. They meet in the middle, and hold each other, and embrace. ] Alan turns to Dysart, tells of how she put her mouth in his and how lovely it was too. The passion for Alan towards Jill is becoming increasingly evident, but the fury of Equus is also increasing. There is yet another lengthy stage direction in which Alan and Jill burst into giggles. Alan lays her gently onto the barn floor in the centre of the square and bends over her eagerly. All of a sudden the sound of Equus fills the place. Hooves smash wood.

Alan straightens up adamant, and stares straight ahead of him, over Jill lying on the floor. What makes this part of the play have a spooky and disturbing side to it is how the play tells of loud noises to sound of wood being smashed by hooves, and the stamping of horses can be heard. But Jill seems very unconcerned which means that all of the noise that can be heard by the audience is what is heard in Alan's head. There could be noises from the horses near by, but potentially Alan's mind is dramatising it and to him it sounds worse than how it really does sound. Jill hasn't mentioned anything at all about the horses making all this noise.

Jill being a horse fan and lover I'm sure would have been concerned or anxious about the horses making such a noise and fuss. Dysart then asks Alan what happened next. He answers brutally, " I put it in her! " There is now a series of questions asked by Dysart of Alan, just about him and Jill on supposedly having sex. It is a fast paced conversation with both the questions from Dysart and the answers from Alan being quite short. Alan mainly answers with one word and fast paced. Dysart begins by asking Alan

<https://assignbuster.com/equus-by-peter-shaffer-essay-sample/>

if he really put it in her and going into deeper detail, even up to and including how easy it was and how far he put it in.

He finishes of the fast paced part of the conversation by confirming with Alan that he really did have sexual intercourse with Jill and demanding the truth from him this time. Throughout these questions hurled at Alan, he never denied having sex with her until he did crack by telling Dysart to ' Fuck off! '. Whether this was in defeat or whether Alan had had enough of Dysart asking questions on this subject (and told him to ' Fuck off! ', because he'd told him what he believed had happened), it could be either. But I do think that it was in defeat, which it does turn out to be.