

Educating rita essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I agree with the statement that says that 'Educating Rita' by Willy Russell is a funny play dealing with serious issues because it includes both of them. It includes serious issues like relationships, suicide, education, self-esteem, class, culture and alcoholism. On the other hand, there are many funny scenes or things, for example, Rita's dialect, jokes, alcoholism, character contrast and swearwords. In the first half of my essay, I am going to discuss some of the serious issues. To begin with, I am going to deal with the breakdown of personal relationships, which appears many times throughout the play.

Both Rita and Frank have unsatisfactory relationships with their partners, Denny and Julia. Rita has made the decision of learning at the Open University, which is a tough decision because she has to break away from the limits imposed on her by her husband and by the society in which she lives and works. This initiative doesn't please Denny whose plan was to have a baby, but Rita doesn't want to have a kid until she has found herself. (Act 1 Scene 1- p. 24) I'm twenty-six. I should have had a baby by now; everyone expects it. I'm sure my husband thinks I'm sterile.

He was moanin' all the time, y' know, 'Come off the pill, let's have a baby'. I told him I'd come off it, just to shut him up. But I'm still on it. See, I don't want a baby yet. See, I want to discover myself first. Soon in the play Denny finds out about the pills and burns all her books. Denny couldn't understand why Rita wanted to change. Even though she tried to explain that she wished for a better life, he didn't understand. He just wanted the girl he married to come back, sometimes he even gave Rita presents hoping they would make her come back.

He warned her that if she didn't stop seeing Frank and didn't get off the pill, they would break up. The disagreement between both caused the rupture of their relation. (Scene 8 - p. 69) I got home from work, he'd packed me case. He said either I stop comin' here an' come off the pill or I would get out altogether. It was an ultimatum. I explained to him. I didn't get narked or anythin'. I just explained to him how I had to do this. He said it's warped me. He said I'd betrayed him. I suppose I have. We should also take notice of Frank's relationships.

Frank has had one failed marriage and his present relationship with Julia is not an easy one. His first marriage was ruined due to poetry. His wife left him so that he had something else to write about. As soon as she left him he stopped writing. This is more or less what Frank said (Scene 2 - p. 35) We split up because of poetry. One day my wife pointed out to me that for fifteen years my output as a poet had dealt exclusively with the period in which we - discovered each other. And so to give me something to write about she left. A very noble woman my wife. She left me for the good of literature.

However his second relationship doesn't seem to be an excellent one. Frank sees Julia as an ex student, very caring and tolerant who admires him enormously but Julia is having an affair with another man. Later on Julia leaves Frank, while they are in France because of a and drinking problem. But it doesn't really bother him, or at least he doesn't act like so. Secondly I am going to discuss the issue of suicide. Rita's flatmate, Trish attempts to kill herself, half way throughout the play. This action made Rita commence to comprehend that art and literature cannot supply all the answers in life.

In the following quote we see how Rita tell Frank about Trish. (Act 2, scene 7-p. 103) It's like Trish, y' know me flatmate, I thought she was so cool an' together - I came home the other night an' she'd tried to top herself. Magic, isn't it? She spends half her life eatin' wholefoods an' health foods to make her life longer, an' the other half tryin' to kill herself. Thanks to this, Rita is now able to take charge of her own life and to make decisions for herself. Equally important is education. Frank, has already been educated and has achieved a slight success as a poet.

He works as a university lecturer in English Literature. This job bores him a great deal, and because of his drinking behaviour, by the end of the play he has been dismissed. Whereas Rita, who comes from a lower-class, has decided she wants to become more educated at an Open University. Subsequently she changes her life completely and gradually becomes absorbed by culture and literature. Only after her flatmate attempts suicide, that she realizes that art and literature cannot provide every answer. However, she decides to continue as a student and finally passes her examinations.

She also went to a University Summer School for further awareness. In addition I will write about self-esteem. Frank's self-esteem is very low throughout the whole play whilst we only see signs of low self esteem in Rita once. This is when she is telling Frank why she didn't go to his party. It was because she felt intimidated, and she thought she was worth nothing. In the following quote Rita explains to Frank how she felt. (Act1, Scene 7-p. 67) I'm all right with you, here in this room; but when I saw those people you were with I couldn't come in. I would have seized up. Because I'm a freak.

I can't talk to the people I live with anymore. An' I can't talk to the likes of them on Saturday, or them out there, because I can't learn language. I'm a half-caste. I went back to the pub where Denny was, an me mother, an' our Sandra, an' her mates. I think she felt this way because everything (the argument with Denny, the essays that unsatisfied Frank, she had no job so she didn't have enough money...) happened at the same time and pretty fast so she couldn't affront the whole lot. Talking about Frank's self-esteem, at the beginning of the play he is disillusioned and cynical and the only progress he makes is downhill.

By the end of the play Frank has been dismissed, sent away to Australia and Julia has left him. Put another way Frank is not fond of himself at all and he is not having a successful career or personal relation. Frank says the following quote to Rita. (Scene 2- p. 36) I like her enormously; it's myself I'm not too fond of. (...) A vote of confidence; thank you. But, I'm afraid , Rita, that you'll find there's less to me than meets the eye. I think this low self-esteem is caused by some sort of hopelessness due to his unsuccessful and unpleasant life. Including his failed marriage, his boring job and social life.

As a result of Frank's low self esteem, another serious matter appears. This one is alcoholism. Frank has a serious drinking problem which could have been caused due to his low self-esteem. Throughout the hole play we see many scenes in which frank is either drinking or drunk. For instance, as soon as the play starts we see Frank searching for a bottle which is hidden behind a book. (Act 1, Scene 1-p. 13) (looking along the shelves)

Where the hell...? Eliot? (He pulls out some books and looks into the bookshelf) No. (He replaces the books) ' E' (He thinks for a moment) ' E', ' e' ' e' ... (Suddenly he remembers) Dickens. Jubilantly he moves to the Dickens section and pulls out a pile of books to reveal a bottle of whisky. He takes the bottle from the shelf and goes to the small table by the door and pours himself a large slug into the mug in his hand). This is the very first thing we see as soon as the curtain rises. Also in this scene while Frank and Rita are speaking for first time, Frank has about four drinks of Scotch even though Rita told him several times it would kill all his brain cells. Later on, Frank tells us that he loves drinking and that previously he didn't drink as much as he did then. (Act 1, Scene 5- p. 4)

This is one of the major themes that Willy Russell deals with in the play. Frank lives in a middle class academic society. In which, even though Frank has grown tired of it himself, art and literature appear to be very important. On the other hand, Rita comes from a working-class society which knows and cares little about literature. However, Rita is decisive to obtain middle-class culture and she sees education as the resource to reach this intend, even though Frank tried to convince Rita that there is nothing wrong with her culture and that his culture wasn't better but different.

He says so in a small argument they have by the end of scene 5 in Act 2 (p. 98) Found a culture have you, Rita? Found a better song to sing have you? No - you've found a different song, that's all-and on your lips it's shrill and hollow and tuneless. Oh, Rita, Rita... What he means with the word ' song' is culture. Close to the end of the play, Rita believes she is educated, like

Frank, and she thinks he can't stand that and that he'd rather have her like before. The following quote is said by Rita to Frank (Act 2, Scene 5-p. 8)

I'm educated, I've got what you have an' y' don't like it because you'd rather see me as the peasant I once was; you're like the rest of them – you like to keep your natives thick, because that way they still look charming and delightful. I don't need you. I've got a room full of books. I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read. I can do without you. Rita was wrong and, to repeat, she realized this, only after Trish tried to kill herself. Consequently, she was able to take charge of her own life and to make decisions for herself.

In this second half of my essay I'll write about why 'Educating Rita' is a funny play. In my opinion I think it is because of all the humour that Willy Russell puts into it, without this humour the play would be uninteresting and boring. Some of the things that Willy Russell includes in the play to make it interesting and entertaining are: character contrast (between Frank and Rita), Rita and Frank's different 'language', Rita's way of seeing things, jokes and swearwords. To start with, I will comment on the character contrast.

Rita is a working class, twenty-six year old hairdresser who has decided to enrol a literature course at the Open University. It has been a hard choice since it means that she has to split apart from the boundaries forced on her by her husband Denny and the neighbourhood in which she lives and works. This decision made Rita become more sophisticated and culturally aware, Rita changes her life completely, she slowly becomes absorbed by literature,

only after her flatmate Trish attempts to kill herself, Rita realizes that art and literature cannot provide all the answers.

However, Rita continues with her studies and after all passes her examinations. Frank in contrary, is an university teacher in English Literature with a drinking problem. He's had an unsuccessful marriage and his present one with Julia is not an easy one either. However it seems as if he has a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Frank has had a slight success as a poet but his job bores him. By the end of the play he has been sent away to Australia by the university authorities because of his drinking behaviour.

With the description written above of both, Frank and Rita, we can compare the two characters and find a big contrast between both we could say they come from different ' worlds'. However this big contrast doesn't affect their relation, they get along very well although they do argue with each other once or twice during the play. Another funny feature of ' Educating Rita' is the different ways both characters talk. Rita speaks colloquially (in everyday, local language) and has a lower-class accent despite the fact that for a short time half way through the play she attempts to change it and to talk properly.