

Act one of journey's end essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Journey's End is about life in the trenches during World War One, and about the depressing one by one, soldiers go 'over the top' and meet with death routine. The endless spectacle of death has taken its affect on Captain Stanhope; psychologically scarred he becomes an alcoholic to ease the pain and guilt of sending more young men to die. The captain senses his second in command, Lt. Osborne, is beginning to doubt his competence, and Stanhope must maintain his troops respect for him until his replacement arrives.

But tensions run high when a new officer, Second Lieutenant Raleigh, joins Captain Stanhope's company behind British lines in France in 1918. The two men knew each other at school, but after three years on the front, Stanhope is a changed man. On the eve of a big German attack, Lieutenant Osborne desperately tries to keep Stanhope from cracking, as he is seen talking to himself and his alcoholism has seen him deteriorate over three years, and it has now come to a point when Stanhope "can't bear being conscious all the time" and that "if I went up those steps into the front line, without being doped up with whiskey, I'd go mad with fright"

In This essay I am going make points, give quotes and explain those quotes on various subjects such as the Setting and the characters of Journey's End, the props and the dramatic devices used, the action in the background including the use of light and sound, and to finalise I shall talk about the audiences expectations of Journey's End and what were R. C Sherriff's intensions when he wrote journeys end and when it was first performed on December 9th 1928. I also think that the first act is very effective at setting the tone of the play.

It successfully introduces us to all of the characters in succession and tells us a small part about their personal lives, their attire and their body language, personality and many other aspects that help us to get to know them. The audience's expectations of this play are wrong as they may think that this play focuses on fighting in the war, but instead it focuses on the mental/physical effects on a small group of soldiers, who are in turn symbolic of every soldier in WW1. I also think that this was one of R. C. Sherriff's intentions when he wrote this play.

Journey's End is set in the First World War and so the culture of this time is varied. In Journey's End there is a strong influence of "classes", and people still have servants, and therefore some people enjoy higher status than others just by the way they speak or even the job they were doing before the War. This 'classes' system relates also to the culture of England and other countries at this time. At the very beginning of Journey's End, we are told about the setting and that this play is set in a trench, near the front line in northern France.

It is like this because of the 1st world war, and the soldiers are stuck in a stalemate, and with nothing to do or at some points even say, some of their mental states are starting to deteriorate. Also the appearance of the set makes the play more realistic as it tells the story of the first world War as it was, without adding any frilly edges of the West-End or corrupting this play in anyway whatsoever, and in some points this may appear shocking to the audience as they did not know the full extent of what was happening at this time on the front line in France, in which so many of their Husbands, Fathers, Brothers and Sons were.

This is because many letters that were sent home were censored by the Army and the true nature of the harsh conditions that met the soldiers every day were kept from them. The implications of the play being kept on one set is that, we can't actually see what is going on outside of the trench, this in turn increases the focus on the interior conflict and not the physical action and that we only get the full feel of the play by R.C. Sherriff telling us about his concern with the effects of war and he introduces tension with comments about sound (e.g. The sound of guns firing or explosions) and sound effects itself (stage directions), the volume of the sound also used helps us to understand how close the soldiers are to the front line and at which point in the war they are, and also that the soldiers are constantly reminded of where they are, however hard they try to forget it, by means of the use of sound.

The setting shows that the play is set in the war because the whole play is set in the surroundings of "A Dug-out in the British trenches, before St. Quentin" and that all the characters are soldiers. R. C. Sherriff has a good use of lighting throughout Journey's End, as only 3 sources of light are used: - the two candles which are held up by two empty bottles, and the faint glimmer of moonlight, I think that this particular use of light is being used to create a realistic and dramatic atmosphere in Journey's End, and that at night-time, when most of the fighting has stopped, that the moon is quite symbolic, and in some ways provides a symbol of hope and solitude in the war and that they think that they are going to make it, Sherriff changes the lighting throughout the play to indicate whether it is day or night in the trenches, and also the lighting symbolises life and hope in the trenches. Some of the sounds in Journey's End depict a real picture of what it must

have been like for some of the soldiers that went through WW1, for example, " the Guns are heard rumbling again".

This use of sound is used throughout Journey's End and we get to know some of the psychological turmoil that the soldiers are going through (particularly Stanhope), without there being any need for a scene full of fighting, though one is written into Journey's End but no fighting is actually seen. The Use of props in Journey's End also plays a good part in the building blocks of this play, as such items as Stanhope's bottle of whiskey, the soldiers uniform and Gas masks, and that the soldiers were only allowed their bare essentials and no luxuries. This plays a vital part in the audience's interpretation of each character, and their individual personalities.

The issue of Food in the Trenches is raised several times throughout Journey's End, And with a Rationing System back home in England you can only imagine what the food and water was like in the trenches, for example when Lieutenant Osborne and Captain Hardy open the play of Journey's End we see Hardy offering Osborne a Drink, but after Osborne agrees to have a drink, we immediately know that something is wrong with the water as Hardy passes both the jug of water and the bottle of whiskey to Osborne and says " Don't have too much water, it's rather strong today". And he was right as they used to put some sort of disinfectant in the water to kill off the microbes that were in it.

The aspect that Sherriff has captured by using small props is that by using a small item/object you can achieve a bigger effect and that in turn makes the whole play of Journey's End many times more realistic than it would have

been without, and the use of humour in this scene and others (i. e. ; “ mind my sock”) is used to make a serious point and increases the realism of Journey's End. Captain Hardy - Hardy is “ a red-faced, cheerful looking man” and is one of the first characters that we meet in Journey's End, he introduces us to the surroundings of the trench and what goes on there.

Hardy is the Captain of this particular battalion, when we are first introduced to him, but later he reveals that he is being transferred to another Battalion.

Hardy's character lifts the tension in the trench by making a joke about near enough everything, such as when he is drying his sock over the candle “ mind my sock”, and when he gives a tip to Osborne about ear-wig races “ dip it in whiskey”, and so by laughing about the earwigs and other things this temporarily helps the soldiers to forget about the war by taking their minds elsewhere, Hardy's purpose in Journey's End is to provide a hearty character that finds everything funny, and he tries to enjoy himself by making the best of a bad situation and who doesn't appear in Journey's End for too long, thus further more emphasising the impermanence of the War and that how nothing ever stays the same for long, as Captain Hardy leaves us after only a few hours as he is being transferred elsewhere.

Lieutenant Osborne - Osborne is also one of the first characters that we meet at the beginning of Journey's End, we first see him talking to Hardy as the play begins. He is quite old, about 45, this is revealed as he takes off his helmet and he shows us his “ close-cropped, iron-grey hair”. Osborne makes a friend with Captain Stanhope and they bond quite well as Stanhope begins to call Osborne “ Uncle”, this may be because, Osborne is twice Stanhope's

age, And He comes across as a Uncle figure to Stanhope, this could also be compared to the Father - son relationship between Stanhope and Raleigh.

In the beginning Hardy and Osborne talk about Stanhope and tell us how he is a " drunkard", and so before we even meet Stanhope we already know what behaviour to expect, they also tell us that Stanhope is a brave, young and determined commander, and this also adds to the audiences expectations of Stanhope before we even meet him, but still Osborne and Hardy still disagree about Stanhope.

Osborne helps to develop his character by becoming a good listener to Stanhope and he develops a sort of " agony uncle" aura about him when he and Stanhope are talking, and he tells Stanhope how Raleigh looks up to him so much " I believe Raleigh'll go on liking and looking up to you, through everything, there's something very deep and rather fine about hero-worship", and I think that this may also be symbolic of someone that Sherriff may have met in the war and he has decided to immortalise them in his literature. Captain Stanhope - we first hear about Stanhope from Hardy and Osborne when they tell us how Stanhope enjoys drinking Whiskey.

We discover this for ourselves later in the play as Stanhope is revealed as an Alcoholic, his speech degenerates as he drinks more and eventually he ends up literally legless and uses such phrases as " I go sleep now" and he sounds like a child. Plus when he drinks whiskey he opens up and is able to have deep conversations, rather than his usual self where he uses sharp short commands as speech instead of long and deep sentences that you can tell he has really thought about. Stanhope's drinking takes us on a sort of

journey as he drinks more and more. He goes from using sharp and short sentences - to deep and meaningful ones, he then gets to a stage when he is slurring his words and becomes completely incoherent.

Stanhope also shows his insecurity with the war (which are revealed as he drinks more) as he uses such phrases as " I can't bear being conscious all the time" and " if I went up those steps into the front line, without being doped up with whiskey, I'd go mad with fright". This shows that the whiskey gives Stanhope courage, and he fools a lot of people into thinking that he is really brave all the time, but really he's just drunk all the time and the whiskey gives him a constant flow of " Dutch Courage". Stanhope also makes a great leader as he persuades many soldiers from not going to the doctor and being sent home, such as Hibbert.

By doing this Stanhope maintains his sense of duty and honour to his country, as this is what should be expected of a leader. nd-Lieutenant Trotter - Trotter likes his food, and as a result of his love of food he tends to make quite a fuss, for example, " we must have pepper" when he makes poor Mason run about all over the spot looking for a pot of pepper, and by doing this the classes system of this era is revealed to us (Servants and Masters scenario).

This also shows that Trotter pays attention to detail and fusses about really little and petite things, but by talking about food this can take the soldiers mind off the fact that there in the middle of the First World War, but this is also only another temporary fix, as the boredom of the war soon sets in. Trotter is a comic character and during Journey's End he lightens the tension

a lot. Private Mason – Mason's character in Journey's end is not a very important one, but he is symbolic of the class system that was a strong issue about the turn of the 20th century, as he is a servant to the rest of the soldiers in the trench.

He cooks their food, basically carries out all of the menial tasks around the trench, and obeys any personal orders that the soldiers may make such as Trotter asking for pepper on his soup. Mason is very obedient and he lifts the tension and boredom in the trench in some instances, such as when he sheepishly approaches the soldiers and tells them that the can of what they thought was at first pineapple chunks was in fact apricots. You can tell that Mason is from a "lower class" to the rest of the soldiers as they use completely different language to Mason, Mason tends to use more slang words and the other soldiers sound quite old fashioned, sort of upper class and use words that are in the same context as 'jolly good chaps', 'chuffing', and 'mind the old girl'. 2nd-Lieutenant Hibbert – Hibbert is a whiner.

He is a little man in his mid-20's and "a little moustache and a pallid face", and he complains about absolutely everything, most of all his constant "neuralgia", which he keeps bothering Stanhope to let him go to the doctor, so that he can be sent home, but Stanhope's loyalty to his position as leader and his job kick in and he stops Hibbert from going to the doctor, as it is obvious to us and the characters that Hibbert is faking it "no proof, as far as I can see" – Stanhope, this also shows us the purpose of a character like Hibbert, as a lot of soldiers faked illness in order to be sent away to the hospital, even if it only meant that they could get away from the trenches for a couple of weeks, or even days! , this is very ironic as if he would have been

sent home he would have been considered a hero by his country, but really he is a coward for faking illness.

During the first act, we see plenty of action, but really just introductions to all of the characters and their personalities, and so by doing this, this helps the audience to achieve a greater understanding of the characters and their surroundings during the first act, and this helps to set up the first act as we get to know about some of the psychological and Physical effects that the war is having on these soldiers.

Also, by the end of act 2 we have already lost 2 main characters, one of which is Osborne. This would happen all the time in the war, but as we have been introduced to them and have got to know them, this shows some of the reality of the war. During World War 1, many letters that were sent home were censored, to protect them from the truth. So people back home were buttered up with many propaganda posters that depicted the enemy as horrible people, well in some cases this was true and most of the people that were the driving force behind this war, were very horrible people indeed, but some propaganda depicted scenes of women and children and that was just not the case, propaganda posters were used worldwide.

On the opponents side they used terrible propaganda, but back home in England the propaganda was more in the way of glorified patriotism and such phrases as " your country needs you" were used, and this had a great effect on the public as many men rushed to sign up as firstly they all thought that the war would be over by Christmas, and secondly they would have been considered national heroes for their services to the country. But they

were not home by Christmas and for four years women and children back home had to support themselves without no men, apart from the ' cowards' who were shunned by society for not going to war and many were given white feathers to symbolise their cowardice.