

# Critical analysis: who's afraid of virginia woolf?



The play discusses the importance of self-perception through the representation of how self-delusions lead to more destruction and stasis in an individual's life. George and Martha create an illusory barrier to repress feelings such as self-inadequacy, fear and self-contempt. But this illusion simply exacerbates their self-loathing. This sense of entrapment that evolves from a life defined by illusions is shown by the exchange between George and Martha - Martha: truth and illusion, George; you don't now the deference George: No; but we must carry on as though we did.

This tone of a directionless life is underscored by Label's stylistic context, with Label amalgamating Theatre of the Absurd (chaos and confusion) with Naturalism (realistic characters and setting).

His manipulation of absurdist is further shown by the Bergen' story, which serves as a powerful symbol for someone who has been metaphorically asleep and in a state of stasis because of their inability to accept reality and their past trauma: ' I'm told that for these thirty years... . He has not uttered.

.. .. One sound.

' Further, the dialogue is often chaotically absurd, rapidly changing in tone and topic.

For example the sincerity in Marsh's comment of, ' I'm loud, and I'm vulgar... And I wear the pants in the house because somebody's got to,' is juxtaposed with her childishness in comments such as, ' Poor George -porgies, put-upon pie.

' This perhaps shows how Martha has repressed her frustrations and disappointments in her life with artificial illusions. However, both characters come to a realization of the Importance of self-knowledge and perception. This is shown by the metaphor of peeling the label: We all peel labels, sweetie... The marrow.

That's what you got to get at. The metaphor of stripping away illusions to arrive at reality and an understanding of self is a critique of American society which promoted conformism at the cost of individuality. This is further explored through the nursery rhyme of who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf, which could be interpreted as who is afraid of confronting reality. Moreover, the play discusses the importance of confronting reality through the marital discord that results from individuals living an illusory relationship.

Martha and George, in conjunction with their self-delusion, are also deluded in regards to what seem to provide.

The illusions of the American Dream, which promises hope and happiness, only further distorts their relationship.. This is firstly shown through the imaginary child, perhaps a metaphor for the illusions in their life. The imaginary child shows initial promise, shown by the tone of nostalgia in, ' he walked evenly between us,' and ' it was a good delivery. ' However, the child eventually becomes, ' used as a goddamn club' and his death is portrayed as a necessary act to rejuvenate Martha and George's relationship, shown by the act's title Exorcism.

The climactic catharsis shows the importance of killing this metaphorical illusion not only through George's grief: You can't decide that for yourself! I

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will not let you do that,' but also through the allusion to the Latin Mass for the dead: ' Keri, Ellison. Christi, Ellison. Keri, Ellison. ' Further, there is a profound irony in the ' Fun and Games' that Martha and George play, as they both keep the relationship alive and are also responsible for its destruction.

Aggressive comments such as, ' I'll make you sorry oh made me want to marry you,' and the declaration of total war in act two is contrasted with the presentation of their vulnerabilities in comments such as, ' There is only one man who has ever..

. Made me happy and when George breaks a bottle against the portable table, when Martha taunts him about his failures. The audience is perhaps positioned to pity the hopeless position that the couple are in. However, after the metaphorical child of an illusionary fade has been killed at the end of the play, there seems to be some restoration in their relationship.

The simple dialogue that concludes the play seems to suggest a shift towards reality. Finally, the play explores the illusions that exist in Honey and Nick's life. The couple epitomizes the direction of a 20th century America, perhaps shown by the fact that the couple come from Kansas, the conservative heartland of America. The characters personify the values of that American Society (Nick with his ambition, Honey being sweet and compliant).

Thus various games such as Hump the Hostess and Get the Guest, forces us to reconsider not only relationship, but also the direction and nature of 20th century America.

The game Get the Guest illuminates their tension over childbirth: 'The Mouse got all puffed up one day, and she won't over to Blonde's house... ' Honeys unwillingness to have a child and hence responsibility represents her denial of her emotions and character, revealing her illusory life, also shown by her overcompensation of alcohol.

' It will steady me dear. I feel a little unsteady,' and her comment towards the end of the play, ' Don't remember; not can't,' evoking her suppression of emotions. Other games include Hump the Hostess and the parasol UN incident.