

# A taste of honey

Literature



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The play was written in 1958 when Divorces were a taboo, there was lesser minority representation amongst the society and single parenting was looked down upon as a religious and social offense. Gay marriages or open homosexual cohabitations were unheard of because such people were at risk of bodily harm if their sexual orientation was made public. It was known as one of the "kitchen sink" plays of its time when the English Theatre was being revolutionized. The play shows women's perspectives on premarital sex, teen pregnancy, abortion, and adoption. This was a big step to discuss these issues in public and show them in English drama. The Characters are the stereotypes of the working class British audience.

The storyline focuses on the life of the women (Helen and Jo) and their problems in the setting of the 1950s. The mother and daughter are shown coping with a tumultuous life. Jo is a 17-year-old working-class girl whose mother, is an abusive drunkard. Jo is devastated when her mother abandons her after finding a rich man., Peter. Jo falls for Jimmy, a black sailor that she meets in school but their marriage proposal is put down after severe denouncement by Jo's mother who doesn't think much of marriage. Jo gets pregnant and Jimmy leaves for naval service. At this turbulent time, Jo is left alone and begins to live with Geoffrey, who is gay.

The play shows the nuances and miseries of the nuclear family and the lack of male support in the women's' lives. The drama shows their increased hostility and dialogue structure. The way Geoff gets treated when he attempts a friendly reconciliation between Jo and Helen is reminiscent of the attitude of the society towards bisexuals in those days.

There are further racial undertones to the play which will be the main theme of my thesis, for example, Jo's resentment at giving birth to a black baby and <https://assignbuster.com/a-taste-of-honey/>

the reaction of Helen at knowing that Jo had sexual relations with a "black man". The end is a bit abrupt after another attempt at reconciliation with Helen fails and she leaves for good after rebuking Geoff again for his sexual orientation. The play depicts the difficulties of single mothers or mothers-to-be faced in those days. It is hard to see this attitude change even today, however.

The play was originally intended to be a novel and when Shelagh Delaney began working on *A Taste of Honey*, she was appalled at the thematic emptiness of the British Theatre. She converted the novel into a play and was an instant success because of its rather accurate depictions of the working-class lives. Sadly however none of Delaney's other novels or drama's matched the phenomenal success of this novel.

. The play earned several awards,( the Charles Henry Foyle New Play award in 1958 and the New York Drama Critics Award in 1961). When the drama was incorporated into a film it won the British Academy Award for best picture in 1961 and a best-supporting actress award for Dora Bryan. Much of the credit for this play's publicity and initial success goes to Joan Littlewoods, whose experimental Theatre Workshop was the first theatre to produce this play.

In conclusion, this essay has looked at the racial and sexual undertones of the uptight 1950's Britain which was in the second decade of its recovery from the social impact of the world war. The new generation is shown breaking norms and the women are confused as they are left to struggle alone in societal politics. Also of importance is the role of the depiction of the Gay Geoff which shows how the society (Helen's mother) would find it acceptable to leave a young child for a new husband but looked down upon

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the love and support of a Gay person and the love of a Black man. Even today the theme remains thought-provoking and very relevant to the sociology and structure of modern Britain.