

Commentary on an extract from "miss julie" essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The first few pages of "Miss Julie" reveals a few aspects of the characters of Jean and Miss Julie, it foreshadows the events that may happen later on in the play and it reveals the gender and class discrimination. The theme of class discrimination and rigidity is shown in the play. The setting of the scene also reveals the issues in the play. The opening scene also charts how the lower classes were trying to rise in society. Through the play Strindberg wanted to show what he felt was the position of women in society. He believed that they were supposed to have a lower position than men and not supposed to have a high position in society.

The opening scene in the play hints at these beliefs of Strindberg and they become more pronounced as the play progresses. The commentary will attempt to analyse the first few pages of the play. Miss Julie's and Jean's characters are all partially revealed in the opening scene of the play. Miss Julie's commanding nature is revealed in the opening pages of the play. We learn of how she was making her fiancé jump over her riding whip over and over again until eventually he got infuriated and snapped the whip over his knee and broke up the engagement.

This shows how Miss Julie wanted to dominate over men and was not content with her position. This foreshadows the way she later commands Jean in the play. Many aspects of Jean's character are revealed. We see that he is not content with his position in society. He wants to be part of the high society and not a servant. Jean: Beer on Midsummer's Eve? No, thank you. I can do better than that. (He opens a drawer in the table and takes out a bottle of red wine with yellow sealing-wax on the cork.) See that? Yellow seal! Give me a glass, now. A wine glass, I'm drinking this pur.

The fact that he wanted wine rather than beer showed that he wanted to try and be like the high society by imitating them. Jean is also a representative for the ideas of his time. He is Strindberg's method of portraying the rise in the status of the lower class during that time. There are many symbols in the scene that are important in the play. The livery that Jean wears and his boots are symbols of his place in society. Whenever he looks at them he remembers that he is a valet and will be nothing else. They make him realize he will never be part of the high society.

Whenever he starts to think about being in the higher class, the boots will remind him where he actually was. The wine and the wine glass were symbolic of the higher class of society which Jean wished to be a part of while the beer represented the lower class of society which Christine was content with. Miss Julie's dog mating with the gamekeeper's pug is symbolic of Miss Julie and Jean. It also serves the purpose to foreshadow the sexual encounter between Miss Julie and Jean. The horsewhip that Miss Julie commands her fiancé to jump over is symbolic of her desire to dominate over men.

The theme of class rigidity and discrimination is shown in the opening pages of the play. We see Christine working hard by the stove and frying pan even though it is Midsummer's Eve. She is not complaining and is quite content with her position in the society. Christine is standing at the stove, frying in a pan. 2 She does not want to take part in the ball because she is quite happy with her place. Jean and Christine start discussing Miss Julie's involvement in the servant's party on Midsummer's eve. They are startled by the fact that she would spend Midsummer's Eve with them rather than with her family.

Jean: Miss Julie's gone mad again tonight, completely mad! Christine: Oh, you're here at last? Jean: I went with his lordship to the station, and on the way back I just popped into the barn to watch the dancing, and who do I see but Miss Julie leading the dance with the gamekeeper? But as soon as she sees me, she rushes across and offers her arm for the ladies' waltz. And then she danced like – I've never known the like! She's mad. Christine: She always has been. Especially this last fortnight, since the engagement got broken off. Jean: Yes, what about that? He was a gentleman, even if he wasn't rich.

Ach, they don't know their own minds. (He sits down at the end of the table.) It's odd, though, that a young lady should choose to stay at home with the servants, on Midsummer Eve, eh? Rather than go off to her relations with her father. ³ This shows that even the servants – Jean and Christine found it awkward and peculiar that she was stooping below her social position to socialize with people below the class. They were used to being segregated from the higher class and were not accustomed to the breaking of the social barriers. Thus Strindberg introduces the main theme of the play in the first page of the play itself.

It is to be noted that this incident also foreshadows Miss Julie's and Jean's bold move to break the social barriers and sleep with each other. This incident also foreshadows the theme of a degenerate woman. Jean calling Miss Julie " mad" is what shows this. The setting of the kitchen is an interesting technique used by Strindberg to show the class rigidity in the play. The whole play takes place in the kitchen. It is a symbol of class rigidity in the play. It was where the servants were supposed to be and the owners of the house were never supposed to enter.

When Miss Julie entered the kitchen it was symbolic of her breaking all the class barriers. It also foreshadowed her doing the same. In conclusion it can be seen that the opening three pages of Miss Julie express Strindberg's ideas of the lower class and higher class. These pages hint but do not fully reveal Strindberg's view of woman and class discrimination. The opening pages of the play also introduce the main theme of class discrimination into the play. The foreshadowing in these pages plays an important role in telling us what is going to happen and builds up the play very well.