

Educationexample



Educating Rita provides a subtle social commentary on a person's social status and ridicules the stereotyping and expectations set by society; that regard social status and gender. These expectations included that single women were expected to find a husband and when married they were expected to find a husband. As well as this, men were to go to work and it was them who were to have the higher education.

The main themes of the play are social status and also education, so these expectations are essential to the plot of the play. Russell represents the social statuses of the society at the time by using Rita and Frank – the two main, and only, characters of the play. Rita is a microcosm of working class women, who want to move forward in life, become more educated and break out of the social expectations -which were being challenged in the political world as Margaret Thatcher, the only British women prime minister, had her term in office. Frank, however, is a middle-class university lecturer who has pre-conceptions of women who want to be educated.

“ I shall need to wash away the memory of some silly woman's attempts to get into the mind of Henry James” This was society's main view of women who wish to be educated, that they were “ silly” to think they would even be able to attempt to grasp the curriculum that was set. Frank also wishes to be in control over Rita – thus representing men's control over women in the patriarchal society of the time. As the lights come up in Act I Scene I we see that Frank is alone on the stage giving the audience the impression that Frank is a main character, which he is. As well as this Russell has created this to go this way as it shows Frank's presence on the stage – which links

back to controlling. Whilst standing on the stage Frank is “ holding an empty mug”, this is a representation of his life – which is also empty.

Frank is ultimately a university lecturer who does not see the point in his work and, in some cases, his life. There are, of course, changes in his behaviour throughout the play, with each change representing something different. For example, in Act I Scene I it is seen that Frank is trying to find alcohol that he has hidden somewhere.”.

.. pulls out a pile of books to reveal a bottle of whisky” This may mean that he is closed and to himself, it may also represent that he hides his opinions and views. This, however, changes in Act II Scene III, where Frank is drunk whilst teaching.

“ Pissed? I was glorious! Fell of the rostrum twice” He is in a way flaunting himself as an alcoholic – thus showing that he has become open about his alcoholism and, in a way, the way he thinks. As Rita enters in Act I Scene I we see that there are big differences between Frank and Rita’s use of language. Frank does not seem to have any apparent accent and speaks using Standard English; this is what would be seen from someone with a high education. This is challenged by the coarse language that Rita uses, which is full of colloquialisms. It seems she is out of place in the middle-class world of academia.

“ There’s no suppose about it. Look at those tits” The way Rita speaks shows that she has not had a proper education, the total opposite to what Frank has had. Rita does not possess the vocabulary or knowledge that can help her to express any literary concepts that are higher than just a basic level.

Although, as the play progresses Rita's coarse and vulgar language changes and becomes more literal and politically correct.

Before Rita goes summer school, in Act II Scene I, she seems to be insecure with what she is doing at the college and she does not feel that she could be around with the "proper" students. This is represented by the door handle when she first enters Act I Scene I." It's that stupid bleedin' door handle on the door...

" This shows that Rita is struggling to enter the academic world. By society's views she should not be there and in the back of her mind she is telling herself that they are right. The door handle being a struggle to open also reveals something about Frank, that he is trapped in his office, and is closed to the world and as he " always mean to get it fixed it shows that he is not actually in a rush to open to the world and anybody who enters his life. Rita does not believe in herself and within the first meeting of her and Frank she is already saying she might leave the course." If I pack the course in I'll post it to y'." This implies that although she wishes to learn she is not sure within herself whether it is the right thing to do, by the views of society and her family but ultimately the views of her own.

Rita is also lacking in knowledge of literary concepts, which are needed to complete the course which she has undergone. The fact that she does not have even the basic concepts that are needed shows that her previous education was next to no use to her at all." If I'd started takin' school seriously I would have had to become different from me mates an' that's not allowed." This shows that Rita has never been interested before in the

academic side of life and that she has had no real attachment to that way of thinking. This pressures the audience into thinking that Rita's choice to become more educated was a quick decision but this is not true, when Frank asks Rita why she has decided to come into the world of academia she replies:-“ I've been realizin' for ages that I was, y' know, slightly out of step.

..” This shows that although it may seem like a snap decision, Rita has thought through what she actually wants to do thoroughly and feels that deep down she can do it. Before Rita goes to summer school her true self is shown through her actions and reactions towards Frank. At the beginning of the play she seems forthright and openly expressive, giving her opinion whenever she has one.

But along with this she is a misfit, describing herself as “ half-caste”. This shows that there is a real separation between the social statuses at the time. Rita feels that she cannot interact with Frank, the “ proper” students or anybody from the middle-class society, yet she feels that she can no longer belong to the society of which she used to belong to, the one in which her husband, family and friends all belong to. She is stuck in the middle and wants to exceed with what she wants and this comes forward in Act I Scene II and also after she attends summer school.

In the beginning of Act I Scene II Rita is seen oiling the door handle, thus making it easier to enter Frank's office – representing that it is now making it easier to enter the world of education. Later on in Act I we see that there is the introduction of Rita's husband, Denny. Denny is a metaphorical representation of men in the 1980s.” Why can't he just let me get on with

me learning?” Denny is trying to stop Rita from achieving her goal at university and this is therefore complying with a main social expectation of the time. This is however unfair to Rita, she wants to learn and therefore is going against the wishes of her society and husband’s views.

After returning back from summer school Rita appears to be a whole new person, full of confidence control and independence. In the early scenes of Act II Rita shows Frank that she has a better control over herself, showing that she thinks before she speaks.” It was right on the tip of me tongue to say, ‘ Only when it’s served with Parmesan cheese’ but Frank, I didn’t. I held it back an’ I heard meself sayin’...

“ Rita has become more in control over her thoughts and what she says. This implies that the summer school has changed her in a positive way. While at summer school Rita became close with sum of the university students. This has made her more confident around them and ultimately within herself. This is show throughout Act II Scene I as Rita is expressing how she feels to Frank.

She also surprises Frank in sum ways with her confidence. Rita: Come on, let’s go an’ have the tutorial down there. Frank: Down where? Rita: Down there – on the grass – come on. In the stage directions, when Frank says his line “ down where?” he is supposed to be appalled, showing that this change in Rita has taken him by shock, as before she went summa school Rita never wanted to go outside, she felt as if she could not compete with the “ proper” students, but now she is open and wants to be in a way set free away from

Frank's office, a representation of the fact that she is moving forward away from Frank.

Something also comes out of this conversation about Frank. Frank says that "like Dracula, I have an aversion to sunlight" – thus representing that he is enclosed in his office and feels he cannot go outside as he might hypothetically "die" from being exposed to the light. However, in Act II Scene I Rita is struggling to open the window, this is a representation of her entering the academic world. Even though she may feel she now has some academic knowledge after she has attended summer school, she has not yet been accepted in her life into that way of life. Rita now has new influences in her life, other than Frank, including the lecturers at the summer school, Trish her new flatmate and also some of the students, who she now feels she can interact with.

"Y' know she's dead classy. Y' know like, she's got taste, y' know like you, Frank, she's just got it." Trish is a new influence on Rita's life and has been compared to Frank himself, this is showing that Rita feels that now she has more people to talk to than just Frank, and Frank has begun to feel that Rita does not seem to open up to him any more since she has come back from summer school." It struck me that there was a time when you told me everything." Frank is becoming jealous of Rita and her new lease on life and the way she does not appear to need him anymore. All of these things are beginning to affect Rita in a way, in which Frank has not prepared himself for.

He wanted to change Rita into what he wanted her to be, being in control in the early scenes and saying that he will have to change her. But now it is Rita who is in control and it is Rita who has changed herself into what she now is, but because Frank allowed himself to get emotionally attached to Rita, he now feels unwanted and used because of her new self. When Rita is invited to go to France with Tiger and his friends Frank sees this as Rita moving away from him, but it is his words that shock Rita.” Is there much point in working towards an examination if you’re going to fall in love and set off for the South of ...

“ This is in a way showing Frank’s true feelings for Rita, he is secretly in love and feels that Rita does not feel the same. Also Frank does not want Rita to move on in her life without him, and with the introduction of Tiger, he feels as if Rita is being taken from him. In Act II Scene II when Rita tries to change her way of speaking, Frank treats Rita as if she is a complete stranger and refers to her as a “ Dalek”, meaning that she has become a robot with only one purpose in life – to become educated.” Rita! Just be yourself” He is failing to understand that Rita does not want to be “ herself” and that she is trying to escape her situation by becoming educated. It is because of her being “ herself” that she wishes to change as she cannot fit in with any society anymore and by going to university and becoming educated she feels as if she can move up into the middle-class society.

Frank becomes appalled at the way Rita has changed, what he has caused her to become. Frank wanted to change Rita into the person he wanted her to become, trying to keep her uniqueness but helping her to become more educated at the same time. His goal has not been achieved. Practically all of

Rita's uniqueness has been removed from her work when she writes and, although she has become educated, she " doesn't need you (Frank) to hold me (her) hand as much". Frank likens himself to Mary Shelley who wrote the novel Frankenstein.

Mary Shelley created Frankenstein, as well as Frankenstein's Monster.

Frankenstein's monster was made out of beautiful parts but when formed turned out to become a monster, thus likening to Frank and Rita – Frank being Frankenstein and Rita being Frankenstein's monster." There's nothing of you in there." By saying this Frank may feel as if it is his fault there is no reflection of Rita in her work, that it is his fault she is not who she once was. In the beginning Rita had her own way of thinking and her own uniqueness but now because of Frank's interference and her persistence of wanting to learn this has all been changed – what was once beautiful and individual has turned into something that no longer stands out and has fallen back in line with everyone else.

When Rita is late for a tutorial Frank's own insecurity becomes known."... perhaps you don't want to waste your time here anymore?" Frank feels that if Rita is late for her tutorial there must be something better occurring in her life other than going to his office and seeing him to receive an education. Frank seems worried that Rita may no longer need him and that he does not know how he will cope without her.

All of these things add to the perception of insecurity which the audience receive. The roles have now reversed – in the early scenes it was Rita who needed Frank and his help but later on in the play it is Frank who needs Rita.

In the final scenes of the play both Frank and Rita are about to embark on new stages of their lives. Earlier in the play, when Frank was drunk he says that “ it’d have to be nothing less than bugging the bursar” that would cause a dismissal. This is then brought up again in the last scene of the play when Rita enters and finds out that Frank has actually been dismissed from his work and is moving to Australia.

Frank: Australia. Some weeks ago – made rather a night of it. Rita: Did y’ bugger the bursar? With the reference to the earlier scene, it seems that Frank knew the inevitable would happen and now it has. Rita, however, has passed her exams and has a number of choices as to what direction her life goes in. This is important as it shows that Rita is now officially qualified and can call herself “ educated”. But now that she has got her qualifications she now realises that it was Frank who helped her get there.

“ I chose, me. Because of what you’d given me I had a choice.” It is in the late stages of the play that Rita realises that she could not have gone to the tutorials, wrote the essays or passed her exam without Frank. Both characters seem to have come to terms with themselves and appear to be more settled, however, neither of them is sure what is going to happen in the future.

In the latter half of the final scene Frank opens up his true feelings towards Rita.” The thing is, why don’t you – come as well? It’d be good for us to leave a place that’s just finishing for one that’s just beginning.” Frank is opening up to Rita and allowing her to see a side to him that she has never seen before, the side that shows his true feelings for her – love. He also shows her

that he accepts her as an educated woman, despite his unease at her becoming educated earlier in the play. He shows his acceptance by giving her a dress.” It’s erm – well, it’s er – it’s a dress really.

I brought it some time ago – for erm – for an educated woman friend – of mine.” This is a real sign as to how Frank’s feelings have changed. At first he was worried and unnerved at the thought of Rita losing most of her uniqueness and becoming educated and leaving him to go forward in the world that has treated him so bad. These feelings have now changed and Frank can now accept Rita as she is now rather than how she was when he first met her.