

Journeys end by
sherriff essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

R. C Sherriff was born in the 1896 to a middle class family. He went to Kingston Grammar School and then went to university at the New College in Oxford, where upon leaving university he joined his father's insurance business. But shortly after the start of the war he joined the army, he applied for a commission but because of him going to a school that was not on a list of very well known public schools he was rejected.

He joined the East Surrey regiment as a private. During the war he got his wish to become an officer due to the fact that many of the original officers were killed and they had to be replaced. When the war was over he rejoined his father's business and spent the next ten years working as a claims adjuster. Due to his interest in amateur theatrics and the need to raise money for his rowing club, he decided to write " Journeys End". After much rejection firstly due to the fact his rowing club were unable to perform the complex play, it was given a single showing at the Incorporated Stage Society in the December 1928 with the actor Lawrence Olivier play Stanhope.

Then with the help of George Bernard show it was produced at the Savoy theatre. " Journeys End" became a huge success in both Europe and America. R. C Sheriff died in November 1975. I personally would say that R.

C Sherriff successfully presents the experience of the life in the trenches and of how class attitudes persisted throughout the play. And through out this essay I will attempt to show you why I feel the way that I do. The first character I will speak of is Raleigh he is 18 and straight from school. He is clearly new to the horrors of the war and is so nai?? ve that he does not see

the effects even though they are in front of him. Though this is not deliberate it is an extremely effective coping strategy as he always maintains up beat during the play. Upon hearing news of the raid he said, " I say" in an excited way.

However it is seen that after Raleigh came back from going over the top he was changed. The next character is the cowardly Hibbert. Hibbert is a character, which is designed to shock the British viewers. He symbolises a reality, which the government have chosen to keep quiet and which the public would find hard to imagine.

He shows a British soldier as a withered bunch of nerves. " I tell you, I cant- the pains nearly sending me mad" is the way he tried to appeal to Stanhope but he wasn't getting away. In fact he is clearly one of the many ways in which R. C Sherriff depicts the gruesome realities of the trench life.

The possible hero of the play is the drunken captain Stanhope. He went to the same school as Raleigh and even though he is a few years older than Raleigh he is still his friend. It also comes apparent that he is in fact in love with Raleigh's sister. He has been in the trenches for three years and it is clear it has changed him. His coping strategy is to be so drunk that the realities do not sink in. as captain Hardy says, " he's the best chap but I never did see a youngster put away the whisky he does".

But through the fact that he is a drunk it is still clear that the men and his fellow officers consider him to be a great leader. The friendly fat officer Trotter is next. Trotter is one of the lucky people who like R. C.

Sherriff was promoted through the ranks. He is a simple man whose coping tactic is to draw circles for every hour of the time he is on the frontline. All the other officers due to the fact he is working class consider him simple. And Stanhope even considered him to have no imagination because of the lower status. He is also depicted as lacking in good taste his due to his patriotic garden " geraniums, lobelia, and calceolaria- you know red, white, and blue" But it is still clear he is valued because after Osborne's untimely death he is immediately given the role of second in command. This shows that during the war class barriers are beginning to break.

And lastly the main character in the book the reliable Osborne He is the oldest person in the group of officers but he does not make other people feel he is the man on top in fact he executes his authority almost suggestively. Osborne is he rock, which the unstable Stanhope leans upon. He is the man who shares the responsibility of Stanhope and almost treats him as his son. In fact it is clear what the other officers think of him when they gave him the nick name " uncle" this shows that he is the older person who cares for you.

He is also extremely defensive of Stanhope he even went as far to say " he's a long way the best company commander we've got" this one statement to me shows loyalty as he says this to a superior officer and in that shows his character. Of course there are some other characters in the play but these are the main ones. The play is set on the 18th of March 1918 merely days before the great German offensive the Kaiserlaicht. So before the play has even started the audience already know that the characters will be lucky to be alive at the end. When the play starts with Captain Hardy sitting on a

stool drying his socks, one thing which is clear to run through the play is lack of light.

Sherriff shows this by comparing the single candle light to the “ glimmer of moonlight”. This is the first obvious dramatic device, which shows the conditions in the dugout. One way in which we can closer look at the characters would be to see the way they react when they are told of the raid. Raleigh shows his enthusiasm and naivety when he says “ how topping” but still when the time came to the raid he was terrified this is shown because of the fact that when humans are extremely scared they yawn and he “ felt the urge to yawn” were as Osborne shows his maturity to realise that it is extremely unlikely that he will return by giving his prized possession to Stanhope to “ look after” After the end of the First World War one thing that dramatically changed was people’s opinion of themselves.

The class structures that had separated the rich and the poor for centuries were shaken. Working class people began to realise that there wasn’t much difference between them and the middle class they worked for. This is shown in the play by the way in which a working class character like Trotter was promoted to the position of authority, which without the war would be impossible for him to get to. But during the war something’s still remained the same for example when Stanhope asks, “ have the men been fed yet” it is like they are referring to farmyard animals. A rather ironic event involving class is the way in which Trotter refers to the cook (Mason) “ as getting rather to familiar” what he means by this is that the working class cook is getting to “ buddy, buddy” with the officers in a way sidestepping the barrier of class.

This is extremely ironic due to the fact that it was not that long ago when Trotter was his equal. I feel that, that is to remind the audience that the officers were above the cook and not to get confused by the way in which mason almost acts like a friend to them. In conclusion it is my belief that R. C. Sheriff did a good job in portraying the horrors of the war which he and I his comrades suffered.

He also showed the class attitudes throughout the play. He did this in many ways including the way in which he used the character Hibbert to show the way effect of the war on humans. All of them being extremely effective.