

# Long days journey into night: character analysis



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In this essay I shall be examining two characters and their actions and roles in the book I shall also be comparing the two characters and examining their relationship with one another. I have chosen to examine Jamie and Edmund.

Jamie is considered a failure by our standards; he was neglected as a child by his parents and never loved. He has become an alcoholic, like his father, and has no prospects for the future. He is often described as a 'whoremonger' as he resorts to brothels to make up for the lack of love he receives at home. He is blamed for killing his brother Eugene who died as a baby from illness.

Edmund has been ill since he was born and this is often blamed on Jamie. He is the child born after Eugene and is mollycoddled by his mother, Mary who is afraid to let him go. He is beginning to become an alcoholic through his brother's bad influence. He is Eugene O'Neill's double in the play, and has sailed around the world but is now sick with consumption, even though he has no more lines than anyone else the play tends to revolve around him with it climaxing at the forgiveness of his father and brother for all the bad things he has done to him. Both Jamie and Edmund are deeply aware of their mother's drug problem.

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The first point I am addressing with Jamie is his role as a 'failure'. During the book Jamie is always portrayed as a failure and as a scapegoat for people's problems, meaning that he is not actually as big a failure as he is portrayed. He is ashamed of his footing in life, and he is forced to work for his father, doing jobs around the house. Mary sums this up with; "Poor

Jamie! How he hates working in the front where everyone can see him". He is also following in his fathers footsteps by having far too much pride and caring what the more well off people think of him ; " Poor Jamie! He bent almost backwards so they (the Chatfields; well off family) wouldn't see him".

Jamie's failure is always blamed upon himself when in fact his parents' neglect of him resorts him not to succeed in life.

His mother, the most important to him considers him to be a big let down to the family; " who would of thought that Jamie would grow up to disgrace us".

On the other hand Edmund is some what succeeding in life compared to his brother, he has sailed around the world and his only stunt is that he is always ill. It is felt through out the book that he is beginning to fail in life and follow in his brothers footsteps. He is similar to his brother in ways, but one difference is that Edmund is spoilt by his mother and she tends to flap if she suspects Edmund is poorly; " I've been so worried ever since you've been sick". This shows how Mary grants her children little freedom and independence, by the fact that if Edmund is ever to be sick he knows he can always run to his mother, if Mary had left things maybe Edmund would be away from home and might be succeeding in life.

Edmund has always been sick and has never really come to terms with this; " That's foolishness you know its only a cold". This is a good point on Edmunds half because with this confidence he should be able to act like a normal healthy man and go out into the wide world but his mothers grasp on him stops him from doing so.

Jamie on the other hand is not as mollycoddled by his mother as Edmund and chooses his freedom to get drunk and spend all his money on whores. His father has an alcohol problem and Jamie does only what he knows and has also resorted to drink, like his father. His father is quite a hypocrite by locking up the whisky so Jamie can't drink and become an alcoholic, but is happy to be one himself. Jamie also resorts to going to brothels to try and gain some love from whores, by paying them, they are referred to as the "fat burlesque queens". It can be said that Jamie lacks ambition in life and is happy to waste his days in the bar and at the burlesque house. Summed up by "loftier dream than whores and whiskey".

Edmund through out the play feels like he doesn't have his father to turn to in times of need so he resorts to Jamie, and also Jamie acts as a father figure when he feels the need to "Listen, kid. You know me I've never lectured you, but Doc Hardy was right"

It is thought that Jamie is trying to bring Edmund down in life like him maybe in order to counterbalance his failure, and Jamie acts like a replacement to Tyrone.

Jamie is very sarcastic in the play and jumps at any chance to make a sly comment to try and bring down any form of happiness that the family might have; "another shot in the arm". This is to do with the fact Jamie doesn't understand and his only contribution is purely sarcasm.

During the play the different stage directions help to show us what the characters are like.

Jamie's sarcasm is portrayed with stage directions such as "(maliciously) (looks away guilty) (dryly) (sneering)" and "JAMIE takes one look at the bottle and glasses and smiles cynically". His personality causes conflict within the family where his parents are to blame for their nurturing of his personality.

The stage directions for Edmund show him to be disheartened and gloomy; "(gloomy) (disturbed) (ignoring this)". He is naïve at times and acts as if he is not hard done by even though he is treated badly.

The stage directions in the play help to add depth to the characters and make them appear more human in the text and gives the characters more credibility as 'real' people.

The rotations of characters are also important to see how the characters interact. The rotation between Jamie and his father, Tyrone, shows how they repel each other as their views conflict; Tyrone; "The less you say about Edmund's sickness the better for your conscience". Jamie is made to feel like he's to blame for Edmund's sickness even though it could be down to Tyrone's neglect.

The rotation between Jamie and Edmund shows Jamie out to be a father figure to Edmund; "I love your guts, I'd do anything for you" this shows Jamie out to be the father Edmund has never had but Jamie often resorts to the ways of his father; "What are you trying to do, accuse me? Don't play the wise guy with me!"

In conclusion we can say that Jamie is doing exactly what his father is doing, even though he dislikes his father's stance in life. We can also say that through each others actions Jamie and Edmund draw out each others strengths and weaknesses.