

# Etiquette letters of introduction for a young lady



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Playwright Alan Bennett wrote six classic monologues for BBC television, naming the series, ' Talking Heads'. A monologue is a play in which a person speaks alone and gives his or her point of view to the audience.

A monologue is exceptional in so far as that it is a personal relationship between the character and viewer. ' A Lady of Letters' describes Bennett's style of twists and hidden messages. Bennett uses lighting to a great effect by creating a dim or bright room to suit the character's mood. He would indicate that the time of the day and the weather had been changed to suit. This can be seen, in the first three sequences, where the source of light was sunlight, coming in through a window on the character's right.

The room was bright and pleasant, probably to complement the relaxed mood of Irene. However, in the next few sequences, she was pre-occupied and upset. The audience subsequently discovers her worry and concern about the child across the road. The source of light here was exactly the same as before, however this time, the brightness was somewhat dimmed.

Thus the audience viewed the same room in a relatively sombre atmosphere. Bennett utilises different camera angles at specific moments in each sequence, each being relative to the words being spoken by the character. This is shown when Irene glances out of the window in the second sequence, talking about a neighbour across the road. The camera angle rotates and the audience sees her in a profile view with the window behind her. The camera was normally rested at character level throughout the play with the exception of the seventh sequence, when the initial pose of the camera

started above the character hence the audience was looking down her and what she was doing.

Close ups were also effectively applied, when Irene said, ' No. Leukaemia. ' she was very distressed and the camera view was as physically close to her as possible. The audience was made to hold the gaze with her, as the camera did not allow for any distractions. It was a very personal moment between the character and viewer. Bennett portrays emotions by the use of music at the conclusion of each sequence.

The instrument and the style of the music would complement the character's feelings. When sad or worried, violins were plucked in a deliberate, slow and quiet fashion. There was no distinct structure to the piece of music. When happy, the same melody by the same instruments would be repeated but this time would be bowed and played in a slightly more brisk manner. At the close of the final sequence, Irene's conclusive word was ' happy'.

She expressed the word with considerable emphasis to clarify how she felt. The soft flow of the music here had an enhanced, natural structure that was again played by the violins accompanied by a flute. The music helped the audience to create a mental image of the concluding few joyful words that were spoken by the character. Bennett displays a great deal of subtle hints in the play for the viewer to independently pick up and piece together.

This can be shown in the fourth sequence when Irene looks out of the window and casually remarks, ' I just wish they'd do something about their privet'. By this point in the play, without it being mentioned, the audience realises that Irene Ruddock is not a public-spirited guardian of morals. An <https://assignbuster.com/etiquette-letters-of-introduction-for-a-young-lady/>

additional hint that could be picked up would be that of the boredom Irene experiences, leaving her little to do but gaze outside the window. Another incident can be shown at the opening of the fifth sequence.

The audience sees Irene with a coat and hat and does not comprehend until much later when they discover that a policeman had told her to put them on. By understanding this, they would realise that Irene was not going anywhere for a walk but to the police station. When the audience come to know that Irene had written to the police about the child she was concerned about across her road, they also pick up the hint of child abuse. When in prison, however, the audience would have most probably noticed how Irene became considerably more relaxed about swearing. It would be the closest way of informing the audience how much Irene has changed.

In this way, Bennett continued to drop hints to express any changes to the audience. Bennett portrayed various atmospheres and character liking in different ways, the most distinct being Irene's clothes, and the setting of the room was is in. In the initial sequence, Irene was dressed in a drab brown shade and the room and the settings in it were drear and uninteresting. Irene herself, however, appeared to be quite content with herself and her surroundings. The audience therefore learnt the character of Irene Ruddock to be dull and perhaps have monotonous taste. Possibly this is what kept them interested in her and in the play itself.

This set was kept on for another four sequences, but Irene's clothes changed from brown to bottle green to grey. Bennett, by doing this, managed to convince the audience that Irene was positively not a modern woman. Then

came a point in the play where the setting transformed drastically from being extremely colourless to bright and cheerful. In addition, Irene's style of clothes changed from wearing drab skirts with jackets or cardigans, to wearing a T-shirt and casual trousers. This was the sequence in which Irene was in prison, but instead of feeling depressed; Irene's character seemed to have transformed greatly to being a much more easygoing person. This would possibly be the greatest change the audience noticed about Irene.

Bennett uses Irene's acting to indicate her personality as well as the use of her clothes and her surroundings. For example, mid-way through the second sequence, Irene says ' She can't be more than twenty and by the look of her she's expecting another. ' When saying this, Irene gave the audience a look of disapproval. They realised that Irene not only knew a great deal about the history of the people on her road, but is also aware instantly of any change that they go through and does not agree with most of them. If Irene was discussing a topic not concerning her neighbours, she would keep her eyes trained on the camera most of the time, occasionally shifting them in order to express feelings by glaring or rolling them. However, if the subject did arise to someone on her street and the audience was unaware of this, then she would gaze out of the window.

This would break the personal contact the audience had with her when she was looking directly at them, as she allows the window to be a distraction. At the commencement of the second sequence, the audience sees Irene sitting down, waiting for her paper, looking rather bored and in a way desperate. By doing this, they notice it is obvious that the paper is the only connection Irene had with the outside world. She makes it quite clear by her acting that

<https://assignbuster.com/etiquette-letters-of-introduction-for-a-young-lady/>

receiving her newspaper is the highlight of her day as she has nothing else to do in the house and she would enjoy writing letters about the articles she does not approve of. When in prison, the audience could instantly see by her actions that she had changed. She seemed to have a fresh outburst of energy and she was acting as if she were radiant.

Again, she was very expressive with her eyes when the camera was close up and the audience could clearly see different feelings being expressed.

Bennett manipulates the different tones of voice and pauses used by the character to emphasize feelings further. This can be seen when Irene said, 'No. Leukaemia', as there is a break in her voice.

The audience understands that she is naturally depressed and the pause Irene holds after saying that impacts the audience further. This is contrary to the joyful sequence in prison where Irene speaks with a typical energetic and satisfied- voice which immediately assures the audience that she is contented where she is. From the play overall, the audience are especially effected by the tone of voice of the character. Nevertheless, all the above are equally important if Bennett wanted to convey hints and made sure they were received precisely.