

# The play 'the birthday party' analysis

Life



The play 'The Birthday Party' is about an everyday, domestic lifestyle/characters with mixed emotions. The whole play is based on a boarding house with one guest, Stanley. It starts off with the owners, Meg and Petey, leading a normal day with Stanley. Two men come to look at the house to stay and Stanley gets nervous. The two men, McCann and Goldberg hold Stanley's birthday party and make it a living hell!

Throughout the play McCann shows signs of confusion and innocence at the task-in-hand. However this is not always the case, for example McCann, later on in the play, attempts to strike Stanley with a chair. When McCann and Goldberg arrive at the boarding house in Act 1, McCann states, 'what are we doing here Nat?' this gives off signals that McCann is there as Goldberg's aid and not a leading figure.

As the play goes on, the audience may start to feel sorry for Stanley due to unfortunate circumstances and more hatred and dislike towards Goldberg and McCann for making him feel so negative.

McCann: He killed his wife!

Goldberg: Why did you kill your wife?

Stanley: What wife? (Back turned, facing the audience)

The above quote shows how McCann and Goldberg continue to bully Stanley. Pinter uses the language in the above quote as if McCann and Goldberg were 'pressing' Stanley for information and as if Stanley found it hard to lie whilst looking at them so he turned his back. The prospect of McCann being more innocent may counter the dislike and tempt the audience to feel sorry for

McCann as he gets dragged deeper and deeper into the unknown. Pinter does this to, yet again, represent the play's psychotic nature and obscure mentality.

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At the beginning of act two McCann is said to be sitting at a table tearing newspapers into 5 equal strips. This may make the audience uncomfortable as it is a rather curious thing to do and may make the audience paranoid as to why he is doing this and what he is thinking as it never tells you this in the play.

Stanley picks up a strip of paper

McCann moves in

McCann: Mind that.

McCann clearly has a motive for tearing the paper or he wouldn't mind it being touched. It is a fine example of the play's paranormal mentality. Also Pinter wrote McCann's line like this to make the audience uncomfortable as it is a rather subtle, commanding statement.

During Stanley's birthday party in act 2, McCann offers to take Stanley's glasses for him during a game of blind man's bluff

Stanley stands blindfolded. McCann backs slowly across the stage to the left. He breaks Stanley's glasses, snapping the frames. McCann picks up the drum

and places it in Stanley's path Stanley walks over and puts his foot through it.

Here McCann proves to be quite a bully and may convince the audience to feel disgust towards him, due to the audiences feeling towards the main character, Stanley, countering the possible sorrow from earlier on in the play. Pinter may do this to make sure that the audience can never set on a real feeling for McCann which may add to the 'fog' of confusion surrounding the play.

As a conclusion I think that McCann is a character the brings emotion and excitement and you can never really settle on a feeling for him