

Journey's end by rc sherriff essay sample

[Government](#), [Military](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The stage directions in Journey's end at the beginning of the extract are of utmost importance because they use a lot of imagery and symbolism, which later is linked back to this extract, at the end of the play, there is a candle on the table which gets blown out, symbolising the doom and death of the men. In the stage directions it mentions the sunset, "towards sunset.....light that slowly fades with the sinking sun"

This symbolises the fore coming death that is looming, the light imagery within the play shows this.

Sherriff's stage directions suggest that Stanhope is anxious and nervous, he paces too and forth suggesting anxiety and displacement.

"he glances at his watch."

He is worried for the time and is trying to plan the day ahead. He is agitated, worried, this character is meant to be calm and confident, he is a strong leader, this represents the war at this time, that even the leaders were unconfident, dismal, scared for their lives and a loss of all idealism and brotherhood. If the leaders of the war had little hope it was bound to show the despair in those lower in the ranks. Already at the beginning of the extract we can see that things are not going to be good to follow, the whole passage is one of doom and looming death.

Stanhope asks the Colonel if there was any news, he is referring to a request of a change in plans on the ground above but his request was denied because of his lack of authority. Stanhope is reluctant to follow orders as he knows that it will surely result in death of his men. The colonel's reaction is

one of that with little surprise and it seems he shares Stanhope's views but knows he cannot change the higher ranks views because of their status.

It was a key theme in world war one literature that there is a loss of faith.

The colonel says that 'its too late' to change the plans for attack. The impression we get is that the arrangements are final and there will be no changing because neither himself or Stanhope have the authority to do so. There is also the sense of doom, it is too late, the plans have been made, death is almost a certainty, a sense of premeditation.

The Colonel will be at a dinner when the attack takes place. This is important because it shows what little involvement they actually have, they are just dictators and literal leaders, they do not actually take part in the war fighting, and they play games with people's lives. In this conversation there is harsh use of sarcasm, "they can't have it later because of dinner, I suppose."

During the war someone of lower social status or ranks wouldn't dare say something so disrespectful, they may think it but it wouldn't be said aloud. This is how we know that the play was written after the war and not during because this would be too disrespectful to write at that time. The colonel says that he 'cant disobey orders' he is just following commands, he doesn't have an actual say, his lack of superiority shows that death is looming.

The colonel suggests that the Germans will be firing into a blank fog when they attack, this symbolises that they don't even know what or who they are firing at the fog is symbolic of the doom rising above them for both the

English and Germans, and conjures up the phrase, 'the blind leading the blind' there is no winner, no leader and no follower, no one benefits, there is no visibility, no instinct of what is to become.

The men are drinking rum this suggests that there is a big fight coming, the men are scared so they drink their rum to comfort themselves give them a sense of confidence. Others around him are smoking and playing cards, a sense of waiting for what is coming. We have seen this drinking in war poetry but in Wilfred Owen the send off they are 'drunk with fatigue' symbolic that drinking is in all areas of the war and how most soldiers are aware of that feeling.

The colonel is reluctant to speak to the men because he knows that when the men will go above the ground he will be sure that they will die, he has seen it on the German side and will now see it on his men's side. He doesn't want the men to realise his knowledge. The colonel's advice to Raleigh and Osborne to grab the first Boche that they see and bundle him across here. The colonel then says:

"then if you succeed then I'll recommend you for the MC"

the emphasis is on 'IF' you succeed, without realising he has let the men know his thoughts about what he knows will happen within the next few hours, that they will not make it over the front line. Sherriff comments that Stanhope and Osborne's eyes meet for a moment, this suggests that now Osborne knows now too what will happen, that he won't make it, he will die tonight and it is the last time he will ever see Stanhope again, he reminisces.

The examples of brotherhood and solidarity still remain within the soldiers because that is the only thing that remains within the war, no hope or religion no family just soldiers. Osborne realises what is going to happen and asks Stanhope to return to his belongings to his wife.

The play was written in the 1920's this is important because there are things that would not have been said or done within the play which he has written in, such as the sarcasm, that would certainly not have happened during the war because there was a lot of respect within the war and a lot of focus on social status. Also the colonel's character wouldn't have admitted to Stanhope his knowledge because when war literature was written during the war that would have been disallowed, also because it was almost all idealistic. The intentions of the author was to inform modern readers of the actual implications of war were like and what the life in the trenches were like.