

Teacher's notes

Five One-Act Plays

by Don Byrne



SUMMARY

'Listen to the boy!'

Johnny Bell wants to tell Mr Smith, the shopkeeper, that two men have stolen some apples from his car. But Mr Smith and the other customers in the shop think that Johnny is just being rude and trying to jump the queue. When he finally gets to tell Mr Smith about the theft, it is too late, of course.

'The right person'

Who is the right person to rent a room in Mrs Stone's house? She wants the young man who sees it first, although he thinks the furniture is too old, the bed too hard and the price too high ... oh, and he's not interested in the view. She doesn't want the old man who sees it next, although he thinks the furniture is nice, the bed is fine and the view is lovely. But she changes her mind about the old man when he discovers that one of her old paintings from the garage is worth a lot of money. She decides she would like him to have the room, even if she won't need to take tenants after selling the paintings.

'An afternoon on the beach'

Granny wants to sit in the shade during her afternoon on the beach, but her daughter is determined that she should sit in the sun. Granny appears to capitulate, but as soon as the rest of the family have gone exploring the smugglers' caves, she moves back behind a sheltering rock and goes to sleep. Some time later the family realise that the tide is coming in and Granny may be in danger. Sure enough, when they return to the spot where they left her, she has disappeared, although her book and umbrella are floating in the sea. It is a moment before Granny is discovered behind the rock and all is well.

'A Bad Dream'

Bank manager George Hill orders his wife to dismiss their maid-of-all-work Annie, after twenty years of loyal service, because, according to him, she is a bad cook and makes terrible coffee. His wife points out that it will be difficult for Annie to find another job but George is implacable. He falls into a sleep of self-righteousness whilst his wife goes off to 'do something'.

George is visited by two employees of his bank who inform him that he must resign, because of his lateness, laziness and generally impolite behaviour to the staff at the bank. He points out that he will find it hard to find another job at his age but they are implacable. He accepts his fate. However, there is more to come. His wife returns to tell him that she is going away for a while and doesn't know when she will return. She leaves. Annie comes in and he asks if she wants to leave too. 'No,' she says, even when he says he might not be able to pay her in the future, she wants to stay because it is her home.

Suddenly, everything becomes clear. George has been dreaming – the men from the bank, his wife leaving, even his

conversation with Annie. Luckily George's wife has not got around to dismissing Annie because George has had a change of mind. In fact, he wants to hire someone to help Annie now. Could his dream have had anything to do with his new attitude?

'The Professor'

The absent-minded old Professor has designed a new invention and offered it to the government for free. Unfortunately, the day that the government men are due to come, the Professor's daughter and 'minder' has to leave the house to deal with an emergency. Two men arrive, present their identity cards and take away some of the Professor's papers then, horror of horrors, it is discovered that the men were imposters who had ambushed the real government men and stolen their identity cards. The design of the invention has been taken. Or has it? It seems that the Professor, whilst absent-minded, is by no means senile. He saw through the two men and gave them some old papers of no value.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

All of the plays in the volume are, or could be seen to be, about lack of respect.

Two of the plays deal with the theme of lack of respect which is brought about by ageism. In *Listen to the boy* the ageism is directed at a young boy who is not accorded the courtesy of a fair hearing and as a result a thief gets away. The boy cannot give his important news to the adults until it is too late. In *An afternoon on the beach* the ageism leads to the wishes of an aged parent being ignored. But Granny gets her own back – she simply waits until her family have gone and then does what she wanted to do in the first place.

A third play also deals with lack of respect, in this case the respect which is due to a loyal employee. In *A bad dream*, the bank manager is completely unmoved by the years of loyal service that his cook has given his family when he decides, almost on a whim it seems, to dismiss her. The moral of this story is clearly *do as you would be done by* as the bank manager is lazy and workshy and yet is amazed when, in a dream, he is dismissed or, at least, asked to resign. Even if Annie is a bad cook, perhaps she should be treated by George, a bad bank manager, with an element of fellow feeling.

Perhaps *The Professor* is also about lack of respect. We, the audience, are led to assume that the absent-minded old man has been easily hoodwinked into handing over the designs of his important new invention. But we should not confuse absent-mindedness with stupidity. The Professor has easily seen through the tricksters but, rather than confront

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them and risk a violent attempt to take the papers, fobs them off with some worthless papers.

There is another common theme running through all of the plays. Something is not what it seems. Johnny is not being rude, the old man looking for a room is more than just an old man, Granny is not dead, the bank manager has not really been asked to resign and the professor has not really given away his invention. Only in one play, however, does the playwright use dramatic irony, allowing the audience into the secret. In *An afternoon on the beach*, we know that Granny hasn't really drowned and therefore the grief and concern is comical rather than tragic.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Put students into groups to talk about the kind of plays they like and to explain why they like that kind of play.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

General Activity:

After each play, ask students to discuss in groups the moral of the story.

Specific activities:

'Listen to the boy!'

- Put students into pairs to make a list of the ways that Johnny tries to tell Mr Smith about the men. Example: *Please, Mr Smith ...*
- Put students into groups to role play a scene in which one person has something important to say, but the other people won't let him/her say it until it's too late.

'The Right Person'

- Put students into groups to make a list of things they would like to have in their ideal room.
- Put students into pairs to role play a scene in which one person is trying to stop the other person doing something e.g. buying a particular car.

'An Afternoon on the Beach'

- Put students into groups to make a list of things that they should take for an afternoon on the beach.

- Ask students to imagine that the Brown family really can't find Granny. Put students into pairs to role play the conversation between Mr or Mrs Brown and a police officer about what happened.

'A Bad Dream'

- Ask students to imagine that Mrs Hill told Annie she must leave. Put students into pairs to role play the scene.
- Put students into groups to make of list of things that show Mr Hill has changed at the end of the play.

'The Professor'

- Put students into pairs to work out how exactly the Professor tricks the men.
- Put students into groups to role play the scene between the Professor and the two men.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into groups to find connections between two or more plays in this collection. For ideas on connections, see Background and Themes.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Listen to the boy! and The Right Person

- act** (n) one of the main parts into which a play is divided
character (n) a person in a book, play or film
doorbell (n) the bell which tells you that someone is at the door, operated by a button
greengrocer (n) someone who owns a shop that sells fruit and vegetables
let (v) to allow someone to use a room or building in return for money
museum (n) a building where people can go and see important objects connected with history, science, art, etc.
worth (adj) to have a particular value

An Afternoon on the Beach and A Bad Dream

- basket** (n) a container made from thin pieces of wood, plastic, wire, etc woven together
cave (n) a large natural hole in the side of a hill or under the ground
cliff (n) a steep rock or piece of land
manager (n) someone who is in charge of a bank, shop, etc.
Granny (n) an informal way of saying Grandmother
head office (n) the main building of a company
scene (n) a short part of a play or film when the events happen in one place
smuggler (n) a person who takes something illegally from one place to another
The Professor
inspector (n) a police officer of middle rank
professor (n) a teacher at the highest level in a university department
sergeant (n) an officer of a fairly low rank in the army or police



Student's activities

Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Work in pairs. Find these things in the pictures in the book.

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| a bed | a chair |
| a computer | a cup |
| a desk | a fireplace |
| a kitchen | a mirror |
| a shopkeeper | a small boy |
| a table | a view |
| a window | an old lady |
| an old man | books |
| cliffs | clouds |
| fruit | glasses |
| sand | sea |
| umbrella | vegetables |
| women | |

Activities while reading the book

'Listen to the boy!'

- What does Johnny want to tell Mr Smith?
- How many times does Johnny try to tell Mr Smith?
- Find the replies (i-x) to each statement (a-j).
 - You were here before me, weren't you?
 - Are these all right?
 - Children today! They're so rude.
 - How old are you?
 - What's your name?
 - You live in Church Street, don't you?
 - I want some apples, please. One kilo.
 - Are there any sweeter ones?
 - Can I see them?
 - Why didn't you tell me.
 - Nine.
 - I tried to tell you but nobody listened to me.
 - I'll go and get them.
 - Johnny Bell.
 - Oh, was I? Thank you.
 - That's right.
 - They can't wait.
 - What about these?
 - Yes, I'll take those.
 - Yes, madam. I've got some good ones but they're still in my car.

'The Right Person'

- How do Mr Stone, the young man and the old man feel about the room? Tick each statement they agree with, cross each statement they don't agree with. Do not put anything if they don't say anything about an item.

item	Mr Stone	young man	old man
It's small.			
It's clean.			
The furniture is heavy.			



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The furniture is old.			
The furniture is good.			
Modern furniture is better.			
The view is bad.			
The bed is hard.			
Soft beds are better.			
The room costs too much.			
The room is cold.			

- How does the old man reply (i-vi) to each of the sentences (a-f) from Mrs Stone? Match the statements and replies.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (a) We live a long way from the town. There aren't a lot of buses. Only one an hour. | (i) I won't notice. I've got a lot of warm clothes. |
| (b) We've very noisy people. | (ii) Oh, that doesn't matter. I don't work. When I go to town, I can walk. |
| (c) The room's quite cold in winter. | (iii) Oh, that doesn't matter. It's only a small hole. I can put a picture over it. |
| (d) They're going to build new houses there. When that happens, there won't be a view. | (iv) Oh, that doesn't worry me. I was talking about the noise of cars and buses. |
| (e) I'm afraid the bed's very hard. Try it. | (v) Perhaps they'll never build them. Who knows? |
| (f) Look at that wall. We'll have to repair it. It will take time. | (vi) That's not necessary. I like a hard bed. |

- Correct this summary of the end of the play.

The old man worked in a library. Now he's writing a book about poetry. Mrs Stone brings two pictures from the garage. The old man thinks the big one is worth a lot of money. He says it was painted by Joe Holland, a painter who lived about a thousand years ago. Mr Stone says there are a lot more painters in the garage. Mrs Stone says 'I'll be rich when I sell the pictures. I won't want to let the room.' She says the old man can't have the room. 'I'll be able to buy a new house with the money.' she says. The old man says 'Please change the furniture.'

'An afternoon on the beach'

- Complete these sentences from Scene 1 and Scene 2 with a preposition or particle from the box in each space.

about above after at away back behind for from in near of on out to up
--

- We've found a nice place ... the cliffs.
- You have to be careful ... your age.
- Put the baskets out ... the sun.
- Leave her chair ... the sun.
- Over there, ... from the cliffs.
- Can we go ... the cave?
- The cave is ... two kilometres from here.
- I'll stay here and look ... Granny.
- Don't stay here ... me.

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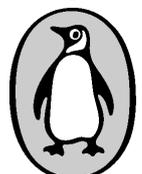
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- (j) Put the umbrella ... if you feel too warm.
 (k) We'll soon be ...
 (l) Now I'll move my chair ... of the sun.
 (m) It's nice ... this rock.
 (n) Smugglers brought things ... the ships and hid them in this cave.
 (o) Perhaps they put them in the holes ... my head.
 (p) Oh, no. We left Granny ... the beach and the sea's coming in!
- 2 Complete these sentences about Granny from Scene 3 with *she* or *her*
- (a) ... chair's gone.
 (b) We can't see ... , Dad.
 (c) Isn't ... here?
 (d) ... was there.
 (e) We've lost ...
 (f) ... couldn't swim!
 (g) Look, there's ... book.
 (h) And ... umbrella!
 (i) We've killed ...
 (j) ... 's still asleep.
 (k) But how did ... get here?
- 3 Find at least 10 words in this Wordsearch connected with a day out on the beach.

U	W	A	T	E	R	C	C
B	M	B	E	A	C	H	L
A	I	B	A	O	A	A	I
S	W		R		V	I	F
K	S		S	E	E	R	F
E		A		U	L		S
T	R	O	C	K	N	L	
R	E	S	T	D	S	E	A

'Abad dream'

- 1 Match the adjectives and nouns / phrases from Scene 1.
- (a) terrible (i) bank
 (b) bad (ii) coffee
 (c) important (iii) cook
 (d) young (iv) customers
 (e) new (v) job
 (f) big (vi) sleep
 (g) little (vii) woman
- 2 Mr Hill must resign (Scene 2). Complete these reasons.
- (a) It will be a good thing for ...
 (b) He isn't a ...
 (c) They do all ...
 (d) He's not nice to ...
 (e) Nobody ...
 (f) He doesn't ...
 (g) He comes to work ...
 (h) He often ...
 (i) He takes two or three ...
 (j) He's never ...
 (k) Head Office agrees that ...
 (l) The bank will be a happier place ...
- 3 How does Mrs Hill reply to each of these statements from her husband? Match the statements (a-j) and replies (i-x).
- (a) Briggs and Winter were here. They've just left.
 (b) I have to resign from the bank.
 (c) You know already?
 (d) Did they tell you the reason, too?
 (e) Where are you going?
 (f) But I need your help now.

- (g) But you can have a holiday later. We'll go together.
 (h) I've got three months. I'll find something.
 (i) When are you coming back?
 (j) But who's going to look after me?
 (i) I can't help you. And I must have a holiday. I can't wait.
 (ii) I have no idea. I'll write and tell you.
 (iii) I hope you're right.
 (iv) I need a holiday. I'm going to spend a few days with my sister.
 (v) There's Annie. Speak to her nicely and perhaps she'll stay.
 (vi) Where will you get the money for a holiday? You've lost your job. It won't be easy to find a new one.
 (vii) Yes, I know.
 (viii) Yes, I saw them when they were going out.
 (ix) Yes, the people in the bank don't like you. I'm not surprised.
 (x) Yes, they told me.
- 4 How does Annie reply to each of Mr Hills statements? Use your own words.
- (a) What is it, Annie? Do you want to leave, too?
 (b) So you don't want to leave. Are you sure?
 (c) I've lost my job. Did you know that?
 (d) And my wife has gone for a long holiday.
 (e) I won't have much money. Perhaps I won't be able to pay you.

'The Professor'

- 1 Complete each of these sentences from Scene 1 with a word from the box.

breakfast	coffee	day	glasses	government	hospital	
invention	leg	men	morning	papers	watch	work

- (a) Dad didn't want his ... this morning.
 (b) He only wanted a cup of ...
 (c) It's a very important ...
 (d) He's ready to give his ... to the world.
 (e) I've just copied the ...
 (f) The men from the ... will be here soon.
 (g) Freda's broken her ...
 (h) They've taken her to ...
 (i) I wanted to stay her this ...
 (j) I can't see anything without my ...
 (k) Now, what's the time? Hmm, where's my ... ?
 (l) I forget a lot of things but I can still do my ...
 (m) The ... are coming at eleven.
- 2 Put in order these events from Scene 2.
- (a) Miss Green takes Pitt and Rose to the Professor's room.
 (b) Pitt and Rose arrive at the Professor's house.
 (c) Pitt and Rose leave.
 (d) Pitt and Rose show their cards to Miss Green.
 (e) The Professor gives some papers to Pitt and Rose.
- 3 In Scene 3, we find out extra information. Put these events into the correct place in your answers to Scene 2.
- (a) Pitt and Rose lock the government men in an empty house.
 (b) Pitt and Rose read the papers and accept them.
 (c) Pitt and Rose steal the cards from the government men.
 (d) Pitt and Rose stop the car of the men from the government.
 (e) The Professor decides not to give the real papers to Pitt and Rose.
 (f) The Professor doesn't like the look of Pitt and Rose.

Activities after reading the book

Work in pairs. Tell the story of each play in no more than five



