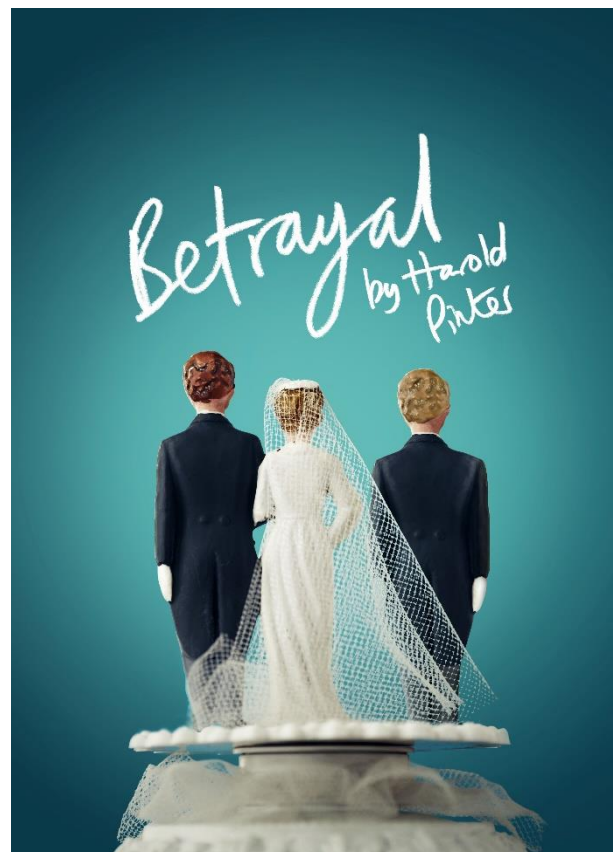


**EXETER
NORTHCOTT
THEATRE**

Betrayal.

Pinter Resource Pack.



Betrayal Resource Pack.

The activities in this pack are intended for use in English or Drama lessons. There is a range of complexity in the activities, which should allow teachers at Key Stage 4, or above, to select a range of tasks appropriate for their classes. Most of the activities call for a discussion or practical approach. The pack is divided into sections covering a selection of Pinter's work, including:

- *Last to Go (The Revue Sketches)*
- *Request Stop (The Revue Sketches)*

These two short dialogues are a really good way in for students not familiar with Pinter, and are easily accessible.

- *Betrayal*

Section A. Pinter in Context

Resource A provides an overview of what was happening in British theatre in the 1950s, and allows for a discussion of the reception of Pinter's early work.

Section B. *Last To Go* (1959).

Task 1.

Read this two-handed piece with the class. Discuss the following questions:

- i). At the beginning, there is a most definite sense of irritation between these two characters. What do you think has caused this? How does Pinter convey the irritation?
- ii). There is a reference to a character called "George." Who might George be, what might his relationship be to the protagonists, and what might have happened to him?
- iii). Chart the status as it shifts between the old man and the newspaper seller. Students might want to choose key moments where these shifts happen and show them in a series of still-images.

iv). What is the purpose of the pauses? What's happening in them?

v). Is the situation between these two characters resolved at the end?

Ask students, in 2s, to rehearse this sketch and perform a section of it to the rest of the group.

Task 2.

Ask the class to think about the pace of this sketch and the intonation. This will link back to the discussion about status in task 1. Ask students, in 2s, to create a dialogue which has the same sense of irritation between the characters, and a similar use of pace and intonation. However, instead of using words, they can only use the numbers 1 – 20. Each number will represent a word. They can use a number more than once and decide whether it represents the same word or a different one with the same meaning or intonation!

E.g.

Person 1: (*questions*) 1?

Person 2: (*whispers*) 2

Person 1: (*questions*) 1?

Person 2: (*shouts*) 3!

Person 1: (*quietly*) 4 5

Etc.

The point is to ask the class to focus on, not *what* is said, but *how* it is said.

Task 3.

Building on what they have learnt about meaning from the previous task, ask the pairs to construct a similar dialogue to the one in *Last To Go*. The conversation will be similar to that in *Last To Go*, where there is clearly an unspoken 'issue' between two characters. Students will need to decide on setting and what the content of the dialogue is.

Task 4.

Now consider the relevance of the pauses. Using Forum theatre, students perform their own scenes again, with pauses. The rest of the class can stop the action and insert pauses in a different place. Group discussion of how this changes: Status? Content? Theme? Intonation? Pace?

Task 5.

Can be a written task, or discussion.

Ask students, in pairs, to look back at *Last To Go* and focus on the pauses. They should make notes, for one or both of the actors playing these parts, which will direct them about what to *do* in these pauses.

Ask the pairs to compare their notes with another pair. Discuss the similarities and differences in what they have suggested.

The pairs can then swap notes and rehearse Pinter's text using the other pair's guidance. What is the effect of this?

Task 6.

It is 2 months after the events in *Last To Go*. Ask the group, using the same two characters, to cross-cut forwards and create a dialogue between the barman and the newspaper seller now. Is there still an issue with George? Is there the same level of irritation between them? Also, ask students to think about what's happening to status as well as pace and pauses.

Section C. *Request Stop* (1959).

Task 1.

Read the text, and again focus on Pinter's use of pauses. Ask students, in pairs, to rehearse the sketch, but the female voice should be from *off-stage*, so that the focus is on what's happening with the man on stage. Pinter doesn't give him anything to say, so students should think about the man's reactions, particularly in the pauses. This task lends itself to Forum theatre, in which the

class can offer different suggestions about the man's movements and assess the impact of their changes.

Section D. *Betrayal* (1978).

Task 1.

Look at the opening of the play, from the beginning of scene one to:

“Jerry: Seems such a long time ago

Emma: Does it?

Jerry: Same again?

He takes the glasses, goes to the bar...”

(this is provided as Resource B).

Ask students to focus only on what's on the page, and rehearse this section. They should think about what the text tells them about the relationship between these two people, including how long they have known each other, and where their families fit into this. It is important for them to think about the tone of this section, and they might start to consider how status is conveyed and whether this shifts as the extract goes on.

Task 2.

Read the end of scene six, from Emma: “Do you think we'll ever go to Venice together?” to the end of the scene (this is provided as Resource C).

Ask students to rehearse this section, while thinking about the following questions. This extract works really well as a direct comparison with the text used in task 1.

Questions to consider during rehearsal and in discussion after performing:

- What do you notice about the Emma and Jerry's relationship now?
- How does Pinter create tension in this section?
- What does this section add to the theme of betrayal?
- Why does Pinter return to the image of the child being thrown up in the air?

Task 3.

Look at the following section from the final scene of *Betrayal*:

JERRY: I was best man at your wedding..... to JERRY: No. Your best man”

(this is provided as Resource D).

Discussion questions:

- What does Jerry mean when he says this?
- What does this section say about the relationship he wants with Emma?
- What does this say about his existing relationship with Robert?
- Explore the relevance of the word “best” here.

In order to address the above questions, students might want to perform it and employ Forum theatre techniques to explore Jerry’s words and actions, Emma’s reactions, and to decide, at this point in the play, which of these characters has the higher status, or power, over the relationships.

Task 4.

General discussion questions for *Betrayal*:

- Who is betrayed in this play? Who does the betraying?
- Which character is most damaged by the events in the text?
- “I’ve always liked Jerry. To be honest, I’ve always liked him rather more than I’ve liked you. Maybe I should have had an affair with him myself.” (end of scene five). What does Robert mean when he says this? What is the effect of this statement? What implications does this have for the themes of the play?

Resource A.

Pinter in Context - British Theatre in the 1950s.

The first thing to remember is that all plays performed in a licensed British theatre had to be first approved by the Lord Chancellor's office. The Lord Chancellor's office could refuse to grant permission for plays that were seen as immoral or subversive or a threat to national values or anything else they didn't like. No reason needed to be given though sometimes changes to plays were agreed.

Possibly, as a result of the above, theatre in Britain in the early 1950s tended to play it safe. Plays were generally naturalistic, often well-crafted and generally orthodox and accessible in content. That is to say that they were easily understood because of a strong storyline. Traditionally staged, audiences would form the 'fourth wall' from where they could look in upon the action taking place in the 'room' of the play. As far as content goes, plays tended to deal with the lives and conflicts of the comfortable middle classes. The playwright controlled the audience in that she, or more usually he, would lead the audience through the play to its moral conclusion. Audience members had to make comparatively little effort; it was all done for them. Playwrights like Coward and Rattigan, though skilled and elegant writers were traditional and respectful of the status quo.

1955: Waiting for who?

Godot

Oh!

1955 saw the first English performance of Samuel Beckett's play. The two principal characters, Vladimir and Estragon, await the arrival of Godot. We don't know who Godot is or why they are waiting for him. The characters do not tell us. It is for the audience to decide what is happening, what has happened and what will happen.

The play received reviews ranging from outraged hostility to its being considered a masterpiece of modern theatre by the critic Harold Hobson who reviewed it for the Sunday Times. So mixed was the response that it became a matter of national discussion on television, radio and press. The main criticism seemed to be along the lines of, "I don't get it, the dialogue is gibberish, so it must be rubbish". Robert Morley, well known British character actor said that it represented "the end of British theatre as we know it." Its first English director, Peter Hall, regarded it then and still does now as "the start of modern drama".

1956: Look Back in Anger.

This is a play that shouts. It attacks comfortable middle class values. It is about class conflict. The language is sometimes violent and the characters cruel. It is direct; it does not try to be subtle. It is angry. The main character, Jimmy Porter, is a deeply flawed person.

The play is traditional in construction and not at all experimental in terms of staging. Osborne's play is passionate and challenging. The term "angry young men" began to be used to describe the young writers who, like Osborne dared to challenge the status quo. This term clearly did not include Shelagh Delaney who wrote *A Taste of Honey* in 1958. 'Kitchen sink drama' was another term used to describe this type of grimly realistic play which contrasted so strongly with the drawing room plays of writers such as Rattigan and Coward.

1957: The Birthday Party

Despite three fairly successful short runs in Cambridge, Oxford and Wolverhampton, the play flopped when it was staged in London and was taken off after only eight performances.

Audiences and many critics hated it. What they disliked most was Pinter's refusal to help them towards an understanding of what was going on. Pinter, like Beckett, presents us with the characters and leaves us and them to it.

Harold Hobson defended the play declaring Pinter to be "the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London."

Hobson acknowledged that the reviews had been hostile but pointed out that poor notices had not prevented "those other two very different writers, Mr Beckett and Mr Osborne from being regarded throughout the world as the most important dramatists who use the English tongue ... Pinter is not merely in good company, he is in the very best company".

The new writers had a way to go but at least they had arrived.

Censorship by the Lord Chamberlain's office ended in 1968 after 231 years.

Resource B.

Scene One.

Pub. 1977. Spring.

Noon.

EMMA is sitting at a corner table. JERRY approaches with drinks, a pint of bitter for him, a glass of wine for her.

He sits. They smile, toast each other silently, drink.

He sits back and looks at her.

JERRY. Well...

EMMA. How are you?

JERRY. All right.

EMMA. You look well.

JERRY. Well, I'm not that well, really.

EMMA. Why? What's the matter?

JERRY. Hangover.

He raises his glass.

Cheers.

He drinks.

How are you?

EMMA. I'm fine.

She looks round the bar, back at him.

Just like old times.

JERRY. Mmn. It's been a long time.

EMMA. Yes.

Pause

I thought of you the other day.

JERRY. Good God. Why?

She laughs.

JERRY. Why?

EMMA. Well, it's nice, sometimes, to think back. Isn't it?

JERRY. Absolutely.

Pause

How's everything?

EMMA. Oh, not too bad.

Pause

EMMA. Do you know how long it is since we met?

JERRY. Well I came to that private view, when was it - ?

EMMA. No, I don't mean that.

JERRY. Oh you mean alone?

EMMA. Yes.

JERRY. Uuh...

EMMA. Two years.

JERRY. Yes, I thought it must be. Mmnn.

Pause

EMMA. Long time.

JERRY. Yes. It is.

Pause

How's it going? The Gallery?

EMMA. How do you think it's going?

JERRY. Well. Very well, I would say.

EMMA. I'm glad you think so. Well, it is, actually. I enjoy it.

JERRY. Funny lot, painters, aren't they?

EMMA. They're not at all funny.

JERRY. Aren't they? What a pity.

Pause

How's Robert?

EMMA. When did you last see him?

JERRY. I haven't seen him for months. Don't know why. Why?

EMMA. Why what?

JERRY. Why did you ask when I last saw him?

EMMA. I just wondered. How's Sam?

JERRY. You mean Judith.

EMMA. Do I?

JERRY. You remember the form. I ask about your husband, you ask about my wife.

EMMA. Yes, of course. How is your wife?

JERRY. All right.

Pause

EMMA. Sam must be ... tall.

JERRY. He is tall. Quite tall. Does a lot of running. He's a long distance runner. He wants to be a zoologist.

EMMA. No, really? Good. And Sarah?

JERRY. She's ten.

EMMA. God. I suppose she must be.

JERRY. Yes, she must be.

Pause

Ned's five, isn't he?

EMMA. You remember.

JERRY. Well, I would remember that.

Pause

EMMA. Yes.

Pause

You're all right, though?

JERRY. Oh ... yes, sure.

Pause

EMMA. Ever think of me?

JERRY. I don't need to think of you.

EMMA. Oh?

JERRY. I don't need to *think* of you.

Pause

Anyway I'm all right. How are you?

EMMA. Fine, really. All right.

JERRY. You're looking very pretty.

EMMA. Really? Thank you. I'm glad to see you.

JERRY. So am I. I mean to see you.

EMMA. You think of me sometimes?

JERRY. I think of you sometimes.

Pause

I saw Charlotte the other day.

EMMA. No? Where? She didn't mention it.

JERRY. She didn't see me. In the street.

EMMA. But you haven't seen her for years.

JERRY. I recognised her.

EMMA. How could you? How could you know?

JERRY. I did.

EMMA. What did she look like?

JERRY. You.

EMMA. No, what did you think of her, really?

JERRY. I thought she was lovely.

EMMA. Yes. She's very ... She's smashing. She's thirteen.

Pause

Do you remember that time ... oh god it was ... when you picked her up and threw her up and caught her?

JERRY. She was very light.

EMMA. She remembers that, you know.

JERRY. Really?

EMMA. Mmnn. Being thrown up.

JERRY. What a memory.

Pause

She doesn't know ... about us, does she?

EMMA. Of course not. She remembers you, as an old friend.

JERRY. That's right.

Pause

Yes, everyone was there that day, standing around, your husband, my wife, all the kids, I remember.

EMMA. What day?

JERRY. When I threw her up. It was in your kitchen.

EMMA. It was in your kitchen.

Silence

JERRY. Darling.

EMMA. Don't say that.

Pause

It all ...

JERRY. Seems such a long time ago.

EMMA. Does it?

JERRY. Same again?

He takes the glasses, goes to the bar. She sits still. He returns with the drinks. Sits.

Resource C. Extract from *Betrayal*.

From the end of scene six.

EMMA. Do you think we'll ever go to Venice together?

Pause

No. Probably not.

Pause

JERRY. You don't think I should see Robert for lunch on Thursday, or on Friday, for that matter?

EMMA. Why do you say that?

JERRY. You don't think I should see him at all?

EMMA. I didn't say that. How can you not see him? Don't be silly.

Pause

JERRY. I had a terrible panic when you were away. I was sorting out a contract, in my office, with some lawyers. I suddenly couldn't remember what I'd done with your letter. I couldn't remember putting it in the safe. I said I had to look for something in the safe. I opened the safe. It wasn't there. I had to go on with the damn contract ... I kept seeing it lying somewhere in the house, being picked up ...

EMMA. Did you find it?

JERRY. It was in the pocket of a jacket – in my wardrobe – at home.

EMMA. God.

JERRY. Something else happened a few months ago – I didn't tell you. We had a drink one evening. Well, we had our drink, and I got home about eight, walked in the door, Judith said, hello, you're a bit late. Sorry, I said, I was having a drink with Spinks. Spinks? She said, how odd, he's just phoned, five minutes ago, wanted to speak to you, he didn't mention he'd just seen you. You know old Spinks, I said, not exactly forthcoming, is he? He'd probably remembered something he'd meant to say but hadn't. I'll ring him later. I went up to see the kids and then we all had dinner.

Pause

Listen. Do you remember, when was it, a few years ago, we were all in your kitchen, must have been Christmas or something, do you remember, all the kids were running about and suddenly I picked Charlotte up and lifted her high up, high up, and then down and up. Do you remember how she laughed?

EMMA. Everyone laughed.

JERRY. She was so light. And there was your husband and my wife and all the kids, all standing and laughing in your kitchen. I can't get rid of it.

EMMA. It was your kitchen, actually.

He takes her hand. They stand. They go to the bed and lie down.

Why shouldn't you throw her up?

She caresses him. They embrace.

Resource D. Extract from *Betrayal*.

From scene nine.

JERRY. I was best man at your wedding. I saw you in white. I watched you glide by in white.

EMMA. I wasn't in white.

JERRY. You know what should have happened?

EMMA. What?

JERRY. I should have had you, in your white, before the wedding. I should have blackened you, in your white wedding dress, blackened you in your bridal dress, before ushering you into your wedding, as your best man.

EMMA. My husband's best man. Your best friend's best man.

JERRY. No. Your best man.

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