

## **LITERATURE PAPER 2 GUIDELINES**

### **William Wycherley : The Country Wife**

#### **Prologue.**

A Prologue, spoken by the actor playing Harry Horner, gives the conventional “apology” for the play that is to follow. The actor anticipates that the “wits” in the audience will criticize the play, but he wittily defies their censure.

#### **Act 1**

##### **Scene 1.**

Horner begins to elucidate for The Quack his scheme for seducing the fashionable ladies of London. At

Horner’s request, The Quack has spread a rumour that a treatment for venereal disease has rendered Horner impotent; The Quack expects that this rumour will tend to make Horner less attractive to the ladies, rather than more, but Horner criticizes the Quack for his conventional thinking.

Before Horner can explain further, The Boy announces the arrival of Sir Jasper Fidget with Lady Fidget and Dainty Fidget. Their coach has broken down before Horner’s door, and Sir Jasper takes the opportunity to introduce Horner to his wife and sister. Horner receives the women coldly, and from his “aversion to the sex” Sir Jasper concludes that the rumours of his impotence must be true. The ladies proclaim themselves disgusted with Horner’s behaviour, and they become even more disgusted when Sir Jasper informs them that Horner is “a mere eunuch.” Before leaving, Sir Jasper invites Horner to spend more time at the Fidget household, to dine and play cards with Lady Fidget; in an aside, he observes that his plan is “to provide an innocent diversion for a wife” and thereby keep her chaste.

When the Fidget group has left, The Quack marvels that Horner should actively strive to make ladies despise him. Horner scorns The Quack’s obtuseness and explains that his plan is already succeeding. Husbands and guardians like Sir Jasper will now give him free access to their ladies. Moreover, Horner will be able to discern from the ladies’ reactions to him who is likely to respond to his advances: if a woman finds the notion of a eunuch disgusting, he will know that she “loves the sport.” Finally, the rumor of his impotence will provide cover for the ladies themselves, who may desire Horner but will not wish to sully their reputations.

The Quack exits as two of Horner's friends, Frank Harcourt and Mr. Dorilant, enter. Both Harcourt and Dorilant believe Horner to be impotent, but unlike Sir Jasper they do not laugh at him; rather, they extend their sympathy and try to rally him to disregard the jeers of the public and join them at the theater. The three friends discuss the change in Horner's attitude toward women, and Horner gives his opinion that "women serve but to keep a man from better company. ... Good fellowship and friendship are lasting, rational, and manly pleasures."

The Boy then announces the impending arrival of Mr. Sparkish, whereupon the three friends begin to disparage Sparkish as a tiresome pretender to wit. When Sparkish enters, he immediately teases Horner

about the reports of his impotence, making what he considers a very clever pun about Horner's being a mere "sign of a man." Sparkish then demands of the other three where they are all to dine, claiming that he has "left at Whitehall an earl, to dine with you." The other three rebuff him, and finally he leaves to find his mistress (i.e. fiancée), with whom he will dine before seeing the new play.

As Sparkish exits, Jack Pinchwife enters. To Pinchwife's chagrin, Horner immediately deduces from his altered appearance that Pinchwife, recently returned from the countryside, has recently gotten married; Pinchwife says in an aside that he had hoped to conceal the fact of his marriage from the notorious rake Horner. (Clearly, Pinchwife has not heard the rumors about Horner's diminished capacities.) Pinchwife mentions that he has come back to London in part to see his sister married to Sparkish. Horner then prods Pinchwife about his new bride, suggesting that "the next thing to be heard is—thou'rt a cuckold." Pinchwife finds this idea "insupportable" and says that he has married a country wife in order not to have to worry that she will, like a "London wife," commit adultery. When Horner points out that adultery occurs as well in the country as in town, Pinchwife explains that he has chosen his wife because, in addition to being rich, she is "ugly, ill-bred, and silly": she will not attract rivals with her looks or desire fashionable company; above all, Pinchwife says, "'Tis my maxim: he's a fool that marries, but he's a greater fool that does not marry a fool. What is wit in a wife good for, but to make a man a cuckold?"

Horner then presses Pinchwife on his reasons for marrying: Pinchwife has previously been such a "whoremaster" that Horner did not expect that he would ever confine himself to a single woman. Pinchwife answers that, when he was a rake, "the jades would jilt me; I could never keep a whore to myself," to which Horner retorts, "So then, you only married to keep a whore to yourself." Horner then mentions having seen Pinchwife at a play yesterday in the company of "a pretty country wench." Pinchwife, realizing that Horner has seen his bride, vows in an aside never to take her to a play again.

Horner gives his opinion that the new Mrs. Pinchwife is “exceedingly pretty; I was in love with her.” Pinchwife, suddenly uncomfortable, excuses himself, though the three wits try to detain him. Harcourt then comments that Pinchwife has gone home “[t]o beat his wife. He’s ... jealous of her.” **Act 2**

### **Scene 1.**

Margery Pinchwife and Alethea Pinchwife discuss Margery’s desire to walk out in London and the desire of her husband, Jack Pinchwife, to keep her indoors. Alethea explains that Pinchwife is “jealous,” that is, “afraid that [Margery] should love another man.” When Margery protests that she never sees any man but Pinchwife, Alethea instances the play that Margery attended yesterday; Margery expresses her appreciation of the actors, whom she describes as “the goodliest, proper’st men,” earning a gentle reproof from Alethea. As Pinchwife approaches, Alethea agrees to ask her brother to give Margery permission “to go a-walking.”

Pinchwife enters and responds to Margery’s affectionate greeting by calling her a fool. He then turns on his sister, accusing her of being “a mere notorious town-woman” and wielding a pernicious influence over Margery. Alethea defends herself, protesting that she only “take[s] the innocent liberty of the town.” Pinchwife pleads with her not to “teach my wife where the men are to be found. ... I bid you keep her in ignorance, as I do.” Pinchwife then urges Margery to compare him to the actors at the theater, extracting from her an acknowledgment that she prefers her husband, whom she knows, to all strangers. He then says that she must never again ask to go to a play, and Margery responds as Alethea, in a previous aside, predicted she would: “Nay, why, love? I did not care for going; but when you forbid me, you make me (as ’twere) desire it.”

Prodded by Margery, Pinchwife explains that he does not want her mixing with the men at the theater.

When Margery expresses doubt that anyone could like “a homely country girl,” Pinchwife reveals that “one of the lewdest fellows in town” (i.e. Harry Horner) “who saw you there, told me he was in love with you.” Margery is thrilled, and Pinchwife scrambles to temper her enthusiasm until the approach of Mr. Sparkish and Frank Harcourt causes him to shut her away in another room.

Sparkish has come to show off his fiancée Alethea to Harcourt. Questioned by Sparkish, Harcourt expresses his admiration for her: “I could wish I had a mistress too, that might differ from her in nothing—but her love and engagement to you”; indeed, “I wish it were in my power to break the match.” Sparkish encourages these attentions, while Pinchwife looks on in horror: “Insensible fop, let a man make love to his wife to his face!” Sparkish even invites Harcourt to “go with her into a corner, and try if she has wit.” As Harcourt

and Alethea move aside, Pinchwife upbraids Sparkish for dealing so lightly with the lady's honor: "If you are not concerned for the honour of a wife, I am for that of a sister. ... Bring men to her, let 'em make love before your face, thrust 'em into a corner together, then leave 'em in private! Is this your town wit and conduct?" Sparkish's flippant response to Pinchwife indicates that he considers the appearance of indifference to a lady's honor to be the mark of a sophisticated town "wit."

Aside, Alethea is busy rebuffing Harcourt's declarations of love. Harcourt argues that Sparkish's lack of jealousy shows that he does not love her; Alethea counters that, on the contrary, it shows Sparkish's confidence in her virtue. When Harcourt condemns Sparkish as "a bubble, a coward, a senseless idiot, a wretch so contemptible to all the world but you," Alethea calls to her fiancée, who obligingly comes over. When Alethea reports that Harcourt has offended her by criticizing him and making advances to her, Sparkish excuses this behavior as typical of fashionable men: "we wits rail and make love often, but to show our parts" (i.e. talents). Sparkish is imperturbable until Alethea reveals that Harcourt has called him a "senseless, drivelling idiot": now, says Sparkish, "my honour's concerned," and he asks Pinchwife to help him kill Harcourt.

Alethea intervenes on Harcourt's behalf, however, saying aside, "I am so far from hating him, that I wish my gallant had his person and understanding." In order to calm Sparkish she makes excuses for Harcourt, saying that he insulted Sparkish only "to try whether I was concerned enough for you, and made love to me only to be satisfied of my virtue, for your sake." Sparkish, mollified, backs down and invites Alethea and Harcourt to depart with him for the play. When Alethea worries that Sparkish will leave her alone in the box again, Sparkish promises to leave Harcourt with her when he goes into the pit, and the three exit.

Pinchwife, who remains, is surprised by the sudden entrance of Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, and Mistress Squeamish. Lady Fidget demands to see Margery and announces her intention of taking the bride to the new play. Pinchwife resists, claiming first that Margery is not at home, then that she is contagious with the smallpox. Finding that the ladies are not deterred, Pinchwife gives up and leaves the room altogether.

The ladies agree that Pinchwife is jealous, and they lament the tendency of upper-class men to neglect their wives and take up with prostitutes and mistresses. The discussion then turns to the question of whether it is worse for an upper-class woman to commit adultery with an upper-class man or with a less illustrious partner. Mistress Squeamish argues that "nobody takes notice of a private man, and therefore with him 'tis more secret; and the crime's the less, when 'tis not known"; Lady Fidget agrees: "'Tis not an injury to a husband, till it be an injury to our honours."

The conversation ceases with the entrance of Sir Jasper Fidget, Harry Horner, and Mr. Dorilant. Sir Jasper informs the ladies that he “[has] business at Whitehall, and cannot go to the play with [them],” and consequently wishes them to go with Horner. Lady Fidget finds the proposal disgusting, and Horner affects to be averse to the company of women. He says some highly misogynistic things, drawing expressions of repulsion from the ladies. Sir Jasper intervenes, quieting Horner and taking Lady Fidget aside to convince her of how useful and entertaining a eunuch companion could be. When Lady Fidget learns that Horner has money (“money makes up in a measure all other wants in men”), she reconciles herself to Sir Jasper’s plans.

Sir Jasper then addresses Horner with a proposal: “since you are unprovided of a lady to flatter, and a good house to eat at, pray frequent mine, and call my wife ‘mistress,’ and she shall call you ‘gallant,’ according to the custom.” Horner, like Lady Fidget, says that he will submit for Sir Jasper’s sake and against his own inclination. Horner and Lady Fidget then move aside and whisper. While Sir Jasper informs the other two ladies that Horner is a eunuch, Horner and Lady Fidget are exchanging their own secrets. Lady Fidget is delighted to hear that Horner is “as perfectly, perfectly the same man as before [his] going into France” and considers him very generous to spread unpleasant rumors about himself in order to preserve the reputations of the upper-class ladies he takes as lovers.

When Horner and Lady Fidget have come implicitly to an understanding about their future liaison, Sir Jasper interrupts to see whether his wife and her new companion are getting along better. Satisfied with the answer, he leaves for Whitehall while the others leave for the play.

### **Act 3**

#### **Scene 1.**

Margery Pinchwife and Alethea Pinchwife meet and discuss Margery’s sadness at being excluded from the fashionable existence of the London ladies. Jack Pinchwife enters and accuses Alethea of putting troublesome ideas into Margery’s head; Alethea disputes this accusation, and Pinchwife says that he is

looking forward to getting rid of Alethea through her marriage tomorrow night and to leaving London with Margery the following day. Margery surprises Pinchwife by saying

that she does not wish to return to the country; since hearing of the gallant who fell in love with her at the play, she has wished to stay in London and meet him. She asks again to go to a play, or at least to walk abroad. Pinchwife goes back to blaming Alethea and charges her with causing Harry Horner to come to Pinchwife's house today. Alethea counters that Horner came on his own initiative, "because you would not let him see your handsome wife out of your lodging." Margery is thrilled that a gentleman should have come to see her, and her determination to walk abroad increases.

Pinchwife gives in and asks Alethea what they can do to prevent Margery's being recognized when they take her outdoors. Alethea suggests having Margery wear her mask, but Pinchwife rejects the mask as tending to "make[] people but the more inquisitive." He decides instead to disguise Margery as a male "in the suit we are to carry down to her brother, little Sir James."

## **Scene 2.**

In the New Exchange (a shopping district on the Strand), Horner, Frank Harcourt, and Mr. Dorilant discuss Horner's current attitudes toward women. Dorilant wonders why Horner has not been avoiding women more completely, since he professes to hate them; Horner replies that he spends time with women in order to inflame his hatred and wreak his revenge on them.

Harcourt confesses that he is "in love with Sparkish's mistress, whom he is to marry tomorrow," and asks Horner for advice on how to steal her. Before Horner can answer, Mr. Sparkish himself approaches.

Horner advises Harcourt to use the oblivious Sparkish as a cover for making his advances to Alethea. Sparkish, breaking in, jokingly accuses Harcourt of "making fierce love to [Alethea] all the play long." He then reminds Horner of the ridicule Horner endured from the "wits" at the play. The three friends then draw out Sparkish on the topic of his antipathy to poets (i.e. playwrights): Sparkish considers himself and the other wits to be cleverer than the poets, and he resents that the poets have taken to satirizing not only lower-class subjects but gentlemen as well.

Pinchwife enters with Alethea, Lucy, and the disguised Margery. Sparkish hides behind Harcourt, claiming that he is due in Whitehall and has no time for Alethea. Horner greets Pinchwife, only to be cold-shouldered by him. Margery examines the low-brow wares of Clasp the bookseller; Pinchwife tries to hustle her away, but Horner notices her and inquires of Sparkish the identity of "that pretty youth." Sparkish believes that the youth is Pinchwife's brother-in-law, and Horner expresses his admiration. When Pinchwife and his train move off, Horner and Dorilant follow them.

Harcourt, remaining, begs Sparkish to reconcile him to Alethea. He claims to desire Alethea's friendship only so that she will not come between Harcourt and his dear friend Sparkish, and the flattered Sparkish agrees to take Harcourt to Alethea and reconcile them. Pinchwife re-enters with the disguised Margery in tow; after Margery has marveled at the tavern signs and Pinchwife has muttered darkly about cuckolding, they exit again. Sparkish and Harcourt then re-enter with Alethea and Lucy.

Sparkish urges Alethea to be reconciled to Harcourt; Alethea resists this suggestion and becomes exasperated with Sparkish, who refuses to accept that Harcourt is actually trying to steal her away from him. Sparkish welcomes Harcourt's attentions as a compliment to Alethea, and indirectly to himself: "Is it for your honour, or mine, to have me jealous? That he makes love to you is a sign you are handsome; and that I am not jealous is a sign you are virtuous." After further fruitless argument, Alethea expresses her frustration: "You astonish me, sir, with your want of jealousy." Sparkish's response reveals his basically contemptuous view of women: "And you make me giddy, madam, with your jealousy, and fears, and virtue, and honour. Gad, I see virtue makes a woman as troublesome as a little reading or learning."

Harcourt goes on to insult Sparkish in a manner that makes his sense clear to the sharp-witted Alethea while sounding complimentary to the vapid Sparkish. Alethea finally threatens to walk off, saying, "I can no longer suffer his scurrilous abusiveness to you, no more than his love to me." Sparkish detains her, however, so that Harcourt can clarify just what kind of love he bears Alethea. When Harcourt describes it as "the best and truest love in the world," Sparkish triumphantly concludes that it is "no matrimonial love, I'm sure." Alethea is understandably put out by this low valuation of matrimonial love. Harcourt goes on to describe his love in extravagant terms, with encouragement from Sparkish, until Sparkish invites Harcourt to close the deal by kissing Alethea.

Pinchwife and the disguised Margery enter just as Alethea is resisting the idea of Harcourt's kissing her. Pinchwife expresses his horror at the whole idea, leading Sparkish to defend his lack of jealousy: "I love to be envied, and would not marry a wife that I alone could love. ... I love to have rivals in a wife; they make her seem to a man still but as a kept mistress." With that, Sparkish departs.

Harcourt asks Alethea to allow him to visit tomorrow with a clergyman. Pinchwife intervenes and tries to leave with the women, but he does not manage to make his escape before Horner enters with Dorilant. Horner accuses Pinchwife of being unsociable, and Pinchwife excuses himself, claiming that he has business to attend to. Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant lay hold of Margery, Alethea, and Lucy, respectively, offering to look after the women while Pinchwife goes about his business. Pinchwife tries to take Margery ("[his] wife's brother") away from Horner, but Horner exclaims that

the youth greatly resembles “her I saw you at the play with—whom I told you I was in love with.” Margery, in a comment aside, expresses her satisfaction with this revelation. Horner goes on lavishing praise on the disguised Margery, such that Pinchwife is in no doubt that Horner sees through the disguise; he cannot warn Horner off his wife, however, without admitting to the ruse and embarrassing himself. Eventually he declares that they must leave; Horner, in parting, kisses Margery’s “brother” and tells him, “you have revived the love I had for [Margery] at first sight in the playhouse.” Pinchwife suffers agonies, remembering that just moments ago he was criticizing Sparkish for allowing another man to kiss Alethea in front of him.

Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant depart. Pinchwife moves off in another direction to seek the coach, and while he is gone, the three wits return. Horner leads the disguised Margery into a nearby walk, to the consternation of Alethea and Lucy. Pinchwife returns to learn that Horner has made off with Margery, and he goes to seek them. Harcourt questions Alethea about her loyalty to “that wretch” Sparkish, and she explains: “if he be true, and what I think him to me, I must be so to him.”

Pinchwife returns again, empty-handed, and takes out his frustrations on Alethea, whom he calls “eternal shame of your family” and accuses of arranging for Margery to consort with Horner. Then the disguised Margery suddenly returns, running, with her arms full of oranges and dried fruit and Horner following behind. Margery shows to Pinchwife the gifts she has received from Horner. Pinchwife, feeling distinctly cuckolded, is eager to leave.

Sir Jasper Fidget then enters to remind Horner to call on Lady Fidget. Horner leaves with Sir Jasper, and Harcourt and Dorilant part from Alethea and Lucy. Margery offers an orange to Pinchwife, who rejects it brusquely.

## **Act 4**

### **Scene 1.**

Lucy has finished decking out AletheaPinchwife for her marriage to Mr. Sparkish; the maid vocally disapproves of the match, however, and continues to advocate for Frank Harcourt. Alethea concedes that she loves Harcourt rather than Sparkish, but she says that her sense of justice will not permit her to deceive or injure Sparkish. When Lucy retorts that there cannot “be a greater cheat or wrong done to a man, than to give him your person without your heart,” Alethea answers weakly that she will grow to love Sparkish after marrying him. Lucy then inveighs against Alethea’s conventional notions of honor: “But what a devil is this honour? ’Tis sure a disease in the head, like the megrim, or falling-sickness, that always hurries people away to do themselves mischief. Men lose their lives by it; women what’s dearer to ’em, their love, the life of life.”



The two women then compare Sparkish and Harcourt, with Alethea admitting that Sparkish lack Harcourt's wit but stressing that Sparkish also lacks the quality she most dreads, jealousy: "Jealousy in a husband—heaven defend me from it; it begets a thousand plagues to a poor woman: the loss of her honour, her quiet, and ... her life sometimes; and what's as bad almost, the loss of this town—that is, she is sent into the country, which is the last ill usage of a husband to a wife."

The conversation ends when Sparkish enters with Harcourt, who is disguised as his fictional brother, "Ned" Harcourt the parson. To the amusement of Lucy, who senses that Harcourt may contrive to subvert these nuptials after all, Alethea strives in vain to convince Sparkish that Ned the parson is in fact Frank the rival, who wants to prevent a valid marriage from taking place. In an aside, Harcourt remarks that if by this ruse he cannot prevent the marriage, then at least he can have "the rival's second pleasure, hindering my rival's enjoyment, though but for a time."

## **Scene 2.**

Jack Pinchwife interrogates his wife, Margery Pinchwife, regarding her encounter with Harry Horner. Not for the first time, she explains that Horner took her into a tavern near the Exchange, lavished gifts on her, kissed her in a manner she found mortifyingly exotic, and arranged to stand beneath her window to greet her at eleven this morning. Pinchwife worries that Margery's growing attraction to Horner will spoil her natural innocence and "instruct her how to deceive me, and satisfy him, all idiot as she is."

In order to thwart the developing romance, Pinchwife orders Margery to write at his dictation a letter renouncing any further connection with Horner. Margery at first balks at the whole notion of writing a letter in London to another person in London: in her experience, letters are for communicating with people who are too far away to be spoken with face-to-face. Pinchwife insists, however, and dictates a harsh letter that begins, "Though I suffered last night your nauseous, loathed kisses and embraces ...". When Margery objects to expressing sentiments that are not her own, Pinchwife threatens her: "Write as I bid you, or I will write 'Whore' with this penknife in your face"; again, "write as I'd have you, and question it not, or I will spoil thy writing with this (holds up penknife); I will stab out those eyes that cause my mischief."

When the letter is complete and Pinchwife has left to fetch sealing wax and a candle, Margery tries to come up with a stratagem (reasoning, "a London woman would have had a hundred presently"). She quickly composes her own letter to Horner, explaining her own attraction to him and her husband's determination to frustrate it and concluding, "now that [Pinchwife] has taught me to write letters, you shall have longer ones from me." When Pinchwife returns, she substitutes this new letter for the approved one

without his noticing; in an aside, she congratulates herself and observes, “there’s my letter going to Mr. Horner—since he’ll needs have me send letters to folks.”

Pinchwife leaves to deliver the letter to Horner, locking up Margery in her chamber before he goes.

### **Scene 3.**

The Quack inquires of Harry Horner how his scheme is succeeding, and Horner reports that he has gained admittance into the private chambers of many honorable ladies, who trust him so much that they “drink and sing bawdy songs” in front of him. The Quack is surprised to learn that ladies of honor should behave in such undignified ways “among friends,” and Horner inveighs wittily against “bigots in honour,” who “fear the eye of the world more than the eye of heaven.”

Lady Fidget enters (“Now we talk of women of honour, here comes one”), and The Quack conceals himself to watch Horner’s performance. Lady Fidget, before withdrawing per Horner’s request, entreats him “to have a care of my dear honour.” Horner protests that this talk of honor is a deadly turn-off and reminds her that the rumor of his impotence is his way of safeguarding her reputation. Lady Fidget expresses her concern that Horner will reveal his “dear secret” to other women, so that the truth would come out: “A secret is better kept, I hope, by a single person than a multitude; therefore pray do not trust anybody else with it, dear, dear Mr. Horner.” She then embraces Horner, just in time to be caught in the act by Sir Jasper Fidget, who enters unexpectedly.

Lady Fidget claims to have been determining whether Horner is ticklish or not; he is, she finds, and she invites Sir Jasper to join her in tickling him. Sir Jasper objects that Lady Fidget was supposed to be shopping for china; she explains that Horner has great expertise in china, and indeed has a collection of his own that she is determined to see. She thus exits to another room, where Horner’s ostensible china is supposedly kept, and on a whispered command from Horner locks the door behind her. Horner then “discovers” that she has locked the door and frets that Lady Fidget will rifle through his belongings; he exits at another door, prompting Sir Jasper to cry mockingly through the keyhole, “Wife, my Lady Fidget, wife, he is coming in to you the back way.” Aside, The Quack expresses incredulity.

Mistress Squeamish enters, inquiring as to the whereabouts of “this woman-hater,” Horner. Learning from Sir Jasper that Horner and Lady Fidget are together in the next room, Mistress Squeamish demands entry, ostensibly to prevent Horner from being obnoxious to Lady Fidget. Finding no way in, she exits to seek another point of ingress.

Old Lady Squeamish then enters, searching for her granddaughter, to whom she attributes prurient inclinations. Learning that the lodging belongs to the eunuch Horner, however, the old lady calms down.

Mistress Squeamish re-enters just in time to see Lady Fidget return, “with a piece of china in her hand, and Horner following.” Lady Fidget congratulates herself for achieving the piece of china, and Mistress Squeamish, picking up the double entendre, demands: “Oh Lord, I’ll have some china too, good Mr. Horner.” A bawdy dialogue ensues in which Horner protests, and Lady Fidget confirms, that he has no china left. Old Lady Squeamish then invites Horner to kiss Mistress Squeamish, which he obligingly does, on the theory that a kiss from Horner “[h]as no more hurt in it, than one of my spaniel’s.” Aside, The Quack, remarks, “I will now believe anything he tells me.”

Pinchwife enters, and the young ladies flee with Sir Jasper and the old lady in tow.

Pinchwife spars with

Horner over his kissing of Margery and then delivers Margery’s letter. Horner reads it in front of

Pinchwife and wonders in an aside whose trick it is, “his, or hers?” Reading the postscript, however (“let [Pinchwife] not see this”), Horner concludes that Pinchwife is deceived as to the letter’s contents. Pinchwife starts in with threats: “I will not be a cuckold, I say; there will be danger in making me a cuckold.” Horner extricates himself by feigning surprise over the information that the youth he kissed was Mrs. Pinchwife in disguise; he then concedes, “I must e’en acquiesce then, and be contented with what she writes.” Pinchwife then exits, warning Horner to “play with any man’s honour but mine, kiss any man’s wife but mine.”

The Quack comes out of hiding, and he and Horner discuss Margery’s “original” (guileless) love-letter, which Horner says is the first “that ever was without flames, darts, fates, destinies, lying, and dissembling in’t.”

Mr. Sparkish enters, pulling Pinchwife with him. They are discussing Sparkish’s marriage to Alethea Pinchwife, which Alethea considers invalid due to the participation of a fake parson. Horner expresses his disappointment over the attachment of Alethea to Sparkish; in an aside, he names Frank Harcourt as the suitor whose cause he favors, but Pinchwife begins to suspect that Horner himself has designs on Alethea.

Pinchwife exits, and Sparkish suggests to Horner that he is glad to have a rival for Alethea already, because rivalry will add spice to the marital condition. Horner seems rather disgusted with this sentiment. Sparkish invites Horner to dine with him and Pinchwife, but Horner will not attend unless Margery is included. Sparkish agrees to try to produce her, then exits. Horner says to The Quack, speaking of Margery: “The poor

woman has called for aid, and stretched forth her hand, doctor. I cannot but help her over the pale, out of the briars.”

#### **Scene 4.**

Alone in Pinchwife's lodging, Margery thinks longingly of Horner and resolves to write another letter to him. While she is engaged in this activity, Pinchwife enters and snatches the paper from her. Reading it aloud, he finds Margery begging Horner to rescue her from her “unfortunate match” with Pinchwife. Enraged, Pinchwife draws his sword just as Sparkish walks in to stop the confrontation and invite both husband and wife to dinner. Pinchwife locks Margery away before going to dinner, prompting Sparkish to observe with unexpected insight that “you may keep your wife as much as you will out of danger of infection, but if her constitution incline her to't, she'll have it sooner or later, by the world.” **Act 5**

#### **Scene 1.**

Jack Pinchwife directs his wife, Margery Pinchwife, to finish her letter to Harry Horner as she had intended. The letter currently breaks off in mid-sentence: “You must make haste and help me away before tomorrow, or else I shall be for ever out of your reach, for I can no longer defer our—.” Pinchwife now demands that Margery complete the sentence, which she does, slyly: “For I can no longer defer our—wedding. Your slighted Alethea.” Margery claims that she has written the entire letter under orders from her sister-in-law, Alethea Pinchwife, who allegedly did not want to compose a love-letter to Horner in her own handwriting. Pinchwife, recalling Horner's evident disappointment on hearing of Alethea's engagement to Mr. Sparkish, finds this story credible.

Pinchwife resolves to speak with Alethea concerning her relations with Horner and whether her earlier wedding to Sparkish was valid. Margery exits, ostensibly to summon Alethea but really to confer with Lucy about “what lie I shall tell next.” Alone, Pinchwife reflects that by marrying Alethea to Horner he would safeguard his own marriage, since Horner would not wish to seduce a woman to whom he is related by marriage. Margery returns to say that Alethea is too ashamed to face Pinchwife and that Horner has proposed marriage to her. Pinchwife is pleased by this news. Margery then reports that Alethea wishes to go to Horner's lodging to discuss the matter with him, but she wishes to wear a mask in order not to have to face Pinchwife.

Pinchwife agrees to the conditions, and Margery exits, only to return momentarily in a mask and some clothes of Alethea's. With the candle put out per Alethea's ostensible request, Margery manages to play both herself (as Pinchwife locks her, so he thinks, into her chamber) and Alethea (as she departs with Pinchwife for Horner's lodging).

#### **Scene 2.**

In Horner's lodging. Horner and The Quack discuss Margery, whom Horner calls "a silly innocent." Soon Pinchwife enters with the disguised Margery, whom Horner and The Quack immediately recognize. After some byplay in which Horner insults Pinchwife, Margery whispers to Horner that she must speak with him in private. Pinchwife then exits to fetch a parson who will marry Horner and Alethea.

The Boy announces the arrival of Sir Jasper Fidget, and Horner directs Margery to conceal herself in the next room. Sir Jasper enters to inform Horner that "my lady and the whole knot of the virtuous gang, as they call themselves, are resolved upon a frolic of coming to you tonight in a masquerade, and are all dressed already." Horner affects to dislike the idea but soon agrees to it.

### **Scene 3.**

In the Piazza of Covent Garden, Sparkish reacts to the news that Alethea has written to Horner and intends to marry him, her marriage with Sparkish being invalid. Pinchwife suggests that Frank Harcourt, as "Ned" the parson, fooled Sparkish into entering a sham marriage; urging Sparkish to go to Horner's lodging and see for himself, he exits. Sparkish is planning all the nasty things he will say to Alethea when Alethea herself enters the Piazza with Lucy in tow.

Alethea is incredulous as Sparkish accuses her of being unfaithful to him, making reference to a letter that Alethea was not even aware existed. The triumphant Lucy whispers, "D'y' think the gentleman can be jealous now, madam?" When Sparkish declares his intention of "not marrying you," Alethea says in an aside, "I can consent to't, since I see this gentleman can be made jealous." Sparkish then reveals that Alethea's only attraction for him was her fortune and that otherwise "I never had any passion for you— till now, for now I hate you." After further obnoxious remarks, he departs, leaving Alethea to exclaim, "How deceived I was in a man!"

### **Scene 4.**

Lady Fidget, Dainty Fidget, and Mistress Squeamish meet Harry Horner in his lodging. The ladies have come before Horner was expecting them, and he now plans to lock his most recent conquest, Margery Pinchwife, inside his chamber. The ladies prevent him from stepping aside to lock the door, however, and soon everyone is drinking, singing, and making confessions.

The ladies quickly become bawdy, making double entendres and speaking openly of their frustrations with upper-class husbands, whose sexual preferences tend more to lower-class mistresses than to their wives. Lady Fidget expands upon the fraudulence of honor, indicting both ladies and gentlemen: "Our reputation? Lord! Why should you not think that we women make use of our reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive

the world with less suspicion? Our virtue is like the statesman's religion, the Quaker's word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour: but to cheat those that trust us."

Lady Fidget is in such a confessional mood that she soon makes open reference to Horner's being her lover. The revelation shocks Dainty Fidget and Mistress Squeamish, each of whom thought that Horner was her own exclusive lover. Lady Fidget persuades the other ladies that it is in everyone's best interest to overcome their jealousies and cooperate in keeping Horner's secret.

Sir Jasper Fidget enters with Old Lady Squeamish, and then The Boy enters to announce the arrival of two gentlemen and a lady. Horner asks his guests to go into another room while he sends away the new visitors, then orders The Boy to detain the visitors below. Horner then fetches Margery and tries to convince her to go home before her husband, Jack Pinchwife, discovers her. Margery refuses, saying that she does not intend ever to return to her husband but plans instead to marry Horner. To the objection that she cannot marry Horner because she is already married, she returns that Londoners seem to take new spouses as a matter of course. Hearing the new visitors coming up, Horner sends Margery into the other room again.

Pinchwife enters with Alethea Pinchwife, Frank Harcourt, Mr. Sparkish, Lucy, and a parson. Pinchwife apparently wants Horner to attest that Alethea has recently visited Horner's lodging in his company; Alethea and Lucy have been disputing the point. Horner, in order not to expose Margery in the next room, plays along with the pretense that the disguised Margery was actually Alethea; as he says in an aside, "Now must I wrong one woman for another's sake." Only Lucy knows everything that is really going on, saying in an aside, "Now could I speak, if I durst, and solve the riddle, who am the author of it."

Alethea, incapable of clearing up the matter by herself, turns to Harcourt and tells him that, while the censure of the others does not trouble her, she regrets the loss of his good opinion. Harcourt responds gallantly: "Madam, then have no trouble. You shall now see 'tis possible for me to love too, without being jealous. I will not only believe your innocence myself, but make all the world believe it." He then turns to Horner and announces, "I must now be concerned for this lady's honour." Horner replies obscurely that he, too, must be concerned for a lady's honor, though he does not explain the connection of his lady's honor to that of Alethea. The two men have reached a stalemate when Margery pokes her head in.

Pinchwife is in the middle of insisting that Alethea must marry Horner, who has allegedly wronged her honor, rather than Harcourt; he lays his hand on his sword in order to threaten the recalcitrant Horner, and then Margery intervenes. The parson, she says, should marry Horner to her rather than to Alethea. Pinchwife, suddenly undeceived,

draws his sword on Margery; Horner objects, and Pinchwife turns to threaten him instead, then is restrained by Harcourt.

Sir Jasper enters with his train of ladies, demanding to know what is going on. Pinchwife indicates that Horner has cuckolded him and suggests that he may have cuckolded Sir Jasper's wife as well. Sir Jasper finds the whole notion ludicrous and moves to whisper to Pinchwife the news of Horner's impotence. Pinchwife insists, however, that Horner "has whored my wife, and yours too, if he knows her, and all the women he comes near." The startled Sir Jasper then demands to know of his wife and sister whether Horner's impotence has been a sham. Without waiting for an answer from the ladies, he then turns to Horner himself, asking, "art thou a dissembler, a rogue? Hast thou—?"

Lucy whispers to Horner that she can extricate everyone, "if [Margery] will just hold her tongue." Horner indicates his gratitude, and Lucy turns to Pinchwife, saying: "Your wife is innocent, I only culpable. For I

put her upon telling you all these lies concerning my mistress, in order to the breaking off the match between Mr. Sparkish and her, to make way for Mr. Harcourt." Margery's coming in disguise to Horner's lodging was merely part of the ruse, not an indication that she loves Horner. Here Margery breaks in, protesting that "I do love Mr. Horner with all my soul, and nobody shall say me nay." Horner tries in vain to quiet her, and Pinchwife makes another threat.

Mr. Dorilant enters with The Quack, to the relief of Horner, who calls upon The Quack to attest to his impotence. The Quack obligingly whispers to Sir Jasper, "on the word of a physician," that Horner could not possibly have cuckolded him. Sir Jasper readily believes this medical testimony and apologizes promptly to his wife. He then passes on the information to Pinchwife, who is incredulous and resists even the promise that half the surgeons in London can swear to Horner's infirmity. Pinchwife is moved only by the information that "all the town has heard the report of him": he probes, "But does all the town believe it?" The Quack polls the Londoners present, who confirm that they have "heard the late sad report of poor Mr. Horner." Dorilant goes so far as to call him "an errant French capon."

Only Margery dissents, protesting, "'Tis false, sir; you shall not disparage poor Mr. Horner, for to my certain knowledge—." The other ladies break in with expressions of their confidence in Horner's deficiency, and Alethea urges her brother to believe in Margery's innocence: "Women and Fortune are truest still to those that trust 'em." Lucy adds, "And any wild thing grows but the more fierce and hungry for being kept up, and more dangerous to the keeper."

Among the concluding remarks, Harcourt indicates his impatience to be a husband, the Pinchwives each indicate their distaste for their marriage, and Lucy insists to Pinchwife that Margery's expression of love for Horner "was but the usual innocent revenge on a husband's jealousy." Margery reluctantly confirms this lie, and Pinchwife resigns himself to accepting the story, though it does not convince him: "For my own sake fain I would all believe; / Cuckolds, like lovers, should themselves deceive."

### **Epilogue.**

In an Epilogue, the actress playing Lady Fidget addresses the rakes in the audience, warning that though the would-be Horners may impress other men with their sexual exploits, nevertheless there is "no coz'ning" (i.e. fooling) **the women**.

## Themes in act oneCountry wife

### 1. Immorality

Horner is a well-known rake and his desire to sleep with ladies is way beyond that he has so far ruined his chances and therefore has to find new ways of enjoying his hobby. This is why Pinchwife worries so much when Horner tells him that by his looks he must be married. Pinchwife intends to conceal this information from Horner which shows that Horner is feared and well known to cuckold other men. He is presented as a womanizer whose only pleasure is to sleep with different women, if possible all women. Our eyes cannot miss to observe this kind of immorality in the play.

In relation to the above, having ruined his chances of getting close to ladies but cannot give up on his desires, Horner decides to pay a fake doctor The Quack to spread a rumor that he is impotent and is no longer a threat to men's wives. He is so much determined that when the doctor expresses concern over him ruining his life with ladies forever, he laughs at him and says that the scheme will work out and so far a negligent man sir Jasper Fidget has invited Horner to dine and play cards with his wife at his house having believed the rumor. By putting up such a scheme in shows how immoral Horner is.

Immorality in this society is also portrayed through what they read. Horner's magazines he refers to are pornographic magazines which are a symbol of immorality. To Horner, nothing a man can offer a woman which is not sex or sexual.



Lady fidget as well as Dainty are immoral . When Horner says that if he could, he would wrong lady fidget's honor, she asks him how he intends to do it. The sexual innuendo used here means "having sex". Though lady fidget looks curious after this, sir Jasper informs her that there is no way Horner would wrong her honor because he is a eunuch. It's observed that lady Fidget and Dainty show great disgust for Horner having been told that he's impotent. One wonders why a married woman like lady fidget would be concerned .It seems modern and stylish to have extra marital sex.

The women complain that noble men do not visit them but instead they spend their time with prostitutes or women without title. It is amazing that lady Fidget who is married thinks that it is fine to have sex outside marriage as long as it is with a 'man of quality'. This portrays immorality as the virtuous ladies seem to be unfaithful and the word fidelity is not in their vocabulary.

The fact that men of quality are promiscuous and behave dishonestly also develops immorality in the play. The ladies' complaints put this in limelight as these men are only of 'quality' in title but not in reputation. They pay and sleep with prostitutes which is very immoral.

Lady fidget is super excited when she hears Horner's impotence story. She appreciates Horner for protecting her and soon announces to Dainty and Squeamish that Horner is an excellent companion. She hopes that she can visit him freely without compromising her honor and of course Horner makes her his mistress. This starts a series of meetings between Horner and lady fidget in which they do all the immoral things hence immorality as a theme.

By Harcourt seducing Alethea , the theme of immorality is portrayed. Sparkish, a snob brings Harcourt to appreciate Alethea but instead Harcourt starts seducing her. He says that he had never been in love until he met Alethea .Harcourt being friends with Sparkish should not be seducing Alethea knowing she is his fiancée.

The unscrupulous Horner sees through Margery's disguise and in order to torment the jealous pinchwife kisses her and invites Harcourt and Mr. Dorilant to do the same. Horner knowing that Margery is pinchwife's wife should not be seducing her. To add an insult to injury Horner takes away the disguised Margery to the next walk after Pinchwife has gone to fetch a coach, kisses her and gives her oranges and dried fruits as gifts. The oranges symbolic and suggestive that Horner wants to have sex with her. Doing this in a man's face is totally unacceptable and immoral.

Harcourt's confession to Horner that he is in love with Sparkish's mistress and asking him for advice on how to steal her from him shows the level of immorality that is there in this society. Harcourt is jealous that Alethea is in love with Sparkish whom he despises and is trying all possible ways to steal her. As much as the self-conceited Sparkish is careless and always tries to avoid Alethea, it does not give Harcourt (his friend) any right to woo his fiancée. Harcourt's suggestion to Alethea that he comes with a priest the following morning to wed them before Sparkish comes with his shows that Harcourt is serious about betraying his friend which portrays immorality.

Margery's adventure in London life has hit high when after being forced to write a cruel letter to Horner, rewrites another love letter which she cunningly makes pinchwife deliver to Horner. In the letter, Margery makes sexual imaginations where Horner and her are in the country playing cards while she treads on his toes under the table and rubbing knees with him. This kind of seduction cannot surely leave any man the same and the audience expects Horner to be titillated. The immorality shown in this letter also proves that Margery is not so innocent and it seems the country wife also knows 'dirty'. As moralists, a married woman who makes such moves wonders us and we have to put her in our books of condemnation. Much as pinchwife is a nagging man, Margery shouldn't be hitting on Horner in this format which by the matter of fact shows why he is too jealous.

Immorality is also portrayed through Horner who confesses to the Quack that he has already spent time with wives, sisters and daughters of husbands. This womanizer seems to be on rampage and it seems his scheme is working for him. To prove a point to the quack and obviously the audience, he tells him to hide when he hears lady fidget coming. As soon as lady fidget enters, he immediately starts seducing her and later sleeps with her in the presence of her unsuspecting husband.

Furthermore, lady fidget in pretense of looking for China enters Horner's bedroom and later Horner follows her to make sure she doesn't trifle his things. The two lock themselves inside and have sex while sir Jasper Fidget waits outside. When she finally appears she is holding a piece of china and the weary Horner following from behind. The word China is an innuendo used to mean sex which exactly translates the action of the two adulterers.

Mistress Squeamish who seems to be so libidinous also portrays immorality in the play. This is reflected when she enters Horner's lodging and learns from sir

Jasper that Lady Fidget and Horner are together in the next room and immediately demands entry but finding the door locked she exits to seek another entrance. When Lady Fidget and Horner finally return, Mistress Squeamish also demands that "oh lord, I'll have some china too." Mistress Squeamish is ostensibly asking for sex in pretense of China but being tired Horner protests that he has no China left which also translates that he is too weary for the activity.

The promiscuous behavior of these honorable ladies and Horner present the theme of immorality right into our eyes. Having drunk and sung bowdly songs, the virtuous gang led by Lady Fidget begins cursing their men for leaving them alone and confessing to have gallants. Lady Fidget suggests that she and other ladies should find for themselves to give them satisfaction. As married women, these ladies are expected to be faithful to their husbands but it's not the case with them. Their immorality is further portrayed when Lady Fidget gets drunk and names

Horner as her gallant and invites others to name theirs. When the rest of the ladies name

Horner as theirs too, Lady Fidget calls upon them not to mind because 'sisters share'

## **2. Deception**

Horner in order to get easy access to women without suspicion spreads a rumor through Quack that he is a eunuch meaning that he is impotent. The quack does the job well and apparently everyone in town knows that Horner is impotent. Sir Jasper even has to lie that his coach has broken at Horner's house so that to confirm the rumor. Sparkish, Dorilant and Harcourt all believe that he is a eunuch.

Horner's pretense to hate women and that he wants nothing from them also brings out the theme. When Jasper invites him to greet his wife, he says that 'I'll kiss no man's wife...' This is one of his tricks to show the public that he cannot do anything with women and fortunately for him, people have swallowed his bait. Sir Jasper says, 'so the report is true, I find his aversion to the sex...'

Lady Fidget who has a reputation of being notoriously virtuous pretends to shun the company of rakes such as Horner. She says, 'a woman is hated by them for loving her husband...' yet she's known for finding gallants. When Horner tells her that he has nothing to offer her and has brought nothing from France, not even L'Ecole des Filles [a French magazine], she accuses her of compromising her

honor and Horner tells her that he would do so if he could. The sexual innuendo 'wrong my honor' seems to interest lady fidget. When sir Jasper informs her that Horner is impotent, she seems more disgusted by him than the idea of Horner having sex with her.

Horner again clearly brings out the theme of deception through his conversation with the quack after the Jaspers have left. He tells the quack that ladies such as lady Fidget and Dainty who show aversion to impotent men love the spot and therefore potential targets of his. Lady fidget and Dainty value their reputation as respectable women because reputation keeps them from being suspected. They trick the audience in the first act with their disgust of rakes but in act 2, they confess that having affairs with another man is okay as long as it is not known. The ladies accuse men of quality neglecting them and also claim that when they have affairs with quality men, they tell everyone. As lady fidget argues that its good to sleep with men of quality because when they are caught the shame is less, mrs squeamish says it's fun to have men of less quality. How ridiculous it is that ladies of Horner discuss sleeping with men.

Pinchwife has Margery dress like a man when she goes out in order to keep men from seducing her. It however ends in tears when Horner sees through the disguise at once and uses it as an opportunity to kiss her without her husband being able to protest. Pinchwife's intention to take in others boomerangs and apparently has to deal with the pain of seeing his wife kissed. This proves that you cannot fool all people all the time and using deceptive measures to achieve something may not yield the intended results.

Horner continues to pretend to be the opposite of what he is to hide his true intentions. In the new exchange in the city center Harcourt and Dorilant are confused that Horner will go to dine with ladies yet he claims to hate women. Horner lies that because he hates women, he wishes to spend time with them to make fun of them and get them drunk so that he can take revenge on them by exposing them as drunkards. This demonstrates horner's deceptive nature hence the theme.

Harcourt in his bid to marry Alethea throws on a disguise in which he dresse up as a parson and lies to Sparkish that he is Ned( Harcourt's twin brother) who is a priest and accompanies Sparkish. Alethea who is clear sighted sees through Harcourt's ruse and informs Sparkish that Harcourt is disguising as a chaplain. Ironically, Sparkish who believes that he is very intelligent is fooled. Harcourt has deceived him that Ned is his twin brother and that " the midwife put her garter

about Frank's neck to differentiate them" and the gullible Sparkish believes him. This ruse later leads to Alethea's cancellation of the wedding because of the fake chaplain. What is amazing in the whole of this drama is that Sparkish continues to defend his ignorance as Alethea strives to make him see truth. Lucy who has also seen the disguise in good faith sides with Harcourt in order to make this marriage invalid as she clearly sees that Sparkish has no love for Alethea making her deceptive too.

The deceptive Horner deceives Lady Fidget that she is the only lady who knows the truth about his impotence. Lady Fidget who cares about public opinion but not virtue is concerned if Horner has told other women about his secret lest should they spread the rumor and she gets dishonored. When Horner assures her, she throws herself into Horner's arms just in time as Sir Jasper walks in. In order to keep their lies, she quickly pretends that she has been tickling Horner and invites Jasper to tickle him too while Horner also pretends to be annoyed with Lady Fidget and begs Sir Jasper to keep his wife under control. Sir Jasper simply believes them unaware that he's been duped. Not only is Lady Fidget deceived but also Sir Jasper.

Furthermore when Lady Fidget visits Horner alone, we learn that she had deceived Sir Jasper that she was going to buy China. When Sir Jasper finds her at Horner's place, she convinces him that she had come to fetch Horner to escort her but understanding that Horner has some China, she is begging him to have some but Horner cannot let her. She then resolves to enter in Horner's bedroom get herself China. Horner who is concerned that she will trifle his things, follows her leaving Sir Jasper out. Later when the two come back, Lady Fidget is holding a piece of China while Horner following her. The word China is Horner's code for sex and it's now clear that it's what they were doing while inside. Amazingly Sir Jasper who cannot figure this out remains out laughing as his wife is being lured by Horner.

When Pinchwife corners Margery and demands she completes the letter she was writing to Horner, she comes up with a plan in which she passes the blame to Alethea saying she is writing it on her behalf also portrays deception. Margery who seems horny and badly wants to lie with Horner tells Pinchwife that had her write a letter to Horner so that in case Horner tries to use it to shame her, it would not be in her handwriting. The jealous man believes this ruse since he had heard Horner saying that Sparkish had a rival hence deception as a theme in the play.

To add on that, Margery finds herself in a web of lies in order to survive the wrath of Mr. Pinchwife. Having lied to Mr. Pinchwife that the letter she was writing is Alethea's and Mr. Pinchwife insisting on talking to Alethea, Mrs. Pinchwife cunningly stops him from going to Alethea's room claiming she will be angry with her and demands she talks to her first. She exits and later comes back with well-designed lies in which she says that Alethea wants to be taken to Horner at once but with conditions that she wears a mask, doesn't speak a word and putting out the lights in the room. Pinchwife whose main objective is to marry Alethea off to Horner so that Horner doesn't encroach on his Margery, quickly accepts these lies and blows the candle out. Margery slips again and when she returns, she is masked and in Alethea's clothes. Pinchwife leads Margery to Horner thinking he taking Alethea hence deception.

In order to make peace and deflect tension created when Mr. Pinchwife sees Margery at Horner's and draws to attack Horner and Margery, Lucy lies that all the confusion stems from her effort to break up Sparkish and Alethea's relationship. Though this is done in good faith, Lucy is being deceptive thus developing the theme. She also lies that Margery left the house in a disguise in order to witness Alethea's wedding since Mr. Pinchwife would not let her go. Though Pinchwife is reluctant at accepting this lie, he finally believes and Lucy's lies save the day as the play ends.

### **3. love and relationship**

Horner's ploy comes to life because he knows that women are not content with their husbands. When Quack suggests to Horner that once this rumor has spread, women will want nothing to do with him, he cheerfully agrees that women will "avoid him as much as they avoid their husbands". Horner implies that married women dislike their husbands. This reflects the common idea about marriage that suggests that people forced to spend all their time together in marriage inevitably end up hating each other.

Sir Jasper is constantly trying to get rid of Lady Fidget so that he can spend more time on his favorite hobby, 'business'. He invites Horner to his house 'I should be glad to see you at my house... dine with and play cards with my wife' he prefers business to his wife and says 'business must be preferred always before love and company...' He then leaves his wife in the hands of Horner whom he believes is a eunuch and proudly says, 'it's as much a husband's prudence to

provide innocent diversions for a wife...' This shows that Jasper doesn't really care about his wife as long as she doesn't cheat on him.

Marriage is considered bad for men as it robs them of their freedom and good company. Married men are often nagged by their wives that you can tell a married man from their appearance. When Pinchwife enters in act 1, Horner says that he can tell that pinchwife has recently married because of 'the glumness of thy countenance and slovenliness of thy habit...' the beliefs not only demotivates men from marrying but also make them marry for reasons beyond love.

It should also be noted that People marry for convenience and this is portrayed through pinchwife who has married Margery, a country woman because he believes that she will not cheat on him. He tells the men that his wife is stupid and plain so that they don't seduce her. His only fear is being made a cuckold and believes that by keeping Margery ignorant, his honor safe. He is forty nine years and has been known to be lecherous. When horner asks him why he has married now, he says that couldn't 'keep a whore to myself' this suggests that pinchwife is getting old and has married Margery to replace the women he has been paying to sleep with. Of course, this not love and we expect to see a lot of strifes in this relationship.

The theme of marriage strife is further portrayed through Margery who reflects unhappiness in marriage. She is unhappy with the way pinchwife controls and refuse her to experience town life. Pinchwife keeps Margery in a cage just like a pet in fear of her learning the bad behaviors of London and cheating on him. This is clearly observed when sparkish and Harcourt come at pinchwife's lodging and he immediately thrusts her in the house and locks it. This is oppressive and abusive as Margery is kept under lock and key as though he is a prisoner.

On the other hand sparkish who seems not jealousy of Alethea is very unconcerned and doesn't care about Alethea's feelings. He is marrying Alethea for money. He is a 'cracked title' which means he is broke and does not have money and therefore marries Alethea because of her money but not love. This is evidenced by the way he treats her. He brings Harcourt to show her off in order to make himself good. He goes ahead to invite Harcourt to seduce Alethea. This makes Alethea uncomfortable and totally embarrassed. Being new lovers, we expect to see love in the air but what we see is a man who is ready to neglect his wife before he marries her officially.

Married women seem to embrace extra-marital relationships which portrays marriage strife. When lady fidget, Dainty and Squeamish are left alone, they complain that men of quality never come to visit them but instead spend their time running after common women. Lady fidget suggests that having extra marital affairs with a man of quality makes it less shameful and Dainty says that it is less fun which portrays the kind of promiscuity among the married couples. It also reflects the unhappiness in homes as it should be agreed that happy couples will not lament over not meeting men.

In order to escape responsibilities Jasper fidget leads Horner to his wife and informs her that he has an engagement that evening and therefore will not be able to escort the ladies to the theatre and then suggests that Horner takes them. When lady Fidget refuses, Jasper convinces her that Horner is bad at playing cards and she may cheat him of his money. He even goes ahead to invite him to take lady fidget aside and persuade her himself. What we see is a man who is inviting another man to sleep with his wife. It is quite surprising that when lady fidget hears the truth about Horner's impotence, she is enraptured and feels Horner is a 'true man of honor' as he has ruined his reputation for her sake. As the husbands get rid of their wives, the wives willingly and happily welcome gallants. What a family!

The theme of marriage strife is further depicted in act three scene one when Margery is depressed because of her husband's refusal to let her go to town. The troubled couple seems to head for more troubles as Mrs. Pinchwife informs Mr. Pinchwife that she has been ill since Mr. Pinchwife told her about a man who is in love with her. Pinchwife openly tells her her sickness will make him ill with jealousy. Margery does not realize that she is supposed to be faithful to Pinchwife and should not be sick of any other man's love. This clearly shows that even though they are married, she doesn't love him and she does not realize that she has to at least pretend for their marriage's sake.

Sparkish just like Jasper fidget is not concerned about spending time with his wife to be, Alethea. He is actually concerned about his reputation at the court and impressing the king. This is portrayed when he asks Harcourt to hide him in order that Alethea doesn't see him because he wants to spend the evening at the court and dine with the king. We can clearly see that he doesn't really love her and he is already casting her aside in the manner of a careless husband. This is exactly the reason why Harcourt makes fun of him, flatters and compliments his mistress in front of him without realizing it. It's only by Alethea's loyalty to Sparkish that Harcourt doesn't succeed in his endeavors.



Pinchwife's jealous has driven him into forcing Margery to write a letter to Horner in which she denounces any connection with him. When pinchwife tells Margery to open the letter with "sir", and Margery asks if it shouldn't be "dear sir", he threatens to carve the word "whore" on her face using a knife. He also instructs her to write to Horner that his kisses repulsed her and that she wants nothing to with him anymore. Margery pleads to leave out some of the harsh words but again mr.pinchwife threatens her until she finishes the letter. The whole scene reflects domestic violence that wives suffer by jealous husbands who believe that their wives are their property and therefore can do whatever they want with them.

It's also clear that mrs.Pinchwif no longer loves mr.pinchwife and if presented with any opportunity, she would opt out. This is portrayed when after writing the pinchwife dictated letter and pinchwife goes to get a seal and wax, mrs.Pinchwif writes a second letter that complements and seduces horner and swaps it with the first when pinchwife returns. The unsuspecting mr.pinchwife triumphantly tells her that the letter is going straight to Horner and Margery enthusiastically agrees that it is fine. Pinchwif has not only taught Margery to write letters but also becomes a messenger to run errands for her. We observe that the already fragile relationship is now boiling and anytime Margery is going to be on Horner's sex menu.

Marriage without love does not improve relationships but rather breeds infidelity, dishonesty and hatred between a couple which are all elements of marriage strife. To explain this, we need to turn our eyes to Margery who is officially married to pinchwife but loves him no more and apparently has caught the "London disease" in which she is sick of her husband and her gallant Horner. She confesses that the thought of mr.pinchwife causes her nausea whereas the thought of Horner fills her with desire. She goes ahead to write a letter in which she wishes that Horner frees her from "this unfortunate match". Mr. pinchwife who enters abruptly reads the letter and draws his sword on his wife only for Sparkish entering by coincidence that Margery survives. Whereas we may blame Margery for her demeaning gestures, we also appreciate Pinchwif's contribution in this. She does not find peace and happiness in this marriage and perhaps tries to find the desired joy somewhere else hence the theme.

Margery Pinchwif who is tired of Mr. pinchwife finds herself away to Horner's lodging. Unlike other town women like lady fidget, Dainty and mistress squeamish who only have sex with Horner for pleasure, Margery is determined to

leave pinchwife for good and marry Horner. Her refusal to return home when Horner asks her to and protesting that Horner is not a eunuch and that she loves in Act five scene four shows that she no longer wants to be married to mr.pinchwife. Though she later realizes that she cannot escape her marriage and goes back to Pinchwife, a point of dissatisfaction in marriage is already made. True, she is married to Pinchwife but she is so unhappy that divorce is a far better option.

#### **4. Jealous and suspicion**

Pinchwife who has newly married is very jealousy. He is furious that Horner knows that he married. When he is asked about his bride, he says that she is ugly, has no attraction and homely. This awkward description of his wife aims to ward off the three wits from his wife.

During the play, the previous day, Pinchwife sits his wife among prostitutes and keeps his eyes on her so that she is not admired by other men. Pinchwife is so jealous that seeing his wife with another person makes him believe she has cheated. Even at the play besides sitting her among prostitutes, he keeps his eyes on her till the play ends

The theme is further developed when Horner insists on asking pinchwife who the pretty young lady he had at the play the previous day was and pinchwife realizing that Horner saw his wife vows not to take her to the play again. He then storms out and Harcourt remarks that he's gone to beat his wife.

Pinchwife keeps his wife Margery locked up so that she doesn't learn deceitful behavior from the outside world. At the beginning of Act 2, Margery complains to Alethea that pinchwife never lets her go abroad .Alethea tells her that pinchwife is simply jealousy. It is however observed that as pinchwife forbids Margery from going out, she becomes more curious. For example when pinchwife tells her that when she goes to town men may see her and fall in love with her, she wonders who could fall in love with a country lady like her. Pinchwife then informs her that one of the lewdest fellows saw her and is already in love with her. In the next act we meet an anxious country wife

Jealous and suspicion is portrayed still when lady fidget, Dainty fidget and lady squeamish surprisingly come to pinchwife's lodging to take Margery with them to the play. Upon asking the whereabouts of Margery, the ladies are shocked by pinchwife's replies. He comes out with excuses first that she is not at home, then

she has a contagious small pox. When the women are not deterred, he just moves out and Mrs squeamish concludes that 'here is an example of jealousy' This theme is further portrayed when Margery insists that she has to go abroad and pinchwife who is reluctant at first finally accepts to let go but only if she puts on a disguise so that the young men of the town do not see her. He decides to dress her in her brother's suit. Later on when they are met by Horner, Dorilant and Harcourt, Horner is able to see through the disguise but pretend to be taken by Margery's disguise in order to torment pinchwife. He touches and kisses her in front of her husband and pinchwife is helpless since he has already told them that 'she' is his in-law. its because of jealous that pinchwife suffers this shame, he has laid his bed and now has to sleep in it. Had Margery been dressed in women clothes, horner wouldn't dare do what he does to her.

Mr.Pinchwife's jealous has blinded him that he cannot see margery's innocence. When Horner gifts her with oranges, the innocent country wife takes them in good faith and even offers one to Mr.pinchwife. This clearly gestures her innocence as she cannot interpret the sexual connotations behind it. The jealous pinchwife's reaction of thrusting away the orange makes Margery angry and consequently hating him.Pinchwife throws the oranges because of jealous hence the theme

Due to extreme jealous, pinchwife continues to ask his wife to tell him what happened during her encounter with Horner. Mrs. Pinchwife protests that she has told him a hundred times but Pinchwife insists that he has to hear again. Realizing that Margery is Jealous drives him into forcing Margery to write a letter to Horner in which she denounces any connection with him. When pinchwife tells Margery to open the letter with "sir", and Margery asks if it shouldn't be "dear sir", he threatens to carve the word "whore" on her face using a knife. He also instructs her to write to Horner that his kisses repulsed her and that she wants nothing to with him anymore. Margery pleads to leave out some of the harsh words but again Mr.Pinchwife threatens her until she finishes the letter.

## **5. Hypocrisy**

Horner's pretense that he is impotent brings out the theme of hypocrisy. In order to get close to ladies without suspicion by their husbands and guardians, Horner pays The Quack to spread a romour that during an operation to treat him of a venereal disease, he was castrated and therefore he is a eunuch. He even shows disgust for ladies in front of their husbands to verify his ruse. For example

when the fidgets come to his lodging, he refuses to greet the ladies and calls them monsters. Sir Jasper who has had the rumor thinks it is true and so invites Horner to his house. Horner uses this pretense to lie with ladies many of who are married which very hypocritical of him.

Horner's selfishness and hypocrisy doesn't stop at lying and pretending that he is impotent but also hates those who do what he does best, ie. Pretense. He says that he dislikes Sparkish because he pretends to be something he is not. It is true that Sparkish is a coxcomb who thinks that he is witty yet he is a fool but it's ironical that Horner criticizes him yet we all know that Horner is surely the custodian of pretense. He has made the world to believe that he is impotent yet as far as we know, he is very much active and by a mile.

Lady Fidget and Dainty show dislike for Horner because he wrongs their honor yet the truth is they hate him for being impotent which is hypocritical of them. They are ladies who assume honor and reputation yet they are not virtuous at all. When Horner says that he would wrong Lady Fidget's honor, she becomes excited as she understands his statement from the sexual angle, which means to have sex. When Sir Jasper tells her that there is no way Horner can wrong her honor since he is impotent, the ladies are furious and show much hatred for him. This shows that they are promiscuous ladies who don't wish to keep company of eunuch but that of active men for obvious reasons.

Horner pretends to be the opposite of what he is in order to hide his true intentions. In the new exchange in the city center Harcourt and Dorilant are confused that Horner will go to dine with ladies yet he claims to hate women. Horner lies that because he hates women, he wishes to spend time with them to make fun of them and get them drunk so that he can take revenge on them by exposing them as drunkards. This demonstrates Horner's hypocrisy since his main intention is to sleep with as many ladies as he can but not the reasons he gives.

The theme of hypocrisy is further portrayed when Lady Fidget gets drunk and reveals her secret with Horner and to everyone's surprise, Horner has told them that they are the only ones who know about the secret. The ladies are angry at Horner for betraying their trust but at the same time they cannot expose him because they fear he could expose them too. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that they want to continue protecting their reputation and honor rather than being virtuous. In fact they use these disguises of being virtuous to continue having fun as the society doesn't realize how sinful they are.

Through the Quack who has made people to think he is a genuine doctor the theme of hypocrisy is portrayed. This is brought out not only by spreading the rumor that Horner is impotent but also coming to confirm it. In act five scene five, pinchwife and sir Jasper are furious that Horner has cuckolded and Mr. Pinchwife draws on Horner. When the quack comes, he swears to sir Jasper that it's true Horner is a eunuch saying "upon heavens and the word of a physician. The gullible Jasper believes and whispers to Pinchwife who also reluctantly believes so.

By Margery betraying her husband to Horner is also hypocritical. Having met Horner in the new exchange, Mrs. Pinchwife has been love sick and finally writes a letter which cunningly tricks pinchwife to take to Horner. She goes ahead to trick pinchwife into taking her to Horner disguised as Alethea. Horner lies with her just like other woman and wants to dispose her but due to the arrival of lady fidget and the rest of her virtuous gang, he is unable to send her away. When Horner finally gets a gap to talk to her about going away, she protests and says that she doesn't want to go back to pinchwife but to marry Horner. By showing interest in leaving pinchwife, Margery is betraying the marriage vows she made hence hypocrisy.

### **Techniques in the country wife**

Dramatic techniques are devices used by the playwright to develop the plot of the play, reveal characters, develop themes etc. In the country wife, the dramatic techniques used include symbolism, irony, nomenclature, disguise, sarcasm, humour etc.

#### **Symbolism.**

This is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. Symbols in the country wife include the following;

#### **Signs**

Signs represent reputation in the play The Country Wife and symbolize the way in which characters use their reputation to advertise things about themselves which they wish to be widely known.

- When Sparkish first arrives in at Horner's house, he tells Horner a joke that suggests that Horner is a 'sign' of a man to imply that he is impotent.
- In act three scene two while on the street in London, Margery is amazed by the painted signs on shop fronts which depict horned animals like rams, bulls etc

and pinchwife says 'if every husband's proper sign here were visible, they would be all like'. This implies that all men are cheated on and therefore all women are unfaithful

## **China**

The word china in play is a sexual innuendo used to represent sex. Horner and his lovers use it as a code word to hide their acts.

When Horner takes Margery aside in convent garden stealing her from pinchwife's watch, he gives her 'china oranges' which she brings to pinchwife. Although Horner doesn't actually have sex with her, pinchwife comments that 'you have only squeezed my orange, I suppose and given it to me again.'

The term china comes again in the play when Horner and Lady Fidget pretend to be fighting over china when they are really having sex while Sir Jasper waits innocently outside the door.

## **Blindness**

Blindness is associated with love.

When Harcourt first meets Alithea, he says that he could look at her until he was blind as Sparkish. Sparkish is indeed blind since he cannot see that Harcourt is courting Alithea. This is in line with the old tradition that lovers are blind since they are biased and therefore cannot see follies of others.

Wycherley however subverts this tradition to mean that they are only the characters with true love that can see. Harcourt can see immediately that Sparkish does not love Alithea but is marrying her for her money. Likewise Alithea is able to see Harcourt's disguise as a parson. Sparkish who is not a lover is the one who is metaphorically blind since he can't see the truth about himself or that his friends make fun of him. While Sparkish doesn't believe Alithea when she is accused of having an affair with Horner, Harcourt sees through this instantly and stands up for Alithea's innocence.

## **Character symbol**

- (1) Pinchwife. He is a symbol of patriarchal impulses in society which seek to censor and eradicate female promiscuity but inadvertently encourage them to be rebels and do the same vice they are trying to prohibit
- (2) Sparkish is a symbol of failed men. He allows Harcourt to court his wife in front of him to prove that he is witty yet stupid.

(3) Sir Jasper is a symbol of business men who abandon their wives in preference to business.

(4) Althea is a symbol of truth and holiness.

## **2. Disguise**

Disguise is used in the following ways;

- Horner spreads a rumour that he is impotent and society believes him.
- Margery disguises as a man
- Harcourt disguises as a priest
- Margery disguises as Althea
- There is disguise of true emotions and intentions for example Lady Fidget, dainty and squeamish. Sir Jasper wants to relieve his duty of a husband and leaves his wife and sister at Horner's.
- Sparkish pretends to love Althea yet the truth is that he is after her money.

## **3. Nomenclature**

The names of the character reflect what they are or are used ironically to suggest that they are opposite of what their names mean.

- Horner can be associated with being horny since his intention is to sleep with as many women as possibly can. He goes around putting 'horns' on other men by sleeping with their wives
- Sparkish implies a young fellow who would be thought elegant and witty yet in reality he is a fool whose pretense is observed and mocked by other characters.
- Sir Jasper. Jasper is the English form of Casper, one of the three wise men. This is used ironically as he thinks he wise to find diversion for his sister and wife yet not but bringing them to Horner.
- Pinchwife. To pinch is to harass or inflict etc. this portrays his violent nature through his empty threats 'write as bid or I will write whore with this knife in your face'
- Althea signifies truth and commitment to the word.
- Squeamish is ironically used to mean one who is very proper and cannot stand to hear any sexual references or story.

## **4. asides**

In this technique in which the character speaks to audience but is unheard by fellow characters. This is used throughout the play, characters such as Pinchwife, Alithea, Sir Jasper etc speak to us in asides.

## **5. Prologue**

This is spoken by actor playing Horner and says that the wits in the audience will criticize the play. In the play Sparkish in act 3 scene 2 criticizes playwrights and is ridiculed by other character.

## **6. Epilogue**

This is spoken by the actor playing the character of Lady Fidget and addresses the rakes in the audience that those who act like Horner may impress other men with sexual exploits, they will never fool women.

## **7. Monologue |soliloquy**

Act 4 scene 2, pg 245 Pinchwife left alone wonders women have more invention in love than men.....have more desires, more soliciting more lust..' this portrays his jealousy and chauvinism.

Act 4 scene 2 page 248, Pinchwife plots to deal with Horner as he leaves to take the letter to him.

Act 4 scene 4 page 259, Margery confesses catching the London disease and plans to write to Horner. In the monologue she says that she dreads her husband but feels anxious when she thinks about Horner etc..

Act 5 scene one page 263, Pinchwife's selfishness and jealousy make him to resolve to give his sister away to Horner other than being cuckolded ' well, I resolve it; Horner shall have her....'

Etc

## **8. Letters.**

After interrogating his wife regarding her encounter with Harry, Pinchwife orders her to write a letter to Horner as he dictates renouncing any further connection with Horner. When Pinchwife goes to pick wax to seal it, Margery quickly composes her own letter .....

Another letter is written by Margery when she longs for Horner. While she is engaged Pinchwife comes and reads the letter aloud. He finds out that Margery is begging Horner to rescue her from her unfortunate match. Margery though



later uses her wit to convince pinchwife that its alithea that had told her to write the letter on her behalf.

## 9. Irony

### Lessons from the play

- ✓ Appearances can sometimes be deceptive
- ✓ Lack is the mother of invention
- ✓ Always marry the person that you love
- ✓ What you do in darkness is revealed in daylight
- ✓ Jealousy and suspicion is the bane of love
- ✓ Domestic violence is a source of divorce
- ✓ Ignorance is bliss
- ✓ Love many but trust a few
- ✓ Marriage is not for convenience

### Relevance to our society:

- Men have ignored their responsibilities as they opt for business
- Urban women due to the above normally find for themselves side lovers □ Many men prefer marrying women from the country to town women □ People pretend a lot.
- There is a lot of domestic violence in our society.
- Men think they can cheat or marry more women but women should not even try.

## Yusuf K. Serunkuma: The Snake Farmers

### Introduction

The play '**The snake farmers**' is a satire that exposes the inefficiency of African leaders as well as misuse of power. The play is set in an imaginary state of Sahara, in a village called kayunga. The village is facing a snake epidemic. Many people and animals have died due to snake bites. The situation is so intense that it attracts the attention of a British news network [BNN] that reports the story . Emmy and Matt, a white couple in London is concerned and decide to extend a helping hand. Concerts and fundraisings are organized with intention of saving Sahara. Missionaries arrive in kayunga with equipment and money to help in fighting the snakes. After the pandemic, the leaders in

Kayunga realize how the epidemic has benefitted them. But now the snakes are gone, which means the aid has to stop too. What can they do to keep the aid flowing? ' we start a snake farm'

## **Plot summary**

### **Act 1 scene 1**

Setting: kayunga village, midday, village life

- Chairman Opobo and mzee Sekadde are concerned about the breaking news of the death of oyire's children who were found dead in their beds with swollen bellies.
- They lament and decide as elders to and stand with Oyire.
- As they walk away fromm sekadde's home, the two agree to call a meeting to arrange the burial.
- Sekadde **execuses** himself leaving Opobo alone.
- In a soliloquy Opobo recounts the problems Kayunga has faced which include slim,liberation wars, cattle rustling and now the new death.
- Sekadde comes back and the two head to Oyire's home.

### **Scene 2**

Setting: London  
Whites

- Matt and Emmy Brown chat over the weather in London, the welfare of their dog,floods in china and local politics.
- When it's news time, they switch to BNN.
- In the news Peter Stokes reports from Ndeba the capital of Sahara, about a mysterious deaths in the village of kayunga.
- He reports that the cause of the death is still unknown as there are no medical centers where an autopsy could be made. He however observes that the bodies had small snakelike bites.
- Matt and Emmy immediately get concerned and says that they always need to help Africa.
- Emmy brown agrees and promises to persuade their church members to organize a fundraising to help people of kayunga.
- The two lovers then plan to go the movies.

### **Scene 3.**

Setting: kayunga

In oyire's compound, Opobo and mzee sekadde console with Oyire and praise him for his braveness.

- Oyire calmly appreciates the unity the elders have shown.
- Opobo then wonders what the problem of the village is.
- Opio come out with superstitious claims that Oyire's children were bewitched but is quickly rebuked by Opobo.
- Lutalo, one of the villagers however observes that the cause of the deaths is snake bites.
- Oyire agrees with lutalo and says that the children had been bitten when they were stealing mangoes.
- The elders decide to fight snakes and they suggest local measures including forming committees to lead in the fight.
- The other villagers retire to their homes leaving opobo and sekadde at the bereaved family.

### **Act 2.**

Scene 1: setting: London park

- Opens in a park where a concert dubbed 'saving sahara' is organized.
- The MC calls the London mayor who gives a speech and contributes 5000 pounds to the cause.
- Emmy and Matt, the organisers move a distance from the park and are excited about the turn up and the success of their efforts.
- The two then rush home to catch up with the news about the new developments in sahara.
- In the news, it is reported that 150 people have died while 100 heads of cattle are also dead.
- Matt is frustrated at this and slumps into a chair.

### **Act 3.**

Scene 1: setting: kayunga

In kayunga, a missionary team led by brother Samson has arrived. They bring with them equipment to fight snakes including food.

A meeting is held, chairman Opobo welcomes the whites.

- Brother saamson introduces his team and displays the equipment they have brought. He also says they have brought with them some money.
- Sekadde suggests that they build a village store to keep the equipment and also build chairman opobo a better house since he's to keep the money.
- Sekadde again requests the whites to build a hospital for the village since the nearest is 35 miles away, which brother Samson agrees with.
- There is a general observation among all that the government is not doing their work.
- They then get guns and other equipment to start the snake hunt.

## **Scene 2**

Setting: Brown's home, London.

- Emmy and Matt talk about the situation in kayunga which has improved. The death have reduced five people per day from 20 people per day.
- Emmy observes that the people of London should feel good about such improvement.
- Matt then takes the family dog for a bath
- Emmy compares the dog to children in Africa and says it feeds better than them.

## **Scene 3.**

Setting: kayunga

- Opobo and Sekadde are taking tea at Opobo's home.
- The two elders chat. Opobo observes that they can now catch sleep since there are fewer snakes nowadays.

Sekadde excites himself that he benefited from the snake fight by diverting some money to finish his small house.

Meanwhile the educated man comes running with a newspaper in which the two elders have been published as the white collaborators who helped to end the snake epidemic.

- In the same newspaper a Whiteman who had died in the line of duty while fighting the snakes is remembered as a hero and honored.
- When the educated man leaves, the two elders express excitement about the positive change calamities bring.

Sekadde introduces the topic of discussion. The two have a sinister plan to rear snakes.

- Opobo is scared that snakes are dangerous and the plan may boomerang while running the farm.
- Sekadde assures him of safety and reminds him of his family background with snakes. He says he knows a woman two villages away who can give them protective medicine that they would use to protect their families.
- Wondering where the farm shall be located, Opobo is told that it will be put in the middle of the forest that belongs to Sekadde with hopes that after 4 months the snakes will ravage the village again.
- The two men agree to invest in the snake project.
- Sekadde gets a lamp to see his Opobo off as the two part.

### **Scene 6**

Setting: London, Browns living room.

- In their living room, Matt and Emily discuss their successes in helping Sahara.
- A hospital has been built and is serving people.  
It's now eight months and news of snake bites is no more.
- Emmy says that Africa needs their help everyday which Matt agrees with.
- Turning to the TV, Sahara is back in the news. The snakes are back in southern Sahara and 10 people have already died.
- Matt and Emmy are horrified and observe that they need to help again.

## **Characters**

### **Sekadde**

He is an elder in kayunga village and a friend to chairman opobo. He is around character turn from being an innovative, positive and developmental to being greedy and selfish. He's majorly influenced by the evil of donor money and his thirsty for more money makes him think of a very unfortunate idea of starting a snake farm. His characterized as follows.

- ✓ Cunning
- ✓ Social
- ✓ Opportunistic
- ✓ Greed
- ✓ Selfish
- ✓ Superstitious
- ✓ Creative
- ✓ Callous
- ✓ Materialistic
- ✓ Corrupt
- ✓ Deceitful

### **Opobo**

He is the chairman of kayunga village. He seems to be a concerned man who is both merciful and caring to his people. However he's convinced by sekadde to start up a snake farm. He is revealed as follows;

- ✓ Naïve
- ✓ Concerned
- ✓ Gullible
- ✓ Selfish
- ✓ Greedy
- ✓ Materialistic
- ✓ Incompetent
- ✓ Opportunistic

- ✓ Callous
- ✓ Superstitious
- ✓ Corrupt
- ✓ Lecherous

### **Matt and Emmy can be characterized as follows**

- ✓ Reliable
- ✓ Determined
- ✓ Generous
- ✓ Kind
- ✓ Daring
- ✓ Compassionate
- ✓ Loving and caring

Themes in snake farmers

### **Poverty**

This is the state of being poor. In the play The snake farmers people live in dire poverty. They are hungry and penniless. This is evidenced by a number of observations.

The fact that Oyire is praised to be the wealthiest man in the village raises eyebrows as he is the only man with an iron roofed house. It's however ironical that when the villagers come to console him, they can't get comfortable places to sit on but "finding anything they can put their bottoms on".

Besides oyire's children dying of snakes bites is unfortunate but the way they die also says a lot about living in a poverty stricken kayunga. Firstly by going to steal mangoes shows that Oyire couldn't afford buying for them mangoes or they were satisfied. When Oyire says that "thieves don't talk" referring to his late children's failure to talk after being bitten by snakes shows that the owner of the mango tree is protective of his mangoes yet in the village of a Sahara setting where such fruits are supposed to be in abundance. It can therefore be argued that the owner perhaps had the mango tree as his only survival.

The people in Kayunga sleep in grass thatched houses which shows that they are unable to construct permanent houses. To make it more visible, even the chairperson of the village has a grass thatched hut which moreover leaks.

The villagers walk barefoot; have no decent clothes which all show poverty in the village.

In one of the soliloquy's Emory Brown wishes that the children of Africa would eat as well as their dog.

Inefficiency of government/ bad governance

The government of Sahara just like most of African government is incompetent and does not so much care about the citizens. When Peter Stokes reports about the epidemic on BBN, he says that there is no health centre to do an autopsy to find out the cause of death of three children in Kayunga. The reporters and the villagers are now left to guess work as some attribute the death to witchcraft and others to snakebite.

The local leaders as put out by Sekadde have failed to manage their communities.

Sekadde says, "what happened to bulungi bwansi?" referring to the communal work that used to take place in Kayunga that is no more. The roads are bushy, the

environment not clean hence becoming a breeding ground for snakes. This shows that the leaders in Kayunga have failed to mobilize people to clean their residents.

The Sahara government is careless, incompetent and inefficient in many ways but not caring to find a solution for its dying people is the strangest. The people of Kayunga suffer snake bites but it's surprising that no government official shows but instead, it is the foreigners from Europe that come as put forward by Sekadde, "even our government to which we pay taxes has failed to show up and help and you are here!.."

The remote area of Kayunga which is not so remote as it is only a 100 kilometers from the city lacks a hospital. Sekadde suggests to the whites that they should put up a hospital treat the injured people as the only hospital is 35 kilometers away from the village. How can penniless, barefoot people walk all those miles for treatment?

The developments set up in Kayunga attributed to foreigners but not the government. The village now has a storage and a hospital all thanks to the white brothers. All this would have been a problem but the biggest question is where is the government of Sahara?

## **Corruption**

**In the** corruption is manifested through dishonesty, embezzlement and abuse of office. Sekadde is quick to point out that they need a storage building, a house for the chairman and a hospital. The cunningness in which he says all these and how he later brags about it shows that he pushes for these demands because he knows that they can be opportunities for him to benefit from.



When the village leaders, opobo and sekadde are entrusted with responsibility of keeping money to be used in the epidemic, they embezzle some of it. Mzee sekadde builds a new house. He openly says, “man eateth where he workth”.

Mugo who is entrusted with keeping and distributing bicycles to villagers in order to help in fighting the epidemic and ease the lives of the villagers sells some to the neighboring village. Tito says “ he stole some of the bicycles and now he is stealing our wives.

In order to continue tapping resources from the foreign donors, sekadde and Opobo hatch a plan to start a snake farm. The plan succeeds and we see whites planning to bring more help to Kayunga, which according to sekadde, they like giving a helping hand..

The corruption in sahara is captured in the conversation between Emmy and Matt when the latter informs Emmy that the UK government has forwarded 300 million dollars to sahara government and she is concerned if it will be put to proper use. This kind of untrustness is not based on vacuum as most money has been lost to corruption. No wonder strict instructions have been fixed on the donation.

### **Immorality**

The society of kayunga has morally degenerated. People don't care about others. The characters we meet are selfish, greedy and promiscuous.

It is absolute immorality as sekadde and opobo remorselessly plan to start a snake farm to their benefit . sekadde openly says that the whites killed the poor to be rich as they are and he wants to follow suit. Opobo is worried that the snakes would boomerang and kill their own as if other people whom the snakes would bite are lifeless. However, sekadde says he would contact a medicine woman who would give him medicine to safeguard their homes.

The boys in kayunga have morally degenerated. They are nowadays thieves who feared in the society. Opobo supports the idea of building a village store to safeguard the equipment least they should be stolen by the village boys. He say, “ there are boys in our area nowadays with long fingers”

The people of kayunga, men and women drink waragi in excess and lose their senses which is an example of immorality. In the African setting, burial ceremonies are respected but on one of the burial ceremonies dubbed “the waragi burial” people enjoyed alcohol as though there was no tomorrow.

The sexual immorality in the play is also worth noting. After the meeting at Oyire's home, Sekadde and Opobo remain behind to keep Oyire company. All is well until Sekadde says, “ ....there used to be unmarried girls around this place. Are they still

there?” this shows Sekadde as an old man with sexual appetite and he doesn’t shy away showing it in public.

Sekadde says that they should keep calamities going since sometimes they are life-changing calamities.

- The two observe that because of the epidemic and consequently the aid from the whites, the village has a hospital and, a store. The people have got bicycles, shoes while Opobo has built a house.
- Sekadde suggests that they have to keep the aid from their white friends coming but Opobo wonders how the aid will keep coming yet all the snakes have been wiped out.
- Sekadde then sends Opobo to look outside the hut lest should there be someone coming.
- Opobo checks and says no one was coming.
- Sekadde suggests that they start a snake farm.
- The two elders are interrupted by a visitor, Tito who has come to report an adultery case. Tito found his wife having sex with Mugo. Tito says that Mugo had sold some bicycles he was meant to distribute and got some money which gives him the power to steal others wives.
- The trio depart as Opobo goes to solve Tito’s affairs.

#### **Scene 4**

Setting : London

- In London, the Browns are having a conversation in their living room.
  - Emmy Brown informs her husband that the government of Sahara sent an official communication appreciating them for the good work well done. Matt also observes that the government of Britain has donated 300 million dollars to help a former colony ‘Sahala’ however with strict instructions on it.
- Emmy suggests that more help should be given to the people of Sahara.
- The two congratulate themselves for the success since there are no more reports about snake deaths.

#### **Scene 5**

**Setting: kayunga, night.**

- Sekadde and opobo are having supper at sekadde's house.
- The two chat on their successes since the pandemic.
- The sexual references used by the two village elders are also immoral. In the first scene Sekadde asks Opobo what makes him shout as if someone else is sleeping with his wife. When the educated man brings a newspaper to the two elders, Opobo asks him why he was running like a bull smelling a cow on heat. The sexual references used by these men show what they always think about.
  - Mugo is accused of sleeping Tito's wife which is a sign of immorality. Tito reports to Opobo, " I found my wife singing under Mugo.."
  - Chairman Opobo too is engaged in sexual immorality. Mzei Sekadde tells him, " these people have enabled you to find a concubine. I know the woman you started chewing the other day..."

- **Foreign Aid**

- Foreign aid and how it is used to reach the vulnerable is another issue of concern that serunkuma brings on table. In act 2 scene 2 Matt Brown shows disgust with Africans who embezzle money given to help the common people and suggests that it is better working with the community directly. When the British government donates 300 million dollars to the Sahara government, strict measures are put on how the money should be used.
- There are lots of negativities that come with foreign which include corruption, greed and immorality. Characters such as opobo who are good turn to be greedy and sell their soul to tap foreign donations after tasting it. They come up with odious projects like snake farming to keep aid coming. People who have benefited from the foreign aid money now steal others wives while the others drink themselves to rags.
- Foreign aid is also a deterrent to africa's creativity as portrayed in the play. When opobo shows concern over the risk of the snake farm to their children, sekadde explains that there is a woman who was coming to help when they were first struck by the epidemic but when the white people came, she abandoned the journey. This African woman's medicine would have been put to use but for the whites invasion.
- Other themes include
- Greed/materialism
- Suffering
- Neo-colonialism

## Dramatic techniques

- flash back

Opobo in a flashback reflects on the several epidemics kayunga has endured including the liberation wars, aids, cattle rustling etc.

Peter stokes in the news bulletin reflects on group death that Sahara had previously experienced due to a cult practice.

Matt Brown is also worried that the money given to the sahara government would be embezzled as in the past.

Mayor Richard notes that England has a long history of conquest and extending civilization.

- **Dramatic contrast.**

Serunkuma juxtaposes the setting and the lifestyle of kayunga and sahara in general with London, the leadership in both states, the family of oyire and Matt, the children in kayunga and matt's dog.

Kayunga is an impoverished village undergoing a lot of misery while London is a rich place and the people in there live in surplus.

The Matt's family is wealthy and full of love. They can afford looking after their dog. oyire on the other hand is grieving for the death of his children who die while stealing mangoes.

The British citizen cares about her citizens. The leaders also mobilize resources for those in need while the government in sahara doesn't care and the leaders embezzle even the little donated to the citizens.

- **Soliloquy**

Opobo ends scene one of act one in a soliloquy when he wonders the cause of the big misfortune that has befallen Oyire. He wonders why the community has continued to suffer as he recalls what they have gone through before which include liberation wars, cholera, Aids etc.

- **Proverbs and sayings**

The play The snake farmers is rich in proverbs which include:

When rain traps a man, the downpour never ends

Rocks must be together to brave floods

When a lion falls ill and grows thin, it does not become a cat

The ungrateful lad will never have providers

The tears of a cow are the joy of a dog. Etc

**Other techniques are; Irony Humour Symbolism**

## Lessons

- Love your neighbor as you love yourself
- Appearance can sometimes be deceptive
- No situation is permanent
- Negligence is recipe to disaster
- Teach one how to fish than giving one fish
- Foreign aid is a stumbling block to Africa's development
- Laziness breeds evil.
- Every cloud has a silver lining

## Questions.

### **1. How is the play, The Snake Farmers a reflection of the contemporary society.**

Snake farmers is a play that exposes the dangerous life Africans have to endure due to their selfish and greedy leaders. It is based on a snake epidemic that ravages an imaginary village of kayunga, a village in Sahara state. When the whites step in to extend their complicated but helping hand, the leaders see an open opportunity to enrich themselves and so they begin a snake farm. What we see happening in the play is a replica of what takes place in the villages and towns of Uganda today. We can relate the two societies in the following ways.

To begin with, the poverty in the play is synonymous with what we see in most villages of Uganda. In the play most people are ravaged in poverty exemplified by their dire ways of life. Most of them walk barefoot, sleep in grass thatched houses and have little to eat. When when Emmy brown sees her dog getting healthier, she wishes that the children in sahara would get the same treatment. It is absurd that one has to compare a life of a dog and a human being. Likewise in our society, many people especially in villages live in absolute poverty with less to eat and often sleep in temporary houses. There are many people sleeping in huts in northern Uganda and it is evident that in parts of north eastern Uganda specifically karamoja region, food is very scarce that children become malnourished.

There are many NGOs in Uganda that extend help to disadvantaged Ugandans as there is in the play snake farmers. In the play, when the news of the dangerous snake epidemic reaches London, Emmy and Matt Brown form an organization under the church, mobilize resources and Brother Samson leads a delegation that comes to

kayunga to help fight snakes. This is similar to many organizations in Uganda that extend a helping hand. These organizations are not funded by the government but operate to help Ugandans. Some of the organisations include, Brac, Save children Uganda etc.

Just like in Sahara , service delivery in Uganda is limited to a few places.

Corruption is a usual talk and corruption scandals hit airwaves every now and then

The social life of the people in kayunga is very much evident in most of our villages. There is solidarity in case of any unfortunate happening eg death. People build bonfires and stay at the bereaved family's place for some time.

Uganda as our contemporary society experiences epidemics just like the snake epidemic that hit kayunga. We have been hit by ebora, cholera, aids etc.

The superstitious nature of some individuals we observe in kayunga is similar to that in our society. People attach supernatural influence to some happenings in our society.

Just like sahara, Uganda is a former colony of Britain.

Money sent as aid is often mismanaged and ends up benefitting a few individuals instead of reaching down to the needy as is the case with Bugali who sells a bicycle and uses the money for his own good.

The selfishness and greed highlighted in the play among leaders is a replica of what we have here in our society.

Leaders and other organization founders deliberately keep people in unfortunate situations so as to continue getting foreign aid just like opobo and sekadde.

The BNN news channel is the same as BBC and their program about Africa is the same as BBC focus on Africa. Most of the news read on this channel highlights problems in Africa.

The fundraising event in London dubbed "london for sahara" is the similar to go fund me programs, car wash drives, kabaka's run campaigns etc that are carried out by well-wishers to help those in need.

Just like Oyire and his neighbor, a lot of people in the villages and towns in Uganda are not at peace with their neighbors and often point fingers at them in case of a sudden happening accusing them as the cause of such inevitable events

- 2. Comment on the suitability of the title, 'The Snake Farmers' to the play.**
- 3. Discuss the themes developed in the play.**
- 4. How has the playwright used irony in the play The snake farmers?**
- 5. Explain the evils exposed in the play The Snake Farmers.**
- 6. With close reference to the play The Snake Farmers, show how man is to blame for the problems faced by mankind.**
- 7. Examine the character of Opobo and Sekadde and show who of the two has a more dramatic appeal.**
- 8. Which lessons do you learn from the play, The Snake Farmers.**

## **OEDIPUS THE KING: Sophocles**

### **BACKGROUND**

Oedipus is son to Laius and Jocasta, the king and queen of Thebes. The misfortune of his house are as a result of a curse laid upon his father for violating the sacred laws of hospitality. In his youth, Laius was the guest of Pelops, the king of Elis and he became the tutor of the King's youngest son, Chrysippus in Chariot racing. Laius seduced and raped Chrysippus who later kills himself in shame. This abomination cast doom over Laius and all his descendants. Laius would bear a son who would marry his own mother.

When he bears a son (Oedipus) he binds the boy's feet together with a pin and orders Jocasta to kill him. Unable to kill her own son, Jocasta orders a servant to slay the infant for her. He should be taken to the mountain and killed. The servant however out of pity and control by fate, gives the infant to another shepherd. The shepherd names the child Oedipus—"swollen feet" as his feet had been tightly bound by Laius-causing them to swell.

The shepherd takes the child to Corinth—a neighbouring kingdom and presents him to the childless king-Polybus, who raises the child as his own son. Oedipus grows into manhood and hears that he is not truly the son of Polybus and his wife Merope. He

consults the oracle about who his real parents are but the oracle ignores the question but instead tells him that he is destined to mate with his own mother after killing his own father.

Desperate to avoid this terrible fate, he leaves Corinth for the city of Thebes. On the way to Thebes, Oedipus encounters a King and his attendants and the two quarrel over whose chariot/carriage has a right of way. The Theban king moves to strike the insolent youth but Oedipus, unaware that this is his true father, throws the old man down from the carriage, killing him. Thus Laius has been slain by his own son and the prophecy that the king had sought to avoid by exposing Oedipus at birth is fulfilled.

Before arriving at Thebes, Oedipus encounters a Sphinx, a legendary beast with the head and breast of a woman, the body of a lioness, and the wings of an eagle. The sphinx had been sent to the road approaching Thebes as a punishment from the gods and would kill any traveler who failed to answer a certain riddle. The riddle was: "what creature walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon and three in the evening?" Oedipus correctly guessed the answer as 'man' who crawls as an infant on all fours, walks upright in maturity and leans on a walking stick in old age. Overpowered by Oedipus, the sphinx throws herself from a cliff, thereby ending the curse. Oedipus' reward for freeing Thebes from the sphinx is it kingship and hand of queen, Jocasta-his mother. The prophecy has then been fulfilled.

## **PLOT**

Thebes is suffering under unknown circumstances to find a solution. He sends Creon, his brother-in-law to consult the oracle at Delphi concerning the plague experienced by the Thebans. Creon returns to report that the plague is a result of religious pollution since the murderer of their former king, Laius has never been caught.

Oedipus swears to find the murderer and curses him. Oedipus summons the blind prophet Tiresias for help. The prophet claims to know the answers to Oedipus' questions but refuses to speak and instead advises him to abandon his search. This annoys Oedipus, who accuses the prophet of complicity in Laius' murder. Annoyed, Tiresias tells the king that he himself is the murder. "You are yourself the murderer you seek." Oedipus concludes that the prophet must have been paid off by Creon in an attempt to undermine him.

Oedipus mocks the prophet's lack of sight. Tiresias tells him that he himself is blind. Tiresias leaves after stating that when the murder is discovered he shall be a native citizen of Thebes, and son and husband to his own mother.

The King wants Creon executed, however the chorus persuades him to let Creon live. Jocasta who has heard the quarrels from within enters and tries to console the king,



telling him to ignore prophets. She tells him of a prophecy that never came to pass: Laius was to be killed by his own son, however he was killed by bandits/strangers at a crossroad on the way to Delphi.

The mention of crossroads reminds him of something, he asks Jocasta for details. What did Laius look like? He begins to worry that Tiresias' accusations were true. He sends for the only surviving witness of the attack .

Confused, Jocasta now asks Oedipus what the matter was. He recounts to her of how he got accused by a drunken man in Corinth that he was not his father's son, upon consulting the oracle, he was instead told that he would kill his father and marry the mother and that this made him leave Corinth. On his way from Corinth he encountered a carriage which attempted to drive him off the road. He killed the travelers including a man who matches Jocasta's description of Laius. Oedipus has hope however because he has been told that Laius was murdered by several robbers yet in his recollection he killed them alone.

A man arrives from Corinth with the news of Polybus' death. To his surprise, this excites Oedipus so much. He is now sure he cannot kill his father. He however fears that he can commit incest. The messenger however eases Oedipus' mind by telling him that Merope was not his real mother. This messenger who took the baby to Polybus and Merope. The baby, he says, was given to him by a shepherd from Laius' household, who had been told to get rid of the child. That same shepherd was a witness of Laius' murder whom Oedipus has already sent for.

Jocasta now realises the truth and begs Oedipus to stop asking questions but he ignores her advice. She runs into the palace. The shepherd arrives, Oedipus questions him but he begs to be allowed to leave without answering questions. Oedipus threatens him with torture and execution. It emerges that the child he gave away Laius' own son. Everything is at last revealed, Oedipus curses himself before leaving the stage.

He enters the palace in anger calling the servants to bring him a sword so he can cut out his mother's womb. He comes across Jocasta's body, which he takes down, removes the long gold pins that held her dress together, plunges them into his own eyes in despair. The blind king now exits the palace, begging to be exiled as soon as possible. On an empty stage, the chorus states that no man should be considered fortunate until he is dead.

## **Oedipus the King, themes**

### **Role of gods/the supernatural**

The gods are believed to be beings that watch over men. They control the lives of us all and foreshadow what is going to happen to us. It's very clear that the gods are a driving and controlling force; however Sophocles also makes it perfectly clear that while these forces are catalysts, the characters make their own decision that lead to their tragic end.

First of all the gods predetermine Oedipus' life and make sure that he fulfills every aspect of it as planned. When king Laius goes to seek for guidance from Apollo, he is told that his will kill him and marry his wife. When he returns home to Jocasta, he tells her about the prophesy and the two decide to escape the god's fate by eliminating the boy's life. Laius pins the boy's ankles and orders Jocasta to kill him. Jocasta instead gives the boy to the shepherd to leave him on mount Cithaeron on a bare rock. However since it's the god's plan, the shepherd spares the boy's life by giving it to another shepherd who takes it to Corinth to king Polybus and Merope who raise Oedipus as their own. The way Oedipus survives this death can only be explained metaphysically as a result of the gods.

Secondly, the fact that all people seek guidance from the gods in the quest for what their future holds also shows the role of gods in the society of Sophocles. The gods seem to be the answer for every problem, query and quest. For example, when Laius wanted to know about his future, he turned to Apollo for knowledge. When Oedipus is at Thebes, he turns to Pythia for guidance. Worth noting still when Thebes is afflicted by pestilence, it's the gods that are relied on. Oedipus sends Creon to find out from the gods the cause of the affliction.

Despite the fact that some characters tend to be blind to the fact that the gods are powerful, they still pray to them for deliverance. Jocasta for example despises the gods and calls them empty vessels because according to her, they prophesized the death of Laius by his son which didn't happen. However as Oedipus grows suspicious of the act, Jocasta comes with supplications to pray to the gods to help Oedipus. It's ironic that a person who does not respect the gods is now praying for their protection and savior which shows their importance.

The respect accorded to the messengers of the gods and the fulfillment of their curses is also an indication of how important the gods are. For example When Teiresias is invited to the palace to explain the mystery of king Laius' murderer, the chorus say they are bringing the prophet in whom all men, lives the incarnate truth. The chorus believes that Teiresias knows the truth and indeed he knows and even goes ahead to

tell Oedipus the truth though he decides not think about it but dismisses it as a conspiracy to overthrow him. Teiresias even goes ahead to prophesize Oedipus' future that he would get out of Thebes without eyes which indeed happen thereby showing the infallibility of the gods and a lesson that the gods will is undisputed.

Finally Oedipus' fulfillment of the oracle also portrays the role of gods as a theme in the play. The gods decided to destroy a man's life from the beginning and it seems no matter how the characters try to escape their fate, they will still face it. For example Oedipus who has been adopted and raised by Polybus and Merope is living a good life till a drunkard tells him that he is not their son. Oedipus goes to find out the truth and he is told his fate instead. He makes a bold and virtual decision to leave Corinth in order not to hurt his parents not knowing that he is actually going to meet his fate. On his way he meets and kills his father and marries his mother later thereby sealing the oracle.

### **Ignorance/blindness**

All throughout Oedipus the King, Sophocles has Oedipus on an unknown journey from ignorance to knowledge. Oedipus believes that he has nothing to do with the murder of King Laius even though the truth is laid out in front of him multiple times. As the story goes on, Oedipus begins to become more open-minded to new information that has an unknown cost. Therefore, through the journey to recognition, the once great and powerful Oedipus can cause his own demise. Sophocles demonstrates that **ignorance** will **blind** one from the truth and knowledge will open one's eyes.

Oedipus' ignorance shows itself immediately when he curses the polluter of the land ignorant of the fact that he once killed a man. Sophocles intends to show man's folly by his anxiety and speed at passing judgment before looking deep into our hearts. Oedipus learns from Creon that the cause of Thebes' suffering is the unrevenged death of their former king. He then curses the man responsible for this death. Oedipus does not know that by this curse, he has cursed himself.

Oedipus is ignorant and constantly avoids and ignores the truth in order to protect his reputation. Oedipus' unwillingness to open his ears to the truth develops when Tiresias reveals that he killed Laius and one of his responses is, "Your words are nothing-- / futile" . Although Oedipus begged to hear Tiresias' words, he was not willing to pay attention or open his eyes to the unfortunate idea. Oedipus pushes aside the words Tiresias says, refusing to believe that he could be the one who killed Laius, the one who must be cursed. Later, Tiresias brings up Oedipus' ignorance saying "...living in ignorance of your own doing" . Oedipus was put in his place and blatantly told that he is ignorant but his rise to knowledge will also bring his demise. Sophocles foreshadows using Tiresias in that way, but Oedipus is so into avoiding any confrontation with the truth at the beginning that he would respond calling Tiresias' visions "absurdities" .

Therefore, even though the truth has been revealed to him, Oedipus still chooses to remain blind to the truth in order to remain good in the eyes of his people.

Due to ignorance, Oedipus claims that Tiresias' words are a conspiracy to overthrow him from his throne. He lashes out at Creon claiming he employed Tiresias to tell him the truth. It's absolute blindness that Oedipus does not reflect on his own life to know if he is guilty or innocent. Due to pride he thinks himself equal to the gods. He thinks he is right and others are wrong not sparing the prophets of the gods. His failure to pose and think of Tiresias' words show he doesn't intend to know the truth and therefore blind.

In spite of his previous attitude, as the story goes on, Oedipus begins to hear the truth for its entirety to gain more knowledge about his past. He starts opening his ears and asking about Laius, out of fear that he was his killer, asking questions such as "Where did this thing happen? and "When? How long ago?"referring to Laius' murder. He confesses killing a noble man who according to Jocasta's description suits the personality of Laius. She says he died just before Oedipus arrived in Thebes and was of the same height and resemblance with Oedipus. Though we see Oedipus beginning to fear, he still believes that he is innocent. By summoning the shepherd in the first place to tell whether Laius was killed by many men or one shows that he is still blind to the truth given the fact that the prophet of god has already told him that he is the murderer.

Another example of blindness is Jocasta's failure to recognize that her new husband is her son but even after realizing it, she chooses to ignore it altogether. This is blindness to the truth. She for example lambasts the prophets saying they are liars and in the same scene she assures Oedipus that the shepherd already said that Laius was killed by robbers and so cannot change. She says, 'even if he changes....he cannot in any event pretend that Laius died as foretold...'. Though Oedipus insists that the shepherd be fetched, its clear Jocasta already has a side to take.

Furthermore after realizing the truth, Jocasta tries to stop Oedipus from further investigation but to Oedipus' blindness, herefuses thinking that Jocasta is concerned over his low born status. This comes after the messenger telling Oedipus that he is no kin to Polybus but was given to him as a child by a shepherd from Laius' house and in turn took him to polybus and merope. Jocasta realizes the truth that the curse has already passed and begs Oedipus to stop probing.

When he refuses, she decides to kill herself therefore entering eternal blindness. In death, she cannot see or make choices.

In the same way, Oedipus loses sight when he pins out his eyes after knowing and acknowledging the truth about his past. As prophesized by Teiresias Oedipus meets

the truth and blinds himself in order not to face reality. At the end Oedipus is banished from the kingdom which becomes his final punishment.

On his part, Teiresias is physically blind, he cannot see his surroundings; however he can see into the future and link it to the past. His physical blindness presents him with the gift of having visions. He knows that Oedipus is the polluter of the land and Jocasta is his mother. Sophocles tends to show that some people have eyes but don't see, yet with those with eyes do. Oedipus has eyes but has no vision yet Teiresias who has no eyes has visions.

In conclusion, the sighted characters can see everything else except truth. The physically blind can see nothing but truth. Even after knowing the truth, people have a tendency to ignore it. However ignoring facts doesn't change them. The truth dawns on Jocasta as she realizes she cannot overlook the truth any more. Death is the only secure way out unfortunately. On the other hand Oedipus, gouges out his eyes to avoid meeting truth physically although he has it on his heart.

## **Suffering**

Suffering in Oedipus is both physical and psychological. The Thebans suffer from the calamities that befall them while king Oedipus and Jocasta suffer fate as explained below.

To begin with, the Thebans suffer the siege of the sphinx. This creature that has a lion's body and a woman's face lays a siege on the city of Thebes and does not allow anyone in or out unless you have answered its riddle. Those who have tried and failed have been killed and the whole city is in fear as they run out supplies. Not until Oedipus solves the riddle do the Thebians get their life back.

The city of Thebes suffers yet again when it's faced by a series of calamities as a result of a curse brought unto them by the man that killed their king. At the beginning of the play, Theban elders, children and women sit in attitudes of supplication before king Oedipus seeking him to address the calamity that has befallen them. We are told of sickness that grips people at night and die by morning; the women miscarry while crops wither mysteriously. It's this kind of suffering that tempts Oedipus to find the ultimate solution from the gods.

The play 'Oedipus the king' also depicts human suffering as we explore the life of Oedipus. He is a man fated to kill his father and marry his mother to which the execution of this very act will cause suffering and therefore the characters involved try to avoid this but unknowingly bring themselves or others suffering. For example, when the messenger reminds Oedipus of the injured ankles as he tries to explain his parentage,

Oedipus say, 'oh, that old trouble....i've carried the stigma from my cradle". The riveted ankles must have caused Oedipus a lot of difficulty in walking hence suffering.

Oedipus again suffers psychologically when at a dinner a drunkard tells him that he is not a son to polybus and Merope. As a proud young man Oedipus enjoys his nobility and by instigating seeds of doubt regarding his parentage gives him thoughts of concern. He says that he suffered in silence after hearing this until he talked to his parents though even then "the smart remained" this is why he goes to Pytho to seek knowledge of his parentage. At Pytho, he is not given an answer to his question but told devastating information how he's meant to kill his father and marry his mother. The young man who loves his parents has to banish himself from the city in fear of the act. By leaving the comfort of his home, Oedipus must have gone through a lot of psychological suffering.

Oedipus yet again drowns in fear as he desperately searches for the murder of Laius with all fingers apparently pointing at him. After Jocasta narrating to him how Laius was killed, Oedipus finds the story related to the man he killed on his way to Thebes. Later on we see Jocasta coming with supplications to pray for Oedipus who has apparently got out of control and has lost the sense of judgment. she says, '...we are afraid, seeing our master-pilot distraught.

When the truth finally gets out, Oedipus has to suffer a lot from his shameful acts of murder and incest. First of all, he suffers the sight of his dead mother and wife. Jocasta who warns Oedipus not to continue with the investigation but Oedipus persists decides to commit suicide as a result to escape facing reality. This devastating act creates a somber mood in all of us as we reflect on whether she's right or wrong in her decision which not only causes suffering to the characters such as Oedipus and the children but the audience as well.

The gouging out his eyes is also a symbol of suffering. Oedipus painfully pins his eyes out to keep himself in darkness.

Oedipus faces banishment. He leaves behind all the money, children and fame.

## **Dramatic techniques in Oedipus the king**

### **Flashback**

Flashback is when a story switches from the present to an earlier event.

Sophocles uses flashback to precisely tell us the long life history of the characters in the play. In fact all the turning points in the story are told in a flashback which develops the

plot of the play as characters unravel what makes their presents, develop themes and reveal a lot about the characters as they react to these remembrances.

To begin with, the priest tells us that it was Oedipus who saved them from the sphinx in a flashback. "it was you we remember, the new comer to Cadmus' town that broke our bondage to the vile enchantress.

When Creon returns from the Pythian house of Apollo, he reports that the city has to banish or kill the man who killed Laius, the former king of Thebes to cleanse itself from the curse. In a flashback we are told that Laius was killed on a pilgrimage and only one man in his company survived. When asked why the city didn't investigate Laius' murder, Creon says they were occupied with problem of the sphinx which portrays the suffering they were going through.

Flashback is again employed when Jocasta is dissuading Oedipus from believing the words of prophets. she narrates how long ago, his former husband(laius) and her had a child that was prophesized to kill his father but as events rolled out, he was killed by robbers at a crossroad. She tells him who laius was and who he was with at the time of his death. This revelation doesn't only tell us how Jocasta and Laius tried to avoid fate but also raises Oedipus' curiosity and at the moment, he is fearful the polluter might be him.

When Oedipus hears jocasta's story, he in a flashback describes a time in past when he left Corinth to Thebes. The story has a lot in common with Jocasta's when it comes to the death of Laius. Jocasta tries to ignore these signs but Oedipus is determined to discover everything and therefore summons the shepherd who witnessed the murder.

The messenger also in an attempt to arrest Oedipus'fears ,narrates in a flashback how he got Oedipus from another shepherd from the house of Laius while tending sheep at mount Cithaeron and delivered him to the childless polybus and merope who adopted him.

Flashback is again employed when Oedipus is talking the shepherd who took the baby from Jocasta. He reveals the whole truth which Oedipus has dreaded from the beginning.

Lastly, flashback is used as the attendant tells how Jocasta met her death and how Oedipus gorged out his eyes.

## **The chorus**

The chorus is a group of actors speaking in unison. In the play Oedipus the chorus is a group of Theban elders whose basic role is to sing comments about the ongoing situation in the play, link the audience to the drama and evaluate the incidents, characters and other developments in the play.

In the first case, Sophocles uses the chorus at the beginning of the play to help tell the audience the given circumstances of the play. From the first ode of the chorus, we hear all about the terrible havoc that the plague is wreaking on Thebes. People are dying, women miscarrying and crops wither. Everyone is fearful and tensed up. The chorus prays to Zeus for an immediate remedy which highlights the role of gods in the Theban society.

The chorus takes part in the dialogue also. When Oedipus consults them about ending the plague in the city, they express disappointment that the oracle had not guided them about the identity of Laius' murderer. They also tell him what they know about the murder of their previous king and its circumstances. The chorus proposes to Oedipus that lord Teiresias be brought to help unlock the mystery to which Oedipus replies that he has already sent for him. The obedience is therefore prepared to meet the prophet.

In addition when Creon learns that the king had accused him of treason, comes on stage and talks to the chorus who tell him that the king made accusation in heat of anger. Creon asks if the king looked serious while making charges and they say it's not for them to look into the eyes of the master when she speaks.

The chorus plays the role of peace maker and is seen as the voice of wisdom in the play. In the heated debate between Oedipus and Teiresias, Oedipus accuses Creon of plotting against his throne when Teiresias tips him to be the polluter of the land. The chorus intervenes seeking to restrain from the functions and focus on the way forward towards finding a solution for the situation.

When Oedipus almost passes a sentence upon Creon, Jocasta arrives on stage and talks to the chorus who requests her to settle the difference between the two men. The chorus vouches for Creon's innocence therefore managing to convince Oedipus not to banish Creon.

The chorus is used to highlight what will happen in future. They express fear when Jocasta storms into the palace in a dejected mood, having stopped Oedipus from further quest into his parentage and he refuses. The chorus says, "I fear some vile catastrophe will out from what she dare not tell"



The chorus in Oedipus plays part as a distinct character with views and emotions which resonates with the audience. They begin by supporting Oedipus believing he is the one to fix things basing on his past experiences. When Oedipus' behavior changes, they start questioning his motives. The fact that Oedipus doesn't sentence them yet he has all the powers shows he is not a tyrant. In the end as Oedipus goes into exile, the chorus is on his side again and laments his horrific fate.

## **Symbolism**

Symbols are elements that appear repeatedly in a story and have a deeper meaning than what appears on the surface. enhance its themes. in Oedipus the King eyes, both blind ones and those with sight, the crossroads, and Oedipus's ankles.

### **Eyes, sight and blindness**

The eyes symbols are introduced when Teiresias, a blind prophet, is trying to explain to Oedipus that Oedipus himself is actually the man who killed King Laius. Oedipus refuses to believe Tiresias or see the evidence right in front of him to confirm it; instead he tries to blame the murder on everyone else. Thus, Oedipus is 'blind' to the truth.

Throughout Oedipus and Tiresias's conversation you can find a lot of play on words with the ideas of 'seeing' and 'knowing.' Teiresias ends up telling Oedipus that not only is he the murderer, but he will end up physically blind once he finally accepts the truth. He says, "...you are pleased to mock my blindness. Have eyes, and do not see your damnation....shall sweep you from this land. Those now clear seeing eyes shall be darkened...."

Oedipus's reaction to Teiresias's claim is to make fun of him for being an old blind man. Although Teiresias may have blind eyes, he can see the truth, unlike Oedipus. Oedipus ends up symbolically punishing himself by blinding his eyes with the brooches belonging to Jocasta, his wife who is also his mother. Therefore, eyes with vision represent ignorant pride, while blinded eyes represent knowledge.

### **The Crossroads**

Another symbol featured in Oedipus's story is the crossroads. A crossroad is a place where multiple roads meet. When you're standing at a crossroads, physically or metaphorically, you have a decision to make: which road will you take? Your decision could potentially be life changing.

A crossroad is first mentioned when Jocasta explains how and where king Laius was murdered; at a place where three roads meet. This new knowledge worries Oedipus because he remembers killing a man at a cross road. He says, 'when I came to a place where three roads join, I met a herald followed by a horse....a man seated therein just as you have described...' the herald ordered Oedipus out of the way which causes the quarrel between Oedipus and Laius' crew. When tensions heat up, Oedipus has a decision to make and every decision presents its consequences.

However, Oedipus is destined to kill his father at all cost. Therefore by meeting his father and killing him at the crossroads is something beyond him since it's programmed by the gods. The crossroads in this case will present fate and the will of the gods rather than freedom of choice

### **Oedipus' swollen feet**

Oedipus is reminded of the swollen foot where he gets his name by the messenger as he tries to convince him that he is no kin to Polybus. Previously Jocasta had told Oedipus how Laius pinned his child's ankles and was to be left to die on mount Cithaeron. At this time however Oedipus is cannot connect his name to the scars and the pain the ankles have caused him. The swollen foot therefore symbolizes Oedipus' ignorance. Although his name blatantly points attention to his feet, he doesn't realize his identity till it's too late.

Oedipus' swollen feet also highlight a fact that he has been marked for suffering from the moment of his birth.

### **The plague**

The plague is the symbol of the crisis that Thebes is facing due to the sin unknowingly committed by Oedipus. It involves all the great and minor people into the search of a solution of the crisis. The defilement and pinning the legs of the baby with pin symbolizes the meaning of the scapegoat. The baby intended to sacrifice for the relief to king Laius and queen Jocasta. Oedipus as the defilement in the city, is to sacrifice by death or exile for the relief to the citizens of Thebes.

### **Foreshadowing**

Foreshadowing suggests in advance what happens later in the story. It is a technique often used to warn of a disaster.

An early example of foreshadowing in Oedipus the king, is when king Oedipus promises to find and punish the guilty in polluting the land by he in his own royal

household. This gives an insight to the audience that the guilty will be found in the royal house.

Teiresias predicts Oedipus' fate when he says that "... he that came seeing, blind shall he go.." This happens when Oedipus insults Teiresias because he hears that he is the curse of and the problem in Thebes, refuses the prophecy and gets angry at the prophet calling him a liar. The quote foreshadows that Oedipus will end up blind although his eyes are full of light now. Teiresias' words are proved to be true when in the end Oedipus stabs out his eyes, being aware of his identity and tragic destiny.

Jocasta too gives the audience a hint of who Oedipus is in her description of Oedipus looking like Laius, her first husband. This anticipates that Laius and Oedipus are related. She says, "... Silver-frosted hair about your figure" .despite this the two ignore this fact and wait for the shepherd to reveal the truth.

Still another example is the description of Laius' and Jocasta's infant son as having had rivetted ankles. This obviously leaves one with a swollen foot which is exactly what the name Oedipus means. Though the two characters are blind to the truth, the audience already knows who king Oedipus is by now before the truth is finally revealed.

Jocaster's warnings to Oedipus not to continue with the investigations tell us who Oedipus is even before the shepherd is fetched. She has learned the truth, begs Oedipus to stop the search but he refuses.

The chorus too foreshadows danger after Jocasta storms into the palace with acute anger. They say, "why has the queen left us in such a deep passion? I fear some vile catastrophe will out..." later on the attendant narrates how Jocasta had committed suicide to confirm the worries of the chorus.

### **Use of the supernatural**

Apollo's prophecy that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother

Teiresias' prophecy that Oedipus would end up physically blind.

### **Lessons in the play**

- No one is wiser than the gods
- A wise mouth keeps a still tongue
- Think twice before you act
- The cruel hand of fate is inescapable
- No crime goes unfinished

- The hunter can become the hunted
- Pride goes before a fall
- Curiosity killed the cat
- A man is as good as his word
- Appearances are sometimes deception
- Suicide is never a solution
- Evil begets evil
- There is always light at the end of the tunnel

## **William Shakespeare: Richard 111**

### **Introduction**

After a long civil war between the royal family of York and the royal family of Lancaster, England enjoys a period of peace under King Edward IV and the victorious Yorks. But Edward's younger brother, Richard, resents Edward's power and the happiness of those around him. Malicious, power-hungry, and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard begins to aspire secretly to the throne—and decides to kill anyone he has to in order to become king.

Using his intelligence and his skills of deception and political manipulation, Richard begins his campaign for the throne. He manipulates a noblewoman, Lady Anne, into marrying him—even though she knows that he murdered her first husband. He has his own older brother, Clarence, executed, and shifts the burden of guilt onto his sick older brother King Edward in order to accelerate Edward's illness and death. After King Edward dies, Richard becomes lord protector of England—the figure in charge until the elder of Edward's two sons grows up.

Next Richard kills the court noblemen who are loyal to the princes, most notably Lord Hastings, the lord chamberlain of England. He then has the boys' relatives on their mother's side—the powerful kinsmen of Edward's wife, Queen Elizabeth—arrested and executed. With Elizabeth and the princes now unprotected, Richard has his political allies, particularly his right-hand man, Lord Buckingham, campaign to have Richard crowned king. Richard then imprisons the young princes in the Tower and, in his bloodiest move yet, sends hired murderers to kill both children.

By this time, Richard's reign of terror has caused the common people of England to fear and loathe him, and he has alienated nearly all the noblemen of the court—even the power-hungry Buckingham. When rumors begin to circulate about a challenger to the

throne who is gathering forces in France, noblemen defect in droves to join his forces. The challenger is the earl of Richmond, a descendant of a secondary arm of the Lancaster family, and England is ready to welcome him.

Richard, in the meantime, tries to consolidate his power. He has his wife, Queen Anne, murdered, so that he can marry young Elizabeth, the daughter of the former Queen Elizabeth and the dead King Edward. Though young Elizabeth is his niece, the alliance would secure his claim to the throne. Nevertheless, Richard has begun to lose control of events, and Queen Elizabeth manages to forestall him. Meanwhile, she secretly promises to marry young Elizabeth to Richmond.

Richmond finally invades England. The night before the battle that will decide everything, Richard has a terrible dream in which the ghosts of all the people he has murdered appear and curse him, telling him that he will die the next day. In the battle on the following morning, Richard is killed, and Richmond is crowned King Henry VII. Promising a new era of peace for England, the new king is betrothed to young Elizabeth in order to unite the warring houses of Lancaster and York.

## **Plot summary**

### **Act one**

#### **Scene one**

- Richard speaks in a monologue addressed to himself and the audience.
- He reflects on the lengthy civil and the current peace England is enjoying and says his elder brother king Edward sits on the throne and everyone is celebrating apart from him.
- He plots against his brother Clarence, who comes before him as heir to the throne of England by paying a soothsayer to give a false prophesy that Edward shall be killed by a family member whose name starts with G and Clarence's first name is George.
- A little while Clarence walks onto the stage as prisoner guarded by sir. Robert Brackenbury.
- Richard using his manipulative skills complains that this arrest is the result of queen Elizabeth whom he claims hates him too.
- Clarence is then led to the tower of London,

Again in a monologue Richard comments that he will soon remove Clarence permanently and clear his path to the throne.

- Lord Hastings who has just been freed from prison meets Richard and tells him that king Edward is very ill and may not live longer.
- After departing, Richard remarks that he will kill Clarence first to be in a better position to assume to the throne.
- He also plots to marry lady Anne Neville who is a widow of Edward, and daughter in law of Henry V1, whom Richard just killed.

## **Scene 2**

- Lady Anne enters the stage accompanied by pallbearers carrying king Henry's coffin.
- She laments and curses Richard's children that he might have and his future wife to suffer grief.
- Richard enters and is immediately cursed by lady Anne for his role in Henry and Edward's death.
- Richard tries to woo her but lady Anne scorns him after each attempt.
- He tells her that he killed her husband because of the love he has for her but Anne spits at him.
- Richard bends down on his knees and tells her to kill him if she cannot forgive him. And she replies ' I will not be your executioner' □ Richard stands up and proposes marriage to her and Anne accepts.
- He succeeds in making Lady Anne wear his ring.
- He tells her to go and wait for him in one of his London residences while he takes care of henry's burial.
- Lady Anne leaves.
- Richard in a soliloquy expresses surprise at Anne's naivety and comments that he will not keep for long.

## **Scene 3**

- Queen Elizabeth, her brother lord Rivers and her two sons Lord Gray and Marquis Dorset enter the stage.  
Queen Elizabeth expresses concern about her future if Edward should die.
- She remarks that Richard Gloucester would become her children's protector yet he hates her.

- Buckingham and lord Stanley arrive and inform Elizabeth that they are from seeing king Edward and is looking well.
- Buckingham informs her that the king would like to see her brothers and Richard in order to reconcile them.
- Richard and lord Hastings enter the room with Richard complaining loudly that the people at court slander him by tell lies to the king and blames Elizabeth for the recent imprisonment of lord Hastings and Clarence.
- Meanwhile Margaret enters speaking directly to the audience in asides calling Richard a devil for killing his husband and son.
- She remarks that Elizabeth is enjoying privileges of being a queen which should be hers.
- Richard and others continue arguing.
- Fed up with their arguments, queen Margaret steps forward and addresses them all.
- The others startled to see her since they thought she had been banished all attack her.
- Bitter about her overthrow and the killing of her family, Margaret starts cursing everyone.
- She curses Elizabeth to outlive her glory and see her husband and children die before her.
- She curses Hastings, rivers and Dorset to die early just as her son did.
- She curses Richard praying that Richard mistakes his friends for enemies and should never sleep peacefully. Then she leaves.
- The entire company is called into the king's chamber by Catesby.
- Richard remains behind and meets two murders whom he sends to kill Clarence.

#### **Scene 4**

- Clarence and Brakenbury enter the stage.  
Clarence has had a terrible dream in which he escapes from the tower attempting to cross to Burgundy accompanied by his brother Richard, while on the ship Richard stumbles and when Clarence tries to help him, he pushes him into the ocean where he sees a lot of terrible things.
- Clarence falls asleep with Brackenbury sitting next to him.
- The two murderers sent by Richard hand a letter to him relieving him of his duty.

- They debate on how to kill him but before they do it Clarence wakes up.
- They tell him that he will die and he begs them to talk to Richard whom he promises would reward them.
- They inform him that it's Richard that wants him dead.
- The first murderer later stabs him but the second murderer refuses to participate and declines to receive his part of the reward.

## **Act 2**

### **Scene one.**

- Edward iv enters with his family and his wife's family.
- He remarks that there has been a lot of quarreling in the court and seeks peace among them.
- He orders Buckingham and Hastings to make peace with queen Elizabeth and her kinsmen and they shake hands.
- Richard enters and apologizes for the recent hostility towards Buckingham and the queen's family.
- Then, Elizabeth asks king Edward to forgive Clarence and summon him to the palace.
- Richard reacts as if Elizabeth is making fun of Clarence saying that who doesn't know that Clarence is dead.
- They all get startled.
- Richard blames Edward for condemning Clarence to death and says that the cancellation of the sentence arrived late.
- The guilty, grieving Edward starts to blame himself for his brother's death. Stanley the earl of derby rushes in asking the king to forgive his servant condemned to death.
- Seeming to be growing weaker, the king is helped to his bed chamber.
- All leave and Richard asks Buckingham if he noticed how guilty Elizabeth looked when the death of Clarence was announced. **Scene 2**
- In another room in the palace, the duchess of york, the mother of Edward, Richard and Clarence is comforting Clarence's two children.
- She grieves and acknowledges that it's Richard who killed his son.
- Elizabeth then enters grieving and announcing the death of Edward.



- All the four start lamenting for their loss.
- Richard enters along with Buckingham, Hastings, sanely, and Ratcliffe.
- Richard and Buckingham agree that the prince should be brought to London but a few people should get to him.
- All others depart leaving Richard and Buckingham behind. Its clear that the two are allies.
- He suggests to him that the two of them should go together to fetch the prince and says he has a plan about how to separate the prince from Elizabeth.

### **Scene 3**

- Three ordinary citizen on a street in London discuss the state of national affairs, sharing the death of Edward and fear since Edward's son is too young to rule while his uncles are involved in quarrels.

### **Scene 4**

- At the palace, the cardinal, an ally of Elizabeth's family tells them that prince Edward is nearly reaching London and should arrive within two days.
- Suddenly, Marquis Dorset arrives with terrible news that Rivers, Gray and sir Thomas Vaughan have been arrested and sent to Pomfret.
- The queen is frightened for her family and decides to go into sanctuary, with the young duke of York so that they will have protection.

## **ACT THREE**

### **Scene one**

- Prince Edward arrives in London accompanied by Richard, Buckingham, cardinal, Catesby and other followers.
- He expresses dissatisfaction with few uncles' welcoming him.
- Richard insists that the missing uncles are traitors but the prince is not convinced.
- The mayor of London comes to greet the prince.
- Lord Hastings appears and announces that the queen has fled to sanctuary together with the prince of York.
- Buckingham complains and asks the cardinal and Hastings to go to the sanctuary and try to reason with the queen and if she doesn't agree with them, Hastings should seize and bring the prince of York by force.
- The cardinal is shocked by suggestion of violating the sanctuary rights but Buckingham convinced him that since York is a minor, he is not entitled to sanctuary.
- The cardinal and Hastings leave to carry out Buckingham's command.
- Richard suggests that prince should stay at the tower of London meanwhile waiting for the coronation.
- Prince Edward is not contented with the proposal due to the history of the Tower.
- Cardinal and Hastings return with York.
- The boys joke about Richard and leave for the Tower.
- Catesby and Buckingham remain on stage with Richard to discuss how Richard will take up the throne.
- Richard tells Catesby to see whether Lord Hastings can be won over to his side, rather than supporting Prince Edward.
- Catesby thinks that Hastings will defend Prince Edward, and Richard indicates that he will kill him if that is the case.
- Richard also mentions that there will be "divided councils" the next morning, meaning a public council for Edward's coronation, and a private council to plot for Richard.

## Scene 2

- Lord Hastings is rudely awakened at four in the morning by a messenger.
- He is told that Lord Stanley is there to see him, having had a bad dream in which he was beheaded by a boar (Richard's emblem is the boar).
- Catesby arrives before Stanley and tells Hastings that Richard wants the crown of England, but Hastings announces that he will die before Richard be allowed to wear the crown.
- Catesby then tells Hastings that his enemies, the Queen's sons and her brother, are to be executed that day.
- Stanley arrives and announces that he is upset about the fact that there are two separate councils.
- He and Catesby leave for the Tower of London.
- A pursuivant (basically, a messenger with the authority to serve an arrest warrant) enters and receives some money from Hastings.
- Buckingham then enters and Hastings tells him that he will eat lunch at the Tower. Buckingham indicates to the audience that Hastings will also eat supper there, although he does not yet know it.

## Scene Three

- Gray and Rivers are forced onto stage as prisoners, while Ratcliffe watches over them.
- The two condemned men remark that it is Margaret's curse which has condemned them to die.
- Rivers hopes that Margaret's curse on Richard will come true as well.
- They are led off the stage to be executed.

## Scene Four

A council meets in the Tower to discuss when the coronation day for Edward should be held. They agree that the coronation be held the next day, but are reluctant to proceed without Richard's approval.

- Richard enters late, bids the men a good day, and calls Buckingham aside.
- Buckingham tells Richard that Hastings will never support him.
- Buckingham and Richard reenter the room.

- Richard asks what the punishment for traitors should be, to which Hastings replies that they deserve death.
- Richard then blames the Queen and Mrs. Shore (who is the mistress of Edward) with having caused his malformed arm.
- He accuses Hastings of protecting Shore, and orders the council to behead Hastings. Richard then leaves, followed by most of the council.

### **Scene Five**

- The Lord Mayor of London arrives at the Tower.
- Catesby delivers Hastings' head, at which point both Buckingham and Richard must try to convince the Lord .
- They tell him that Hastings was plotting against them both, and that he confessed as much in the Tower.
- They ask the Lord Mayor to inform the people of what happened, since he is better placed to placate the masses than they are.
- Richard then sends Buckingham to follow the Lord Mayor.
- He wants Buckingham to tell the people that the children of Edward are illegitimate, which would require that the eldest illegitimate child should take the throne.

### **Scene six**

- A scrivener enters, with a paper that fully details the treachery of Lord Hastings. The paper is meant to support Richard and Buckingham, but the scrivener points out that it took eleven hours to write, during which time Hastings was still alive. The scrivener laments the corrupt and evil nature England has befallen.

### **Scene Seven**

- Buckingham has returned from the Guildhall, where he attempted to convince the people to accept Richard as their king.
- He informs Richard that his speech to the crowd went over very badly.
- He says that having told the crowd everything, he asked them to shout out their support of Richard.
- Since not a single person responded, he then had the Recorder tell them again, at which point only a few of his own men threw up their caps and yelled, "God save King Richard !"

- In order to overcome this problem, Buckingham and Richard plan to stage a silent play.
- Richard grabs a prayer book and goes to stand between two churchmen on the balcony.
- The Lord Mayor arrives with some aldermen and citizens. Buckingham tells them that Richard is currently meditating, and does not wish to speak with anyone.
- Pretending to have been waiting too, Buckingham implores Catesby to call Richard who later enters with two Bishops.
- Buckingham asks Richard if he would be willing to assume the throne.
- Richard declines, saying it is better for Edward to be the king.
- Buckingham pleads with him, and Richard again turns him down. Buckingham then exits.
- A citizen tells Richard that the land will fall into chaos if he does not accept his position. Richard then calls them back, saying, "Call them again. I am not made of stone".
- He accepts the throne and begs the Lord Mayor to tell everyone how reluctant he was to become the king.

## **Act Four**

### **Scene One**

Queen Elizabeth, the Duchess of York and Lady Anne (now Richard's wife) ask to be let into the Tower to see Prince Edward and young York.

- Brackenbury forbids them to enter, saying Richard has forbade it.
- Stanley enters and orders Lady Anne to Westminster Abbey, where she is to be crowned queen.
- Queen Elizabeth, realizing that Richard has succeeded at seizing the throne, orders her son Dorset to go to Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond.
- Stanley agrees with her and sends the young man away. Elizabeth decides to return to sanctuary, while the other women choose to flee to Richmond.

### **Scene Two**

- Richard now a king, asks Buckingham if he will support him in killing Prince Edward.
- Buckingham is reluctant, and begs for a while to consider the issue.

- Richard thinks that Buckingham is too ambitious, and becomes suspicious of him.
- Richard then calls a page over, and asks if the man know anyone willing to kill for a sum of money. The page tells him that a man named Tyrell would be happy to serve him.
- Richard then tells the audience that he is plotting to kill Buckingham.
- Next he speaks with Catesby, telling him to start rumors that Lady Anne is ill. Richard also plans to marry Clarence's daughter to a non-nobleman □ Tyrell is dispatched to kill the two young boys still living in the Tower.
- Buckingham arrives and asks Richard for the Dukedom he was promised earlier in the play.
- Richard instead talks about the fact that Richmond is prophesied to become the king, and that he was told he would not live long after seeing Henry Tudor's face.
- Buckingham continues asking, but Richard then remarks that he is not in the "giving vein."
- Buckingham realizes his life is in danger, and prepares to flee.

### **Scene Three**

- Tyrrell, the murderer sent by Richard to kill the Edward's children, returns having done the deed. He tells Richard that they are dead.
- Ratcliffe enters running, and informs Richard that the Bishop of Ely has fled to join Richmond, while Buckingham has started raising an army.
- Richard is shaken by the fact that all of his top lieutenants are either dead or have fled from him.
- He orders his armies to be quickly assembled so that he can overcome his traitors.

### **Scene Four**

- Old Queen Margaret emerges and says that she has patiently watched the destruction of her enemies. She informs the audience of her plan to go to France where she hopes to see the few remaining enemies die tragic deaths.
- She then tells Queen Elizabeth that her curse is coming true, and that she is being revenged for her losses. Elizabeth begs Margaret to teach her how to curse, so that she too may have revenge.
- Richard enters and is immediately abused by the women present. His mother, the Duchess of York, demands that he listen to her, which he unwillingly does.

She finishes her remarks with a curse on Richard, namely that he should die in the battles he is about to fight.

- Richard then speaks with Queen Elizabeth.
- He tells her that he wants her daughter Elizabeth to be his queen.
- She scorns his suggestion, and tells him to write her daughter a letter describing all of her relatives that he has killed. Richard continues pleading with her to help him win her daughter's hand.
- She finally agrees to go talk with her daughter, and Richard assumes that he is victorious.
- Ratcliffe enters and tells Richard that Richmond is already arriving with ships on the western shore.

Stanley enters and informs Richard that Richmond is almost upon them.

Richard accuses him of treachery, and orders him assemble an army.

- Stanley, in order to prove his trustworthiness, allows Richard to keep his son.
- Several messengers arrive and give both mixed good and bad news.
- Richmond manages to finally land at Milford.
- However, Catesby enters the scene to tell Richard that Buckingham has been captured.

## **Scene Five**

- Stanley tells a priest to go to Richmond and inform him that Stanley is unable to join his side because Richard is holding Stanley's son in custody.
- He also mentions that Queen Elizabeth has agreed to let Richmond marry her daughter once he defeats Richard.

## **Act Five**

### **Scene One**

- Buckingham, having been captured, is led on stage and gives his last speech. He recalls Margaret's curse on him, and says, "Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy on my neck ....."

### **Scene Two**

- Henry of Richmond enters and encourages his men.
- He gives them images of peace and prosperity as their payoff for defeating Richard.

### Scene Three

- Richard enters and tells his men to set up camp on Bosworth field.
- He ascertains that his army is three times the size of Richmond's, and plans to be busy with the battle plans the next morning.
- Henry of Richmond enters and sends a note to Stanley, who is willing to betray Richard. The men wish each other a "quiet rest tonight."
- Richard decides that he will not eat, saying, "I will not sup tonight" (5.5.3). He then has his men post several guards and makes Ratcliffe set up a pen and paper for him.
- Richard also orders Catesby to tell Stanley to bring his force the next morning, or have his son killed. He writes some, and then falls asleep.
- On the other side of the stage Richmond enters, accompanied by Stanley. Stanley informs him that he will try to deceive Richard as best he can, and will delay for as long as possible.
- Richmond then attempts to fall asleep, worried that he will not be fresh for the battle. After a short prayer, he too falls asleep.
- A parade of ghosts representing those whom Richard has killed during his lifetime comes out onto the stage. Each ghost stops and tells Richard, "Despair, and die." To Richmond they say, "Live and flourish."
- The ghosts appear almost in the order in which they were killed, starting with Prince Edward, King Henry, Clarence, Rivers, Gray, Vaughan, the two young Princes, Hastings, Lady Anne, and lastly Buckingham.
- Richard awakes and holds an internal dialogue in which he berates his conscience for giving him bad dreams.
- He continues in this vein, first blaming and then defending himself for a short while.
- Ratcliffe enters and gets Richard to come join his troops.
- Richmond awakes and happily remembers his dream in which the dead souls promised him victory.
- He then gives a speech to rally his troops, promising to protect their wives, free their children, and create peace throughout the land.
- A messenger then informs Richard that Stanley has defected to Richmond's side.
- Richard calls out for Stanley's son to be killed, but the enemy is already so close that he cannot carry out that command.



## Scene four

- Richard's horse has been overthrown, and he now fights on foot.
- Richard calls out, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (5.7.7) He then remarks that there must be six Richmonds on the field, since he has already slain five and none of them were Richmond. (This alludes to the practice of dressing common soldiers as kings, so that the enemy could be fooled into chasing the wrong man.)

## Scene five

- Richmond and Richard both come out onto stage and fight, during which Richard is killed.
- Stanley enters with the crown and places it on Richmond's head, making him King Henry VII.
- Richmond hopes to unite the two feud houses by marrying young Elizabeth.

## Themes

### Greed / greed for power

The one thing that can be said about the Yorks and Lancasters is that they were greedy for the throne. Even before Richard's schemes, we observe that the house of Lancaster and the house of York had been locked into a long civil war in pursuit for power. These wars lead to the death and consequently the ousting of king Henry VI.

Richard's greed coupled with malice leads to his aspiration for power. In his speech at the beginning of the play, he announces how he wants to make everybody miserable. He is power hungry and so he sets in motion dangerous schemes to gain control of the throne. He has already paid a soothsayer to lie against Clarence the second brother in their line of birth. Richard obviously knows that the sickly Edward will not be alive for long. He therefore positions himself for the throne through deceit.

After Clarence's arrest, Richard pays murderers to kill him. He then shifts the burden of guilt onto the sickly Edward. This accelerates the king's illness leading to his death. With Clarence out of the way and Edward's death, Richard becomes the lord protector the position he uses to gain the throne.

Shortly afterward, Richard III goes on rampage kills the court noblemen who are loyal to Edward's family, arrests and executes relatives of queen Elizabeth, declares that his brother's wedding was invalid and his sons were bastards, taking them out of the line for the throne. Richard goes ahead to imprison the young princes at the tower and later send Tyrrell to them.

After declaring himself king, Richard tries all within to consolidate his power. Besides killing the young princes, he has his wife Anne killed so that he can marry his niece, young Elizabeth the daughter of Elizabeth and the dead king Edward. Though she does not marry him, the attempt gestures that Richards can do anything to gain the throne.

Richard III was widely disliked by his sister-in-law's family, the Woodvilles. Richard first began his climb to the throne by having them killed, in that case it was a kill or be killed situation. He feared what a boy-king would do to the country which was why his nephews were locked in the tower out of the way, but when he eventually came to the point of declaring himself king it is fair to say that he had been overcome by greed although this was not his initial intention from the start.

Buckingham is ambitious of becoming an earl. He therefore helps Richard achieve his goals due to the promises of lands and titles. However when Richard becomes a king, he sidelines him and breaks the promise. Buckingham joins the forces against Richard but he is captured and executed.

## **Betrayal**

Richard utterly delights in the wickedness of his scheme to betray Clarence. He pays a soothsayer to lie that he intends to overthrow the king. He even jokes that he's doing Clarence a favor by sending him to heaven. "Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so that I will shortly send thy soul to heaven, If heaven will take the present at our hands."

Betrayal is also portrayed through Clarence himself. Richard cleverly reminds his listeners that Clarence originally betrayed the family by going over to the Lancastrian side when he married Isabella Warwick (sister to Anne, whom Richard will later marry). Richard brings this point up slyly by saying Clarence betrayed his father-in-law, the Lancastrian supporter, to come back to York. "Poor Clarence did forsake his father, Warwick, Ay, and forswore himself-which Jesu pardon!-[ . . . ] To fight on Edward's party for the crown" Of course, the undercurrent of this entire commentary is that Richard has betrayed Clarence, who waits in the Tower even as Richard speaks. Richard feels none of the outrage about betrayal that he suggests others should feel.

Anne is a betrayer. At the beginning of her conversation with Richard, she has done an admirable job telling his to get lost. Her failing comes when Richard makes the argument that, although she wishes him dead, she can't kill him herself. Her acceptance

of his ring is strange. She is willing to take it but unwilling to give her love. Through this act, Anne not only betrays her murdered husband and father-in-law, but also herself. The reasons must be deeper than just her unwillingness to kill. Why else would she submit so meekly?

Richard betrays his right hand man and ally Buckingham when he denies him what he had promised. Buckingham is smart enough to realize he's out of Richard's favor and what that might mean. He says;

"And is it thus? Repays he my deep service

With such contempt? Made I him King for this?

O, let me think on Hastings, and be gone  
To Brecknock while my fearful head is on!"

Buckingham betrays Edward's family when he chooses to support Richard instead of the young Edward. In act 2 scene 1, he promises love and support to the queen and her relatives, "Whenever Buckingham doth turn his hate on you or yours, but with all duteous love..."

## **Fate and Free Will**

Fate is the belief that there is a certain path that has already been set out for us and nothing can be done to change it. However there is also a belief that the choices one makes shapes one's life which is "free will". We wonder whether what happens to the characters in the play Richard 3 is as a result of fate or free will.

To begin with is Richard who demonstrates from the beginning how "I am determined to prove a villain" In this line from the play's opening speech, Richard reveals to us his plans to take the crown by force. If we take "determined" to mean "resolved," then Richard is implying that he's made a personal decision to be a villain and is willing to do whatever it takes to get the crown. This is typical Richard, always going out of his way to tell us how smooth he is and that he's the one who makes everything happen. (This works in favor of the "free will" argument.) However if interpret in a different way, the word "determined" may mean "fated," which suggests that Richard is not acting of his own free will, but rather God's.

Margaret is always cursing Richard and calling on divine justice to punish crimes he committed in the past. In this way, she predicts his bad end;

“ If heaven have any grievous plague in store

Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,  
O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe.

Margaret views Richard as an instrument of divine justice. She thinks God is using Richard to punish the Yorks for their crimes against the Lancasters. However, Richard argues that God is punishing the Lancasters for the crimes they have committed against his family. Richard's dad cursed for example Margaret for her involvement in his son Rutland's murder. Margaret had taunted Richard's dad by putting a paper crown on his head and waving a bloody handkerchief ("clout") in his face. The handkerchief was dipped in his son Rutland's blood.) In other words, the Lancasters and the Yorks have been going at it for a very long time, and if it's true that God is using Richard's reign as a form of punishment, then everybody is getting what they deserve.

Margret tells the duchess of York that;

Thy Edward he is dead, that stabb'd my Edward:

Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward; Young

York he is but boot, because both they Match not the  
high perfection of my loss:

Thy Clarence he is dead that kill'd my Edward;

And the beholders of this tragic play,

The adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,

Untimely smother'd in their dusky graves.”

Here she insinuates that everyone has been punished for their past crimes. She suggests that when people get murdered in the play, it's because they were basically asking for it.

There's plenty of evidence to suggest that everything that happens in the play is fated. More specifically, the play suggests that events unfold according to divine providence. When Queen Margaret calls on God's divine justice to punish Richard for all of his terrible deeds, the play suggests that Richard's grab for the throne and his fall from power have been predetermined by God. “Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I plead, That I may live to say, 'The dog is dead' (4.4.7)”

Lord Stanley's dream warns Hastings of the impending danger if he goes to the tower. However Hastings chooses to ignore these warnings. It is not until the last moment that he realizes his imminent death. As he is led to his execution, Hastings wishes that he had considered Stanley's warnings.

## **Guilty conscience**

One's conscience is the part of his mind that tells him whether what he is doing is right or wrong. In the play characters are haunted by their deeds. Some meditate on their wrong past while others shun what they are about to do.

To begin with is Clarence's dreamed conversation in the land of the dead which illustrates his guilt and frustration surrounding the throne. He feels bad that he betrayed his father in law by supporting the house of York. In the dream, he is knocked overboard by Richard while on the deck of a ship. Drowned in the ocean, he sees the ghosts of those he betrayed in the war of roses. This weighs heavily on his conscience.

Left alone with the sleeping Clarence, the two murderers debate how best to kill him. Both murderers suffer some pangs of guilt-conscience. The second murderer says the word judgment has made him feel a little guilty. He is afraid to be damned for killing Clarence and says no warrant can protect him from that.

The second murderer is haunted by guilt-conscience. He says; a conscience makes a man a coward, a man can't steal without it accusing him, he can't swear without it restraining him; he can't sleep with his neighbour's wife without it exposing him. He says that he once returned a purse full of gold that he had found due to conscience. He concludes that any man who wants to live well should trust only himself, and live without his conscience.

This elaborates analysis of conscience impacts on the first Murderer who says it is now even at his elbow, persuading him not to kill the duke but again changes quickly and says that he is strong-willed and his conscience will not overcome him.

The news about the death of Clarence, whose death warrant had already been reversed by king Edward depresses Edward. He is angry that nobody pleaded with him to reconcile Clarence's death sentence. He is guilty-conscience about it. He says; " O God! I fear thy justice will take hold on me and you and mine and yours, for this!" He fears that God's justice will destroy him and all the men around him.

After the parade of Ghosts that curse him, Richard starts from sleep so scared. He later realizes that it was all a dream but remains rattled, vacillating between selflove and self-loathing. Though he tries to ignore the message of his dreams, the ghosts' language

proves too powerful for Richard to ignore and leaves him deeply disturbed and disempowered.

## **Hypocrisy**

This is a situation in which someone pretends to be what he is not or pretends that they believe something that they actually don't. Richard betrays his brother Clarence. He plants rumours to make the sickly Edward suspicious of Clarence. The rumours about a prophecy that someone whose name starts with letter G will snatch the throne from Edward and his children. Clarence is then arrested and conducted to the tower of London where English political prisoners were traditionally imprisoned and often executed.

Later on when Richard meets Clarence, he pretends that he is sorry and says that queen Elizabeth or Lady Shore are responsible for his arrest. He even promises to do all it takes to set him free. However hardly had Clarence left when Richard curses him and that he will never return. The hypocrisy is depicted in his pretense that he feels sorry for Clarence yet he is the master of this plot.

Richard sheds crocodile tears when courting Lady Anne. He claims her beautiful eyes have drawn salty tears from his eyes and that he had never cried like that before. This pretense that he is crying for Anne's love depicts hypocrisy because Richard is not genuine, he fakes the emotions for selfish reasons.

In a soliloquy in act 1 scene 3, Richard announces that he has set all his plans in motion and is deceiving everybody into thinking that he is really a good person. He has shifted blame that should rest on his shoulders onto queen Elizabeth's. He has also polished his own image by quoting the bible and parroting Christian values that he does not actually believe in.

Another form of hypocrisy is seen during the reconciliation scene. Edward in his frail form tries to serve the state by reconciling his family and that of the queen during which Richard duke of Gloucester enters and swears to keep peace and claims he has no enemy in all of England. For Richard, words can be thrown around regardless of their truth and he will say "I swear" as long as it serves his plot. His promise to Edward is utterly hollow but helps bolster the image he is trying to spread as a peace loving guy yet the opposite is true.

In the same scene Richard uses this time to his advantage when queen Elizabeth asks the king to forgive Clarence and Richard interjects that Clarence is dead and that the queen's request is a mere scorn. He blames Clarence's on the too hasty decisions of Edward. We have all seen and we know who has killed Clarence.

Richard claims to have loved Hastings very much and that his death and sight of his head cause him distress. This is pure hypocrisy since Hastings is beheaded by Ratcliffe and Rovel on Richard's orders.

In act 3 scene 6 a scrivener, someone who writes and copies letters and documents for a living, says that he has just finished his last assignment, which was to copy the paper that will be read aloud to all the people of London later that day. The paper says Hastings was a traitor. The Scrivener then condemns the hypocrisy of the world. For he, like everybody else can see that the claim in the paper is a lie invented to justify the killing of a political rival but no one can talk about it.

Hypocrisy is also seen when Richard appears with two bishops pretending to have been in a prayer yet it is all his façade.

### Retribution

Although the theme of guilt and retribution reaches its fullest expression in the death of Richard at the hands of Richmond in Act 5, there are several other examples of how justice is still operating in England even while Richard III is either on the throne or plotting to acquire it. This can be seen in the characters of Clarence, Edward IV, and Buckingham, all of whom die during the course of the play.

Clarence may have been imprisoned on trumped-up charges engineered by Richard, but he nonetheless has crimes of his own, which he acknowledges and expresses regrets about before his death. He did betray his brother Edward IV by siding with his father-in-law, the Earl of Warwick, on the Lancastrian side, because Edward did not provide him with a suitable wife. (This is presented in Henry VI, part 3.) He was later reconciled to Edward.

Clarence was also one of the killers of young Prince Edward, the son of Henry VI. When he is imprisoned, he feels his guilt keenly. He has a dream in which he is reproached for his sins. Although he dies unjustly, murdered even after the king has issued an order of clemency, the impression of guilt followed by retribution is clear.

Similarly, just before Edward IV dies, he regrets his treatment of Clarence and the fact that he did not manage to save his brother from being murdered. The king fears that he and his whole family will suffer divine retribution for this failure. This is Shakespeare's way of presenting the guilt that has accrued in the Yorkist family during the Wars of the Roses.

Buckingham too shares in this guilt, having helped Richard plot his way to the throne. When he is facing execution, he acknowledges his complicity in the crimes of Richard and accepts that he is facing divine retribution.

Margret's woes too have a history. Her suffering, and being desperate are a culmination of her bloody hand. For example she was involved in Rutland's murder(Richard's youngest brother). Margaret then taunts Richard's dad by putting a paper crown on his head and waving a bloody handkerchief ("clout") in his face. The handkerchief was dipped in his son Rutland's blood.

## **Dramatic techniques**

□ Symbolism

□ **The boar** □ **Tower of London** □ **Curses** □ **Prophecies** □ **Ghosts**  
□ **Ring** □ **Dreams** □ **Character symbols**

- Monologue and soliloquy
- Irony
- Dreams
- Biblical allusion □ Foreshadowing
- Use of the supernatural (dreams, ghosts, curses, prophecies)
- Flashback
- Use of letters
- Dramatic contrast

## **Note**

Techniques are literary devices in drama a playwright uses to develop his work. In the approach of a question about techniques therefore, must show how the a device develops the elements that make up a play.

**Consider how a technique helps in development of plot, character revelation, thematic portrayal, creation of mood, lessons learnt and authorial intention.(PTCLMI)**

## **Simple essay sample**

1. Explain how Richard proves a villain in the play Richard 111?

Richard is the most dominant character in the play 'Richard 111' and the most dramatic. He is a brother to Edward 1v and Clarence. Richard is clearly a villain by choice and undoubtedly the best at the game, thanks to his numerous horrible acts he persecutes directly or indirectly. He declares his villainous position at the beginning of the play in his first speech when he says that since he cannot become a lover, he is determined to prove a villain. He therefore sets up plots and schemes that affect those around him. This evil character remorselessly proves his mission in the following ways.



In order to create enmity and confusion between the king, Edward 1v and his other brother Clarence, he pays an unscrupulous soothsayer who falsely prophesizes that Edward will be killed by a family member whose name begins with "G". Clarence whose other name is George is therefore framed and the king orders for his arrest and immediately conducted to the dreadful tower of London. To prove his treachery Richard meets Clarence and blames the Queen for his situation. He then like a real green snake in green grass promises Clarence that he would do anything possible that he gets back his freedom but as soon as Clarence leaves he curses him that, "go walk a path you will never return". One wonders the kind of black heart this man has and why on earth such a heartless sadist should live for even a minute.

In relation to the above, the schemer Richard doesn't only set his brother to prison but also pays for his death. Richard's heartlessness doesn't stop on anything but to hurt others as he selfishly wishes himself everything. In order to align himself for power, he pays two murderers to kill Clarence who is the second in line to take over power in case Edward 1v dies. The murderers do as they are told. They kill Clarence in a very horrible and bloody manner. He is stabbed and his body hidden in a hole. The most notable event that evoke sadness in the audience is the way Clarence pleads with the murderers to spare his life and they will be heavily paid by Richard. The murderers confirm to him that in fact it's Richard who wants his head. The demoralized Clarence cannot believe but all in all the deed is done.

Other points to consider are;

To quicken the death of the already ailing king Edward 1v, Richard announces the news of Clarence's death and blames the king for it. When Edward reminisces what Clarence did for him, he becomes too ill and dies.

He uses his position as the lord protector to arrest and kill Queen Elizabeth's relatives. That is her son Gray, her brother Rivers and Vaughan an ally.

Richard accuses Hastings of conniving with Mistress Shore and the Queen to bewitch him and he is beheaded. Hastings's only crime is not supporting the coronation of Richard since he is not the right and legitimate heir to the throne.

Richard hires Tyrell to kill Prince Edward and the young Duke of York since they threatened his throne after taking over the kingship.

Richard manipulates and marries lady Anne in order to win favors and become the king. Soon after becoming the king, he tells Stanley to announce her sickness and consequently her death.

Richard betrays and executes his right hand man Buckingham having refused to support him in killing the princes.

He shamelessly approaches and asks queen Elizabeth to allow him marry her daughter the young Elizabeth after killing all her other relatives. It is absurd.

He kidnaps Stanley's son and keeps him in custody so that Stanley's army and friends fight on his side.

## **2. Show how the writer uses supernatural to develop themes in the play**

### **Richard 111.**

Supernatural simply means things or happenings beyond human control or understanding. Shakespeare uses plenty of super natural elements in the play Richard 111 that tells a tale of a man who brands himself a villain and tortures all those around him till he is also killed. These elements include Lady Anne and Margret's prophetic curses. Clarence's and Stanley's dreams, Richard's alleged witchcraft, the prince's claim that there are ghosts at the tower and the ghosts that visit Richard and Richmond before the battle. The supernatural elements in the play Richard 111 are significant towards development and portrayal of themes such as fate, deception, good versus evil, guilt, greed for power and others as explained below.

To begin with is Lady Anne's curses that she rains on Richard. When she comes on scene, lady

Anne is escorting Henry V1 corpse who had died of Richard's hand. She laments the death of Henry and his son Edward that was betrothed to her. She curses Richard that any woman who marries him should have abortive children and should be more miserable than she is. Not long after, Richard the master tactician meets lady Anne woos and earns her hand in marriage. What Anne doesn't realize is that by marrying Richard, she has inadvertently cursed herself into misery. When Richard assumes the throne, he immediately plans to terminate her. He orders Stanley to report to the public that lady Anne is sick and the next thing to hear is that lady Anne is dead. The painful death that Anne goes through fulfills the curses she cast on whoever marries Richard hence the theme of fate portrayed.

The theme of retribution is also portrayed through the above curse. Lady Anne curses Richard for the evils he has committed to her family. It is therefore surprising that the same lamenting woman who at first appears to be a hard nut to crack is easily tricked by Richard and wins her heart. By accepting to marry a man who killed her husband and father in law, Anne has cursed herself and one can conclude that her death is long overdue since she well knew that she was marrying a monster and a well known murderer whose hand she knew better than others. Another character that rains curses on others is the wailing Margret, the former queen who lost her title after the death of her husband and son. In her prophesy she curses queen Elizabeth to outlive her glory and should dies neither a wife nor queen. She curses her son Edward to die young just like hers. She also curses Richard to carry out a lot of sins, be scared of his friends and trust his enemies. She also curses Richard to have strange nightmares full of ugly devils. All these curses are later fulfilled and lead to the development of the following themes.

Fate is developed as the curses come back to haunt each of the characters she curses. She predicts that the queen will outlive her glory and very soon her husband dies and Richard usurps the throne. Her children Edward and York are also brutally killed by Tyrell under the orders of Richard just as predicated by Margret.

Greed for power is also developed from the curse Margret rains on Richard that he will live to carry out a lot of sins. Richard basically carries out most of the sins in order to become the king and to consolidate his power. He for example kills Hastings because he is opposed to his coronation and also murders the princes because they threaten his existence on the throne. He again approaches Elizabeth to ask her a hand in marriage of her daughter yet he is her uncle in order to have right claim to the throne. All these explain the theme of greed for power.

Hypocrisy is also developed as Richard betrays his right hand man Buckingham. Margret's prophesy that Richard will doubt the friend's loyalty is fulfilled when he asks Buckingham whether to kill the princes and he asks him for some time to make up his mind. Richard becomes suspicious and plots against him. He at first denies him the promises he had made to him and later is executed. This is one of the most notable betrayals witnessed in the play as Buckingham is well known to have helped Richard take up the throne.

**Other elements of supernatural elements to consider are;**  
Clarence's dream

Stanley's dream

Richard's claim that Mrs Shore and Queen Elizabeth bewitched him

The scene in which young Prince of York rejects the idea of staying at the tower citing the fear of ghosts of his dead uncles.

The event in which ghosts visit Richard and Richmond.

Note: for each of the above show at least two or themes developed as a result. It doesn't matter even when you repeat the theme.

### 3. How has the author used Irony in the Play, Richard III?

#### **Approach:**

The introduction should contain the definition of irony and different kinds of ironies evident in Richard III. Then show its use/effectiveness in developing elements of drama.

#### **Clues**

Irony is a literary technique where a situation, event or use of language seems deliberately contrary of what one expects and is often wryly amusing as a result. There is verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony used in the play to develop plot, themes, character, lessons mood and atmosphere and revealing the author's intention as follows,

- Clarence is imprisoned in a tower and believes it's the queen who has imprisoned him yet ironically it is Richard (dramatic irony)
- Richard promises to release Clarence from the tower or even "lie" with him in prison yet ironically he is the mastermind of his imprisonment (dramatic irony)
- That Clarence is dead because of King Edward's orders but it's dramatically ironical that it's Richard who ordered this murder.
- Richard woos Lady Anne to fulfill his intentions of becoming king yet Lady Anne is unaware of this but the (dramatic irony) audience knows.
- Richard ironically claims that he murdered Lady Anne's father-in-law and husband because of her beauty.
- Lord Hastings asserts that he would live to give thanks to whoever has caused his earlier imprisonment (Verbal)
- Richard curses Queen Elizabeth's kindred that wish him dead yet we know that it's actually him who wishes them death. (dramatic)
- It's ironical that Clarence suggests to the murderers to seek clarification and help from Richard yet ironically it's Richard that has sent them.
- King Edward expects everyone to stay united after reconciling them but ironically it gets worse as Richard plans to scheme against them.
- It's ironical that King Edward dies from the guilt of having ordered the death of Clarence.

- The two princes i.e. Prince Edward and York of Duke are kept in the tower apparently for safety purposes as they await to crown Edward a king. Ironically they are killed from the tower.
- It is situational irony when Buckingham expects a thunderous applause after thinking that they have convinced the citizens about king Edward's bastardy origins.
- It's ironical that Richard pretends that he does not want to be king. The Mayor even pleads with him to accept.
- The mayor finds Richard praying with the Bishops, something that the audience knows that he is just pretending. (dramatic irony)
- Queen Elizabeth wonders sarcastically whether her daughter-young Elizabeth is supposed to die in the hands of Richard just because she is beautiful, virtuous, royal and gracious (verbal irony)
- Richard ironically wants to marry his niece in order to consolidate his power not because of love.
- Richards denies Buckingham his rewards for being a good ally. This is ironical in nature. He thus organizes an army against him.
- Lord Hastings celebrates the imprisonment of Rivers and Grey, his arch enemies from the Queen's side yet his own death is awaiting.
- Lord Hastings is also warned by lord Stanley through the messenger about his "boar" dream but he laughs it off thinking that he is still Richard's friend.
- Lord Hastings accuses whoever wishes Richard to die yet ironically Richard will accuse him of conspiracy and even complain about his mistress Shore.

***The above instances of irony are significant in developing;***

**Plot:** (the cause and effect/chronological flow of events)

**Themes:** Deception, greed for power, Divine justice, Good Vs evil, Retribution etc

**Character revelation:** Richard is revealed to be deceitful, cunning and crafty. Lord Hastings is naïve and ignorant etc

**Lessons:** Appearance can be deceptive, power is sweet, etc

**Mood and atmosphere:** Agony, Confusion, Tension,

#### 4. **Discuss Shakespeare's use of soliloquy in the play, Richard III**

**Approach:** The introduction will contain the definition of soliloquy and show which characters perpetuate the soliloquies in the play. Show its use in developing PTC LM

**Clues:**

A soliloquy is a passage in a drama in which a character express his thoughts or feelings aloud while either alone upon the stage or with the actors keeping silent. It's a word taken from Latin to mean "talking by oneself".

Examples of soliloquies in Richard III

- "Now is the winter of discontent..." spoken by Richard, duke of Calouchester in Act 1, scene".
- "He cannot live; I hope and must not die till George be packed with post-haste up to heaven act 1 scene 1.
- "was ever woman in this humour wooed?" spoken by Richard Act 1 Scene 2 .
- "I do the wrong, and first begin to braw). The secret Mischief that I set abroad..." Act 1, scene 3. Act 1 scene 3.
- "Now will I in to take some privy order to draw the brats of Clarence out of sight, and to give notice that no manner of person at anytime have recourse unto the princes..." Act 3 scene 5.
- "This is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings..." spoken by scrivener in Act 3 scene 6.
- "Is it even so?" Rewards he my true service with such deep contempt made I him king for this?" Act 4 scenes 2 spoken by Buckingham.
- "The Tyrannous and bloody deed is done...." Spoken by Tyrell in Act 4, scene 3.
- "The son of Clarence have I pent up close" spoken by Richard in Act 4, Scene 3.
- "So now prosperity begins to mellow and drop into the rotten mouth of death...." Act 4 scene 4 spoken by Queen Margaret.
- In a soliloquy, Richard reveals his next step that he will marry young Elizabeth King Edward IV's daughter in order to secure the safety of his position.
- The soliloquy in Act 4 scene 4 gives us the idea of how Richard" obsessed with his bloody plan. He reckons what he has accomplished so far.

***The above soliloquies help in the development of;***

**Plot:** (Cause and effect of events)

**Themes:** Hypocrisy, deception, good Vs evil,

**Character revelation:** Richard is a hypocrite, evil, depressed, frustrated, vicious  
-Buckingham is disappointed, loyal etc

**Lessons:** Pride comes before a fall, crime is punished

**Mood and atmosphere:** Jubilant, frightening, sad, etc

## **SOPHOCLES: Oedipus the King**

### **5. Discuss the theme of fate in the play, Oedipus the King.**

**Approach:** Define Fate and show instances of fate. Analysis is a great deal with this Question.

**Clues:**

Fate refers to the development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power. A force beyond someone's control.

These pre-determined forces in Oedipus the King include;

- The prophecy of the oracle, Apollo that Jocasta and king Laius would have a baby doomed to kill his father and marry his mother is utter fate!
- Fate saves Oedipus from dying at mount Cithaeron.
- It's also fate that drives Oedipus to the oracle while he is still in Corinth to get the same prophecy.
- Oedipus runs from Corinth because of fate.
- He kills his father at a place where three roads meet because of fate.
- Oedipus saves Thebes from the plague when he answers correctly the sphinx's riddle and later becomes king because of fate.
- Fate influences the messenger from Corinth to bring news of the death of Polybus. He is the same person that will reveal his true identity.
- Oedipus' persistence in knowing his origin is driven by fate.
- Revelations from the blind prophet are also unavoidable because of fate.
- It's fate that drives Jocasta to commit suicide.

#### **6. What lessons do we learn from the play, Oedipus the king?**

##### **Approach:**

What is a lesson?? Kinds of lessons in the introduction.

##### **Clues:**

A lesson is a moral of play or story that is supposed to teach you how to be a better person. From Oedipus the king, we learn a lot from majorly Oedipus, his actions and other characters at large. These include;

- Fate is inevitable
- Never judge a book by its cover
- Appearances can be deceptive
- Pride comes before a fall
- It is impossible to escape one's destiny
- Every cloud has a silver lining
- The truth will always prevail crime attracts punishment
- Humility is key
- Look before you leap
- Truth surpasses all deceit
- There is light at the end of the tunnel
- Curiosity killed the cat
- You reap what you sow

**YUSUF. K. SERUNKUMA -The Snake Farmers**

## 7. Discuss the role of Mzee Sekadde in the play, The Snake Farmers.

### Approach:

Give Mzee Sekadde's profile in your introduction and later show his role in developing plot, themes, characters, lessons, Mood and atmosphere and authorial view.

### Clues

Mzee Sekadde is an elder and a village traditional chief. He is a close ally to chairman Chris Opobo. An adviser of all sorts.

### Plot;

- Invests in the search for the cause of the death of Oyire's children.
- Requests the missionary group for the construction of the hospital and a storage.
- Opobo's house is also renovated because of Sekadde's influence.
- A snake farm is established under Mzee Sekadde's wisdom.
- A second wave of the snake's epidemic is evident after the establishment of the snake farm. **Themes;**

- Bad governance - Greed and Materialism
- Betrayal
- Corruption - Immorality
- Effects of foreign Aid

### Lessons

- Innovativeness is the ideal solution to all problems
- Survival for the fittest
- We ought to be human
- A leader ought to be impartial

### Character revelation

Mzee Sekadde reveals to us the character of;

Opobo as;

-Naïve

- Gullible
- Loyal
- Corrupt
- Submissive
- Exploitative

Matt Brown as Generous, neocolonialist considerate

### Mood and atmosphere

- Tension



- Agony
- Confusion

### **Authorial view**

Through Mzee Sekadde, the author criticizes bad leadership. He ridicules the corrupt, exploitative and selfish leaders like Sekadde and his friend Opobo.

### **8. Describe the character of Opobo which lessons do you learn from him?**

Approach. Profile Opobo and hint on the meaning of a lesson in your introduction.

### **Clues**

Opobo is the local council chairman of Kayunga village. A close friend of Mzee Sekadde. In the play, he is around character whose traits change from good to bad and vice versa. Opobo can be characterized as;

- Responsible
  - Concerned
  - Determined
  - Social/amiable
  - Selfless
- } Initially

Manipulative  
Opportunist  
Exploitative  
Cunning /crafty later  
Strategic  
Courage  
Deceitful

Lessons learnt from the character of Opobo.

- Be flexible with your goals - We ought to have an independent mind - Never trust leaders.
- A friend in need is a friend indeed.
- Never trust all friends
- Birds of the same feather flock together.

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