

STRONG TOWER ACADEMY, IKORODU, LAGOS

WEEK FOUR

CLASS: SSS 2
SUBJECT: Literature-in-English
TOPIC: "LOOK BACK IN ANGER"
SUB-TOPICS: (i) Summary of Act Two
(ii) The plot summary of the play
(ii) Setting

ASPECT: Non-African Drama

ENABLE OBJECTIVES: At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- (i) Identify the significant points and write the summary of the Act read.
- (ii) critically analyze the significant points in the plot of the play.
- (iii) summarize the plot of the selected play
- (iv) Explain vividly the physical and social setting of the play.

REFERENCES:

- (i) Obiene Ututu's "Scholars Literature-in-English" (New WAEC & NECO SYLLABUS (2021 -2025))
- (ii) Ehis O. Osajie's "Complete Guide to Literature-in-English for WAEC & NECO candidates (2021 -2025)"

CONTENT: Introduction to Non-African Drama: "LOOK BACK IN ANGER" by John Osborne.

SUMMARY OF ACT 2

Act 2 opens on another Sunday afternoon, with Helena and Alison making lunch. In a two-handed scene, Alison says that she decided to marry Jimmy because of her own minor rebellion against her upbringing and her admiration for Jimmy's campaigns against the dereliction of life in postwar England. She describes Jimmy to Helena as a "knight in shining armour". Helena says, firmly, "You've got to fight him".

Jimmy enters, and the tirade continues. If his Act 1 material could be played as a joke, there's no doubt about the intentional viciousness of his attacks on Helena. When the women put on hats and declare that they are going to church, Jimmy's sense of betrayal peaks. When he leaves to take an urgent phone call, Helena announces that she has forced the issue. She has sent a [telegram](#) to Alison's parents asking them to come and "rescue" her. Alison is stunned but agrees that she will go.

The next evening, Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, comes to collect her to take her back to her family home. The playwright allows the Colonel to come across as quite a sympathetic character, albeit totally out of touch with the modern world, as he himself admits. "You're hurt because everything's changed", Alison tells him, "and Jimmy's hurt because everything's stayed the same". Helena arrives to say goodbye, intending to leave very soon herself. Alison is surprised that Helena is staying on for another day, but she leaves, giving Cliff a note for Jimmy. Cliff in turn hands it to Helena and leaves, saying "I hope he rams it up your nostrils".

Almost immediately, Jimmy bursts in. His contempt at finding a "goodbye" note makes him turn on Helena again, warning her to keep out of his way until she leaves. Helena tells him that Alison is expecting a baby, and Jimmy admits grudgingly that he's taken aback. However, his tirade continues. They first come to physical blows, and then as the Act 2 curtain falls, Jimmy and Helena are kissing passionately and falling on the bed.

PLOT OF "LOOK BACK IN ANGER" BY JOHN OSBORNE

LOOK BACK IN ANGER (1956) is a realist play written by John Osborne. It focuses on the life and marital struggles of an intelligent and educated but disaffected young man of working-class origin, Jimmy Porter, and his equally competent yet impassive upper-middle-class wife Allison.

Written in 17 days in a deck chair on [Morecambe](#) Pier, *Look Back in Anger* was a strongly [autobiographical](#) piece based on Osborne's unhappy marriage to actress [Pamela Lane](#) and their life in cramped accommodation in [Derby](#). While Osborne aspired towards a career in theatre, Lane was more practical and [materialistic](#). It also draws from Osborne's earlier life; for example, the wrenching speech of witnessing a loved one's death was a replay of the death of his father, Thomas.

What it is best remembered for, though, are Jimmy's tirades. Some of these are directed against generalised British middle-class smugness in the post-atomic world. Many are directed against the female characters, a very distinct echo of Osborne's uneasiness with women, including his mother, Nellie Beatrice, whom he describes in his autobiography *A Better Class of Person* as "hypocritical, self-absorbed, calculating and indifferent". Madeline, the lost love Jimmy pines for, is based on [Stella Linden](#), the older rep-company actress who first encouraged Osborne to write. After the first production in London, Osborne began a relationship with [Mary Ure](#), who played Alison; he [divorced](#) his first wife (of five years) Pamela Lane to marry Ure in 1957.

SETTINGS:

A one-room flat, English Midlands, 1950s. *Look Back in Anger* opens on a lazy, mid-1950's Sunday afternoon in a one-room attic apartment in a town in the English Midlands. The play opens with a description of the setting and the scene. Act I takes place on an evening in April. The setting is the Porter's attic apartment. It is a small room with simple, sparse furniture. It is cluttered with items such as "books, neckties, and odds and ends, including a large, tattered toy teddy bear and soft, woolly squirrel." There is a large window in the attic, but the only light comes from a skylight, so the room is somewhat dim. The play opens in April, a reference to T.S. Eliot's line from *The Waste Land*. "April is the cruellest month." Eliot is mentioned several other times in the play and is used as a definitive English cultural reference for Jimmy. This love/hate relationship with British culture is characteristic of Jimmy's attempts to retain a vibrant patriotism even while being pessimistic about the state of English affairs.

Their apartment flat is a symbol of 1950's domesticity. The staging of the play is important for understanding the mood of domestic disturbance. The room is filled with

old furniture, half-read newspapers, and pieces of worn clothing. This is representative of the characters and the characters' lifestyle. Like a piece of junk or old furniture, Jimmy, Cliff, and Alison have literally been stowed away in an attic, out of sight from the upper class culture. Their emotions and ambitions do not fit in with the upper class world and this causes a great amount of consternation for Jimmy. The cramped space contains all of the trappings of a meager domestic life. Jimmy's political and social persuasions become evident here as well when he mocks a faux column in the paper written by the "Bishop of Bromley." He considers himself unconventional and untied to traditional British politics and even declares that no political party would want him. Though his politics often align with the Liberal party, he is also a bit of an anarchist, opposed to any kind of organization whether it be politics or religion.

CLASSWORK

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer the following questions:

1. State two significant points in Act Two of Look Back In Anger by John Osborne.
2. What type of play is Look Back In Anger?
3. Jimmy's wife is called _____?
4. What is the setting of the play? Time and place. (a) Pittsburgh, PA; 1957 (b) A one-room flat, English Midlands, 1950s (c) Liverpool city, 1801 (d) Lysander's aunt's house, 1564.

CLASS: SSS2

SUBJECT: LITERATURE

ASSIGNMENT FOR WEEK FOUR

- (1) Account fully for the plot of Look Back In Anger by John Osborne.
- (2) Write a brief note on the setting of the play, Look Back In Anger by John Osborne.
- (3) In not more than two pages, summarize Act Two of the text, "LOOK BACK IN ANGER" by John Osborne.

Teacher: Mrs Oloyede Ethel O.