

Student Matinee Series

Student Webquest



BETRAYAL

Modern Classic Drama
By Harold Pinter
Directed By Richard Rose

**MARCH 23
TO APRIL 11, 2010**

Recommended for Grades 11 and 12
Student Matinee: Thursday, April 8

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Betrayal

Written by Harold Pinter

Student Matinee Study Guide and Webquest - prepared by Dom Saliani

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Background information on

Betrayal

Written by Harold Pinter

Information to help you better understand and appreciate
Theatre Calgary's performance of
Betrayal.

Who was Harold Pinter?

Using the suggested websites, explore Pinter's life and works. Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

[Moonstruck Drama - Harold Pinter](#)
[Wikipedia](#)
[New York Times Obituary](#)

1. When and where was Harold Pinter born?
2. How long did it take Pinter to write his first play? What was it called?
3. What is the title of his one act play which features two hired killers? When was it first performed?
4. What is the title of his first full length play? What is odd or mysterious about the plot of this play?
5. How many dramatic works did Pinter write?
6. When did Pinter win the Nobel Prize for Literature?
7. Describe Pinter's participation at the Nobel awards ceremony.
8. What happened as a result of his anti-American Nobel prize acceptance speech?
9. When did Pinter die? What did he die of?
10. According to the New York Times' obituary, how important was Pinter? What else did they say about him?

What did Harold Pinter look like?

Have you used the new Internet search engine created by Microsoft yet? If not, it is called [Bing](#). This name was chosen because it can be easily turned into a verb, much like the noun Google can be turned into the verb "to Google."

Use the [Bing Image search](#) function to explore what Pinter looked like throughout his long career.

Choose any five of photos that you think are distinctive or interesting and create a biographical poster complete with information as to when the pictures were taken.

Harold Pinter and Film

If you like movies (and who doesn't?) a great comprehensive internet site that you should know about is the [Internet Movie Database](#).

Here you can conduct extensive searches on movies, actors, writers, quotations, movie trivia, etc.

Did you know that Harold Pinter wrote screenplays for and acted in numerous films? Check out the IMDb page on [Pinter](#) and answer the following questions. You may have to follow some of the links to get the answers.

1. How many screenplays did Pinter write since 1990? Name them. Choose at least two to explore more closely. Read their plot summaries and decide the film you would most like to see. Explain why you would choose this film to watch.
2. Which of Pinter's best known plays were turned into films?
3. Who starred in the feature film version of *Betrayal*?
4. For what Oscar Award was this film nominated for?
5. Read Roger Ebert's film [review](#) of *Betrayal*. List three things that he liked about the film.
6. Pinter's *Betrayal* has been referred to in a number of other films and TV shows. The IMDb lists [four such works](#). What are they?

Rave Reviews for *Betrayal*

***Betrayal* is a play that will leave you with plenty of food for thought. Yet, for all its examination of moral issues, it's highly entertaining.**

- Elyse Sommer

***Betrayal* is worth seeing more than once for the nuances that are all too easy to miss on first viewing.**

- Tony Flook

Harold Pinter: master of economy and understatement; architect of the resonant silence. Pinter is never just about surfaces ... [The play] takes the audience on a richly textured emotional journey.

- Frances Edmond

***Betrayal* is a wonderful, human play despite its unusual structure. It shows us the price of choices we make without even realizing we've made them, and asks us if we'd choose the same again, had we foreknowledge. It is the kind of play that will never age because it shows us how people really are and people never really change.**

- Matthew Lyon

Beloved British playwright Harold Pinter died in 2008. We salute his genius with this special presentation of his evocative play. By telling the story backwards he unveils deeper truths and contradictions hidden inside the betrayal.

- Dennis Garnhum (Artistic Director
Theatre Calgary)

Explore Reviews for *Betrayal*

By the time you are scheduled to attend *Betrayal* at Theatre Calgary, the local papers and magazines will have printed reviews of the play. The play has been and continues to be performed in many major city centers. Their on-line news media outlets have also printed reviews of the play.

Find and carefully read at least two of these reviews.

You can start by checking out the [Calgary Herald](#) and the Calgary Sun ([Canoe.ca](#)) entertainment sections.

What did the reviewers think of the performance?

What did the reviewers like or dislike about the production?

What important information did you learn about the musical and the characters by reading the reviews?

Based on the reviews, what are you looking forward to seeing in the performance of *Betrayal* at Theatre Calgary?

Exploring Genre

Betrayal shares a variety of aspects found in a number of theatrical and literary genres. Below are some brief descriptions of a few of these genres.

Before you see the play, you may wish to use on-line or print resources to find out more about the characteristics of these genres:

Tragedy – serious works in which the protagonists suffer a tragic end, or loss as a result of a flaw, or bad choice.

Morality Play – a form of entertainment which first became popular during the Middle Ages. Many modern plays are also considered morality plays if their plots involve simple characters and if their purpose is to teach lessons in morality.

Comedy of Menace – This term has often been used to describe plays that are similar to Pinter's early works. Plays which fit this genre are humorous in places but the humour is mingled with plot elements that are unsettling and disturbing. Audiences at such plays often find it difficult to know how to respond in that the dramatized situations are funny and unsettling at the same time.

What does it mean to be Pinteresque?

Harold Pinter holds a special place in dramatic history in that his name has been turned into an adjective that is used to describe a certain style or atmosphere on the stage.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word ***Pinteresque*** is used in reference to plays that contain a combination of the following characteristics:

- *A lack of certainty – frustrating the audience's need for answers*
- *The use of pauses and silences*
- *A mixture of comedy and threat*
- *The past is mysterious and is rarely explained*
- *Language is used as a weapon by characters*
- *Characters do not offer explanations for themselves*
- *Apparently trivial situations have serious threats underlying them*
- *Settings are typically enclosed spaces*

Oxford English Dictionary

Interestingly enough, Pinter dismissed the notion that a distinguishable 'Pinteresque' style existed.

As you watch the Theatre Calgary performance of *Betrayal*, identify scenes which fit any of the above characteristics.

Who's Who in the play

<p>Robert – a publisher. He is married to Emma.</p> <p>Emma – a housewife. She is married to Robert.</p> <p>Jerry – a book editor. He is married to Judith and having an affair with Emma.</p> <p>Jerry and Robert have been best friends for many years.</p> <p>According to Pinter's casting notes, at the end of the story, Jerry and Robert are 40. Emma is 38.</p>	<p>Important characters mentioned in the play but who do not appear on stage:</p> <p>Charlotte \ Emma and Robert's Ned / children</p> <p>Judith – a doctor; Jerry's wife Sam \ Jerry and Judith's Sarah / children</p> <p>Casey – a novelist. He is having an affair with Emma.</p>
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Setting of the Play

Time	The play begins in the spring of 1977 and ends during the winter of 1968.
Place	Areas in and around London, England and Venice

Summary of the Play

Before attending the Theatre Calgary performance of *Betrayal*, you may wish to read a summary of the plot.

An excellent detailed [synopsis](#) of the play is available at Wikipedia.

Some people are reluctant to read such summaries because they feel that this ruins the viewing experience. There is no suspense, it is argued, because we know in advance what is going to happen.

Well, this is not a concern with *Betrayal* because of the unconventional plotting of the story. The play begins with the end. In the first scene, we learn that the affair between Emma and Jerry is over. In the subsequent scenes, we go back months and years at a time, and witness the events that led to the end of the affair. The final scene of the play deals with the very beginning of the affair.

By reading the summary, you will have a better idea of what to expect from the performance.

Student Activities

Before the Curtain Rises

**Activities to consider before
attending the Theatre Calgary
performance of *Betrayal***

Note to teachers:

It is not necessary for students to complete all of the following activities.

Consider only those activities that you believe meet the needs and interests of your students.

It is also recommended that, whenever possible, choices be offered and that students engage in group inquiry when completing the activities.

1. Predict the dramatic context based on the dialogue:

Below are some quotations that are part of the dialogue in this play.

In groups, make predictions regarding the *dramatic context* during which each of the speeches is delivered. In other words, imagine what

- has just happened or is about to happen that would motivate the character to speak these particular words
- the emotion with which the lines are spoken
- the reaction of the person being spoken to, once the lines are delivered.

Quotes from the play	Predicted dramatic contexts
Emma: I thought of you the other day.	
Jerry: You know the form. I ask about your husband, you ask about my wife.	
Emma: I wonder if everyone knew, all the time.	
Robert: No, you didn't know very much about anything, really, did you?	
Jerry: I know that perfectly well. I might remind you that your husband is my oldest friend.	
Emma: Listen. I think we've made absolutely the right decision.	
Robert: Writing a novel about a man who leaves his wife and three children and goes to live alone on the other side of London to write a novel about a man who leaves his wife and three children –	
Robert: Only yesterday. When I saw his handwriting on the letter. Before yesterday I was quite ignorant.	
Emma: It was your kitchen actually.	
Robert: I was alone for hours, as a matter of fact, on the island. Highpoint, actually, of the whole trip.	
Jerry: As you are my best and oldest friend and, in the present instance, my host, I decided to take this opportunity to tell your wife how beautiful she was.	

As you watch the performance of *Betrayal*, pay careful attention to when the above lines are actually spoken.

To what extent were your predictions of the dramatic contexts correct?
Was there anything that really surprised you about the actual situations during which the above lines were spoken?

2. Work with tone to create meaning

It goes without saying that how actors say their lines can often determine what the audience will think and feel about them and the situation.

Take for example the following brief dialogue between two of the characters. During this scene, Robert learns that his wife, Emma, has been unfaithful to him for some time now. Here they discuss when Robert first started to suspect.

Emma: We're lovers.
Robert: Ah. Yes. I thought it might be something like that, something along those lines.
Emma: When?
Robert: What?
Emma: When did you think?
Robert: Yesterday. Only yesterday. When I saw his handwriting on the letter. Before yesterday I was quite ignorant.
Emma: Ah. (Pause) I'm sorry.
Robert: Sorry? (Silence) Where does it ... take place? Must be a bit awkward. I mean we've got two kids, he's got two kids, not to mention a wife ...
Emma: We have a flat.
Robert: Ah. I see. (Pause) Nice?
(Pause) A flat. It's quite well established then, your ... uh ... affair?
Emma: Yes.
Robert: How long?
Emma: Some time.
Robert: Yes, but how long exactly?
Emma: Five years.

This dialogue can be delivered in a variety of ways to project different interpretations of the characters.

In pairs, prepare to present the dialogue so as to project a combination of the following interpretations. The student reading Emma will choose either a or b and the student reading Robert's role will choose either c or d.

- a. Emma loves Robert and is sorry that she has betrayed him.
- b. Emma does not love Robert and is upset that her secret has been discovered.
- c. Robert still loves Emma and is very hurt that she has betrayed him.
- d. Robert is very angry that Emma has betrayed him.

Do not tell the class in advance which interpretation you were projecting.

Now go to the [NPR](#) site and listen to a tribute to Harold Pinter and a professional reading of the above scene with Pinter himself playing Robert. Scott Simon, the reviewer, makes the point that one of Pinter's most notable trademarks, as a playwright, is his use of "silence." Simon also suggests that Pinter's "Long, tense pauses between his characters" often make "audiences squirm and wonder what people do not - and perhaps cannot - say to one another."

Take special note of the dramatic effect of the pauses and silences.

3. Prepare for the “Meet the Actors” Session

After each student matinee performance, many of the actors make themselves available for a question and answer session with students.

From what you know of the play, which actors would you like most to talk with?

With a partner, generate at least three questions that you would like to ask these actors.

The questions can deal with any of the following:

- when and how they got into acting
- their favorite roles in past performances
- what they do to prepare for their roles in the performance
- their interpretation of the work or the role they play
- special challenges of their roles
- any other aspect of acting or of the play that you are interested in

4. Prepare To Attend the Performance: Theatre Etiquette

Theatre etiquette – what is appropriate and not appropriate to do when you are in the theatre - is an important matter to consider before attending a play with your classmates.

In groups, generate a list of as many theatre etiquette rules as you can. Make sure to include reasons for the rules. An example is provided in the box below.

Rule	Reasons
<i>a. Don't take pictures during the performance.</i>	<i>The actors are live. They must do rather difficult work. Noise or flashes from cameras can distract them and could make them stumble over lines.</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

If you are having problems generating your own list of rules, create reasons for the following rules listed at: <http://www.drdaveanddee.com/theater.html>

1. To avoid being late, plan to arrive 30 minutes early.
2. Turn off cell phones, pagers, watch alarms, and other electronic devices.
3. Do not talk, whisper, sing, or hum during the performance.
4. Do not eat and drink during the performance.
5. Unwrap cough suppressants during applause, laughing, or loud musical numbers.
6. Keep feet on the floor, not on the seat or balcony in front of you.
7. At the end of the performance during curtain call, don't rush for the exits.
8. Performers appreciate enthusiastic applause, but not whistling or shouting.
9. Do not use cameras or videotape during the performance.



Student Activities

While the Curtain Is Up

Questions to consider as you watch the play

Consider elements of plot:

- The first two scenes of *Betrayal* deal with the end of the affair between Jerry and Emma. The rest of the play travels back in time to the beginning of their affair.

List at least five important pieces of information shared in the first two scenes of the play that help us to better appreciate what happens later in the play.

- Audiences often report that this play, despite its unconventional plotting does succeed in maintaining their interest right to the very last line of dialogue. To what extent was your interest maintained till the very end?

How was suspense created and maintained in this play?

- The climax of a story can be either the point of highest dramatic tension or the turning point for the protagonist(s).

Does the play have a true climax?

If so, when does the climax of the play occur?

Does it mark the highest point of dramatic tension or is it the turning point for the protagonist(s) in the play? Explain.

- The final scene of a dramatic work needs to be carefully crafted for maximum effect. The playwright would want to accomplish a number of things with the ending of the work.

With a partner, generate a list of three things that you think the ending of a play should accomplish.

After watching the play, consider the extent to which the ending of *Betrayal* succeeded in accomplishing the three things in your list.

Consider elements of character:

The first two scenes of the play reveal what the major characters have developed into. As you watch the performance, keep track of the changes that occur in each of the characters.

Which of the characters have changed the most?

How were these changes emphasized during the performance?

- According to Shakespeare, “Action is eloquence.” What this suggests, in context of the theatre, is that actions – what a person does - often speak louder than words.

Identify five examples where *what* the actor *did* was more important in terms of revealing or developing character than what he or she said?

You should also identify what the actions reveal in terms of character traits.

- Create a brief character sketch of Emma, Jerry or Robert.

Be sure to identify important character traits, values, beliefs, attitudes, dominant emotions, strengths, weaknesses, etc.

Consider elements of setting and mood:

- **What were your first impressions of the set designs?**

What did the set design and props contribute to the overall effect of the play?

- **Identify when and how sound, music and lighting effects were used effectively during the performance.**
- **What specific moods, atmosphere or effects did the use of sound, music and lighting help to create at various times in the performance?**

Consider elements of theme:

- Many notable people have said very quotable things about some of the important themes and ideas in this play.

Choose any two of the following quotations to focus on.

Put each of them into your own words but *do not* translate word for word.

In your rewording, avoid indicating how you feel about what is being said.

Then in brief paragraphs, consider the extent to which you agree or disagree with the idea being expressed in each quotation. Be sure to explain your position.

Once you have viewed the performance of *Betrayal*, identify what the play suggests about the important ideas dealt with in the quotations you have considered.

<p>What we call little things are merely the causes of great things; they are the beginning, the embryo ... One single black speck may be the beginning of a gangrene, of a storm, of a revolution. - Henri Frederic Amiel (1821 – 1881)</p>	<p>Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of witnesses. - Margaret Millar</p>
<p>It's a challenge to view a moral dilemma from more than one angle. - Peter Marks</p>	<p>I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated. - Paul Anderson</p>
<p>The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right place but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment. - Dorothy Nevill</p>	<p>Dramatic suspense is to do with the flow of information to the audience. - Tom Stoppard</p>

- Titles of works are very important in that they may explicitly identify the theme or contain symbolism that suggests to the audience what is important in the work in terms of ideas.

In what ways is the title *Betrayal* appropriate and effective?

Create two different titles for this play that also contain symbolism or which suggest one of the important themes in the play.

- This work deals with a number of important themes. These include:

betrayal	lack of communication
fragility of relationships	isolation
love	individual responsibility

Create three statements that Jerry or Emma would agree with at the end of the play about any of the above themes.

Student Activities

After the Curtain Falls

Choose any of the following activities to deal with after viewing the Theatre Calgary performance of *Betrayal*.

1. Reflect on pre-performance activities

What pre-performance information and activities best prepared you for the play?

What else could you have done or wished you had done to have better prepared for your viewing of *Betrayal*?

2. Cast a feature film version of the play

Harold Pinter's play, *Betrayal* was made into a feature film starring Ben Kingsley, Jeremy Irons and Patricia Hodge.

Assume a new updated feature film version of the play is being made and that you have been given the job of finding a cast for it.

What well known actors would you choose to play the roles of the major characters?

To justify your casting choices, you should refer to other similar roles handled by each of the actors.

Which, if any, of the actors used in the Theatre Calgary production would you cast in your movie? Why?

3. Write a Review

Write a review of the performance of *Betrayal* that you have just seen. Read several newspaper or magazine reviews to get a better idea of the style and structure of a typical drama reviews.

A good central source for reviews can be found at:

<http://www.curtainup.com/goingall.html>

Make sure that you do not follow any one review too closely. Your review should reflect your personal take and evaluation of the performance.

4. Reflective Writing on the Theatre Experience

A recent Globe and Mail article, entitled “Movies offer escape. Theatre lets us understand” argued that live theatre experiences are often far more impactful than virtual experiences offered in film or on TV.

Do you agree?

Consider the ways in which attending a live theatre performance could be preferable to watching a feature film on the big screen or a DVD or video at home.

What did you enjoy most about being part of the audience attending Theatre Calgary and seeing *Betrayal*?

Based on this experience, are you looking forward to attending another play in the near future? Explain.

5. Write a letter to the Director

Write a letter to the director commenting on what you enjoyed or did not enjoy about the production.

Focus on how elements such as casting choices, use of lighting, sound and music, costuming and acting contributed to your enjoyment of the production.

6. Representing character, conflict and theme

Create a poster by finding (or creating) a series of graphics, photos or illustrations, and words that you think serve, in significant ways, to illustrate or bring to life the characters, the situations, the themes or messages of the play.

Complete your representation on poster paper.

On the back side of the poster, briefly explain why you chose the graphics you did. In other words, what does each of your visuals represent?

Please note that the explanation of the graphics on the back of your poster is not an essay or a formal piece of writing.

Since the purpose of this writing is to provide you with the opportunity of explaining your choice of visuals, you may even complete this in point form.

7. Create a Keepsake Scrapbook

As a permanent keepsake and record of your experiences with the Theatre Calgary performance of *Betrayal*, create a scrapbook/journal which includes artifacts, assignments, and reflections.

Artifacts could include items such as theatre reviews from local newspapers, your ticket stub and program.

You should also include all the assignments and activities that you completed in preparation for your visit to Theatre Calgary as well as the “After the Curtain Falls” activities.

Here are some other ideas that you may wish to consider for inclusion:

- journal entry commenting on your opinion of the actors playing the various roles
- a published review of the play
- photographs taken before and after the performance (Remember that you are not allowed to take pictures during the performance.)
- drawings or sketches of the set
- questions you would like to ask the actors or director
- journal entry dealing with your thoughts and impressions of being a part of a live theatre audience
- graphics found on the internet relating to *Betrayal* and Harold Pinter. Be sure to credit sources.
- colourful cover and a detailed table of contents
- anything else that you think will make your scrapbook/journal worth going back to several years from now

Once your scrapbook/journal is complete, you may choose to share it with the staff at Theatre Calgary.

To do so, you should contact Ryan Bump and he will ensure that it gets shown to the right people.

Ryan Bump can be reached at 294-7440 ext.1391 or by email at:

rbump@theatrecalgary.com