

## About the play

The play is set in the poverty of post-war London, where the youth are on the dole and lack direction and purpose in their lives. The relationship between Len, Pam and Fred are the main focus. Their lack of principles and commitment convey their inability to connect and form loving relationships. The primitive nature that lies beneath the human facade emerges in a violent and shocking manner.

## Context

Bond explores how the promises made after the Second World War have not materialised and society seems to be in an eternal cycle of disappointment and pessimism out of which there is no escape. This is not the liberal society associated with the swinging sixties! First performed at The Royal Court theatre in 1965. It was the subject of censorship by the Lord Chamberlain. Significant cuts and alterations were demanded before it could be given a performance licence. The Royal Court declared themselves "a private club" so that the play could be performed uncut.

Bond declares his intention as a playwright is to "write for human salvation...drama is about justice, about social justice".

## Main characters

**Len** - Aged 21. The central character of the play. He is searching for a reason to exist.

**Pam** - Aged 23. Lives with her parents. She is promiscuous and turns her affections from Len to Fred.

**Fred** - Aged 21. He is the least trapped of all the characters. It is this that fascinates Pam.

**Harry** - Aged 68. Pam's father. He is in a loveless marriage and is described as "grey" by Bond.

**Mary** - Aged 53. In an embittered marriage with Harry. She attempts to bring excitement into her life by flirting with Len.

**The Gang** - They represent the 'group mentality' that can lead individuals to behave in way they might not alone.



## Design

When approaching the text as a designer, here are some things to consider:

**Concept:** What is your concept? Production style? Chosen historical period? Research this and how it might influence your design ideas. Will the original production conditions influence your ideas?

**Themes:** How are they going to be expressed in your design ideas for the whole play and from scene to scene? How can your ideas help to communicate what you know about the characters and relationship with others in the play?

### Design skills include:

**Set & props** e.g. Stage space & shape, location, set construct, furniture and large props

**Costume** e.g. style, historical period, colour, texture of fabric and embellishments

**Hair and Makeup** e.g. style, colour, accessories, body makeup

**Lighting** e.g. type of lighting, position of lanterns, colour and intensity

**Sound** e.g. type of sound (music, sound effects or soundscape), intensity, length of cue and use of effects on the sound

## Acting

When approaching the text as an actor, here are some things to consider:

**Research** the character throughout the play and before its action.

**Acting style** - This could be naturalistic but versions of the play have used epic theatre techniques to emphasise the themes in the play.

**Explore the relationships** between characters in the given circumstances of the play and each scene.

What are the motivations of the character to behave the way they do? Do they change? and why? What do they really mean when they engage in dialogue or are silent? - Subtext

The status of characters is important, and it is this fine balance of power that tips over into violence.

Who sparks this?

### How do they communicate this to an audience?

**Vocal skills** e.g. pitch, tone, rhythm, pausing, emphasis

**Physical skills** e.g. facial expression, posture, gesture, the use physical of levels, the speed of movement

**Directing:** [in the exam the element of **directing** will focus entirely on the relationship a director has with the actors.]

What type of acting style will be used? What are the conventions of this style and how might you use them in rehearsal with actors?

How might they move in the space? What do the proxemics between characters convey about their relationship? How could you as a director show the relationship between characters in the way they interact physically and vocally? How important is their entrance or exit from a scene and how could you get your actors to communicate this?