

## **Look Back in Anger** by John Osborne

### **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

#### **JIMMY PORTER**

Jimmy is a young man of the working class who is at war with himself and society. He is highly intelligent non-achiever who sells sweets on a stall in a local market. He feels that no one wants what he has got to offer.

There is a boiling resentment inside of him. However, all his bitterness, hysteria and cruelty seem to be only cry for recognition. He makes the lives of those he cherishes impossible.

Jimmy ridicules many aspects of British society, such as the upper class behaviour, the church, the bishops and the American age.

Jimmy's anger is linked to his own past, 12 months when he was watching his father dying. He was only a small, frightened boy at the age of 10 who spent hours in the tiny bedroom at the beside of his dying father. The death of his father had a very strong impact on him. He felt the bitterness and learnt about helplessness, loss and betrayal.

Jimmy torments Allison because he can not forgive that she comes from upper-middle class and he from lower-middle class. He is verbally attacking his wife and he is trying to get her down on her knees, but she is unable to express her emotions. By attacking her Jimmy destroys what he actually treasures and Allison leaves him. He immediately starts life with Helena. His life with Helena brings up the same pattern.

#### **ALLISON PORTER**

Allison is Jimmy's very patient wife who completely humiliates herself as she was piece of garbage. She comes from upper-middle class. Like many people from British upper class, Allison is not used to expressing emotions and she is extremely reserved.

The painful experience of the miscarriage makes her understand what suffering means and gives her time to think about her relationship with Jimmy.

#### **CLIFF**

Cliff is simple and kind person. He is Allison's real friend who is trying to protect her from Jimmy's anger. Through his kindness he supports Allison in the worst moments. He describes himself as "No man's – land" between Jimmy and Allison.

Cliff works with Jimmy on the sweet stall. He is "an uneducated peasant" (pezent) according to Jimmy's description. He is helpless against Jimmy's rhetorical fury.

#### **HELENA**

Helena is Allison's friend, a very proper middle-class woman. She is an actress who comes to stay with the Porters while she performs in a play at the local theatre. Jimmy has long despised her, as he considers her a member of a Establishment.

Helena has sent a telegram to Allison's father asking him to take Allison home. It seemed that she was worried about Allison, but that wasn't true, because when Allison left, she seduces Jimmy. When Allison, having lost her baby, returns to the flat, Helena realizes that her affair with Jimmy was wrong and she leaves.

### **THEMES and MOTIFS**

#### **THE THEME of RESENTMENT (zamera) and DISILLUSIONMENT (razočaranje)**

The play illustrates the resentment and disillusionment of the young people with the general situation in Britain after the World War II. Neither the Labour Party nor the Conservatives improved the political situation in Britain. Jimmy says: "People of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. They aren't any good, brave causes left."

People were dissatisfied and frustrated with British post-war situation, because economy was slow to recover. Jimmy criticizes the Conservative Party.

### **THE THEME of ANGER and ISOLATION**

Jimmy's statement that "The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest", brings up the theme of anger and isolation. The author wants us to think about the nature of our existence. Through anger Jimmy expresses aversion to life without belief or hope.

### **THE THEME of WOMEN who are TRAPPED in EMOTIONALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP**

Jimmy attempts to dominate the women in his life.

### **THE THEME of ALIENATION (odtujitev) and LONELINESS**

The play suggests that there is something wrong with society which isolates human beings who do not accept what society forces upon them. Jimmy protests against modern alienation. Jimmy rants about his alienation from a society in which he was denied any meaningful role. Although he is university educated, the real power and opportunities are reserved for the children of the Establishment, those born to privilege, family connections.

### **THE THEME of CLASS AWARENESS**

This theme is used in all J. Osborne's plays. Coming from a particular class can be an obstacle to personal realization.

Jimmy attacks the upper class snobbery.

### **THE THEME of DEATH**

The theme of death may have a very strong impact on human psyche. As Jimmy was just a lonely little boy he experienced the death of his father and during the course of the play he is called to a deathbed of a friend's mother – a woman he loves. Both events have influenced his mind.

### **THE THEME of UNDEREMPLOYMENT**

Jimmy embodies the frustrations of a generation of young men who had attempted to leave behind their position as a working – class, using higher education. The problem was that, once these men arrived in the promised land of the educated middle class, they found that the promise had been a hollow one, and that the real privileges had carefully been retained in the class-ridden Establishment.

### **THE THEME of a MARRIAGE**

The drama also explores the theme of marriage. It's all about how two people don't communicate with each other as much as they should. It's about how their relationship is full of love and hatred at the same time and it's about three people involved in a relationship.

### **SYMBOLISM**

#### **a BEAR and a SQUIRREL**

A bear and a squirrel stand for their sexual fantasies, for the world of games in which Allison and Jimmy find a common language.

### **IRONY**

It is ironic that although Jimmy spreads his anger in all possible directions and he seems to be an impossible person to live with, but all three – Allison, Cliff and Helena love him.

Jimmy's speech about Allison's conceiving and losing her baby is also ironic, because she actually did conceive and lost her baby afterwards without him known.