



The Dumb Waiter

Harold Pinter

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One of his most recognized and acclaimed plays, Harold Pinter's "The Dumb Waiter" is a humorous and provocative story of two hit men as they wait in a basement for their next assignment. Told through Pinter's unmistakable wit and poignant pauses, "The Dumb Waiter" is recognized for its exceptional writing and subtle character development.

The Dumb Waiter Details

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From Reader Review The Dumb Waiter for online ebook

Jamie says

I don't know quite what to say about this play--it was my first Pinter experience, and I'd be interested to read more. But I'd say that I got a lot more through discussing the play in class than in the actual reading of it; which doesn't necessarily discount it, but I'm hesitant to say I loved it, when really I loved the issues that arose peripherally, as my class was perplexed as to what to bring up from within the text. Issues like: where do we search for meaning, particularly in our reading of literature--is it on the surface? What is the importance of a text if you have to read between the lines, so to speak, in order to gain anything from it. Several people waxed poetic on "art for art's sake" and claim that we should never make conjectures about a text--any assumptions must be made from the actual evidence in the work itself--and continued by asking why we can't just enjoy what's there, rather than analyzing everything to death? I think that strain of thought is idiotic, and it made me wonder why these people are English majors, if they don't like analyzing literature in an exhaustive fashion!

Pinter's play, though, creates a taut atmosphere--spatially, it is claustrophobic, and each movement deliberate, leading us to wonder as readers when the tightrope is going to snap. Similarly, the dialogue never falls on anything substantial, as though Gus and Ben are circling the issues at hand. That in itself is fascinating (and why we discussed the implications of "reading between the lines" in a text). The dumb waiter itself points to, I think, humanity's fascination or need to look to and obey some higher authority--Ben, in this way, is incredibly robotic. He doesn't know what the dumb waiter is, this scares him, and then he wants to follow it simply because it seems authoritative. Gus asks questions, and is perhaps punished for doing so--certainly he isn't encouraged. Very Orwellian or Atwood-esque in the sense that they warn readers that it's when you stop asking questions that "those who are they" (haha) get you, so to speak. But it's also Gus, asking questions here, who is going to pay for doing so. An interesting play in terms of looking at power politics--Gus obeys Ben, at least provisionally, and Ben in turn yields to disembodied images of power. Communication in such heirarchic situations, then, seems impossible in Pinter's view (or at least in mine).

It's also difficult to judge a play without seeing it performed, I must admit. Some things came across better when we did some reading-aloud in class--some of the intricacies made more sense or were highlighted a bit brighter. It's an interesting play, but not necessarily the easiest one to enter into. Requires multiple readings, though as it takes only 30-40 minutes to get through it, it's not too unreasonable.

notgettingenough says

Melbourne Comedy Festival 2005

Two men perform *The Dumb Waiter*. In the background you can hear the noise of at least two other shows coming through. I write to complain and receive a reply along the lines of 'You are lucky we didn't charge you for the other shows too.'

I can't say that I entirely understand the idea of reading a play any more than, say, reading a music score. Or reading a painting? The play is not a complete thing until it has voice and setting and atmosphere. Atmosphere is completely vital to the success of Pinter, no reading can get across the ambiguity, the menace,

the unsettling that takes place.

Lawrence Mooney and Matt King created that. They created it despite the insane inane background of hysterical audience manufactured laughter and miked standups going on at the same time. The setting created it.

rest here:

<https://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress.com>

Greg says

If you love the Theater of the Absurd, you will think this play a masterpiece. The play follows two hit men as they wait in a room for an assignment. The dialogue is comic between the two men. They read the paper, they argue about things. They hear a sound and discover a dumb waiter system in the room.

If you do not love the Theater of the Absurd, you will, while appreciating Pinter's mastery of dialogue, be more upset that the play really goes nowhere. The play, as far as I can tell, doesn't really have a point. Language is used in a quite intentional way so as NOT to betray a meaning.

See my other reviews here!

Taylor Moore says

I've always sort of enjoyed absurdist drama, it's so damn funny to read the character's interactions. I didn't, however, particularly enjoy reading this play, but that's mostly due to human error. Reading absurdist plays, you have to imagine what's going on and read between the lines, and sometimes it's just better to watch the play because you can see the characters right in front of you. I'll change my review on this play later, but it is a annoying reminder of why I dislike reading plays.

Julia says

This play reminded me a lot of Samuel Beckett. However, I think that Beckett executes the Theatre of the Absurd slightly better than Pinter. In "Endgame" I really felt the despair and helplessness of the characters, while in "The Dumb Waiter", I felt less attachment to the characters.

A-Ile Self-hallucination says

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Jennifer Bane says

This was a great read. The realism of the situation combined with the few ridiculous absurdities made for an entertaining read. Two men, waiting in a basement to kill someone where the toilet doesn't flush properly and someone keeps sending orders for food down the dumb waiter of an old restaurant.

The mechanics are beautifully woven with entertaining dialogue and a mysterious and shocking ending. Definitely worth the read. Now I must watch the play!

Esmay says

even more confused

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Disclosure:

This piece of Absurd Theater was an Integral piece in the Curriculum of the University, It was under the Subject of the Theater of Absurd, I own a Paperback of it with the Features above.

My Plot:

The Dumb Waiter is again one of the master piece of Harold Pinter the leading dramatist of the Theater of Absurd, The Play was all about a Two Hit Men, Ben and Gus, Ben is the Senior of the Gang and Gus is a Beginner to the Gang team, They were Hired to Kill someone, the One Act play goes in the Following, Ben reading the Newspaper and spending his time for the victim to come, Gus is making some modification on his shoes, Ben sometimes reads to his friend from the Newspaper and than all of a sudden they make a verbal riot about the Semantic of the Kettle whether it's "Light" or "Put on" the Kettle, This meaningless conversation shows the Absurdity of Humans in the Pinter Theater, after a while a dumb waiter who delivers occasional food order, The Two Characters wants to get rid of him and Gus gets out, After coming back Ben was ready to kill his friend which was his task to perform.

Positive and Negative Aspects:

Speaking of Theater of Absurd It's very hard to get a meaning from the whole play, the Writer was intended to make language empty from meaning, It was a hard attempt to do so, Speaking of positives the play writer was really professional to make a One Act play with a meaningless subject, From this Meaningless the writer shows the Aspect that there is no use from the Language nor from the Human beings themselves, everything was useless and meaningless. Besides, the setting was quite simple showing that there is no need to make such complications.

Concerning the Negatives, It was so much heavy to read all day a meaningless play, Besides I already make idea of How the Absurd Theater was making itself.

My Personal Reaction:

Reading the Theater of Absurd was something that puts you against the time and meaning. the whole play was just some small events of a two hit men waiting for the right moment to kill at the same time expressing the Useless nature of How Human begin to show up. It was like making two Punches at the same face without taking into consideration the Intentions of theses Punches. Anyway I could not say that I enjoy the Play but I would rather say that I grasp the meaning of the Writers Intentions.

Recommendations:

I would recommend this Play to those cold blooded persons, It is absurd to read the Theater of Absurd, That's How I say it, However I would recommend it to those who want to explore the techniques of this Genre of Theater for some Futuristic works. Anyway those people will get in touch with it.

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Min says

One of my favourite plays and playwrights. The Dumb Waiter was performed by me (as Ben) and my friend (as Gus) as part of our GCSE finals and was possibly the one play that influenced me to take theatrical studies as an A-level. If it allowed me such an expanse of charm as Pinter's work I couldn't resist.

As for the play itself it is a masterpiece of drama infused with light hearted comedy (for anyone that's seen this at the Westend with Lee Evans and Jason Isaacs you'll understand).

The character of Ben seems to be constantly agitated by his partner, Gus, the comic relief of the play to put it simply, as he flicks through his newspaper making odd references to stories that baffle him. It isn't hinted at as to who these two people are until the end, all we know is there's two people in a basement waiting for something.

The aim of the play is to examine Pinter's style of writing and how the individual reacts to different brands of stimulus. We know something is going on when several matches encased in an envelope is slid under the door (which leads to my favourite scene in the play) but it is still the wordplay that Pinter forces out of his characters' mouths that influence the true properties of the play; odd nuances that we in every day life ignore or pass on as regular ("put on the kettle" or "put the kettle on," two phrases that are examined thoroughly in The Dumb Waiter).

Hector says

Esta es la primera obra de Pinter que leo y quedé con muchas ganas de conocer más, aunque no fue completamente de mi agrado me gustó mucho la atmósfera que crea el autor en un espacio tan estrecho y los diálogos, siempre por la tangente, sin llegar al fondo de nada.

Zohal says

3.5 Stars

Rating might change when I watch an available version of the play one day.

Fun fact: When you don't read the blurb ... it makes the play that much more mysterious.

Sarah says

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Anthony D'Juan Shelton says

i bought this play as a birthday present to myself, in 1998, when i turned twenty-two (the year my oldest son was born). it was suggest to me by a writer friend of mine who told me:

"You would like Harold Pinter."

in 2002 i directed and acted in the play with my friend Galen Howard.

Sara says

Through it you can see how the human can be anxiety from face the world .
i liked character Ben and Jess and the monoling between them ..
it' a fine play .

Hossein Sharifi says

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Youlia Zeitouni says

If you have read Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" before this you will notice Beckett's influence on Pinter. Although I didn't like Samuel Beckett's play I did enjoy the ideas.. Pinter's style did appeal more to me...

it is very obvious that from the very beginning of the play Ben is the dominant character who keeps bossing Gus around.

Since the beginning Gus questions the routine of life which annoys him, he keeps asking Ben questions like "why doesn't Wilson ever bothers to show up" or "who cleans after they had done wit their job?" while Ben either avoids his questions or stays silent and the more Gus asks him questions the more he seems to be irritated. Another thing that is noticed throughout the play is that they never have meaningful conversations, for instance they avoid talking about death incidents written in the newspaper and talk about more trivial matters such as the malfunctioning toilet (anyone sensing the irony here?).

the repetitive actions in the play represent the dull life cycle and this is what really kills the characters(whether physically or other wise), while the repetitive pauses create an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, because in some cases silence proves to be deadly. And in the end we never get to know who Wilson is (just like Godot, for everyone interprets it in his own way).

Is he someone made up? Is he the boss of this little group? Why does he have such an influence on the characters? the questions in fact are endless.

Manab says

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tomwrote says

I hadn't read any Pinter before this but I now want to read more. This a compact play that succeeds on many levels. It is funny, disturbing and intelligent and also absurd, perplexing and challenging.

The play seems to be designed to be read on many levels, more overtly than many plays. There is a clear political hierarchy being critiqued, as well as interpersonal politics to contend with but there are also deliberate loose ends that demand the reader/audience insert their own conclusions. Naturalistic versus symbolic action and dialogue are also up for grabs.

A tightly packed short play that is as satisfying to unpick as it is to read.
