



The Caretaker

Study Guide by Course Hero



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👁 Book Basics

AUTHOR

Harold Pinter

YEAR PUBLISHED

1960

GENRE

Comedy, Drama

TENSE

The Caretaker is told from the third-person limited point of view. The audience has access to only the characters' words and actions.

ABOUT THE TITLE

The Caretaker references the character of Davies who accepts a job offer from brothers Aston and Mick as a caretaker of a home. However, Davies is anything but a

caretaker of the home. Aston takes care of Davies, and Mick takes care of his brother Aston.

🕒 In Context

London and Britain during the 1950s

Britain still showed signs of World War II in the early 1950s. Vacant bomb sites and military bases peppered the countryside. World War II (1939–45) began when Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), leader of the Nazi Party, began his quest for world domination alongside Italy and Japan. Britain and France declared war on Germany when Hitler ordered German armies to invade Poland in September 1939. The United States joined the war effort after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the United States formed the Allies against the Axis powers that included Germany, Italy, and Japan. By the end of the war 45–60 million people had perished. This included over 6 million Jews who died in Nazi concentration camps in what is referred to as the Holocaust.

Taxes were high in the 1950s, some consumables such as butter and tea continued to be rationed, and the people had little excess spending money. However, concerns about World War II quickly evolved into worries about the Soviet Union. The Cold War (1947–91) was an ideological and economic struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union that fueled anti-communist suspicions. As a result opposing political camps were formed, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1947 and the Warsaw Pact in 1955. Europe and the world were divided. *The Caretaker* is set during this time period, and all three characters are immersed in this political climate. The mistrust and unrest most affect [Davies](#) who is

closed-minded and fights against the changes.

The 1950s also saw significant change in the population demographics in Britain. The first wave of immigrants arrived aboard the *Empire Windrush* in 1948. In 1951 only 3 percent of Britons had been born overseas. Throughout the decade a large number of immigrants came to Britain. The largest immigrant group were the Irish, but there was also a large number of immigrants from Italy and Cyprus. Over 160,000 Poles and Jews arrived from central Europe. Some immigrants suffered discrimination upon their arrival.

Davies in *The Caretaker* is unhappy about the changing demographics at the time. The atrocities that [Pinter](#) witnessed during World War II instilled in him a loathing of discrimination. Pinter communicates his feelings about prejudice and discrimination through the way Davies treats [Aston](#) and the language he uses when referencing immigrants.

Social class in London during the 1950s was evident by how people dressed. Middle-class men were usually seen with white collars, suits, and hats. Working men would typically wear caps and clothes appropriate for the type of work they did. In *The Caretaker* Davies asks for leather shoes because it reflects wealth, and he is concerned about how others perceive him. He is also enamored with the smoking jacket he borrows from Aston. Davies gives up the jacket and sheds his fabricated status when he returns to the streets.

The Notting Hill Riots

The Notting Hill Riots began on August 29, 1958, and ended with the worst racial violence seen in Britain's history. Notting Hill is located in West London. At the time of the riots the neighborhood had dirty streets, overcrowded tenements, and brothels. Jobs were scarce, and black employees were frequently denied jobs in the local factories. Tensions between the whites and blacks had been high. A dispute drew attention from those nearby. The incident quickly erupted into a vicious fight that eventually included over 1,000 individuals. *The Caretaker* is set during this time frame. Davies shows his distaste for the immigration of West Indians into London when he asks Aston repeatedly about the black family that lives next door. Prejudices similar to those of Davies fueled the Notting Hill Riots.

The riots continued for three days and involved males from

black and white communities. While many were injured nobody was killed. The police were relatively ineffective in controlling the fighting, and it was not until the West Indians forced the white crowd back that the violence began to subside.

The British government did not want a situation of this type to happen again. They denied that the riots were racially motivated and blamed the violence on young troublemakers. However, ten years later in 1968 the Race Relations Act was enacted. The act made it illegal to discriminate in the areas of housing, employment, or public services based on ethnicity or nationality.

The area in the present day does not look at all like it did in the 1950s. The slum areas were bulldozed in the 1960s to make way for larger, fashionable homes. However, those who experienced the Notting Hills Riots remember the events well.

Electroconvulsive Shock Therapy

In *The Caretaker* Aston discloses to Davies that he was hospitalized as a teenager, and electric shocks were administered to his brain as treatment for his hallucinations. Aston underwent a procedure known as electroconvulsive shock therapy.

Electroconvulsive shock therapy (ECT) was developed by the Italian neurologist Ugo Cerletti in 1937. Cerletti developed the idea after seeing a butcher deliver electric shocks to pigs before slaughter. The shock relaxed the pigs, and he wondered if a brief electric shock would have a similar effect on humans. Previously, doctors had used Metrazol to induce seizures in patients with schizophrenia. A number of patients showed improvement, but the convulsive therapy was difficult to control. As a result Cerletti and Lucio Bini created the first device in 1938. ECT uses electricity to induce seizure activity in the frontal lobes of the brain. It can be administered to one hemisphere or across the entire brain.

The results were favorable. A significant percentage of patients with severe depression who did not respond to previous therapies showed measurable improvement. Furthermore, ECT was deemed safer than Metrazol-induced convulsive therapy. The treatments lasted several minutes, using 10 to 20 shocks, and were administered typically on

alternating days for a few weeks.

By the 1940s ECT was adopted by nearly every psychiatrist for the treatment of schizophrenia, delusions, and hallucinations. Aston was a teenager at this time, and his doctor recommended ECT to manage his hallucinations. Aston's mother trusted that this new and effective treatment was the only hope for her son to live a somewhat normal life.

The increased use of antidepressants and ECT therapy in the 1950s led to the closing of mental health institutions previously used to house people diagnosed with severe mental illnesses. However, by the 1960s there was a strong movement against ECT based on claims that it was inhumane. While the widespread use of ECT ended by the mid-1970s, it resurfaced again for severe mental disorders in the 1980s. It continues to be used for severe treatment-resistant depression, severe mania, catatonia, and aggression related to dementia.

Author Biography

Early and Personal Life

Harold Pinter was a famous playwright, poet, director, and actor. He was born on October 10, 1930, in Hackney, East London, England. He was the only child of Hyman Pinter (1902–97), a Jewish tailor, and Frances Pinter (1904–92), a homemaker.

Pinter was impacted significantly by events in his childhood which instilled an interest in dramatic writing. In 1940 the Germans began bombing London, and nine-year-old Pinter and his family evacuated to Cornwall and Reading. Pinter was traumatized by the bombings which resulted in a lifelong aversion to war. He returned to London in 1944 and attended Hackney Grammar School. His English teacher Joseph Brearley (1909–77) had a tremendous influence on Pinter and cast him as Macbeth and Romeo in productions Brearley directed. While at Hackney, Pinter studied works by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–81), Franz Kafka (1883–1924), T.S. Eliot (1888–1965), D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930), Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), and Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961). In 1948 Pinter was accepted into the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. That same year he was called up by the National Service, but he did not enlist. His refusal resulted in a fine but not

imprisonment. Pinter was accepted into Central School of Speech and Drama in 1951. He participated in Anew McMaster's (1892–1962) famous Irish repertory where he played many roles during the two years he was there.

Pinter married actor Vivien Merchant (1929–82) in 1956. Merchant provided much of the financial security early in their marriage. They had one son, Daniel (b. 1958). In 1980 Pinter and Merchant divorced, and he married author Lady Antonia Fraser (b.1932) He had known Fraser since 1975. They did not have any children together, but he was stepfather to her six children from a previous marriage.

Career

From 1954 to 1959, Pinter toured repertory theaters using the stage name David Baron. At the same time he continued to write poems and prose. He earned his first break in 1957 with his one-act drama *The Room* (1957) and then later with *The Dumb Waiter* (1959). His first full-length play *The Birthday Party* (1957) originally flopped but later received acclaim in 1968 when it was turned into a film. His success as a playwright was solidified with his second full-length play *The Caretaker* (1960). He was now recognized as a respected writer for the theater of the absurd, a type of drama that contains seemingly illogical plots with nonsensical dialogue. Pinter also became known as the originator of the dramatic idiom in his next play *The Homecoming* (1964). *The Homecoming* reached Broadway in 1967 and brought Pinter additional fame. Other major works include *Landscape* (1968), *Silence* (1969), *Night* (1969), *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975), *Betrayal* (1978), *Moonlight* (1993), and *Celebration* (2000). He wrote radio and television dramas as well as motion-picture screenplays. Besides writing, Pinter directed over 50 productions that included his own as well as those of other writers. He also took his talents to the stage as an actor. He played Saul Abraham in *Rogue Male* (1976) where he received acclaim. He also played roles in *Mojo* (1997), *Mansfield* (1998), and *The Tailor of Panama* (2001). In all, Pinter wrote 29 plays, penned 18 dramatic sketches, and co-authored 2 plays.

Pinter often included a unique style of dialogue in his plays. The conversations between characters were disjointed with frequent awkward silences. Early plays including *The Caretaker* center the plot on the introduction of a stranger to a dysfunctional pair of characters. This does not go well, and the ineffective communication between the characters adds to the

conflict. This type of play with minimal plot has been characterized as "comedy of menace," a type of dramatic irony where much of the conflict is apparent to the audience but not between the characters. By 1968 Pinter's style had changed from absurdism to one that portrayed characteristics of human memory. By 1984 his plays took on a political focus. His play *One for the Road* (1984) was about power and powerlessness under totalitarian rule. His political views about various causes were evident in a collection of poems titled *War* (2003).

Recognition and Legacy

Pinter has been recognized internationally as a dramatist, poet, actor, and director. Pinter was first recognized in 1966 when he was made Commander of the Order of the British Empire. His most notable achievement was earning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005. In 2007 the French Legion of Honor honored Pinter with the noble title of chevalier, similar to that of a knight.

Pinter was a fighter for human rights and earned praise for taking a stand on controversial issues. In 1999 he spoke out against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) action in Serbia and said that the action was "outside the parameters of international law." He earned many national and international awards as well as honorary degrees from established universities. Pinter also received recognition from film sources. He was also a two-time Academy Award nominee for best screenplay in 1982 for *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981) and in 1984 for *Betrayal* (1983). *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981) was also nominated for a Golden Globe and a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award in 1982.

Pinter died of liver cancer on December 24, 2008, in London, England. His legacy lives on through the PEN Pinter Prize which is awarded each year to a writer from Britain, the Republic of Ireland, or the Commonwealth. This award is given to a writer who inspires truth through a body of plays, poetry, or fiction of outstanding literary merit. On September 7, 2011, the Royal Comedy Theatre was renamed The Harold Pinter Theatre in honor of Pinter's contribution to the Comedy Theatre. Pinter's work has been honored through *Pinter at the Pinter* which is a series of Pinter's one-act plays.

Characters

Davies

Davies is a man full of excuses and deceit. His sole purpose is to take care of himself as he pits two brothers against each other so he may have a place to stay. He finds excuses to not go to Sidcup to sort out his paperwork. He is prejudiced and constantly worries about the family that lives next door. He complains incessantly and is unappreciative. For example, he always turns away the shoes that are offered him and never says thank you. He reveals his true colors when he tries to set one brother against the other for his own selfish gain.

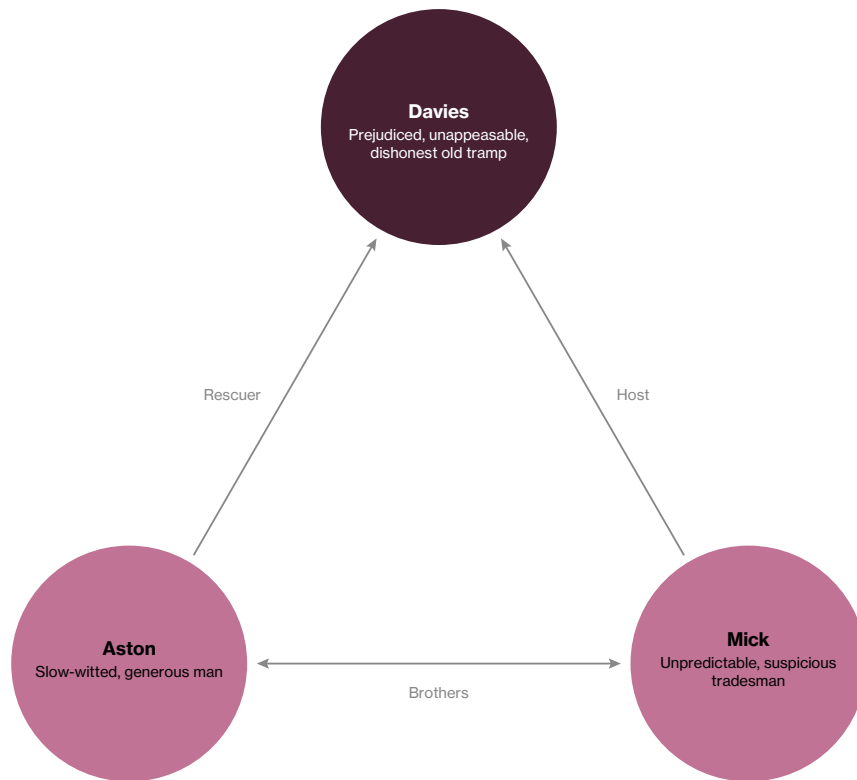
Aston

Aston brings Davies into his home after he has rescued him from an altercation in a tavern. Aston is slow-witted as evidenced by his broken speech. However, he is kind and generous which is evident when he offers Davies a bed, shoes, and supplies. He is gentle in demeanor and patient when Davies complains about his shoes, the draft, and the weather. Aston is eager to have someone listen to him and does not hesitate to share the story of his hallucinations, hospitalization, and shock treatments.

Mick

Mick is in his late 20s and is the owner of the home though he lives elsewhere. Mick is unpredictable. At times he is quite caring, but at other times he is somewhat aggressive. He is suspicious of Davies from the beginning and interrogates him extensively. While sometimes frustrated with his brother's lack of work ethic, he is protective of him and loyal to him.

Character Map



● Main Character

- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Davies	Davies is an old, homeless man who is prejudiced against other races and is a guest at Mick's home. He is dishonest and complains incessantly.
Aston	Aston is a man in his early 30s who lives in his brother Mick's house. He had shock treatments in his teens for hallucinations.
Mick	Mick is Aston's younger brother and a tradesman. He allows Aston to live in his home and take care of it.

Plot Summary

Act 1

All of the scenes take place in [Mick's](#) home where [Aston](#) lives. The room has a window on the back wall that is half covered by a sack. There is a cupboard above an iron bed along the left wall. Paint buckets, boxes, vases, a stepladder, a lawn mower, a shopping trolley, and other miscellaneous items clutter the room. Another bed with a mound of clutter lies next to a gas stove. Above the stove is a shelf with a Buddha statue on top. A vacuum cleaner is tucked underneath the bed. A bucket hangs from the ceiling to collect drips from the leaking roof.

Mick is alone in a room in his home in west London in the early 1950s. Mick is a tradesman who allows his slow-witted brother Aston to live in his home. When he hears muffled voices outside, he turns off the light and exits through the door.

Two men named Aston and [Davies](#) enter the home. Davies is an older homeless man that Aston has rescued from an altercation at a local tavern and offered temporary stay at his home. Davies and Aston discuss what led up to the incident at the tavern. Davies shares his frustration in finding a seat while he inserts negative comments about other nationalities and races. He says that a coworker had asked him to take a bucket of rubbish out back which infuriated him. He threatened the coworker and created commotion when Aston intervened.

Davies and Aston converse before making the room more suitable for sleeping. Davies peppers Aston with questions about the black family that lives next door. His focus then turns to his shoes. Davies asks Aston if he has a spare set of shoes because his shoes are worn, but he is unhappy with both pairs that Aston offers him. Davies is curious about the Buddha statue on the shelf, and Aston says that he picked it up in a shop because he liked how it looked. The men then prepare the room so that it will serve as an adequate sleeping space.

Aston and Davies continue to reveal more about themselves. Aston offers Davies some money which he eagerly accepts. Aston shares how he did not drink the beer at a pub recently because it was not served in a thin glass. Davies does not respond and launches into his need to get to the town of Sidcup to retrieve papers that prove who he is. Sidcup is a town southeast of London. He tells Aston that years ago he changed his name to Bernard Jenkins. He has an unemployment card in that name but fears that he will be arrested if he uses that card. Davies's real name is Mac Davies.

Davies notices a bucket hanging from the ceiling. Aston explains that there is a roof leak, and the bucket is there to catch the drips. Davies heads to bed while Aston works on mending a plug. Davies is concerned about the stove that is near his bed but lies down anyway.

The next morning Aston walks to the foot of Davies's bed and coughs to wake him. Davies startles and awakens. Aston shares that Davies was groaning and jabbering during the night which Davies denies. The men discuss the stove near Davies's bed, and Aston assures Davies that it is not connected. Davies announces that he may go to a café in Wembley for a job prospect and expects that he will get the job because he is English.

Aston leaves and Davies looks around the room. He sees a stack of papers which almost fall to the floor after he touches them. Suddenly, the door opens and Mick walks into the house. Davies does not notice at first and is startled when Mick seizes his arm and forces it back. Mick puts his hand to his lips and then to Davies's lips before letting him go. Mick then moves to a chair where he sits expressionless and watches Davies.

Act 2

Davies stands facing Mick who is seated in a chair. Mick stares

at Davies without saying a word for a few moments. Then Mick asks Davies who he is. Davies tells Mick that his name is Jenkins. Mick wants to know how Davies slept and which bed he used. Mick tells Davies that he is choosy. Mick's barrage of questions rattle Davies, and he is angry that Mick will not share anything about himself. Davies shares that he was born and bred in the British Isles.

Suddenly Mick grabs Davies's trousers off the bed, and the two men fight over the garment. They lunge and grab the legs from each other. Davies is furious. He explains to Mick that he was brought home by the homeowner who saved him from a fight at the café where he works. Mick calls him a liar and tells him that he is the owner. He gives Davies the option to either be dropped at the police station or rent a spot in the home.

Aston returns and says that he has brought Davies's bag that was left at the café. Mick claims that he has seen it before and grabs it. A tug-of-war ensues over the bag. Eventually Mick gives it to Davies and leaves.

Aston and Davies are alone in the home and talk about their plans. Aston adds that he plans to build a shed. Davies then realizes that the bag is not his. Aston confirms that he picked up the bag elsewhere and purchased some clothes for Davies which Davies dislikes. Davies asks Aston if he is the caretaker of the home which Aston denies. Aston then offers Davies the job of caretaker. He considers this offer but shows concern. Davies confesses that he uses an assumed name and adds that the authorities might want the assorted unemployment cards he possesses.

The next scene opens with Davies entering the home after dark. He finds that the light does not work, so he lights a match. The match stays lit only momentarily, and the box of matches falls. He cannot find the box and assumes someone moved. Davies says he has a knife. He then stumbles, falls, and cries out. Suddenly the vacuum cleaner begins to hum, and Davies jumps away. The vacuum cleaner goes off and the light goes on to reveal Mick standing on the bed. He holds the plug and tells Davies that he was doing some spring cleaning.

Mick decides that he and Davies started off poorly and tells him that he wants to know more about his brother's friend. Davies denies being Aston's friend. Mick shares his worries about his brother and comments, "No, he just doesn't like work, that's his trouble." Mick is angered by some of Davies's remarks about Aston. Mick changes the subject and offers Davies the job of caretaker. At first Davies is hesitant, but he

accepts the position. Davies tells Mick that he can provide references once he gets to Sidcup. He plans to go the next day once the weather breaks.

The next morning Aston wakes Davies so he can head to Sidcup, but Davies decides that he will not go because of the weather. Aston plans to walk to Goldhawk Road to look at a saw bench. He suggests that Davies go to the nearby café for some tea while he is gone.

Aston is reminded of how often he used to go to the café years ago. This remembrance leads into a long monologue about a time that he "went away." Aston tells Davies that he used to work in a factory where he was younger than most of his coworkers. He says that he used to talk to his coworkers quite a bit. Unfortunately, he told them about the hallucinations he was experiencing. Some of the coworkers shared their concerns with one another. Eventually Aston was taken against his will to a hospital where the doctor recommended a procedure be carried out on his brain. Aston's mother gave permission for the procedure. At the hospital Aston watched others succumb to the treatment. He did not want the electric shock therapy and tried to fight the men off. One of the men grabbed Aston around the throat and administered the shock treatment while Aston was still standing. Aston could not walk very well after the treatment, and his speech was slowed. He had headaches. He thought he would die. Aston adds that he no longer talks much to people and typically avoids places like the café. He is still angry. He thinks about finding the man who did that to him sometimes. He says that he may do so but not until after he has built his shed.

Act 3

Mick lies on the floor and Davies paces around the room in the home. Davies shares a list of complaints about Aston. He feels that Aston is not listening to his worries about the gas stove and the blacks using the lavatory. Davies suggests that he and Mick together could improve the home. Mick appears excited about the idea and begins to list ideas for improvement. Davies then asks who would live in the home. Mick answers, "My brother and me." Davies asks him about himself, but Mick does not respond.

Davies returns to his complaints about Aston. He tells Mick that Aston has no feelings and that he is different. Davies shares that Aston wakes him up every night and tells him that

he is making noises. Mick agrees that that is terrible. Finally, Davies tells Mick that he often awakes to find Aston standing over his bed smiling at him. Davies claims that "He puts on his coat, he turns himself round, he looks down at my bed, there's a smile on his face!" Mick does not respond.

Mick rises to leave as Aston enters the room carrying a paper bag with some shoes for Davies. Immediately, Davies tells him that the shoes do not fit and the only way they are usable is with shoelaces. Aston finds brown shoelaces for the black shoes, but Davies is not satisfied. Davies shares his need to get to Sidcup but states that he cannot go there because of the weather and his lack of good shoes.

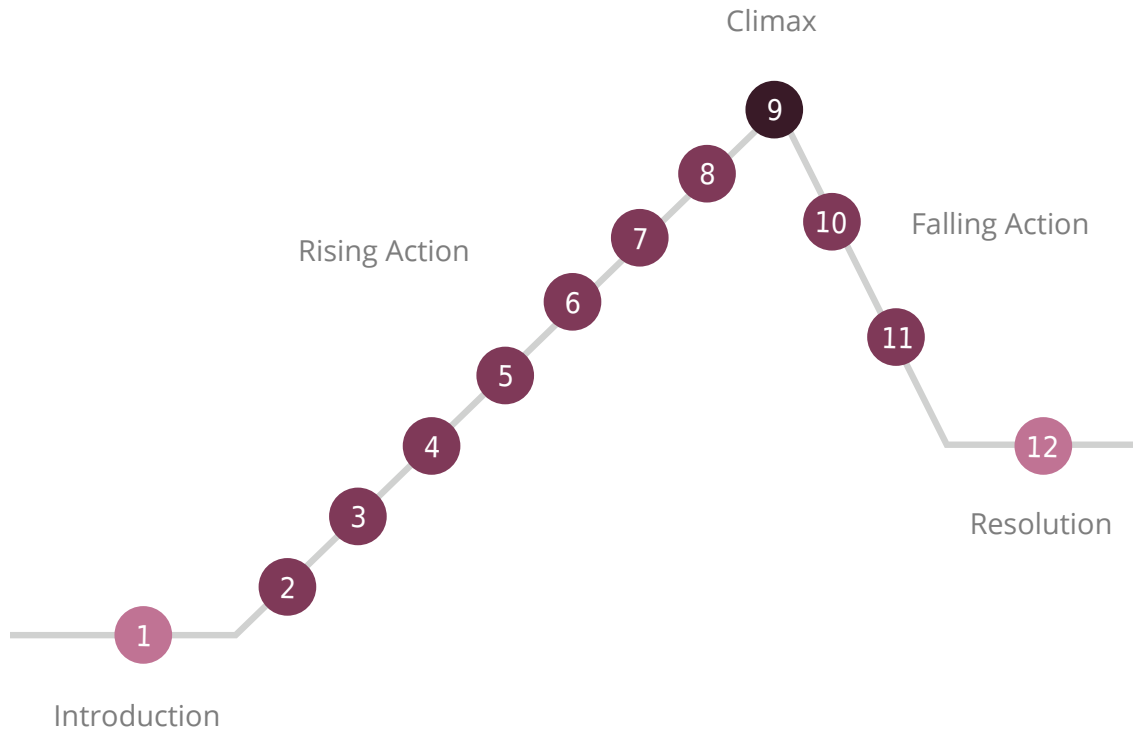
That night Davies groans in his sleep. Aston lights a cigarette, walks over to Davies, and shakes him. Davies is not happy and begins to criticize Aston. He taunts Aston with going back to the hospital and says, "They can put them pincers on your head again, man!" When Aston approaches him, Davies takes out his knife and threatens Aston to not come any closer. Aston asks Davies to find another place to live and tells him that he is not suitable. The men argue over who should stay and who should leave. Davies declares that Aston should leave because Mick has hired Davies as a caretaker. Aston offers Davies money to get to Sidcup and then tells Davies that he stinks. Davies moves toward Aston and thrusts the knife toward his throat. Davies puts the knife back into his pocket and eventually leaves.

It is early evening. Davies has returned to the home and sits with Mick. They talk about Aston and where he will live if Davies becomes the caretaker. Mick adds, "Well, you say you're a good interior decorator, you'd better be one." Davies shares that he is not an experienced interior decorator. Mick becomes angry and calls Davies an imposter. Infuriated, Mick circles around Davies and yells, "You're violent, you're erratic, you're completely unpredictable." He calls him a barbarian and tells him that he stinks. He says that he has not seen any of the references that Davies supposedly has in Sidcup. Mick takes a sixpence out of his pocket, throws it at Davies's feet, and tells him that this is his pay for caretaking. Mick picks up the Buddha and throws it at the gas stove which causes the statue to break.

The door opens and Aston enters. Mick and Aston exchange faint smiles. Mick leaves. Aston sees the broken Buddha, grabs a screwdriver, and begins to poke at the plug he picks up. Davies tells Aston that he had left but came back for his pipe.

He begins to beg Aston to let him stay. Aston tells him, "You make too much noise." A long silence ensues, and Davies heads slowly to the door.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Aston offers Davies a place to stay temporarily.

Rising Action

2. Davies tells Aston about the incident at the tavern.
3. Davies tells Aston he goes by a fake name.
4. Davies notices a bucket and a Buddha statue.
5. Aston offers Davies keys to the home.
6. Mick questions Davies after finding him at his home.
7. Aston asks Davies to be caretaker of his home.
8. Mick asks Davies to be caretaker and decorator.

Climax

9. Aston tells Davies about his hospitalization.

Falling Action

10. Davies taunts Aston after he wakes him.
11. Aston and Mick ask Davies to leave.

Resolution

12. Davies begs to stay but must leave.

Timeline of Events

Same night

Davies tells Aston about the incident at the tavern when a coworker offended him.

Same night

Davies says he must go to Sidcup to retrieve papers that prove his true identity.

Day 2

Aston leaves to look at a jigsaw at a shop down the road.

Day 2

Aston returns with Davies's bag and a tug-of-war over it ensues.

Day 2

Aston asks Davies to be caretaker of his home.

A winter night

Aston offers Davies a place to stay temporarily.

Same night

Davies rejects both pairs of shoes Aston offers him.

Day 2

When Aston tells Davies he jabbered in his sleep, Davies tells him it was the blacks next door.

Day 2

Mick startles Davies after he finds him in his home and then questions him.

Day 2

Davies realizes that the bag is not his but instead contains clothes and shoes.

Day 2

Day 3

Aston wakes Davies to go to Sidcup, but Davies decides not to because of the weather.

Two weeks later

Davies complains to Mick about Aston.

Two weeks later

Aston asks Davies to leave.

Two weeks later

Aston and Mick tell Davies he must leave.

Mick asks Davies to be the caretaker, and Davies plans to provide him with references.

Day 3

Aston tells Davies about his hallucinations, hospitalization, electric shock, and aftereffects.

Two weeks later

Aston wakes Davies, and Davies taunts Aston about going back to the hospital.

Two weeks later

Mick learns that Davies is not an interior decorator and calls him an imposter.

Two weeks later

Davies begs to no avail and heads to the door.

Act Summaries

Act 1

Summary

The scene opens in a room with two beds, a bucket hanging from the ceiling, a statue of Buddha on a shelf above the stove, and other assorted items in west London during the late 1950s. Mick, a man in his late 20s, is in the room but leaves when he hears muffled voices outside. Two men Aston and Davies enter the home. Aston has offered his place to Davies after rescuing him from an altercation at a local tavern. Davies talks, and Aston mostly listens. Davies tells him about what led up to the altercation and reveals his prejudiced views about other races and nationalities. He tells Davies about his need for shoes because his shoes are too worn to use. Aston offers Davies two different pairs of shoes, but Davies complains that neither fit properly. Davies notices the Buddha and asks Aston about it. Aston tells him that he picked it up in a shop because he liked how it looked. Davies asks about the sink, and Aston tells him that it does not work. When Aston tells him that they must use the lavatory down the landing, Davies is concerned because he does not want to share a lavatory with the blacks next door. As the conversation continues Davies tells Aston that he goes under the name of Bernard Jenkins. He adds that he must get to Sidcup to obtain the papers that will prove his identity. Just before he heads to bed, Davies notices a bucket hanging from the ceiling. Aston tells him that there is a leak, and the bucket is there to catch the water.

The next morning Davies is startled awake when Aston coughs at the foot of his bed. Aston tells him that he heard Davies groaning and jabbering throughout the night. Davies denies it and suggests that Aston may have heard the blacks next door. Aston offers Davies keys to the house and asks him about his heritage. Davies provides a vague response and changes the subject to the stove. He is concerned that the stove near his bed may turn on and emit gases. Aston assures him that it is not connected. Davies announces his plans to apply for a café job in Wembley, certain that the café would be happy to have an Englishman like himself.

Aston leaves, and Davies begins looking around the room. He

notices a stack of papers which almost fall to the floor after he touches them. Suddenly, the door opens and Mick walks into the house. Davies does not notice at first and is startled when Mick seizes his arm and forces it back. Mick shushes him before letting him go. Mick moves to a chair, sits, and stares at Davies.

Analysis

Mick is the first character introduced. He says nothing and leaves the room once he hears voices outside. From the start Mick is mysterious, and it is not clear if he is an intruder because he leaves when he hears someone approach. Mick returns at the end of Act 1 when he sneaks into the home and startles a snooping Davies. Mick does not question Davies and instead grabs him from behind, puts his hand to his lips, and then moves to a chair and sits quietly. Mick's behavior is unsettling. This introduction of a stranger into a dysfunctional relationship is common in Pinter's plays. Here, Davies enters into an already complicated relationship between two brothers. Mick's erratic behavior reveals his anxiety about the newcomer in their home which incites the play's rising action.

Act 1 reveals the most about Davies because he is the one who does most of the talking. He is dressed in baggy mismatched clothes with sandals and is disheveled. Almost immediately his distaste for other nationalities and races becomes evident: "All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it." Davies appears to consider himself superior to them. Davies is offended by a younger coworker who asks him to do a simple task. He misinterprets this simple request for help as a personal attack on his worth as a man. He ridicules others to feel superior. He brags that he is so clean that he even left his wife because she did not maintain the same standards. He is ready to fight anyone who disagrees with him. Davies pretends to be a proud, capable man who will not tolerate disrespect. The irony is that his overreaction in these situations reveals an insecure man.

Another aspect of Davies's character is revealed through his ingratitude toward the help Aston provides him. Davies walks into a home that he has been invited into and immediately begins to assess it. His first concern is who lives next door, and when he finds out it is an Indian family he obsesses over them being so close. Davies does not thank Aston for his offer of a bed to sleep in. He rejects both pairs of shoes that Aston offers him. He complains about a stove that is close to his bed

and the draught that will surely come in through the open window. Davies is insatiable and will never be satisfied. Nothing Aston or Mick do for him will be enough. Davies believes that once he has a pair of shoes with no holes he will be able to move forward in his life. However, Davies needs to fix the hole in his soul first.

Davies's deceptive side appears when he discusses his other name Bernard Jenkins and his fear of arrest. It is not quite clear why he has this alter ego, but ironically Davies does not try to hide it even though he worries about being arrested. He portrays it as being perfectly normal. Interestingly, Aston does not appear alarmed by the news of Davies's possible criminal behavior and instead simply asks him what his real name is. Pinter creates dramatic irony to reveal that Davies should not be trusted, yet Aston seems unaware of his duplicity. Davies talks constantly and quickly and becomes very vague when asked questions about his heritage and birthplace. He changes the subject to avoid further questions, and Aston does not seem to notice. Aston's personality is revealed more through his inaction and lack of voice. He is portrayed as kind but odd. When he speaks his phrasing is disfluent which indicates a difficulty in either intelligence, short-term memory, or attention. Aston also appears to be a loner. The only social moment he shares is about a woman who he thought made an inappropriate pass at him. Aston is also inflexible and rigid. Aston tells Davies that he refused to drink the beer at a pub because it was served to him in a thick mug instead of a thin one. He fiddles with a plug throughout the scene as he tries to keep busy with his hands.

The dramatic tone used for the plot shifts to humor as Aston, Davies, and Mick talk. Initially the three characters are very different from one another. They are exaggerated and uniquely odd. The dialogue between Aston and Davies is also disconnected at times. When Aston tells Davies about the beer in the thick mug, Davies does not respond and begins to talk about something else. Dramatic pauses add a comedic element to the dialogue. Pinter uses this device again when Mick silently stares at Davies after he has scared him. There is also repetitive banter between Davies and the brothers that goes back and forth about certain topics such as the neighbors and the shoes. Pinter uses repetition of topics, questions, and interruptions to add depth of character to a simplistic plot. These intricacies show Davies as self-centered, Aston as naive, and Mick as impulsive.

Act 2

Summary

Mick is seated and facing Davies. Mick says nothing for a few minutes and then asks Davies for his name. Davies tells Mick his name is Jenkins. After he asks Davies if he slept well, Mick says that Davies reminds him of his uncle and someone else Mick knew from Shoreditch, London. Davies says that he was born and bred in the British Isles.

Suddenly Mick grabs Davies's trousers off the bed, and the two men fight over the garment. Davies is now angry and explains that he was brought home by the owner of the home. Mick calls him a liar and tells him that he is the owner. He adds that one bed belongs to him and the other to his mother. Mick then tells him that he is a stinking scoundrel to which Davies takes offense.

Aston returns and now all three men are present in the room. Aston and Mick discuss the roof leak briefly. Aston then tells Davies that he has brought him the missing bag from the café. Mick grabs the bag, and Davies becomes very upset. A tug-of-war ensues, and Mick eventually surrenders the bag to Davies.

Upon Mick's departure Davies and Aston talk. Davies learns that Mick is Aston's brother and a building tradesman. Aston shares that he plans to build a shed with the wood in the house. Suddenly Davies realizes that the bag is not his. Aston admits that he picked up the bag elsewhere and purchased some clothes for Davies which Davies dismisses. Davies asks Aston if he is the caretaker of the home. Aston replies that he is not and then asks Davies how he would feel about being one. Davies considers this question but shows concern. He then tells Aston that because of his assumed name the authorities may be looking for him.

Davies later enters the home after dark. Not able to find the light, he stumbles, falls, and grabs his knife just as the vacuum cleaner begins to hum. The light goes on and Mick is standing on the bed. He holds the plug and tells Davies that he was doing some spring cleaning.

Davies calms down and the men discuss Aston. Mick tells him that the two of them started off poorly and he wants to get to know his brother's friend better. Davies denies that he and Aston are friends. Mick shares his worries about his brother.

Breaking the subject Mick asks Davies if he would be interested in being the caretaker of the house. At first Davies is hesitant, but he accepts the position. When Mick asks for references, Davies tells him that he can get them once he gets to Sidcup the next day. Then he asks Mick to look for some shoes for him.

The next morning Davies decides not to go to Sidcup because of the terrible weather. He adds that he had another bad night's sleep, and the men disagree about keeping the window open. When Aston says that he is headed to Goldhawk Road to look for a saw bench, Davies whines about not being able to even get a cup of tea because he does not have shoes.

Aston is reminded of how often he used to go to the café years ago, and this recollection prompts him to begin a long monologue about the time he "went away." Aston tells Davies that he used to work in a factory and enjoyed talking to his coworkers. Unfortunately he experienced hallucinations, and uneasy coworkers shared concerns with one another. Aston elaborates that "this lie went round. I thought people started being funny. In that cafe. The factory." Aston was hospitalized against his will and underwent shock therapy. His mother authorized the procedure because Aston was a minor at the time.

After the treatment Aston could not walk very well, and his speech was slowed. He had headaches and thought he would die. He tells Davies that while he does feel better he no longer talks to people. He is still very angry at the doctor and his mother. He may someday look for the doctor but not until he has built his shed.

Analysis

The Caretaker is a comedy of menace that combines humor and tragedy to evoke positive and negative reactions from the audience. At times a character's misfortune is funny. In the opening scene Mick interrogates Davies by first asking for his name. The opening scene mimics the earlier scene between Davies and Aston where Davies talks incessantly in more of a monologue than a dialogue. Unlike Aston Davies is quite aggravated because Mick will not answer his questions. Pinter uses repetition to create humor. Davies asks multiple times who Mick is, and Mick does not answer. Mick also asks for Davies's name several times, and when he pronounces it he pauses between the syllables, Jen ... kins, which adds an

element of dramatic irony. The audience knows what Mick does not which is that Jenkins is a fake name. Mick frustrates Davies when he asks how well he slept, and he does not give Davies a chance to say much. The scene is intentionally comedic, and it is humorous to see Davies rattled by Mick's unpredictability. Each time there is a drip in the hanging bucket, both men look to the ceiling simultaneously in a humorous reminder that the home is in need of a skilled caretaker.

Another humorous scene occurs later that day when Davies fumbles to get inside the home. Davies is easily aggravated when he cannot work the light, so he finally reaches in his pocket for a box of matches. The match lights but goes out, and then Davies drops the box. When he cannot locate the box he believes that someone must be in the room and yells that he has a knife. Davies trips and falls. Suddenly the vacuum cleaner begins to hum, and Mick turns on the light to reveal himself. "I was just doing spring cleaning," he says to Davies. Mick is terrorizing a pathetic homeless man for his amusement. The struggle for control between Davies and Mick is shown through comedic scenes that prompt the audience to laugh at the men's weak attempts to gain power.

Mick likes to taunt Davies who is easily antagonized. Davies becomes Mick's puppet. Not long after Aston returns there is another battle over a bag that Aston brings home for Davies. Once Davies indicates that the bag belongs to him Mick says, "I've seen this bag before. This bag is very familiar." This leads to another tug-of-war that enrages Davies. Moreover, Davies realizes that the bag is not his when he finally retrieves it. This is an example of situational irony which is when what happens is the opposite of what is expected. Aston watches the entire battle and finally reveals that he knew the bag was not Davies's. This scene thus exemplifies the ineffective communication among the three men, each of whom acts as an antagonist to the others at times. Davies clearly provides a challenge to Aston who despite repeated efforts to satisfy Davies's needs receives only complaints. Mick's playfulness with Davies provides contrast. Aston's power rests in his silence. For example, it is not clear whether he keeps silent about the bag because he does not think to say anything or because he enjoys the altercation. The play does not contain a great deal of action. The depth is in the characters who reveal the themes through silence rather than action.

A potential conflict emerges when Davies and Mick discuss Aston. Mick indicates that he is worried about his brother and

talks to Davies as if he were a caring friend of Aston's. However, Davies with his cynical ways uses that opportunity to criticize and complain about Aston. He remarks, "Well ... he's a funny bloke, your brother." This comment crosses a line with Mick who warns, "You don't want to start getting hypercritical." It is at this point that Mick offers the erratic and unreliable Davies the job of caretaker in another example of situational irony. Mick has just become angry with Davies over his comments about his brother and recognizes Davies's poor work ethic. By securing ties with Davies, Mick minimizes the relationship between Aston and Davies.

Aston's monologue is significant because it reveals his hallucinations and the hospitalization and resulting shock treatments that left him slow-witted and weakened. Until this moment Aston is more of a flat character though it is clear that he is somewhat odd based on his interactions with others and the concerns that Mick shares with Davies. Aston's speech to Davies is lengthy and detailed, unlike his previous dialogue. It is ironic that of all people Aston chooses to share personal information with Davies when Davies is only an acquaintance. Aston's need to verbally share his pain is apparent, and it likely does not matter who is on the receiving end. The home is his world, and the Buddha is his companion until he meets Davies. Aston feels good about helping Davies at the tavern, but he misinterprets Davies's neediness as friendship. At this moment the mood shifts to serious, and the comedic tone is replaced with a dramatic one. Aston shares that he no longer talks to people because he does not trust them, yet he shares his deepest pain with a man he does not trust.

Act 3

Summary

The scene opens two weeks later. Mick lies on the floor of the room as Davies paces around and complains about Aston. He is still worried about the gas stove and the blacks. He thinks that Aston ignores his concerns. Davies tells Mick that together they could improve the home. Mick responds with excitement and begins to list his ideas for each room. Davies asks Mick who would live in the home to which Mick answers, "My brother and me." Davies asks, "What about me?", but Mick does not respond. Davies shares his frustration with Aston waking him each night to tell him that he is making noises. Mick

agrees that it is terrible to wake someone. Aston enters the room with shoes for Davies and interrupts the conversation. Immediately Davies tells him that the shoes do not fit and the only way they are usable is with shoelaces. Aston finds brown shoelaces for the black shoes, but this is not acceptable for Davies. The scene ends as Davies emphasizes his need to get to Sidcup and all the reasons why he cannot go there. These reasons include bad weather and a lack of good shoes.

That night Davies groans in his sleep. When Aston wakes him Davies is angry. Davies taunts Aston with going back to the hospital. Davies takes out his knife and threatens Aston to not come any closer. Aston tells Davies to find another place to live. Davies believes that it is Aston who should leave because Mick has hired him as caretaker. Aston offers Davies money and then tells him that he stinks. Davies takes great offense to this statement. When Aston asks him again to leave, Davies thrusts the knife toward his throat. Aston orders Davies to get his belongings, and Davies places the knife back into his pocket. Aston gathers Davies's things, takes the blue coat from Davies, and opens the door for him to leave. Davies rants but to no avail.

It is early evening, and Mick and Davies are back together in the home. Davies angrily tells Mick that Aston said he stinks. While they discuss the renovation plans, Davies reveals that he is not an interior decorator as he led Mick to believe. Mick becomes angry and calls Davies an imposter. Davies blames the misunderstanding on Aston and adds that he is "nutty." Mick becomes very angry. He circles around Davies and says, "You're violent, you're erratic, you're completely unpredictable." He calls Davies a barbarian and tells him he stinks. Mick takes a sixpence out of his pocket, throws it at Davies's feet, and tells him that it is his pay for caretaking. Mick picks up the Buddha and throws it at the gas stove which causes it to break. The door opens and Aston enters. He faces Mick, and they exchange faint smiles before Mick leaves. Davies is clearly nervous about being back in the home and tells Aston that he had to come back for his pipe. He then begs Aston to let him stay. He offers to swap beds and then to stay in the current bed. He offers to help Aston build the shed. Aston tells him, "You make too much noise." Davies continues to plead. Eventually there is a long silence, and Davies heads slowly to the door.

Analysis

Davies now has a new set of excuses for his inaction. The complaints have turned into blame directed at Aston. Davies cannot resolve his issues in Sidcup because Aston will not give him the proper shoes. He cannot function properly because Aston wakes him at night. Davies is now the victim and Aston is now the perpetrator. When Davies realizes that he is losing leverage, he is desperate. He is determined to find his place in this home and will cast blame to secure his spot.

Davies's attempt to weasel into the home by turning one brother against the other fails. Davies first attacks Aston because he assumes that he is the weaker of the brothers, and he threatens to put him back in the hospital for more treatments. Aston asks him to leave, but this does not dissuade Davies who tries to persuade Mick to expel his brother from the home. However, after Mick discovers that Davies is not an interior decorator he calls him an imposter. Mick throws the Buddha across the room and breaks it. Aston does not appear upset about the broken Buddha that he once adored enough to have on his shelf. Likewise, Aston easily dispels Davies from the home as he no longer needs either of them.

Aston and Mick show their loyalty to each other through their actions rather than their dialogue. At times each man seems to understand what the other is thinking. Davies tries to play one brother against the other for his benefit. He thinks it is working. However, it is Aston and Mick who are in control of the situation as they bait Davies with separate job offers of caretaker for the home. Both men finally confront Davies. Mick calls Davies an imposter and Aston turns to face Davies. The brothers then look at each other and smile faintly as if they are both in on a secret that Davies does not know. The bond between the brothers is solid. Davies is cast aside, broken like the Buddha. He will move on but not forward. The loyalty between the brothers runs deeper than words.

“” Quotes

"All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, ... treating me like dirt."

— Davies, Act 1

Davies interprets his inability to find a seat in a crowded tavern as a purposeful act of disrespect. He believes that the bar patrons like the blacks, Greeks, and Polish immigrants intentionally do not let him sit down on his break. This foreshadows the difficulties Davies will have taking responsibility for his actions and his lack of success in securing a place to live.

"If I had a few years off me I'd ... I'd break you in half."

— Davies, Act 1

Davies justifies his threat to the man in the tavern that results in his firing. This is an example of verbal irony where words communicate the opposite of the intended meaning. Davies says that he was taught to be respectful and then tells the man he would injure him if he were younger. He contradicts the point he thinks he is making. Davies believes that the coworker was being disrespectful when he asked Davies to take out the trash.

"Picked it up in a ... in a shop. Looked quite nice to me."

— Aston, Act 1

Aston references the Buddha statue that he bought on a whim. The Buddha is symbolic of Aston's decision to bring a man who started an altercation in a bar home to live with him for a while. It seems like a good idea at first but is an impulsive decision. The Buddha does not fit with the remaining decor just as Davies does not appear to fit anywhere.

"I can't drink Guinness out of a thick mug."

— Aston, Act 1

Aston cannot drink a brand of beer that he normally enjoys because it is not in the type of glass he prefers. This shows Aston's rigidness and his ability to adapt to unexpected situations. He does not ask for a new glass or a new beer. Instead he just walks away and does not stand up for himself which exemplifies his passive nature.

"You're knocking at the door when no one's at home."

— Mick, Act 2

Mick uses an idiom to reference his brother Aston who is mentally impaired or does not pay attention. An idiom is an expression with a meaning that cannot be predicted by the usual meaning of the embedded words. Mick lets Davies know that he will not tolerate Davies taking advantage of Aston. Mick is erratic and unpredictable, and his taunts test Davies's intentions.

"Well, I mean, you don't know who might come up them front steps, do you?"

— Davies, Act 2

Davies's duplicity is revealed through irony which is the opposite of what would be expected. He professes to be an honorable old man, yet he is worried about others that might be after him. His assumed name might also be a source of protection for him. Davies freely shares this incriminating information despite his worries about the law.

"There used to be a wall plug for this electrolux."

— Mick, Act 2

Mick references the wall plug that Aston has been taking apart

and poking with a screwdriver. Aston fixes the plug that may always need adjustments. The plug symbolizes Aston's broken dreams and limitations. Aston gains satisfaction from doing something but never finishes the work which keeps him from moving forward in his goals.

"I know that sort. I've met them."

— Davies, Act 2

Davies's response to Mick about men who do not like to work reveals Davies's inability to see himself clearly. This mindset supports the theme of identity. Davies identifies himself as a hardworking, misunderstood, respectful older gentleman. He rejects any feedback that conflicts with how he views himself.

"I talked too much. That was my mistake. The same in the factory."

— Aston, Act 2

Aston does not talk much until this moment when he reveals his hallucinations, hospitalization, and resulting shock treatments in a cathartic monologue. He sees this series of events as the cause of his troubles which is why he does little talking and more listening. However, he takes a risk and unfortunately shares too much with the deceitful Davies.

"I've ... thought of ... trying to find the man who did that to me. But ... I want to build that shed."

— Aston, Act 2

While Aston expresses a desire to confront the man responsible for his brain injury, his comments foreshadow the likelihood that this will never happen. As Mick discloses, Aston lacks the ability to follow through with his plans such as building the shed and fixing the plug.

"You must come up and have a drink some time. Listen to some Tschaikowsky."

— Mick, Act 3

Situational irony adds humor here as it seems odd to imagine Mick and Davies enjoying a drink while they listen to classical music. The music of Pyotr Tschaikowsky (1840–93) seems too refined for a homeless man like Davies who is focused on his troubles. Davies is flattered that Mick would believe he would appreciate music correlated with high culture.

"Just so I can sleep in this lousy filthy hole every night."

— Davies, Act 3

The plot comes full circle when Davies complains that Aston is asking him to do work that is beneath him which is how he ended up in the tavern scuffle that landed him in Aston's home. This is especially ironic given that Aston has been nothing but gracious and has not expected anything from Davies.

"I don't think we are hitting it off."

— Aston, Act 3

Pinter uses understatement humorously after Davies's verbal attack on Aston. Aston says this with little emotion in stark contradiction to Davies's aggression. Aston's response is the opposite of what might be expected after such an attack, but it is in keeping with Aston's numbness to the world.

"I've got that shed to get up. ... Until it's up, I can't get started."

— Aston, Act 3

Despite their clear differences in personality, both Aston and Davies find it difficult to "get started." Both men keep a barrier in place so they do not have to move forward. Aston plans to build a shed but does not begin the task. Davies talks about traveling to town to get his papers but always has an excuse not to go.

"You make too much noise."

— Aston, Act 3

The play ends with an understatement, a simple reason why Davies must leave. Aston, with his lack of emotion, delivers the news to Davies who finally accepts that he must go. The humorous note offsets the previous serious scene when Davies leaves the home.

Themes

Power

Power is a recurring theme. Each of the characters seeks power in his own way. [Davies](#) criticizes and attempts to manipulate others to feel a sense of power. Initially he is involved in a tavern dispute because he is offended when a younger coworker asks him to take out the trash. He is angry that someone who is not his boss asks him to do something, and in an attempt to regain control he provokes a fight with him. Davies seeks power rather than resolution, so he responds with anger. Davies also seeks power through his prejudices toward blacks and other nationalities. He interprets their very presence as a deliberate attack on him and asserts that "All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt." Because he has a need for power, he assumes others do as well and interacts with the world accordingly. Davies can have power or be a victim. Davies is so focused on defending his so-called rights that he does not use the control that he has. He makes excuses as to why he cannot go to Sidcup. In the meantime he uses his energy to secure a place for himself by

turning one brother against the other. Davies fights for power over others, but he is least powerful over himself.

[Aston](#) has been stripped of power as a result of the shock treatments administered when he was young. He no longer has the ability to think clearly and maintain focus. He does not work and is dependent on his brother for a place to live. Aston no longer socializes because he believes that the oversharing of personal details led to his hospitalization. His mother exercised power over Aston when she signed the forms that authorized the shock treatments. Aston gains power through limiting his contact with people and controlling his voice. He fills his world with objects such as items to use for his shed, papers, buckets, and a Buddha statue. He is attached to items because they will not betray him. In some ways Aston has power over Davies though Davies would not agree. Regardless of Davies's ranting, Aston knows that Davies is at his mercy, and he could let him go at any time. However, Aston gets in his own way much like Davies. He says that before he can do anything else he must build his shed. The shed may not ever be built. Aston protects himself from interacting with society to give himself a sense of control.

[Mick](#) appears to have the most power of the characters, yet upon closer examination he does not. He owns the home where his brother is staying. He is clearly able to intimidate Davies with his erratic ways. Mick gains power over others through being aggressive and unpredictable. He is clever and enjoys watching Davies squirm. Mick does not display this behavior with his brother Aston. Instead he seems to avoid being around him which results in little interaction between them. It is possible that Mick has little control over his impulsivity, and what appears to be power over others is really a lack of self-control. Mick and Davies flex their muscles often, but perhaps it is Aston who is really in control with his quiet strength.

Loneliness

When [Pinter](#) was forced to evacuate London as a young boy, he suffered terrible loneliness. This experience had a lasting impact. He found value in connections and developed lifelong friendships. Pinter brought this understanding of loneliness to his characters in a number of his writings as he does in *The*

Caretaker.

[Aston](#) spends most of his time alone and busies himself with fixing a plug and shopping for a jigsaw. He brings a stranger into his home on a whim and seems to find joy in providing for him. He listens patiently while [Davies](#) complains about the draught, his shoes, and the stove. Aston smiles at Davies before he wakes him. He shares his deepest pain with someone he barely knows. Aston's world is small, and he fills it with items he collects from different places. Aston experiences loneliness because of the shock treatments that limit his ability to connect with people. He wishes to connect with others, but fear and mistrust prevent it. Instead he retreats into the world he has created in his room and the plans that will happen once he has fixed the plug and built the shed.

Davies experiences loneliness because he has no true identity. He has no connections with family members. He does not have a home. When asked about his heritage he is at first vague and then emphatic which raises questions about his honesty. His belligerent demeanor keeps potential friends away. Davies does not even use a real name. He does not have a realistic view of himself, and he takes tremendous offense to being told that he "stinks." Davies readily accepts Aston's invitation into his home and almost immediately strategizes to secure his place there. Unfortunately, Davies desperately tries to connect in ways that ultimately drive others away. His boastful comments that are intended to foster acceptance instead guarantee his seclusion.

Communication

An inability to communicate effectively is prevalent throughout the play. While [Aston](#) and [Mick](#) show loyalty to each other, they do not share much. Aston does not ask Mick about bringing [Davies](#) into the home. In fact, the two men never have a discussion about Davies. Each man asks Davies to be a caretaker of the home, supposedly without the other's knowledge. It is possible, however, that more is understood between Aston and Mick than there appears to be. Both men smile at each other just before Davies is forced to leave. The characters' entrances and exits seem to be timed perfectly with the drama with Davies.

Both Aston and Mick share personal information with Davies.

This is unusual given that they barely know him. Aston shares the horrific story of his hospitalization, while Mick shares his worries about his brother. It appears that neither Aston nor Mick share their feelings with each other. As a listener Davies attends with opportunistic ears. He later uses Aston's confession as a weapon to angrily expel Aston from his home. Rather than show compassion for Mick's worries, Davies mistakenly begins to add his own criticisms of Aston. He thinks that he and Mick are now a team and will force Aston to the sidelines. However, the family bond is strong, and when Davies tries to come between the brothers they throw him out. Communication is also about listening, and if Davies had listened to his common sense he may have still had a place to stay.

Aston and Mick use the word "stink" as a verbal weapon against Davies. Davies brags about his hygiene and claims "I'm clean. I keep myself up. That's why I left my wife." However, Davies is odorous which is why he is so defensive about it. Davies complains about the window being left open in the room, and it seems that perhaps it is open to offset the smell. Aston is polite and simply insists on keeping it open. He does not say anything to make Davies uncomfortable. Later, though, after Davies lashes out at him, Aston says, "You've no reason to call that shed stinking. You stink." This infuriates Davies enough for him to pull a knife on Aston and say, "I'll stink you!" The comedic element continues when Davies tells Mick about the confrontation, and Mick finally confirms what Davies already knows. This use of the word "stink" is childish, and the image of three grown men using the word to hurt one another is funny as it reveals the immature and ineffective way in which they communicate.