

THE UNDERSTUDY
DRAMA & THEATRE RESOURCES

ALAN AYCKBOURN'S

ABSURD

Person Singular

PRE-READING &
FIRST READ

FLY
SPRAY

18:23

Dear Teachers,

This is our freebie resource to introduce the second extracts of the Pre-Release Material for May/June 2026.

We like to introduce the plays in a fun way then do a first read together before starting the detailed practical exploration and associated written practice.. It means that students have read the extract at least twice and gives them time to 'digest' the plot and characters, before coming to their practical work and written work. It means that when they do the practical work, they can draw on their knowledge of how the characters behave in the whole extract in order to shape their ideas.

There is some guidance on the next slide for introducing the play using these slides. Then there are slides for various activities leading up to a first read and a few simple activities to help organise information. We find that students respond very well to having this kind of help with setting up their scripts and being organised – especially those who might usually be the kind to lose scripts, keep half-hearted notes. This is a great opportunity to teach skills of analysis and organisation of ideas. The fact that the extracts are only 15 pages or less means they can keep on top of it and feel successful.

The second play's first set of slides for practical exploration is due out on or before Sunday 16 November.

We expect it might be a little earlier, but don't want to make promises we can't keep.

If you would like to pre-order (especially if you need to pay via a bank transfer from school) you can do so in the shop: www.the-understudy.org/shop
Otherwise you can buy an instant download as soon as they are published.

Kind regards,
Jane

**PRE-READING &
FIRST READ**

INTRO LESSON

1. As we had so much fun with the party to introduce Three Sister, my suggestion is to start with a party again here. Set up your room like a Christmas party using whatever props / decor you have available. If starting this play in November, this will make more sense than for those of us starting January!
2. Start as teacher-in-role. Get yourself a little costume - either just an apron / pinafore or wear this over a party dress - 1970s style. Get some yellow rubber gloves and be cleaning and preparing the room as the students come in. When they arrive, quickly remove apron etc. Welcome them to your party and offer them hors d'oeuvres and a drink - those with time and money might make these real, otherwise just use empty glasses / plates (or even mime). Next slide can be used on the board.
3. Help them begin to form characters through improvisation by asking / offering names, jobs (for the men!) and children etc. Wish them Merry Christmas and comment that you can't believe that it's nearly 1973!
4. Give them the impression that they are all socially above you and you want to impress them.
5. Offer them each a quote (printouts at end of slide show).

6. They can work in small groups to create a scene at this party and they must find a way to incorporate their quotes into their scene. They can enjoy playing for comedy this time - but must stick to being 30-something adults in the 1970s.
7. Reflect: what kind of themes and ideas were emerging? What are you curious about? What sense do we get of the world of the play?





Merry
Christmas

CREATE A SCENE

- Work in groups of 3-5.
- Create a scene in which you use all of your quotes.
- Your scene must be set at a Christmas Party in one of your homes in 1972.
- You must all be middle class adults in your 30s. Some of you may be trying to impress others. You may play for comedy.



SHARE & REFLECT

What kind of themes and ideas are emerging?

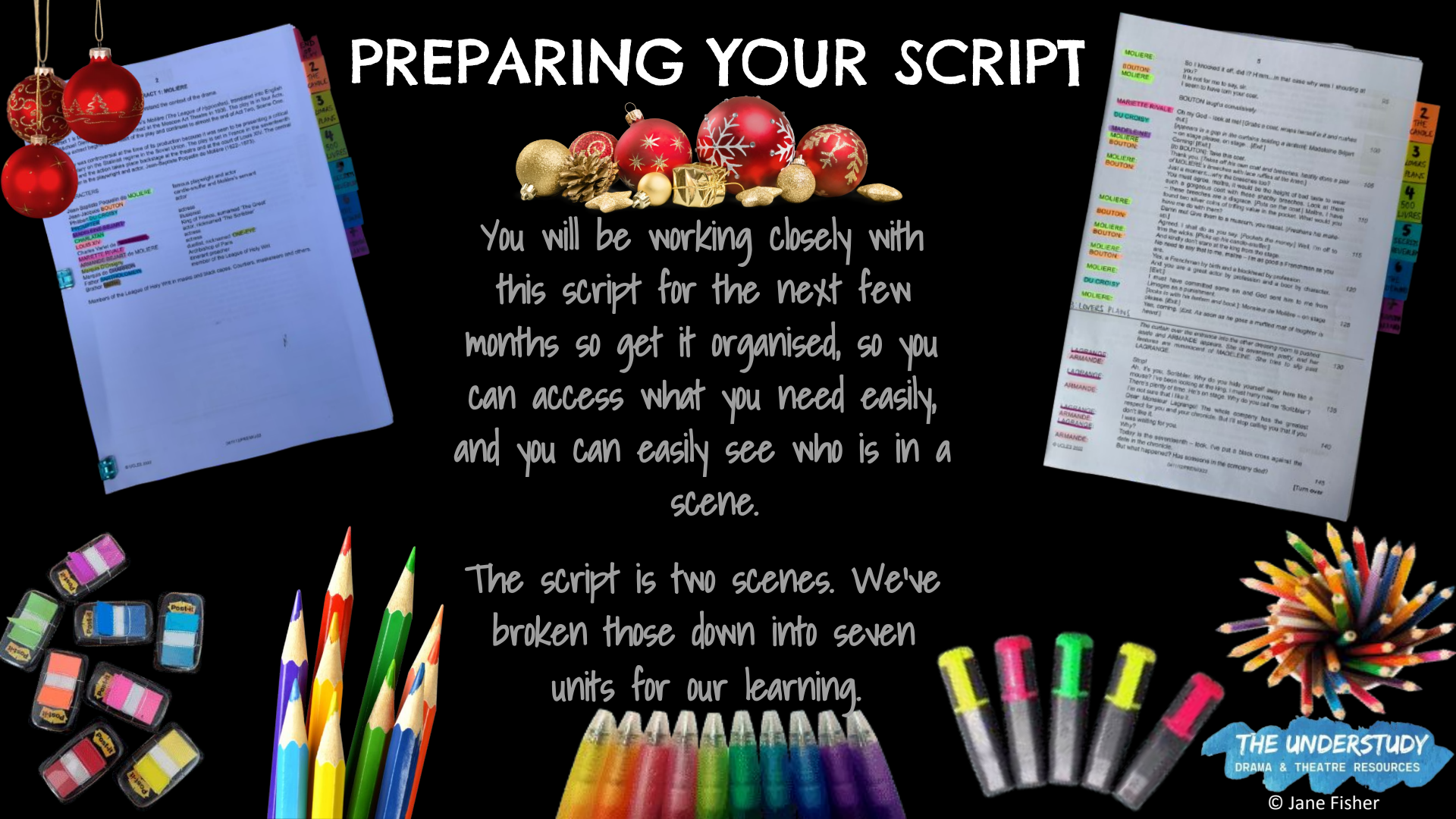
What are you curious about?

What sense do we get of the world of the play?

PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

You will be working closely with this script for the next few months so get it organised, so you can access what you need easily, and you can easily see who is in a scene.

The script is two scenes. We've broken those down into seven units for our learning.



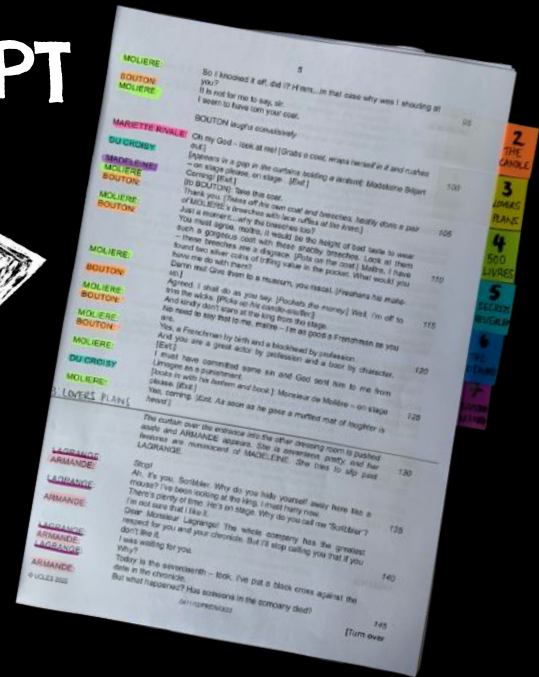
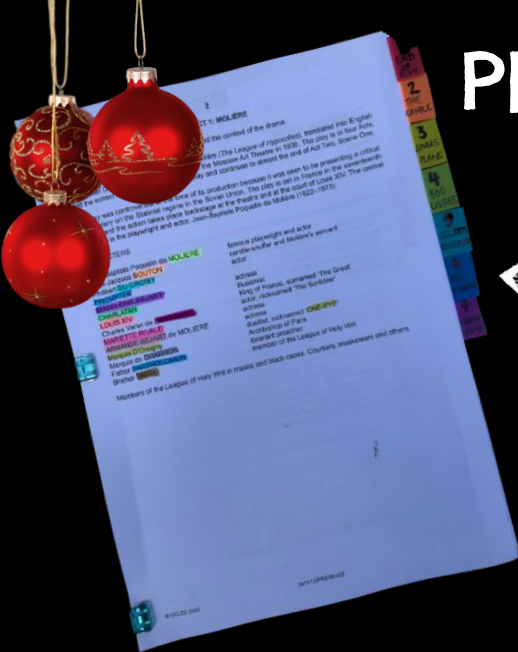
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PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

Choosing a colour for each character and highlighting your whole script allows you to see who is in each scene and makes reading in class (or to yourself) and experimenting with scenes much easier. It also allows you to see how prominent a character is.

Adding tabs to mark each section makes finding your place easy and helps organise the script in your head.



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PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT



Different directors/designers use different ways to decide where a unit starts and ends. Often an entrance or exit of a character is useful as it means characters' intentions change. Each play is unique as is each decision about how to do this.

In drama analysis, directors and designers often break down the script into units. This makes it easier to analyse what is going on.

We like to give each unit a name to help us remember it and to be able to talk about it with our class / company. We try to choose names that are simple and easy reminders of events.

UNIT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAGES	18 - 20	20 - 23	23 - 25	25 - 26	26 - 27	27 - 28	28 -29
LINES	1 - 131	132 - 253	254 - 354	355 - 424	425 - 463	464 - 525	525 - 569
NAME	GETTING READY	FIRST GUESTS	INSPECTING THE KITCHEN	SHELVES	RONALD & MARION	BEVERAGES	A MAD WORLD

PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

A C T	UNIT	P A G E S	L I N E S	UNIT TITLE	LOCATION/ PLACE	SEASON/ DATE/ TIME	PLOT	MOOD/TONE	SCENIC: SET / PROPS / COSTUME	TECHNICAL: LIGHT / SOUND	IDEAS / THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS	J A N E	S I D N E Y	M A R I O N
1	1	18-20	1-131	GETTING READY	Sidney and Jane's kitchen	Last Christmas' (1971) Evening. Raining. UK = cold.	Jane cleans the kitchen happily. Sidney enters. They are discussing the pending arrival of their guests. There is a sense that they feel beneath them socially. Jane is concerned with cleaning the kitchen; Sidney doesn't think they will be interested in the kitchen - as they are socially above that. It is raining. There is a fuss over a spill that Sidney hasn't taken care of: a requirement for both polish and air freshener, but Sidney accidentally uses he fly spray instead. They count down the minutes to their guests' arrival. Jane berates Sidney for being 'at the nuts' and he now smells like fly spray. Lots of light anxiety around the guest's arrival - wanting the night to go well. They only count themselves friends of Dick and Lottie Potter; the others they want to impress. One minute to go and a panic about the room spray.	Light but anxious. Comical.	Kitchen of small suburban house - 1970s. Unremarkable. Digital clock - strats at 1823. Jane - pinafore over party dress, slippers, hair tightly permed, unimaginatively made up, rubber gloves. Sidney - small trimmed moustache, old-fashioned, sober suit, dark tie, polished hair and shoes, handkerchief, watch. Cloth and assortment of cloths, fly spray, air freshener, duster, polish.	Door chimes. 18h23 in England in winter so dark outside + raining. Front door chimes.				

You can complete this document as a class or as individuals. You get deeper understanding and more attention to detail if you each do your own but you share ideas (and workload) if you do it together. Or you could each do your own then share and create a central document. It helps enormously with noticing details and understanding design requirements.

Here's a blank template with just the first one done as an example



[BLANK ABSURD PERSON UNITS.xlsx](#)

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READ THE SCRIPT TOGETHER



You can now read the script together and stop to complete your uniting document and begin a character study, so that when you come to do your second read and practical explorations, you know the characters and the plot of the whole extract and can draw on that knowledge in your activities and explorations of staging them. You can keep character notes on the second tab of the uniting sheets or you can keep notes in your script. (See next slide.)

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AGE	Further Notes
SIDNEY HOPCROFT	businessman, social climber, 30s		
JANE HOPCROFT	his long suffering wife, 30s		
RONALD BREWSTER	an influential banker		
MARION BREWSTER-RIGHT	RONALD's wife		
EVA JACKSON	troubled wife of influential GEOFFREY JACKSON		
DICK & LOTTIE POTTER	friends who are heard but never seen		

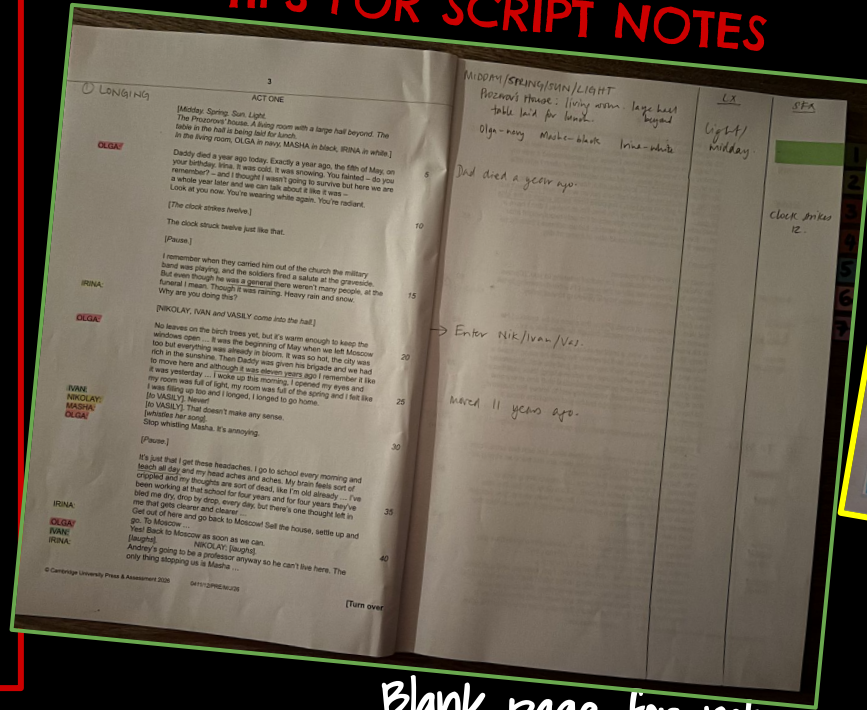
PREPARING YOUR SCRIPT

We print our script with a blank page next to each page for notes, diagrams for staging etc. We keep all notes in pencil so we can keep changing them as we go on.

On the front inside cover we use post-it notes to keep character notes. We can keep adding to these if needed.



TIPS FOR SCRIPT NOTES



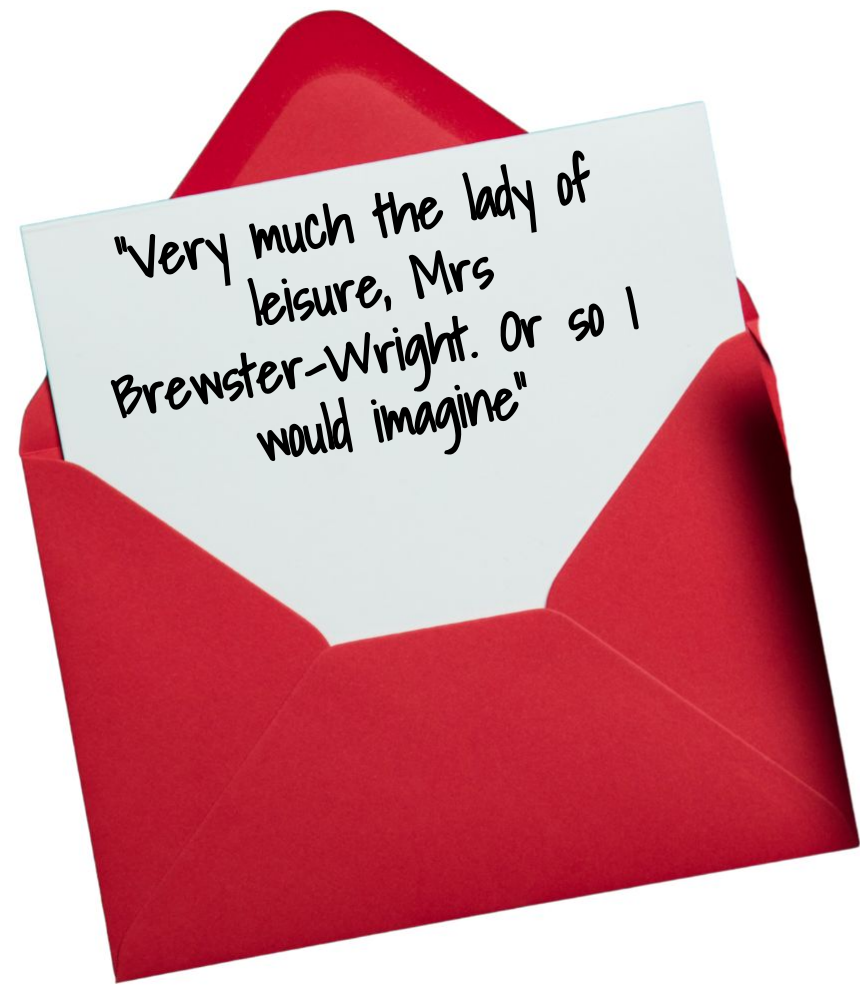
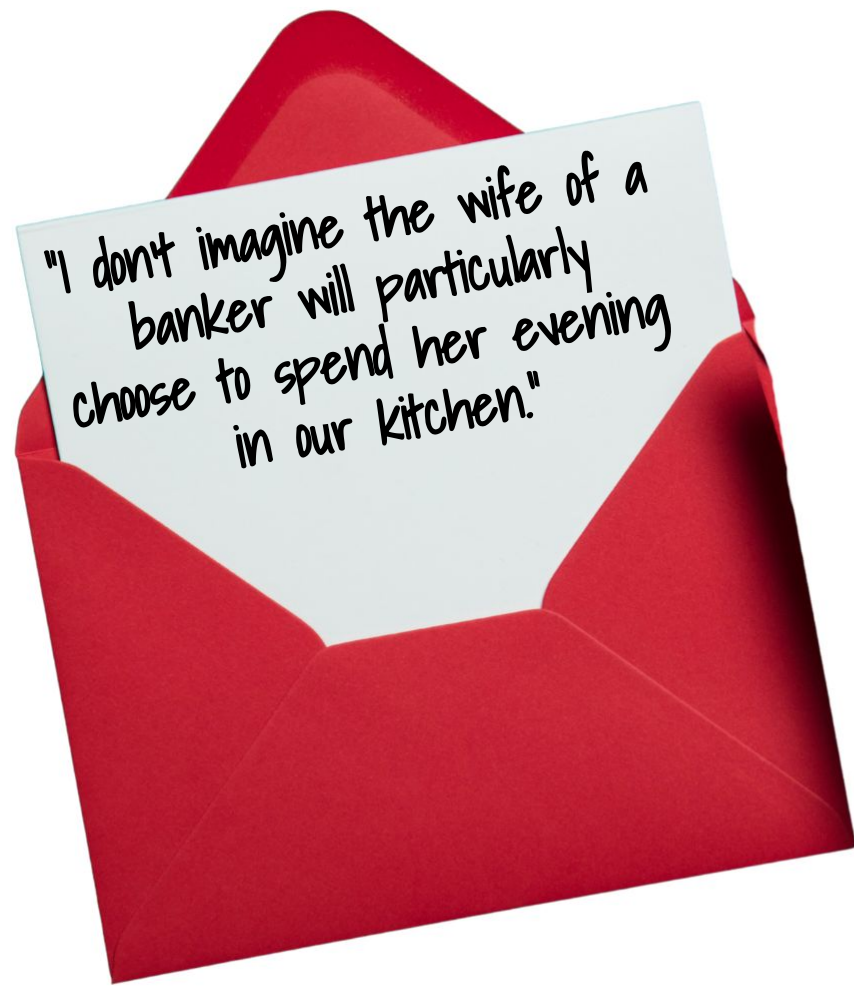
Blank page for notes



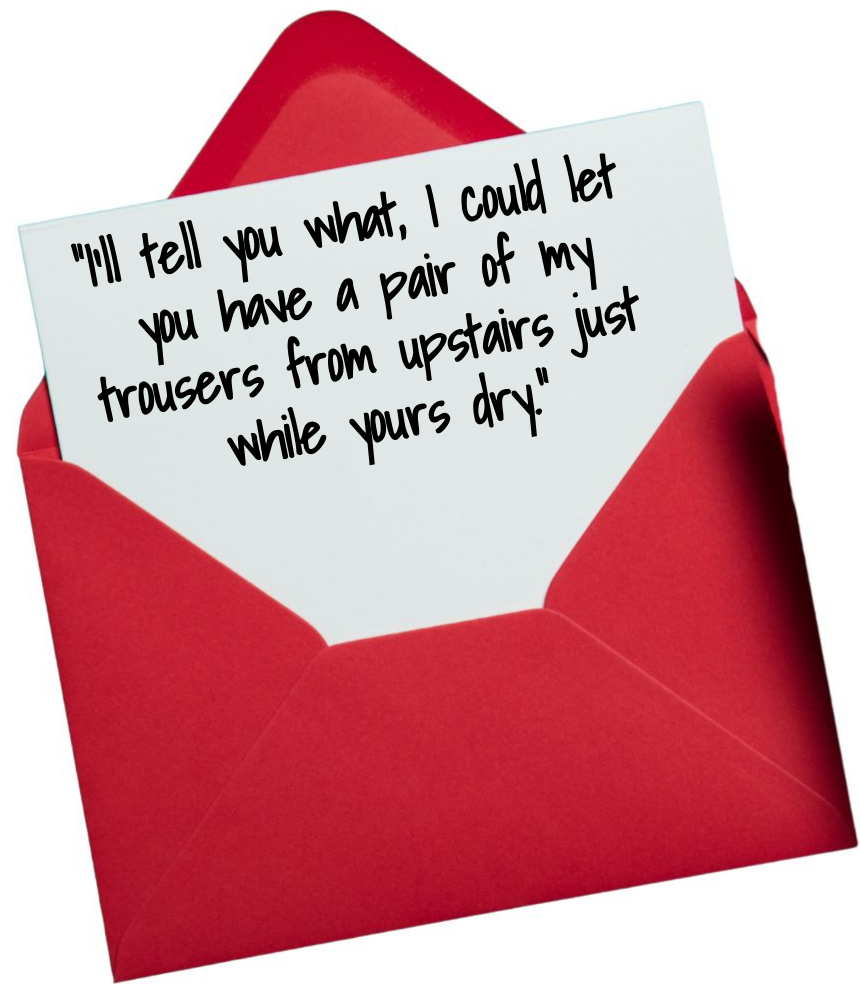
Character Notes

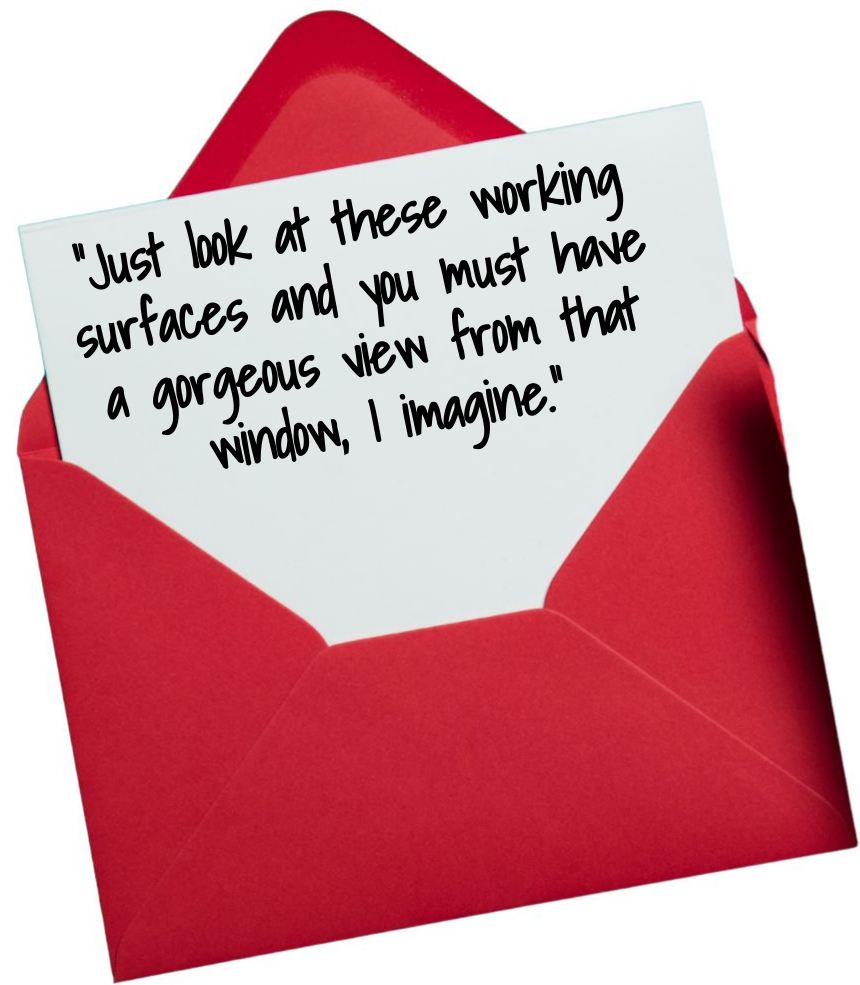
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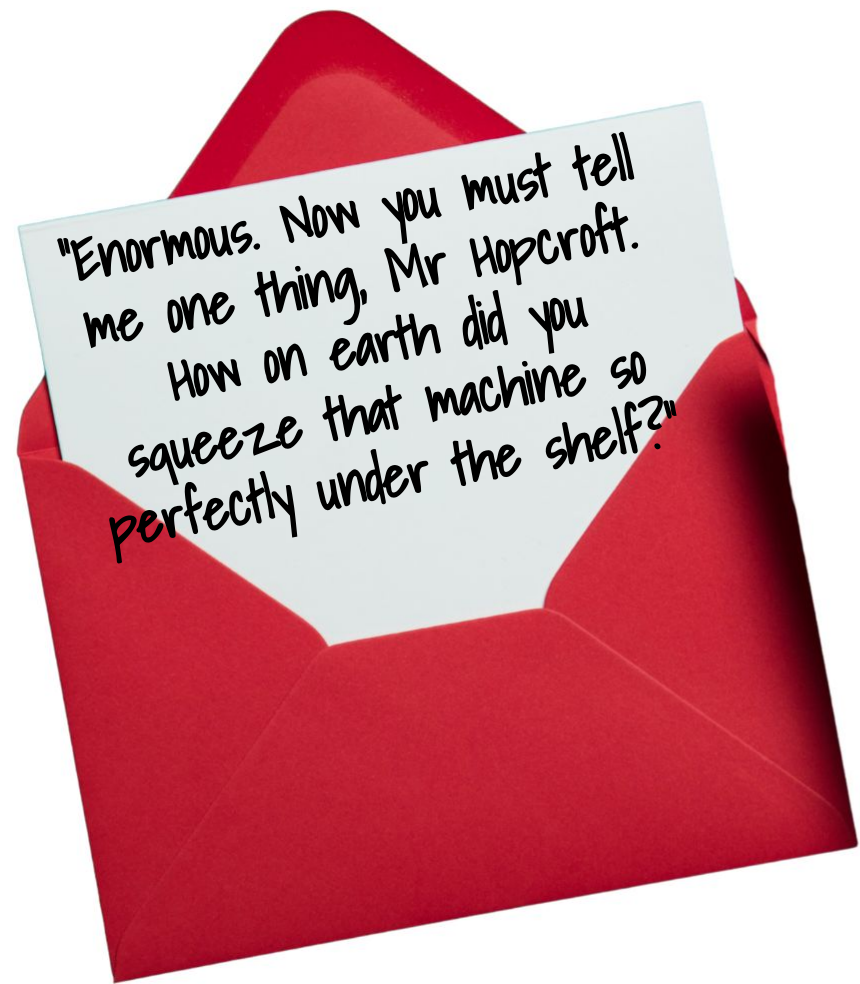
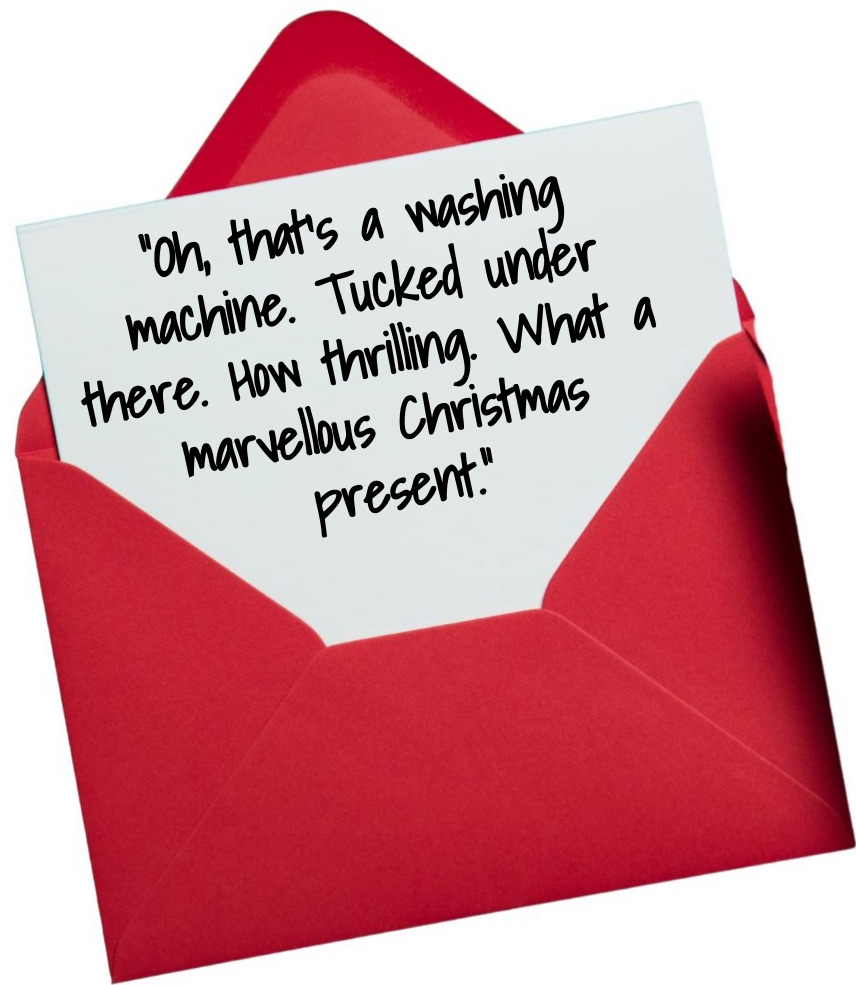
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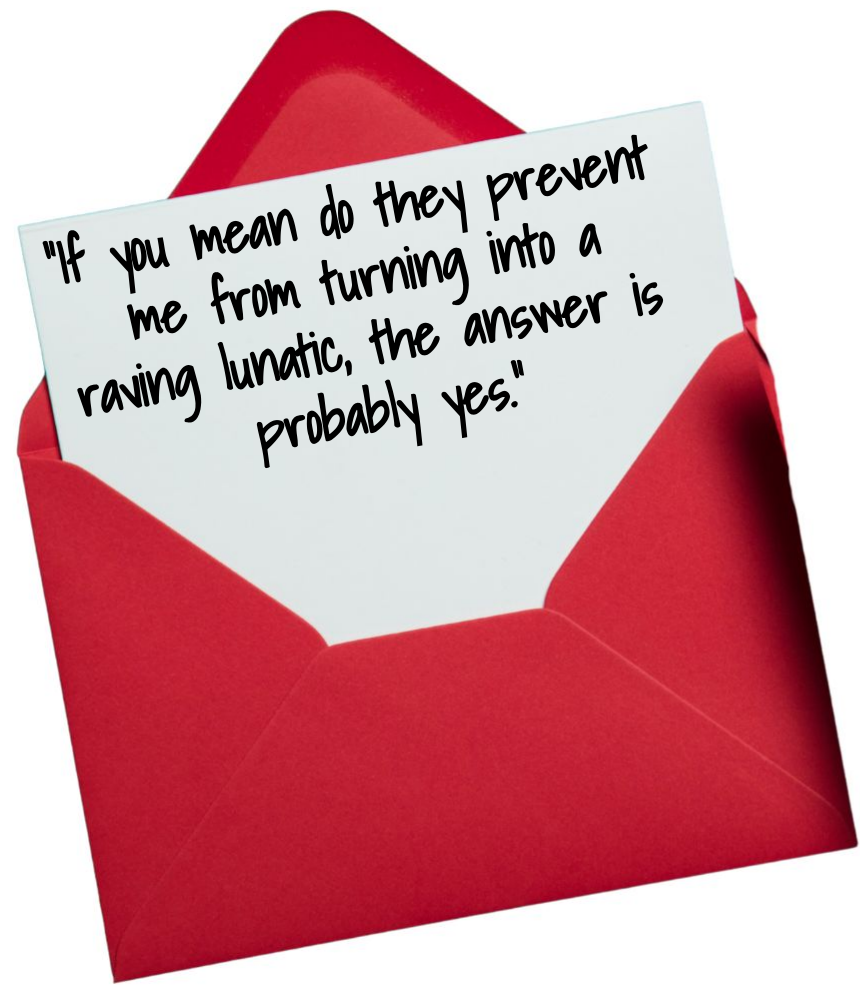
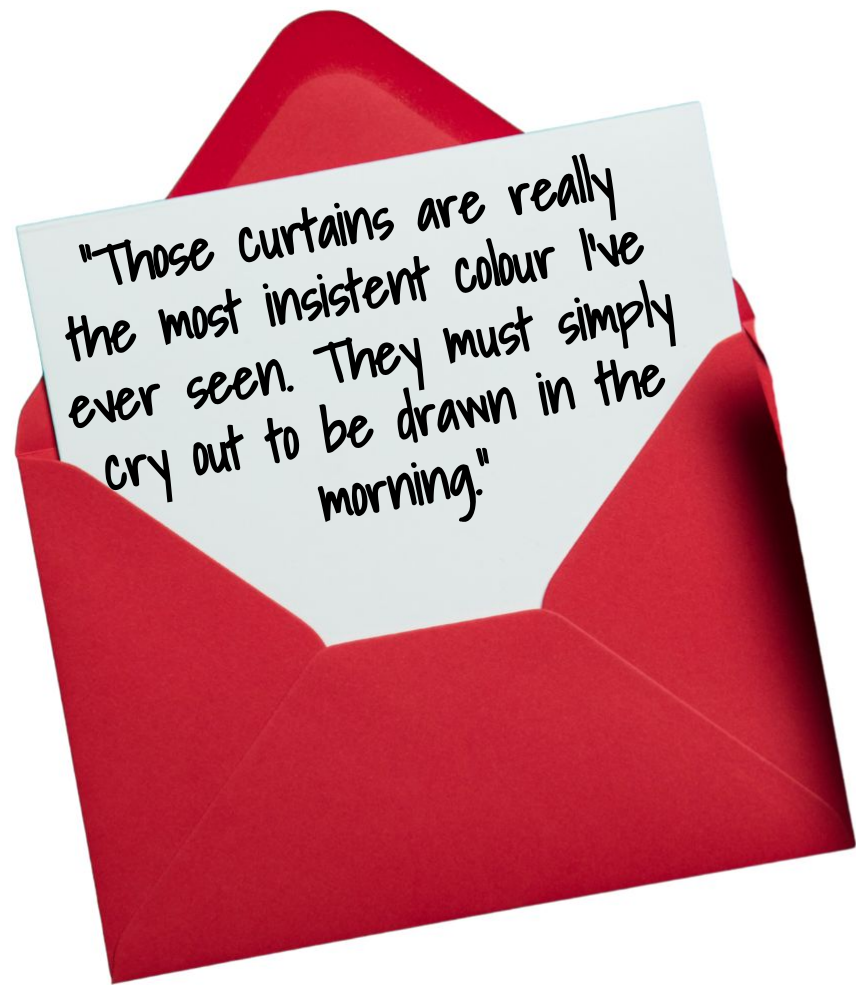


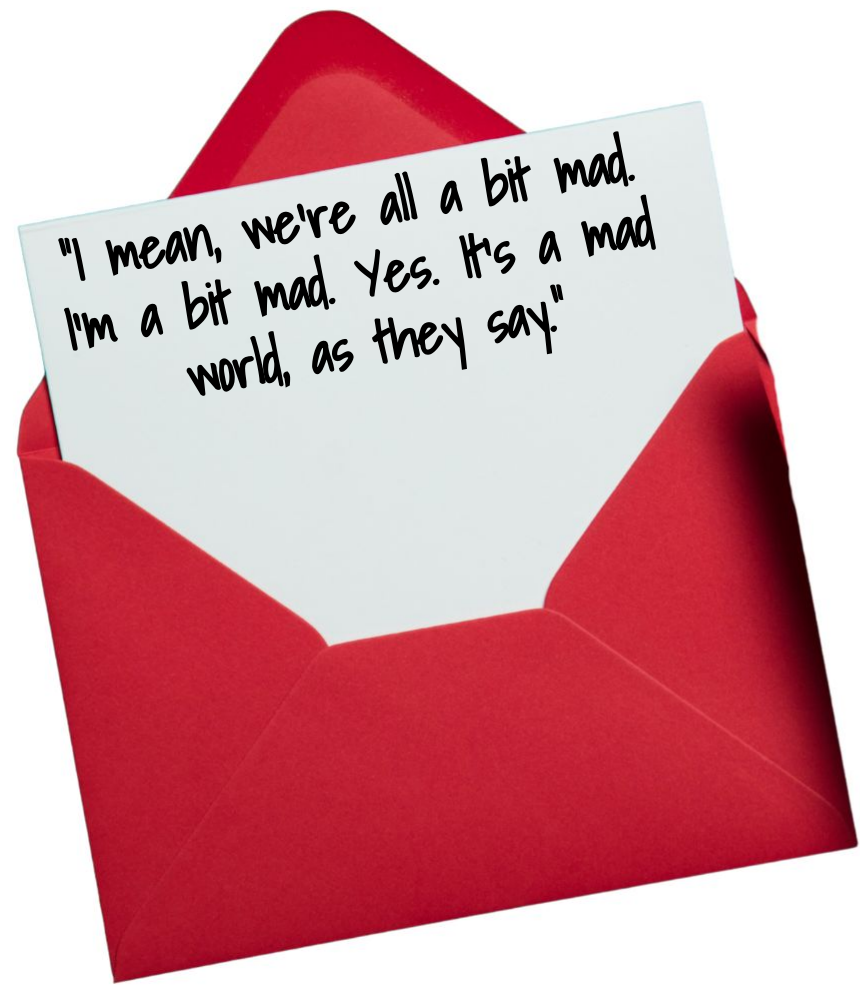


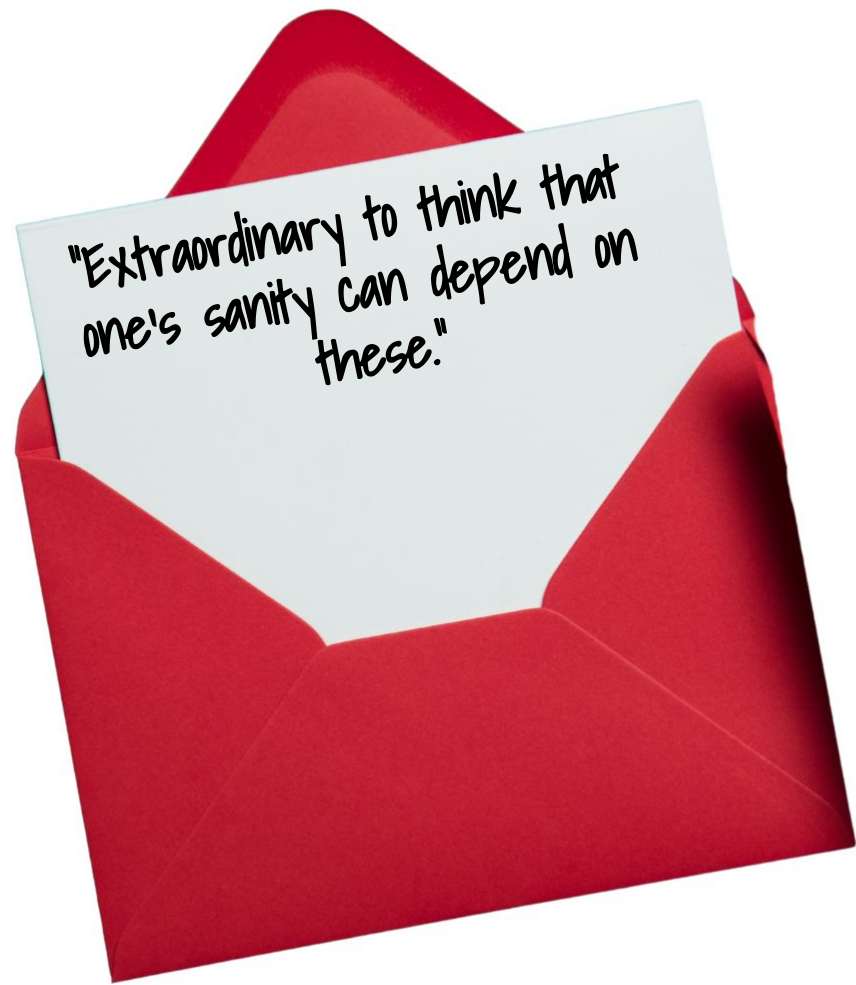














This resource is a freebie from

www.the-understudy.org

It is designed to help you set up your scripts so that you will find working with our slides to explore this play much easier. And you will feel organised before you embark on your exploration.

The full set of resources are published over a series of dates as we write and publish as we go, due to the time constraints of receiving new material each September. For more details, go to:

<https://www.the-understudy.org/iqcsedramapre-release>

