

Task for *Blackrock*

Close study of dramatic conventions in *Blackrock*

1. Analysing set / setting

Sc. 1 – Alone above Blackrock Beach Jared looks out to sea. He's in a wetsuit. Cherie approaches.

1. What might the sea symbolise? What is significant about Jared gazing out to sea?
2. Jared is up high, presumably on 'the rock' itself. What might the black rock dominating the beach represent? Think of several ideas that it might connote.
3. What feelings might this dominating presence provoke in the audience? Do you think it becomes a motif throughout the play?
4. Ricko says to Tiffany, "We'll be out on the rock." Explain the connection between the rock and the 'tribe'.
5. Later, Ricko mentions that the Acklands live across the river from the beach. Explain the symbolism of this choice in setting.

Sc. 11 – Kirby House. Sunday morning. Jared has been roused from sleep.

1. What does your bedroom mean to you? Is it a place of safety and security?
2. How do you think the audience would view this setting of Jared in his bed, with his mother Diane waking him up?
3. In this scene, Diane reveals Tracey's death, using blunt and monosyllabic language, such as "found her down on the beach with her head split open" and, "someone bashed her head in with a rock." What is the effect of the contrast between this horrifying revelation and this particular setting?

Sc. 12 – Cemetery. Cherie by the grave with a boom box.

1. What connotations come to mind when you think of a cemetery?
2. Enright stated that he specifically chose not to portray Tracey's death on stage because he wanted to avoid sensationalism and focus instead on the aftermath. In light of this, what function does this setting fulfil?
3. How does the inclusion of only a single character contribute to this construction of setting?
4. The previous scene was set in Jared's bedroom, at morning time. What effect would the shift from a familiar domestic scene to a cemetery have on the audience?

2. Analysing dialogue

Sc.2 – Ackland house. The dialogue begins in medias res (in the middle of the action) with Toby and his father, Stewart, talking. This is the audience’s first insight into the Ackland family and its dynamics.

1. In the exchange between Stewart and Marian, what does the reference to “Thursday Island”, “Arnhem Land” and “Initiation rites” suggest about the Ackland family’s class and attitudes and values?
2. How does Enright’s use of language in the following dialogue present Toby as a demanding yet immature character?

Marian: I’m on my final paragraph. Can’t this wait?

RACHEL enters in school uniform, with bag.

Toby: I’m due at the gym. I want to have my party over at Blackrock surf club.

Rachel: When?

Toby: Saturday night.

Marian: At Blackrock? Why over there?

TOBY glances at STEWART

Stewart: Your pitch

3. What does the following dialogue suggest about patriarchal attitudes in a relationship and how they may or may not have changed?

Marian: What do we do about catering?

Stewart: We’re busy, Marian. The Optimum Awards.

Marian: You’re busy.

4. Enright uses varied forms of address (“Mum”, “mother” “guys”, “bitch”, “mate”, “sir” etc.) in this scene. What do these suggest about the family dynamics?
5. Read this exchange:

Stewart: It is Hoontown. I used to surf over there when I was a kid. You always got out before sunset, unless you were looking for...

Marian: What? A fuck?

Stewart: A punch-up.

6. Blackrock, in this dialogue, is presented as a place always associated with sex and violence. What does this dialogue suggest about the inevitability of identity in lower socio-economic settings?

7. Taboo language, sexual language and profanities are used in this scene
8. How do you respond to the use of swearing and the informal dialogue between parents and children? Provide some examples to support your views.

Sc. 14 – The tribe discuss their guilt.

1. Read the following dialogue from scene 14 and answer the questions that follow:

SCOTT: Well, I reckon he's dobbed. Or he will next time.

RICKO: Dobbod?

SCOTT: We did it. The three of us.

RICKO: You topped her?

DAVO: No! No way.

SCOTT: We all pounded her, but we left her out there alive.

RICKO looks steadily at them.

DAVO: Shit, Ricko. I swear we didn't kill her.

SCOTT: No way.

- a. How is the dialogue in this scene used to *reveal plot*, rather than establish character?
 - b. What does the use of the phrase "No way." spoken by both Davo and Scott suggest about the Blackrock boys' attitudes to crime?
 - c. Scott is concerned that Toby has "dobbod" on them. Why might this be considered wrong?
2. In this scene we hear from the rapists and their account of the fateful night. Explain how Enright's use of language ("pounded", "we went through her") present sex and violence as intertwined and connected?
 3. In the following dialogue Ricko uses his leadership to try to convince Scott and Davo to forget the events of Tracy's death.
 - a. What does this dialogue suggest about male attitudes to rape?
 - b. How much of this dialogue is Ricko trying to convince *himself*, rather than Scott and Davo?
 - c. Why might this dialogue conflict with Ricko's eventual suicide?

RICKO: Listen, both of youse. Press here. Wipe everything you know about that night. It's that easy. You can make yourself do anything, if you've got the guts. Press.

They press their temples like him.

Nothing ever happened on this beach. It's just a rock and a stretch of sand. Okay? Okay. Now me and my mate have work to do.

Sc. 17 - Dialogue between Jared, Ricko and Tiffany.

1. How does the dialogue in this scene reflect power differences between characters?
2. Discuss the importance of using the word 'mate' and how it contributes to the theme of tribe.
3. There are several examples of profanity in this scene. What tone does this contribute to? How does this form of colloquialism reinforce certain ideas about gender and class? What impact would it have on the audience?
4. List examples of the language used by Ricko that contribute to his violent characterisation. Discuss how this language influences the audience.
5. Discuss the importance of dialogue in advancing the plot in this scene.
6. Jared says to Ricko, "Anyone else can lose it. Not you." Explain the relevance of this quote to a major theme in the play.
7. Tiffany is attempting to have a discussion with Ricko but all he responds with is, "They found me." Explain the significance of his repetition.
8. Explain the significance of the shift from Ricko's brief utterances to the two extended ones towards the end of the scene.
9. Note that the stage directions imply Ricko delivers his last line alone on stage. How does this influence your interpretation of his last utterance?

Analysing conflict - internal

Sc. 19 – Jared at the boxing ring.

1. Why has Jared turned up at the boxing ring to speak to Len? What internal conflict is he wrestling with?
2. How does Len respond to Jared's attempts to talk?
3. What is the symbolism between having this scene take place next to a boxing ring?
4. Why do you think the scene begins before Jared arrives? Look at the language Len uses in talking to George, particularly in regards to mateship. What imagery do you notice? What does this remind the audience of prior to Jared's arrival?
5. At one point, George bloodies Donny's nose. Len says, "Get a good whiff, George." What symbolism is evident here? What does the idea of 'smelling blood' connote?
6. Len initially says, "You're not going to dob, are you?" but then tells Jared, "You'd be bloody mad [to lie to the police]." What causes this shift in attitude? What impact might this have on Jared's conscience?

Sc. 24 – Jared at the beach, talking to Diane.

1. What does the loss of Diane's breast (to cancer) symbolise? Why does Diane force Jared to confront her breast cancer in this scene?
2. Jared has a significant, confessional monologue in this scene. What does this suggest about his state of mind?
3. At the end of this monologue, Jared says, "I could have taken [Tracey] home. Only I wouldn't. I didn't." What does this reveal?

4. He follows Diane's question of 'Why?' with, "If I knew, I mightn't feel like such a piece of shit." How does this develop our understanding of exactly what Jared is wrestling with?
5. Jared agrees that the other guys were "no friends" of his, but says they were "mates". What is the difference? Why did this make Jared's internal struggle more difficult?

Analysing conflict - external

Sc. 21 – Ricko and Jared fight.

1. Tiffany returns Ricko's 1993 surfing trophy, saying at the time she was "so proud" but now doesn't want it "anywhere near [her]". What does this trophy symbolise?
2. Describe Ricko's attitude towards Tiffany, particularly when he asks her to have sex with both him and Jared. How does the language of his dialogue reveal this attitude? How does he react when she refuses?
3. What does this interaction between Ricko and Tiffany remind the audience of?
4. Why does Jared intervene?
5. After the first tussle, Jared tries to say he is not the same as Ricko. Why does Ricko then "attack" Jared? What is Ricko trying to prove? How does Jared respond?
6. What is the symbolism of the brawl taking place as darkness descends?
7. What is significant about the fact that Ricko goes to hit Jared with his trophy?
8. Why do you think Jared picks up the trophy and "weighs it in his hand"?

Analysing stage directions

Sc. 6 – The party.

The stage directions for the party scene stipulate a significant amount of character movement on, around and off the stage. It's an action packed scene with Enright specifying very physical interactions between all of the characters on stage. Yet there is also inaction by a number of characters, where the stage directions call for passive behaviour, such as following, watching and leaving.

Outside the Blackrock surf-club. An amateur band plays. SCOTT shows his strength. JARED, SHANA, RICKO, TIFFANY and DAVO watch.

1. What masculine traits or behaviours are revealed through the opening stage directions?
2. Why do you think a crowd of characters are watching Scott? What ideas does this raise about group behaviour/tribalism?

SHANA runs on shrieking. SCOTT chases her towards the beach.

DAVO drags CHERIE from the dancing area.

She goes back to the dancing. SCOTT chases SHANA. They collide with RICKO as he returns. JARED cleans the beach.

3. What does Enright's choice of verbs (shrieking, chases, drags) suggest about the atmosphere of this scene?
4. What do the stage directions reveal about Shana's character? Who or what might this character represent?
5. Based on the stage directions, describe the relationship between Shana and Scott.
6. How do the stage directions present Jared's character as different to the other male characters in this scene?

He gives JARED a push. JARED goes. RICKO watches. CHERIE comes towards him.

7. How do the stage directions reveal Ricko's influence and authority over other characters?
8. How does this further add to the characterisation of Jared?

They laugh at her. TOBY stares at the dancing.

He runs towards the dancing. CHERIE follows. A fight erupts. SCOTT and DAVO watch.

9. What do Scott and Davo's inactions in this scene suggest about the behaviour of young people?
10. What other examples of characters' inaction can you identify in this scene?

TOBY returns, pursuing JARED.

TOBY drags SCOTT towards the dancing. DAVO follows

He kicks beer cans into the wall and heads for the beach.

11. Describe four traits of male behaviour revealed through the stage directions in this scene.
12. Identify five words from the stage directions in this scene that imply violence or aggression?
13. Identify five words that show passive behaviour or compliance with the group.

Sc. 23 – Rachel and Jared.

Kirby house, days later. Midday. The room is empty. RACHEL is heard calling. She comes in carrying a Christmas present. JARED appears.

It's a cup for the saucer. His name is on it.

1. Rachel made the saucer and mug for Jared, what does the gift symbolise?

He hurls the mug. It shatters.

2. What is the significance of Jared's action of smashing the mug?
3. His name is labelled on the mug, why has this detail been included in the stage directions? What further symbolic meaning can be deduced from this detail?

He grabs her.

She kicks him hard in the groin. Winded, he goes down.

She's going. His face is in his hand. He sobs, retches. It's like a fit. She wants to go, can't.

4. To what extent do the stage directions empower Rachel?
5. Why can't Rachel leave Jared?
6. Other than Rachel's kick to his groin, what else is the cause of Jared's retching and crying?

He puts a hand out. She kneels. She puts an arm round him, he round her. He embraces her. Their moment of intimacy starts to become sexual.

7. Why might Jared need intimacy at this point?
8. Explain two different ways the above directions could be interpreted by a director staging the play.

Analysing monologue

Sc. 12 - Cherie at the cemetery.

1. How does Enright use this monologue to reveal Tracey's backstory; what new information does he reveal?
2. Why do you think Enright decided to use a monologue, rather than dialogue between characters, for this information to be revealed? What is the purpose of a monologue in drama?
3. Cherie talks directly to Tracey throughout this monologue. What effect does this have on the audience?
4. The monologue builds in tension and emotion throughout the three parts. Identify and provide evidence of the emotional journey Cherie goes on.
5. Why is it significant that there are no male characters present for this important moment in Cherie's characterisation?