Task for Hotel Sorrento

Exploring Family and Loyalty

Hannie Rayson quotes Jane Dowdeswell: “Few other relationships can inspire such loyalty or such anger as sisters.” Of Hotel Sorrento, she says, “At the heart of this play is the family and the sisters.”

As you explore this theme, using the following references as a starting point, consider both the comments about family and loyalty made and the contradictions revealed in the characters’ attitudes.

Consider the charge that Meg’s novel is autobiographical:

- Edwin’s sly comments, 1:3, p. 8.
- The review as read by Troy, 1:4, p. 10.
- Dick’s accusation of autobiography, 2:11, p. 71.

The relationship between Wal, his wife and children:

- Wal’s poor treatment of his wife and love from his daughters, 1:4, p. 10; 2:11, pp. 67–68.
- Wal wanting to read Meg’s book, 1:17, p. 35.
- Wal not showing interest in Pippa, 1:21, p. 42.
- The loss of a sense of family without Wal holding them together, 2:15, pp. 80–81.

The relationship between the sisters:

- Loyalty (the foundation drinking episode), 1:8, p. 19.
- Loyalty (not discussing what happened with Gary), 2:12, pp. 74–75.
- Hurt, 1:15, pp. 32–33; 2:1, p. 49; 2:10, pp. 63–64.
- Pippa’s anxiety, 2:1, pp. 49–50.
- Resentment and cynicism, 2:1, pp. 49–50.
- Connected, despite differences, 2:2, p. 51.
- Bitterness, 2:2, pp. 51–52; 2:18, pp. 85–86.
- Irreconcilable, 2:4, p. 55.
- Conflict over whether to sell the house, and Hil’s ‘sacrifice/choice’ to look after Wal, 2:7, pp. 58–59.
- Hil’s envy, 2:9, pp. 61–62.
- The love quadrangle with Gary, 2:12, pp. 74–75; 2:15, p. 81.
- Not belonging, 2:18, pp. 85–86.
- Fractured and hopeless, 2:18, p. 87.
The effects of Meg’s book:

- Hil’s refusal to discuss it (initially)
- Pippa feels “cheated”, 1:8, p. 19; 2:18, p. 86.
- The implication of disloyalty on Meg’s part, 2:11, p. 70.
- Dick’s accusation of autobiography, 2:11, p. 71.
- Meg’s hurt that no one will discuss it, 2:11, p. 71, 2:11, p. 74.
- Hil’s sense of betrayal, 2:11, p. 74.
- Integrity, 2:18, p. 86.
- Unforgiveable, 2:18, p. 86.

The family secret:

- Hil can’t talk to Troy about his father, 1:12, p. 31; 1:17, p. 36.
- Meg’s acknowledgement that she loved him, 2:2, p. 52.
- Running away from it, 2:8, p. 60.
- Pippa not talking to Meg about it, 2:10, p. 63.
- Meg’s challenging of Hil, 2:10, pp. 63–64.
- Meg telling Troy, 2:12 pp. 74–75.
- Meg telling Pippa to admit to the affair, 2:15, p. 81.
- Hil revealing that she knew about the affair, 2:18, p. 86.

The family home:

- Whether the home represents connection and unity, and selling it represents the loss of that, 2:7, pp. 58–59; 2:15, p. 80, 2:18, pp. 85–86, 2:19, p. 87.

Reflection: Is loyalty to one’s family an overriding value?

- Compare the various characters understanding of loyalty in 2:11, pp. 70–72. With whom do you agree? Why?
- Do you feel that Meg did take her sister’s integrity?
- How is loyalty such a contradiction for this family? About what are they loyal? Disloyal?
- How does the affair with Gary ultimately drive each character’s actions? How can the sisters’ current interrelationships be seen as arising from that single act?
- What correlation can be made between the concept of family loyalty and patriotism?