

## 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.
- Hil’s ‘sacrifice/choice’ to stay in Sorrento to look after Wal, 2:7, pp. 58–59.
- The loss of a sense of family without Wal holding them together, 2:15, pp. 80–81.

The relationship between the sisters:

- Guilt, 1:7, p. 18; 2:10, p. 63, 2:15, p. 80.
- Loyalty (the foundation drinking episode), 1:8, p. 19.
- Loyalty (not discussing what happened with Gary), 2:12, pp. 74–75.
- Meg missing her family, 1:13, p. 31; 1:18, pp. 36–37; 1:20, p. 40.
- 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.
- The painting of Hotel Sorrento, 2:11, pp. 66–67; 2:15, p. 80; 2:18, pp. 85–86.

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?