UNIT 12: HAROLD PINTER: *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 Harold Pinter: The Playwright
12.3.1 His Life and Works
12.4 Summary of the Play
12.5 Let us Sum up
12.6 Further Reading
12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.8 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- find a brief introduction to the playwright Harold Pinter
- gain an idea on Harold Pinter's life
- discuss the literary contributions of the playwright
- receive a summarised idea of the acts of the play
- note the sequence of events and dramatic action in the play
- appreciate the difference in an absurd play from other realistic plays

12.2 INTRODUCTION

The unit takes up Harold Pinter's play titled *The Birthday Party* (1957) which was the second of his twenty-nine plays and also one of the best known among them. Harold Pinter was a world renowned playwright, poet, actor, director, screenwriter and a political activist. His life and works shall acquaint you to his distinct contribution to the world of modern drama. When *The Birthday Party* was first adapted on stage and performed in 1958, it had met with much criticism fromthe critics and reviewers of the time, owing

to the shift in its difference from the contemporary conventions of drama. But it did not take long for the same intellectuals to sit up and notice and also to revise their earlier opinions of Pinter's talent and insight into the dramatic arts. Pinter did not approve of the critics trying to pin down meaning from the text of his works because that was a limited way of reading into his works which celebrated a kind of open-endedness. Through his plays he suggested and explored the playfulness of language and the mundane monotony that informed reality. And precisely for this reason, his plays probed into the complex ideas of meaning and menace, reality and the absurd, mystery and memory, language (at times playful and at time a verbal terror) and the inexplicable, interwoven with the strands of political and the personal. As you study the unit in details, you will appreciate what makes Pinter one of the leading and unforgettable playwrights of the modern period.

12.3 HAROLD PINTER: THE PLAYWRIGHT

The subsection provides a glimpse into the life and works of Harold Pinter in order to discuss his early yearsalong with his development as a modern playwright as well as describe a series of his critically acclaimed plays and published works.

12.3.1 His Life and Works

Harold Pinter (10 October, 1930–24 December, 2008) was born in Hackney, North London to Hyman Pinter and Frances Pinter. He grew up in a suburbia which was populated with rail yards, factories, smoking chimneys,sludge canals and multiples of shops. His father, as he reminisces was a hard-working ladies'-tailor who worked daily for twelve hours at a stretch and his mother was a home-maker who was also his favourite cook. His parents had provided him with all the care and comfort of a good home but during the Second World War,his father hadto give up his tailoring business, to serve as an air-raid warden. Thus, the war had brought considerable changes in their lives as a normal family.

At this point of his life the nine year old Pinter (along with twenty-four other boys) had to be sent away to a Castle in Cornwall for safety during the wartime. This proved to be a difficult phase for the family owing to the separation, the long distance and the travelling expenses involved especially at a time when his parents barely had enough money. It was only after a year that he could return to London for a while, before moving to a place just near London with his mother. After a few years of evacuation their final return to their London home was in the year 1944. Although the wartime was almost nearing its end,there were several bombardments in and around their neighbourhood and sometimes even in their own backyard. During this time, Pinter had joined the Hackney Downs Grammar School in London. It was here that he developed an interest in acting after having participated in the school productions, under the direction of his much admired English teacher, Joe Brearley.In the year 1948, he applied and received a grant, to study acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, even though he wished to study at Oxford or Cambridge University.

Later that year, being of an eligible age as an eighteen years old man, he was called to join in the National Service. But Pinter had already made up his mind and hadthe moral courageto refuse war-service as a 'conscientious-objector' in two such 'conscientious-objector tribunals'. This had turned into a difficult proposition as his application was refused twice in both the tribunals but being a juvenile he could not be imprisoned. As Pinter's was a civil and not a criminal offense, he was left alone with the charge of a hefty fine by the appointed Magistrate. Pinter had attended the Central School of Speech and Drama and acted in the English Repertory for a stretch of twelve years from the years 1954 to 1959. You will be interested to know that Harold Pinter in his early writings wrote under the pseudonym of 'Harold Pinta' and acted under the stage name of 'David Baron'. Pinter was married to actress Vivian Merchant with whom he had a son named Daniel. But Pinter discovered true contentment in his second marriage to the historian Antonia Fraser.

Pinter was also very vocal and expressed his political views in various campaigns such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, British Anti-Apartheid Movement and Cuba Solidarity Campaign to name a few. He had also opposed America's war in Afghanistan in 2001 and invasion of Iraq in 2003 and during his final years he wrote and spoke extensively on world-wide political issues. Although Pinter underwent treatment for cancer in 2001 and suffered a rare skin disease in 2005, he worked tirelessly on completing all his projects and other engagements without failure. Pinter was seventy years old when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005 in recognition of his contribution to literature and the arts. He breathed his last in the winter of 2008 (on 24 December) and was finally laid to rest at the Kensal Green Cemetery on 31 December 2008.



LET US KNOW

As the surname of 'Pinter' which was common among the Hungarian Jews, Pinter's paternal side of the family was believed to have descended from Hungarian Jews who settled in England. But it was also believed that they may have been Sephardic Jews as the titles 'Pinto', 'da Pinto' or 'da Pinta' were common among the Spanish and the Portugese. But later his second wife Antonia Fraser, a historian through her research had found out that Pinter's grandparents hailed from Poland which determined that the Pinters were originally an Ashkenazic family.

Pinter began writing poetry at the young age of twenty and his poems "New Year in the Midlands" and "Chandeliers and Shadows" were first published in the journal *Poetry London* in 1950. As a playwright, Pinter had written a total of twenty nine plays, fifteen dramatic sketches, twenty seven screenplays and film scripts apart from other collaborations. He began his career as a playwright with his plays *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* both written in 1957 and performed in the years 1957 and 1958 respectively.

The second play had received much criticism after its initial staging because the treatment of the play had completely left the critics and reviewers baffled. The only critic to see through his promising talent was Harold Hobson who in his review of *The Birthday Party* had redirected a new interest in the critics.

Further, the critic Irving Wardle in his review had termed the early plays of Pinter as the "comedy of menace" in which the seemingly normal start to the plays of Pinter would take a gradual turn towards the absurd. Similar to his first play *The Dumb Waiter*(1959) was a one act play with 'a room' as its settings, enveloped by a mysterious and hostile world outside. While *The Room* is replete with the insecurities of Rose losing her sense of home, *The Dumb Waiter* is shadowed by suspense of secret missions and motives of two professional assassins, Ben and Gus. Both *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter* were performed together at London in 1960. *The Hothouse* (1958) was a more psychological play set in a rest room with an ex-army officer, Roote leading the action of the play which took Pinter twenty long years before it was published and performed. *The Caretaker* (1959) which saw a total of four hundred and forty four performances was a more realistic play centered on the developing tensions between two brothers, Aston and Mick and their concern for an old tramp Davies. Thus, these plays from 1957-1960 put together in a cluster can be considered Pinter's 'menacing' plays.

The next set of plays from the years 1968-1982 were more expressionistic and personal (centred on the role of memory) and were considered as Pinter's 'memory plays'. Let us briefly discuss them together: *Landscape* (1968) was a short play based on the complexities of communication;*Silence* (1969)was woven with monologues and flashback dialogues;*A Night Out* (1969) originally a radio play riddled with mystery, with its protagonist as Albert Stokes; *Old Times* (1971) with a constant clash and play of memories between two best friends Kate and Anna; *No Man's Land* (1975) on the interaction and reminiscences between two elderly men, Hirst and Spooner; *Betrayal* (1978) centered on a realistic story of an adulterous love affair between Jerry and Emma revealed through a reverse

chronology; *FamilyVoices* (1981) a radio play based on the imagination of three cross cutting voices; *Victoria Station* (1982) directed with radio messages between a taxi driver and a controller of taxis; and *A Kind of Alaska* (1982) a one act play presenting the insights of a medical patient, Deborah.

The plays from 1980-2000 such as *One For the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *PartyTime* (1991), *Moonlight* (1993), *Ashesto Ashes* (1996) and *Celebration* (2000) were more political in nature and hence his 'political plays'. *One For the Road* has a disturbing political climate with a hanging fate of an interrogated couple Victor and Gila; *Mountain Language* highlights four different scenes with difficulties of communicated language and political situations; *Party Time* introducing a host of characters in a cocktail party contrasts their privileges to the politically disadvantaged; *Moonlight* is centered on a civil servant Andy on his deathbed suffering his dreams; *Ashes to Ashes* involves Devlin and Rebecca's conversation on her past and her violent lover; lastly set in a restaurant *Celebration* reveals the table talk of couples in two different tables.

Apart from these highlighted works of Pinter, he had also written well-received screenplays (that is adaptation of his or the plays of other playwrights for the screen) such as Robin Maugham's *The Servant* (1963), *The Pumpkin Eater* (1963) by Penelope Mortimer, *Remembrance of Things Past* (1972), *The Last Tycoon* (1976) by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles and *The Trial* by Franz Kafka among others. His *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948-1998* (1998) forms a significant work. Martin Esslin in examining the works of Pinter wrote: "Harold Pinter's supreme craftsmanship, his originality in treating the language, the depth of emotional intensity of his poetic vision, his refusal to compromise his artistic standards and integrity, give him the stature and assured position of a 'modern' classic" (273). The PEN Pinter Prize was established in the year 2009 to award a British writer or a writer residing in Britain.



LET US KNOW

The significant works of Pinter which have been published as collected editions are as follows:

Plays One **(1991)** a collected edition which contains an Introduction titled 'Writing For The Theatre', *The Birthday Party*, *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *A Slight Ache*, *The Hothouse*, *A Night Out*, *The Black and White* (a monologue) and *The Examination* (a short story).

Plays Two **(1991)** a collected edition includes an Introduction titled 'Writing for Myself', *The Caretaker*, *The Dwarfs*, *The Collection*, *The Lover*, *Night School*, *Revue Sketches*, *Trouble in the Works*, *The Black and White*, *Request Stop*, *Last to Go* and *Special Offer*.

Plays Three **(1991)** a collected edition opens with Pinter's Speech on being awarded the 1970 German Shakespeare Prize, *The Homecoming*, *Tea Party*, *The Basement*, *Landscape*, *Silence*, *Night*, *That's Your Trouble*, *That's All*, *Applicant,Interview*, *Dialogue for Three*, *Tea Party* (a short story), *Old Times* and *No Man's Land*.

Plays Four **(1993)** a collected edition opens with Pinter's Speech on receiving the 1995 David Cohen Literature Prize, *Betrayal*, *Monologue*, *Family Voices*, *A Kind of Alaska*, *Victoria Station*, *Precisely*, *One for the Road*, *Mountain Language*, *The New World Order*, *Party Time*, *Moonlight*, *Ashes to Ashes*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What was the major factor that disrupted the Pinter's family life?

Q 2: Why did Pinter appear in tribunals as a 'conscientious objector'?

Q 3: What were Pinter's pseudonyms as a playwright and an actor?

Q 4: When was Pinter awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature?

Q 5: At what age did Pinter start writing poetry?

Q 6: List the political plays of Pinter.

Q 7: When was the PEN Pinter Prize established? Why?

12.4 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

The play is divided into three acts of which the first act takes place one fine summer morning in the living-room of a house in a sea-side town, the second act takes place in the following evening of the same day in the house and the third act takes place the next morning. The main characters in the play are Meg, Petey, Stanley, Lulu, Goldberg and McCann. The confusion and the abrupt scenes in each of the acts are certainly difficult to grasp as it will certainly disturb the learner's sense of linearity and comprehension of the plot sequence. Absurdity is characteristic of Pinter's major plays but all the same, let us try to make a sense of the happenings in the play with an alternate approach and by planting some relevant insights into the text.

Act I

The setting of the play provides a clear picture to the reader in which he/she can ground the characters introduced. Thus, the play begins in Petey and Meg's home which is situated in a seaside town. The main door of the house leads to the hall and old Petey makes his entry with a newspaper to be seated at the kitchen table, beginning to read all by himself. This is when Meg's voice is heard and her presence felt shortly after her immediate entry. Meg prepares a plate of cornflakes and offers it to Petey who appreciates her kind efforts and they both begin a conversation which you could consider' a play of words' in a way.

The learner must consistently remind him/her-self that an absurd play requires more effort in understanding the scheme of things whether it is the dialogues, situations or the characters. Meg enquires about Stanley who apparently is put up in their boarding house and is yet to wake up and appear downstairs. She takes a pair of socks from a drawer, collects wool and a needle and goes back to the table to chat with Petey. He talks of the news article in the paper on a woman named Lady Mary Splatt having a baby girl and Mary is quick to express her pity that it was a baby girl and not a boy child, She says that she would much rather have a little boy if she had the choice. As soon as Petey finishes his breakfast, she surprises him with two pieces of fried bread and watches him eat it.

This is when Petey talks of two gentlemen approaching him the previous night at the beach who wanted to know if they could find accommodation with them only for a few nights and that they would visit their place toformally request for the same. The prospect of visitors or potential boarders excites Meg who presumes that they might have heard of their boarding house being a good place to put up in. In case they would turn up, Meg had the room with the armchair ready and expected to put up her guests. Meg talks of her fondness for music and theatre show-something that Petey does not seem to be interested in as such–to him a straight show was one without dance or music and which only had 'words'. She expresses a liking for the piano and how she loved listening to Stanley playing the piano even though he did not sing.

When Petey enquires if she would take Stanley's cup of tea to him upstairs, she strangely says: "I always take him up him his cup of tea. But that was a long time ago." You will notice that, Petey in many ways appears composed than the jolly and talkative nature of Meg. She decides to call on Stanley and approaches his door upstairs calling him by the name of "Stan! Stanney!" and in a minute Stanley's shouts followed by Meg's laughter is heard from the room. Meg then reaches the kitchen in a hurry to prepare his breakfast. Stanley the late-riser makes his entry greeting Petey and taking his seat at the kitchen table. Meg sets the cornflakes at the table which receives Stanley's disapproving stare and while eating expresses his utter dislike for the cereal. In many ways, Meg is seen trying to appease Stanley like a child who cribs about the first course and desires for something cooked and only when he emotionally bullies Meg for proper food, does she assure him of a better breakfast than the smart hotels in front of their house.

Petey then takes leave for work, skipping Meg's tea-offer and Stanley teases Meg for being "a bad wife", pulling her leg or teasing her for giving her husband "sour milk". And Meg takes immediate offence and affirms that she had always been a good wife who had also kept a nice clean house, well-known to visitors. Instead, Stanley acts rudely to tell her that there were hardly any visitors ever in that house with the exception of him.

She offers him tea and ruffles his hair, brings in the tea-pot and serves him a cup, in quite a coy manner at which Stanley exclaims that it was more "gravy" than tea and he could not drink such "muck".

Stanley:This isn't tea. Its gravy!

Meg: It's not.

Stanley: Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag.

Meg: I am not! And it isn't your place to tell me if I am.

Stanley: And it isn't your place to come into a man's bedroom and- wake him up.

[Act I, 18]

She takes to dusting the room and with reference to his earlier compliment that he had found the bread toast was succulent, approaches him to ask: "Am I really succulent?" Note that she had corrected Stanley on his first compliment, saying the word "succulent" was not the right word selection to use in front of a married woman. At this point, Stanley starts ordering about like a master, calling the place a 'pigsty' that required immediate cleaning up and that he also needed a newly papered and swept room. On hearing this, Meg sensually strokes his arm insisting that the room was a lovely one where she had had some lovely afternoons in his company which makes Stanley recoil from her in disgust.

He takes to smoking and she playfully tickles him, asking him for a cigarette but Stanley rudely pushes her away. She then asks him to accompany her to the market as she is to purchase things for the two gentlemen who are to visit at any given time. The very mention of the two gentlemen interests him in a very different way and he turns curious about their identity but somehow he declares with a certainty that they would not come there. But we shall find out more about them later.

Meg requests him to play the piano like he used to earlier. Here, you may notice she is always pleasant and playful to Stanley who on the other hand bosses over her and is very rude. She insists that he could play the piano on the pier, a job that would not require him to move out from their boarding house. This is when Stanley reveals that he has been considering a job offer already, at a night club in Berlin to play the piano with a fabulous

remuneration at the end of the day. At this Stanley gets carried away with his plans, imagining a musical world tour from Berlin to Constantinople, Zagreb and Vladivostock. Infact, he talks of having played the piano all over the world and how he hadonce presented a unique and successful concert at Lower Edmonton which won him a lot of accolades but was cut short witha sudden turn of events. And suddenly, he makes Meg sorry for having reminded him of the old concerts (perhaps it was a personal grievance which he did not want to remember or be reminded of). But once again he turns casual and restart their conversation during which Stanley talks of an unexpected arrival: “They’re coming today. They’re coming in a van” (24).

Stanley in all probability referred to the two expected gentlemen and who according to him were to arrive with a wheelbarrow and most certainly come “looking for sometime.” But all the while during their conversation Meg is in a state of disbelief as though she were in self-denial of the fact.

There is a sudden interruption by a sudden knock of the door and a young lady called ‘Lulu’ enters greeting Meg as Mrs. Boles. But it must be noted that Lulu’s voice is heard much before her presence in person on the stage (just as Meg’s entry in the first act). Meg takes her shopping bag and collects something (not mentioned or hinted) from Lulu. Stanley sidles by the door and overhears their hushed conversation. Lulu enters and greets Stanley, slips a bulky solid round parcel on the sideboard and prohibits Stanley from touching it. Lulu requests Stanley to open the back door due to the heavy or stuffy air in the room and a conversation between the two takes place. Stanley talks of having been by the sea at half past six in the morning right at the head-land before returning for breakfast (perhaps he tries to place himself in her good books). While he had shown disinterest in accompanying Meg for shopping, here he makes a vague offer to Lulu saying “How would you like to go away with me?” (26)

No sooner he makes the proposal than he retreats and expresses his not wanting to go out for a walk at that moment which is again strange. Lulu then exits calling him “a bit of a washout” (26) and then Stanley wakes up to the mirror to take a look at herself, perhaps having become conscious

of his unkempt appearance that Lulu is quick to point at. This is why he immediately washes his face after taking a look at the mirror.

At this the two gentlemen Goldberg and McCann enter through the back door with McCann carrying two suitcases and Goldberg-a briefcase. While they enter through the door without any reception and halt indoors, Stanley catches a secret glimpse of their backs and sidles through the kitchen door and out of the backdoor in a bid to avoid meeting them. Both, McCann and Goldberg take centre stage now and begin their conversation and sit at the kitchen table without any reception. Goldberg requests McCann to relax which was the very purpose of bringing him on a holiday to the seaside for a few days. McCann in comparison to Goldberg talks a little less (in phrases) whereas Goldberg lectures a lot (literally talks in paragraphs).

He reminds McCann to do his breathing exercises in order to calm his nerves. Goldberg recalls the days when he was just an apprentice, every Friday of the month, his uncle Barney would also take him to the seaside without failure- whether it was Brighton Cauvey island or Rottingdean and he describes their relaxing hours until sunset which were his golden days of his life. And thus, Goldberg is all praises for his uncle who was a respectable man, regular as 'clockwork', impeccable in his sense of dressing, a cosmopolitan and an all rounder. You may take note that McCann addresses Goldberg as 'Nat'. Also notice their confusion while already seated indoors at Meg and Petey's home, with none of them around either.

McCann: Nat. How do we know this is the right house?

Goldberg: What?

McCann: What makes you think it's the wrong house?

Goldberg: I wasn't looking for a number.

McCann: No?

[Act I, 28]

Goldberg settles in the armchair and talks of how Uncle Barney had taught him that the word of a gentleman was enough, which was why whenever he went away on business, he never carried money and insisted his accompanying sons would carry a few coppers. His name was good

enough to avail anything and moreover, he was a busy man to least bother. This attitude is shaped through Goldberg's boastful dialogue.

When McCann points out that no one was around to receive them, Goldberg makes an observation saying "Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral" (28). Goldberg discloses/reveals that when he received news of a job and was approached for it, he had suggested McCann's name, complimenting him for his capabilities which is something that McCann highly appreciates. McCann pleadingly enquires if that job was something like he had tried before. At this, Goldberg speaks in an affected but fluent official tone saying: "…At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the assignments will be carried out and the mission accomplished with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. Satisfied."

At this Meg re-enters and Goldberg is quick to greet her bringing in the reference of Petey whom he had met the night before. Meg expresses her delight and pleasure and introduces McCann and himself to her. When asked for availability of accommodation, Meg says that it would have been, lot easier the previous week (although we know that she had only one visitor) but obliges all the same.

When Goldberg asks about Petey's profession, Meg says her husband was a deck-chair attendant, out in all weather. And she slowly unpacks her shopping parcel and takes out all her purchases. After having broken into conversation, Goldberg takes the opportunity of further enquiring about the long-time boarder in their boarding house and Meg discloses in a matter-of-fact manner of her resident 'Stanley Webber' who worked as a pianist in a concert play on the pier. When asked about his musical abilities, she reveals the story that Stanley had told her of how he had given a concert in a hall at Edmonton but was locked up by the caretaker until it was all revealed the following morning and they wanted to tip him, which he accepted anyways to avail a fast train to their boarding house.

Meg further reveals that it was Stanley's birthday (of which we are not given any information or idea in the early morning opening scene). According to Meg, Stanley was supposed to have forgotten his birthday party and also the arrangements for the same. Meg is overwhelmed with the idea

of organising a party and in her excitement happens to address Mr. Goldberg as 'Gold'at which she is almost immediately corrected. Goldberg declares themselves as invitees in the birthday listby adding the fact that McCann was certainly "the life and soul of any party." Thus, Goldberg and Meg decide to remind Stanley that his birthday was not forgotten and that a party was on the cards at 9.00 p.m. in the evening. Meg is already caught up in selecting the right dress for the party and shows the two gentlemen upstairs to their room. Together they make an exit, laughing.

Once again Stanley reappears on stage-entering from the back door and on hearing no voices, waits until Meg enters to hang her shopping bag on the hook. The immediate action that follows is that Stanley lights a match and watches it burn and then enquires Meg of the two gentlemen. Meg puts in a word of appreciation for them, saying that they are nice and thrilled with their room indeed. Stanley who earlier had the notion that they would not come visiting, asks her for their names which Meg is apparently unable to recall. You must note a recurrent dialogue: "This house is on the list" which is left unexplained to the reader.

When Meg questions Stanley continuously if he knew the two gentlemen by any chance, he does not reveal anything. She tries to reassure him that they would not disturb him and that she would still bring him his morning tea and pleads him not to be sad as it was his birthday. The sudden mention of his birthday almost comes as a surprise to Stanley and leaves him dumbfounded but Meg reassures him that it was most certainly his birthday and that she even had a present for him. This gift parcel is brought to the table and he is asked to open it up. Stanley still insists that it was not his birthday but Meg pushes him to open the gift which he finds (and without any emotion) to be a boy's 'drum'.

Meg tenderly tells him that the present was in place of the piano that he did not own. Although Stanley is indifferent, he gives a kiss on her cheek at her request and finds the two drumsticks inside the parcel which he taps together, looking at her. This is until he suddenly asks her "Shall I put it round my neck?"

Act I closes on this note of an anticipated evening party, taking us to Act II. Although, Meg appears uncertain, he hangs the drum around his neck and taps it gently with the sticks, marching around the table, continuously beating it but halfway in the second round of the table, he becomes erratic and uncontrolled. Meg's pleasure turns into dismay on seeing Stanley almost banging his drum and his turning into a savage sort of state. The curtains fall on the stage at this moment.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Where does Pinter's *The Birthday Party* take place?

Q 9: State the plans of the world musical tour of which Stanley dreams ?

Q 10: Briefly explain what Goldberg recalls in association to his uncle Barney?

Q 11: What was Petey's profession?

Q 12: What do Goldberg and Meg decide together? Name the gift that Stanley receives from Meg.

Act II

The second act opens in the Boles household itself. McCann is seated at the kitchen table, tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips (almost like a meaningless pastime). After a few moments,Stanley enters from the side but stops on seeing McCann and walks towards the kitchen before he stops to greet him the hour of the day. After Stanley helps him to a glass of water and turns to leave the kitchen space, McCann rises and approaches him because of which the two confront each other). The two introduce themselves and Stanley introduces himself by his surname 'Webber'. Perhaps, in wanting to avoid confronting him or further making conversation decides to go outside. Although, Stanley considers it 'unfortunate' and that he was in no mood for a party but if at all, would rather go out to celebrate quietly on his own. McCann insists on his staying for the party as everything had already been arranged for and he had the 'honour' of invitation. But

Stanley finds it exaggerated and thinks it would rather turn into "another booze-up" or in other words, a drinking party. (38)

Here you will notice how both Stanley and McCann start whistling "The Mountain of Morne" while the other speaks and how both of them start whistling together at one point. Stanley alters his mind and moves indoors towards the table and just as he is about to pick up a strip of paper, McCann immediately asks him to avoid it. Stanley then expresses his feeling that they had met before and somehow seems to connect seeing McCann in the High Street, situated in that charming town in Maidenhead, where Stanley was brought up in a quiet, thriving community there.

Stanley continues his conversation saying he would soon move back to his own house. He says he would not have made such a decision had it not been for some pressing business. Stanley on being asked, talks of owning a small private business which had rather compelled him to visit the seaside town and put up in their boarding house. Prior to that, he says he had lived a quiet life, playing records, being comfortable at home. Stanley talks of drinking a little, living far away from his near and dear ones. He also says that in no way was he the sort of guy to cause any kind of trouble in case he seemed like he was. McCann tells Stanley that Goldberg and he were there for a short holiday.

Stanley: This is a ridiculous house to pick on.

McCann: Why?

Stanley: Because it's not a boarding house. It never was.

McCann: Sure it is.

Stanley: Why did you choose this house?

McCann: You know, Sir, you're a bit depressed for a man on his birthday.

[Act 2, pg, 41]

On hearing McCann address Stanley as 'Sir', he immediately snaps back, expressing his dislike of being addressed so and even decries that it was not his birthday and that it was in the next month. He even calls Meg crazy for declaring it her birthday saying: "Her? She's crazy. Round the bend." (41) and that she is completely a mad woman. McCann is shocked

and taken aback with such terrible things told about a lady in whose house he had been residing for a long time.

Gradually, Stanley tends to lose his composure and almost disgusts McCann with his incoherent speech, hissing and whispering, asking McCann with his incoherent speech, hissing and whispering, asking McCann if Goldberg revealed anything with regard to their purpose of being there. But McCann is unable to understand anything of this. Stanley cautions McCann that he has been led like a fool to that place (hinting at Goldberg whom he possibly seems to be acquainted with until now). He goes on to talk about having lived in Basingstoke and Ireland, a much loved country where he had had many friends but had never stepped out. He praises the Irish for their 'love of truth' and even praises the policemen there.

At this, both Goldberg and Petey make their entry. Goldberg exclaims with surprise when his eyes meet Stanley's as if he had found who he was looking for. Petey is quick to introduce Goldberg to Stanley. Goldberg then starts a conversation of his childhood days (a conversation which he had just shared with Petey in the garden).

Petey excuses himself from their company as he is to attend a chess night. He admits that he had learnt of the party just then and would try to reach home a little early from the chess club. Goldberg then sends McCann to arrange for the drinks for the party with his reference or rather the mere mention of his name. He wishes Petey luck for the chess game to defeat his opponent and to return home just about in time. When Mc Cann and Petey make their exit, left to themselves, Goldberg tries to strike a conversation but Stanley is quick to put up his defenses almost by warning and avoiding him.

Goldberg: A warm night.

Stanley (turning): Don't mess me about! [Act II, 41]

At this we find how Stanley immediately takes charge as if he were the manager of the boarding house declaring that there was a mistake in their dealings and that their rooms had already been booked and taken. Therefore, they were to arrange accommodation elsewhere. When Goldberg tries to be pleasant and wishes him on his birthday but is only met with

Stanley's indifference. Goldberg reveals Stanley's age (past fifty) which also makes one wonder how he could be so certain. This is what he says:

Goldberg: Not bad going eh? For a man past fifty. But a birthday. I always feel, is a great occasion, taken too much for granted these days. What a thing to celebrate-birth! Like getting up in the morning. Marvelous!...[Act II, 44-45]

Stanley gets furious and orders both Goldberg and McCann who enters with the bottles, out of the house, saying no drinks were allowed there as the premises were unlicensed. But as if he were acalm-headed lawyer, Goldberg only laughs at what he calls Stanley's "terrible humour." And suddenly Stanley takes up the role of a protective man.

Stanley: Let me-just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me you're nothing but a dirty joke. But I have a responsibility towards the people in this house… And nobody's going to take advantage of them while I'm here. Anyway, this house isn't your cup of tea…
[Act II, 45]

Stanley warns both of them repeatedly until Goldberg tries to negotiate with him in an attempt to calm him down, although he is truly unable to bear such a disposition. Goldberg orders McCann to have Stanley seated down. What follows then is a mindless argument between Goldberg and Stanley. You will find how Stanley even in the middle of a brewing argument begins to whistle "The Mountains of Morne" to take his seat only after he finishes his whistling. Goldberg seems to reiterate Lulu's words saying that Stanley was indeed a 'washout' (47) and begins to question him:

Goldberg: Why do you behave so badly, Webber? Why do you force that old man out of to play chess?

Stanley: Me?

Goldberg: Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? She's not a leper, Webber!

[Act II, 47-48]

Thus, begins an accusation and a somewhat confusing reference to Stanley as 'Webber' who supposedly had left an unknown and unspecified organization according to Goldberg.

McCann: Why did you leave the organisation?

Goldberg: What would your old mum say, Webber?

McCann: Why did you betray us?

Goldberg: You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.

McCann: That's a Black and Tan fact.

[Act II, 48]

From the enquiry that follows in which Goldberg charges a volley of questions to Stanley, we learn about Webber and see him in a new light. We also learn that Stanley had come to the place the year before and that he supposedly had a wife.

McCann adds to the charges and accuses Stanley of 'betrayal' and thus reveals his familiarity with Stanley.

"**McCann: You betrayed the organisation. I know him!" [Act II, 48]**

Goldberg orders Stanley's glasses to be taken off by McCann.

Being deprived of his spectacles Stanley begins to falter and stumble. When Goldberg questions him regarding his wife, McCann directly accuses Stanley of having killed his wife. And in a spate of accusations, possibly making up Stanley's past history, he does not give him a chance to speak or respond. They accuse him of murdering his wife by choking her with arsenic and talk of his old mother being in the sanatorium.

But again in a confusing manner, they question him as to why Stanley had never ever married and why had he "sheddadled" from the wedding when his girl was possibly waiting for him in the lurch, the pudding club or the church. Goldberg further questions as to why he had changed his name, to which Stanley replies that he had forgotten the earlier one and that his new name was 'Joe Soap' [Act II, pg. 50]. From Stanley's defensive and protective disposition we now find him in a submissive and a helpless situation in which he suddenly feels the torment of such questions and charges. Here, Goldberg almost takes over as an advocate playing with words and trying to debate with Stanley. To quote an example of the word-play, here is a dialogue that Goldberg makes:

Goldberg: Wrong! It's only necessarily necessary! We admit possibility only after we grant necessity. It is possible because necessary but by no means necessary through possibility. The possibility can only be assumed after the proof of necessity. [Act II, 50]

Such mindless chatter and accusations are made almost meaninglessly. Suddenly, Stanley is made to feel like an outcast, an unwanted fellow with his words: "No society would touch you. Not even a building society" and "You verminate the sheet of your birth." Certain questions are both meaningless and repetitive in these pages such as: "Is the number 846 possible or necessary?" [Act II, 50] or "What's your trade? "Why did the Chicken cross the road?" and the repeated question "Chicken? Egg? Which came first?" [Act II, 52].Even McCann makes accusations at Stanley and describes him as "what's left" as though Stanley was a mere corpse while Goldberg calls him "a plague" and together they say:

McCann:Who are you, Webber?

Goldberg: What makes you think you exist?

McCann: You're dead.

Goldberg: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!"

[Act II,52]

They almost stand over him, until in his agitation, Stanley kicks Goldberg in the stomach, making him fall and scaring McCann out off his wits.

Suddenly, a loud 'drumbeat' is heard and everything else comes to a standstill. Meg enters in an evening dress, holding a drum and sticks, completely ready for the party and unaware of the happenings downstairs amongst the three men. Meg is in a dress that was gifted by her father and with her presence, brings in a feeling of freshness to the much heated fight downstairs. She places the drum on the table and requests Stanley to play a tune afterwards.Stanley's vision is literally blurred and he asks for his glasses, which McCann hands over to him. For the evening, they had four bottles of Scotch and a bottle of Irish, with Goldberg calling on Stanley to

make a toast. Meg notices that Lulu is yet to arrive. Suddenly, Goldberg proposes and gets her to agree to raise a toast first for the birthday boy.

This time there is a play with the lighting (on the stage) as Goldberg at the onset of Meg's toast orders McCann to switch off the lights and focus on her but again reorders the light to be focused on the birthday boy instead. Meg makes the toast saying:

Meg: Well-it's very nice to be here because it's his birthday, and he lived here for a long while now and he's my Stanley now. And I think he's a good boy, although sometimes he's bad. And he's the only Stanley I know, and I know him better than all the world, although he doesn't think so. Well, I could say because I'm so happy, having him here and not gone away, on his birthday, and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for him, and all you good people here tonight…[Act II, 55]

At the end of Meg's toast, Lulu enters and joins the party and while Stanley is made to sit down, they all drink to his health. Goldberg with his usual long-winding speech congratulates Stanley for the toast he just receivesfrom Meg and again orders McCann to turn off the lights while they drink to their toast.

Both Meg and Lulu applaud with much admiration after having listened to Goldberg's speech. They all congratulate Goldberg, while Meg offers a kiss to Stanley in the dark. Stanley in the birthday party is almost in a state of comatose and totally indifferent to all the happenings around him. Goldberg directs the stage lights as if he were the director taking over the stage directions. When he is questioned about his oratorical skills, Goldberg reveals of his first chance to lecture at the Ethical Hall, Bayswater where he spoke of 'The Necessity and the Possible' and after which he had always spoken at weddings.

While they all indulge in drinking, Goldberg calls Lulu to sit on his lap and they both talk and flirt. McCann who is seated on a stool converses with Meg until she feels like dancing and asks Stanley for a dance but ends up dancing all alone across the room (while Stanley is still as a statue). Goldberg reveals that he was a married man once and talks of the time he shared

with his wife till her funeral. The conversation in which this is brought up starts in the following manner:

Lulu: I bet you were a good husband

Goldberg: You should have seen her funeral

Lulu: Why?

Goldberg: (draws in his breath and wags head) What a funeral.

[Act II, 59]

The learner will notice that there is a jumble in the paired conversations, with much non-continuity in the flow of the dialogue, which disturbs our sense of meaning and understanding. Goldberg asks McCann to sing a long song to which he readily agrees and sings in a full voice:

Song:

Oh the Garden of Eden has vanished, they say,

But I knew the lie of it still

Just turn to the left at the fort of Ben Clay

And stop when halfway to Coote Hill

It's there you will find it, I know sure enough,

And it's whispering over to me

Come back, Paddy Reilly, to Bally-James-Duff,

Come here, Paddy Reilly, to me!

[Act II, 61]

Suddenly, Meg expresses her desire to play a game called 'blind man's buff' and she tries to involve a sulky Stanley into it.Taking a scarf from Lulu, they go about playing the game in which anyone touched by the blindfolded person becomes the next to be blindfolded. Thus, while Meg moves about the room, Goldberg fondles Lulu at arm's length and the next to be blindfolded is McCann who touches Stanley's glasses. The scarf is tied around Stanley head by covering his eyes. McCann takes off his glasses who then purposely snaps and breaks its frame. He further picks up the drum and places it sideways in Stanley's direction. Being blindfolded Stanley trips over the drum with his foot caught in it. But he rises and moves towards Meg and reaches straight for her throat beginning to strangle her.

And suddenly there is a black out with no light pouring in through the window in the room. Initially a faint light had been visible through the window (on stage), which gradually turns a little dim and finally dies out leaving complete darkness. This is followed by a confusion of who touches whom in the dark. McCann reaches for his torch and shines it on Goldberg's face who protests the same. McCann's torch slips from his hand and stops functioning for awhile.

Goldberg's voice then emerges from the dark in which he orders the torch to be found. Suddenly from the back of the room, there is a sharp, continuous rat-a-tat with a stick on the side of the drum. They all grapple and stumble in the dark. This is when Lulu suddenly perceives a hand moving towards her and she screams and faints.In the darkness, Stanley picks up Lulu and places her on the table. Together, Goldberg and McCann try to fidget in the darkness for Lulu, only to realise she is not there. They reach for the torch on the floor and having switched it on, find Lulu lying spread-eagled on the table with a giggling Stanley bent over her. With his rising laughter, he almost flattens his back against the walls. Here, you will notice the play with light in which the sense of sound and sight are seriously challenged and played with as their figures of shadow converge upon Stanley's. With this we move to the last part of the play in Act III.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Name the song that Stanley and McCann whistle in between their conversation

Q 14: What reason does Petey cite for being unable to attend the birthday party that evening?

Q 15: Describe in a few words Stanley's behaviour in the birthday party.

Q 16: What does Goldberg order McCann to do before Meg raises her toast?

Q 17: Name the game that they all play in the dark. How do we find Lulu after the lights return?

Act III

The third act begins in the morning after the birthday party with Petey reading his newspaper as usual. Once again, Meg's voice is heard and almost immediately her presence is felt. She appears at the kitchen hatch, saying she ran out of corn flakes and that she had nothing else to serve, as the two gentlemen had finished off the fried pieces that morning with only a little tea left in the pot. She informs him that despite her 'splitting headache.' she would shortly go for shopping to get him something nice to eat. Petey describes how he had found her sleeping like a log the previous night.

Meg finds and almost reaches for the broken drum that she finds in the fireplace. And when Petey asks her about it, she seems to have had no idea of why it was broken. To remind you again, the drum was broken during the 'blind man's buff' game in the birthday party itself.

Once again there is a repetition of the previous morning's conversation between the couple. Meg discusses how she had taken Stanley his cup of tea in the morning but found him talking to McCann who had apparently made him his tea already. She then talks about her doubt to her husband for the first time saying: "Do you think they know each other?" [Act III, pg. 68]

Meg inquires if he had seen a big car outside their home that morning and if there was a wheelbarrow in it. Petey says he had and that it was Goldberg's car. On learning this, Meg suddenly feels relieved and much better. Meg feels panicky when she thinks of Stanley coming downstairs, wondering what to serve him for breakfast. Before leaving for her shopping, she questions Goldberg about the car.When she exits, Goldberg says: "A good woman. A charming woman. My mother was the same. My wife was identical" (71).

Goldberg says Dermot (probably referring to McCann) was looking after Stanley as he had a serious 'nervous breakdown' and that "the birthday celebration was too much for him"(71).

Goldberg describes the condition of nervous breakdown in the following words:

Goldberg: Well, Mr. Boles, it's all sorts of ways. A friend of mine was telling me about it only the other day, we'd both been concerned with another case"not entirely similar, of course, but…quite alike. Anyways, he was telling me, you see, this friend of mine that sometimes it happens gradual-day by day it grows…day by day. And then other times it happens all at once. Poof! Like that! The nerves break. There's no guarantee how it's going to happen, but with certain people…it's a foregone conclusion.[Act III, 71-72]

Petey talks of the previous night when he came through the front door and found all the lights out until he had put a shilling in the slot at which the lights came on. And while walking upstairs how he had met McCann at the landing who had informed him about Stanley's nervous breakdown. Petey wishes to call a doctor but Goldberg assures him that everything had already been taken care of. This is when McCann reaches downstairs and puts down his suitcases saying he would not go upstairs again and that Stanley had become too quiet after he gave him his glasses (the frames of which he had spoilt earlier in the dark) and had even tried to fit his eyes in the eyeholes of the broken glasses. At this both of them decide that Stanley required a doctor for his condition.

McCann picks up the news paper and begins to tear it into strips (a meaningless exercise) while Goldberg himself poses the question: "Why do you do that all the time? It's childish, it's pointless, it's pointless. It's without a solitary point" (75).Here, you will notice the repetition of the conversation between the Goldberg and McCann (just like the two characters Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*).

McCann: Well

Goldberg: Well what?

McCann: Do we want or do we go and get him?

Goldberg: That's unbelievable.

McCann: So do we wait or do we go and get him?

McCann: Let's finish and go. Let's get it over and go. Get the thing done. Let's finish the bloody thing. Let's get the thing done and go!

[Act III, 76]

Goldberg suddenly gets angry when McCann addresses him by his pet-name 'Simey' and almost seizes him by the throat, warning him to never call him by that name again. This is followed by what can be called as 'gibberish' or 'nonsensical' form of dialogue.

Goldberg: Wait! Come here (to McCann). I want your opinion. Have a look in my mouth. Take a good look. You know what I mean?

You know what? I've never lost a tooth. Not since the day I was born. Nothing's changed. (He gets up.) That's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. What do you think, I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball. School? Don't talk to me about school. Top in all subjects. And for why? Because I'm telling you, I'm telling you, follow my line? Follow my mental? Learn by heart. Never write down a thing. And don't go near the water.

And you will find"what I say is true.

Because I believe that the world….(Vacant)….

Because I believe that the world… (Desperate)…

BECAUSE I BELIEVE THE WORLD… (Lost)….

[Act III, 77-78]

This hints at certain form of psychosis, incoherence and fragmentation of thought, for an example, dialogues such as "who came before your father's father but your father's father's mother! Your great-gran-granny" (78).

At this point Lulu makes a re-entry and Goldberg suggests a game of '**pontoon'** to her which she declares she had had enough of already. Goldberg then expresses his wish to touch her saying that he had never touched any other woman which also reviles her in a way. When he tells her that they were to leave the following day- it angers her all the more and her outburst is expressed in the following words:

Lulu: You used me for a night. A passive fancy.

Goldberg: Who used who?

Lulu: You made use of me by cunning when my defenses were down.

Goldberg: That's what you did. You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at least three times.

Now you're a jump ahead! What are you complaining about?

[Act II, 80]

Although, Goldberg talks of the importance of 'respect', he sort of belittles Lulu calling her 'Lulu Schmulu' and then again 'Lulula' and seems to have total disregard for the woman with whom he had taken sexual liberties with. Lulu exits and Stanley dressed in a dark, well cut-out suit with white collar, clean-shaven and tidy makes his entry, holding his broken glasses in his hands. Both McCann and Goldberg take notice of his appearance immediately but Stanley shows no reaction to their gentle wooing and sits still without a single movement. Thus, begins a two pages long jargon of both Goldberg and McCann.

Goldberg suggests a new pair of glasses, as Stanley had been cock-eyed for years, unable to see straight and also suggests a change of air. As Stanley appears anemic and almost like a "dead duck" both the gentleman suggest saving him from a worse fate and looking after him with good advice, proper care and treatment. And together they provide a list of their services they would offer or facilitate" such as reserving a table, letting Stanley use the club-bar, bake him rum-cakes, offer free passes, take him for constitutionals and providing him hot tips. They list many other things such as skipping rope, vest and pants, ointment, hot poultice, finger stall, abdomen belt, ear-plugs, baby powder, spare-tyre, stomach pump, oxygen tent, prayer wheel, plaster of Paris, crash helmet, crutches, day and night service. They try to assure that Stanley would make a man (and a woman), that he would be adjusted, be their pride and joy and a huge success; that he would be integrated, give orders, make decisions, be a magnate, a statesman, own yachts, animals and basically be able to have a life of his own.

Stanley turns towards Goldberg and when asked for an opinion, he begins to clench and unclench his eyes, clutching his glasses and beginning to tremble. At this, Goldberg makes Stanley more and more nervous, watching him draw long breaths that makehis body shudder. Petey enters to find Stanley's body stooping and on asking, learns that they are to take him to the doctor for special treatment. Although, Petey insists that he would find a good doctor himself, the two men help Stanley out of the chair and move him towards the door. When Petey tries to stops them, pleading them to leave Stanley alone, they suggest him to accompany them in their car and taking their suit-cases and Stanley in tow, they make their exit.

Petey who is almost broken and alone calls out to Stanley to prevent them from doing what they intended to do. The sound of a car starting and leaving is heard on stage. Petey takes his seat and opens his newspaper which falls apart in the form of strips (that McCann had cut earlier). This is when Meg enters from the back door and having heard the car outside, questions Petey if they were gone and whether they would come back for lunch.When Meg learns that they would not be attending lunch, she puts her shopping bag on the table exclaiming that it was such a shame on their part for not attending her lunch. She enquires about Stanley and Petey replies that he is in bed and suggests her not to disturb his sleep.

Meg then remembers and talking of the "lovely party"the night before, exclaims with excitement of how she had danced and sung, played games and laughed heartily after many years. When it strikes her that Petey had been absent from the birthday party, she says that he should have been there the previous evening instead of missing out on the fun. The play ends with the following dialogues:

Meg: I was the belle of the ball.

Petey: Were you?

Meg: Oh yes. They all said I was.

Petey: I bet you were, too.

Meg: Oh, it's true. I was. I know I was.

[Act II, 87]

Meg shares her wonderful experience of the birthday party with Petey and even indulges in her own self-praise of being the centre of attraction. Thus, the play ends with Meg's chirpy conversation with her husband and the couple being occupied with their own discussion.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 18: Name the second game that Goldberg suggests to Lulu the morning after the birthday party

Q 19: What does Goldberg suggest for Stanley?

Q 20: What is the list of services that Goldberg and McCann are to provide for Stanley?

Q 21: Who indulges in self-praise saying "I was the belle of the ball"?



12.5 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, you will be more familiar with the life and works of Harold Pinter. A thorough reading of the text, supplemented by the detailed summary will provide you with a critical approach to the play. Further, you will be able to appreciate the nuances and complexities of an absurd play which tends to disturb ones sense of linearity, truth and meaning. Also, after reading the text of the play, you will develop a tendency to read in between lines, read more than just the lines and at times pause between the lines to figure out what you have just read, which is the defining experience of reading plays that deal with the absurd, the complexities of reality and the playfulness of language.



12.6 FURTHER READING

1) Esslin, Martin. (2000). *Pinter: The Playwright*. London: Metheun Drama.

2) Pinter, Harold. (1991). *The Birthday Party*. London: Faber and Faber.

3) Raby, Peter. (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter.* (Second Edition) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

12.7ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: Thus, the war had brought considerable changes in their lives as a normal family.

Ans to Q 2: Being of an eligible age as an eighteen years old man, he was called to join in the National Service. But Pinter had already made up his mind and had the moral courage to refuse war-service as a'conscientious-objector' in two such 'conscientious-objector tribunals'.

Ans to Q 3: Harold Pinter in his early writings wrote under the pseudonym of 'Harold Pinta' and acted under the stage name of 'David Baron'.

Ans to Q 4: He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005 in recognition of his contribution to literature and the arts.

Ans to Q 5: Pinter began writing poetry at the young age of twenty.

Ans to Q 6: The plays from 1980-2000 such as *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991), *Moonlight* (1993), *Ashesto Ashes* (1996) and *Celebration* (2000) were more political in nature and hence his 'political plays'.

Ans to Q 7: The PEN Pinter Prize was established in the year 2009 to award a British writer or a writer residing in Britain.

Ans to Q 8: The play begins in Petey and Meg's home which is situated in a seaside town.

Ans to Q 9: Stanley gets carried away with his plans, imagining a musical world tour from Berlin to Constantinople, Zagreb and Vladivostock.

Ans to Q 10: Goldberg recalls the days when he was just an apprentice, every Friday of the month, his uncle Barney would also take him to the seaside without failure- whether it was Brighton Cauvey island or Rottingdean and he describes their relaxing hours until sunset which were his golden days of his life. And thus, Goldberg is all

praises for his uncle who was a respectable man, regular as 'clockwork', impeccable in his sense of dressing, a cosmopolitan and an all-rounder.

Ans to Q 11: Petey was a deck-chair attendant at the promenade and was out in all weather.

Ans to Q 12: Goldberg and Meg decide to remind Stanley that his birthday was not forgotten and that a party was on the cards at 9.00 p.m. in the evening. Petey opens the gift to find (and without any emotion) a boy's 'drum'.

Ans to Q 13: Stanley and McCann start whistling "The Mountain of Morne" while the other speaks.

Ans to Q 14: Petey says he will not be able to attend the party as he is to attend a chess night. He admits that he had learnt of the party just then and would try to reach home a little early from the chess club.

Ans to Q 15: Stanley in the birthday party is almost in a state of comatose and totally indifferent to all the happenings around him.

Ans to Q 16: Goldberg at the onset of Meg's toast orders McCann to switch off the lights and focus on her but again reorders the light to be focused on the birthday boy instead.

Ans to Q 17: They play a game called 'blind man's buff." We find Lulu lying spread-eagled on the table with a giggling Stanley bent over her.

Ans to Q 18: Goldberg suggests Lulu a game of pontoon.

Ans to Q 19: Goldberg suggests a new pair of glasses, as Stanley had been cock-eyed for years, unable to see straight and also suggests a change of air.

Ans to Q 20: They provide a list of their services they would offer or facilitate" such as reserving a table, letting Stanley use the club-bar, bake him rum-cakes, offer free passes, take him for constitutionals and providing him hot tips among others.

Ans to Q 21: They provide a list of their services they would offer or facilitate" such as reserving a table, letting Stanley use the club-bar, bake him rum-cakes, offer free passes, take him for constitutionals and providing him hot tips.



12.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Briefly explain the life and experiences of Harold Pinter.

Q2. Discuss the works of Harold Pinter as a playwright.

Q3. Discuss the morning conversation between Meg and Stanley in Act I

Q4. What does Stanley and McCann discuss when they meet? How does Goldberg confront Stanley?

Q5. Describe the evening of the birthday party in details.

Q6. What are the services that Goldberg and McCann promise to offer to Stanley? Discuss what happens to Stanley at the end of the play.

Q7. Do you consider the title of the play suitable? Discuss the content of the play *The Birthday Party* in details.