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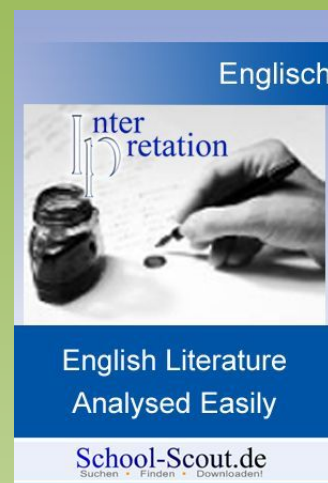
Unterrichtsmaterialien in digitaler und in gedruckter Form

Auszug aus:

Russell, Willy - Educating Rita

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necessary, but she does not totally give up her roots. Her initial spontaneity does not disappear.

Also, Rita is a very emphatic person. She even tries to understand her husband's feelings. During the course of the play, she feels sympathy for Frank as well, which does not protect him from her criticism, though.

Dr. Frank Bryant seems to be the opposite of Rita in many ways. He does not care for his outward appearance at all, and he does not pay attention to his surroundings. He does not even notice that his doorknob needs oiling and his window cannot be opened anymore, until Rita mentions these things.

Frank obviously has a drinking problem, and his appearance does not inspire confidence in his abilities, but to Rita he represents the key to a better life.

He is rather unorganised in matters of daily life. He often forgets the hiding place of his whiskey bottle and at home it seems that he relies on his girlfriend Julia. Despite this, they fight a lot, because Frank is notoriously unpunctual and messy.

It is not easy to get along with Frank. His wife has left him and eventually Julia leaves him, too. He has problems with his superiors, which are to a large degree due to his alcoholism and his refusal to take an advice. Also, Frank dislikes his students. He is frustrated by his job, because instead of being a university lecturer, he really wanted to become a poet. His attempts at writing have failed, though, because he saw them as worthless and believes that he has no real talent, even though Rita loves his poems. At the same time he is repelled by himself: "I'm actually an appalling teacher." (Act I, Scene 1)⁵

He does not seem to have many friends, the only acquaintances he mentions are the dinner party guests. In reality, Frank is quite lonely. Rita becomes very important to him, though, and he absolutely believes in her talents: "You will understand Blake; they overcomplicate him, Rita, but you will understand – you'll love the man." (Act II, Scene 1)⁶

Frank is shy about sharing his emotions. He does not like to talk about his personal life, but he gives in to Rita when she pursues the subject. His answers to her personal questions are often hidden beneath self-irony, which Rita criticises:

"Rita: Y' never tell the truth you, do y'?"

Frank: What d' y' mean?

Rita: Y' don't; y' like evade it with jokes an' that, don't y'?" (Act I Scene 5)⁷

Frank is not an entirely negative character, though. He does not pretend to be anyone else than he really is, he is honest about his flaws. Frank does not judge people by superficial criteria, but he tries to see the real person. Therefore he believes in Rita, and it angers him that she becomes friends with Tiger and his friends. He never had prejudices against Rita due to her background, her job or her accent and he does not see a problem in inviting her and her husband to the dinner party. In fact, he is appalled by Rita's fake accent she uses when she comes back from summer school and prefers the way she naturally is.

Minor characters:

⁵ Russell, Willy. p. 13

⁶ Russell, Willy. p. 55

⁷ Russell, Willy. p. 37

Denny is Rita's husband. He represents everything that Rita is appalled by and wants to escape from. He only knows the traditional ways of his class' background and is not flexible enough to change them. From his point of view, Rita has to subordinate herself under these traditions. He reacts aggressively to her studies and he does not believe that adults should pursue an education: "Rita: He says there's a time for education. An' it's not when you're twenty-six an' married." (Act I, Scene 8)⁸

Rita's mother seems to be able to understand her daughter. Rita turns to her, when she leaves Denny. Like her daughter, she feels that the low-class life she leads does not satisfy her. Rita obviously has a good relationship with her and in the end of the play actually thinks about moving back to her mother.

Julia is Frank's girlfriend. She has a university degree and likes to plan and organise things. This is the reason for the many fights between her and Frank, because unlike her, Frank is messy and unpunctual. Also, Julia seems to be a rather jealous girlfriend who tries to control Frank's life.

Trish is Rita's friend. She also is Rita's role model in her search for a new lifestyle. For Rita, Trish represents everything she is looking for, and she relies on her in the furnishing of the new flat and in the interpretation of Frank's poems. Trish's attempt at suicide, though, points to the fact that the lifestyle she has does not satisfy her at all, but in fact she is deeply unhappy.

Tiger is one of Frank's students with whom Rita becomes friends. Rita is drawn towards his group of friends at first, because she admires their education and the casual ways in which the students move in society. In the end, though, Rita's judgement of him becomes more realistic and she is not enthusiastic about Tiger's suggestion to go to France with him and his friends.

Language and Style

One important stylistic element in the play is Rita's dialect, the so-called "Scouse". It is the regional Liverpool dialect and is mostly spoken by members of the lower classes⁹. The usage of this dialect hints at Rita's background, but also makes her a unique character that is lively and realistic.

Scouse is widely regarded as "ugly" by members of higher social classes. For Russell it was a risk to bring this dialect on stage, but he was successful.

In contrast to Rita, Frank speaks standard British English without a particular accent. His way of expression changes with the situation, though. His range of expression reaches from a conversational tone to a lecturing one, and also to an emotional one.

It is of importance to note that during the course of the play Rita's and Frank's ways of expression become more similar. Rita does not give up her accent entirely, but her scope of expressions becomes broader. She learns to talk in a more educated way if necessary. Her

⁸ Russell, Willy. p. 47

⁹ Ulm, Dieter. p. 27



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