

Underneath the surface of his words lies a wealth of unspoken communication. This “subtext” can turn even the most demotic phrase into a threat, or a plea. “So often,” Pinter said, “below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken.” Pinter’s characters choose to use the most everyday speech to mask the most extraordinary emotions. As Pinter said in 1962, “There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed.”

It is about a man dealing with the terror of being misunderstood, taken away and destroyed by forces bigger than himself.

He uses language as a weapon; he uses language as a seduction; he uses language as a way to upset or amuse an audience in an altogether new way.

What do we learn by seeing essentially the same scene on two different days? What is revealed in what is said and not said, and contrast between the two? Think about the first scene of the play, which we assume to be the status quo in Petey and Meg’s life. How is their everyday life affected by the presence of McCann and Goldberg in the second? Has the tone of the breakfast changed on the surface? Is there a tension between Meg and Petey? Why doesn’t Meg mention any recollection of the previous night’s conflict? Does this make you question the first breakfast?

“There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.” Recently, in Harold Pinter’s Nobel prize acceptance speech he asserted that this quote applies to his perception of art, and not of reality.

Blind man's buff is played in a spacious area, such as outdoors or in a large room, in which one player, designated as "It", is blindfolded and gropes around attempting to touch the other players without being able to see them, while the other players scatter and try to avoid the person who is "it", hiding in plain sight and sometimes teasing them to make them change direction.

Blind man's buff is ideally played in an area free of dangerous obstructions so that the "It" player will not suffer injury from tripping over or hitting something.

In yet another version, It feels the face of the person tagged and attempts to identify the person, and only if the person is correctly identified does the person become It.

“It is to diminish the play to have a Stanley who is a helpless victim. Victim, yes, but guilty and deserving”

A proscenium arch creates a "window" around the scenery and performers. The advantages are that it gives everyone in the audience a good view because the performers need only focus on one direction rather than continually moving around the stage to give a good view from all sides. A proscenium theatre layout also simplifies the hiding and obscuring of objects from the audience's view (sets, performers not currently performing, and theatre technology). Anything that is not meant to be seen is simply placed outside the "window" created by the proscenium arch, either in the wings or in the [flyspace](#) above the stage.

The side of the stage that faces the audience is referred to as the "[fourth wall](#)". The phrase "breaking the proscenium" or "breaking the fourth wall" refers to when a performer addresses the audience directly as part of the dramatic production. The phrase can also refer to when a member of the cast or crew walks onto the stage or into the house when there is an audience inside, also breaking the fourth wall.

Characters do not always operate according to reason. The individual is affected by the past which cannot be defined by certainty. The past is a continuous mystery – it leaves us in the present in a state of insecurity.

“I do happen to have strong political views, but they simply do not come into my work as far as I can

see.”

In his letter to Peter Wood, Pinter gives a typically vague interpretation of *The Birthday Party*:

“We’ve agreed: the hierarchy, the Establishment, the arbiters, the socioreligious monsters arrive to affect censure and alteration upon a member of the club who has discarded responsibility (that word again) towards himself and others...He does possess, however, for my money, a certain fibre—he does fight for his life. It doesn’t last long, this fight. His core being a quagmire of delusion, his mind a tenuous fusebox, he collapses under the weight of their accusation—an accusation compounded of the shitstained strictures of centuries of ‘tradition’.”

A View of the Party

i

The thought that Goldberg was
A man she might have known
Never crossed Meg’s words
That morning in the room.
The thought that Goldberg was
A man another knew
Never crossed her eyes
When, glad, she welcomed him.
The thought that Goldberg was
A man to dread and know
Jarred Stanley in the blood
When, still, he heard his name.
While Petey knew, not then,
But later, when the light
Full up upon their scene,
He looked into the room.
And by morning Petey saw
The light begin to dim
(That daylight full of sun)
Though nothing could be done.

ii

Nat Goldberg, who arrived
With a smile on every face,
Accompanied by McCann,
Set a change upon the place.
The thought that Goldberg was
Sat in the centre of the room,
A man of weight and time,
To supervise the game.
The thought that was McCann
Walked in upon this feast,
A man of skin and bone,
With a green stain on his chest.
Allied in their theme,
They imposed upon the room

A dislocation and doom,
Though Meg saw nothing done.
The party they began,
To hail the birthday in,
Was generous and affable,
Though Stanley sat alone.
The toasts were said and sung,
All spoke of other years,
Lulu, on Goldberg's breast,
Looked up into his eyes.
And Stanley sat – alone,
A man he might have known,
Triumphant on his hearth,
Which never was his own.
For Stanley had no home.
Only where Goldberg was,
And his bloodhound McCann,
Did Stanley remember his name.
They played at blind man's buff,
Blindfold the game was run,
McCann tracked Stanley down,
The darkness down and gone
Found the game lost and won,
Meg, all memory gone,
Lulu's lovenight spent,
Petey impotent;
A man they never knew
In the centre of the room,
And Stanley's final eyes
Broken by McCann.

1958