

Harold Pinter

The Homecoming

Summary

The Homecoming is a two-act play written in 1964 by Nobel laureate Harold Pinter and first published in 1965.

Set in North London, the play has six characters: five men who are related—*Max*, a retired butcher, and *Sam*, a chauffeur, who are brothers; and Max's three sons, *Teddy*, an expatriate American philosophy professor; *Lenny*, who appears to be a pimp; and *Joey*, a would-be boxer in training who works in demolition; and one woman, *Ruth*, Teddy's wife.

After having lived in the United States for several years, Teddy brings his wife, Ruth, home for the first time to meet his working-class family in North London, where he grew up and which she finds more familiar than their arid academic life in America. Much tension occurs as Ruth teases Teddy's brothers and father and the men taunt one another in an Oedipal game of one-upmanship, resulting in Ruth's staying behind with Teddy's relatives as "one of the family" and Teddy returning home to America and their three sons without her.

The Homecoming, now considered by many critics to be Harold Pinter's masterpiece, was not universally admired when it was first produced in England by the Royal Shakespeare Company at London's Aldwych Theatre, on June 3, 1965. Many critics, while praising the production directed by Peter Hall, found the play itself to be baffling and enigmatic in the extreme.

The play does in fact deal with many themes, such as emotional impotence, Oedipal desires, personal loneliness and isolation, appearance and reality, and familial power struggles, to mention a few; and, audiences and critics alike sensed that there is a great deal more going on in the play than can be easily articulated.¹

¹ "The Homecoming", **Wikipedia**, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Homecoming