**Summaries and Analysis – “Sailmaker” Support Notes**

The play begins with "light on Alec, centre stage".

Here, an aspect of **staging** - the **lighting** - acts to focus the audience on Alec's **soliloquy**.  It is for a dramatic purpose as the playwright’s use of light helps to suggest the movement from the present to the past.  Therefore, the use of light indicates **flashbacks**.

The words in Alec's soliloquy "I was only a boy" also indicate that there is about to be a flashback.

When the "lights fade up" it is clear that this is now a flashback to the night Alec learned of the death of his mum.  Loss becomes a **thematic concern** within the drama.  Many things are lost throughout the course of the play.

The **repetition** of "Ah've got a bit of bad news for ye son" reflects the need for Davie to drive home reality.  There is a real sense of grief in the eleven year old boy and the repetition of this piece of dialogue suggests that this news was difficult to take in.

The father and son relationship is an important thematic concern within the drama and in this flashback at the outset of the play, following the loss of his wife, Davie notes (in **dialogue** with Alec) that "there's just you an me now son.  We'll have tae make the best of it."

The dramatist develops a sense of Alec's grief when he makes use of another aspect of staging - **music**.  The "wee boy" Alec's 'sees' from the window who is "playing the same two notes over and over again" is a melancholy representation of himself.  The "two notes on mouth-organ, repeated, continuing while he talks" expertly conveys the grief that Alec feels as a result of his loss.

There is also a clear sense of Davie's grief.  In a key piece of dialogue Davie says to Alec "and it hits ye an ye think...this is me for the rest of ma days".  The play makes the audience consider how people deal with grief.  People react differently to it.  Davie is affected badly by his wife's death and never really manages to be enough to sustain a positive and close relationship with his son.  This is a thematic concern.  Davie and Alec's relationship changes throughout the course of the play.

Again, the playwright makes use of light to indicate the movement of time.  Indeed, the play spans many years in terms of its movement between flashback and present.  When the dramatist notes "lights up" this is now another memory from Alec's past, following his mother's death.

Alec's cousin, Ian, enters this scene.  In the **dialogue**/interaction with Ian, a sense of Alec's pride of his father - perhaps almost idolisation - is apparent.  There is a sense of excitement in the STAGE DIRECTIONS when Alec "runs out for yacht".  In DIALOGUE with his cousin he says, "Ah'm gonnae get ma da tae fix it up".  Here, there is a sense of complete faith in his father.  When Ian points up the reality that Davie is "a tick man" the audience become aware that Alec has a more romantic perception that "he's really a sailmaker.  That's his *real* job.  That's his trade."  Later, Alec will realise that this means very little, certainly his father has lost all hope. Davie's trade is one which there is no real need for anymore.  This loss of trade and the loss of his wife impacts upon his character.  Spence characterises Davie as a rather hopeless procrastinator who rarely achieves anything, and gambles the little money he has.

Ian's dad also has a trade.  Ian says to Alec that his father is "gonnae get me in wi him at the paintin" when he's "auld enough".  This does indeed happen.  Billy, Ian's dad, is characterised as being in CONTRAST with Davie.  Billy faces reality; gets things done.  Davie does not.

Alec's boyhood pride in his father is seen when he claims that his father made up the poem "Ah had a yacht/y'ought tae see it".  This contributes to the **SYMBOL** of the yacht which is a **MOTIF** throughout the play as a whole. Here, the claim that his father made this up is doubted by Ian but Alec exclaims "Aye he did!"  The use of the exclamation mark conveys the extremity of Alec's conviction that his father did indeed create the poem.

There is a sense of Alec's imagination in this scene when he moves their dialogue from talk of making sails to "pirates and explorers".  They later play-fight as pirates suggesting the innocent play and imaginings of young boys.  Such play contrasts with the bleak **SETTING** and absence of hope within the drama.

The **SYMBOLISM** of the yacht is interesting in many ways.  The audience could consider the yacht as carrying symbolic weight in relation to movement and travel.  This is interesting as there is a real sense that the Govan **SETTING** is one which would be difficult to escape. The lack of money, and often as a result, hope means that people would have few aspirations.  Therefore, the very fact that Davie fails to ever *fix up* the boat and make sails - which it would need to function - is suggestive of Davie's inability to escape this **SETTING**.  Indeed, social class is an important **THEME** within the drama and this idea of being trapped within a particular **SETTING** evokes this as it is suggestive of a particular position within society. Alec is extremely keen for sails to be made.  1.  This is due to his pride about his father's skill/past trade but 2.  might be indicative of an aspiration to move away from his social background.  This is something that he would not be aware of as a young boy, but it does become clear later in the drama that Alec is quite different from his father and that his [Alec's] C**HARACTERISATION** is in **CONTRAST** with his setting.  Indeed, Alec is characterised as an intelligent young man and it is this intelligence and thirst for education that provides him with a path out of this SETTING and elevates his position within society.  And so, the THEME of social class is developed through the development of Alec and Davie's CHARACTERISATION and the increasing divide between the two as a result of their CONTRASTING outlooks/characters.

There is a strong sense of the boys' loyalty to Rangers Football Team.  This might seem like an insignificant detail about the young boys but, in fact, it is an important reflection of the cultural divide in Glasgow: you were a Rangers or Celtic supporter (note later that Billy becomes an Aberdeen supporter when he moves away from this particular setting.)  Being a Rangers or Celtic supporter would have been a significant part of the boys' upbringing and it is also linked to their faith/beliefs - Protestant or Catholic.  Note on page 11 when Alec says "sea's blue...blue in the fire - see thae blue flames there! Pity the grass is green."  And so, it should be noted that the football team they support does indeed reflect something about their SETTING.

There is a sense of Alec's creative/imaginative/intelligent character when he is interacting with Ian.  It is clear that Spence is developing Alec's characterisation so as to suggest that he is bright and curious.  Consider his appreciation of the "amazon colours" of the shell he finds in the glory hole, or his interest in taking out the sheet of cellophane and admiring how its appearance changes from "clear" to "gold again".  He "wonders how it works.  Where the colour goes."

During this episode (p15 -->), the dramatist continues to convey Alec's pride in his father: "did ah ever show ye ma da 's sailmakin tools?"  The tool used for marine rope work, the "marlinspikes", are noted as having "a great name" by Alec.  His engagement with his father's trade is clear.

Davie is characterised as being quite a heavy drinker.  When young, Alec doesn't seem to be distressed that he "can smell it" when his father drinks.  However, their relationship changes throughout the course of the drama.  Alec does not yet recognise his father's character for what it is.  When young, he rather naively continues to ask his father to "make [him] a sail" for the yacht.  He believes that his father could "fix it up".

Davie appears to respond positively and notes in this dialogue that he'll "see what [he] can do".  But when questioned further about "when?", he responds "wait and see".  This rather vague response is indicative of Davie's CHARACTERISATION: he procrastinates, putting everything off until *tomorrow* when he hopes that his "coupon'll come up". Of course, it never will.  Davie simply wastes money on gambling.

Alec explains the confusion of his young mind between the 'bookie' and the 'boogie man' as an explanation for why he now hates the bookie so much.  This is a rather humorous comparison, but it highlights a rather sad point:  Alec probably has more to fear of the bookie than the boogie man; his father wastes so much of his life, never mind money, at the bookies that in fact it (Davie's life) will amount to very little.  Alec will begin to recognise the wasteful behaviour of his father when he gets older and his view of him will change.  This family relationship is an important thematic concern within  the drama.

Davie has to borrow money from his brother, Billy.  Davie says that "things are still a wee bit tight."  Billy tries to get his brother to recognise the reality of his situation by explaining that he shouldn't "be this skint".  Billy doesn't give him an easy time and questions him about his drinking.  Davie is "slightly shamefaced" when he has to admit to Billy that he is in debt to the bookie.  Because of the interest being charged he has paid him back "two or three times over" but is still in debt.

Billy is more realistic about gambling being "a mug's game".  In fact, Davie is probably the more intelligent of the two brothers, but it is their CONTRAST in CHARACTERISATION which is the reason for the differences between the two.  Davie achieves very little; Billy is a solid working class man who gets things done.

Billy points out to his brother that Alec would do "a lot better" if Davie managed to "screw the heir".  Although Alec is doing very well in school, Billy recognises that his brother is doing little good as a father.  However, the audience his reminded of Davie's loss here and we do feel some sympathy.  Billy accepts that it is "hard on yer own an that..."

The playwright very skilfully captures the CONTRAST between the brothers on p22.  Billy promises to take the yacht and paint it, getting it "done this week". The playwright's use of the exclamation mark in Alec's response "This week!" reflects his disbelief that such a timescale would be put on this.  This is due to his father "saying...for weeks!" that he would "fix it up" when he had time.  It is clear that Davie has the time.  There is little productivity in his days!

The yacht therefore also comes to SYMBOLISE Davie's false promises and the deterioration of hope.  There is the glimmer of excitement when Billy says that when he paints it "it'll be like a brand new boat" but the audience would understand that there is a poignancy in Billy's words about the yacht being made to be "that real we can aw sail away in it!"  There is a sense that this hope that this phrase holds is made less likely due to Davie's characterisation.  Indeed, we come to learn that Alec is only has the opportunity to *sail away* from this SETTING due to his own hard work, his own merit.  Due to Davie, the metaphor falls flat - there is a sense of inevitability about the rather bleak end for Davie, left alone at the end of the play.

When Alec's uncle returns the yacht freshly painted he holds it, "amazed."  Davie recognises that it'd "be a shame not to" "fix it up".  But as he lists the range of things that needs done to it - and bought to make the sail - then it becomes less and less likely that this will actually happen.  Davie is "cheerful" when he tells Alec that it will be "soon" that he fixes up the yacht.

The playwright juxtaposes this piece of dialogue with lighting which undermines the hope in the *cheer* of Davie's voice - "Dark".  Here, Spence underlines what the audience would already be suspecting - that time would move on and this promise would not be met.  The "light on Davie" focuses the audience on his recount of being beaten.

There is a sense of the CONTRAST between Alec and Ian when they are at play.  When they are playing football Ian doesn't engage with Alec's suggestion to 'be' two different footballers from different decades.  Alec shows his greater creativity and says that they should "kid on" and tells Ian to "use yer imagination".  Here, it is clear once again that Alec is the brighter, more imaginative of the two.  And the audience might infer that there is hope for this character - who has a hope*less* father!

When the boys imagine how brilliant it would be to be a footballer the playwright has Davie and Billy enter to have Davie announce that he "just got [his] jotters".  Davie is very downtrodden here and realises that he has little to show for his life.  Davie says "what *have* ye got when ye come right down tae it.  Nothin."  When Billy tells Davie that "something better might come up", Davie is "dead" (STAGE DIRECTIONS) in his response.

When Davie goes in to tell Alec that he has lost his job, Alec is "playing with yacht".  He is trying to make a 'sail' out of cellophane but drops it.  This is SYMBOLIC of the false promises of his father and the loss of hope that is developing ever-more throughout the play.

Davie leads into his explanation about the loss of his job with the words "bit of bad news son." This is reminiscent of the playwright's repetition when Davie tells Alec about his mother's death.  This effectively reminds the reader of the importance of **loss** within the play.  The things that are lost within the drama contribute to the deterioration of the father and son relationship - another thematic concern. Furthermore, the playwright exploits music, an aspect of STAGING, to further remind the audience of the loss of Alec's mother and the grief the two characters feel.  The "two notes on mouth organ" take the audience back to the melancholy sound when Alec had first learned of his mother's death and we come to associate the sound with the character thinking of this or feeling grief.