**‘Sailmaker’ by Alan Spence**



**National 5 Revision Pack**

Name ……………………………………………

4A Miss Steer & Mrs Wood

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**Introduction: Important Information**

**Genre:** drama

**Setting:** 1960s Glasgow, alternates between a Glasgow tenement (front room and kitchen) and the surrounding streets and back courts.

**Characters:** the play focuses largely on the relationship between father and son, Davie (father) and Alec (son); we are also introduced to Ian (Alec’s cousin) and Billy (Alec’s uncle, Davie’s brother).

**A Short Summary:**

‘Sailmaker’ is an autobiographical play by Glasgow-born playwright **Alan Spence**. The drama of the play focuses on protagonist Alec’s transition from childhood to independent adulthood. Through Alec’s journey, Spence provides the audience with an inspirational model of the potential to go beyond the limitations of their upbringing. Through humour and realism Spence constructs a narrative describing actual events and the real difficulties people experience living in poverty.

**The Plot**

**Act One**

* The play opens with eleven-year-old Alec recalling the death of his mother, his feelings mix with memories of Davie bluntly telling him the news.
* Alec recalls their messy home, the funeral and him and Davie being left alone.
* Alec is seen with his cousin, Ian. Alec has found a model yacht in the ‘glory hole’ – an untidy cupboard with random things. The yacht needs a mast and sails and Alec is keen to ask his father Davie, a sailmaker by trade, to fix it up.
* It is clear from the dialogue that Davie is no longer a sailmaker but a **‘tick man’** collecting debts. Life is hard for Alec and Davie: Davie is struggling to cope.
* Alec and Ian play adventure games and discuss their cousin Jacky in America, who sends them comics. They discuss their interest in Rangers and music.
* Alec is concerned when his Dad comes home from the pub: he is struggling to collect money and deal with his grief. He promises Alec he will repair the boat before getting him to place a bet with the bookie.
* Davie is seen with brother Billy – he is unable to pay his brother money back that he has borrowed, and it is revealed Davie is in significant debt from illegal gambling. Billy supports him at this stage.
* Davie still doesn’t repair the yacht, while Billy paints it. They discuss colours and Billy’s bigotry is apparent.
* Davie is beaten up and robbed, which leads to the loss of his job. He puts on a brave face when he shares the news, but Act One ends on a pessimistic note.

**Act Two**

* Time has passed: Alec has matured and has new interests, including enthusiastically attending the Mission several times a week.
* Ian still wants to play football and mocks Alec when he does not.
* Davie is not entirely supportive either, although he sees the value of education and encourages Alec to work hard to secure a decent job.
* Alec reveals he has found peace in his faith, but when he is challenged by a probing question from Mrs Latula, an African visitor. He runs away from the church and never returns. It is clear he has been using religion to fill a gap.
* He returns home and he and Davie box playfully. Alec wonders if this is his path, but Davie discourages him.
* In the next part of the scene, Alec is about to sit an entrance exam for a private school. He is seen struggling and doubts he has passed.
* Ian mocks private education and the pupils. Later, it is revealed Alec has passed: the move creates a divide between him and his family.
* Davie and Billy learn they are being made redundant, Alec is frustrated at his Father and they argue. We learn about Davie’s dire financial situation – they have had their electricity cut off. Billy and Ian work together as painters.
* Davie and Alec argue again after Davie gambles Alec’s bursary money and spends the winnings at the pub. Alec recalls a time his father teased him about girls, criticises the messy house and challenges his father for giving up.
* Soon after, Alec is seen as an older teenager, looking through their possessions in the glory hole. One by one the items are thrown into the fire, symbolising the end of an era for father and son.
* Alec tells his father he wants to find student accommodation at university and the final item to be symbolically burned is the yacht Davie never repaired.

**Characters and Relationships:**

**A note on structure:** The play switches between the present (1960s) and flashbacks to when Alec was younger. In the present, he is an older teenager of about 17 or 18, having just sat his exams, and is looking forward to university in Glasgow.

**Act One**

**The Opening: the audience meets Alec**

* The play begins with a flashback to when Alec is eleven and is informed by his father of his mother’s death. He is presented as naive and childlike as he struggles to cope with this traumatic experience: **‘I was standing there, crying – real big deep sobs.’** The audience sympathises with him.
* Alec’s struggle with his own identity is also introduced at the start: this childhood event is depicted as surreal, as if he is having an ‘out-of-body’ experience: **‘I was me and I was not-me, almost as though it is happening to someone else’**.
* The older Alec reflects on this and the importance of religious faith is established: **‘Everything was the same. It was very ordinary … I don’t know what I had expected. A sign. Jesus to come walking across the back and tell me everything was all right.’**Through his experiences (that we will see in the rest of the play), the mature Alec understands that faith doesn’t always provide a solution to life’s problems.
* There is some hope though – as the clouds separate he imagines the patch of blue sky to be a sign from God that his mother is safe, and provides some comfort. Later he tries to explain this to Ian, who doesn’t understand and says it’s ‘creepy’.

**Act One: Alec and Ian**

* As a child, Alec is proud of his father’s trade (sailmaker) and boasts to Ian.
* His cousin is much more practical and the audience learns the reality through him: **‘He’s a tick man.’**
* Alec, however, is not yet ready to face this reality, and prefers to believe his Father’s version of events.
* The cousins’ upbringing is contrasted: it is clear Davie encourages Alec to study hard and aspire to a job to escape from poverty. Ian is more practical – and arguably less ambitious – when he says **‘Ye need a trade.’**
* The imaginative games the boys play (such as cowboys/ pirates) emphasise Alec’s intelligence, as does his interest in comics that his cousin Jacky sends from America.
* Alec defends his Father, even when we learn **‘He’s no very good at cookin,’** before he proudly shows Ian the sailmaking tools.
* However, we also see Ian’s influence when Alec asks his father **‘How come ye chucked yer trade?’** – he learns that the factory closed when traditional industries were no longer required.

**Act One: Alec and Davie**

* Struggling with his own grief following with the death of his wife, Davie bottles this up to be a role-model for Alec. His blunt words , **‘Ah’ve got a bit of bad news for ye son … Yer mammy’s dead’** echo in Alec’s mind in the flashback.
* Men of Davie’s social class and generation were not expected to display emotion and his attempt to bluntly continue as normal and attempts to make a good impression **(‘Folk’ll be comin back after the funeral.’**) contrasts with his Alec’s **‘real big deep sobs’**.
* Davie highlights the importance of family relationships when he tries to comfort Alec with his repetition of: **‘Just you and me now son.’** At the beginning the pair are very close.
* Davie is intelligent, questioning language and playing with the double meaning of **‘Ah’m shattered’**, after the funeral (he is referring both to how tired he feels and to his broken life).
* Cracks soon begin to show when we see Alec’s ambition contrasted with his disapproval towards his father’s drinking, gambling and lethargy. Davie’s grief prevents him from being the role-model he envisaged – his promises that the messy house will be tidied tomorrow sum up his attitude: tomorrow never comes.
* At the beginning of the play, Davie is working as a tick man, going door-to-door to collect debts – a depressing job, below his skills. Traditional industry was in decline (post World War Two) and there are no skilled jobs. ‘**Naebody needs sailmakers these days.’** He feels worthless and unfulfilled.
* Davie struggles as a single parent and spends time at the pub as a release from his lonely life **‘wee half at the end of the day. Just helps me tae unwind.’** He has also been illegally gambling, losing money and hoping his luck will change. He has to borrow money from brother Billy and admit he is struggling to make ends meet.
* Davie and Billy influence Alec to support Rangers and follow the Protestant way of life, as seen in his choice of paint colour for the yacht.
* However, Davie still encourages him to have an open mind, and he does not share their sectarian feelings – he is interested in the Catholic badge.

**The End of Act One: Cracks in the Relationship**

* Davie does not make the sail for Alec’s yacht, leaving Alec disappointed. Practical Billy provides a contrast here: he paints the yacht in a few days. Davie describes the complex process with technical jargon but has lost any ambition to complete the task: the sailless boat symbolises Davie’s life: going nowhere – Alec will have to provide his own ‘sail’ or purpose.
* Davie is beaten and robbed, leading him to lose his job: **‘just got ma jotters.’** This adds to his lack of self-worth. Billy helps him find a job **‘doin yer sweeper up’** and Davie puts on a brave face – **‘Never died a winter yet’**. In spite of this, the Act closes on a depressing note, with the strain between Alec and Davie strongly felt.
* At the close of Act One, the audience know Alec as intelligent and strong – he has shown he is able to think for himself and he coped with the loss of his mother better than Davie.
* Unlike Davie, who lives in denial, he recognises that they will struggle financially: his storing of the yacht in the glory hole symbolises that he will have to put his childhood behind him and mature to help his father cope with their circumstances.
* This also symbolises further cracks in their relationship: he is becoming disillusioned with his father’s empty promises.

**Act Two**

**Act Two: Alec and Religion**

* As Act Two opens, we see Alec has become involved with ‘the Mission’ and its religious activities, coming top equal in the Bible exam with the Minister’s son.
* The audience sense that he is still unhappy; that he is using these activities to distract him from his awkward home life with Davie and fill the gap left by his mother: **‘I felt this glow, it was good to feel good. It had come on stronger since my mother died.’**
* He later admits to simply learning the facts by heart to come top and that they don’t mean much to him: **‘Just a matter of rememberin.’**
* Davie also calls this a passing phase: **‘Ach well, keeps ye off the streets’**.
* When the African visitors challenge him to think about his faith **(‘When did the Lord Jesus come into your heart’**) he is afraid and runs away. He never returns to the church.

**Act Two: Alec and Ian**

* On his way to the Mission, Alec refers to Norman, the Minister’s son, as a **‘big snotter who thinks he’s great’** – a snob – emphasising his working class background.
* However, there is also a sense that Alec is moving away from his social class: Ian complains **‘Ye never come oot wi us these days.’**
* As he walks away from Ian and his friends, he hears them **‘makin a rammy. Somebody kicked over a midden bin, smashed a bottle.’** The negative connotations of these Scots words emphasise his disapproval and how he no longer identifies with their activities.
* **‘head down, hurried through a close and out into the street’** – Alec puts literal and metaphorical distance between himself and Ian, however after he runs away from the Mission, he kicks over a **‘midden bin’** – symbolising that this is still where Alec is most comfortable.
* The symbolic ending of their relationship comes when Alec obtains a bursary for private school: **‘Aw well, that’s it then.’** Ian criticises the school and Alec’s peers, but he learns to ignore such comments.

**Act Two: Alec and Davie – breakdown**

* Davie sees Alec’s religion as a passing phase; however, we learn Davie was a member of the Boys’ Brigade and earned a long-service badge, promoted to sergeant, showing he used to be able to stick at something, but he **‘just drifted away fae it.’**
* This is why he values education and encourages Alec to **‘Get yerself a good education. Get a decent job. Collar and tie. Never have to take yer jacket off’.** He also says **‘Ye’ll get out using yer brains’** – education is an escape from poverty. We see Davie continue to encourage Alec’s ambition, although he lacks any of his own.
* Ironically, this advice is what leads to the breakdown of the relationship – he cannot find the drive to match Alec’s – the fact he ‘**cannae be bothered going to church’**and says of boxing **‘Ah didnae stick to it’.** Davie’s outlook on life perhaps results from his depression and low self-esteem and we feel sympathy towards him.
* Alec complains about the crack in Davie’s shaving mirror, **‘There’s a big crack doon the middle. The two halfs don’t sit right’**. This symbolises Davie’s life and sense of identity – distorted and broken after the death of his wife. He says **‘Does me fine for shavin’,** suggesting he is not ready to move on yet.
* Davie continues to show a lack of emotion when he gets into private school **‘Yer teacher’ll be pleased.’** He never says he is proud of Alec himself.
* In contrast with Alec’s success, shortly afterwards Davie is made redundant again. He appears knowledgeable, talking about classical and popular music, reinforcing the waste of his abilities. He takes his frustration out on Alec **‘Is it gonnae be long hair an ban the bomb noo?’** Having encouraged him, he is now failing to support him or provide a role model: the breakdown in their relationship to follow is now inevitable.
* Embarrassingly for Davie, he has to admit their electricity has been cut off as he **‘Couldnae pay the bill’** – borrowing from Alec’s bursary must be humiliating for him; he drinks and gambles and doesn’t pay the bill – creating conflict with Alec, now fed-up with his failure to act. Davie feels distant from his son: **‘Can you no talk to me these days?’** They never really communicate and so Davie seeks comfort in the pub.
* Alec and Davie argue over a woman – Alec upsets his father when he recalls Davie teasing him, Alec slapping him and Davie shoving him away to tell him he was **‘a bad, bad, bad boy.’** Now the roles are reversed when Alec taunts Davie **‘Why don’t ye just admit that ye fancy her?’**
* The stage direction **‘*DAVIE slaps him, exits’*** illustrates that Davie is still grieving and unable to move on – the audience feels sympathy for him.

**Alec and Education:**

* Education offers Alec the opportunity to move out of his social class, taking the entrance exam for a private school. His intelligence is shown when he questions some of the tasks, but he also struggles with maths problems, adding some humour and showing his down-to-earth roots.
* Alec assumes he is failed the exam but is happy to learn that he has passed and obtained a bursary, funding his schooling. This is the catalyst for the breakdown of the relationship with his father, so important at the beginning of the play **(‘Just you and me now, son’).**
* Soliloquies about Alec’s education in Latin, music, science, geography, RE, Mathematics and English are condensed into a summary of all he has learnt – much from memory.
* The soliloquy ends with **‘University here I come. Ready or not’**, like a game of Hide and Seek. This suggests Alec still has a lot of growing up to do.

**Alec and Davie – the ending of the play:**

* In the final scene, nothing has changed for Davie and Alec: freezing and out of coal, with Davie awaiting his dole money. They decide to burn their possessions.
* Davie’s words indicate he still lives in the past, whereas Alec’s words show his newfound learning: Davie recalls the Catechism he learned off by heart, without question, but cannot think back to his earliest memories. He is uncomfortable when Alec discusses the different beliefs of other faiths. Alec would willingly burn the hymn-book, but Davie believes **‘It’s just no right to do that’**, demonstrating his strong sense of morality.
* When they first find the battered torch from encounter with the bookie’s heavies, he admits that the bookie’s ambition now means he owns two shops (gambling is now legal), contrasting with Davie’s unemployment.
* Alec reads a section about bookmakers from the history book – Davie admits he **‘Used tae make leather wallets and things’**, showing his practical skills. He has accepted the changing industrial nature of the country rather than finding new ways to use his skills (like Billy and Ian who move to Aberdeen). Rather than making something of his *own* life, he lives through Alec, encouraging him to **‘dae something wi your life.’**
* Burning his wedding furniture symbolises the (reluctant) end to Davie’s past. There is some optimism about the future as they are moving to a new place.
* Davie is a frustrating character: he has skills and talents, but his grief, coupled with low self-esteem and lack of drive, means he achieves little.

**Billy: Act One and Two**

* Billy provides a strong contrast with Davie’s character in many ways: both fathers have influenced their sons’ thinking. Billy is practical and encourages Ian to be the same: **‘Ye need a trade. That’s what ma da says. He’s gonnae get me in wi him at the paintin when ah’m auld enough.’**
* Billy is practical and keen to get the job done – as demonstrated when he paints Alec’s yacht in a few days, while Davie never makes the sail.
* Billy is sympathetic to a point, and Davie confides in him about his difficulties at work and with gambling. Billy is wiser with money and avoids the **‘mug’s game’** of gambling. He looks for a practical solution, while Davie accepts his lot.
* Billy puts a word in for Davie at his work, coming up with a solution while Davie wallows in self-pity: **‘Scrubbed. Get yer jacket on. Pick up yer cards. On yer way pal! Out the door.’** From their memories, it seems Davie used to be more active and clever with ambitions – but since the death of his wife this has disappeared.
* Billy does not understand Davie is still grieving and thinks he simply has to **‘screw the heid’** and pull himself together – Billy represents the stereotype of the working man who does not show his feelings and “gets on with it”.
* Billy detests anything Catholic, and, influenced by sectarianism, criticises Celtic: **‘Ye don’t like green do ye? … they Catholics have made it bad.’**
* Davie does not approve of him influencing his son with such bigoted attitudes, saying **‘It takes a green stem tae haud up an orange lily.’**
* Even the name of the boat **‘No Surrender’** is the opportunity to allude to a Protestant victory over the Catholics, and he sings sectarian songs to Davie’s horror: **‘It’s a Protestant country isn’t it? An Ah’m not ashamed tae show ma colours.’** His influence is also shown to have affected Ian: **‘Typical fenians’** – a sectarian response that can only have been learned from his father.
* In Act Two we see Billy and Ian (who has now left school) working overtime, and continuing to have a close relationship. Billy reveals he turned down the opportunity to go into business with Davie after the war, saying he has always played safe in his life rather than being too ambitious.
* Billy was in the army himself but discourages Ian when he mentions the army: **‘It’s no just playin at cowboys ye know.’** He also suggests London is not worth seeing – there is a sense Ian would like new experiences, but Billy is either over-protective or unambitious: **‘don’t rush intae anything’** – he limits his son.
* We see Billy and Ian together throughout, whereas Davie and Alec drift apart.

**Themes**

**Family relationships:**

* This is a main theme: the four characters belong to the same family and we see the differing father-son relationships.
* At the beginning of the play, Alec and Davie’s family situation is forced to change, and at the end it changes again as Alec chooses to leave home and live on his own at university.
* Billy and Ian’s home life is static throughout and they are not overly ambitious.
* Davie is presented as a (stereo)typical, traditional Scottish working man who cares about his family and shows few feelings. Even when Alec recalls learning of his Mother’s death, his Father’s words are bluntly honest and lacking in emotion: **‘Ah’ve got a bit of bad news for ye son… Yer mammy’s dead.**’ Davie makes no attempt to comfort his son, hug him or soften the blow with his words.
* We only learn of Davie’s grief in soliloquy; he and his son are not close and cannot communicate openly with one another. This is maybe why Alec finds it easier to make his own path at the end of the play.
* At the beginning of the play, Alec is proud and supportive of his father, boasting about his trade to Ian, attempting to deflate this by reminding him his Dad is a ‘tick man’.
* He tries to encourage Davie to return to his trade with the toy yacht. Billy in contrast promises to paint the yacht, discussing colours enthusiastically. The job is completed in a few days.
* Ian and Alec get on well at the start with mutual interests in imaginary games, music and Rangers. Alec is more sensitive and intellectual, whereas Ian is practical – even at a young age.
* Billy is mainly supportive of Davie, although he fails to understand his grief and believes he needs to pull himself together. The family separate when Billy and Ian move to Aberdeen in search of work, leaving Davie and Alec behind.
* Davie impresses upon Alec the importance of education and obtaining a good job; ironically this leads to the breakdown in their relationship due to his Father’s lack of ambition, contrasting with Alec’s desire to seek new opportunities. Alec begins climbing Glasgow’s social ladder, leaving his father behind.

**Grief:**

* This is a significant theme from the beginning of the play, explored through the contrasting characters Alec and Davie.
* Alec has no inhibitions as an eleven-year-old: he cries freely for his mother and deals with her death. Religion offers some guidance for him too: **‘A sign. Jesus to come walking across the back and tell me everything was all right. A window in the sky to open and God to lean out and say my mother had arrived safe.’** The clouds part, showing blue skies – a sign to Alec that his Mother is safe and that he can begin to move on.
* In contrast, Davie cannot talk to his son and Billy doesn’t understand his feelings. He tries to keep busy at home: **‘As long as ye keep movin it doesnae hit ye. Get the fire goin clean the windaes dust the furniture think about something for eatin don’t stop keep yerself going.’** He uses a series of imperatives, without punctuation, suggesting this long list of jobs keeps him from thinking too deeply about his feelings. This does not work for long and his future is bleak.
* Davie deteriorates into a depressed stupor, begins drinking, gambling and taking no interest in his work. He can’t seem to find the motivation to get another job, as his lacks fulfilment, and he doesn’t cook – he and Alec live off fish suppers. His gambling gets out of hand and this leads to further conflict.
* At the end of the play, Davie is still lonely and grieving; he and Alec argue over women: **‘Every time ye meet a wumman she’s a really really really nice person. Why don’t ye just admit that ye fancy her?’** Alec receives a slap for this; he fails to understand that his father is lonely but is not ready for a new relationship.
* The symbolic burning of their possessions in the glory hole and Davie’s rehousing by the council may provide Davie with some hope, in the form of opportunities to move on, but this is left ambiguous – only time will tell. The end of the play is rather poignant for this reason.

**Social class/ Poverty:**

* The family belongs to the traditional Scottish working class, where men would leave school, often at the first opportunity, and learn a trade as an apprentice, such as painting or shipbuilding, to work and provide for their families.
* The men were regarded as head of the family and viewed their practical role with a sense of pride. Alec is proud of his father’s trade, superior to his current job in Act One as a ‘tick man’.
* Moving from the working to middle class was not always positively received: for example, see Ian’s mocking comments about private school.
* Education is seen as the key to social mobility and Alan Spence explores this through Alec’s experience of private education, which leads to university, opportunities as well as risks. For Ian, state education leads to a trade and a steady job.
* Davie is determined that his son will have the opportunities he did not through education: **‘Goin tae a good school. Go on tae the University. Decent job.’** Alec’s private education introduces him to different subjects and philosophies – by the end of the play he knows **‘lignum vitae’** is Latin for ‘wood of life’ and has learned much about many subjects by heart.
* The scene involving Alec’s new learning is followed immediately by Davie’s redundancy – emphasising the importance of education in the play.
* Ian hates school and cannot wait to leave – he does not understand why Alec wants to continue his education and mocks the private school, suggesting that all the boys are snobs and rugby and cricket are not suitable for boys.
* Alec would have agreed with this previously (see how he describes the Minister’s son Norman earlier in these notes).

**Religion**

* Religion plays a prominent role in the play: first it is referred to in an innocent context, as eleven-year-old Alec searches for hope following his Mother’s death.
* When Alec is seen going to the Mission at the end of Act Two, at first he seems fanatical about it, having come joint top of the Bible exam.
* However, this interest is revealed to be part of the grieving process when he does not have an answer to Mrs Latula’s question **‘When did the Lord Jesus come into your heart child?’** The answer can’t be learned by heart – Alec struggles to deal with his emotions and runs away, never to return.
* For Alec, religious faith is over when the answers become too challenging: he is willing to burn his hymn-book at the end of the play. Davie – who was in the Boy’s Brigade and is knowledgeable about the Bible – finds the idea horrific, suggesting he has a more profound faith than Alec.
* References to Buddhism allude to the fact that there are other religious dimensions outside the narrow sectarian divide of Glasgow.
* Billy and Ian refer to religion in this sectarian way: they are strongly allied to Protestant Scotland, symbolised by their fanaticism for Rangers and critique of anything linked to Catholicism – simply for the fact that it is not Protestant. Davie points out the ridiculousness of this to Billy, but his comments are ignored: Billy does not see the bigger picture, simply repeating the stereotype.

**Comparison Question**

The final, eight-mark comparison question will ask you to comment on the **commonality** (similarity) between the extract in the exam and rest of the play: this might be one of the above themes, character/ relationships or any other key aspect of the play.

* **2 marks for commonality**
	+ State what the extract has in common with the rest of the play: look carefully at what the question asks you to talk about – character, theme, setting, etc.
	+ Write one statement that explains how the focus of the question (theme/ characterisation) is shown here.
	+ Write another statement about how the focus of the question is shown elsewhere in the text.
* **2 marks for discussion of extract in front of you**
	+ You should quote or refer to a technique, idea, feature or any other relevant reference in the extract relating to the question (1 mark)
	+ You should then comment on these techniques, ideas, features or references and the effect they have – relate it to the question (1 mark).
* **4 marks for discussion of the rest of the play**
	+ You should quote or refer to a technique, idea, feature or any other relevant reference from the rest of the text relating to the question (character/ theme etc.) (1 mark)
	+ Then comment on these techniques, ideas, features or references, explaining what they show about the focus of the question (character/ theme etc.) and explain how it develops, compared to the extract given (1 mark)
	+ This should be done **TWICE** to gain four marks.

*To help you prepare for this part of the exam, use the grid over the page to brainstorm some ideas you could discuss in the final question .*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Quotation from ‘Sailmaker’** | **Meaning/importance** (1 – show your understanding by using your own words2 – analyse any techniques used, such as word choice, imagery, stage directions) | **Link to other parts of play** (commonality – how is it similar in terms of theme/ character/ other key ideas?)  |
| ‘Ah’ve got a bit of bad news for ye son. Yer mammy’s dead.’ (Davie, Act 1 p6) |  |  |
| ‘Just wan, son. Honest! Wee half at the end ae the day. Just helps me tae unwind.’ (Act 1 p16) |  |  |
| ‘Can ye no talk tae me these days? Can ye no tell me anythin? Think ah came fae another planet.’ (Act 2 p54) |  |  |
| ‘Ah’ve been thinkin da. When ah go tae the University ah might get a wee place ae ma own. Wee bedsit or somethin. Over near the Uni.’ (Act 2 p62) |  |  |
| ‘It was after ma mammy died. Ah was lookin at the sky above oor hoose. An ah thought ah saw her.’ (Alec, talking about a vision of Mary. Act 1 p13) |  |  |
| ‘He’s workin as a tick man. But he’s really a sailmaker. That’s his real job. That’s his trade.’ (Act 1 p8) |  |  |
| ‘Alec: How come ye chucked yer trade?Davie: It chucked me! The chandlers ah worked for shut doon. Ah got laid off. That was it. Nothin else doin. Nae work. Naebody needs sailmakers these days.’ (Act 1 p16) |  |  |
| ‘So that’s me. Scrubbed. Again. Laid off. Redundant. Services no longer required. Just like that.’ (Act 1 p31) ‘Ian: Ye need a trade. That’s what ma da says.’ (Act 1, P9) |  |  |
| ‘Davie: Ah give up!Alec: Ye always do.Davie: Now that’s no nice. That’s a bit below the belt.’ (Act 2 p55)‘Alec: You were always gonnae fix it up for me.Davie: Ah always meant to. Just…Alec: Just never did.Davie: Story a ma life.’ (Act 2 p63) |  |  |
| ‘Davie: Electricity got cut off son. Couldnae pay the bill. […]Alec: Ma bursary money’ll be comin through this week, can pay it wi that.’ (Act 2 p47) |  |  |
| ‘And the yacht had a sail of flame’And the wood burned to embers. And the iron keel clattered onto the hearth.’ (Act 2)  |  |  |

*The final question could ask you to look at the differences between the two boys or their dads. Here are some ideas for Alec and Ian:*

* Ian and Alec are very close when they are younger, but they gradually start to drift apart. For example, Alec goes to private school – which Ian mocks – and Ian eventually moves to Aberdeen to find work with his father Billy.
* Alec finds meaning in religion, studying the Bible and coming joint top in the test. Ian feels left out, and echoes the sectarian views of his father, regularly making sectarian and bigoted comments about Catholics. Alec is more respectful and open-minded.
* Alec is an optimistic and positive person whereas Ian is much more sarcastic and cynical. For example, when Alec finds the yacht he really likes and admires it and he wants to repair it, whereas Ian is not impressed and he is critical of the yacht, and of Davie’s trade.
* Alec and Ian have very different views about the importance of education. For example, Ian doesn’t understand why Alec would want to continue his education and would rather leave school and start earning.

*The final question could ask you to talk about the symbolic importance of the yacht and how it relates to family relationships. Here are some key ideas:*

* The yacht can be seen as symbolic of Alec and Davie’s relationship – in what way?
* At first, Alec treasures the yacht. He shows off: **‘Ah had a yacht, y’ought tae see it’,** boasting that his Dad made up the poem and is a sailmaker by trade. He sees an opportunity for Davie to return to his trade. The yacht could be repaired, what does this show about their relationship at this point?
* Alec is sorely let down: **‘Ye’ve been saying that for weeks!’** – did the audience expect this?
* Billy, by contrast, promises to paint the yacht and enthusiastically discusses colours with Billy. The job is completed within a few days – what does this show?
* Alec names the yacht **‘Star of the Sea’**, a name commonly given to the Virgin Mary. How could this relate to his Mother?
* At the end of Act One, Alec tries to make a sail himself with cellophane. When Davie admits he has lost his job Alec puts the yacht away. What does this symbolise? What do we learn about their relationship?
* The yacht makes its final appearance at the end of the play. What does the symbolic burning of the yacht suggest?
* The yacht is compared to a burning Viking longboat, with connotations of death and the role of grief and loss in their lives.
* The words **‘Ah had a yacht, y’ought tae see it’** are repeated. Alec remembers the pride he once felt for his father. What does this show now?
* The end of the play is poignant, as Davie realises he will be alone. Is there anything ambiguous about the ending?