**Men Should Weep**

**Act One Scene One
Setting**

* Winter, 1930, East End of Glasgow, evening
* The setting is described as being in very poor, unsanitary condition – *‘Nappies hang on a string across the fireplace and the table, dresser, etc., are in a clutter’*
* Poor quality housing and cramped conditions were the norm for most occupants of Glasgow at the time

**Character**

**Maggie**

* Poor, downtrodden, oppressed, overburdened and working class
* However, she fiercely nurtures her children
* A stereotypical ‘martyr’ at the beginning of the play
* Seems to ‘clash’ with Lily – over John, over the amount of work she does, over her appearance
* Worried about Bertie, her son with TB
* Worries about her son Alec who is infatuated with his wife Isa
* Seems to have a good relationship with her husband John
* Ends the scene by arguing with Mrs Harris, her neighbour, about head-lice

**Granny**

* A caricature, often used for comic relief in the play
* However, she makes a valid point about the fact that, as an elderly woman, she has no independence
* Is resentful at being shipped off to her other daughter-in-law Lizzie’s house
* *‘She disnae want me. She’s aye crabbit, is Lizzie. She’s got a tongue wad clip boots. A she’s interested in’s ma pension book.’*

**The Children**

* Edie, Ernest, Marina and Christopher
* Prove to be a bit of a handful (constantly hungry, fighting etc.)
* But also seem quite independent and capable of doing a lot for themselves

**Lily**

* At first, seems helpful and kind (tends to the children, provides the family with beans for their tea, providing cough medicine for Bertie)
* Despairs at Maggie’s worries, criticises the mess in the house
* Disparages John
* *‘Ach, I’m no wantin’ tae hear whit John says aboot they bloody capitalists.’*
* Very independent

**John**

* Out of work, but actively seeking work
* Clashes with Lily
* *‘(turning to Lily with as much of a smile as he can muster) An how’s Lil?’*
* Criticises the women for having *‘nae system’* for cleaning
* Maggie laughs this off, but it is implied that John is a chauvinist

**The Neighbours**

* Gossips – but, as part of wider society, comment on the action as outsiders
* Emphasise themes - domestic abuse, the economic control men have over women and poor sanitation

**Themes**

Throughout the play, a number of themes are developed:

* **SOCIAL THEMES** – Poor Housing, Sanitation, Malnutrition and Poverty
* **GENDER THEMES** – Role of Women and Role of Men
* **POLITICAL THEMES** – Religion and the Relationship Between the Individual and The State

**Social**

* *Poor Housing* – The house is described as being a mess, falling to bits and overcrowded. Also, Alec and Isa’s block of tenements collapses near the end of Act One Scene One
* *Sanitation* – As a result of poor sanitation, Bertie has tuberculosis (in those days, a fatal disease) and Mrs. Harris’ son has headice

**Gender**

* *Role of Women –* Women were expected to get married, have children, stay at home and look after the family
* The main characters seem to buck that trend – Lily works in a Cowcaddens’ pub; Maggie works and is the sole breadwinner in the Morrison home; Jenny works; and Isa, who does not work, has her husband running in circles
* *Domestic Abuse* – It is referred to on a number of occasions during Act One, that Mrs Bone’s husband beats her; it is also mentioned that Alec once threw a breadknife at Lily
* *Role of Men* – Men were expected to be the breadwinner and unemployment would have been seen as a disgrace; men would also hide their feelings (hence the ironic title); Alec is not a typical 1930’s man – he is weak, susceptible and dishonest. John is also untypical in that he is teetotal and he is unemployed.

**Political**

* *Relationship between the Individual and The State –* John is obviously quite political (Lily makes fun of his politics) and what he says has influenced Maggie’s thoughts (*‘I dinnae ken whit they rotten buggers in Parliament are daein wi ma money...’*). It is clear that the characters in the play feel quite powerless and at the mercy of the powers of the state