



Learning English Through Theatre

SAMPLE PACK

[Full version available after reservation]

“Playing Mathilde”

Written by Philip Ayckbourn

Produced & Directed by Judi Armstrong Christie

TEACHING PACK

2016/2017

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A] SYNOPSIS

When widower Harold Carter goes to an old school reunion, it's the perfect opportunity for Nina, his 17-year-old daughter, to put away her schoolbooks and entertain her boyfriend, Tommy Robbins. All proceeds relatively smoothly for the two youngsters, until their evening is cut short by the unexpected return of Harold, after a fire in the hotel postponed his reunion. Tommy has just moments to run upstairs and hide, while Nina clears the traces of their revelry. Unfortunately, Harold notices a bottle of whisky and two glasses that have been overlooked in Nina's haste. Forced into an immediate explanation, Nina blames the evidence on the premature arrival of Madame Lapierre, their new French au pair. Nina claims Madame Lapierre got the days confused and has arrived a day early and is presently upstairs changing after her journey. While Harold readies himself to meet the new guest, Nina persuades Tommy to dress in her mother's old clothes and wig and pass himself off as the au pair. After a faltering start, Tommy manages to convince Harold of his/her 'legitimacy' and, what's more, even starts to enjoy his newfound powers playing the sophisticated French lady. Whisky begins to take effect though on Harold, and soon the lonely widower is starting to make amorous advances. Tommy summons up Bernard, an opportunistic thief, to rescue the situation. But has Tommy now overstepped the mark? Can Nina possibly assist him in his new pretence? And, if the police are called, will any of them be able to look each other in the eye again?

B] GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PLAY

- From **"The telephone rings"** (P.7a) to **"Yes, hurry, hurry - Tommy! Tommy. (P.10b)**

1. Who is calling Nina? What for?
2. How does Tommy behave while Nina is on the phone? Explain why he behaves in such a way. What sort of boy is he?
3. How does Nina react?
4. How long have Tommy and Nina been going out?
5. Who is arriving sooner than expected?
6. What does Nina ask Tommy to do?

- From **"Harold takes the bottle and sniffs it"** (P.11b) to **"Oh God! Oh God!" (P.13a)**

1. Why does Nina tell her father Madame Lapierre has arrived?
2. Who does Nina ask Tommy to pretend to be?
3. Explain Nina's plan.

- From **"She's not come down yet?" (P.14a) to " Je suis très bien aussi" (P.16b)**

1. Draw a portrait of Madame Lapierre based on what Nina says to her father.
2. Why is Harold nervous?
3. What is Harold's opinion about French women?
4. What does Harold keep doing throughout his conversation with Nina?
5. Does Madame Lapierre speak English?
6. Describe what is happening upstairs.
7. Is Harold very good at French?

- From **"Enjoying my whisky monsieur"** (P.17a) to **"Tommy retrieves his bag"** (P.23b)

1. What is Tommy like?
2. Describe Harold's reaction.
3. What is rather uncommon for a lady, which indeed surprises Harold? (quote 2 things)
4. What does Harold notice about Mathilde's perfume and dress?
5. What do you notice in the conversation between Nina and Tommy/Mathilde? Is Tommy at ease with the French language?
6. Why does Tommy/Mathilde fetch his bag and want to go home?

- From **"Yes, but not just any woman Mathilde, I'm quite particular"** (P.26a) to **"I'M A MAN!"** (P.29a)

1. What does Harold expect of a woman?
2. What does Mathilde/Tommy suggest that Harold does?
3. Who does Mathilde remind Harold of?
4. Sum up Tommy and Nina's conversation.
5. What does Harold want from Mathilde? Does he manage to get it? What does he actually notice?

- From **"Harold takes his glasses from his pocket"** (P.29a) to **"Dad, are you alright?"** (P.31a)

1. Who does Tommy pretend to be?
2. What does he ask Harold?
3. What is Nina's reaction when she sees the situation?
4. What do Tommy and Nina blame Harold for?
5. Harold finds the situation rather strange. Why?
6. What does Tommy do before running away?

E] NOUNS & ADVERBS
[Find the French equivalent]

- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|-------|----|---------------|-------|
| 1 | excruciatingly | _____ | 11 | weightlifting | _____ |
| 2 | a mess | _____ | 12 | a scent | _____ |
| 3 | a tie | _____ | 13 | jewellery | _____ |
| 4 | hunting | _____ | 14 | a brain | _____ |
| 5 | a joint | _____ | 15 | an emergency | _____ |
| 6 | a drop | _____ | 16 | a witness | _____ |
| 7 | actually | _____ | 17 | a wallet | _____ |
| 8 | a label | _____ | 18 | bravery | _____ |
| 9 | stuff | _____ | 19 | balance | _____ |
| 10 | height | _____ | 20 | a tie | _____ |
| | | | 21 | rubbish | _____ |

LEVEL B

Clues Across

- 1 Wonderful or fantastic.
- 2 Opposite of early.
- 3 It carries the blood through your body.
- 4 The prolonged extremity found at the back of most animals.
- 5 Opposite of love.

Clues Down

- 6 To take the place of.
- 7 To provide information on a particular subject.
- 8 There are 52 if these in America and Hawaii is one of them
- 9 If people are not on time, you sometimes have tofor them.
- 10 You write your address on this and then you attach it to your suitcase.

And now, even more difficult!

4 words in the crossword are homophonic with 4 others. Can you find them? Give their meaning?

**One is to do with cheese; another with fairies;
another with kilos: and finally another with someone's character.**

H] MODAL VERBS

[Find the value of these following modal verbs and translate them]:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| a) If you CAN have a young woman (...) I CAN have a young man | INTERDICTION |
| b) I WILL meet Mme Lapierre on the 4.30pm | PERMISSION |
| c) You HAVE TO drink the whole glass | OBLIGATION |
| d) Dad MIGHT call again | POSSIBILITY |
| e) You SHOULDN'T drink, especially spirits | FUTURE |
| f) You MUST have a drink with me | ADVICE |
| g) You CAN'T do that | LITTLE PROBABILITY |
| h) Your wife WOULDN'T be happy | STRONG OBLIGATION |

I] WORD GRID

The following words can all be found in a theatre. Find them and circle them. They may appear horizontally, vertically or diagonally, forwards or backwards!

Cloakroom, Orchestra, Pit, Stage, Exit, Entrance, Bar, Booking Office, Stage Door, Curtain, Props, Wings, Dressing Rooms, Lights

C	L	O	A	A	B	F	B	A	R	E	D
U	L	I	G	H	T	S	O	A	C	C	R
R	D	O	R	C	H	E	O	E	F	N	E
T	S	T	A	G	E	G	K	H	I	A	S
A	T	J	A	K	L	L	I	G	H	R	S
I	A	M	R	N	R	O	N	P	Q	T	I
N	G	U	T	T	S	O	G	R	U	N	N
V	E	W	N	X	D	E	O	I	A	E	G
Y	D	R	E	S	S	I	F	M	O	T	R
Z	O	F	A	X	W	V	F	U	T	S	O
Q	O	U	E	S	G	N	I	W	T	R	O
P	R	X	O	P	I	T	C	N	R	M	M
I	I	G	H	O	I	J	E	K	U	L	S
T	I	P	A	R	T	S	E	H	C	R	O
F	E	O	R	P	D	C	B	W	I	N	A

J1] GLOSSARY OF EXPRESSIONS AND PHRASES

My French is a bit rusty -
Make yourself at home -
My late wife -
999 -

J2] GLOSSARY OF VERBS AND VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

To fire someone up about something -
To be responsible for something/someone -
To be nervous about something -
To (dis)approve of something -
To take after someone -
To be forward with someone -
To get away with -
To break into a house -
To call on someone -
To sort something out -