Your notes

GCSE English Literature: revision notes

Journey's End

Contents

1. Plot
2. Themes and context
3. Form
4. How to get top marks
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

Plot

- In March 1918, British officers wait in a **dugout** in the front-line trenches near St Quentin, expecting a German attack.
- Captain Stanhope, only 21, has served for three years and drinks heavily to cope. Raleigh, 18, arrives; he hero-worshipped Stanhope at school, and Stanhope fears Raleigh will tell his sister about his drinking.
- Osborne, an older former schoolmaster, calms everyone. Hibbert tries to escape the front line, and Trotter jokes to cope. Osborne is killed leading a raid to capture a German soldier.
- The German attack begins on 21 March. Raleigh is fatally wounded and dies in the **dugout** with Stanhope, who then goes out to the fighting as a shell destroys the **dugout**.

Themes and context

- The horror and waste of war, heroism, fear and ways of coping, friendship and class.
- R. C. Sherriff served in the First World War and wrote the play in 1928. It is set just before the German **Spring Offensive** of 1918.

Form

- All of the play happens in one **dugout**, which makes it **claustrophobic**.

How to get top marks

- Use the setting. A single, cramped **dugout** makes the audience feel the trap, and tension builds as the attack gets closer.
- Write about Stanhope: his drinking is courage and damage at the same time.
- Use the ending, and the fact that Sherriff served in the war, to write about what heroism costs.

Key terms

Dugout	A shelter dug into the trench.
Claustrophobic	Feeling trapped in a small space.
Spring Offensive	The German attack of March 1918.
Morale	The confidence and spirit of a group.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Where is Journey's End set?
2. How does Stanhope cope with the war?
3. Who is Raleigh?
4. Who is the older officer known for calming everyone?
5. What happens to Osborne?
6. Who tries to avoid the front line by claiming illness?
7. How does the play end?
8. Who wrote Journey's End and when?

Answers

1. A dugout in the trenches near St Quentin
2. By drinking heavily
3. A new officer who hero-worshipped Stanhope at school
4. Osborne
5. He is killed leading a raid
6. Hibbert
7. Raleigh dies and a shell destroys the dugout
8. R. C. Sherriff, in 1928

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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