Your notes

GCSE English Literature: revision notes

A Taste of Honey

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Plot

- In Salford in the late 1950s, teenage Jo lives with her mother Helen in a run-down flat. Helen drinks and puts her own life first.
- Helen marries Peter, a younger man, and leaves Jo. Jo has a relationship with Jimmie, a Black sailor, who promises to marry her and then goes to sea.
- Jo is pregnant. Geoffrey, a gay art student, moves in and cares for her more than anyone has.
- Helen returns after Peter throws her out and drives Geoffrey away. When Jo goes into labour and Helen learns the baby may be Black, she goes out for a drink.

Themes and context

- Mother and daughter relationships, class, race, sexuality, gender roles and loneliness.
- Shelagh Delaney wrote it at 19 (1958). It is 'kitchen sink' drama about ordinary working-class lives. Homosexuality was illegal until 1967, and mixed-race relationships faced **prejudice**.

Form

- Characters speak to the audience, and music-hall songs and dance link the scenes.

How to get top marks

- Write about how radical it was in 1958: a working-class young woman, a Black boyfriend and a gay friend, all on stage in Salford.
- Use the relationship of Jo and Helen as your central focus: cruel, funny and full of need.
- Use Delaney's methods, such as music and characters talking directly to the audience.

Key terms

Kitchen sink drama	Realistic plays about working-class home life in the 1950s and 60s.
Working class	People who did manual or low-paid jobs.
Breaking the fourth wall	Characters speaking to the audience.
Prejudice	An unfair opinion of someone because of their group.

Quick questions

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

1. Where is A Taste of Honey set?
2. Who does Helen marry?
3. Who is the father of Jo's baby?
4. Who looks after Jo during her pregnancy?
5. How old was Shelagh Delaney when she wrote the play?
6. What kind of drama is A Taste of Honey?
7. How does Helen react when she learns the baby may be Black?
8. Which law makes Geoffrey's life harder?

Answers

1. Salford
2. Peter
3. Jimmie, a Black sailor
4. Geoffrey
5. 19
6. Kitchen sink drama
7. She goes out for a drink
8. Homosexuality was illegal until 1967

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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