

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Drama Club I

Unit 3 of 8

Below are two scenes from a play called Private Lives by Noel Coward. The play follows two couples, Sibyl and Elyot, and Victor and Amanda. They are staying in the same hotel and the scenes below show them talking about their ex-spouses with their new partner. The playwright shows how you can use characters to hint at what's to come. In this case, Elyot and Amanda, once married, will soon find out they are in the same hotel. This play falls under the category of "broad comedy". Coward uses different characters to hint at the absurdity to come.

SIBYL: I should think you needed a little quiet womanliness after Amanda.
 ELYOT: Why will you keep on talking about her?
 SIBYL: It's natural enough, isn't it?
 ELYOT: What do you want to find out?
 SIBYL: Why did you really let her divorce you?
 ELYOT: She divorced me for cruelty, flagrant infidelity. I spent a whole week-end at Brighton with a lady called Vera Williams. She had the nastiest looking hair brush I have ever seen.
 SIBYL: Misplaced chivalry, I call it. Why didn't you divorce her?
 ELYOT: It would not have been the action of a gentleman, whatever that may mean.
 SIBYL: I think she got off very lightly.
 ELYOT: Once and for all will you stop talking about her.
 SIBYL: Yes, Elli dear.
 ELYOT: I don't wish to see her again or hear her name mentioned.
 SIBYL: Very well, darling.
 ELYOT: Is that understood?
 SIBYL: Yes, darling. Where did you spend your honeymoon?
 ELYOT: St. Moritz. Be quiet.
 SIBYL: I hate St. Moritz.
 ELYOT: So do I, bitterly.

The scene below is separated from the first one by dialogue, but is in the same Act.

VICTOR: I couldn't love you more than I do now.
 AMANDA [*warningly*]: Victor.
 VICTOR: I want to know.
 AMANDA: St. Moritz. It was very attractive.
 VICTOR: I hate St. Moritz.
 AMANDA: So do I.



1. How did the playwright set up the impending action?
2. Why did the playwright have the new spouses so curious about the old?
3. What do you think would be the most comedic way for Elyot and Amanda to realize that they are in the same hotel?

4. Write a scene (twenty lines or more) that suggests comedy to come.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

**Appendix
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Citations:
<http://www.easyreadernews.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Private5-web1.jpg>