

AT THE THEATRE

Some ill-mannered people keep talking and shouting all the time while watching a play or film at a theatre. They keep blurting out what is going to happen next, and thus spoil the play's charm for all those who are sitting around. What would you do if there was such a one sitting next to you? Would you ask him to shut up or suffer him silently?

Read this poem and see what the poet says to the lady behind him.



Class Notes

- Dear Madam, you have seen this play:
I never saw it till today.
You know the details of the plot
But, let me tell you, I do not.
- 5 The author seeks to keep from me
The murderer's identity,
And you are not a friend of his
If you keep shouting who it is.
- 10 The actors in their funny way
Have several funny things to say,
But they do not amuse me more
If you have said them just before.
The merit of the drama lies
I understand, in some surprise;

plot : events in the story of a play or novel.
identity : who or what somebody is.



- 15 But the surprise now must be small
Since you have just foretold all.
The lady you have brought with you
Is, I infer, a half-wit, too,
But I can understand the piece
20 Without assistance from your niece.
In short, foul woman, it would suit
Me just as well if you were mute;
In fact, to make my meaning plain,
I trust you will not speak again.
25 And—may I add one human touch?—
Don't breathe upon my neck so much.

C.1.

Answer the following questions briefly (in not more than two or three sentences each):

1. How did the lady know all the details of the plot?
2. What did the lady do while watching the play?
3. What kind of play do you think the poet was watching? How can you say that?
4. Why did the poet want the lady to stop her shouting?
5. Was the lady sitting behind the poet talking to herself or to someone else?
6. What does the poet say about the other lady and why?
7. The poet tells the lady two things plainly. Mention them in your own words.

C.2.

Explain the meaning of the following lines:

- a) The author seeks to keep from me
The murderer's identity.
- b) The merit of the drama lies
I understand, in some surprise.
- c) The lady you have brought with you
Is, I infer, a half-wit, too.

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|----------|---|---------------------|
| foretold | : | told beforehand. |
| infer | : | reach a conclusion. |
| half-wit | : | stupid or foolish. |
| foul | : | ill-mannered. |
| mute | : | silent. |

human touch : here 'touch' doesn't have its usual meaning; it has simply been used to rhyme with 'much' in the next line; the phrase 'human touch' may be taken to mean 'something related to the way a human being should behave'.