

On the Shore of the Wide World

Author	Simon Stephens
Published by	A & C Black, London
Published in	2005
Price	€12.99
Genre	Postmodern drama
Length	144 pages
First staged	at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester in 2005.
Summary	<p>2004. Three generations of the Holmes family are living in Stockport, a suburb of Manchester. Each generation has its internal conflicts. The young couple experiencing first love and intimacy; the youngest brother falling in love with his older brother's girlfriend; the parent's heading for a dead-end marriage, getting the opportunity to have an affair and start a new life; the grandparents trapped in a routine-based marriage, not speaking about their problems. A tragic event forces all members of the family to face their conflicts, to rethink their lives. The play neatly examines how they cope with this and studies their interaction, communication and also their recovery.</p>
Structure	<p>The play's structure allows interpreting every part as its own 'little drama' with one of the family members in the centre of the action:</p> <p>Part One, "Christopher", is the story of his unrequited love to his brother's girlfriend Sarah, his struggle with this situation and finally his death.</p> <p>Part Two, "Alex", tells the story of his girlfriend and him, trying to leave Stockport, their struggle against their doubts and the resistance in the family, and finally their departure.</p> <p>Part Three, "Alice", deals with the problems in her marriage, confrontations with her parents-in-law, the opportunity to have an affair with another man and finally her return to her husband.</p> <p>Finally, Part Four, "Peter", is about him questioning his life, clashing with his father and mother, meeting another woman, but finally returning to his wife and family.</p> <p>Altogether, these personal dramas of the characters are embedded in a plot that leads the family through four states: (introduction) – confrontation – escaping – returning.</p>

HS Teachable Plays

Prof. Dr. Christoph Reinfandt

Characters	Peter Holmes (39 years), Alice Holmes (37), Charlie Holmes (66), Ellen Holmes (62), Alex Holmes (18), Christopher Holmes (15), Sarah Black (17), Paul Danziger (19), John Robinson (36), Susan Reynolds (35)
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between generations • Love in different states of partnership • Family conflicts • Death of a family member • Life in an English suburb • Alcoholism
Helpful Secondary Literature	<p>Oberender, Thomas: "Tragik des Alltags". <i>Theater Heute: Jahrbuch 2005</i>: 164-165.</p> <p>Marshall, Brenda K.: <i>Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory</i>. New York: Routledge, 1992.</p>
Language	Contemporary BE everyday language; occasional swearing.
Suitable Age	15 years or older
Teachability Pros	<p>Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics are accessible and relevant for pupils aged 15 or older. <p>Language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary BE everyday language. <p>Educational objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection of emotions • Dealing with and recovery from family tragedies • Staging 'the tragedy of everyday life' • Postmodern theatrical devices • Pauses and silences in drama
Teachability Cons	Occasional swearing
Overall Evaluation	<i>On the Shore</i> is a very intense and profound play with a big potential to have influence on today's theatrical landscape. It is accessible in many ways and can be used to teach contemporary drama in school.