

Translations

Author	Brian Friel
Published by	Faber and Faber, London
Published in	1981
Price	€9.50
Length	72 pages
Summary	Ireland in 1833 in an Irish-speaking community: The British Royal Engineers conduct the first Ordnance Survey (= mapping the country) which also includes the translation of the local Gaelic place names into English. The people of the village react differently to the changes which the mapping projects and its manifold consequences on the linguistic and political reality bring along.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 acts, 4 scenes • Classical dramatic structure in act one and two (introduction, complication), deviation in act three: no resolution but open end • The entire action is set in the school room of the villagers
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish personnel: schoolmaster Hugh with sons Manus and Owen, peasants Maire, Bridget, Sarah, Doalty and Jimmy Jack; backstage characters: the Donnelly twins • English Personnel: Captain Lancey, Lieutenant Yolland • The characters are quite stereotypic and bear many opportunities for interpretation.
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language: language and identity, extinction of a language, English as global language • Translation of words, of traditions and of way of lives, consequences of translations, mistranslations • Communication and its failure • Encounter of two different cultures, religions, political systems • Love story of two people belonging to different cultures • Ireland and its history: famine, emigration, colonialism under British rule in the 19th century, the Troubles in the 20th century

HS Teachable Plays

Prof. Dr. Christoph Reinfandt

Available Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No student book version available • Only English version: Faber and Faber edition, London: 1981 • No film adaption available • Only rarely performed in Germany; and if so, in German (<i>Sprachstörungen</i>. Trans. Eva Walch. Berlin: Henschel, 1988)
Helpful Secondary Literature	Brannigan, John. <i>Translations. Brian Friel</i> . 2nd ed. London: York, 2004.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult lexicon (rural and political; some Hiberno-English words) • Several Irish place names • Greek and Latin words and phrases • Colloquial English
Suitable Age	16-18 years
Activities	<p>Performative activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping the characters according to political, linguistic or social position (freeze frames), discussing different possibilities of doing so • Positioning the characters on a scale (e.g. from open-minded to violently opposed to the ongoing changes) • Inventing a further scene • Writing activity: dialogue between the backstage characters (Donnelly twins) and Doalty
Teachability Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good length • Easy access to the setting: also class room situation • Easy to be performed since no special props needed • Ireland as theme as another English speaking country
Teachability Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult language • Greek and Latin words • Students should have the age of 16 to 18 because of the required language knowledge; however, at that age, in the Oberstufe, there is normally a fixed syllabus which does not allow any additional literature. • No student version available; no film adaption; it is rarely performed in Germany, and if so, then in German
Overall Evaluation	I would give it a try, if there is room in the syllabus, in class of 16-year-old students with a profound knowledge of English and Latin; or, if there is a chance, approaching and performing the play with a theatre group.