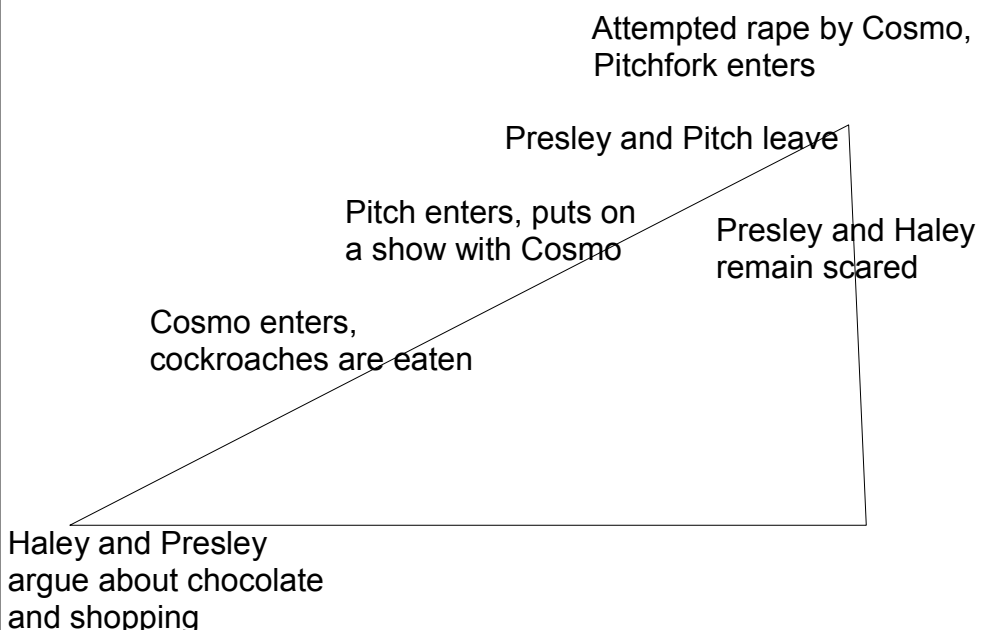


The Pitchfork Disney

Author	Philip Ridley
Published by	Bloomsbury Methuen Drama
Published in	2012
Price	14,90€
Genre	Drama
Length	96 pages
First staged	Bush Theatre, London, in 1991. Directed by Matthew Lloyd
Summary	<p>The play opens with the characters Presley and Haley, who are twin brother and sister. They are 28 years old and since the death of their parents 10 years ago, they have been living alone in the East End of London. They lead a childish fantasy existence, living entirely off chocolate and biscuits. The twins are awake at night and take their parents old medicine so that they can sleep throughout the day. They have no friends and only ever leave the house to buy more chocolate. The exact fate of their parents is never described, but there are clues about the nature of their demise throughout the play.</p> <p>As the play begins, Presley and Haley argue about who should go and buy some chocolate the next time. Haley refuses to go and tells Presley that she was attacked by rabid dogs the last time. She would have been killed if she hadn't been saved by a priest with a shotgun. Presley finally agrees to go and buy chocolate the next time. Presley then comforts her with her favorite story: a description of a nuclear holocaust in which they are the only survivors.</p> <p>Suddenly the twins hear a voice from outside. Presley runs to the window and sees two men, one of whom seems to be ill. Haley gets scared that the two men might see them so that she has to be calmed down by Presley with the help of their parents' medicine. Despite Haley's cautious words, Presley decides to bring the sick man into their home, who immediately throws up on the floor. The man of angelic beauty, who is called Cosmo Disney, explains that he and his partner are showmen, and that his own particular "talent" is to eat all sorts of insects, by which his illness was caused. On the one hand, Cosmo notices Haley, who is sleeping, and it becomes clear that he is attracted to her. Cosmo emotionally manipulates Presley, who is, on the other hand, obviously attracted to him. Cosmo listens to Presley's sinister stories about his childhood and then convinces Presley to eat a cockroach. Believing that he befriended Cosmo through his eating of the cockroach, Presley tells</p>

	<p>Cosmo about a “recurring nightmare” he has about a serial killer named Pitchfork Disney.</p> <p>Shortly after the story, Cosmo's friend Pitchfork Cavalier arrives. He is a huge bear-like, but mute, man with a leather mask covering his deformed face. Cosmo decides to put on a show for Presley, which he doesn't want to see. However, Cosmo is aware of his attraction to Presley and manipulates the twin brother into saying that he wants to see Pitchfork's face. However, instead of taking off his mask, Pitchfork picks up Haley, who is still asleep, and dances with her. This upsets Presley, but he doesn't dare to call a halt on Pitchfork. Cosmo convinces Presley to go to the shops with Pitchfork to buy some chocolate. As soon as they are out, Cosmo attempts to rape Haley. Presley unexpectedly returns and realizes Cosmo's true motivation. He is enraged and breaks Cosmo's finger, who then flees. Pitchfork briefly returns, terrifies Presley, but then leaves again. Haley awakens from her sleep, and both twins embrace each other in fear as the lights fade out.</p>
<p>Structure</p>	<p>One act play set in East London. Similarities to Greek tragedy: Unity of space, unity of time. There is a denouement (Pitch and Cosmo leave), however, after the climax and the denouement, there is hardly a catharsis, because everything is happening so quickly after the attempted rape/sexual abuse. The tension remains high, creating uneasy effects.</p> 
<p>Characters</p>	<p>See appendix 1</p>
<p>Topics</p>	<p>Werkimmanent: (Childhood) fears, loss, growing up, reality vs. dream, trauma and coping mechanism, guiltless guilt (Haley), sexual abuse (of children -> father/daughter), the shattered identity, worlds of order</p>

	<p>vs. chaos (apocalypse), religion, good vs. evil, the "invasion of the foreign", the attraction of evil, homoeroticism vs. homophobia</p> <p>Cultural reading: Paranoia during the cold war, the threat of nuclear holocaust, Thatcherism and the neoliberal revolution in Great Britain and the US (Reagan) & its effects on Great Britain.</p> <p>Readings in terms of genre conventions: Pitchfork Disney as a kickstarter for in-yer-face theater; its origins in the "theater of the absurd" (e.g. Harold Pinter); similarities towards Greek tragedy (unity of space, unity of time, guiltless guilt etc.)</p>
Available Media	Photographs of several performances (the newest being from 2012)., there is no movie.
Helpful Secondary Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Göttfert, Matthias. "Laughing at the Punch in Your Face." Thesis. Universität Wien, 2009. Online <http://othes.univie.ac.at/7802/1/2009-11-06_0349272.pdf>.
Language	Colloquial Present Day British English. Line-by-line exchanges interrupted by monologues.
Suitable Age	Kurststufe
Activities	<p>Pre-reading activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher projects the cover page with the surreal image onto the wall. The students speculate about the play based on the image. The teacher shows the pupils a picture of a cockroach. The pupils give associations. The teacher writes the title of the play onto the blackboard. The pupils speculate on the content of the play. The students are supplied with a detailed description of the twins situation in the room at the beginning of the play. The students speculate on what happened to them. A photograph of Cosmo and Pitchfork is projected onto the wall. The students speculate about the strange pair. The teacher can collect question on the play after he/she has explained the situation or gave a picture/caricature to the students. <p>While-reading activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are a reporter of the local newspaper, and you have seen a production of <i>The Pitchfork Disney</i> in the local grammar school. You are demanded to write a summary for your newspaper. Therefore, you take the photographs which have been taken during the performance. Unfortunately, the pictures were mixed up by an assistant in the photo laboratory, and you need to order them in order to write your summary. Bring the photographs into the right order and write your short summary. You have a copy of the script to help you with your memory. (20 minutes) Other while-reading activities could skip the summary and

	<p>move it to a post-reading activity. Instead of a summary, the teacher could choose to split the class into several groups all focusing on important scenes in the play. For example, the story in the church to describe the thematic field of religion in the play, a group which focuses on the coping strategies of the twins, another group focusing on the relation between dream and reality and so on. The results of the groups could then be used to draw a simplified version of appendix 4. Thus, a large part of the subtext could be revealed. Alternatively, groups could focus on character constellation (to reveal the complementarity of the pairs and the dichotomy between them), character development (Presley) or the aspect of communication between Presley and Cosmo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case a fact sheet is being provided about “in-yer-face” theater, the teacher could also include the question: To what extent represents <i>The Pitchfork Disney</i> the genre? <p>Post-reading activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions on certain aspects of the play • Long term development: How does the situation of Haley and Presley evolve? • Transformation: How does Presley think about his development in the encounter with Cosmo? <p>However, if there is already a play at hand, a good idea to make use of this is to employ drama activities, for example the thought tunnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a thought tunnel, pupils will be divided into two groups. Each group will again be separated into those who choose a pro or a con side. The problem, which this activity can deal with, is e.g. Presley's decision to leave Haley to Cosmo to buy some chocolate. Presley's inner conflict: Should he go and leave Haley in order to get the chocolate and to get the apparent trust of Cosmo, or should he stay with his sister whom he has vowed to protect? After 10 minutes of group work, the pupils are demanded to arrange in four lines, always two lines facing each other. The “Presleys” walk through the lines while the students give their advices. At the end of the lines, every Presley has to present his decision.
<p>Teachability Pros</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of relevant topics can be addressed • The working of the interplay between form and content can be VERY well illustrated by teaching the play. • Literary theories can be fruitfully employed if the teacher wishes to (psychological approach and structuralist approach worked well) • The analysis can easily be stretched into cultural and intertextual fields • The play has been performed several times, so that there is enough material to talk about the effects of the stage on the communication (theatricality). • A classic play which was revived in 2012 (maybe more performances to watch?)

Teachability Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might be a bit shocking (although besides the breaking of the finger there is no explicit violence in the play). • No available DVD/movie -> Mediality can't be compared 														
Overall Evaluation	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="437 293 675 353">Criterion</th> <th data-bbox="675 293 791 353">Grade</th> <th data-bbox="791 293 1410 353">Short explanation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="437 353 675 524">Interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="675 353 791 524">★★★ (3/3)</td> <td data-bbox="791 353 1410 524">Shows many characteristics of how plays work; many levels (figural, symbolic, thematic, language) can be addressed; intertextuality/genre (Greek tragedy vs. In-yer-face)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="437 524 675 689">How Plays Work</td> <td data-bbox="675 524 791 689">★★★ (3/3)</td> <td data-bbox="791 524 1410 689">A play which helped to create a genre (In-yer-face theater); many different productions with sufficient variation to be able to illustrate the leeway of the director.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="437 689 675 954">Teachability</td> <td data-bbox="675 689 791 954">★★★ (3/3)</td> <td data-bbox="791 689 1410 954">Many issues which can be explored (growing up, dealing with trauma, sexuality etc.); very topical play in terms of actual circumstances in Britain at the time play was created as well as high topicality concerning the readers present environment (2014). Many possible focus points around which tasks for pupils can be constructed.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Criterion	Grade	Short explanation	Interpretation	★★★ (3/3)	Shows many characteristics of how plays work; many levels (figural, symbolic, thematic, language) can be addressed; intertextuality/genre (Greek tragedy vs. In-yer-face)	How Plays Work	★★★ (3/3)	A play which helped to create a genre (In-yer-face theater); many different productions with sufficient variation to be able to illustrate the leeway of the director.	Teachability	★★★ (3/3)	Many issues which can be explored (growing up, dealing with trauma, sexuality etc.); very topical play in terms of actual circumstances in Britain at the time play was created as well as high topicality concerning the readers present environment (2014). Many possible focus points around which tasks for pupils can be constructed.
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Appendix 1: Character Traits (Including Text Passages Where Appropriate).

	Haley Stray	Presley Stray
External appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 years old, twin sister (p. 1) • Wears a black T-shirt and jeans (p. 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 years old, twin brother (p. 1) • Pale and pasty skin (p. 35) • Bloodshot eyes, rotten teeth (p. 34) • Wears a black T-shirt and jeans (p. 1)
Psychological disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrational • Innocent • Anxious • Hysterical at times (needs then to be pacified) • Pessimistic/paranoid (p. 29, 30) • Unreflected (p. 27) • Xenophobic (p. 27) • Loves her brother • Infantile mental state (p. 27) • Honest (p. 11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not like mirrors (p. 33) • Virgin (p. 50) • Faithful/religious (p. 50) • Caring for Haley (p. 24, p. 40) • Cosmo: “You know your trouble? You care too much!” (p. 83) → Also cares for Pitchfork • openness/trustfulness (“I am! I'm interested in you, Cosmo!” p. 59) • Infantile mental state • Naive (p. 90, 91)
Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hasty, anxious, almost hyperventilating • Bantering and snippy at times • Seemingly trivial, innocent questions (p. 25) • Stichomythie (conveys passion) interrupted by monologue (p. 25) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stichomythie (conveys passion) interrupted by monologue (p. 25) • Open-hearted • Interested but also restrained
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleepwalks and talks while asleep • Terrorizes her brother with story about outside world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes imagined world to Haley several times (5 in total this day) • Eats cockroach (p. 65) • Shows photographs to Cosmo • Terrorizes his sister with story about outside world • Describes imagined world to Cosmo (p. 70)
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lives together with her brother in the elderly flat/house at the East End of London. The front door has many bolts. • The parents are apparently dead. • The children invent a post-apocalyptic world after a nuclear holocaust (p. 70). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lives together with his brother in the elderly flat/house at the East End of London. The front door has many bolts. • The parents are apparently dead. • The children invent a post-apocalyptic world after a nuclear holocaust (p. 70).
Typology/summary	Flat, static, opaque and psychological character	Rather complex, with a dynamic development at the end, opaque and psychological character
	Pitchfork Cavalier	Cosmo Disney
External appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain damage (p. 33) • Dressed like Cosmo with a red shiny jacket, a white shirt and a black bow tie and a black-leather bondage mask with holes for eyes and mouth. He is very tall. He has a shuffling, awkward walk (p. 80) • Soft hands (p. 81) • Deformed face (p. 82) • Unmanned/castrated (p. 88) • He is struggling with balance, stumbling (p. 83) • No discernible voice (p. 84). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 years old, blond hair and a “menacing angelic beauty” (p. 32) • Looks “perfect” (no scars, no pimples, no blemishes, no broken bones hair etc.) (p. 35) • Glistening, healthy hair “redolent of a stallion” (p. 35) • Blue eyes (p. 35) • White, shiny, healthy teeth (p. 36) • Body: “Hard and muscular and totally free from fat” (p. 36). • Perfect hands, perfect knuckles (p. 36). • Is wearing a long black leather overcoat,

		<p>black trousers and black patent-leather shoes (p. 32).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underneath he is wearing a bright red, rhinestone and sequin jacket white shirt and black bow tie (p. 38).
Psychological disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Servant and bodyguard • “Big, contented baby” (p. 81) • Likes physical contact (p. 80) • Sexual criminal? (p. 87) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of his strong attraction to others “Wanted touch me, did you?” and to Pitchfork: “I’m like a magnet to him” (p. 33) → extraordinarily self-conscious • Does not like being touched (by men) (p. 33) • Homophobic (p. 51) • Does not want friends • Likes terrified people (p. 70) • Materialist (p. 58) • Arrogant • Clever • Self-absorbed • Naturalistic attitude (survival of the sickest) (p. 67) • Never dreams (p. 78)
Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No discernible speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinarily self-conscious • Commanding tone • Manipulating • Stichomythie (conveys reticence or passion) interrupted by monologue (p. 25)
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searches for the parked car. • Does not eat “things”, but shows his face “at work” (p.82). • Sings “Cradle Me to Heaven” . ”a terrible howl – half human, half-animal. It has a strange, hypnotic, barbaric beauty” (p. 84). • Touches Haley, pulls her up from the chair and sways with her from side to side (p. 87) • Eats chocolate (p. 88) • Wants to take Presley to buy chocolate(p. 90) • Scares Presley when grabbing Cosmo's coat (p. 95) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting in the gutter • Vomits in the house • Explores the flat/house (p. 37) • Eats cockroach (p. 62) • Induces Presley to eat a cockroach (p. 65) • Looks at photographs together with Presley • Plays with Presley's memories • Flirts and threatens • Eats chocolate (p. 72) • Gives Presley a “little show” together with Pitchfork (p. 82) • Commands Pitch to eat chocolate (p.88) • Attempts to rape Haley (p. 92)
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work associate of Cosmo • Works as a showman • Does probably not get any money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work associate of Pitchfork • Works as a showman • Owns probably all the money
Typology/summary	Flat, static, opaque and psychological character	Round, static, opaque and transpsychological character

Source: Own composition.