

away by michael gow characters

Away by Michael Gow is a prominent Australian play that delves into the complexities of human relationships, the search for identity, and the impact of the natural environment on personal growth. Set against the backdrop of a summer holiday in Australia, the play presents a rich tapestry of characters, each with their unique perspectives and struggles. This article will explore the main characters in "Away," their development throughout the play, and the thematic significance of their journeys.

Overview of the Play

"Away" was written in 1986 and is often regarded as a quintessential Australian work. The narrative centers around three families who embark on a vacation, attempting to escape the realities of their lives. As they navigate the challenges of relationships, grief, and self-discovery, the characters are brought together in a poignant examination of the human condition.

Main Characters in "Away"

The play features a diverse cast of characters, each representing various facets of Australian society. The primary characters include:

1. Tom

Tom is a central character who embodies the youthful spirit and the quest for freedom. He is a high school student grappling with the loss of his father, which profoundly affects his outlook on life. Throughout the play, Tom's character evolves as he learns to cope with grief and the realities of adulthood.

- Development:
- Tom initially displays a carefree attitude, but his father's death weighs heavily on him.
- His relationship with his mother, Gwen, is strained, reflecting the struggle between parental expectations and personal desires.

2. Gwen

Gwen is Tom's mother and serves as a driving force in the narrative. She represents the traditional values and expectations of a mother figure in Australian society. As the play unfolds, Gwen's character is revealed

to be deeply affected by her husband's death and her desire to protect her family.

- Themes:

- Gwen's character explores themes of maternal love, loss, and the difficulty of moving on after tragedy.
- Her relationship with Tom highlights the generational divide and the challenge of communication in times of grief.

3. Vic

Vic is Gwen's husband and is characterized by his pragmatic approach to life. Although he is largely absent from the action due to his death, his presence looms large over the narrative.

- Significance:

- Vic represents the ideal of stability and security in a family.
- His death acts as a catalyst for the emotional journeys of the other characters.

4. Coral

Coral is Vic's sister and adds a layer of complexity to the family dynamics. She is a free spirit, contrasting sharply with Gwen's more conservative nature. Coral's character embodies the theme of escapism and the desire to break free from societal constraints.

- Characteristics:

- Coral is portrayed as adventurous and spontaneous, often seeking to challenge the status quo.
- Her relationship with the other characters serves to highlight the tensions between tradition and modernity.

5. Harry

Harry is Coral's husband and represents the grounded, practical side of life. He often finds himself caught between Coral's whimsical nature and the harsh realities of their situation.

- Role:

- Harry serves as a stabilizing force, often trying to mediate the conflicts between Coral and Gwen.
- His character reflects the struggles of balancing personal desires with familial responsibilities.

6. The Young Couple

A young couple appears in the play, embodying the themes of love and youthful optimism. Their interactions serve as a counterbalance to the more serious themes of loss and grief experienced by the older characters.

- Representation:
- They symbolize hope and the potential for new beginnings, contrasting with the established family dynamics.

Thematic Significance of the Characters

The characters in "Away" are not just individuals; they represent broader themes inherent in the human experience. The following elements are particularly significant:

1. Grief and Healing

The play's exploration of grief is central to the characters' journeys. Each character deals with loss in different ways, showcasing the varied responses to death and the healing process.

- Tom's journey: His evolution from a carefree youth to a more reflective individual highlights the impact of grief on personal growth.
- Gwen's struggle: Gwen's inability to let go of the past illustrates the challenges of moving forward after loss.

2. Escape and Freedom

The notion of escape is prevalent throughout "Away," as the characters seek refuge from their troubles through a holiday. This desire to escape represents a universal human longing for freedom from life's burdens.

- Coral's character: Her adventurous spirit serves as a metaphor for the pursuit of freedom and the challenges of societal expectations.
- The holiday setting: The Australian landscape serves as a backdrop for self-discovery and reflection, emphasizing the connection between nature and personal growth.

3. Family Dynamics

The complex relationships between the characters reveal the intricacies of family dynamics. The play examines how personal struggles can affect familial bonds and the importance of communication.

- Gwen and Tom's relationship: Their evolving dynamic underscores the difficulty of understanding and supporting one another in times of grief.
- Coral and Harry's interactions: Their contrasting personalities highlight the challenges of maintaining harmony within a family.

Conclusion

In "Away" by Michael Gow, the characters serve as a lens through which the audience can explore profound themes of grief, escape, and family dynamics. Each character's journey is intricately woven into the narrative, allowing for a rich exploration of the human experience. Through their struggles and transformations, the play not only reflects the complexities of Australian society but also resonates with universal themes that speak to audiences across cultures and time periods. The enduring significance of "Away" lies in its ability to capture the essence of what it means to be human, making it a timeless piece of literature.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the central character in 'Away' by Michael Gow?

The central character in 'Away' is Coral, a mother who is navigating her family's complexities during a summer holiday.

What role does Tom play in 'Away'?

Tom is Coral's husband, who struggles with his own emotional barriers and the impact of their family's dynamics.

How do the characters of Laura and Vic contribute to the theme of love in 'Away'?

Laura and Vic's relationship illustrates youthful love and the challenges of growing up, highlighting the contrasts between idealism and reality.

What significance does the character of the Stranger hold in 'Away'?

The Stranger represents an outsider perspective and serves as a catalyst for the characters' self-discovery and reflection throughout their journeys.

How does the character of Glynn reflect societal issues in 'Away'?

Glynn embodies the struggles of working-class individuals, showcasing the economic and social challenges faced by families in Australia.

What is the relationship dynamic between the characters of Coral and Laura?

Coral and Laura's relationship is complex, marked by tension and love, as Coral grapples with her daughter's burgeoning independence.

How does the character of the Doctor influence the themes in 'Away'?

The Doctor serves as a symbol of authority and the medical perspective on life, emphasizing themes of healing and the fragility of existence.

What does the character of the Fairy illustrate in the play 'Away'?

The Fairy represents a sense of fantasy and escapism, contrasting with the harsh realities faced by the other characters, and adds a layer of magical realism.

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