

The aim of this essay is to ascertain to what extent "A Taste Of Honey", a play by Shelagh Delaney, could be described as a "kitchen -sink" drama.

The term "kitchen – sink" drama originated in the literature of the 1950's and 1960's. It aims to provide a vivid picture of working – class life in all its often unpleasant reality. The genre can be exemplified by John Osborne's famous play "Look Back In Anger" and in books such as Alan Sillitoe's "Saturday Night And Sunday Morning".

A kitchen – sink drama has the following characteristics:- It is always set in a working - class environment ; usually in a bed-sit or flat. It always deals with domestic issues, with conflicts that take place between people who are poor and live in cramped conditions.

The genre uses ordinary everyday language in an attempt to provide the audience with an accurate picture of one section of society.

"A Taste Of Honey" is set in Salford , Manchester , in a "comfortless flat". It is about a young girl named Jo who lives with her mother in a shabby flat in a poor area. Jo's mother, whom she refers to as Helen, is a prostitute and they live off her earnings. Helen drinks a lot and Jo blames Helen for disrupting her education. This has led to a hostile relationship between them.

The author uses everyday, often crude language in an attempt to accurately typify their lives. For example, when Peter and Helen come to see Jo:

Helen : "Take your bloody money and get out."

Peter : "Thank you."

Helen : "You dirty bastard."

A kitchen – sink drama is set in a working – class environment and "A Taste Of Honey" certainly reflects this. As Helen says:

"...but there's a lovely view of the gas works . We share a bathroom with the community..."

Also, Peter says:

"What on earth made you choose such a ghastly district..."

Both of these quotes make the area and environment sound very working –class and rather slum – like. A kitchen – sink drama also looks at the conflicts, which arise under these conditions. In the play many conflicts are depicted, for example Helen kicks Geoff out of the flat he shares with Jo. Jo doesn't know about this. Helen only does this without Jo's knowledge because she knows Jo wants him there. Helen argues with Peter because he keeps touching her:

Peter: (Petting her) "Now you know, I like this mother relationship"

Helen: "Stop it!"

Peter: " Aren't you wearing your girdle?"

The domestic issues that make "A Taste Of Honey" a good example of kitchen sink drama mainly arise between Helen and Jo. For example, Helen asks Jo to get her a drink. Jo refuses and says:

"Why should I run around after you?"

Also when Jo is getting married Helen argues...

Jo: My boyfriend. He asked me to marry him.

Helen: Well, you silly little bitch...

Helen: I could choke you.

All of this suggests that Helen and Jo don't have a very strong relationship and this could be related to the play being "a kitchen sink drama."

Another relationship that deals with domestic issues is between Helen and Peter (mother and boyfriend.) The issues that occur between them is: - when Peter finds out that Helen has a daughter

Peter... That puts another ten years on her.

This shows that Peter is being a little cruel about her age, as he knows that Helen is always trying to look and act younger.

When Peter finds out that Jo's pregnant he makes fun of her: -

Peter (singing):- Who's got a bun in the oven? Who's
Got a cake in the stove?

This shows that he doesn't really care for her and takes any opportunity to make fun of her. He also may be a bit drunk.

Another domestic issue that arises is between Jo, Jimmie and Geoff. For example, Jo is upset when Jimmie goes away.

Jo: You've no need to worry, Helen. He's gone away
He may be back in six months, but there again, he may....

This shows that Jo is uncertain to whether or not Jimmie is going to come back.

The language used in "A Taste of Honey" is not Standard English Grammar. It has the colloquial vigor of ordinary every day language. Normal "common" day language is used to give the effect of a "kitchen sink drama." For example:-

Jo...: you'll end up an old down-and-out boozier knocking back the
Meths.

This shows that Jo has an excellent command of the language and is from a working class background.

The anger in the play comes from Jo towards her mother. She is angry with Helen because its Helens fault that Jo didn't get a good education or go to Arts College.

A Taste of Honey can be described with words such as angry, working-class, gritty, defiant, comic-sarcasm (from Peter and basically the whole story line), it is also tragic, socially aware and has variety and scope.

Overall "A Taste of Honey" is a traditional Kitchen Sink Drama, with all the characteristics of the genre.

The play ends with this poem:

As I was going up Pippin Hill,
Pippin Hill was dirty.
And there I met a pretty miss,
And she dropped me a curtsy.
Little miss, pretty miss,
Blessings light upon you.
If I had half a crown a day,
I'd gladly spend it on you.