

MEMORANDUM TO THE *BEST BOOKS STUDY WORK GUIDE: THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S WIFE*

ANALYSIS AND QUESTIONS

Foreword (p. 2)

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|-------------------------|---|
| Character | e.g. the people in the play plus their distinctive traits and qualities. |
| Plot | e.g. what happens in the play and why it happens. |
| Setting | e.g. the place and time where and when the action takes place. |
| Stage directions | e.g. instructions from the playwright to guide the producer and the actors. |
- There are no “right” answers.

Key features (p. 3)

- Prose fiction contains all the elements that are found in drama (story, characters, etc.) and in addition it can include all the actual dialogue that would make up a play.
- It differs in that it includes in the text itself all the information that a playwright is forced to write in stage directions.

Introduction to The *Lighthouse Keeper's Wife* (p. 4-6)

- The speaker and Casper are both able to prevent themselves from seeing the movie as unreal or unbelievable.
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Type of character	Stella Lamprecht	The other three characters (Plaatjes, Adriaan Lamprecht and Barney)
Major character	√	
Minor character		√
Round character	√	
Flat character		√
Dynamic character	√	
Static character		√

Protagonist	√	
Antagonist		√

3. Plot

Word: causality

Meaning: Whatever happens does so for a reason (a cause) and in turn it causes other things to happen as a result.

4. Conflict

“Each of them in his own way represents an obstacle in Stella’s way ...”

5. Structure

Structure	Applying this to <i>The Lighthouse Keeper’s Wife</i>
Exposition	The first two acts; we meet the four characters.
Rising action	From Barney’s destruction of Plaatjes’ boat to rising tensions during Barney’s visit to the Lamprechts.
Climax	Lamprechts cuts out Plaatjes’ tongue.
Falling action	Stella echoes the words Plaatjes used at the beginning of the play.
Dénouement	Stella is fitted with a strait jacket.

6. Setting

The play is set on the existing Robben Island, which lies seven kilometres off Table Bay in the Atlantic Ocean. The lighthouse is a real fixture on the island. The date is around 1900.

7. Stage directions

The narrator provides all information in the first or third person as the need arises. It is distinguished from dialogue in that it is not in inverted commas.

8. Dialect

Dutch: *Mijn baas*
 Cape coloured slang: *Hey’ta*
 An African language: *Molimo (SeSotho)/Ndidladla! (isiXhosa)*

9. Theme

Being given some authority turns petty officials into bullies.

OR The desire for freedom is not easily defeated.

10. About the author

Johannesburg; Los Angeles; London; Oxford

About the play (pp. 7-8)

1. Robben Island

Captives	From	Until
Khoikhoi	1591	?
Xhosa captives during the Frontier Wars	1779	1878
Tuberculosis patients	Early 1800s	?
Lepers and the mentally ill	1846	1931
Political prisoners (maximum security prison)	1961	1991
Convicted criminals (medium security prison)	1961	1996

2. The lighthouse

To make sure that the light was always burning. We are not told whether this was still a “bonfire”, as in Van Riebeeck’s time, or a gas flame or other kind of lamp. It was before electrification in 1938.

3. Pre-reading

- There is no right answer to this question. Your reasons should be based on what you know about yourself in hazardous situations.
- The reasonable answer here is that the desire for freedom differs among both individuals and cultures. Draw on your own experience to support your answer.

THE PLAY: The Lighthouse Keeper’s Wife (pp. 10)

Stage directions

Act	Page	Stage directions that identify the scene for each act
I	11	Plaatjes crosses the stage, heading for the rocky cove .
II	18	“A lamp on the table lights the kitchen area .” Lamprecht and Stella are already present in the kitchen when the curtain opens.
III	24	There is no lamp in the kitchen area. Instead, Plaatjes and Barney are in position near the boat and the rocky cove .
IV	30	“The light comes up in the kitchen area .” Lamprecht is in the area, dancing, when the curtain opens.
V	38	Barney crosses the darkened stage, carrying a lamp and dragging Plaatjes towards the boat in the rocky cove .

VI	41	Stella is busy working on Plaatjes' boat in the rocky cove .
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POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Below are some guidelines for these questions and spaces for your answers. These questions are answered both in your copy of the play and in the memorandum for this Study Guide and Workbook. Differences between the two sets of suggested answers tell you that writing about a literary text is subjective, unlike solving problems in Mathematics, where there is always a single correct answer. What is important in literary analysis is that the answer should be supported by the text.

Act I

Question 1 Act I (p. 11)

Quotations	Addressed by? To? Where?
God knows. No more up and down empty corridors. Cold stone jugs.	By Plaatjes and to himself here and now.
<i>Mijn baas. Mijn baas.</i>	By Plaatjes to Barney or some other warder in the mental patients' quarters.
God knows you must think, Plaatjes.	By and to himself while he's in the mental patients' quarters.
Wash your hands. Scrub your feet. Check the chains.	Either by Barney or some other warder to Plaatjes, giving him instructions. Or by Plaatjes to himself in the mental patients' quarters.
Come, my captain, come and lead us from this place of desolation!	By Plaatjes to "freedom" (in the wind).

Question 2 Act I (p. 11)

Images	What the images refer to
... her sweet feet dangle ...	Table Bay or the mountain itself rises out of the sea.
She is dressed to the nines.	The mountain is covered in vegetation.
Her hair blows fresh ...	Wisps of cloud are being blown from the mountain.
Shoes shining ...	(Perhaps) the surf breaking along the shore is bright in the sun.

Her lips are red ...	(Perhaps) this refers to the reddish colour of some of the rocks or to the grapes that grow on the slopes.
Her eyes are blue ...	(Perhaps) the blue sky above the mountain
... she pulls that blanket ...	The moving blanket of clouds ...
... around her naked shoulders	... cover the rock faces near the top of the mountain.
She'll take us in her arms	The 'U' formed by Table Mountain in the middle with Lion's Head and Devil's Peak on either side.

Question 3 Act I (p. 12)

The quotation: "You know you're not allowed to talk to strangers."

Its relevance: Stella is a stranger, so he wants to get rid of her to avoid landing in trouble.

Question 4 Act I (p. 12)

She realises that he is afraid of getting into trouble for talking to her so she wants to reassure him that he has nothing to fear from her – she has no official status on the island.

Question 5 Act I (p. 12)

It's a convenient way to inform the audience about her relationship with Lamprecht.

Question 6 Act I (p. 13)

The earlier questions were impersonal, asking for information much as an official might. The question about loneliness goes to the heart of his efforts to leave the island. He misses his own people back on the mainland; he is lonely without them.

Question 7 Act I (p. 13)

The conflict between the characters, climaxing when Lamprecht cuts off his tongue.

Question 8 Act I (p. 13)

Perhaps to protect Stella from any suspicion Lamprecht might have that she was flirting with Barney, or perhaps to protect himself from a similar suspicion. Either way, it tells us that he is aware of how jealous Lamprecht is. It also tells us that he is dishonest and cowardly.

Act II (pp. 14-16)

Question 9 Act II (p. 14)

Stella has only just named Prospero for Lamprecht. Since he goes on to comment about Prospero before asking Stella if she thought he had a lighthouse, it is obvious that "he" refers to Prospero. Her question implies that her thoughts are elsewhere and she is paying little attention to what Lamprecht is saying.

Question 10 Act II

A	Lamprecht is rude and aggressive towards Stella.
B	Lamprecht wants to keep Stella from interacting with other people.
C	Lamprecht doesn't trust Stella with other men.

D	Stella feels cold and hostile towards Lamprecht.
E	Stella objects to Lamprecht's attempts to control her.
F	Stella feels intimidated by Lamprecht.
G	Stella refuses to be intimidated by Lamprecht.
H	Stella would like to improve the relationship.

Note: Only the first lines in the table are quoted – answers A-H are listed in the right column.

Lines from Scene 2	A-H
LAMPRECHT: People crowd ...	B
LAMPRECHT: How was your walk ...	D
STELLA: Precisely. And I'm a grown woman	E D
LAMPRECHT: What's your breasts got to do ...	A E/G
LAMPRECHT: Desperate? Who's desperate ...	A F/G
LAMPRECHT: Why can't you be like other women ...	B E A E
LAMPRECHT: Hold it now! Don't go blowing your horns ...	A E G

LAMPRECHT: (<i>watches her in silence and sips his brandy</i>) I hope you ...	B
LAMPRECHT: He's not your concern, Stella ...	B E/G
STELLA: Adriaan? (<i>LAMPRECHT puts his jacket on.</i>) Are you ...	H
STELLA: We can't go back, can ...	C G C
LAMPRECHT: They always do! ...	C F

Description of their attitudes and feelings:

Lamprecht expects Stella to agree with his opinions, for example about not socialising with neighbours ("What you say, Stella?"). He is protective and controlling (for example warning her against going near the lepers or the insane, and demanding "Why can't you be like other women and stay at home?"). He reacts defensively to any suspicion of opposition or independence of opinion ("Now what's that supposed to mean?"); he is prudish when she refers to her breasts ("Well, there's no bloody reason to be crude about it") and says "damn" and takes great offence when she describes both of them as "desperate". He is jealous and distrustful ("... he would have tried his luck with you. They always do! I see these bastards coming and you leading them on.")

Stella is uninterested in his views ("Stella nods"; and she appears not to be paying attention when he is speaking about Prospero.) She defies his instructions to be careful about who she sees on the island and shows a lack of respect for him ("Forget it. No use explaining to you.") Under provocation she becomes rebellious ("Don't tell me what to do") and angry ("*slams her fist on the table*"; "Damn it! Damn it!").

Act III (pp. 16-19)

Question 11 Act III (p. 16)

- **Barney:** He is indifferent to Plaatjes' feelings; believes Plaatjes has nothing better to do than build his boat.
- **Stella:** She sympathises with Plaatjes and feels sorry for him.
- **Plaatjes:** He looks devastated but he isn't defeated; he will begin again.

Question 12 Act III (p. 17)

No. He means she should leave the island altogether for her own good.

Question 13 Act III (p. 18-19)

	Sane	Insane
I see many come here bright with hopes and dreams. Leave. Leave before it's too late.	√	
I got a boat to build. Places to go. My people are waiting.		√
Some they drown in the sea; others they drown in love.	√	
That one, she is my Flora. She got herself lost in the fog one night long time ago. She was carrying spices from the east. Smell this.	√	
I must take the message from the spirits of the great ones.		√
Everywhere. <i>Ngentla!</i> Look and you see. (<i>Fingers the air</i>) Makana ... Gcaleka ... Sandile. Spirits of the great chiefs who want to go back to their wives and their children. <i>Plaatjes</i> must take the message to the people ... they must not lose hope. The great <i>Molimo</i> has spoken. <i>Kukazakulu</i> ... the spirits will return. The Lord's people will be set free. <i>Hey'ta</i> freedom! (<i>Dances in a circle</i>) <i>Hey'ta</i> freedom! <i>Hey'ta</i> freedom!		√
Seven seals. Seven angels. Seven trumpets. Four riders will come. White horse and his rider take the land from the people. Red horse steals the peace from the people. Black horse kills the cattle of the people. Pale horse stops the breaking of the waves. Persecution. Sun burns black. Moon rises in the blood of the people. Seven seals. Seven angels. Seven trumpets.		√
(<i>takes a worn Bible from his pocket, tears a page from it and chews it; offers her a page</i>) Eat, lady. Eat and walk with the spirits of the great ones. Eat the message of <i>Molimo</i> and let the words of the great chiefs become flesh.		√
Madness, she's like the sea. She drowns you if you let her.	√	
<i>Hey'ta</i> ... she's a beauty that one. She sleeps with one eye open. Her mouth is filled with stars. Her face is bright like the early morning spring. Her breath smells like sweet potatoes. When she smiles, the sun goes down over her head.	√	
(<i>slowly dances around her</i>) <i>Ukutya kweendlebe</i> . Her voice is food to my ears. My head lies in her breast like a bird in its nest. She washes my hands and my feet with her tides. Her belly is full of seasons, year after year. At night all the men come out and dance with her. The children play in her streets. (<i>Takes STELLA's hand and they dance</i>)	√	
LAMPRECHT: (<i>turns and faces PLAATJES who now stands ready with the hammer in his hand. Charges PLAATJES again, who in turn swiftly moves sideways causing LAMPRECHT to charge into the hull of the boat. PLAATJES grabs him from behind in a similar wrestling grip to BARNEY's and forces LAMPRECHT to the ground. He releases LAMPRECHT and moves away. LAMPRECHT gasps for breath.</i>) So, you're not so crazy after all, are you? PLAATJES: <i>Izulu elibi ... hamba! Voetsek! Go!</i>		√

Plaatjes' insanity/sanity:

He's not insane:

- His advice is based on his observations and makes sense; he is also able to see the matter from her point of view.
- He is able to point out a shipwreck and to name the ship.
- He dodges Lamprecht and after subduing him lets him go. This persuades Lamprecht that he is not mad after all.
- His knowledge of the book of Revelations is accurate.

He is insane:

- He persists in rebuilding the boat despite knowing that Barney will simply break it up each time.
- He sees spirits.
- He believes what is in the book of Revelations to be literal.

Act IV (pp. 20-23)**Question 14 Act IV (p. 20)**

Stella dances with Plaatjes, but when Lamprecht calls to her to join him in dancing she does not arrive and he has to dance with a broomstick instead. The implication is that their relationship has lost the joy and intimacy that it had earlier on. When Lamprecht recalls the way they used to dance in Mossel Bay early in their marriage, Stella puts a large shell to her ear. This distances her from Lamprecht's nostalgia and again aligns her instead with Plaatjes, who gave her the shell.

Question 15 Act IV (p. 21)

Barney brings wine for both of them and he brings flowers for Stella alone. He offers her wine, makes several attempts to include her in the conversation, and when she leaves the room he follows her to the door.

Question 16 Act IV (p. 22)

- He views the inmates as sub-human.
- He is unaware that it is incestuous to have a relationship with your niece.
- He is willing to "make Plaatjes disappear" – i.e. to murder him.
- He aspires to be a wrestler like his hero, Tromp van Diggelen.

Question 17 Act IV (p. 22)

- He is distrustful of other men near his wife.
- He doesn't respect Stella's privacy; he steals the letter she has been writing and gives it to Barney to read to him.
- He longs for signs of affection from Stella.

Q18 Act IV (p. 23)

- She is cold and unfriendly towards her husband and her visitor, not even thanking Barney for the flowers. She answers Barney's direct questions but does not otherwise participate in the conversation; instead she cups the shell to her ear and leaves early to go to bed.

Act V (pp. 23-25)

Question 19 Act V (pp. 23-24)

Note: Only the first few words in each extract are indicated.

Extract	Insane?	Sane?
His interaction with Barney on p. 18 before Lamprecht's appearance. Consider the stage directions too.	√	
BARNEY: ... What was it like ...		√
BARNEY: ... I loved her more than ...		√
BARNEY: ... Tell him what it was like ...		√

- **Sane:** he replies sensibly and even poetically to Barney's questions, and asks sensible questions in return.
- **Insane:** the memories that frighten him; the list of unrelated words he babbles.

Question 20 Act V (p. 24-25)

- Plaatjes did not have any designs on Stella; she was the initiator of their (innocuous) relationship, not the other way round.
- Plaatjes was describing Cape Town in his speech starting on page 41; Lamprecht was mistaken in thinking he was talking about Stella.

Act VI (pp. 25-28)

Question 21 Act VI (pp. 25-26)

- She too is attempting to knock together a futile boat in which to escape from the island.
- She uses the same rude words in trying to chase Lamprecht away – *suka*; *hamba*.
- After a sane conversation with Lamprecht she talks to herself in the same way that Plaatjes used to do and speaks about freedom and about the cloud on Table Mountain, just as he did.

Question 22 Act VI (pp. 26-27)

Barney's lack of sympathy and understanding for Plaatjes is abnormal. This is reinforced by his nonchalant willingness to do away with Plaatjes altogether. (Is his obsession with body-building and wrestling not abnormal too?)

Lamprecht's jealousy regarding Stella is groundless and extreme, and it leads him to cut out Plaatjes' tongue, which is the act of a lunatic.

Question 23 Act VI (p. 28)

No. She lives in the same house as Lamprecht, so it was unnecessary to write letters to him. She could have told him of her love if that's what she actually felt. But she treats him with no love at all, and in fact is by turns angry, sneering and rude.

OR

Yes. She was writing to the man as he was when she fell in love with him. She longs to have him be like that again.

Note: Essay questions' answers will differ according to the learners' point of view.

Characters (pp. 41- 55)

1. Plaatjes (pp. 41-42)

1.1

a.

BARNEY: The boat keeps old Plaatjes occupied. Otherwise he'd be running around the Kraal again telling everyone he's a prophet. ... Told the magistrate he's the saviour ... come to save his people ... (p. 17)

STELLA: Why do you want to go back to the mainland, Plaatjes? (p. 27)

PLAATJES: I must take the message from the spirits of the great ones. (p. 27)

STELLA: But they're all dead. They can't possibly return. (p. 28)

PLAATJES: They will ... that is the message I must take to my people. (p. 28)

b.

o *Izulu elibi!* Plaatjes sees it coming! ... Bad tides. (pp. 15-16)

o *(Breaks loose from Barney's grip) Izulu elibi!* I smell it! Bad tides are coming! (p. 17)

o Go away, woman! *Suka!* I see many come here bright with hopes and dreams. Leave. Leave before it's too late. (p. 25)

c.

• Let it be known, my brothers. Rise of dawn, we are leaving this place of weeping forever! (p. 12)

• Tomorrow we'll walk her gentle shores and she'll welcome us as an old lover does. (p. 12)

• Plaatjes is coming. Plaatjes is coming, my brothers! (p. 13)

• All night she waits there. She knows we're coming. She knows her captain is coming home. (p. 41)

1.2

a.

• **PLAATJES** Freedom! *Hey'ta*, freedom! She calls us in the wind! She sings to us! (p. 12)

• **PLAATJES** *Hey'ta* freedom! *(Dances in a circle) Hey'ta* freedom! *Hey'ta* freedom! (p. 27)

• **STELLA:** Where are these spirits? (p. 27)

- **PLAATJES:** (*Points at the seagulls overhead*) *Ingaba-ngaba.* (p. 27)
- **STELLA:** *Ngaba?* (p. 27)
- **PLAATJES:** We sing the same song of freedom! (*Cries like a seagull*) (p. 27)

b.

No more up and down empty corridors. Cold stone jugs. *Mijn baas. Mijn baas.* No more shiny floors. Stench. Death. Decay. ... Cries. Whispers. Fears. ... Be brave. No more sleepless nights. Wash your hands. Scrub your feet. Check the chains. Scratch. Scratch. Watch the rats. Lice. Lice everywhere. ... No more *mijn baas!* (p. 12)

c.

Plaatjes will tell you of that far shore calling in the wind. Oh, how her sweet feet dangle in the waters of the docks. Old clock tower is ticking away. (*Looks at the horizon offshore*) Looky her! She is dressed to the nines. Her hair blows fresh in the southeaster. Shoes shining like a late afternoon. *Molimo!* Her lips are red like grapes. Her eyes are blue as the morning skies! (*Paces toward the edge of the cove*) Watch how she pulls that blanket from the mountain around her naked shoulders. (p. 12)

Our lady is calling! The bands are playing! Sweet maidens of Papendorp are lighting up their lamps! The streets of Kanaladorp are filled with cheers and laughter! They're dancing on the Parade! (p. 14)

- 1.3 **PLAATJES:** You must think, Plaatjes. No more slipping into madness ... (p. 12)
STELLA: I don't think you're really mad. (p. 28)
PLAATJES: Madness, she's like the sea. She drowns you if you let her. (p. 28)

1.4

STELLA: You're quite a craftsman. Were you a boat builder before? (p. 13)

PLAATJES: Do not despair! Tomorrow is but a few pieces of wood between this place and freedom away! (*Gathers the rest of the planks into a heap*) (p. 25)

STELLA: You should hide the boat. They'll destroy it again. (p. 28)

PLAATJES: They can't kill my hope. (p. 28)

1.5

Plaatjes will tell you of that far shore calling in the wind. Oh, how her sweet feet dangle in the waters of the docks. Old clock tower is ticking away. (*Looks at the horizon offshore*) Looky her! She is dressed to the nines. Her hair blows fresh in the southeaster. Shoes shining like a late afternoon. *Molimo!* Her lips are red like grapes. Her eyes are blue as the morning skies! (*Paces toward the edge of the cove*) Watch how she pulls that blanket from the mountain around her naked shoulders ... (p. 12)

- Similar descriptions of the mainland on p. 14.
- **STELLA:** Tell me again about the mainland. (p. 28)
- **PLAATJES:** *Hey'ta ... she's a beauty that one. She sleeps with one eye open. Her mouth is filled with stars. Her face is bright like the early morning spring. Her breath smells like sweet potatoes. When she smiles, the sun goes down over her head.*
(LAMPRECHT appears. He stops and watches them.) (p. 28)
- **STELLA:** More! (p. 28)
- **PLAATJES:** (*slowly dances around her*) *Ukutya kweendlebe.* Her voice is food to my ears. My head lies in her breast like a bird in its nest. She washes my hands and my feet with her tides. Her belly is full of seasons, year after year. At night all the men come out and dance with her. The children play in her streets.
(Takes STELLA's hand and they dance) They sing her praises. They dance to

her rhythms. When she laughs, her breasts swell with pleasure. When she cries, the trees lose their leaves in her honour ... (pp. 28, 29)

2. Stella (pp. 43-48)

2.1 Stella and Plaatjes (p. 13)

Stella persists with her friendly questioning even although Plaatjes is rude and threatening and tries to chase her away. She does not believe that he really means it, and she also does not believe that he is actually mad. We see that she is patient, persistent and perceptive.

Here we have confirmation that Stella is perceptive about Plaatjes. She also has the courage to defy Lamprecht when he tries to forbid her to see Plaatjes.

Just as Stella defended Plaatjes against Lamprecht, here she does the same against Barney. Unlike him, she is able to see Plaatjes' point of view and to empathise with him.

Stella appreciates Plaatjes' poetic gift.

2.2 The dutiful wife

These signs that Stella tries to be a caring wife, concerned about Lamprecht's health and dutiful in providing food and drink, overlap with her growing rebellion against him.

2.3 Her rebelliousness towards Lamprecht

Although Stella tries to downplay her beauty by saying that she is losing it, we can assume that she says so in order to reassure Lamprecht that he no longer has to fear the attentions of other men.

Both Barney and Lamprecht think that Stella is beautiful, however, and so we can assume that she still is, and that Lamprecht still has grounds for his fears.

Stella probably means that Lamprecht's jealousy makes him desperate in his efforts to prevent her from interacting with other men. These attempts to control her are in turn what make her feel desperate. During the course of the play Stella abandons all efforts to be a dutiful wife. She becomes progressively more rebellious as the play develops. In the first extract (p. 21) she simply says he must not tell her what to do; in the second (p. 29) she curses him and his lighthouse; in the third (p. 42) she calls him a coward and a bastard and echoes Plaatjes in using "*suka!*" and "*hamba!*" The key to her rebellion lies in this: "It's about me! About freedom!" In the final extract (p. 44) she tells Lamprecht exactly what she is rebelling against – his controlling behaviour.

2.4 Her desire for freedom

The first extract (p. 13) implies that Stella's desire for freedom is threatened by Lamprecht's controlling behaviour, but not caused by it. The pleasure she got from swimming "out there in the ocean" shows that the desire for freedom is part of her nature.

2.5 Her "intellectual" side

Stella's reading includes Shakespeare and books on evolution whereas Lamprecht is illiterate.

Similarly, her views about personal freedom are enlightened compared to Lamprecht's primitive impulses of jealousy and his ruthlessness in acting on them. He almost killed a man in Mossel Bay ("What about Hendricks in Mossel Bay? Did you have to beat him to death ...?") and in the play he cuts out Plaatjes' tongue.

2.6 Her letter-writing

In the play Stella is indifferent to the efforts Lamprecht makes to rekindle the feelings she had when they first knew each other. It is therefore unlikely that she will ever believe that he is capable of "finding his boat" and returning to her. Her letters can only be understood as her hopeless longing for Lamprecht as he was when they first became lovers.

3. Lamprecht (pp. 48-55)

3.1 Both of the first two aspects lie behind this exchange. Lamprecht is probably worried about Stella's safety (over-protective) and would like her to come home (controlling). Both are prompted by his intense jealousy.

3.2 On the face of it Lamprecht seems to be acting against the preference for solitude he claims. His motive behind the invitation is to talk to Barney about Plaatjes, which he does as soon as Stella leaves the room in Act IV.

3.3 Lamprecht's jealousy is discussed on the island – evidence of its intensity and how dangerous Lamprecht is when aroused.

3.4 It's clear from this that Lamprecht and Stella are not always in conflict and that Lamprecht welcomes the companionship that they have shared.

3.5 It is not clear whether Lamprecht actually declined the Superintendent's invitation. He prefers not to socialise. This might be linked to his jealousy: if they both keep away from other people she will be unable to be unfaithful.

3.6 One of the ways Lamprecht tries to control Stella is in what she says and what she thinks. He objects to her mentioning her breasts, which suggests that he is prudish, and he overreacts to her saying that they are both desperate.

3.7 Here Lamprecht's desire to control Stella applies both to what she does (she goes out instead of staying at home) and how she speaks.

3.8 Here Lamprecht repeats his wish that they should not associate with other people on the island. In this he is showing both his anti-social side and his wish to control Stella.

3.9 It is clear that Lamprecht's jealousy has made him violent in the past. This should prepare us both for the way he grabs Barney by the throat and for his cutting out of Plaatjes' tongue. Did Stella lead the men on? If so, then Lamprecht has grounds to feel insecure – and jealous. On the other hand, an intensely jealous person would misinterpret innocent behaviour as being provocative.

3.10 Here Lamprecht's jealousy turns violent. We see here that his attempts to control Stella have failed. He told her not to go to where Plaatjes was building his boat, but she disobeyed him, and she now refuses to be dragged by the arm.

3.11 Both in his attempt to catch hold of Plaatjes and in his threat when he leaves, Lamprecht reveals the violent side of his jealousy.

3.12 By reminding Stella of happier times earlier in their marriage, Lamprecht is hoping to reclaim their lost love. It is also clear that he used to enjoy socialising.

3.13 Either Lamprecht craves company despite claiming that he prefers not to see other people, or else he is delaying Barney because he hasn't yet managed to talk to him privately about keeping Plaatjes locked up.

3.14 Lamprecht believes that the only way to prevent Stella from seeing Plaatjes is by having him locked up. He turns down Barney's offer to make Plaatjes "disappear", so there is a limit to what he will do out of jealousy.

3.15 Jealousy makes Lamprecht distrustful and sneaky.

3.16 By apologising to Barney, Lamprecht shows that he is aware that his jealous rages are inappropriate.

3.17 Lamprecht pleads here to recapture their lost love.

3.18 Stella's point is that Lamprecht's jealous fears make it impossible for him to get back his original feelings of love for her.

3.19 Because of his jealousy Lamprecht assumes that Stella has been writing to a man she knew in Port Nolloth. Judging from their interaction during the play it seems unlikely that Lamprecht will ever "return to" Stella.

Writing about characters (pp. 56-59)

1. Lamprecht (p. 56)

1.1 His jealousy

Lamprecht's jealousy dates back to when he and Stella lived in Port Nolloth. He believes she "led men on" then, and in the play he considers that by dancing with Plaatjes she is leading him on.

However, Barney makes overtures, commenting on her beauty and bringing her flowers when he comes to supper, and Stella gives no encouragement. Yet Lamprecht grabs Barney round the throat and threatens to kill him. His violence in Port Nolloth might have been similarly unprovoked.

Plaatjes certainly has no romantic designs on Stella, yet Lamprecht attacks him twice, the first time unsuccessfully when Plaatjes dodges away before subduing Lamprecht in a wrestling hold, and the second "successfully" when he cuts out his tongue.

Lamprecht knows that his violence is unacceptable. He apologises to Barney for his attack and restrains him from making Plaatjes "disappear".

1.2 He is overprotective and controlling

Lamprecht's jealousy makes him overprotective of Stella and determined to control her movements. He tries to persuade her not to walk around the island and when she does he follows her, spying on her and sneaking up on her when he thinks he has caught her doing something wrong – as when she was dancing with Plaatjes. He does this openly, asking Barney if he has seen her. His jealousy is a matter of common knowledge on the island.

He tries to control what she says. He criticises her for mentioning her breasts and he scolds her for saying "damn".

He also tries to control her ideas, for example about whether Plaatjes needs her help and her use of "desperate" to describe him.

Lamprecht's jealousy makes him overprotective and controlling and this in turn makes him anti-social.

1.3 Is Lamprecht really so anti-social?

There seem to be two sides to Lamprecht's social urges. On the one hand he harks back to dances at Port Nolloth but on the other he tries to persuade Stella that they are better off not socialising with other people on the island, and he tries to keep her at home.

His invitation to Barney suggests that he simply wants his company, and he later prevails on Barney to stay for yet another brandy. His motives are suspect, however. It seems that he wants time alone with Barney so as to persuade him to keep Plaatjes confined to his prison during the day.

1.4 Reclaiming lost love

When Lamprecht and Stella are not disagreeing about what she does away from the lighthouse, they seem to get on amicably. Stella reads Shakespeare to him and he asks for more; she prepares his meals and pours his brandy. He wants more than this too, reminding her how they used to dance and asking her to dance with him. He has to be satisfied with a broom as a partner, however, and this symbolises their relationship. When he promises to listen to her she tells him it's too late, and when he manages to say that he loves her, she tells him that it sounds hollow – the result of his fears.

2. Barney (pp. 57-59)

2.1 Although Barney is rude to Plaatjes and bossy, he is concerned about him being too late for his supper and refers to himself as Plaatjes' "only friend". This is supported by the Superintendent's opposition to the freedom Barney allows Plaatjes. He tolerates Plaatjes' disobedience for a while, but eventually forces him into his restraint jacket. Although he aspires to being a professional wrestler, he waits until Plaatjes is wearing the restraint jacket before he grabs him in a wrestling grip.

It is also inconsistent of him to warn Plaatjes to stay well away from Stella because of Lamprecht's reputation for violent jealousy but at the same time to harbour thoughts of providing the "bit of love and care" he thinks she needs (the playwright implies this with the three dots ...).

2.2 Barney's denial is a lie that tells us that he is dishonest and possibly that he wishes to protect Plaatjes from Lamprecht's jealous anger.

2.3 Here too we see Barney's ambivalence towards Plaatjes. On the one hand he forces him to be servile (Yes, *mijn baas!*) but on the other he has saved him "some nice chicken bones from last night's supper".

2.4 This confirms our suspicion that despite the threat of Lamprecht's jealousy, Barney has the illusion that Stella might welcome his flirtation.

Barney is just as blind to Plaatjes' distress at the destruction of his boat as he is to Stella's aversion to him.

2.5 A love affair or marriage between cousins is frowned on in the Western world, where it is associated with the lower working class – for example with hillbillies and rednecks in the USA and with "poor whites" in South Africa. By admitting freely that he was in love with his niece, Barney places himself socially. However, the family relationship between an uncle and niece is that of an adult and a child, which puts Barney's love far more inappropriate.

2.6 Barney's offer to murder Plaatjes is probably an empty boast to impress Lamprecht, very much like his dream of becoming a professional wrestler. This is confirmed by the horror he expresses when Lamprecht cuts out Plaatjes' tongue (see 2.7 below).

2.7 Barney's first thought is not for poor Plaatjes, but for himself: he will be in trouble with the Superintendent.

3. Writing about character: Barney

Barney is an orderly in the Kraal, the mental hospital run by his superior, the Superintendent. He has arranged for Plaatjes to be free every day to build a boat out of driftwood planks. He is responsible for putting Plaatjes in a strait jacket every evening and escorting him back to the Kraal. He also destroys Plaatjes' boats surreptitiously when they near completion.

His treatment of Plaatjes is inconsistent. On the one hand he claims to be Plaatjes' only friend, he saves chicken bones for him and he shares personal things with him such as his ambition to become a professional wrestler and how attractive he finds Stella. On the other hand, however, he seems to find pleasure in insulting Plaatjes and bullying him and he is unaware of how Plaatjes feels when his boat is destroyed. He also tells Lamprecht that he could make Plaatjes "disappear", and when Lamprecht cuts out Plaatjes' tongue, Barney's only thought is for his own welfare: what will he tell the Superintendent.

There are similar contradictions in his attitude to Stella and in his aspiration to become a professional wrestler. He is well aware of Lamprecht's jealousy and warns Plaatjes to keep away from her, but he nevertheless flirts with her himself, telling her she is pretty and getting close enough to her to breathe into her neck. He boasts about putting on weight and increasing his strength by following Tromp van Diggelen's programmes and emigrating to the USA to become a professional wrestler, but he gets Plaatjes in a wrestling grip only once he is tied up in a strait jacket, and Lamprecht beats him in an arm wrestle and overpowers him.

THEMES (pp. 60-69)

1. Imprisonment and freedom

- 1.1 The longing for freedom is felt most intensely by those who are imprisoned under terrible conditions.
- 1.2 A sense of freedom arises when one is overcoming a challenge without any assistance or interference.
- 1.3 Being subject to someone's attempts to control one is a kind of imprisonment.
- 1.4 A prisoner is powerless against bullying and humiliation by a warder, and this in turn brings out the worst in the warder.
- 1.5 A jealous man wants all possible rivals for his wife's attention to disappear.
- 1.6 A belief in freedom can survive on very little./Only through self-delusion can a prisoner keep alive a vision of freedom.
- 1.7 See 1.5 above.
- 1.8 A relationship can be just as restrictive of one's freedom as an island or a prison.
- 1.9 Freedom is in the mind, not in one's circumstances. One's imagination and dreams can set one free.

2. Jealousy, fear and isolation

- 2.1 Jealousy and controlling behaviour arise from the fear of losing someone.

- 2.2 Jealousy is obvious to outsiders; it can't be hidden.
- 2.3 A jealous person seeks security in isolation.
- 2.4 There is usually a reason for someone to be distrustful and jealous.
- 2.5 Jealousy can cause someone to lose all self-control and become violent, often without much reason to.
- 2.6 Fear is always destructive, even when it has no obvious cause.

3. Sanity and insanity

- 3.1 It is possible to resist the onset of insanity – to control it.
- 3.2 Opinions about someone else's insanity are subjective, especially if the sanity of the one judging is itself suspect.
- 3.3 What seems like poetry to one person might seem like nonsense to someone else. Opinions about poetry are just as subjective as those about madness.

4. Human rights; autonomy; dignity

- 4.1 See 1.4 above. (A prisoner is powerless against bullying and humiliation by a warder, and this in turn brings out the worst in the warder.) The relationship of warder-prisoner lends itself to abuses of human rights.
- 4.2 Lamprecht believes that he has the right to control what Stella does and to treat "offenders" without respect.
- 4.3 Seeing people as "other" makes it easier to treat them with no respect for their dignity or human rights.

5. Love

- 5.1 Plaatjes' love for his wife was genuine.
- 5.2 Barney's "love" for his niece was one-sided and therefore worth little.
- 5.3 Love and possessiveness are not the same thing.
- 5.4 Fear (jealousy) destroys the feeling of love in both the jealous person and the loved one.
- 5.5 Too much of anything is by definition negative; an excess of any kind is unhealthy. In the case of love the excess takes the form of jealousy and the wish to control the loved one.

Writing about themes

1. Imprisonment and freedom

The play shows that a relationship can be just as much a prison as a building or an island. Stella is just as much a prisoner of Lamprecht's jealousy as Plaatjes is of his confinement in the Kraal on Robben Island. When Lamprecht tries to prevent Stella from building a boat near the end of the play, she shouts that "It's not about the boat! It's about me! About freedom!" When he asks her "Freedom from what?" she shouts, "From you!"

The boat-building links her to Plaatjes, who opens the play with the vow that "Rise of dawn, we are leaving this place of weeping forever." He is firstly a prisoner on the island, but he too is in a relationship that confines him. Barney allows him just enough freedom to spend the day building a boat in which he hopes to escape, but every night he puts him in a restraint jacket and escorts him back to the Kraal.

Both relationships are damaging to the jailer as well as to the prisoner. Barney seems to take pleasure in bullying and humiliating Plaatjes, which undermines his own humanity. Similarly, Lamprecht loses not only Stella's good will, but in her view he has "destroyed every bit of feeling you ever had for me with your stupid fears".

Imprisonment is contrasted with freedom. The longing for freedom is felt most intensely by those who are imprisoned under terrible conditions, such as those described by Plaatjes in the opening scene of the play. He finds freedom in his imagination by picturing the beauty of the mainland and holding fast to his hopes of escaping. "Wrecks to you; freedom to me," he tells Stella. "Boat to you; hope to me." Stella understands this. When Plaatjes is confined to the Kraal near the end of the play and Lamprecht promises to have him released, Stella tells him that "He doesn't need you to set him free! He is free!"

Stella knew what freedom felt like when she was swimming at Mossel Bay, saying it "gave me an immense sense of freedom to be out there in the ocean swimming and swimming". The absence of boundaries in the ocean contrasts with her confinement in a controlling relationship on an island surrounded by an icy, shark-infested sea.

2. Jealousy, fear and isolation

Lamprecht's jealousy has a negative effect on all four characters.

Although Lamprecht doesn't use the word fear, for example when he tells Barney that "I love her more than anything and it breaks my heart every time I see her just talk to another man", it is the fear of losing her that fuels his jealousy (breaks his heart). His solution is to isolate Stella, first by moving to Robben Island and then, once there, by preventing her from interacting with anyone on the island: "Lamprecht will wonder where I am. He's like that, always watching ... worrying about me".

He has failed to isolate Stella in the past and he fails again on Robben Island. When this happens he becomes violent. He was said to have nearly killed a man in Mossel Bay, and in this play he chases Plaatjes round a boat, puts a neck lock on Barney and in the climax of the play cuts Plaatjes' tongue out, in each case in a jealous rage.

Perhaps Stella is partly to blame for Lamprecht's insecurity. He accuses her of "leading them on" in Mossel Bay. She resists Plaatjes' attempts to chase her away and in fact the two become quite close, even dancing together. She also wanders elsewhere on the island, but not in search of opportunities to be unfaithful: she rejects Barney's clumsy flirtations.

Lamprecht's jealousy has the opposite effect to what he intends. Instead of binding her more closely to him, it drives her away in search of freedom: "I'm leaving as soon as I get this boat finished," she tells him, and when he asks where she will go she says, "As far away from you as possible."

Plaatjes is a victim both of Stella's loneliness and of Lamprecht's jealousy. He tries in two different scenes to get Stella to leave, in the first because he's afraid of getting into trouble for speaking to a stranger and in the second because he knows it's for Stella's own good that she should leave him alone. Stella's determination to befriend him prevails, however, and Plaatjes pays for it with the loss of his tongue.

Barney is aware of Lamprecht's jealousy and warns Plaatjes about it. Despite this, he, himself, flirts with her at Plaatjes' boat and brings her flowers when he visits the Lamprechts. Although Stella pays him no special attention in her home, when she leaves Lamprecht attacks Barney, tells "Don't look at my wife the way you do," and threatens to kill him.

Barney is implicated when Lamprecht cuts out Plaatjes' tongue: he brought Plaatjes to the meeting place that night.

3. Sanity and insanity

Robben Island was a prison island where the so-called insane (prostitutes, thieves, debtors and the homeless) were supervised by the apparently sane. This play questions the sanity of both groups. Plaatjes was sane when he was sent to Robben Island for stealing vegetables, although he did see himself as a prophet, but when the play opens he is struggling to control his state of mind: "You

must think, Plaatjes,” he tells himself. “No more slipping into madness.” Barney believes that “Since his wife died last year he’s really gone crazy,” but it may well be the inhumane treatment he receives from Barney that threatens his sanity.

Similarly, Stella is perfectly sane when the play opens, but she was angered by the way Lamprecht tries to imprison her out of jealous fear and distressed when he cuts out Plaatjes’ tongue and has him locked up away from his boat. She takes on Plaatjes’ persona in the final scene and is put in a strait jacket as a result, but she is of sound mind when she ends the play with the words, “They’re your letters, you fool. They were all written for you!”

The implication is that Barney’s bullying is abnormal, and it is this that threatens Plaatjes’ sanity. Similarly, it is Lamprecht’s jealousy that is abnormal and that threatens Stella’s sanity.

Opinions about sanity are subjective. Stella thinks that Plaatjes is sane and that his utterings are poetic, but Lamprecht declares that “The man’s completely insane if you hadn’t noticed,” and describes his poetry as “nonsense”.

4. Human rights; autonomy; dignity

Barney says of the inmates of the Kraal that he sometimes thinks that “they’re not human, you know ... like they descend from another species”. Seeing them like this makes it easier for him to treat them with no respect for their dignity or human rights.

Just as Barney imprisons Plaatjes in the Kraal, so Lamprecht tries to imprison Stella by confining her to Robben Island and to the lighthouse. He gives himself the right to deprive her of any autonomy, and this shows a lack of respect for her dignity and human rights.

5. Love

A final preoccupation in the play is about the nature of love. Plaatjes’ love for his wife was so real that, according to Barney, he “really lost it when his wife died”. His own “love” for his niece was one-sided (“she married someone else”) and doomed anyway since it was considered incestuous.

Lamprecht tells Barney that he loves Stella “more than anything”, but it is clear that possessiveness is not the same as love, and when Stella tells him to “put some feeling” into his declaration of love, he can only respond with “Damn you! Damn you woman!” His fears have destroyed the love he once had for her, and it’s obvious that they have destroyed her love for him too. His confusion about love is clear when he says, “It’s not a sin to love too much, Stella, is it?” Too much of anything is by definition negative and therefore unhealthy. His excess of love takes the form of jealousy and the wish to control Stella.