Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre

Mother Courage and her Children

study pack



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Brecht and Epic Theatre

**WHAT IS EPIC THEATRE?**

A style of theatre developed by Bertolt Brecht based on influences including the Ancient Greeks. The plays appeal to the spectator’s reason rather than his or her emotions and often focus on the plight of the working class. The plays are episodic, require an objective acting style and use a wide variety of theatrical conventions. The audience is required to remain objective and judge issues from a distance.

**WHO IS BERTOLT BRECHT?**

* The father of Epic theatre.
* Born 1898 in Germany.
* Worked in a hospital during WWI and the experience confirmed his hatred of war.
* Did not approve of Stanislavsky; contemptuous of ‘realism,’ and reacted against it.
* Was a fan of Karl Marx and his theories
* He used ***alienation*** effects or ‘***verfremdungseffekt’*** to keep the audience emotionally distanced from the events of the play.
* Wrote most of his plays in exile.
* Insisted that theatre must be ‘fun’
* Was not very interested in actors’ training

“How can theatre be both instructive and entertaining? How can it be divorced from spiritual dope traffic and turned from a home of illusions to a home of experiences? How can the unfree, ignorant man of our century, with his thirst for freedom and his hunger for knowledge; how can the tortured and heroic and abused and ingenious, changeable and world changing man of this great and ghastly century obtain his own theatre which will help him master the world and himself?”

Brecht wanted theatre to make a ***change***

He wanted a theatre where people could make***their own decisions***

He wanted to ***educate***the audience.

He wanted the audience to ***think***

The audience ***must not be emotionally involved***with characters or plot

They must be ***forced to make decisions***about what they see.

**QUESTIONS:**

***Author’s Purpose:***

1. *What is Brecht trying to ‘change’ with Mother Courage?*
2. *What decisions does he want the audience of Mother Courage to make?*
3. *What is he trying to educate his audience about?*
4. *What conventions has Brecht used to ‘alienate’ his audience so that they don’t become emotionally involved?*
5. *How might you stage this production so that the audience does not get emotionally involved?*

Before Brecht:

**REALISM**

Direct observations of humankind

3-dimensional rooms

Realistic scenery and costume

Stanislavsky and

‘Method’ acting

Individual character analysis

Enter Bertolt Brecht:

“But The theatre-goer in the **Epic Theatre** says: “I would never have thought that. You can’t do that. That’s very strange, practically unbelievable. That has to stop. The suffering of this or that person grips me because there is an escape for him. That’s great art – nothing is self-evident. I am made to laugh about those who cry, and cry about those who laugh.”

“The theatre-goer in the **conventional dramatic theatre** says: “Yes, I’ve felt that way too. That’s the way I am. That’s’ life . That’s the way it will always be. The suffering of this or that person grips me because there is no escape for him. That’s great art – everything is self-evident. I am made to cry with those who cry, and laugh with those who laugh.”

“We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings , insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and *encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”*

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**QUESTIONS:**

1. *What moment(s) in Mother Courage might the audience say “You can’t do that!”?*
2. *What moment (s) in Mother Courage are ‘practically unbelievable’?*
3. *What moment (s) in Mother Courage might the audience say “That has to stop!”?*
4. *Which character (s) in Mother Courage are suffering, and there could be an escape for them? Why are they suffering, and how could they escape?*

Dramatic Theatre vs Epic Theatre:

In order to understand Epic Theatre it is useful to make clear distinctions between Dramatic Theatre and Epic Theatre. This chart was written by Brecht himself in 1957.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dramatic Theatre** | **Epic Theatre** |
| **Plot**  Has a beginning, middle and end. Issues raised in the play are resolved. (well-made play) | **Narrative**  Begins anywhere, continues and stops. Issues are not resolved. |
| **Implicates the spectator in a stage situation**  Suggests to the spectator that what he or she is watching is just like real life. | **Turns the spectator into an observer but arouses his capacity for action**  The spectator can question what he/she is seeing. |
| **Provides spectator with sensations**  A theatre of illusion, with ideas reinforced. | **Forces spectator to take decisions**  Makes it clear that there are problems to be solved. |
| **Experience**  The audience feels what the actors feel | **Picture of the world**  The audience is not emotionally involved, so can sit outside and see the bigger picture |
| **The spectator is involved in something**  The audience is swept up in the characters, the plot, the ideas | **The spectator is made to face something**  The audience is forced to reconsider their ideas because of what they see. |
| **Suggestion** | **Argument** |
| **Instinctive feelings are preserved** | **Brought to the point of recognition** |
| **The spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience** | **The spectator stands outside, studies** |
| **The human being is taken for granted** | **The human being is an object of inquiry** |
| **The human being is unalterable**  Preconceptions are reinforced | **The human being is alterable and able to alter**  Change is possible, both in oneself and in the world |
| **Eyes on the finish** | **Eyes on the course** |
| **One scene makes another**  See plot | **Each scene for itself**  See narrative |
| **Linear development** | **In curves,** broken up |
| **Evolutionary determinism** | **Jumps** |
| **The human being is a fixed point** | **The human being is a process** |
| **Thought determines being** | **Social being determines thought** |
| **Feeling**  A theatre where the audience can allow itself to indulge in emotions | **Reason**  A theatre where the audience is made to question and think. |

Verfremdungseffekt’ – The V-Effect

At the heart of Brecht’s method was the ‘alienation ‘or V-Effect. The word ‘alienation’ in English carries connotations of turning someone away from something, or inhibiting them. Brecht’s original German, ‘*Verfremdung’* does not have an appropriate English equivalent: ‘distanciation’? ‘defamiliarisation’? It may be best to make do with ‘V-effect.’ He explains it as:



“The man who first looked with astonishment at a swinging lantern and instead of taking it for granted found it highly remarkable that it should swing, and swing in that particular way rather than any other, was brought close to understanding the phenomenon by this observation, and so to mastering it.”

It operates when you think of your mother as someone’s lover, or your teacher in his underwear (or like the student in the 2004 film, *Mean Girls*, says, “Oh, I love seeing teachers outside of school. It's like seeing a dog walk on its hind legs.”). You look at your watch many times every day’ yet when did you last ‘see’ it? Without looking, can you tell what form the numerals take, or if the number of jewels it contains is written on its face?

The whole barrage of Brechtian features were originally designed to produce the V-Effect: placards, the half-curtain, exposing the source of lighting, the direct address to the audience and so on. Particularly effective is the use of song; when a character stops speaking and begins singing, they are interrupting themselves. The episodic nature of Brecht’s plays also serves to ‘alienate’ the audience; by interrupting the flow of the story, it prevents the audience from becoming too engaged with the characters or the narrative, taking the real issue for granted. It forces the audience to snap out of the reverie created by the actors and remind themselves ‘oh that’s right, I’m watching a play and I have to think about the issues it is presenting me with.”

‘Gestus’

Gestus is another key feature of Epic Theatre which Brecht used in his plays. It is a self contained statement of action and may involve any or all of a process, a social relationship and a significant gesture or movement. It is something which typifies the whole, and each episodic scene in Brecht’s plays can be ‘summed up’ with an appropriate gestus. It works much like a quotation sums up an idea. It is reducing a scene to a single line of action that represents the true heart of what is happening in that episode.

A gestus must have a social dimension (after all, Brecht was concerned with social issues and the gestus is designed to make clear to the audience what the social issue is). So a man cringing from a dog might be a gestus, but has no social context until it becomes clear that he is a tramp, constantly harassed by watchdogs. The gestus of uniformed Fascists only becomes social when they stride over corpses. Both examples force the audience to think about the issue that is being raised; about the injustice and about the action they might take to remedy this injustice.

Brecht describes his play *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich*, a montage of 27 scenes, as “a table of gestus.” Each seemingly unrelated episode has its own summary: “The gestus of keeping your mouth shut, “the gestus of looking about you,” “the gestus of sudden fear” and so on.

Features of Epic Theatre

**…Or how to alienate your audience!**

**As you get to know *Mother Courage,* make a list of examples for each of the following key features:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Techniques/ Conventions** | **Evidence** |
| **Plot/ Structure** | * The play is episodic in nature * An open-ended montage of scenes * The play is presented in non-realistic and non-chronological way * The play is episodic and loosely connected; there could be loose-standing scenes with few, if any links to the rest of the play * Narration is used through the play. A singer, commentator or chorus explains the actions and links the scenes * Scenes in the play end with musical interludes, captions or gestures. This is to prevent the audience from feeling any empathy and aims at making the audience think critically * Each scene has its own message |
| **Historification**  This means setting the action of a play in the historic past in order to draw parallels with contemporary events | * Brecht often used fables, myths or familiar stories as part of his plot in the drama * The play could also show historical events * Both were used to draw parallels to contemporary social issues. |
| **Stage Design** | * The stage is usually bare – this prevents the audience from experiencing the illusion of reality * A half curtain is used on stage * Exposed stage lighting is clearly visible to the audience * The backdrop on the stage is clearly visible to the audience * There are no wings or curtains hiding the sides of the stage – the audience can see the props and pieces of set on the side of the stage * The use of symbols – flags, placards, screens * The actors change scenes in front of the audience * Musicians are on stage in full view of the audience * The actors only used necessary props on stage * There is no constructed scenery and the backstage and wings are visible to the audience. |
| **Movement, gesture and gestus**  This is the combination of gestures, facial expressions and body language. It is used to create meaning and communicate with the audience.  It simplifies the message. It means the actor is standing outside the character. | * Gestus is the outward signs of relationships: correct stance, movement, tone of voice, gesture, body language, facial expression and intonation to show significance of scene. * It is something which epitomises or typifies the whole * It must have a social dimension * Each scene can be summed up in a single action. * Brecht used mime, dance, acrobatics , pantomimic dramatisation, masks, costumes, and make-up to make the play more presentable. Epic Theatre was heavily influenced by Asian theatre’s use of mime and gesture * The storyline must be broken down – single action into a simple sentence   *e.g.in Fear and Misery: ‘The gestus of keeping your mouth shut’* |
| **Actor/ Narrator** | * The actors address the audience directly * The actors speak in the third person * Actors speak in the past tense * Actors give stage directions on stage during the play or can read stage directions as part of their lines * Actor must create a single action in a single sentence * Actors must not empathise with the character they are portraying * The actor must only represent the character on stage, unlike the Method acting technique where actors ‘live’ the part * Characters in a play can represent an individual who in turns represents all humankind * The actor must present the character from a number of perspectives so that the audience can understand the message the actor is giving them |
| **Lighting** | * Lighting on stage is simple. Like a boxing ring, circus ring, cinemas, cabaret. * Lights and operators are in full view of the audience * Light creates no mood on stage * Brecht used the boxing ring type lighting – harsh white light * There is no attempt to create mood or atmosphere on stage. |
| **Use of Technologies** | * Projection * Film * Text * Placards * Scaffolding * Music * Screens * Masks |
| **Music** | * Uses music to underline ideas in the play. * Poetry * Music is not an accompaniment, but a comment on the action, or in conflict with the action on stage. * There is no smooth transition from speech to song * Songs can comment on the action and arouse social consciousness |

**QUESTIONS**:

1. Comment on the set design in this production of *Mother Courage.*
2. What do we learn about the setting of the play from the set?
3. Why do you think the designer has chosen to use a revolving stage?



Brecht’s advice to the actors

Brecht was not a great fan of acting training. He did however, believe that the actor must be a skilled observer of life:

Above all the other arts

You, the actor, must conquer

The art of observation

Your training must begin among

The lives of other people.

Make your first school

The place you work in, your home,

The district to which you belong,

The shop, the street the train.

Observe each one you set your eyes upon

Observe the strangers as if they were familiar

And those whom yo know as if they were strangers.

* *Poems on the Theatre,* Bertolt Brecht

Brecht also developed his own acting style for his work. He urged his actors not to empathise totally with their characters, but to stand outside them and illustrate their behaviour. Brecht's actors were asked to go beyond the Stanislavski system of acting, where the actor identifies entirely with their character and *represents* the character entirely from his or her point of view. Rather Brecht encouraged a more demonstrative acting method, one that enables the actor to *present* the character from a number of perspectives.

Brecht described the actor’s role as being like an eye witness to an accident – their job is to demonstrate what happened. The actor must show the character, not imitate, rather than being wholly transformed into the part. At no time should the audience or the actor identify with the character. Anti-naturalistic presentation was an objective.

However, Brecht did insist that creating theatre should be fun, and that the audience should and must enjoy their theatrical experience: “A theatre that can’t be laughed in, is a theatre to be laughed at.”

Brecht produced a series of rules for his actors to follow in performing Epic theatre. He stated that actors should:

* Perform with an awareness of being watched
* Look at the floor and openly calculate their movements on stage
* Separate voice from movement so that words and gestures do not co-ordinate
* Remain uninvolved with the other actors physically and emotionally
* Make their own movements on stage when it suits them
* Focus on their performance, deliberately relating to specific groups in the audience
* Speak lines as if they were a quotation or a speech
* Speak directly to the audience from centre stage
* Occasionally speak the stage directions aloud
* Be critical of their characters, as though all actions had a happened in the past and they now were judging them
* Change roles with other actors, both in rehearsal and in performance
* Stand in front of a mirror and study their gestures
* Use robotic, mechanical, dreamlike and other non-realistic movements and voice
* Use opposite styles of acting, such as acting a serious death scene in an outrageous comedy style

Voice

Brecht’s dialogue is powerful, poetic and full of emotion but he wanted it broken up by strange and dissonant speech or sounds to produce alienation. Actors were required to chant, sing, use mechanical and strange sounding voices and produce disconnected and non-human sounds.

Class distinctions and regional accents were written into the language of the plays as part of the political and social message so the actors had to speak in dialects and class accents.

Narration

Most of Brecht’s plays make use of a screen, or large notices, somewhere above the stage. The screen gave the audience information about the play, introduced scenes or songs, made comments about the action on the stage.

Sometimes parts of the story were narrated, rather than acted. Sometimes Brecht used a narrator who may come onto the stage carrying a placard announcing the time and place, or any other information. Other times an actor could step out of character and explain, or narrate events to the audience. They talked directly to the audience, giving them information or hammering home the message. By interrupting the action in this way, and reminding the audience that they were watching a play, Brecht was purposefully trying to ‘alienate’ the audience so that they could remain objective and clear thinking about the social issues being presented.

Songs

Brecht thought the music composer must express the theme of the play independently, and thus provide a separate comment on the action. Music and song are often thus in counterpoint with the action on the stage. The music and songs may even be in conflict with the activity of the characters.

Songs could be used, like a Greek Chorus, to comment on the action, make a particular point about one of the characters or to briefly summarise the message of the play. Sometimes the songs worked as third person narrative and were an interruption to the text. By breaking the mood or action and bursting into song the actors were reminding the audience they were watching a play and the play had a message. There can be a cynical association of the song and the scene; it can either shock or sooth unexpectedly in relation to the surrounding action of the play.

The music was created for actors to sing, not great singers. He preferred his actors not to be singers: “If he drops the melody, it must be an event. The actor can emphasise it by plainly showing the pleasure that the melody gives him.” The actors were often not in character when they sang.

Songs were another way of ‘alienating’ the audience, because they interrupted the action, and were often juxtaposed to the character. He felt that when a song arrived in his play, it should be an obvious interruption:

Mark off clearly the songs from the rest.

Make it clear that this is where the sister art enters the play.

Announce it by come emblem summoning music,

By a shift of lighting,

By a caption

By a picture

The actors having made themselves singers

Will address the audience in a different tone.

They are still characters in the drama

But now also openly

They are the playwright’s own accomplices

* *Poems on the Theatre,* Bertolt Brecht

Characters in the play

Brecht was never interested in heroes. His characters are ordinary men and women and he presents them all in varied moods. The characters can generally be divided into the goodies and the baddies. The goodies are the loyal, selfless people who act on behalf of the public good. The baddies are all those who are self-centred, who worry about their health and their public image and who are always grasping for money. Brecht’s characters are instantly recognisable.

The minor characters

There are hundreds of minor characters in Brecht’s plays. They often appear in only one scene and then only to say a couple of lines. They do not develop. Sometimes they are comic characters, such as the drunken monk. Sometimes they illustrate the worst aspects of capitalism, such as the soldiers selling ammunition to the other side. And sometimes they are just there to assist the plot, such as the old peasants in the last scene where Kattrin climbs onto the roof.

**Brecht’s advice to the players:**

Brecht’s final message to the actors in his Berliner Ensemble, before he died, was:

“Our playing needs to be quick, light, strong. This is not a question of hurry, but of speed, not simply of quick playing, but of quick thinking. We must keep the tempo of a run-through and infect it with quiet strength, with our own fun. In the dialogue, the exchanges must not be offered reluctantly, as when offering somebody’s last pair of boots, but must be tossed like so many balls. The audience has to see that here are a number of artists working together as a collective (ensemble) in order to convey stories, ideas, virtuoso feats to the spectator by a common effect.”



**QUESTION:**

* Comment on the Alienation techniques you can see in this photograph of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. What do you notice about the set, the actors, the costumes?



Brecht’s Rehearsal process

Although Brecht was not a fan of actor training, he did develop his own exercises and processes for rehearsing his plays.

**Preparatory Exercise – ‘The Street Scene’**

This was Brecht’s most significant acting exercise. Actors were to imagine they had witnessed an old man crossing the road who was then run over by a truck. They were then instructed to explain what they saw by demonstrating it. They were to re-enact the old man, hobbling down the street, then show the driver of the truck being distracted by lighting a cigarette at a critical moment. They were to demonstrate each participant in the scene so the share of responsibility would be clear. Brecht insisted that you did not need to be a highly trained actor to do this. You can explain that the old man had a walking stick; you do not actually need to have one. The ‘street scene’ should happen in the way that one might tell a police man exactly what happened as a witness; so that the spectator can concentrate on the events, and not marvel at the acting.

**Naïve Readings**

Brecht’s rehearsal process began with ‘naïve readings.’ Chapter headings and stage directions were read out along with the parts. Players changed parts; no-one was assigned to any one role for long. After each scene, Brecht would have a group discussion:

* What happens in this scene?
* Where? Who? When? What?
* What is interesting about this play?
* Why are we putting it on?

Brecht advised his actors in during the naïve readings:

“When reading his part, the actor’s attitude should be one of a man who is astounded and contradicts. Before memorising the words, he must memorise what he felt astounded at and where he felt impelled to contradict. For these are the dynamic forces that he must preserve in creating his performance.”

We gain some insight into Brecht’s thoughts on casting with his words:

“Parts are allocated wrongly and thoughtlessly. As if all cooks were fat, all peasants phlegmatic, all statesmen stately.”

**Supertask**

Once the casting was confirmed, the actors were then instructed to explore their character and discover the ‘supertask.’ This is the character’s place in the overall purpose of the play and how it contributes to its political, historical, moral, social, aesthetic concerns. Discovering one’s supertask takes three steps:

1. Look at the character **objectively**. Concentrate especially on function in the story, concrete actions, status. Seek the contradictions in the part, note objectively the choices the character has made.
2. See the character from the **inside**; through his actions, rather than his emotions. “*In phase 2, the actor empathises with the character and the ‘magic if’ places the actor in the circumstances of the character.”*
3. The actor must then **objectify** the character; adapt a critical attitude so that the actor can clarify but not resolve the contradictions; so that they can present not a through-line (as Stanislavsky would instruct) but “the sweep and rhythm of a zigzag path, inconsistent and certainly not inevitable.’

The actor should enjoy creating this contradictory, even fragmented, being. They should obtain fun from creating the character, and should present the result it their audience with grace and humour.

“A theatre that can’t be laughed in is a theatre to be laughed at.”

**Blocking**

The next part of the rehearsal process, much like any other director, was to decide on the blocking of the play. Brecht insisted that the blocking should be so clear that the spectator, unable to hear the actors voices, and seeing the production through thick glass, would still be able to follow the twists and turns of the story. For blocking purposes, Brecht would split the text up into ‘processes’ (a little like Stanislavsky’s ‘beats’). A ‘process’ is a complete entity, a moment of interaction between characters.

“Positions should be retained as long as there is no compelling reason for changing them. Desire for variety is not a compelling reason.”

In Epic theatre, every movement, even a hesitation, should be performed with conviction. If the actor turns to the audience, it must be a whole-hearted turn.

Brecht’s pet hate was actors in a straight line or symmetrically disposed across the stage. Preferences were for a solitary figure in the corner, or a clump of figures at a distance.

“Don’t make it a pace or two, walk clearly across the stage. Don’t walk while talking. Walk in silence. Make a dramatic pause out of your walk. Let the only sound be the sound of your feet.”

**Rehearsal exercises**

**“Not…But…”**

At each key point in a process or scene, the action would stop and the actors play out first what did not happen and then what did happen (as in the written scene). They would preface the action with “not” and “but.” The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce the idea that these characters could have made different decisions, but chose a particular set of actions, and those actions could be contradictory to the character.

**Demonstrating the story**

Brecht would rewrite the scene into a little story and ask the actors to act them out using the existing blocking. They would read the story in third person, instead of using the play’s lines.

**Swapping Parts**

Brecht would swap actors around in rehearsal process to get a different perspective for the actor playing the role.

If an actor had trouble with a speech or song, they were asked to paraphrase it in rehearsals.

**Run-throughs**

The final stages of rehearsal were somewhat contradictory to Brecht’s process. The rehearsals were taken up with run-throughs. Brecht’s ultimate aim was that the story should emerge with clarity, the actors can sense their through-line and the director can set the tempo.

**Mark-through run**

Finally, the cast would run through the play at double speed. Lines would be quiet and complete and distinct, movements would be crisp and accurate. This ensures that every actor knows precisely what they are doings, and it enhances relaxation – paradoxically releasing more energy.

Mother Courage and Her Children

**Synopsis:**

Mother Courage is a trader who is serving with the Swedish Army during the **Thirty Years’ War** (1618 – 1648). She is trying to make a profit out of the war while keeping her children out of it. She has three children. The eldest son is Eilif. He joins the army and become a war hero but is killed by his own side for committing the same act in times of peace. Her honest son, Swiss Cheese, steals the regiment’s cash box while travelling with his mother, and is executed by the enemy. The third child, a daughter called Kattrin, dies warning the people in the sleepy town of Halle that the enemy is about to invade the town. Despite these deaths, Mother Courage drags her battered wagon across Europe. She changes sides twice as she criss-crosses Europe. Each scene exists for itself and is carrying a different message. As in montaged plays, the order is not necessarily important – it is the message that is conveyed within the scenes that is essential.

**Characters**

Mother Courage (Anna Fierling)

Kattrin – dumb daughter

Eilif – oldest son

Swiss Cheese – youngest son

The Recruiter

The Sergeant

The Cook

The General

The Chaplain

The Armourer

Yvette Pottier

The Ensign

The Man with the Patch

Soldiers

Another Sergeant

A Voice

The Ancient Colonel

A Clerk

A young soldier

An older soldier

A peasant

The Peasant’s Wife

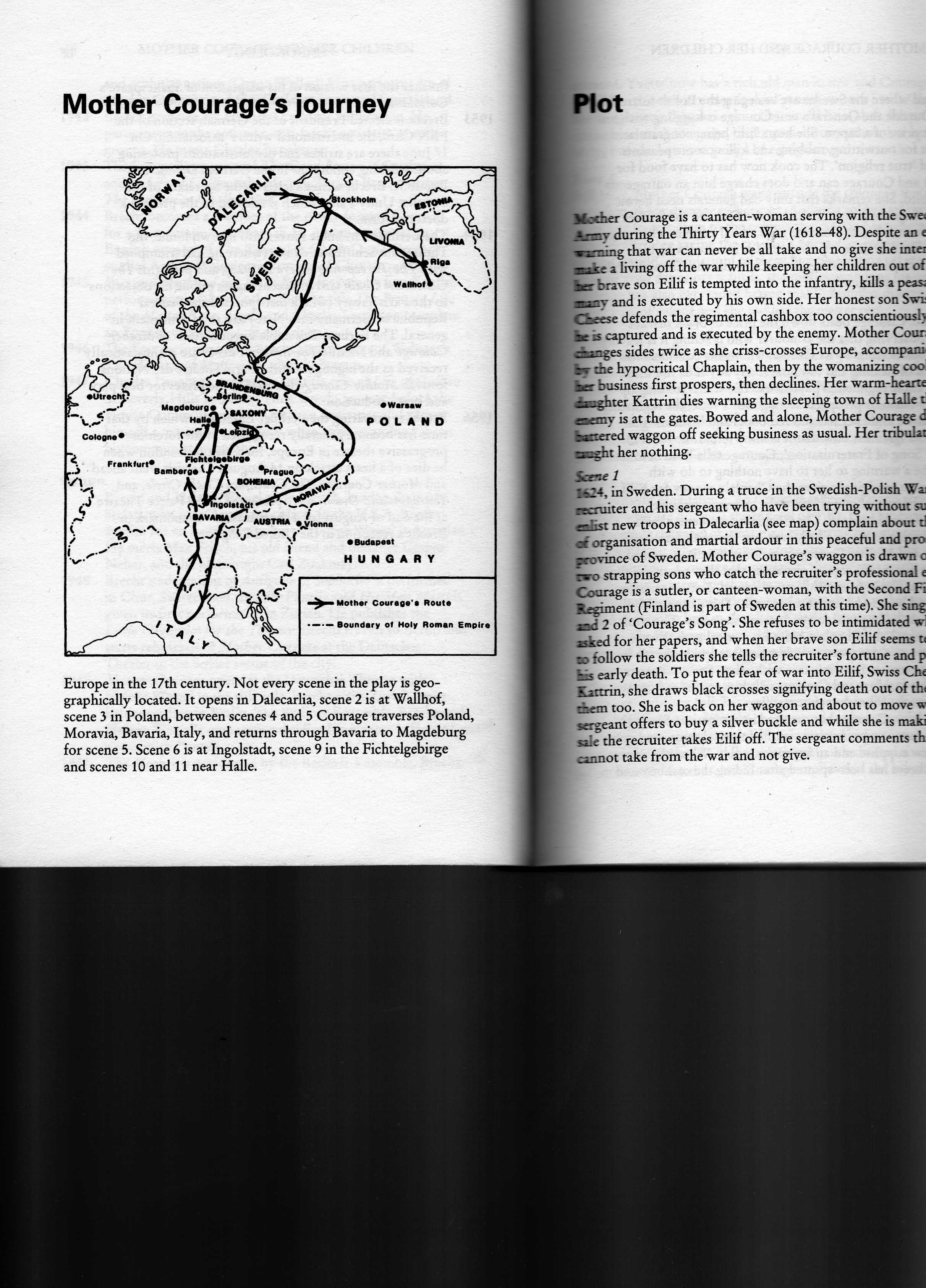
The Young man

The Older Woman

Another Peasant

His Wife

The Young Peasant



**Setting**

Mother Courage is set in Europe. The main character’s wandering takes her through many countries. The play starts off in Sweden (the first scene takes place during the Polish-Swedish war which was separate from the Thirty Years’ War) and then the playwright takes us through Bavaria, Bohemia, Moravia, Saxony and Brandenburg – the modern-day Austria and Germany. Mother Courage travels as far south as Italy and back north to Sweden (see map).

**Themes**

*Mother Courage* invites the audience to examine the social institutions of society and alienate itself from its comfortable position. Themes like **war, business, motherhood** and **morality** must be reconsidered as Mother Courage takes the audience on her journey throughout Europe, following the war. Her wagon is symbolic of her economic and material wealth. Her character is trying to make a living from the very system (war) that takes her children away from her. She is trying to make a profit from the system that exploits her.

Alienation techniques in each scene

**Each scene in *Mother Courage* starts with an explanation called a chapter heading. Read through them and answer the following questions:**

* What information is this chapter heading giving us about the play?
* If you were to direct this play. How would you use this information?
* If you show/ display this information to the audience, do you think it will help in alienating them?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Chapter Heading** | **Alienation Technique** |
| 1 | Spring 1624. The Swedish Commander-in-Chief, Count Oxenstierna, is raising troops in Dalecarlia for the Polish campaign. The canteen woman Anna Fierling, known as Mother Courage, loses one son. | Telling audience before the scene starts that the main character is going to lose her so takes the shock/ emotion/ sympathy away from the audience |
| 2 | In the years 1625 and 1626, Mother Courage crosses Poland in the train of the Swedish armies. Before the fortress of Walhod she meets her son again. Successful sale of a capon and heyday of her dashing son. |  |
| 3 | Three years later Mother Courage is taken prisoner along with the elements of a Finnish regiment. She manages to save her daughter, but her honest son is killed. | Again the murder of the youngest son is revealed before it happens. The takes the emotion away from the actual murder. |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 | Outside the Bavarian town of Ingolstadt, Mother Courage participates in the funeral of the late Imperial commander Tilly. Discussions are held about war heroes and the war’s duration. The Chaplain complains that his talents are lying fallow. Kattrin gets the red boots. The year is 1632 |  |
| 7 | Mother Courage at the peak of her business. |  |
| 8 | The same year sees the death of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus a the battle of Lutzen. Peace threatens to ruin Mother Courage’s business. Courage’s dashing son performs one heroic deed too many and comes to a sticky end. |  |
| 9 | In the seventeenth year of the great war of faith, Germany has lost more than half its inhabitants. Those who survived the bloodbath were killed off by terrible epidemics. Once fertile areas ravaged by famine; wolves roam the burnt-down towns. In autumn 1634 we find Mother Courage in the Fichtelgebirge, off the main axis of the Swedish armies. The winter this year is early and harsh. Business is bad, so there is nothing to do but beg. The cook gets a letter from Utrecht and is sent packing. |  |
| 10 |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |

**Acknowledgements:**

The following published texts have been used to inform this resource:

*Mother Courage and Her Children* Translated by John Willet and Commentary by Hugh Rorrison(Methuen Drama Student Editions, 1983)

*Makers of Modern Theatre, An Introduction* by Robert Leach (Routledge New York, 2004)

*The Cambridge Companion to Brecht (2nd Ed)* Edited by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (Cambridge University Press, 2006)

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