The Winslow Boy

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF TERENCE RATTIGAN

Terence Mervyn Rattigan was the son of Vera and William Rattigan, and was born just before the coronation of George V. Rattigan's father was a diplomat and hoped his son would one day work in the civil service. Coming from an upper-middle class background, Rattigan received a typical education, attending Harrow School before enrolling at Oxford. A childhood trip to the theatre brought on an early obsession with the art form; at Harrow, Rattigan devoured the school library's collection of plays. While at Oxford, Rattigan's desire to be a playwright was so strong that he dropped out in order to write. Rattigan found relatively early success with the 1936 *French Without Tears*. When World War 2 came, Rattigan served in the Royal Air Force as a tail gunner. After the war, he had a run of popular and critically well-received plays, such as *The Winslow Boy* and *The Browning Version*, firmly establishing him as a major playwright. Not long after, however, his plays fell out of favor as new and younger playwrights – like the "Angry Young Men" – grew dominant. Rattigan continued to work, producing what are now considered some of his best plays. In 1971, Rattigan received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth, only the fourth playwright in the 20th Century to receive the honor. Towards the end of his life, Rattigan saw a revival in popularity in Britain, before dying from bone cancer at the age of 66 in Bermuda.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Winslow Boy is by and large based on real-life events: the court case of George Archer-Shee, a naval cadet expelled for stealing a postal order. Similar to the play, Archer-Shee's family went to great length and expense to clear his name, hiring the most respected barrister of the day, Sir Edward Carson. The case enraptured the country, become a *cause célèbre* and eventually culminating in victory for the accused. A key divergence between the play and the real case, however, is the character of Catherine. Whereas Archer-Shee's sister was a conservative, more "traditional" woman, Rattigan made Ronnie Winslow's sister a Suffragette with progressive politics that at the time were quite radical. This allows him to place the play's overall consideration of universal rights and fairness against the great injustice of the time—the treatment of women as second-class citizens. Also present in the background of the play is the threat of World War 1. Part of the public criticism of Ronnie's case is that it is distracting for the military establishment when it ought to be focusing on preventing Germany's rearmament. As *The Winslow Boy* was written and first performed in the post-war period, the audience knows war is looming in the background at the time when the play is set—but the characters don't. This contributes to the sense that the play is about the fundamentals of being human—not merely the result of a court case—in the light of the knowledge that humanity will soon inflict such horrors upon itself.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Winslow Boy is a technically precise work that follows the principles of the "well-made play"—a tight form that begins with a piece of crucial information withheld from one of the characters (in this case Ronnie's expulsion, hidden from Arthur). The well-made play also makes frequent use of letters as ways to bring about plot twists or climaxes, which is evident both in the Ronnie's expulsion letter and in the communication from the father of Catherine's fiancé that he can no longer endorse the marriage. Rattigan's play, then, has much in common with the work of George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, and even Anton Chekhov (e.g. *The Seagull*). As a play set exclusively in the Winslows' front room, *The Winslow Boy* is also a fine example of the "drawing-room play," in which all the action takes place in a singular location that allows for visitors to come and go. Accordingly, Rattigan's play shares common ground with Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and the works of Noël Coward.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Winslow Boy*
- **When Written:** 1946
- **Where Written:** London
- **When Published:** U.K.
- **Literary Period:** Post-war
- **Genre:** Drama
- **Setting:** A house in Kensington, London, before WW1
- **Climax:** The Winslows learn they have won their court case
- **Antagonist:** The Crown

EXTRA CREDIT

Tragedy behind the scenes. Tragically, the boy on whom the play is based died at the age of 19 soon after his court victory, fighting in the First Battle of Ypres in World War One.

Real life discrimination. Rattigan was gay, which was only made legal in the U.K. four years after his knighthood.

PLOT SUMMARY

It is 1912, and fourteen-year-old Ronnie Winslow has just arrived home after being expelled by Osborne Naval College for allegedly stealing a postal order from a fellow student. He reveals himself to Violet, the Winslows' housemaid, and seems incredibly frightened. As his parents, Arthur and Grace, and siblings, Dickie, Catherine, arrive back from church, Ronnie quickly runs into the garden to hide in the rain.

As the family enters the house, Arthur chastises Dickie for not working hard enough on his studies at Oxford University (studies that Arthur funds). Dickie complains that he is treated unfairly, and that Ronnie is the favorite son. Grace asks questions of Catherine about her fiancé, John Watherstone, and whether he still wants to marry her even though she is a passionate believer in equality for women. Soon after, John comes to the house to discuss the potential marriage with Arthur and to obtain his permission. After a stiff and formal conversation, Arthur agrees to provide a small dowry.

Now alone with Catherine, John admits how nervous the conversation with Arthur made him. To Catherine's bemusement, he had planned eloquent phrases in advance, though nothing about how much he loves Catherine; he assumed that Arthur and he could take that as given.

A soaked Ronnie reveals himself to Catherine, who reads the letter detailing his expulsion. Dickie comes in and is instructed by Catherine to fetch Grace and keep Arthur upstairs, so that he doesn't see Ronnie. When Grace comes down she makes a big fuss over Ronnie; Dickie, meanwhile, can't believe he's been expelled over a mere "bit of pinching." They all agree it's best to hide Ronnie away from Arthur, fearing his reaction to the expulsion.

Desmond Curry, the family's hapless solicitor, arrives. He congratulates Catherine and John, though a little awkwardly as he's been in love with Catherine for a long time. Arthur brings out a bottle of wine to toast the engagement and asks Violet to bring some glasses. He pours everyone a drink, including Violet, who protests that she didn't want one—her glass was actually meant for Ronnie. Arthur insists that Ronnie isn't yet due back from college, but it then dawns on him that Ronnie may have been expelled. He makes Grace read him the letter and then orders Ronnie to come downstairs, telling everyone else to leave the two of them in the room alone.

Arthur is hurt to learn that his son would rather hide in the rain than suffer his wrath. He looks Ronnie intently in the eyes and asks him to tell him the truth—did he steal the postal order or not? A tearful Ronnie vehemently denies the charge, and Arthur believes him. Arthur sends Ronnie up to bed and immediately starts making phone calls to try and clear his son's name.

Nine months later, Dickie and Catherine sit in the living room, reading letters in the newspaper about the "Winslow boy" case. The case has gained a fair amount of media attention and prompts a range of opinions: some think it's a fundamental fight for human rights, others that it is a massive distraction when the Navy should be focusing on more important things (like Germany's rearmament). To cheer themselves up, Dickie and Catherine dance to the **gramophone**; Catherine reveals that her wedding has been postponed because John's father, a military colonel, is away for six months.

Arthur has a one-on-one conversation with Dickie in which he asks him to assess his own chances of successfully passing his Oxford exams. Because Dickie is less than convincing, Arthur informs his son that, as the legal proceedings are costing a lot of money, he will no longer be able to fund Dickie's studies and he will have to leave Oxford.

Arthur reveals he is engaging the services of Sir Robert Morton, the most respected barrister in the country. Arthur asks Catherine if they're "mad" to pursue the case and reveals that he will not be able to provide the planned dowry, but Catherine has already come to terms with that. She reveals that she doesn't have much faith in Sir Robert as she fundamentally disagrees with his politics and thinks he is self-serving.

Sir Robert arrives with Desmond. He informs Arthur that he will be seeking a "Petition of Right"—a complex legal mechanism that gives an individual express permission to sue the Crown (essentially the state). He summons Ronnie down and subjects him to an extreme interrogation. This greatly distresses Ronnie, who admits having practiced the signature of his fellow student and can't remember all the details of what happened on the day. Sir Robert accuses him of being guilty and causing pain to his family, which Ronnie vehemently denies. Just as Catherine and Arthur start to object to Sir Robert's technique, he calmly goes to leave, agreeing to take on the case as "the boy is plainly innocent."

Nine months later, the media attention on the case has intensified and it's now being discussed in the British parliament. Arthur sits in his armchair, reading an account of the debate to Ronnie and Grace, who are trying to stay awake and darning socks respectively. Grace thinks Ronnie should just go to bed, but Arthur thinks he ought to listen to the news about his case. Arthur also tells Grace that Violet needs to be dismissed as they can no longer afford her. Grace doesn't want to do that and tearfully accuses Arthur of sacrificing their lives for the sake of the case.

Catherine comes back from watching parliament and fills Arthur in on the day's proceedings. Catherine is grudgingly impressed by Sir Robert, who to her shock walks in through the door at that very moment. Arthur reads a letter brought in by Violet while Catherine and Sir Robert discuss the latter's earlier interrogation of Ronnie. Having read the new letter, Arthur suddenly insists that they must drop the case. Catherine

snatches the letter—it's from John's father, saying that, unless the Winslows drop the legal action he won't be able to endorse the marriage; as a colonel, he finds their attack on the military establishment embarrassing and unpatriotic. John arrives and almost convinces Catherine that they should drop the case. But at that moment, Sir Robert receives a phone call saying the "Petition of Right" has been granted, meaning the case can actually go to court and have a public trial. Arthur says it's up to Catherine if the case proceeds. Without hesitating, she says that it must. John storms out.

Five months later, the case is now one of the most talked about issues in the country; the Winslow telephone is always ringing, and the house is surrounded by journalists. Dickie comes in, having just returned from Reading where he now works in a bank. Grace calls Arthur, who is sitting in the garden, to come in for his lunch, before telling Dickie how exciting she finds the court case—she's never seen "such crowds," though she doesn't really follow the proceedings very well. Dickie asks how Catherine is doing as he's heard John broke off the engagement. Arthur comes up the stairs and gets into a wheelchair; his health is getting worse.

Arthur goes into the dining room for his lunch, and Grace reveals to Dickie that he is due to go into a nursing home after the trial, though she doubts he actually will. Catherine arrives from court, relaying the information that Sir Robert is now worried about the outcome of the case. Grace and Dickie go to court, leaving Arthur and Catherine to have a heart-to-heart. Catherine reveals increasing admiration for Sir Robert, but both are concerned they will lose.

Desmond Curry comes to the house. Having heard of Catherine's split from John, he seems like he is about to propose to her, even though he admits she will never love him. She cuts him short and just says she will think it over, and he leaves confused—but not before letting slip that Sir Robert turned down a prestigious job as a judge to continue working on the case. Arthur comes in, complaining of being gawped at through the front window. Catherine confesses she is considering marrying Desmond so she can have a comfortable life and might give up working for women's suffrage. Arthur thinks marrying Desmond would be lunacy. Arthur kisses her on the head and apologizes for messing up her life, but she says they've only done what they must do in the face of "tyranny" and "injustice."

Suddenly they hear a shout from a newspaper boy outside: "Winslow case result!" Violet comes in and tells the Arthur and Catherine that they have won , describing jubilant scenes in the courtroom. Arthur and Catherine are taken aback and a little annoyed to have missed the victory.

Sir Robert comes to the house and gives Arthur a scrap of paper that has written on it the Admiralty's statement absolving Ronnie of all guilt. He tells Catherine it was a pity that she wasn't in court. Arthur goes outside to make a statement to the press, insisting on standing up rather than being wheeled out. Catherine quizzes Sir Robot on why he is so emotionally guarded. He admits he cried at the verdict, as "Right" had been done. Ronnie comes in and apologizes for missing the verdict, asking if they won. Sir Robot says he hopes to see Catherine in parliament again; she says that if she does it will be as equals, not her watching him work. As he leaves and bids her goodbye, he doubtfully replies, "Perhaps."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Ronnie Winslow – The "Winslow Boy" of the play's title, fourteen-year-old Ronnie is the first character on stage, visibly frightened of the repercussions of being expelled from Osborne Naval College. He is alleged to have stolen a postal order worth a small sum of money and is terrified of his father, Arthur's, reaction (even as he is thought by his siblings to be the favorite child). Ronnie professes his innocence from start to finish, with both Arthur and barrister Sir Robert Morton believing he is telling the truth. Even though Ronnie is the play's titular character, he doesn't play a huge role—realizing he is not in trouble with his father, Ronnie quickly settles into a new school and loses interest in his own case. In many ways, he's just a typical boy, interested in how tall he is growing and wanting to tell his father about the cool things he has seen. He still does what is required of him, but doesn't share the same passion for victory as his father, his sister Catherine, and Sir Robert. In one scene, for example, he desperately tries to stay awake as Arthur reads about the case's proceedings from the newspaper. Ultimately, Ronnie is found not guilty—though like the rest of the family he isn't in court at the time of the announcement. The audience, though, never knows for sure.

Arthur Winslow – Arthur is the intimidating patriarch of the Winslow family. He is the main driver behind the long and arduous legal process to get Ronnie justice and a fair trial. Though the family is clearly intimidated by him, Arthur also shows moments of tenderness and vulnerability from time to time. Over the two years of the case's process, the stress takes its toll on Arthur's health; though only in his sixties, by the end of the play he is required to use a wheelchair (though he stands up symbolically to give a victory statement to the press). Arthur is also in control of the family's finances, having made a modest fortune working in the banking industry, and is the one who decides to hire the notorious (but expensive) barrister Sir Robert Morton. Arthur's commitment to the case means he has to make tough financial sacrifices, starting with withdrawing his funding for Dickie's studies. He goes on to admit to Catherine that his dowry arrangement for her wedding to John will no longer be possible, and also wants to get rid of the housemaid, Violet. The question throughout the play is whether Arthur is fighting for "justice," as he claims, or because of personal pride

and stubbornness. The truth is most likely a combination of the two.

Grace Winslow – Grace is the flighty mother of the Winslow family who simply wants a nice life. She doesn't understand why Arthur is willing to sacrifice their living standards just to win a case that, after all, is being fought over a five-shilling postal order. As the case progresses, though, the spectacle draws Grace in. By the end of the play she is intoxicated by the size of the crowds and self-consciously chooses her outfits for any public appearance. Importantly, she's not as weak as she might seem. It's subtly presented, but Grace is shown to be a caring character that treats Ronnie with kindness and looks after Arthur as his health deteriorates. Her main conflict is with Catherine—she can't get on board with her daughter's "new woman" attitude and its principles of feminism and equality. She sees herself as more a "traditional" home-keeper, and believes Catherine's way of thinking is "unwomanly."

Catherine Winslow – Catherine is Arthur and Grace's daughter and Ronnie's sister. Along with Arthur, she is the character most committed to Ronnie's defense, and Arthur considers her his "closest ally." In fact, she readily gives up her proposed marriage to John when his father issues the ultimatum that the Winslows drop the case or lose his support for the marriage. Catherine is an avowed feminist and works with the Women's Suffrage Association, but, as a woman nearing thirty, she's also conscious of avoiding being a social outcast if she remains unmarried. Overall, she is presented as the play's moral compass, even if the other characters don't follow her lead in supporting her principled commitment to women's rights. As the play goes on, even though he can't see her as an equal, she develops an admiration for Sir Robert's commitment to doing "right"—and offers the challenge that soon she will see him in parliament not as a spectator but as his equal.

Dickie Winslow – Dickie is Ronnie's older brother who at the play's beginning is an undergraduate at Oxford. His father, Arthur, suspects him of shirking his studies and being distracted by his **gramophone**. He's the most carefree, fun-loving character of the Winslow household. But unfortunately for Dickie, it's these characteristics that make Arthur withdraw his financial support for Oxford when he needs more money to fight the case. Dickie feels that Ronnie is favored over him and at one point vents his frustration, saying he could "just murder" his brother. Overall, though, Dickie comes across as generally supportive of his brother and family. After being forced to quit Oxford, he takes a job at a bank in Reading, before enlisting in the volunteer army. He has heard there might be "a bit of a scrap" on the horizon and doesn't want to miss out, obviously without the knowledge of the horrors that World War 1 will bring.

Sir Robert Morton – Sir Robert is a notorious barrister hired by Arthur to fight the Winslow case, and is widely held to be the best in the business. He comes across as rude, impersonal, and a little intimidating; furthermore, Catherine objects to his politics and initially thinks him unprincipled (she sees him as almost inhuman and "fish-like"). He has the air of a man little moved by emotion. Take, for example, when Catherine reminds him that someone he recently defeated committed suicide soon after the case; Sir Robert says only that the man was nonetheless guilty. His methods, too, are unconventional—he reduces Ronnie to tears when he questions him about the alleged innocent. Though Catherine does have her initial suspicions of him, Sir Robert appears to hold strong principles about doing "Right," which he sees as something different from doing "justice"—justice is the administering of the law, whereas "Right" is a more universal morality. As the play goes on, Catherine and Sir Robert come to respect each other, especially as Catherine learns that he has turned down the most prestigious job in British law in order to stay on the Winslow case. Furthermore, the victory brings Sir Robert to tears, showing that beneath his stern exterior there lurks an emotional life. Though he admires and is possibly attracted to Catherine by the play's end, his inability to see her as his equal ultimately proves to the reader/viewer that there remains a lot of work to be done to bring about equality between the sexes—especially if someone so committed to "Right" as Sir Robert can't see things the way Catherine does.

Violet – Violet is the Winslows' housemaid. She is a loyal servant to the family and is the first character that Ronnie reveals himself to in Act 1. Evidently, she has never been given proper training and has learned on the job. That's why Grace is reluctant to let her go in order to free up finances for the case—she doesn't think Violet will fare well anywhere else. She frequently—and unwittingly—plays the role of information-provider, for example accidentally giving away that Ronnie is home early. She's also one of the only members of the household who is actually in court to witness the unexpectedly sudden victory.

Desmond Curry – Desmond is the Winslow family's hapless solicitor who is hopelessly in love with Catherine. Now forty-five, he used to be a successful cricket player but his athletic glory has long since faded. When Desmond learns of Catherine's split from John, he hurriedly proposes to her even though he knows she will never love him.

John Watherstone – John Watherstone is a man of about thirty years who gets engaged to Catherine. In Act 1, he comes to the Winslow house to discuss Arthur's dowry for John and Catherine's marriage. But John depends on an allowance from his father, and ultimately John follows his father's orders by splitting from Catherine. It's not clear, really, whether John is all that in love with Catherine anyway; after their split, he quickly moves on and marries a new woman (this time the daughter of an army general).

John's Father/Colonel Watherstone – John's father is a

colonel in the army. John is dependent on his father for financial security and is evidently quite afraid of him. As a member of the military establishment, John's father does not approve of the Winslow case and issues the ultimatum that either they drop it, or he will withdraw his support for John's proposed marriage to Catherine. He never appears on stage, perhaps suggesting his air of distant authority, but his letter nevertheless plays an important role in the development of the plot.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Miss Barnes – Miss Barnes is a journalist from *The Daily News*. She appears in Act 2 as the media attention in the Winslow case grows. She annoys Arthur because she seems more interested in their curtains than in the political significance of Ronnie's legal battle.

TERMS

Petition of Right/"Let Right Be Done" – This is the legal mechanism that **Sir Robert Morton** seeks in order to grant **Ronnie Winslow** a proper trial with a public jury. Essentially, it is a constitutional document that sets out an individual's right under circumstances to bring a court case against the Crown (which in 20th century Britain is one and the same as the state/government). Sir Robert is especially attracted to this legal quirk because when the petition is granted it is traditional for the Crown's representative to say, "let Right be done," a phrase which, to Sir Robert, seems to embody the difference between justice as simply enforcing the law and "right" as a more universal morality. Both **Arthur** and Sir Robert agree that the phrase has a strong appeal. **Catherine** gestures towards it when she insists that the case must go on, despite the blackmailing letter issued by **John's colonel father** saying that he will not endorse their marriage unless they drop the charges.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

PRINCIPLES AND SACRIFICE

Terrence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy* is the story of a family that sacrifices everything in order to uphold the "truth." Ronnie Winslow, the boy of the title, is expelled from his Navy College for allegedly stealing a postal order worth just five shillings. Arthur, the boy's domineering father, trusts in his son's moral integrity and is willing to go to any length to defend it. The Winslows ultimately win the ensuing court case, but its pursuit causes the family significant financial and social hardship. What's more, the moment of court victory is anticlimactic rather than triumphant, leaving the audience wondering whether it was all worth it. For Arthur and his daughter, the principled feminist Catherine, no price is too high to right an "injustice." But as the play goes on, the family loses its financial security and Arthur's health deteriorates—leading his wife, Grace, to believe that the cost of their defense of Ronnie may be "out of all proportion." One of the questions at the play's core, then, is this—are "truth" and "justice" universal standards that must be defended at all costs?

On its surface, Ronnie's expulsion is a serious matter but not, ultimately, the end of the world. At the start of the play, the Winslows easily have the means to send him to a new school and forget about the stealing episode. It would be possible, in other words, to just move on. Arthur instead pursues legal action—which has to go through many laborious stages—to prove the "truth." The financial costs involved have serious implications for the rest of the family. Arthur can no longer afford to send Ronnie's brother, Dickie, to Oxford University. Grace grows increasingly distressed as she powerlessly witnesses the dismantling of the Winslows' comfortable family life. Meanwhile, Catherine, gives up her potential marriage John Watherstone. And Sir Robert Morton, the respected lawyer who agrees to take the case, gives up the chance to take up the most prestigious role in the British legal system, Lord Chief Justice.

Arthur, Catherine, and Sir Robert are steadfast in their commitment to the case, even when Ronnie, once he's over the initial fear of telling his father about the accusation, doesn't seem that bothered about what happens. Public detractors of the case, meanwhile, assert that it's a trivial distraction from more pressing political matters at a time of mounting global tension (indeed, the play takes place shortly before the start of World War I). That the play positions Arthur, Catherine, and Sir Robert as defenders of their principles, for which they are willing to risk everything, therefore asks the audience to think about what it is that they're actually defending—whether truth is even an objective value that can be defended, and how the legal system reflects or inhibits the "truth."

Further, though these characters are brought together by their commitment to their principles, a closer look reveals that those principles, while certainly complimentary, are not identical. Arthur's fighting spirit comes largely from a desire to protect his son and uphold what he genuinely believes to be true—that Ronnie didn't do it. But he's also a proud and stubborn man, and the reader should remember that clearing Ronnie's name equates to clearing his name too—the Winslow name.

For Catherine, it's much wider than that. She doesn't believe

that the system has been fair to Ronnie in expelling him without first discussing the matter with his parents and presenting evidence to prove Ronnie's guilt: "It's cold, calculated inhumanity," she says, and is ultimately fighting for fairness, specifically the universal right to a fair trial. Because she's a feminist, Ronnie's case becomes a kind of proxy in which she sees her own cause reflected—by upholding the values of fairness, she is making it more possible for the Women's Suffrage movement to win their argument by appealing to those very same values.

For his part, Sir Robert sees an important difference between doing "justice" and doing "Right." He implies that the legal system can easily uphold the law as it is ("justice") but that it's more difficult to do "right"—that is, to uphold the more universal values of humanity. "Justice" is the law as it is, whereas "right" is what it should be. Sir Robert fights with great vigor and commitment to win Ronnie's case, when career-wise he'd more comfortable if avoided it altogether, because he, like Catherine, sees its broader moral implications.

Through these various motivations, Rattigan shows that behind a single court judgment are fundamental questions about truth, justice, and the way society governs itself; the play also suggests that the immense public interest in the trial is in fact motivated by the public's sense of the deeper principles underlying this seemingly simple case. In that sense, each character's sacrifice and determination to win seem to be worth the cost. Rattigan further supports this conclusion by suggesting that progress in society depends on traits represented by all three of them—Arthur's stubbornness to see justice done; Catherine's appeal to universal human rights; and Sir Robert's view that the law does not automatically equal morality.

Nevertheless, Rattigan doesn't end the play on an especially victorious note. Neither Catherine nor Arthur are in court when the judgment is handed down and are instead left with a single flimsy piece of paper declaring Ronnie's innocence. In reasserting the smallness of the court case itself, this anticlimactic finale again calls into question the value of their sacrifices. What's more, the final exchange of the play, between Catherine and Sir Robert, suggests that despite the triumph of the trial, deeper societal issues of injustice remain unresolved. Sir Robert wants Catherine to come and see him again at parliament; she says she will see him there, but as a participant in democracy, not a spectator to its proceedings. Not even Sir Robert, the principled defender of "right," can imagine a woman occupying that role, showing that much of the work that needs doing to bring about greater "right" depends on changing entrenched attitudes as much as it does in reforming the legal system.

FAMILY

Over the course of the play's two-year timeline, the Winslow family is placed under increasing pressure, both financial and social, by the ongoing saga of Ronnie's case. The play, then, creates a kind of microscope in which to explore the way that a family operates under stress. One way this plays out focuses around the normally domineering family patriarch, Arthur, who, much to his family's surprise, reacts protectively, rather than angrily, to the news of Ronnie's expulsion. Yet as the family's resources are increasingly sucked into fighting the case, its members are forced to give up more of their individual dreams and desires. In this way, the play shows how one person's crisis can affect an entire family, and displays the obligations, tensions, and pain that go along with familial loyalty. Overall, the play demonstrates that family stability is a fragile peace, under constant threat from external events and internal conflict.

The Winslow family is clearly ruled over by its patriarch, Arthur. Based on the way that Arthur dominates his wife and children, the other Winslows initially expect him to react angrily to Ronnie's expulsion. This is why Ronnie hides in the garden when his family returns from church at the start of the play, and it's why Dickie, Catherine, and Grace continue to hide Ronnie from Arthur after the boy reveals himself to them; they're all scared of Arthur's response. Arthur confounds his family member's expectations, however, once he gets to actually talk to Ronnie and judge for himself whether the boy is lying, He in fact proves to be more upset that Ronnie was scared of him than he is angry about the expulsion, and immediately puts into motion efforts to clear Ronnie's name. Though his exchange with Ronnie is tense, it also shows that there is tenderness and love beneath his imposing manner. The mistaken expectations of the family members about Arthur's likely behavior exemplifies how complicated family can be, and that nobody truly knows how people will react to a crisis until it actually comes along.

Arthur's actions also highlight a distinct sense of familial loyalty in suggesting the way the different ways that family members, particularly those with power, may respond to external threats versus internal disobedience. In fact, one of the most important dramatic tensions in the play is between this loyalty and the individual hopes and dreams that each family member hold for their own life. Rattigan shows that these two forces within a family are knotted together, with a change in one always affecting the other. If it weren't for the court case, these tensions probably wouldn't come to a head—but because the case puts such a strain on the Winslow's financial and social situation, it has serious consequences for all involved.

Ronnie's older brother and sister both have plans for their own lives: Catherine is engaged to marry John Watherstone, son of an Army Colonel. Dickie is a student at Oxford, and while he is perhaps having more fun than he is studying, an Oxford degree

is his ticket to an expected comfortable career in the civil service. Though both are supportive of Ronnie, their lives are dramatically upended by the ongoing legal action. The cost of the case means that Arthur can no longer afford to support Dickie's studies, which he suspects Dickie of neglecting anyway. This shift dramatically alters Dickie's prospects, and as the case goes on Dickie's loyalty to his brother is tested. At one point, Dickie says: "My gosh, I could just about murder that little brother of mine. What's he have to go about pinching postal orders for? And why the hell does he have to get himself nabbed for doing it. Silly little blighter!" Meanwhile, because of the notoriety of the case, and the fact that the Winslow's case is essentially against a decision made by the military, John's army colonel father withdraws his support for his son's marriage to Catherine. Both Dickie and Catherine's lives, then, are irreparably changed by their familial ties in a time of crisis.

Of course, isn't simply that Dickie and Catherine *choose* to maintain family loyalty—in Dickie's case, the decision to end his studies really is his father's to make. And for Catherine, her commitment to the case is as much about her principles as it is family loyalty. At the same time, though, the crisis brings her closer to Arthur; he confides in her, and the play's one moment of true tenderness comes when he kisses her on the head after talking about her split from John. The fun-loving Dickie, for his part, admits he was likely not going to complete his Oxford degree anyway, and is pushed into finding stable employment—in a sense, into finally growing up. Rattigan, then, shows that even as family crises can cause stress and test loyalties, they can also make families—and the individual members within them—stronger.

WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY

The position of women in society is an important theme in *The Winslow Boy* that plays out almost entirely in the background of the main action yet still feels highly relevant today. Though several bills to give women the vote were looked at in the British parliament between 1910 and 1912—the year at the start of the play—none of them were passed. Women were essentially second-class citizens at the time: rape within marriage was not a crime, for instance, and women could not vote or sit on juries. The Suffrage movement, which fought for women's right to vote, had spent the first few years of the century using "militant" tactics to bring the issue to wider public attention—heckling politicians, civil disobedience, sit-ins, and so on. At the point when the play is set, there was still a lot of work to be done. Primarily through the experiences of Catherine, an avowed feminist, the play shows the forces of society arrayed against women, and more particularly the way that society often questioned or refused to grant that feminists really were "women" at all.

Catherine's efforts to achieve equality for women are opposed not just by men, but also by women of an older generation. This older generation is embodied by Grace, Catherine's mother, who believes in the traditional role of the wife as home-maker and generally takes a more conservative view of women's place in the world. Catherine, in turn, has to fight against not just her inequality as a woman, but also her own mother's ideas of what it means to be female. Though women were generally meant to keep quiet about their opinions, Catherine is unafraid of speaking up; Grace generally tries to avoid any kind of "scene." Grace is even surprised that John wants to marry Catherine, given that he knows she is a member of the Women's Suffrage Association. This portrays the attitude that those supporting feminism are not meant to have any wants or desires in common with more "traditional" womanhood—it suggests that being a wife *and* supporting women's rights are somehow mutually exclusive.

Catherine herself feels the tension between society's expectations of her as a woman and her deep-rooted desire for progress. It's not certain that she really *wants* to be married to John, but she expresses anxiety at not being married as she nears the age of thirty. In fact, this anxiety means she even briefly considers marrying Desmond Curry, Sir Robert's hapless colleague, despite not being attracted to him in the slightest. She feels she has a somewhat dismal choice, as she tells Arthur, who is generally unsupportive on the issue: "Either I marry Desmond and settle down into quite a comfortable and not really useless existence—or I go on for the rest of my life earning two pounds a week in the service of a hopeless cause."

Likewise, Catherine is not meant to look feminine because the Suffragettes were painted as being less "womanly" than other women. That's why Sir Robert—who otherwise has such strong values about what is "Right"—comments on Catherine's hat: "It seems decidedly wrong to me that a lady of your political persuasion should be allowed to adorn herself with such a very feminine allurement. It really looks so awfully like trying to have the best of both worlds." Again, this suggests that in order to be a "New Woman"—as Grace disparagingly calls her—Catherine has to sacrifice anything that ties her to being feminine. The play suggests, then, that those women who want a more equal standing between genders are expected to be less "womanly"—they're not supposed to want to look good or get married. They're expected to be martyrs to their sole cause and are marginalized as being feminists ahead of being women.

That's why the closing lines of the play are so important. By giving the closing remark to Sir Robert, Rattigan emphasizes the patriarchal structure of early 20th century British society. Sir Robert says that he hopes to see Catherine in parliament again, but Catherine doesn't want to simply be a spectator—she tells him that if he does see her there, it will be across the floor rather than from the gallery. By this, Catherine means she'll be there in a role of power. Sir Robert's principles, however centered on the idea of doing "Right," don't seem to extend to

women—he just can't see them ever being the true equal of men. This shows the depressing truth that even those best placed to understand the Suffragette movement found it too much of a mental leap to imagine a world in which men and women were genuinely equal. Nevertheless, women *did* have the vote at the time of play's publication, meaning that audiences would likely see the folly in Sir Robert's hypocritical short-sightedness, as well as the strength and importance of Catherine's fight for justice.

MEDIA AND SPECTACLE

Throughout the play Rattigan shows the complex relationship between the private and public sphere, underlining the toll public spectacle takes on people. In defending Ronnie, the Winslows have to take on the Navy itself. And because the Navy is part of the Crown (essentially the State), they have to appeal to get special permission from the King to pursue the case. Without getting too technical, the Winslow case argues that a democracy's constitution must allow for private individuals to challenge the public institutions of that democracy itself. Accordingly, the Winslow case goes to the very heart of British society and becomes subject of wide and impassioned public debate.

Ronnie's alleged crime is a petty misdemeanor that normally wouldn't arouse any public interest. But the fact that Sir Robert has to appeal to the Crown itself and attain a "Petition of Right" in order to bring a case turns it into a subject of fierce debate. The media senses the wider importance of the case and bombards the Winslows with attention, so much so that, by the end of the play, the Winslow house is practically under siege by reporters. The press function to heighten the play's tension, and Rattigan repeatedly shows how such intrusion can impact somebody's physical and mental wellbeing.

Initially, there isn't a huge amount of interest in the case. Indeed, the first reporter, Miss Barnes, is more interested in the Winslow's curtains than she is in reporting the story. But as the case becomes more and more about the issues of an individual's right to a fair trial, the media attention gets more intense and intrusive. At its height, the press attention is so bad that the phone is always ringing, and the Winslow house is completely surrounded by reporters; Arthur eventually laments that is being forced to live "as though I were an animal at the Zoo." Rather than being hyperbole, Arthur's comment is actually an understatement: the stress of the constant scrutiny has worsened his health so badly that he can't walk anymore and spends most of the day in bed. Near the end of the play, after they have won the case, Arthur gets up from his wheelchair and goes to address the press on his front door. But the damage of the intrusion has already been done—Arthur's health will never entirely be what it was—again raising the question of whether the press attention created by the battle was worth it.

Another fundamental question asked by the play is about sincerity. Do the media and, more generally, the public, really care about what happens to Ronnie? The play shows that it's far from certain that they do. The press is more interested in spectacle, using and encouraging the notoriety of the case in order to sell more papers. Members of the public engage in this spectacle but are distanced from its reality—their perception of the case is filtered by the press' presentation. Rattigan thus emphasizes that there is a strong element of theatrically running through the case and its attention.

The play is set-up from the off as being Arthur's quest to *publically* clear his son's name: "I'm going to publish my son's innocence before the world." A private apology from the Navy, or Ronnie's readmittance, wouldn't do. As the case quickly gathers attention, members of the public weigh in with what they think. One person writes into a newspaper to say that Ronnie has been denied a fair trial by a "soulless oligarchy," while another thinks the whole case is a waste of time when the Navy should be concentrating on more important things (like Germany's rapid rearmament). These viewpoints show that the case has become a kind of prism through which different people see different issues. These people are less interested in the case itself, and more in how it intersects with their own politics.

Sir Robert, too, is keenly aware of how spectacle functions. He actively uses it to his advantage, behaving theatrically in order to make the press write up the story in the way that he wants. When the case is ruled in favor of Ronnie, members of the jury jump over their box to shake hands with Sir Robert. The case becomes far more than a simple question of whether a boy stole or not; its spectacle makes people feel personally invested in the outcome (in fact, much more invested in it than Ronnie himself).

The play, then, demonstrates that the press doesn't simply report reality as it is—the media actively affects the way in which people perceive that reality. By heightening the stakes of the case, the press attention draws more people into its orbit, with the case functioning as a kind of mirror in which people see what they want to see—a David vs. Goliath of individual against state, or a waste of time. Those involved have to use that spectacle to their advantage. That's why, as Arthur gets out of his chair to address the press outside his house once victory has been confirmed, he self-consciously asks Sir Robert how best to choose his words. He knows that perception matters and that it isn't enough to just relay the truth. Overall, then, Rattigan shows that the relationship between truth, justice, and the press is a complex beast—and it takes savvy knowhow and theatricality to use that to one's advantage.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

GRAMOPHONE

Dickie's gramophone, a type of music player invented at the end of the 19th century, represents a generational shift between the more traditional mores of Arthur and Grace's generation versus the looser, more progressive world of their children. In Act 1, Arthur accuses Dickie of shirking his studies and listening to his gramophone instead, much like contemporary parents might lament their children spending too much time playing video games instead of doing homework. Dickie insists that the gramophone helps him concentrate but is nevertheless made to take it upstairs—signaling Arthur's continued authority over his son. Dickie wants to have fun in life, but Arthur is a stern patriarch. In Act 2, however, as Arthur's health starts to deteriorate, the gramophone finds its way back downstairs, indicating that his physical weakness is matched by a small but significant decrease in his authority. More broadly, the represents the unavoidability of societal change as new generations come of age.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Nick Hern Books edition of *The Winslow Boy* published in 2000.

Act 1 Quotes

Ronnie's the good little boy, I'm the bad little boy. You've just stuck a couple of labels on us that nothing on earth is ever going to change.

Related Characters: Dickie Winslow (speaker), Ronnie Winslow, Arthur Winslow

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

This moment, occurring shortly after the Winslows have returned from church and do not yet know of Ronnie's expulsion, sets up the tension between Ronnie, supposedly Arthur's favorite son, and his older brother Dickie. Arthur has scolded Dickie for shirking his studies in favor of playing his gramophone, in response to which Dickie accuses his father of treating him unfavorably compared to Ronnie. Though Dickie is largely supportive of his little brother throughout the play, this moment foreshadows his later frustration at having to give up his Oxford education so that the funds can be spent on Ronnie's case. The quote also prepares the reader/viewer to make up their own mind about Ronnie's guilt or innocence; it's never known for sure whether Ronnie is telling the truth when he denies stealing the postal order, and Arthur's assertion that his son is not lying could, theoretically, be simply in keeping with the "label" of "good" that he has "stuck" on his youngest son.

The labeling Dickie talks about here also makes an interesting point—Ronnie himself is labeled as "the Winslow boy" by the public and by the end of the play the case has become about something much bigger than him. In that sense, Ronnie's actual identity dissolves into the background and is replaced by that of "the Winslow boy."

GRACE: You're such a funny girl. You never show your feelings much, do you? You don't behave as if you were in love.

CATHERINE: How does one behave as if one is in love?

ARTHUR: One doesn't read Len Rogers. One reads Byron.

CATHERINE: I do both.

ARTHUR: An odd combination.

CATHERINE: A satisfying one.

Related Characters: Arthur Winslow, Catherine Winslow, Grace Winslow (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

This conversation outlines the stark difference between Grace and Catherine's ideas of what it means to be a woman. Grace sees Catherine as a "New Woman," but doesn't think this as a good thing. On the contrary, she believes that Catherine is denying her "natural" womanhood and losing touch with "tradition," whereas Catherine longs for progressive politics that will bring about equality between men and women and give the latter the vote. The book that Catherine is reading in this moment is

significant: Len Rogers is a fictional union leader whose job would have been organizing the laboring class to win them better employment rights and collective bargaining power. These are ideals that Catherine adheres to as well, and there is overlap between her interest in Rogers, her feminism, and her commitment to getting Ronnie a fair trial. Arthur's comment is typical of his patriarchal position, implying that there are "proper" books for women to read; he thinks she ought to be more romantic and less intellectual, and that feminism and traditional femininity are mutually exclusive.

JOHN: The annoying thing was that I had a whole lot of neatly turned phrases ready for him and he wouldn't let me use them.

CATHERINE: Such as?

JOHN: Oh – how proud and honoured I was by your acceptance of me, and how determined I was to make you a loyal and devoted husband – and to maintain you in the state to which you were accustomed – all that sort of thing. All very sincerely meant.

CATHERINE: Anything about loving me a little?

JOHN: That I thought we could take for granted. So did your father, incidentally.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, John Watherstone (speaker), John's Father/Colonel Watherstone, Arthur Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

In his first scene alone with his fiancée, John proves hardly a romantic. In fact, his comments reflect an attitude that considers marriage to be as much a practical matter as a commitment of love. Catherine isn't very impressed by his attitude, but her comment also shows that she isn't as cold and "masculine" as her mother, Grace, might believe her to be. It also sets up Catherine and John's relationship as precarious and beholden to external forces; indeed, this moment foreshadows the fact that eventually John withdraws his proposal because his father disapproves of the Winslow case. It also shows that John found the dowry discussion with Arthur intimidating and had been thinking about it long in advance, practicing his phrases so that he could live up to the formality of the conversation.

DICKIE: Who's going to break the news to him eventually? I mean, someone'll have to.

CATHERINE: Don't let's worry about that now.

DICKIE: Well, you can count me out. In fact, I don't want to be within a thousand miles of that explosion.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Dickie Winslow (speaker), Ronnie Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

In this early scene Dickie is referring to who will tell Arthur, the family patriarch, about Ronnie's expulsion. This quickly develops the reader/viewer's understanding of the family dynamic. Evidently, all the family members—not just Ronnie—are afraid of Arthur's reaction to the expulsion, which they think will be "explosive" and terrifying. Dickie doesn't even want to be in the room, such is his concern at how his father will respond. Dickie's language here also suggests a mild threat of violence from Arthur, though this is never demonstrated in the play. In fact, this quote serves to emphasize Arthur's surprisingly sympathetic reaction to Ronnie and his total trust in his son's moral integrity. Arthur's "explosion" is in fact channeled into a calm but stubborn pursuit of the case.

ARTHUR: Why didn't you come to me now? Why did you have to go and hide in the garden?

RONNIE: I don't know, Father.

ARTHUR: Are you so frightened of me?

Related Characters: Ronnie Winslow, Arthur Winslow (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27-28

Explanation and Analysis

Having finally learned about Ronnie's expulsion, Arthur's paternal instincts kick in. He realizes the extent of his's son fearfulness here: the fact that Ronnie would rather hide in the garden in the rain rather than confess to Arthur that he has been expelled shows the degree of psychological pressure on Ronnie and, importantly, gives Arthur a glimpse into how his own family perceives him. It's after this quote that Arthur decides that he believes Ronnie and begins the

long, drawn-out fight to clear his name. This quote is also the first example of Arthur's tenderness that lurks underneath his intimidating exterior, and is the last time when anyone in the family is so expressly scared of him (though they come to find other faults).

Act 2 Quotes

I wish I had someone to take me out. In your new feminist world do you suppose women will be allowed to do some of the paying?

Related Characters: Dickie Winslow (speaker), Catherine Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

This quote at the top of Act 2, as Dickie and Catherine are sitting together in the living room, further develops the play's theme regarding society's attitude toward women. It's important to remember that women really were second-class citizens at the start of the 20th century. Dickie's comment is a light-hearted jab at his sister's feminist politics, but it's indicative of the deeply-entrenched stereotypes about women at the time—namely, that they must be subservient and dependent upon men. Behind Dickie's comment is the sense that a "new world" is on the horizon, even if he is being a little sarcastic. To be sure, the Women's Suffrage movement—which fought for the women's vote—was growing and eventually was to culminate in success. The quote is also evidence of Dickie and Catherine's mutual affection—Catherine doesn't take her brother's words as offensive, but as good-natured humor.

DICKIE: Suppress your opinions. Men don't like 'em in their lady friends, even if they agree with 'em. And if they don't – it's fatal. Pretend to be half-witted, then he'll adore you.

CATHERINE: I know. I do, sometimes, and then I forget. Still, you needn't worry. If there's ever a clash between what I believe and what I feel, there's not much doubt about which will win.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Dickie Winslow (speaker), John Watherstone

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

While still sitting in the living room with his sister, Dickie portrays the attitude that women ought to dumb down their intellect in order to better win the affections of men. Catherine, for all her steadfast commitment to her principles, understandably feels the societal pressure that Dickie's comments point towards. This shows that Catherine's character is complex and nuanced, even as others think that because she is a feminist she is not allowed to show any weakness or concern for how she is perceived. Rattigan shows that feminism is not mutually exclusive from emotionality or a desire for love. Catherine wants John to adore her and admits to sometimes willingly going against her own principles in order to win his affection—at least, that is how Dickie interprets her comments here. Later in the play, Catherine will actually do the opposite: she will abandon her relationship with John in favor of the case, effectively choosing what she believes—that is, her principles—over what she feels.

My gosh, I could just about murder that little brother of mine. What's he have to go about pinching postal orders for? And why the hell does he have to get himself nabbed doing it?

Related Characters: Dickie Winslow (speaker), Ronnie Winslow, Arthur Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

This quote signals the rising tensions in the Winslow family as Ronnie's case gains notoriety. Because the legal process is long and expensive, Arthur has had to make financial sacrifices elsewhere. The first cut he makes is to Dickie's university tuition, hence the latter's evident frustration with his brother. This is also the first time that anyone in the Winslow family has seriously suggested that Ronnie might in fact have committed the crime, but it's probably borne of frustration on Dickie's part rather than actual belief. Furthermore, this moment develops Dickie's character—it's not so much the "pinching" that annoys him, it's that Ronnie got himself caught. This implies that Dickie has a morally

rebellious side to him, perhaps brought about by his childhood in such a patriarchal and strict household.

CATHERINE: I suppose you heard that he committed suicide a few months ago?

SIR ROBERT: Yes. I had heard.

CATHERINE: Many people believed him innocent, you know.

SIR ROBERT: So I understand. As it happens, however, he was guilty.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Sir Robert Morton (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 46

Explanation and Analysis

Sir Robert Morton is portrayed as a man who is intellectually brilliant but emotionally cold; this is an image that he is happy to cultivate. Upon first meeting him, Catherine sees the barrister as almost "non-human" (she later describes him as "fish-like), and reveals her knowledge of his legal background by bringing up a specific legal case: the suicide that Catherine refers to was that of Len Rogers, the trade union leader whose autobiography she was reading earlier.

Here, Sir Robert portrays himself as a disinterested defender of "justice," later saying that there is no place for emotion in law. This sets up the initial tension between Catherine and Sir Robert—she knows his reputation but, given what she knows of his previous case, is suspicious of his motives. Sir Robert's slightly flippant tone also reflects his attitude towards women; he does not see them as his equal and is only talking to Catherine here because he is waiting for Arthur to come downstairs.

Act 3 Quotes

ARTHUR: I know exactly what I'm doing, Grace. I'm going to publish my son's innocence before the world, and for that end I am not prepared to weigh the cost.

GRACE: But the cost may be out of all proportion –

ARTHUR: It may be. That doesn't concern me. I hate heroics, Grace. An injustice has been done. I am going to set it right, and there is no sacrifice in the world I am not prepared to make in order to do so.

Related Characters: Grace Winslow, Arthur Winslow (speaker), Sir Robert Morton, Ronnie Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

By this point in the play, the case is really taking its toll on the Winslows. Grace is angrily arguing with Arthur, accusing him of sacrificing their whole way of life just so he can win what she sees as a case that isn't even that important. In this moment Arthur, like Sir Robert, positions himself as a mere defender of "justice," a notion that has to be upheld all costs. Grace's suspicion, however, is that Arthur is simply being stubborn, afraid of losing face by admitting defeat. This moment also demonstrates the importance to Arthur that Ronnie's innocence be established specifically in the public sphere—a private apology or Ronnie's re-admittance to the college would not suffice. Justice needs not only to be done, but be seen.

CATHERINE: Not a verbal protest. Something far more spectacular and dramatic. He'd had his feet on the Treasury table and his hat over his eyes during most of the First Lord's speech – and he suddenly got up very deliberately, glared at the First Lord, threw a whole bundle of notes on the floor, and stalked out of the House. It made a magnificent effect. If I hadn't known I could have sworn he was genuinely indignant –

ARTHUR: Of course he was genuinely indignant. So would any man of feeling be –

CATHERINE: Sir Robert, Father dear, is not a man of feeling. I don't think any emotion at all can stir that fishy heart –

Related Characters: Arthur Winslow, Catherine Winslow (speaker), Sir Robert Morton

Related Themes:

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, in which Catherine is updating her father on the day's court proceedings, demonstrates Catherine's increasing respect for Sir Robert Morton, despite still believing his antics to be more self-serving than done in the pursuit of justice. Her point is that the case and its proceedings are inherently theatrical, and she is impressed

by Sir Robert's ability to manipulate theatricality to improve their chances of winning. Arthur of course, thinks that Sir Robert is a man of feeling and would not have been acting—but Arthur shows little evidence of being a man of feeling himself, so the reader/viewer wonders if he is a good judge of character on that particular issue. Catherine spells out her view that Sir Morton is almost "non-human" or "super-human," again reaching to imagery of fish. The quote also demonstrates just how much the case has grown in notoriety; it's now discussed in the highest location of power in the country, the British parliament.

SIR ROBERT: It seems decidedly wrong to me that a lady of your political persuasion should be allowed to adorn herself with such a very feminine allurement. It really looks so awfully like trying to have the best of both worlds –

CATHERINE: I'm not a militant, you know, Sir Robert. I don't go about breaking shop windows with a hammer or pouring acid down pillar boxes.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Sir Robert Morton (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

This moment offers further clarity about Sir Robert's views towards women. He clearly doesn't think a woman can be both feminist and "feminine." This reflects broader societal belief that a "New Woman" can have nothing of the "old," traditionally feminine woman about her. Catherine, for her part, tries to outline that she is perfectly capable of being politically engaged and wearing a nice hat, and that the one doesn't disallow the other. Historically, the activities she describes were tactics used by the Suffrage movement in the early years of the 20th century. At the time of the play's setting, though, these more "militant" activities had slowed down. The women's vote was looking momentarily more likely with a series of legislation, but this was mostly voted down by the completely male parliament—meaning there was plenty more work to do after World War 1.

JOHN: But people do find the case a bit ridiculous, you know. I mean, I get chaps coming up to me in the mess all the time and saying: "I say, is it true you're going to marry the Winslow girl? You'd better be careful. You'll find yourself up in the front of the House of Lords for pinching the Adjutant's bath." Things like that. They're not awfully funny –

CATHERINE: That's nothing. They're singing a verse about us in the Alhambra.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, John Watherstone (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

John displays that he is weak-willed and not on board with Catherine's views of the case. He still wants to marry her, but seems more concerned about avoiding the embarrassment of being associated with the Winslow case. This also points to the increased public attention on the proceedings—the case has become a cultural event, famous throughout the land. Catherine shows typical strength of character by effectively laughing off John's concerns. The Alhambra was a popular theatre London's Leicester Square at the time the play is set, again showing that the case has garnered wide pubic interest.

SIR ROBERT: What are my instructions, Miss Winslow?

CATHERINE: *(In a flat voice.)* Do you need my instructions, Sir Robert? Aren't they already on the Petition? Doesn't it say: Let Right be done?

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Sir Robert Morton (speaker), Arthur Winslow, John's Father/Colonel Watherstone, John Watherstone

Related Themes:

Page Number: 72

Explanation and Analysis

Having just learned that John will leave Catherine if the family does not drop the case, and that the Winslows have been granted their desired Petition of Right, Sir Robert tells Catherine it's up to her if they continue. For one thing, this quote shows the symbolic importance that the "petition of right" takes on in the play. It's associated text, "let Right be done," becomes a kind of stand-in that sums up Arthur,

Catherine, and Sir Robert's commitment to their principles.

It's also the moment that finally destroys Catherine's relationship with John, as he's just been petitioning her to stop the case so that they can get married with the approval of his father. Showing herself again willing to make great personal sacrifice on behalf of her family, she makes it clear that in her opinion there isn't even a choice to make: they must continue. It also represents a momentary shift in power, in which the men—Sir Robert and Arthur—grant Catherine the responsibility of choosing whether to continue with the case (in light of John's father's ultimatum).

Act 4 Quotes

ARTHUR: I'm tired of being gazed at from the street while eating my mutton, as though I were an animal from the Zoo.

Related Characters: Arthur Winslow (speaker)

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

This quote neatly demonstrates the increasing media pressure on the Winslows as public interest in the case intensifies. The Winslow household is now completely surrounded by reporters and nosy members of the public, all hoping to catch a glimpse of the Winslows. Arthur isn't used to feeling objectified and being an object of curiosity, and clearly doesn't like it. Pursuing a case to such lengths, Rattigan suggests, comes with difficult repercussions. This Act will go on to represent the height of the public scrutiny of the Winslows. This quote in particular shows that the case has become a genuine public spectacle, pointing both to its broader moral and legal significance as well as the theatricality of the pursuit of justice. That's what Arthur claimed he wanted—to publish is son's innocence "before the world"—but he appears to be more disturbed by that idea now that the world is on his doorstep.

CATHERINE: You don't think the work I'm doing at the W.S.A. is useful?

ARTHUR *is silent.*

You may be right. But it's the only work I'm fitted for, all the same. *(Pause.)* No, Father. The choice is quite simple. Either I marry Desmond and settle down into quite a comfortable and not really useless existence – or I go on for the rest of my life earning two pounds a week in the service of a hopeless cause.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow (speaker), Arthur Winslow, Desmond Curry

Related Themes:

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

Desmond has just left the Winslow home, after proposing marriage to Catherine despite acknowledging that he knows he will never love him. When Arthur insists Catherine turn him down and then suggests she can still find something "useful" to do with her life, she poses this question referencing her work with the Women's Suffrage Association. Arthur clearly doesn't think the work that Catherine does for Suffrage is valuable—otherwise he wouldn't remain silent. However, his silence also shows that has become more sensitive to her feelings (whereas in Act 1 he was more openly critical of her feminism).

The quote shows that Catherine's situation is playing heavily on her mind. The societal pressures on women are so great that she is even considering marrying someone for whom she has no feelings whatsoever, just so she can eke out a comfortable existence and avoid spinsterdom. It's actually Arthur who insists that marrying Desmond would be "lunacy"—he know it's not at all what she wants. This shows at least some development in his ability to empathize with Catherine; they've been brought together by their shared commitment to the case and their unwillingness to sacrifice their principles to make life easier. But it also shows how difficult it will be for Catherine to affect any real change on the issue of women's rights—even she worries that it might be "hopeless."

ARTHUR: It would appear, then, that we've won.

CATHERINE: Yes, Father, it would appear that we've won.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Arthur Winslow (speaker), Violet, Ronnie Winslow

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Neither Arthur nor Catherine is in court to witness Ronnie's surprisingly sudden victory (Ronnie isn't there either, for that matter). In fact, they learn that a verdict has been reached because they hear a paper boy shouting about it

outside, before Violet comes in—the only major character who actually was at the court at the victorious moment—to explain to them the scenes of jubilation that Arthur and Catherine have missed. That's why it "appears" that they've won—because they weren't there, they find it hard to believe.

This anticlimactic conclusion to the case, then, gives Arthur and Catherine a victory devoid of any public display of personal pride, asking the audience to decide whether or not the great sacrifices involved have been worth it. It's also worth remembering that Arthur hears the news while sitting in a wheelchair that he only needs because of his poor health caused at least in part by the pressures of case. Finally, this quote shows the solidarity between Arthur and Catherine—they may have missed out on the ceremony of their victory, but they have won it together.

> SIR ROBERT: Goodbye, Miss Winslow. Shall I see you in the House then, one day?

CATHERINE: *(With a smile.)* Yes, Sir Robert. One day. But not in the Gallery. Across the floor.

SIR ROBERT: *(With a faint smile.)* Perhaps, Goodbye.

Related Characters: Catherine Winslow, Sir Robert Morton (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 96

Explanation and Analysis

With the Winslows having won their case and, ostensibly, made a major victory for justice throughout society, the play in its final moments brings the viewer/reader's attention back on to the question of women's rights. Sir Robert seems to have developed an attraction to Catherine, arguably reciprocated, and wants to see her again. He wants her to come back to the parliament and watch him from the gallery. Catherine makes the determined point that, though, that, if she does come back, it won't be to watch him as a spectator—it will be as an equal, as a member.

Sir Robert's response is less than hopeful; he can't see the world changing so fundamentally as to allow women to be active participants in the government. This is a hypocritical shame, because otherwise he seems to be a principled defender of the "Right"; he has, after all, turned down the most prestigious job in law in order to win the case. Rattigan, then, argues that attitudes towards women are deeply entrenched and will require a seismic shift in society to dislodge. Nevertheless, women were allowed to vote by the time or the play's publication, pointing to Sir Robert's short-sightedness as well as the potential for broad social change.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

ACT 1

It's a rainy Sunday morning in the wealthy London borough of Kensington, not long before World War I. Fourteen-year-old Ronnie Winslow, dressed in the uniform of his naval college, stands in the living room—the furnishings of which suggest its occupants to be of the upper middle class—looking frightened and as if he might run away.

Ronnie is clearly of two minds about whether to reveal his presence or to run away. The uniform looks out of place in the living room of his family home, suggesting that something must have gone wrong.

The Winslow maid, Violet, enters the room and is shocked to see Ronnie standing there. She tells him that the rest of the family are out at church, before insisting that he gives her a hug and a kiss. She looks up him up and down and tells him he's "quite the little naval officer," before leaving to get on with some chores.

Violet's treatment of Ronnie shows that he occupies an affectionate place in the family. Her comment is painfully ironic—it's the kind of language adults use with kids, but also demonstrates that Ronnie's status as a budding naval officer is important to his identity and his standing in the family.

Alone again, Ronnie takes a letter out of his pocket and looks at it miserably. For a moment, it looks like he might tear it up. Suddenly, the sound of voices starts up in the hall. Ronnie panics and runs out of the garden door into the torrential rain.

Clearly whatever is contained in the letter is both authoritative and, to Ronnie, highly worrying. In his tormented state, he'd rather hide in the rain than be discovered.

The rest of the Winslow family enters the room, discussing the priest who led the church service. Grace, Ronnie's mother whose prettiness is beginning to fade, says he was "inaudible." Arthur, a sixty-something man and clearly the imposing head of the family, defends the priest. Dickie, Ronnie's gregarious older brother, mocks the priest for his slowness. Much to Dickie's bemusement, Arthur says that he bets that—unlike Dickie—the priest never failed his Oxford exams.

This sets up the dynamic between Arthur and his eldest son, Dickie. Arthur is willing to defend the priest because he sees in him another dominant male leader; Dickie has a fun-loving side to his personality, which irritates Arthur in the light of the fact that Dickie failed his recent exams. Arthur thinks Dickie shirks his educational duty (and it's Arthur who funds his studies).

Dickie claims to have been working hard on his studies, but Grace and Arthur suspect him of listening to his **gramophone** and shirking his duties. Arthur warns that he won't keep funding his place at university unless he sees some improvement in his son's dedication. Defending himself, Dickie complains that Ronnie is Arthur's favorite son, and appeals to Catherine, their strong-willed sister, for her agreement. Catherine, who is nearing thirty and has a "air of masculinity" about her, is reading a book and not really listening. Arthur orders Dickie to take his gramophone out of the living room.

This scene establishes Arthur as the decision maker of the family—it's up to him whether Dickie can carry on at Oxford—as well as potential tension or resentment between Dickie and Ronnie. The gramophone—perhaps occupying a role here much like videogames do today—is seen by Arthur and Grace as a frivolous object that reflects Dickie's lack of effort. That's why Arthur orders it out of his living room, which, after all, he sees as his territory. Catherine prefers to avoid these kinds of arguments.

Grace asks Catherine what she's reading—it's an autobiography by Len Rogers, a prominent leader of a Trade Union. Catherine is planning to marry John Watherstone, though they're not yet officially engaged, and Grace remarks that she is surprised John wants to be with Catherine considering she's a Radical and a Suffragette.

The book demonstrates Catherine's commitment to left-wing politics and to a wider interest in human rights and societal organization. Grace's comments show that the two women have very different attitudes about the place of women in the world: Grace sees Catherine as being against tradition, particularly the institution of marriage. She doesn't see how her radical politics or her role as a Suffragette (i.e. fighting for women's right to vote) can square with being a wife.

Grace thinks Catherine "doesn't behave as if she were in love." Arthur puts forward the idea that if you're in love, you read Byron—not Len Rogers. Catherine retorts that she reads both, with Grace wearily saying that modern girls don't have the feelings that her generation did: "it's this New Woman attitude." Much to Arthur's amusement, Catherine replies mockingly that she loves John in every way possible for a woman, and more than he loves her. Grace suddenly spots movement in the garden, thinking it must be the young boy from next door.

Grace thinks that young women have lost their way, and that Catherine doesn't do what she's "supposed" to in order to show she's in love. But Grace cares about more than marriage and love—she is politically engaged and passionately believes in change. Arthur's point that when someone is in love they should read Byron also marks him as something of a traditionalist: Byron was a poet active in the early 19th century, 100 years or so before the time period of the play. Arthur doesn't see how a woman can be interested both in romance—in his view represented by someone like Byron—and the political struggle of a union leader like Len Rogers. Feminism and traditional femininity in his mind—and the mind of many at the time—are mutually exclusive.

John's due to arrive imminently to discuss his potential marriage to Catherine with Arthur (the meeting has been arranged by Grace). Catherine and Grace go to hide in the dining room while the two men talk. Grace tells Arthur to give them a sign when the conversation is done, like a cough or three taps of his walking stick.

Though Catherine might long for progress, she still has to follow the protocol of her patriarchal family set-up (and it's worth noting that she does have a close relationship with her father). The women have to leave the room so that the men can do the talking, neatly showing where the power lies. The walking-stick tapping just shows how stilted and contrived the whole situation is.

John is shown into the room by Violet. He's a well-dressed man of about thirty. He and Arthur have a very formal exchange about the marriage, mostly focused on the finances. John outlines his money situation: he's in the army but depends on an allowance from his father, who is a colonel. Arthur says that the Winslows don't have vast riches, but offers John a sixth of his total wealth as a dowry for the marriage. John thinks this very generous.

Rattigan emphasizes that this marriage is almost like a business transaction, with John and Arthur bartering to come to an arrangement. This also importantly shows two things: first, that John is financially dependent on his father; and second, that though the Winslows may appear to be wealthy, their riches are relatively modest. This suggests that, were the family circumstances to change (as indeed they do), the financial security of the family would be under threat.

Catherine and Grace emerge from the dining room. Grace offers her congratulations to Catherine and John; Arthur goes down to the cellar to get a celebratory bottle of wine. After Grace leaves the couple alone for a few minutes, John confesses to Catherine that the conversation with Arthur was nerve-wracking, and that he didn't use any of the phrases he'd prepared in advance. She asks if any of his pre-planned sentences included anything about loving her, to which he replies that both he and Arthur thought that could be taken for granted.

Now that the men have come to an agreement, the proposal can be treated as official. When John is left alone with Catherine, his relieved attitude shows the level to which Arthur is seen as an intimidating and dominating man (even to other men). He was so nervous about the conversation that he planned phrases in advance. That none of these included anything about his love for Catherine shows just how unromantic the whole occasion is.

Catherine asks John what his own father, the Colonel, thinks about their proposed marriage. John's father makes her uncomfortable: "he has a way of looking at me through his monocle that shrivels me up." John says that's just him being a colonel, and asks Catherine if the rest of her family is as scared of Arthur as he is. By and large, they are, she says; but Ronnie needn't be scared as Arthur "worships" him.

Even John is beholden to patriarchal society—he hasn't yet proceeded through its ranks and is very much under the authority of his own father (who, appropriately, is a prominent member of the military establishment). Catherine outlines that it's not just him who finds Arthur intimidating; it's their whole family. But to her, Arthur clearly has a soft spot for his youngest son.

Ronnie comes to the window and calls for "Kate" (Catherine). His sudden appearance startles her. Ronnie enters the room, soaked to the bone, and pleads with his sister not to fetch Arthur. Sensing a difficult conversation coming, John excuses himself to the dining room.

Ronnie feels he has a better chance revealing himself to his sister than to his father. Ronnie echoes John's fear of Arthur, while his disheveled physical appearance reflects his panicked mental state.

Ronnie shows Catherine the letter; she's shocked by its contents. Furthermore, it's addressed to Arthur; Catherine tells Ronnie he shouldn't have opened it. Ronnie desperately professes his innocence to Catherine and asks if they can tear up the letter—she refuses.

The letter is, of course, addressed to the head of the household. Catherine senses that Arthur will be angry about it being opened. Ronnie so desperately wants it all to go away that he thinks physically destroying the letter will somehow get rid of the problem. This is a reminder that he's still a young boy.

Dickie re-enters the room, nonplussed to see Ronnie home early from Naval College. He greets Ronnie jovially, asking if he's in trouble. Catherine instructs Dickie to wait with Ronnie while she gets Grace.

Dickie is generally good-natured and sociable. He assumes Ronnie is in trouble as he has come home early, but Dickie doesn't seem too concerned about it generally.

Dickie talks with Ronnie, learning that Ronnie has been expelled from college. When Ronnie tells him it's for stealing—which Ronnie is adamant he didn't do—Dickie can't believe the authorities would make such a fuss over "a bit of pinching."

Dickie doesn't even think that stealing is such a big deal; it's not an offence that deserves expulsion. Ronnie professes his innocence, as he does from the play's start to its end.

Grace rushes into the room and embraces Ronnie, who starts crying. She agrees not to tell Arthur anything yet, and Dickie goes upstairs to stop his father from coming down. As he departs, he asks who is eventually going to tell Arthur what's happened. He doesn't want to be "within a thousand miles of that explosion."

The family show themselves to be a cooperative unit—but with a difference. They are actively trying to hide Ronnie from incurring the wrath of his father. Dickie, who has already been on the receiving end of criticism from Arthur, doesn't want to be there to witness the fall-out when Arthur does eventually learn what's happened. There's a genuine fear in the air, then, of Arthur. Dickie shows that his empathy with Ronnie only extends so far.

Catherine, visibly upset, relieves John from hiding in the dining room. She asks him how a child of Ronnie's age could be "tortured" in this way. Learning of Ronnie's misdemeanor, John gently tries to suggest that Ronnie's harsh treatment at the hands of the authorities is kind of how it works in "the Service"—institutions like the navy or the army. He then apologies, realizing he's not really helping. Catherine thinks the news might "kill" her father.

John is from a military background—his father is a Colonel. That's why he thinks Ronnie's maltreatment is par for the course. Catherine shows that the issue goes deeper than just being about Ronnie—she thinks it about general fairness and the relationship between authority and individuals.

All of a sudden Desmond Curry, the family's hapless solicitor, arrives at the house. At forty-five, Desmond has the body "of an athlete gone to seed." Catherine quietly warns John that Desmond has been in love with her for years and it's become a running joke in the family.

Desmond is a bit of a laughing stock in the play. He thinks Catherine doesn't know he has loved her for a long time, but she does. This shows a slightly lighter side to the family dynamic.

Catherine tries to break the awkward atmosphere by asking Desmond how his cricket match went the day before. Desmond congratulates the engaged couple—Violet told him the news as he came in.

Violet often proves to be a source of information in the play. She does not have the same social filters as the rest of the characters, and just tends to speak her mind.

Grace enters again and tells Catherine that Ronnie is now upstairs in bed. Arthur comes in, complaining about the state of the cellars. He, too, asks Desmond about his cricket match, telling him he should give up his "ridiculous games" and embrace middle age.

Grace goes straight into maternal mode and puts Ronnie to bed. It is worth remembering that he's fourteen—hardly a baby. Arthur's comment about middle age has a mild sadness to it, given that his own health deteriorates throughout the play.

Arthur calls Violet and asks her to bring glasses so they can toast the engagement. He pours out a drink to all in the room, including Violet. She insists she only wants a drop, which Arthur thinks is funny as she appears to have presumptuously brought herself a glass. Violet says that the glass wasn't for her, but for Master Ronnie.

Violet breaks the news that the rest of the family was trying to keep secret—Ronnie is home early. Again, Violet proves an unwitting source of information.

Arthur tells Violet that Ronnie isn't due back for another couple of days, but she says she's seen him with her own eyes. Arthur asks Grace what's going on—she fearfully explains that the family thought it best Arthur didn't know about Ronnie's return just yet.

Arthur starts to understand that something is being kept from him. Grace is fearful of the consequences of Arthur finding out. This re-emphasizes that this is a patriarchal set-up with Arthur in the position of authority.

At first, Arthur thinks that Ronnie is ill, but it quickly dawns on him that there must be a problem with the Naval College. Grace timidly presents Ronnie's expulsion letter, which Arthur makes her read out. The letter explains that Ronnie has been expelled for stealing a five-shilling postal order. Grace starts crying; Catherine puts a hand on her shoulder.

The emotional fallout of the expulsion begins. The fact that Arthur makes Grace read the letter is a reminder of his overall authority. Here the reader/viewer learns the specific charge of the crime, which concerns only a small amount of money; a postal order was a way of sending money through the post, and Ronnie is accused of stealing his friend's order and cashing it for himself.

Arthur tells Violet to fetch Ronnie from upstairs. Grace protests that he is in bed, but Arthur insists on seeing him immediately. Arthur makes it clear that he wants to be alone with Ronnie. As she leaves the room, Grace pleads with Arthur "please don't—please don't."

Once again, the other characters are instructed to clear the room so that the Arthur can converse one-on-one. Though Grace is Ronnie's mother, she's not allowed to be present. This serves to set up a more fearful encounter for Ronnie and heighten the dramatic tension.


Ronnie appears in his dressing gown, clearly fearful. Arthur asks why he isn't in uniform; Ronnie tells him that it got wet in the rain. Arthur is disappointed to learn that Ronnie was hiding in the rain from him, asking if Ronnie is really that frightened of his father.

The removal of Ronnie's sodden uniform mirrors his expulsion from the naval college. Arthur becomes more aware of how much he intimidates others, in this case his allegedly "favorite" son.

Arthur instructs Ronnie to tell him the truth about the stealing accusation; he says he'll know if Ronnie is lying. Ronnie emotionally denies the charge. Arthur stares intensely into Ronnie's eyes, and then relaxes, apparently believing his son's story.

Arthur sees himself as a moral authority with the ability to tell if his son is lying or not. The reader/viewer never finds out whether Ronnie is telling the truth, though; convincing and genuine as he seems, it's worth remember that it isn't impossible that Ronnie lies throughout the entire play (though it is unlikely). Truth occupies a central place in the text, but it's always kept at a distance, and only relatable through the characters themselves (the reader/viewer has no privileged access to knowledge of what actually happened).


Arthur sends Ronnie back to bed, insisting that in the future "any son of mine will at least show enough sense to come in out of the rain." As Ronnie goes upstairs, Arthur picks up the phone, asking the telephone exchange to put him through to Ronnie's Naval College.

Re-establishing the household hierarchy, Arthur dispenses his instruction to Ronnie. But clearly, the issue of Ronnie's case becomes an instant priority for Arthur. He is consistent in his efforts to restore Ronnie's name, but it should also be remembered that that name is also Arthur's name*—it isn't just Ronnie's integrity that is at stake.*


ACT 2

It's nine months later. Dickie and Catherine are in the living room. Dickie's **gramophone**, back downstairs again, is playing some early ragtime. Dickie asks his sister if she thinks Arthur can hear it upstairs, but she reckons not.

The gramophone has been taken back downstairs, perhaps hinting at a slight weakening of Arthur's authority. That said, Dickie and Catherine are still worried he can hear it.

Dickie praises the dress Catherine is wearing; she's about to go out on a date with John. Dickie asks Catherine whether in the "new feminist world" women will sometimes foot the bill instead of men. She says "certainly," to which Dickie jokingly commits to joining the cause.

Dickie and Catherine have a good-humored closeness to their relationship. Dickie is the second character after Grace to refer to women's "new" way of being. It's clear he doesn't take Catherine's feminist ambitions too seriously.

Violet comes in with a copy of *The Star* newspaper. She asks Dickie and Catherine not to throw it away when they're done, so that she and the cook can read it.

Clearly there's something in the paper that interests all three characters (and the cook). This is the first entry of the press into the play. Violet continues in her slightly unwitting role as provider of information.

Catherine flicks to the letters page of the paper, with Dickie watching attentively over her shoulder. She reads the first letter, which offers support for "the Osborne Cadet"—Ronnie—in light of his "high-handed treatment by the Admiralty." The letter goes on to praise Arthur for his defense of Ronnie against the "soulless oligarchy."

Ronnie's case has evidently garnered significant public interest. This particular letter is a good example of how one part of the public views the case: as the defense of a powerless boy against the might and authority of the State/the Crown. Without getting too technical, the U.K. state has political power but is ultimately constitutionally ruled by the monarchy (the Crown). That's why Ronnie's case is presented as being against the government and the Crown; they're essentially interchangeable for the purpose of the play.

Catherine reads aloud the next letter, signed by "Perplexed." This letter-write "cannot understand what all the fuss is about in the case of the Osborne Cadet." "Perplexed" thinks there are more important matters than a fourteen-year-old boy and a five-shilling postal order. Furthermore, it goes on, the case is a major distraction for the Navy when it should be concentrating on Germany's rearmament—Ronnie's case is a "storm in a teacup."

"Perplexed" offers the opposite view to the previous letter. In essence, Ronnie's case isn't worth the hassle—the "truth" of the matter is unimportant. In particular, the navy should be focusing on more important issues like the activities of Germany. The play is set just before World War I, which looms darkly on the horizon.

Dickie says, a little guiltily, that he can kind of see the point of the second letter-writer. He thinks it does seem like a bit of an expensive fuss over such a small matter. He tells Catherine to dance with him to cheer them both up.

Dickie doesn't operate with the same loyalty to a set of principles as Catherine does. He can see the last letter's point—that the attention on the case is out of proportion with the triviality of the alleged crime.

As they dance, Dickie asks Catherine about her upcoming wedding. Catherine tells him that it's been postponed again as John's father is abroad for six months. She says that her and John have differences of opinion, but that she'll marry him even if she has to drag him up the aisle.

This is the first hint that Catherine and John's proposed marriage might not work out as planned. This also reinforces the degree of control John's father has in his life.

Dickie tells Catherine that she should "suppress" her opinions: "Men don't like 'em in their lady friends, even if they agree with 'em. And if they don't—it's fatal." It's best if she pretends to be "half-witted"; then John will "adore" her. Catherine reassures him that if there's ever "a clash between what I believe and what I feel, there's no doubt about which will win." Dickie takes this to mean she will choose marriage.

Even though Dickie is trying to offer Catherine genuine advice, his comments demonstrate the entrenched patriarchal structure of early 20th century society. Women should dumb down their intelligence if they want men to adore them. Catherine's comment is a little cryptic but implies that she would choose her potential marriage over her ideals.

Arthur enters, walking with difficulty. Dickie hastily switches off the **gramophone**. Dickie asks Arthur what the doctor said, who has evidently just been to visit. The doctor reportedly said that Arthur isn't as well as he last saw him, which to Arthur seems like expensive information. Arthur notices the paper and asks Catherine to bring it to him.

Arthur's health is starting to deteriorate, suggesting the toll the case has already begun taking on him. His comment about the doctor shows that he always has one eye on his finances.

Reading the letter page, Arthur wonders if he could sue "Perplexed." Catherine asks him if Sir Robert Morton is coming to the house. Sir Robert is considered the best barrister in the business. Arthur says he could hardly go and see Sir Robert himself.

Arthur can't go to see Sir Robert himself because of his ill health. His vague wish to sue the letter-writer shows that the case is to him partly a matter of pride as well as "truth." It also shows his preoccupation with the perception of the case to the wider public.

Catherine leaves the room, and Arthur goes over to Dickie, staring at him intently. Arthur asks Dickie to answer a question for him truthfully: what odds would Dickie place on him successfully completing his Oxford degree? Dickie responds that it's more or less "evens," before reducing the likelihood to "seven to four against."

Arthur, thinking about his financial situation, lays a trap for Dickie by asking a seemingly light-hearted question.

Arthur tells Dickie that he's no longer able to pay for "such a gamble." Dickie will have to quit university; Arthur says he will get him a job at the bank. Dickie, clearly disappointed, asks if it's because of the case. Arthur , "it's costing him a lot of money," and then apologizes for the shock. Dickie had been kind of expecting it anyway—especially with the knowledge that Sir Robert Morton is to get involved in the case. He admits, though, that it's "a bit of a slap in the face."

Arthur is being a little disingenuous here: Ronnie's case is as much of a gamble as Dickie's education. In fact, Arthur is simply prioritizing his gambles. To him, the case represents something worthier than Dickie's education. Dickie accepts his fate with characteristic understatement, putting on a brave face.

The doorbell rings, and Arthur knows that it is a journalist who has come to see him. He asks Dickie if they can continue their conversation another time. Arthur then asks how Dickie's love interest, Edwina, is doing, before giving Dickie some money so he can take her to the theatre. Dickie thanks Arthur, and asks if he can pour himself an alcoholic drink. Arthur agrees, and Dickie leaves the room.

Arthur's donation to Dickie demonstrates Dickie's dependence on financial help from his father. It's not meant to be patronizing, but it makes Dickie out to be a kid who gratefully receives his pocket money. Dickie, still taking in the news that he has to leave Oxford, wants a drink to calm his nerves.

Violet appears at the door and announces the arrival of Miss Barnes, a journalist from the *Daily News*. She says she wants to take a picture of Arthur and Ronnie; her paper specializes in "stories with a little heart … a father's fight for his little boy's honour." Arthur is visibly offended, and says he thinks the case has "wider implications" than Miss Barnes implies.

Arthur believes in the wider importance of the case, but Miss Barnes isn't that bothered. The case hasn't yet reached the height of public awareness that it will later. This hints that the press is not interested in principle, but in selling papers.

Miss Barnes quizzes Arthur about the case but doesn't seem especially interested. Arthur outlines the long process they've already been through: they had to fight to even see the evidence against Ronnie. Eventually there was an inquiry, but in Arthur's opinion that wasn't conducted fairly either—Ronnie had no representation and was judged by someone involved in the Navy. That's why he is now hiring Sir Robert Morton. Miss Barnes seems more interested in the Winslows' curtains.

The reader/viewer gets a sense of why Arthur has hired Sir Robert. Ronnie has already been through a protracted legal process to date, and now Sir Robert is the only with the expertise to fight against the powers that be. Miss Barnes's interest in the curtains, meanwhile, further reflects her disinterest in the particulars of the case., much to Arthur's frustration.

Ronnie and Grace enter, clearly in high spirits. Ronnie excitedly tells Arthur that he has grown an inch taller. He notices Miss Barnes and asks who she is. Miss Barnes calls in her photographer, Fred.

Ronnie doesn't seem to be too weighed down by the case, and his comments reiterate that he just wants to be a kid. This further suggests Arthur's pursuit of justice is also conducted in the name of his own, rather than his son's, pride.

Posing with Ronnie, Arthur explains to Grace about Miss Barnes. Grace and Miss Barnes discuss the curtains. Ronnie is excited to be in the *Daily News* as it's a paper they get at his new school's library. Miss Barnes departs with her photographer, thanking Grace rather than Arthur.

Ronnie doesn't see the case in the same way Arthur does. He thinks it's quite cool that he's in the papers and doesn't see the whole thing with the same seriousness and strength of principles as his father.

Arthur tells Ronnie that his half term report was pretty fair, but Ronnie is more interested in talking about a train he has just been on. He knocks Arthur's leg, which Arthur complains about. Ronnie exits, excited to find Violet.

Ronnie doesn't realize that his father is in bodily pain. Ronnie clearly has things he wants to talk about with his father, but they are boyish, youthful things, and he's not bothered about how he is doing at school.

The doctor left ointment for Arthur's back, instructing him to have four massages a day. Grace says he should have one now, to which he grudgingly agrees. She says it's stupid to spend so much money on a doctor and then not to follow his advice.

As the head of the family, Arthur hates having to admit any weakness. Here, Grace displays her sense of caring in a moment that suggests how Arthur, despite his authority, still relies on his family.

Grace goes upstairs to attend to Ronnie and prepare Arthur's ointment. Arthur turns wearily to Catherine, saying he feels "suicidally inclined." He asks her if they're both mad for committing to the case.

The case draws Arthur and Catherine closer together; they're by far the most committed of the family members to the case's successful completion. Obviously, Arthur is exaggerating about suicide—but he is genuinely concerned whether he and Catherine are wasting time and money. It's also a first glimpse of mental vulnerability from Arthur (mirroring his increasing physical difficulties).

Arthur asks Catherine if he should drop the case, which she steadfastly refuses. He admits that the great expense will prevent him from keeping his dowry agreement for Catherine's marriage, but she says she's already given up on that.

The financial implications of the case now bear down not just on Dickie but on Catherine too. She, however, is wedded to her principles and has already decided that she is willing to sacrifice future financial security for the sake of the case—contradicting what she said earlier to Dickie about feelings winning out over beliefs (or at least Dickie's impression of that statement).

Relieved at Catherine's attitude, Arthur says that they have to "pin all their faith" on Sir Robert Morton. After an awkward silence, Catherine complains about Sir Robert. She thinks he's untrustworthy and self-serving, and she disagrees with his political leaning. Arthur sympathizes but asks Catherine, as his "only ally," to have faith in his decision to hire Sir Robert as their barrister.

Catherine and Sir Robert come from very different sides of the political spectrum. Sir Robert is more conservative whereas Catherine wants to see tangible progress. Of course, as the head of the family and the one with the funds, the decision is Arthur's to make.

Arthur leaves the room as Dickie comes in. Dickie vents his frustration to Catherine at having to leave Oxford. He says he could "just murder" Ronnie for stealing that postal order—and even more so for getting caught. He leaves the room gloomily.

Dickie didn't feel he could complain about the case to Arthur, but he has a little more leeway with Catherine. He is frustrated at Ronnie and thinks that he probably did steal the postal order.

The doorbell rings. Catherine goes to get the door, thinking it will be John; instead, it's Desmond Curry with Sir Robert Morton. Sir Robert is elegantly dressed and has a refined, formal manner. He bows to Catherine, who offers him a seat; he refuses.

Sir Robert is a busy man and can't stay for long. He also wouldn't sit down until the head of the household, Arthur, is present, further suggesting his conservative attitude.

Desmond stresses how short Sir Robert is on time, so Catherine instructs Desmond to go upstairs and get Arthur. She offers Sir Robert a drink or a smoke, but he declines both.

Sir Robert doesn't really have time for Catherine. He's strictly here to speak to Arthur—again reflecting his more traditional nature.

Catherine and Sir Robert strike up awkward conversation. She expresses surprise that he's even interested in the case. She saw his rigorous cross-examination of Len Rogers, and asks if Sir Robert knew that Rogers committed suicide soon after. Sir Robert says he had heard, but that Rogers was still guilty.

It turns out that Catherine is so familiar with Sir Robert because he prosecuted the author of the book she was reading earlier (the trade unionist Len Rogers). Evidently, he won the case against Rogers. Sir Robert presents himself as unemotional, at a distance from the people involved in the cases because of a greater commitment to "truth." He's not really interested in the consequences of that "truth."

Arthur and Grace come down. Arthur introduces himself to Sir Robert and tells him that Ronnie will be down soon. Sir Robert just wants to ask him a few questions; he needs to rush off to an important dinner. Arthur expected Sir Robert to stay longer.

Arthur assumed that Sir Robert would drop everything to prioritize and that accordingly he would stay longer than "a few questions."

Sir Robert explains that he thinks they need to apply for a "Petition of Right." This gives an individual express permission to sue part of the Crown, in this case the Admiralty of the Navy. Customarily, the King's representative has to agree using the words "let Right be done." Both Sir Robert and Arthur agree that they like the phrase.

Sir Robert shows his supreme legal expertise by explaining that he has found a way for the case to potentially proceed. This also establishes Sir Robert's key phrase: let Right be done. "Right," for Sir Robert, is a kind of objective value of "truth" and "fairness." Arthur and Sir Robert both demonstrate that they are also interested in the presentational power of the phrase—it has a ring to it that sounds important and profound.

Ronnie comes in. Arthur explains that Sir Robert will ask Ronnie a few questions, and Sir Robert insists that nobody interrupt him. Sir Robert makes Ronnie stand at the table, facing him.

The two men direct proceedings. Sir Robert recreates interrogation conditions, again underscoring his unemotional and direct manner.

Sir Robert quickly begins interrogating Ronnie. Ronnie explains that he did go to the Post Office on the day of the alleged incident, but that he didn't steal anyone's postal order. Arthur interjects a couple of times, annoying Sir Robert greatly.

Ronnie maintains his innocence. Arthur isn't used to not having control, which is why he tries to interrupt. But Sir Robert is another man used to having power over proceedings.

Sir Robert's questions intensify. He gets Ronnie to admit that he had practiced the signature of his roommate, Elliot, whose postal order he is supposed to have stolen. Ronnie says they used to practice each other's signatures, but just for fun. Sir Robert tells Ronnie that the Admiralty had the handwriting on the postal order analyzed and confirmed that the signature came from Ronnie, not Elliot.

Sir Robert's technique is to question Ronnie aggressively, rather than calmly ask for his side of the story. Ronnie's admittance that he used to practice his roommates signature is obviously the kind of incriminating evidence that the opposition could use against him.

Ronnie is increasingly tearful, asking Sir Robert whose side he is on. Sir Robert keeps pressing him on the details of that day, which Ronnie seems unsure of. There are inconsistencies in his story that clearly make him feel stressed. Finally, Sir Robert accuses Ronnie of committing the crime, telling him that the Admiralty's account of the event is patently true.

Sir Robert seems to be doing the very opposite of what Arthur and the family expected him to do—he is proving Ronnie's guilt, not innocence. This is his way of finding the truth.

Sir Robert says that by continuing to lie, Ronnie is bringing great strain upon his family. Catherine stands up, objecting strongly. Sir Robert says that Ronnie should "undo some of the misery you have caused by confessing to us all now that you are a forger, a liar, and a thief!" Ronnie, crying, insists that he's not.

This is the climax of Sir Robert's dramatic interrogation of Ronnie. His questioning has reduced Ronnie to tears. Catherine clearly feels that Sir Robert is being far too harsh on Ronnie, but it will soon be revealed that his has been in a way testing the boy's commitment to his innocence.

Arthur tells Sir Robert that he is being "outrageous." John enters, clearly taken aback by the scene he walks into. Suddenly, Sir Robert turns to Desmond and calmly asks him if he can drop him off anywhere as he drives to dinner.

Even Arthur now objects to Sir Robert's methods. But Sir Robert has suddenly completely changed his attitude, dropping the fierce emotion and returning to his atmosphere of calm and control. He has clearly finished his questioning.

With an air of indifference, Sir Robert asks Desmond to drop off the materials relevant to Ronnie's case at his office in the morning. Desmond is surprised—but Sir Robert says, "the boy is plainly innocent," before bowing to Arthur and Catherine and leaving the house. Ronnie sobs hysterically.

Contrary to the family's assumption, Sir Robert has actually concluded that Ronnie is innocent. The fact that he has come to this decision using such harsh methods shows that he feels he knows best how to get to the "truth." Like Arthur earlier in Act 1, he feels that he has the analytical skills to detect whether someone is being truthful just by asking the right questions. But it comes at a high emotional cost for Ronnie.

ACT 3

It's nine months later. At 10:30 p.m., Arthur is sitting in his favorite armchair, reading about the case—it's headline news. Ronnie and Grace are listening; Ronnie is struggling to stay awake, while Grace is darning socks.

This act opens similar to the previous, with characters reading about the case in the news. This time though, it's not just in the letters pages—the case is on the front page. The story's attention has increased and the media pressure intensified. Neither Grace nor Ronnie are really listening to Arthur's reading, however; they're becoming numb to the case as it's been going on a long time.

The paper gives an account of an exchange in the U.K. parliament. It relays a fierce debate, in which the First Lord defends the position of the Admiralty to jeers and interruptions from the opposition. Arthur says happily, "it looks as if the First Lord's having rather a rough passage." Ronnie doesn't reply, so Arthur wakes him up by sarcastically shouting that he hopes his reading isn't keeping him awake.

Arthur clearly wants *Ronnie to be as interested in the case as he is. After all, it's being fought on his behalf. Arthur's sarcasm lets Ronnie know that he actually doesn't want him to sleep when he's reading out news about the case.*

Grace thinks her "poor sleepy little lamb," Ronnie, should go to bed. But Arthur says that Ronnie is the subject of "violent and heated debate" and that he ought to be awake to hear what's gong on.

A divide is starting to open up between Arthur and Grace. He thinks Ronnie ought to know exactly what's happening with the case, but Grace's motherly instincts means she wants to look after Ronnie.

Arthur shouts at Ronnie again. Ronnie says he was listening, just with his eyes closed. Arthur continues reading: the First Lord admits he "was as moved as any honourable Member opposite by [Sir Robert's] use of the words 'Let Right be done' … nevertheless, the matter is not nearly as simple as he appears to imagine." The First Lord argues that allowing a Ronnie, who is technically a servant of the Crown, to then sue the Crown would set a dangerous precedent. Ronnie falls asleep once more, irritating Arthur.

The case has gained such notoriety that it has become a national issue. What Arthur is reading refers to the day's debate in U.K. parliament. The First Lord, representing the Crown (and the state), thinks that allowing Ronnie to sue the Crown—by using the Petition of Right—is a dangerous precedent because Ronnie as a trainee naval officer was essentially a servant of the Crown. His argument is that it would be undermining for the country constitutionally to have one part of the Crown suing the other. Ronnie still can't stay awake, suggesting perhaps he's been listening to the same arguments for a long time.

Violet comes in, informing Arthur that there are three reporters waiting in the hall. He instructs her to dismiss them as he already gave a statement the day before. Violet asks if she should make sandwiches for Catherine, as she has missed dinner. She leaves the room.

Whereas in Act 2 Arthur was keen to talk to the press, now he has more attention than he needs. It will be revealed that Catherine is at parliament, watching the debate about "the Winslow boy," further reflecting her interest in and commitment to politics.

Grace puts a rug over Ronnie. Arthur says to her that he thinks this is a good time for her to talk to Violet about relieving her of her duties. He says delaying it only adds to Grace's worries—she asks him bitterly what he knows her worries.

The money woes are getting worse. The Winslows can no longer afford to keep Violet on, though they are yet to inform her, and the tension between Arthur and Grace is getting worse. She doesn't share his commitment to the case and believes that he is incapable of seeing things from her perspective.

Arthur says it's best they let Violet go and explain that it's too expensive to keep her. Grace is hesitant because Violet was never properly trained as a maid, so even with a good reference might find it hard to find anything else.

Grace doesn't want to let Violet go because she knows Violet will suffer and find it difficult to get new employment. But, for Arthur, it's a necessary sacrifice.

In reference to the financial figures, Arthur says "facts are brutal things." Grace says, a little hysterically, that she doesn't know what facts are anymore. Arthur says that it's a fact that they are living on half the income they were the previous year. Grace says she's not talking about facts—but about having "a happy home and peace and quiet and an ordinary respectable life, and some sort of future for us and our children." She accuses Arthur of sacrificing all of that for the case, gesturing to the newspaper headline.

This loosely sets Arthur up as beholden to facts in opposition to Grace's more emotional way of seeing the world (though the dividing lines are not neat and simple). It's also the first real outburst of feeling from Grace, who confesses that she doesn't see how sacrificing their way of life can possibly be worth headlines in a newspaper.

Arthur says he is going to publish Ronnie's innocence before the world, and for that he is "not prepared to way the cost." Grace believes the cost may be out of proportion, but that doesn't concern Arthur: "An injustice has been done. I am going to set it right, and here is no sacrifice in the world I am not prepared to make."

Arthur believes that the cause he is fighting for is nothing less than "truth" and "justice." Grace, meanwhile, is arguing that he isn't being pragmatic and sensitive to the rest of the family's needs. Arthur's insistence to right the wrong in front of the "world" shows that it's important to him that not only is Ronnie cleared of the charge but also that "the world" knows he is innocent.

Grace reacts angrily, pointing out that Ronnie doesn't even care about the case—he's happy at his new school. No one need ever have known about his expulsion, she says. She says he'll forever be known as the "Winslow boy" who stole the postal order. "The boy who didn't steal that postal order," interjects Arthur. Grace says it makes no difference when millions of people are talking and gossiping about him.

Grace is saying that, if Ronnie doesn't care about winning, why should anyone else? Furthermore, she is concerned that he will be forever tagged as the "Winslow boy"—he won't have his own identity as Ronnie but will always be abstracted as someone famous for one particular event. With that in mind, she argues, it doesn't even matter if Ronnie is cleared: he is never going to not be "the Winslow Boy."

Grace continues her attack on Arthur. She says that Ronnie won't thank him for the case when he's older, and that Arthur isn't being honest with himself about the deterioration of his health due to the stress. She says she's asked him and Catherine a hundred times why it's worth destroying the family. "For justice," replies Arthur. She asks if it isn't just "pride," self-importance," and "stubbornness."

Arthur thinks that even his own health is worth sacrificing for the good of "justice." Grace is suspicious of his motivations, thinking that he's afraid to back down and is more concerned with how he is perceived than with any pious notions of justice. Grace also signals that Catherine is the only one really on Arthur's side.

Grace breaks down, and Arthur puts his arm around her. Ronnie wakes up a little, asking what the matter is. Arthur says to Ronnie that his mother is a little upset; Ronnie goes back to sleep.

Ronnie is oblivious to the family drama playing out on his behalf. It shows how there's definitely some truth in what Grace was saying—the "Winslow boy" is almost someone else, an abstraction.

Violet comes in with sandwiches and a new letter for Arthur. He asks her how long she's been with the family (twenty-four years). She tells him she read in the *Evening News* an editorial that complained the case was a waste of the Government's time. She says sometimes she has to laugh that it's all about "Master Ronnie."

Clearly if Violet does have to be dismissed from her duties as housemaid it will be an impactful decision for the family. She's seen the children grow up and is evidently an important part of the daily life of the household. Her quip about Ronnie reinforces the above idea that the case has become almost completely removed from the little boy asleep on the sofa.

Violet leaves, greeting Catherine who has just come back from watching the parliamentary debate. She updates Arthur on the proceedings, saying it still looks unlikely that they will allow a fair trial to take place—it depends on how the politicians vote.

Catherine, unlike Grace, is still very invested in the case. She has been watching it unfold live and knows the full extent of its workings. She is an important ally for Arthur—without her, he'd be completely alone in his commitment to pursuing the case.

Arthur asks Catherine if Sir Robert protested when the First Lord refused them their trial. She tells him that Sir Robert listened to First Lord's speech with his hat over his eyes, before suddenly getting up, throwing all of his papers on the floor and storming out. She said it was a very effective gesture but doubts its sincerity.

Sir Robert knows how to use drama to good effect for his work (e.g. the interrogation of Ronnie in the previous Act). He is aware of the importance of the media and therefore adjusts his actions according how he thinks he can best manipulate the way that proceedings are written up.

Catherine admits that Sir Robert has done better than she expected, though she still doubts his motivations. She thinks he's doing it for publicity and because the case is a useful tool to attack the government. They agree it is lucky that he chose to do so; Catherine says Sir Robert is "a fish, a hard, cold-blooded, supercilious, sneering fish." At that very moment, Violet enters announcing the arrival of Sir Robert—Catherine almost chokes on her sandwich. Sir Robert assists her with a pat on the back.

Catherine's attitude to Sir Robert hasn't completely changed. She still thinks the same about him as earlier, but now admits that he is at least doing a good job with the case. She thinks he has no emotional life—that's why she describes him as a non-human creature. Sir Robert's timely arrival is meant to emphasize the quality he has to appear almost beyond human.

Sir Robert has come to update Arthur on the day's events. Catherine asks if he had noticed she was there; he says with such "a charming hat" it was hard not to. Catherine wants to know about Sir Robert's previous interrogation of Ronnie—how he decided Ronnie was innocent. Sir Robert says that he if Ronnie was guilty he would have taken him up on his suggestion that the postal order was stolen "for fun," and that Ronnie made too many bad-sounding admissions to have been telling a lie. Catherine is impressed by his technique.

Catherine and Sir Robert's relationship starts to become a bit less guarded. Catherine has come to respect his abilities—if not his motivations—and wants to know about his methods. He clearly has an attraction to her, at least partly based on her physical appearance. This also gives the reader/viewer their own evidence with which to decide Ronnie's guilt or innocence.

Arthur reads the letter brought in by Violet, while Catherine and Sir Robert continue chatting. When he has finished, Arthur says he thinks they should drop the case. Catherine grabs the letter from Arthur, and Sir Robert tells him that to quit now would be "insane." He insists that whatever the contents of the letter, they must fight on.

The letter contains information that Arthur believes is pivotal. Arthur has been willing to sacrifice everything it seems, including his own health, but now is changing his mind. Sir Robert is adamant that they should continue because he wants "Right" to be done.

Catherine finishes the letter too, and tells Sir Robert that, contrary to what her father says, the case will go on. The letter is from John's father, Colonel Watherstone. It says that the "Winslow" name has become a "nation-wide laughing-stock," and that he can no longer allow John to marry Catherine unless the case is dropped.

The Colonel fears the embarrassment that John's marriage to Catherine will bring to his family. He is from the military establishment, part of the Crown, and so naturally sides more with the naval college than with Ronnie. Catherine, however, maintains her principled commitment to the case.

Arthur reiterates that they should end the case, but Sir Robert says that Catherine is clearly willing to take the risk. Catherine has a cigarette, looking scared. Sir Robert asks for one too. Sir Robert apologizes for his tone to Arthur—he's had a long day.

Sir Robert doesn't usually suffer lapses in his decorum, but it seems he really is invested in the case and can't stand the thought of it ending now. Catherine and Sir Robert smoking together portrays them as getting closer in mindset.

Sir Robert tells Catherine again how much he likes her hat. But, he adds, "it seems decidedly wrong to me that a lady of your political persuasion should be allowed to adorn herself with such a very feminine allurement." She tells him she's not a militant, just an organizer for the Woman's Suffrage Association.

Though Sir Robert is clearly principled, those principles don't extend to equality between men and women. Furthermore, he can't square the idea of a woman being attractive with her being as forthright and strong-willed as Catherine. In essence, she confuses him.

Violet comes to the door, saying that John has arrived asking to speak privately with Catherine. Arthur and Sir Robert go to the dining room to let the other two speak. John looks depressed and anxious.

Once again characters retreat to the dining room to allow a sensitive conversation to take place. This time it's Catherine and John—the latter is clearly worried about the implications of his father's letter.

John brings up the letter from his father. Catherine says she's read it, but John wants to know what Arthur's response will be. She says he'll most likely ignore it—"isn't that the best answer to blackmail?" John says he tried to get his dad not to send it.

John's attitude to his father is rather feeble, suggesting he is fearful of the repercussions of disobeying him.

Catherine says that they can marry without his father's approval, even if they won't have much money. John clearly doesn't think so: "Unlike you I have a practical mind, Kate. I'm sorry." He tells her she should think very carefully before taking the next step.

John, too afraid to stand up to his father, is making clear the terms of the ultimatum. On top of that, he shows that deep down he considers himself to be superior to Catherine simply by virtue of his being a man.

John says surely the case has gone far enough—it's had two inquiries, the Petition of Right case, and an appeal. Now it's even getting the parliament into a "frenzy." John points at Ronnie, still asleep, and says that he won't mind if they stop.

John wants Catherine to be pragmatic, not principled. He thinks similarly to Grace: the case isn't worth fighting anymore. He uses Ronnie as supporting evidence, because Ronnie is clearly not that bothered about the case. That said, he's also a child.

Catherine says she's not even sure if Ronnie did or didn't do it. She's fighting the case because the government has "ignored a fundamental human right" in not giving him a fair trial. John argues that, though her words are "noble," there are greater things to worry about: the threat of war in Europe, miners' strikes, the chance of civil war in Ireland. Can't she see that it's a bit out of proportion, he asks.

This outlines the principle behind Catherine's stubborn refusal to drop the case. She's not even sure if Ronnie's innocent—her fight is with the system more generally. She feels Ronnie was denied a fair trial, and that this should be a universal right. The case for Ronnie, then, becomes a kind of proxy for her wider wish to see universal rights (with voting, for example) extended to women. John's comments remind the reader/viewer of the looming threat of war, asking the question of whether Ronnie's case is worth attention given the darkness that is imminent in Europe.

Catherine says that if the parliament is ever too busy to discuss a case like Ronnie's it will be to the detriment of the country as a whole. John complains that people are mocking him for planning to marry a Winslow. Catherine laughs it off—she says they're even singing about it in one of London's music halls.

Catherine's point is that parliament is precisely the place where universal rights have to be fought for. If it's too busy to do that then something fundamental to society will have been lost. John again demonstrates his lack of bravery; essentially, he's embarrassed to be associated with the Winslow name. Catherine couldn't care less; her principles are far too important to her.

Catherine asks John if he actually wants to marry her. He says he's never wavered before, but she thinks he is now. She asks whether, assuming the case is dropped, John's father will still grant his allowance. She apologizes, saying that she loves him and that she wants to be his wife. He kisses her and says they shouldn't let something "stupid and trivial" come between them.

The couple make peace, but it feels highly precarious. Part of Catherine definitely does want to be John's wife, but it's not the most important thing in the world to her. She briefly looks at the option of dropping the case. "Stupid and trivial" is meant to clear the tension in the air, but it also hints at John's attitude towards the case.

The phone rings. Catherine answers it and then shouts to Sir Robert that it's for him. He comes out of dining room and apologizes for interrupting. He helps himself to a sandwich and goes to the phone.

The situation is extremely fluid, with new information coming through all the time. Sir Robert's eating a sandwich is the first time the reader/viewer sees him do an action that isn't part of his "super-barrister" performance.

Arthur appears in the doorway, wanting to know what the phone call was about. Sir Robert tells him that one of his fellow barristers apparently gave a scathing attack on the government at parliament. It was so effective that it turned many of the members against the First Lord. Accordingly, the First Lord has just granted the Petition of Right, meaning the Winslows can finally take the course to court.

While the characters have been debating the case at home, the argument was raging on in parliament. It appears that Sir Robert's colleague has won over the majority of the parliament, forcing the First Lord to give the Winslows the express permission to sue the Crown (the state).

Sir Robert asks whether in light of the new information Arthur still wants to cease action. Arthur says it's up to Catherine. Without hesitation she says to Sir Robert that he doesn't even need her instructions—they're already on the Petition of Right: "Let Right be done." Visibly angry, John storms out. Sir Robert says, "well, then—we must see that it is."

John thought he had been weakening Catherine's commitment to the case, but he was badly mistaken. He's angry at her stubbornness. Sir Robert, Arthur, and Catherine are now strongly grouped around the idea of "letting right be done"—even if it's difficult to pin down exactly what that means. But it does, more widely, show that for all three the case is about more than Ronnie. Their principles may not be exactly the same, and there may be elements of stubbornness or self-interest, but the three characters are resolutely committed to carrying on.

ACT 4

Five months later, it's a hot day in June and has been almost two years since Ronnie was expelled. The telephone rings incessantly. Dickie enters the room, looking hot and flustered. He's wearing a neat suit with a tie and a stiff collar. He shouts for Grace, and receiving no reply also shouts for Violet.

Rattigan cleverly spaces each act from the other by a period of months to emphasize the long passage of time that has gone by. This helps create the sense of the case being grueling and unrelenting. Dickie has evidently just returned from somewhere and is dressed more smartly than a few months ago. The ringing phone signals that the press intrusion is at its peak.

With nobody around, Dickie picks up the phone. It's a journalist from the *Daily Mail*, who quizzes Dickie about his life and his thoughts on the trial. Dickie tries to stay tight-lipped, saying Ronnie is just a normal boy. He tells the reporter that he's only just arrived from Reading, where he works in a bank. He nervously says his brother never washes, and then, realizing that sounds bad, says that he does sometimes.

Dickie took the job at the bank his father mentioned earlier. He knows it's risky to speak to the press, and is trying not to, but the journalist on the other end of the phone is clearly skillful at getting him to talk. Fortunately for him, what he says is fairly harmless, though the experience clearly makes him nervy.

Dickie puts the phone down, which immediately starts ringing again. Grace comes in and greets Dickie, complimenting his new suit. According to Grace, the phone hasn't stopped for four days. Dickie tells her he had to fight his way through an "army of reporters" to get in the house.

The media attention has become so intense that the phone never stops ringing. The house is also surrounded by reporters, further reflecting the intense pressure on the case.

Dickie jokingly pretends that he told the reporter on the phone that he thinks Ronnie is guilty, much to Grace's momentary horror. He asks her how it's been going. She says she's been in the court for four days straight but hardly understood a word. She answers the phone and just says that nobody is in, putting it straight back down.

Grace isn't invested in the case like Arthur and Catherine, so probably doesn't pay close attention to proceedings at court. That said, in light of Dickie's earlier "wisdom" to Catherine that she should dumb down her intellect, perhaps Grace, as a more "traditionalist" woman, is doing the very same.

Grace calls Arthur in from the garden for lunch. Dickie asks if there will be room for him at the court. Grace says yes, and how exciting it all is: "you never saw such crowds in your life." She says even though she doesn't understand Sir Robert and the Crown's representative's technical arguments, the fact that they are so heated makes it compelling viewing.

Though Grace doesn't understand the legal side of the case, she seems to enjoy its spectacle: the case makes for a dramatic and compelling spectacle. Clearly, from Dickie's question, they expect the case to go on still for a while.

Dickie asks how Ronnie did as a witness. Grace says that Ronnie—"the poor little pet"—felt that two days being examined by the Attorney-General (the Crown's representative) was easier than two minutes interrogation at the hands of Sir Robert.

Grace is always calling Ronnie by pet names, reflecting her motherly instinct to protect him (but also to treat him as a child). Grace shows that Sir Robert's interrogation of Ronnie in Act 2 had a profound effect on him, scaring him to his core but perhaps also preparing him for what he was to face in court.

Dickie asks how Kate (Catherine) is; he has heard that John has broken off their engagement. Grace responds you can never tell with Catherine—"she never lets you know what she is feeling."

Rattigan masterfully makes most of the key plot points happen off-stage. In this case, the resolution of the Catherine/John question has taken place in the gap between Acts. This shifts the emphasis in Act 3 to Catherine's attitude *towards her split with John, rather than the "action" of them actually splitting up. Grace continues to paint Catherine as a "different" kind of woman from her: less emotional and less open.*

Arthur comes in through the garden door, walking badly. Grace tells him off for coming up the stairs by himself. Arthur gets into a wheelchair and apologizes to Dickie for his new and "ludicrous form of propulsion." Arthur tells Dickie that he has heard from his banking friend that Dickie is doing well in his new role.

Arthur's health has declined even further, also in the time passage between the acts. He's now wheelchair-bound and is embarrassed by the displaying what he sees as an obvious sign of weakness—something that further contrasts with the air of authority he displayed in earlier acts.

Arthur has also heard that Dickie has joined the volunteer reserve force of the British Army. Dickie says it's because he's heard "there's a fair chance of a scrap quite soon," and he doesn't want it to be all over before he can get involved. He says he can always go back to the bank afterwards.

World War I looms closer on the horizon, putting the Winslows' legal fight into context. On the hand, it could be seen as trivial given the horrific warfare that is to come; on the other, if the case is taken as a genuine *defense of universal values, it could be perceived as being a defense of humanity more generally. Dickie displays an attitude common at the time: that war will be fun, give meaning to aimless young men, and be over quickly.*

The telephone rings again. Arthur picks it up and immediately puts it down. Grace says that he shouldn't do that as it annoys the exchange. Arthur complains that Catherine is late and criticizes Grace's choice of outfit, saying it's more suited to a theatre performance than a court case.

Arthur criticizes Grace's outfit because he sees it as trivializing the grand importance of the court case. The constant ringing of the telephone serves as a kind of aural irritant, demonstrating the incessant pressure on the Winslows.

Arthur asks Grace if his lunch is ready. She's made him salad as the cook and Violet are at the trial. Dickie says he thought Violet was going to be dismissed, but Grace says neither she nor Arthur have had the courage to tell her; Arthur counters he does have the courage and will break the news to Violet. Grace tells him that he mustn't until the time is right. Arthur complains to Dickie: "These taunts of cowardice are daily flung at my head; but should I take them up I'm forbidden to move in the matter. Such is the logic of women."

Violet has still not been dismissed from her duties. Arthur again positions himself as superior in knowledge and virtue than Grace simply because he is a man and she is a woman. He doesn't like to be thought of as cowardly—that is, "unmanly." Grace, meanwhile, is more emotionally attuned to the potentially disastrous consequences for Violet's life.

Arthur goes into the dining room; Dickie closes the door after him. With concern, Dickie asks Grace about Arthur's health. She informs him that Arthur has promised to go into a nursing home after the trial, though she doesn't really believe him. She says at least Catherine and Sir Robert managed to convince him to stay away from the court.

Because of the stress of the case, Arthur hasn't even been able to visit the court to watch proceedings. The fact that Dickie asks Grace about his health shows that Arthur is unlikely to be honest about how far it has deteriorated; he's too proud.

Dickie offers his sympathies to Grace. She says Arthur doesn't care what she thinks and never has, but that she's given up worrying—it's her job to "pick up the pieces."

The case has really taken its toll on Grace. She feels in a sense that something has already been irretrievably lost, and has an attitude of resignation (whereas earlier she was at least a bit more combative when it came to presenting her thoughts).

Catherine comes in, complaining of the heat and the reporters outside. She hugs Dickie, and says she thinks the judge is against the Winslows. According to her, Sir Robert is worried about the case's outcome. Apparently, the Attorney-General made a speech that implied that a verdict for Ronnie would be a damnation of the navy and cause "jubilation" in Germany.

This shows how much notoriety the case has gained: Ronnie is blamed by the opposition for putting the country at risk by distracting the navy. The stakes could not get any higher. It's also worth noting that Catherine's first comment in this act is to do with the case, not her split from John.

Arthur appears at the dining-room door, still in his chair. He tells Catherine she is late. She says it's because there was such a huge crowd both inside and outside the court—Grace seems pleased to hear the crowd is even bigger than the day before.

Arthur relies on Catherine for up-to-date information about the case, and expects it delivered at the earliest opportunity. He is physically distanced from the case by his ill health. Grace again shows that the drama and theatre of the case are intoxicating. It's clear that the entire country is now invested in the outcome.

Catherine informs Arthur that Sir Robert did a great job examining the witness who identified Ronnie as the thief. Without bullying her or frightening her, he managed to find numerous inconsistencies in her story. Catherine thinks that will have offset the damage done by the Attorney-General's speech.

Sir Robert is clearly in his element, doing to the witness what he did earlier to Ronnie. This shows how much the outcome depends on his skill, as opposed to any easily attainable "truth."

Catherine says she saw John in court—Grace is horrified and hopes Catherine didn't speak to him. But John had wished Catherine good luck, which Grace thinks is outrageous and "cold-blooded." Arthur warns Grace she will be late for the resumption of court. She makes him promise to finish his lunch.

Catherine doesn't have the headspace to be angry at John—it's all about the case for her. Arthur wants his family to be present for every moment of the case so that he, through them, doesn't miss anything. Grace's instruction to him to finish his lunch shows that he is undergoing the shift from being the dominant head of the family to being dependent on help from others.

Grace and Dickie leave for court. Arthur asks Catherine if they are going to lose—they both know it's their last chance. He asks what Sir Robert thinks, and wonders whether Catherine was right to doubt the barrister. She says they "couldn't have had a better man." At least, he's the best at his job and seems like he genuinely wants to win; she hasn't changed her mind about anything else she previously said about his personal qualities, though.

Catherine's attitude towards Sir Robert is starting to become more favorable. But she still sees him as "good at his job" rather than "good as a person." This moment makes clear that she's nevertheless coming around to him.

Arthur read in the papers that proceedings began earlier with Sir Robert telling the judge he felt he was getting ill. Catherine says that was just a trick to get him the sympathy of the jurors and the judge. Or, she says hesitatingly, to give him an excuse if he loses. Arthur asks if she likes him—she says she neither likes nor dislikes him, but admires him.

This moment offers further development of Catherine's complicated feelings towards Sir Robert. She assumes that everything he does is for theatrical effect. Arthur shows that he values Catherine's opinion.

Desmond Curry comes in through the garden door. He apologizes for arriving from the back of the house but says there were too many people out front. He wants to speak with Catherine alone, so Arthur goes to finish his lunch.

The viewer/reader already knows Desmond is in love with Catherine, so can safely presume that what's coming is a marriage proposal.

Desmond says he has an urgent question for Catherine; he has a taxi waiting outside. She says that she already knows what the question is, and that she would like a few days to think it over. She tells him she's grateful, much to his bewilderment. Catherine says Desmond should hurry back to his taxi. He asks her if she's always known that he loves her, to which she says yes.

Catherine flips Desmond's hurriedness on its head; she knows what he's here for and is impatient to get it over with. She takes control of the situation and stops herself having to listen to his actual proposal. Naturally, this comes as a surprise to Desmond who has been working up to this moment.

Desmond says they should examine two facts: one, that Catherine doesn't love him and never will; two, that he loves her and will never stop. After an awkward pause, she thanks him for making "everything much clearer."

This is certainly not the most romantic proposal ever made. Desmond is implicitly arguing that marriage is a functional union that is potentially beneficial to both parties even if they don't actually want to be together.

Catherine changes the subject to Sir Robert, whom they agree is a strange and brilliant man. Once again, Catherine calls him "fishlike." Desmond informs her of the secret that Sir Robert turned down the role of Lord Chief Justice—the most prestigious job in British law—to continue working on the case. He says: "strange are the ways of men are they not?" Desmond then leaves.

Catherine continues to see Sir Robert as something as other than human. While at first this was a criticism, she is definitely developing a more favorable attitude towards him. Desmond's information shows that Sir Robert has made genuine sacrifice to work on the case. If he was just career-serving, he would have taken the new job. Desmond displays further entrenched misogyny, implying that women's "ways" are not strange because they are inherently simpler and more basic.

Arthur opens the dining-room door and asks Catherine if he can now come in. As he enters the room, he says he is "tired of being gazed at from the street while eating my mutton, as though I were an animal from the zoo."

The whole Winslow family has become a spectacle. Arthur feels his privacy is being invaded, but it was also him who wanted to clear Ronnie's name "in front of the world."

Catherine says she has been a fool; Arthur waits for her to say why, but she doesn't. Then he asks what Desmond wanted. She says Desmond wanted to marry her. Arthur assumes that she didn't accept; he hopes that wasn't what she was referring to about being a fool.

Arthur doesn't think Desmond is worthy of Catherine. Clearly, something is on Catherine's mind.

Catherine asks if it would be such "folly" to marry Desmond. Arthur thinks it would be lunacy. She says that he's "nice" and that she is approaching thirty. Arthur says that being thirty isn't the end of life, but Catherine says it might be for "an unmarried woman, with not much looks." Arthur says it's "better far to live and die an old maid than marry Desmond."

Arthur here takes an attitude surprising to his earlier comments about women. Essentially, he's saying to Catherine that it should be up to her, and that she shouldn't feel pressured into being married. Catherine feels like she is an approaching an age at which to not be married would cast her as a societal outsider.

Arthur tells Catherine that he is bequeathing everything to her and Grace. There's still a "little left" of his money, he says. He asks if she has taken his advice and demanded a salary from the Suffrage Association. She has, but it's hardly anything. He says she'll have to think of something else to do.

Catherine can't get paid well for her role in the Suffrage movement, because the money and power in society are controlled by men. Arthur maintains his role as financial provider, but notably bequeaths his money to the women in his life, rather than his sons.

Catherine asks if Arthur thinks the work she does for Suffrage is useful. He remains silent. She says he might be right, but it's the only work she's fitted for. She believes she faces a choice: marry Desmond and be comfortable or go on being broke fighting for a "hopeless cause." Arthur is surprised to hear his daughter call the cause "hopeless" for the first time.

Catherine feels she has to choose between principles and practicality—life would be easier if she just married Desmond, even though she doesn't have an ounce of desire for him. Arthur does not feel the Suffrage movement is a noble cause, reflecting the misogyny of the time despite his clear admiration for his daughter. Or, perhaps, he believes that however noble, the cause will never succeed. Of course, only a few years after the time period of the play, women would get the vote after all—suggesting that Catherine's continued dedication to her work has in fact helped society progress.

Catherine says John told her he's getting married to someone else next month. Apparently he was very apologetic, which Arthur thinks is ridiculous. He asks if John is in love with the new woman. Catherine answers "no more than he was with me." She says he's marrying so soon after their split because he thinks there's going to be a war. John's father also approves—the new woman is a general's daughter.

John has moved on quickly, showing that he wasn't that committed to Catherine in the first place (and perhaps cementing the foresight of her decision to commit to the case rather than their relationship). Furthermore, he's gone for a new woman who will undoubtedly please his father, showing how much influence the Colonel exerts on him. Catherine continues to display her outward indifference to the question of love, perhaps putting on a brave face.

Arthur slowly takes Catherine's hand in his. He asks her if he's messed up her life. She says no—she's responsible. Arthur apologizes, but Catherine tells him they both knew what they were doing. Arthur says that it seems their motives have both been different all along—"can we both have been right?" She says she thinks that, yes, they can.

Arthur doesn't spell out what their supposedly different motives are, yet it's fair to say that he sees his commitment to the case as noble defense of his son's moral integrity; Catherine, on the other hand, sees it as about universal human rights. These two, as she points out, are not incompatible.

Arthur says that maybe they've just been stubborn—that's what Grace thinks. Catherine agrees that it's a possibility. But perhaps stubbornness isn't "such a bad quality in the face of injustice," says Arthur; or "in the face of tyranny," adds Catherine. Neither of them thinks they would have done anything differently. He kisses her head and thanks her.

Perhaps it takes stubbornness to fight against injustice and tyranny, suggest Arthur and Catherine. This moment shows that the two characters are truly on each other's side and is a rare moment of intimacy. It also further imbues Ronnie's minor case with a much broader philosophical and moral resonance.

Arthur and Catherine can hear the shout of a newsboy outside. He's calling out "Winslow Case Result!" Catherine thinks there must be some mistake.

At this point Arthur and Catherine still think there is a long way to go with the case.

Violet bursts into the room with a big smile on her face. Apparently just after lunch—when none of the family was actually there—the Winslows won the case. She describes jubilant scenes; Sir Robert was in tears and the jury jumped over the box to congratulate him and shake his hands.

Violet continues in her role as bringer of information. This news comes as a genuine shock to Arthur and Catherine. The scene Violet describes shows the sheer outpouring of emotion that comes with the Winslow victory. But that emotion comes mostly from people outside of the family, like the jurors, again pointing to the broader social resonance of the case.

Violet says to Arthur that he must be pleased—she'd always said it would work out. He is pleased, he says. She says that sometimes he thought he and Catherine had been wasting their time—but they wouldn't have felt that if they'd been there, that's for sure.

Arthur doesn't know how to react to the sudden news of victory. Violet essentially describes how he ought *to feel, but his verbal utterances of agreement don't sound convincing. He has been denied the experience of the moment of release—he wasn't able to be at court to actually witness the victory himself.*

Violet exits the room. Arthur says to Catherine that it appears they've won. She breaks down in tears and cries into her father's lap. He says he would liked to have been there.

It "appears" they have won because neither of them was there to witness the moment. But why should it matter if they have succeeded in upholding principles? This reminds the reader that there is definitely pride at stake for Arthur; if he could have been there to feel the grandeur of victory it would be more real to him.

Violet enters again, announcing the arrival of Sir Robert. He walks into the room "calmly and methodically," and says he thought Arthur might like to hear the Attorney-General's conceding statement which he's written down on a scrap of paper. It absolves Ronnie of any wrongdoing. He folds the paper up and gives it to Arthur.

In terms of lived experience for him, all Arthur's victory amounts to is a scrap of paper. This is Rattigan's way of saying that, though victory has been won, it is up to the reader/viewer to decide if it has been worth it.

Arthur thanks Sir Robert, saying it is hard for him to find the right words. Sir Robert says they can take the "rather tiresome and conventional expressions of gratitude for granted." He wants to apply pressure to the First Lord in order to help Arthur get back some of the damages and costs of the case. Arthur says: "please, sir—no more trouble—I beg. Let the matter rest here." He holds the piece of paper and says that it is all he has ever asked for.

Sir Robert revels in avoiding the usual formalities. He wants to go on pursuing the case and claw some of Arthur's money back, but Arthur doesn't have the energy. This is the first time the two characters diverge in what they want. When Arthur says, "let the matter rest," it's as much to himself as it is to Sir Robert.

Sir Robert turns to Catherine and says it was a pity she wasn't in court. He says the handwriting expert had been discredited and that that had won them the case. Violet comes back in and tells Arthur that the reporters at the front door would like a statement from him.

Sir Robert, too, has developed a fondness for Catherine. This isn't explored much further, but implies an underlying mutual attraction perhaps based on both of their willingness to make personal sacrifices and commitment to causes beyond themselves.

Catherine begins to wheel Arthur to the door, but he protests that he wants his stick—he refuses to meet the press in his "ridiculous chariot." He tries out some different phrases with Catherine and Sir Robert as he figures out what to say in his statement. He says maybe he should just say what he feels which is "Thank God we beat 'em." He exits.

Arthur does not want to suffer the embarrassment of displaying physical weakness in public and so insists on standing up when makes his statement. Standing is a more dominant position and he wants to be seen as commanding and strong.


Sir Robert asks Catherine if he could have a little whiskey. She goes into the dining-room to get some. While she's out of the room, Sir Robert droops his shoulders wearily and sits in the chair. He sits up straight when she comes back in.

This is the one moment in the play in which the reader/viewer has more information than the characters on stage. They way Sir Robert visibly slumps when nobody is watching him shows that he is very conscious of the way that he comes across, and that his stern air is in part an act. When Catherine comes back in, he wants to seem strong again—but is too tired to stand.


Catherine says she has both a confession and an apology to make to him, neither of which Sir Robert thinks is necessary. She insists and tells him that she misjudged his attitude to the case. He accepts her gratitude but says that his attitude has been the same as hers: to win.

Catherine wants to make clear her change of heart towards Sir Robert. He continues with his line of wanting to avoid emotional conversation, though he has just displayed an element of vulnerability to the viewer/reader.


Catherine says she knows that Sir Robert has made great sacrifices for the case (i.e. the Chief Justice role). He says the robes wouldn't have suited him and angrily tells her he will have Desmond expelled from the Law Society. He asks her never to tell anyone what she knows.

Catherine isn't supposed to know about Sir Robert's Chief Justice job offer. He is angry about it because he knows that it will not be perceived well if people know that he rejected it, which is why he swears her to secrecy.

Catherine asks Sir Robert why he is so keen to stop people knowing about him. He says it's "perhaps because *I* do not know the truth about myself." She says that is no answer; he lightly accuses her of cross-examining him. Why, she asks, is he so "ashamed" of his emotions? He says to fight a case on emotional grounds would guarantee defeat.

Catherine tries to delve deeper into Sir Robert's character, something he is not used to. His reply is telling: perhaps he is so wrapped in his constant performance as an almost super-human barrister that he has forgotten who he is. He thinks that emotion and "Right" are separate entities, but the public reaction at the Winslows' victory clearly shows that they are more entwined than he would like to believe. Furthermore, the reader/viewer gets the impression that it's not that he doesn't feel emotion—it's that he actively suppresses it.

If Sir Robert is so anti-emotion, Catherine follows up, then why did he weep in court earlier? He suspects Violet of telling her and says it will be all over the papers tomorrow. He grudgingly admits that he wept because "right had been done."

Sir Robert doesn't want to look vulnerable in front of Catherine. He believes that emotion is a woman's domain, and that justice is a man's. But the truth is that he was *emotionally invested the victory, showing that he feels more than he is willing to admit to himself.*

Catherine asks whether Sir Robert means "right" as opposed to "justice." He thinks it easy to do "justice" but hard to "right." The former is intellectual while the latter induces tears. He then asks Catherine if he can "leave the witness box."

Catherine is cross-examining Sir Robert, and he's not used to being on the receiving end; he doesn't like it. The distinction between "right" and "justice" isn't really clear; probably, he equates "justice" with legal victory, but "right" with something deeper and more fundamental to humanity at large.

Mischievously, Sir Robert asks Catherine why she doesn't abandon the "lost cause of women's suffrage" and work in the law courts. She says she doesn't believe it is a lost cause. He says that he hopes to catch a glimpse of her at parliament some day, wearing her hat in the public gallery.

Sir Robert doesn't extend his views on what's "right" to an agreement with Catherine about the need for women's suffrage and equality. That said, he clearly admires her tenacity and strength of will. In those, she has more in common with him than he is able to realize. But he still feels a woman's place is as a spectator, while the men do the important work involved in administering power and preserving "right."

Ronnie comes in and apologizes to Sir Robert, saying he didn't know anything was going to happen. He was at the cinema. He asks if they won.

Ronnie has almost disappeared from the play by this point—he is quite possibly the character least bothered by the case's proceedings. This both shows that the case is about much more than him and questions whether Arthur, Catherine, and Sir Robert's sacrifices and commitment were worth it.

Sir Robert tells Ronnie that they were victorious. He asks Catherine whether he will, then, see her at the parliament one day. She says he will—but she won't be in the public gallery. Catherine says she'll be there in the same capacity as him—across the floor as a member of the opposite political party. Smiling faintly as he turns to leave, he says: "Perhaps. Goodbye."

Sir Robert, for all his positive traits, simply cannot imagine Catherine as an equal. Yet he is drawn to her because, in reality, she has qualities similar to his: strength of will, principled commitment, and a fighting spirit. She ends the play arguing for her equality, but the last words go to Sir Robert. This reinforces that, at this point in time, it's men that have the power. Even so, the reader/viewer senses that Catherine's vision is not beyond the realms of possibility at all. Indeed, audiences would be aware that just a few years later, women would go on to get the right to vote that she so vehemently fought for.

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