



ATAR course sample examination

DRAMA

Text booklet

Section One

Section One: Short answer
Analysis and interpretation of a drama text

Drama text

Brisbane by Matthew Ryan was first performed by the Queensland Theatre Company and was published in 2015 by Currency Press Pty Ltd.

Contextual information

This two-act play focuses on the coming of age of the main character, Danny Fisher, at a time when Brisbane faces the threat of destruction during World War II. When his beloved brother Frank is killed in the bombing of Darwin, Danny’s family is ripped apart and Danny becomes a forgotten son. Thrust headlong into the threat of war and the hope of love, Danny, like his city, is growing up fast. He spends time with Frank’s girlfriend, Rose, as his family tries to move on without him.

Theatrical inventiveness is encouraged with a sense of ensemble throughout.

The word ‘aside’ is used to distinguish when Danny is narrating to the audience instead of talking to the other characters.

Characters

Danny Fisher: 14 year old narrator
 Stanley:
 Robbie: } Cricket boys on Mulvany Street
 Justin:
 Rose: Frank’s (Danny’s older brother) girlfriend

Setting

The play is set during wartime in the 1940s when Brisbane was changing rapidly. The arrival of American soldiers to assist Australia’s war efforts resulted in the population nearly doubling. The play focuses on the city and a childhood and remembrance of loss due to the war.

Excerpt one

Danny Fisher, fourteen, enters and speaks to the audience.

Danny: *[aside]* The air is thick and wet, and the sun burns your skin like it hates your guts. January’s got it in for everyone. It has a temper that builds and builds until it’s had enough and dumps a mountain of water and electricity on your head. The smell of dirt road mixes with the pong of dead fruit that falls from the trees. Houses sit on stilts, breathing the cool air beneath them. Street after street. Streets that make up suburbs. Suburbs that make up Brisbane. It’s 1942 and I’m fourteen, which means I face two obstacles on a daily basis. One: Entire countries that want to kill me. And two: The Cricket Boys on Mulvany Street.

The Cricket Boys enter with bats and balls – Stanley, Robbie and Justin.

Stanley: Hey, it’s Fisher.

Robbie: Where are you going, Fisher?

Danny: *[aside]* These are the Cricket Boys on Mulvany Street. You have to pass them if you want to get to the shops to buy pencils and paper. They’re about to beat the shit out of me.

See next page

- Stanley: What's this?
Stanley snatches an old notebook from Danny. They pass it around.
- Danny: Give it back.
- Justin: Another story, Fisher?
- Stanley: Only kids like stories, Fisher.
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Excerpt two

- Danny: *[aside]* The stairs to the Shrine of Remembrance¹ are divided in two. Nineteen steps first, then eighteen, to remember the last time we did this. Flowers and photos of soldiers surround the eternal flame that burns in the middle. On the wall are names of faraway places. Amiens, the Hindenburg Line, Mont Saint-Quentin.
Rose enters, wearing a blue American Red Cross uniform.
- Rose: Danny?
- Danny: Hi, Rose.
- Rose: What are you doing here?
- Danny: Came to watch the newsreel². Learn about planes.
- Rose: Why?
- Danny: *[lying]* Writing a story. How about you?
- Rose: Got a job. I stop here on my way home.
- Danny: Why?
- Rose: Look at the flowers. Photos. See if there are any new ones.
- Danny: Are there?
- Rose: Did you come alone?
- Danny: Yeah.
- Rose: Do your parents know?
- Danny: They don't care.
- Rose: I think they would.
- Danny: I'll miss my train.
Danny goes to leave.
- Rose: There isn't one. Tram got pushed over onto the train tracks. We're stuck here.
- Danny: Oh.
She looks up at the placenames on the wall.
- Rose: What do the names mean?
- Danny: Where we fought best.
-

End of drama text

¹ Shrine of Remembrance – a war memorial

² newsreel – a short film containing information of relevant news events

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contextual Information

Adapted from: Ryan, M. (2015). Brisbane [play script currently re-published as Danny Fisher]. Currency Press

Script excerpts

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