

# Philadelphia, Here I Come!

Brian Friel - Biographical Note . . . . .	8
Introduction . . . . .	8
Plot Summary . . . . .	13
Episode I . . . . .	13
Episode II . . . . .	25
Episode III, Part One . . . . .	35
Episode III, Part Two . . . . .	38
<b>The Characters . . . . .</b>	<b>43</b>
Gar O'Donnell . . . . .	43
S.B. O' Donnell . . . . .	48
Madge . . . . .	50
Kate Doogan . . . . .	52
Senator Doogan . . . . .	54
Canon Mick O'Byrne . . . . .	55
Master Boyle . . . . .	57
Lizzy Sweeney . . . . .	58
Con Sweeney . . . . .	59
Ben Burton . . . . .	60
<b>Key Themes . . . . .</b>	<b>61</b>
Communication . . . . .	62
Marriage and the Role of Women . . . . .	64
Disappointment . . . . .	67
Emigration . . . . .	70
<b>Guidelines for Answering Exam Questions . . . . .</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Sample Answers . . . . .</b>	<b>74</b>

# Brian Friel (1929–2015)

## Biographical Note

Brian Friel is listed among the great modern English-language dramatists, alongside writers such as Samuel Beckett, Caryl Churchill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. He won many prizes and awards including a Tony Award for best Broadway production, the Laurence Olivier Award, The New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Writers' Guild of Britain Award. His play *Dancing at Lughnasa* was adapted into a film starring Meryl Streep. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* was nominated for a Tony Award in 1966 establishing Brian Friel as a vibrant new voice in international theatre at the time.

Friel was born in Omagh, County Tyrone in 1929. His father was a teacher and his mother was a postmistress. When Brian was ten years old, the family moved to Derry. He attended St Columba's College, the same school attended by Seamus Heaney and John Hume, both Nobel Prize winners. Friel qualified as a teacher and spent ten years teaching maths in Derry before taking leave in 1960 to pursue a career as a full-time writer. Friel moved with his wife and four children to Donegal, living first in Muff before settling in Greencastle, a fishing village in the north of the Inishowen peninsula, about 20 miles from Derry.

Friel initially wrote short stories and radio plays. His first stage play, *A Doubtful Paradise*,

was produced by the Ulster Group Theatre in 1960. Dublin's Abbey Theatre staged *The Enemy Within* in 1962 and from then until 1979 the Abbey premiered most of Friel's plays. In 1980 he was a founder-member of the important and influential Field Day Theatre Company based in Derry. He remained at the helm of Field Day for over ten years before formally resigning in 1994.

Back in 1963, Friel spent three months at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis observing Tyrone Guthrie at work as a director. This proved to be a very important learning experience. It gave Friel the confidence to be more adventurous in his work and attempt new things. It was shortly after returning from America that he wrote *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

Despite his growing fame, Friel chose to remain living in the small Donegal village of Greencastle. This is important because many of his plays, including *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, are set in a fictional small village in Donegal called 'Ballybeg'.

Friel remained a dominant and important figure in Irish and international drama until his death in Greencastle in 2015 at the age of 86. In an obituary, *The Irish Times* called him 'a giant of world theatre'.

## Introduction

Brian Friel's play *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* was written in the early 1960s and first staged in 1964 at the Dublin Theatre Festival. It was a huge success, resonating with audiences and establishing Friel as a dramatist of major significance. The play was produced on Broadway in 1966 and in London the following year, extending Friel's reputation to an international audience.

The play's **plot** is straightforward. Gar O'Donnell, a young man of 25, is about to leave home to start a new life in Philadelphia. He has accepted an invitation to go there to live with his Aunt Lizzy and work in a hotel. He is an only son and is leaving his ageing widowed father S.B. behind in his general store in a small village in Donegal. As the clock ticks down to the time of his departure, Gar hopes for some affectionate

gesture or word from his father or a sign that he will be missed. This is not forthcoming. Gar revisits events that led up to his decision to leave. Meanwhile, Madge, the housekeeper who is like a mother to Gar, grows more impatient at S.B.'s inability to make any effort to connect with his son.

The play is structured in three **Episodes**. The third Episode is subdivided into two parts: Part One and Part Two. Friel has decided not to use the usual structure of Acts subdivided into definite numbered Scenes. Instead, each Episode is made up of a number of clearly defined parts as characters arrive and depart, or when Gar is remembering events from his past. On these occasions the playwright uses the technique of **flashback**. (These parts will be explored in detail in the Plot Summary section.)

The play's appeal can be attributed to a number of factors. The play conveys a sense of **realism**. The **set**, which mainly represents the interior of the O'Donnell house, is carefully described in the stage directions creating a feeling of authenticity. The **characters**, with their individual and easily identifiable qualities are ordinary and believable. Friel presents us with the silent, uncommunicative father; the kind housekeeper; the superior Senator; the ineffectual Canon (the parish priest); the sarcastic but pathetic schoolmaster; Kate, the practical daughter of a Senator; the brash loquacious (talkative) Lizzy Sweeny, her resigned husband Con and, most importantly, the sullen, reserved, silent, monosyllabic Gar Public and his alter ego the witty, insightful and eloquent Gar Private.

The **action** or events of the play take place on the night before Gar leaves home to start a new life in Philadelphia and on the morning of his departure, a period of about seven hours in all. Friel employs the technique of **flashback** with incidents from Gar's past being re-enacted on stage. As the clock ticks on towards the hour of his departure, Gar recalls significant incidents

which influenced his decision to leave his home in Ballybeg. He recalls the night he and Kate planned to get married, but he lacked the self-confidence to ask Senator Doogan for his daughter's hand in marriage. He also vividly recalls the visit of Aunt Lizzy and Con to Ballybeg and his emotional turmoil at meeting his dead mother's sister.

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### Flashback

The use of flashback allows the audience to see the events from the past taking place on stage and to be introduced to the characters involved. It demonstrates the significance of these events in Gar's life and helps to explain why he felt he should leave Ballybeg. Flashback allows us to appreciate the terrible disappointment experienced by Gar when his relationship with Kate ended. It also allows us to speculate on what may lie ahead for Gar when he arrives in Philadelphia to stay with Aunt Lizzy and Con. **The use of flashback extends the time of the play from a few hours before Gar leaves, allowing Friel to cover the events from the past that led up to Gar's decision to leave home.**

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### Setting

The play, as is the case with other Brian Friel plays, is **set** in the fictional small village of Ballybeg in County Donegal. Like many small Irish towns in the early 1960s, life in Ballybeg is sterile and constraining. It is a small community with a small world view, a place where life is set, predictable and follows a conventional, humdrum pattern. Gar longs for something better, for personal fulfilment – emotionally, sexually and imaginatively. He had tried to escape by attending university in Dublin, but failed. His love for Kate ended in

disappointment. The community, as represented by the Canon, fails to offer Gar any reason to stay in the place or to even recognise Gar's need to feel he belongs and is loved. Yet, deep down, Gar is attached to Ballybeg. It is where his roots and sensitivities rest, even though he calls it a 'quagmire, a backwater, a dead-end'. **The tight, restrictive set on stage showing the interior of the O'Donnell home also represents the narrow world Gar plans to leave behind.**

Most importantly, small-town Ireland was typically reserved when it came to matters of love and affection. Gar's father, S.B., is a product of such a place. Therefore, he is not emotionally equipped to respond to his son's needs. Ballybeg is an emotionally impoverished place. The visit of his friends, 'the boys', is another example of this impoverishment. They are unable to properly convey any farewells to their friend. 'They're louts, ignorant bloody louts, and you've always known it!' Gar Private remarks after they leave. However, he then softens his attitude towards them, recalling that they did have 'foolish, silly fun' together.

### Central theme

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At the very core of the play is the **lack of communication** between Gar and his father, S.B. O'Donnell. This is the play's **central theme**. Gar longs for some connection with his father, some small sign that he is loved and will be missed when he leaves for Philadelphia. Gar's mother died just a few days after giving birth to him, so he never knew her. Gar hopes for some word or gesture from his father to indicate that he loves his son, but they have never been able to communicate, even on a basic level. They were never even able to have a proper conversation, so it is no surprise that they cannot find a way to express their true feelings even as the clock ticks down towards the time of Gar's departure. (This theme and others are explored in more detail under 'Themes'.)

### Public and Private

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An important feature of this play is **the technique of having two actors on stage both playing aspects of Gar's personality**. Public represents the side of Gar's character that is on public view, the side he shows to the world. The words spoken by Public are the words that people can hear and his actions are the actions that people can see. On the other hand, Private represents Gar's interior life. These are Gar O'Donnell's private thoughts and ideas that are never publically expressed. They are hidden from public view and hearing. Private is Public's alter-ego, the private side of his character. Public says very little, can be sullen and appears to be unimaginative and to lack eloquence. Private, on the other hand, is the opposite. He is witty, eloquent, full of humour and fun and can challenge Public's opinions or tell him some home truths. (See more detailed analysis of Public and Private in the 'Characters' section of the notes).

It is very important that this feature of the play is understood. Brian Friel wants the audience to fully appreciate the depth of the conflict that exists in Gar's mind as he prepares to leave Ballybeg. In order to do this he gives the audience a privileged view of Gar's private, interior mind. On the surface Gar appears to be delighted to be leaving Ballybeg. He also appears to be indifferent to his father's inability to express any affection for his son. We soon realise that this impression is far from the truth. **The use of two characters, Gar Public and Gar Private, to represent both sides of Gar's personality allows us to fully appreciate the tragedy at the heart of the play.**

### A tragedy or a comedy?

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Brian Friel skilfully mixes comedy and tragedy in this play. He makes the audience laugh and then brings them close to tears. Friel knows that an audience must be entertained as well as challenged to reflect on serious issues such as

unexpressed love and life's disappointments. Friel himself never specified to which type of drama his play belongs. However, by the end of the play, with the focus on the final dialogue between Public and Madge, the overall mood is downbeat and tragic. S.B. has exited after revealing his own misgivings about being left alone when Gar goes. He has his own fond memories of Gar as a boy, but he reveals them to Madge instead of telling his son. He departs with the sad thought that he was too old to be a father or a husband. Madge, too, has her own disappointments. Her niece did not name her new baby Madge after all. She is also upset because S.B. failed to communicate with his son.

Gar asks Madge to let him know if his father falls ill. 'Who else would there be?' she replies, highlighting S.B.'s isolation when his only child leaves. By expressing his concern for his father, Gar is facing the fact that he does care for S.B. after all. He does actually love those people who have been close to him, namely Madge and S.B. The play ends on a note of confusion when Private asks Public why he has to leave, 'Why? Why?' Gar replies, 'I don't – know. I – I – I don't know'. The tragedy is that both Gar and S.B. failed to communicate their true feelings towards each other and now Gar is leaving forever without the comfort of ever knowing if he was loved.

Gar's relationship with Kate is also tragic. Gar's feelings of inadequacy left him unable to stand up to Senator Doogan who wanted his daughter to marry the wealthier Dr Francis King. Kate wanted to be with Gar, but he failed her by being unable to ask her father's permission to marry her. He knows that his own failings led to Kate's marriage to Francis King. 'No, no; my fault – all my fault.' He still loves Kate and this is a further source of torment for him on the eve of his departure.

There are aspects of the play that are definitely comedic. Much humour is generated by the witty and often boisterous exchanges between Public and Private. Private gets all the funny lines.

His ability to impersonate S.B. is humorous as is his ability to predict S.B.'s movements and conversation. At one stage, Private has an imaginary discussion with S.B. about being a sex maniac. Private's sarcastic comments are a rich source of humour in the play. However, Private's commentary can at times turn darker and more sinister, revealing a more negative attitude towards those he is addressing.

The scene where Aunt Lizzy arrives with her husband Con and friend Ben Burton also has funny moments. However, there is an underlying sadness because we feel that Gar will not be doing himself justice by leaving home to go and live in Philadelphia with someone like Lizzy.

**While Friel skilfully balances humour with the more tragic and darker elements of the play, the overall impression one is left with is that the play tends more towards tragedy.**

### **Contrasts**

**Contrast, in the literary sense, is a technique by which writers identify the differences between two subjects, such as characters or ideas or places.** Friel skilfully uses contrast to accentuate certain aspects of a character or to call attention to a theme or an issue. By highlighting these differences the true nature of a subject can be exposed.

The most obvious contrast is that which exists between Public and Private. Public says very little. He appears to be shy and self-effacing. He keeps his true feelings hidden. He pretends to be indifferent to events around him and that he is happy to be leaving Ballybeg. Private is almost the exact opposite of Public. He is witty, eloquent, imaginative, insightful and intelligent. He is keenly aware of his own failings and the inadequacies of those around him. The contrast between the two Gars highlights the conflict at the root of his personality. Gar longs for some sign or gesture of love, but is unable to do anything about this desire. He wants to be free,

but needs to be affirmed by those close to him.

There are many other examples of contrast in the play, for example, the difference between the impractical and immature Gar and the girl he loves, Kate Doogan, who is practical and realistic. The contrast between Private and S.B. serves to highlight the boring, predictable and remote character that S.B. appears to be. This is also highlighted in the contrast between the characters of Lizzy and Master Boyle, who have no difficulty in displaying their emotions, and the closed nature of S.B. who is incapable of expressing his emotions.

There is the obvious contrast between the Gar that features in his fantasies and the real Gar. Gar imagines himself as a great sportsman, 'the dashing Gar O'Donnell ... the pride of the Ballybeg team' or a great womaniser, when in fact he is neither of these. There is also a contrast between Gar's imagined life in Philadelphia and the reality of Irish emigrants who have actually 'made it' in America, as personified by the pathetic world of Aunt Lizzy and Con. Ben Burton expresses it well when he says that America is 'just another place to live'.

The contrast between the emotionally expressive Master Boyle and the emotionally remote S.B. O'Donnell serves to highlight Gar's predicament. He longs for some emotional connection with his father, but he is unable to handle feelings when they are expressed openly. There is great contrast too between the Gallagher girls (Gar's mother Maire being one of them) who are 'sorta silly' and the O'Donnells who are 'kinda cold', according to Lizzy. Gar dislikes being classified as 'cold'. There is contrast too between Madge, who is naturally reserved, and the brash mannerisms of Lizzy. Madge maintains a dignified distance, obviously disapproving of Lizzy's lack of restraint.

## Time

**Time is regularly referred to throughout the play. It dominates and regulates the lives of the characters.** Even in the very opening scene, Gar asks Madge to tell him the time on two occasions. This is most noticeable in the case of S.B. and the Canon. S.B. is a virtual prisoner of the clock. When he enters the room at the end of his day's work in the shop he 'looks at his pocket watch and checks its time with the clock on the wall'. He then repeats the phrase that he uses every evening, 'Another day over'. This emphasises his plodding, methodical, unimaginative nature. There is an atmosphere of stagnation around S.B. and the O'Donnell household as if time has stood still. There is the notion that lives are totally regulated by time. He tells the Canon that there is 'Not a thing happening' on the eve of his son's departure for America for good. 'Powerful the way time passes, too' is all the Canon can say when Gar tells him that he is leaving in the morning.

Friel defines the time-span of the play with great accuracy. The action begins at 7.10 in the evening and Gar will leave at 7.15 in the morning on the mail-van. The passing of time creates heightening tension in the play. There is a sense that time is running out for Gar and S.B., to bridge the emotional gap that exists between them and finally express their true feelings for each other, before Gar leaves for good. Gar grows more tense and frustrated as time runs out, as does Madge. S.B. is also affected, as is clear from the conversation he has with Madge when he finally reveals that he has his own fond memories of his son as a boy and he expresses his fears of being left alone. 'Madge, I'll manage rightly, Madge, eh?' he remarks to Madge on three occasions during this short dialogue.

The many references to time underline the fact that the things that urgently need doing are not being done. There are many loose ends that need to be tied up before Gar leaves, including his relationship with S.B., with Kate, with 'the

boys' and his confusions over Master Boyle's relationship with his mother long ago.

Age is another aspect of time that is important in this play. S.B. wonders if he was too old when he married Gar's mother. He was 40 and she was only 19. 'I was too old for her, Madge, eh?' he

asks Madge. He is 40 years older than his son who is 25. He wonders if this could be a factor in their inability to communicate with each other. 'Madge, maybe it's because I could have been his grandfather, eh?' Note how it is to Madge he addresses his concerns and not to his son Gar.

## Plot Summary

### EPISODE I

The play is structured in three **Episodes**. The third Episode is subdivided into two parts, Part One and Part Two. Friel decided not to use the usual structure of acts subdivided into a definite number of scenes. Instead, each episode is made up of a number of clearly defined parts or events which would correspond to short scenes in a more conventional format.

#### The set

Friel begins by describing the stage set in detail. The set is comprised of the interior of the O'Donnell home which is '*sparsely and comfortlessly furnished – a bachelor's kitchen*'. Stage right is Gar's bedroom with a door to the kitchen. This bedroom and the kitchen are the two main areas with a door to the shop and a door out to the scullery. There should also be a '*generous apron*' or a space near the front of the stage to allow for scenes that take place outside of the O'Donnell home.

#### Opening scene

The play opens with the housekeeper Madge calling Gar to his tea. Gar '*marches on stage*' and appears to be in a great mood. '*He is ecstatic*

*with joy and excitement: tomorrow morning he leaves for Philadelphia*'. He sings lines from a well-known song by Al Jolson called *California, Here I Come* from an old Broadway musical. He changes California to Philadelphia because this is the eve of his departure for Philadelphia where he plans to start a new life, far away from his home village of Ballybeg in County Donegal.

**This opening scene is brimming with energy.** Gar appears to be in an exuberant mood, 'leppin' and 'eejinn' about' in the words of Madge. He playfully forces Madge to dance a few steps with him. Even at this early stage in the play we feel that Gar may only be pretending to be ecstatic with joy at the idea of leaving home. He asks Madge if she will miss him and tickles her into admitting that she will indeed miss him when he is gone.

Gar goes on to complain about having to work ten minutes overtime on his last day. We later learn that Gar dropped out of university in Dublin and has been working in his father's shop on poor wages. He takes offence at the fact that he is told by his father, S.B. O'Donnell, to gut and salt some fish and perform other tasks before finishing work. He thinks his final day at home should be recognised and maybe he should have been given the day off. **His negative attitude towards his father is evident from this early stage of the play.**



## KEY POINTS

- Gar appears to be in an exuberant mood.
- Even at this early stage in the play we feel that Gar may only be pretending to be ecstatic with joy at the idea of leaving home.
- He asks Madge if she will miss him and tickles her into admitting that she will indeed miss him when he is gone.
- Gar goes on to complain about having to work ten minutes overtime on his last day.
- His negative attitude towards his father is evident from this early stage of the play.

## Private appears

We are then introduced to Private. **He represents Gar's inner, private thoughts, the side of Gar that is never presented to the outside world. He is Gar's alter-ego.** Through the words and actions of Private, we see the inner conflicts and turmoil that Gar is experiencing as the clock ticks down towards his hour of departure. When Public says with relief, 'It's all over', Private's first words in the play are, 'And it's all about to begin'. This is, on the surface, a reference to Gar's imminent departure for America, but it also has a deeper meaning. Friel is suggesting in this play that life is a circle and that each generation will repeat the mistakes of the previous generation. Gar may well live his life in America, but as Madge predicts 'when he is the age the boss is now, he'll turn out just the same'.

## Fantasies

Private and Public engage in some fantasy exchanges, a pattern we see repeated throughout

the play. **Private provides much of the humour and wit in the play.** He is, however, more than just a source of entertainment and comedy. He also provides emotional reactions and insights that Public would often prefer to ignore. Their first fantasy is that of a fighter pilot attacking Irish fishing boats in the Atlantic, a reference to Gar's continued resentment at having to complete chores on his last day at home. Gar then becomes the 'dashing Gar O'Donnell ... pride of the Ballybeg team' before becoming a soldier being interrogated by a commanding officer about his intentions to go 'to a profane, irreligious, pagan country of gross materialism'. Gar adopts an '*absurd military stance*', but Madge enters his bedroom with an old suitcase and tells Gar to 'quit eejiting around'. **There is a marked difference between the Gar that appears in his fantasies and the real Gareth O'Donnell.**



## KEY POINTS

- Private represents Gar's inner, private thoughts, the side of Gar that is never presented to the outside world.
- Private provides much of the humour and wit in the play.
- There is a marked difference between the Gar that appears in his fantasies and the real Gareth O'Donnell.

## Madge and Gar discuss S.B.

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There then follows a brief but important dialogue between Madge and Gar. She asks Gar if his father has spoken to him yet about the fact that he is leaving home forever in the morning. ‘Not a word,’ Gar replies and Private immediately adds, ‘the bugger’, reflecting Gar’s hidden disappointment at this lack of communication.

**Gar and S.B.’s inability to communicate with each other is a central theme in the play.** Gar pretends that he does not care if his father speaks to him or not. ‘Whether he says goodbye to me or not, or whether he slips me a few miserable quid or not, it’s a matter of total indifference to me, Madge.’ This isn’t true. Madge tries to let Gar know that his father is actually very distressed about his son’s departure but is unable to express his feelings. ‘He said nothing either when your

mother died,’ she tells Gar. We can see the extent of Gar’s own distress when Private starts calling S.B. names such as ‘Screwballs! Skinflint! Skittery Face!’

## Introducing S.B.

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There follows a brief exchange when S.B. calls Gar to ask about the number of barbed-wire coils that were delivered to the shop. **Gar, we are told, ‘assumes in speech and gesture a surly, taciturn gruffness. He always behaves in this way when he is in his father’s company’.** Gar is unable to remember the exact number and S.B. returns to the shop in disgust. This would appear to be typical of the interactions between father and son. It concerns a business matter and does not go well.

### KEY POINTS

- Gar and S.B.’s inability to communicate with each other is a central theme in this play.
- Gar pretends that he does not care if his father speaks to him or not.
- Madge tries to let Gar know that his father is actually very distressed about his son’s departure but is unable to express his feelings.
- Gar, we are told, ‘assumes in speech and gesture a surly, taciturn gruffness. He always behaves in this way when he is in his father’s company’.

## Gar’s fantasies

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Gar then continues his immature fantasies. He goes from being a cowboy to being interviewed by ‘the president of the biggest chain of biggest hotels in the world’ before playing a record ‘on the li’l ole phonograph’ (old-fashioned record player). He then becomes a great orchestra conductor and a violinist. All of this fantasising shows how immature Gar is and how unprepared he is for the reality of life in America.

## Gar recalls his mother

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When Gar opens the old battered suitcase to pack for his trip, he discovers an old newspaper from the year his father and late mother went on their honeymoon to Bundoran. This was obviously the last time this suitcase was used. This brings on thoughts about his mother, Maire, who married S.B. when she was only 19 and S.B. was 40. According to Madge, she thought ‘he was the grandest gentleman that ever lived’. All Gar’s information about his mother, who died at the age of 20, a few days after giving birth to Gar, has come from Madge. His father

## PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!

has never spoken to Gar about his late mother. Apparently, she was not happy in her marriage because ‘Madge says, for many a night he must have heard her crying herself to sleep’. She was only 19 going on 20 when she was pregnant with Gar. Her friends, ‘the other young girls from

Bailtefree would call in here to dress on their way to a dance, Madge says, and her face would light up too, Madge says’. **Madge describes her as being small ‘and wild and young’. S.B. will later ask Madge if she thinks he was ‘too old for her?’**

### KEY POINTS

- All of this fantasising shows how immature Gar is and how unprepared he is for the reality of life in America.
- The newspaper in the suitcase brings on thoughts about Gar’s mother Maire who married S.B. when she was only 19 and S.B. was 40.
- Apparently, she was not happy in her marriage because ‘Madge says, for many a night he must have heard her crying herself to sleep’.



### ‘It is now sixteen or seventeen years ...’

Private tries to get Gar to snap out of his melancholic thoughts. He recites a piece of prose from Edmund Burke’s writings called *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. ‘It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles.’ **Gar habitually recites these opening lines from this text as a means of breaking out of a particular line of thought, or to distance his mind from something he finds unpleasant or painful.** Perhaps he learned this passage while at school or university and it has stuck in his mind. It is an interesting choice because in the text that Gar is quoting, the writer Edmund Burke is idolising a past in France that no longer exists. In the same way, Gar tends to idealise the past and the mother he never knew. He idealises the past in order to discredit the reality of the present which is populated by the likes of S.B., the Canon, Master Boyle and others we will meet as the plot unfolds.

### Gar and Kate Doogan

Gar puts a ‘*lively piece of ceilidhe Band music*’

on the record player. He now imagines that he is at a dance chatting to imaginary people he meets there. He is then reminded of Kate Doogan, the girl he once wanted to marry and the girl he still loves, despite the fact that she is now married to the local doctor. Private asks if he intends to bring her photograph with him to Philadelphia. Private tells Public that ‘you loved her once, old rooster; you wanted so much to marry her that it was a bloody sickness. Tell me, randy boy; tell me the truth, have you got over that sickness? Do you still love her? Do you still lust after her?’ Gar gets upset and calls her names. He blames her for the break-up and also blames her parents, but then admits to himself that the break-up with Kate was all his own fault, ‘my fault – all my fault’. **It is clear that he still loves Kate.**

Gar recalls the night ten months before that when they both planned to get married. ‘By God, that was a night, boy, eh?’ But then he admits that he made a fool of himself on a number of levels. That night ‘you made a right bloody cow’s ass of yourself’. He recalls that they had taken a walk ‘out the Mill Road’ together and made plans to get married. They would be ‘engaged by Christmas, married by Easter’. They would have 14 children: ‘seven boys and seven girls’

and Gar was going to get more involved in the shop and get extra pay for taking on 'increased responsibilities'. Gar would 'develop the hardware lines and she was going to take charge of the drapery'. He now realises that these plans were impractical but he was 'so far gone that night' that he even told Kate about his 'secret egg deals that nobody knew anything about – not even Madge'. These deals turned out to be almost worthless, at the most they were worth £1 every month. This shows Gar's immaturity and impracticality.

**This scene with Kate Doogan is of great significance in the play because the breakdown of his relationship with Kate is one of the factors which led to his decision to accept his Aunt Lizzy's invitation to come and live with her in Philadelphia.** It is also a source of great unhappiness in his life. Because of its importance, the playwright uses the technique of **flashback** rather than have Gar simply recall the events. As Private recalls the events of that fateful night '*Public and Kate enter from the left and walk very slowly across the front of the stage. They stop and kiss ...*'. Public tells Kate that he is mad about her and that he will 'never last till Easter! I'll – I'll – I'll bloody-well burst!' They then kiss again.

Gar imagines what their future family will be like, but Kate is much more sensible and practical. She knows that they could never live on the pathetic amount of money Gar earns working for his father in the shop. Gar is not really concerned with the practicalities of marriage but Kate is adamant, 'Gar! Listen! Be sensible,' she tells him. She wants to know how they will 'live'. Gar is caught up in his feelings for Kate and 'tries to kiss her again and she avoids him'. She pleads with him, 'Please, this is serious'. She tells him that he will have to see about getting more money. Gar gets a little irritated by Kate's focus on the practicalities of marriage and blurts out that he has another 'source of income'. He tells her that he buys and sells eggs on the side, but his

source of income is not profitable like her father's 'investments'. Gar is shown to be very immature and impractical unlike Kate. **Kate, however, clearly loves Gar and wants to marry him.** '*They kiss. Suddenly Kate breaks off. Her voice is urgent.*' She has decided that the two of them must go straight away to her house and tell her parents that 'you want their permission to marry me next week'. She knows that it must be now or never for them. She pulls Gar's arm, urging him to move, saying, 'Come on. Quickly. Now, Gar, now'. Gar starts making excuses 'look at the shoes – the trousers'. He does not like the idea of having to confront her wealthy parents. His confidence begins to wane, 'God, they'll wipe the bloody floor with me!' he tells her, clearly now in a panic. Kate kisses him passionately in an attempt to give him some courage.

When they arrive at the Doogan residence Gar tells Kate that his 'legs are trembling'. He tries to escape by saying that perhaps they 'should wait until – until – until next Sunday'. Kate ignores his pleas and tells him, 'it's up to you, entirely up to you'. She concocts a story for Gar to tell her father. He must pretend that he earns £20 a week and has savings of £5,000 in the bank. **This shows Kate's practical nature as compared with Gar's immaturity and impracticality.**

Senator Doogan enters and tells Kate that Dr Francis King has 'arrived' while she was out. Kate is surprised to hear this and does not seem at all pleased with the news. It would appear that Kate was aware that her parents were encouraging the idea of a marriage between their daughter and the young doctor and were working behind the scenes to try to bring it about. That would explain why she wanted Gar to act swiftly and to go that very night to confront her parents. Sadly, Gar lacked the self-confidence and poise required to face down someone with the social standing and skills of Senator Doogan.

Kate leaves to find her mother but before she exits she '*gives Public a last significant look*'. She is obviously very serious about wanting Gar