

A Study Guide,
with Theatrical Emphasis,
for Robert Bolt's Play
A Man for All Seasons

by

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For Meg

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I. Introduction

This guide is designed to give a performance orientation to the study of Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*. It attempts to encourage teachers and students to discover the work as a play to be performed. You can use this guide for inactive classroom study if you wish, but it would be much more interesting and productive to use it as a stimulus to performance work of some sort, whether it be rehearsing a scene in class or a full production of the play. At very least, it should help produce the sort of reader who accompanies his reading with consciousness of what happens on the stage when it is performed, with a sense of the visual and aural aspects of the play for which the script gives cues.

My experience has been as both a teacher-scholar and an actor-director. I spent many years performing classical drama in schools, universities, cultural centres and theatres, and working with teachers and students throughout the world. I have taught drama in a British university and *A Man for All Seasons* in an Estonian university. Some of my scholarly work has focused on Sir Thomas More.

I first saw the play on Broadway in the early 1960s, with Emlyn Williams as Sir Thomas More. The impact on the audience was extremely powerful. My reaction at the end was to feel, "This play could change the world." In the 40-odd years that have followed it has not done so, but performances of the play still have the effect of making people feel this, and perhaps of making them a little better. The impact comes from a complete experience, from watching and listening to people playing the characters, moving as they speak, with the sort of accompaniment a staged production includes in the way of scenery, costume, lighting and music. Though effective, it does not make anything like the same impact when merely read.

I wish to thank Deirdre Barber for working out with me during our many years of touring as actors and running workshops together some of the ideas on practical theatre incorporated here. Others I owe to many, many drama teachers, too numerous to name. Thanks to Gerard Wegemer and Guy Lawrence for answering questions.

All references below to the play are to the Vintage International Edition of 1990.

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II. General Background

1. Sir Thomas More

Nobody wants to be a hero. You go through life giving up parts of yourself – a hope, a dream, an ambition, a belief, a liking, a piece of self-respect. But in every man there is something he cannot give up and still remain himself – a core, an identity, a thing that is summed up for him by the sound of his own name on his own ears. If he gives that up, he becomes a different man, not himself.¹

More's own life encapsulated Bolt's main theme of tension between worldly success and comfort and service to a higher authority. He was born in 1478, the son of a prosperous London lawyer, and, after study at Oxford, was trained in the law. He was drawn toward a career in the church, but rejected it because he wanted to marry. Entering government service, he progressed from the post of Under-Sheriff of London (legal expert for the sheriff's office) to national office, to the top office of Lord Chancellor (chief legal officer of the kingdom), serving along the way as an ambassador in foreign countries. He carefully educated his family, daughters as well as sons, running a school in his home. The leading English humanist (see below) scholar and author of his age, he wrote on matters of religion as well as statesmanship. In 1515-16 he wrote (in Latin) his most famous work, *Utopia*, which depicts an alternative commonwealth. More had a lifelong interest in drama: it is reported that as a child he stepped into plays performed by professional actors and improvised a part for himself (Roper, p. 198). The short comedies he wrote in his youth have not survived. But his surviving works show dramatic qualities: clearly envisaged "scenes," lively dialogue and a recurrent image of human life as a stage play. His own ultimate role in life was not one he sought or wished for: hero, martyr and ultimately saint.

More had resisted Henry VIII's wish to divorce his queen, Catherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn, and the expedient it entailed of Henry's breaking with the Pope and taking on himself the headship of the church in England. Henry appointed him Chancellor in 1529, probably hoping this would lead More to side with him. More resigned the Chancellorship in 1532. After being imprisoned in the Tower in April 1534, he was executed on 6 July 1535 for High Treason, having

¹ Arthur Miller, interview in *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 June 1953, quoted in Nelson, p. 169.

“maliciously,” it was claimed, refused to acknowledge the king’s titles: he refused to swear to the Act of Supremacy designating Henry VIII head of the church.

Robert Bolt had to select aspects of the real More and leave others out in order to create a character with whom a twentieth century audience would be sympathetic. He omits, for example, the occasional scurrility in some of More’s writings (a style common in his own day, but less so in ours), and the extreme reaches of his asceticism (he wore a hair shirt), and of his wit (his practical joking would in some instances appear overdone). The real More’s character appeared to include a mass of contradictions: while he wore a hair shirt against his skin, he enjoyed worldly success and comfort. He was very harsh in his writings against heretics, but kind and gentle at home, rarely showing any sign of anger. As a humanist and as a government official, he focused on the world, but he was drawn to the monastic life. He was saddened by the corruption in the church but died rather than participate in dividing it. Bolt diminishes the apparent contradictions, and some critics have felt that he watered More down in the process.

More’s own attitude may be reflected in *Utopia*, written when he was trying to decide whether or not to enter the king’s service. One of his speakers gives this advice:

If you cannot root out wrong opinions or cure received abuses as you believe from your soul you should, still don't desert the commonwealth. In a storm you don't abandon ship because you can't control the winds. And there is no point in trying to inculcate strange and unfamiliar ideas when you know they will carry no weight with those of opposite persuasion, except by indirection and by making your best effort to handle the matter tactfully. And what you cannot turn to good, at least try to make less bad. For it is impossible that all should be well until all people are good...(my translation)

Probably this goes some way toward explaining why More, a man drawn to private life, chose to be a public servant: rather than expecting perfection or refusing to participate, he felt obliged to try to make things less bad.

Several biographies of More were written not long after his death. The most famous, a literary masterpiece in its own right, is by his son-in-law, William Roper, who appears as a character in the play. Bolt’s main source for *A Man for All Seasons* was R. W. Chambers’s *Thomas More*, first published in 1935, 400 years after More’s death. Chambers even suggests the idea of More’s biography as a play:

We have, then, four main characters—More and his wife, Roper and his wife—acting upon each other. Behind them we have the background of the world, the flesh, and Henry VIII. The world: represented by the Duke of Norfolk, scandalized, when he came to dine with More...to find him in church, singing in the choir, with a surplice on his back....King Henry, shown not so much in proper person, as in the reflected light which these anecdotes

throw on him....We have only one glimpse of Henry himself, as he walks after dinner in the garden at Chelsea, holding his arm about More’s neck (Chambers, pp. 24-25).

Because Chambers relies very heavily on Roper’s account, Bolt seems to be following Roper quite closely, but everything he quotes from Roper and almost everything from More’s own works appears in Chambers in some form. Examples of what Bolt derives from his sources will sometimes be pinpointed in the guide. Because Chambers was normally Bolt’s intermediary, I have generally given the quotation from Chambers rather than from the original, except in the case of Roper’s work, which I have invariably quoted from its most recent edition, also stating where the passage comes in Chambers.

In his play, Bolt telescopes time: Act I begins in May 1530; Act II begins in May 1532 and concludes in July 1535.

More and Conscience

Critics have made a lot of the difference between how most people think of “conscience” now (as the individual’s inner sense of what is right) and what the concept meant to More. The most significant difference seems to be, as it is described by Aldo Bergamaschi, that a Christian doesn’t say, “I obey my conscience,” but “My conscience tells me to obey God in preference to men” (Rousseau, pp. 77-8; my translation). Conscience thus is regarded not simply as an individual’s private conviction of right, but as God’s will, which it would be blasphemy to refuse. More believed that if he wanted to continue being a Christian and to save his soul he had to follow the dictates of his conscience.

More felt that it was every man’s responsibility to investigate “by learning and by good counsaile, and be sure that his conscience be such as it may stand with his saluacion, or else reforme it” (*Correspondence*, p. 547). Having done that, he could not “fynd it in myn hart otherwise to say, than as myn awne conscience geveth me” (*Correspondence*, p. 500). Having devoted ten years of study to the question of whether the Papacy was instituted by God, he came to the conclusion that his immortal soul—the spiritual aspect of the person, which survives forever after his physical death—would be in danger if he were to take an oath recognizing Henry as head of the church, saying, “I woulde not sware, without the iubarding [putting in jeopardy] of my soule to perpetuall dampnation” (*Correspondence*, p. 502). Thus while, if he did not follow the king’s wishes and sign the oath, he would suffer worldly discomfort and bodily extinction, if he were to sign it without believing in it he would be condemning his soul to damnation for eternity. He realised that fear of the pains and privations he might have to suffer might put him at risk of capitulating, particularly if he were to be tortured. But he trusted in God to keep him strong and help him die well.

It is difficult for those who live in the 21st century to understand the fear of being shut out FOREVER from God, from being able to see and be with God, the object of the believer’s devotion. The belief in hell as a place of torment in which those condemned to it would suffer

FOREVER was very strong indeed. When More's wife was sent to visit him in prison in the hope that she would persuade him to sign the oath, she told him that he might, if he signed it, have another twenty years of life. More answered with his usual wit that if she had offered him 1,000 years he might have been tempted, but 20 years in exchange for an eternity of damnation was a very poor bargain (Stapleton, p. 161).

Bolt's More is a dramatic character, a recent creation for a contemporary audience by a playwright of the 20th century. It is not essential to understand the Catholic definition of conscience to understand Bolt's More. Bolt was brought up as a Protestant (a Methodist), and by the time he wrote *A Man for All Seasons* he had ceased to have any identifiable religious convictions. In our world, where ethics are not necessarily governed by religious conviction, understanding Bolt's More is based on our shared ability to admire someone who unswervingly follows his convictions of what is right, without our having to share those convictions in every detail.

The modern concept of conscience derives from long experience of Protestantism, which is distinguished from Catholicism in the extent to which it is a private and personal transaction between an individual and his God. The real Sir Thomas More sometimes sounds like an individualist as when, for example, he said—as he did repeatedly—that while he followed his own conscience, he left others to follow theirs. In More's time people conformed with the two higher authorities, the church and the state. So long as the two were not in opposition there was no conflict. An individualist was thought of as very dangerous, cut off from society and its norms. Bolt had to be careful not to isolate More from his own society. For this reason he has focused attention on his relationship with his family. At his trial it was suggested that he was separating himself from society by following his own lights rather than joining his fellow countrymen in subscribing to the oath. Time and again emphasis was placed on the fact that the universities, the bishops, the nobility had all subscribed to the oath. However, More pointed out that his point of view was shared by the whole of Christendom outside of England, a much larger body. In that respect he cannot be regarded as an individualist, though at the same time in resisting the state he lived in, and being almost alone in doing so, he would be looked on as one today, when an individualist is a more positive thing to be.

Protestantism made individualism respectable. From a Protestant point of view, conscience is seen as an entirely private matter, and the danger comes not in a clash of two higher authorities such as church and state, but in the clash of the individual's (private) conscience with the state. More was following God's authority, which he saw as higher than that of the king, and was conforming to what, in a larger society (Christendom) was the general belief. More's "self" is not the same as ego, but rather the aspect of his being—the belief that obedience to God was the most important thing in life—which he could not compromise for any reward or the threat of any punishment.

2. Henry VIII and Thomas More.

Henry, who came to the throne in 1509, was the second son of King Henry VII, and became heir to the throne on the death of his older brother, Arthur. As a young man he seemed very promising. He was a competent scholar, an accomplished linguist and musician. Some of his musical compositions are still popular today – for example, "Pastime with Good Company." He had interests in astronomy, mathematics and theology and was a fine athlete and dancer. Plato's ideal ruler was a philosopher-king, a king who was a learned and virtuous man. Added to this was the Christian ideal of the king as a good Christian. It looked as if Henry might satisfy these aspirations, and his reign began with hope for him as the ideal enlightened monarch. This assumption seemed confirmed in 1521 when he wrote *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*, a reply to the heresies of Martin Luther, for which the Pope gave him the title Defender of the Faith, which is still part of the English royal title.

After More became a member of Henry's council in 1518, the king often sought him out for conversations on astronomy, geometry and theology, and the king and queen enjoyed his pleasant company so much that he had to try to pretend to be less good-natured in order to get home to his family. The king sometimes visited More at home, unannounced, and walked with his arm familiarly about More's neck. When his son-in-law William Roper was impressed by this, More responded, "If my head could win him a castle in France...it should not fail to go" (Roper, p. 208).

Henry's older brother, Prince Arthur, had married Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish princess. At the time when Henry assumed the throne, it seemed sensible to retain the Spanish alliance and for Henry to marry Catherine. But the Catholic Church forbade a man to marry his brother's widow, so for the marriage to take place he had to obtain a dispensation from the Pope.

The marriage was happy for many years, but it was vitally important that a king should have a male heir to inherit the throne. All of Henry and Catherine's sons either miscarried or died soon after birth. Finally a girl, Mary, was born, but still no sons appeared. England's alliance shifted away from Spain, and it became rather a political drawback for the king of England to be married to a Spanish princess. There was also the fact that Henry had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn. Around 1525, there began to be talk of a divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

The death of all his sons in early infancy or before seemed to be a sign to Henry that he had offended God by marrying his brother's widow. His conscience was troubled - it appears completely sincerely. He consulted learned fathers of the church, as well as his friend Sir Thomas More, who was known to be learned in theology as well as law. Old Testament references to the problem appeared to contradict each other:

"If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."
Leviticus 20:21

“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry with a stranger: her husband's brother shall take her to him to wife...” Deuteronomy 25:5

While the contradiction can be avoided by explaining Leviticus as referring to a situation in which both brothers were alive, Henry found it more convenient to interpret it as referring to a brother's widow. He contended that such a marriage was against the law of God and nature, and the Pope had not had the power to make it lawful. He was consequently, he claimed, still a bachelor.

It is useful to understand that for many years in England there had been hostility to the clergy, because the church had great worldly power, property and wealth, while many members of the clergy were corrupt and self-seeking. At the end of the 14th century Chaucer had satirised corrupt clergy in *The Canterbury Tales*. It was generally understood that the church was in serious need of reform. Although Sir Thomas More was very much in favour of church reform, he had not reached the point of believing either that church rituals should be put aside, or that a single man or a single country could break away from the church without the consent of the whole body. So when finally in 1521 Martin Luther inadvertently began a breakaway movement, More obeyed the laws of his land and his king's specific command by arguing against Luther in print and condemning as heretics those who shared his beliefs.

More consulted experts on canon law and read all he could find on the subject, but could not agree with the king's wish that he approve the divorce. In fact it was the king's own book that first persuaded him that the Pope's power came directly from God – this was a subject upon which he had urged the king at the time of writing not to lay so much stress. And his later reading seemed so strongly to support the divine origin of the papacy that he felt his “conscience” would be in “right perrell” (*Correspondence*, p. 498) if he were to incline against it. Cardinal Wolsey, the Lord Chancellor of England, was given the task of securing the Pope's approval for annulling the king's marriage with Catherine. As the Pope stalled, Henry became impatient and finally deprived Wolsey of the office of Lord Chancellor of England, conferring it next on More. This was probably meant in part as a bribe to persuade More to approve the divorce, but it failed to change his opinion. At first Henry received More's objections kindly, promising not to pressure him and saying that he should regard his duty to God first and to the king second. Later, as he became impatient with More as well, More resigned the Chancellorship.

Finally Henry had himself declared head of the church in England, “so far as the law of Christ allows.” In 1533 Thomas Cranmer, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, pronounced the divorce and crowned Anne queen. More did not attend the ceremony. In 1534 Henry had Parliament pass the Act of Succession, which disinherited Mary, his daughter by Catherine, and proclaimed as heirs to the throne any children born to himself and Anne. Subjects had to swear loyalty to the king, queen and their children. More was unwilling to swear this oath, since it denied the

Pope's authority to dispense with the objection to Henry's marriage to Catherine. Though he agreed that Parliament had the right to determine succession, he felt that it was wrong for a layman to interfere in spiritual matters, over which the Pope had authority. Meanwhile, he neither published nor spoke against the oath nor criticised anyone who signed it, and he would not tell anyone to what aspect of the act he objected. He was first confined to his house, then sent to prison in the Tower of London.

The Act of Succession was swiftly followed in November 1534 by the Act of Supremacy and Treasons. This made it treason for anyone maliciously to plan or attempt to harm the royal family “or to deprive them...of their dignity, titles or name of their royal estates.” After 1 February 1535 anyone found guilty of any of these offences would be regarded as a traitor. Treason was punishable by death. “Head of the Church of England” was now, of course, one of Henry's titles, and More's unshakeable position was that if there were to be a change of allegiance in the church, this would have to be determined by all Christendom, not by a single county alone. It is thought that Anne Boleyn pressured Henry to pursue More, but of course his prominence and international reputation made it dangerous for Henry to let him live, silently witnessing against Henry's cause. He was as tried and convicted on the basis of Richard Rich's false evidence.

It is important to be aware that in the 16th century the king was regarded as God's representative on earth, holding power directly from God. More was thus torn between the needs of God's representative and his conviction of God's will in the matter of church organisation. The world was conceived as hierarchical, with God at the head of creation, under whom was the king at the head of society. When the Archbishop of Canterbury reminded More of his obligation to obey the king and thus to swear the oath, More responded that, according to his conscience, this was not one of the areas in which he was obliged to obey: his primary responsibility in spiritual matters was to God.

3. Renaissance Humanism

Thomas More was an internationally famous humanist scholar. The humanist approach to scholarship and writing had developed earlier in Italy, with the re-discovery of Greek and Latin texts, and spread to the rest of Europe. It included the study of Greek and Latin, in which More was proficient. The ideal of the humanist scholars was to illuminate Christianity by the ideas of the Greeks. The aim of humanist education and scholarship was the development of virtue, which included attributes such as courage, fortitude, justice and mercy, and assumed the possessor was part of the active world, not a scholar in retirement. Particular stress was laid on the education of rulers. More's friend Erasmus wrote *The Education of a Christian Prince* with this aim, and More's *History of King Richard III*, an example of tyranny, may have been intended to show

Henry VIII what path to avoid. The Tudor rulers, most notably Queen Elizabeth, were educated according to a humanist programme.

More was regarded internationally as one of the greatest humanists of his age, and he was the friend of the other famous scholars of his time, foreign as well as English. He wrote poetry, satire, philosophy, historical exemplum (i.e. using history to show rulers what they should and should not do), devotional works, and virulent religious controversy. His still most famous book, *Utopia* – which, like many of his works, was written in Latin, the language of scholarship – dealt with government and society. His “school” in his own home was famous, partly in that he pioneered the education of women among his daughters and daughters-in-law. His daughter Margaret was, like her father, an outstanding classical scholar.

Strange as it may seem, the political thinker Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), who is mentioned in *A Man for All Seasons* as influencing the new amoral politicians, is normally described as a humanist writer as well. In his major book, *The Prince*, he advocated pragmatic rather than moral values as guides in statecraft: the leader needed to do what was effective rather than what was morally right in order to achieve his political ends. Religion, to the governor, is merely a tool. We note that Richard Rich at the beginning of the play has been reading Machiavelli and is aware of Cromwell's interest in his work. These are the two men in the play who most signally ignore moral precepts in order to gain their ends, forwarding the king's aims by destroying More, for the purpose of advancing their own fortunes. Machiavelli was not translated into English until 1640, so knowledge of his precepts came to England mostly through hearsay. Understanding of them was distorted so as to make his name synonymous with villainy, and his work was believed to be inspired by the devil. In our own day the concept of Machiavellianism still has negative connotation: in putting the state first, it is easily equated with totalitarianism.

4. Robert Bolt

Robert Bolt was born in 1924 in Sale, a suburb of Manchester, in the north of England, son of a shopkeeper and a schoolteacher. His studies at the University of Manchester were interrupted by military service during World War II, and he completed his degree in history in 1949. Early in his university career he joined the Communist Party, but became disillusioned with it during the war and left it when he returned to university. After obtaining his degree he moved to the southwest, trained as a teacher and taught school for several years. His first plays were written for school performance. He then began writing radio plays, progressed to plays for the stage, and finally wrote film scripts, including those for *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Dr Zhivago*. *A Man for All Seasons* was written first as a radio play for the BBC in 1954, then appeared on BBC television in a one-hour version in 1957, which was “criticized as a static version of the radio play” (O'Connor, p. 151). Manchester Library Theatre performed it again on

radio in 1959.

When at last in 1960 it appeared rewritten as a stage play in London's West End (the English equivalent of Broadway), it was tremendously successful. A run on Broadway followed in 1961, to great acclaim. Paul Scofield, who created the role, called it “the most difficult part I played” (O'Connor, p. 155). It next appeared as a major film in 1966, directed by Fred Zinnemann in Bolt's own specially written film script, with Scofield again in the title role. This script omits the Common Man, who, Bolt felt, worked only as a stage device: film, being much more naturalistic than theatre as a medium does not lend itself to inclusion of a character who keeps changing his identity. Zinnemann objected to this cut: “For six weeks,” he said, “we tried to get Matthew back into the script, but it just didn't happen. Bolt was right” (Zinnemann, p. 199).

Charlton Heston, who had played More in American theatres over the course of many years, had wanted the role in the 1966 film. In 1988, just after starring in the play in London's West End, Heston directed and played More in a version made for television. In it he adheres closely to the stage script and retains the Common Man. Heston regarded *A Man for All Seasons* as the best play of the 20th century and called it the most rewarding experience—apart from Shakespeare—that he'd ever had on the stage (Heston, *Actor's Life*, p. 230).

Robert Bolt was brought up a Methodist, but in later life was not religious. “I ought to be religious,” he said, “in the sense that I'm comfortable thinking in religious terms and altogether I seem naturally constituted to be religious. It is just my misfortune that I have no religion” (Hayman, *Robert Bolt*, p. 15). Like Sir Thomas More, Bolt had “great respect for the law because I think that the human being is a potentially chaotic and destructive creature and society and the law are infinitely valuable” (Hayman, *Robert Bolt*, p. 13). But in 1961 he chose to break the law. He was a member of CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), and an activist for nuclear disarmament. In 1961, the year after *A Man for All Seasons* debuted on the stage, he was arrested while demonstrating against nuclear weapons and, when he refused to be bound over to keep the peace, was sentenced to a month's imprisonment. He failed to carry his principles through to the end of his sentence, giving in to pressure from the film company for which he was writing at the time. He compromised with the authorities and was released after being in prison for only two weeks. “That,” Bolt said, “was the most shameful moment of my life” (Barber, p. 8).

Bolt was married four times, twice to the actress Sarah Miles, and had four children. During the latter part of his life he was disabled, due to a stroke in 1979. He died in 1995. His life, like the heroes of his plays, reflected what he described as a sense of being “torn between two poles of Man's longing; his desire for a full cup here on Earth and his desire to serve a greater Being than himself” (*Radio Times*, Northern ed., 13 Feb. 1953, quoted Turner, p. 113). From this distance, some people regard Bolt's life as misguided and perhaps largely wasted, in that he let the lure of money divert him from writing plays. After *A Man for All Seasons*, he wrote very little for the stage and devoted himself mainly to writing

screenplays, though he believed them to be a lesser art form. His ideals concerning theatre were high: he said, "I am pro-theatre. I believe that even now life does somehow have significance and I believe that theatre is well-adapted to affirm significance and not well-adapted to deny it" (Preface to *Vivat! Vivat Regina!*). It might be worth considering whether it is really fair to regard a life as wasted which produced *A Man for All Seasons*, and whether the screenplay for a film of the stature of *Lawrence of Arabia* is a mean achievement.

5. Theatrical Influences

In style and structure, *A Man for All Seasons* is for the most part a traditional play. The aspects of it which are untraditional show the influence of Bertolt Brecht's plays. Brecht (1898-1956) was a German Communist writing with a social purpose, who tried to distance viewers from the action so as to force them to respond more critically to the social problems his plays portrayed. Brecht wanted to encourage analysis rather than the *catharsis* (purging of the emotions by exercising them) which is traditionally held to be the effect of serious drama. For this purpose he focused on the artificial nature of the stage, using theatrical devices which avoided any attempt to create illusion. Actors were not to "become" but to observe and demonstrate the character. Sets were minimal and non-naturalistic, with scenes changed in full view of the audience, using signs to identify locations. Costumes might be put on in full view. Choral figures commented on the story to the audience: in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the Singer is the teller of the tale which is the play. The subjects of Brecht's plots came from folklore or history, and are told episodically. Songs are interpolated. Brecht's company was not based on a star system but rather on ensemble playing. Often his plays do not accord with his theories, and the audience inevitably becomes swept up in the story, sympathetic to the main characters.

Some of Brecht's techniques influenced English playwrights, who tended to imitate only aspects of his work. We can see the influence of Brecht in *A Man for All Seasons* particularly in the character of the Common Man, who speaks directly to the audience, takes a series of roles, changing costume in full view, often changes the set between scenes, and is thus partly in and partly outside the play, like Wong, the Water Seller in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Unlike Brecht's choral figures, he does not represent the author's view, but often the other side, and as a character in the play he often serves as a contrast to More. For example, for him the highest value is to be alive, whereas for More there proves to be something higher than that. Other aspects of *A Man for All Seasons* attributable to Brecht are the changes of scenery in full view of the audience, hanging up signs to indicate location, the episodic structure and the historical subject.

Critics have not taken the Brechtian influence on *A Man for All Seasons*

very seriously and have regarded it as superficial. John Russell Taylor feels that the device of the Common Man really owes more to Bolt's radio experience than it does to Brecht. In fact Bolt himself, in his preface to the play, says that he intended the Common Man to draw the audience into the play rather than to alienate them from it. (p. xix) *A Man for All Seasons* makes its effect by being a play about a person more than a play about ideas or about social conditions.

The closest Brecht play to *A Man for All Seasons* is *Galileo*, in which a series of scenes show the great scientist eventually being forced by the Church (who succeed in "persuading" him by showing him the instruments of torture) to abandon his discoveries. Loyalty to the Church makes Galileo seem a coward. He is both the same as and the opposite of More, whom loyalty to the Church makes a hero. One line in *Galileo* is echoed in *A Man for All Seasons*: "Unhappy the land that needs heroes" is alluded to in the scene between More and his family, p. 140: "the happy land that needs no heroes."

There were several plays about More before Bolt's, in several European countries, but the only one which is at all well known is a much earlier attempt to represent Thomas More on stage in England, not very long after his death. This was *Sir Thomas More* by Anthony Munday and several collaborators, which contains four pages evidently written by William Shakespeare. It was probably written around 1593 and probably never performed, because the scenes in it depicting popular riots were censored. More emerges as a local hero, a man who was a particular friend to the poor and to the city of London. The play had to exclude all reference to More's spiritual life and beliefs, because it was written in the reign of Henry VIII's daughter Elizabeth, a Protestant. This leads to More's having to refuse to sign a document whose contents are never revealed. He speaks several times about his conscience, but we are not told what the central problem is. There is a metaphor running through the play of man as an actor, echoing More's own frequently-used metaphor. It is unknown whether or not Bolt was acquainted with this play, but *A Man for All Seasons* does not seem to have been influenced by it. When performed recently (early 2006) in London by the Royal Shakespeare Company, it suffered by comparison with *A Man for All Seasons*, a revival of which was also on in London at the same time.

It is possible that the theatre of More's own time had an influence on *A Man for All Seasons*. The Tudor morality play contained allegorical characters, who, instead of being individual people, were representations of vices and virtues or social types. The characters of the King, Cromwell and the Common Man share this quality, being symbols as much as they are characters. Also, a favourite 16th century theme in poetry and drama was the falls of great men: characters were shown rising in power, then losing it and eventually dying. The overall structure of *A Man for All Seasons* follows this pattern. The purpose of this type of literature was to teach by example. It is likely that Bolt, a former teacher, shared this desire to use his play for teaching purposes.

Partly because of Brecht's influence there was a rise in the popularity of the history play in the later 20th century. Several of these plays focus on

religious subjects: T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and Jean Anouilh's *Becket* (1959) had as their central figure Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury who ultimately came into conflict with King Henry II and was killed in Canterbury Cathedral on the king's orders. John Osborne's *Luther* (1961), about the Protestant reformer Martin Luther, also shows Brecht's influence in aspects of style. At the same time Bolt was writing his play for the stage, Anouilh was also writing a screenplay on Sir Thomas More, *Thomas More ou l'Homme Libre* (*Thomas More, or the Free Man*). But the popularity of Bolt's play prevented its production, and was not published until 1987, after Anouilh's death.

Bolt's main theme is individual conscience vs. the state, a theme both old and traditional, relevant to the time in which the play was written. It remains relevant today. One of the most famous Greek plays, *Antigone*, tells of a young princess who disobeys the edict of the king, her uncle Creon, that those who died fighting against his favoured party should not be buried. Antigone's brother died leading armed combat against Creon's side. Divine law dictates that Antigone should bury her brother. She does so and is condemned to death for disobeying human law. One of the most famous heroes of conscience is Socrates, whose last hours are depicted in Plato's *Apology*. He taught people how to use their minds and was condemned to death for "corrupting the youth." One of Shakespeare's characters, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, faces a dilemma similar to More's, in that she believes her soul would be in danger if she agreed to save her brother's life by sleeping with the judge. She regards eternal life as more important than temporal life and chooses to save her virginity (thus saving her soul) and allow her brother to be executed.

The mid-20th century was particularly concerned with the problem of the individual conscience vs. the state. The Nuremberg Trials in 1945-1949 held Nazi leaders to account for their crimes against humanity during World War II. The court supported the view that a person's primary responsibility was to his conscience, no matter what the orders of his superior officers, including the government. In the 1950s, America was in a state of hysteria due to the trials by the House un-American Activities Committee of prominent people for having once belonged to the communist party. Arthur Miller (1915-2005), one of America's leading playwrights, was called to testify, and he was fined for contempt of court because, while he was willing to admit details of his own past, he felt it was immoral to witness against anyone else. His opposition to the committee's tactics led to his writing *The Crucible*, about the Salem witch hunts in the late 17th century, which had also been conducted in an atmosphere of unreason and hysteria. John Proctor dies at the end because he will not compromise his "name" by swearing to something he knows is false. The relationship of *A Man for All Seasons* with *The Crucible* is complicated. Miller's play appeared in 1953. Bolt saw it in 1954, after writing the radio version of *A Man for All Seasons* but before writing the stage play. In part the relationship is one of influence, in part one of sharing the same time period, with its threats of a police state, of the state taking control of the individual conscience. It is not unusual for works on

similar themes to appear almost simultaneously. Jean Anouilh and Christopher Fry were both writing plays on Thomas Becket when Bolt was completing the stage version of *A Man for All Seasons*.

More's silence seems to parallel the taking of the 5th Amendment by those accused of communism in America. Though Britain did not suffer from "witch hunts" similar to McCarthy's (we should remember that Bolt had been a communist for a time), there was conflict between the government and individuals or groups demonstrating and practising passive resistance to the state's developing weapons for nuclear warfare. This made the conflict of government and the individual a natural topic for the time. However, Bolt noted that Americans "seemed to respond to the play as having an acute bearing on the present day – rather than as an historical piece, which, on the whole, was how it was viewed in London..." (O'Connor, p. 162). Though *A Man for All Seasons* is sometimes said to have no social "message," but rather to be simply biographical, the character of More does serve as an example for the audience, if not actively improving them, at least showing them that they could be better people if they wished or had the courage to follow their own convictions.

III. Classroom and Theatre Performance

1. What is Theatre?

When we see a headline, "Ocean Rescue Drama," or "Dramatic U-Turn in Government Education Policy," what does the word "drama" or "dramatic" convey to us? There is a sense of excitement, of the unexpected, which catches attention: a situation exists now which didn't exist before. The word "drama" comes from the Greek verb meaning to do or perform an action, so "drama" is an action, something done. What makes "drama" an act of theatre? Why isn't it theatre to watch anyone doing anything? Whatever is performed needs to attract the interest of the audience and hold it, affecting them in a particular way. A theatrical performance has a sense of occasion: a lot of people have left their homes and gone somewhere to participate in it together. It is a social situation, in which members of the audience, all separate individuals who probably do not know each other, somehow become one and subtly interact with the actors, influencing the performance. As any actor will tell you, no two audiences are the same, just as no two people are the same. And the actor will respond to what the audiences give him, "answering" what the audience "asks." Hence there will be a subtle difference in every performance of the same play.

Unlike a novel, which is read alone and silently, a play takes place before an audience, and usually consists not only of a story and characters but also of a visual component, of sound - often including music - and of lighting effects. While a play is happening, the characters are moving or still all the time. They are speaking or there is silence while they do not speak. The playwright must make his effects economically, because performance time is limited, and the viewer lacks the opportunity the reader has of being able to turn back the pages and check past information. The characters can only display who they are and what they feel through what they say and how they act. The playwright must select carefully the events he portrays and the words his characters use. This compression, assisted by set, sound and lighting, may draw the audience into an experience in which they subtly influence each other's response. There is an aspect of mob psychology about a theatre: people are more easily swayed emotionally in a group than individually. This is one reason why governments have tended to regard theatre as dangerous.

Of course we can read a play instead of, or as well as, going to see it.

But this is a lot more difficult, because the reader needs to supply with his imagination all the details of sight and sound for which the script of the play is shorthand notation. In a play, characters are presented, not discussed, and we know what they are feeling only by watching what they do and hearing what they say in a particular voice and tone. Without a sense of the physical aspects of a play you may come away with little more than an idea of the plot (what happens). You may miss the interaction of real people, the spatial relationship between actors, and between the actors and the audience. You miss the sound quality, which consists of the pitch, volume, tone, rhythm, pace and resonance of the actors' voices, the music which may introduce, conclude, and accompany important moments of the text, and specific noises designed to create dramatic effects. You miss the visual element: the appearance of the stage itself and how its architecture draws together actors and audience, the set (if any), and the lighting. You miss the colours and design of the costumes, and what these may tell you about the characters. All of these factors influence the impression the play makes. Most important, a theatrical experience happens in a communal setting and is happening NOW.

But some freedom is lost in production which is available in the study. On the stage, specific actors have to have been chosen and rehearsed. The appearance and voices of the actors in an individual production robs the viewer of freedom to imagine characters' physical appearance and the way they sound. The reader is not under obligation to make decisions, but can imagine more than one possibility. For example, the reader may imagine that in a particular scene More can *either* sit throughout a discussion *or* get up and move around during it, *or* he can sit for part of the time and move for part of the time. The director needs to have made interpretative decisions among the various possibilities the script allows. More if he gets up must get up at a particular point in the discussion, perhaps stressing some aspect of his thought or feeling. The point where he gets up will have significance for his character.

A playwright has to make his effects clearly and economically, because there is not much opportunity for repetition, and an audience cannot refer back. We have to pay close attention, because we may miss something vital, and for that reason the playwright has to work hard to hold our attention at all times. This intensity of attention is one of the most important aspects of the dramatic experience. The biggest job for the playwright is selection: whether his characters are real or imagined, he needs to choose which events of the many he might have included will relate to each other in such a way as to give the desired effect (in the case of *A Man for All Seasons*, the object is to portray most clearly the growth of More's dilemma and the tension of its inescapability). We can know the character only within the play: he has no life outside it. The playwright "creates" him by selecting which traits to highlight and which to suppress. Bolt is writing for a general audience of diverse religious views, some of whom will not be highly educated. So he suppresses the aspects of More as a scholar and as a Roman Catholic, stressing more his intelligence, his wit, his devotion to his family. Aspects of More which would not have seemed eccentric in his own time, but which would alienate a modern

audience from sympathy with him are omitted. Bolt omits a great deal, but we still have a sense of a rounded, likeable and complex figure. He has also compressed the time period of the play's action. In reality the events we see took place over five years. On the stage, events seem to follow each other very rapidly.

Ideally, someone wanting to experience a play should have the opportunity to see it or to act it or both. Reading is not enough. There are, fortunately, two productions of the play available on video, and some sense of the variety of interpretation available in a dramatic script can be derived from comparing these two. Of course these were performed long before the audience watches them, and editing produces a "perfect" finished product – there is no risk involved, nothing can suddenly go wrong. Video is not communal, as a staged production is, nor is it taking place at the moment of watching. The word "live" is important: a theatrical performance may be "live" not only in that the people performing it are alive, but also in the way that an electrical wire is "live," with energy coursing through it.

In the study we are freer than we are in the theatre – we can get up and move around, and we don't have to read the play in a single sitting. As a result, we have less sense of the tension which can be built up within a limited period and an enclosed space. We notice in reading Shakespeare that there are very few stage directions in the text. Shakespeare was on hand to give directions to his company: if he wanted a particular effect onstage, he could tell people to provide it. If it is true, as has been recently suggested, that he wrote for readers as well, he seems to have been able to rely on the knowledge that all playing spaces and acting conditions were similar and could leave most effects to the readers' imaginations. Modern playwrights seem to take on some of the functions of directors in making their wishes clear. Bearing in mind that plays will inevitably be read as well as acted, published editions of recent plays take some care in describing stage effects. If you look at *A Man for All Seasons*, you will see first of all very detailed descriptions of characters, as well as suggestions for set and costumes, and if you glance through the play you will see the sort of detail Bolt provides of movements, tones of voice, states of mind, and actions. A director of a theatrical production may allow himself to be guided by these directions, or he may decide to ignore some or all of them.

There are many ways in which a play may be realised on the stage, and many styles of stage. The public understanding of what is used in the theatre tends to be about a hundred years or so behind reality. Most people when they think of "theatre" still think of a building in which an audience in a darkened auditorium watches actors performing in a recessed area, framed like a picture, on which a set provides both decoration and a realistic sense of locality, and there is a curtain to be drawn at the beginning and end of the play. It never ceased to amaze me, when I was touring as an actor and said I could perform in ANY SPACE, how I was often met with a worried apology from the presenters: "We don't have a curtain," or "We don't have footlights," or "We don't have a stage." Actually, all that is required for a theatrical performance is an open

space, an actor (or several actors) and an audience. A bare space can often be just as effective a background for a play's action as a set (and it is cheaper!). Acting in the round is more natural than having actors in front of audience. So it is possible for a classroom to be put to use as a theatre.

One way of developing a sense of how a play you read will look and sound on the stage is to see as many plays in the theatre as possible. You might make the play more vivid by reading it aloud. But one of the best ways of discovering a play is to try acting it. For example, by taking a single short scene and assigning it to two or three groups to prepare for performance in class (the degree of preparedness may vary from a moved reading to a performance off book), the class may develop an idea of the variety of interpretation possible within a single text. Those who are acting might get a clearer idea of some of the important aspects of drama that reading does not convey. For example, that the physical relationship of characters on the stage affects the audience's interpretation of their relationship. Are they looking at each other when they speak, or looking away, or does only one look away, and why? Are they close to each other or is there distance between them? Is there furniture between them, and what is the effect of this? Is one standing and one sitting, and if so, what is the effect? Do they both move about the stage, does only one move, or are they both stationary the whole time? When they move, why do they move?

One of the director's jobs is to "block" the action: to plan what the actors do physically at all times. He or she may either tell the actors where to stand or when to move or may work this out in collaboration with them in rehearsal. This is both so their movement and placing will express their moods and relationships meaningfully and so the audience will not be bored by overuse of actions and areas of the stage – though sometimes one scene may intentionally echo another.

2. Aspects of a Play

a. Suspension of Disbelief

We know that what is happening on the stage is not real. But for the duration of the performance we agree to believe that it is, or rather to "suspend our disbelief." Coleridge spoke of "That willing suspension of disbelief...which constitutes poetic faith" (*Biographia Literaria*).

b. Character

A *character* in a play exists only in the play, "living" only in action and in relation to the other characters. A dramatic character grows out of a situation, and as the situation changes or becomes clearer, more aspects of the character will appear. We must ask ourselves at every point whether the first impression of a character is contradicted or deepened by what has just happened. In each scene in which he or she appears, what aspects of a

character are revealed? Our assessment of the characters will be constantly changing as we see them relating to events and to other characters. An author will define character more clearly by developing characters who are parallels and opposites of each other. A character is shown through relationships, interactions and contrasts with others. Look how every character seems to comment on More by being in some way similar to him (for example, Roper is, like More, a man of principle) or opposite to him (but Roper is an extremist, whereas More is moderate). More's relationships with other people will help to define either his personality or his point of view or both.

Some of the questions in this guide should lead you to understand how Bolt skillfully contrasts More with various other characters in the play. What he says about himself and what others say about him helps to build up our sense of him, but we must carefully assess the trustworthiness and the vested interests of the people giving opinions. Always ask yourself what a character wants, both in general and at any specific moment. Suggestions of a character's past life will help to give him a sense of depth, roundedness and reality. So will the environment he has created around himself. With More, the physical environment of his home is not so clear in the play, in which the scenery is not naturalistic, as in the videos, but the relationship to his family and friends is very clear.

In contrast to the novel, there is little place in a play for describing a character's appearance, thoughts, feelings and moods. Instead, a stage character must reveal himself through what he says and does and the way the actor plays him. What aspects of his mental or physical characteristics come from the stage directions, the author's notes in the script, or the director's design, what from the action and the dialogue, and how much from the actor's specific qualities? The tone of his voice, his pauses and silences, what he chooses *not* to say as well as what he says all reveal nuances of his deeper feelings. So does his physical attitude and relationship to other characters. Every person in a play moves in a way characteristic to him, and there will be variations in this according to his situation. Is he healthy or ill at a particular point, comfortable or uncomfortable, happy or troubled? What is his relationship to the person currently onstage with him? More will bear himself more subserviently with the king than with his family. With which characters does he feel most and with which least comfortable, and how would he show it?

More is the *protagonist* of *A Man for All Seasons*: that is, he is the central character. The protagonist of a tragedy, or the tragic hero, is usually struggling with some problem. In earlier tragedy - Greek tragedy or Shakespeare, for example - the protagonist, a character of high birth and/or position, struggled with some huge problem of cosmic or existential significance, and the way he rose to the occasion when the play revealed circumstances which would cause his inevitable destruction showed his magnificence: tragedy showed man in extremity at his very best in strength, courage, defiance, or moral or spiritual transcendence. In drama from the middle of the 20th century on, the problem is often domestic, and the central character may not have high social status or

heroic qualities. Indeed he is sometimes described as an "anti-hero." More is a fairly traditional tragic hero, though he is not of particularly high social status: he is not, like Hamlet, a prince, or, like Antigone, a princess, but a member of the middle class who has bettered his position by his own talents and exertions and reached high status. Another difference between More and other tragic heroes, from King Lear to John Proctor in *The Crucible* or Thomas Becket in Anouilh's *Becket*, is that he has no serious flaws of character. The "traditional" tragic hero tends, because he is imperfect, to be partly responsible for bringing about his own downfall, whereas More's downfall could only have been avoided by his being *less* perfect.

c. Plot and Action

The *plot* of a play is what happens in it. More, in *A Man for All Seasons* is confronted with a dilemma in being asked to support something he does not believe in. But he does not want to die and feels his responsibility is first to seek for a way to live without compromising his convictions. He makes several attempts to find a way round the situation. Other people attempt to change his mind. Ultimately there is no means of compromise, and he dies for his beliefs. In the usual sense of "action" referring to physical action, there is no action in the play until the struggle with the jailer on p. 146. But in critical terms, referring to Aristotle's description of a tragedy as being "the imitation of an action," the "action" of a play describes its overall intention. This may be the accomplishment of revenge, as in *Hamlet*, the process of self-discovery, as in *King Lear*, or the uncovering of a crime - which in *Oedipus* is coupled with self-discovery. In *A Man for All Seasons*, the "action" may be said to be More's concurrent fall from worldly power and rise in moral authority.

d. Theme

This is the overall *idea* on which the play focuses. In *A Man for All Seasons* the theme may be said to be that following your conscience, even when this may not be practical and may be dangerous, is the most admirable course of action. Or the theme may be how man deals with the powers in authority over him. Or that man should have a sense of his self and the necessity of preserving it at all cost. There are other possibilities, and to some extent various readers will see the theme differently. What would *you* say the main theme was? There may be subthemes as well. These will appear as you study the play carefully.

e. Structure

A play's *structure* is how it is organised. The structure of *A Man for All Seasons* follows a traditional pattern. It begins with *exposition*, in which we are given all the information necessary for understanding the characters and situation. Then the *rising action* provides the central situation with its complications: the protagonist receives a challenge, and then there are

moves and counter-moves by him and by those opposing him. The *climax* is the high point of the action, usually the moment of greatest excitement. It is toward this that the complications of most of the play have been leading. Then finally there is the *denouement*, in which the plot or conflict is resolved and we learn the outcome. It is easy to see how *A Man for All Seasons* is organised according to this scheme. You may want to discuss which portions of the play fit into each of the above categories.

Bolt has chosen to organise his play in two acts, each consisting of a series of scenes. Some scenes are shorter, some longer. Some flow into each other, others are more clearly separated. Some might be outdoors, some indoors, some in the daytime, some at night. It is interesting to look at how much of a play takes place indoors or how much outdoors, how much in daylight, how much at night. Look at how the order of scenes is constructed: why does one scene follow another? Is it because of a relationship of time, of ideas, of characters? Compare several examples of how the author moves the play from one scene to the next. What is the dramatic effect of the method he uses for transition each time he changes scene? This guide will pinpoint transitions that are particularly worth considering.

Bolt described his radio version of *A Man for All Seasons* as "a play of one man" (Turner p. 111), and the stage play essentially is as well. How does Bolt structure the play so that More is always the centre of focus? All the characters relate to him, either as contrasts or comparisons.

Each act will have its own agenda: the first act of *A Man for All Seasons* depicts More at the top of his prosperity, the second shows his fall. Each has its own structure, rising to a climax. What scene is climactic in Act 1? Act 2? The "curtain line" (the last line of an act) is always particularly important. What is the curtain line of each act, and what is its effect on the audience?

It is useful when considering a play in detail to take a scene at a time, asking yourself questions about each one. First of all, where is it taking place? In what period? What is the time of day? What is happening? Each scene will have an individual structure. Notice where the conflict is in each scene and how it is resolved, or how suspense is aroused by its not being resolved. How is tension built up and released? Where does the scene speed up or slow down, where is it loud and where is it quiet, and why? Are there sound effects (apart from speech) in it, and what is their effect? What happens visually, to what effect? When and why do the characters move? Notice changes of mood. Notice where dominance of character shifts. Are there any specific movements to suggest this? Who has the initiative at each point? Notice how sympathy shifts in relation to specific characters. Notice any changes in language or style and account for them. Are there any moments of relaxation and humour? Any moments of silence? What is the effect of the first and the last line of each scene? Finally, how does each scene compare and contrast with the one before and the one after it?

f. Speech

A play consists largely of words and speeches. In modern naturalistic drama, the playwright chooses these words very carefully to make the lines the actors speak sound like real conversation between real people. Language must give the impression of being formed by the character at *this* moment in reaction to *this* situation. A sense of reality is created when characters enter in the middle of a conversation. References may be made to things that have happened before the play begins, giving an illusion of continuous life. People may ask questions, which are then either answered or evaded. A word from one speech may be picked up in another, and significant words can be repeated again and again, on the lips of several characters. People may agree with or contradict each other, challenge each other and respond to challenges, or they may evade each other. Dominance may change when one person tops another in speech. You can find examples of all of these techniques in *A Man for All Seasons*.

At all times the playwright is aware (1) of the need to create dialogue that actors can speak easily (for example, they need places to breathe), (2) that information needs to be given economically (people in plays never talk just for the sake of talking), and (3) that it needs to be given in a particular order, to move the plot from beginning to end and to create the intended impact on the audience.

We can pick up clues to character and mood from the style of language used. It may help us locate the period and locality. There is a suggestion of antiquity about the speech of the characters in *A Man for All Seasons*, but only a hint of it. See if you can identify what aspects of the speech make it sound not quite up to date, and others which seem quite modern. Are there any characters whose speech is more contemporary than the others? Another thing we can determine about characters from their speech, by the type of words they use, is how well educated they are. Which characters are more or less educated, and how can you tell? Bolt incorporates in the play some speeches which are actually attributed to the historical More or from his own writings. In order to do this without very glaring stylistic difference between the speeches he invented and those More spoke or wrote, he had to take particular care, for More was a brilliant stylist. Still, Bolt was sometimes criticised for incongruity between the modern-sounding speech and More's own words. Critics who make such comments on the basis merely of reading the play neglect the contribution of the actor, who can make the incongruity vanish. Most of More's own speech is in the Trial scene. This heightens the situation, makes it more momentous, through the alteration in language. This is "special" language, in that it is clearly older than the speech surrounding it, more formal, more poetic. It creates an effect of heightening and significance similar to Shakespeare's shifts from prose to verse.

Language also gives a cue to the actor and director (and indeed to the reader) of how fast or slowly a passage is progressing. If there are long syntactical units containing a lot of long vowels, the passage is produced cerebrally and is slow. Fast speech is depicted by short syntactical units with a lot of consonants. Look at examples of alliteration (words starting

with the same consonant) and assonance (echoing of the same vowel) and assess their effect.

Language in a play does not exist on its own. An actor must bring it to life. Movement and facial expression can completely alter the meaning of the words. Gestures are matched to words. The physical relationship between characters on the stage demonstrates their relationship. Ronald Hayman points out that “The meaning of a phrase can depend on tone, timing, phrasing, on how she is looking at him, how close he is to her, whether her hand touches his” (*How to Read a Play* p. 59). When do characters move? How do they move? The meaning of what is said also depends on what we know of the characters’ past, and what they want – what their main objective is - at a particular time.

g. Subtext

Subtext is the meaning or intention underlying the surface meaning of the words. These are sometimes in direct conflict. People use language to cover up as much as to reveal their feelings. Be careful to spot when what looks like ordinary conversation is an evasion of more serious issues or a suggestion of them. For example, in the trial scene, More and his family talk about custard and dresses when the underlying situation is that they know they will never see each other again. What is the effect of this? You can observe how the actors *listen* as well as how they speak. In periods of silence, what is going on physically and mentally?

h. Dramatic Irony

Dramatic irony depends on the audience, and often some of the characters knowing more than at least one of the other characters. In a sense, most of the characters in *A Man for All Seasons* are victims of dramatic irony, since the story is historical: we know what is going to happen from the start. This is similar to Greek tragedy, whose audiences would have been familiar with the myth on which the story was based, and to the Shakespearean history play. The Common Man reads to us from a fictitious history book what happened to some of the other characters in the play after it was over, so that More is not alone in being subject to dramatic irony.

i. Imagery

Imagery may appear in either words or things. The main image in *A Man for All Seasons* is water (including ships, rivers, the sea, currents and navigation), which Bolt says represents “the superhuman context” of the play. Dry land, as a contrast, represents society (see *A Man for All Seasons*, pp. xvi-xvii). Imagery functions to make suggestions, beyond the actual words, of the meanings and significances of things. With an image, unlike a word, there is no one-to-one equation between symbol and meaning. Instead, an image sends out reverberations and ripples, like a stone

thrown into water. In the theatre, images are often not obvious, but provide a sense of depth and breadth to the effect a play produces, by adding to it an element of beauty as well as of uncertainty. Props, costumes and aspects of the set can be symbolic as well. What do the hats on poles in the trial scene symbolize? Are there other images in *A Man for All Seasons*?

j. Scenery

Just as with lighting, sound effects, costumes, and props, all of which are discussed below, one must be very aware of the aspects of scenery, since they contribute to the meaning of the play by bringing out various moods, stressing aspects of character and affecting—sometimes changing—the atmosphere.

The function of the set is often to give a sense of reality to the play. Bolt’s idea for scenery in *A Man for All Seasons* doesn’t do that. It only suggests the period. It is intended to be used throughout the play, which means it can double for indoors and outdoors, and scenes can easily flow into each other. It echoes More’s own austerity. There are various methods of changing scenery. The two used in this play are that things are moved on and off by the actors in the play, and items are flown in and out. In the prison scene, a cage is brought in by the Common Man and a rack is flown in. For the trial scene, these are both flown out and coats of arms are flown in, creating a sense that an irresistible mechanism has taken control of events.

k. Lighting

Lighting is used to focus on individual characters, to define particular areas of the stage, to suggest time of day, and to define mood. It can suggest location at the same time, for example, “cold gray light from off the gray water” on p. 137.

l. Sound Effects

Sound effects, including music, deepen the texture of a play. Real life is pervaded by sound, quite apart from that of voices: birds sing, planes fly overhead, church bells ring, even in the quietest moments (a useful exercise is to sit in “silence” for two minutes noticing each sound you hear). In plays, sound effects are not random in this way but are very carefully chosen to define or heighten the effect of a particular moment. For example, in the Tower scene (pp. 146-47), as the tension near the end of the scene becomes almost unbearable, “The first stroke is heard on a heavy, deliberate bell, which continues, reducing what follows to a babble.” Then there is an abrupt transition to the trial scene: music “portentous and heraldic” is heard. Try to imagine the quality of each sound effect, its pitch, tone, volume and rhythm.

Careful attention must be paid to the selection of music for a production. Will it be all period, specially composed, or a mixture of

modern and period? Since there is in the play an air which Henry claims to have written, there is an opportunity to research the music composed by Henry VIII, but be careful not to bore the audience by settling on a single tune and playing it again and again, *ad nauseam*: be sure each sound effect is meaningful.

m. Costumes

Bolt's own ideas for costumes mix 16th century with modern. The older, more traditional characters wear some suggestion of 16th century dress, with the colours being significant, while the new politicians, whose outlook is pragmatically administrative, are, he suggests, in black and pinstripe, which must mean modern business suits. The Common Man's costume is a sort of cliché Tudor, with black tights and tight black top. Lady Alice is described as overdressed, which is a point significant for her character. There are several places in the play where costume is particularly significant: for example, More changes costume onstage, coming from Mass when the king arrives. Richard Rich's gown is important: when we first meet him he needs a new gown, and later, when his rise in office has begun, More comments on his new gown

n. Props

Props are items (smaller than furniture) which are used on the stage. When a prop appears in a play, it must always have some significance either from a real or a symbolic point of view. There is a Russian maxim, "Don't bring a loaded pistol onto the stage unless you intend to fire it." The wine in the first scene is used as an index to the Common Man's moral slackness and More's mischievousness. It will later reappear to stress, in contrast with both the Common Man and More, Roper's moral rigidity, which More mischievously chooses at this point to bring out, as if by pressing a button. Then it will reappear finally when Roper tries to occupy the Jailer during More's final scene with his family. The cup More gives Rich in the first scene will become very significant as his accusers try to find something discreditable with which to charge him.

o. Space

A theatrical performance necessarily takes place within a specific space. It will be of a certain size and have specific characteristics. The director has to find the best way to fit the play into the space he chooses or is given. He must fill the stage so that most of the time it doesn't look bare. And he must fill it interestingly, by seeing to it that the characters move in ways that are interesting and not repetitive, unless repetition is important to stress some idea or characteristic. The architecture of the space will partly determine the relationship between actors and audience. It may also affect how close the actors tend to be able to be to each other. Of course the audience area should not look empty either. This is partly a matter of

choosing a space which can be filled, and advertising in such a way to ensure that it will be filled.

Imagine the visual effect of the actors' movements in costume against the set, accompanied by lighting and sound, in a particular theatre space with the audience in a particular relation to the stage.

3. Classroom Performance

The least productive way to study dramatic literature is to sit at desks and talk about it. By being in and seeing plays, you gradually learn to read them as if you were seeing them, supplying the theatrical details from your imagination. But without this skill, which comes with practice, what you can get from a play by simply reading it is very limited. So if you have time, it would be useful to work on the play practically (in fact you may well find this occupies less time in the long run). There are various ways of doing this, from reading aloud in class right up to a fully staged production. Some benefit is to be gained from any practical engagement with the text. You may choose to read the whole play or only parts of it, and you may encourage students to move in character as they read. You might choose to assign some scenes that groups of students can prepare for presentation to the class or to the school or college, or you may decide to direct such scenes yourself. A complete production is most useful, not only for getting to know the play but for providing a sense of achievement and inculcating skills (not least linguistic) which the students can use for the rest of their lives.

a. Scenes in Class

By far the most productive method of studying drama is to get on your feet and work on it as something to be performed. The least ambitious way is to select a specific scene for a small number of people and assign the same scene to several groups to prepare. You may choose for the "cast" to direct the scene cooperatively, or one person may be chosen to serve as director for each group. Or you may direct it yourself as an exercise to show specific different interpretations. How finished the scene is when it is shown to the class depends on the amount of time you choose to allocate to it: it can be a moved reading with book in hand, or lines can be learned. The latter is preferable. It may be useful to start with some exercises: some are given in the section which follows this ("Acting Exercises," p. 37-44).

When the scenes are shown to the class, differences in interpretation will be apparent, and these can be discussed. Actors may be asked why they did the things they did. It will become clear that there is not any single right way of doing a play, or a scene. Some of the notes I have offered are intended to help rehearsal by identifying points where important choices need to be made. Once students are provided with a basis for making critical judgments on performed drama, they will begin

to do so very quickly and with interest.

b. Moved Reading

If a production does not seem desirable or possible, you might choose the option of a moved reading, which will take several class periods to complete. You cast the play - it is possible to change actors of the main roles every day, if you wish - and it is sensible to do this a bit in advance so that students will have time to read over their lines and be somewhat familiar with them. The classroom needs to be arranged so that there is a space for movement, and the "actors" read the script, moving as they feel the lines dictate. It may be useful to do this in the round, which is more natural: there is no need to face the audience at all times, and so movement is freer, and one must act with the whole body. Few rooms are so small that they can't provide enough space for this sort of reading, even if the "actors" have to work around the outside of the "audience."

c. Reading Aloud

If you don't want to move, there is still some benefit to be derived from reading the whole play aloud. This will give students a feel of the language. Again, it is useful to assign parts far enough in advance so that the students can be fluent in their own lines.

4. Full Performance

This may be more difficult because of time constraints and also the dearth of female characters in *A Man for All Seasons*, but the benefits of doing a finished production of a whole play cannot be overstressed, in that problems present themselves for which a practical solution must be found, and the sense of achievement and excitement of the event will never be forgotten. Through experimenting, students will learn to see what is wrong and suggest how to fix it. The more they participate in decision-making, the more exciting the experience will be for them, and the deeper their understanding of the play will become. They will also gain confidence in being responsible for a particular character or a particular aspect of the production. Questions about vocabulary and interpretation will arise naturally in the course of rehearsal: you HAVE to find answers and make decisions if the rehearsal is to progress. Rehearsal and performance depend on social interaction. But quite apart from the social skills such work develops, it will lead students very rapidly to become more incisively critical. Because everyone's input is essential to a production, students will quickly learn to develop their own ideas and gain confidence in expressing them, not just in rehearsal situations but in other areas as well.

a. Preparation

The work of a director is to interpret the author's vision, in collaboration with the actors. He or she needs to persuade the actors to give a performance and inform them so they can. The most important aspect of the director's job is to create an atmosphere in which the actors' best work can take place. If the idea of producing a play terrifies you, here are some suggestions. (1) Become an "active reader:" imagine all the visual and aural aspects of the play as you read. (2) Go to the theatre as much as possible. (3) Think about acting in or helping with local amateur productions. (4) See as many versions of the same play as possible, live or on video, and notice how they differ in interpretation. There are only two videos available of *A Man for All Seasons*, but you may be able to catch an amateur production as well. There are several videos available of some of Shakespeare's plays. *Read the play carefully, and only then read criticism.* Some of the notes in this guide ask questions. Learn to ask yourself and your cast similar questions.

b. Casting

Casting can be done formally or informally. By the time you come to start work on the play you may have enough of an idea of your students' capabilities to appoint them to parts. But it might be more satisfying to give them a chance to audition, even if you already have an idea of how you will cast. You can either do this "formally" by having each individual prepare a speech, or less so by giving short sections to read aloud in groups. Or you might feel you will get a better idea of their capabilities by less formal methods, such as reading the whole play (or indeed another play) aloud, perhaps moving it spontaneously while it is being read, perhaps changing parts as the reading progresses.

c. Blocking

"Blocking" (planning who moves where when) may be handled entirely by the director, or the director may choose to elicit the cast's suggestions for it and let it evolve in rehearsal. The latter process may take longer, but can be more exciting. You need to bear several things in mind when blocking: (1) unless you are working in the round, you need to be very careful that people onstage never stand either in front of each other or in a straight line; (2) the upstage position (see below, p. 33) is normally the more dominant, with upstage centre being the most dominant position; (3) the physical positions of characters in relation to each other demonstrates their relationships and affects the meaning of what they say and do at a particular moment, and thus for the whole play. I once did a workshop with an American community college (adult) English class who had never before realized this, and it came as a revelation. If they had worked on performing plays earlier in their lives, they would have absorbed this awareness effortlessly. In planning blocking in advance, you

can use chessmen if you find this helps.

The director should always have an idea to fall back on should difficulties arise, and should have the last word, since he or she is able to see the whole play from the outside, as the audience will see it, and can tell if particular moves or stage areas are under- or over-used, and whether a particular move a student suggests or tries is effective or not. You may find that a collaboration is the most effective means of blocking a play: having your own ideas but being open to, and indeed encouraging suggestions from the cast. Beware of getting too attached to your own solitary concept of the production (it will NEVER turn out exactly as you imagine it) and be alert to how changes in it might prove more effective. Everyone's input may be valuable. Actors of the smallest role are experts on the play from their own position.

In devising blocking, you and your cast need always to be asking, "What does this character want?" "Why has he come to this place?" "Where is he coming from and where is he going?" and "What has he been doing just before he comes onstage?" Actors need constantly to be asked, or to ask themselves why they are there, where they have come from, and where they are going.

Some handy *terms* for conveying instructions include the following: (1) *upstage*, the part of the stage farthest from the audience; (2) *downstage*, the part of the stage nearest the audience; (3) *stage right*, the right of the stage from the actor's point of view; and (4) *stage left*, the left of the stage from the actor's point of view. Common abbreviations for stage positions are: UR (upstage right), DR (downstage right), UL (upstage left), DL (downstage left), C (centre), UC (upstage centre), and DC (downstage centre).

d. Performance Space

I have met *many* teachers who believe that it is impossible to present a play without a raised stage at the end of a room, a curtain at the front which would close between scenes or acts, representational scenery, and footlights – all the trappings of the 19th century theatre, whose techniques have been outmoded for at least 50 years. In fact almost *any* space can be adapted for a performance. Rehearse as often as possible in the place where you will perform – a luxury not always available.

Classrooms tend to be cluttered with furniture, but can be flexible and lend the production interesting ideas. You can normally clear a performance space by moving the desks. If the desks are screwed to the floor (as they used to be in most classrooms, but rarely are any more), you might consider putting audience at the desks and performing the play around them.

A large, empty room will probably not give you lighting facilities or a defined stage area, but this could be a gain in that you could use the space in any way that seems appropriate or interesting, and your decision about this could grow with the production instead of being imposed on it.

Too often, a *school auditorium* is not built with performance of plays in

mind. If it is not, attempts to conquer the many aspects that make it seem virtually impossible to do plays in it may lead to inventive solutions. Performing in the auditorium will in itself give the production a sense of occasion.

Outdoors is flexible, but if the space is not very restricted and defined, voices will easily get lost. Also, natural scenery can distract from the play, or can help some scenes while working against others. Traffic, airplane noises, and the weather may also be impediments.

e. Set

You, or whoever you designate to design the production, might want, before starting any rehearsal or performance work, to make a model of your set. Bolt suggests a set which is functional and suggestive, rather than an attempt to create a specific, detailed locality. But he makes it clear that the design must ultimately depend on the set designer. Of course you may decide on a production without any set but only furniture – this is up to you and your class. You need to decide how to change from one scene to the next, how the furniture is adjusted and who is to move it. It might be carried about by the actors who are to use it, or by actors dressed as servants.

f. Costumes

You may also want to design costumes or to have someone else design them. Again, Bolt has given his idea of costumes, which appear to be a mixture of period and modern. It might be possible to assign the tasks of set and costume design to different groups of students. But beware: MAKING costumes can be very time-consuming.

g. Lighting

Lighting may or may not be available to you. If it is, you might consider whether it would be more effective to have characters "discovered" at the beginning of a scene sometimes, instead of coming on, and whether a blackout on the action would have more impact than the characters seen walking offstage at the end of a scene. Bolt gives directions for lighting, but you are not obliged to stick to this if something else would be more effective in your production or would suit your space better. Particular attention needs to be given always to the beginnings and ends of scenes and how the transitions from scene to scene are effected.

h. Props

Props need to be provided as early as possible in the rehearsal period so that actors can get used to using them. Someone needs to make a list of props the play requires early in the rehearsal period. A stage manager can be appointed for this. One enjoyable way of finding props in the script is, during a reading, for people to call attention to a prop whenever one

appears. Then find out who can lend what. Someone needs to be designated to collect these (keeping a very careful list of what has been borrowed from whom) and make or buy the rest, and to take charge of them during performance. Don't accept vague promises – keep checking. Have a date when all props *must* be available. Start rehearsing with them as early as possible so they become part of the characters, using substitutes when necessary until the “real” props are available.

i. Stage Directions

Generally directors and actors are advised to ignore the stage directions in printed texts. However, Bolt has been so meticulous and so sensitive in defining mood and character through stage directions that I have decided to treat Bolt's stage directions as part of the whole in the page-by-page commentaries below. Of course if a director finds the printed stage directions simply do not work for his production, he is always at liberty to dispense with them.

j. Characters

In directing students I've discovered that they feel the most useful thing a director can do in helping them find their character is to ask them questions. I have provided some questions in the notes. You will think of more on the spot. Guide your actors to look first at what the characters do, then what sort of words they use, what they say about themselves, what others say about them, their relationships with other people, and their attitudes to people and situations. You can use improvisation if you feel it will help your actors get to grips with their characters, having the students act out a situation which is not in the play but is, perhaps, related to it in some way, or having them play the events of a particular scene in their own words. It is up to you how much, if at all, you use improvisation in exploring story, characters and relationships, and when you use it – before or during rehearsal.

k. Rehearsal

You may want to spend some time at the beginning reading and discussing the play. I do not necessarily recommend this. Questions about the play will arise naturally from the process of rehearsal, and you will HAVE to find answers, or the rehearsal will be stuck. Finding answers during rehearsal, through experimentation and discussion, is a collective effort. By trying out various things and responding to your questions about what works better and why, students will be sharing in the directing process and will simultaneously be developing a critical sense. The more they participate, the more exciting the experience can be, and the more they will understand the play.

1. Learning Lines

People these days seem to be surprisingly “hung up” on learning lines, even young people. The first question people always ask actors is, “How do you manage to remember all those lines?” There is no easy answer. Learning lines is easier for some people than for others, but it is, quite simply, one of the main things you have to do before you appear onstage. Actually having an assignment in which lines must be learned may prove to students that this is not so much a major problem as fear may make it appear to them. And it will add immeasurably to their fluency in the use of the English language to “own” a part of it. It is easiest to learn lines in the course of rehearsal, to learn them at the same time as moves are learned, so that words and movement reinforce each other. Lines need to be learned early, so that books can be put down and the body is free to move. A date should be set by which all lines should be learned, perhaps first for Act 1, then for Act 2. Someone who learns more easily through the ear than through the eye may learn more easily by having lines put on tape and playing them over and over. But he or she needs to beware of the danger this involves of being stuck in an early interpretation. It often helps to have someone “cue” you, since it is important to keep in mind that lines are often responses to other people. Going over your lines first thing on waking up and last thing before going to sleep is very helpful. In desperation you may be able to *trick* yourself into learning (My wife once set up a toy R2D2 when she cued me nightly for a part that was an hour and forty minutes long non-stop and told me HE was teaching me the lines. It worked!).

Be sure that words are pronounced accurately from the beginning, because it is *much* more difficult to unlearn a mispronunciation the longer one uses it. And be sure that actors understand what all the words mean (understanding the words, of course, helps the process of learning them). If the actors don't understand what they are saying, the audience won't.

m. Past Performances

Remember that *no single production of a play is definitive*. There are as many different interpretations as there are different casts. A director will have an overall concept which he or she will keep modifying while working with the cast, taking suggestions from them, developing new ideas based on their strengths and weaknesses, almost until the final rehearsal. The result will inevitably end up being much better than the private concept the director had when starting.

Many actors have played the characters in this play since it was first written. The very first direction, in the planning stages for the radio version, was Bolt's saying that “More's voice is high and sweet, Cromwell's voice has force but Wolsey's has force and charm, since Wolsey is large enough to be able to indulge his emotions” (Turner, p. 110). But this will not be the only thing to influence a director in his search for an actor for the title role in a stage production, where voice is not the only significant element. Paul Scofield created the role, first on the

stage and then on the screen. He developed his idea of More's voice thus, according to Garry O'Connor: "More is a lawyer with a dry voice, so Paul elongates the vowels, but More is also a warm man with a wife and family, so everything has to be rounded...He found achieving a combination of the harsh and the ascetic difficult" (O'Connor, p. 157).

Fred Zinnemann's film starring Scofield was shot on a small budget, and one might have been forgiven for imagining that a film on an intellectual subject about a hero whose strongest action is to keep silent would not have impressed a wide audience. Yet this film is one of the "all time Boxoffice Champs," according to James R. Nicholls (p. 143). And many people regard Scofield's portrayals as "definitive."

Charlton Heston, the American actor best known for the role of More, believed he was better suited to it than Scofield. In 1966 he wrote in his journal, "I know I could do it better. Really, I do" (Heston, *An Actor's Life*, p. 248). Years later he commented on this remark in a footnote to it: "I still do. Although Paul Scofield is one of the finest actors alive and was widely admired for his interpretation of Thomas More, the deep asceticism of his nature isn't close to the real More. Scofield's performance is still a memorable achievement. Nevertheless, More's sanguine physical quality is something I was able to reach in striving for the quality of his greatness" (p. 248).

Other actors who have played the part are Emlyn Williams, who took over from Scofield on Broadway, Alec McCowen, and Tony Britton, who played it at the Chichester Festival in 1978. Martin Shaw has recently played it in the London's West End. The play is sometimes performed in amateur theatre in America, rarely in England.

n. Video

Video can be a useful rehearsal tool, but care should be taken if the performance is to be videoed, since awareness of it could lead to some actors performing to the camera.

There are, fortunately, two commercial videos available, of Fred Zinnemann's film with Paul Scofield as More, and Charlton Heston's TV portrayal. These videos should be watched and discussed comparatively *after* the students have done their own performance.

5. Acting Exercises

There is not time or space to try to teach acting, but here are a few exercises which should help develop concentration, hone skills and lead toward the sense of community which is useful for putting on a play, and which putting on a play in turn encourages.

a. Getting to Know and Trust Each Other and Work as a Unit

- 1) In a circle, throw a ball to someone else in the circle. Say your own name as you throw. After a while, start again, this time saying the name of the person to whom you are throwing.
- 2) In a circle, "pass around" a facial expression. The receiver changes the face slightly, and then passes it on.
- 3) In a circle with eyes shut, the teacher gives one person a smallish object. That person explores it, feeling its size and shape, how cold or warm it is, whether it is hard or soft or slimy, wet or dry, rough or smooth, and then passes it on. The next person does the same. After it has gone on to about two or three people, give Person 1 a second object. Repeat this with about 6-10 objects, having chosen them for contrast in hardness/softness, texture, and shape, and choosing things whose identity will not be immediately obvious. Take each object out of the circle when the last person has finished with it.
- 4) Eyes open, pass an imaginary object around the circle, with each person first reacting to it, playing with it, then changing it into something else and passing it on.
- 5) In pairs, facing each other. Person 1 moves (slowly), and Person 2 acts as a mirror. When you clap your hands, Person 2 will take over being the initiator and Person 1 the mirror, etc.

b. Voice and Speech

i. Stance

This should give a sense of balance with a hint of the unexpected. Note that if the head is too high you look proud or uninterested, and your voice will be strained. If the head is too low, you'll look suspicious or lacking in confidence, and your voice will be artificially forced down.

- 1) Rising from a chair: lead with the torso, as if a wire were attached to the chest, taking a full breath when rising.
- 2) Stand with weight evenly balanced over the balls of the feet, poised very slightly forward (balance with a sense of the unexpected).
- 3) Flop forward, come up very, *very* slowly, the head last, and shake shoulders loose. You are now ready to speak.

ii. Relaxing the Jaw

- 1) Turn your head very slowly and carefully from side to side, then from back to front, then round and round.
- 2) As you let your jaw drop, bring your hands down the side of your face.
- 3) Yawn.
- 4) Say "mmm – ah" slowly over and over.

iii. Breathing and Speaking

- 1) Breathe in through the nose on a count of 4, and out through the mouth on a count of 4.
- 2) On a full breath pant lightly, while feeling the diaphragm moving with your hands.
- 3) Relax the throat, and with vigorous, marked rhythm and abdominal force, say "HA-HA-HA", three times, then four, then five, ending in a real laugh.
- 4) Count with firm, even pressure while breathing out, breathing in after the final number. Always aim beyond the last number. It goes like this: 1 (breath in), 1-2 (breath in), etc., to 1-8.
- 5) Chant a verse with a long line, throwing the final word across the room (again, aim in your breathing beyond the last word):

Beyond the path of the outmost sun through utter darkness hurled—
Further than ever comet flared or vagrant stardust swirled —
Live such as fought and sailed and ruled and loved and made our
world.

(from Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads*)

iv. Resonance

With breath firmly supported and throat relaxed, sing on one note: mmmm-ahhhhh, mmmm-ahhhh, etc. Do the same as above, only increase the volume toward the middle of the phrase then let it die away gradually (let the tone swell, without forcing it, and keep the jaw and throat relaxed).

v. Articulation

- 1) relax jaw, as above
- 2) tongue strengthening exercises:
 - a. (This is a rude but very effective one!): stick the tongue out as far as it will go. Stretch it toward nose, then down toward chin. Stretch it from side to side. Circle it round the mouth, stretching out as far as possible.
 - b. Say "La, la, la," etc. with open jaw, not moving the jaw.
 - c. Say "Ta, ta, ta," etc. with open jaw, not moving the jaw.
 - d. trill – "rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr"
- 3) Lip muscles (some people don't use them)
 - a. "wu-wu-wu" etc. (If only the sides of the lips are used, the tone is flattened. The front of the lips pushes the tone forward.)
 - b. brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr, vvvvvvvvvvvvvvvv – feel the buzz
- 4) Soft palate: "ng-ah," repeatedly
- 5) Read the following poem in several ways:
 - a. Exercise mouth muscles and open jaw exaggeratedly wide
 - b. Whisper, to convey by articulation alone.
 - c. Increase volume and pace as you progress.
 - d. Share around class, with 1 line to each person.
 - e. Repeat, increasing volume and pace as you go.

Rats!

They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheese out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.
(Robert Browning, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin")

vi. Stress or Emphasis

- 1) The important word is pitched either higher or lower.
 - a. Say "It's cold today," stressing the word "cold"
 - b. Say "Cold," accompanying it with an appropriate gesture
 - c. Mime cold
- 2) The significant word is stressed: say "Mother gave John two cakes" five times, each time stressing a different word. Then do the same with, "I'm not going to see Mrs. Jones today." (Note: it won't work to stress "to")
- 3) Pauses create emphasis, because they create suspense. You can stress a word by pausing either before or after it. Say "And then there came a great big bear," trying to make it as suspenseful as possible by inserting pauses.
- 4) Pick a paragraph either from the play or from a newspaper. Underline the important words. Read it aloud. Then read only the important words. Then read only the verbs (verbs carry the energy of a passage).

vii. Release

While walking around the room, say some of the following sentences,

- 1) holding in (communicating only with oneself)
- 2) letting go (sharing with others)

"What is this thing called love?"

"It's great."

"No."

"I'm going to be very late."

viii. Projection

- 1) Standing in two lines facing each other and about a yard apart, with the people in each line as far from each other as possible, make polite conversation, then move 2 yards apart and repeat, *trying to keep the same sense of naturalness*, noticing what you have to do to make yourself audible over greater distance. Then move across the room and do the same. This should give you some idea of how you have to project for

your voice to carry to an audience without sounding artificial:

Speaker 1: Awful weather we're having.

Speaker 2: Yes – I don't really want to go outside at all.

Speaker 1: I was planning to go shopping today, but I think I'll wait until tomorrow.

Speaker 2: Yes, they said it would be a little brighter tomorrow.

2) Standing in three lines, the members of line A are trying to communicate something to line B (everyone pick their own sentence), across the room while the members of line C hold them back physically.

ix. Pitch

1) Sing up and down the scale on HOO-EE-AH

2) Sing up and down the scale on HA-EE-OO-AH

3) Count up and down the scale, 1-8

4) Maintaining good breathing and relaxation, intone in "curves", being aware of availability of the whole scale, and keeping relaxed:

Fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages.
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers come to dust.

(from William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*)

x. Attitude

1) You're chewing gum. It tastes good. The teacher says, "Tastes bad," and the taste changes. The teacher says, "Getting bigger", and it does. Teacher says, "Yuck," and you say "YUCK!" Then "getting smaller" and it shrinks and resumes its original taste. Teacher says, "Vanishes" and it vanishes.

2) Tone and inflection control: the wrong tone gives the wrong meaning.

a) Say "yes" in each of the following ways, and watch the pattern your voice makes:

- i. uninterested
- ii. enthusiastic
- iii. neutral
- iv. interested, surprise
- v. uncertain, skeptical
- vi. more involved, irritated
- vii. positive

b) Say "marvelous" with a sense of

- i. fright (breathy and either very high or very low – try both)

ii. hate (through teeth)

iii. seduction (sliding)

iv. happy (lift the corners of the mouth)

v. sarcastic (out of sides of mouth)

vi. romantic (relaxed, warm)

c) Say "Close the door" implying

i. "... and have a chair"

ii. "... or we'll all freeze to death"

iii. "... before they catch us."

d) Say the next verse with the following connotations:

i. sinister

ii. delight

iii. disgust

iv. reportage

'T was brillig and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogrobes,

And the mome raths outgrabe.

(Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*)

e) Maintaining good breathing and relaxation, chant the following

i) As an interior monologue, walking around, to yourself

ii) In two opposite lines, each trying to communicate with the other, increasing suspense as it progresses:

When you're alone in the middle of the night and
you wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright
When you're alone in the middle of the bed and
you wake like someone hit you on the head
You've had a dream of a nightmare dream and
you've got the hoo-ha's coming to you.

Hoo hoo hoo

You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock and it's
foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark
And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock
for you know the hangman's waiting for you.

And perhaps you're alive

And perhaps you're dead

Hoo ha ha

Hoo ha ha

Hoo

Hoo

Hoo

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

KNOCK

KNOCK

KNOCK

(T.S. Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*)

xi. Watching and Moving

- 1) Watch people on the bus or subway. Try to guess from the way they are sitting or standing what is their facial expression. Then look at the face and try to describe it to yourself. What message does it convey? Choose one expression and try later to reproduce it on your own face, using a mirror.
- 2) Watch people of different ages and genders moving in different circumstances, especially noting effects on movement of age, gender, and mood (e.g., circumstances: school, work, entertainment, social gathering). Pick about three and practise doing them. Then show some of these in class.

c. Entrances and Exits

When you enter, some aspects of the physical qualities of the place you're coming from and coming to and your attitude toward the place/situation you have come from and the place/situation you are coming to should be apparent to the audience. Come in the door from somewhere that has a particular connotation and show people something of where you've come from and where you are coming to, and the reverse when you exit. Here are some suggestions. You could give these out to individual students on separate pieces of paper and ask the class to guess from each performance where the person came from and has now arrived.

i. Entrances

- 1) You're coming from the cold outdoors into a warm room with a fire.
- 2) You're coming in at night from outdoors, where you've just seen a huge comet with a multicoloured tail and want to tell everyone in this room about it.
- 3) You've just had a big argument with your mother inside your house and are coming outdoors.
- 4) You've been on a long hike, you're lost and tired, you come into a clearing and hope to see a landmark or someone to give you directions.
- 5) You've just escaped from a burning hotel, pursued by smoke and flames.
- 6) You're coming into a restaurant to meet someone you were in love with 20 years ago.
- 7) You've just escaped from outdoors, where a huge tiger was chasing you, snapping at your heels.
- 8) You've been mowing the lawn in the heat and have come in for lunch.
- 9) You're coming to tell your best friend he's failed an exam.
- 10) You open the door of a strange room and are greeted by a gust of

hot air.

- 11) You were outdoors playing ball and now have to come in and do your homework.
- 12) You've just eaten the most disgusting sausage in a restaurant and are coming into the kitchen to tell the chef exactly what you think of it.
- 13) You rush into the room, late for an important meeting, and in a couple of seconds realise it's the wrong room.

ii. Exits

- 1) As a follow-on from the last entrance: having realised it's the wrong room, you leave.
- 2) You're going from a warm room out into the cold.
- 3) You've seen a dead person get up and walk, and you are going outside to tell everyone about it.
- 4) You're being chased by a tiger, but the only place you can go to escape is into a burning hotel.
- 5) You've just had lunch and are going out into the heat to mow the lawn.
- 6) You're very late for an appointment with someone who has offered you a job.
- 7) You're leaving, having been turned down for the job.
- 8) You're leaving a room in which you've just had an exam in which you couldn't answer a single question.
- 9) You leave a very hot room for the cool air.
- 10) You're going from doing your homework indoors to play ball outside.

d. Short Scenes

While the third one is entirely technical, the first two explore the different subtexts that can be brought out of the same combination of words in a scene. Divide into groups of two or three. Give each group one of the following sets of instructions without telling anyone else what it is. Then have the group act out the scene accordingly. (Change "Ms." to "Mr." and "her" to "him" as needed.)

i. Scene 1 (subtext: emotion and dominance):

- 1) Brown is going to fire Smith. The Clerk knows.
- 2) Smith is going to fire Brown.. The Clerk doesn't know.
- 3) Brown finds Smith very attractive, but Smith is not interested. The Clerk is in love with Brown.
- 4) Brown is going to give Smith an important assignment. The Clerk is neutral.
- 5) Smith is going to give Brown an important assignment. The Clerk is neutral.

Clerk: Ms. Smith to see you, sir.

Brown: All right. Show her in. (*Clerk exits and reenters*)

Clerk: Ms. Smith.
 Brown: Ah, Ms. Smith. How are you?
 Smith: Quite well, thanks. I've come to see you about this Manchester business.
 Brown: Yes. Sit down, won't you? Have a cigarette.
 Smith: No thanks. I don't smoke.

ii. Scene 2 (subtext, mood, emotion, dominance):

- 1) A stock romantic parting.
- 2) B is bored and wants to get rid of A. A is trying to get a response out of B.
- 3) A and B are spies. A is giving B code clichés, which B writes down.

A: Well, the time has come. I must go now.
 B: Yes.
 A: My train leaves in ten minutes.
 B: Yes.
 A: Take care of yourself; let me hear from you often.
 B: Yes.

iii. Scene 3

- 1) Get the most from pauses, and B must work to time the exit.

A is sitting down left (DL). B is Right of Centre. Exit is upstage Right (UR).
 B: Then you won't tell me where you were last night?
 A: No.
 B: I strongly advise you to do so.
 A: I refuse, absolutely.
 B: Very well, then: there is nothing more to be said. But I warn you, you have not heard the last of this – by any means. (*Exit.*)

e. Improvisation

This can be a useful exercise to relax the students and free them from getting “paralysed” by the text. You can think up improvisations based on the script, to explore relationships, character, and motivations. Here are some more general ones, which simply act as a loosening-up activity.

i. Cross Purposes

Two people meet in the same space. Each thinks he or she is in a different place. One person thinks he or she is waiting for a bus. The other thinks he or she is in his or her own living room, and they act accordingly.

ii. A Crisis, or a Stranger Creates a Disturbance

Someone walks into your living room (where several people are sitting

comfortably after dinner) with painting equipment and starts setting up to paint the walls. React to this.

iii. A Disaster

There is a terrible storm and flood. The water is rising and rising. You need to find a way to save yourself.

f. Logbook or Diary

It may be useful to your students (and to you) to keep a logbook or diary of work on the play, both in class/rehearsal and out.

IV. Notes and Questions for Study and Performance

1. Act 1, *A Man for All Seasons*

The Title of the Play

Robert Whittinton in 1520 wrote a school textbook of Latin prose composition, in which one of the sample sentences said that Thomas More – then the most popular man in London – was “vir omnium horarum,” literally meaning “a man of all hours.” This probably referred merely to his ability to adapt his behaviour to the occasion. But 400 years later R. W. Chambers translated it metaphorically to mean “A man for all ages” (Chambers, p. 169), and Bolt follows this.

Page 3

Note that Bolt assumes the production will appear in a traditional theatre with a curtain. The main theatres in London, mostly built in the 19th century, take this form. But the play is suitable for performance on an open stage and was performed at the Chichester Festival Theatre, which has one, in 1987. What is the first lighting cue, and what is its effect? What does a property basket suggest about the style of the play? To whom is the Common Man speaking? Note that Bolt has the Common Man dressed entirely in black at the start of the play. What might this suggest (several things)? What would you have the Common Man wearing at the start of the play?

speaking costumes and...embroidered mouths...coloured propositions – What figure of speech is Bolt using, and what does it suggest about the Common Man?

The House of Lords – The House of Lords is the branch of Parliament composed of the nobility. The emphasis here is on the ceremonial aspect and elegant speaking in the House of Lords. (The House of Commons, composed of elected members, would be characterised by plainer clothes and speech.)

reduce Old Adam to the Common Man – “Old Adam” refers to man’s original state, naked as Adam in the Garden of Eden. This is a paradoxical concept. Wearing clothes, a “reduction” in status in that it is coupled with man’s disobedience and consequent punishment, is normally thought of (clearly is by the Common Man here) as an advance or improvement.

something of my own....A proposition of my own – The Common Man seems to be balancing the concepts of people as individuals or as types. The main theme of the play is human selfhood: what constitutes a person’s self. In our society we see this as equivalent to individuality. The Common Man seems to think human identity is related to clothing. While in fact people seem more similar naked than they do clothed, the Common Man regards his nakedness as “something of my own.” There is considerable clothing imagery in the play, of which this is the first example. We’ll see how the Common Man generally chooses to run with the herd, as do most people in the play, while More alone stands out as holding onto his “self.”

What is the first sound effect in the play? Note how it continues and creates a bit of suspense for More’s entrance. Why would it not have been a good idea to begin the play with More?

the century of the Common Man – The 16th was the first century when people could rise in society through talent and merit. In previous centuries it was rare for a person to rise above the social station in which he was born. The Tudor kings (Henry VII, Henry VIII, Elizabeth) worked to limit the power of inherited nobility, focusing more power on the throne, partly by promoting people from lower orders of society to positions of government authority. Two of the most powerful men in this play, Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, rose from very lowly origins.

But the 20th century is usually described as the century of the common man. And a way of looking at history that has become fashionable as a result of this emphasis is to look at history not an account of the deeds of great men, but as a story involving people at all levels of society.

Page 4

Now, enter, at the head of the stairs, SIR THOMAS MORE – What has the effect of the Common Man’s “prologue” been in setting up the play’s atmosphere? What is the effect of More’s entrance on a higher level? Where is he coming from? What time of day is it? What is the effect of his entrance on how Matthew moves, stands and speaks?

Looking into the jug – What, if anything, do you want More to notice?

Bless you – What is the difference between Matthew’s use of the words “Bless you” and More’s?

But every man has his price – Rich’s first words are a pointer to his character. They suggest the idea of man as a commodity, who can be bought, sold, used. Notice how Rich is “bought” in the course of the play. It is interesting that the Common Man, who is also easily bought, introduces him “Contemptuously.” Rich’s role has been considerably developed for the stage play. In the radio and TV versions that Bolt

wrote, Rich appears only at the end.

Page 5

Buy a man with suffering? – What does More think, at first, that Rich means by the idea of buying a man with suffering? Does the idea as he initially understands it interest him? How does it relate to his decision at the end of the play?

Machiavelli – (see section on Renaissance Humanism, pp. 12-13 above) was a synonym for pragmatism in politics. The moral aspect of torture is not considered. Look carefully at the subtleties of this conversation. Get up and try them out. More “smells a rat,” senses that the idea Rich expresses here is not his own. He knows that Rich is not a strong character and is clever in his method of getting information out of him. He first pauses (three dots). He then takes Rich by the arm and walks with him. He pauses again. This creates suspense before he asks the question. Notice the physical action: More uses physical intimacy and limited physical control to try to get Rich to answer his question. Rich, by breaking away and laughing a bit too much shows that he is embarrassed at being caught out and does not want to confess. But More won't let him off the hook and asks again. Rich again tries to evade him with laughter, but More, pausing again, pursues the matter, and Rich capitulates.

Master Cromwell – The importance Cromwell will have in the play is stressed by the way the conversation leads up to him suspensefully and then hovers around the first mention of his name. Note that it is Cromwell's competence that is stressed, not any moral quality. J. J. Scarisbrick describes him as “an administrative genius” and says “That the 1530s were a decisive decade in English history was due largely to his energy and vision” (p. 303).

Page 6

Cambridge – There were only two universities in England until the 19th century, Oxford and Cambridge. More went to Oxford. Rich had evidently shown academic promise at Cambridge but so far has had no success in “the real world.” More sees that he is not a morally strong man and is thus in great danger of being corrupted by exposure to ideas such as Machiavelli's and politicians such as Cromwell.

I'm not used – What does this manner of putting it suggest about Rich's character and his view of people?

friendship...acquaintance – What is the difference?

Page 7

I thought we said friendship – Rich expects friendship to be something that produces tangible results: that More's influence should help him to a

job. That is not what More means by friendship.

The Dean of St Paul's – This was John Colet, a Greek scholar and friend of More's. St Paul's School, still in existence, was founded by Colet to promote classical learning (See Renaissance Humanism, pp. 12-13).

A teacher! – Why is Rich “bitterly disappointed” at this suggestion?

a silver cup – This cup will become important later in the play. It was given by Catherine Anger to More in the hope of influencing his judgement in her favour, i.e., as an intended bribe.

Look...Look – Why does More repeat “Look” after handing Rich the cup? What was Rich doing?

Page 8

If you feel it's contaminated – Should Rich feel it is contaminated? This scene seems to function as a temptation of Rich, a parallel with later temptations he will meet, to the temptation of other characters in the play, and also to the temptation of Christ. Rich fails it, easily turning down the idea of teaching, which would benefit others, and accepting the cup, which will benefit only himself.

Page 9

be a teacher – Teaching is one of the themes of this play. Look for other examples of it. (Remember that Bolt was a teacher before becoming a full-time writer.) Rich is offered the prospect of being a great teacher, with his pupils, his friends, and God as audience. But this is without social status or the potential for “fame.” Instead of wanting to confer benefit on people, Rich wants a “public” life, to be higher in the social scale and to be noticed by people higher in that scale. The significance of More's advice is stressed by the entrance of new characters, and a consequent change of tone.

irritably...Irritably – Why are these two characters irritated? Notice that this segment of the scene, just like the one before it, begins with a friendly disagreement. What effect does this have on the audience?

Earl Marshal – A title which still exists and is still attached to the dukedom of Norfolk. His job was to oversee military ceremonials, such as tournaments, as well as to officiate in royal ceremonials. Thomas, 3rd Duke of Norfolk (1473-1554), was uncle to Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's mistress and later wife, and was a friend of Sir Thomas More.

be stooped from the clouds – A falcon will “stoop,” or descend rapidly, from a great height when it sees a potential prey. The question is whether, in a cloud, the falcon could have seen the heron. The time spent on this image suggests it has significance for the play, that the falcon is symbolic. He is associated here with divinity, royalty and splendour

and doesn't care where he is going. Whom might he suggest?

Page 10

Soapy – What does this suggest about Matthew's attitude to Margaret? (Try to reproduce it.)

we'll put it to Thomas – More is thus established very early as a trusted and respected arbiter.

A real falcon don't care – This was correct English up to the late 19th century, and hung on longest with the upper class sporting type, which it typifies. The ease with which Norfolk swears is also typical of this sort of character. His style of speech, including the tendency to swear, is suggested in Roper, p. 237: "By the mass, Master More, it is perilous striving with princes. And therefore, I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure; for by God's body, Master More, *Indignatio principis mors est*" (Chambers gives this on p. 286).

Page 11

The opinion of Aristotle – This suggests that the "real" Rich is most at home in academic disputation.

I see no falcon stoop from no cloud – Lady Alice was More's second wife, whom he married mainly to be a mother to his children and manage his household—though there is no real indication in the play that she is his second wife and not Margaret's mother. It seems to have become traditional for biographers and playwrights to find her a figure of fun, and Bolt continues this tradition. The real Lady Alice was a respectable widow, an heiress eight years older than her husband. She seems to have been fond of dressing very well—something true of the character in this play. Some of her colourful use of language was recorded by her stepson-in-law, William Roper, in his biography of More. She was a competent household manager, and the marriage seems to have been happy, despite More's jokes about his wife's tendency to contradict him. What does this first scene show us about her character?

Very evidently discreditable – Why is Norfolk lying here?

Page 12

God's body – In the period it was common to swear by God's body or parts of it. Swearing was not ladylike.

Thomas, remember who you are – More's "self" is the subject of the play. It is ironic here, since Alice means it entirely in the sense of social identity (notice the many definitions of self in the play: the Common Man has equated it with clothing).

a city wife – A mere member of the middle class. Sir Thomas is a knight, and his wife should share his dignity. Hunting was an aristocratic pursuit.

What was that of Aristotle's, Richard? – More's kindness sees to it that Rich is not overlooked (remember, he has complained that Norfolk hasn't noticed him properly).

Great philosopher...wonderful mind...Nasty book from what I hear – What impression do we get from these remarks about Norfolk's relationship with books? For the purpose of the play, Bolt has made his character less complex than it actually was. The real Norfolk had literary interests.

Oh no...! – Rich is hedging here, because he knows Machiavelli's popular reputation (which is all Norfolk would know of his work) was that he was in league with the devil.

Very practical, Your Grace – Norfolk has just said he derives no practical benefit from Aristotle. Is it possible there is a hint that Margaret is making gentle fun of Norfolk? "Your Grace" is an address to aristocracy, both temporal and spiritual.

You read it? Amazing girl – Machiavelli's work was available only in Italian. Margaret More was a formidable scholar.

Page 13

...Slightly, Your Grace – Why does Rich pause?

(Exclamations of shock from MORE, MARGARET and ALICE) – Would it be more effective if they spoke all at once, or overlapping, or in orderly succession, as it is written on the page? Try it all three ways.

Howard – The surname of the dukes of Norfolk. More and Norfolk are close enough friends for More to be able to address him by his surname rather than his title or "Your Grace."

Page 14

A farrier's son? – A farrier was a blacksmith. Cromwell and Wolsey both came from very lowly origins and rose by their native talent under kings who promoted talent as part of their effort to curb the power of the nobility.

If you only knew how much, much rather I'd yours than his – This is Rich's last, desperate attempt in this scene to gain More's assistance to a job. He still prefers assistance from a moral rather than an amoral man.

At this time of the night? – This is the first actual reference to the time of day, but the lighting will have suggested it from the beginning. Notice

how much of the play happens at night.

The Queen's business – The matter of the divorce. See above, the section on Henry VIII and Thomas More, pp. 6-9.

Page 15

Is there a boat? – The River Thames was used as an artery of travel through London in More's day. More's house at Chelsea was on the river. He is going to Richmond, nearly ten miles upstream, to see Cardinal Wolsey. Norfolk is going downstream, and will be able to drop Rich off at the Inns of Court, which are also near the river.

Dear Lord give us rest tonight – The scene slows down here. Notice its emotional progression, rising to the tension of discovering that Cromwell has become Wolsey's secretary, then reaching an oasis of calm here, after which there is a coda, as More calls Norfolk's attention to Rich. Germain Marc'hadour objects that this prayer is "perfunctory" (p. 21). Yet it is thematic: More proves ultimately to be "careful only for our soul's salvation." Can you perform this section so that it sounds more than perfunctory?

Page 16

No. I don't recommend him; but I point him out – Why is More so careful to make this distinction?

The New Inn – One of the "Inns of Court," which were the law schools. More had studied at the Inns of Court.

hawk at Hounslow – Now a London suburb, Hounslow then was open fields, suitable for hunting. Notice the alliteration in this section ("hawk at Hounslow," "Cardinal crushed"), which gives the scene a light, playful touch.

crushed his bum – Bum means bottom. The Cardinal fell off his horse at Hounslow.

(Softly) Margaret! – Very economically, Bolt suggests the close special relationship between More and his daughter.

Page 17

That one'll come to nothing – This is ironic. At the end of the play the Common Man will tell us that Rich prospered in life and died comfortably, so in worldly terms at least he didn't "come to nothing." But these are not the only terms to be considered, as the play shows.

The Common Man is changing the scene here, packing away props from the previous scene, setting those for the next one, and he comments to the audience on the characters as he does so. What is More going to be

asked to give away that he wants to keep?

Look back now over the previous scene. What have we learned about the situation and about each of the characters?

Page 18

This scene could be a very rewarding practical exercise. Consider as you work through it who is dominant at all points, and how this is realised by their stage positions, actions and tone of voice. Is the same person always dominant? Consider also changes in mood, tone and speed.

Your Grace – In this case the form of address should remind us that Wolsey is a prominent clergyman. He should be worthy of More's respect as such.

MORE waits standing – Wolsey keeps More standing throughout the first portion of the scene, with himself behind his desk. He also keeps on writing. What is the effect of this?

Rome – The seat of the papacy, here used as a synonym for it. This is a request to the Pope respecting the divorce or annulment of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

Before it goes – Wolsey seems to be trying to play a cat and mouse game with More, leading him at first to believe that he is seeking his opinion. But does he win all the rounds in this exchange?

Cardinal Campeggio – Campeggio and Wolsey would be appointed the papal legates for the matter of Henry's divorce. Wolsey is laying the groundwork for this. But communication should have gone through the English ambassador to the papacy.

Page 19

(After a pause, rather gently)...(Briskly) – Might these two directions be read as suggesting there is a conflict within Wolsey between the basically moral man and the ambitious one under pressure to get a particular job done for the king?

you could have been a statesman – This inability of Wolsey's to see More as a very great statesman, practical and diplomatic, has been cause for the play to be criticised, as if Wolsey's opinion were serious, and as if it were the author's. It is always very dangerous to attribute to the playwright ideas expressed by a character in one of his plays, or to assume there is only one way of interpreting a dramatic passage. Wolsey's underrating of More here may be an example of dramatic irony, which would undermine him in the audience's eyes, while he ostensibly has the upper hand onstage. Or might it be a gratuitous insult? Or is it intentionally ironic? (Notice Wolsey calls him a statesman later.) Its patent absurdity, if understood, calls attention to Wolsey's view of statesmanship as pragmatic and amoral.

(After a little pause.) – Why the pause?

(Hesitates, looks away) – Why?

A single trumpet calls – What effect does this sound have on the mood and action? On the audience?

Page 20

he's been to play in the mud again – Later we'll see him with real mud on his shoes. Notice Wolsey's contempt for the king's affair in contrast to the assiduity with which he pursues the divorce.

WOLSEY visibly relaxes – Again, sound influences mood and action. What has Wolsey been worried about?

deliberately loud – He has just said there is no one else there. What does his speaking loud suggest?

starting up – Wolsey's technique has been to lure More into a false sense of comfort and security, then shock him.

two Tudors – Henry VII and his son Henry VIII had been the only kings with the surname Tudor so far. Henry VII's claim was by conquest, his right to the throne being very slight indeed. Henry VIII's is rather firmer, since he at least claims the throne by inheritance, and he wants to found a ruling dynasty.

horrified alarm – A wish that the king's family line should cease to rule would be tantamount to high treason.

the King needs a son – It had not yet crossed anyone's mind that a woman could sit on the throne of England. Henry VIII was succeeded in 1547 by his young son Edward VI, who died after six years, followed by Mary, his daughter by Catherine of Aragon, who ruled from 1553 to 1558, and then Elizabeth, his daughter by Anne Boleyn, who reigned until 1603.

Page 21

for state reasons – The difficulty is that reasons of state are often in conflict with spiritual values, and the Pope is above all a spiritual official.

Like this? – We are not told what this document says, but we are probably supposed to assume that it contains a threat to the Pope that the Church in England will move away from Rome if the Pope does not agree to dissolve the marriage. Henry's ambassador to Rome did make just this threat in 1529 (Guy, p. 111).

Page 22

the Yorkist wars – Commonly known now as “the Wars of the Roses” because the logo of the House of York (the Yorkists) was a white rose and that of the House of Lancaster a red rose. The Yorkist king Edward IV won the throne from Henry VI, of the House of Lancaster, after many years of civil war. In the name of the House of Lancaster, Henry VII conquered Richard III in battle and married Edward IV's sister, symbolically uniting the two warring houses. Wolsey's point is that if this family does not continue to hold the throne, the country may be plunged back into civil war, which is utterly undesirable. Most Englishmen of More's time feared civil war above all things, and this is a major reason for More's resistance of religious heresy (see the scene with William Roper, below).

He extinguishes the candle – Why does Wolsey do this? Is there a symbolic effect to it?

your conscience is your own affair, but you're a statesman! – Wolsey suggests that conscience is entirely a private matter and, in the case of politicians, should be separate from statesmanship. It is clear that this guides his own practice. More feels that for a statesman to put his conscience to one side is dangerous for the state.

there is much in the church that needs reformation – No one would have agreed more readily to this than More, but he objected to the unilateral decision to break up Christendom.

During this speech he relights the candle – Is this meant as a symbol?

Yes, I should – But, well aware of human imperfection, More would not have been naive enough to try. Wolsey seems to see him as an impractical dreamer, but he was a “practical, shrewd, business-like and efficient executive” (Marc'hadour, p. 20). It is up to the actor who plays him to show this, or we might risk (as some critics have) sharing Wolsey's view.

Page 23

Where, Your Grace? – From here until the end of the scene, More's use of this address intensifies. What is the effect?

He half lifts the chain from his shoulders – This chain of office, which signifies the office of Lord Chancellor, the chief legal officer of the kingdom, is an important prop.

Tunstall – Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, was a friend of More's, a fellow scholar and diplomat.

Suffolk – Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, was the king's brother-in-law. He was a serious contender for the position of Lord Chancellor after

Wolsey fell from power, but Norfolk blocked his candidacy.

a cleric – A clergyman (priest), with the popular assumption that clerics are unworldly and impractical.

Page 24

Like yourself, Your Grace? – Note More's physical position here, above Wolsey. This speech may be made effective by placing of pauses. Try it several ways.

taking most of the light from the stage – The lighting is symbolic. It is very dark, and the atmosphere is sinister. This is the first outdoor scene – one of the few.

An oar and a bundle of clothing are lowered...COMMON MAN begins to don the coat and hat of BOATMAN – This instance of obtrusive stagecraft is an example of Brechtian influence—and of the Common Man's lack of "self."

Page 25

Stepping from behind an arch – Notice how the atmosphere is built up before Cromwell appears. This is a location and atmosphere typical of a melodramatic villain. Suspicious characters, spies, intriguers, murderers lurk in the shadows at times when no one else is awake.

the fares are fixed – Cromwell shows himself here to be a stickler for the law. But later in the play, he will manipulate the law.

busy in the night – Darkness is the traditional setting for evil. Calling attention to Cromwell's being busy in the night calls attention to the sort of people—and spiritual agencies—who are traditionally about at this hour.

Page 26

one of your multitudinous admirers – Cromwell really did admire More. This is the first meeting of the two antagonists.

CHAPUYS – The Spanish ambassador, favourable to Queen Catherine. He wants to find out, just as Cromwell does, what More has said to Cardinal Wolsey about whether he will support the divorce or not.

Page 27

A shade indignant – Why? How would you play this?

I hope you do, Your Excellency – More is concerned for fear that Chapuys—who has obviously taken his account of Wolsey's mood as an indication of More's support—should think he is expressing allegiance for Spain against his own king, which would be treason.

Dominus vobiscum – The Lord be with you.

Page 28

spiritu tuo – And with your spirit (the liturgical response to "Dominus vobiscum").

The river looks very black tonight. They say it's silting up...There's a channel there getting deeper all the time – This is an example of Bolt's water imagery, which he has identified in the preface as being "the superhuman context." What do the blackness and silt suggest? What about the deep channel? Does this imagery have an overall, cumulative effect on the play?

losing her shape – He means this literally. More means it figuratively.

What essential information has this scene given you that you didn't have before? What new characters have you met, and why are they important?

Page 29

the tablecloth – The furniture and props from the scene with Wolsey have remained onstage during the previous scene. Bolt has neglected to indicate a change of costume for the Common Man from the Boatman to Matthew, so you need to work out where he does this.

resignedly – This refers to his tone in seeing Roper there. How would he do this? Try it.

Page 30

Stolidly – This is a direction for Roper's character. What does it mean? He takes things absolutely literally.

called to the bar – Having been a law student, he is now to become a barrister, an advocate in the superior court.

Warmly – This shows More's genuine feeling for Roper. He is, of course, a barrister himself. Despite his exhaustion, and that Roper is very irritating, More is kind and humorous throughout this scene.

the Mores were selling penner – Both Roper and More were sons of lawyers, but the Ropers had inherited estates, which made them socially higher than the Mores. More's grandfather was actually a baker, but this information was not in any of Bolt's sources, so he makes up a plausible occupation in trade.

Luther – see above, pp. 10-11.

Oh, one more or less – More deflates Roper kindly and does not match his

rage with anger. But he is unyielding in the matter of Roper's religious principles. Appalled by the corruption within the church, Roper, with his tendency to go to extremes, wants to leave it rather than stay in it and reform it. More feels it should not be divided and did everything he could to protect its unity. In real life, Roper's shift to Lutheranism and back happened after he had married Margaret, not before.

Page 31

an excommunicate – Forbidden by the church to take communion: the church has (perhaps temporarily) disowned him.

Page 32

Assess what you have learned about William Roper and More's attitude toward him in this scene. He was not a character in the radio or TV version of the play, but was added when it was expanded for the stage. It is Roper's little book about More which, indirectly, provided Bolt with most of the material for the play.

Nice boy. Terribly strong principles though – One would think strong principles were something to be approved of. But Roper sees everything in black and white, whereas More's first recourse is always to practicality, and finally to conscience, rather than abstract ideals. He is thus more flexible than Roper.

Father, did he? – More has been evading Margaret's question. She tries to make him answer, but he continues to evade her. How could you show this physically?

Page 34

Old fox! – Whom does Alice mean by this?

Page 35

dangerous, levelling talk – At this time to suggest that all people are equal was heretical, because it was believed that God had established social classes and assigned people to them. The government of the country was based on this assumption, so to question it was also treasonous, since such views potentially led to revolution. The Levellers in the next century, who did advocate equality, were imprisoned and executed.

the Tower – The Tower was used as a place of imprisonment. Though a joke, this is ironic, since More will end up there himself.

Into this bright circle is thrown a great red robe and the Cardinal's hat – Lighting and costume combine in a symbol of Wolsey's fall. That no human agency is shown suggests the hand of fate in great men's lives, a traditional dramatic and literary theme in More's time. This visual image and the following passage from an imaginary history book

cover the important events of Wolsey's fall and More's rise to the office of Lord Chancellor. The significance of the light focused on the garments is complex, stressing (1) that clothes, and the offices they represent are only symbols, not reality, (2) they are only temporary (More is about to assume high office himself). Quite a lot of time passes here.

Professor Larcomb – A fictitious historian. The passage which the Common Man is reading is not from a real history either; Bolt (whose academic subject was history) made it up. How do we react to the last sentence?

Page 36

indifference to realities – This is really a joke on Bolt's part, but it supports Wolsey's characterisation of More as an impractical man. Does the play bear this out? This passage also establishes an important aspect of More for which the play hasn't enough space and really can give no opportunities for conveying: the scholar and writer.

Hampton Court – The palace at Hampton Court, still standing, was built for Wolsey near Richmond and given by him to Henry VIII. The screen could depict it realistically, since its appearance is well known.

Duke's Secretary – This is actually a higher post than that of librarian (Cromwell was himself Wolsey's secretary.) Does Cromwell know that Rich is really the Duke's librarian? If so, why does he say "Secretary"?

Flustered – Why?

RICH smiles uncertainly – Why?

Page 37

He isn't really my friend – Why would Rich deny it? More has clearly defined his feeling for Rich as friendship. What biblical experience does this denial call to mind?

He gets up, prepares to go – Is this a strategy on Cromwell's part? What does it achieve?

In a sense he is – How quickly does Rich come in with this line? How can someone be a friend "in a sense?" Obviously Rich is trying to have it both ways.

Reproachful – Why?

He recommended me to the Duke – Did he?

CHAPUYS – He seems to have the habit of slipping in unobtrusively, despite always being accompanied by an attendant. In the scene that follows he and Cromwell, who are on opposite sides in regard to the

king's divorce, are trying to one-up each other about who has been able to find out more.

Page 38

it has fifty-six guns – This displays the military intelligence Chapuys has managed to collect. Did Cromwell give the wrong number purposely to find out how much Chapuys knew?

Page 39

Sir Thomas is a man – This should remind us of the beginning of the play, where Rich said every man has his price.

Innocently – Is this intended to be mock-innocence or real innocence? What is he being innocent about? Why have they both looked “sharply” toward Matthew?

Eagerly – Why does Chapuys want Cromwell to go? Cromwell counters this with a clever manoeuvre. Why does he insist on staying? Try staging this.

Page 40

CROMWELL walks aside...beneath which their legs protrude clearly – Look at the positioning of everyone, and what it says about each of the characters involved. There is certainly an element of humour here—and elsewhere—at Chapuys's expense. The scene between Cromwell and Matthew is worth working on particularly because of (1) the pauses, (2) Matthew's unmet expectations of a response, (3) what interests Cromwell and how he shows it, (4) how Cromwell manipulates Matthew.

(Conspiratorially) Sir, Sir Thomas doesn't talk about it – Matthew evidently enjoys the atmosphere of intrigue. It is obvious from the way he plunges right in without being asked and refers to the divorce as “it” that Cromwell has already approached him, and he is “reporting in.”

He doesn't talk about it to Lady Margaret – Why does this seem to Matthew more significant than his not talking about it to his wife?

reproachfully – Why?

Are you coming in my direction, Rich? – What is Cromwell really asking? Notice that at this point they go off in different directions.

Page 41

Well? – It is clear Chapuys expects the Steward to know what he is asking for. So Chapuys has evidently approached him beforehand, just as Cromwell has. Matthew gives each person information only on the subject that he knows interests him: Cromwell is told of More's

reaction to the divorce, Chapuys of More's devotion to the church.

Dominican – A member of a specific order of (Roman Catholic) preachers.

Page 42

an enormous cross – Notice how Matthew keeps this prop hidden, ready to produce if it is likely to prove useful to him.

afraid of drowning – How does this fit in with the water imagery?

Page 43

Master Cromwell went that way, sir – Matthew here is acting as the devil, tempting Rich, who is still strong enough to resist.

furious – Why?

out of your depth – A continuation of the water imagery. Matthew has kept his eyes and ears open for information that will please the people he is informing and earn him money. Now he is dealing with information that really isn't secret, but that's as far as he feels able to go. He needs to be able to “touch the bottom.”

that's more than I earn in a fortnight – Matthew appreciates the financial advantages of being an informer, as opposed to “honest work.” He has demonstrated that his price is not very high. Later in the play (p. 135) he will be offered a very high price and will turn it down as dangerous.

fanfare – This change of light and scene, and the sound effect, prepare us for something great and ceremonial, but what happens? Notice the contrast of tone with the previous scene.

chain of office – Keep careful track of what happens to this very important prop.

erupt onto the stage – The scene starts abruptly, rushed and confused.

Page 45

STEWARD swings onstage a small Gothic door – Perhaps the ease with which this piece of the set is brought on and then dispensed with again on the next page suggests the ease with which people manipulate religion (or any sort of conviction). Why “Gothic?” More had built a chapel and library on his estate for private prayer and study, and he was in the habit of praying daily (Roper, p. 211). Remember, he was drawn to the priesthood before deciding to follow the law and statesmanship.

Plainsong – A type of mediaeval church music.

cassock – a long black over-garment, such as priests wear.

My Lord Chancellor – Norfolk hopes to impress on More’s mind the undignified nature of his current behaviour in contrast to his very dignified new office, which Norfolk seems to regard as his new “self.”

Notice the rapidity, tension and energy of the section that precedes this, how it suddenly stops dead with More’s appearance, and how More’s mood entirely contrasts with that of the other characters. The actor playing More must bear in mind that he has just come from a religious service, and that More’s devotion to God was absolute. This has to colour his portrayal of the subsequent scene.

Page 46

disguised as a parish clerk? – Norfolk said something very like this on one occasion when he was coming to dine with More, who was by then Lord Chancellor, and “fortuned to find him at church singing in the choir with a surplice on his back to whom after service, as they went home together arm in arm, the Duke said, “God body, God body, my Lord Chancellor, a parish clerk [priest]! You dishonour the King and his office” (Roper, p. 225. Chambers quotes this, p. 25).

the service of God is not a dishonour – The answer Roper cites to Norfolk’s rebuke: “Nay, quoth sir Thomas More, smiling upon the Duke, ‘your Grace may not think, that the King, your master and mine, will with me for serving God his Master be offended, or thereby count his office dishonoured.’” Chambers cites this indirectly: “King Henry would not consider the service of God a dishonour to his office” (p. 25). If Bolt relied entirely on Chambers, he would have missed More’s smile (perhaps Bolt’s More here sounds stuffier than the real More did), and he also misses a signal point about the king, who at this time really was not offended by More’s placing God first. Once when the king had sent to summon him sent two or three times, More chose to stay at Mass until it finished (Chambers, p. 170, from Stapleton, p. 62). Stapleton goes on to say, “Nor did More’s devotion...in any way displease Henry, who was at that time a pious and God-fearing King” (p. 63).

laced up at the thighs – Men wore not tights but very long stockings tied at the top. This view of him would seem to undermine More’s dignity, but does it?

Expostulation...overlap in a babble – The scene has built up again to the same tense and energetic confusion with which it started, preparatory to the king’s arrival. This time the sound effect puts a sharp end to it.

Page 47

No, no, no, no – Why does More refuse the chain?

Cloth of gold...runs...sunlight...blows a blast on his pilot’s whistle – The details of sound effects, costume, lighting and movement combine to give the king a sense of tremendous magnificence. The soft blowing of the whistle as he descends produces a sense almost of magic. His coming from above is surely significant. This is a young, handsome king with splendid intellectual, artistic and sporting accomplishments, who has great charisma. Notice the contrast between his costume and More’s.

Look, mud – Where have the king and mud been associated before?

By heaven what an evening! – The king is a very dynamic and active man. Look at his constant movement during the ensuing scene.

Page 48

Oh, no, your Grace—that is yes – Alice has forgotten that this visit is supposed to have been a surprise. Tudor monarchs sometimes visited their subjects, but notification was generally given in advance of the ensuing “surprise visit” so that preparations could be made. In fact Henry sometimes visited More’s house unannounced, as Roper tells us: “And for the pleasure he took in his company, would his Grace suddenly sometimes come home to his house at Chelsea to be merry with him, whither on a time unlooked for he came to dinner, and after dinner in a fair garden of his walked with him by the space of an hour holding his arm about his neck” (Roper, p. 29). This scene is obviously based on that account. When Roper congratulated his father-in-law on the favour the king had shown him, More replied “I may tell thee, I have no cause to be proud thereof. For if my head would win him a castle in France...it should not fail to go” (Chambers quotes this, p. 25). It may help the actor playing More to play this scene with that awareness in mind.

Among women I pass for one, Your Grace – This is the proper answer, for the sake of courtesy, but in fact Margaret More was one of the foremost Latinists of her age. The superiority of her Latin to the king’s need not diminish respect for his. Women were regarded in More’s time as naturally inferior to men, and More challenged that assumption by giving the young women in his household the same education as the men. He was one of the first to promote the education of women.

John Colet – A famous Greek scholar, Dean of St Paul’s, who has already been alluded to as founder of St Paul’s School, where More wanted to recommend Rich as a teacher.

Page 49

MORE gently presses her down – Subjects should not rise until the king tells them to.

“too much learning...books” – Ecclesiastes 12:12: “of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

I dance superlatively – Henry VIII was a very accomplished dancer.

Page 50

Your Grace's book – Henry VIII's book, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum adversus Martin Lutherum* (*Assertion of the Seven Sacraments against Martin Luther*) defended the sacraments of the Catholic Church against Luther's attack.

In a minor capacity – Henry consulted More about the book, evidently after it was finished, and More helped with the structure (More said he was “a sorter-out and placer of the principal matters therein contained,” Roper, pp. 234-35). That he also advised Henry not to lay so much stress on the Pope's authority but that the king insisted on doing so is ironic in view of subsequent events (Roper, p. 235).

Sb! – There is a short period of harmony here between More and Henry, as Henry resists More's straining to give courteous replies and insists that he listen to the music. This makes the ultimate breach between them sadder. There are lots of silences and pauses on this and the following page. Take careful note of them.

Page 51

I steered her, Thomas, under sail – Does this steering of the ship have a symbolic connotation?

Be seated – A subject should not sit in the king's presence until directed to.

the chain – Where did we last see it in the action?

Page 52

implacably – How does the king's implacability make More feel?

Was he? Was he so? – Does the king's mood change significantly during this section? If so, where does it change back again? The king needs to be seen as unstable and potentially frightening. Robert Shaw in the film displays a tendency to burst into anger which borders on insanity. Garry O'Connor describes his portrayal thus: “in turn warm-hearted, roughly joky, reasonable. Frightened, increasingly uncontrolled, and finally despotic as he descends into a tantrum” (p. 203).

never merry in England...Cardinals – This was actually said by the Duke of Suffolk when Wolsey and Campeggio, who were designated by the Pope to look into the matter of the king's annulment, failed to make a decision.

He rises – There has been no direction for him to sit. At what point would it be sensible for him to do so? Try several.

Be seated – More *would* automatically start to stand when the king does. If he is to sit in the king's presence, particularly when the king is standing, he has to be commanded to do so.

lowers his eyes – Why?

Walking away – The king increases physical separation from More.

the feel of that...great tiller under my hands – What does this show about the king?

the Bishop of Rome – Henry is trying to reduce the Pope's authority here by calling him merely Bishop of Rome, as opposed to head of all Christendom.

sail clean around the world – During this period explorers were attempting to circumnavigate the globe. More's brother-in-law, John Rastell, embarked on an expedition to the New World in 1517.

Page 53

thumps the chair in distress – More is confined to the chair by the king's command, so he can't express his agitation by walking up and down.

Then you have not thought enough!...Great God, Thomas – The king is trying very hard to keep his temper under control. There is power in his restraint. He pleads with More on emotional grounds here, asking how his friend can object to his having something so close to his heart.

There is my right arm – More is really suffering here, and he means what he says. Roper tells us, “there was nothing in the world had been so grievous unto his heart as to remember he was not able, as he willingly would with the loss of one of his limbs...to find whereby he could, with his conscience safely, serve his Grace's contentation [satisfaction]” (p. 224, cited in Chambers, p. 227). Remember Matthew's early assertion that More is good at giving things away. The cliché “I'd give my right arm” is forcefully illustrated here. That is a lot to give. But More will be asked for something even bigger.

Rises, formally – More is desperate to get the king's attention.

Page 54

the Great Seal – The seal for the kingdom's official documents, held by the Lord Chancellor.

your Majesty promised not to pursue me – According to More's own account, the king told him that in the debate on the marriage he should not do or say anything except in accordance with his conscience, “and that I

should first look unto God and after God unto hym." After that the king employed him in other business and used for the divorce only those who agreed with him (*Correspondence*, p. 496; cited in Chambers, p. 226-27).

No, no, I'm joking – How does More react to lead Henry to reassure him thus? And what was there about Henry's manner that frightened or abashed More? Does Henry enjoy his ability to manipulate More's mood and reactions?

Be seated – By making More sit while he himself has freedom of movement and the higher physical position, Henry is keeping control.

I stand in peril of my soul – Henry really did appear to believe this. It seemed to him that in the death at or very soon after birth of all his sons God was punishing him for sleeping with his brother's wife.

Leviticus – 18:16, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife."

Deuteronomy – 25:5 says that if one of two brothers dies without children, her husband's brother should marry the widow. Bolt does not complicate matters for the audience by giving this reference. It is enough that Henry and More have opposing opinions.

I have no son – A male heir was thought to be essential for inheritance of the throne.

Holy See – The Pope ("See" means seat in this case).

all the Popes back to St. Peter shall not come between me and my duty – St. Peter was regarded as the first head of the Catholic Church. This reliance on private conscience over papal authority may be seen as a Protestant argument.

Page 55

they are jackals...I am their lion – The jackal is a scavenger. Jackals follow lions hoping to feed on their leavings.

Your Grace's own – Henry VIII was a composer of some competence. The most famous of his extant compositions is "Pastime with Good Company."

Page 56

reputedly deplorable – This is something Bolt finds it useful to have More say to lighten the mood of the scene. More was not ignorant of music and encouraged Dame Alice to practice lute, lyre and recorder so they could pay together in the evenings.

Will Your Grace honour my roof...I'll bellow for you – He is asking Henry to sing for them. Henry says he probably will.

Your conscience is your own affair; but you are my Chancellor – Just as Wolsey has done, Henry prescribes a separation of conscience from the affairs of state.

I'll leave you out of it – Possibly Henry really did intend to, but More's high position and international reputation made his resistance more noticeable than if he had been a private man.

Princes of the Church – The magnificence of churchmen rivalled that of the king, and Henry by sneering at it shows he is jealous. There was considerable anti-clerical feeling in England, and had been for centuries, because the church was extremely wealthy, and churchmen were exempt from secular law, having their own courts, which led to considerable licence in the behaviour of some of them.

Page 57

the King of Spain's knife at his throat – The Pope was at this time a captive of the King of Spain, the Emperor Charles V, and did not dare do anything against the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon.

no words, no signs, no pamphlets – More was a writer, a religious controversialist, whom King Henry had commissioned to write against heresy. He did not in fact speak or write against the divorce.

his voice is unsteady – He is terrified by the accusation of treason.

you are the man I would soonest raise – Another temptation. Henry probably expects More eventually to yield from gratitude. That ultimately he doesn't do so seems ungrateful.

Page 58

He mounts – Notice the lack of ceremony with which he leaves compared to his arrival. Does he leave in anger? The script would allow for him either to be courteous or to leave in a huff. Try it both ways and decide which is more appropriate and more effective for your purposes.

too nice – "Nice" used to mean precise or fastidious, fussy about details.

Woman, mind your house – More speaks unkindly to Alice here. It shows how worried he is. Critics have made a point of how much more polite he is to Margaret than to Alice in the play. What do you think?

Page 59

Lady Anne Anne Boleyn – More may be making this up to calm Alice's fears or may have intuited it. It is clear from his saying "I think so" later that he isn't sure.

Souperçon – A tiny bit, just a taste (the "p" is not pronounced, and the "ç" is pronounced as an "s"). More is trying to lighten the atmosphere.

Page 60

a fortnight – Two weeks.

It's not convenient – It could hardly be less convenient, with the king just gone.

Joshua's trumpet – In the Bible (Joshua 6), Joshua makes the walls of Jericho fall by marching around them with his army, followed by the priests blowing trumpets. The simile is with Meg's defences falling before any mention of Will's conscience.

the next Parliament – William Roper became a Member of Parliament in 1529.

money-changers – Christ bodily threw out the people who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers (Matthew 21:12). Before, Roper wanted the whole Catholic Church destroyed because of the corruption in it. Now what he wants is reform in the Church, not to see it destroyed. He was firm in his return to Catholicism and stayed loyal to it all his life in the face of great danger.

Page 62

There, Alice, you see? – Again More refuses to be angry at Roper. Is there any sign that he has been corrupted? This is an example of dramatic irony at Roper's expense: we have seen enough of More to know that Roper is wrong.

Page 63

the younger – Roper's father's name is William too. This is the correct form in 16th century England for indicating that. In America now, he would be called "William Roper, Junior," "junior" being the Latin for "younger."

I sense that I'm not welcome here! – How does each of the characters respond to Rich's unexpected entrance, in the midst of a family argument? Is there anything in their behaviour to suggest to Rich that he is not welcome? If not, he is either paranoid or feeling guilty. What does he have to feel guilty about? Work on this scene, trying to define the various characters' responses to Rich and how they show them.

Page 64

Stay a minute, Matthew – Work out when you want Matthew actually to leave. No exit is given for him, yet he comes back in on p. 69 as the Common Man.

No – Why does More refuse to employ Rich? What tone does he use to say this?

Page 64 and 65

There is a series of very short lines here (a figure of speech called *stichomythia*). Generally, short lines read very fast and create tension. This is a moment of crisis.

Page 65

you couldn't answer for yourself even so far as tonight – This may echo Christ's telling Peter that before dawn he will deny his master three times (Luke 22:34).

Page 66

the currents and eddies of right and wrong – This is the play's central image. The water imagery in this instance clearly represents superhuman elements, as Bolt explains in the preface, whereas the forest represents earthly considerations, dry land, where More feels safe. Roper finds right and wrong easy to distinguish. For More they are more complex. And so he needs the law for guidance and protection. He is confident that his is the best legal mind in the kingdom. Notice how the scene has slowed down now, with long speeches after the stichomythic ones.

I'd give the Devil benefit of law – Roper, p. 220: "this one thing I assure thee on my faith, that if the parties will at my hands call for justice, then were it my father stood on the one side and the devil on the other side, his cause being good, the devil should have right" (Chambers quotes this, p. 257).

(Advances on ROPER)... (He leaves him) – First try this speech without More moving at all. Then try moving it as the author suggests. Where are the other characters on the stage? Does the movement toward Roper and then away from him (a) help define the relationship between them? (b) Make More's speech more significant and pointed? How and why? What does movement say about More's state of mind?

the golden calf – In the Bible (Ezekiel 32), Moses took his time communing with God on the mountain, and the people, becoming impatient, told his brother Aaron to make them gods, so he collected their golden earrings and made a golden calf and built an altar before it, and the people burnt offerings to it. A "golden calf" is therefore, proverbially, a false god, usually associated with wealth.

Page 67

(Wearily)...(Rather bitterly)...(Very bitterly) – More is growing tired of Roper's absurd attacks on him, but even more he is worn out from trying to see his way to what God wants of him. It also must be getting late (when would you start to indicate this with the lights?). The play has been criticised for focusing on More's conflict with "a soulless administration" at the expense of his inner struggle (Marc'hadour, p. 20). This is one place where his inner struggle seems important. It is up to the actor how significant he makes it seem. Work on distinguishing weariness from bitterness and then on expressing the degrees of bitterness.

Moloch – A false god to whom sacrifices of children were made (i.e., a cruelly – and meaninglessly - demanding god).

seagoing principles. They put about too nimbly – Again, More opts for dry land as opposed to water. Roper's two changes of religious conviction suggest that he is too impressionable to be a trustworthy support for Margaret.

that was harsh – Roper (p. 217) says that over the course of the sixteen years he knew More intimately, he never saw him in a "fume." Yet More sometimes spoke cruelly, and does so in this play.

He said nothing about biding me – This is funny on the face of it, but it is the first overt suggestion that Alice feels slighted by her husband. Critics have noted that More seems much more attached to and more solicitous for his daughter than his wife, and that he is in fact cruel to her. Looking at the relationships throughout the play, do you find this true?

Page 68

that was harsh – What does More's using the same words Margaret used suggest?

sending him up – Making fun of him.

Takes ALICE's hand – That he takes Alice's hand first should absolve him in her eyes and those of the audience for giving Margaret priority previously.

They don't, sir – What is the purpose of this short exchange.

My poor boy – More commiserates with Roper for the fact that his principles are so rigid they forbid him a glass of wine with dinner. More's principles are at this stage ostensibly more flexible – or is it that he doesn't feel the need to have inflexible principles about trivial, superficial things?

Page 69

Anchored – the play continues the water/seagoing imagery.

The Loyal Subject – Bolt has made up the name of this pub for the sake of irony – it is an unlikely name for a pub. The Common Man changes his clothes and identity yet again.

a candle – Again we have an atmosphere of darkness and conspiracy. The lighting will assist this. The candle was an important prop in the scene between More and Wolsey. It will be even more important at the end of this scene.

(Straight to audience) – Is the Common Man trying to suggest that the audience can't follow More either, and thus they will excuse the Common Man's betraying him?

Page 70

Promptly – What does this promptness suggest? Try it.

almost with hatred – The Publican might be suspected of making fun of Cromwell by his pretended ignorance.

Intoxicated...with success – This shows Cromwell's weakness: he is not in complete control after all but is under the sway of his ambition.

(leaves RICH standing) – This is reminiscent of the scene between Wolsey and More. Remember throughout this scene who has the power and who is the petitioner.

Page 71

You do keep your ear to the ground – The higher Cromwell's office, the more power he will have to advance his followers, of whom Rich is now one.

Sir Thomas Paget is—retiring – What does the pause before "retiring" suggest?

No ceremony, no courtship – This scene follows that with the king, in which we hear him say "No ceremony." Cromwell is mimicking the king, which might suggest disrespect.

Jumps up—is pulled down – Rich's jumping up shows his nervousness. Cromwell's ability to manipulate Rich physically demonstrates his power over him.

may I say "friendship"? – We will remember the pains taken to define More's relationship to Rich as friendship on pp. 6-7. Yet it is More whom

Rich will be asked to betray. This scene is Rich's final temptation, which casts Cromwell in the role of the devil.

Page 72

There are some things...but you don't expect to have to use them – To what character particularly do these words pertain?

Page 73

Here and on p. 75 Cromwell talks a lot more than Rich. What does that signify, in *dramatic terms*, in this situation?

Page 74

(Hastily buffooning) – Putting on the act of a buffoon, clown. Again, Rich is willing to change himself, to pretend to be something he's not, for the sake of gain.

(Takes the wine) – He obviously feels he needs it for support.

Page 75

Yes, I say he is – This is a repeat of what More says to Rich about Cromwell on p. 5. The repetition stresses the point. More's enemies recognize his good points (and, like the typical machiavel, use them to try to destroy him). That two people have to convince Rich that they are being sincere in seeing the strengths of their adversaries suggests that Rich is completely at sea about whether or not people are being sincere.

meaningless circumstance – That this “corrupt old person” has the title of Pope attached to him. Cromwell lacks values, so this fact is meaningless to him. But to More it is not meaningless.

silver goblet – This is the prop that passed from More to Rich in the first scene. What is Cromwell planning?

Chancery – The court of the Lord Chancellor.

(Takes the bottle. Restrains RICH from filling his glass) – Notice how fast Rich has drunk. Is drink affecting Cromwell at all?

Page 76

Court of Requests – The court for poor people. More was made Master of Requests in 1517, early in his career.

Page 77

he could be frightened – Cromwell seems to think that fright would make More “get out of the way.” But, as we will later see, his ideas of what will frighten a man like More are very simplistic.

(Looks up, his face nasty) – A battle has been going on, as Rich tries to resist Cromwell in support of More. The resistance has annoyed Cromwell, leading to his coldness of manner. Rich persists. Cromwell tries to win the argument by leaving. What does the nastiness suggest? Nasty towards whom?

CROMWELL'S downturned face is amazed – Why?

Triumphantly – Why? This has been a melodramatic conclusion to Act 1. There is perhaps a further suggestion, through the association with fire and Rich's horror, that Cromwell is a devil. (He is also a Machiavellian, and Machiavelli was often equated with the devil.)

2. Act 2, *A Man for All Seasons*

Page 81

Spectacles – It is, of course, unlikely that a member of the lower classes in More's day would be able to read. This is an aspect of the character's straddling his own time and the present. How else does he show here that he is outside the play?

1530...1532 – The whole play covers a greater time span. Act 1 begins in 1528. Act 2 ends in 1535.

Church of England – A 1531 Act of Parliament established the king as “sole protector and supreme head of the Church and clergy of England.” The Church of England is a version of Catholicism in which the English church, separate from the Pope's authority, has the ruler as its head. It is equivalent to the Protestant Episcopal Church elsewhere. The English have a reputation for compromise. Bolt has invented this “quotation” and is being rather scathing about the English character and church.

dressed in black and wears a cross – Again, Roper is showing off his religious sympathies through his dress and contrasts with More, who does not feel the need to do so.

Page 82

a Spaniard – This reference to Roper's costume neatly heralds the appearance of Chapuys, the Spanish ambassador.

Bishops in Convocation – A convocation is a formal gathering or meeting. In 1531 the Convocation of Canterbury had approved the act establishing the king as head of the church with the proviso, “So far as the law of Christ allows.” On 15 May 1532, they surrendered their independent powers to the king. More resigned the Chancellorship the next day.

Page 83

I'll keep my opinion to myself – Not only is it important, from a legal point of view, for More to keep absolute silence, it would be unsafe for his family if he were to tell them his opinions. His silence makes him a surprising hero of a tragedy. How, in the face of More's silence about what he believes until almost the end of the play, does Bolt achieve sufficient variety and tension to keep the audience interested?

you've a wife now – Now that Roper is no longer a heretic, he and Margaret More are married.

Page 84

(Rising) – Where did More sit? Do you think he would be too static if had sat from the beginning of the scene, or would it give him authority?

strikes a pose – This establishes Chapuys as insincere.

English Socrates – This reference is the sole recognition in the play's dialogue of More as a scholar of international importance. Bolt would have extrapolated it from Chambers, p. 169, "After More's household had removed to Chelsea, Erasmus, in a famous letter, described it as Plato's Academy on a Christian footing" (From a letter of 1532 to John Faber, Vol. 12, p. 139 of Erasmus's letters). Erasmus, the famous Dutch scholar, was a close friend of More. Harpsfield refers to More as "our noble new Christian Socrates," p. 199. Chambers at the beginning of his biography includes a section entitled "Thomas More and Socrates," pp. 12-15. Socrates was condemned for religious unorthodoxy and "corrupting the youth" by what he taught, and was sentenced to die by drinking hemlock. Like More, he could have escaped death by compromising his convictions.

a display of horror – Again, he is posing.

Page 85

titters nervously – Chapuys is behaving very awkwardly throughout this scene, first insisting on inept and embarrassing flattery, then spending quite some time on evasions regarding his reason for being there. More, a direct and honest man, must find this irritating. The two are not on the same wavelength at all. Identify the various aspects of Chapuys' speech and behaviour, remembering that he is Spanish.

he is clearly here on business – More has already spent a page trying to get Chapuys to give his reason for coming. And Chapuys goes right on being evasive, while More can speak very directly to Will.

(Rising, unreal protestations) – There has been no direction for him to sit. More would have had to gesture him to do so. Where could he most

sensibly do that? And has More sat too? His protestations are "unreal" in that he is still being insincere.

No more than a token – The actor will need to show that the character's protest is weakening.

fili mei – My children in Latin.

(Pompously) – Why?

holy language – Latin was the language used in the Catholic Church until the late 1960s, when it became permissible to say Mass in the vernacular. As More points out, a language is not, in itself, holy. Again, Chapuys is overdoing it, and More can't resist making fun of him, though with a straight face.

Sits – More must sit as well. Does he do so before or after Chapuys, or has he remained seated during all this? Try it several ways.

Page 86

lets the word sink in – This an instance of a pause after a word emphasizing it—a very effective pause, which results in a physical movement from More.

what has been done badly, might have been done worse, – The commas are not needed grammatically. Why are they there? What does the actor do with them? This is an echo of More's attitude in *Utopia*, where he (or his persona) speaks in favour of taking public office in order to make things as good as possible: "And what you cannot turn to good, at least try to make less bad." See above, p. 7.

(Agitated) There does come such a point – More has been trying to make things less bad, to work by compromise. There will come a point when that is no longer possible. That point is coming nearer and nearer.

What do you want? – More has been asking this since Chapuys came in. His main objective in the scene is to find out. But he is distracted by the rapidly approaching need to make a decision for himself.

Page 87

Approve, applaud, admire – Chapuys' language tends to be flowery; he won't use one word where he can use three, and these decorated with assonance.

Looks down...Still looking down...Suavely...positively silky – More was very agitated on the previous page and is now in control of himself and the situation.

“Signal”? – More picks up this word because Chapuys has misinterpreted him. More’s action would be entirely a matter between him and his conscience. But Chapuys takes it as a signal. A signal must be given to someone. To whom is Chapuys suggesting More’s signal will be given?

Now More looks up sharply – More hasn’t been looking at Chapuys for quite a long time. Why? *Now* he does. Why? Try performing this section and notice the subtlety of More’s responses contrasted to Chapuys’s flamboyance.

they are ready – Chapuys is speaking like a conspirator. He is trying to get More to join him in conspiracy. More will have to ask for the missing information. The more Chapuys makes More ask, the more interested More will seem to be. What Chapuys is talking about is Spanish support for a northern rebellion. No wonder More is galvanized from his seat. He is being tempted in this scene. Is there any risk of his deciding to lend his name to this rebellion? Why do you think so (or not)?

Page 88

his back to CHAPUYS...MORE’S face is electrically alert – He is facing away from Chapuys, but *toward* the audience, so Chapuys can misinterpret him easily, but the audience can’t.

don the arms of God – Ephesians 6:11: “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” It goes on, 6:13-17: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

the breastplate of righteousness...salvation – Isaiah 59:17: “For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head.” See also Ephesians, quoted above.

he shall flee the iron weapons – “He shall flee from the iron weapons and the bow of steel shall strike him through,” Job 20:24.

Intones – Chapuys puts on an act with everything he says—he can’t just speak!

frightening implications – To lend even nominal support to a foreign power assisting a rebellion would be treason. Roper breaks into the scene when More is at a pitch of tension.

It’s all over, sir – Bolt manages to delay elaborating on this for a while. What is the effect of doing so?

Page 89

(He stares at CHAPUYS hostilely) – Why is Norfolk hostile to Chapuys?

I have been trying...to borrow a book – Why does he lie?

stops unnoticed – He is spying again.

a fine of a hundred thousand pounds – Cromwell had led Parliament to complain against the clergy for oppression. The Church and state had separate courts, and the laity could be bound by the Church’s law while the clergy were exempt from state legislation. This led to abuses of church privileges. The clergy finally capitulated, surrendering their legal autonomy: henceforth all their legal decisions had to be ratified by the king. The fine for their long resistance was a clever means of attacking the Church’s immense wealth and enriching the royal coffers.

He doesn’t mean to be funny – This validates the audience’s sense that Chapuys’ awkwardness and foreignness has been funny. But is this what Norfolk meant by “funny”?

Page 90

No, thank you, Will – Why doesn’t More want Roper to help him?

behave like a printed book – This is Alice’s interpretation of his resignation. What does a “printed book” do? How is More *not* like a printed book?

If you want – This response shows Margaret’s complete trust that More knows what he is doing, even though it may look foolhardy to others.

(She takes it from his neck) – This action is an important visual symbol. The chain has been one of the most important props to date. How does More react to this physically? Try it without, then with a pause after Meg removes the chain. Is a pause useful to register the momentousness of what has happened?

Cowardice – This is Norfolk’s interpretation of More’s resignation. What could be interpreted as cowardly about it?

Page 91

The Pope’s a Prince, isn’t he? – A prince (or king) may declare war on another prince (king), and it is his subjects’ duty to support him if he does so.

Vicar of – Substitute for.

tenuous – What does “tenuous” mean? Why does More agree that the link is tenuous?

Apostolic Succession – The assumption is that bishops represent an unbroken line of descent from the apostles of Christ, the office of Pope descending from St Peter. The Pope was God's representative on earth. That God had instituted this succession was something More said (*Correspondence*, p. 498) he had not believed until he read the king's book against Martin Luther (*Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*) in 1521—in fact at that time he had urged the king to lay much less stress on it. During the ten years after that, further reading convinced him that the office of Pope was divinely established, and hence it was not up to man to overthrow it. More came to believe that his conscience would be “in right great perell” if he were to follow the other side, since he had read or heard nothing which led him to think his “conscience were well discharged” if he should deny that the papacy was instituted by God (*Correspondence*, p. 498).

theory – Norfolk means by “theory” an idea which is untested and may or may not be fact. What More means by “theory,” when he has thought about it, is abstract knowledge.

not that I believe it, but that I believe it – What does More mean? The stress on the individual is actually more a Protestant than a Catholic position.

I trust I make myself obscure – What is the usual expression?

This isn't Spain – This is an allusion to the Spanish Inquisition, a particularly harsh and cruel campaign to find and punish heretics. To avoid it, people had to resort to secrecy. Norfolk seems to be suggesting, naively as it will turn out, that England is more humane than Spain, and there is no need for secrecy. He will go on to tell More how generous the king's response is to his resignation.

Page 92

Looks at him, takes him aside – More is playing at being conspiratorial. Norfolk doesn't suspect this. Should the audience be in on it? If so, how would More show them?

your oath of obedience to the King – A subject is bound to the king before anyone else. For Norfolk to keep a secret with More which the king wants disclosed would be treasonous.

Page 93

the Old Alliance – The traditional alliance between Scotland and France, which always caused worry when there were border clashes, is used as a parallel to the coming alliance between the north and Spain.

jealousy – More has revealed the danger of rebellion, as it was his responsibility as a subject to do. It must be somewhat deflating to find out that Cromwell already has knowledge of it.

make goslings in the ash – imagine animal shapes in the fire.

Page 94

a noble gesture – This is Roper's interpretation. Why does More object? We have now had four interpretations of More's resignation, none of them correct. This shows how isolated More has become.

Resonantly – Roper wants something to celebrate. But More is only doing what he must.

A gesture? – This speech of More's is very energetic. He is trying desperately to make his family comprehend something that really can't be explained, his relationship to his conscience.

Morality's not practical...a complicated gesture learned from books – Roper, who thinks in terms of blacks and whites and oppositions, has just opposed morality to practicality. Alice has said More is behaving like a printed book. What does Roper mean by suggesting that More's “gesture” is moral, not practical? Are morality and practicality mutually exclusive?

plead humility – Meg seems to be suggesting that other people are lesser mortals so can't see the moral distinctions More does. That makes decisions easier for them.

Page 95

cruelty in this house – It is worth discussing how cruel More is. He is undeniably following his own conscience at the expense of his family, people for whom he has taken responsibility.

You'd dance him to the block! Like David with a harp – Two biblical references are combined here. In 1 Samuel 10 David, a brilliant harpist, is summoned to play for King Saul, to relieve him of his “evil spirit.” He plays and the king is cured. Then in 2 Samuel 6:14, David is described as dancing “before the Lord with all his might.” The point seems to be the enthusiasm of David's dancing, to which Roper's enthusiasm, his ostentatious religious fervour, is being compared. Notice Bolt's use of biblical references, here as elsewhere, to give the flavour of the period and the subject.

fall to housekeeping – A great lady had servants and didn't need to do her own housework. Also it might mean literally staying home, being unable to go about socially.

Look—(He advances on her) – The pace here remains rapid, and More is physically active in contrast to the others, who are stunned. It is vitally important that the family understand that his silence must be complete.

Page 96

we shan't have to use it but it's comforting to have – This is an example of dramatic irony. We know that More was not safe in the end, though he believes now that the law will protect him if he stays silent. This creates suspense: we want to find out how it happened that he was condemned.

MARGARET with the chain – Remember she has had it all this time.

Page 97

Now, damn me – Why is Matthew talking so much? Because he is used to people having ulterior motives for their actions and not being sincere, he is saying that More in claiming he would miss him was making a gesture, that this was a ploy to try to persuade him to stay on at a lower wage. But is More like that? Does Matthew really believe More has done this, or does it just make him too uncomfortable to contemplate someone being so much better than he is? What's Matthew's problem? How does he respond to it physically?

Wo-Ab. We-e-eyup – Noises made to call a horse to a stop. Matthew is telling himself to "hold his horses." He almost has to demonstrate this physically.

Page 98

But he makes no noise – This scene begins in mid-conversation. What has Cromwell said to elicit this response from Norfolk? Note how the scene derives its energy and credibility from references to something that has gone before in the conversation.

if he opposes Spain he supports us – Cromwell is thinking like Roper, in blacks and whites: if More is not supporting Spain, he must support the king. There is a third alternative, though Cromwell can't see it.

Page 99

What! Goddamit – How would you define the difference between Norfolk's manner and Cromwell's? Try rehearsing this scene making the distinction in manner as clear and strong as possible.

Cato – Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.), a Roman statesman noted for his moral uprightness. Stapleton notes (p. 130) how Livy's description of Cato (*Ab Urbe Condita* 39:40, 3-12) can be applied to More in that he too was morally upright, unmoved by cupidity, and his powers of mind were such that he would have risen to the top no matter what his status at birth.

Page 100

we're old friends – Rich has now become quite glib with the word "friend," which he has steadily debased since he diffidently asked More if he could use it in Act 1.

(Savage snub) – Norfolk is one of the old nobility, whom people like Rich are replacing in government. He does not feel friendship toward Rich, who, to him, would seem little more than a menial.

Page 101

Go! – Cromwell has been using Catherine Anger as a puppet throughout this little scene.

Page 102

the moment he knew it was a bribe, he got rid of it – In the course of his career, More was given several gifts as bribes, which he either returned in a manner which would not be insulting to the giver or exchanged for something of equal value (Roper, pp. 231-32, cited in Chambers, pp. 257-59).

a horse that won't run – His metaphor is a reminder of Norfolk's sporting interests.

(Between bullying and pleading) – Socially, Norfolk is Cromwell's superior, but Cromwell is the king's agent and thus has power. Cromwell uses his closeness to the king to one-up Norfolk in "Indeed? He told me," below.

Page 103

This isn't Spain – A repetition of what Norfolk said on p. 91.

(Civil Service simper) – A simper is a sort of self-conscious smirk. Bolt sees this behaviour as typical of the ingratiating manner of civil servants. There is about it a desire to be thought both clever and obliging.

Page 104

I'm only anxious to do what is correct – Rich is still wavering about being treacherous to More. What does he mean by "correct?"

making one – More felt safe in that he knew the law. He said, "I knowe well that if they wolde make a lawe to doe me any harm, that lawe could neuer be lawfull" (*Correspondence*, p. 529). Cromwell is a formidable

lawyer as well, and concedes that it may necessary to make a new law in order to catch More. The new law made it treasonable to refuse to swear to the Act of Supremacy. It also became treason to deprive the king, queen and their heirs of any of their titles. More could not accept the king's title as head of the church. Note that not a vestige of morality enters Cromwell's deliberation – it is entirely a pragmatic matter.

Bring my papers, will you – Cromwell is treating Rich as a servant, leaving him to clear up and follow.

Could we have a word now, sir? – This short scene between Rich and the Common Man allows us to compare them. What do they have in common? Is one morally superior to the other? More likeable?

(The last word is shrill) – The shrillness makes it clear that Rich is not in control.

Page 105

Bring my papers – Rich is trying to demonstrate his superiority over Matthew in the same way that Cromwell just demonstrated his over Rich.

I can manage this one! He's just my size – Though Rich thinks he is in command, Matthew has managed to manipulate him by flattery, and he points to how easy it is to “manage” Rich (unlike More), because Rich is not so much better a person than Matthew.

Lighting changes – What sort of lighting would you have to make the location look drab and chilly? Also think about how costume, bearing and makeup can add to this sense of decline in the family's fortunes.

Cloaked – What impression do the cloaks give?

My husband is coming down – Does Alice know before she comes in that Chapuys is there? Matthew is no longer around to announce visitors. You will need to decide so that the actress knows how to behave on this entrance, whether she is surprised to see him or not.

I beg you to be gone before he does – Why does Alice want Chapuys to be gone before More comes?

Royal Commission – From what king?

Page 106

primly triumphant, produces the ace of trumps – In rehearsing this it may be useful actually to try it with cards first.

There's no third alternative? – Cromwell has said to Rich on p. 98, “Or do you see some third alternative?” Bolt obviously wants the two scenes to mirror each other. Cromwell and Chapuys can conceive only of black and white, and no one can grasp More's disinterestedness (at least from a political point of view). Bolt said, “They assumed he must be in with the Catholics. In fact, he was fond of the King...and scrupulously loyal. When he was attacked, the Catholics thought he must be on their side. He was not. Both sides had the wrong end of the stick throughout. I think there are many parallels in our own day” (*The Times*, 28 June 1960, quoted in Turner, p. 163). Siding with either the king or the Spaniards would have given More support, but he has found the “nonexistent” third alternative, which leaves him very lonely.

Page 107

no political sense – This is partly ironic, and parallels Wolsey's comment to More in Act 1, “with just a little common sense, you could have been a statesman” (p. 19). Politics, as More indicated in his scene with Wolsey, should involve honesty. The Attendant has been shocked by Chapuys's assessment of goodness as “a difficulty” and has not followed Chapuys in assuming More is on their side. In a perfect world, the Attendant's attitude would be preferable to Chapuys's. As it is, it seems only naïve. But the fact that the audience is able to recognize this is morally encouraging.

a better state – That is, heaven. Again, Chapuys's language is very flowery, “over the top.”

It falls between the two – And again, he prevaricates.

My master, the King of Spain – Charles V of Spain did write to More, expressing gratitude for his help and support. More refused to accept the letter, and began from that point to avoid Chapuys.

Page 108

Very nearly in disguise – Chapuys adheres to the morally lax belief that if something is not seen it is all right. The idea that he *can* disguise himself is funny.

Glibly – In the Bible, Christ tells his listeners regarding their duty to pay tribute to Caesar, “Render...unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's” (Matthew 22:21). Chapuys is using the Bible “glibly” as support for his argument that loyalty to the king cannot coexist with loyalty to God, which is the opposite of what the biblical passage actually says and also is opposed to More's striving to be loyal to both. Glib misuse of the Bible annoys More.

Page 109

I wish I could ask you to stay – This is as polite as More is able to be in asking

Chapuis to leave. The very fact of the man's being in his house is dangerous for him.

The man's utterly unreliable – This is obviously said privately to the Attendant. It needs to be staged in such a way as to be audible to the audience but not to More and his family. How would you organise this?

Page 110

Note in this scene the contrast in bearing and mood between More and his family. They are physically exhausted, cold and hungry and frustrated. He, too, is frustrated, but still has hope. He is sympathetic with their plight but adamant in his own interpretation of what he must do. He is increasingly alone as he knows that his family do not understand.

money from the bishops – Roper (pp. 222-23, cited in Chambers, p. 244) tells us that the bishops offered to give More £4000-5000 in recognition of his service to the Catholic faith in writing many books against heretics and heresy. More had done this in part as Lord Chancellor, at the king's command. He refused to accept the money, saying he had worked for God and would receive reward only from God. The bishops then asked permission to give it to his wife and children, but he declined. Of course his reason for refusal was to avoid the suspicion that he was being paid by the bishops to stand against the king's assuming supremacy over the church. This is very similar to More's dealings with the cups given him as bribes in court cases: acceptance would seem to compromise him.

we could be beggars and still keep company and be merry together – For More the most important thing is the family being together, whether rich or poor. "Merry" seems to have been one of the real More's favourite words. Alice won't buy it.

Page 111

(Her arm about her mother's waist) – Bolt suppresses the fact that Alice was More's second wife, and was not the mother of his children. Unexpectedly, Margaret is siding with Dame Alice on this point. More is in the unenviable position of forcing his family to suffer with him. He is being very gentle with them, not only to try to soften their discomfort but also to try to get them to understand and share his need not to compromise, because without their support he is completely alone.

Oh, am I not though – What does More mean by this?

Page 112

You are to go before Secretary Cromwell – This parallels the summons from Wolsey in Act I.

Lighting changes – This emphasizes both More's solitude and his rightness.

Father, don't be witty – Wit, in the sense of humour, was one of the most obvious things about More. His early biographer Stapleton (p. 127) delightfully describes his disposition: "But as in most serious matters he tried always to be pleasant and humorous, so in the midst of his jokes he kept so grave a face, and even when all those around were laughing heartily, looked so solemn, that neither his wife nor any member of the family could tell from his countenance whether he was speaking seriously or in jest..."

Wit's what's in question – More uses "wit" here in the sense of intellect.

a mere pragmatist – More makes the mistake of underestimating his opponent. He is saying that Cromwell is not a legal scholar, but purely someone aiming for the most practical results. It is precisely this difference between them that leads Cromwell to "win" and More to "lose."

the Devil – Is Cromwell the devil, or only a Machiavellian? The two were equated in More's time. Roper, like Chapuis, tends to be "over the top" in his expression. More persistently deflates him, as he does here.

Page 113

Exit ALICE...Enter CROMWELL... – Notice that the scene is changed not by the Common Man this time, but by the lighting. What is the effect of this? There is a contrast with the parallel Wolsey scene in Act I, in that here More's household is left in darkness as light comes up on Cromwell, whereas Wolsey put out the light, which is then relit by More.

Will you take a seat? – More sits, Cromwell is free to move. This contrasts with the Wolsey scene. Does it place More at a disadvantage? It certainly contrasts him and Cromwell. This scene, between two brilliant lawyers, is well worth working on.

old friends – More echoes what Rich had said earlier about Norfolk. In Act 1, he had given Rich permission to call their relationship friendship, and he sticks to this.

nice gown – Remember in Act 1 Rich said he would sell the cup to buy a gown (p. 8).

Laughs appreciatively – Cromwell shows he is intelligent enough to have caught More's touch of irony.

Invites More to join him – Cromwell in laughing at Rich tries from the outset to get More on the same side as himself and here is trying to forge

bonds between them at Rich's expense.

no more sincere admirer – This is not mere flattery. Cromwell did, in fact, admire More, though he was bound to destroy him when he refused to conform. Guy (p. 203) speaks of Cromwell's "genuine affection and respect" for More. The play has often been seen as a conflict between More and Cromwell. But when the BBC suggested this to Bolt, he replied, "I do not want it to be turned into a play of 'conflicts'. It is a play of one man, and its vitality no more depends on the clash you mention than the clash between Christ and Pilate. If it hadn't been Cromwell it would have been someone else" (Quoted in Turner, p. 111). It is worth discussing this point: whether the play focuses on the clash between More and Cromwell or on More alone. If the latter, does this make it a lesser or less interesting play?

Page 114

no charges – This word has been batted back and forth, being repeated five times in seven lines.

It amazes me too – Cromwell can't have expected this answer. What does More mean?

(Picks up and drops a paper; sadly) – There are several papers on the table, which are very important props in this scene. The way Cromwell approaches them should give them the significance they require. This paper must be the Act of Attainder, accusing More of misprision of treason on the grounds of knowing but not revealing the treasonable sentiments of the Maid of Kent (see below). Cromwell is using this prop to create suspense, to back up his claim with evidence and as a veiled threat.

I am grieved – A simple and perfectly sincere statement. The scene contrasts More's sincerity with Cromwell's strategy.

there is no honor which the King would be likely to deny you – This is a temptation, parallel to the devil's tempting Jesus with all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him (Luke 4:5-7). Cromwell is associated with the devil here both by being a tempter and by being a pragmatist. More deflects Cromwell's strategy.

Coldly – His first attempt having failed, Cromwell changes tack here, from being ostensibly warm, humorous, and More's equal, to being cold and formal, beginning to tighten the screws. He will again turn cold and formal at the end of the scene.

The Holy Maid of Kent – A nun, Elizabeth Barton, claimed to have experienced miracles and revelations. The substance of some of her revelations was reported to the king, who passed the matter on to

More to look into and judge. More felt what the "Holy Maid" said could have come completely from her own mind. Later she began prophesying that the king would lose his kingdom if he changed wives and was arrested. More did talk to the nun, but not of politics, and afterwards he wrote her a letter of which he kept a copy, advising her not to talk to anyone about state affairs. Roper, p. 233 (cited in Chambers, pp. 281-84), reports that, in the hope that this would scare him into surrendering his resistance to the divorce, More was accused of having known of her treason and having failed to denounce it (a crime called "misprision of treason"). A commission including Cromwell was appointed by the king to examine him. At the beginning, Roper says, they "entertained him very friendly, willing him to sit down with them." They assured him that "he could ask no worldly honour, or profit at his Highness's hands, that were likely to be denied him" if he would consent to "those things that the Parliament, the bishops, and universities had already passed." Note how closely Bolt follows this source. Why has he reduced the commission of four (Archbishop Cranmer, Lord Chancellor Audley, Norfolk, and Cromwell) to just Cromwell?

Page 115

(Quickly) – Cromwell is trying to "nail" More.

sympathize with her...sympathize with her – Cromwell and More are using "sympathize" in different senses. What are these two senses?

(Grunts) – More has slipped off the hook again.

Witnesses...witnessed – More wins these points by legal sharpness.

charge – Has Cromwell slipped up here through irritation, or is he using the word as a threat?

Page 116

Charge – More pounces on the word.

You will find it very ably set out and defended – More slips off again, deflecting Cromwell's attack (with, perhaps, a touch of irony).

I do not mean you actually held the pen – This time Cromwell thinks he has plugged the gap by nailing down the definition of "wrote."

Page 117

Do you deny you instigated it? – Cromwell seems to be floundering here. He is gradually finding that the accusation he was so sure of is faulty.

this is trivial – More knows all the facts of the case and calls Cromwell's bluff, so Cromwell can only resort to a threat: "I should not think so if I were in your place."

he will not give evidence to support this accusation – More is very confident here, and Cromwell is caught off guard. He can only ask, a bit lamely, “Why not?”

you don't yet know him – This is one-upmanship on an important point: More knows the king on a personal level, but Cromwell does not. Cromwell realises that More has beaten him again, and his response is to look at him viciously. To re-establish dominance he has to change his physical position and take up that of a formal examiner. More keeps to the same position. Who has the upper hand in this interview, and does it shift? Or are different sorts of dominance displayed? What are they?

Page 118

terrors for children – Roper quotes More as saying, “These terrors be the arguments for children, and not for me” (Roper, p. 234. Chambers quotes it, p. 284) in response to the accusation that he had instigated the king's book. His contempt for the accusations is seen in his gesture.

something in the cupboard – A child can be frightened by being told there is a monster in the cupboard. For an adult to be frightened, there really has to be something in the cupboard.

True...true, Sir Thomas – Cromwell allows More a moment to relax, apparently conceding defeat. But then his tone changes again.

Traitorous – The king has accused More of treason, a crime punishable by death. His gesture toward his throat is a reaction to this terrifying word and signifies his awareness that this death is generally ordered to be by hanging or beheading. (In More's case the sentence of hanging, drawing and quartering was commuted to beheading.)

Page 119

I don't like him as well as I did – Cromwell's “liking,” like Chapuys' assessment of his “reliability,” is based on a person's willingness to be pragmatic. More has not caved in as expected, and this is impractical, since it puts his life in jeopardy. In fact this comes from More's letters, which suggests that Bolt consulted them: “In conclusion...Mr. Secretarie said that he liked me this daye muche worse than he did the last time...” (*Correspondence*, p. 559).

raises the gale and won't come out of the harbor – Cromwell seems to be contradicting himself. He seems to feel More should “come out and fight,” but literally to stay in the harbour when there is a storm at sea is the most practical thing one can do! Cromwell is evidently shaken by the interview.

RICH – He has come suddenly back into prominence. He has, of course, been onstage in full view throughout the interview, but we cannot be aware of his responses or focus on his presence during that time, since that would distract from the major players. Thus his “reappearance” is a bit of a shock. It is obvious from his “covert jeer” (directed at Cromwell) that he still believes More to be unshakeable. Look at the sequence of directions for his responses after this, which show his moral attitude gradually collapsing. Work on how you show these changes in Rich during this short exchange. The disagreement between Rich and Cromwell about whether or not More can be frightened creates suspense.

Page 121

you have a son – If Norfolk were to be condemned for treason, his son would lose the right to inherit his lands. More is pointing out to Norfolk that his main loyalties lie with the king and with his family, before his friend.

You might as well advise a man to change the colour of his hair...eyes – This echo is very powerful, stressing the closeness of the friendship and also the vital significance to Norfolk of his regard for More and to More of his convictions.

Page 122

We're supposed to be the arrogant ones – “We” means the aristocracy.

You'll break my heart – This is a *tremendous* revelation for Norfolk to make. He is a very “macho” man. Men are in any case traditionally not very demonstrative of their emotions. And also this is an aristocrat revealing his heart to a member of the middle classes. So the fact that he says it “Quickly and quietly” is very important.

Page 123

Sermon on the Mount – Jesus's sermon, in Matthew 5, is simply worded and is one of the most inspiring of Christian documents. Yet More says the English aristocracy are more interested in dog-breeding than in this.

Thomas Aquinas – (b. 1224-74) He was a philosopher and theologian noted for argument on serious and important subjects such as the relationship of faith and reason. So the reference is ironic.

Marsh mastiffs? Bog beagles? – More, being a literary man, leans toward illiteration.

Page 124

just Norfolk – This focus on individual selfhood is Protestant, not Catholic.

Give that some exercise...you'll go before your maker in a very ill condition! – More uses his last few minutes as Norfolk's friend to try to persuade him to be more honest and spiritually committed, for the sake of his soul.

a bitch got over the wall – God will have to think, if you remain so spiritually lazy, that you're not pure-bred. This carries on the dog-breeding imagery and also indirectly insults Norfolk by calling him a son of a bitch. Norfolk's anger has been shown mounting, and this is too much for him. As for More, Norfolk remains in his thoughts throughout the whole of the scene with Margaret and Roper, while he looks after him.

Page 126

ROPER excited and truculent – Roper wants a showdown. He wants More to go in fighting. But More explains that a human being must try to use his God-given intelligence as long as possible, with the aim of escaping. Only when he has done that to the extent of his capacity and there is still no chance of escape, may we fight and show splendour, if we have the capacity for it. To do anything else would be to show off. More needs to know the exact wording of the oath in case it should be possible for him to take it without compromising his integrity.

stand to our tackle – To stand by the rigging of a ship, so as to direct it. This metaphor is More's own. In his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, pp. 234-35, he says that people should not court danger but go where they can serve God in private until "he [God] should suffer them to fall in such point that there were no way of escape, and then would he have them abide by their tackling like mighty champions, wherein they shall not in such case fail of his help" (Quoted here from Chambers, p. 324).

dragging a cage...Brings the basket on – Again the Common Man changes the scene, bringing on furniture and costume to show what sort of scene it is. The rack descends of its own accord and "remains suspended." What is the effect of its being there? It is night again.

nearer the knuckle – Close to indecent.

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Enter CROMWELL, NORFOLK, CRANMER...and RICH – These people are thus silently present while the Common Man reads the summaries of their future.

An envelope descends – This ostentatious effect, and the Common Man's reading of the message inside, in the presence of the characters described, which speaks from the present about their future, is a Brechtian "alienation" (distancing) effect. Who is the envelope from? Notice the contrast of the deaths described and the parallel between

the fortunes of the morally upright More and the morally bankrupt Rich, who also became Lord Chancellor.

With reference to the old adage – The old adage, just quoted, is "better a live rat than a dead lion." What is its implication for the survivors?

Oh, and Richard Rich – As he himself tells us at the beginning of the play, Rich is always overlooked. In the play he is always remembered last and with an effort. Yet, ironically, he had the best luck, though he was several times accused of dishonesty, and several times betrayed friends and benefactors.

And so, I hope, will all of you – Is there a suggestion that we may sacrifice our integrity for a happy life and death?

Page 128

Relaxed...bored, tense and jumpy – Note the contrast between More and his accusers. It is night, and both parties are under stress, More because he is in prison, the commissioners because they are under pressure from the king to bring More round, and because this is their seventh attempt to do so.

Page 129

(Throws down document...rests his head in his hands) – Cromwell has lost his temper. He and Norfolk are strange and uncomfortable allies. Norfolk is contemptuous of Cromwell because of his class and his underhand methods. Cromwell is annoyed with Norfolk, who takes the direct route to a point instead of going at things indirectly, as Cromwell does.

Of course I recognize them – The Act of Succession (1534) established the potential children of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn as heirs to the throne. More, a lawyer, recognizes them as such because Parliament has established them as such: inheritance is an area within the purview of the law. What he does not approve is the requirement of renouncing allegiance to the Pope. Failure to swear to the Act of Succession was punishable by imprisonment and loss of goods, but a new law enacted in February 1535 made it treasonable to deny any of the king's titles, and More could not accept him as head of the church.

Page 131

humour overtakes him – The real More was like this, jesting when things seemed most desperately serious, pretending to be serious when they were funniest. The challenge to the actor is to show the transition between his first indignant reaction and the humour in his spoken response.

It's most material – More is trying to save his life by legal means, through silence. Legally, so long as his reasons for refusing to swear cannot be

proved to be treasonous, he cannot be condemned to death.

Page 132

for fellowship – That is, to keep his friends company. Norfolk has again been driven to reveal his emotions.

you are sent to Paradise...I am damned – More is very clear here that if he did not follow his conscience he would be damned (see above, note on p. 129). He asks, ironically, if Norfolk would be willing to join him in hell for the sake of fellowship. This echoes a fable which, according to a letter from his daughter Margaret, More told her while he was in prison (*Correspondence*, pp. 521-24): a man who dissents in a lawsuit is asked by his fellow jurors to join in their verdict: “play the good companion, come thereon forth with us, and pass even for good company.” He answers, “But when we shall hence, and come before God, and that he shall send you to heaven for doing according to your conscience, and me to the Devil for doing against mine, if I shall then say to you all again, ‘Go now for good company with me,’ would ye go?” This is quoted from Chambers, 296, who silently omits some of the original.

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ceremonial indignation – Cromwell is in control of himself and putting on this indignation for effect.

can't I go to bed? – More is desperately tired. It is one in the morning and he has been awakened for this interrogation.

for a year – So far we have been able to tell the passage of time since the last scene only by More's haggard appearance. Now we are told how long he has been in prison.

harsher punishments – The rack is part of the scenery, reminding us of this all along.

Page 135

there's fifty guineas in it if you do – A guinea was a coin worth a pound and a shilling (about \$2 in today's terms). Fifty of those to the Jailer would be a fortune. The question seems to be how big does a reward have to be to make someone betray a friend or benefactor? The Jailer is alarmed by the sum and sees that the stakes are so high that anyone involving himself may be at risk of his life. He gives this as his reason for not becoming involved. This is followed by Rich's suggestion to Cromwell of the sort of reward which might make him betray More. The fact that lingers in our minds is that Rich does betray More in the end and the Common Man does not, whatever their reasons.

Page 136

the King is becoming impatient – This reminds us that Cromwell, too, is under pressure. His own life is at risk if he does not bring about More's capitulation or downfall. He in turn threatens the other members of the commission.

with regards this case – This is so in every edition of the play. One would think it must be a misprint for “as regards this case” or “with regard to this case.” Yet both films reproduce it.

CROMWELL is brooding over the instrument of torture – Cromwell's punishments (as in his burning of Rich) are physical. More regards this sort of threat as trivial. It is worth noting that in Brecht's *Galileo*, Galileo recants when shown the instruments of torture.

Page 137

if I bring about More's death—I plant my own I think – Notice the continuation of the garden imagery. More's death is a last resort for Cromwell just as it is for More. In the end it proves inevitable, since More will not give in and in a sense *forces* Cromwell to kill him.

producing a startling clatter from the ratchet – This is an important sound effect and should be frightening, perhaps to Rich as well as to the audience.

The scene change commences as he says this – Again a scene change without the help of the Common Man. What is the effect of this? Notice the very depressing lighting.

Throughout this scene pay particular attention to *subtext* (the meaning and feeling under the surface of the words). Examine how this can best be expressed: by use of carefully arranged pauses, by bearing, by action, by speed or slowness of speech, by how much and when the characters do or do not look at each other, touch or turn from each other.

cold gray light – How does the lighting affect the mood of the scene? And the presence throughout it of the rack and also the “cage” in which More begins the scene?

MARGARET – Evidently Margaret got permission to visit her father by a ruse: she wrote a letter, which she knew would be read before being passed on to him, in which she tried to persuade him to yield and take the oath (Stapleton, p. 104).

Page 138

ROPER – William Roper wasn't actually at this meeting with More in the Tower. Nor was he in the radio version of the play. What does Bolt gain by including him here?

ALICE – The characters' costume and makeup show how they have suffered. What effect does this have on the scene? Alice says very little in this scene. What is her mood? In Roper (p. 243) her speech is very colourful. Why do you think Bolt decided to tone it down?

It drips...too near the river – Remember Bolt's definition of his symbolism, that water stands for "the superhuman context." More may mean "too near the river" in a metaphorical sense as well as literally. If so, it contrasts his habitual ways of thinking with Alice's.

there is constraint between them – Why? How long does it take More to catch on to the fact that this visit is "a put-up job"? What about More's behaviour makes it clear that he suspects something?

Page 139

A custard! – A custard is a standard prop of farce (people get custard pies in the face). Yet here it appears in a serious context, perhaps underlining the contrast between the trivial talk of food and the fact that this is the last time More will ever see his family. The exclamation mark suggests he sounds (or is trying to sound) enthusiastic. How much "heart" is there in this enthusiasm, or is he just trying to be polite? Does he overdo it? He hasn't, of course, eaten well in quite some time.

She doesn't look at him – Why?

Is it good, son Roper? – This is a playful echo of his question to Matthew at the beginning of the play. We've seen Matthew secretly tasting the wine (p. 3). Roper is too strait-laced to have done so, and anyway we know he doesn't drink, so, unlike Matthew, when he says he doesn't know, he means it.

Page 140

say the words...and in your heart think otherwise – More anticipated this argument, according to Margaret's description of a conversation she had with him in the Tower (*Correspondence*, p. 521): "And some may be peradventure of that mind, that if they say one thing and thinke the while the contrary, God more regardeth their harte than their tonge, and that therefore their othe goeth vpon that [what] they thinke, and not vpon that [what] they say...But in good faith, Marget, I can vse no such waies in so great a matter..." (Chambers quotes some of this, p. 296).

Do you mean it isn't true? – An argument described as "neat" is usually a clever, casuistical way of getting out of something.

When a man takes a oath – This is one of the most important speeches in the play. More makes clear the seriousness of an oath, how pivotal it is

to one's identity. This is one of the play's main themes. Who else do we see taking oaths, and how seriously do they take them?

you elect yourself a hero – Meg is acting as a temptress. She is suggesting More's intention is to martyr himself, which God does not permit, whereas in fact he is trying by every means possible (except risking his soul) to avoid martyrdom. He defines standing fast as his aim and heroism as a risk it involves. It is a fine point, but it is the *intention* that matters, and that is always clear in More's mind. More resisted martyrdom because, as Germain Marc'hadour says, "No man may run to his death, least of all a martyr's death, for that would be suicide and presumption. Man's life is in the hands of God; and so, More believed, we should abide God's time and trust Him to help us die well, if we must face death, rather than disobey his will" (p. 24). More, *Correspondence*, p. 516, says "God shoulde geue me strength rather to endure all thinges, than offend hym by sweringe vngodly against myn own conscience."

That's very neat – More echoes Meg's earlier words. This gives an impression of the closeness between them and that they are engaged in an intellectual argument.

the happy land that needs no heroes – This echoes Brecht's *Galileo*: "Unhappy the land that has no heroes" (p. 75, Brenton translation, Methuen 1980) is answered with "Unhappy the land that needs heroes!" (p. 76).

Page 141

reason...love – There are limits to what is reasonable, no limits to love.

Hostile – Alice is giving vent to her bitterness, and More is hurt by it – he flinches.

mice and rats – Bolt has chosen to use Alice's words here. Roper's *Life*, p. 243, has her say, "I marvel that you...will be content to be shut up here with mice and rats, when you might be abroad at your liberty...in the company of me, your wife, your children and household."

has Eve run out of apples? – A reference to Eve tempting Adam with the forbidden apple in the garden of Eden, after the Serpent had persuaded her to bite into it (Genesis 3). More used this simile several times in his letters to Margaret. For example: "how now daughter Marget? What now mother Eue? Where is your mind now? Sit not musing with some serpent in your brest, vpon some newe perswasion, to offer father Adam the apple yet once againe?" (*Correspondence*, p. 529) This scene is the final temptation of More.

I've not yet told you – Here the tone of the scene changes, and Margaret plays on More's emotions. That she can do this shows she is closest to him. What do you notice about the difference between More's

relationship with his daughter and with his wife in this scene?

Page 142

He doesn't use the rack – Remember, the *real* rack is right there as part of the set.

Two minutes to go, sir – This adds an element of tension to the scene suddenly. From now on it is played pretty much in “real time:” about two real minutes pass before the Jailer says “time’s up.”

mind you share it – Roper tacitly agrees to compromise his inflexible principles and drink, to support More’s inflexibility in a much more significant matter. (Why would it be a mistake for the actor to show Roper objecting here?)

you must leave the country – More’s family did leave the country after his death.

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There’ll be no trial – More knows that his opponents have no case in law. He doesn’t envisage the show trial that will follow.

Alice, I command you! – Women in More’s day were obliged to obey their men. More, though, had respect for women as intellectual equals, and he does this only in desperation.

Right! – She is obviously furious.

Oh, this is splendid – Having angered Alice, More is now trying to get round her.

Page 144-5

This short scene between More and Alice is very important, as much for what they don’t say as what they do. They have not appeared close throughout the whole play. In this scene Alice has been truculently distant. Now it is important to More to hear her say she understands his reasons for refusing to take the oath.

Page 145

Swiftly she crosses the stage to him; he turns and they clasp each other fiercely – This is more significant, creates more emotional release than if they had seemed closer at any other point in the play, or earlier in this scene. She admits his potential death as a reality, and accepts that God must have reason for it if it is to happen. That is enough for More.

his face shining...He puts his face in his hands – This is a very quick change of mood, turning just on the line about the custard. The family are now united.

Page 146

You must understand my position, sir – It’s obvious the Jailer is being watched and knows it (the actor will have to make this clear to the audience). His motivation in this scene is fear for his own skin. He has to do what he’s told or risks execution himself. The Common Man’s first thought is always for himself, though there is evidence that his feelings are kindly. What are the other characters’ objectives here? It is obvious that from this point on the scene becomes rapid and tense.

(Throwing him off as she rises) – This is really the first physical action of the play. Alice’s words and actions from now until the end of the scene show her social consciousness: she is a knight’s wife and will not be manhandled by a common jailer! This of course is how she channels her emotions at this point.

Page 147

with considerable dignity – Is there a touch of humour here?

Oh, sweet Jesus, these plain, simple men – More’s emotions burst out here. Whom is he including among “these plain, simple men?” There is an anecdote in Roper, p. 229, quoted in Chambers, p. 279-80, which speaks ironically of the harm a “good plain man” can do. Chambers comments on “The ‘good plain man’, who can teach the autocrat how he may break his own laws, destroy innocence, and yet keep his conscience safe!” and says that Henry had surrounded himself with “good plain men.”

Immediately music, portentous and heraldic – This scene transition is more elaborate than any of those preceding it. What does the stage machinery suggest? Notice that the jury are depicted only by hats. What does this signify?

Page 148

the Canvas and the Rigging of the Law – Cromwell is speaking in jingles here and on the next page. This is an alienating (distancing) technique. What is its effect? What does the word “rigging” refer to? What does it suggest metaphorically?

You’re the Foreman of the Jury – Cromwell is in another way now stepping out of the play, to determine the “casting” of the Common Man.

A general dealer – Possibly suggesting “wheeler and dealer.” John Dauncey was not a member of the jury, listed in the notes to Harpsfield, p. 349. Probably Bolt got the surname from one of More’s stepsons-in-law.

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fix these quicksands on the Law’s plain chart – Cromwell is a lawyer. His job should be to interpret and administer the law, not manipulate it. This

is a Machiavellian technique, to corrupt the legal system when everything else has failed.

I should be glad to sit down – “My Lords...I humbly thank you for your great good will. Howbeit, I make my petition unto God Almighty that it may please him to maintain me in this my honest mind, to the last hour that I shall live. And concerning the matters you charge me withal, the articles are so prolix and long that I fear, what for my long imprisonment, what for my disease and present weakness, that neither my wit, nor memory, nor voice will serve to make sufficient answer.” More was leaning upon a staff; but a chair was placed for him...” (Chambers, p. 320, no source cited). The Paris Newsletter, which seems to have originated this story, has a chair placed for More at this point (in Harpsfield, p. 259).

Page 150

maliciously – This is the crux of the legal case. The person depriving the king of any of his titles has to be doing so maliciously to be convicted of treason. More is shocked at the statement that he has denied the king's title, since he has not done so, but has been careful to be silent.

the trial has been in some way rigged – More has to this point been confident that the law is on his side. He can only be condemned by a perversion of the law. Now he begins to sense that this is what is about to happen. How would this growing suspicion be shown?

Death...comes for us all – This speech is from More's *Dialogue of Comfort against Misfortune* (p. 268) written in the Tower. Bolt found this quotation in Chambers, p. 300, who introduces it, “There is no king so great but is very sure that he must die” (the first seven words are also direct from More): “Death, which, from his first coming in, hath ever hived aloof, and looked toward him, and ever lain in wait on him, shall amid all his royalty, and all his main strength, neither kneel before him, not make him any reverence, nor with any good manner desire him to come forth; but rigorously and fiercely gripe him by the very breast, and make all his bones rattle, and so by long and divers sore torments, strike him stark dead, and then cause his body to be cast into the ground in a foul pit, there to rot and be eaten with the wretched worms of the earth, sending yet his soul out farther unto a more fearful judgement, whereof at his temporal death his success is uncertain.” The falls of great men was a typical mediaeval and early Tudor theme, as was the *memento mori* imagery. The idea is to frighten people so they would care for their souls in time.

Page 151

Leaning forward urgently – Norfolk has hidden behind formality, but his action here, and his calling More “Thomas” shows his real feelings.

For our own deaths – This comes from later in More's *Dialogue of Comfort* (p. 311, quoted in Chambers, p. 300): “Who can for very shame desire to enter into the kingdom of Christ with ease, when himself entered not into his own without pain.”

Gentlemen of the Jury – Cromwell's long speech is impressive and in fact convincing. Note the significance to this occasion of his metaphor of having a knife to kill the prisoner and the silence of the attending lords, betokening that they are content for him to do it. Notice the irony of his going on to say this makes them all guilty. It is important that this speech be carefully “built.” Does it start slow and get faster, start quiet and get louder? Are there any variations in tempo? Work on how to make it most persuasive and clinching.

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qui tacet consentire – Whoever is silent (is assumed to) consent. More is a better lawyer and knows that from a legal point of view silence cannot be construed to mean anything other than consent.

Page 154

Sir Richard Rich – Rich's new title should be a shock to both More and the audience. The seduction and consequent transformation of Rich has now succeeded and shows in his new title and splendid dress, which contrast now to More's. Is he overdressed? And does he wear his clothing comfortably, or is there an awkwardness?

I do solemnly swear – Here is an example of an oath following soon after More's beautiful definition of the meaning of an oath. What does Rich's forgetting to say “So help me God” suggest?

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If I were a man who heeded not the taking of an oath – This and the passage that follows are given in More's own words, as reported in Roper's *Life* (p. 245 and Chambers quotes it, pp. 322-23): “If I were a man...that did not regard an oath, I needed not...stand here as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Master Rich, be true, then pray I that I never see God in the face, which I would not say, were it otherwise, to win the whole world.” He went on to say, “In good faith, Master Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for my own peril,” which in the play comes slightly earlier.

Master Rich – More insults Rich subtly by leaving out his knightly title.

such a man as that – More was actually rather more explicit, according to Roper. He asks if it seems likely that he would, “in so weighty a cause, so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Master Rich, a man of me always reputed for one of so little truth, as your lordships have heard, so far above my sovereign lord the King or any of his noble counsellors, that I would unto him utter the secrets of my conscience

touching the King's Supremacy - the special point and only mark at my hands so long sought for?" (p. 236). He goes on to call Rich's evidence "slanderous" (p. 247). That Chambers quotes only "the special point and only mark at my hands so long sought for" and omits the rest may account for Bolt's More being comparatively mild.

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Southwell and Palmer – These witnesses did in fact give evidence and said that they had not been paying attention so had not heard the conversation. Bolt has got them out of the way because the trial appears more contrived that way and More more alone.

God help the people whose Statesman walk your road – Remember Wolsey's ironic comment "you should have been a statesman" on p. 19. More's view was that law was essential to the running of society, and that the king and government could not be above the law (see Wegemer, p. 204). Cromwell has sunk to the level of using a false witness to decide his case.

Page 158

But for Wales? – Wales was at the time a wild, rebellious and not very desirable place, so More's remark is funny. The care with which it is constructed adds to the humour, balancing "the whole world" with "Wales" and stressing their opposition with alliteration. He has manipulated Rich by making him stop in the course of his exit and turn back to face More "reluctantly." Then he has to continue his exit with all eyes on him, holding himself together with difficulty. Try this.

I am empowered to tell you that even now – What is the message Cromwell has for More from the king?

it shouldn't be necessary for them to retire – Cromwell is "strong arming" the jury, and the foreman takes his "hint."

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the sentence of the court... – Cromwell's case is steamrolling along, when More, consummate lawyer that he is, stops it by pointing out that Norfolk has bypassed a traditional legal form. Why has Norfolk done this?

fulfilled all his obligations – This shows that More is not a mere individualist. To whom or what is More shown as having had obligations and discharged them?

when I was practicing the law – Roper, p. 248, has More say: "My Lord, when I was toward the law, the manner in such case was to ask the prisoner before judgment why judgment should not be given against him" (Chambers quotes this, p. 325). It was actually Lord Chancellor Audley,

not Norfolk, who tried to rush the trial in this way.

Now that the Court has determined to condemn me – "Seeing that I see ye are determined to condemn me (God knoweth how) I will now in discharge of my conscience speak my mind plainly and freely touching my indictment and your Statute withal. And forasmuch as this indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and His Holy Church, the supreme government of which, or any part whereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual pre-eminence by the mouth of Our Saviour himself, personally present upon the earth, only to Saint Peter and his successors...granted." England, as a single member of this entity cannot make a law which binds the whole church, any more than London, as a part of England, can make a law to bind the whole kingdom. He goes on to cite Magna Carta and the coronation oath as witnessing the obedience due from England to the Papacy (Roper, pp. 248-49. Chambers quotes it on p. 325).

you are malicious – In Chambers (p. 326)—who neglects to give a source—it is Norfolk who says this. Why does Bolt shift it from Norfolk to Cromwell?

I do none harm, I say none harm, I think none harm – This appears in More's letters, describing an earlier examination rather than his trial: "I am...the Kyngis trew faythfull subiect...and pray for hys Hyghnesse and all hys and all the realme. I do nobody harme, I say none harme, I think none harme, but wyssh (euerye bodye) good. And yf thys be not ynough to kepe a man alyue in (good fayth) I long not to lyue. And I am dying already, and syns I came here, bene dyuers tymes in the case that I thought to dye (within) one houre, and I thank our Lorde I was neuer sorry for yt (but rather) sorry when I saw the pang past. And therefore my pore body ys (at the) Kyngis plesure, wolde God my deth might do hym good" (*Correspondence*, p. 553). This is quoted, with no source given and with spelling modernized, in Chambers, pp. 309-10. It is unclear whether by "none harme" More means "no harm" or "nobody harm." He tends to use "none" to signify "no." Possibly "nobody" starting the parallel construction suggests that he means the "none"s which follow to mean "nobody" – or perhaps the fact that he changes the word signifies a change in meaning.

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Nevertheless, it is not for the supremacy...the marriage – This passage is given in Chambers, p. 326, without documentation: "Howbeit, it is not for this Supremacy so much that ye seek my blood, as for that I would not condescend to the marriage."

Immediately the scene change commences – The "mechanism" of the rigged court is quick in its action.

head shall be stricken from your body – This was known as a kind and dignified death, compared to the usual sentence for treason of hanging, drawing and quartering, which More had every reason to fear (and which, historically, was the sentence first passed against him, later commuted to beheading).

NORFOLK and CRANMER exit with chairs – This is part of the Brechtian “alienation” technique. Norfolk (a lord) and Cranmer (an Archbishop) would of course never carry chairs, nor would Cromwell carry a table or put a mask on the Common Man!

a light of steadily increasing brilliance – The lighting is symbolic here.

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I can come no further, Thomas – Apparently through an oversight, the speaker is omitted. Who *must* it be? In reality, the execution did not immediately follow the trial—there were a few days in between.

easel and gall – “My master had easel and gall, not wine, given him to drink” (Chambers, p. 332, no source cited – older sources, such as Stapleton, p. 188, say “vinegar”). Jesus, like More after him, turned it down (Matthew 27:34 and Mark 15:36 call it vinegar and gall). Eisell was in More’s time a word for vinegar.

Have patience, Margaret, and trouble not thyself – More said this as he was led from the trial back to prison to await execution. Chambers (p. 327) quotes it from *The Paris News Letter* (Harfsfield, Appendix II, p. 265), “Have patience, Margaret, and trouble not thyself. It is the will of God. Long hast thou known the secrets of my heart.” The sentiment “Death comes for us all” has been used in the trial scene, p. 150. Some of the remainder seems to echo writings of More. For example, in *The Last Things*, p. 149, he says, “a man is always dying from afore his birth: and every houre of our age as it passeth by, cutteth his own length out of our life, and maketh it shorter by so much.” How do you account for More’s rather distant tone here?

WOMAN – Is this the woman who appeared in the earlier scene with Cromwell and Rich testifying about the goblet?

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Offended, CRANMER does so – Why is Cranmer following More? If we understand that we see why he is offended at More’s asking him to go back.

Envious rather than waspish – Remember that Cranmer will become a martyr himself (for the Protestant church) in a few years. How does an actor make it clear that the character is envious, not waspish? This is

important, because the distinction makes a huge difference in Cranmer’s character.

Kettledrums – Clearly chosen here for the harshness of their sound, to “depict” the execution, along with the blackout, which ends the basic part of the play with a shock.

Behold the head of a traitor! – This is said in darkness. We do not see the head, and perhaps we begin to wonder who, actually, is the traitor.

It isn’t difficult to keep alive – Like the Common Man, More has done his best to keep alive. But he has gone about it very differently. Look at the two comparatively from this point of view.

recognize me – What does the Common Man mean by that? How comfortable does it leave the audience feeling? Is there something diabolical about the Common Man?

Alternative Endings

Bolt originally ended his radio play with what were reported as More’s final words in his speech from the scaffold: “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first” (Chambers, p. 333, quoted from the *Paris News Letter*). Why did he change this? He brought it back in the screenplay.

The ending given in the text was the play’s original ending. But an alternative ending was substituted on the London stage: Cromwell and Chapuys appear in the left and right-hand spots, look toward each other with hostility, then cross toward one another and gradually smile. They link arms and go off together, laughing comfortably. What does this signify? Why do you think this ending was eventually dropped?

IV. Questions for Discussion or Essay Writing

1. Charlton Heston felt that “The dry asceticism of [Scotfield’s] nature isn’t close to the real More.” Heston’s own performances in London, and his portrayal on television were criticised for lack of intellectual incisiveness. But Professor Clare Murphy, who saw him play it onstage in 1979 in America, found his portrayal warmer than Scotfield’s. On the basis of seeing both performances, what do you think? Support your arguments with specific references.

2. Alec McCowen, who played More, thought that the “writing is ‘thin,’ the characterisation not very deep, and...it would not have succeeded had it not been for the extraordinary authority that Paul brought to More.” Having studied the play and seen the video, what do you think?

3. In the radio play Bolt has More say – as he did in real life – “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first,” which seems a perfect “exit line.” There are a lot of stories about More on the way to execution, but Bolt does not use these in the play. In the process of revising the radio play for the stage, he gave his reason: “Once the trial is over we know what will follow, and dramatically the most important thing left is More’s speech on the scaffold and the words of the executioner. If the trial scenes were to be lengthened with a very brief vivid execution scene, it would be highly effective in its dramatic irony” (Turner p. 110). Discuss (noting that ultimately Bolt decided not even to include More’s very short speech from the scaffold).

4. Discuss in detail the differences between the playscript and the screenplay, including such matters as scenery and costume. Why did Bolt omit the Common Man from the screenplay? Is Heston’s TV film more successful, in that it includes him? How does Roy Kinnear’s Common Man differ from the character in the script?

5. In the Tower scene (pp. 146-47), the tension near the end becomes almost unbearable: “The first stroke is heard on a heavy, deliberate bell, which continues, reducing what follows to a babble.” Then there is an abrupt transition to the Trial scene: music “portentous and heraldic” is heard. Discuss these two sound effects and their contribution to the play.

6. “The play has often been seen as a conflict between More and

Cromwell. But when the BBC suggested this to Bolt, he replied, “I do not want it to be turned into a play of ‘conflicts.’ It is a play of one man, and its vitality no more depends on the clash you mention than the clash between Christ and Pilate. If it hadn’t been Cromwell it would have been someone else” (Quoted in Turner, p. 111). It is worth discussing this point: whether the play focuses on the clash between More and Cromwell or on More alone. If the latter, does this make it a lesser or less interesting play?” (pp. 87 above). Discuss.

7. “Another difference between More and other tragic heroes, from King Lear to John Proctor in *The Crucible*..., is that he has no serious flaws of character. The ‘traditional’ tragic hero tends, because he is imperfect, to be partly responsible for bringing about his own downfall, whereas More’s downfall could only have been avoided by his being less perfect” (above, p. 24). Discuss.

8. Plays “which contain a good deal of discussion and argument . . . will remain undramatic unless the ideas which are discussed grow out of and illuminate the life of the action, that is, unless they are embodied in the characters” (Dawson, p. 62). How does *A Man for All Seasons* avoid being undramatic while still being a play of ideas?

9. Because the play is historical, the outcome is determined from the beginning: we know what is going to happen to More at the end. The characters in the play, though, apart from the Common Man, are ignorant of how it will end. Do we identify with them enough ever to share some feeling of their ignorance? Is there any shock left for us when More finally is executed? How does the knowledge of the inevitable ending affect our response to the play? Is it any different from our response to other plays (*Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet*, for example) whose endings we know because they are popular?

10. More is the focal point of the whole of the drama. Other characters exist only for the purpose of showing him in different lights, by parallels or contrasts. Discuss, illustrating with specific reference to the play.

11. Discuss the Common Man: what are his characteristics? What are his functions? How does his character work in contrast to More’s? How far is the audience supposed to identify with him? Is the use of him as a dramatic device successful?

12. Adrian Turner says of the Common Man that he “confides in, alienates and finally shocks the audience. There is in him Brecht’s concern for taking the audience out of the play and into the broader argument, though there is as much Greek chorus and Mystery Player in him as well.” Discuss, having first found out first what the characteristics are of a Greek chorus and Mystery Player (this refers to the mediaeval Mystery plays).

13. Discuss Bolt's use of imagery in the play. What are the dominant images, and how does he use them? Do they contribute successfully to the play? Pay particular attention to the effect imagery has when it appears in individual speeches and, in detail, to how imagery works in the scene between More and his family (pp. 138-147).

14. Discuss the play's style. Consider how each character uses language. Does each have his/her own voice, and are they clearly differentiated? Note the stylistic differences in the trial scene. Several of More's speeches are quoted from what he really did say. Does this clash with the language elsewhere in the play, or is it successful? Why or why not (discuss using specific examples)?

15. What stage devices does Bolt use for the trial scene, and what is their effect?

16. Discuss the character of Richard Rich. What is his structural function in the play, and how is it achieved? Look at him in contrast to More (note particularly the pattern of their rise and fall, their attitude to sacrificing their "self," and their attitude to taking an oath).

17. Discuss the advantages of "going with the flow," as opposed to resistance, bearing in mind that More's action failed to halt the tide.

18. Discuss the play's structure.

19. Discuss how the play's main theme and subthemes are portrayed. Here are some of the themes:

- a. what is a man
- b. relationship of "price" to intrinsic value of a person: how various characters value people
- c. theme of self: consider the relation to self of Cromwell, Roper, Rich, the Common Man, and More. How far toward expediency can each of them go before being stopped by his conscience?
- d. theme of friendship
- e. theme of teaching
- f. theme of oath taking

20. How do his interactions with Alice, Margaret, Henry, Norfolk and Roper reflect on or simply reflect More's character?

21. Discuss how others' relationship to their self compares to More's (n.b. Roper's changeability, etc.).

22. Discuss how details of dress are significant for personality. Then watch the videos and discuss how costume is used to depict status and personality.

23. Consider how lighting and sound effects are used and to what effect.

24. Choose another play from the list of plays cited in the List of Works Consulted (p. 109 below) and discuss some aspect of it comparatively with *A Man for All Seasons*.

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