

'SAILMAKER' by Alan Spence – National 5 Revision Guide

DAVIE

What happens to him during the play?/How does he change during the play?

Act 1:

He loses his wife.

He struggles to cope with being a single father.

He starts to have 'just wan' at the end of the day to help him unwind.

He becomes indebted to a shady bookkeeper.

He is assaulted by the bookkeeper.

He loses his tick-man job (partly due to this assault).

After losing his job, he resolves to cope with it.

Act 2:

He loses his factory job when it shuts down.

He falls out with Alec over dinner.

He borrows money from Alec to pay bills.

He starts to rely a little bit more on alcohol.

After gambling some of the money, he comes home drunk and has a serious fight with Alec.

He comes to terms with the fact that he never did do something with his life.

Before being rehoused, Davie and Alec burn Davie's sailmaking tools and yacht for heat.

Positive Traits:

He is literate and knowledgeable (he is well-read).

He is not prejudiced, like his brother.

He puts a brave face on when dealing with tragic events.

He cares about his son deeply, and encourages him to do better than he did.

Negative Traits

He is defeatist.

He is very passive, letting things happen to him.

He struggles with his and other people's emotions.

ALEC

What happens to him in the play? / How does he change during the play?

Act 1: He loses his mother.

He looks up to his father, defending his status as a sailmaker to Iain.

He plays with his cousin, showing similar interests.

He plays football with Iain and talks with him at great length about football and the girls they fancy.

Act 2: He becomes very interested in Christianity.

His interests change – he starts spending all his time at the mission, as a means of getting away from home.

He leaves the mission when he's asked an uncomfortably personal question about his religious beliefs.

He passes the entrance exam for a private school.

He grows apart from his cousin.

He is accepted to university.

Alec's experience and tastes expand beyond those of his father; he begins to grow apart from his father.

Alec and his father have an argument over what to have for dinner.

He has a serious argument with his father when his father comes home drunk.

He leaves to stay in student accommodation.

Positive traits:

He is motivated.

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He is open-minded (like his father): he keeps the Catholic medal, and

concepts.

open to new ideas like vegetarianism and unorthodox religious

As a child he looks up to his father and does not complain about their situation.

Negative traits:

He becomes quite harsh to his father.

BILLY

- Act 1:** He paints Alec's yacht.
He tries to help Davie with the bookie.
He offers Davie help getting a job at the factory.
- Act 2:** He works with his son, painting a grocer's shop.
He moves to Aberdeen.

Positive traits:	He is practical (he repairs the yacht quickly; he works to get Davie a new job). He is wise when it comes to money, calling gambling 'a mug's game'.
Negative traits:	He has strong sectarian prejudices.

IAIN

- Act 1:** He plays with Alec.
- Act 2:** He and Alec grow apart.
He follows his father into painting.

Positive traits:	He is practical.
Negative traits:	He is – like his father – prejudiced, particularly in a class sense.

‘SAILMAKER’: Themes

Social Class

- The family is traditional Scottish working-class (men were expected to become apprentices to a trade at a young age).
- Billy and Iain – and Davie, to some extent – are locked in this traditional mind-set.
 - Davie’s difficulty expressing his emotions (over his wife’s death; losing his jobs; being unable to say he is interested in the woman he was out with) stems from this ‘men should be men’ mind-set.
- Class boundaries leads to some prejudice (see Iain’s comments about Alec’s school, and Alec’s comments about the minister’s son).
- The experience of the middle-class private school distances Alec from Davie:
 - “And what does your father do? He’s not actually working just now, but he’s a sailmaker to trade. Sounds fascinating. Aye’. (p45)
 - ‘There’s more to stew than just shovin a dod a meant in the pot wi an oxo cube and slappin it on the plate...’ (p46)
- At the end, Alec reads from ‘The British Working Man’. While some of it is correct, much of it is wildly different from Davie’s actual life.

‘The British Working Man’	Davie’s Life
<i>The housing conditions were once poor but have been greatly improved’.</i>	Davie’s living conditions are now so bad he has to burn his possessions for warmth.
<i>He is perhaps at his best in skilled individual occupations as, for example, in the many aspects of shipbuilding.</i>	This is true of Davie, who is a skilled sailmaker with no sails to make.
<i>He will follow the fortunes of his local football team with enthusiasm.</i>	Davie is a keen Rangers fan.
<i>His summer interest in cricket will not be so emotional, but is often deep.</i>	Davie scoffs at the idea of following cricket.
<i>Better housing, old age pensions, security of employment – on these he is now seeing practical results.</i>	Davie isn’t seeing the results of any of these things: his living conditions are poor, he’s not got a pension, and he has been made redundant several times throughout his life.
<i>Many men seek for their sons better opportunities than they had in their youth.</i>	This is true; but by doing so, Davie has helped distance his son from him.

Father-Son Relationships

- The play is about two father-son relationships: each is a mirror to the other.
- Davie and Alec's relationship changes; Billy and Iain's does not.
- Davie and Alec's relationship deteriorates throughout the play, where Billy and Iain's ties remain strong.
- Alec's education and experience makes him more aware, which results in resentment of his father's decisions and habits (his gambling, drinking, and emotional distance).

Grief and Loss

- At the beginning of the play, older Alec looks back on his childhood grief. 11 year old Alec lets all of his grief out, but Davie tries to hide his.

ALEC: Part of me already knew, accepted it. Part of me couldn't. Part of me cried.

DAVIE: Ah've got a bit of bad news for ye son.

ALEC: I cried and a numbness came on me, shielding me from the real pain.

DAVIE: Yer mammy's dead. (p1)

- Davie tries to keep a lid on his grief from the very beginning: we see this as he reacts to the death of his wife, and the loss of his job, with the same 'I've a bit of bad news son'.
- Davie becomes depressed: he lacks motivation; he lets problems pile up without doing anything; he becomes lonely.

'SAILMAKER': Structure

1. **Exposition:** In this section the main characters and the basic situation of the play are introduced to us.
2. **Turning point:** Something very important happens to change the way the play is going, or the main character comes to an important decision or realisation.
3. **Climax:** At this point the action and emotions of the play come to a head. This is the most exciting or dramatic point of the play. It is usually near, but not at, the end.
4. **Resolution:** This follows on from the climax. Events and emotions are finally dealt with and the play feels finished off.

Turning point: The end of act 1, when Davie is assaulted by the bookie's thugs.

This indirectly costs Davie his job.

This damages Davie's character; the damage to Davie's character negatively affects his relationship with his son.

Climax: Towards the end of act 2, when Davie and Alec have a fight after Davie comes home drunk. The following issues have been building up:

- Alec's lack of trust in his father ('Did you gamble wi that bursary money?' – p53)
- Alec's resentment about Davie calling him 'a bad bad bad boy' (p54).
- Alec's irritation that Davie 'always' gives up (p55).
- Davie's struggling with life: 'It's hard son. It's on easy on yer own' (p55).
- Alec's sense of loss as regards he and his father's relationship: 'There's something I've lost. Something I've forgotten' (p56).

Resolution: The very end of act 2. Alec and Davie burn old possessions for heat.

The yacht – a recurring symbol throughout the play – is burned.

The Yacht

- The yacht represents Davie's life.
- It appears early on in the play.
- He means to fix it, but never gets around to it.
- It is tossed in the fire, just as Davie has been tossed aside by life.

Quotations

DAVIE: Ah've got a bit of bad news for ye son.

(repeated: his wife dies; he loses his tick man job)

DAVIE: God, Ah'm shattered. Isn't it funny the words ye use to describe things. Shattered!
(p8)

ALEC: He's workin as a tick man. But he's really a sailmaker. That's his real job.
That's his trade. **(p8)**

BILLY: Ah know it's hard on yer own an that...

DAVIE: Naw, ye don't know. Naebody knows, unless they've been through it. Comin hame's the worst. The boy's oot playin. Hoose is empty. Gets on top of ye. **(p22)**

DAVIE: Away ye go! How can a colour be bad? Just because Catholics wear it.

BILLY: It's maybe no bad in itself, but they Catholics have made it bad.

DAVIE: Even Rangers play on green grass!

BILLY: Aye, they trample it under their feet.

(Davie and Billy talk about colours for the yacht, p26)

DAVIE: So that's me. Scrubbed. Again. Laid off. Redundant. Services no longer required.
Just like that. Ah don't know. Work aw yer days an what've you got tae show for it?
Turn roon an kick ye in the teeth. Ah mean, what have ye got when ye come right
down tae it. Nothin. **(p31)**

DAVIE: Ach aye. Not to worry. Never died a winter yet. **(Davie, final words of Act One, p32)**

ALEC: So what happened?

DAVIE: Och, ye know. Just... drifted away fae it.

(Davie on why he didn't become a missionary, p34)

IAN: Again? Ye never come oot wi us these days.

ALEC: There’s a lot ae things on at the Mission.

IAN: Ye don’t have tae go tae them aw!

ALEC: Ah like it.

IAN: Ah well. Suit yerself.

(Alec and Ian are drifting apart, p36)

ALEC: Tell me, she says – big deep voice like a man’s – When did the Lord Jesus come into your heart? Pardon? I says. Terrified! She looks right at me. Ah said, when did the Lord Jesus come into your heart?

(Alec struggles to answer personal questions of faith, p37)

IAN: Don’t fancy that. Hey, ah’d watch ma bum if ah was you! [...] Ah couldnae stick it. Imagine still bein at school when yer eighteen or that. Soon as ah’m auld enough ah’m chuckin it. Getting maself a job.

(Ian isn’t full of congratulations, p43)

DAVIE: Ah give up!

ALEC: Ye always do.

DAVIE: Now that’s no nice. That’s a bit below the belt. **(p55)**

DAVIE: Ah always meant to. Just...

ALEC: Just never did.

DAVIE: Story a ma life. **(p63)**