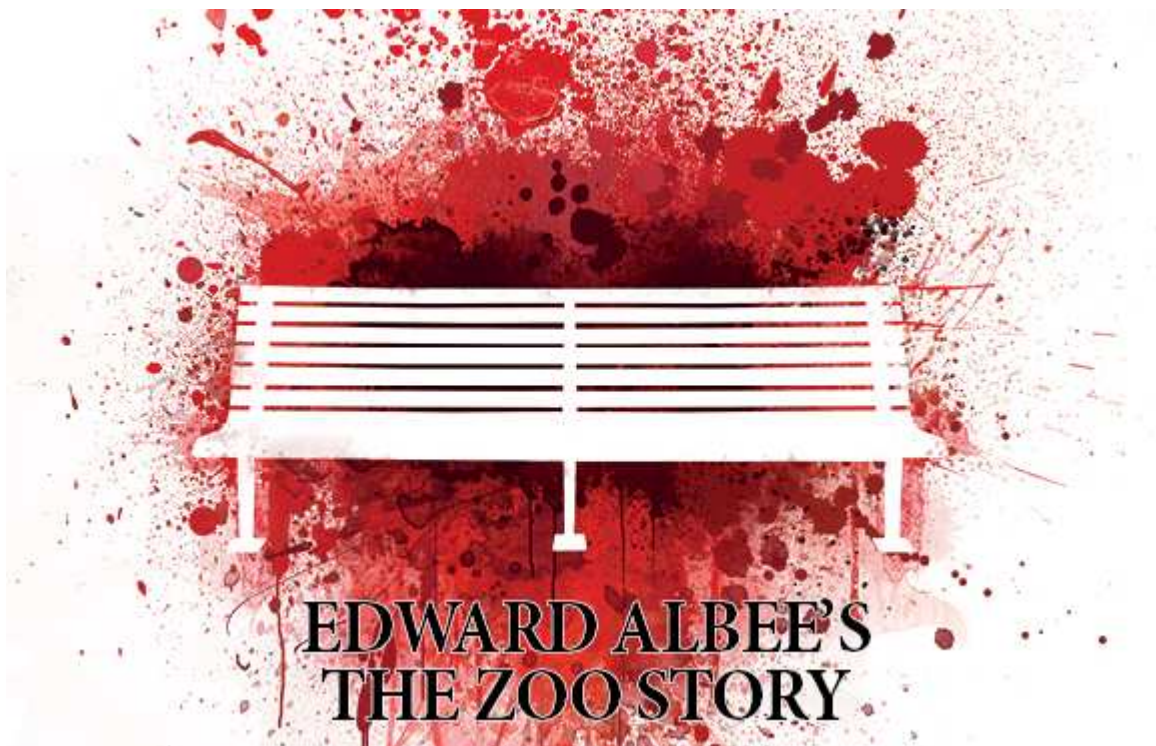


EDWARD ALBEE'S THE ZOO STORY

**October 26th – November 26th 2011
Krudttønden. Serridslevvej 2, Østerbro..**

**That-Theatre Company
Director: Barry McKenna
With Adam Brix & Ian Burns**



Introduction

The story, in simplest terms, is about how a man who is consumed with loneliness starts up a conversation with another man on a bench in Central Park and eventually forces him to participate in an act of violence.

According to Matthew Roudane, who quoted a 1974 interview with Albee in his *Understanding Edward Albee*, the playwright maintained that he got the idea for *The Zoo Story* while working for Western Union: "I was always delivering telegrams to people in rooming houses. I met [the models for] all those people in the play in rooming houses. Jerry, the hero, is still around."

Combining both realistic and absurd elements, Albee has constructed a short but multi-levelled play dealing with issues of human isolation, loneliness, class differences, and the dangers of inaction within American society. He focuses on the need for people to acknowledge and understand each other's differences.

After garnering its initial critical praise, *The Zoo Story* went on to win the *Village Voice* Obie Award for best play and ran for a total of 582 performances. *The Zoo Story* continues to be a favourite with university and small theatre companies and persists in shocking and profoundly affecting its audiences.

One of the main reasons for being alive is to communicate with our fellow human beings despite the modern trend of isolationism, of constantly wearing headphones and therefore sending a signal that you are not interested in having any contact with another soul.

I remember as a child being told by my parents not to talk to strangers. A common sense safety measure that all children must take heed of. However when we become adults does this still apply? Innocence is dead. Recent awful events in Norway seem to support this notion, but it must still be a positive thing to want to talk to strangers. Dangerous maybe, but so is driving a car.

One thing you hardly ever see nowadays is a hitch hiker. This was very popular when I was a student and a great way of meeting people and having conversations with them. I used to pretend to be different people, which is fine until your story gets discovered to be a false one.

Saying hello to people you pass on the street is a very human thing to do. It doesn't take much effort and makes people smile. We seem more at ease to indulge in this friendly act from the safe distance provided by the sea or even a canal. When 2 boats pass each other and we wave to each other. It's also something we seem more at ease doing in the countryside. But we are reluctant to do this in our big cities?

Strangers asking for directions have spoken to us all and most of us are polite when this happens. Curious strangers in bars or cafés who want to talk to you in a friendly way is

also acceptable, if you're in the mood, but when people **really** want to talk and want to share more than just superficialities we tend to get nervous.

When strangers need to share something that matters to them, about how they really feel we can get intimidated. It depends how this is done of course and we all have the safety valve of our own instincts as how to judge strangers. If they are too aggressive or pushy we have the option of pulling away from what could become a confrontation.

This is the springboard for the Zoo Story. A small slice of the "**human-zoo-story**", which is as relevant today as when it was written in 1958.

T35 Tickets: [Billetten.dk/7020 2096](http://Billetten.dk/70202096).

Limited number of these, 2.200 available to That Theatre per season.

We hope that the educational material will be useful to you. Feel free to pick and choose what you would like to focus on in class. If you would like to meet the actors after the play for an informal question/answer session please e-mail: info@that-theatre.com to arrange this.

See you in the theatre.

All best wishes,

Ian Burns

Birgitte Holm Halkjær (Educational material)

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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES:

Task: “The Zoo Story” being staged ?

- 1) What do you think, a student of the English language, may gain from coming in and watching, for instance “ The Zoo Story”, being staged?
- 2) Have you seen any of the plays you have read in class being performed by That Theatre-Company at Krudttønden?
- 3) Discuss: Do you think watching the play being performed on stage may help you to achieve a better understanding of e.g. the genre or the plot? Why/why not?

Task: Pre-reading Activity – Google Translate

- 1) Make a prediction about the plot of this play by Edward Albee based on the title “The Zoo Story”. In Pairs, think of and write down three complete sentences in Danish. Each sentence should consist of at least one main clause and one dependent clause.
- 2) Now translate each sentence into English and set your translation aside. When you are finished, go online to Google Translate and enter each of your original Danish sentences.
- 3) Compare your translations of your three original sentences with suggested translations from Google Translate and answer the questions below:
 - a) Did you have any identical translation suggestions?
 - b) Who provided the most grammatically correct translation suggestions – you or Google Translate?
 - c) Did anything surprise you when comparing translations – “organic” translations vs. machine translations?
 - d) Select the results of one of your text sentences to share with the rest of the class
 - e) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of machine translation?

Task: Vocabulary - Building – How to improve your English?

- 1) The following is a list of academic terms which can be used in analyzing newspaper articles:

Match the English terms with their Danish counterparts

English

headline
body (body text)
target audience
column
news story
strapline
letter to the editor
review
editorial/leading article
comment
byline
tabloid
obituary
introductory paragraph (lead or standfirst)

Danish

målgruppe
brødtekst
leder
journalistens navn
anmeldelse
overskrift
kommentar
læserbrev
nekrolog/mindeord
manchet/stor overskrift
sensationsblad
nyhedsartikel
klumme
underoverskrift

- 2) Read the newspaper article “The Play’s the Thing for Improving your English” (Source: <http://www.english-magazine.org/index.php/english-language/465-the-plays-the-thing-for-improving-your-english>). While reading underline essential lines and/or keywords.
- 3) Compare the lines you have underlines with another classmate of yours. Discuss in pairs: Why did you underline that specific word or line.
- 4) How would you describe the language used in the article? (colloquial/formal/ substandard/ complicated/technical/simplistic/vulgar/sarcastic, etc.). Include examples.
- 5) What is the author’s attitude toward the main topic, and how is this revealed? Use quotes/references to back up your claims
- 6) Who do you believe could be the target audience for this article? Explain why.
- 7) Write a summary of the article using the key-words as your starting point

Task: Associations and Vocabulary-Building

- a) In Class: Note down all the words and expressions you associate with the word “theatre”. Draw e.g. a mind-map.
b) In Pairs: Match the words in the column on the left with the definitions on the right..

box-office	a person who performs on the stage, on tv or in films
stage directions	one of the main divisions of a stage play
playwright	where you buy tickets for the play
actor	a writer of plays
act	instructions to actors and directors about how the play should be performed

- c) Translate the English words into Danish: *curtain - downstage – exit – exposition - fade out – beat – fade - lights come up - off stage – parts -point of no return –props- stage directions - stage right/left – upstage – subtext- dialogue- monologue... add more yourselves.*

Task: Lead in - Why do people go to the Zoo?

- 1) Draw a mind-map starting with a question: Why do people go to the Zoo? (e.g. to have a good time, to see the caged in animals, add more yourself....)
- 2) Make a brainstorm and write down what comes to your mind when you hear the title “The Zoo Story”. You may find it useful to draw a mind-map.
- 3) Make a brainstorm and write down what comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “the world is a Zoo”.
- 4) Give a short speech about the animals in the Zoo starting with the lines: *Animals do not pretend to be somebody else. They are just animals! The Zoo is a microcosm of real life – animals live alone in their cages – in captivity, just like people who often live in isolation , separated by walls from each other*

Task: “The Zoo Story”

1) Read the review excerpt below, and while reading look up all the words that you do not understand.

Review “The Zoo Story”, by Kosta Jaric

<http://www.fringebenefits.com.au/fb-review-the-zoo-story>

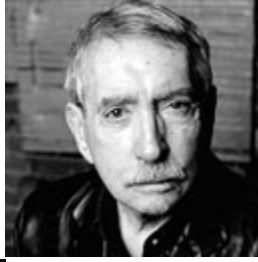
There is something very strange yet very compelling about Edward Albee’s The Zoo Story. A period in time that seems a world away, but under the surface was closer than you think; this is an opportunity to catch that rare glimpse you’ve been missing.

The premise seems simple: as one man enjoys a book on a secluded Central Park bench, another happens upon him with an itch for conversation. Peter is very much the straight-laced family man from the East Side, Jerry the boarder from the West. Jerry is curious and social, Peter polite; when Peter indulges Jerry in his desire to tell him about his visit to the Zoo, he inevitably changes his life forever...

An hour of viewing that will have you thinking about it for much longer, The Zoo Story is captivating. You will spend the entire time waiting for something you can’t quite put your finger on, and when it does happen, you’re least expecting it.

2) Next, write a review of a film or book that you have recently seen or read. While writing try to copy the style from the review by Kosta Jaric.

Task: Fact-finding about the Author of “The Zoo Story”



- 1) Check the internet for information about Edward Albee's life and work
- 2) Refine your search for information about Edward Albee by combining several search words, for example Edward Albee biography, Edward Albee, The Zoo Story, Theatre of the Absurd etc.
- 3) Write a biography of Edward Albee using at least three sources on the Internet. The biography should include: an outline of his life, education, writing career (not just a list of titles) and an evaluation of the importance of his work (based on the opinion of others). The biography should not be longer than 400 words. It must include a list of source material.
- 4) Next, compare your biography with that of another student in your class. In what ways are your biographies similar? In what ways are they different? Finally, compare your list of source material and discuss strengths and weaknesses of the different sources.

Task: True or false about Edward Albee?

1) True or false about the author of "The Zoo Story"? Search Google for information about the author and correct the false statements:

a. *He was born Edward Harvey*

b. *His first play, The Zoo Story, won Albee an international reputation as a fearless observer of human alienation.*

c. *Albee has written many novels and poems*

d. *At the age of 35 he wrote "The Zoo Story"*

e. *In 2005 he wrote the play "At Home in the Zoo"*

f. *Albee's play "Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf" was not a success*

2) Add three more false statements about the author. Next, let one of your classmates correct the false statements.

READING COMPREHENSION

Task: While reading work out your own vocabulary for “The Zoo Story”

1) While reading the play, “The Zoo Story”, make your own glossary.

My own vocabulary to “The Zoo Story”:

Page 27: *a prosthesis*

Page 20: *irksome*

Page 30: *patronizing*

Etc.

2) Next, translate the words into Danish and find an English synonym(s).

Task: The Setting Central to the Plot

1) Describe and comment on the time and setting of the play “The Zoo Story”. The definition of the literary term may help you: “*Setting is the time and place of the story. More precisely, it may be the geographical place, the environment in which the characters live, the historical period, the season of the year or the social conditions of the character. Dramas are generally confined to more limited settings than other forms of literature, like novels, which play out in readers’ imaginations*”.

2) Explain the difference between the literary terms “plot” and “setting”.

3) The term “setting” is often used as a mirror to reflect the psychological state of characters.

Discuss how does the setting in “The Zoo Story” mirror the characters’ states of mind? State page references.

4) Comment on the following statement: “*He (Albee) doesn’t like a lot of lighting effects or music. He thinks the audience is going to wonder who’s pressing the buttons, and that it takes away from the reality. I’ve found that it’s much better to just let the play come out of the dark and speak for itself*”.

5) Try and relate the following statement to the plot: “*Two animals meet in a park. The one knows he is an animal. The other one does not know*”

6) Why do Jerry and Peter meet in a park? Why not in a room with four walls?

7) Write down your associations when you hear the word “park”. Relate your associations to “The Zoo Story”.

Task: Reading Comprehension – My Questions to the Zoo Story

- 1) Individually: While reading the play “The Zoo Story” write down questions to the play.
- 2) In Class: Ask one of your class-mates to answer the questions you have written down and vice versa.

My Questions to the Zoo Story:

- a) *Why does Jerry go to the Zoo?*
 - b) *What is his need to tell Peter about it?*
 - c) *What is Jerry trying to tell Peter with “The Story of Jerry and the Dog”?*
 - d) *What may be the reasons for Jerry’s inability to make friends?*
 - e) *Why does Jerry suddenly begin to tickle Peter?*
 - f) *How does Jerry’s experience with the dog influence the way he treats Peter?*
 - g) *What do we get to know about Jerry’s social and family background?*
 - h) *What do we get to know about Peter’s social and family background?*
 - i) *Now ... your turn to continue ..*
- 3) In Pairs: Compare and contrast – and write down three extra questions to the play

Compositional Analysis

Task: Development of Plot

- 1) Comment on the way “The Zoo Story” is structured. Is it a linear composition? Why/why not?
- 2) Discuss: The time span (duration) of the play (1 hour? 2 hours? 7 hours? Or?)
- 2) Divide the one-act play into different scenes.
- 3) Next, give each scene a headline and state page references
- 4) Re-arrange the following synopsis (storyboard) of the play so that it follows the development of the Zoo story. Remember to state page references:
 1. *The story of Jerry and the dog*
 3. *Peter gets to know Jerry*
 4. *Jerry provokes Peter into a fight*
 5. *Jerry’s living conditions and past*
 6. *Jerry dies*

Task: Compositional Analysis

1) Often a dramatic play can be divided into: an exposition – a conflict- a turning point/ a climax – a resolution.

Please consider:

- If we find any exposition in “The Zoo Story”. If so, how does this show?
- If there is a conflict in “The Zoo Story”? If yes, do you consider the main conflict to be of political or psychological nature or maybe something else? Please explain:
- If any climax in the play? – please give/state page reference
- If there is a resolution?
- How would you explain the ending of the play?

Characters and Relationships:

Task: Compare and Contrast: Jerry and Peter

1) The following statements about Jerry and Peter have all been mixed up. Your task is to find out which lines go with Jerry and which lines go with Peter. Remember to state references to the text:

Jerry?	Peter?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- work: unknown- married, two daughters, two cats, two parakeets- lives on 74th street; east side of Manhattan (posh area)- works in a small publishing house- insecure- embarrassed- polite- (rather) conservative- inexperienced- reticent- ironical/cynical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- a man in late thirties- a man in his early forties- unmarried- lives on the west side of Manhattan; lives in a run-down (rooming-house, poor neighbourhood)- serious person- verbally aggressive and he resorts to physical violence- unscrupulous and inquisitive: he forces his company upon Peter/he forces Peter to converse with him- childish

- insecure	- he is dominating
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2) In Pairs: Add more lines about Jerry and Peter.

3) In Pairs: Compare and contrast the two characters. Take your point of departure in the above lines.

Task: Jerry's Problems and Aims

1) Try to arrange Jerry's problems on a scale from minor to major

Jerry's problems:

- he feels lonely, lacks company and has no one to talk to
- he feels misunderstood
- he desperately tries to come into contact with other people
- he is an outsider, utterly depressed and unhappy
- he is unable to establish a relationship with other people

2) In Pairs: Comment on Jerry's problems

3) Try to arrange Jerry's aims on a scale from minor to major

Jerry's aim(s) is :

- to establish a relationship with another person
- to make Peter aware of the fact that other people may be less fortunate than he is
- to make Peter understand himself more fully
- to insult Peter

4) In Pairs: Comment on and discuss Jerry's aim(s).

Task: Jerry and his Relationship to other People

- 1) Characterize the place and the people where Jerry lives. State page references.
- 2) Characterize Jerry's relationship to the people. State page references.
- 3) Comment on the following statement: "*The people in the rooming-house can be likened to a "human zoo"; the rooms are cages; the people can be compared to animals in captivity*"
- 4) What do the tenants of the rooming-house seem to have in common?
- 5) In Pairs. Discuss: Why does Jerry live among these very different people in a rooming-house?

Task: Static and Dynamic Characters

Dynamic characters change as a result of the experiences they have. Static characters remain untouched by the events of the story. They do not learn from their experiences and consequently they remain unchanged.

1) In Pairs. Discuss: Is Jerry a dynamic or static/untouched character? Why/why not?

- 2) And what about Peter, is he the same character throughout the play, or does he develop as a human being? In other words can he be characterized as a dynamic or static character – why/why not?
- 3) If Peter changes throughout the play. How would you define the kind of change(s) that takes place in Peter?

Task: Writing Character Sketches

1) What is understood by the term a protagonist and by the term an antagonist? Who is the protagonist in “The Zoo Story”? And who is the antagonist?

2) Write a character sketch of Jerry.

The following list of words may be of help to you:

Unscrupulous; inquisitive; ironical, cynical; dominating; a verbally aggressive man; unmarried; unhappy; odd behaviour; mean; vicious; poorly dressed; in his late thirties; careless; a chaotic life; once handsome; a “savage” man, in touch with his inner life; lonely; not many friends, uncivilized, trying to find true intimacy with another person; no money, a tramp on the run; he represents the real values in life; etc.

3) Write a character sketch of Peter.

The following list of words may be of help to you:

Publishing executive; wife, organized; two daughters; two parakeets; two cats; insecure; polite; embarrassed; conservative; inexperienced, reticent; handsome; nice; perfect; innocent; despair beneath the surface of middle-class married life; lives on the “surface” of life; wearing a civilized “mask”; untouched; unmoved; tidy; unconscious of being alive; bland; everything in his life seems to be “sufficient”; an uneventful life; peaceful; calm; too civilized, a fine husband, settled; privileged; spiritual emptiness; organized; alienated from himself; living with things; he represents the artificial values in life, etc.

3) Present your character sketches in class.

Task: The Relationship between Jerry and Peter in “The Zoo Story”

1) How would you characterize the relationship between Jerry and Peter? Take your point of departure in the following lines and please account for your choice.

In my opinion the relationship between Jerry and Peter can be characterized as:

- *a partnership of equals because ...*
- *a father- son relationship because ..*
- *a homosexual relationship because ...*
- *a father/child relationship because ..*
- *a master/servant relationship because*

Task: Discuss Jerry as a real Hero – or maybe even a real Christ figure?

- 1) Discuss: Is Jerry a real American hero? Take your point of departure in the following lines:
1. *Jerry is too well- drawn a character – self-pitying and aggressive, self-deluding and forlorn – to become the conventional “hero”*
 2. *Jerry is a real American hero, a product of the American Way of Life – a permanent transient, and his home is the sickening rooming-houses on the West Side of New York city*
- 2) Albee, himself, has once said about ‘Jerry’s death; “*Though he dies he passes on an awareness of life to the other character in the play*”. Discuss this statement in class and remember to state reference to the text.
- 3) Discuss Jerry as a Christ/Jesus Figure – salvation through sacrifice. Does Jerry accept death for man’s salvation? (Peter’s salvation?)

Task: Jerry and his inability to make friends

- 1) Discuss: What may be the reasons for Jerry’ s inability to make friends/for his loneliness? The following lines may help you get started:
- a) - *childhood experiences (no real family life in his youth)*
 - b) - *psychological problems (he cannot deal with other people)*
 - c) - *anonymity/impersonality of a big city*
 - d) - *alienation of the individual in big cities/in modern society*
 - e) - *the big gap between the haves (like e.g Peter) and the have-nots (like eg. Jerry)*
- 2) In Pairs. Discuss: Why is Jerry so eager to make friends with Peter?

Task: Talking about Jerry and his death

1) In Pairs. Discuss:

Does Jerry achieve his aim to establish a relationship with another human being? Take your point of departure in the following statements.

yes	no
- Jerry thanks (/likes) Peter; Peter has comforted him	- the relationship does not last (a relationship is something mutual (<i>here</i> : one-sided); Peter does not like Jerry

- Jerry has succeeded in establishing a relationship with another human being (with Peter)

- a relationship is something spontaneous, develops, is not planned
- Peter is shocked, not touched by Jerry
- after the "story" with the dog Jerry is disillusioned and plans his death carefully

- 2) In Pairs. Discuss: Did Jerry plan his own death right from the very beginning? Why/why not?
- 3) In Pairs. Discuss: Why does Jerry want to kill Peter – why did he want to kill the dog?

Task: Talking about Peter's Character

A snob is someone who thinks that he/she is better than other people and does not want anything to do with them.

1) Which of the following sorts of snobbery do you think are the most prevalent? Choose one and explain why you choose it:

- a) *People who feel superior because they are rich?*
- b) *People who feel superior because of their family background?*
- c) *People who feel superior because they have a higher education?*
- d) *People who feel superior because they are regarded as more beautiful?*

2) How does Peter in “The Zoo Story” come across as being snobbish? Remember to state references to the text.

Task: The Characters in “The Zoo Story”– a Question of Trust?

1) Discuss: Are the characters in “The Zoo Story” to be trusted? Why/why not? State references in support of your argumentation.

Is Peter e.g. to be trusted when he says to Jerry: *“I ... I don't understand ... I don't think I (Now almost fearfully). Why did you tell me all of this?”*

Is Jerry e.g. to be trusted when he says to Peter: *“I'm crazy, you bastard”*

How does Jerry know that Peter wanted boys but has two girls?

Jerry: But you wanted boys.

Peter: Well...naturally, every man wants a son, but....(p.28)

“You couldn't even get your wife with a male child” (p.45)

2) What does the line *“You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don't see it on your TV tonight”*, (said by Jerry) mean? Take your point of departure in one of the following statements:

- That Jerry is mad – not to be trusted?
- That something sensational happened at the Zoo
- That something sensational is going to happen

- 3) At a certain point Jerry says: “*Animals are indifferent to me ... like people..most of the time*”. Do we, as readers, trust this statement? Why/why not?
- 4) At a certain point Jerry says about his background: “ *... and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit*”. Do we, as readers, trust this statement? Why/why not?

Task: Language and Characters

- 1) In Pairs: Find places where Jerry seems to talk down to Peter – and the other way around. Describe the language used by the characters in these situations.
- 2) Is there any connection between the way the characters´ speak and their mental states of mind? Remember to give examples.
- 3) Does the language used by the characters in “The Zoo Story” tell us something about their social background? If so, give examples of how Jerry speaks, and of how Peter speaks.

Task: To Attack or not to attack another human being

- 1) In Pairs. Discuss: Why does Jerry attack Peter in the end?
 1. *Jerry´s attack on Peter is an attack on society in which there are scarcely any real relationships*
 2. *Jerry´s own murder is a last desperate attempt to make contact with another human being - to make real contact with a fellow human being, Jerry has to take his own life.*
 3. *Jerry´s death is an illustration of the impossibility of living in accordance with the values that he represents.*
 4. *Without killing his hero, Albee would not have been able to make the point that Jerry could not have got through to Peter in any other way.*
 5. *Jerry confronts the vegetative Peter, forces him to stand his ground, dies finally on his own knife held in Peter´s hand. In the suicidal act, Jerry becomes a scapegoat who gives his own life so that Peter will be knocked out of his complacency and finally learn how to LIVE.*
- 2) Jerry attacks Peter and Peter fights back leaving the knife in Jerry. Comment on the final words said by Jerry to Peter : “*And Peter, I´ll tell you something now, you´re not really a vegetable; it´s all right, you´re an animal, too. But you´d better hurry now, Peter...*”
- 3) Could Peter have avoided fighting back? What do you think?

Task: Jerry´s Monologue (The Dog Story)

- 1) What is true and what is false in the story of Jerry and the dog?
 - *Jerry decides that he will first try to kill the dog with kindness, and if that fails he will simply*

kill it

- Jerry is fascinated by the dog's love for other people?
- The dog dies in the end
- The dog does not die, nor does it come to love Jerry
- To make good friends Jerry feeds the dog hamburgers
- Jerry wants to the dog to love him

2) Discuss: What is the purpose of the Dog Story?

3) How can the play itself be said to have been represented in miniature in the Dog Story? Please explain in your own words.

4) Write a brief commentary on Jerry's monologue (the Dog Story), mentioning features such as style of writing, mood, dialogue, characters, and conflict.

5) The following references (said by Jerry) are all mixed up. Your task is to place them in chronological order as if you were telling Jerry's Dog Story from beginning to the end.

Text references:

- *I came in the door and advanced, unafraid, to the center of the entrance hall. The beast was there looking at me ..*
- *She said I was a liar and that I probably wanted the dog to die*
- *I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves*
- *On my way back to the rooming-house, I kneaded the hamburger and the rat poison between my hands*

4) Now, do the same and tell Albee's "The Zoo Story". In Pairs: One student finds the quotes and mixes them all up. The other student tells Albee's story from beginning to the end.

5) The dog reflects with deadly accuracy all of the qualities which Jerry finds in the animals of his own species (his parents, the landlady etc.). What are these qualities?

6) Discuss: Why does Jerry suddenly start tickling Peter? How can this "tickling contact" that Jerry achieves with Peter be comparable to the contact Jerry has achieved with the dog?

7) Comment on the following statement: *The story of the dog in The Zoo story is the emotional turning point of the play. Much has been said about Albee's storytelling technique, but what needs to be stressed further is the fact that the stories are always an integral part of the action. They are always the key to meaning, significantly placed to provide the greatest dramatic tension – the story of the landlady's dog rises out of Jerry's efforts to "reach" Peter ..*

8) Comment on and explain Jerry's theory (learned from the dog experience). *"I have learned ..(Jerry says) that neither kindness or cruelty, independent of each other creates any effect beyond themselves and I have learned that the two combined together, at the same time are the teaching emotion" .*

9) In Class: Practice acting out the essential monologue said by Jerry. Think especially of voice and intonation.

Task: Mr. Peter "Right"

1) Write down all the "right" things that Peter has or does. Fill in the gaps in the following lines
a. Peter reads the "right"

b. Peter lives on the “right” side of the

c. Peter has the “right” number of

d. Now your turn ... Peter ..

2) In Pairs. Discuss: Why do people need to surround themselves with the “right” things?

3) In Pairs. Discuss: Is Mr. Peter “Right” a happy man? Why/why not?

4) In Pairs: How does Mr. Peter “Right” talk to other people – here Jerry? Take your point of departure in e.g. the following page references: p. 30, p.43, p.45.

Task: The Animal in Man.

1) Fill in the gaps (X?) with a name. Write either the name of Peter or Jerry. Next, substantiate your answer by referring to the text.

1. X? is one of the “people” who is separated from the animal in himself and others
 2. X? is an animal (X knows his own nature) who fights separation from the other animals.
 3. X? is determined to discover the essential nature of the human condition. Therefore, X strips himself of gods, things, possessions, obvious relationships.
 4. The same urge for truth that enables X to know himself/ the “animal” in himself makes communication between him and the other animals almost impossible, for the truth about human relationships that X recognizes is that men are islands irrevocably cut off from one another. Contact is from time to time made, but always with great pain and difficulty and never with any assurance that it can be sustained.
 5. X is self-isolated. His life of things and prejudices protects him from himself and from the world (other animals).
 6. X does not live out the animal in himself. Moreover, he is a very polite man, maybe even too polite and too afraid of anyone’s bad opinion to ignore them. Once engaged in conversation he tries to avoid talking about any subjects that has real relevance, anything that has roots penetrating the carefully mask which he presents to the world, and even to himself.
- 2) Discuss: Has Jerry found the “animal man” in himself? If yes – does that make him a happier man? A happier man than Peter?
- 3) Jerry, Mr. “Savage” Man, does not at all speak and behave in a nice way. Find the places in the text where Jerry calls Peter: *a bastard, a vegetable, where he spits in Peter’s face, where he pokes and punches Peter, where he threatens Peter with his knife and where he provokes Peter to kill him.*

Task: Talking about Characters - Panel Discussion

- 1) Divide the class into two groups (facing one another in class). One group must argue in favour of Jerry attacking Peter. The other group must argue against Peter participating in the fight.
- 2) Select a chairman or chairwoman to organize the debate. Select a secretary to make a written discussion account of the meeting (e.g. using a laptop). Account for the highlights and the different points of view as the debate progresses. Make sure that everybody gets the written account after the discussion.
- 3) Finally, discuss who won the debate and why.

The Idea of Role-playing in “The Zoo Story”

Task: Talking about Character and Dialogue

1) Discuss: Why does Peter withdraw from the conversation in the following dialogue.

Jerry: “And you´re not going to have any more kids, are you?”

Peter: (a bit distantly). No. No more (Then back and irksome) Why did you say that? How would you know that?

Jerry: The way you cross your legs perhaps; something in the voice. Or maybe I´m just guessing. Is it your wife?

Peter (furious). That´s none of your business. Do you understand?

2) Find other places in the text where either Peter or Jerry withdraw from the conversation.

3) How would you define Jerry´s tone of voice in the following dialogue? What are the characters´ feelings towards each other? Act-out the dialogue working with the voice quality and how it may change. Try saying the lines in different styles. Vocabulary to describe voice quality: high, low, sweet, clear, rough, etc.

Jerry: Don´t go. You´re not thinking of going are you?

Peter: (Seriously). Yes

Jerry: And fact is better left to fiction. You´re right, Peter. Well, what I have been meaning to tell you about is the dog; I shall, now.

Peter (Nervously): Oh yes, the dog

Jerry: Don´t go. You are not thinking of going, are you?

Peter (Nervously): Well ... no, I don´t think so

Jerry (As if to a child): Because after I tell you about the dog, do you know what then? Then ... then I´ll tell you about what happened at the zoo.

Peter (Laughing faintly): You´re ... you´re full of stories, aren´t you?

Jerry: You don´t have to listen. Nobody is holding you here; remember that. Keep that in mind.

Peter (Irritably): I know that (p.35)

Task: A Study of the Power-relationship between Jerry and Peter:

- 1) Explain how the dominance and submission relationship between the two characters is established throughout Act 1.
- 2) Discuss: What is / becomes Jerry's motivation for participating in the relationship with Peter?
- 2) Study Act 1 and consider how tension is built up in their relationship.
- 3) Study Act 1 and find examples where the tension in their relationship seems to come out.
- 4) The form the dialogue takes in "The Zoo Story" also seems to mirror a game-playing/ power-relationship. Discuss in class who does most of the interrupting in "The Zoo Story"? Hereby exerting his dominance in conversation.
- 5) Comment on and study the absurd power- act-defending- bench dialogue in "The Zoo Story". How is tension built up and carried out in this dialogue? (p.43).

Task: Tone and Role-playing in "The Zoo Story"

- 1) Comment on and discuss the way Albee opens his play.
- 2) Act out the very first dialogue between Jerry and Peter in "The Zoo Story".
- 3) Characterize the language and style of the opening lines of the play "The Zoo Story". How does Peter speak? How does Jerry speak? How would you define the tone of Jerry's voice and of Peter's voice in the opening lines (e.g. calm, angry, menacing, hysterical, persuasive, controlled or?)

Opening lines of "The Zoo Story":

JERRY: I've been to the zoo. [PETER doesn't notice.] I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!

PETER: Hm? . . . What? . . . I'm sorry, were you talking to me?

JERRY: I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north?

PETER: [puzzled] North? Why. . . I . . . I think so. Let me see.

JERRY: [pointing past the audience] Is that Fifth avenue?

PETER: Why ya; yes, it is.

JERRY: And what is that cross street there; that one, to the right?

PETER: That? Oh, that's Seventy-fourth Street.

JERRY: And the zoo is around Sixty-fifth Street; so, I've been walking north.

PETER: [anxious to get back to his reading] Yes; it would seem so.

JERRY: Good old north.

PETER: [lightly, by reflex] Ha, ha.

JERRY: [after a slight pause] But not due north.

PETER: I . . . well, no, not due north; but, we ... call it north. It's northerly.

JERRY: [watches as PETER, anxious to dismiss him, prepares his pipe] Well, boy you're not going to get lung cancer, are you?

PETER: [looks up, a little annoyed, then smiles] No, sir. Not from this.

JERRY: No, sir. What you'll probably get is cancer of the mouth, and then you'll have to wear one of those things Freud wore after they took one whole side of his jaw away, What do they call those things ?

PETER: [uncomfortable] A prosthesis?

JERRY: The very thing! A prosthesis. You're an educated man, aren't you? Are you a doctor?

PETER: Oh, no; no. I read about it somewhere: Time magazine, I think. [He turns to his book.]

JERRY: Well, Time magazine isn't for blockheads.

PETER: No, I suppose not.

4) As you read through Act 1 of “The Zoo Story” note every time there is a mood change or a new note of any kind. Try to explain why the change of voice takes place.

Discuss: What do you think is the effect of this change?

Task: Themes, Symbolism, Beckett Influence and Critical Reception

1) Comment on the following quote said by Edward Albee: " *There is something terrifying about how out of touch we tend to be with this kind of uncensored release and reaching out. It's one of the most terrifying things about "civilized" upper-class society. It's what is haunting Jerry, and it's why he tries so desperately, and with such vivid ferocity, to really tear down the bars of Peter's cage to make him truly connect to another human being—to make him come out of his well-heeled, well-polished shell and see what it feels like to be truly present to life and all its pain, its messiness, its contradictions, its underprivileged, its chaos*".

2) The theme directs and shapes the subject matter of a story, play or poem. It is the view of life or the insights into human experiences that the author wishes to communicate to his readers. If the theme of a work is clearly stated in the text, we may refer to it as an overt theme. When the theme is hidden in the action, characters, setting and language of a story, we may refer to it as one implied in the text.

In Pairs: Comment on the theme(s) of the play. How do the following themes apply to the play? *A play about dominance and submission –dehumanisation in a commercial/material world - the question of an anxiety over social class differences – the hollowness of the American Dream- human isolation- loneliness- the silence and violence of language – a power –struggle relationship – failure of communication – alienation from society – physical and mental violence of character(s) – how people use language for personal advantage- men are more animal than they care to admit*

3) In Class: Discuss what is the overt theme and the implied theme in the play, if possible, reach agreement.

4) Students are often confused between the term “plot” and the term “theme”, but themes explore ideas, and can be defined as the main point of a work of literature. Plots simply relate what happens in a very obvious pattern of events and provide means to explore primary themes. Comment on the plot of “The Zoo Story”, i.e. relate what happens in the story. Next, explain how the plot in “The Zoo Story” can be said to provide means to explore the themes (major/minor) of the story.

5) Some critics argue that “The Zoo Story” is concerned with human isolation - *that the world is a zoo with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals*. Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?

6) Discuss: What are the “bars” which separate Peter from his own nature and from other people (here: Jerry)?

7) Discuss: Has Jerry managed to break down his “bars”? Why/why not?

8) Discuss: Does Peter get to know his own animal nature? Or is he more than happy living in a world separated by “bars”. Why/why not?

- 9) The Theatre of the Absurd has often been defined as: theatre after the death of God; with minimal action/setting; theatre that attempts to convey the situation of mankind in an absurd universe without meaning, emptiness of dialogue, etc. It has often been said that Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter have influenced Albee's style of writing. Discuss: Is Albee a "real" absurdist? Why/why not? In Pairs. Discuss: Are there any absurd elements to be found "In the Zoo Story"?
- 10) Comment on the following statement: "*Ultimately, the two men in The Zoo story face the fact that their lives are both meaningless, and Peter must come to grips with the fact that he is not all that different from Jerry*".

Task: Visual Presentation of the Major Themes

- a. In small groups, search the Internet (e.g Google Pictures) to find a work of art (e.g. a painting, a drawing, a photograph, a sculpture, an engraving etc.) which can be connected to one of the major themes in "The Zoo Story" in some way.
- b. Be ready to explain the connection between your group's work of art and the major theme you have selected.
- c. In groups, search YouTube for a song, a sound clip or some other video segment which connects to one of the major themes of this text. Be prepared to explain the connection between your group's song (or sound clip/video) and what you believe to be a major theme in the play "The Zoo Story"
- d. Comment on and discuss the following quote: "*Albee's play The Zoo Story has a timeless quality about it because it has timeless themes*". What is meant by "timeless themes"? Why is "The Zoo Story" still as relevant today as it was in the 1950s?

Task: Definition of a Literary Term

Definition of a literary term: "The conflict in a work of fiction is the issue to be resolved in the story. It usually occurs between two characters, the protagonist and the antagonist, or between the protagonist and society – or the protagonist and himself or herself. "Conflict" is the driving force behind many plots. It may come from:

- a) Outside: the main character may be in conflict with external forces such as for instance his family, society, physical hardship or nature.*
- b) Within: The character may be forced to make a difficult choice, or he may have to question his/hers values or beliefs.*

1) Apply the following definition of the literary term "conflict" to "The Zoo Story". I.e comment on and describe the kind of conflict that Jerry and Peter face in "The Zoo Story". Remember to state references to the text.

Language, Style and Grammar

Task: Vocabulary- Building

1) Fill in the sentences below with a word from the following list to make them logical.
List of words: love - amounted to – garbage – patronizing - concentrate – bewildered-
indifferent - kill – cage- rotten – entertain.

1. *Animals are to me like people, most of the time*
 2. *If you think about it this dog had what an antipathy towards me*
 3. *I don't think the landlady ever eats anything but ...*
 4. *I mean, I can longer at looking into a dog's face than a dog can look into mine.*
 5. *I had tried to and I had tried to and both had been unsuccessful by themselves.*
 6. *She had forgotten her lust, and her eyes were wide open for the first time*
 7. *My daughters keep them in a in their bedroom.*
 8. *And when you are bewildered you become*
 9. *The black queen has teeth, which is rare.*
 10. *These people a lot.*
- 2) Next, translate the sentences into Danish.

A Study of Black Humour or a Comedy Thriller?

- 1) Give examples where the reader willingly laughs at the many exchanges between Jerry and Peter. See for instance top on page 30.
- 2) What else brings forth the black humour and wit in "The Zoo Story"?
- 3) What is it that brings an abrupt end to both comedy and laughter in "The Zoo Story"? Remember to state page references

Task: Albee's Style of Writing

Style refers to the way a writer says what he wants to say. It is usually analysed in terms of diction. The term diction refers to the choice of words in a literary work. A writer's work may be described, for example, as abstract or concrete, colloquial/informal or formal, technical or common, literal or figurative.

1) Discuss. In Pairs: How would you characterize Albee's language and style of writing?

2) Find examples of the use of informal language (slang) in "The Zoo Story". Remember to state page references.

Informal language to be found in "The Zoo Story" please continue the list:

- *Give me a beer, or where's the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy (p.29)*

- *Well, Time magazine isn't for blockheads (p.28)*

- *I suppose when you were a kid you and your pals passed them around, or you had a pack of your own (p.34)*

... please continue

3) Choose the words you think describe Albee's style of writing, and then discuss your choice with the rest of the class. State quotes/lines to substantiate your choice of words. Look up the words you do not know: *elegant – subjective- aggressive- funny- thoughtful- expressive- scientific – ironic- objective- imaginative – self-ironical- contrasting- informative – retrospective- provocative- complicated- argumentative- simple- colourful- poetic- metaphorical – political- entertaining – factual...add more words yourself*

4) Point out (find) an essential dialogue in "The Zoo Story" e.g. between Jerry and Peter. Consider what elements in the dialogue contribute to building up pathos (i.e. passions, deep feelings, tenderness, pity, sympathetic sorrow etc.) from the reader. Study e.g. the very intense dialogue on page 43:

Peter: People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything

Jerry: (Laughs) Imbecile! You're slow-witted

Peter: Stop that!

Jerry: You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground.

Peter: (Intense). Now you listen to me. I've put up with you all afternoon.

Jerry: Not really

Peter: LONG ENOUGH. I've put up with you long enough. I've listened to you because you seemed ... well, because I thought you wanted to talk to somebody.

Jerry: You put things well; economically, and yet ... oh, what is the word I want to put justice to your ... JESUS, you make me sick ... get off here and give me my bench

Peter: MY BENCH

Jerry: (Pushes Peter off the bench). Get out of my sight ..

Task: Talking about and Working with Grammar and Style of Writing

1) In Class: Talk about what is a so-called linker/ a so-called run-on? Next, discuss the function of these linkers in the play "The Zoo Story". Remember to state page references.

2) In Class: Talk about what is a gambit. Find examples of the many gambits used in the play.

Before starting, in class talk about what is a so-called gambit? Next, discuss the function of these gambits in the play. Please remember to state page references.

3) In Class: Talk about what is a noun. Next, discuss the function of the use of nouns in the following from “The Zoo Story”:

Jerry: Well, no, it isn't an apartment in the East Seventies. But, then again, I don't have one wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets. What I do have, I have toilet articles, a few clothes, a hot plate that I'm not supposed to have, a can opener, one that works with a key, you know; a knife, two forks, and two spoons, one small, one large; three plates, a cup, a saucer, a drinking glass, two picture frames, both empty, eight or nine books, a pack of pornographic playing cards ... etc. (see page 32).

4) Turn the following excerpt from “The Zoo Story” from the past tense into the present tense:

“When I got back from the rooming-house the dog was waiting for me. I half opened the door that led into the entrance hall, and there it was; waiting for me. It figured. I went in, very cautiously, and I had the hamburgers, you remember; I opened the bag, and I set the meat down about twelve feet from where the dog was snarling at me. Like so! He snarled; stopped, snarling, sniffed; moved slowly; then faster; then faster toward the meat. Well, when he got to it he stopped, and he looked at me. I smiled; but tentatively, you understand. He turned his face back to the hamburgers, smelled, sniffed some more, and then ... RRRRRAAGGGGHHHH, like that ... he tore into them”, (p.37).

5) In Class: What is an adjective? Next, translate the following adjectives into Danish:

“But the landlady is a fat, ugly, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag og garbage”, (p.34)

6) Find adjectives to describe Peter's mood when Jerry tells him that he will have the bench to himself (p.42). Next, find adjectives to describe Jerry's mood when Peter accuses him of being a bum (p.43).

Turning Stories into Theatre- Acting and Reading aloud

Task: Sound Effects

Divide the class into groups of three or four: Ask each group to decide where in the play “*The Zoo Story*” it would be interesting or helpful to introduce sound effects etc. They should nominate one person to write director's notes, with a list of the “effects” and the event/moment in the chosen pages.

Possible noise effects:

Sound effects and /or music: clap-stamp-hiss-whisper-squeak-scratch-knock on table-hammer the table with a fist-whistle etc.

Musical instruments: drums, whistles, bells etc.

Exclamations: OOOh!!, AAhh!!, Eh!!! Etc.

Speaking in chorus

1) In Pairs: Ask students to practice reading the chosen pages aloud making the noises for themselves at each point they have marked.

In Class: After about 15 min, invite each group to perform their pages. Ask each group to listen and note down the effects they liked.

2) In Class: Ask the class to choose the noises they thought were the most effective.

3) In Class: Devise a class-version of the students' notes, and set the story up with the whole class performing the noise effects.

Task: Act-it-out/ Working with Dialogue and Subtext

Timing, stress and pitch are important in all forms of drama. During rehearsals the director and actors will walk round with the script and work out issues such as stress, pace, pausing, volume and pitch.

- 1) Your job is to work in pairs and choose 15-20 lines of the play “*At the Zoo*” and make notes about the timing, stress and pitch.
- 2) Next, try to perform the lines following the indications.
- 3) Tell students to dramatize an excerpt of “*The Zoo Story*”. Next, group students in three. Explain to the students that one of them is the theatrical director who has to cast the characters’ roles within his or her group. In class: Ask students to perform their excerpt from the play. In class: Discuss, the performance and make the director explain how he or she chose to present it in that way.
- 4) Act out the very intense “question-answer- dialogue” between Jerry and Peter on page 43 and continue page 44. Consider the tone of the dialogue. How should the characters speak their lines? What do the characters say, as opposed to what they intend, in other words find the subtext (the unsaid, the hidden intention of what the characters actually say). The dialogue starts with Jerry saying on page 43:
Jerry: JESUS you make me sick ... get off here and give me my bench
Peter. MY BENCH!
Jerry: (Pushes Peter off the bench) get out of my sight
Peter (Regaining his position) God da ...mn you. That’s enough! (continues page 44)
- 5) What do the characters say, as opposed to what they intend to say - in other words find the subtext (i.e the unsaid, the hidden intension of what the characters actually say) in the above very intense dialogue.
- 6) Next, write down the subtext.

Task: Reading an Excerpt from the play

- 1) In Pairs: Practice reading an excerpt from “*The Zoo Story*”. Choose the excerpt yourself. Focus for instance on the very intense dialogue on page 45. It starts with Peter who says “STOP”.
 - a) First, read the dialogue in a neutral tone of voice.
 - b) Next, read the dialogue in an angry tone of voice.
 - c) And finally in a happy (humorous) tone of voice. Think about tone of voice, as well as speed (slow or fast) and volume (loud or soft).
- 2) In Pairs. Discuss: Did the change in tone of voice – change your view upon the way the characters behave towards each other?

Task: Talking to the Characters /Actors

- 1) If you had the chance of talking to either Jerry or Peter: Are there any lines in the play that you would like them to explain to you? Is there anything else you would like to ask them about? In Pairs: Write down three questions to the characters
- 2) If you come in and watch the play “The Zoo Story” being performed it is possible for you to arrange an informal talk with the actors after the performance. If you had the chance to speak to the actors, what you would like to ask them about? And why?

Post- reading “The Zoo Story”

For Oral Discussion and Presentation

Task: How were you left feeling at the end of the play?

- a) In Class: Discuss. When does the climax (turning point) occur in “The Zoo Story”?
- b) Individually: Choose three words from the list which best describe your state of mind at the end of the play. Explain your choice of words. Finally, add one yourself:
Desperate – uplifted – heavy-hearted – hopeful- resigned – disheartened – desolate – dejected – light-hearted – depressed – accepting – confident – optimistic – numb- dazed – broken-hearted – melancholic – distressed – aggrieved – woeful – disillusioned – sad.
- c). In Pairs/groups. Discuss, and if possible, reach agreement.
- d) Comment on the ending of the play. Did the ending come as a big surprise to you? Why/why not?
- e) Jerry says to Peter near the end of the play: “*You are an animal too*”, (p.46). Why does Jerry compare Peter to an animal?
- f) Comment on the quote: “*Then Peter screams, pulls away, leaving the knife in Jerry. Jerry is motionless, on point. Then he, too screams, and it must be the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal*”, (p.46)

Task: Comment on Quotes by Edward Albee

Quotes:

- *"I write to find out what I'm talking about."*
- *"What could be worse than getting to the end of your life and realizing you hadn't lived it"*
- *"Good writers define reality; bad ones merely restate it. A good writer turns fact into truth; a bad writer will, more often than not, accomplish the opposite."*
- *"It's one of those things a person has to do; sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back a short distance correctly."*

- 1) A lot of critics have said that Jerry gets what he deserves. Do you agree or disagree? Why/why not?
- 2) A lot of critics have said that Jerry goes too far in trying to make “friends” with Peter. Do you agree or disagree? Why/why not?
- 3) A lot of critics have said that both characters are deeply flawed, lost souls on the wrong track. Throughout the play they rarely agree or understand each other. In Pairs. Discuss - and try and come to an agreement.
- 4) A lot of critics have said that Peter really tries to help Jerry. Comment on and discuss his advice to Jerry: *“People can’t have everything they want. You should know that; it’s a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can’t have everything*
- 5.) A lot of critics have said that Jerry tries to help Peter to become more engaged in life, in other people. Comment on and discuss Jerry’s verbal attacks on Peter: *“.. You have everything in the world you want; you have told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo. You have everything, and now you want this bench ... This is probably the first time in your life you’ve had anything more trying to face than changing your cats’ toilet box. Stupid! Don’t you have any idea, not even the slightest, what other people need?”*, (p.44)

Task: Ask students to tell a “Chain-Story” in Class.

- 1) The story may begin with the line from “The Zoo Story” where Peter, asks Jerry if he is going to kill him (page 45). One of the students begins the story with this line and stops after a few sentences. The next student picks up the thread and continues, then stops ... and so on until the story comes to a natural end.
- 3) Ask the students to begin another story with a new line from for instance “The Zoo Story”

Task: Oral Presentation with Ingredients to be included

- 1) Tell students that they are going to use their imagination and tell a story with their own made-up elements and words to be included.

Title: ? the student finds out himself/herself

Setting: ?

Time: ?

Conclusion: ?

Ten words to be included: ?

- 2) Ask the students to think about what they hope to achieve by telling their story? (to shock, to entertain, to inform etc.)
- 3) Ask the students to write down their story.

Task: Pointing out Essential Quotations from “The Zoo Story”

1) Point out/ choose two quotations from the ones below which to you would seem to be the play’s most important ones?

Quotations:

- a. “*You have everything , and now you want this bench*”, (p.44)
- b. “*You´re a sweet man, and you´re possessed of a truly enviable innocence*”, (p.32)
- c. “*You don´t have to listen. Nobody is holding you here*”, (p.35)
- d. “*Don´t you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING*”, (p.39)

2) Compare and, if possible, reach agreement

3) Link each sentence to a character in the play “The Zoo Story” and with one of them as your starting point prepare a short talk.

5) Now your turn: Find three interesting sentences in the play “The Zoo Story” . Next, write your immediate response to each sentence and argue for your choice. In Pairs: Compare, and if possible, reach agreement

4) Give a two-minute-speech on “The Zoo Story” and the concept of the American Dream. Use at least three words from the following and make sure that your audience (class-mates) will remember them after your speech. *Words to be used: the hollowness of the American Dream – materialism – money- the emptiness and fear below the surface of everyday life – to experience and come to terms with a frightening reality – pursuit of happiness – civilized and organized – an American Beckett – Peter and Jerry.. two men whose lives are meaningless.*

The Title , Plot , Message – any connection?

1) Having read “The Zoo Story”, discuss if we get a direct or indirect reference to the title? If indirect, explain how we get the reference?

2) Discuss, the possible connection between the title and the play?

3) Are there any places in the text where the message of the play shines through either directly or indirectly? State reference.

4) Comment on the message of the play. You may take your point of departure in the following statements:

- *life is inhuman, brutal and cruel*
- *society drives man (Jerry) to his fatal deed*
- *isolation and a lack of communication are the most serious problems of modern society*
- *everybody needs somebody he can talk to, otherwise he becomes crazy and is driven to do a fatal deed*

5) Discuss the message of the play:

Do you think Albee wants to tell us something about the American society?

Or do you think Albee’s primary concern is with the lack of communication between people?

Or what do you think may be Albee’s primary concern?

6) Albee has once stated that he has one very important message to his audience: “*Participate in your own life—fully. Don´t sink back into that which is easy and safe. You´re alive only once, as far as we know, and what could be worse than getting to the end of your life and realizing*

you hadn't lived it?—Edward Albee, (2005) Try and apply this statement to the characters in the play.

Genre and Creative Writings

Task: Working with Biographical Information

The paragraphs of the following piece of biographical information have all been mixed up.

1) Your task is to rearrange the paragraphs so that they follow each other chronologically.

Piece of biographical information:

The play explores themes of isolation, loneliness, social disparity and dehumanisation in a commercial world. It premiered in West Berlin in 1959.

These men meet on a park bench in New York City's Central Park. Jerry is desperate to have a meaningful conversation with another human being. He intrudes on Peter's peaceful state by interrogating him and forcing him to listen to stories from his life, including "The Story of Jerry and The Dog", and the reason behind his visit to the zoo.

The action unfolds in front of the audience in real time. The elements of ironic humour and unrelenting dramatic suspense are brought to a climax when Jerry brings Peter down to his own savage level.

'The Zoo Story' is Edward Albee's first play; written in 1958 and completed in just three weeks. It was originally entitled Peter and Jerry.

This one-act play concerns two characters, Peter and Jerry. Peter is a middle-class publishing executive with a wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets who lives in ignorance of the world outside his settled life. Jerry is an isolated and disheartened man who lives in a boarding house and is very troubled.

Task : Write a Blurb

a) Individually: Look up the concept of a “blurb” in a dictionary.

b) Write a blurb in English in no more than 200 words directed at a Danish audience. Your primary concern is how would you sell the play in Denmark?

Before you start consider what to include and not to include.

Write down three points you would like to include in your blurb and find arguments for including the points.

My points to include:

1. *A play about human isolation, loneliness, alienation and the dangers of inaction with American Society*

2. ?

3. ?

4.?

c) Show your teacher your points before writing the blurb.

d) Begin your blurb with the following line: *Albee's "The Zoo Story" is a very interesting play to read. The mixture of and the lack of communication between the two character turns the play into a special ...*

Task: Write an Article

1) Individually: You are a literary journalist. Write an article telling your readers why they should /should not read the play, "The Zoo Story" that you have just read in class.

Useful vocabulary:

To begin with .. secondly ...another reason is ... the main thing is .. the most important aspect .. oddly/surprisingly/strangely enough .. as a rule ...on the whole.. the point is... in my opinion ... from my point of view... well, personally ... what I am more concerned with ... what I find particularly the play conveys ... in the opening scenes ..what fascinated me ... I will/will not recommend this play to ..

2) What do you think you have personally gained from reading the story about Peter and Jerry?

Task: Quick-Writing

- 1) You have 2- 3 minutes to respond to the following statement in writing: "*I realized that Peter wasn't drawn as fully as Jerry, that audiences saw Peter mostly through Jerry's eyes, which wasn't necessarily a complete view of him*", (said by Edward Albee)
- 2) You have 2- 3 minutes to respond to the following statement in writing: "*The Zoo Story is about one man trying to persuade another one to live his life more fully, participate in it. And the guy can't do it, and that's why the tragedy occurs at the end*", (said by Edward Albee)
- 3) You have 2-3 minutes to respond to the following statement in writing: "*Albee focuses on the need for people to acknowledge and understand each other's differences*".

Task: Rewrite and Change Attitude

1) Rewrite the below dialogue changing Peter's attitude towards Jerry. The dialogue starts with Peter saying:

Peter (Numb): I ... I don't understand ... I don't think I ... (Now, almost tearfully). Why did you tell me all of this?

Jerry: Why not?

Peter: I don't understand!

Jerry (Furious; but whispering): That's a lie

Peter: No. No, it's not

Jerry (Quietly): I tried to explain to you as I went along. I went slowly; it all has to do with ..

Peter: I don't want to hear anymore. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or her dog .. (p.41)

2) Rewrite another dialogue between Jerry and Peter. This time changing Jerry's attitude towards Peter. Next, act out the dialogue.

Peter: Well, it seems perfectly simple to me, you just haven't met ..

Jerry (Angry): Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets?

Peter (Angry, himself): Forget the parakeets! And stay single if you want to. It's no business of mine. I didn't start this conversation .. (p.33)

3) Discuss the function of the changes of attitude.

4) Act-out and rewrite the ending of the play. What if Peter had died instead of Jerry?

Task: Diary Writing

1) Some critics think, because of statements Jerry makes about the animals that he may have released some from their cages, while others think Jerry is talking about a death which has not yet happened, Imagine you are Jerry in "The Zoo Story". Write a page in his diary. Your focus of concern has been giving: *My plan to release the animals from the Zoo*

2) Imagine you are Jerry in "The Zoo Story". Write a page in his diary. Your focus of concern has been giving: *Murder near Central Park Zoo*

3) Imagine you are Peter in "The Zoo Story". Write a page in his diary. Your focus of concern has been giving: *My first and last meeting with Jerry.*

Task: Essay-writing

1) Write an essay about "The Zoo Story". In your essay you must include:

- a characterization of Jerry
- a characterization of Peter
- the title of the play
- theme(s)
- language
- symbolism

2) Before you hand in your essay make sure you have included an introduction and a conclusion.

Task: SMS – Writing about "The Zoo Story"

- 1) Write a text-message (SMS) in English about “The Zoo Story” which you then send on your mobile to another person in class. He/she reads the message and replies and so on.
- 2) In Class: Discuss the rules you used or invented when you created your text-messages.
- 3) Compare the language of text-message to the language of everyday speech.
- 4) Turn the language of one of the text-messages (SMS) that you received in English about “The Zoo Story” into written language. Compare and contrast.

Task: Writing a Summary

- 1) Write a summary of the play (½ page). Use as many words as possible from the following: *a two-character play, power-struggle, miscommunication, love and lack of understanding, two men meet, one gets killed, consumed with loneliness, a conversation, issues of human isolation, class differences and the dangers of interaction ...*
- 2) In Class: Present your summary

Task: Letter - Writing

- 1) Put yourself in Peter’s shoes. Write a letter to Jerry telling him that you are sick and tired of the way he treats you. Your letter starts with the lines: *Dear Jerry, I wish you would try and understand that people like me are perfectly happy about the way they live. I love my wife, my two daughters and ..*
- 3) Put yourself in Jerry’s shoes. Write a letter to Peter telling him that you are sick and tired of the way he ignores you. Your letter starts with the lines: *Dear Peter, I did my very best to help you. I tried to make you understand something about human loneliness and suffering. I even expressed empathy for you because I liked you, and now you say you do not care about other people and that you do not want to see me again. Who do you think you are? I am ..*

Task: The Concept of the American Dream - Arguing a point

- 1) Jerry and Peter come from different social backgrounds. Write a paragraph (about 150 words) in which you argue for a wider understanding of the issue of the gap between social classes. State your main point in the first sentence and signpost your supporting arguments with appropriate linkers.
- 2) In Class: Read aloud your paragraph and discuss your point of view
- 3) Try and apply the concept of “the American Dream” to the play. Is “The Zoo Story” a savage attack on the American Way of life/living? Why/why not?
- 4) In Pairs. Discuss: Is it Peter or is it Jerry who lives a life to which many Americans tend to conform?
- 5) In Pairs. Argue for your point. Has Peter gained a wider knowledge of himself and life in general from his encounter with Jerry? Has Jerry enabled Peter to see clearly for a brief moment the

emptiness of his life, a life in which cats, children, wife and parakeets are interchangeable because they are merely props whose function it is to disguise nothingness and isolation?

Task: Creative Writing – use your Imagination

- 1) Write a continuation of the play and concentrate on the kind of life Peter will have in the years to come.
- 2) What will happen in Act 2? Rewrite the ending and write a continuation of the play.
- 3) Write your immediate response to the ending of the play. While writing do not think of grammar or punctuation.

Task: Write a Letter to the Editor

- 1) Letter to the editor:

Dear Madam, Please help me what do you think I should do? I have met a man called Jerry. He seems like a nice guy but he has some serious personal problems to deal with. He tries to make me understand about other people's loneliness and suffering. But in fact I think it is his own loneliness and suffering that he cannot handle. I met him on a park bench in New York City's Central Park I enjoy going there everyday. But the fact is now I do not dare to go to the park because meeting Jerry again would be more than I can handle. What should I do? Hope to get an answer soon. All best, Peter

- 2) Write an answer to Peter telling him how to handle the fact that he may meet Jerry again in Central Park.

Task: Translate and from Danish into English and Vice Versa

- 1) Turn the following excerpt about "The Zoo Story" into Danish:

".... While Peter is reading a book on a bench in Central Park, he is interrupted by Jerry, a total stranger, who announces that he has just been to the Zoo. Anxious to return to his reading, Peter reacts with merely vague interest and lights his pipe, but he is immediately made uncomfortable by Jerry's queries about his material status, children, work, and ménage of cats and parakeets. After repeating that he has been to the zoo and that Peter will read about it in the papers the next day if he does not see it on television that very night, Jerry follows several digressions about social class distinctions, literary tastes, and his daylong wanderings. He also gives a detailed description of the rooming house and its characters on the Upper West side. Peter is embarrassed to hear these sordid details. Jerry says that, unlike Peter, he owns little except for toilet articles, pornographic playing cards, eight or nine books, cutlery, empty picture frames, an old Western Union typewriter

that prints nothing but capital letters, and a small box containing letters and some sea-rounded rocks that he picked up on a beach when he was a boy ...

2) Translate from Danish into English: **Edward Albee**, f. 1928, amerikansk dramatiker. Vakte opsigt med *Zoo Story* (1959), en psykologisk fabel om to mænd, der repræsenterer spændingen mellem tilpasning og oprør i Eisenhowerperioden. Fik internationalt gennembrud efter Broadwayopsætningen af *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962; filmatiseret 1966 af Mike Nichols), som med onskabsfuld satire hudflettede allerede skrøbelige myter om den amerikanske families værdier. Albee angreb selvbedrag og følelsesmæssig tomhed i den amerikanske efterkrigstids lykkebilleder med en verbal grusomhed, som var uhørt hos de dominerende samtidige, Arthur Miller og Tennessee Williams. Albees tekster viser en speciel lydhørhed over for pauser og sammenbrud i personernes tale, der fremmaner billeder af tilbagetrækning og isolation som grundlæggende menneskelige vilkår. Albee er blevet forstået som absurdist (*Zoo Story*) og som en moderne efterfølger af Ibsen- og (især) Strindbergtraditionen (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* har klar reference til *Dödsdansen*). Den overvejende del af Albees produktion er opført i Danmark. (http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Kunst_og_kultur/Litteratur/Engelsksproget_litteratur/Engelsk_litteratur_efter_1945/Edward_Albee)

3) Compare your translation with suggested translation on Google Translate

Useful links/for further reading:

<http://www.oppapers.com/essays/The-Zoo-Story-Themes/427302>

<http://www.oppapers.com/essays/Zoo-Story-Existentialism/6600>

<http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/16737.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2004/jan/10/theatre>

<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4350/the-art-of-theater-no-4-edward-albee>

