

DNA Characters

Mark and Jan

These characters act as the 'chorus' or narrators. They throw the audience directly into the action at the beginning of each Act and are useful as they fill in any blanks for us.

Mark and Jan are responsible for the events surrounding the bullying of Adam that lead to him falling into the grille. From p20 – 23 we are given a detailed description of the events that take place. Mark and Jan appear to be trying to justify their actions in this scene,

Mark: **"We were having a laugh, weren't we..."** (p20).

This phrase is repeated several times.

They also convince themselves that Adam is actually enjoying the bullying.

Mark: **"Oh yeah, Adam he was laughing harder than anyone."** (p21).

Again, this word laughing is repeated throughout the scene. However, it is also punctuated with other words such as, 'terrified', 'crying', 'stubbed out cigarettes', 'punch him', 'pegged a stone'.

We get the impression that Mark and Jan might also be younger members of the group/ less able to assert themselves. They look to Phil for reassurance and take instructions from him. (p57)

Jan: **"Are we going to be in trouble"**

Phil: **"If you go now and say nothing to no one about this, you won't be in trouble."**

Leah

In a number of scenes, (pages 10–12, 26–28, 30–32, 41–43, and 46-48) we are presented with a one-sided relationship between Leah and Phil. She is clearly concerned about their relationship – **'You need me as much as ...'** shows her insecurity and desire for some response from Phil and this sears through the text.

Her speeches are virtually monologues as there is no response from Phil. She is constantly striving for Phil's attention and tries a variety of techniques to gain his attention. These range from putting herself down (showing her insecurities), talking about intellectual topics (bonobos, science, nature) that seem not to relate to the events of the play, doing something physical (at times harming herself or a pet), putting Phil down or repeating his name. These do not get his attention. Finally she brings her speech back to the Adam situation in the hope of shocking him into a reaction.

Leah is a moral character and tries to reason with many of the characters. She is sensible and able to think for herself and speak her mind. However, she still falls under the leadership of Phil as she is not strong enough to alter the opinions and actions of anyone in the group.

We are given no back ground information to any of the characters and much of what we understand is due to inference. However, Leah reveals that her and Phil have actually known Adam a very long time and pleads with him to help Adam, not harm him.

Leah: **"It's Adam, Phil, Adam! We used to go to his birthday parties, he used to have that cheap ice cream and we used to take the piss, remember?"** (p58)

Phil

Although on stage in many scenes, Phil rarely speaks. Usually his action involves eating (ice-cream/Starburst/waffles, etc.).

In the scenes with Leah he only actually directly responds to her when she has left him on page 61. Look closely at these scenes and the way Leah directly addresses Phil. He sometimes uses facial expressions and body language in response to what she has to say: such as the talk on the beauty of life on page 31 where she hopes that he sees the world from the same perspective as herself. This includes the shocking revelation that she killed her pet with a screwdriver – at which '*Phil shrugs!*' (p32) Why is there so little response to what she says? How might his later actions be foreshadowed by his lack of response and concern to what Leah is saying?

Although quiet for a long time, Phil clearly considers everyone's words and actions before he speaks. He gives calm and considered instructions to each member of the group as he assigns roles and tasks for them to complete. This makes him appear callous and nihilistic. A key quote that justifies his actions:

Phil: "***I'm in charge. Everyone is happier. What's more important; one person or everyone?***"

Phil has controlling/ reassuring body language. When addressing Lou on p57, the stage directions state that he, 'Places a hand on her shoulder, smiles, warm, reassuring'

Phil: "***Everything is going to be fine***"

It is not until Act 3 Scene 4 that Phil realises he needs Leah as he calls after her when she walks off. Ironically, this is the first time he shows her any affection or acknowledges her but she is clearly disgusted by what he has turned into (p61).

Act 4 Scene 2 Phil is sat with Richard in the field. The stage directions clearly state, 'Phil is not eating.' Although Richard takes Leah's role, something is missing/ wrong as Phil is not eating. This is significant. Does he realise he needs Leah?

John Tate

John Tate only appears in Act 1 Scene 3. He leads through using fear to control others. However, he is visibly falling apart during Act 1 Scene 3 as he panics and is unable to control those around him or the situation. He tries to ban the word, '*dead*,' he says he *will 'bite their face. Or something.*' if anyone uses the word again. However, the use of '*Or something*' shows he has clearly not in control of his thoughts, words or the situation.

The challenge to his leadership by Richard causes him further insecurity and the only way he knows how to lead is through fear, which he employs by threatening Lou, Danny and Richard. His words are very patronising as he talks down to each character –

- John Tate to Danny: "***you're on you're own side, which is, well, to be honest, very silly and dangerous***"
- John Tate to Brian: "***you crying piece of filth***"

Cathy

From very early on in the play, Cathy is shown to have no remorse about the groups' actions. She finds the situation '*exciting*' and '*better than ordinary life*' (p16). Her excitement grows when she is asked by the TV for an interview. She shows no concern

for Adam and the real reason why the cameras are at the TV station and instead focuses on her own gain: "**They might even give me money for it, do you think I should ask for money?**" (p36).

Cathy appears to have a callous side when she obtains DNA evidence from an actual postman who fits the description Phil made up. Did she do this because she is a social climber who is trying to impress the leader, or did she genuinely not realise what she has done? (p38)

Cathy: "**We showed...initiative. We-**"

Leah: "**Who told you to do that?**"

Cathy: "**Richard, we showed initiative.**"

She looks up to the leader and she is always supported by the leader – whoever they may be. For example, John Tate backs her up on p7 "**Don't tell Cathy to shut up**" (John Tate to Danny). Phil also trusts her with the important jobs (acquiring the DNA evidence, killing Adam). Her position within the group rises throughout the play as she becomes closer/ more relied on by the leader.

By Act 3 Scene 3 Cathy is 'second in command' as she is charged with killing Adam. A conversation takes place between her and Phil and despite Leah's attempts to be heard, she is ignored by them both (p58)

Phil: (to Cathy): "**Do you understand?**"

Leah: "**Understand what?**"

Cathy: "**Yeah, I do.**"

By the end of the play we learn that Cathy is now in charge and appears to have a sadistic nature. Phil has left the group so she assumes the leader role she seems to have been craving.

Richard gives the final words on Cathy:

Richard: "**Cathy doesn't care. She's too busy running things...She's insane. She cut off a first year's finger, that's what they say anyway.**"

Richard

Richard first appears to be a strong character and potentially someone who is able to be a leader of the group. Lou is scared of him and he presents a challenge to John Tate's leadership. Although he stands up to John Tate (*You shouldn't threaten me John'* p17), he is eventually put in his place when John Tate turns the entire group against Richard by telling them to choose sides. (Act 1 Scene 3).

Richard is in need of guidance from a leader. Richard's way of dealing with the situations that arise is to become sarcastic and to put others down.

Act 2 Scene 3:

Putting other down (p36)–

Cathy: "**It was great**"

Richard: "**It was shit**"

(p39)

Cathy: "**Richard, we showed initiative**"

Richard: "**That is the most stupid-**"

Sarcasm (p36) - Leah can't believe they have found a man that fits their fake description. Richard: "**Why don't you pop down the station and say, 'excuse me, but the fat postman with the bad teeth doesn't actually exist, so why don't you let him go.'**"

Richard can be very negative and grumbles when given instructions by the leader. It could be argued that this is why he does not progress in the social hierarchy and Cathy does. Phil instructs Richard to take Brian to the police station but has to repeat his instructions to him (p41)

Phil: "**Richard'll take you**"

Richard: "**Not me again**"

Phil: "**Richard'll take you**"

By Act 4 Scene 2 Richard appears to have taken the place of Leah as he sits in the field with Phil. His speech/ monologue takes the same structure as Leah's. He seemingly talks about something unrelated to the group, attempts something physical to gain Phil's attention (walking on his hands), then brings his thoughts back to the actual situation they are in by discussing what has happened to the group.

Brian

Brian is the weakest link. There must be a reason why he is chosen as the one the 'fake man' shows his 'willy' to. The other characters must see him as weak and vulnerable and someone the police believe could be a victim. In order for their story to stick, the police must believe this.

Brian is bullied and pushed around by all of the characters. Richard hates him and protests when told by Phil he should look after him. Cathy slaps him. Phil threatens him with the same fate as Adam if he does not follow orders (p40).

He cannot deal with his guilt and is prescribed medication to help him cope. He is seen to revert to a childlike state of 'play' by Act 3 Scene 3 as his way of dealing with the events.

Danny

Danny is presented as a sensible character and appears as an opposite to the rest of the characters. He has plans to become a dentist. He has plotted his course through education to achieve this and nothing can interfere with this plan...until the death of Adam. None of the other characters refer to their plans and the consequences of their actions on their lives or the lives of others. Look at Act 1 Scene 3 (his plans ruined) and Act 2 Scene 3 where Cathy is revealed to have found someone matching the description of the fake postman. Danny's concern is how he will get into dental college "**You need three references...**" (p36) and also that they are framing a man for something he didn't do. 'We can't let them think it's him.' (p39). Finally in this scene, he reacts with shock to Phil's suggestion at taking Brian up to the grille if he doesn't follow orders, "**Is he serious?**"(p40).

Lou

Lou will follow whoever the leader is at the time. She is a 'yes' woman and will do as she is told. She is controlled by fear (see Act 1 Scene 3). She is afraid of John Tate but

also of '*Richard, maybe*' (p13). This causes John Tate to panic and ultimately results in John Tate and Richard's confrontation. Lou (possibly inadvertently) has planted the seed in John Tate's mind that he is not seen as a leader which results in the struggle for power between him and Richard. Ultimately, their conflict ends with John Tate re-gaining power through threats and fear.

Lou has no complicated speeches but instead speaks using simple sentences or short phrases. Phrases such as 'We're screwed' (p34) make her appear young/ not assertive and relies on being given instruction. She also appears to believe the lies the group have created (p35)

Lou: "***Because he saw him in the woods***"

Leah: "***He didn't***"

Lou: "***He did he-***"

She is cut off by Leah making it appear as if her words are not important.

In Richard's final commentary to Phil on what the members of the group are now up to, we find out that Lou is best friends with Cathy.

Richard: "***Dangerous game. I feel sorry for her.***"

Adam

Adam is our victim. We learn a lot about him through the words of Jan and Mark between pages 20-23 where they recount the horrific events that led up to him falling into the grille. However, we must bear in mind that we are being told their version of events where they are trying to convince themselves and the rest of the group that he is in fact laughing/ enjoying the things being done to him. Mark says, "***he was laughing harder than anyone***"(p21).

Adam wants to be part of the group and Mark and Jan see exactly what he will do to be part of their gang:

Mark: "***...so we were sort of, well, alright, taking the piss, sort of. You know what he's like he was, sort of hanging around***"

Jan: "***Trying to be part of***"

Mark: "***Yeah, trying to be part of, yeah, yeah...He'll do anything to be part of the group.***"

When Adam actually appears in Act 3 Scene 3 (p49) we find out he has been living in a hedge. He has suffered a head injury and this is evidently still affecting him as his memory is weak and his speech is confused and staggered (p53)