

✕ Refers to links on [www.crossref-it.info](http://www.crossref-it.info)

## Equus: (a) Opening and ending

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore the impact of the play's opening and ending.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Create a glossary of the following terms, encouraging students to volunteer to define them
  - Encourage students to use them during the lesson that follows (perhaps keep a tally on the board, or make it competitive with teams):
    - Circular narrative
    - Flashback
    - Foreshadow
    - Monologue
    - Address to audience/breaking the fourth wall.
  - ✕ (A-Z: [General definitions](#))
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Re-read Act One Scene One. Ideally have this scene enlarged on paper with plenty of space around it for annotations.
  - ✕ ([Equus: Synopses and commentaries > Act One, Scene One](#))
  - Teacher leads the class in analysing the techniques Shaffer uses to create an impact. Consider:
    - Use of darkness and light (spotlight, cigarette lighter, circle lights)
    - Use of silence and talking
    - Visual impact of the boy and the horse
    - Sexual references ('fondle', 'necking', etc)
    - Monologue
    - Address to audience
    - Rhetorical questions
    - Shifts in scene (stables / hospital) and time ('for an hour', 'for years', and 'It began one Monday...')
    - Starting at the end (circular narrative)
    - Use of foreshadowing.
- ❖ Re-read Act Two Scene Thirty Five (again, ideally have this scene enlarged on paper with plenty of space around it for annotations)
  - ✕ ([Equus: Synopses and commentaries > Act Two, Scene Thirty Five](#)).
  - Identify which features the final scene has in common with the first scene (eg. use of monologue, characters, rhetorical questions, sexual references, themes, light, etc.)
  - What other techniques does Shaffer use to make an impact in this scene?
- Consider Dysart's dialogue – changes in tone and direction, use of exclamations and italics, length of utterances, impact of ending lines, etc.
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** Discuss the following questions in groups, making notes on the text, and then feed back to the rest of the class:
  - How successful do you find the opening scene in creating interest and excitement about the play?
    - Why?
  - Which features used in this scene do you find most effective?
    - Why?
  - What might an audience member be thinking and feeling as they see Alan and Nugget, and are spoken to by Dysart?
    - What questions are raised?
  - Does the final scene adequately bring an end to the plot, or is there a sense of anti-climax?
    - Why?
  - What questions are left unresolved at the end of the play?
  - How might an audience member feel at the end of the play?
    - Is there a sense of catharsis? (emotional purging)
    - Or just an ongoing disturbance?
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Try writing two linked monologues to open and close a play. The monologues should be addressed to the audience, and should build excitement for - and contain clues about - the action of the plot which takes place between them.
- ❖ **Critical task:** 'The play's opening does not prepare the audience for the horrors which are to follow.'
  - To what extent do you agree?
- ❖ Consider how the opening scene foreshadows some of the ideas in the play, and explore whether the students feel that the opening scene adequately sets the tone for the play
  - ✕ ([Equus: Synopses and commentaries > Act One, Scene One](#))
- ❖ **Extension task:** Investigate some of Shaffer's other plays.
  - What techniques does he use for their openings and endings