

Look Back in Anger Key Facts

Writer: John Osborne | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Full Title:** Look Back in Anger
 - **Original Title:** Look Back in Anger (no alternate title)
 - **Author:** John Osborne (1929–1994)
 - **Title of the Author:** Leading figure of the “Angry Young Men” movement
 - **Prize:** Evening Standard Drama Award for Most Promising Playwright (1956)
 - **Source:** Inspired by Osborne’s own failed marriage, personal frustrations, and post-war British class tensions; connected to the “Angry Young Men” and “Kitchen Sink Realism” movements
 - **Written Time:** Written in 17 days in 1955 while on tour with a repertory theatre company
 - **First Performed:** 8 May 1956 at the Royal Court Theatre, London
 - **Publisher:** Faber and Faber (first published 1957)
 - **Genre:** Realist Drama / Kitchen Sink Drama
 - **Form:** Three-act play
 - **Tone:** Bitter, passionate, confrontational, ironic, emotionally charged
 - **Point of View:** Third-person stage directions; Dialogue-driven drama with no narrator
 - **Significance:** A landmark in post-war British theatre; launched the “Angry Young Men” movement; challenged genteel stage traditions with raw realism, class conflict, and emotional intensity
 - **Famous Line:** “Why don’t we have a little game? Let’s pretend that we’re human beings...”
- **Setting:**
 - **Time Setting:** Mid-1950s, post-World War II Britain
 - **Place Setting:** A cramped attic flat in the English Midlands

Key Notes

- **Kitchen Sink Drama:** This play is a prime example of “kitchen-sink realism”. It shows lower-middle-class life, small rooms, financial strain, daily quarrels, and disillusionment.
- **Angry Young Man - Jimmy Porter:** Jimmy is the symbol of the “Angry Young Men” movement. His anger is directed at social inequality, class privilege, and hypocrisy.
- **Class Conflict:** The core tension is between working-class and upper-middle-class values. Jimmy and Alison’s relationship embodies this clash.
- **Marriage as a Battlefield:** Jimmy and Alison’s marriage is a constant emotional battleground. Love mixes with anger, resentment, and hurt.
- **Verbal Violence - Monologues:** Jimmy’s long, intense monologues are central to the play. They reveal his frustrations, discontent, and personal wounds.
- **Symbolic Elements - Bear & Squirrel Game:** This game represents Jimmy and Alison’s fantasy world. It means an escape from harsh reality to an ideal world. It is a symbol of their fragile reconciliation.
- **Autobiographical Touch:** Many aspects reflect Osborne’s own life, such as his failed marriage and experiences of class conflict.
- **Post-War Disillusionment:** In post-WWII Britain, social and economic change was slow. The frustration and disillusionment of the young generation are voiced through Jimmy.