



# Education Resources Pre-Production

Sydney Theatre Company and UBS Investment Bank present

## Gross und Klein (Big and Small)

A Journey across contemporary Germany

By Botho Strauss

English text by Martin Crimp



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Education Resource written by Kerreen Ely-Harper and compiled by Education Coordinator Toni Murphy

#### KEY



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

#### GROSS UND KLEIN

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## ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

[www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about](http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about)

## ABOUT STCED

[www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about](http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about)

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Director** – Luc Bondy

**Set Designer** – Johannes Schütz

**Costume Designer** – Alice Babidge

**Lighting Designer** – Nick Schlieper

**Composer & Sound Designer** – tba



## CAST

**Lotte** – Cate Blanchett

**Inge & Turk's Wife** – Anita Hegh

**Old Woman & Older Married Woman** –  
Melissa Jaffer

**Woman & Meggy** – Belinda McClory

**Guitar Player** – Josh McConville

**Paul & Doctor** – Robert Menzies

**Fat woman & Tent** – Katrina Milosevic

**Wilhelm** – Richard Piper

**Alf & Juergen** – Richard Pyros

**Girl with bladder & Josephine** –  
Sophie Ross

**Jung Man & Albert** – Chris Ryan

**Man in Nightwatch & Bernard** –  
Christopher Stollery

**Old Man, Older Married Man & Old Man  
with shirts** – Martin Vaughan

**Turk** - TBC

## THEMES

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Autobiography

Relationships

Subjectivity

Post Modernism

## GROSS UND KLEIN

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### *MOROCCO*

LOTTE-KOTTE is in her mid-thirties, lonely and looking for love. She has been rejected by her husband and is 'not getting any younger'. Dressed up, a tourist in the evening on the Mediterranean. Moonlight. Shadows of two Men are walking on the terrace. She listens attentively to their conversation, reporting and debating with herself. When the men stop walking she panics, fearing they may have overheard her talking out aloud.

### *NIGHTWATCH*

A WOMAN is sleeping. A MAN is sitting beside her. He has come to watch over her. She is suspicious of his motives. When she leaves to go to the bathroom, he confides he cares for the Woman, his wife, letting her curses 'rain down on me'. Lotte enters the couple's room through an open window. The three become engaged in conversation. The Woman wants to know if Lotte is from the Church. When the Woman wants to know what her husband is going to wear to work, they all engage in a game of dress ups. Soon the Woman tires of Lotte and not interested in becoming her 'new acquaintance' shuts the window.

### *TEN ROOMS*

1. An empty room. We hear Lotte running on the stairs. There is a knock on the door. Lotte tries the door handle. A large key falls from the lock, into the room. The door remains unopened.
2. A FAT WOMAN injects morphine into her arm. Lotte opens the door. The Fat Woman asks her if she's 'In or out?' Lotte decides to leave.
3. Lotte opens the door. Inside there is a tent, some clothing and a body is breathing heavily. Lotte slams the door and leaves.
4. An OLD MAN is massaging the OLD WOMAN, his wives' back. Lotte interrupts them but they ask her to leave, which she does, closing the door behind her. The Old Woman recognizes Lotte as her daughter, Rose. Her husband disputes Lotte is Rose.
5. A young GUITAR PLAYER plays softly. Lotte closes the door. He asks her to stay. Lotte praises his playing.

6. INGA, dressed in a zipped up dress opens the door to reveal Lotte who is now looking for some-one.
7. Two research assistants; a BOY and a GIRL enter. The Girls' bags are overflowing with books. The Boy wants to know what all her books are for. She tells him she is researching the theme of everywhere and that they need to be searching more systematically together.
8. PAUL, Lotte's husband paces back and forth in a raincoat. Lotte comes in with a drawing portfolio and portable television. When he asks what does she want, she replies, money or a divorce.
9. Paul pushes Lotte into the room. The door is slammed shut and locked from the outside. The TENT creeps toward her. The Tent reminds her of her brother, Bernard. The Tent continues to follow her. Lotte panics and tries to escape the room. Inge appears and invites Lotte to move in. She asks Inge who is in the tent. Inge tells her there is a sad seventeen year old girl hiding who won't come out.
10. Lotte is now in her own room. The Fat Woman and the Guitar Player drop in for a visit. The Guitar player tells Lotte he's a Crystalographer, who determines the atomic structure of solid objects. Soon both visitors insist they must leave.
11. Inge and Paul are lying next to one another in an embrace. Lotte enters complaining she can't sleep. Inge tells her to go away.
12. Boy and Girl Investigators argue over 'the book' that proved to contain nothing. They ask the Guitar Player to play something from long ago.
13. Lotte is alone again. She practices a conversation until she is interrupted by the Guitar Player. He tells her she's been making mistakes since she moved in and she needs to not expect people to be there for her and to be more responsible for herself.
14. The Old Woman tells Lotte that a young woman like herself moved out. Paul enters and he and Lotte argue and he becomes violent. The Old Woman attends to a bloody and battered Lotte.
15. Paul and Inge are together. Lotte enters, sees them and stops. She tells them she's leaving.
16. The Old Man and Woman watch a slide show. Gradually the inhabitants of the ten rooms appear as slides depicting the old couple in various representations and poses.

### *BIG AND LITTLE*

Lotte is now at a Berlin apartment building, communicating over the INTERCOM. She says she is looking for Margaret Niedschlager. A voice identified as 'Meggy' answers. The Intercom voice becomes suspicious when Lotte says she wants to come up and talk. When Lotte decides to leave, the door buzzer sounds, letting her into the building. A YOUNG MAN and GIRL enter the stage. Lotte reappears. She's been crying. Her conversation with the Intercom Meggy continues. Meggy tries to provoke Lotte by insulting her. They are interrupted by a drunk husband, the TURK, and his wife. Lotte walks him around the block, leaving his wife alone. The wife is then accosted by the Young Man. The Turk returns but without Lotte. They converse in Turkish, the wife translating in English. He begins to bellow commands. The Young Man runs away leaving the couple alone.

### *WAY STATION*

Lotte is in a telephone booth. She recites a letter she has written to Paul. Telling him she accepts his love for Inge 'the woman in the zipped dress', she asks him to not throw her letter away.

### *FAMILY IN A GARDEN*

A barbecue patio. Sitting at the empty table is ALBERT; WILHELM, his father; JOSEPHINE, his sister; Lotte, and her brother BERNARD, Josephine's husband. Lotte draws a picture of Albert while he tries to flirt with her. Josephine tells Lotte, that Bernard has robbed her of thirteen thousand dollars. Bernard refuses to tell them what happened to the money.

### *WRONG NUMBER*

Lotte sits alone, on a chair. A gigantic book lies open in front of her on the floor. Recounting her journey so far, she asks 'Where now?' She does battle with the great big book to no avail. Surrendering to her fate, she cleans the bloodied book and embraces it, returning to darkness.

### *DICTATION*

ALF, Lotte's new boyfriend boss, dictates a letter. Lotte enters with a sheaf of papers. He asks

her to dictate a letter. When he reads another letter she has written to her husband, Paul, he accuses her of being unclear in her intentions and says she must rewrite it. When her bicycle helmet accidentally hits his chin he falls into a rage and tries to smash the helmet. He later apologises and begs her to stay. Lotte exits quickly.

#### *THE FILTHY ANGEL*

A MAN in an army jacket is waiting. Lotte asks him if he recognizes her. She tells him she is 'one of the righteous'.

#### *IN SOCIETY*

A hospital waiting room. Lotte waits with the other patients. Patients come and go until Lotte is alone. When the DOCTOR asks if she has an appointment, she replies 'No. There is nothing wrong with me'. He asks her to leave and she exits slowly as the Doctor closes the door behind her.

#### **Consider**

Lotte is an angel.

*Gross und Klein* is a kind of road movie.

Every storyteller bends the mythic pattern to his own purpose or the needs of her culture.

A hero leaves her comfortable, ordinary surroundings to venture into a challenging, unfamiliar world.

You can't have a story without a voice.

References:

*The Writer's Journey*, Christopher Vogler

*The Writing Book*, Kate Grenville

## HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

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*Gross und Klein (Big and Small)* was first produced in Berlin, in 1978. The play is structured as a non-linear journey narrative while retaining many of the allegorical conventions of the classical Greek hero's quest journey.

Botho Strauss began his career as a critic and dramaturge. His literary and critical influences are the writings of German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, French Existentialism, the Surrealist movement, Feminism, Shakespeare and the ancient Greeks.

*Gross und Klein* examines the concepts of subjectivity and self against the background of cultural and political upheaval prevalent in Western Germany between the 1960s and 1980's. Strauss's early works describe the conflicting forces that affected the West German student movement and the debates surrounding the rationalistic tradition of the Weimar Left versus the more 'irrational' ideological influences of French existentialism and surrealism as well as the American "Beat" movement and anti-establishment rock and roll culture.

Many of his plays are set in Berlin. As a dramatist Strauss's work is essentially post-modernist in its rejection of linear structured narratives. Despite his use of allegory and symbol the plays retain a strong sense of the tragic and adherence to the realist tradition.

As a post-modernist writer, Strauss is concerned with questions of subjectivity, knowledge, authority and alienation. The perception of reality is the subject matter of his post-modern theatre. The post-modern views expressed in his works are a distrust of the great institutions of religion, politics, science, art and doubts about the knowability of everything. Strauss challenges the separation of emotion from reason, life from art, the private from the public. He aims to challenge rationalist ideologies and explores the rise of new political movements - ecology, nuclear disarmament, and feminism.

The idea of *Gleichgewicht* (balance) is a recurring motif in his work. *Gross und Klein* delves into the border area between two extremes, the balance that leads to wonder and the unveiling of

new layers of meaning possible. The work is politically and ideologically complex and Strauss provides few answers for his audience but offers up instead the experience of an extra-ordinary woman's journey. Strauss's drama is strange and quirky, the characters are mysteriously intertwined with each other in a world that can be harsh, is uncertain, sometimes deceptive, but always brimming with surprises.



### **Additional Resources**

#### **Botho Strauss**

Interview with Ulrich Greiner, 'On the edge. Where else' , 9.14.2007, Zeitonline

[http://www.zeit.de/feuilleton/interview\\_strauss](http://www.zeit.de/feuilleton/interview_strauss)

#### Plays

- *Trilogy of Goodbye*
- *The Park*
- *Seven Doors*
- *Time and the Room*

#### Books

- *The Young Man*
- *Couples, Passerby*
- *Living Glimmering Lying*

#### **Martin Crimp**

Audio Interview *Theatre Voice* , 2004

<http://www.theatrevoice.com/1901/interview-martin-crimp-12-the-playwright-talks-to-domini/>

#### Plays

- *The City*
- *The Country*
- *Attempts on Her Life*



Luc Bondy



Biography

<http://www.goethe.de/kue/the/reg/reg/ag/bon/enindex.htm>

Message to the Sydney theatre Company, TheatreCornouaille, 2011



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGWyLhlnNg0>

Recent production of Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3QJrvocmdk>

Reviews of Previous Productions of *Gross und Klein*

Mel Gussow, New York Times, 1983

<http://theater.nytimes.com/mem/theater/treview.html?res=9B0DE7D7123BF930A15753C1A965948260>

New York Magazine, 1979 Google Books P90

Critical References

*Crisis of subjectivity: Botho Strauss's challenge to West German prose of the 1970's*

Leslie A Anderson, German Quarterly 60, 1987

*New Subjectivity and prose forms of alienation: Peter Handke and Botho Strauss*

P Lang 1987



**AIM: To examine and explore Strauss's use of the epic hero journey narrative in a post-modernist world.**

This is the tale I pray the divine Muse to unfold to us.  
Begin it, goddess, at whatever point you will.

*The Odyssey* Homer

*Gross und Klein* takes the audience on an epic tale as Lotte embarks on a journey of self-realization. Traveling from one place to the next we follow her as she passes through doors, windows, Berlin streets and apartment buildings, the family garden, up and down staircases, a doctor's surgery. We see the world through Lotte's eyes, her voice, her point of view.

*Gross und Klein* borrows from two literary traditions.

Firstly, the *Bildungsroman* (German 'formation novel') the 'education' (*Erziehungsroman*) or 'upbringing' novel, which refers to an account of the youthful development of a hero or heroine. It describes the processes by which maturity is achieved through the various ups and downs of life.

Secondly, the ancient Greek epic, a long narrative poem about the deeds of warriors and heroes. It incorporates myth, legend, folk tale and history. Epics are usually of national significance in that they embody the history and aspirations of a nation. There are two kinds of epic: (1) primary – oral or primitive; (2) secondary – the literary. The first belongs to the oral tradition and is spoken and in some cases (as in *The Iliad and Odyssey* is written down later). The second is written down at the start (as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*).

Examples of literary works that utilize the themes and narrative structure of *Bildungsroman* and the Greek hero epic are *Candide* (Voltaire), *Alice In Wonderland* (CS Lewis), *Peer Gynt* (Henrik Ibsen), and *The Wizard Of Oz* (Frank Baum).

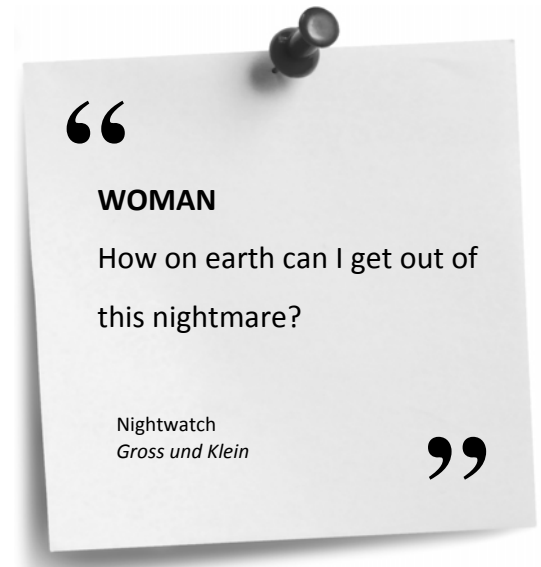


**List** 3 contemporary hero and/or heroine characters that go on a long journey - from books, television or film.

What make these characters and their stories heroic?

### The Stages of the Hero Character Journey

1. *Ordinary World* – the hero is taken out (or leaves) the ordinary, everyday world and enters a Special World, new and alien.
2. *Call to Adventure* – the hero is presented with a problem, challenge, or adventure a quest.
3. *Refusal Of The Call* – the hero is reluctant to go on the journey. She is faced with fear of the unknown.
4. *Meeting With The Mentor* (The Wise Old Man or Woman ). The mentor figure may be wise, tough or grumpy. The mentors prepare the hero to face the unknown. She may be given advice, information, guidance, magical equipment to assist her on the journey.
5. *Crossing The 1<sup>st</sup> Threshold* – the hero commits to the journey. She enters the Special World.
6. *Tests, Allies, Enemies* – the hero encounters tests, makes allies and enemies. She begins to learn the rules of the Special World.
7. *Approach to the Innermost Cave* – the hero comes to a dangerous place, usually dark, where the object of the quest is hidden. Often this place is where the hero's greatest enemy resides.
8. *Supreme Ordeal* – the hero confronts her greatest fear, her greatest obstacle. There is a life and death moment.
9. *Reward* – Having survived the Supreme Ordeal, the hero gets her reward. She may appear more attractive to the community.
10. *The Road Back* – she must now deal with the consequences of confronting the Supreme Ordeal. She decides to return to the Ordinary World.
11. *Resurrection* – a second life and death moment, a replay of the Supreme Ordeal. Before returning to the Ordinary World the hero must be reborn and cleansed.
12. *Return With the Elixir* - the hero returns to the Ordinary World, but the journey is meaningless unless she brings back some *Elixir* , treasure or lesson from the Special World. The



Elixir is a magic potion with the power to heal. It can be a treasure or it might be knowledge or experience that could be useful to the community someday. Sometimes it's just coming home with a good story to tell.



**Write** a hero or heroine story in a contemporary setting.

**Remember** the 12 stages of the *Hero's Journey* is a guide that needs to be fleshed out with your own ideas, details and surprises of the individual story you want to tell.

**Don't** follow the stages too precisely. The stages can be deleted, added to, and shuffled around without losing their power.

The values of your Hero's Journey are what matters.

### Performance Reflection

Map Lotte's journey following *The Stage of the Hero's Journey* as a guide.

What is her quest? Who is her greatest enemy? Who are the mentor figures in her journey?

How much does Lotte's story mirror the classical hero journey?

How does it differ?

References:

*The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell

*The Writer's Journey*, Christopher Vogler

*The Penguin Dictionary Of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J A Cuddon



**AIM: To explore and evaluate narrative voice.**

### Voices



#### *For yourself*

**Think** of some example of minor conflict that you've been involved with in the last week with a member of your family or a friend.

**Write** a short account of it as if for a diary you're keeping: you are writing it just for your own interest and you're the only reader.



#### *For the reader*



**Write** the incident again but this time write it as a letter to a friend (not the one you are having the conflict with).

You will have to be clearer and you might have to explain things. You must be sure the reader sees the conflict the same way as you do.

**Notice** the changes you make.

#### *For the court*



**Re-write** the letter: this time it's being written as evidence in a court of law.

This account will be sober, unemotional, formal. It's still your voice, but it's your voice at its most controlled. You are no longer addressing an individual reader, but an unknown number of unknown readers.

#### *Borrowing someone else's voice*



**Imagine** you are that person you've been in conflict with.

**Write** a letter about the conflict, in that other person's voice. The letter is addressed to you.

Now you are looking at the incident from the other person's point of view and you'll be using their voice.

How does the person use language: do they use the same words as you do? Do they talk more formally, or less? Are they more articulate than you, or less? Do they use a lot more unfinished sentences or exclamations than you do? Do they say straight out what they mean or do you have to read between the lines? Are they ironic? Do they express themselves in cool, rational ways or are they highly emotional?

**Describe** their voice.

**Re-write** the piece, exaggerating the qualities of their voice and use of language.

**Make** the word use ridiculously formal or ridiculously colloquial, absurdly longwinded or in credibly terse.

**Write** in extremes to broaden your own range of voices.

### Performance Reflection

Who is Lotte speaking to in the opening scene?

Describe Lotte's voice. How does Lotte use language? How does the way she speak reflect her attitude and emotional state?

Reference: *The Writing Book*, Kate Grenville



**AIM: To examine social roles and conflict in relationships.**

Wishing Well



**Make** a three-sided space with chairs. This is your wishing well.

**Enter** inside. In this magical space you can be anyone, or anything you wish and do anything you wish (except physical violence).

What ever you do, do with your whole being – dance, fly, hide, skip, sing...

You can be *anybody* – rich, famous, invisible, a hero, an Olympic athlete...

Don't censor your wish – it can be as BIG as you like, or as LITTLE as you like.

Life Roles



**Name** 2 roles you play in real life – for example, sister, son, cousin, student, lifeguard, community member etc

**Choose** 3 roles you would like to play – for example, tap dancer, writer, politician, musician, husband, mother etc

**Discuss** what the roles you play and fantasies you have in common.

Conflicting Roles



**Conflicting Roles**

Girlfriend – boyfriend

Parent – Child

Boss – worker

Husband – wife

Tenant – Landlord

Teacher – student

Referee – player

**Situation Starters**

“You can pay the bill”/“Me?”

“Happy Birthday!”/“Is this all I get?”

“You’re late!”/“Where’s my pay cheque?”

“Who’s cooking tonight?”/“Who’s cooking tonight?”

“The roof is leaking!”/ “Pay the rent!”

“Pay attention!”/ “You’re are picking on me!”

“You’re out!”/“I am not!”

**Add** your own

**Reverse** Roles

**Discuss** the scenes

**GROSS UND KLEIN**









**AIM:** To appreciate and critique the staging of *Gross und Klein* for a contemporary audience.

### The Postmodernist Text

**disrupt** to burst asunder , to break: to interrupt



One of the key features of postmodernism is 'disruption to the linear narrative'.

**Give** three examples of when Lotte's narrative journey is interrupted. When does she disrupt other characters?

How do these disruptions and interruptions effect the linear flow of the action? Are they confusing, interesting, entertaining, annoying?

**Describe** the world Lotte lives in.

The staging of drama does not necessarily any longer respect clearly recognizable events and characters presented in an Aristotelean way, but privileges moments and climates of anti-mimetic intensity, violence or discontinuity which convey the postmodern lifestyle and its lack of traditional metanarratives.

Freddy Decreus



**Discuss** this statement with reference to your understanding of postmodernist drama's rejection of Aristotle's principles of cause and effect.



Extension:

What is the significance of the play's title *Gross und Klein* (*Big and Little*)?

How does the title relate to the postmodernist themes of isolation and disconnection explored in the play?

Ref: Nick Kaye *Postmodernism and Performance*, 1994

“

**LOTTE**

Oh, God, my house is in chaos.

Morocco  
*Gross und Klein*

”

### **GROSS UND KLEIN**

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## The Director's Vision

Benedict Andrews has been described as a 'director with a penchant for works about life's dark side'.

"Everyone wants to work with him," says Cate Blanchett, the co-artistic director of the Sydney Theatre Company. "He shakes a company up with his energy. His rehearsal rooms are muscular – brutal, even – but he loves being surprised and he has an incredible visual sense and he can wrestle any text to the ground."

Sydney Morning Herald



**List** three things that surprised about the director's choices in staging the production.

**Score** the director's vision out of 10.

What in this production made you want to applaud? Or not?



## The Director In You

It is the final week of rehearsal of the STC's *Gross und Klein* and Benedict Andrews has taken ill and you are called in to take over.

How will you approach the task? What is your vision for the production? What changes will you make?

**List** five things you would change in the current production.

**List** three things you would keep.

### **Consider**

Script Amendments

Set Design

Lighting

Staging

Casting

Costume

Sound/Music

Directing Style



## The Reviewer in You

You are writing a review of the STC production for a Sydney newspaper. The editor has given you a set of guidelines to follow:

Your review must be 250 words in length and include:

- title
- byline (give yourself a surprising name)
- 40 word synopsis of the play's storyline and major themes
- comment on audience's responses
- critique of production elements (staging & design, music/sound, lighting, costume)
- evaluation of acting performances
- evaluation of director's approach



Extensions:

**Re-write, Adapt & Present** your review for a television audience that will be delivered by you as a 1 minute direct-to-camera address to a general audience.

**Re-write, Adapt & Send** your review as a 160 character Twitter post.

**Interview & Video** your class mates and teachers on what they thought of the production.

**Edit & Present** a 1minute Voxpop style audience review of the production.



**AIM:** To understand and analyse Botho Strauss's writing style and technique in *Gross und Klein*.

### Exclusion

The work of writing is an act of perfect exclusion.

Botho Strauss

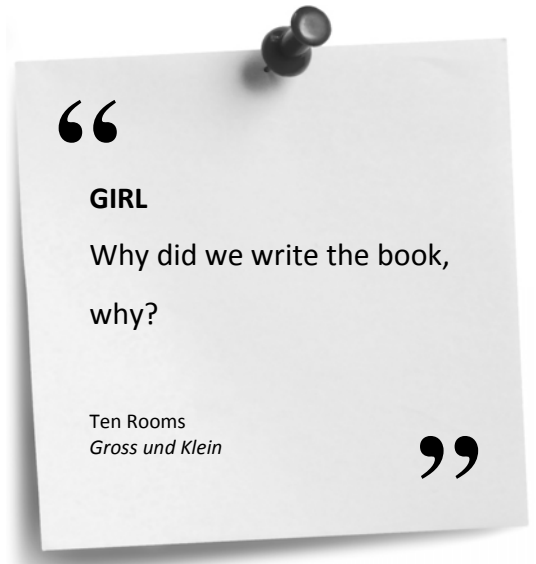


Why does Botho Strauss describe writing as an act of exclusion?

**Discuss** this statement with reference to your own experience of writing.



**Devise & Perform** three X one minute scenes showing different incidents from your life when you felt excluded.



### Lotte's Soliloquy

A soliloquy is a speech by a character alone on stage. In a soliloquy the character expresses what they are really thinking and feeling.

**Read** the selected excerpt from Lotte's opening soliloquy.

*Lotte*

Can you hear?

Two men are walking up and down outside.

Forever.

Deep voices. Can you hear?

Crazy.

Who is the 'you' Lotte is addressing? The audience? Her 'inner' self? An imaginary friend?

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**Write & Present** a one minute soliloquy addressed to an imaginary 'you' on the theme of exclusion, or being on the outside of a social situation.

**Consider** whether to address the audience, or to speak as if the audience overhears you thinking aloud.



**Read** the selected excerpt.

*Lotte*

I suppose –  
I suppose I did get a little too  
loud.  
How stupid of me.  
How stupid.  
It isn't easy for me  
To spend my vacation  
without –  
without even a chat,  
sometimes days without a single hello.  
So that evenings  
one little word  
can easily slip out and I don't even notice it.  
I'm talking up a storm and I'm positive that  
I'm only thinking. What can you do?  
You just have to get it straight once and for all  
and then it's all right

*(She falls silent and listens)*

Nice voices.  
Can you hear?  
Forever.  
Better now than then.

*(She smiles)*

Crazy.



**Discuss** Strauss's use of language

**Consider**

Word Choice

Repetition

Rhythm

Layout & Punctuation

Length of Sentences

Narrative Voice



**Experiment** on your own with different ways of speaking the lines – loud, soft, fast, slow, to the audience, to yourself, with emotion, neutral without feeling or attitude.

**Share** a group reading, taking turns to speak the words. Change readers at each punctuation mark.

**Talk** together about the impression of Lotte you gain from her soliloquy.

**Suggest** five adjectives to describe her character.

**Perform** three different interpretations of Lotte's soliloquy based on your discussions of her character.



Extension:

**Discuss** Strauss's use of the soliloquy to explore loneliness and exclusion.