



# SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS IN *THE PRESENT*

## THE GUN

The gun in *The Present* both starts and ends the play. A 40th birthday present from Sergei, Anna fires the gun before anything is said, turning the house lights off. This gunshot is symbolic of grounding herself in the present time. While all of the characters in the play struggle with their ability to be in the present, Anna is the character that hovers closest to the present and does this by letting go of the past through dangerous and violent acts such as blowing up the summer house. The same gun is used at the end of the play to kill Mikhail. As Mikhail lies in Anna's eyes dying he repeatedly says "I'm here" a reference to finally being in the present moment after spending the course of the play chasing the past or thinking of the future.

## THE LAKE

The lake on the country estate where the play takes place is spoken about but not seen. The lake apparently has been covered in algae bloom and weeds due to overfertilization of the surrounding farm land. Mikhail, in a state of disenchantment, laments that he himself is like the algae bloom that pollutes the lake as he has not amounted to anything in life and instead causes chaos thanks to his romantic dalliances.

## ANNA'S FOLLY – THE SUMMER HOUSE

The summer house is a folly from Anna's past that she lovingly restored 20 years ago when she married the General. When Anna blows up the summer house it is representative of her resentment towards her past that has led to her feeling bored and disappointed.

## MUSIC AND LOVE

The choice in music in the play highlights the destructive nature of love. In the summer house scene the characters dance to *What Is Love* by Haddaway, a reference to the characters search to understand what love means in the play. Further to this, many of the characters say throughout the play that "love will tear us apart." This can be interpreted as a reference to the Joy Division song *Love Will Tear Us Apart* that features the lyrics "when routine bites hard, and ambitions are low, and resentment rides high, but emotions won't grow, and we're changing our ways, taking different roads. Then love, love will tear us apart again." These lyrics relate to the action of the play as the character's disenchantment and banality of life creates resentment and gives rise to messy relationships.