



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

Sive by John B Keane

Sive by John B Keane is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2026, 2027 & 2028. It may be used as a single text at Ordinary Level or part of the Comparative at Ordinary Level or Higher Level.



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Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Sive* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



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Getting Started with
Guide for this Text](#)

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

1. Exploring the Context

Divide students into small groups and assign each one a topic to research briefly (or provide short resource packs):

- Rural Ireland in the 1950s (social class, poverty, traditions).
- Marriage customs and matchmaking in mid-20th century Ireland.
- The role of women in rural Irish society at the time.
- John B. Keane as a playwright and his focus on social issues.

Each group shares 3–4 key points with the class in a short oral report.

2. Debate

Pose the motion: “Parents and guardians should have the final say in their children’s marriages.” Divide the class into two sides (for/against) and hold a short debate.

3. Quotation Exploration

Give students this quote by Mena about her teenage niece, *Sive*, and ask them to discuss what it might suggest about their family relationships and values.

‘what is she but a schoolgirl and illegitimate, to crown all.



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format,
as individuals or as part of a group activity.

1. Perspective analysis

Divide students into pairs. One takes Mena's side, the other Sive's. Give them 5 minutes to prepare arguments using textual evidence and their own inference. Afterwards, pairs reflect on how convincing each side was.

2. Language

Ask students to highlight two examples of Keane's use language to show Mena's persuasion and Sive's hesitation. Students then could write an analysis of how power is shown in the scene.

3. Sive's perspective

Ask pupils to put themselves in the mindset of Sive, a teenage orphan who is being pressured into marriage. They could write a diary entry or monologue from her perspective which could be performed out loud.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following question may be based on the extract included or form part of
your extended study of the novel.

1. Personal Essay

The clash between tradition and personal freedom has always shaped people's lives.

Ask students to write a personal essay reflecting on a time when they, or someone they know, felt pressure to follow expectations versus pursuing their own wishes. Encourage a mix of anecdote and reflection.

2. Newspaper Opinion Piece

Set the task of writing a newspaper opinion article titled: "Arranged Marriage: Outdated Tradition or Practical Solution?" Students should write their arguments, use persuasive devices, and reference modern or historical examples.

3. Sive in the 21st Century

Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to adapt the extract into a modern setting. Encourage them to think about:

- How the conversation would happen today (e.g., in a family home, via messages, social media posts, video call etc).
- Modern equivalents of the pressures Sive faces.
- How Mena's persuasion techniques could translate into contemporary strategies.

Students can present their adaptation using either a short filmed scene or scripted role-play in class.