



Exploring Junior Cycle Prescribed Fiction

The king of Spain's Daughter by Teresa Deevy

The king of Spain's Daughter by Teresa Deevy is a drama included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and presenting for examination in 2024, 2025 and 2026).

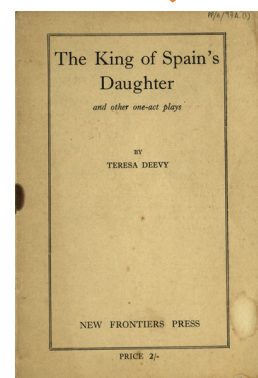


Image courtesy of
New Frontiers Press

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.
- *The king of Spain's Daughter* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before You Read... (Teacher Guidance)

Pre-reading Activities - Discussion Starters:

1. Quick-Write (5 minutes)

Prompt students with a thematic question such as:

- “Have you ever felt torn between what your family wants and what you want?”
- “What responsibilities come with adulthood?”

2. Title

Display only the title of the drama/extract.

Ask students:

- What genre does this title suggest?
- Who might the main characters be?
- Is the title serious, funny, mysterious, dramatic?
- What sort of world do you expect? Modern? Historical? Rural? Urban?

3. A Director's First Day

Tell students: “You are the director of a new play you’ve never read. You only know the title and the setting.” What would you expect the first scene to look like?



Extract

This extract is taken from the opening scene of the play. This short, one-act play set in Ireland in the early 1900's reveals the plight of dreamer, Annie Kinsella.

The action of the play takes place on a grassy road in Ireland during the dinner-hour of a day in April

The King of Spain's Daughter

SCENE— *An open space on a grassy road. At each side road-barriers with notices "No Traffic" and "Road Closed". At the back an old dilapidated wall; a small door in the centre of the wall stands open and fields can be seen beyond. County Council workers have been employed here. Two coats, a thermos flask, an old sack and a man's hat and stick have been left on a pile of stones near one of the barriers. PETER KINSELLA, a heavily built man of fifty, comes through the doorway. He carries a pick axe, his overalls and boots are covered with a fine dust. He stands in the centre, looks away to the left, shading his eyes — then to the right. JIM HARRIS comes on, whistling. He is twenty-four, wears a cap and dusty overalls. He leaves his spade against the wall, goes to the barrier at the right side leans on it, looking away to the right.*

JIM: *Great work at the weddin' below. Miss What's-her-name getting married. The women were gathered at the wharf an hour and a half before time for send-off. (Laughs. PETER nods without interest). Right well it looked from above, with the white launch, an' the flags flyin' an' the sun on the water. Brave and gay at the start however 'twill go. (Takes his thermos flask). Come on, man. With the noise of the sirens I didn't hear the whistle, an' I kept workin' five minutes too long. Wasn't that a terrible thing to have happen to me?*

PETER: *She's late with my dinner.*

JIM (dismayed): *What? Didn't she come here at all?*

PETER: *She did not. Late — the second time in the week.*

JIM: *'Tis on account of that weddin'. She'll be up now. They don't feel time or weather when they're waitin' for a bride.*

PETER: *I'll make her feel something ... her father without his dinner.*

JIM (looking to the right): *Is it at the wharf she is? or the far side of the river watchin' the start?*

PETER: *Do I, or anyone, ever know, where Annie'd be? Only sisters you have but they'd give you more thought than that daughter of mine. Oh, she'll be sorry yet.*

(Teresa Deevy, The King of Spain's Daughter, 1935, Act1:1).

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. Describe the setting using details from the stage directions, and explain what kind of atmosphere these details create.
2. Describe Peter's relationship with Annie as it appears here, and explain what his words suggest about their family dynamic.



3. Identify one example of everyday, natural speech in the extract and explain how it makes the characters feel realistic.
4. Explain how Jim should move or act in order to show his cheerful nature and why these actions would suit his character.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the text. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

1. A Letter Between Characters

Write a letter one character sends to another explaining something left unsaid on stage.

This develops skills in empathy, tone, and relationship exploration.

2. Rewrite a Scene from Another Character's Point of View

Retell a moment from the viewpoint of a different character, focusing on how they interpret events.

Great for understanding bias, perspective, and character contrast.

3. Director's Notes

Write a director's commentary explaining how you would stage, light, costume, or block a scene.

Encourages students to think about performance, visual meaning, and audience impact.

4. Write a Scene in Modern Language

Rewrite part of the extract in a modern Irish or urban setting.

5. Write a theatre review of a performance of the play you have just studied.

You should imagine you attended the performance in a theatre and are now writing about what you saw, heard, and felt.