

## Group Discussion



### Instructions

- Divide into groups of 2 or 3.
- Collect a Discussion Question sheet from Dr May.
- Write your full names (first and last) on the Discussion Question sheet.
- Discuss and take informal notes on the Discussion Question.
- Select one person to summarize your discussion to the class.
- We will reconvene in 10 minutes.

## Group Discussion

1. Discuss the significance of Norm Yarrow's meeting with Prof. Vambrace (181-86), in particular Yarrow's attempt to harangue Vambrace on points of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.
2. Consider the relevance of the episode involving Mrs Little, her sister Kitten, and Kitten's husband George Morpew (207-13). What is the object of satire in this section?
3. Trace Solly's epiphany. Characterize him before his epiphany, identify his epiphany, and then discuss how it changes him as a character.
4. Trace Pearl's epiphany. Characterize her before her epiphany, identify her epiphany, and then discuss how it changes her as a character.
5. Consider the resolution of the detective-story element of the novel as an anticlimax. What purpose is served by resolving this element anticlimactically rather than climactically?

## Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (ca. 429 BC)

- prior to the start of the play, Oedipus has become the king of Thebes while unwittingly fulfilling a prophecy that he would kill his father Laius (the previous king) and marry his mother Jocasta (whom Oedipus took as his queen after solving the Riddle of the Sphinx)
- the action of the play concerns Oedipus' search for the murderer of Laius in order to end a plague ravaging Thebes, unaware that the killer he is looking for is actually himself
- at the end of the play, after the truth finally comes to light, Jocasta hangs herself, while Oedipus—horrified at his patricide and incest—gouges out his own eyes in despair
- Aristotle repeatedly refers to the play in his *Poetics* (ca. 335 BC) as an ideal example of tragedy (*Wikipedia*)

## Oedipus Complex

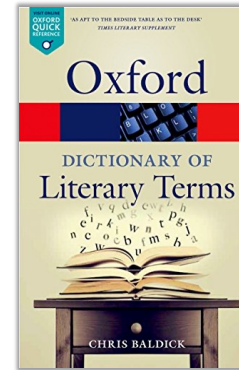
- in the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a crucial stage in the normal developmental process of a child, as introduced in his early work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899)
- theorizes about the desire of a child for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of sexual rivalry with the parent of the same sex; the stage ends when the child identifies with the parent of the same sex and represses these sexual instincts
- if previous relationships with the parents were relatively loving and non-traumatic, and if parental attitudes were neither excessively prohibitive nor excessively stimulating, the child passes through the stage harmoniously; in the presence of trauma, however, neuroses can occur, which can affect the child into adulthood (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

## Oedipus Complex

... although Davies ... had chewed over Freud's theories for years ... he had never espoused a Freudian outlook.... The reason for this only slowly became clear to him. When he was a young man, he had not recognized how much Freud's temperament and outlook repelled him, but as he approached middle age, he began to feel profound unease and dissatisfaction with the great man. Freud had little to say to patients over the age of forty-five. His deep pessimism had begun to grate on the basically optimistic Davies. Freud's dogmatism, his unwillingness to admit to reservations or uncertainties, troubled him.... And Freud's insistence on the central role of infantile sexuality in all subsequent experience seemed wrong-headed and reductive of life's possibilities. Surely a man elected to become a writer ... "for some better reason than because he was scared of his mother before he developed his Oedipus complex"! (348-49)

Judith Skelton Grant. *Robertson Davies: Man of Myth*. Viking, 1994.

## double entendre



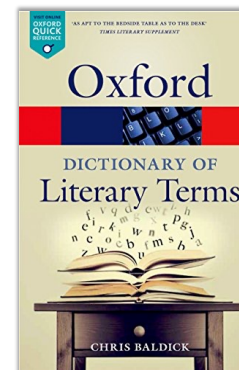
- French for “double meaning”
- adopted in English to denote a *pun* in which a word or phrase has a second, usually sexual, meaning (Baldick 105)
  - **pun**: an expression that achieves emphasis or humour by contriving an ambiguity, two distinct messages being suggested either by the same word or by two similar-sounding words (Baldick 298-99)

## double entendre



I'll be up her flue next week, I'll be up her flue next week,	While looking through the paper at the matrimonial part,
I'm very busy now with another old flue,	I saw a great big advert, it really made me start.
When your brush gets warm well you can't sweep two.	It said apply at number ten, Tottenham Court, West Ham.,
In my line of business it's very hard to speak,	There's a pretty little widow with a thousand quid,
When I get another brush I'll be coming with a rush,	And she wants a nice young man. (20-24)
I'll be up her flue next week. (6-11)	<b>“I'll Be Up Your Flue Next Week.” Traditional.</b>

## epiphany

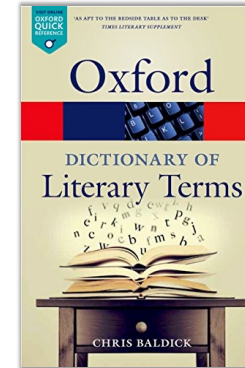


- the insight gained when one suddenly understands the essence of something or sees something for what it is
- a “Eureka” moment, an instantaneous discovery or revelatory experience that imparts new insight or realization
- Greek for *manifestation*, originally referred to the Christian festival commemorating the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, celebrated on 6 January (Baldick 121-22)

## epiphany

	Pearl	Solly
<b>pre-epiphany</b>	<b>ch. 3:</b> "Pearl was a loyal daughter and it never occurred to her that home was ... a hell" (89)	<b>ch. 4:</b> "Solly was always late for his mother's First Thursdays, and they kept up the pretence" (140)
<b>epiphany</b>	<b>ch. 3:</b> "She felt herself to be utterly alone and forsaken, for she knew that she had lost her father" (131)	<b>ch. 4:</b> "his mind was made up about one thing: he should have tried to protect Pearl from her father" (171)
<b>post-epiphany</b>	<b>ch. 5:</b> "Feeling herself now to be alone in the world, she stood straighter, her eyes were brighter" (180)	<b>ch. 5:</b> "what Pearl had confided to him ... had strengthened him, and ... he pitied his mother" (201)

## anticlimax



- an abrupt lapse from growing intensity to triviality in a work
- creates the effect of disappointed expectation or deflated suspense
- a descent from the sublime to the ludicrous
- often, but not always, used for comic effect (Baldick 16-17)

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