

The Changing Face of Design Education or What the Flamin' Hell's all this Then?

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The play takes place in Boggswood Comprehensive School on Open Night.

The Characters

Mike Smith is forty years old. He has been more or less out of circulation for the last twelve years or so, due to repeated attacks of a strange illness. This manifests itself as an inability to pass a jewellers shop without throwing a brick through its window. He is an ex-Boggswood secondary modern pupil himself.

Kate Smith is Mike's thirty five year old wife. She has coped more or less single-handed during Mike's absences.

Tracy Smith
and

Peter Smith are Kate and Mike's thirteen year old twins.

Sue Brown Tracy and Peter's CDT teacher.

The conversation begins in the corridor of the design block.

Kate Well, Mike, do you recognise the old place then? Fancy it's where we first met. We had such high hopes then. You were going to go into the jewellery trade, remember?

Mike Well, so I did in a manner of speaking. It wasn't my fault I got caught with the brick in my hand. I mean everyone's allowed one mistake.

Kate Fair enough, but five times! You've been in and out like a flipping yo-yo. What's the longest I've had you at home in the last twelve years? Six weeks? I'm surprised you still recognise the kids, let alone the school.

Mike OK, OK, let's forget it, shall we. I've promised to go straight from now on.

Kate Just as long as it's not straight to the high street. Window shopping with you takes on a whole new meaning.

Mike Look, I've promised, haven't I? A strong-minded lad like our Peter needs his Dad to keep him on the straight and narrow.

Kate In that case, he's in real trouble!

Peter Oh Lord, here we go again. It's always the same (*to parents*) OK you two, stop arguing. We're supposed to be looking round the school so belt up both of you. Look, this is where we do CDT.

Mike CDT! What the 'ell's CDT? Is it something like that aerobics, them nice girls in the Sun seem to go in for?

Kate Don't be daft Mike. It's ... well ... woodwork ... and things.

Peter Well, not exactly Mum. You see we design things now as well as making them.

Mike That sounds nice, Son. Where do you do your cookery and needlework Tracey?

Tracey Just over there, Dad. But Peter does food and textiles as well, you know.

Mike He does what! I mean, I suppose a bit of cooking isn't a bad thing, just in case he doesn't get married, or something. I'm not having him doing sewing though. People will think he's a bit funny.

Peter Shut up Dad, there's people listening. Textiles isn't only sewing. We print our own stuff 'n that. I'm not very good at it, but it's been good fun. I made a kite with "Boggtown United" on it. It'll never fly, but it'll look great hanging off my bedroom ceiling. I'll show you in a bit. In here's ...

Mike I know what's in here. I remember from when I was here myself. It's the metalwork room. I remember making my first crowbar in here. Very useful it turned out, too. (*opening door*). Have you made me a pipe rack in woodwork as well?

Peter But you don't smoke a pipe!

Mike What's that got to do with it? We always made a pipe rack when I was at school. Strewth, this has changed a bit. The benches still look like the ones when I was here though. (*Peers more closely*) I wonder if the one's still here that I carved "I love ..." (*Glancing at Kate*). Er where's your work then?

Tracey Mine's over there, Dad. Is yours up Pete?

Mike What the hell do you mean Trace. This is the boy's stuff.

Tracey No it isn't, Dad. We all do exactly the same course now until we choose our options.

Mike But that can't be right, surely. You can't have girls making wrought iron gates. They're not strong

	enough. And all the machines. Girls could never work them, could they.	Mike	Oh, you can't beat a bit of TD.		Which subjects do they want to do?
		Peter	What's TD Dad?	Mike	She's just told you, CDT. By the way, what does CDT stand for?
Tracey	I must admit, Dad, it can be a bit difficult. Most of these machines are great big factory things. The teacher had to make a box for the littlest ones to stand on, so they could see. There's not enough money to get all the tools that would make it easier either. Oh look, there's Mrs Brown now. She's a smashing teacher.	Mike	Don't they teach you anything these days? I thought you said you draw things! TD is technical drawing — You know drawing boards, tee squares and things. I bet I could still develop the joint between two pipes. I'll be able to help you with your homework. But I can't see any drawings up on the wall, only pictures. Do you do art in here as well?	Kate	Let's see if I can remember — Craft, Design and Technology isn't it?
				Mrs Brown	Ten out of ten, to quote a phrase. You see Mr Smith, CDT is such a big area that at exam level we split it into three areas.
Kate	What does she teach, love?			Peter	I want to do Design and Communication. There's lots of graphics in that. You get to make models as well.
Peter	This of course! She's new this term. Hello Miss!	Tracey	Not exactly, Dad. We do graphics though — it's all part of design. It helps you sort out your ideas, and sort out what to make. You know, how to solve the problem.	Mike	Models?! That's not school work. That's playing. I mean it's good fun, model making. I made one of Saint Paul's Cathedral out of matchsticks once.
Mrs Brown	Hello Pete. Hello Tracey. Is this your Mum and Dad. I think I've seen your Mum in Sainsbury's haven't I? I don't know your Dad though. Pleased to see you both.	Mike	What do you mean? What problem? If you've got a problem you just tell me, love. I'll sort it out. That's what Dads are for.	Mrs Brown	Goodness, that must have taken absolutely ages. However did you find the time?
Kate	Yes, I work in Sainsbury's. Small world, isn't it.			Mike	Well, let's just say it found me. But why do you make them in school?
Mike	Our Tracy's been telling me that she does metalwork. Surely that can't be right.	Mrs Brown	Well, if one of the twins wanted to solve the problem of storing your pipes, then they could design something suitable. (<i>To the twins</i>) You might bear it in mind for your next project.	Mrs Brown	It lets us design things that would be too difficult for us to make. Sometimes kids find it easier to make a model of something than to draw it.
Tracey	I didn't say metalwork, Dad. I said CDT. It's not the same thing.	Peter	But he doesn't smoke, Miss.	Kate	Pete's always been good at drawing. Remember the letters and pictures he used to send you while you were away, Mike?
Mike	Well what the flaming hell is CDT then?	Mrs Brown	Oh, I see, you collect pipes do you Mr Brown? How many do you have?	Mike	That's true. He could bring things to life with them. Made me feel as if I was there.
Mrs Brown	Go on then, Tracey, you explain what you do in CDT.	Mike	What are you on about? I haven't got any pipes.	Kate	What do you want to do, Tracey?
Tracey	We make things.	Mrs Brown	Well, why do you want a pipe rack, then?	Tracey	Design and Realisation. You actually get to make things then. That's what I like best. We did jewellery in the second year. It was great. I made that bird table that's on the back lawn as well, Dad.
Mike	Just like I said, it's a posh name for woodwork and metalwork. So I might get my pipe rack after all, then.	Kate	Oh, forget it, Mrs Brown, it would take too long to explain. I've read the little booklet you sent out last week (<i>Turning to Mike</i>) I'll show you when we get home if you remind me, love. It explains it all quite well. The kids seem quite keen to take CDT next year.	Mike	You never did! That's really good, that is. I thought you'd brought it. Mind you, I've never seen
Mrs Brown	It's not just wood and metal, you know. We use a lot of plastics these days as well; acrylic especially.				
Mike	Acrylic — that's what jumpers are made of isn't it. Load of old rubbish!				
Mrs Brown	Actually, it's the general name for Perspex, Mr Smith. But CDT's a bit more than just making things, isn't it Peter?				
Peter	I suppose it is really. We have to draw them as well.				

- one that colour in the shops, come to think of it.
- Mrs Brown Yes, it was pretty unusual, wasn't it. I remember wondering if it was meant for peacocks or any bird of paradise that happened to be passing. Still, we do encourage originality. *(To the twins)* Don't either of you want to do technology?
- Mike Now that sounds more like it, Son. That's the sort of thing you need today, with all these computers and things.
- Peter I know, Dad, but I'm not sure I'm clever enough to do it. Tracey is though.
- Mike Don't talk rubbish. It won't be any use to Tracey. You ought to do it though. Think of the future!
- Mrs Brown And what about Tracey's future. Hasn't she got one? Some of the best jobs around here are for technologists.
- Mike Well of course she's got a future. But let's face it, she's bound to get married, isn't she. You don't need technology to bring kids up, do you.
- Kate Yes, I got married, didn't I? I've also worked for most of my married life. As what? Cleaner, shop assistant — all the jobs with lousy pay. At least let's give Tracey the options that I never had. And even if she has a family, so what? Surely a well educated Mum is going to be a great help to her kids. Perhaps she'll be able to help her kids with their homework. I got stuck just past primary school. It's not as if I was thick at school. I got quite good results, but Mum couldn't afford for me to stop on. She needed the extra money. I'd like our two to go on to university if they're good enough. That's if I can find the money of course.
- Mrs Brown They are good enough, you know. Don't take any notice of Peter, he's good enough to take technology, to go to University, or whatever he want to do. Tracey too. Even if they don't get jobs in this sort of work, they learn lots of other things as well.
- Mike Such as?
- Mrs Brown Making decisions. I already explained that they have to establish and solve problems for themselves. They learn to be a bit more methodical about the things they do.
- Tracey Besides, it's great to be able to move around a bit and do something different. You get fed up of sitting and listening all day. I'll be able to make things at home better, as well.
- Mrs Brown Don't forget you have a design folder to produce as well, young lady. And then there's all the research.
- Mike In that case, perhaps you ought to research those shelves your Mum keeps on at me about. Anyway, it looks as if I'm outvoted, doesn't it? OK I give in. I didn't realise I had such a pair of clever clogs'. *(To Kate)* Don't worry about finding the money, love. I remember now, I buried it just behind *(Voice fades to a whisper)*
- THE END

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