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## Introduction to Say the Right Thing

"Say the Right Thing" is a humorous play that teaches the importance of speaking politely and appropriately in social situations. The story revolves around a mother advising her daughter, Mary Shaw, on how to behave and speak correctly when guests arrive. Despite the mother's guidance, Mary ends up making several blunders that embarrass both the guests and her mother.

### Key Elements

- **Theme:** The importance of politeness and social etiquette.
- **Characters:** Mary Shaw (a young girl), Mrs. Shaw (Mary's mother), Mrs. Harding (wife of a wealthy man), Mrs. Lee (Mrs. Harding's sister).
- **Setting:** The play is set in the home of Mrs. Shaw, where guests arrive for a visit.

### Summary

The play begins with Mrs. Shaw preparing for the arrival of guests, Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Lee. She advises Mary on how to behave politely, including saying kind things, making guests feel welcome, and not rushing them to leave. Mary promises to follow the advice but ends up making rude and embarrassing remarks during the visit, showing the contrast between knowing what to say and actually saying it.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who are the main characters in the play?
- What advice does Mrs. Shaw give to Mary?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Why does Mary embarrass her mother and the guests?
- Explain the meaning of the phrase "Say the right thing." How is it important in the play?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how Mary's behavior reflects the challenges of learning social etiquette.
- Analyze the role of humor in conveying the play's message.

## Answer Key

- **Main characters:** Mary Shaw, Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Harding, Mrs. Lee.
- **Mrs. Shaw's advice:** Be kind, say things that please guests, make them laugh, and don't rush them to leave.
- **Mary embarrasses others:** By making rude comments and not following her mother's advice.
- **Meaning of "Say the right thing":** To speak politely and appropriately in social situations, which is the central theme of the play.
- **Mary's behavior:** Shows the difficulty of practicing good manners despite knowing them.
- **Humor's role:** Makes the lesson engaging and memorable by showing Mary's mistakes in a funny way.

## Quick Reference

- Politeness and social etiquette are essential for good relationships.
- Listening and thinking before speaking helps avoid embarrassment.
- Humor can be used effectively to teach important lessons.

## Glossary

- **Hilariously:** In a very funny way.
- **Blunders:** Careless mistakes.
- **Embarrasses:** Makes others feel uncomfortable or awkward.

## Summary of Scenes

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### Scene I

Mrs. Shaw prepares the house for guests and advises Mary on how to behave politely. Mary insists she can talk well and promises to say the right things. Mrs. Shaw warns her to be kind and make guests feel welcome, especially when they want to leave.

### Scene II

The guests, Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Lee, arrive. Mary makes several rude and embarrassing remarks about the guests and their acquaintances, such as commenting on their clothes, habits, and pets. Despite Mrs. Shaw's efforts to smooth things over, Mary fails to say the right things, causing discomfort.

## Practice Set

Level 1 – Easy

- What instructions does Mrs. Shaw give Mary before the guests arrive?
- Who are the guests visiting Mrs. Shaw?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe one example of a blunder Mary makes during the visit.
- How does Mrs. Shaw try to handle Mary's remarks?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Explain how Mary's comments affect the mood of the visit.
- What does this scene teach about the importance of social awareness?

## Answer Key

- **Mrs. Shaw's instructions:** Be kind, say pleasing things, make guests laugh, and don't rush them to leave.
- **Guests:** Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Lee.
- **Mary's blunder:** Saying Mrs. Harding has children when she does not, or criticizing Mrs. Best's clothes.
- **Mrs. Shaw's handling:** She tries to explain or change the subject to avoid offense.
- **Effect on mood:** Mary's remarks create awkwardness and discomfort.
- **Lesson:** Being socially aware and polite is important to maintain good relationships.

## Character Sketches

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### Mary Shaw

Mary is a young girl who is confident in her ability to talk but lacks social tact. She often speaks without thinking, which leads to embarrassing situations. Her character shows the challenges of learning proper social behavior.

## Mrs. Shaw

Mrs. Shaw is Mary's mother who values politeness and social etiquette. She tries to teach Mary how to behave correctly when guests visit, showing patience and concern for social harmony.

## Mrs. Harding

Mrs. Harding is the wife of a wealthy man. She is polite and reserved, representing the ideal guest in the play.

## Mrs. Lee

Mrs. Lee is Mrs. Harding's sister. She is also polite and tries to maintain a pleasant atmosphere during the visit.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who is Mary Shaw?
- What kind of person is Mrs. Shaw?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe Mrs. Harding's character based on the play.
- How does Mrs. Lee contribute to the visit?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze Mary's character and her role in conveying the play's message.
- Discuss Mrs. Shaw's role as a mother and teacher in the play.

## Answer Key

- **Mary Shaw:** A young girl who speaks confidently but lacks social tact.
- **Mrs. Shaw:** A caring mother who values politeness and teaches social etiquette.
- **Mrs. Harding:** Polite, reserved, and represents a good guest.
- **Mrs. Lee:** Polite and helps maintain a pleasant atmosphere.
- **Mary's role:** Shows the importance of learning to speak appropriately.
- **Mrs. Shaw's role:** Guides and teaches Mary about social behavior.

## Themes and Literary Devices

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### Themes

- **Politeness and Social Etiquette:** The play emphasizes the importance of speaking kindly and appropriately in social situations.
- **Communication and Miscommunication:** It shows how poor communication can lead to embarrassment and discomfort.
- **Learning and Growth:** The play highlights the process of learning social skills and the challenges involved.

### Literary Devices

- **Humour:** Used to make the lesson engaging and to highlight Mary's blunders in a light-hearted way.
- **Dialogue:** The entire play is a conversation that reveals character traits and advances the plot.
- **Irony:** Mary's confident talk contrasts with her actual inability to say the right things.

## Practice Set

## Level 1 – Easy

- What is the main theme of the play?
- Give an example of humour from the play.

## Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how irony is used in the play.
- Describe the role of dialogue in the play.

## Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how the theme of learning social etiquette is portrayed through the characters.
- Analyze the effectiveness of humour in teaching the play's message.

## Answer Key

- **Main theme:** Politeness and social etiquette.
- **Example of humour:** Mary's silly remarks about the guests and their habits.
- **Irony:** Mary thinks she can talk well but often says the wrong things.
- **Dialogue's role:** Reveals characters and shows the social situation.
- **Theme portrayal:** Through Mary's mistakes and Mrs. Shaw's advice.
- **Humour effectiveness:** Makes the lesson memorable and enjoyable.