

# Translations

A Play by Brian Friel

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## Teacher Guide

Mater Dei Education





*Mater Dei Education*

# Translations

A PLAY BY BRIAN FRIEL

*Teacher Guide*

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## Introduction

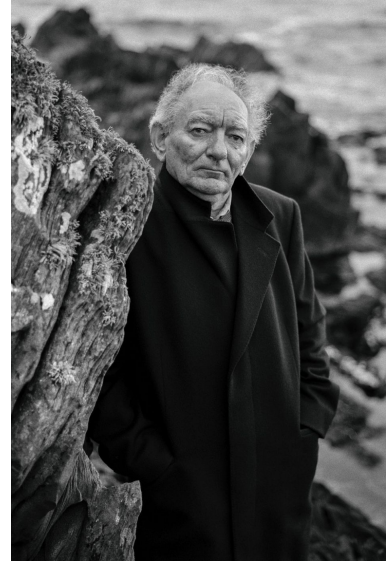
### *Brian Friel and Translations*

Brian Friel (1929-2015) was born near Omagh in County Tyrone. At the age of ten he moved with his family to Derry, where he attended secondary school at St Columb's College. Like his father, he became a teacher in the city. However, during the 1950s he was drawn increasingly to creative writing and by the end of that decade his short stories featured in the *New Yorker Magazine*. He decided to give up teaching to become a full-time writer in 1960. His development as a playwright led to an invitation to spend time at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in 1962, an experience that Brian Friel described as transformative. He returned to Ireland from the USA to devote himself to drama. A short time later he wrote his innovative play, *Philadelphia, Here I Come* (1964), which won him international acclaim. During a writing career of over half a century, Friel published more than twenty plays, of which *Translations* (1980) is one of the most applauded. He has been described as the greatest Irish playwright of his generation and as the father of modern Irish drama.

Shortly before writing *Translations*, Brian Friel discovered that his great-great-grandfather McCabe had been a hedge schoolmaster from County Mayo who moved to live in County Donegal. Around the same time, he came across the old trigonometric base near Lough Foyle that had played an important part in the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey of Ireland. Friel wove these strands together to craft a compelling drama concerning a conflict of languages and cultures. *Translations* is set in the year 1833 in a fictional Donegal village called *Baile Beag* (Ballybeg) and explores a clash between the Gaelic and Irish-speaking world of the hedge school and the imperial and English-speaking world of the soldiers who mapped Ireland. Friel dramatises a moment of increasing anglicisation in *Baile Beag* when a new National School is about to open in the Irish-speaking community, and Royal Engineer officers arrive to survey its landscape and to translate its Irish place names into English.

### *Debut and Reaction to Translations*

*Translations* was first presented in Derry's Guild Hall in September 1980 by Field Day Theatre Company, which had recently been co-founded by Brian Friel and the actor Stephen Rea, to whom the play was dedicated. Almost a century and a half had passed since the events depicted onstage took place, yet the weight of history seemed just as momentous in 1980 as it had been in 1833 and was keenly felt in the Northern Ireland Troubles (1968–1998). Field Day sought to address political and cultural conflict through drama and the arts, by opening new windows of thought and creating what was called a *Fifth Province*; a realm of the imagination, where Brian



Stephen Rea (1946-) is an Irish actor of stage and screen. Born in Belfast, he began his career as a member of Dublin's Focus Theatre, and played many roles on the stage, film and on Irish television.

Other works where Friel explores these themes including *Philadelphia Here I Come*, *Aristocrats*, and *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Friel hoped Ireland and its past could be viewed in a new way and where opposing forces could be thought about and resolved. *Translations* was the first and perhaps the most important production by the Field Day company. Performances followed in Dublin, London, and other locations, with reviews describing the play as a national classic.

### *Influences on Friel*

Brian Friel's writing of *Translations* was shaped by several influences. His historical understanding was informed by books such as P.J. Dowling's *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* and J.H. Andrews' *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* as well as John O'Donovan's *Ordnance Survey Letters from County Donegal* and *A Memoir of the City and the North-West Liberties of Londonderry*, written by Colonel Thomas Colby, who supervised the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. The title, *Translations*, points to the core concern of the play, which Friel explained was solely about language and communication. His own perspective on language was influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and George Steiner, whose book, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1975) impressed him greatly.

For Friel, there were many translations in Irish history. He was interested in how people coped with change and adapted to new situations. In particular, he reflected on the loss of the Irish language, the adoption of English as an acquired language, and the impact of this on cultural consciousness, identity, and expression. Of all his plays, *Translations* is the richest in classical allusion. Irish characters in the hedge-school find relevance and a means of expression in quotations from Greek and Latin authors and in quips and language games. Some, like the hedge-school master, see themselves as inheritors of an ancient classical tradition that was well suited to their native Gaelic language. Friel gives prominence to Homer's *Odyssey* and to Virgil's epic, the *Aeneid*, in particular. References to these and other classical texts add subtlety and complexity to themes and motifs explored in *Translations*, such as questions of dispossession, empire-building, and cultural and linguistic change. Both Virgil, in the *Aeneid*, and Friel in *Translations* use the literary device of having all their characters speak one language: Latin and English, respectively. Place and place names are of significance to both Virgil and Friel, as are words, their origins, and etymologies.

### *The Hedge Schools*

Much of the dramatic action of *Translations* takes place in the disused barn where a hedge-school is located. At first, classes were held outdoors or in simple sod and heath huts constructed along hedgerows. Hence the name 'hedge-schools.' By the 1830s they were extremely popular and no longer illegal. Classes took place

Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) was a German philosopher best known for contributions to phenomenology; the study of the subjective experience and consciousness. He was particularly interested in the question of the meaning of being.

Homer's *Odyssey* follows the adventures of the Greek hero and king of Ithaca, Odysseus, and his homecoming journey after the ten-year long Trojan War.

The *Aeneid* is Virgil's epic poem (written in Latin) that tells the legendary story of *Aeneas*, a Trojan who fled the fall of Troy and travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans.

*Etymology* is the study of the origin and evolution of words.

Hedge-schools were informal schools where young people received instruction during (and for some time after) the era of the Penal Laws which outlawed the education of Catholics and other religious groups who did not conform to the established Anglican church.

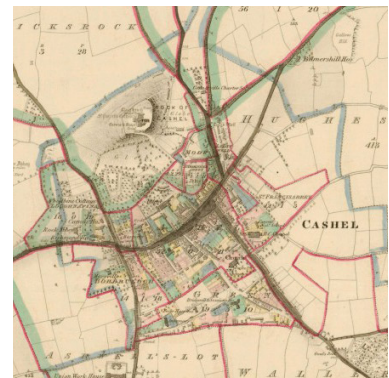


indoors wherever a space could be found. The hedge-school master provided tuition in return for a small salary, paid by parents. The curriculum depended on the master's own learning and knowledge but frequently included Catechism, Mathematics, Latin, Greek, and the works of classical authors. The system was a response to the denial of education to most Irish children, and the proliferation of hedge schools in the early nineteenth century demonstrated the enduring value placed on learning by parents who managed to pay for it, though often struggling to subsist.

The popularity of hedge-schools and the idea that education was in the hands of the people alarmed British authorities. Commissions of Inquiry expressed suspicion of hedge-schools and questioned their loyalty. As a result, the British government decided to become directly involved in the provision of primary education in Ireland and set up the National Board of Education in 1831 to build national schools, employ and train teachers, set the curriculum, and provide textbooks. We hear in *Translations* that a new national school is about to open in *Baile Beag* and that Hugh, the hedge-school master, wants to become master of the new school. Like other hedge-school teachers, he was attracted by a better-built and equipped schoolhouse, an annual salary, and permanent employment. Hence, new national schools often absorbed existing hedge-schools. But the two systems were very different. Hedge-schools had transmitted the faith, knowledge, and cultural heritage of communities, along with classical learning, in an informal manner for centuries. The new national schools were state-run and strictly regulated. English was the language of instruction, and there was no place for the study of the Irish language, history, or culture in the curriculum.

### *The Ordnance Survey*

Another intervention in Ireland by the Westminster government was an Ordnance Survey of the entire country, which was conducted under military leadership between 1824 and 1846 and resulted in the publication of maps for each county at the scale of six inches to a mile. It involved the collection of wide-ranging information on each parish and the revaluing of Irish land for taxation purposes. John O'Donovan, an Irish language scholar, joined the Topographical Department of the Ordnance Survey in 1830 and led the study of place names as they were recorded in old documents and spoken by the people. It was his task to recommend anglicised forms of Irish place names for the published maps. Some place names were translated directly into English, but often the Irish language name was simply anglicised to fit patterns of English pronunciation and spelling. Consequently, meaning was lost. For example, the element *cnoc* (a hill) became *knock*, and *druim* (a ridge) became *drum*. *Dún na nGall* was anglicised to Donegal and *Baile Beag* to Ballybeg. In the play, O'Donovan is represented by the character Owen, who is fluent in Irish and English and works for the British cartographers.



The Ordnance Survey Office, established in 1824, was created to carry out a military survey of the entire island of Ireland to update land valuations for land taxation purposes. The original survey at a scale of 6 inches to 1 mile was completed under the direction of Major General Colby. Ireland thus became the first country in the world to be entirely mapped at such a detailed scale. The town of Cashel, County Tipperary is shown here.

The Ordnance Survey was a massive undertaking that involved the triangulation of the whole country and extensive information gathering. It took over twenty years to complete and employed thousands of people, including Royal Engineer officers, soldiers trained in field-work (sappers), and civilian labourers. Colonel Colby was assisted by Captain Thomas Larcom in the Dublin OS office set up by the government in 1824 at Mountjoy House in the Phoenix Park, where the Ordnance Survey has remained ever since.

<b>Irish</b>	<i>English</i>	<b>Irish Example</b>	<i>Translation</i>
Gleann	<i>glen</i>	Gleann Dá Loch	<i>Glendalough</i>
Mainistir	<i>monastery</i>	Mainistir Fhear Maí	<i>Fermoy</i>
Droichead	<i>bridge</i>	Droichead Nua	<i>Newbridge</i>
Muileann	<i>mill</i>	An Muileann gCearr	<i>Mullingar</i>
Caisleán	<i>castle</i>	Caisleán Riabhach	<i>Castledermot</i>
Carraig	<i>rock</i>	Carraig na Siúire	<i>Carrick-on-Suir</i>
Leitir	<i>hillside</i>	Leitir Fraic	<i>Letterfrack</i>
Cluain	<i>meadow</i>	Cluain Meala	<i>Clonmel</i>
Gleann	<i>glen</i>	Gleann Beithe	<i>Glenbeigh</i>
Doire	<i>oak grove</i>	Doire Fhionáin	<i>Derrynane</i>
Baile Átha	<i>ford town</i>	Baile Átha Cliath	<i>Dublin</i>
Ceann	<i>head</i>	Ceann Toirc	<i>Kanturk</i>
Clochán	<i>stepping stones</i>	Clochán Liath	<i>Dungloe</i>
Cill	<i>church</i>	Cill Dara	<i>Kildare</i>
Port	<i>port</i>	Port Láirge	<i>Waterford</i>
Inis	<i>island</i>	Inis Córthaidh	<i>Enniscorthy</i>
Cnoc	<i>hill</i>	Cnoc Mhuire	<i>Knock</i>
Long	<i>ship</i>	An Longfort	<i>Longford</i>
Lios	<i>ringfort</i>	Lios na gCearrbhach	<i>Lisnagarvey</i>
Gort	<i>field</i>	An Gort	<i>Gort</i>
Áth	<i>ford</i>	Áth Dara	<i>Adare</i>
Dún	<i>fort</i>	Dún Pádraig	<i>Downpatrick</i>

Some Irish Placenames and Translations. In some cases, direct translation was attempted (*e.g.*, Newbridge) but in most cases, a phonetic translation was adopted.

Friel captures the complexity of these developments and the tensions they generated in a community such as *Baile Beag*, whose inhabitants found themselves beleaguered by forces of change. The social and political turmoil swirling in the background of *Translations* is sometimes referenced in the dialogue of the play and at other times it is vaguely implied by events that occur covertly off-stage. While the London government sought to tighten the bond between Britain and Ireland, Daniel O'Connell embarked on a campaign for the Repeal of the Act of Union and the restoration of an Irish parliament in Dublin.

A *Tithe War* was in progress against the obligation on all those working the land to contribute, either in cash or produce, to the upkeep of the established Anglican church. The population had grown rapidly to more than seven million in 1831, putting intense pressure on land and leaving many families dependent on the potato for food. In addition, there was widespread agrarian unrest, agitation by secret societies, and sporadic violence—activities associated with the shadowy Donnelly twins in the play. The extent of unrest in Ireland was so great in 1833, the government introduced the Suppression of Disturbances Act: a severe measure that allowed for curfews, detention without trial, and military courts. Friel presents the dramatic arrival of Red Coats in the remote village of *Baile Beag* against this historical backdrop. Their appearance stirs conflicting reactions and sets in motion a chain of fatal events.

The *tithe* was a compulsory payment in cash or in kind to support the Protestant state church, known as the ‘Church of Ireland.’

### *The Anglo-Irish Relationship*

The influence of British colonisation on Ireland’s history cannot be overstated, and the Irish language was just one of many casualties following the British invasion of Ireland. This was particularly acute in the wake of the *Cromwell’s* conquest (1649–1653). The use of the Irish language was widely discouraged under British rule, especially through education; with the introduction of national schools across Ireland in the 1830s, English was the sole language through which children could be taught, with Irish strictly forbidden. When the Great Famine of 1845–1849 hit, the Irish population dropped by 20–25% due to deaths from starvation and mass emigration. The worst hit areas of the famine were rural areas, which were also the predominantly Irish-speaking communities, causing a further decline in speakers of the Irish language.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Irish language and its speakers began to become heavily stigmatised, with Irish deemed the language of outcasts and the dispossessed. The majority of the remaining Irish speakers were those in rural, underdeveloped areas. They were contemptuously regarded by society as peasants, with English – branded as the wealthier and more sophisticated language – slowly becoming the language of the cities. This view of the Irish language is captured in the portrayal of the British authorities in *Translations*.

The Irish relationship with Britain throughout history has been a difficult one. In the aftermath of Irish independence, attempts were made to rehabilitate the Irish language through the national school system and various cultural organisations. However, as a modern sovereign nation, it has often surprised outside observers why more emphasis is not placed on learning the language that was once native to all people, to establish Ireland’s cultural identity as one unique and unmarred by anglicisation.



Oliver Cromwell landed near Dublin in August 1649 and undertook a vicious campaign of terror. The *Act for the Settlement of Ireland* 1652 barred Catholics from most public offices and confiscated large amounts of their land, much of which was given to Protestant settlers. This proved a continuing source of grievance, while the brutality of conquest means Cromwell remains a deeply reviled figure in Ireland.

*For the Reader*

As you study *Translations*, pay careful attention to what the play is saying and to how Brian Friel, as playwright, introduces ambiguity and complexity in the characters and in the action of the play. Consider the message he wishes to convey to his audience—its depth and intricacy. Reflect on what *Translations* says about the Irish language, its decline, and the impact of language loss on Irish identity. Think about the significance of colonisation as a theme in the play and about how Friel conveys the might of empire and the results of empire-building. Give thought to the importance of language and communication as motifs in the play, and consider how perspectives on the English language unfold. From your study, decide how you would characterise the most important themes in *Translations* and the reasons for your conclusions.

*Basic Features and Background*

1. **Brian Friel (1929-2015)** - born near Omagh, Co Tyrone; Brian Friel is considered a pioneering and innovative playwright who had a profound influence on modern Irish drama.
2. *Translations* – a play written by Brian Friel in 1979-1980.
3. **Theatrical conceit** – the illusion is created that most of the characters speak in the Irish language, although the script of *Translations* is written entirely in English, with some Greek and Latin quotations.
4. **Dramatic irony** – a dramatic technique by which the full meaning of words, actions, or symbols is clear to the audience or reader, but the character(s) on stage are unaware of it. This dramatic method is used frequently in *Translations*.
5. **Speech idiom** – an expression or phrase used in a distinctive way in a particular dialect whose meaning may not be clear to outsiders. For example, *fit me better* (p.8). The Irish and English characters are distinguished by their speech idioms, language patterns, and accents. Friel wrote that he set out to present each character with their own voice, characteristic speech patterns, and idiosyncrasies of expression.
6. **Conflict** – the difficult problem(s) that must be addressed in a drama. Conflict may involve contention, confrontation, a threat, or a dilemma. It can be expressed in dialogue, action, and symbolism, and it drives the action of the play.
7. **Linguistic games** – Hugh, the hedge-school master, plays language games with his class based on the etymologies of words and their derivation from classical roots.
8. **Classical allusion** – reference to Greek or Roman literature, mythology, or themes. *Translations* is rich in classical allusions.

9. **Foreboding** – anticipation of a disaster that will happen in the future. Reference to potato blight and the fear it stirs in people creates a presentiment of the cataclysm of the Great Famine in Ireland (1845–c.1850).
10. **Palimpsest** – something, for example a country, which has many different layers or parts apparent beneath the surface. *Translations* is concerned with layers of language in Ireland and with how the English language was overlaid on Irish placenames.
11. **Setting** – The setting for *Translations* is the barn or byer in *Baile Beag* (Ballybeg), which is the location of the hedge-school. Friel provides a detailed description of the set and introduces some of the inhabitants on stage. Others, such as Nellie Ruadh, the Donnelly Twins, and Mr. George Alexander J.P., are referred to in the dialogue.
12. **O'Donnell family** – the central family in *Translations*; Hugh is the hedge-school master. His scholarly son, Manus, assists him in the classroom while his second son, Owen (Roland), has gone to Dublin and acquired the English language and manners. There is no mother present, and we learn that the barn, which is also the O'Donnell home, bears no trace of a woman's hand.

### Comprehension Exercises

The following are suggested answers to the comprehension questions. Additional information is provided in parentheses for some questions.

1. When and where is *Translations* set?  
**Answer:** *Translations* is set in the year 1833 in a hedge-school in a fictional village called *Baile Beag* (Ballybeg) in County Donegal.  
 (Friel wrote in his *Sporadic Diary* that he had Urris, a remote area on the Inishowen Peninsula, in his mind as the setting of the hedge-school.)
2. Where was *Translations* first produced?  
**Answer:** *Translations* was first produced by Field Day Theatre Company in the Guild Hall, Derry in September 1980.  
 (The Guild Hall was a symbol of the plantation of the city and county of Derry by London companies in the seventeenth century. The year 1980 was a tense time in the Northern Ireland Troubles, and members of the audience were searched on their way into the Guild Hall. The performance received a standing ovation led by the Unionist Mayor of the city, Marleen Jefferson.)
3. What did Brian Friel mean when he spoke about creating a *Fifth Province* in Ireland?  
**Answer:** When Brian Friel spoke of a *Fifth Province*, he was referring to the idea that drama and the arts could open up a new space for reflection on the issues facing Ireland.
4. List three sources that informed Friel's writing of *Translations*.  
**Answer:** Any three of the following:
  - J.H. Andrews, *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*.
  - Col T. Colby, *A Memoir of the City and the North-West Liberties of Londonderry*.
  - P.J. Dowling, *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*.

- J. O'Donovan, *Ordnance Survey Letters Donegal*.
- G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*.
- Virgil, *Aeneid*.
- Homer, *Odyssey*.

5. How were Irish placenames changed during the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (1824–1846)?

**Answer:** Place names were translated from the Irish language into English or anglicised on the Ordnance Survey maps.

(Royal Engineer officers leading the O.S. in each district collected placenames from local sources and entered various ways of spelling them in Field Name Books. The Topographical branch of the O.S., led by John O'Donovan from 1830, studied placenames in historical documents and conducted field work to hear pronunciations. Some placenames were translated directly into English, but often the Irish language name was simply anglicised to fit patterns of English pronunciation and spelling. For example, *Baile Beag* became Ballybeg.)

6. Briefly, explain what the *hedge-schools* were.

**Answer:** Hedge schools were informal schools based in local communities and run by hedge-school masters, who were paid by parents.

7. List two ways that life was changing for the people of *Baile Beag* in 1833.

**Answer:** It was a time of great upheaval and change for the people of *Baile Beag*. Their hedge school was about to be replaced by a new National School where English would be the language of instruction. The Ordnance Survey was in progress, mapping, revaluing land, and anglicising Irish placenames. (The people had to learn a new language and the familiar name of their townland was about to be lost. The population was also growing rapidly, and there was food insecurity and fear of potato blight. People were leaving *Baile Beag* if they had the passage money to emigrate. The traditional recognisable world was quickly disappearing.)

8. Name the two classical authors from ancient Greece and Rome referred to in *Translations*.

**Answer:** Homer, Virgil.



### Development Exercises

1. Irish is one of a number of Celtic languages which underwent a long period of decline under British colonial rule. What other languages were suppressed under British rule?

**Answer:** Manx (originally spoken on the Isle of Mann), Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Cornish (originally spoken in Cornwall in the south-west of England) all suffered similar fates.

2. Use the table on page 8 and the resources at <https://www.logainm.ie/en/> to determine the meaning of the placenames below:

**Answer:**

<b>Irish name</b>	<i>English name</i>	<i>English meaning</i>
<i>Cill Mhichíl</i>	Kilmichael	'Michael's Church'
<i>Cluain Tarbh</i>	Clontarf	'Meadow of the bulls'
<i>Baile Átha Luain</i>	Athlone	'Town of Luan's ford'
<i>Cionn tSáile</i>	Kinsale	'Salty head'
<i>Droichead Átha</i>	Drogheda	'Bridge ford'
<i>Cill Dara</i>	Kildare	'Church of the Oaks'
<i>An Dún Beag</i>	Doonbeg	'Small fort'
<i>Cluain Meala</i>	Clonmel	'Meadow of honey'
<i>Baile na mBocht</i>	Mayfield (Cork)	'Town of poor'
<i>An Ráth</i>	Charleville	'Ring fort'

### Discussion Exercises

1. What do you think is the real reason behind the ordnance survey mapping of Ireland? Might there be a hidden agenda on the part of the British government in relation to land ownership, cultural and political identity, and taxation of land?
2. Why are the Irish place names being anglicised and the Irish language banned in the new schools? What is lost in the translation of the Irish place names and what is gained?
3. Discuss the historic Irish phrase, 'tír gan teanga, tír gan anam,' or in English, 'a country without language is a country without soul,' proclaimed by the revolutionary Pádraig Pearse, one of the leading figures of the 1916 Easter Rising.
4. Use your library or online resources to further investigate the following historical events and characters relevant to the play;

The Plantation settlements of Ireland;

The Penal laws in Ireland;

Hedge Schools and Mass Rocks in Ireland;

Daniel O'Connell;

Irish place names on Ordnance survey maps and what they reveal.

## Act 1

### Introduction

Act 1 takes place in the barn where the hedge-school is held. It is an afternoon in late August 1833. All ten characters are introduced and the scene is set for the entire play in Act 1. Important themes are presented from the start. These include questions concerning language, identity, naming, colonialism and cultural imperialism.

The student reads through the Reading Notes. He or she then reads Act 1 thoroughly and well, marking the text in key places. Next the student answers the Comprehension Exercises in your copybook, referring to the text when necessary. Then proceed to the Development Exercises for Act 1. Finally you should address the Discussion questions for Act 1 either orally or in writing.

### Reading Notes

**Battle** – a bundle; for example, a bundle of hay or straw.

**Homer** – Greek epic poet who is said to have composed *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

**The Odyssey** – the epic poem that tells the story of the ten-year journey of Odysseus home to the island of Ithaca and his wife Penelope after the Siege of Troy. Jimmy immerses himself in this epic and quotes from it in Greek.

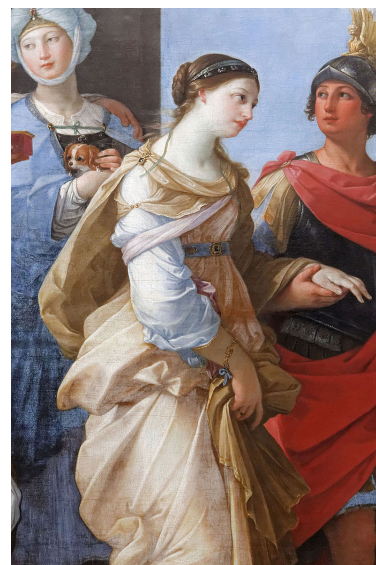
**Ulysses** – Latin name for Odysseus.

**Athene** – the Greek goddess of wisdom and war, who was a daughter of Zeus and who gave her name to Athens. She was reputed to be slow to anger, but dangerous if provoked. A warrior, she always wore armour and was referred to as grey-eyed or flashing-eyed Athene. Jimmy is enthralled by her.

**Artemis** – Greek goddess of the moon and hunting. She shone like silver and was also a daughter of Zeus.

**Helen of Troy** – a demi-goddess, she was the most beautiful woman in the world and the daughter of Zeus and Leda. She married Menelaus, the king of Sparta, but fell in love with Paris and went with him to Troy. This caused the Trojan War when Menelaus led an army to the city of Troy to reclaim her.

**Grania and Diarmuid** – the main characters in the Irish mythological tale, *Tóraíocht Dhiarmada Agus Ghráinne* (The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne). Grania was the daughter of King Cormac MacAirt and Diarmaid Mac Duibhne was a member of the legendary Fianna. Mention of Diarmaid and Gráinne references the long mythological and literary tradition in the Irish language and Ireland's epic past.



*L'Enlèvement d'Hélène* (The Kidnapping of Helen) by Guido Reni which can be seen at the *Musée du Louvre* in Paris.

**Maypole** – a high pole decorated with flowers and foliage, around which people danced and celebrated the arrival of summer on May Day.

**Sappers** – soldiers who carried out field work. The term comes from French *saper* (spade) and Latin *sappa* (spade or mattock).

**Chaining** – Survey parties used long chains to measure distance between features while conducting the Ordnance Survey.

**Theodolite** – a portable precision instrument with a telescopic sight used in surveying for measuring angles. Theodolites of various sizes were used by specially trained Royal Engineer officers to carry out the primary and secondary triangulation of Ireland, which involved the use of trigonometry and the measurement of angles. *Sliabh Snaght* on the Inishowen Peninsula was the location of one triangulation station. The base on which every other line in Ireland depended was measured on the eastern shore of Lough Foyle in 1828. The word *theodolite* was coined in the late sixteenth century. While it appears to have a Greek form, it has no clear Greek origin. Hence, Jimmy is unable to work out an etymology for the word.

**Horace** – (65 BC–8 BC) a Roman lyric poet and satirist, who ridiculed human folly in two books of poetry, *The Satires*, written c. 35 BC.

**Virgil** – (70 BC–19 BC) regarded by Romans as their greatest poet. His most famous work was the *Aeneid*, an epic poem in twelve books that described the journey of the Trojan hero Aeneas to Italy where he became the ancestor of the Romans. It looked back to Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* and presented the view that it was the mission of the Romans to civilise the world by building an empire. Virgil also wrote the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, a poem in four books on agriculture.

**Tacitus** – (c. 55 AD–120 AD) a Roman historian and senator. He wrote many books about the history of the empire, including *Agricola*; an account of his father-in-law the Roman General, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who led the Roman army into Britain and enforced policies of repression and of assimilation into the Roman way of life.

**Passage money** – the money to pay the fare for passage on board ship.

**Saint Colmcille** – (521–597 AD) also known as Columba. He was born in Gartan, Co Donegal and founded several monasteries such as Derry and Durrow and also the island monastery of Iona off the west coast of Scotland. Along with Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid, he is a patron saint of Ireland. Said to have been a poet, scholar, and scribe and a man of great wisdom, learning, and holiness, he and his monastic *familia* were very influential



A theodolite of the transit type with six-inch circles, manufactured in Britain around 1910 by Troughton & Simms in London.

and associated with some of the greatest treasures from Early Christian Ireland, such as the *Book of Kells*. Several prophecies are attributed to Colmcille.

**‘Yella’ meal** – maize or cornmeal. Indian corn (maize) was imported into Ireland from America by the British Government during the Great Famine and was known as Peel’s Brimstone.

**Pliny Minor** (c. 62–113 AD) – also known as Pliny the Younger. He was a Roman writer, known especially for his letters.

**Sophocles** (c. 496–406 BC) – one of the great Greek playwrights, noted for his tragedies. He was born at Colonus near Athens. His surviving plays include *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*.

**The Liberator** – Daniel O’Connell (1775–1847) became known as the Liberator because of the success of his campaign for Catholic Emancipation, which was achieved in 1829. He went on to lead a mass movement demanding repeal of the Act of Union and the restoration of an Irish parliament in Dublin. O’Connell died on his way to Rome in 1847, having failed to gain Repeal.

**Euripides** (c. 484–406 BC) – another Greek tragic dramatist, who was interested in philosophy and associated with the Sophists. Born in Athens, he left the city in 408 BC and went to Macedonia where he died. A number of his plays survive including *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Medea*.

**William Yolland** – an actual person involved in the ordnance survey of Ireland and Britain and a talented mathematician. He took charge of the measurement of the Lough Foyle base and wrote an account of it in a book published in 1847. Friel uses the surname with artistic licence.

**Lieutenant Lancey** – was also an actual Royal Engineer officer who worked with the ordnance survey. Letters written by him from Killygarvan Parish, Co Donegal in 1835 to Thomas Larcom are extant. Again, Friel used the name with artistic licence.



Daniel O’Connell (1775–1847), was known as ‘The Liberator,’ and was the political leader of Ireland’s Roman Catholic majority in the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite being a native speaker, he argued that the ‘superior utility of the English tongue, as the medium of all modern communication is so great, that I can witness, without a sigh, the gradual disuse of Irish.’

### Comprehension Exercises

1. Write a one paragraph summary of Act 1.

**Answer:** Five adult students arrive for class at the hedge-school. One, Sarah, finds her voice and articulates her name. Hugh, the hedge-school master, arrives late and somewhat under the influence of alcohol. The difficulties of life in *Baile Beag* are revealed in the conversations of the students. They speak Irish and learn Latin and Ancient Greek in the hedge-school, but language change is underway in the form of a new national school where English only will be taught and in new ordnance survey maps which will name places in English. This change is problematic for the community and calls forth varying responses. Owen, Hugh’s younger son and a linguistically able young man, arrives unexpectedly to work as a translator for the ordnance survey and introduces two Royal Engineer Corps officers to the hedge-school.

2. What difficulty does Sarah overcome at the beginning of Act 1 and how does she achieve this breakthrough?  
**Answer:** Sarah overcomes her inability to speak. She achieves this breakthrough with the help and encouragement of Manus, whose empathy and gentle persistence wins her confidence and whose skillful instruction guides her to speak her name.
3. As the hedge school students gather for class, who are they waiting for and why is he not present?  
**Answer:** The students are waiting for Hugh, the hedge-school master to arrive. He is absent because he is drinking in Anna na mBreag's pub.
4. What details reveal that a friendship is forming between Maire's family and the sappers?  
**Answer:** Maire and her family become friendly with the sappers. She reveals that they leave the theodolite in her family's byre at night sometimes if it's raining (p. 11). She thinks favourably of the sappers and disapproves of Doalty's interference with their work.
5. Doalty arrives to class brandishing a surveyor's pole and relates that he was, '*Up in the bog with Bridget and her aul fella, and the Red Coats were just across at the foot of Cnoc na Mona, dragging them aul chains and peeping through that big machine they lug about everywhere with them*' (p. 11).
  - (a) What were the Red Coats (sappers) doing?  
**Answer:** The Red Coats (sappers) were engaged in surveying. Mention of the chains suggests that they were measuring distances or 'chaining', and 'peeping' through that big machine indicates that they were calculating angles.
  - (b) How did Doalty undermine their work?  
**Answer:** Doalty confounded them by creeping up and moving their surveying poles, thus putting out their computations.
  - (c) What is the reaction of Manus to Doalty's subversive act?  
**Answer:** Manus appreciates Doalty's gesture and says that it indicates a 'presence,' meaning resistance to the Red Coats.
6. Using a quotation from the text, name four ongoing concerns of the community in *Baile Beag*, according to Maire. What is Maire's attitude to these anxieties?  
**Answer:** '*The rents are going to go up again – the harvest's going to be lost – the herring have gone away forever – there's going to be evictions*' (p. 18). Maire is dismissive of these concerns and expresses frustration with the outlook of *Baile Beag*.
7. How does Bridget describe the new National School about to open in *Baile Beag*?  
**Answer:** Bridget says the new National School will enforce attendance, make everything free, but only teach English.
8. Maire challenges Hugh about language learning. What assertions does she make and how does Hugh react?  
**Answer:** Maire challenges Hugh, saying that Irish is a barrier to modern progress and students should learn English. Hugh is visibly impacted but avoids a direct reply.
9. Hugh tells the class that he has three announcements, but he only makes two. What are they?  
**Answer:** Hugh announces that Captain Lancey is conducting a survey and that Mr. Alexander invited him to take charge of the new National School.
10. Captain Lancey is the cartographer in charge of the area. How does he address the people gathered in the hedge school and explain the purposes of the new Ordnance Survey maps?  
**Answer:** Captain Lancey addresses the group in a formal and awkward manner, over-explaining and quoting official documents.
11. Owen says, '*Lancey's a bloody ramrod but George (Lieutenant Yolland) is alright.*' In what ways is Lieutenant Yolland different to Captain Lancey?

*Answer:* Yolland is sensitive, empathetic, and eager to learn about Irish culture, contrasting Lancey's rigid demeanor.

12. To whom does Owen introduce Maire?

*Answer:* Owen introduces Maire to Lieutenant Yolland.

13. Describe the stage-picture at the end of Act.

*Answer:* The stage-picture shows key characters reflecting motifs of Act 1, with Hugh resorting to alcohol, Jimmy immersed in the past, and Owen acting as a cultural intermediary or go-between.

14. Use the context given and a dictionary to figure out the meanings of words in **bold** print. Each word and its definition is to be written in your copybook.

- (a) He is fluent in Latin and Greek but he is in no way **pedantic** – (p. 2)

*Answer:* Someone who annoys others by correcting small errors, who enjoys emphasising their own expertise.

- (b) Doalty is **brandishing** a surveyor's pole (p. 10).

*Answer:* Waving about a hand-held weapon by way of threat or display

- (c) They say that's the way it **snakes** in, don't they (p. 18)?

*Answer:* Winds or twists in a snake-like manner

- (d) Indeed – we had a few **libations** to mark the occasion (p. 21).

*Answer:* Drink-offerings

- (e) – and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier **conjugation** – (p. 23).

*Answer:* Combination

- (f) Great. He's the **cartographer** in charge of this whole area (p. 28).

*Answer:* One who makes or compiles charts or maps

- (g) Indeed – and the younger man that I travelled with from Dublin, his name is Lieutenant Yolland and he is attached to the **toponymic** department – (p. 29)

*Answer:* To do with the study of place-names

- (h) Indeed – although he is in fact an **orthographer** – (p. 29)

*Answer:* An expert in the spelling of words

- (i) A map is a **representation** on paper – (p. 33)

*Answer:* A symbolic expression or denotation of something

- (j) His Majesty's government has ordered the first ever comprehensive survey of the entire country – a general triangulation which will embrace detailed hydrographic and **topographic** information and which will be executed to a scale of six inches to the English mile (p. 33).

*Answer:* Relating to the features of a region or locality

- (k) And also so that the entire basis of land **valuation** can be reassessed for purposes of more equitable taxation (p. 34).

*Answer:* Estimation of the worth or value of something

- (l) He is already a committed **Hibernophile** – (p. 35)

*Answer:* A person who has a love of Ireland



## Development Exercises

Based on Act 1 of *Translations* answer the following questions.

1. How does Jimmy perceive his world?

**Answer:** Jimmy inhabits the world of the hedge school, but this is not his only reality. He lives mostly in the mythical realm of Homer's *Odyssey*, present in his imagination. Jimmy is fluent in Ancient Greek and the characters and locations of its literature are as real to him as *Baile Beag* and its people.

2. What languages are spoken on stage and how does Friel as dramatist convey the impression to the audience that characters speak the Irish language?

**Answer:** The language spoken onstage is almost entirely English. The audience is given the impression that the Irish characters are speaking their native Gaelic language when, in fact, the actors onstage are speaking English. Friel uses a *theatrical conceit* to persuade his audience to accept this. We also hear some Greek and Latin phrases and quotations as well as Irish language placenames. (Even though all the characters speak English onstage, Friel constructs a theatrical conceit by having some of the Irish characters indicate that they do not speak or understand English.)

3. We do not meet the Donnelly twins directly on stage, but we hear reference to them. What is implied about them in Act 1 and how are suggestions concerning them communicated tacitly?

**Answer:** It is implied that the Donnelly twins are involved in subversive activity. They are associated with the disappearance of two military horses and of surveying equipment. Their hidden actions are merely hinted at by the silence or reluctance of other characters to speak about them.

4. Bridget is working on the headline, *It's easier to stamp out learning than to recall it.* (The Agricola Book Three, Tacitus). Why is this an example of dramatic irony?

**Answer:** This is an example of dramatic irony because to Bridget the sentence is merely the headline she must copy. However, the audience understands its deeper significance as an important theme in *Translations*.

5. Referring to pages 20-25, describe how Hugh, the Hedge Schoolmaster, enters and interacts with his students.

**Answer:** Hugh enters shabbily dressed, with residual dignity, and interacts with a mix of humour, pedantry, and superiority.

6. Owen, Hugh's younger son, returns after six years. How does he fit back with the company on stage even though his smart city appearance conflicts with the surroundings of the hedge school?

**Answer:** Owen reconnects with the hedge school with charm and affection, engaging easily with its members.

7. Owen (mis)translates Captain Lancey's address. What does this tell us about the influence of the translator?

**Answer:** Owen mistranslates Lancey's address, downplaying its seriousness to calm tensions or avoid alarm.

8. How is friction between the brothers, Manus, and Owen, revealed at the end of Act 1?

**Answer:** Tension arises when Manus confronts Owen about the survey's military nature and the changing of placenames.

9. What portents of the Great Famine (1845–c.1850) are found in Act 1? Do you think these forebodings of famine are reported intentionally or accidentally?

**Answer:** The spread of potato blight and its devastating effects are hinted at in Act 1. Jimmy advocates for growing corn instead of potatoes (p. 14), while Bridget describes the smell and signs of potato blight with fear and vigilance (p. 18). These forebodings create dramatic irony, as the audience knows the Great Famine's historical consequences, while the characters remain unaware.

10. References to Greek and Latin language and literature contribute to our understanding and appreciation of Act 1. How do you think the characters know the Greek and Latin languages? What does this say about their education?

**Answer:** References to classical literature (Homer, Virgil, Horace, Tacitus) highlight the hedge-school's classical curriculum. Hugh's teaching style emphasises tracing etymologies and engaging with classical culture, reflecting his belief in the affinity between Gaelic and classical traditions.

11. *'Indeed – Item B – Item B – yes – On my way to the christening this morning I chanced to meet Mr George Alexander, Justice of the Peace. We discussed the new national school. Mr Alexander invited me to take charge of it when it opens. I thanked him and explained that I could do that only if I were free to run it as I have run this hedge-school for the past thirty-five years – filling what our friend Euripides calls the "aplestos pithos"... and Mr Alexander retorted courteously and emphatically that he hopes that is how it will be run' -Hugh (p. 25).*

Do you think Mr Alexander's response was sincere? Are these expectations for the future national school reasonable? Do you think that this is how the national schools were implemented?

**Answer:** Mr Alexander's agreement to let Hugh run the national school as he sees fit is likely insincere. National schools were strictly controlled by the government, with an English-only curriculum. Hugh's statement may be more about restoring his dignity after Maire's challenge (p. 24).

12. Consider the conflict that develops between Maire and Manus in Act 1. What is the reason for their conflict?

**Answer:** Maire's frustration with Manus stems from his reluctance to compete for the headmaster post and her desire to escape poverty. Their personalities clash; Maire is ambitious and assertive, while Manus is hesitant and tied to tradition.

13. Sarah and Manus were close at the start of Act 1, but at the end of the act she stares at him from a distance. What has created distance between them?

**Answer:** Manus's growing preoccupation with his personal and cultural struggles leads him to neglect Sarah. His tension with Maire and Owen, along with his concern for the hedge-school's future, creates a rift between him and Sarah.

### Discussion Questions

Reflect on Act 1, considering the words and actions of the characters as well as the stage notes. It is important to think carefully about what is happening, as well as to ponder on the inner world of the characters and the message that the dramatist seeks to communicate. Discussion of the Socratic Questions leads to deeper thought about Act 1 and calls on the student to identify and connect ideas, leading to an appreciation of the central concerns of the play. The questions are to be discussed, and optionally answered in your copybook.

1. Discuss the use of symbols in Act 1. How does the playwright use the setting, language and characters as symbols with possibly deeper meaning?

**Answer:** (Answers will vary).

Life is difficult and uncertain in *Baile Beag*. Its inhabitants struggle under the burden of the land system and foreign government. They worry about the harvest, rents, and eviction. The general impoverishment and vulnerability of the community is reflected in the physical state of the hedge-school. *Baile Beag* is an isolated Gaeltacht community where the Irish language is spoken. However, economic and political forces, including government policies, commerce, and emigration, are driving language change.

Tension emerges in Act 1 between two notions of language: English as the language of progress (Maire and Owen) and Gaelic as a container of culture and identity (Hugh).

The Royal Engineer officers and their survey represent rapid anglicisation. Lieutenant Yolland's translation of Irish placenames to English is symbolic of breaking language as a container of culture and meaning.

The ordnance survey symbolises a redefinition and renaming of *Baile Beag* and its culture, challenging its people to adapt to a new language and reimagine their identity.

2. Locate a quotation from Act 1 that you think express the main theme.

**Answer:** (Answers will vary). *'Indeed – English, I suggested, couldn't really express us.'* (Hugh, p. 23)

3. Basing your answer on Act 1, explain how the people of *Baile Beag* were living through a time of great upheaval. Do you see any comparisons with today's societies?

**Answer:** The hardship of life in *Baile Beag* is evident in the run-down state of the barn, Hugh's shabby dress, the malnourished appearance of Sarah and Manus, and the diet of bread and milk. The inhabitants are economically vulnerable under landlordism, struggling with increasing rents, evictions, and food insecurity. They also face cultural upheaval due to the imposition of English through the new national school and the ordnance survey. This reflects Friel's words: *'It is a time of great upheaval for the people of Ballybeg...everything that was familiar is becoming strange.'* (Murray, 1999, p. 73)

4. State the main theme of Act 1 in a well-written sentence.

**Answer:** The inhabitants of *Baile Beag* live in difficult times; most significantly, they are about to experience a language shift from Irish to English which will have a profound impact on their cultural identity, sense of self, and sense of place. (Answers will vary.)

5. How is the idea of naming explored in Act 1? Do names matter? Why?

**Answer:** Naming symbolises identity in Act 1. Sarah's declaration, *'My name is Sarah'* (p. 3), marks a moment of hope. Owen's dual identities—Owen Hugh Mor and Roland—show the tension between Gaelic and anglicised names. The renaming of Irish places by the sappers signifies imperial domination, threatening cultural memory and connection to the land.

6. What is the importance of map-making in Act 1? How do you think the availability of maps changed Ireland in the nineteenth century?

**Answer:** Map-making symbolises conquest in Act 1. The sappers' work anglicises placenames and represents a redefinition of Ireland's cultural landscape. The new maps, which aimed to aid governance, taxation, and military control, also contributed to modern infrastructure development.

7. *"Me a soldier? I'm employed as a part-time, underpaid, civilian interpreter. My job is to translate the quaint, archaic tongue you people persist in speaking into the King's good English."* -Owen (p. 30).

What do you understand by the King's good English? Irish is described as the quaint archaic tongue. Is this a fair description? How has this idea influenced Irish society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

**Answer:** Owen describes Irish as a *'quaint, archaic tongue'* (p. 30), echoing colonial attitudes that marginalised Irish as outdated. This view devalued the language and contributed to cultural loss in the 19th and 20th centuries.

8. Describe the impact of the soldiers' presence on *Baile Beag* in general and on the hedge schoolroom in particular. Can you think of any other instances in Ireland's history of how military presence affected the lives of ordinary people?

**Answer:** The soldiers' presence highlights colonial domination, eliciting both resistance and acceptance. Captain Lancey's authoritative demeanor contrasts Yolland's romantic admiration of Ireland. Historical parallels include the Cromwellian conquest (1649-1653), the Jacobite-Williamite War (1689-1691), and the Northern Ireland Troubles (1968-1998).

## Writing Assignment I: Historical Context of Friel's *Translations*.

Genre: Historical Analysis

**Assignment:** Write a 5-paragraph essay discussing the historical context within which Brian Friel set *Translations* and how this contributes to the development of conflict, plot, and theme in Act 1. Your essay will consist of an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your argument will be supported by at least one strong quote from the text. You may need to go back and revise the information given in the Introduction and Introduction Comprehension Exercises of this student workbook.

As usual, you will follow the four stages of writing in the composition of your essay:

*Stage 1: Create an outline.*

*Stage 2: Write a rough draft.*

*Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.*

*Stage 4: Write a final draft.*

### Stage 1: Create an Outline

Recall that it is often best to begin writing the body paragraphs before your introduction and conclusion, with the exception of your thesis statement. In the first section of your outline (I. Introduction) you will only fill in your thesis statement for now. Then you will write your outline by answering the prompts in the template. Copy the outline template into your Literature copybook, answering the prompts in italics. Remember, you do not need to write in full sentences. Note: **You must use and cite at least one quote in your essay.** Otherwise, you can summarise an example from the text instead of directly quoting from the play.

### Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraph 1, 2, and 3 into your Literature copybook. Skip a line when you write so that you can easily edit your rough draft later. Remember to underline the title of the play when writing, or put the title in *italics* if you are typing. Please note that when you use a quote in your rough draft you must follow these four steps every time. 1. **Introduce** the quote. Do not just insert a quote into your essay. Introduce it with a phrase such as Maire says, 'quote here.' or The author states, 'quote here.' 2. Whatever quote you choose, it must be **put in quotation marks** (inverted commas). 3. You must **cite** your quote. After your quote, put the page number on which you found the quote in parentheses (brackets). The full stop for the sentence should be placed outside the parentheses unless the quote ends in an exclamation mark or question mark. If you are continuing the sentence after the quote, use a comma inside the quotation mark, finish writing your sentence, then cite the page number in parentheses and put the sentence's full stop after the parentheses. 4. You must explain or **illustrate the significance** of your quote. Consider the examples that follow.

#### I INTRODUCTION.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 *Thesis statement: The historical context in which Brian Friel set Translations contributes to the theme, plot, and conflict of Act 1.*

#### II BODY PARAGRAPH 1: THEME HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 1 *Topic Sentence: What is one major theme you see developing in Act 1 and how does this theme fit into the historical context of the play?*
- 2 *Give a concrete example of the theme in Act 1. Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary.*
- 3 *Optional: Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 4 *Remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this theme.*
- 5 *Give a second concrete example illustrating the theme of Act 1. Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary.*
- 6 *Optional: Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example and remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this theme.*
- 7 *Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.*

#### III BODY PARAGRAPH 2: PLOT HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 1 *Topic Sentence: What is one development in the plot of Act 1 and how is it connected to the historical context of the play?*
- 2 *Explain one important element of the plot development in Act 1 and how it fits into the historical context of the play. (i.e., Does it seem like there is a lead up to some event or occurrence and how is that related to the time period?)*
- 3 *Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 4 *Remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this development in the plot.*

*Example 1:*

Maire says, 'We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says. That's what I say' (p. 24). Maire's claim in the school room shows the changing perspective of some of the Irish people.

*Example 2:*

As they try to communicate, Yolland asks, 'Always? What is that word – always?' (p. 67) This exchange shows both their success and failure at communication.

*Example 3:*

Hugh remarks, 'It is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception' (p. 51). This demonstrates Hugh's view of the Irish language as unique and irreplaceable .

*Introduction and Conclusion*

Now that you have your body paragraphs written you can write your introduction and conclusion. The introduction should capture the readers' attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence of the introduction is called the 'hook' or 'attention grabber'. You will come up with a sentence related to the subject of your essay (your thesis statement) that grabs the reader's attention, such as an intriguing fact from the historical context or an interesting event from the story. After the hook, you will give a brief background of the historical context the play is set in. Finally, you will state your thesis statement. The conclusion will re-state your thesis statement, re-summarise each of your body paragraphs, and finally, leave the reader with a closing thought or reflection related to the topic of your essay in general. When you re-summarise your body paragraphs, be sure to mention the examples you gave. Do not simply restate the topic sentence of each body paragraph—that does not give enough detail.

You can now complete the first and last sections of your outline. Copy the template into your copybook and answer the prompts in italics. Be sure to write your final reflection to close the Conclusion.

Now that you have outlined your introduction and conclusion, write them into paragraph form in your copybook, skipping a line for easy editing later on.

## III BODY PARAGRAPH 2 (CONT.)

- 5 *Optional: Give another concrete example of the plot development in Act 1. Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Again add a quote from the play to illustrate your example and remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this aspect of the plot development.*
- 6 *Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.*

## IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3: CONFLICT HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 1 *Topic Sentence: What is one conflict that seems to be developing by the end of Act 1 and how is it connected to the historical context of the play? (Think: Is there tension between any characters? Why?)*
- 2 *Explain one important element of the conflict in Act 1 and how it fits into the historical context of the play.*
- 3 *Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 4 *Remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this conflict.*
- 5 *Optional: Give another concrete example of the conflict developing in Act 1.*
- 6 *Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example. Remind the reader how the historical context is connected to this aspect of the conflict.*
- 7 *Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.*

## V CONCLUSION

- 1 (To be completed later).

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

*Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft*

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 53.

*Stage 4: Write a Final Draft*

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for creating your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 55.

## I INTRODUCTION

- 1 *Hook: Come up with a line to capture your reader's attention related to the historical context or a major theme, conflict, or event in Act 1.*
- 2 *Describe the historical setting of the play*
- 3 *Describe three important facts (details) about the historical setting of the play*
- 4 *Thesis statement: The historical context in which Brian Friel set *Translations* contributes to the theme, plot, and conflict of Act 1.*

## II CONCLUSION

- 1 *Restate your essay thesis.*
- 2 *Summarise body paragraph 1*
- 3 *Summarise body paragraph 2*
- 4 *Summarise body paragraph 3*
- 5 *Closing thought: Closing thought or general reflection on the historical setting of the play, why Brian Friel may have chosen this topic, why the play is important today, etc.*



### *Writing Assignment I: Historical Context of Friel's Translations.*

The process of colonisation often begins not with war, but with language. In *Translations*, Brian Friel captures a powerful moment in Irish history where imperialism arrives in the form of map-making and name-changing. Set in 1833 in the rural, Irish-speaking town of Baile Beag, the play unfolds during the Ordnance Survey—a British project aimed at standardising and anglicising Irish place-names. The setting allows Friel to explore themes of cultural identity, miscommunication, and loss. This historical moment—when a rich native culture faced suppression through seemingly bureaucratic means—shapes every part of Act 1. The historical context in which Brian Friel set *Translations* contributes to the theme, plot, and conflict of Act 1.

One of the most prominent themes developing in Act 1 is the tension between language and identity. Language in the play is more than communication; it is culture, memory, and belonging. This theme becomes clear through the character of Hugh, who passionately teaches Latin and Greek, symbolising Ireland's classical heritage. When Owen translates for Captain Lancey and manipulates the message to make it sound less threatening, we see how translation can distort meaning and power. The manipulation of language for political ends echoes how British imperial forces sought to erase Irish culture. A key moment is when Hugh says, 'It is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception,' (p.51) referring to Irish. This quote emphasises the depth of the Irish tongue and its connection to imagination and history. The theme of language under threat reflects the historical process of cultural erasure.

The historical context also drives plot development in Act 1, particularly through the arrival of British soldiers and surveyors. Their presence signals the beginning of the colonial transformation. The introduction of the Name-Book and the mapping project is not neutral; it is the precursor to land control and eventual dispossession. The plot thickens as we meet Owen, who has returned from Dublin as a civilian interpreter working for the British. While he appears cheerful and helpful, Owen's role is complex—he is the bridge between the colonisers and the colonised. The plot's momentum builds as the audience becomes aware of the dissonance between Owen's relaxed attitude and the looming consequences of the survey. When Owen dismissively says, 'It's only a name,' it foreshadows the erasure of more than just words—it's the beginning of cultural transformation (p. 37). The renaming of places symbolises a deeper loss that will unfold as the play continues.

Finally, the central conflict of Act 1 stems from the tension between tradition and modernisation taking place across Ireland at that time. This conflict is evident between Manus and Owen, and between the Irish-speaking locals and the English-speaking authorities. Manus, who stays in Baile Beag to care for his father, represents the old ways—poor but rooted in heritage. Owen, by contrast, has embraced modernity and Englishness. Their quiet conflict reflects the broader national struggle: whether to adapt to British rule or resist it. This division is further illustrated in Maire's wish to learn English: 'We should all be learning to speak English. That's what my mother says. That's what I say' (p. 24). Her desire, driven by economic necessity, reveals how even within the oppressed community, there are disagreements on survival. These interpersonal tensions are rooted in the real historical pressure Ireland faced—assimilate, or be left behind. The conflict in Act 1 is not yet violent, but it simmers beneath the surface, shaped by the historical setting of linguistic and cultural colonialism.

In conclusion, the historical context of *Translations* is essential to understanding the themes, plot, and conflicts of Act 1. Through the theme of language and identity, the introduction of British mapmakers into the plot, and the growing tension between characters, Friel shows how imperialism operates subtly at first—through names, jobs, and schools. Act 1 sets the stage for the tragic consequences to come by planting the seeds of confusion, betrayal, and cultural disintegration. Friel chose this historical moment to reflect on Ireland's colonial past, but also to offer insight into the enduring struggle of language and identity in all colonised societies. Even today, the issues raised in *Translations* remain relevant as Ireland grapples with her linguistic identity in the face of globalisation, immigration and cultural dilution.

## Act 2

### Introduction

The second act consists of two scenes and takes place some days after Act 1. The first scene, set in the hedge-school barn, is focused on place-name translation by Owen and Lieutenant Yolland and leads the audience to a deeper understanding of Yolland as a character. The second scene takes place the following night close to where a dance is in progress. It is a love scene between Maire and Lieutenant Yolland, who endeavour to communicate their feelings to each other even though they do not speak a shared language.

The student reads through the Reading Notes. He or she then reads Act 2 thoroughly and well, marking the text in key places. Next the student answers the Comprehension Exercises in your copybook, referring to the text when necessary. Then proceed to the Development Exercises for Act 2. Finally, you should address the Discussion questions for Act 2 either orally or in writing.

### Reading Notes

- **Name Book** – The Ordnance Survey produced Field Name Books for every civil parish on a county-by-county basis. A civil parish was generally equivalent to the Church of Ireland parish. The Name Books recorded information on each townland in a parish and the origin of its place-name. Land quality and ownership as well as notable features of the landscape were also generally noted.
- **Creel** – a large wicker basket, usually made from sally rods and used to carry heavy loads such as turf, seaweed or potatoes.
- **Church-registry** – parish register containing details, for example, of baptisms and marriages and noted townland names.
- **Poteen** – a type of spirit high in alcohol, made traditionally from potatoes, sugar and yeast. Poteen was illegal and made secretly, often in rural areas.
- **Freeholders** – farmers who either owned their land or held a lease of the land for their lifetime or the lifetime of other people named in the lease. Freeholder records include lists of those registered to vote in elections and poll books giving details of those who voted. The records include addresses of freeholders and thus give information on place-names.
- **Grand jury lists** – before the establishment of county councils in Ireland in 1898, local administration was in the hands of the Grand Jury system which dated from medieval times. By the nineteenth century the county Grand Jury, in addition to administering courts and the county jail, was responsible for constructing roads, bridges, and public buildings as well as for



A creel.

collecting a local tax called the county cess. This work led to the creation of several types of Grand Jury documents with mention of place-names, including lists of Grand Jury members.

- **Burnfoot** – the word burn has its origin in Old English and means a small stream or river. Burnfoot, a townland in Inishowen, takes its name in English from its location at the foot of a burn or small river. It is known in Irish as *Bun na hAbhann*.
- **Bombay** – Mumbai, a city on the west coast of India, anglicised as Bombay by the British colonists.
- **East India Company** – a trading company set up in 1600 in the East Indies to develop trade between Britain and Asia. The East India Company came to rule over large areas of the Indian subcontinent and exercised military and administrative control.
- **Battle of Waterloo** – a battle fought in June 1815 near Waterloo, which was then in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands but is now in Belgium. The battle resulted in the defeat of Napoleon's army by an Anglo-allied force led by the Duke of Wellington. The French defeat at Waterloo brought the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) to an end.
- **Bastille** – a fortress and prison in Paris that was stormed by a crowd on July 14th, 1789, and fell to the revolutionaries. This event became symbolic of the French Revolution (1789–1799).
- **French Revolution** – a time of enormous political and social change and upheaval (1789–1799), which brought the *ancien régime* (old order) to an end in France. The revolutionaries introduced a new calendar in which the year 1789 was counted as year 1.
- **The Apocalypse** – In a Christian sense, the revelation of the future and of the Second Coming of Christ granted to Saint John and recorded in the final book of the New Testament, *Revelation*.
  - In a general sense, a disastrous event that changes society or the world irrevocably; a cataclysm.
- **Apollo** – Greek god and son of Zeus, said to have charge of the sun's movement across the sky.
- **Paris** – son of Priam and Hecuba and a prince of Troy. He caused the downfall of the city.
- **Cuchulainn** – a heroic figure who features in Irish mythology.
- **Ferdia** – another mythical warrior who is said, in the tale of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), to have been slain by his friend Cuchulainn.
- **Ovid** – Latin poet (43 BC–AD 18).



A fresco from Pompeii depicting Apollo, 1st century AD.

- **William Wordsworth** – English poet (1770–1850).
- **Pentaglot Preceptor** – Five Language Teacher.

### *Comprehension Exercises*

#### *Act 1, Scene 1*

1. Write a one paragraph summary of Act 2, Scene 1.

**Answer:** Act 2 Scene 1 begins with Lieutenant Yolland and Owen translating place-names and entering new names into the Name-Book. Owen is diligent and does most of the work, while Yolland is unfocused and drinks poteen. Manus enters briefly, but refuses to speak to Yolland in English. Owen explains that Manus is lame since infancy as a result of Hugh falling across his cradle. Yolland is curious about Maire, whose house is close to the army camp. He expresses a desire to learn Irish and to live in *Baile Beag*. Hugh enters and reflects on the Irish language. After he leaves Owen and Yolland debate the translation project, with Yolland describing it as an eviction of sorts. Owen snaps that his name is not Roland, but good humour prevails. The mood is further heightened when Manus arrives with news that he has been offered the post of hedge-school master on Inis Meadhon. The scene ends on a high note with Maire's news that a dance is to take place.

2. What task are Owen and Lieutenant Yolland engaged in? How do they differ in the way they perform their work?

**Answer:** Owen and Lieutenant Yolland are engaged in translating place-names in the vicinity of *Baile Beag* / Ballybeg for the new Ordnance Survey map of the area. Owen works diligently. The stage notes describe him, as totally engrossed in his task which he pursues with great energy and efficiency (p. 38). On the other hand Lieutenant Yolland is absent minded and sits on the floor, his back resting against a creel, his eyes closed. His mind is elsewhere (p. 38).

3. Name two sources used by Owen and Lieutenant Yolland in their research. How are the sources useful? What methods do Owen and Yolland use to translate place-names in the vicinity of *Baile Beag* / Ballybeg?

**Answer:** Any two of the following; church registry, list of freeholders, grand jury lists. These sources are useful because they provide information about place-names and how they were anglicised in the past. Owen pronounces the original Irish forms of place-names. He and Yolland research how they were anglicised and written in old documents. They then decide on the English spelling that is closest to the original Gaelic place-name by sound. Or, in some cases, they translate a place-name directly into English. They enter the new anglicised names in the Name Book. (See stage notes p. 38.)

4. What does Manus see and hear as he enters? Describe his response.

**Answer:** As Manus emerges from upstairs, he sees the two men at work and the map and reference books scattered on the floor. He hears Yolland's comment, "*You cannot rename a whole country overnight*" (p. 41). Manus is angered by developing events and his rage with Owen resonates in his barbed comment, "*I'm sure. But there are always the Rolands, aren't there?*" (p. 43) He means those who betray trust and allegiance. Manus continues to speak in Irish even though Yolland cannot understand him. Perhaps, this is his gesture of resistance.

5. Why, according to Owen, does Manus feel responsible for his father, Hugh?

**Answer:** Owen tells Yolland that Hugh fell over Manus's cradle when he was a baby. This resulted in an injury that caused Manus to grow up lame. Owen suggests that Manus developed a misplaced sense of responsibility for the accident and the roles of parent and child were reversed. '*Father fell across his cradle. That's why Manus feels so responsible for him*' (p.43).

6. What does Lieutenant Yolland reveal about his father? Briefly, describe the relationship between father and son. How did Yolland come to join the army? Is there any parallel between him and Manus?

**Answer:** Yolland tells Owen that his father builds roads throughout the British Empire. Like Captain Lancey, he is the perfect colonial servant and a man of drive, dedication and indefatigable energy. The relationship between Yolland and his father is troubled. Yolland says that he does not possess his father's energy, coherence or belief and fears that he is a great disappointment to him. When Yolland missed the boat to take up the job his father got for him with the East India Company in Bombay, he joined the Army because he "*couldn't face Father*" (p. 47). Both Yolland and Manus appear to experience insecure relationships with their fathers.

7. Owen asks Yolland if he believes in *fate* (p. 47). How does Yolland respond to this question?

**Answer:** Lieutenant Yolland does not answer Owen's question directly. Instead, he talks about Captain Lancey and his father who have characteristics of perfect colonial servants, absent in himself. He reflects somewhat vaguely on the question of fate by describing a sense of recognition he experienced that he could live in *Baile Beag*. – "*it was then that I thought – I knew – perhaps I could live here ...*" (p. 48). Yolland associates destiny with the following of inner truth– "*a sense of recognition, of confirmation of something I half knew instinctively*" (p. 48). He considers himself very lucky to be in *Baile Beag* and not in Bombay (p. 47).

**Answer:** Hugh enters in a jaunty and alert manner. He is going, he says, to visit the parish priest to get a testimonial of his suitability for the post of headmaster in the new national school and to meet the builders to discuss his living accommodation there.

8. How does Hugh seek to impress Lieutenant Yolland? Does he succeed? What is Hugh's motivation?

**Answer:** Any two of the following or other examples of Hugh's sense of superiority: Hugh says that the parish priest is a worthy man but barely literate, who will ask him to write the testimonial himself and wonders in all modesty how he can do himself justice. He is going to talk to the builders of the new school about the type of living accommodation he will require. Hugh asks if Wordsworth spoke of him to Yolland. Owen is impatient with his father's pretence because he knows that he is putting on a performance, something he has probably witnessed many times before. Hugh does not reply directly to Owen's question, '*Will you be able to find your way?*' (p. 51) Instead he pours himself another drink and continues speaking to Lieutenant Yolland before asking Owen for the loan of half-a-crown and mentioning his new book, the imposing title of which suggests he is a multilinguist. The book is likely fictitious and an example of the subtle wit with which Hugh can dismiss a challenge to his authority.

9. Yolland questions Hugh about the Irish language and literature. What does Hugh say in response?

**Answer:** Hugh sets out to impress Lieutenant Yolland by putting on a performance and assuming an air of superiority. He dabbles in Latin verse after the style of Ovid, uses ornate language and reveals the lengthy title of his new book. Yet, Yolland is impressed by the insight in what Hugh says. He comments that Hugh is an astute man who knows what's happening (p. 52). Hugh is intent on communicating a certain supremacy to Lieutenant Yolland. This is evident in comments such as, "*Wordsworth?... no. I'm afraid we're not familiar with your literature, Lieutenant. We feel closer to the warm Mediterranean. We tend to overlook your island*" (p. 50). (The *Pentaglot Preceptor* was the title of an actual work planned by Patrick Lynch (1754/7 – 1818) on the English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Irish languages. Only the first volume on English grammar was completed. Lynch was a schoolmaster and scholar who received his early education in a hedge-school in County Clare, where he learned Hebrew, Latin and Greek through Irish.)

*Act 2, Scene 2*

10. Write a one paragraph summary of Act 2, Scene 2.

*Answer:* Act 2 Scene 2 is a love scene featuring Maire and Yolland. They have left the dance together and face the difficulty that they speak different languages. They try to communicate in several ways but words fail. Speaking the Irish place-names softly in a kind of duet draws them closer and they succeed in conveying their affection to each other. However, they fail to understand Yolland's desire to stay in *Baile Beag* and Maire's desire to leave. Sarah sees them kiss and rushes to tell Manus.

11. Describe the setting of Act Two Scene Two.

*Answer:* Act Two Scene Two is set the following night, outdoors. Maire and Yolland run hand-in-hand onto a darkened stage; excited by their sudden and impetuous escape from the dance.

12. What difficulties do Maire and Lieutenant Yolland experience as they try to communicate with each other?

*Answer:* Maire speaks Irish and Yolland speaks English. They do not understand each other's language. After the first few lines of the scene, they begin to drift apart (p. 62).

13. How do they attempt to overcome these difficulties? What role do place-names play in their communication?

*Answer:* Both Maire and Yolland desperately endeavour to communicate and struggle to find ways to talk to each other. This includes pointing while saying their names, Maire and George, Maire's effort to converse in Latin, and her utterance of the few English words and the one sentence she knows. It is their exchange of a litany of Irish place-names that finally draws them together and makes it possible for them to relate to each other.

14. To what extent do Maire and Yolland succeed in understanding each other? To what extent do they misunderstand each other?

*Answer:* Maire and Yolland succeed in communicating their attraction to each other and their mutual affection. There is an intuitive and imaginative understanding between them. From what they say, it is clear that they have been drawn to each other from the moment Yolland arrived in *Baile Beag*. They appear to make a promise to each other in the word *always*. This suggests that communication is possible without verbal language. However, the limitation of such communication is poignantly displayed in Maire and Yolland's failure to grasp their conflicting expectations of each other. I've made up my mind ... 'I'm not going to leave here,' Yolland declares while Maire pleads, 'Take me away with you, George' (p. 67).

15. Use the context given and a dictionary to figure out the meanings of words in **bold** print from Act 2. Each word and its definition is to be written in your copybook.

- (a) There's no English **equivalent** for a sound like that (p. 39).

*Answer:* **Equivalent** – Concordant, of equal or corresponding meaning or value.

- (b) We are trying to **denominate** and at the same time describe that tiny area of soggy, rocky, sandy ground where that little stream enters the sea (p. 40).

*Answer:* To name.

- (c) But I wasn't **intimidated** (p. 41).

*Answer:* Inspired with fear or overawed.

- (d) Do you believe in **fate** (p. 47)?

*Answer:* The idea that events are unalterably predetermined.

- (e) Father has that drive, too; that **indefatigable** energy (p. 47).

*Answer:* Untiring in work or effort.

- (f) I had moved into a **consciousness** that wasn't striving nor agitated, but at ease and with its own conviction and assurance (p. 48).

*Answer:* An awareness.



- (g) The private core will always be ... **hermetic**, won't it (p. 48)?  
*Answer:* Sealed or closed tightly.
- (h) English succeeds in making it sound ... **plebeian** (p. 49).  
*Answer:* Common or to do with the plebs or commoners in Roman history.
- (i) Purpose A: to acquire a **testimonial** from our parish priest (p. 49).  
*Answer:* A letter of recommendation.
- (j) I have lived too long like a **journeyman** tailor (p. 49).  
*Answer:* One who has learned his trade but works as the servant or employee of another.
- (k) We like to think we endure around truths **posited** immemorially (p. 50).  
*Answer:* Affirmed or postulated.
- (l) Yes, it is a **rich** language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception – a syntax opulent with tomorrows (p. 51).  
*Answer:* Abundant.

### Development Exercises

- State the main theme of Act 2 in a well-written sentence.  
*Answer:* Translation between languages and cultures is difficult to achieve and can be problematic in its consequences. (Answers will vary).
- Locate a quotation from Act 2 that you think expresses the main theme and write it down.  
*Answer:* 'Even if I did speak Irish I'd always be an outsider here, wouldn't I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won't it? The private core will always be ... hermetic, won't it?' – Yolland (p. 48). (Answers will vary).
- Describe the role of the Irish language in Act 2.  
*Answer:* Anglicising place-names is a complex task and past efforts have been flawed. Yolland suggests that equivalence between languages cannot always be found and that some names should remain in Irish. He wishes to settle down in *Baile Beag*. This involves moving across or translating from his native English culture to Irish culture and language. He recognises how impossible it would be to truly translate into and belong in Gaelic culture. Hugh reminds him that the Irish language enables the people to survive adversity, but if it does not regenerate itself, it will become eroded and die. Yolland questions the wisdom of anglicisation because it is an eviction of sorts, a form of cultural and linguistic dispossession and erosion. Language, identity and culture are interwoven and important. Owen said earlier that his new anglicised name, Roland, is 'only a name' (p. 37). In Act 2 this translation of his identity snaps and he explodes ... 'My name is not Roland. It never was'. Only love has the capacity to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. But this, too, is fraught with danger and may be fleeting, as we see in the case of Maire and Yolland.
- Why do Owen and Yolland set up their work in the hedge-school barn? What does this action symbolise? Can they be said to have occupied the hedge-school?  
*Answer:* Owen has invited his friend, Yolland, into the community of *Baile Beag*/Ballybeg to undertake the job of translation. Such is Owen's self-assurance; he does not appear to consider any boundary between his work and that of the hedge-school or that the barn is home to his father and brother, as the clothes-line demonstrates. It is Yolland who shows sensitivity and questions if they should leave before class begins (p. 41). This take-over of the barn can be seen as symbolic of the usurpation of the hedge-school and the Gaelic world it represents by the forces of empire. It is a type of occupation, or to use Yolland's term, an eviction.
- What is the dramatic effect of Owen saying the place-names in Irish at Yolland's request (p. 45)? What misgivings does Yolland have about the translation of place-names to English? Does Owen share his doubts?

**Answer:** A heightened dramatic moment is created when Owen recites place-names in Irish and Yolland repeats them silently after him. The pace and rhythm of the scene slows down and out of the quietness Yolland wonders if he could live here in *Baile Beag*. He is concerned about the part he is playing in the anglicisation of Irish place-names. It's an eviction of sorts, he says. '*Something is being eroded*' (p. 52-53). Owen disagrees with him and justifies their work as standardising confused place-names with accuracy and sensitivity.

6. Lieutenant Yolland says that he does not share his father's belief in modern advancement and empire building. Based on his words and actions, how would you describe Yolland's beliefs and values?

**Answer:** Owen describes Yolland as a decent man (p. 56). In all his interactions, Yolland is respectful, courteous and sincere. He is the antithesis of Captain Lancey. A soldier by accident and a shy apologetic man, Yolland cares little for the army or for his rank. He lacks the drive. In Owen's words, he becomes a committed Hibernophile, who values the Gaelic language and culture of the people he meets. He appreciates tradition and the beauty of the landscape. An open, positive and trusting character who is sympathetically presented, Yolland views the world through the eyes of the romantic and the poet.

7. Lieutenant Yolland interprets Doalty's cutting of the grass around his tent as an act of kindness. What does this say about Yolland? Is he naive? Can Doalty's action be explained in any other way?

**Answer:** That morning Doalty cut the long grass around Lieutenant Yolland's tent with a scythe and then a pathway down to the road. The two men were unable to communicate in words. Yolland assumes that it was an act of kindness and that Doalty did not want him to get his feet wet with the dew (p. 46). This illustrates the inoffensive nature of Yolland's character. He is well-meaning and presumes that kindness motivates others. Yolland is perhaps somewhat innocent and fails to bear in mind that he is an inexperienced officer (ten or eleven months in the army) in a strange country. Doalty's motivation remains unclear. But his action identifies Lieutenant Yolland's tent. We do not know if this is intentional or if it plays a role in subsequent events.

8. Describe Lieutenant Yolland's mood in Act Two, Scene One and outline the thoughts that preoccupy his mind.

**Answer:** It is a warm afternoon and Yolland continues to drink poteen to the point of intoxication by the end of the scene. He says that he is emboldened by the Irish air and disputes Captain Lancey's order to speed up the pace of his work. Although it is Yolland's responsibility to translate the place-names, he proceeds half-heartedly and leaves the task mostly to Owen. At times, his mood is combative, sometimes it explodes into revelry and celebration, displaying the easy friendship between him and Owen. Yolland is ecstatic in the final image of the scene as he jumps onto a stool and shouts, 'Bloody, bloody, bloody marvellous!' Yolland's thoughts focus on the Irish language and on the dream that he could settle down in *Baile Beag*. He is captivated by Maire and looks out the window at her house (p. 44). The scene ends with their humorous efforts to communicate through Owen as translator and with the heady prospect of the dance. Yolland also senses a counter current of hostility in the little girl who spat at him and in mention of the Donnelly twins who are wanted for questioning by Captain Lancey (p. 43-44).

9. Describe Hugh's entrance (p. 48). He is dressed for the road. Where is Hugh going? For what purpose?

**Answer:** Hugh enters with high energy, speaking in Latin verse. Hugh is going to acquire a testimonial from the parish priest and to speak with the builders of the new national school to inform them of the kind of accommodation he will require.

10. Hugh pauses at the door and says:

*'But remember that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen – to use an image you'll understand – it can happen that a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of ... fact'* (p. 52).

To whom does Hugh address these words? What does he mean when he says that words are signals and counters and that they are not immortal?

**Answer:** Hugh addresses these words to Lieutenant Yolland in response to his sense of exclusion, of being cut off from life in *Baile Beag* because he does not speak Irish. Hugh says that words are sounds or symbols that denote something else. They serve as tokens. Words can change and fall out of use. They are subject to alteration and obsolescence.

11. Describe the image Hugh uses. Briefly, what is his message here and why does he say this?

**Answer:** He uses the image of a contour. Perhaps this means an outline as understood in topography. Hugh seems to say that certain patterns can take shape in a linguistic landscape. Speakers of a language can find themselves confined and hemmed-in, for example, when encircled by a dominant language. Within a tight boundary, a language can decline. Hugh may be reflecting on inevitabilities that his community has to deal with; the increasing use of the English language in many aspects of life must be faced as fact. (The term contour-line, meaning lines that show altitude on a map, did not come into use until the 1840s. Although *Translations* is set in 1833, Friel may have had the idea of a demarcation line or boundary in mind when Hugh speaks of a civilisation becoming imprisoned in a linguistic contour.)

12. What is the significance of Sarah witnessing Maire and Yolland's kiss? Outline the irony in Sarah's response.

**Answer:** As Sarah enters, she sees Maire and Yolland kiss. She is shocked and rushes off to tell Manus. It is ironic that Manus taught Sarah to speak and she will now use this faculty to tell him of Maire's disloyalty to him.

13. Why is Act 2, Scene 2 an important scene? How has the action of the play led to this pivotal moment? What is the emotional impact of the scene?

**Answer:** This is a carefully crafted and important scene, in which music and lighting help to create atmosphere. It presents the declaration of Maire and Yolland's love for each other and so represents an emotional high point in the play. Much of the action leads to this key moment; Maire's desire to learn English, her estrangement from Manus, Owen's encouragement of Yolland and his enchantment with *Baile Beag*. Maire and Yolland manage to cross the boundaries of culture, social background and language that separate them. This is a romantic encounter. However, the image of the Irish girl in the arms of the Red Coat could be symbolic of conquest and betrayal. This scene is impactful on the feelings and sympathy of the audience/reader and comes to a dramatic conclusion.

### Discussion Exercises

The student reflects on Act 2, considering the words and actions of the characters as well as the stage notes. It is important to think carefully about what is happening, as well as to ponder on the inner world of the characters and the message that the dramatist seeks to communicate. Discussion of the Socratic Questions leads to deeper thought about Act 2 and calls on the student to identify and connect ideas, leading to an appreciation of the central concerns of the play. The questions are to be discussed and (optionally) answered in the Literature copybook. Based on Act Two of *Translations*, answer the following questions:

1. A *motif* is a recurring idea in an artistic work. How is the motif of translation kept to the forefront of Act Two? Why is it important?

**Answer:** Motifs of language and translation are central to Act 2. Owen and Lieutenant Yolland are onstage throughout Scene 1. They spend much of their time discussing language and translation, anglicising local place-names and entering them into the name-book. This gives an insight into the painstaking approach taken by the Ordnance Survey and the way new names were devised. Owen calls out strange new places and wonders if Hugh will find his way in the translated landscape (p. 51). Owen personifies the influence of the translator. As in Act 1, he is prepared to distort the

message when he translates Manus's comments for Yolland (p. 43). He also translates, somewhat confusedly, for Maire and Yolland at the end of the scene. But alone and speaking different languages, they must find ways to communicate without translation in Scene 2. This emphasis on language reflects a central concern of the play with the implications of language loss and language shift for a society. The title of the play, *Translations*, is in the plural. Perhaps Friel is also exploring the vicissitudes of other, non-linguistic forms of translation in the sense of movement from one place to another, such as Maire and Yolland's leap over the boundaries of culture and class, Manus's anticipated move to a life of personal freedom on Inis Meadhon and Hugh's hoped-for, but fanciful, transformation from hedge-school to national school master.

2. In what ways does Owen fulfil the role of translator in Act Two Scene One? What is his outlook on translation? Does Yolland's perspective on translation differ from Owen's? If so, how?

**Answer:** Owen is expert in the Irish language and he is employed by the Ordnance Survey as a civilian interpreter, to help pronounce and advise on Gaelic place-names. He describes his job as trying to denominate and at the same time describe the landscape (p. 40). Owen embraces his role wholeheartedly and takes over from Yolland. He accepts anglicisation with an air of assurance. He tells Yolland, '*We're making a six-inch map of the country. Is there something sinister in that?... And we're taking place-names that are riddled with confusion and... and we're standardising those names as accurately and as sensitively as we can.*' (p. 52). Lieutenant Yolland is responsible for recording place-names in the name-book, but he is nonchalant about this duty from the start. As Act 2 Scene 1 progresses, he questions the integrity of translating Irish place-names to English and expresses concern about his involvement in what he calls an '*eviction of sorts*' (p. 52). '*Something is being eroded,*' he tells Owen (p. 53).

3. Which character, Owen or Yolland, has the greater appreciation of the ancient Gaelic forms of place-names? Why do you think this is so?

**Answer:** Yolland has a greater appreciation of Gaelic place-names than Owen. He exclaims to Hugh, '*And your place names – what was the one we came across this morning? – Termon, from Terminus, the god of boundaries. It – it – it's really astonishing.*' (p. 50). His regard for language and the story of words comes from a philosophy that is different and more idealistic than Owen's belief in pragmatic modernisation.

4. What questions relating to translation are raised in Act Two? Does Brian Friel, as dramatist, suggest answers? If so, what are they?

**Answer:** Several aspects of translation are explored in Act 2. There is the question of motivation and its ethics– of why a translation is made and who it is for. We see this in Owen's emphasis on the need for clarity and standardisation in place-names. Who requires this certainty and who owns the translation project? As Yolland asks, '*Who's confused? Are the people confused?*' (p. 52) Captain Lancey explains in Act 1 that the new maps are being made, not for the people, but on the orders of His Majesty's Government for the benefit of the military authorities and for taxation purposes (p. 33-34). The complicated procedure involved in carrying across or translating meaning from one language to another is also touched upon. For example, Yolland says in relation to Bun na hAbhainn, '*Let's leave it alone. There's no English equivalent for a sound like that,*' indicating that sometimes a direct correlation between languages does not exist. Owen communicates only the information he wants to and personifies the influence of the translator who has the power to shape the message that is conveyed in translation between languages. There is also discussion of the nature of words. To Hugh, words are merely signals and counters. They can change and die or become eroded, as Owen suggests in the case of Tobair Vree. Friel does not offer easy answers, but seems more concerned with presenting the intricate nature of language and the difficulty inherent in translation.

5. Outline the autobiographical information Lieutenant Yolland provides in Act Two. Do you think that his earlier life has any bearing on him in *Baile Beag*?

**Answer:** In Act 2 Scene 2 Lieutenant Yolland reveals that he comes from the village of Winfarthing in the English county of Norfolk and that his mother is from a small village called Little Walsingham close to Norwich (p. 65). In the previous scene, he speaks about his father; an imperialist and a man of drive, dedication and indefatigable energy who builds roads – *‘hopping from one end of the Empire to the other. Can’t sit still for five minutes’* (p. 47). Yolland does not feel secure in his relationship with his father and worries, *‘I’m afraid I’m a great disappointment to him. I’ve neither his energy, nor his coherence, nor his belief’* (p. 47). He says that his father was at his wits end with him and finally got him a job in the East India Company. Yolland joined the army because he couldn’t face Father, having missed the ship to India. His longing for a life of tranquility in *Baile Beag* and his reported self-assertion with Lancey (p. 41) may be his answer to the rigidity and sternness he has experienced from his father and the army.

6. Owen tells Yolland not to be such a *‘bloody romantic’* (p. 45). What does the term romantic mean in this context? Explain why you agree or disagree that Lieutenant Yolland is a romantic based on his words and actions in Act Two.

**Answer:** Owen tells Yolland not to be a bloody romantic, a dreamer, indulging in sentiment and fantasy. He suggests that Yolland’s desire to settle down in *Baile Beag* is impractical, telling him, *‘You wouldn’t survive a mild winter here’* (p. 45). The term Romanticism also describes a movement in literature, art and music that was popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is interesting that Yolland mentions William Wordsworth, one of the greatest Romantic poets (p. 49). Romanticism stressed personal feelings and the emotions. For example, Wordsworth defined poetry as *‘emotion recollected in tranquillity.’* It also expressed a desire to return to the natural world and a respect for past civilisations that pre-dated the Age of Reason and the Industrial Revolution. Much of what Yolland says and does in Act 2 connects him to Romanticism. He separates from the avid beliefs of his father and from regimented army life. *‘I never think of myself as Lieutenant,’* he says to Maire (p. 63). Instead, he follows his own impulses and inner emotional compass. He feels *‘at home in a consciousness that isn’t striving nor agitated, but at its ease ...’* (p. 48) and he is drawn to the wild beauty of the Donegal landscape and to walking *An Trá Bhán* in solitude each evening. To Yolland, the ancient Gaelic culture of *Baile Beag* and its kinship with the classical world is captivating. He wants to become part of it, not to demolish it. *‘And when I heard Jimmy Jack and your father swapping stories about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia – as if they lived down the road – it was then that I thought – I knew – perhaps I could live here,’* he tells Owen (p. 48).

7. How does Lieutenant Yolland’s relationship with the Irish language, with *Baile Beag* and with Maire evolve in Act Two?

**Answer:** Lieutenant Yolland has overcome his hesitancy and he is at home in his new surroundings at the beginning of Act 2. His mind is not on the work of translation. Instead, his thoughts turn to the Irish language, to staying in *Baile Beag* and to Maire. Yolland is charmed by the Irish place-names and repeats silently those called out by Owen (p. 45); an action echoed later, with even greater emotional intensity, in a duet with Maire (p. 65). He tells Hugh that he is learning to speak Irish and that he feels cut off from the people without the language. Yet, he knows that culture divides him from *Baile Beag* and that language is not a key to belonging. *‘Even if I did speak Irish I’d always be an outsider here, wouldn’t I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won’t it? The private core will always be ... hermetic, won’t it?’* he says to Owen (p. 48). He seeks to learn about Gaelic literature by questioning Hugh. Hugh’s response, while acknowledging the richness of the tradition, points to the forces of change weighing upon it. Yolland begins to question his part in what’s happening and to recognise an eviction of sorts in the anglicisation of Irish place-names. He has fallen in love with *Baile Beag* as a place where he finds a totally different order, in which he feels alive. However, he struggles to believe that it is possible for him to live in *Baile Beag*, until the moment in Scene 2 when he declares, *‘I’m not going to leave here’* (p. 67). In addition, Yolland is attracted to

Maire. He gazes through the hedge-school window at her house (p. 44) and later wishes to tell her that he spends his days either thinking of her or hoping to catch a glimpse of her (p. 66). She, in turn, ensures that he learns about the dance, which Owen encourages him to attend. It is unclear if Owen is fully aware of Manus's intention to marry Maire or what his motivation is in introducing Yolland to Maire and nurturing their friendship.

8. What is Hugh's role in Act Two Scene One? Why is it significant?

**Answer:** Hugh enters on his way, he says, to make arrangements concerning the new national school and briefly interrupts the work of moment (the entering of translated place-names into the Name-Book) that Owen and Yolland are engaged in. The most significant aspect of Hugh's role here is his reflection on the Irish language and his speech on the nature of language and language change.

9. Hugh says, '*Yes, it is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception – a syntax opulent with tomorrows. It is our response to mud cabins and a diet of potatoes; our only method of replying to ... inevitabilities*' (p. 51). What does he mean? What perspectives does Hugh offer on the Irish language and Gaelic culture in Act 2 Scene 1? Why might he consider Irish speakers to be a spiritual people (p. 50)?

**Answer:** Hugh means that Irish represents things in an optimistic way, as they might ideally be. It is a utopian language, full of fantasy, hope and self-deception. It makes life seem better than it actually is and in this way, it helps people to endure the harsh realities of their lives– mud cabins and a diet of potatoes. He is saying that human survival, in the face of adversity, is dependent on language and the ability to interpret reality in an empowering way. Hugh's description of the structure of the Irish language as a syntax opulent with tomorrows could be said to describe aspects of his own linguistic ability. He frequently uses classical allusions, poetry and grandiose expressions as a means of coping with his personal difficulties. Hugh connects the Irish language with ancient times and suggests Irish speakers feel closer to an old-world order and to the classical languages of the warm Mediterranean than to modernity. '*We like to think we endure around truths immemorially posited*'; he tells Yolland (p. 50). He highlights two aspects of language: vocabulary and grammar and suggests that these elements are richly developed in Irish. The elegance of the language compensates for the material poverty of its speakers. Linguistic wealth is not a consequence of material prosperity. By spiritual Hugh may mean that their focus is on concerns of the mind and the spirit rather than on the pursuit of material possessions. (Hugh's words echo the ideas of George Steiner. His comment to Yolland, that '*certain cultures expend on their vocabularies and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their material lives*,' is a direct quotation from Steiner's book, *After Babel*.)

10. Discuss the meaning and importance of the speech Hugh makes at the door; beginning '*The phrase goes...*' (p. 51) and ending '*...Gentlemen*' (p. 52).

**Answer:** Hugh makes a short, but important speech about language as he is about to leave. Once again, his words resonate with the thinking of George Steiner on the topic. Hugh addresses Yolland's sense of exclusion, of being cut off from a life in *Baile Beag* as a result of not speaking Irish. He believes that Yolland will find a way into the community with Owen's help as intermediary. However, they must keep in mind certain facts about language. Firstly, Hugh says words are arbitrary; they are signals, counters, mere tokens that do not bear an inherent connection to what they denote. Secondly, words change, become eroded and even obsolete. Thirdly, a people can become imprisoned in a language that has ceased to be a living, regenerating container. Hugh quotes Steiner almost exactly when he says: '*it can happen that a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of ... fact*' (p. 52). So, Hugh asserts that language is random, subject to change and even to death. Hugh has assumed authority to speak about language to the orthographer and the translator. His words resonate for a moment before he leaves. They provoke a debate between Yolland and Owen about anglicisation and the erosion of language. Hugh's speech may be an indirect comment on the translation of place-names. He may want to impress on his son and Yolland that

no semantic form is timeless. It may also be a reaction to the moment when Gaelic culture and language were being eclipsed in his community. It is notable that he has applied to be master of the new national school and may be concerned that he will be left behind in the whirlwinds of change. Perhaps, Hugh is coming closer to the view of Daniel O'Connell reported in Act 1– that the old language is a barrier to modern progress (p. 25).

11. Maire says, '*O my God, that leap across the ditch nearly killed me*' (p. 62). What is the significance of her words? In what sense have she and Yolland metaphorically crossed boundaries? What might the consequences be for them personally and for the community of *Baile Beag*?

**Answer:** Act 2 Scene 2 begins with Maire saying, "*O my God, that leap over the ditch nearly killed me*" (p.62). Her words, placed at the start of the scene, are deeply significant and amongst the most important spoken in the play. In a literal sense they describe jumping a field boundary, but symbolically they point to a core concern of the play with the difficulties and dangers involved in two cultures attempting to communicate and understand each other's language. Translating between cultures nearly kills. Maire and Yolland cross boundaries or leap across a ditch metaphorically in this scene. They come from different cultures and social backgrounds, they speak different languages and want different things. Yet, they bridge the gulf that separates them and cross over cultural and linguistic obstacles. In doing so, Maire turns away from Manus and finds in Yolland a gentleman and the prospect of a life away from *Baile Beag*. Yolland is a Hibernophile, willing to turn his back on army life. But crossing a cultural divide involves danger as Jimmy explains in the next Act, ... the word *exogamein* means to marry outside the tribe. "*And you don't cross those borders casually – both sides get very angry*" (p.90). The image of Maire in the arms of the Red Coat, creates conflict with Manus and the community, to which she seems disloyal. Captain Lancey is likely to be angered by what he may perceive as Yolland's naivete. The love story of Yolland and Maire is an emotional high point and pivotal moment in *Translations*. It drives the plot and shapes the remainder of the play. Maire and Yolland's actions result in consequences that change their lives and that of *Baile Beag* irrevocably.

12. '*Don't stop – I know what you're saying*' (p. 67). How successful are Maire and Yolland in communicating with each other in this scene? Are there important ways in which they fail to understand each other? What does Act 2 Scene 2 suggest about language, communication and translation?

**Answer:** Maire and Yolland speak different languages, Irish and English, respectively. Now, without a translator, they must try to make themselves understood. They search for some inspiration that will provide ... communicative means (see stage notes p. 63) and attempt mime, Latin and the few words that they know in each other's language. At certain points, though speaking different languages and unknown to themselves, their expressions are in accord and the audience might think they are conversing in words (for example, in the first four lines of the scene). Maire and Yolland succeed in communicating their affection. They get the message across that they like each other and mutually make the pledge always. This is not achieved through their understanding the meaning of words, but through the way they are spoken, through sound, gesture and touch. Both urge, '*Say anything at all. I love the sound of your speech*' (p. 63). The stage notes emphasise manner of articulation, touch and movement. For example, Yolland says the name *Bun na hAbhann* softly, almost privately, very tentatively ... (p. 65). Maire holds out her hands to Yolland. He takes them. Each now speaks almost to himself/herself (p. 66). However, this communication is mainly emotional and creative. They fail to understand each other on the level of thought and miss their differing perceptions. Yolland declares that he is not going to leave here while Maire pleads, '*Take me away with you George*' (p. 67). The scene suggests several things that Brian Friel, as dramatist, wants his audience to think about. In a play about language, this key scene features two characters who cannot communicate with each other in words they understand. He explores a space beyond the comprehension of spoken language and what it is possible to know from other cues such as voice, affect or feelings, touch and movement. Perhaps, he is implying that love can overcome language difference as Maire and Yolland bridge the

distances between them– that in the realm of deep personal feelings, *'it is possible to interpret between privacies'* (p. 90) even when words fail. Friel may be questioning the necessity or usefulness of verbal communication which can lead to misunderstanding and hatred between people. Are Yolland and Maire able to speak more truthfully without words? Is Friel hinting that maybe silence is the perfect discourse? Maire and Yolland repeat the word always. But we sense that their promise will not be realised, emphasising the difficulty of speaking about the future.

13. Is translation important in present-day societies? How have translation methods changed since Friel wrote this play in 1979?

**Answer:** Students' answers in relation to present-day translation may vary. The development of non-human machine and AI translation might be mentioned.

14. Act Two Scene Two has been described as a beautifully constructed love scene. Discuss the combination of theatrical elements used by Friel to structure the scene effectively.

**Answer:** Friel uses a number of theatrical elements to construct Act 2 Scene 2. It is night-time and the action takes place outside in the natural environment. Lighting softens the scene and loses the schoolroom, foregrounding Maire and Yolland. Music, a reel, continues during the interval and links the two scenes. It is very loud at the end of Scene 1, suggesting intoxication and rapturous expectation of the dance. The music rises to a crescendo at the start of Scene Two indicating the heightened energy with which Maire and Yolland run onstage having suddenly and impetuously escaped from the dance. It then fades and stops, to be replaced by a guitar melody. Music, without the use of words, appeals deeply to the emotions. Here, it sets the atmosphere. The night is warm and the mood becomes gentle and romantic. Time is compressed in the short love scene and the tempo gradually slows to the quietude of the word *'always'* (p. 67). Dramatic irony continues. Only the audience fully understands all that is said on stage and they are asked to accept the theatrical conceit that Maire is speaking Irish. There is poignancy in the efforts she and Yolland make to find words and Friel imaginatively introduces elements to their communication that go beyond the verbal, such as tone, gesture and touch. The scene ends dramatically with the powerful stage picture of Sarah witnessing their kiss and rushing off to tell Manus, as music rises to crescendo.



## Writing Assignment II: Language and Translation in *Translations* Act 2

Genre: Language Analysis

**Assignment:** Write a 5-paragraph essay discussing the theme of language and translation in Act 2 of *Translations*. Your essay will consist of an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your argument will be supported by at least two strong quotes from the text.

As usual, you will follow the four stages of writing in the composition of your essay:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Write a final draft.

### Stage 1: Create an Outline

In the first section of your outline (I. Introduction) you will only fill in your thesis statement for now. Then you will write your outline by answering the prompts in the template.

Copy the outline template into your Literature copybook, answering the prompts. You do not need to write in full sentences.

Note that in the outline, each body paragraph has an optional quote to illustrate your examples. **You must use and cite at least two quotes** in your essay.

### Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraph 1, 2, and 3 into your Literature copybook. Skip a line when you write so that you can easily edit your rough draft later. When using a quote, remember to introduce, quote, cite, and explain it properly.

#### Introduction and Conclusion

Now that you have your body paragraphs written, you can outline and write your introduction and conclusion. Copy the template into your copybook and answer/fill in the prompts in italics. For the conclusion, use the prompts 1-4 as a reminder for what to write in your rough draft. Be sure to write your final reflection.

#### INTRODUCTION.

- 1 Hook: Come up with a line to capture your reader's attention related to the theme of language or translation. Add a statement about the importance of language/translation or why it is such an important topic for discussion.
- 2 Discuss the importance of language/translation based on the historical setting of the play. (You may need multiple lines to do this.)
- 3 Thesis statement: In Act 2 of *Translations*, Brian Friel develops the

*theme of language and translation through Yolland's interactions and conversations with Owen, Hugh, and Maire.*

- 4 Briefly state the main point of each of your body paragraphs.

#### I INTRODUCTION.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Thesis statement: Brian Friel develops the theme of translation in Act 2 through Yolland's interactions and conversations with Owen, Hugh, and Maire.

#### II BODY PARAGRAPH 1: OWEN, YOLLAND, AND ENGLISH PLACENAMES

- 1 Topic Sentence: In one sentence, state that the theme of language and/or translation is explored in the scene where Owen and Yolland work on their map.
- 2 Briefly explain what they are doing and how translation plays a role in their task.
- 3 Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example
- 4 Analyse the significance of this scene. What do you think the author, Brian Friel, might be saying through the scene?
- 5 Give more explanation of the importance of this point if necessary. Add an optional quote from the play to illustrate your example.
- 6 Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.

#### III BODY PARAGRAPH 2: HUGH AND YOLLAND

- 1 Topic Sentence: State that the conversation between Hugh and Yolland in Act 2, Scene 1 also demonstrates the theme of translation and/or language.
- 2 Briefly explain the conversation between Hugh and Yolland in Scene 1. Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.
- 3 Analyse the significance of this conversation. What do you think the author, Brian Friel, is saying about translation and/or language?

## CONCLUSION

- 1 *Restate your thesis from the Introduction*
- 2 *Re-summarise body paragraph 1*
- 3 *Re-summarise body paragraph 2*
- 4 *Re-summarise body paragraph 3*
- 5 *Closing thought: Closing thought or general reflection on the importance of language/translation, what Brian Friel is saying about language/translation, why Brian Friel may have chosen this topic, why the play is important today, etc.*

Once you have completed the outline of your introduction and conclusion, write them into paragraph form in your copybook, skipping a line for easy editing later on.

*Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft*

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 53.

*Stage 4: Write a Final Draft*

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for creating your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 55.

## III BODY PARAGRAPH 2 (CONT.)

- 4 *Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Explain what one of the important quotes from the conversation really means. Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 5 *Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.*

## IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3: YOLLAND AND MAIRE

- 1 *Topic Sentence: State that the romantic scene between Yolland and Maire in Scene 2 also demonstrates the theme of translation and/or language.*
- 2 *Briefly explain the scene and Maire and Yolland's interaction/conversation. Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Add an optional quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 3 *Analyse the significance of their conversation. What do you think the author, Brian Friel, is saying about translation and/or language?*
- 4 *Give more explanation of the importance of this example if necessary. Where are they still miscommunicating? How did they succeed in communicating? Add a quote from the play to illustrate your example.*
- 5 *Clincher: Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic sentence to end the paragraph.*

## V CONCLUSION

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

## *Sample Writing Assignment II: Language and Translation in "Translations" Act 2*

Language is often seen as a tool for communication, but in *Translations*, Brian Friel shows that language is also a carrier of identity, culture, and power. In Act 2 of the play, the theme of language and translation comes to the forefront as characters struggle not only to understand each other but also to navigate the larger political and cultural implications of translation. The historical context—the anglicisation of Irish place-names by the British Ordnance Survey—deepens this theme. In Act 2, Brian Friel develops the theme of language and translation through three key moments: Owen and Yolland's work on the map, the conversation between Hugh, Yolland, and Owen, and the romantic but flawed communication between Yolland and Maire.

First, the scene where Owen and Yolland collaborate on the Ordnance Survey map directly explores the theme of translation. They are tasked with converting Irish place-names into English, a task that at first seems technical but quickly reveals its cultural implications. Yolland, though fascinated by Irish culture, contributes to its erasure by replacing names like Baile Beag with Ballybeg. Owen, who is Irish, helps this process, reassuring Yolland that the changes are harmless: "It's only a name" (p.37). However, the deeper significance of these names is that they represent the people's connection to their land, history, and identity. Friel suggests that translation, especially under colonial conditions, is never neutral. This scene shows that language can be used to reshape or even erase cultural memory.

Secondly, the conversation between Hugh, Yolland, and Owen highlights the complexity of language and its limitations. Hugh, the schoolmaster, explains to Yolland that English lacks the depth and richness of Irish, saying, "It is a rich language, Lieutenant, full of the mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception" (p.51). Hugh's words show his belief that Irish is more than words; it is a world view. This conversation is important because it contrasts Yolland's romantic fascination with Ireland and its people with Hugh's awareness of what is truly at stake. While Yolland wants to learn Irish to be closer to the community, Hugh warns that translation alone may not grant real understanding. Friel seems to argue here that translation, while possible at the surface level, cannot fully carry the private meanings and deep cultural ties embedded in a language.

Finally, the romantic scene between Yolland and Maire illustrates both the power and limits of language. They barely understand each other's words, yet they still manage to communicate emotions, desires, and hopes. Their attempt to bridge the language gap is touching and symbolic. Yolland says, "Always? What is that word—always?" (p.67), showing both his yearning to understand and the limitations of literal translation. This scene shows that, while words may fail, people can still reach a certain emotional understanding. Yet, Friel also implies that such communication is fragile. Without a shared language, misunderstandings are inevitable, especially against the backdrop of political tension. The scene reflects the double-edged nature of translation: it can create connections, but it can also leave crucial gaps.

In conclusion, Act 2 of *Translations* presents language and translation as deeply connected to identity, power, and human relationships. Through the scenes of the map-making, Hugh's conversation with Yolland, and Maire and Yolland's encounter, Friel shows that translation is never simple or neutral. It is always influenced by history, power, and culture. The act leaves us reflecting on the limitations of language and the difficulty of truly "translating" between peoples. Friel may be suggesting that while translation can bring people closer together, it can also highlight the deep divides between them—divides that may not be bridged by words alone. This theme remains relevant today wherever language is used to dominate, assimilate, or resist.

## Act 3

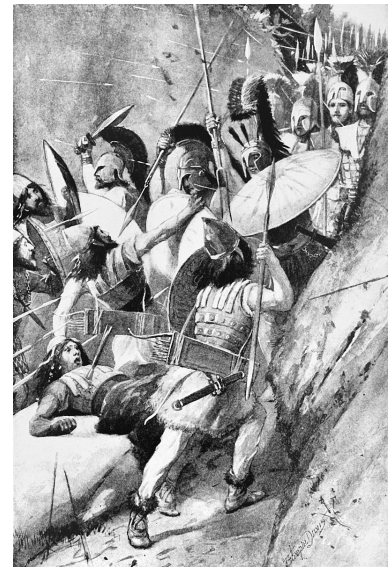
### Introduction

The setting returns to the hedge-school. It is the following evening. The good weather is at an end and it is raining. The mood becomes increasingly sombre and menacing.

The student reads through the Reading Notes. He or she then reads Act 3 thoroughly and well, marking the text in key places. Next the student answers the Comprehension Exercises in your copybook, referring to the text when necessary. Then proceed to the Development Exercises for Act 3. Finally, you should address the Discussion questions for Act 3 either orally or in writing.

### Reading Notes

- **The Murren** – an actual townland located in the Fanad district of Inishowen, County Donegal. *An Mhoirinn* in Irish, Owen associates it with Saint Muranus (c.550-645 AD). Also known as Saint Mura, he was abbot of the Abbey of Fanad. His crozier and bell are preserved and the cross of Saint Mura can be seen at Fanad. He is patron of the district and of the O'Neill clan. His feast day is March 12th.
- **Erris Peninsula** – a district located on the northwest coast of County Mayo
- **Caesar** – Julius Caesar (c.100-44 BC) Roman general, statesman and writer. His writings include *The Gallic Wars* and *The Civil War*.
- **Aeschylus** – (c.525-456 BC) Ancient Greek dramatist. He is considered the father of tragedy, the genre of drama that depicts human suffering and sorrowful events.
- **Bayonet** – a knife or dagger attached to the barrel of a rifle allowing the gun to also be used as a spear.
- **Visigoths! Huns! Vandals!** – three tribes that warred with the Roman Empire from the third to the fifth century AD. The Romans portrayed them as looters and plunderers.
- **Ignari! Stulti! Rustici!** – Ignoramuses, fools, peasants. Doalty repeats these Latin words from Act 1 (p.11) in imitation of Hugh.
- **Thermopylae** – a pass between the mountains and the sea in eastern Greece. Thermopylae was the site of a famous battle in 480 BC when the Spartan general Leonidas defended the pass against a large invading Persian force.
- **Winfarthing, Barton Bendish, Saxingham Nethergate, Little Walsingham** – the names, originating in Old English, of ancient villages in Norfolk.



A scene of the Battle of the Thermopylae by John Steeple Davis (1900).

## Comprehension Exercises

1. In one paragraph, summarise Act 3.

**Answer:** The act is set in the hedge-school. It is the evening after the night of the dance and Lieutenant Yolland is missing. Manus had no part in his disappearance, but feeling under strain, he flees from *Baile Beag*. Sarah is distraught and feels responsible for what has happened. Her apology to Manus is the last thing she says. Doalty and Bridget arrive with news that a large number of soldiers are searching for Yolland and that Hugh, Jimmy, and others are angry to see them trashing the countryside. Bridget hints that Yolland was abducted by the Donnelly twins. Maire arrives in a state of grief. She describes her and Yolland's last hours together and the map he drew on the sand. She adds that Nellie Ruadh's baby has died. Captain Lancey enters and instructs Owen to translate his ultimatum. If Yolland is not found, he will order the shooting of livestock, the eviction of families, and, if necessary, he will lay waste the entire parish. Lancey leaves on hearing that the army camp is ablaze. Hugh and Jimmy arrive, very drunk. Hugh reveals that he has been passed over for the post of master in the National School and Jimmy announces that he is to marry the goddess Athene. Owen prepares to join Doalty in defending the community. He and Hugh express differing perspectives on the Name-Book and Hugh insists they must learn to adapt to change. He recalls setting out to take part in the 1798 Rebellion and turning back at Glenties. When Maire returns, Hugh promises to teach her English and Jimmy muses on the danger of crossing tribal boundaries. The play ends with Hugh reciting a passage from the *Aeneid* concerning the destruction of Carthage by the Romans.

2. State the main theme of Act 3 in a well-written sentence.

**Answer:** Cultural conflict results in tragic consequences and painful choices.

3. What do we learn about Lieutenant Yolland from the conversation between Owen and Manus (p.70)? What might have happened to him?

**Answer:** We learn that Lieutenant Yolland is missing. We are not told with certainty what has happened to him. But it is implied that he may have been abducted by the Donnelly twins and perhaps killed.

4. What does Manus do before he leaves and how does this reveal details of his daily life? Describe how he parts from his brother, Owen and from Sarah.

**Answer:** Before he leaves, Manus explains to Owen what needs to be done for their father, Hugh. This reveals how Manus gave great care to Hugh in their daily life, ensuring that he was safe and fed. Manus and Owen part with a handshake. He speaks to Sarah, encouraging her, reassuring her that she did no harm at all and kisses the top of her head— as if in absolution (p.72).

5. Owen throws a sack over his shoulders and goes out to see Dan Doalty (p.88). What do you think their meeting is about?

**Answer:** Answers will vary. It appears that Owen is going to join Doalty and others such as the Donnelly twins in a fight against the British.

6. Describe the map Maire traces on the floor in the space where the Ordnance Survey map had been. What does she think has happened to Yolland?

**Answer:** Maire traces an outline map on the floor like the map traced by Yolland in the wet sand the previous night. It shows ancient villages around his home in Norfolk with strange-sounding Anglo-Saxon place-names. Maire thinks that something very bad has happened to him because she knows that he would not go away without telling her.

7. How is the army responding to the disappearance of Lieutenant Yolland? What is the impact of their actions on the people of *Baile Beag*?

**Answer:** The army is responding with a heavy hand. Doalty and Bridget describe how reinforcements are combing the district, prodding the ground with their bayonets, scattering livestock and tumbling

everything before them. Force is being used without thought for the community and this will lead to a sense of grievance.

8. Captain Lancey enters the hedge-school now the commanding officer (p.78). How does he assert his authority? Briefly, what is his ultimatum and what is his threat to the community of *Baile Beag*? Who does he identify as carrying a big responsibility in all this (p.82)?

**Answer:** Captain Lancey enters briskly, intent on decisive action and ready to use tactics of terror and intimidation. His insistence on the English form of place-names asserts his own and British authority. Lancey demands information that will lead to Lieutenant Yolland. If Yolland is not found, a series of reprisals will follow. Firstly, all livestock in Ballybeg will be shot, then families in selected townlands will be evicted and their homes will be levelled, finally a complete clearance of the entire district will be carried out. Lancey identifies Owen as carrying a big responsibility in all this.

9. What, do you think, will be the consequence of Captain Lancey's address to the hedge-school students?

**Answer:** Answers will vary. It is likely that Lancey's address will cause fear and terror in the community of *Baile Beag*. It may also stir characters such as Doalty to fight back. He responds, "*I've damned little to defend but he'll not put me out without a fight. And there'll be others who think the same as me.*" (p.84).

10. How do Hugh and Jimmy enter Act 3 (p.84)? What is Hugh outraged about and how does he intend to respond to the insult?

**Answer:** Hugh and Jimmy are both drunk and wet from the rain. Hugh is outraged because he has been passed over for the post of Master of the National School. Master Bartley Timlin has been appointed. Hugh intends to compose a satire on Master Timlin.

11. What announcement does Jimmy make? How has he retreated into a world of fantasy? What does he say about his life away up in Beann na Gaoithe?

**Answer:** Jimmy announces that he is to be married at Christmas to the goddess Athene. He is no longer able to distinguish between reality and the realm of myths that exists only imaginatively in language. Jimmy describes the intense loneliness and isolation of his life.

12. Who was Caitlin Dubh Nic Reactainn and what does Hugh tell us about her? How has Hugh changed since the spring morning in 1798 when he set out for Sligo with Jimmy?

**Answer:** Caitlin Dubh Nic Reactainn was Hugh's wife and mother of Manus and Owen. Hugh says that she was his goddess. Unlike Jimmy, he found love, goodness and beauty in the real world. But Caitlin has died; may she rest in peace; Hugh says in his one mention of her. Manus remembered her talking of her cousins in Mayo (p.71). This reveals that Hugh was once young and poetic, full of hope with a wife and family that he loved. But, over the years he has grown arrogant and miserable, perhaps from heartbreak.

13. What does Jimmy say about *exogamein* (p.90)? How is it significant at this moment in *Translations*?

**Answer:** Jimmy says that *exogamein*, marrying outside the tribe, is problematic. It is a boundary not to be crossed casually because both sides get very angry. The comment is significant at this late moment in the play. It confirms the importance of Maire and Yolland's efforts to traverse barriers and the painful consequences of their actions. It also reinforces the notion that translating between cultures is complex, a major theme of the play.

14. Name the Classical text from which Hugh quotes in the final speech of the play.

**Answer:** Hugh quotes from Virgil's *Aeneid*.

15. Use the context given to figure out the meanings of words in **bold** print from Act 3. A dictionary may also be used to help choose the correct definition from the Definitions Bank. Each word and its definition is to be written in your copybook.

- (a) I think we should go back to the **original** – Saint Muranus (p.68).

**Answer: Original** – Earliest or first.

- (b) His voice breaks in **exasperation** (p.69).  
*Answer: Exasperation* – Frustration and annoyance.
- (c) The wrong **gesture** in the wrong language (p.70).  
*Answer: Gesture* – Movement or signal.
- (d) He stoops over her and kisses the top of her head as if in **absolution** (p.72).  
*Answer: Absolution* – Forgiveness, pardon.
- (e) I will **pursue** the following course of action (p.80).  
*Answer: Pursue* – Follow.
- (f) If that doesn't bear results, commencing forty-eight hours from now we will embark on a series of evictions and levelling of every **abode** in the following selected areas (p.80).  
*Answer: Abode* – Dwelling, home.
- (g) Who's that **lout** (p.82)?  
*Answer: Lout* – An awkward ill-mannered person.
- (h) 'My tidings are **infelicitous**,' said he (p.84).  
*Answer: Infelicitous* – Unhappy.
- (i) I will compose a **satire** on Master Bartley Timlin, schoolmaster and bacon-curer (p.85).  
*Answer: Satire* – A literary work that ridicules or lampoons, for example, by pointing out the foolishness of a person.
- (j) The lady has **assented** (p.86).  
*Answer: Assented* – Said 'yes' or agreed.
- (k) Two young **gallants** with pikes across their shoulders and the Aeneid in their pockets (p.89).  
*Answer: Gallants* – Brave and honourable men.
- (l) My friend, confusion is not an **ignoble** condition (p.89).  
*Answer: Ignoble* – Low or mean.

### *Development Exercises*

1. Locate a quotation from Act 3 that you think expresses the act's main theme and write it down.  
*Answer: (Answers will vary.) "Do you know the Greek word endogamein? It means to marry within the tribe. And the word exogamein means to marry outside the tribe. And you don't cross those borders casually - both sides get very angry." - Jimmy (p.90).*
2. How is Manus feeling at the beginning of Act 3? What does the overloaded burst bag symbolise about him?  
*Answer: Manus busies himself packing and moves with determination and urgency. Emotionally, he is agitated and disturbed. His voice breaks in exasperation as the overloaded bag bursts. He is still shocked following the events of the previous night and Maire's abandonment of him.*
3. According to Manus, how did he respond to the sight of Maire and Yolland together on the night of the dance? Explain why you think Manus's decision to flee is wise or unwise. Where does he intend to go and what does he bring with him?  
*Answer: Manus was angry and tells Owen that he had vengeance in mind, intending to fell Yolland with a stone. But confronted by the sight of him and Maire, all Manus did was shout at Yolland in Irish. Manus responded only with a gesture in the wrong language because Yolland didn't understand what he said. Answers will vary. Owen is concerned that Manus's flight will make him appear guilty of wrongdoing. Doalty says that the army will overtake him limping along the coast before night. Manus intends to head for the Erris Peninsula in County Mayo, where his mother had cousins. He takes with him his clothes and some books by Virgil, Caesar and Aeschylus.*

4. How are Owen's loyalties conflicted in Act 3? He translates Lancey's message in Act 3 more accurately than he translated Lancey's message in Act 1. What has changed (p.79-81 / p.32-34)?

**Answer:** Owen is in a difficult position. He is employed as a translator by the army and he is a friend of Lieutenant Yolland. He knows that Lancey will question him and he will be expected to cooperate with the British. Yet, he feels the need to protect his brother and his community. He is shocked by the terror that is about to be unleashed. The severity of Lancey's resolve is unquestionable, and Owen is startled by the change in Lancey's manner and attitude and by his arrogant, *I'm in a hurry, O Donnell*. He does as he is commanded and translates accurately.

5. The Name-Book falls to the floor and Owen leaves it there (p.84). What does this say about his point of view? How is Owen's outlook changing?

**Answer:** The Name-Book is an important symbol in the play and especially in Act 3. Owen leaves it on the floor where it falls, suggesting that it is losing its value and significance for him as he prepares for the coming strife. His outlook is changing. Soon he begins to regret his part in anglicisation calling it his mistake. He dismisses the Name-Book as a catalogue of names as he throws it onto the table and declares it has nothing to do with us (p.87). These gestures mark Owen's return to his Gaelic identity.

6. A wake is taking place in *Baile Beag*? What does Maire say about it at the end of her speech (p.78)? Outline the symbolic significance of the death of Nellie Ruadh's baby.

**Answer:** Maire reveals that Nellie Ruadh's baby died in the middle of the night. This symbolises loss and mourning. The celebration of this baby's life in Act 1 is now turned to grief. Maire comments, *It didn't last long, did it?* This expresses the short duration of her and Yolland's dream of a life together and her own anguish now that he is gone.

7. How is Maire feeling when she arrives (p.76)? How do other characters who are present (Sarah, Bridget, Doalty, Owen) respond to her and what might this signify?

**Answer:** Maire is deeply shocked by Yolland's disappearance and this is reflected in her physical appearance and incoherence. Her hair is in disarray and she forgot to put the milk in the can. She is in acute distress, on the verge of being distraught and her thoughts lurch from hope to despair. Owen is noncommittal in his responses and Sarah, Bridget and Doalty do not speak to Maire. When she leaves, there is silence. Perhaps, they do not know what to say to Maire. It is possible that their silent presence indicates amazement or disapproval of her relationship with Yolland and that Maire is now isolated in the community.

8. Doalty refers to reprisals in his grandfather's time (p.83). What does this suggest about the nature of conflict and violence?

**Answer:** It suggests that violence can recur from generation to generation if conflict is not resolved.

9. Hugh promises to teach Maire English. What aspects of language is it possible to teach and to learn? What may not be possible? Why might Hugh think that the word 'always' is a silly word?

**Answer:** It is possible to teach aspects of language such as vocabulary and grammar. But Hugh is unsure if this will help Maire to interpret between privacies in English. He means to share in the deep, culture-bound understanding of native speakers. Yolland referred to this issue earlier, saying that even if he learned Irish, the language of the tribe would always elude him. *"The private core will always be... hermetic"* (p.48).

**Answer:** *"Do you know the Greek word 'endogamein'? It means to marry within the tribe. And the word 'exogamein' means to marry outside the tribe. And you don't cross those borders casually – both sides get very angry."* – Jimmy (p.90)

10. Describe the difficult situation in which Maire finds herself in Act 3. How is her grief conveyed to the audience and to what extent does she receive sympathy or comfort?



**Answer:** Maire is suddenly and shockingly confronted by calamity at the beginning of Act 3. Lieutenant Yolland has disappeared and may be dead. Like Nellie Ruadh's baby, Maire's dream of a new life with Yolland didn't last long. He represents the modern life and economic security for which Maire yearns. With his disappearance, her vision for a life of independence and opportunity, away from *Baile Beag*, has shattered. Maire attempts to appear normal when she enters the hedge-school. But she is bereft. Her hair is in disarray and she is in acute distress on the verge of being distraught (stage notes p.76). Her anguish is evident in her restlessness and disconnected thoughts, gaining the sympathy of the audience. She asks Owen for news of Yolland and his response is courteous but reserved. She appears isolated in the schoolroom. Sarah makes no response, and Bridget and Doalty are unusually quiet. The others may not know what to say to Maire or perhaps, they disapprove of her liaison with the Red Coat.

11. Briefly, summarise what Maire says in her speech beginning, "*He comes from a tiny wee place called Winfarthing*" (p.77). Why has she it all in her head with such clarity and detail? How does she try to cope with her fears and grief?

**Answer:** Maire tells of the map Yolland drew in the wet sand on the beach and the strange-sounding Anglo-Saxon names of villages near his home in Norfolk. She does not know what the names mean, but she likes their sounds. She compliments Sarah on looking lovely the previous night. Terror grips her, and she tells Owen that she knows something very bad happened to George. Her thoughts move to incomplete Geography homework, the wee ones at home, and everyday chores. She hopes there's no hay to be saved in Brooklyn. She also shares that Nellie Ruadh's baby died during the night and that she must go to the wake. Maire remembers Yolland's map and the Norfolk place-names with great clarity, indicating the strength of her connection with George. Focusing on their happy time together may help her cope. She tries to appear normal and focus on routine, but her anxiety and grief emerge in her worry, restlessness, and scattered thoughts.

12. What is the significance of Maire's presence onstage with Hugh and Jimmy in the final moments of the play (p.89-91)? How does she imagine her future now? What is the symbolism of her picking up the Name-Book and sitting with it on her knee?

**Answer:** Maire's inclusion in the final scene centres attention on the message with which Friel concludes. Despite her confusion, she returns to the hedge-school, saying, "*I'm back again. I set out for somewhere but I couldn't remember where. So I came back here*" (p.89). Maire represents resilience and independence. She responds to her plight with a willingness to start again and to learn English out of necessity. She mentions Brooklyn and Yolland possibly returning, leaving her future uncertain but still hopeful. She is left holding the Name-Book, symbolising her openness to engage with anglicisation and her desire to leave *Baile Beag*.

13. What predicament does Manus face at the beginning of Act 3? Why does he flee from *Baile Beag*? Do you think that he will reach Erris in County Mayo? Give a reason for your answer.

**Answer:** Manus faces the heartbreak of Maire's rejection and suspicion surrounding Yolland's disappearance. His dream of marriage to Maire is shattered, and he may be suspected of involvement in Yolland's disappearance. He reacts with determination and urgency. He flees *Baile Beag*, symbolised by the overloaded paper bag he carries. Manus may be driven by fear, guilt, or shame. He momentarily considered violence against Yolland, which haunts him. His fate is left unresolved. It is possible, but difficult, that he reaches Erris due to his lameness and the British soldiers searching for him. He has little money and only vague information about his relatives in Mayo.

14. How is Manus portrayed in the final act of the play (p.68-72)? What will his absence mean to *Baile Beag*?

**Answer:** Manus is portrayed positively in the final act. He is decent, honest, and loyal. He takes only what belongs to him and cares for Hugh by giving Owen careful instructions. He treats Sarah with

kindness and forgiveness. His absence will be deeply felt in *Baile Beag*, as he contributed scholarship, loyalty, and humanity.

15. Owen described himself in Act 1 as a civilian interpreter on the pay-roll of the military (p.30). Outline how this role becomes problematic in Act 3. Why does his outlook change? Contrast the Owen we meet at the end of the play with the charming city man of Act 1.

**Answer:** Owen's role becomes increasingly awkward as tensions escalate. He is torn between loyalty to his community, his friend Yolland, and the British Army. He is humiliated into translating Captain Lancey's ultimatum and sees firsthand the army's cruelty. His outlook begins to shift as early as Act 2 when he insists on being called Owen, not Roland. By Act 3, Lancey treats him as an outsider, calling him O'Donnell. Owen ultimately rejects his role by leaving the Name-Book on the floor. In contrast to Act 1, where he was confident, flippant, and accepting of colonisation, Owen in Act 3 is serious, disillusioned, and committed to his Gaelic identity.

16. To what extent are conflict and violence resolved in Act 3? What, if anything, remains uncertain? Explain why you agree or disagree that Brian Friel is reflecting, in *Translations*, on the Troubles taking place in Northern Ireland at the time he wrote the play in 1979. Briefly, name a troubled place in today's world and describe what is happening there.

**Answer:** The conflict is unresolved. Lancey's next move is unclear, and the community's fate remains uncertain. Although Friel claimed the play is about language, parallels with the Troubles are strong—division, violence, cultural suppression, and fear dominate. Students may mention regions of conflict like Ukraine, Gaza, or Sudan, where conflict, displacement, and violence are more recent.

17. "... it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language..." – Hugh (p.88). What is Hugh saying in the above quotation? Outline Hugh's views on History, as he expresses them in Act 3. How should the past be remembered, according to Hugh? Explain why you either agree or disagree with Hugh.

**Answer:** Hugh believes that stories and language shape identity more than historical facts. He stresses that these stories need constant renewal to stay meaningful. Hugh views history as subjective, shaped by memory and imagination rather than just facts. He warns against obsessively remembering everything, suggesting it could lead to madness. He reflects on his own past and failed rebellion. Students may agree or disagree based on their view of history and memory.

18. Hugh tells Owen that they must learn the new place-names. "We must make them our new home" (p.88). What type of new home or future does Hugh envisage?

**Answer:** Hugh acknowledges the inevitability of cultural change. He sees that Irish people must adapt to the new English language and names, but that they can make it their own. He envisions a difficult but possible future where the Irish preserve their spirit within a changed world.

19. "Now, the problem is this: Is Athene sufficiently mortal or am I sufficiently godlike for the marriage to be acceptable to her people and to my people? You think about that" – Jimmy (p.90). What is the significance of Jimmy's question? What is he really asking us to think about?

**Answer:** Jimmy is reflecting on cultural mixing, specifically Irish-English relations. He is really asking if two very different cultures can successfully unite or whether such unions are doomed due to inherent tensions and mutual suspicion.

### Discussion Exercises

The student reflects on Act 3, considering the words and actions of the characters as well as the stage notes. It is important to think carefully about what is happening, as well as to ponder on the inner world of the characters and the message that the dramatist seeks to communicate. Discussion of the Socratic Questions leads to deeper thought about Act 3 and calls on the student to identify and connect

ideas, leading to an appreciation of the central concerns of the play. The questions are to be discussed and answered in the Literature Notebook. Based on Act Two of *Translations*, answer the following questions:

1. Has Owen been naïve or reckless during the course of the play? Explain why you agree or disagree with Captain Lancey's assertion that Owen carries a big responsibility in all of this; the disappearance of Lieutenant Yolland and the events that ensue (p.82).

**Answer:** Answers will vary. Evidence of naivety includes Owen's casual attitude in Act 1 and his mistranslation of Lancey's speech. He thought he could satisfy both the British and his community, but underestimated the consequences. Lancey's assertion holds some truth—Owen introduced Yolland to Maire, encouraged their interaction, and involved him in the Name-Book project. He may have unintentionally exposed Yolland to danger.

2. Outline how conflict and violence unfold in *Baile Beag* during the course of Act 3. What is suggested about the nature of violence and its impact on people?

**Answer:** Violence escalates throughout Act 3. Yolland disappears, soldiers ravage the land, and Lancey threatens reprisals. Doalty reports that the whole army camp is on fire. Violence appears inevitable once unleashed and causes widespread fear and suffering. It affects individuals like Maire, Manus, and Sarah, and the entire community is left vulnerable.

3. How does the use of language and the use of silence contribute to the escalation of violence in Act 3?

**Answer:** Conflict arises from colonialism, cultural suppression, and rebellion. Language contributes to violence through Lancey's intimidating words. Silence also plays a role—the Donnelly twins act without speaking, and Doalty and Bridget conceal what they know. Sarah's muteness reflects terror. Silence and words alike become weapons.

4. Consider the role of classical allusion and literature in Act 3. What is the significance of the books Manus is bringing with him? How does Jimmy's comments on the Greek words *endogamein* and *exogamein* contribute to the development of theme in Act 3? The play ends with Hugh quoting from the *Aeneid*. Why does he choose this particular excerpt? What does it suggest?

**Answer:** Manus brings books linked to conquest and tragedy (Virgil, Caesar, Aeschylus). Jimmy's comments on *endogamein* and *exogamein* underline the dangers of crossing cultural boundaries. Hugh's final quote from the *Aeneid* connects Ireland's fate to Carthage, which was destroyed by Rome. It suggests the overwhelming power of imperial conquest and Ireland's subjugation.

5. What is the relevance of Homer's *Odyssey* and of Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*, to *Translations*?

**Answer:** Classical references deepen the play's themes. Jimmy's obsession with the *Odyssey* highlights the search for belonging and the blurred line between myth and reality. Manus carries classical texts symbolising knowledge and empire. The *Aeneid* provides a powerful parallel between the destruction of Carthage and Ireland's subjugation. Both epics reinforce themes of displacement, cultural conflict, and loss.

6. Consider the theme of imperialism and cultural tension in Act 3 of *Translations*. Give specific examples.

**Answer:**

- Imperialism and cultural tension bring tragic results for several individuals in Act 3.
- Yolland is missing, presumed dead. Manus flees and may also perish.
- Maire is robbed of her dreams; Sarah is terrorised into silence.
- *Baile Beag* is gripped by fear and violence.
- Hugh articulates the need to make difficult choices and accept change in order to survive. The loss of the Irish language will erode the roots of identity and belonging, plunging people into an alien future.

## Writing Assignment III: Character Analysis in “Translations”

Genre: Character Analysis

**Assignment:** Write a 5-paragraph character analysis of one character—Maire, Owen, or Manus. Your essay will consist of an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your argument will be supported by at least two strong quotes from the text

As usual, you will follow the four stages of writing in the composition of your essay:

Stage 1: Create an outline.

Stage 2: Write a rough draft.

Stage 3: Edit your rough draft.

Stage 4: Write a final draft.

### How to Analyse a Character

Before outlining, we will recall the basics of how to analyse a character. First you will choose your topic by looking at your character and making a statement about a quality, motive, effect, change, or something he or she learned. Then you will make a restriction, which is a statement or claim about your topic, focusing the paragraph. The topic and restriction can be covered in one sentence. Next you will illustrate your topic and restriction with an example from the story, using a quote from the book. You must then give an analysis, or explanation, of your illustration. Finally, you will write the clincher, which repeats or reflects 2-3 key words from your topic.

Below is an example of a character analysis of Edmund from the book “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe” by C.S. Lewis. The topic, restriction, illustration, analysis, and clincher are noted in bold square brackets. You will follow this model for the third section/paragraph of your outline and rough draft.

*In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Edmund [Topic] demonstrates significant personal growth as [Restriction] he moves from selfishness to redemption. [Illustration] At the start, Edmund’s selfishness is evident when he betrays his siblings for the promise of Turkish Delight and power from the White Witch. Lucy warns Edmund about the Witch, but he “still wanted to taste that Turkish Delight again more than he wanted anything else”. Edmund then willingly lies to Lucy about Narnia and later, he sneaks off to the Witch’s castle, driven by his desire to gain favour and authority.*

*[Analysis] This behaviour illustrates his desire for personal gain, even at the expense of his family’s safety. However, after being rescued by Aslan and witnessing the consequences of his actions, Edmund shows remorse and becomes a braver, more selfless individual. He proves his change of heart by fighting alongside his siblings to defeat the Witch. [Clincher] This transformation shows that Edmund learned the value of loyalty and sacrifice, changing from a selfish traitor to a noble hero.*

#### I INTRODUCTION.

1 Introduction

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

#### II BODY PARAGRAPH 1: STORY SUMMARY

- 1 Summarise the parts which are relevant to the character you are analysing.
- 2 Tell what your character wants or needs, or tell what challenges your character faces.
- 3 Tell the important things that your character does, says, and thinks to solve the problem and how they feel while solving the problem (or failing to solve the problem).
- 4 Explain the climax surrounding your character. (The climax is the event reveals how the conflict will work out or not work out.)
- 5 Explain the resolution. (The resolution is what the outcome is for your character at the end of the story.)

#### III BODY PARAGRAPH 2: CHARACTER ANALYSIS PART 1

- 1 Topic: (Statement about a strength or weakness in your character, motive, change, effect, or something your character learned)
- 2 Restriction: (Make a statement or argument about the topic)
- 3 Illustration: (Find a quote from the book which shows an example of the topic and restriction. Write down the page number.)
- 4 Analysis: (Explain the illustration and why it is important or how it proves your point)
- 5 Clincher: (Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic and restriction)

#### IV BODY PARAGRAPH 3: CHARACTER ANALYSIS PART 2

- 1 Topic: (Statement about another strength or weakness in your character, motive, change, effect, or something your character learned)
- 2 Restriction: (Make a statement or argument about the topic)

### Stage 1: Create an Outline

In a character analysis, you do not need to write a thesis statement, so you will leave the first part of your outline (I. Introduction) blank for now. Write your outline by answering the prompts in the template.

Copy the outline template into your Literature copybook, answering the prompts in italics. Remember, you do not need to write in full sentences

### Stage 2: Write a Rough Draft

Using your outline as a guide, write body paragraph 1, 2, and 3 into your Literature copybook. Skip a line when you write so that you can easily edit your rough draft later. When using a quote, remember to introduce, quote, cite, and explain it properly.

#### Introduction and Conclusion

Now that you have your body paragraphs written, you can outline and write your introduction and conclusion. Copy the template into your copybook and answer/fill in the prompts in italics.

#### INTRODUCTION.

- 1 *Hook: Come up with a line to capture your reader's attention related to character that you have chosen.*
- 2 *Background: Introduce the play, its overall storyline and plot.*
- 3 *Explain why the play is important in the Irish tradition/culture and its main themes and conflict.*
- 4 *Introduce your character and the topics of your character analysis.*

#### CONCLUSION

- 1 *Restate your topics from your Character Analysis*
- 2 *Explain the topic's importance.*
- 3 *Personal feelings on the topic. Use the passive voice and avoid using "me, I, you, or we."*
- 4 *What is most important to learn/take away from this character and why?*
- 5 *Idea for a closing reflective sentence*

Now that you have outlined your introduction and conclusion, write them into paragraph form in your copybook, skipping a line for easy editing later on.

### Stage 3: Edit your Rough Draft

Now that you have completed your outline, follow the guidelines for editing your rough draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 53.

### Stage 4: Write a Final Draft

Now that you have completed editing your rough draft, follow the guidelines for editing your final draft in *A Short Guide to Essay Writing* on page 55.

#### III BODY PARAGRAPH 3 (CONT.)

- 3 *Illustration: (Find a quote from the book which shows an example of the topic and restriction. Write down the page number.)*
- 4 *Analysis: (Explain the illustration and why it is important or how it proves your point)*
- 5 *Clincher: (Repeat or reflect 2-3 key words from the topic and restriction).*

#### IV CONCLUSION

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### *Sample Writing Assignment III: Character Analysis in "Translations"*

*Character Analysis:* Manus in Act 3 of *Translations* In *Translations*, Brian Friel presents Manus as one of the most complex and tragic characters in the play. Manus is a man caught between loyalty to his family, his cultural identity, and his personal heartbreak. Throughout Act 3, Manus's actions reveal his inner turmoil as he faces rejection, fear, and the collapse of the world he knows. His quiet dignity, sense of duty, and eventual disappearance leave a lasting impression on the audience. Manus's story in Act 3 highlights the pain of personal and cultural loss, the struggle for identity, and the consequences of silence.

At the beginning of Act 3, Manus is portrayed as a man in crisis. He has discovered Maire's romantic interest in Yolland, and he is devastated. Already burdened by his lameness and social limitations, Manus must now face the emotional blow of rejection. His first instinct is to flee. He packs his things, including his treasured books, and prepares to leave Baile Beag forever. Manus does not participate directly in Yolland's disappearance but feels the weight of guilt and suspicion. His anguish is symbolised when "his voice breaks in exasperation as the overloaded bag bursts" (p.69). This small but powerful moment shows the depth of his emotional turmoil and the sense of hopelessness that has overwhelmed him. Friel presents Manus as a man who chooses escape over confrontation, showing both his vulnerability and his humanity.

Manus also displays strength of character and responsibility despite his suffering. Before leaving, Manus ensures that his father Hugh will be cared for, giving Owen clear instructions about his needs. His final words to Sarah reveal his kindness and empathy: "You did no harm at all, Sarah" (p.72). This simple act of comfort and absolution demonstrates Manus's compassion. Although heartbroken, Manus shows maturity by accepting the situation without bitterness or anger. His decision to disappear silently rather than retaliate against Yolland or Maire reflects his deep sense of honour. Manus may be leaving, but he leaves behind a legacy of integrity, selflessness, and loyalty to his family.

However, Manus's disappearance also shows the danger of silence and withdrawal. Throughout the play, Manus represents those who quietly endure hardship without resistance. His departure is left unresolved—will he make it to Erris? Will he be hunted down by the soldiers? The uncertainty of his fate mirrors the broader uncertainty facing the Irish community. His inner conflict is also a reflection of Ireland's own struggle under colonialism. Manus's choice to leave, like his choice to shout at Yolland in Irish (a language Yolland does not understand), is an action steeped in futility and frustration. His tragedy is that he cannot find a place for himself—emotionally, socially, or politically—in the changing world of Baile Beag. As Owen remarks, "The lame scholar turned violent" (p.71) reveals Manus's self-awareness of his limited options, but also his resignation.

In conclusion, Manus is a character who embodies both the emotional and cultural struggles at the heart of *Translations*. In Act 3, Manus faces heartbreak, powerlessness, and the disintegration of his world. Yet, he responds with dignity and quiet strength, making him a deeply sympathetic figure. His unresolved fate leaves the audience reflecting on the cost of silence, exile, and emotional restraint. Friel, through Manus, shows that the greatest tragedies may not always be the loudest or most obvious but may lie instead in the quiet, unspoken choices of those who endure. Manus's story remains relevant as it reminds us of the human cost of cultural and personal loss.

# A Short Guide to Essay Writing

## Editing your Rough Draft

Writer Robert Graves said, “There is no such thing as good writing, only good rewriting.” To begin the rewriting process, you must edit your rough draft. The editing process is comprised of 3 steps:

1. *Add elements to enhance and improve your writing.*
2. *Correct errors in your writing.*
3. *Give your rough draft to an editor to double-check for errors in your writing.*

You will edit your draft as much as possible on your own, then give it to an editor to make more corrections for you. The first step in editing is to add some style elements to vary your sentences and make your essay more interesting to read.

## Vocabulary Requirements

One way we can enhance our writing is through our vocabulary. Read through the checklists below for guidance on how to enhance your writing through vocabulary.

1. Identify a weak or overused verb and replace it with a strong verb: e.g. Replace ‘*went*’ or ‘*said*’ with more descriptive verbs.
2. Identify a weak or overused adjective and replace it with a quality adjective or extended description.
3. Add an *-ly* adverb: An *-ly* adverb often fits best with a verb.

**WEAK/STRONG VERBS:** “*It was said that they went to Lough Gur*” might become “*It was rumoured that they journeyed to Lough Gur.*”

**AVOID OVERUSED ADJECTIVES:** “*The dinner looked nice*” might become “*The soft, steaming rolls and mouthwatering scent of the roast drew everyone to the finely set table.*”

**USE ADVERBS:** “*As the time dwindled, he scribbled down his answers furiously.*”

## Sentence Variation Requirements

Another way to improve our writing is by varying sentence style and structure. Read the checklist below for guidance on how to improve your writing through sentence style and structure.

1. Add detail or combine sentences using a *who* clause or a *which* clause.
2. Use a clausal opener by beginning a sentence with one of the following words: *when, while, where, as, since, if, although/though, because* etc.

**CLAUSES** “*Peter has played the violin since he was four years old. He competes in many competitions.*” You can combine these sentences with a *who* clause: “*Peter, who has played the violin since he was four, competes in many competitions.*”

**CLAUSAL OPENERS:** “*Though she had never skied before, Maria was a natural on the slopes.*”

1. Use a prepositional opener by beginning a sentence with one of the following words: above, across, around, after, by, during, for, from, in, inside, into, near, of, off, on, outside, over, past, through/throughout, to, under, up, with, without etc.

PREPOSITIONAL OPENER:.. "After much hard work, they finally completed the project."

Read through your rough draft and add the vocabulary and sentence variation guidelines. In each paragraph you must add the vocabulary requirements listed above (strong verb, quality adjective, -ly adverb). In each paragraph you must also add the sentence variation requirements listed above (who/which clause, clausal opener, prepositional opener).

Now that you have improved your rough draft through structural and stylistic edits, you can go through your rough draft and eliminate or correct any errors you find. Read through the list below for guidance on what to watch out for in your writing.

#### *Errors to Avoid*

1. *Spelling: Check for any spelling errors.*
2. *Subject-Verb Agreement: Ensure that subjects and verbs agree in number (singular/plural).*
3. *Punctuation: Check for the proper use of commas, semicolons, quotation marks, and full stops.*
4. *Capitalisation: Check proper nouns and the beginning of sentences for capitalisation.*
5. *Run-On Sentences and Fragments: Avoid long, confusing sentences. Make sure every sentence is complete.*
6. *Ambiguity: Avoid vague or unclear language.*
7. *Active versus passive Voice: Use the active voice whenever possible. It is clearer and more direct.*
8. *Informal Language: Avoid slang or colloquial language. Use a formal tone.*
9. *Contractions: Do not use contractions like don't, can't, couldn't etc. Apostrophes should only be used to show possession in formal writing.*
10. *Tense Consistency: Use the same verb tense throughout the essay unless there is a logical reason to switch.*
11. *Third Person Writing: Do not use the first person (I, we, my, our) or second person (you, us).*

Read through each paragraph of your rough draft carefully, correcting any errors from the list above.

#### *Finding an Editor*

You are now ready to begin the final part of the editing process. You will need to find an editor. Your editor should be somebody in



the same class as you or older than you. Give your rough draft to your editor along with the list of errors to avoid. Your editor will read through your rough draft and add additional corrections to it in red pen.

Give your rough draft to an editor. Ask your editor to consult the list of errors to avoid and mark any corrections in a red pen.

### *Writing the Final Draft*

Once you receive your corrected rough draft back from your editor, you are ready to begin your final draft. The final draft is the polished, complete version of your essay that is ready for submission or presentation. The final draft is the most refined version of the work, with minimal mistakes, and should fully communicate the intended message or argument in a cohesive and polished manner.

To write your final draft, you will copy your rough draft in neat handwriting, adding in all your own edits and the corrections from your editor. It is important to use proper formatting when writing your final draft. Formatting is the way that you arrange and present the text of your essay. Read through the guidelines below for a hand-written final draft.

### *Hand-Written Formatting Requirements:*

1. *Write a heading in the top left margin of the first page. The heading is made up of 4 lines. The first line is your name. The second line is the subject. The third line is the assignment. The fourth line is the date.*
2. *Come up with a short title for your essay and write it on top of the first line in the centre of the first page. Remember to CAPITALISE the main words of the title.*
3. *Write in blue or black pen.*
4. *Write in your best handwriting.*
5. *You do not have to skip a line, but you may if you prefer.*
6. *Write all the way to the end of the line (stop where the margin is marked). Do not begin a new line when beginning a new sentence.*
7. *Start a new line when beginning a new paragraph.*
8. *Indent the first line when beginning a new paragraph. To indent a paragraph means to leave a blank space (about 1cm or one finger space) between the left margin and the beginning of the first sentence of your paragraph. It is important to indent a paragraph because it shows the reader that a new paragraph is beginning.*
9. *Number your pages in the top right margin.*

EXAMPLE HEADING:  
Mary O'Connor  
English Literature  
Essay on "The Children of Lir"  
23/10/2025

Write your final draft, using your edited rough draft as a guide. Consult the formatting requirements and follow them meticulously.

## *Acknowledgements*

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