

Harold Pinter

In 2005 the Royal Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature to Harold Pinter, the British playwright, actor, stage-director and author of short stories and sketches.

On 10 October 1930 Harold Pinter was born in Hackney in London's East End. Both of his parents were Jewish, born in England. His father was a tailor. In 1939 when World War II broke out, Pinter was evacuated to Cornwall for duration of the war.

Pinter went to Hackney Downs Grammar School, where he took part in school theatre performances and played the Shakespearean roles of *Macbeth* and *Romeo*. In 1948 he began his studies at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. After only two terms, however, he broke them off. Later he studied for a short time at the Central School of Speech and Drama. As a conscientious objector, he refused to do his national service in 1949. But instead of being sent to prison, he only had to pay a fine.

In 1956 he married the actress Vivien Merchant who acted in several of his plays. They had one son, Daniel. They were divorced in 1980, and Pinter married Lady Antonia Fraser. Vivien Merchant died in 1982.

Pinter began earning money as an actor in 1950, doing speaking parts for BBC Radio. From the end of 1951 to the end of 1952 he toured Ireland with a theatre troupe, and from 1953 to 1957 he acted in several provincial theatres, most of the time under the pseudonym David Baron. He wrote his first drama, the one-act play *The Room*, in 1957. Other plays followed: *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1960), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Homecoming* (1965), *Old Times* (1971).

Pinter has received a lot of awards, among them the Berlin Festival Silver Bear (1963), the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize (1970), the Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or (1971), the Commonwealth Award (1981) and the Laurence Olivier Award (1996). In 1966 he was awarded a CBE (Commander of the British Empire), and in 2002 he became a Companion of Honour in recognition for his service to English literature.

The themes of Pinter's plays are menace, family hatred, mental disturbance, obsession, jealousy, struggle for survival and lack of communication. They are usually set in one single room. Pinter's work, like that of Samuel Beckett in France, is regarded as representative of absurd theatre.

Pinter is also interested in politics. When Chile's socialist President Salvador Allende was overthrown in 1973, Pinter began to be active in human rights campaigns. He condemned the intervention of NATO troops in the Kosovo crisis in 1999. And he is a convinced opponent of US President Bush's Iraqi politics.

Since 1982 Pinter has suffered from cancer. He died on 24 December 2008 in London.

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Read the text above carefully. Then connect the two parts to form a sentence.

1 In 1930 Harold Pinter

a Vivien Merchant, an actress.

2 *The Caretaker*

b at the outbreak of World War II.

3 As a conscientious objector

c was Pinter's first drama.

4 In 1980 he married

d was born in Hackney.

5 His first wife was

e the Silver Bear of the Berlin Festival in 1963.

6 He was evacuated to Cornwall

f Lady Antonia Fraser.

7 The Royal Swedish Academy awarded him

g under the pseudonym David Baron.

8 For some years Pinter acted

h was published in 1960.

9 Pinter was awarded

i he refused to do his national service.

10 The one-act play *The Room*

j the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005.

The Official Harold Pinter Website: <http://www.haroldpinter.org/>