

Characters in *Sive*

Learning Intentions

- Understand each **main character** in depth:
 - Their **traits** (e.g., brave, manipulative).
 - Their **development** throughout the text (character arc).
 - Their **relationships** with others in the story.
 - Their **role** in conveying themes.

Be able to discuss **minor characters** if they play a critical role

John B. Keane's *Sive* is populated with vivid and complex characters who drive the play's exploration of themes like greed, love, societal oppression, and individual freedom. Below is an analysis of the main and minor characters, their traits, relationships, and roles in conveying the play's themes.

Main Characters

Sive

- **Traits:**
 - Sive is innocent, youthful, and idealistic. She is also vulnerable, caught between her love for Liam Scuab and the oppressive forces around her.
 - Her strength lies in her resistance to the arranged marriage, despite the overwhelming pressure from her family.
 - **Development:**
 - Sive begins as a hopeful young woman with dreams of love and happiness but becomes increasingly trapped and despondent as the play progresses.
 - Her tragic death marks the culmination of her despair, symbolising the destructive impact of societal and familial pressures.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Liam Scuab*: Sive's romantic relationship with Liam represents genuine love and contrasts sharply with the transactional nature of her arranged marriage.
 - *Mena and Mike Glavin*: Her aunt and uncle act as her guardians but fail her utterly—Mena through cruelty and Mike through passivity.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Sive embodies the conflict between individual desire and societal expectations, particularly the lack of autonomy granted to women in traditional Irish society.
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Mena Glavin

- **Traits:**
 - Mena is domineering, manipulative, and greedy. She prioritises wealth and status over Sive's happiness and well-being.

- Her sharp tongue and harsh treatment of others make her one of the play's primary antagonists.
 - **Development:**
 - Mena remains unrepentant throughout the play, highlighting her selfishness and moral corruption.
 - Her role in Sive's downfall reveals her complete disregard for the younger woman's autonomy.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Mike Glavin*: Mena dominates her husband, coercing him into supporting the arranged marriage.
 - *Thomasheen Seán Rua*: She conspires with him to arrange Sive's marriage, showing her shared greed and lack of moral scruples.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Mena represents societal greed and the commodification of women in marriage. Her character underscores the destructive effects of these values.
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Mike Glavin

- **Traits:**
 - Mike is passive, weak-willed, and easily manipulated by his wife. He struggles with his conscience but lacks the strength to stand up to Mena.
 - **Development:**
 - Throughout the play, Mike is torn between protecting Sive and succumbing to Mena's demands. His failure to act contributes to Sive's tragedy.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Mena Glavin*: His subservience to Mena highlights the imbalance in their relationship.
 - *Sive*: As her guardian, Mike's failure to defend Sive reflects his inability to confront societal pressures.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Mike embodies the theme of complicity, showing how inaction can be as harmful as active wrongdoing.
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Thomasheen Seán Rua

- **Traits:**
 - Thomasheen is cunning, self-serving, and unscrupulous. As a matchmaker, he is motivated purely by financial gain.
- **Development:**
 - Like Mena, Thomasheen remains unrepentant, focused solely on the material benefits of the marriage.
- **Relationships:**
 - *Sean Dóta*: Thomasheen facilitates the match to secure his commission, showing no regard for Sive's happiness.
 - *Mena Glavin*: He conspires with Mena, representing a shared greed and lack of empathy.

- **Role in Themes:**
 - Thomasheen symbolises the corruption and exploitation inherent in the matchmaking process, particularly for women.
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Liam Scuab

- **Traits:**
 - Liam is honest, loving, and determined. His love for Sive is pure, contrasting with the greed and manipulation of other characters.
 - He is also an outsider, ostracised due to his family's history.
 - **Development:**
 - Liam's persistence in trying to win Sive's love shows his resilience, but his inability to prevent her marriage highlights his powerlessness against societal forces.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Sive*: His genuine love for her is a stark contrast to the arranged match with Sean Dóta.
 - *The Tinkers*: Liam's reliance on Pats Boccock and Carthalawn to deliver his letter reflects his isolation and lack of agency.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Liam represents true love and the power of individual agency, even in the face of societal opposition.
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Minor Characters

Sean Dóta

- **Traits:**
 - Sean is wealthy but old and undesirable. His willingness to purchase a young bride shows his selfishness and entitlement.
- **Role in Themes:**
 - Sean represents the transactional nature of marriage and the objectification of women. His character underscores the play's critique of societal values.

Pats Boccock and Carthalawn

- **Traits:**
 - These travelling tinkers are sympathetic, humorous, and wise. They act as outsiders who observe and critique the societal norms of the community.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - The tinkers serve as a moral counterpoint to the greed and corruption of other characters. Their support for Sive and Liam highlights the possibility of empathy and integrity.
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Conclusion

The characters in *Sive* are integral to its exploration of greed, love, and societal oppression. Each character's traits, relationships, and development reflect the play's central themes, making them compelling and memorable. The interplay between the main and minor characters ensures that the drama resonates with its audience, offering a poignant critique of traditional values and human failings.