



Bus Stop

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Places Discussed

Kansas diner. Dingy Kansas restaurant where long-haul buses make rest stops. All three acts of the play occur within this setting. The audience understands that the owner's apartment is above the restaurant and there is a privy out back. These facts emphasize the small-town nature and rural setting of the play. A sense of bleakness, isolation, and loneliness pervades the play. The time is an hour after midnight, and snow is falling heavily. Roads are closed, and the bus from Topeka will be forced to lay over.

When the bus arrives and its passengers and driver disembark, the lonely diner becomes alive with people, each of whom reflects the isolation of the location with a similar isolation. Preoccupied by personal concerns, the characters allow little real communication among themselves. Eventually, a few manage to overcome their personal isolation. However, for the most part, the restaurant becomes a metaphor for the lack of meaningful interaction among human beings and for the transitory nature of human relationships. The play is Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks*, transferred from an urban to a rural location. At the conclusion of the play, the diner once again stands empty and alone.

Bibliography

Dusenbury, Winifred L. *The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960. Focuses mostly on *Come Back, Little Sheba*. Much about the theme of loneliness can be applied to most of Inge's plays, and most notably to *Bus Stop*.

Inge, William. "Interview with William Inge." In *Behind the Scenes: Theatre and Film Interviews from the "Transatlantic Review,"* edited by Joseph McCrindle. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971. A seven-page interview with William Inge is searching and revealing. It provides valuable insights into Inge's major dramas, including *Bus Stop*.

Kansas Quarterly 18, no. 4 (1986). This entire issue of *Kansas Quarterly* is devoted to William Inge. The dozen articles cover most of his plays and both of his novels. Although no single article is devoted to *Bus Stop*, at least half of them give some interpretive consideration to the play.

Lewis, Allan. *American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre*. New York: Crown, 1965. Compares *Bus Stop* to Maxim Gorky's *Na dne* (1902; *The Lower Depths*, 1912).

Shuman, R. Baird. *William Inge*. 2d ed. New York: Twayne, 1989. Offers a complete reevaluation of all of Inge's plays and of his two novels. A major interpretive section on *Bus Stop*.

Voss, Ralph F. *A Life of William Inge: The Strains of Triumph*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989. Voss's is the most thorough critical biography of William Inge. His analytical considerations of all the plays are strong, and his comments on *Bus Stop* have particular merit.

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