



Uncommon Women and Others

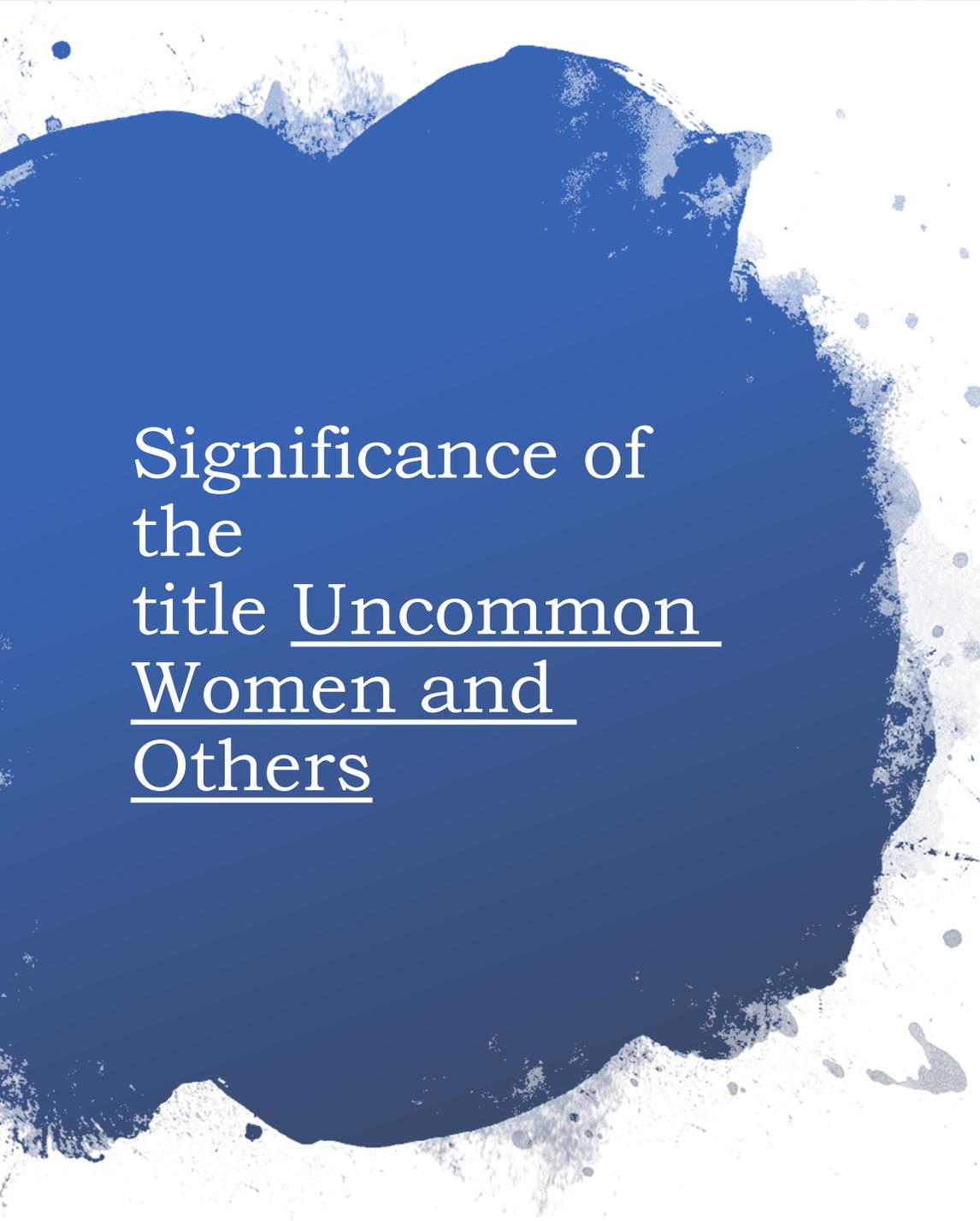
Tonilee Rowe and Dianna Baxter

Basic Information

- Name of play: *Uncommon Women and Others*
- Author: Wendy Wasserstein

The play was first published in 1975, and first presented by The Phoenix Theatre at the Marymount Manhattan Theatre in New York City on November 21st, 1977.

- The setting shifts in time between a reunion of five women and their days as students at an all-girls school called Mount Holyoke College in the early 1970s. This is significant because this time period is remembered as an era where there was protests for women's rights, gay rights, and environmental movements.



Significance of
the
title Uncommon
Women and
Others

The title is significant because these 5 main women are very unusual and different than normal ingenue leads we see in a lot of plays.

Each woman has a different, and sometimes harsh personality that differentiates them from each other.

What strikes us is that they are very outspoken and not afraid to speak about things we usually shy away from. This is where the title comes in "uncommon women" and "others" being the other schoolmates they came across with.



Themes and central conflicts

- A big theme we saw throughout this play was insecurities, and being okay with them/facing them head on
- Another theme has a lot to do with feminism. In the 1970's there was a huge women's movement and the characters ultimately thought it failed alluding to the theme that it is a man's world where men rule it
- Central conflicts: man v self, man v society

Summary

- The play begins with the main characters at a women's college reunion, Kate Quin, Samantha Stewart and Holly Kaplan talking about their lives after college, as the conversation continues Muffet Di Nicole and Rita Altabel enter with their own impute on their time in college. After Mrs. Plumm gives a toast we rewind and see these girls younger and still in college. We meet new characters named Carter, Leilah, and Susie Friend. The play goes on as the world changes around them with women rights being promoted and a time of social change in which the traditional family expectations for young women were giving way to new possibilities. The play doesn't depend on plot as much as character development and the choices they make. The main characters are confused about their purpose in life, and the goals they want to achieve after graduation. On one side of the group is Kate, who wants to be a lawyer but feels that such a career choice will compel her to accept a lifetime of boring routines. On the other side is Samantha who will settle for marriage to a man whom she can encourage and stand behind. In the middle is Muffet, who does not know whether to wait for her man or to strike out on her own. Kate and Samantha are two women who do not know what they want. The raunchy Rita does not want to live through a man, nor does she want the business world to transform her into the duplicate of a power-hungry man. The self-conscious Holly, pressured by her parents to lose weight and marry well, keeps postponing her choices. Although the classes eventually come to an end, the women are still baffled six years out of college. Holly is still collecting options that range from having a baby to becoming a birdwatcher, and Rita is waiting until she is forty-five to achieve success. The inciting incident is the 5 women meeting up together in the first scene of the whole play. If they didn't meet up, they wouldn't have reminisced about their days in school and there would be no play.

Characters

- Muffet Di Nicola- Proud, Beautiful, stubborn, women. Isn't afraid to say her thoughts even if they are not the kindest.
- Holly Kaplan- Is an insecure women that generally keeps her opinions inside. She has trouble saying no to people as we can see by the fact that she had sex with a man because she didn't want to make him feel bad.
- Kate Quin- is a beautiful women that is unsure of her future yet tries to be professional
- Samantha Stewart- Closer to Rita then the others, she is open to ideas and is hesitant to share her own.
- Rita Altebel- Is a very proud women that isn't at all afraid to talk about subjects that were generally not talked about during her time. While her ideas about femininity seem strange to the girls in her group in the end, she makes the most sense

Quotes

- Pg 30: " I think all me should be forced to menstruate." - Rita

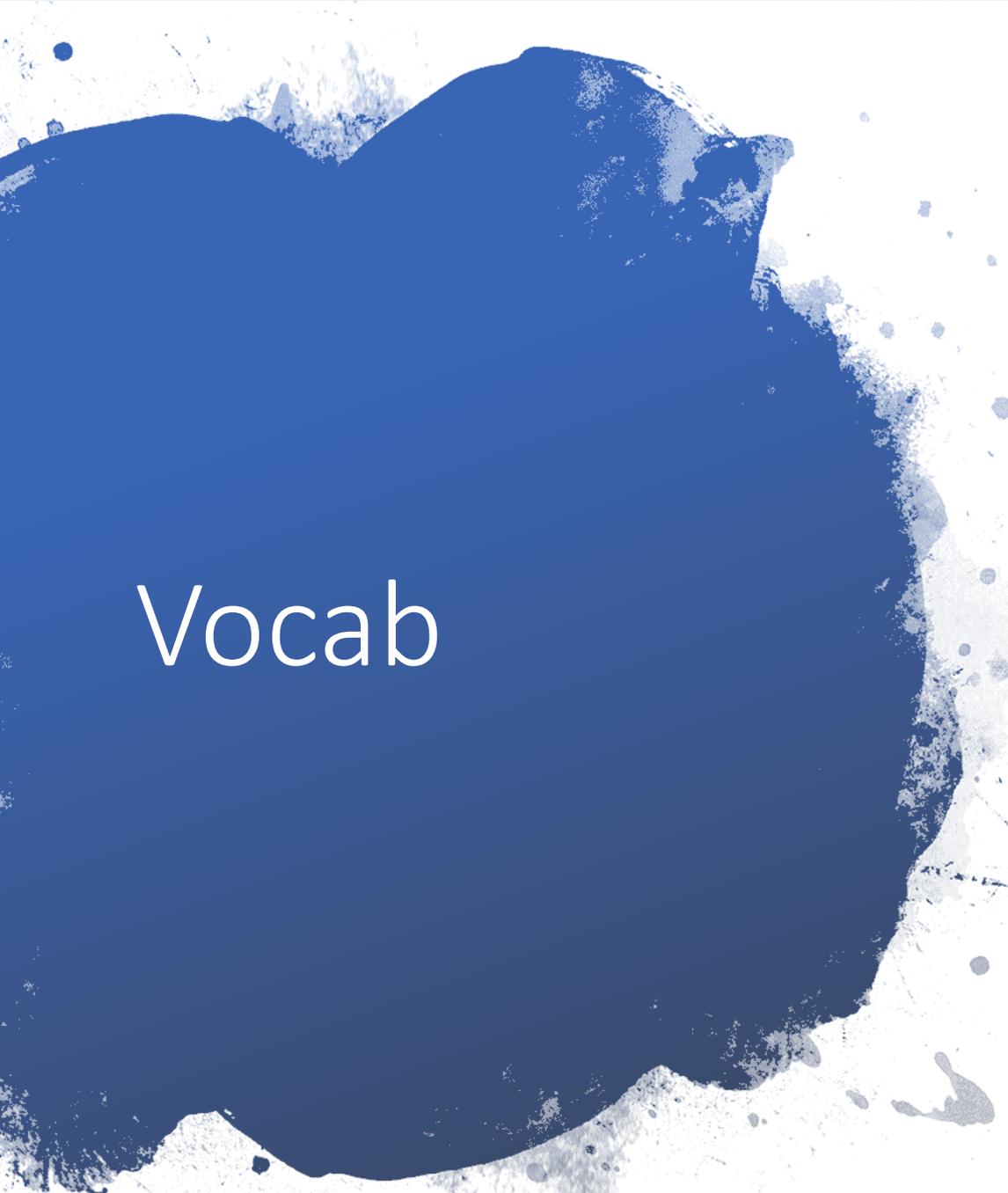
This is important to the meaning of the play because of the running themes of feminism and how it is a men's world

- Pg 46: " I guess I envy men. I envy their confidence. I envy their options." - Holly

This ties in with the other theme of feminism but also the insecurity and fear of speaking out about what you believe in.

- Pg 12: " I think we need more women lawyers and gynecologists. I won't go to mine anymore, 'cause it's a man." - Rita

Although this quote may not seem important, I think it is one of the most significant quotes throughout the whole play. The fact that the most personal and feminine part of their body is being looked at by a man is important to the overall theme.



Vocab

- Gross-Me-Out: to disgust someone
- D.A.R.- Daughters of American Revolution
- Milk'n Crackers-in the early 70's, when they drank tea with their housemother, late-night snacking was officially referred to as "milk and crackers," and each freshman had a "senior elf" secretly watching over her, and sending her encouraging and anonymous, notes

Scenes

- Act 1 scene 1: I think the first scene of the play would be very interesting to see performed on stage. It is when these 5 friends meet up with each other and catch each other up on life. Something about it reminds me simply of an episode of "Friends" or like a sitcom of such, like "Sex in the City." It is important to note the scene calls for an all women cast and does include some inappropriate language.
- Act 1 scene 8: This scene has 4 girls: Rita, Samantha, Holly, and Kate plus Mrs. Plumm at the very end. In this scene the girls are talking about if they would marry, and who they would marry inside and outside of their friend group. It's very lighthearted and includes important quotes that lead to the overall themes of the play.



Personal Reactions

- Dianna; I didn't truly like the play itself. While I love Rita and how she is used to introduce the other girls to stranger opinions and new takes on their own
- Tonilee; I was surprised at the content I read and was not expecting it to be so graphic at some parts. Though I had some issues with some of the running conflicts and language I thought the use of feminism was creative and brilliant in its own way.

Bibliography

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