

RAIN MAN

By Dan Gordon



Resource Pack for Teachers

Comprehensive Version

Arbeitsmaterialien für den Englisch - Unterricht

(Oberstufe Gymnasium)

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1. A story and its success - introducing the authors of *Rain Man* and their contributions

- ***Rain Man*** is known for the namesake movie version (1988) that won four Oscars, there the main characters were played by Dustin Hoffmann and Tom Cruise. The Movie is based on a story written by **Barry Morrow**. The movie's screenplay authors are **Ronald Bass** and Barry Morrow.
- ***Rain Man*** reached the theatre stages in 2008 at the Apollo Theatre of the London's West End. In the first production one of the main characters was successfully played by the movie star Josh Hartnett. **Dan Gordon's** play version has also reached the Australian and Israeli stages.
- The novel *Rain Man* by **Leonore Fleischer** is based on the screenplay of the hugely successful 1988 film of the same name. Fleischer has worked in every area of publishing over the last twenty-five years.

Dan Gordon's theatre adaptation of the *Rain Man* - Movie not only improves the original, it introduced a Hollywood heartthrob to the London West End as charismatic on stage as on screen. Dan Gordon was head writer of the hit TV series *Highway to Heaven*; his screenwriting credits include *The Hurricane*, *Murder in the First*, *Wyatt Earp*, and *The Celestine Prophecy*. He is the cofounder of the Zaki Gordon Institute for Independent Filmmaking in Sedona, Arizona; and has been a guest lecturer at Columbia University School of the Arts, USC School of Cinematic Arts, UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television, and Tel Aviv University.

2. Synopsis

How to write a summary – three suggestions for different purposes



Rufus Beck (Charlie)
Altes Schauspielhaus Stuttgart,
2010

2.1 Quick-Info

"When his father dies, ambitious and self-centered Charlie Babbitt finds he has an older autistic brother who's been institutionalized for years. Needing him to claim an **inheritance**, he liberates him from the institution and takes to the road, where both brothers undergo subtle changes..."

2.2 Two more detailed versions for comparison

Rain Man **revolves around** Charlie Babbitt, a tough young man eager to get rich quick. His business is in trouble and he needs money badly. He receives news of his father's death. 'Nothing I did was ever good enough for him' says Charlie bitterly to his girlfriend, Susanna. Then he learns that his wealthy father has left him only his 1949 Buick and his roses and that he has left all his money to 'someone very important to me'. Charlie is understandably angry – he feels that the money belongs to him. He discovers that his father

has left the money to his older brother Raymond – a brother he never even knew he had. Raymond is **autistic**. Requiring a very secure environment, he lives in an institution. He can't feel things the same way that other people do, and therefore he is unable to have normal relationships with people. Charlie 'kidnaps' his brother, although he refuses to admit to his girlfriend that this is what he has done. He tells her, 'I'm keeping him until I get my money.' He and his brother drive across the United States to Los Angeles, where he plans to live with his brother. During their journey, Charlie gets to know Raymond, who has some extraordinary skills. For example, he can count 246 **toothpicks** in a second, and he can memorize a page of telephone numbers in a minute. More importantly, however, Charlie realizes that Raymond is the 'Rain Man', whom he vaguely recalls from his childhood. Charlie didn't know it at the time, but his secret friend was actually his brother.

Charlie takes Raymond to Las Vegas. He has decided to solve his money problems by using Raymond's unusual skills to win at cards. Raymond indeed wins \$90,000 for Charlie, but by now, Charlie is beginning to care for his brother. When Charlie reaches Los Angeles, he finds Raymond's guardian waiting for him, and the two agree that a specialist will decide who should look after Raymond. Raymond's guardian offers Charlie \$250,000 'to have Raymond back now', but Charlie refuses. He says, 'I don't want your money, Dr Bruner. I want my brother'.



He has changed. The specialist questions Raymond, and Charlie begins to realize that his brother needs to be cared for in an institution. By now, Charlie loves Raymond enough to want what is best for him. 'Can I visit him?' Charlie asks in the end.

Andrew Grose (Charlie) and James Holmes (Raymond) ETF 2012

2.3

Charlie is a self-centered Los Angeles **hustler** who imports expensive sports cars for a living.

Arrogant, ruthless, and **venal**, Charlie is used to getting things his way and leaves a **lackey** to unload four Lamborghinis while he takes a quick trip to Palm Springs with his secretary-girlfriend Susanna, an Italian import herself. En route, Charlie gets a call on his car phone informing him that his father has died and that the funeral is in Cincinnati. An only child, Charlie left home on bad terms while still a teenager and never **patched things up** with his widowed father. Canceling his trip, Charlie attends the funeral merely to collect

a \$3 million inheritance. Much to his **dismay**, however, he learns that he has inherited only his father's 1949 Buick Roadmaster and beloved rose bushes--items Charlie despises.

VOCABULARY AIDS 1

inheritance – Erbschaft

to revolve around – to centre on/ deal with mainly

autistic savant - see info 1 p. 6

toothpick - Zahnstocher

hustler – s.o. who tries to trick people into giving him money

venal – käuflich, korrupt

lackey - servant

to patch things up –to end an argument because you want to stay friends with s.o.

dismay - Entsetzen

to stumble upon – to meet by chance

hostage – a person captured and hold prisoner (Geisel)

a facsimile – a copy

"The people`s Court" – American TV- Series

a sibling – a brother or sister

scalding hot – brühheiß

to retain custody of - to keep the legal right/obligation of caring for s.o.

The bulk of the estate is turned over to a trustee, who will

administer

it to a person unnamed in the will.

Determined to get his inheritance, Charlie does some snooping and discovers that the trustee, Dr. Bruner, is the head of a respected home for the mentally disabled.

Although Bruner refusesto divulge the name of the person who will get the inheritance, Charlie **stumbles upon** Raymond, an older patient who recognizes the Roadmaster and claims to have driven it. To Charlie's amazement, he learns that Raymond is his elder brother, an **autistic savant** institutionalized when Charlie was an infant. Although quite brilliant at processing numbers and memorization, Raymond is shut off from the rest of the world and cannot look anyone in the eye; he also does not want to touch or be touched. Both out of anger that he never knew he had a brother and out of determination to get

half his father's estate, Charlie more or less kidnaps Raymond from the home and **holds him hostage** until Bruner agrees to turn over \$1.5 million. Disgusted by his behavior, Susanna leaves Charlie and flies back to Los Angeles. The situation proves difficult, however, because while in the home Raymond has become used to a strict daily routine; therefore, he must eat meals that coincide with the institutional schedule (pepperoni pizza with tapioca



pudding on Monday, etc.) must arrange motel rooms to a **facsimile** of his room at the home, refuses to go out in the rain, and must watch "**The People's Court**" every day, otherwise he will become extremely agitated and upset. To make things as easy as possible, Charlie attempts to fly Raymond back to Los Angeles, but Raymond--who can cite airline crash statistics in astounding detail--refuses to fly, forcing the pair to drive from Cincinnati to LA in their father's car. As they make their way across the country ever so slowly, stopping to watch "The People's Court" and find motel rooms before 11 p.m. (Raymond's lights out time) Charlie begins to warm up to his brother, despite the extreme frustration of trying to connect with him emotionally, and marvels at his amazing abilities. At one stop, Charlie discovers that Raymond is the Rain Man, Charlie's childhood imaginary friend who used to sing to him when he was scared. Charlie has always assumed that the Rain Man was imaginary, because he didn't remember having a **sibling**. As it turns out, their father institutionalized Raymond after he accidentally burned the infant Charlie with **scalding** bath water. This revelation causes Charlie's feelings toward Raymond to deepen and now the money doesn't seem as important as **retaining custody of** his brother. As they approach California, Charlie learns that the Lamborghini deal has fallen through and he must pay back \$80,000 in down payments, which he doesn't have, to his customers. Given Raymond's incredible memory for numbers, Charlie takes him to Las Vegas, where Raymond counts cards. With Raymond's help, Charlie wins \$86,000 and triumphantly returns to Los Angeles determined to fight a custody battle for Raymond. Bruner arrives in Los from Cincinnati to meet with Charlie, Raymond, and another doctor, who will assess the case and recommend to the court whom Raymond would be better off with. Charlie is very forthright and admits the initially mercenary nature of his plans, but is quite sincere when he states that he would prefer Raymond live with him. After a few tests, however, it is obvious Raymond couldn't really care less where he lives and would be better cared for by a staff of professionals. Wanting what is best for Raymond, Charlie concedes custody to Bruner and plans to visit his brother at the home in two weeks' time."

Assignment 2:**The function of a summary**

Summaries of meetings, incidents, cultural and political events, texts, etc. are frequently required. Their style and length depend on the intention and the recipients of the communication.

Which of the three versions would you present to whom/ on which occasion:

- a) to inform the readers of your school newspaper
- b) to give a basic idea of the plot to a friend right before seeing the show
- c) to arouse curiosity about the play among your class-mates
- e) to introduce an essay/comment on the play (f.ex. in a test (Klausur).

Give reasons for your choice!

• • •

INFO

Autism is a rare mental disorder. Autistic children are physically well-developed, but they are very limited in their ability to understand and communicate with other people. They seem isolated from the world around them. Many autistic people hardly speak at all. Some of them (around ten percent) are called 'idiot savants', as they also have a condition called Kanner's syndrome. They have an exceptional memory, and many of them possess unusual skills in music, art or mathematics. They insist on being surrounded by 'sameness'. Raymond suffers from this syndrome.

• • •

Assignment 2: Comparison of summaries in detail

In which way do the more comprehensive versions (2.2/2.3) differ? Before you make a statement have a closer look at linguistic criteria f.ex. direct speech/ quotations, uses of tenses, content details etc.

Complete the list below and find out about hidden comments and evaluations! Which picture of Charlie Babbit is conveyed?

2.2	2.3
<i>A tough young man eager to get rich quick.</i>	<i>A self-centered L.A. hustler who imports sports cars for a living. Arrogant, ruthless, and venal, Charlie is used to getting things his way.</i>
<i>"Nothing I did was ever good enough for him" says Charlie bitterly to his girlfriend Susanna.</i>	<i>An only child, Charlie left home on bad terms while still a teenager and never patched things up with his widowed father.</i>

3. The film

Rain Man was the most successful film of 1988. It won four Oscars at the Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor (Dustin Hoffman) and Best Original Screenplay. Before the film's release, few people knew much about autism, and cinema audiences all over the world were moved by Hoffman's portrayal of an autistic savant. It is difficult to play a man who lacks the ability to feel while remaining sympathetic to the audience, but Hoffman accomplished the feat.

4. American Dreams – American Nightmares: Fiction and Reality

Did Dustin Hoffman exploit the Rain Man? After his death this week, his father makes a startling accusation.

By David Jones - **Daily Mail** (online 27 December 2009)

Kim Peek (left) with his father Fran and Dustin Hoffman (right) who portrayed him in



Rain Man

During a career spanning half-a-century and more than 60 films, Dustin Hoffman has **forged** a reputation for portraying unusual characters with extraordinary empathy and idiosyncratic brilliance.

According to many critics, however, his defining role was that of Raymond Babbitt, the autistic genius who could instantly solve the most complicated maths calculations and memorize entire phone directories, in the 1988 movie Rain Man.

The script was famously inspired by the true story of Kim Peek, who was classified as 'mentally retarded' as a child, but was later discovered to possess such amazing brainpower that medical experts later called him "**The Living Google**".

And Peek's father, Fran Peek, claims Hoffman **honed** his Oscar-winning performance by studying his son's peculiar mannerisms, movements and diction during an intense six-hour encounter at a Hollywood studio. When the two men parted, Mr. Peek senior claims, the star was so profoundly moved that he rubbed noses with the real-life Rain Man (Kim's habitual way of showing affection) and told him, Peek says: 'I may be the star - but *you* are the heavens.' When it was announced that Kim Peek had died suddenly of a heart attack, aged only 58, his father says he expected Hoffman to send his **condolences**, at least. Though he has received hundreds of sympathy messages, however, he has heard nothing from the star.

INFO

The leading person of "Rain Man" – Raymond, has an actual "prototype" with the name of Kim Peek who lived his whole life in Salt Lake City at the USA and who has recently passed away.

Instead, an unedifying war of words has broken out between the grieving Mr Peek, 83, who accuses Hoffman of shunning his treasured son, and the actor's camp who say Kim's influence on the film project has been grossly overplayed.

How has this sad situation come about? The origins of the dispute date back a quarter of a century to 1984, when Hollywood scriptwriter Barry Morrow met Kim Peek at a meeting of the Association of Retarded Citizens in Texas, and was astonished by his great brainpower. After discovering that Kim, then 33, was able **to reel off** every address in the 50 states of America, complete with zip codes, he decided to write a movie based around his phenomenal gifts.

VOCABULARY AIDS 2

to forge - to shape

to hone - to develop and improve over a period of time

to offer condolences- Beileid
bezeugen

to reel off - herunterspulen,
aufsagen

mental impediment – geistige
Behinderung, Sprachfehler

gross earnings - total amount of
money earned (Gesamtertrag,
Brutto-Umsatz)

royalties - Tantiemen (Gebühren
für Aufführungsrechte)

epitaph – Grabinschrift

trifling - small (geringfügig,
unbedeutend)

Nearly five years passed before Rain Man was released to huge acclaim, in December, 1988. Kim was duly thanked, both in the film's credits and by Hoffman himself during his acceptance speech after winning an Oscar for Best Actor. His father began touring the country with his son on public speaking engagements.

Hoffman also later stated that his characterization was largely based on another man, Peter Guthrie, whose behaviour he studied. He was not a savant, like Kim, but instead suffered from autism. For a quarter of a century, however, Kim Peek has been regarded as the film's inspiration - and speaking at length for the first time since his son died in his arms last Saturday, Fran Peek maintained it would never have been made were it not for his

son. But he claimed Hoffman - or his aides - had effectively 'cut off' Kim after the film came out, refusing to accept phone calls or answer messages. This, he says, was 'one of the sad things about Rain Man'.

Drawing on the film's huge popularity, they aimed to break down the stigma surrounding **mental impediment** by demonstrating Kim's exceptional abilities before an audience, and - though he could not understand the concept of fame - 'the real Rain Man', as he was announced, became a celebrity. A few years later, Fran Peek also wrote a book, titled **The**

Real Rain Man, about his son's moving struggle with Savant syndrome, the rare condition which gave him extraordinary powers of recall even though he was so disabled he could not wash or dress unaided.

To be fair, scriptwriter Barry Morrow was one of the first to offer condolences. Hoffman was paid \$5.8 million for the film, plus a percentage of its **gross earnings**, which topped \$172 million at the box office and have multiplied many times with video sales and TV repeats. Kim could have worked out Hoffman's earnings to the last decimal point - but it would not take a mathematical genius to work out what he received himself. The answer is zero.

'We weren't business people, and anyway we weren't trying to sell him for anything,' explained Mr Peek. 'I never asked for **royalties**. That just wouldn't have seemed right. The film people did send \$10,000 to be put in trust for Kim. (...)

However, his father gives thanks for a life that had so much purpose, and was so remarkable that two U.S. research institutions have requested permission to preserve his brain for medical science (Mr. Peek has refused because he wishes Kim to be buried intact).

His tombstone will bear the self-written homily with which he always ended his appearances: 'Learn to recognize differences in others and treat them like you would want them to treat you. 'It will make this a better world to live in. Care and share and do your best. You don't have to be handicapped to be different - everybody is.' For a man who was so much more remarkable than his film persona, it is a fitting **epitaph** and makes the row over the Rain Man's true identity seem rather **trifling**.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1238386/Did-Dustin-Hoffman-exploit-rainman-After-death-week-father-makes-startling-accusation.html#ixzz1qjeK208Y>

Assignment 4 : A role and a model (1. Discussion 2. Comment 3. Creative Writing)

1. The Hoffman/Peek case. Discuss the Pros and Cons of becoming/being a celebrity.
2. Which ethical attitude do we expect from a movie star? Are Fran Peek`s accusations and demands justified? A personal comment.
3. Imagine you were Dustin Hofmann. You have learned from the papers about his death. You have decided to write a farewell-letter to Kim Peek.

5. "Rain Man" on Stage. Film or theatre - should movies be adapted and performed on stage?
Arguments!



a) Theatre does some things so differently from film that we can create a new experience from a terrific story.

b) A successful film should never be turned into a stageplay. The result can only be disappointing!

c) It's real people in the same room as you. It surely

can't be immaterial that in *The Graduate* an older woman takes her clothes off for a young man a few feet away from you as opposed to up on an inhumanly large and paper-thin screen. The vulnerability is palpable. We are at close enough range to feel that we could hug poor Raymond should we so desire.

d) Let's face it, the cinema always teaches theatre a lesson. Films are full of plot and big emotion.

e) Modern theatre too often fails to make you laugh or cry and in a huge auditorium, there is often simply not enough emotional volume to fill the space.

f) Theatre does not insist on happy endings as Hollywood does.

g) In stage adaptations you will always have fewer characters. Oddly enough, this means you can give a voice to those characters you have, sharpen tensions between individuals, develop themes more deeply.

h) Aside from the evident advantage of editing and multiple takes which polish a film, it is an immense challenge to compete with an original article. One can also not help but question if perhaps opinion would be altered had the theatrical production been the original and the film produced in its shadow.

Assignment 5: Performing a debate

Split up the class into two groups. Each group collects more arguments in favour of the cinema or the theatre. Organize a debate. Support your discussion and your points view with examples from films and stageplays you have recently seen. Include the "Rain Man" – Movie and the show at the English Theatre Frankfurt.

6 To the point: what is "Rain Man about"?

6.1 Rain Man shows us something new – the strange world of an autistic individual. It is also an in-depth study of character and relationships. In seven days, Charlie learns to love someone who can't give him anything in return. The critic Roger Ebert put it well when he said that **Rain Man** is about acceptance: 'Charlie Babbit's first appearance ... has him trying to control his life and the lives of others. What Raymond teaches him is that he can relax, because he will always be powerless over other people. They will do just about what they choose to do—no matter how loud Charlie Babbit screams. Raymond has a lot he can teach Charlie Babbit about acceptance – even if it is the solitary thing he knows.'

6.2 Interview with Hanna Chissick (Director of the ETF RAIN MAN Production)

Q: A colleague of yours said about his production: " That play is about what happens to us when we meet someone with a different skin colour, religion, different sexuality, who was born different." How would you describe your approach to this play?

H.C.: When the film was released in 1988 it introduced the whole issue of autism above anything else to a broader public. People did not have this term in their vocabulary. This has changed in the meantime. So we can't say we want to introduce a picture of autism and put our focus on Raymond.

Certainly Charlie Babbit and his development is also at the centre of our production. Yet it's a story about a relationship between siblings and their mutual discovery. The two brothers seem to be different, but they are very similar. They are like mirrors of each other, or they can be seen as two sides of a coin, really. Whereas Raymond is trapped in his specific mental condition Charly is trapped in his emotional and social cage of his childhood past and his business structures in the present. What we wanted to explore in our production is how they differ, where and why do they meet, recognize their similarity, realize that they are brothers in affliction.

Charly is very successful on the surface, seems to manage many crucial situations in a multi-tasking performance. He is the sort of guy that thrives on all the challenges and pressures he is likely to produce in his business as well as in his private life. Popular with women, being handsome and intelligent, he is quite self-conscious: "I am a hustler!" He anticipates



INFO

A director`s point of view

"That story also talks about Raymond or the **Rain Man** but actually our production is even more about Charlie – how he changes from the moment we see him on stage until the last moment when he allows himself to finally show emotions and humanity. That play is about what happens to us when we meet someone with a different skin colour, religion, different sexuality, who was born different.

situations, possesses the faculty of screening people, assuming what they need and want; his acting is always based on assumptions about his surroundings.

Q: Finally he changes through the rediscovery of his childhood past with Raymond, his "Rain Man". These scenes are a possible key to the future. Were they also the key to "open the play" for your actors?

H.C.: What happens to children when losing their mother? "Divorce" with his mother ended up in a sad relationship with a stern father. Charlie`s emotional development stopped at the age of 16. We must take into account that from then on he didn`t allow any person to get close to him, he clams up avoiding to get hurt.

He leads an adult life still being a child trying unconsciously to please his father by continuing with his addiction, selling vintage cars. There is huge grief in that.

He learns Raymond`s language and finding his older brother again he gets the nurturing parent back that he had missed so much throughout his childhood.

Q: Which role did your designer Bob Baily play for the whole concept with his set?

H.C.: We definitely did not want to see twenty scene changes. The question was what can we do theatrically that film can`t! The world we see are the images in Raymond`s head, the "world as a clinic". Images stay with Raymond, icons of the stages he has gone through with Charlie. The pictures, they never leave, it is his peculiar way of travelling through life.



We have lit the set very white and uncomfortable in the beginning.

It takes on colour and warmth later.

It is quite a risky set to act in.

7. Themes and background – personal approaches for student activities

7.1 Viewpoint

Give your idea of the general message of the play!

7.1 Imagination

How would you feel if your father was rich and left all his money to someone you didn't know? What would you do?

7.2 Creative Writing

Make a list of the things that Raymond is and isn't good at doing.

Write a brief essay: Would you like to have Raymond as a brother? Why or why not?

7.3 Research and presentation: On childhood

Do research in the Internet about the importance of childhood. Present your results in class.

Does a person's childhood affect one's life as an adult?

If so, how does it affect it?

Can a person be happy as an adult if he or she didn't



*have a happy childhood? What does the **Rain Man** – story contribute to these questions?*

Assignment 8.1: Guided Characterization

Do you agree with this picture of Charlie?

Continue or contradict!

7.4 Role play: *Student A is Charlie and Student B is Dr Bruner. Charlie should tell Dr Bruner why he wants Raymond to be with him instead of at the hospital. Dr Bruner should tell*

Charlie that it isn't a good idea for Raymond to be with Charlie and explain why this is the case.

8 Dialogues in action - Characters and topics for discussion in class

8.1 Charlie Babbitt and his opponents - Self Interest vs. Morality.

- Charlie believes that getting half of the inheritance left by his father will solve his business problems, and only then will he be happy. However, his experience with Raymond shows him that what he truly needs is a more generous attitude toward others in his life.
- Charlie Babbitt's shark-like business acumen, smooth-talking personality, and unbending will to succeed can't get him half of the \$3 million dollar inheritance. He's thwarted at every turn by uncomprehending Raymond, fed-up Susanna, stoic Dr. Bruner, unsympathetic bankers, and cranky customers.
- Charlie has been deeply wounded by his father; his vulnerability will appeal to women. Charlie's drive, quick wits, and survival skills give men someone they can identify with. Both men and women can empathize with someone who realizes his shortcomings and does the right thing.

- Charlie is most concerned with making fast money and guarding his emotions. He works hard to close the car deal and make a profit with just "a few phone calls." He argues with Susanna when she wants him to share his thoughts, however, because he is able to reconcile with her.

8.2 A turning point?

CHARLIE

It's funny, I just realized I'm not pissed off any more that my father cut me out of his will. [...] It's not about the money anymore.

- Later at the hearing with the doctors, Charlie says he connected with Raymond during the trip and values him as family: ***I had a father I hardly knew. A mother I didn't know at all. I found out a few days ago that I have a brother and I want to be with him.***

Assignment 8.3.1: Guided Characterization

Has does Susanna mean to Charlie? What does she do to him?

CHARLIE

Why didn't anyone tell me I had a brother?

DR. BRUNER

What would you have done about it?

CHARLIE

I don't know. It would have been nice to know him for more than just the past six days.

Dr. Bruner's immediate response to Charlie's inquiry is to clam up. Charlie's anger and hurt drives him to simply kidnap Raymond from Walbrook without thinking about the consequences. Susanna's reaction to Charlie's treatment of Raymond is outrage.

8.3 Susanna and Dr Bruner - antagonists or supporting characters?

- Susanna wants Charlie, her lover, to give her the hidden, emotional part of himself. Dr. Bruner wants the safe return of Raymond. While Charlie works to obtain big money through the inheritance, intent on a future of wealth and ease, Raymond is only concerned with the basic necessities he craves to maintain peace of mind in his limited world. Within a week of living together they transform each other and emerge as an unbeatable team, brothers.

Assignment 8.2: Guided Characterization

Has Charlie really changed? Why?

- Dr. Bruner is interested in his patient's welfare and honoring his commitment to Raymond's father. Susanna constantly works to make Charlie aware of his responsibility to Raymond. When Charlie is rude to Raymond for walking in on their lovemaking, Susanna is disgusted with Charlie:

SUSANNA *You go back in there.
And you apologize.*

CHARLIE
*What was I supposed to do? Tuck him in
like
a baby? I'm not his mother, for
Chrissake.*

SUSANNA
*No. You're his brother. [...] You could
show
him some respect.*



- Whereas self interest is explored by the objective characters, morality is well represented.

DR. BRUNER
*I'm trustee of the fund. But this hospital receives
nothing from it.*

CHARLIE
Hardly seems fair. Maybe that's something we could discuss.

DR. BRUNER
*I took on this burden out of loyalty to
your
father and that's where that loyalty
ends.*

DR. BRUNER
*Raymond has a problem
communicating
and learning. He can't even express
himself
or probably even understand his own
emotions*



in a traditional way. There are dangers everywhere for Raymond. Routines, rituals are all he has to protect himself. [...] Well, it's the way he acts, sleeps, eats, uses the bathroom, walks, talks, everything. Any break from that routine is terrifying. [...] He doesn't understand the concept of money.

- Charlie's one happy childhood memory is of the Rain Man:

CHARLIE

When I was a kid and I was scared, the Rain Man would come and sing to me.

SUSANNA

What happened to him?

CHARLIE

Nothing. I grew up.

8.4 The Control Problem

The issue of control creates problems between Charlie and Raymond: Charlie is determined to manage Raymond to his advantage which means getting his brother on a plane to Los Angeles, but Raymond won't be persuaded as his only defense against the world is absolute control over what he will and will not do. To Charlie's dismay, Raymond can't be manipulated by any of his usual methods: Raymond won't get on a plane; won't ride along a busy highway where accidents can happen; won't go out in the rain.

Charlie struggles to control his business deal; get control of the inheritance; manage Raymond. Raymond must tightly control his environment and daily routine or he becomes frantic. Dr. Bruner controls Raymond's fortune, and fights to keep Raymond under his care. Susanna tries to direct Charlie's attitude

Assignment 8.3.2: Guided Characterization

Dr. Bruner never wavers in his efforts to do what is best for Raymond, selflessly denouncing personal and professional claim to the inheritance....**Continue:**

Assignment 8.3.3: Comment

What does Charlie mean when he says:

I grew up?

toward Raymond.

Letting go ...

Although the objective story outcome results in failure, out of control circumstances leads to solving problems within the story. Susanna slips from Charlie's control and leaves him, causing Charlie to realize he needs her. Raymond is set loose into an uncontrolled world and charms Charlie. The unscheduled road trip sets Charlie's life in turmoil; ruins his business; bankrupts him; prompts Dr. Bruner to offer money, pushing Charlie toward the noble decision to release Raymond back into the doctor's care.

8.5 Commitment vs. Responsibility:

Commitment is explored in the subjective story, but it's responsibility that wins out. Charlie comes to believe he's the one who should take care of his brother, and fights to convince the psychiatrists of this.

CHARLIE

You have to understand that when we started

out together that he was only my brother in name. And this morning we had pancakes...

RAYMOND

Maple syrup on the table. And Charlie Babbitt made a joke.

CHARLIE

See? I made a connection.

Assignment 8.4: Personal comment

What does "being in control" mean to you? Where do "control problems" occur in your life and personal environment? How do you deal with them?

- After it's obvious that Raymond hasn't truly changed, Charlie realizes his commitment to have Raymond live with him is not the responsible choice for Raymond's well being.

8.6 Characterization by acting: Scenes for presentation

8.6.1

Assignment 8.5: Definition

Explain what the terms „commitment“ and „responsibility“ mean to you!



CHARLIE

You like Shakespeare, Ray?

RAYMOND

I don't know.

CHARLIE

You don't know. You read "Macbeth?"

RAYMOND

*I don't
know.*

Assignment 8.6.1/2: Acting

Interpret the characters by acting out the two dialogues in class.

Find out what you can do with your body and your voice.

CHARLIE

You read the "The Twelfth Night?"

RAYMOND *(distraught)*

Vern!

SUSANNA

(to Charlie) Stop it.

CHARLIE

You read all these stories that are in this book and you don't know if you read this book.

(Laughs) You don't know. Don't know. It's okay, Ray. I won't touch anything else.

8.6.2

CHARLIE

You. You're the Rain Man? [...] You were the one who sang to me?

RAYMOND

Yeah.

CHARLIE

What was that song. What did you sing?

Raymond begins to sing "I Saw Her Standing There" and Charlie joins in.



9. Studying and writing reviews Nimax Theatre Vaudeville London

9.1 A story originally told in the 1988 film of the same name, *Rain Man* has recently been brought to London's West End with Josh Hartnett playing the role of Charlie and Adam Godley as the autistic savant Raymond.

It's not an easy charge, considering the acclaim and recognition the original film has received, but Dan Gordon's adaptation, directed by Terry Johnson, hits only a few bum notes. Without a film's advantage of exterior shots and editing, the loss of much original pathos was inevitable, making the theatrical undertaking of the **quasi-iconic tale** quite risky. However, considering its youth on the stage, I left the theatre quite a bit more satisfied than in many other recent trips to London's West End.

Hartnett embodies a Charlie Babbitt almost equal to Tom Cruise's solid performance in the original. With big shoes to fill, Hartnett establishes a character full of blind arrogance and **bullish determination**, and able to gradually reveal the soft side we all know is there. He is full of questions

and sincere frustration; his many silences (which could almost be mistaken for a failure to remember lines) actually result in the sort of moments that exist in the 'real world'.

It is nice to see an actor on the stage not desperately distorting himself or over-dramatising for the sake of loading a moment. Hartnett's pauses are more convincing than much fuss I have seen on the stage far too many times, as he gathers himself, searching for words whilst decoding the new information he is consistently being given: learning he has a brother, that the brother is autistic and cannot be managed in the 'usual' ways, that the brother was the Rain Man of his imaginary childhood friendship, that he loves this brother, and that he must let this brother go. It is for these moments, along with his consistent and unyielding rendering of the yuppie with a heart, that Hartnett should be lauded.

I will dare to say that whilst his is also an exceptional performance, Adam Godley has a somewhat easier task in playing Raymond. Despite being the more iconic role, it does seem **to pose fewer challenges** and less need for restraint than the role of Charlie. Godley masters an awkward walk, a dull manner of speech, and other idiosyncrasies which are more about action than control.

Working to his benefit is the immediacy of the theatre, a place in which a spectator's sympathies can almost be enacted, as we are at close enough range to feel that we could hug poor Raymond should we so desire.

The same level of acclaim cannot be granted to the secondary characters, who unfortunately cannot compete with Hartnett's intensity or the delectable Godley. Dutifully and successfully ordinary are the various administrative characters played by Charles Daish and Colin Stinton, but the stage falls almost into pantomime with the giddy performance of Mary Stockley as Charlie's girlfriend and the affectedness of Tilly Blackwood's various characters.

Gordon's adaptation serves Barry Morrow's original story well. It does not fall into the trap of **overindulgence and sentimentality** which the theatre often sets, and it works well by loading simple words rather than silences. As much as it can be, this is a real play, with the key performances feeding an authenticity that I hope to see more of under our prosceniums from now on.

Rain MAN Review <http://blogcritics.org/culture/article/theatre-review-london-rain-man-adapted/>

9.2 **A CurtainUp** **London Review**

Rain Man by Charlotte Lovridge

Adapting the Oscar-winning, much loved 1988 film **Rain Man** for the stage is a project bound to lead to a fairly safe foundation of ticket sales.

Vocabulary Training 3

Look up the following expression in the dictionary! Explain their meaning and function in the text!

- quasi-iconic tale
- bullish determination
- to pose fewer challenges
- overindulgence and sentimentality

Making his West End, and indeed his professional stage debut is Josh Hartnett, following the pattern of US stars finding their stage feet in London.

The well-known story is fairly simple: two orphaned brothers, one emotionally disconnected through a harshly lonely upbringing and the other through autism, discover first each other and then the depths to their connection and learn to open up their emotions in their own peculiar ways. Josh Hartnett, in the role created by Tom Cruise, plays Charlie Babbit. A stressed businessman on the point of losing everything, he has a precariously overstretched business and a girlfriend disengaged by his lack of commitment and intimacy. Mercenary, exploitative and brutal from engrained isolation, Hartnett captures well this character's unsavoury aspects without belying the possibility of redemption. His psychological journey towards consideration to others and greater emotional self-awareness is both convincing and, peppered with humour, not overly

sentimental.

Adam Godley's performance as autistic savant Raymond is an acting showcase in textured compassion, remarkable when portraying a character whose condition means that he is alien to sympathy himself. In an earthy and unpretentious performance, Godley manages to achieve a complementary chemistry with his co-star and, with his own finely strained vocal sincerity, avoids a mere reprisal of Dustin Hoffman's Oscar-winning incarnation.

The tale is heart-warming and poignant with its funny moments but the fact is that this stage adaptation is also a fairly indolent artistic endeavour. With little innovation or risk, this *Rain Man* could be seen as quite a cynical, ticket-selling venture. Nevertheless, this solid production is watchable and enjoyable with good lead performances and will undoubtedly prove popular with audiences.

9.3 Rain Man at the Apollo Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London Evening Standard Sept 2008

Josh Hartnett's riveting performance as Charlie Babbit rises high above the erotic and the star cannot be written off as theatrical Viagra or even a 100 per cent herbal alternative. Yes, his classic good looks and physique, in the style of a college Jock, will surely drive the libidos of thousands of

Assignment 9: A Review

1. Compare the three reviews, their appreciation of the actors` achievement, their interpretation of the message.

Do you find the summaries of the plot sufficient to inform a spectator about the play?

2. **Write a review** of the English Theatre Frankfurt Production and send it to our Education Department:

michael.gonszar@english-theatre.de

We will publish it on our Education Website and you will receive a reply!

heterosexual women and gay men into excited top gear. But Hartnett does something more creative than flash his sex-appeal around.

He takes his lead from Gordon, whose stage version, both bleakly comic and emotionally devastating, dispenses with the film's celebration of a generous, loving America. This Rain Man shapes a critique of an American paternalism that destroys families, fears emotional candour and cannot tolerate deviation from the norm. Hartnett's businessman-Charlie reeks of aggression and exudes a chronic impersonality, even when with his girlfriend. He betrays the belligerence of someone who is in a bad mood all his life.

This Rain Man retains the unusual comic-pathetic mood when Charlie tries to speed the routine-obsessed Raymond across America, and teaches him to dance and avoid hookers. Jonathan Fensom's design glides from airport to hotel and to the point when Charlie realizes that what links him to Raymond is the psychic damage they both suffered. Hartnett's Charlie is too withdrawn to let slip his feelings but it becomes clear he understands that only by committing his life to Raymond can he save himself from solipsistic rage and materialism.



10. A text for further studies:

Changes in Perspectives of Autism through *Rain Man*

by Joshua Solomon

A man and his brother walk down the terminal in an airport. They engage in a heated argument over

Vocabulary Aids 4

obstinacy - stubbornness
(Starrsinn, Hartnäckigkeit)

landmark essay – Grundlagenaufsatz
in der Forschung mit wichtigen
neuen Erkenntnissen

rampant - zügellos

Orthogenic School -residential
treatment center and therapeutic
school for children and adolescents
typically classified as emotionally
disturbed

reverse – umkehren, rückgängig
machen

impenetrable – sth you can`t really
comprehend (undurchdringlich)

cascading blame – to be very
reproachful to s.o. (jmd. mit
Vorwürfen überschütten)

whether they should board an airplane for Los Angeles. The older brother complains about taking an airplane and fears for his life, telling his brother about the crashes that every airline has had. The younger brother becomes annoyed and tells him that every airline has crashed at one point or another. To this, the older brother exclaims, Qantas never crashed. Upset at his **obstinacy** and refusing to fly to Australia just to travel to Los Angeles, the younger brother attempts to pull the older. He responds in the only way he knows by screaming. Not wishing to undergo his painful screams, the younger brother stops and reassures his brother that they will drive to Los Angeles instead. This scene may sound weird to normal people, but it does demonstrate the coping strategies of people with autism, as exhibited through this scene from **Rain Man**. Charlie Babbitt does not understand how his brother, Raymond Babbitt functions in his little world that he has created. With the release of *Rain Man* came the increased understanding of autistics and a willingness to find out what autistics are thinking, thus improving the treatment and awareness so that they can live more normal lives than their counterparts in the past.

Autism has undergone significant definition changes in the past. The term was first used in 1912 by the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler from the Greek word for self: **autos** in his description of patients with schizophrenic thinking divorced from both logic and reality. However, an established set of guidelines for diagnosis would not be established until 1943, when Leo Kanner, a German émigré to the United States, wrote „Autistic Disturbances of Affective Content“, a **landmark essay** in which he described eleven children who,

from infancy, had seemed to cut off from their parents and existed in their own, often impenetrable world.

**Assignment 10:
Understanding the text and
talking about different issues:**

1. Point out the main thesis of the author!
2. Which developments in research about autism does he mention?
3. What have we learnt from the *RAIN MAN* story?

His initial findings convinced him that nearly all of the parents of autistic children were highly intelligent, self-absorbed in their careers, and emotionally aloof, suggesting that they kept their children neatly in a refrigerator that did not defrost.

Though he would state later that he never took such a hard line, others at the time took this statement as truth and sought to prove it.

One of the most notable of these was Bruno Bettelheim, a concentration camp survivor who ran the **Orthogenic School** at the University of Chicago. He sought to find out what their parents had done wrong in raising them and to determine if proper training based on human relationships can **reverse** the autistic process. These were based upon his assumptions that autism was caused by mothers who were characterized by their towering rage against everyone in their families,

humiliation run **rampant** against the children that would become autistic for their coldness.

Additionally, he compared them to wolf children in that these psychotic children have acute sensations of smell and touch, that autistic children rely little on sight, and that autistic children often behave as if they were insensitive to heat and cold .

This is similar to the reason why Ray was sent to Wallbrook, the institution in which he lives, as Sanford, Charlie and Ray`s father, was afraid that Ray would hurt Charlie Babbitt with hot bath water by confusing hot and cold water or by simply exploring his surroundings.

Today, autism is understood as a neurological impairment with a variety of suggestions for causation, such as increased serotonin levels in the blood and alterations in brain tissue. High-functioning autistics, such as Ray, often have the ability to speak and sometimes exhibit a savantism, or high degree of knowledge in one particular area. Nevertheless, the world of the autistic is still **impenetrable**, hard to understand from the outside world, so there was still a gulf between treatment and success. As we see Charlie watch Ray board the train for Wallbrook in a simple manner, it has to make us wonder how simple this disorder really is and if treatment could entail simple, effective solutions in the future. With the emphasis on treating the problem rather than disregarding it completely or **cascading blame**, I am confident that we will one day find such solutions with the focus on a biological cause and a treatment based on that.



James Holmes and Charlotte Moore (ETF 2012)

Production Photos by Bobby Anders. (The other photos are taken from the 1988 film version.)

Rain Man has helped us to see the humanity, not the wildness of autistics. We now see autism as an illness, not as a monstrosity.

11. Recommendations for further material and studies on similar topics:

- **Novel:** Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* Vintage 2004, ISBN 0-099-45025-9
- **Film:** Peter Ness, *Mozart and the Whale* (starring Josh Hartnett, Radha Mitchell) www.boulevard-entertainment.com
- **Research:** Julie Brown, *Writers on the Spectrum. How Autism and Asperger Syndrome have influenced Literary Writing.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers www.jpk.com ISBN 978-1-84310-913-6
- **Science:** Tony Attwood, *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* Jessica Kingsley Publishers, www.jpk.com ISBN 978-1-84310-669-2

