

John Tate

Dennis Kelly presents John Tate from the beginning of Act 1 as a character constantly struggling for power. By the naming of John Tate with a surname, Kelly gives the character an initial superficial power as the leader of the group. The audience, are therefore aware that other characters are expected to respect him. This expectation is shown when Danny simply says “He’s just saying, John” (p17) and John Tate’s response is very accusing and demeaning, to show Danny’s mistake with only using the first name.

p12 “No, no, it’s not, no, Lou, we’re not”

- he doubts himself and thus this quotation represents him reassuring himself by the repetition of “no”. He is trying to convince himself that he is right.
- the interruption is shown by no full stops and thus incomplete sentences. This implies his wavering in his moral compass, despite trying to validate his actions.
- the others don’t perceive his power, because he is unsure of himself

p13 “...because actually what you are saying is a very negative, and that’s...”

- “actually” is very patronizing and condescending, showing he is trying to gain power
- “a very negative” → this connotes a disjointed thought process. John Tate is not as confident as he may come across to the other characters. He is fearful of the situation (i.e. being screwed) and worried that others will challenge him (insecure)
- the ellipsis shows he loses his train of thought, implying he is overwhelmed by the situation.

p13 “Look, haven’t I looked after things before?”

- the question challenges the others
- “Look” is an imperative showing he is trying to enforce his power over the group; this appeals to his traditional role/status as leader
- at the challenge Lou poses, John Tate is automatically defensive, defending his role as leader.

p13 “are you scared of anyone in this school?”

- John Tate takes control of the situation here
- he does however show fear because he is afraid of his power being taken away

p15 “Yes. Banned. Sorry”

- this is the response to the second time the group questions his method. This suggests they don’t see him in the way he wants to be perceived by everyone else
- “Banned” is an imperative, showing his enforcement of power
- “Sorry” has differing connotations
 1. sarcastic → John Tate could be belittling the others, and showing his power in this way
 2. serious → John Tate is backtracking and questioning himself and wavering on his statement, however he can’t do anything more than this so says “sorry”
- full stops show that John Tate was attempting to control himself and his language so he gets it together in this way. Full stops show no depth or detail so that John Tate can remain controlled and so he doesn’t stutter as previously shown

p15 “I’m going to, you know, bite their face. Or something.”

- the vague language of “you know” and “or something” is non-specific and so the harshness of the threat is minimized

- “bite their face” is childish and unrealistic, showing that John Tate is immature, despite his power, and that he is unsure how to handle situations
- “or something” loses the sincerity of the claim as the commitment is gone.
- no humanity is shown
- it shows he feels threatened by Richard as the others fear Richard as well as fearing John Tate. He therefore needs to assert his power using a threat, however the fear of power being taken away leads his language to be vague.

Relationships

John Tate and Richard

At some point there has been a status fight between Richard and John Tate where John Tate won. Due to the conflict shown between characters there is remorse, however John Tate is still conscious of the way other characters see Richard as also having power.

John Tate and Phil

John Tate gives Phil the ultimate power when he says “What do we do?”. Giving power means John Tate must have had power to begin with. John Tate must give power because he is crumbling/losing it and in order to stay in control, someone else needs to claim power under John Tate’s command. John Tate was worried he couldn’t control what happened to Adam and thus passes the blame to Phil when he gives the power. There is strong stage power, because John Tate directs others to look at Leah and Phil and “They all stare at...” shows the power shifts; it also controls the audience because all focus goes towards Phil and Leah.

John Tate, Lou and Danny

John Tate does not bond with anyone because he doesn’t trust himself to have a relationship. Although Lou and Danny are with him at the beginning, they are only seen as his “posse”. Because they hide in John Tate’s shadow and see him as their leader, their role in the play after John Tate no longer appears is negligent. Without John Tate they do not have any power.