

Write a guided analysis of the following text.

The following text is an excerpt from *Hotel Sorrento*, a play by Hannie Rayson. Meg, an Australian writer living in London, has written a novel which has been short-listed for a major award. She is talking with her husband Edwin about a letter from her sister, Hilary, who lives back in Australia.

MEG is sitting on the lounge room floor reading aloud excerpts from a letter from Hilary.

MEG: Listen to this bit...

EDWIN: This is still from Hilary?

5 MEG: Yeah... [*She reads aloud.*] 'I'm doing an English course with the Council of Adult Education. We are studying Chaucer¹ at the moment. It's very interesting.'

See what I mean? Chaucer is not interesting. Chaucer is very, very dull.

10 EDWIN: So, she finds it interesting.

MEG: She does not. She just thinks she *should* find it interesting, because that's what being 'cultured' is all about.

EDWIN: Being conversant with things that are irrelevant and dull.

15 MEG: Exactly. That's what the whole middle class is like back home². They go off and memorise Shakespeare's date of birth and a few rhyming couplets so they can sprinkle it in conversation around the barbie³. 'D'you think Kylie'll bring the coleslaw.' 'Ah, To bring or not to bring. That is the question⁴. Shakespeare you know. Born in 1564, strangely enough.' 'Yes. Died in 1616. Poor thing. Such a tragedy. Terrific bean salad Val.'

20 EDWIN: Ooh, you're such a snob.

MEG: No, I'm not. I don't care two hoots about Shakespeare, you know that. In fact I've often thought that my idea of purgatory would be an everlasting subscription to the Royal Shakespeare Company.

25 EDWIN: I'll never forget the look on Peter Hall's⁵ face, the night you told him that you thought *Othello* was dreadfully overwritten.

MEG: Ah, you see, that's one thing I really regret about ageing. I resent having to mellow. I'd never say that sort of thing now.

30 EDWIN: Well, that's just as well I should think. I can just see *The Times Literary Supplement*. Booker prize nominee Meg Moynihan says that Shakespeare's plays are dreadfully overwritten.

MEG: But that's what it's like at home. For all that obsessive nationalism, people still equate 'culture' with Shakespeare and Chaucer.

Pause. MEG sighs.

35 I just wish she'd say something about my book. [*She wrinkles up her nose.*] It's silly, isn't it, 'cause on one level I don't give a damn what she thinks of it – as a piece of 'literature'. I just want a reaction. Anything. 'Dear Meg, I found your book excruciatingly turgid.'

EDWIN: Maybe she hasn't read it yet. Too busy swatting up on Chaucer.

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Pause.

MEG: If you'd written a book, you'd expect your family to read it,
wouldn't you?

¹ Chaucer: a major early English poet

² home: Australia

³ barbie: barbecue

⁴ To bring or not to bring. That is the question: adapted quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

⁵ Peter Hall: famous theatre director

- How does the writer convey Meg's attitude towards her sister Hilary and the culture her sister represents?