

# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

---

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

[www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)  
[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)

# Audience

A Play in One Act

by Michael Frayn

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

[SAMUELFRENCH.COM](http://SAMUELFRENCH.COM)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *AUDIENCE* is subject to a Licensing Fee. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to *AUDIENCE* are controlled exclusively by Samuel French, Inc., and licensing arrangements and performance licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur Licensing Fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a licensing quotation and a performance license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Licensing Fees are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Samuel French, Inc., at 45 W. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010.

Licensing Fee of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Stock licensing fees quoted upon application to Samuel French, Inc.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to: United Agents LTD, 12-26 Lexington Street, London W1F 0LE England.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured in writing from Samuel French, Inc.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright, this play may be impaired.

No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production.

Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Samuel French, Inc., for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

#### **MUSIC USE NOTE**

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play and their licensing agent, Samuel French, Inc., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees.

#### **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of *AUDIENCE* *must* give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for the purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* appear on a separate line on which no other name appears, immediately following the title and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of the title type.



*AUDIENCE* was first presented in *Colin Blakely, a Celebration*, at the Lyric Theatre, London, on October 4, 1987. With a second act added, it was presented under the title *Look Look* by Michael Codron at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on April 17, 1990, with the following cast:

AMANDA ..... Serena Gordon  
CHARLES ..... Michael Simkins  
BOBBIE ..... Joyce Grant  
MERRILL ..... Ken Wynn  
HELENA ..... Gabrielle Drake  
JOAN ..... Margaret Courtenay  
QUENTIN ..... Robin Bailey  
LEE ..... Steven Mackintosh  
KEITH ..... Stephen Fry  
REGINALD ..... John Arthur  
EILEEN ..... Pat Keen  
WENDY ..... Lisa Jacobs  
USHERETTE ..... Jeanne Mockford

*Stage Manager* ..... Krissy Wilson

*Directed by* ..... Mike Ockrent

*Designed by* ..... Carl Toms

*Lighting by* ..... David Hersey

## CHARACTERS

F 13 (JOAN)

F 14 (HELENA)

G 12 (QUENTIN)

G 13 (LEE)

G 14 - later G 15 (WENDY)

G 15 - later F 15 (CHARLES)

G 15 - later G 14 (REGINALD)

G 16 - later F 16 (AMANDA)

G 16 (EILEEN)

H 18 (KEITH)

I 16 (BOBBIE)

I 17 (MERRILL)

USHERETTE

## AUDIENCE

*A proscenium arch, seen from behind. The tabs are in. They are in fact a scrim, and in the last few minutes before the start of the play the lights behind them gradually come up to reveal, rather dimly, a kind of mirror image of the auditorium, with members of an audience being shown to their seats by an usherette, buying programmes, taking off their coats, and chatting.*

*All that can be seen of this second auditorium, in fact, is a section of the stalls, with one of the aisles and the entrance doors at the back. Twelve seats are defined in various parts of the central block: four side by side in the row nearest the front (Row F); five side by side in the row behind (Row G); one, way off to one side, in the row behind that (Row H); and two side by side in the backmost row (Row I). [See illustration #1 on page 48.]*

*By the time the play starts nine members of the audience have taken their places in these thirteen seats.*

*In I 16 and I 17, at the back, an American couple: BOBBIE, in her fifties and in command, and MERRILL, in his seventies and no longer in command of anything much, not even his faculties.*

*In H 18 - KEITH, in his forties and wearing seedily casual clothes.*

*In G 12 - QUENTIN, who is in his fifties and knows everything about the theatre. Beside him, in G 13 -*

*LEE, who is in his late teens and knows nothing about anything.*

*In G 15 - CHARLES, a middle-aged man being remarkably attentive to his companion, AMANDA, in G 16, who looks as if she is being hunted by the police.*

*In F 13 - JOAN, in her sixties, and beside her in F 14, her daughter HELENA, a distracted woman in her forties.*

*G 14, and F 15 and 16, remain unoccupied.*

*The USHERETTE has taken her place by the double doors at the back.*

*[See illustration #2 on page 49.]*

*MUSIC. The USHERETTE closes the doors. The houselights begin to go down. So do the houselights on the other side of the tabs. LIGHT comes up on the tabs, until the scrim becomes once again entirely opaque. The tabs rise, revealing the audience beyond, illuminated by the spill of light from the stage they are facing, which is where we are sitting.*

JOAN. (*Sotto voce to HELENA.*) ... So I told her. 'Forty pounds,' I said...

HELENA. Sh. (*SHE indicates that the curtain has gone up.*)

JOAN. (*Faces front.*) Oh, yes.

(*Pause.*)

JOAN. (*Whispers to HELENA.*) 'And that included delivery and fitting...'

(*She reluctantly abandons the conversation. Everyone stares at us in silence for some moments.*)

AMANDA. (*To herself, puzzled and irritated, in normal conversational tones and at normal conversational level.*)  
*Where's this supposed to be?*

JOAN. (*To herself, likewise.*) *What's all this?*

QUENTIN. (*Likewise.*) *What in heaven's name ...?*

BOBBIE. (*Likewise, delighted.*) *It looks just so real!*

CHARLES. (*Likewise.*) *We are in the right theatre?*

*(They try to read their programmes.)*

HELENA. (*Reads.*) *'Act One...'*

AMANDA. (*Reads.*) *'An auditorium ...'*

CHARLES. (*Reads.*) *'Evening.'*

AMANDA. *Oh no.*

HELENA. *Oh dear.*

QUENTIN. *God help us.*

CHARLES. *I thought it was a musical.*

BOBBIE. *I can't believe we're here! Our honeymoon—  
day two!*

MERRILL. (*Aloud, sotto voce, to BOBBIE.*) *Where's  
the popcorn, baby girl?*

BOBBIE. (*Aloud, sotto voce, to MERRILL.*) *You just  
hush now, baby boy.*

QUENTIN. (*To himself, gloomily.*) *These are supposed  
to be ordinary people, are they?*

*(THEY all continue in the same manner—each speaking to  
himself in normal conversational tones, and each  
inaudible to all the others.)*

LEE. (*Suspiciously.*) *These people—they're supposed  
to be all like symbolic or something, are they?*

AMANDA. (*Darkly.*) *This is supposed to be us, is it?*

BOBBIE. *They're so lifelike!*

CHARLES. (*Gloomily.*) They look as if they've just walked in off the street.

HELENA. It all looks a bit *modern* to me.

QUENTIN. They did this in that play, what was it called, in the thirties.

CHARLES. I think this is going to be rather a yomp. Better break out the rations. (*HE offers AMANDA a box of chocolates.*)

JOAN. Well, I suppose it's the kind of thing *she* likes.

CHARLES. Seems to hold some morbid fascination for *her*, anyway.

AMANDA. (*Brushes the chocolates away.*) I read something about this somewhere. It's supposed to be all about—I don't know—something—what was it...?

CHARLES. And we might just manage twenty minutes in the car on the way back.

AMANDA. (*To herself.*) I wish they'd stop staring! I hate plays where they peer out at you. Why don't they just look at each other? We're supposed to feel got at, are we?

HELENA. It was Jane who recommended it. Of course it was Jane who recommended that one where they all took their clothes off.

JOAN. (*Thoughtfully.*) Chap there loosening his tie already.

AMANDA. They can't actually see us, can they?

MERRILL. (*Sotto voce, to BOBBIE.*) What are they saying?

BOBBIE. (*Sotto voce, to MERRILL.*) Sh!

MERRILL. What?

BOBBIE. They're not.

MERRILL. Not what?

BOBBIE. Not saying.

MERRILL. Not saying what?

BOBBIE. Not saying anything! They're thinking.

MERRILL. Thinking?

BOBBIE. Sh!

MERRILL. Thinking what?

BOBBIE. You have to work it out.

MERRILL. What?

BOBBIE. I'll tell you afterwards! Sh!

MERRILL. (*To himself.*) Thinking? We're supposed to sit here thinking 'What are they thinking?'. I know what they're thinking. They're thinking 'What the hell are *these* people thinking?'

KEITH. Funny, isn't it. You do your best to make a play relevant to the lives of the audience. You try to write about people they can identify with. What happens? Do they identify? Do they make the connection?

AMANDA. But why do they all look so actorish?

KEITH. I think they're just trying to recognise the actors.

QUENTIN. I don't recognise any of them.

LEE. They're all famous, are they? We're supposed to recognise them, are we?

QUENTIN. Oh, not *her*! She was in that thing at the whatsit.

LEE. Oh, yeah, he was in that commercial with that bloke who's in that other thing.

KEITH. Why do I have to sit here and subject myself to this humiliation? (*HE sees the empty seat in Row G.*) Oh, and an empty seat. Only been running four months, and already there's an empty seat in Row G... My God, there's two more in Row F...

QUENTIN. I'm just waiting for poor Roddy to come on.

KEITH. I'm only here because poor Roddy's off.

QUENTIN. That's the only reason I've come—to see Roddy.

KEITH. That's the only reason I've come—to see the understudy.

QUENTIN. Four months of this thing—it's a wonder he's not back in the clinic already.

KEITH. Laugh coming up here, by the way ... *Should* be a laugh here ...

MERRILL. Shut my eyes for a bit. That'll wake me up.

KEITH. No? Well, there was a laugh there. You take your eyes off a show for two minutes, and the next thing you know the theatre's half-empty and all the laughs have gone.

QUENTIN. Oh, and there's dear old what's-her-name. But what *is* the poor poppet wearing?

BOBBIE. I just love the dresses they wear.

HELENA. Ridiculous, wearing a dress like that at her age.

AMANDA. (*Shaken.*) I've got a dress like that.

JOAN. I might try that pattern in the downstairs loo .

BOBBIE. Everything taken care of. That's what I love. All the people so beautifully arranged. It's all going some place. Someone's got it all figured out.

MERRILL. (*His head jerks forward. HE opens his eyes.*) Nowhere to put your head. That's what I hate.

KEITH. I think they're beginning to settle down. Perhaps we'll get the next laugh.

MERRILL. (*Eyes closing again.*) One of these nights it's gonna roll right off.

(*People begin to stir in their seats again.*)

KEITH. No? What's worrying them now?

HELENA. I suppose there's going to be language. It's that sort of play ... I mean, *I* don't mind. I'm just worried about Mother. I know what *she* must be thinking.

JOAN. I wonder how often they have to clean that upholstery ...

QUENTIN. Anyway, it's a treat for him.

LEE. I mean, like, what's going on? Am I supposed to be *enjoying* this, or what?

QUENTIN. I know how much it means to these boys to get their first taste of live theatre.

LEE. Like, why just me? I'm not the only one doing a Drama A-Level ...

QUENTIN. So valuable for them to be taken off on their own once in a while.

LEE. Soon as it's over he's going to be on about What did I think? What did I feel?

QUENTIN. Given a chance to say what they really think and feel.

LEE. I mean, how do *I* know? We haven't done this one, have we.

(*Silence.*)

KEITH. All right?

HELENA. (*Suddenly.*) What *I* resent is that there they are, all having a wonderful time swearing and taking their clothes off and sitting around as if they owned the place—and they get a great kick out of it because here we are watching them. Yet here we sit, with our clothes on and our mouths shut, and not so much as a thank you—no one taking the slightest bit of notice!

KEITH. Good. Yes. Fair point. We'll talk about it afterwards. Now ...

(*Pause.*)

MERRILL. (*Opens his eyes.*) Great stuff. When's it over?

CHARLES. They ought to put the finishing time in the programme.

*(EVERYONE shifts around again.)*

KEITH. Come on! Don't start thinking about supper.

QUENTIN. I've booked a table at that little place across the road.

CHARLES. Or if we left at the interval ...

HELENA. Could leave at the interval ...

JOAN. Go at the interval ...

HELENA. Only she won't, of course ...

JOAN. Only she paid for the tickets.

HELENA. She insisted on sitting there to the bitter end even in the one where they all took their clothes off.

JOAN. Taken his jacket off now.

CHARLES. Say eighty minutes in the car, eighty-five minutes ...

KEITH. If you're not careful there won't *be* an interval. You want an interval? You want to go home tonight? All right, then, you buckle down to it and start thinking about the next laugh. Silence. Concentrate.

*(MERRILL opens his eyes and coughs. KEITH turns round and gives him a look.)*

KEITH. Right. Thanks. Hold it. Stop there.

*(No one notices KEITH. He faces the front—and immediately MERRILL coughs again.)*

KEITH. Oh, no!

*(KEITH jumps to his feet and stares at MERRILL until he stops. But by this time CHARLES has started coughing as well. KEITH comes leaping over the backs*

*of the seats to hover behind CHARLES, unseen by anyone, as if about to murder him.)*

KEITH. You'll start them all off!

*(CHARLES stops.)*

KEITH. Right. That's it. No one else.

*(But now LEE has started. KEITH goes leaping back to threaten him in his turn. But LEE is already acutely aware of causing a disturbance. HE stuffs a handkerchief into his mouth and shakes silently, letting no breath escape. KEITH watches over him vengefully.)*

KEITH. That's right. Just suffocate in silence.

*(Gradually everyone becomes aware of LEE'S sufferings, and makes great efforts not to turn round and look. KEITH watches, agonised.)*

JOAN. Is someone having a fit?

KEITH. No one's having a fit.

HELENA. Is someone going to be sick?

KEITH. No, no, no! Just keep your mind on the play.

AMANDA. Someone ought to do something.

CHARLES. It's probably just one of the actors. It's that sort of play.

HELENA. Don't turn round.

QUENTIN. *(To LEE, feebly.)* All right? Better now? *(To the others.)* I don't really know this lad. He's just someone in the Drama Group.

BOBBIE. Take a deep breath.

QUENTIN. Try not to breathe.

KEITH. (*Politely.*) If you're going to die, do you think you ought to do it outside? We are only halfway through the act.

(*LEE suddenly clammers over QUENTIN and rushes out.*)

KEITH. Very sensible. Just don't ...

(*The doors slam.*)

KEITH. ... slam the doors.

(*A wild volley of coughing bursts forth outside, and echoes around the empty corridors.*)

AMANDA. Someone ought to go after him.

QUENTIN. I expect he'd like to be left in peace.

KEITH. (*HE returns to his seat.*) I knew it! Someone dying! It's that kind of audience! It's going to take another ten minutes to get them back! He's probably not even dead. We'll just have got everyone interested and he'll come creeping in again, and they'll all be listening to every move he makes, and that'll be another ten minutes gone ...

(*LEE creeps back in.*)

KEITH. He's alive. I *knew* it.

(*LEE creeps back to his place with the most careful quietness, still holding his handkerchief to his mouth. QUENTIN stands up to let him pass, looking solicitous.*)

QUENTIN. (*Whispers.*) All right?

JOAN. Is he all right?

AMANDA. Is he sure he's all right?

HELENA. He's not going to start being sick again?

*(LEE sits down. KEITH leans forwards to watch his face. Eventually LEE puts the handkerchief away.)*

LEE. OK, no one noticed, no one noticed. Just sort of hold my breath for the rest of the evening.

*(KEITH leans back in his seat. At once MERRILL takes out his handkerchief and blows a sustained voluntary on his nose. Everyone else gets out a handkerchief and starts to blow his nose, while MERRILL closes his eyes again. KEITH puts his head in his hands. When the nose-blowing at last subsides another small sound is audible—an electronic alarm watch. Everybody, except the sleeping MERRILL, gradually becomes aware of it. THEY all look uneasily round, trying to see where the sound is coming from.)*

MERRILL. Time to get up?

BOBBIE. Hush now. Back to sleep, baby boy.

*(KEITH's suspicions finally settle upon CHARLES. HE advances threateningly upon him and stands behind him. Gradually everybody else comes to the same conclusion. THEY all look sidelong at CHARLES. Gradually CHARLES realises himself, like a man in a deodorant ad who becomes aware that everyone is looking at him. Very carefully HE checks his wrist-watch. With the utmost precaution HE feels all his pockets. As careful as before not to make a noise, HE opens his briefcase and goes through its contents. Papers slip out of folders; HE retrieves them just in time. KEITH reacts to the prospects raised by the production of a mobile*

*telephone. The cellophane wrapping from the chocolates has to be placed silently in AMANDA's lap.)*

KEITH. I shall give you precisely ten more seconds to get this noise stopped. Then I shall kill you. Ten seconds.

*(KEITH looks at his wrist-watch to time the ten seconds. A terrible suspicion slowly comes to him. HE puts the watch to his ear. HE takes it away from his ear and touches it. The SOUND ceases. HE tiptoes back to his seat, everyone's eyes now on him, and hides his head behind the seat in front. Then suddenly all the other heads snap back to watch the stage. Silence. EVERYONE is gazing at the stage. KEITH's head comes up sharply in surprise.)*

KEITH. What? What?

BOBBIE. *Oh oh!* Something's happening!

HELENA. *(Disgusted.)* Oh, no!

KEITH. *(Understanding.)* Oh. That.

HELENA. Sex, sex, sex.

LEE. What? Where? What's going on?

HELENA. The couple in the stalls there.

AMANDA. He's got his hand on her knee.

CHARLES. Yes, and a very conveniently placed knee here, too.

*(HE puts his hand on AMANDA's knee. SHE does not notice.)*

AMANDA. This is not remotely like me.

BOBBIE. This is our story.

*(SHE puts a hand on MERRILL's knee. HE wakes up.)*

MERRILL. Have I taken my green pill?

HELENA. *Every time I take Mother out ...*

QUENTIN. So embarrassing for *him*.

LEE. (*Interested.*) This is like that thing on the telly.

QUENTIN. I'll just have to make it up to him afterwards.

(*HE protectively pats LEE's knee.*)

HELENA. The *one* chance I get to give Mother an evening out, while Christopher's at his wildlife ...

JOAN. I wonder if those sponge fingers went down the back of the sofa.

AMANDA. Why do they keep trying to *get* at you all the time? We're not getting at them! And I have never in my life sat in a public theatre and let some man ...

(*SHE discovers the hand on her knee.*)

AMANDA. What's this?

CHARLES. What?

AMANDA. (*Takes his hand off.*) Everyone can see us.

CHARLES. Your husband can't. He's in Bonn.

AMANDA. There's bound to be people here we know.

JOAN. (*Looking at CHARLES and AMANDA.*) She's going to have melted chocolate everywhere if he's not careful.

CHARLES. (*Puts his hand back.*) They're all watching the play.

JOAN. (*Looking at CHARLES again.*) Seen him somewhere before, haven't I?

AMANDA. (*Takes his hand off.*) You don't seem to be watching the play.

CHARLES. I'm thinking about things. That's what you go to the theatre for—to be made to think.

AMANDA. Yes, but not to think about *that*.

CHARLES. What?

AMANDA. You know.

CHARLES. You don't know what I'm thinking about.

AMANDA. I know perfectly well what you're thinking about.

CHARLES. I'm thinking about wildlife. It's my wildlife night with Christopher Whatsit.

AMANDA. Well, don't think so loudly. Everyone'll hear.

HELENA. Why don't they ever show happily married couples going out together, like Christopher and me?

*(SHE puts a fond hand on JOAN's knee.)*

JOAN. *(Sotto voce, to HELENA.)* What?

HELENA. *(Sotto voce, to JOAN.)* What? *(Realises her hand is on JOAN's knee.)* Oh. *(She removes it.)*

KEITH. All right, then. Everyone alert and eager?

*(MERRILL snores.)*

BOBBIE. Oh, bless him!

KEITH. One missing.

*(MERRILL snores again and wakes.)*

MERRILL. *(Sotto voce, to BOBBIE.)* What? *(To himself.)* Where am I? Is this tonight or is this last night? OK, let's work it out. We got on the plane at nine o'clock at night. But nine o'clock at night Central Standard Time is four o'clock in the morning London time. Or is it four o'clock in the afternoon? Hey, wait a minute. This is yesterday!

KEITH. Write him off. What about the rest of them?

# FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

---

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

[www.samuelfrench.com](http://www.samuelfrench.com)

[www.samuelfrench.co.uk](http://www.samuelfrench.co.uk)

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:



\*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.