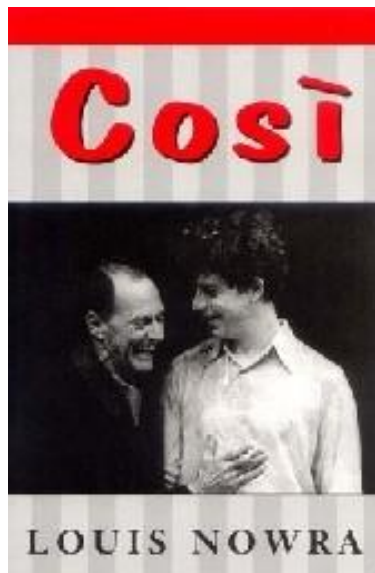


# Sam's Cosi Study Pack



|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| Cosi Notes        | pg 2  |
| Cosi Quotes       | pg 14 |
| Cosi Essay Topics | pg 18 |
| Useful Links      | pg 21 |

# Cosi Notes

## Love

'Love is not so important nowadays.'

'Free love is a hard concept to define.' Love in general is hard to define, or understand, Nowra is trying to tell us.

When it comes to love and Lucy, Lewis states that it's 'not something I want to talk about.' Perhaps that's the problem. He needs to talk about it and to be able to talk about it with Lucy. There needs to be more honesty in their relationship (and in any relationship) for it to be able to work.

'Lucy's not into marriage.' Lewis and Lucy's attempts to 'talk about commitment ... never get far.' Lucy 'is into politics. She hates talk about love.' When asked if Lewis trusted Lucy he answered 'uncertainly'. Their relationship doesn't seem strong.

'My hair is grey so I speak with authority' – One would imagine that the oldest character would have the best understanding about love, but his views contrasted with those of the younger characters such as Nick and Lucy make Henry's views seem outdated.

'Give her a poke and get it over and done with.'

Nick's view on love: "And you want to remain true to your lovers. It's an old fashioned concept, granted." Nowra does believe that some views of love are outdated; he certainly believes the view that only women are unfaithful is outdated. He acknowledges that it can be difficult to remain faithful, but he does not endorse Nick's view.

"It's just as easy for a woman to fall in love as it is for a man."

"Mozart is about love, not madness."

"Love is hallucinating without drugs."

"That's what love is, being foolish."

"Love is what you feel when you don't have enough emotion left to hate." It's an odd statement, but fitting when you consider Roy's childhood and past.

"Music is what love between humans should be."

Conversation was "the glue that held [Ruth and her boyfriend's] relationship together." Despite the boyfriend being insane, he has the right idea. Nowra is saying that for relationships to be successful there needs to be a certain amount of communication to hold them together.

“It is about important things, like love and fidelity.” This is in contrast to his earlier comment that “love is not so important nowadays.” There is growth in Lewis’ confidence but also his views and values.

“Without love the world wouldn’t mean very much.”

Lewis has always “mistaken lust for love.”

“I have sex with him and sleep with you.” Admissions like this make Lucy seem like the mad one.

“Women. You have to wrap it up in fancy language ... when it all comes down to the same thing.”

### **Infidelity/Fidelity**

‘Women are never true.’

‘Women like to pretend they don’t play around, but they’re just more secretive about it. They don’t brag about it like men.’

‘Women are flesh and blood too.’

‘I don’t like men’s double standards.’

“Women’s constancy is like the Pheonix of Arabia. Everyone swears it exists, but no one has seen it.’

Irony in the fact that Henry plays the part of Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* as Henry firmly believes in truth and fidelity whereas Don Alfonso is cynical about it.

“This *Così* condones the corruption of innocence. Women are told to be tramps. Free love.”

“Whether women can remain true is a tragedy.”

“Don’t insult those pure men. They’re models of fidelity and perfect love.” (*Così fan tutte*)

“Only mad people in this day and age would do a work about love and infidelity.”

Lewis and Julie kiss demonstrating that men too can be unfaithful. In a way, Nick is also unfaithful in his friendship with Lewis.

“You have enemies for life, but never lovers.”

“Everyone blames women, but I forgive them. If they change their love a thousand times a day, some call it sin, others a drug, but I think it’s the necessity of women’s hearts.”

“That’s how men want us to be – even though they’re not true and faithful themselves.”

Wagner “foreshadows what is going to happen to the couples in the future. A life of torment and adultery.”

Nick justifies his infidelity with “we’re mates, aren’t we?”

Nick and Lucy ‘didn’t last long as both were not into love and fidelity.’

## **Vietnam War**

‘To be against the Vietnam War is also to be against the old fossilized Government we now have.’

Lewis is surprised that Doug knew and followed events of the 1968 French Moratoriums.

‘She hates me doing an opera on love and fidelity while thousands of Vietnamese are being killed by American troops.’

Lewis wants to dress Guglielmo and Ferrando as Albanian soldiers. They are communists. Lewis is making a joke about them. (“That’s half the joke”). Nick objects. “A bit of a kick in the face of a poor nation struggling to feed its people, isn’t it?”

“Here we are supporting the Viet Cong and you’re laughing at their supporters, the Albanians.” This is the first time that Lewis has really boldly admitted his growing differing views to those of Nick and Lucy. Nick says that “we” are supporting the Viet Cong, but Lewis only blindly follows what Luck and Nick do. Nick takes Lewis’ support for granted.

Henry thinks Nick is “a traitor” for supporting the Communists.

Lewis finally comes to his own conclusion that he is not “a communist too” but supports the Viet Cong “against American imperialism.”

There is a lot of ignorance in regard to the outside world in the asylum. “You’re always the last to know things in an asylum” & “What’s this about Vietnam?”

“Australia is in a war against Communist and you .. you stab my father in the back.” Henry is a very loyal man. He is loyal to his country, loyal to the cause that his father fought in Korea and is loyal when it comes to love.

“Not only are they nuts, but they’re right wing nuts.” Nowra casts Nick in a negative light showing his disagreement with Nick’s ideals.

“We must support any way of getting Australia and Americans out of this quagmire.”

“It is a war with meaning. It is to stop communism.” (Henry)

After giving Roy a pep talk Lewis makes the bold step forward as he says *Così fan tutte* “comes first” over the moratorium. Nowra is telling us that we need to be looking and solving the problems we have (mental illness) before we can go fighting others (Vietnam).

Lucy forces him to “make a choice ... between the moratorium meeting and staying here.” Lewis chooses “Mozart.” He “won’t let them down.” As Lucy notes, “working with these people has changed” Lewis.

“After bread, shelter, equality, health, procreation, money maybe comes love. Do you think the starving masses give a fuck about love? Love is an emotional indulgence for a privileged few.”

“How to understand how capitalism exploits the working class is important. How to stop the war in Vietnam is important.”

“1, 2, 3, 4, we don’t want your fuckin’ war. Radicalised the nation.”

## **Cosi Fan Tutte**

‘You can’t play the piano accordion in Mozart!’ The piano accordion and Mozart are incongruous. They don’t fit together. In the same way the Vietnam war didn’t fit with Australian society and the Ride of the Valkyries doesn’t fit with Cosi Fan Tutte.

Men: “They have as much resolve as water” (cosi fan tutte)

“The women are twits, are they? Even though the Opera makes them out to be.”

The words of Cosi Fan Tutte are sickly sweet. Perhaps too good to be true.

Zac wants to play the ride of the Valkyries on the piano accordion as the overture. This is absurd and totally incongruous with the play.

“Today Australia was changed forever. She doesn’t want to see an opera about some upper class twits.” The opera is about much more than some upper class twits, it’s about bringing life back into these mental patients. Giving them love and care because they have been neglected in the asylum.

“You do this old fashioned opera – this is the era of free love and orgies.”

## **Mental Asylums + Mental Illness**

‘Chink of light enters’ (1). Along with light entering, so does the outside world and love.

Putting on Cosi is helping them, finally, after years of ineffective treatments: shock therapy, lobotomies, lithium.

When Lewis notes that the theatre ‘is burnt’ Justin reassures him that with a ‘coat of paint, it’ll be fine.’ If used as an extended metaphor Nowra is criticizing the way in which mental asylums work. Patients can’t be helped with a flippant ‘coat of paint.’

There’s a hole in the roof that allows water to leak through. Justin notices this in the first scene, but makes no effort to have it fixed. ‘Let’s hope it doesn’t rain on the night,’ he says. Does he use the same approach when working with the patients?

Justin further belittles the patients by using a 'sotto voce', a soft voice.

Nowra writes Justin's character to be demeaning and belittling towards social workers. You can hear it in his tone when he says, 'hello Henry. Would you like to be in the play too?'

Nowra uses Roy to convey his belief that 'asylums are the most inefficient places on this earth.'

'And when you want a lobotomy, you just can't get it.' – Doug (criticizing mental asylums)

Nowra shows his contempt for social workers when Justin says, 'there'll be no real trouble: no carving knife against the throat.' Ironically, there is trouble and Cherry uses a carving knife against Doug. Justin is just ignorant of everything. 'Lights ... what do you call them in the theatre?' They're still called lights!

Nowra's ultimate question is this: 'Where would the world be without social workers?' Doug aptly answers it by saying, 'in tip top condition.'

Justin says that the purpose of the play is to 'keep them interested' and 'give them something to do'. Hardly considerate reasons. Justin doesn't even know all the patients: 'I'm sorry, I don't know your name.' Justin has a 'day of meetings.' Nowra is making the criticism that the mental patients aren't helped by social workers who sit in meetings all day.

'I've told occupational therapy to stop making those baskets'. Roy takes a job at occupational therapy, but behind this is Nowra's opinion that methods of rehabilitation used in the 1970s were useless or sometimes harmful (lobotomies).

'They don't know how to deal with drug users. He called it a "crutch", I said it was a "rocket to the stars".'

'Don't ever tell a psychiatrist that story, they'd have a heart attack on the symbolism of it all.' That sentence is deep with cynicism.

'You know what a psychiatrist is? A Peeping Tom with a fancy title.'

'I'm going to have a word with his doctor, I think his lithium needs to be upped.' Nowra is critical of the idea that when something appears to be wrong (controversy over Wagner for the overture) that increasing the medication, particularly the drugs, is the answer. In fact, when the dosage is lowered Zac can think much more clearly.

'Do it yourself lobotomy'. Nowra is criticizing the treatment of mental illness by creating a joke out of it.

"God, how I hate that ward." The mental patients don't like the institution. This is a reflection of Nowra's dislike of them. However, Julie's parents think it's like "sort of like a holiday." There seems to be a misconception about mental asylums. Australian society doesn't have a great understanding of either the asylums or the patients.

"They're coming to take me away, ha, ha, to the funny farm."

“Can’t, he’s having shock treatment. Been a bit depressed lately.” They seem very flippant in the way they talk and accept the use of shock treatment.

“A Mesmer magnet never helped anyone. It was a fraud.” Again, treatment methods are unsuccessful. Furthermore the doctors who are supposed to be treating them are ignorant: “no one knew what a Mesmer magnet looked like. Dr. Posner was there and he thought it was a Carlton.”

“Mozart is about love, not madness.” Roy calls shock therapy madness. This is ironic since it is supposed to cure madness. Shock therapy “brings back too many memories.” It was an unpleasant experience.

“There’s no such thing as divine madness, madness is just madness.”

“A lower dosage. It’s amazing how much more bright the world seems.”

## **Mental Patients**

‘Mad actors are bad enough, but madmen...’

The mental patients’ insanity is evident from the very start. Roy ‘broke in’ because he ‘didn’t want to be late.’ Henry enters and ‘says nothing’. His ‘left arm is paralysed’ and he carries it in an ‘invisible sling.’ Doug casts an ‘expert eye on the damage’ of the theatre hinting towards his pyromania.

Physically, one cannot distinguish between the mental patients and normal people. Lewis asks Roy if he is the social worker. Later Justin asks Lewis if he is a patient. Nowra blurs the boundaries between normal and abnormal.

‘They are normal people who have done extraordinary things, thought extraordinary thoughts.’

Perhaps Nowra is trying to make the point that not everything has to be ‘wrapped up in fancy language’ or labelled. In the same way the mental patients don’t have to be labelled.

The patients are often more positive than Lewis, especially when Roy implies that Lewis ‘got up on the wrong side of the bed today.’

In contrast to the cold and severe Nick and Lucy there seems to be more humanity in the mental asylum.

‘Just because my eyes are closed doesn’t mean I’m asleep.’ Nowra telling us not to judge. Don’t label the patients as it gives them an excuse to act as they do and makes it acceptable.

There are constant reminders of the patients’ insanity. “You’re dealing with a mad audience, you know.” This is Nowra’s way of reminding readers that the mental conditions these people have are real. Just because they’re not the stereotypical mad man doesn’t mean their condition isn’t real.

“Today Australia was changed forever. She doesn’t want to see an opera about some upper class twits.” The opera is about much more than some upper class twits, it’s about bringing life back into these mental patients. Giving them love and care because they have been neglected in the asylum.

“What are you on about? Too much time with the loonies, Lewis.” It is Nick who ends up looking like the ‘loony’.

Henry is like the hole in the roof – someone has finally paid it some attention by putting the bucket underneath is to catch the rain. (“Ruth gets a bucket and puts it under the dripping water.”)

The patients ‘blossomed’ because of *Così fan tutte*

### **Illusion/Reality**

“The more real it is, the more real it is.”

“I can’t stand real things. If I could put up with reality I wouldn’t be in here.”

“I like this, I like the dark.” The dark gives them a security blanket.

### **Honesty**

Henry believes in honesty so deeply that he’d compromise *Così fan tutte* when Doug first burns the toilets. The stage directions say Henry is ‘wanting to tell the truth’.

Justin ‘turns to Lewis for the truth’ and Lewis continues with Cherry’s lie about smoking. The group are lying, but it’s for the good of the mental health of the patients. Putting on *Così* is helping them, finally, after years of ineffective treatments: shock therapy, lobotomies, lithium.

### **Irony**

There is a dramatic irony when Roy states that he and Lewis will be like Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, respectively. This is because Roy is more like Jerry Lewis and Lewis more like Dean Martin.

‘A hero suffering from verbal diarrhoea?’ (Doug about Henry) Adds ironic humour. Shows humanity within the patients and stops the play becoming too serious.

‘There’ll be no real trouble: no carving knife against the throat.’ Ironically, there is trouble and Cherry uses a carving knife against Doug

‘It’s all in my head’. Roy is talking about the music for *Così fan tutte*. Ironic humour because Roy has a mental condition so it really can be described as ‘all in his head.’



Irony in the fact that Ruth chooses the song 'Wild Thing' to audition with because Ruth is by no means a wild thing. Irony humour is also evident in Cherry's wish for a 'larger role' as she is constantly referred to as overweight by Doug.

Irony: Doug asks if Nick and Lewis share Lucy. Offended, Lewis says no.

Irony in the fact that Henry plays the part of Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* as Henry firmly believes in truth and fidelity whereas Don Alfonso is cynical about it.

Irony: Cherry as the character of Despina. Despina preaches that there are 'more where they came from' in regards to men. However, Cherry is very hung up over Lewis.

Irony: Lewis wanted to dress Guglielmo and Ferrando as communists. Communism is all about liberating the lower class and abolishing the class system. Guglielmo and Ferrando are aristocrats.

## Language

The patients are very bold and forthright, especially Doug. He asks if Lewis gets to 'fuck the actresses?', if he's a 'poofter?' This makes Lewis feel uncomfortable. But Doug is simply being honest and true to himself.

Perhaps Nowra is trying to make the point that no everything has to be 'wrapped up in fancy language' or labelled.

Zac/Language – 'Such a pissy opera. Wagner – he's got balls.'

Language: 'A laugh is as good as a fuck they say.'

The lyrical prose of *Così fan tutte* is juxtaposed with the language of the 1970s, ie 'just a mo' (zac).

Doug/Language – 'I'll go for a piss'

"1, 2, 3, 4, we don't want your fuckin' war. Radicalised the nation."

## Lewis

Lewis 'feels betrayed' (in the stage directions) when Nick and Lucy leave him.

Lewis begins 'hesitantly'. This later changes as he grows more confidence.

Stage directions says 'Lewis is out of his depth' at the plays commencement.

Lewis, in Act 1, Scene 2 still holds the belief that 'they're mad ... it's madness'. He also wonders 'why can't I ever say no?' Through working with the mental patients Lewis will learn to be less of a follower, a sheep, and more of a leader.

Lewis slowly grows and begins to care about the emotional state of the patients. 'Roy, no one is a success or failure.'

Roy about Lewis – 'I thought you were tougher than that.'

'Lewis is flummoxed' by the task of staging *Così fan tutte* in the mental asylum.

"To be perfectly frank, Jerry, what you've done up until now, no one would call direction."

The end of Act 1 is a real turning point for Lewis. He grows confidence as a director and as a person. He is more firm ("firmly") and authoritative. He has finally seen the human side to the patients. ("Henry, I don't want you to leave. I'm not going to let you walk out on us. You'll have to hit me to walk out.") Furthermore he is caring and changes the play so that "Guglielmo and Ferrando disguise themselves as Australian soldiers."

Nick and Lewis have different (and perhaps unrealistic) expectations of each other. Nick expects Lewis to help organise the moratorium and Lewis expects Nick to help produce *Così fan tutte*.

Lewis is beginning to reassess his priorities. "A fuckin' Mozart opera. Lucy can't believe it either." His priorities are starting to differ from those of Nick and Lucy.

"Here we are supporting the Viet Cong and you're laughing at their supporters, the Albanians." This is the first time that Lewis has really boldly admitted his growing differing views to those of Nick and Lucy. Nick says that "we" are supporting the Viet Cong, but Lewis only blindly follows what Nick and Lucy do. Nick takes Lewis' support for granted.

Comes to the conclusion that *Così fan tutte* 'comes first' over the moratoriums

"I want others to contribute; it makes them feel a part of the show." (Lewis' development)

Lewis practices his scene "enthusiastically." He even enjoys being there now.

The final step of Lewis' development is when Lucy forces him to "make a choice ... between the moratorium meeting and staying here." Lewis chooses "Mozart." He "won't let them down." As Lucy notes, "working with these people has changed" Lewis.

Lewis really becomes one of them when he tells Doug to "go burn a cat."

Lewis begins to comfort the patients. He has become a true leader. "It's okay to have stage fright. I get it."

"You've become a right wing nut, haven't you?" Although Lewis has developed into much more than just a right wing nut.

"I said, don't sing that song!" Lewis takes control, is authoritative and doesn't blindly follow Nick and Lucy anymore.

Lewis even gets to the stage where he knows the patients' weaknesses. He kisses Cherry to stop her from hurting Julie.

'I shifted house soon after Cosi.' Lewis' journey of change is fully complete.

## Henry

At the mention of war or soldiers Henry takes out his toy soldiers and begins to play with them. This occurs when Roy talks about the Albanian soldiers in *Cosi Fan Tutte*.

"Australia is in a war against Communist and you .. you stab my father in the back." Henry is a very loyal man. He is loyal to his country, loyal to the cause that his father fought in Korea and is loyal when it comes to love.

There is growth and development in Henry. "Henry, who is supposed to be miming to the music, sings loudly." This would never have happened before the beginning of the play. Henry is like the hole in the roof – someone has finally paid it some attention by putting the bucket underneath is to catch the rain. ("Ruth gets a bucket and puts it under the dripping water.")

"Your right arm is paralysed. It used to be your left." "It changes."

Henry 'died soon after Cosi.'

## Roy

'You know what culture is for most Australians, Jerry? It's the stuff that grows on stale cheddar'.

'I am for the stars, Jerry.'

Roy thinks his 'mother played the music to me over and over.' The audience later has reason to believe that this is fabricated. Roy is an orphan.

'It's all in my head'. Roy is talking about the music for *Cosi Fan Tutte*. Ironic humour because Roy has a mental condition so it really can be described as 'all in his head.'

Roy is melodramatic. He 'falls to his knees and starts banging his head on the floor.'

"Why am I always let down!" Roy exclaims. This could be both his melodrama or an insight into his past. Abandonment (especially since Roy is an orphan) may contribute to his mental illness.

It's saddening to think that Roy's solution to being 'depressed' is that he 'need[s] some uppers.'

"It's more the fact that you've let everyone down.' (roy about Lewis)

'This theatre could have been ringing with the music of the spheres.'

The fabricated version of his childhood ("tea parties, dances in our ballroom, circus performers coming to perform just for me.") is what Roy "wanted *Cosi Fan Tutte* to capture – recapture."

Roy has mood swings. One moment he is cheery and joyous, the next he is “down” and “doesn’t feel talkative.” Roy’s dream is one that is “as removed from this depressing asylum as possible.”

Cherry tells Lewis that Roy “hasn’t got parents. He’s an orphan.”

“Humility can limit you.”

Roy went ‘from ward to ward.’

## **Ruth**

Ruth is ‘mechanical in performing’. This is because her obsessive compulsive nature.

Irony in the fact that Ruth chooses the song ‘Wild Thing’ to audition with because Ruth is by no means a wild thing.

‘You’re doing a fine job of messing with my head.’ (Ruth about illusions)

‘I can live with illusion as long as I know it’s illusion.’

Ruth became a ‘time and motion expert.’

## **Cherry**

Irony humour is also evident in Cherry’s wish for a ‘larger role’ as she is constantly referred to as overweight by Doug.

Cherry is delusional: ‘I’ll eat and watch you work. I like watching people work.’

Their humour is also evident when Cherry jokingly tells the story of being the duck hunter for her father because they couldn’t afford a dog. In contrast to the cold and severe Nick and Lucy there seems to be more humanity in the mental asylum.

Cherry is delusional. ‘You didn’t offer to marry Cherry did you?’ Justin asks Lewis. However he furthers this by saying ‘must be pulling my leg again.’ Perhaps the humanity and humor is beginning to shine through.

‘I only ever got one love letter from Cherry’

## **Doug**

Doug’s forthright attitude is explained by: ‘in here you miss out on a lot of changes in society’s morals.’

Doug lights a fire in the dunnies. Cherry is intent on killing him by throttling him. The mayhem has begun...

Doug: “I have a problem with social mores.”

'the theatre mysteriously burnt down. Doug was the major suspect.'

## **Julie**

'Julie's mood swings wildly'

"Drugs make me feel sort of living." (Julie)

"Some people can't imagine life without love, well I can't imagine life without junk."

"i need something stable in my life."

Julie 'died from a drug overdose.'

## **Zac**

Zac likes lithium (and drugs) because "everything passes like he's in a dream or limbo."

About zac: "can't, he's having shock treatment. Been a bit depressed lately." They seem very flippant in the way they talk and accept the use of shock treatment.

Zac 'left the asylum and founded a rock and roll group called the psychotic Wagners.'

## **Nick**

"I'm only doing this as a favour, so you'll help me out with the moratorium committee."

"You'll never be a director until you convince them that what you want to do is what they want to do."

Despite the language that is used within the mental asylum, they are still shocked when Nick says fuck. "There is a shocked intake of breath from everyone at the four letter word."

The language Nick uses shows his dislike of the play – "fuck" "cark it" "old girl"

"So that's how a real director works his magic." (Roy to Lewis about Nick)

"Lewis is astonished by Roy's servility towards Nick." (stage directions)

"I'm not putting up with this right wing crap." (Nick)

Nick and Lucy 'didn't last long as both were not into love and fidelity.'

## **Lucy**

"Are you going to let Nick down? What about the moratorium meetings?" Lucy can't see how she and Nick have let Lewis down, only vice versa.

# Così Quotes

## Love

- 'Love is not so important nowadays.'
- 'Without love the world wouldn't mean very much.'
- 'imagine life without love.'
- Mozart love: romantic and sentimental & Nowra/Louis love: deeper feelings of trust, respect and loyalty
- Love is 'an emotional indulgence for a privileged few'
- 'Love is the last gasp of bourgeois romanticism'
- 'love is hallucinating without drugs'
- 'i've always thought that love was being stupid and foolish'
- 'love is what you feel when you don't have enough emotion left to hate.'
- 'After bread, a shelter, equality, health, procreation, money comes maybe love'
- 'Mozart is about love, not madness.'

## Fidelity:

- 'It's only a fling, it doesn't mean anything. I have sex with him and sleep with you.'
- 'Lucy's not possessive about you and I'm not possessive about her'
- 'women shouldn't come between mates'
- Loyalty is Julie's gf who stood by her 'through thick and thin, mostly thin'
- 'remaining true to your lovers' is an 'old fashioned concept'
- Henry's mother romantically 'loved no one else'
- 'free love is a hard concept to define'
- 'A women's constancy is like the phoenix of Arabia. Everyone swears it exists but no one has seen it.'
- 'whether women can remain true is a tragedy'
- You want to remain true to your lovers. It's an old fashioned concept, granted.

## Così Fan Tutte/ Drama /Theatre

- 'Are you sure this is not a French farce?'
- 'It's just another thing about the battle of the sexes'
- Lucy: theatre needs to be 'meaningful and intelligent'
- He's doing a play that's relevant and he's doing something about the war in Vietnam'
- Music:
  - 'this theatre could be ringing with the music of the spheres, instead of that a dreadful silence has descended upon us'
  - 'no one cares who wrote the words. Why do you think an opera has music – so one will have to pay attention to the words'
  - 'the music of this opera will keep the world in harmony'
  - 'music is what love between humans should be. And we've thrown out the music from this opera'

## **Vietnam War**

- 'how to stop the war in Vietnam is important'
- 'capitalism exploits the working class'
- 'American imperialism' & 'radical'
- 'do you think the starving masses give a fuck about love?'
- 'want the war to end ... want changes in our society ... want to overthrow the establishment'
- 'she hates me doing an opera about love and fidelity while thousands of Vietnamese are being killed by American troops'
- Do you think we should be doing something like this ... in these days, you know, the Vietnam War?

## **Humor/Black Comedy**

- Doug – 'no social mores'
- Calls cherry 'fat'
- 'Do you get to fuck the actresses?'
- ECT in rehearsal – funny but serious
- 'Go burn a cat'
- 'there's no such thing as grace under pressure for a burning cat'
- 'comedy is better when it's real'

## **Illusion and reality**

- Theatre: a world 'as far removed from this depressing asylum as possible'
- 'I can live with illusion as long as I know it's illusion'
- 'If i could put up with reality i wouldn't be in here'
- 'it's off stage, no one will know the difference and they'll think you've got hundreds backstage.'
- 'the more real it is, the more real it is'
- 'An illusion of reality. A real illusion in other words?'
- 'can handle something being an illusion or real but not both at the same time'
- ' i am for the stars jerry, is that such a bad thing'
- 'Roy, no one can sing opera ... opera voices take years of training.'

## **Insanity vrs sanity**

- 'a mad man is somehow who arrives at a fancy dress party dressed in the Emperor's new clothes.'
- 'You're dealing with a mad audience'
- 'That's fine Ruth, I never doubted you.'
- 'Normal people who have done extraordinary things.'
- 'It's not divine madness like some people think, there's no such thing as divine madness, madness is just madness.'
- 'mad actors are bad enough, but madmen...'

- Only mad people in this day and age would do a work about love and fidelity.

### **Treatment Methods**

- 'I need some uppers'
- 'I told occupational therapy to stop making those baskets.'
- 'how much lithium is the poor bugger (Zac) on?'
- Justin has a 'day of meetings'
- World would be 'in tip top conditions ... without social workers'
- 'do it yourself lobotomy'
- 'Asylums are the most inefficient places on earth'

### **Fates of Characters**

- Ruth 'time and motion expert'
- Henry 'died soon after Cosi'
- Doug = 'the major suspect' when theatre mysteriously burnt week later
- 'only got one love letter from Cherry'
- Nick and Lucy - 'both didn't last long as both were not into fidelity'
- Lucy became an academic
- Nick became a labor MP in the upper house
- Roy 'went from ward to ward'
- Julie 'died of a drug overdose'
- Zac founded a successful 'polka band'
- Lewis 'shifted house soon after Cosi'

### **Language:**

- *Crude:*
  - Do you get to fuck the actresses
  - She's a good root
  - I need a fuck
  - Couldn't direct a poofter to a man's dunny
- You have to wrap it up in fancy language when it all comes down to the same thing.
- *Australian vernacular:*
  - Grungy
  - Shacked up
  - Sheilas
  - Drongo
- *Flowery*
  - Roy: 'servants dancing on fingertips'
  - Julie: 'like lying in a warm cloudy river'
  - Heightened use of language indicated state of mind – unreal, magical



## Change:

- 'a lot of changes in societies morals'
- 'working with these people has changed you'
- 'bring them out of their shells'
- 'blossomed'
- Henry 'sings loudly'

## Misc

- 'No one is a success or failure'

## Lewis

- *Beginning*
  - He 'needs the money'
  - 'hesitantly' and 'uncomfortably'
  - Wonders why he 'can't ever say no'
  - Feels 'betrayed' by Nick and Lucy
  - Wanted to perform 'the exception and the rule' by bertolt brecht
  - 'Politics is the real theatre'
- *Middle/End*
  - Lewis is 'not a communist too'
  - Speaks 'firmly'
  - Won't let patients 'walk out' (Henry)
  - 'madness' but knows 'he won't leave'
  - 'Mozart. I'm not going to let them down.'
  - 'Sorry, I can't. They need me.'

## Cosi Essay Topics

### ▪ Love/Fidelity

1. Lewis says, 'love is not so important nowadays.' What does the play show us about Nowra's opinion on this topic?
2. Relationships and comedy are victorious over politics and seriousness in this play. Discuss.
3. Cosi shows we don't have to love and understand someone to love and value them. Discuss.
4. How are ideas about betrayal and loyalty explored through the structure of the play within a play?
5. The characters of Mozart's opera and Nowra's play prove the truth of the opera's title: 'women are like that.' Discuss.
6. Love is proven to be obsolete in this text. Discuss.

### ▪ Comedy

7. Lewis: 'They're mad. It's madness...' The humour in Cosi comes mainly from Nowra's mockery of the mentally ill. Do you agree?
8. Nowra's use of dramatic irony creates both humour and pathos in his play. Discuss.
9. Ruth claims, 'comedy is better when it's real.' How does this statement apply to Cosi itself?
10. Most of the humour in this play is black. Do you agree?
11. Despite the comedy in Cosi, there is an underlying sadness throughout the play. Discuss.
12. When chasing your dreams it helps to be a little bit crazy. How does Nowra use black comedy to advantage in this play?

### ▪ Vietnam War:

13. Both Cosi Fan Tutte and Cosi are trivial comedies which ignore the important social and political issues of their times. Do you agree?

### ▪ Theatre/Drama

14. The visual and musical elements in *Cosi* are as important as the dialogue in conveying the play's central ideas.
15. Nowra's play is set in a 'burnt out theatre'. Discuss the importance of setting and imagery in conveying Nowra's ideas in *Cosi*.
16. Nowra's use of clichés and stereotypes is very clever. Discuss.
17. *Cosi* demonstrates the futility of labels. Discuss.

## ■ *Cosi Fan Tutte*

18. 'Lucy: We used to talk about important things ... now all you can talk about is reactionary drivel like *Cosi Fan Tutte*.' How does *Cosi* show modern audiences the contemporary relevance of Mozart's eighteenth-century comic opera?
19. 'Roy: The music of this opera keeps the world in harmony.' Why does Mozart's opera become so important to the characters in *Cosi*?
20. How does Nowra use the opera *Cosi Fan Tutte* to explore the play's main ideas?
21. 'Without this opera having been composed, there would be just a clanging, banging, a bedlam all around us.' Roy's comment illustrates his
22. belief in the transformative power of the arts. To what extent does the play reflect this?

## ■ Illusion/Reality

23. Ruth says, 'the more real it is, the more real it is.' Does this apply to the play as a whole?
24. *Cosi* is a play about the triumph of fantasy over reality.
25. Each patient in *Cosi* has his or her own way of escaping reality. Discuss.
26. 'Justin: the important thing is to feel you are in control.' Does *Cosi* suggest that illusions are more powerful than reality?
27. Theatre, madness, illusion, reality ... what is real in *Cosi*? Discuss.

## ■ Honesty/Truth

28. Who is more honest – the patients or the 'normal' people?

29. Roy and Doug speak the truth in this play. Discuss.

- **Growth of Lewis**

30. 'In a way you're sort of testing yourself by coming here?' (Julie to Lewis). What does Lewis seek when taking on the project and what does he find?

31. The play is designed to bring the patients 'out of their shells', but in fact Lewis gains far more from the experience than they do. Do you agree?

32. Lewis might grow in confidence throughout the play, but he does not change in any significant way. Do you agree?

33. It's not the patients but Lewis who comes out of his shell. Do you agree?

34. Lewis admits that he agrees to direct *Cosi* 'for the money'. Is money the only thing Lewis gains in the course of the play?

- **Growth**

35. Lewis tells Roy, 'no one is a success or failure.' Does the play show this to be true?

36. In *Cosi*, the players develop a sense of purpose and community. Discuss.

37. Each of the characters in *Cosi* has something to teach Lewis – and us. Discuss

38. *Cosi* shows the importance of finding the courage necessary to pursue our passions in life.

39. *Cosi* shows how 'I' and 'them' can become 'us' and 'we'. Discuss.

40. *Cosi*'s players don't need to 'come out of their shells' they are already out. Do you agree?

41. Lewis and the characters adapt the opera to suit the needs, fears and disabilities of the players. What does this show about Lewis' growth and Nowra's message?

42. As we accept and connect with others in our relationships, we ourselves are transformed. Discuss in relation to *Cosi*.

43. Alone they were lost. Together they were magical. Do you agree?

- **Inside world vs. Outside world**

44. If Lucy and Nick represent the normal world, then we would be better off in the asylum. Discuss.
45. Nick, Roy and Doug are all alike. They all have extreme passions and they are all unreasonable and dangerous. Do you agree?
46. Lewis is a normal person in an abnormal situation and his reactions mirror our own. Discuss.
47. Despite their faults and limitations, we never lose sympathy for the patients in *Cosi*. Discuss.
48. The comic irony of Nowra's play is that other patients in the asylum are 'saner' than the normal characters. Discuss

- **Doug**

49. Doug likes lighting fires, both real and symbolic. Discuss.

- **Misc**

50. *Cosi* is a misogynistic play. Do you agree?
51. This play is about the difference between selfishness and compassion; between realism and dreams. Discuss.
52. All of the characters in *Cosi* are likeable. Discuss.

## **Useful Links**

Article on *Cosi* from The Age Newspaper -

<http://education.theage.com.au/cmsspage.php?intid=136&intversion=251>

First ten pages of the Insight Study Guide on *Cosi* –

[http://www.insightpublications.com.au/pdf\\_preview/TG-Cosi-10-pages.pdf](http://www.insightpublications.com.au/pdf_preview/TG-Cosi-10-pages.pdf)

Performance Cues notes on *Cosi* -

[http://lms.wssc.vic.edu.au/Files/125/documents/cosi\\_teaching\\_notes.pdf](http://lms.wssc.vic.edu.au/Files/125/documents/cosi_teaching_notes.pdf)