

Study Guide for *The Emperor's Birthday Suit*
By Charlie Lovett

1) What do we learn about the Emperor's family in the first scene? How does the playwright show us the relationship between the Emperor, the Empress and their son? Each of the three family members has a driving interest revealed in the first scene. What are these interests? If your family were portrayed in the first scene, what would your driving interests be? How might you show them in a scene?

2) Some of the humor of *The Emperor's Birthday Suit* comes from combining traditional fairy tales with the modern world. This leads to lines like Parker's reaction to the name Rumpelstiltskin on p. 2.29. Where else can you find humor that is created by combining old fashioned stories and characters with the modern world?

3) *The Emperor's Birthday Suit* is inspired by the fairy tale "The Emperor's New Clothes." Find a copy of the original tale and read it. In what ways is it similar to the play? How is the play different? Does the play include elements of other fairy tales? Which ones? Why do you think the playwright chose the title *The Emperor's Birthday Suit*?

4) The four detectives Mike Screwdriver, Miss Maple, Nancy Clue, and Joe Saturday are all parodies of detectives from previous books, movies, and television shows. Can you find the originals of these detectives? In what way do the characters in the play act like the detectives who inspired them? In what ways are they different? If you had to pick a character from books, movie, or television to inhabit the world of this play, whom would you pick? Why?

5) What kind of person do you think Queen Daphne is? How does her behavior lead you to this conclusion. Imagine that Queen Daphne were your teacher. What do you think class would be like? Write a scene in which you and Queen Daphne have a discussion.

6) Characters in a play are defined mostly by what they say. Dialogue is the main tool that the playwright has to communicate story and character. If you have to pick one line that shows what kind of character you are playing what would it be? Why? Do you think it is important to establish your character right away? How could you deliver your very first line in a way to establish your character?

7) Describe the relationship between Trixie and her sister Jill. If you have a brother or sister, compare it with the relationship you have. If you had to put your brother or sister into the play, what part would you give him or her? Why? If you don't have a brother or sister, you can do this same exercise with a friend.

8) On p. 13 we find out that Penelope, Parker, and Shawn like three different kinds of music: Disco, Blues, and the marches of John Philips Sousa. Can you find examples of all three? Which is your favorite? Why? Which do you think is least like the others? Why?

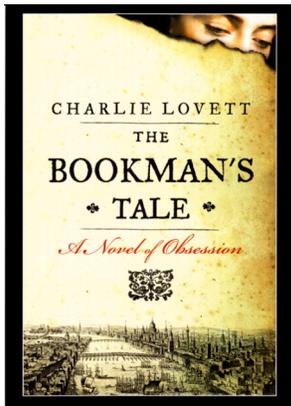


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9) Comedy often uses the rule of three. A list of three things is presented, the first two things on the list set up an expectation that the third thing will be something similar, then the third item on the list is surprisingly different or silly, making for a comic effect. An example of this is Shawn's line on p 9.16–18. Can you find other examples in the script. Try making your own lists using the rule of three. Write a list of things you might find in a classroom, or things your teacher might say to you.

10) An allusion is an indirect reference to something outside the world of the play. The connection is not explained or referred to specifically—an allusion requires the reader, actor, or audience member to know about the thing being alluded to. For instance, on p. 23.11, Cleopatra uses the term “Zippety-doo-dah” to mean “nothing,” to which Augustus responds “Zippety-day.” This is an allusion to the Disney song “Zippety-Doo-Dah.” What other allusions can you find in the play? Does it make the play more interesting if you understand these allusions?

11) Sometimes in a play the first thing we learn about a character or situation turns out to be very important in the end. For instance, the first thing we learn about the Emperor is that he wants a fancy new suit of clothes and he is vain. In the end, he gets what he wants. What is the first thing we learn about Jack? How does this play an important roll for Jack towards the end of the play?



Charlie Lovett's newest book is *The Bookman's Tale: A Novel of Obsession*. Published by Viking Pres, June 3, 2013.

A mysterious portrait ignites an antiquarian bookseller's search through time and the works of Shakespeare for his lost love. Guaranteed to capture the hearts of everyone who truly loves books, *The Bookman's Tale* is a former bookseller's sparkling novel and a delightful exploration of one of literature's most tantalizing mysteries with echoes of *Shadow of the Wind* and A.S. Byatt's *Possession*.