

YELLOW MOON — STUDY GUIDE

Author: David Greig

First Performed: 2006 (TAG Theatre Company)

Genre: Contemporary Scottish Theatre / Road-movie-style drama

Narrative Style: Multi-voice storytelling with actors stepping in and out of narration

Target Audience: Written for young adults; often studied at National 5

Why it's studied: Energetic, raw exploration of teenage life, identity, violence, mental health, and Scotland's social landscape.

[\[faber.co.uk\]](http://faber.co.uk), [\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](http://en.everybodywiki.com)

1. Introduction

Yellow Moon: The Ballad of Leila and Lee follows two troubled teenagers who go “on the run” after Lee commits a violent crime. The play blends realism with mythic, ballad-like storytelling, tackling themes of masculinity, silence, belonging, and the search for identity.

It is designed to be performed with minimal staging, relying on imagination and strong actor storytelling.

[\[faber.co.uk\]](http://faber.co.uk)

2. Plot Summary

Overview

The play is structured as **twenty short, interlinked vignettes**, creating a fast-paced, cinematic narrative.

[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](http://theskinny.co.uk)

Key Plot Events

Beginning

- **Lee Macalinden**, 17, lives with his mum and her boyfriend, Billy.
- Lee fantasises about being a gangster like his absent father.
- One night, in a moment of rage, Lee kills Billy — semi-accidentally.
[\[faber.co.uk\]](http://faber.co.uk), [\[theskinny.co.uk\]](http://theskinny.co.uk)
- **Leila Suleiman**, a shy, intelligent girl nicknamed *Silent Leila*, witnesses the aftermath.

Middle

- Lee pressures Leila to flee with him: *"Are you comin' or are you comin'?"*
[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](https://theskinny.co.uk)
- They run from Inverkeithing to the Scottish Highlands, hoping to find Lee's estranged father.
[\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](https://en.everybodywiki.com)
- They stay at an estate with **Drunk Frank**, an alcoholic groundskeeper, and a mysterious woman staying there.
- Leila grows closer to Frank's companion; Lee searches for meaning and belonging.

Twist

- Lee discovers that **Frank is actually his father**, now broken and alcoholic.
[\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](https://en.everybodywiki.com)

Ending

- Leila and Lee help out on the estate.
 - Police eventually track them down.
 - The ending is ambiguous and reflective rather than neatly resolved; the focus is on the emotional and psychological journey.
[\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](https://en.everybodywiki.com)
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3. Setting & Context

Places

- **Inverkeithing**: small, working-class Scottish town; social pressures and limited opportunities.
- **Scottish Highlands**: remote space symbolising escape, freedom, and danger.
[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](https://theskinny.co.uk)

Staging

- Minimal set; actors narrate actions and scene changes.
- Created to tour secondary schools and perform "anywhere" — flexible, imaginative theatre.
[\[faber.co.uk\]](https://faber.co.uk)

Social Context

The play explores:

- Mental health
 - Unguided masculinity
 - Elective mutism
 - Domestic violence
 - Family breakdown
 - Teenage sexuality
- [\[faber.co.uk\]](http://faber.co.uk), [\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](http://en.everybodywiki.com)
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4. Characters

Lee Macalinden

- 17, impulsive, angry, performs toughness
 - Desperately wants masculine identity and validation
 - Haunted by his absent father
 - Semi-accidental murderer
- [\[theskinny.co.uk\]](http://theskinny.co.uk)

Leila Suleiman

- Quiet, thoughtful, often overlooked
 - Nicknamed *Silent Leila* due to selective mutism
 - Intelligent, observant, morally grounded
 - Represents empathy and the consequences of being unseen
- [\[theskinny.co.uk\]](http://theskinny.co.uk)

Frank (Lee's Father)

- Alcoholic groundskeeper on the estate
 - Embodiment of failure, masculinity in decline
 - His brokenness forces Lee to confront reality
- [\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](http://en.everybodywiki.com)

Supporting Characters

- **Jenni** – Lee's mother
 - **Billy** – Her boyfriend; Lee's victim
 - **Estate woman** – Mysterious, maternal presence
 - Minor characters often portrayed by the same actors, emphasising storytelling form
- [\[studyres.com\]](http://studyres.com)
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5. Themes

Teenage Identity & Masculinity

Pressure on boys to perform toughness and on girls to hide vulnerability.
[\[faber.co.uk\]](https://faber.co.uk)

Silence & Communication

Leila's selective mutism represents hidden suffering and neglect.
[\[faber.co.uk\]](https://faber.co.uk)

Violence & Consequences

Lee's violent act leads to irreversible moral and emotional fallout.
[\[kjtheatrediary.com\]](https://kjtheatrediary.com)

Family Breakdown

Absent fathers, struggling mothers, lack of adult guidance.
[\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](https://en.everybodywiki.com)

Escape vs Reality

Teenagers flee, imagining freedom, only to confront painful truths.
[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](https://theskinny.co.uk)

Identity & Belonging

Lee's search for his father is a search for self; Leila searches for connection.

6. Form, Structure & Language

Form

- "Ballad" style: lyrical, rhythmic storytelling
- Mixture of first-person, third-person narration, and direct address
[\[faber.co.uk\]](https://faber.co.uk)

Structure

- 20 vignettes — brief, cinematic scenes
- Episodic, fast-moving — like a film or road trip
[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](https://theskinny.co.uk)

Language

- Scottish idioms and naturalistic teenage dialogue
 - Narration blends poetic and colloquial tones
 - Minimalist stage directions encourage imaginative staging
[\[studyres.com\]](https://studyres.com)
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7. Key Quotations

(Representative, based on analysis from search summaries)

- **Leila's silence:**
"Silent Leila watched everything."
(Selective mutism theme.)
 - **Lee's bravado:**
"The only pimp in Inverkeithing."
(Teenage fantasy of power.)
[\[theskinny.co.uk\]](https://theskinny.co.uk)
 - **The call to run:**
"Are you comin' or are you comin'?"
(Catalyst for the escape.)
 - **Frank's brokenness:**
"More empty bottles than hope in his room."
 - **Ballad tone:**
"This is the story of Leila and Lee..."
(Meta-narrative style.)
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8. Symbolism & Motifs

Moon / Yellow Moon

- Symbol of fate, storytelling, transformation
- Ballad-like motif linking to myth and folklore

Silence

- Represents trauma, invisibility, internal struggle
 - Leila's mutism is both shield and burden.

Running / Escape

- Symbol of teenage desire for freedom
- Also symbolizes running from truth, responsibility

The Highlands

- Escape fantasy
 - Also isolation and harsh reality
- [\[theskinny.co.uk\]](http://theskinny.co.uk)
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9. Important Scenes

- The murder of Billy
 - Lee persuading Leila to run
 - Journey to the Highlands — discovery and bonding
 - Encounter with the estate woman
 - Reveal that Frank is Lee's father
 - Police closing in
 - Final ambiguous tableau
- [\[en.everybodywiki.com\]](http://en.everybodywiki.com)
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10. Writer's Purpose

David Greig aims to:

- Explore modern teenage struggles with identity, masculinity, silence, and anxiety
 - Show consequences of violence and lack of adult support
 - Use stripped-back theatre to empower imagination
 - Create a ballad-like modern myth for young audiences
- [\[faber.co.uk\]](http://faber.co.uk)
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11. Sample Essay Questions

- **Theme:** How does Greig explore the pressures facing modern teenagers?
 - **Character:** Analyse the role of silence in Leila's character.
 - **Symbolism:** What does the journey to the Highlands represent?
 - **Structure:** How does Greig use vignettes to shape the story?
 - **Turning Point:** Discuss the significance of Lee discovering Frank is his father.
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12. Model PEA Paragraph

Point: Greig uses Leila's selective mutism to illustrate how young people's emotional struggles often go unnoticed.

Evidence: The playwright notes that "school was sometimes so stressful that if a girl was silent it might go un-noticed."

Analysis: This silence becomes symbolic of how Leila is overlooked at school and at home. Her lack of speech contrasts with Lee's chaotic noise, making her the moral centre of the story and highlighting systemic failures in supporting vulnerable teens. [\[faber.co.uk\]](https://faber.co.uk)

13. Quick-Revision Checklist

- **Themes:** teenage identity, violence, silence, family breakdown
- **Characters:** Lee, Leila, Frank, Jenni, Billy
- **Symbols:** moon, silence, running, journey North
- **Quotes:** bravado, mutism, escape line
- **Turning points:** murder, decision to run, father reveal



DRAMA — SQA-style Model Mini-Essay

Yellow Moon (David Greig) — Theme: Belonging and self-invention

David Greig's *Yellow Moon* explores how young people craft identities to survive social invisibility. Lee "Stag" and Leila run from the consequences of a stabbing, but what they're truly fleeing is the dead weight of small-town labels: "ned," "good girl," "nothing special." Greig's spare, story-theatre narration makes the characters both storytellers and subjects of their own myths, suggesting identity as performance. The recurring image of the **moon** reflects this: distant, changeable, seemingly constant yet always shifting, as the pair reinvent themselves on the road. Encounters with adults—Lee's absent father; Leila's fragile mother; the survivalist woman in the Highlands—expose generational failures but also moments of grace. The play's episodic structure creates a pilgrimage in which each stop strips away bravado, culminating in the loch scene that forces moral reckoning. Crucially, Greig keeps the audience aware of the characters' *telling*—

stage directions spoken aloud—so that the act of narrating becomes an act of becoming. By the end, belonging is no longer a postcode but a promise the characters tentatively make to themselves: to face truth rather than hide behind stories. Greig's lyric minimalism turns a "teen fugitive" tale into a meditation on class, care, and the risky hope of self-invention.
