



Chicken Soup with Barley (Modern Plays)

Arnold Wesker

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Chicken Soup with Barley is an epic play that spans twenty years in the life of an East End Jewish family and the gradual crumbling of their socialist dream. It vividly captures the loss of political idealism and links the journey of a single family to the wider political situation.


The kettle boils in 1936 as the fascists are marching. Tea is brewed in 1946, with disillusion in the air at the end of the war. Twenty years on, in 1956, as rumors spread of Hungarian revolution, the cup is empty.

Sarah Khan, an East End Jewish mother, is a feisty political fighter and a staunch communist. Battling against the State and her shirking husband she desperately tries to keep her family together.

This landmark state-of-the-nation play is a panoramic drama portraying the age-old battle between realism and idealism. *Chicken Soup* captures the collapse of an ideology alongside the disintegration of a family.

Chicken Soup with Barley, the first in a trilogy that includes *Roots* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* was first performed at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry in 1958 and transferred to the Royal Court in the same year.

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