**La casa de Bernarda Alba – Knowledge Organiser One – Character and Plot.**

**Main Characters – Those who have an influence on the plot**

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| **Bernarda Alba** | * **Epónimo** – play named after her.
* Mother.
* Name means ‘**with the strength of a bear**’ and surname means white.
* White – symbolises her obsession with **cleanliness and honour**.
* More commonly a man’s name – Bernardo.
* Obsessed with **‘el qué dirán’** (what people will say).
* Follows **traditional** Spanish code of honour.
* Wants to maintain a **fachada** (façade) in front of the neighbours.
* She is **omnipresente**
* First and last words in the play are **¡Silencio!**
* Uses her stick for violence.
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| **Adela** | * Youngest daughter.
* Name means of noble nature.
* Tragic heroine – takes her own life but is the only one in the household to stand up to the repression. Doesn’t fully fit the criteria as her death was an error on her own part.
* Consumed with desire for Pepe.
* Breaks all social codes of conduct.
* Believed to be pregnant.
* Carries the green and red fan and rebels against the long mourning period.
* Breaks her mother’s stick – the main symbol of tyranny in the house.
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| **Poncia** | * House keeper.
* Name related to Pontius Pilate who sentenced Jesus to death and then washed his hands of him. Prefers not to get herself involved in the difficult situations in the house.
* Calls Bernarda by the informal ‘tú’ as they are the same age and have known each other for many years. However there is no affection in the relationship.
* Bernarda’s confidante.
* Frequently reminded of her background and status by Bernarda.
* Happy to talk in a risqué manner and discuss sexual matters with the daughters.
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| **Angustias** | * Name means anxiety. Symbolises her age, ugliness and desire to marry.
* Eldest daughter and the only one from Bernada’s first marriage.
* Heir to a considerable fortune which is why Pepe el Romano wants to marry her.
* The most influenced by Bernarda.
* Isn’t happy to be marrying Pepe.
* Difficult relationship with her sisters.
* Poncia says she is too old to marry and won’t survive having her first child.
* Pepe gives her a peal engagement ring – pearls represent tears as opposed to the traditional diamonds.
* Cruel to her siblings.
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| **Martirio** | * Names means martyrdom, suffering. She has poor health and a hunchback, is ugly, bitter and jealous.
* Pessimistic.
* Had the chance to marry but wasn’t allowed as he was from an inferior class.
* Very jealous of Angustias.
* Accepts the repression of her mother even though she doesn’t like it.
* Won’t tolerate others breaking the moral codes.
* Very jealous of Adela even though they previously had a close relationship.
* Hurts Adela by telling her that Pepe is dead, when he isn’t.
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**Secondary Characters – Those who have little influence on the plot**

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| **María Josefa** | * Bernarda’s mother.
* Suffering from dementia.
* Locked away out of sight in order to keep the family reputation.
* Mixed in her ramblings there is some good perception and clarity of thought about the family.
* Echoes her granddaughter’s longing for marriage and children.
* Shows us how hard-hearted Bernarda is.
* No affection or significant relationship with other characters.
* Potentially imposed the same tyranny on Bernarda when her father died.
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| **Magdalena** | * Name associated with love, honesty, fallen women, humility and tears. Mary Magdalene in the bible.
* Second oldest of the daughters.
* Loved her father the most and faints during the funeral.
* Was her father’s favourite.
* Cries easily which her mother doesn’t like.
* Resigned to following her mother’s orders. Agrees with her to an extent on the role of women.
* Admires Adela’s bravery.
* Convinced that she’ll never marry.
* Calmer than the others but still bickers with Angustias.
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| **La Criada** | * We never find out her name – belongs to a lower class.
* Very submissive and never rebels.
* Only complains to Poncia that she is never allowed to rest.
* Had an affair with Bernarda’s late husband.
* Shows no mercy to the beggar and treats her just as she would be treated by Bernarda.
* Takes care of María Josefa.
* Scared of Bernarda but speaks freely to the daughters and Poncia.
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| **La Mendiga** | * Shows how behavioural traits have passed from Bernarda to La Criada.
* Treated in an unnecessarily cruel manner.
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| **Prudencia** | * The neighbour that comes to visit.
* Means prudent and sensible.
* Controlled by her husband.
* Complies with what is socially acceptable but is unhappy about it.
* Devout Catholic and her solace is in the church.
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| **Amelia** | * The third daughter.
* Caring personality.
* Believes that being born a women is the worst kind of punishment as they have no freedom.
* Naïeve and inexperienced.
* Accepts the period of mourning and whatever else comes to her.
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| **Las mujeres y la muchacha** | * Come to the house after the funeral and make quiet comments which help us to learn about Bernarda’s personality.
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**Invisible characters – Those that never appear but play an important part in the plot**

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| **Pepe el Romano** | * Never seen but is omnipresent.
* Without him the whole drama wouldn’t have occurred.
* The most handsome man in the town. Young (25), much younger than Angustias (39).
* Must come from a good background.
* Greedy – wants Angustias’ wealth.
* Has a relationship with Adela a year before he decides to court Angustias. Presumably for love or strong sexual desire that isn’t stronger than his desire for the wealth.
* Loved by Martirio in silence.
* Represents a threat to Bernardas authority and morality when she tries to kill him.
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**Characters that are referred to – Those who don’t appear and whose actions play a minor role in the plot**

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| **Antonio María Benavides** | Bernarda’s former husband |
| **Enrique Humanes** | The former suitor (pretendiente) of Martirio |
| **Paca la Roseta** | ‘la única mujer mala que temenos en el pueblo’ |
| **Adelaida** | The woman who is being kept inside by her boyfriend. |
| **La mujer vestida de lentejuelas** | The lady in town singing and dancing with an accordion. Prostitute. |
| **Don Arturo** | The notary dealing with the finances of the inheritance. |
| **El hombre de los encajes** | The man that delivers the lace that Adela and Martirio argue over. |
| **La hija de la Librada** | The woman that has a baby, kills it and hides it. |
| **Los segadores** | The harvesters that work on the fields. |

**Plot summary**

**Act One**

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| **Bernarda’s husband’s funeral. La Poncia and la Criada are alone, cleaning and criticising Bernarda.** |
| **Bernarda and her daughters arrive with the women from the town who criticise her quietly.** |
| **The mourning is announced to last eight years.** |
| **Bernarda is angry with Angustias for standing listening to the men outside.** |
| **Adela puts on her green dress. Magdalena tells her Angustias is going to marry Pepe.** |
| **Adela gets nervous when she finds out Angustias is going to marry Pepe.** |
| **Bernarda and Poncia talk about the inheritance. Maria Josefa says she want to get married and live at the seaside.** |

**Act Two**

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| **The daughters talk about when Pepe comes to court Angustias. She says he left at 1am but Poncia says he left at 4am.** |
| **Adela says that she’ll do as she likes with her body. Poncia tries to convince her to let Angustias marry Pepe.** |
| **The arrival of the happy harvesters in town cheers the girls up.** |
| **Martirio steals the picture of Pepe from Angustias but says it was a joke.** |
| **Poncia insuiates that Adela is in love with Pepe because he didn’t leave until 4am.** |
| **Martirio and Adela argue about Pepe. Adela is horrified by the baby-killing and the persecution of the mother, but no one else is.** |

**Act Three**

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| **The family has dinner with a neighbour. They talk about the wedding and there are bad omens.** |
| **Adela wants to leave but the others are watching her. Angustias tells Bernarda that Pepe won’t be coming that night.** |
| **Bernada rejects Poncia’s advice and goes to bed. Adela goes out.** |
| **Maria Josefa appears with a lamb in her arms reciting verses and saying that Pepe is going to destroy them.** |
| **Martirio admits to Adela that she is in love with Pepe and says she is going to stop her from seeing him.**  |
| **Pepe is heard. Martirio doesn’t let Adela go. Berarda shoots at Pepe, who escapes. Martirio says that Pepe is dead. Adela, believing this lie, kills herself.** |