

Galileo Study Guide

Galileo by Bertolt Brecht

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Plot Summary

Galileo by Bertolt Brecht is a short history play about the scientist and astronomer Galileo Galilei. It charts Galileo's later years, when his experiments with telescopes and development of evidence for a heliocentric model of the solar system threatened the Church, resulting in Galileo's inquisition and his eventual recantation of his scientific findings.

Middle-aged Galileo, already a famed scientist living in Venice, is in his study when he receives a geocentric model of the universe, geocentrism being the long-accepted theory about the cosmos and one Galileo knows is not true. Galileo shows Andrea, son of his housekeeper, how the earth circles the sun even though to the eyes it appears that the sun is moving through the sky. Ludovico, a student, arrives to study under Galileo. He tells Galileo about a new device, the telescope, that is sweeping Europe but which has not arrived to Italy. Priuli, a curator, arrives to inform Galileo that the university will not offer Galileo a much-needed honorarium (money); Galileo must prove his worth by inventing something useful.

Galileo takes the idea of the telescope and presents it as his own invention to the Venetian Navy. The Senators of Venice all approve, and Galileo gets his honorarium after all due to the telescope.

Later, using an improved telescope, Galileo makes discoveries about the moon and the rotation of the stars. Most importantly, he notices that the moons of Jupiter orbit that planet. This shatters the geocentric model of the universe; heavenly bodies are not supposed to orbit but instead stay fixed in a series of glass spheres.

In Florence, Galileo and his theories meet resistance. No members of the court will dare look through his telescope. The court decides to seek the opinion of Rome's preeminent astronomer, Christopher Clavius, as to Galileo's heliocentric evidence. In Rome, as church members ridicule Galileo, Clavius emerges and states that Galileo's evidence is sound.

Galileo is thereafter officially warned against pursuing astronomy by two Cardinals, Bellarmine and Barberini. Galileo decides to abandon astronomy, and eight years pass. He is then notified that the current Pope is ready to die, and Cardinal Barberini, less conservative and a former mathematician, will succeed as Pope. For Galileo, this means a chance to resume his research with less threat from the Church.

Galileo is found out, and the new Pope reluctantly agrees to have an inquisition for Galileo. As his servants wait for him and hope he will defy the Church in the name of science, Galileo emerges a broken man who cowardly agreed to recant his heliocentric research. All are disappointed.

Several years pass. Galileo is a prisoner of the Church. Andrea comes to visit him and learns that Galileo wrote the last of his astronomical masterpiece, the *Discorsi*, while

under house arrest. Andrea smuggles the text out of Italy, with the hope that Galileo's research will have the profound impact it deserves.



Scenes I - II

Scenes I - II Summary

Scene I: Galileo is in his study. Andrea, the boy of his housekeeper, arrives with a gift from the court of Naples. It is an astronomical model. Galileo dismisses it as an "antique." Andrea wants to learn more about it, so Galileo gives him a lesson and has him describe the various spheres (representing planets), stars, etc. At the center is the Earth, around which all other heavenly bodies spin. This geocentric model of the universe, Galileo tells us, has been believed for over two thousand years. He compares it to a cage. Galileo states that this idea is changing, however. It began when ships started to stray from coasts and explore the oceans. A millennium of faith is becoming a millennium of doubt. Soon, Galileo predicts, everyone will know that the earth is the body that's rotating and people along with it, and not the sun.

Andrea thinks Galileo is "off again," not making sense. Andrea says he knows the sun is moving because he can see it pass through the sky everyday. Galileo proves otherwise by sitting Andrea down and then picking up his chair and rotating the boy around an iron washstand symbolizing the sun. Andrea sees that he moved and not the washstand (sun).

Mrs. Sarti the housekeeper and Andrea's mother catches Galileo and scolds the man for putting crazy ideas in Andrea's head. Galileo tells Andrea that he shouldn't talk about Galileo's ideas outside because "certain of the authorities won't like it."

A young man, Ludovico, visits Galileo. He has been sent to study science under Galileo for thirty scudi a month. Ludovico admits he knows nothing about science and that his specialty is actually horses. However, Ludovico tells Galileo about a wondrous new device he saw in Amsterdam, a tube capped by glass lenses through which everything appears much larger. Galileo becomes interested and sketches out the design with Ludovico's help. Though Galileo does not suffer fools gladly, he needs the money and agrees to tutor Ludovico. He then has Andrea go to the local lens maker and buy two powerful lenses.

A curator, Priuli, arrives, and informs Galileo he cannot offer him an honorarium (badly needed money) because Galileo's current theories and research (astronomy) have little real-world value or use. Galileo states that he may have something for Priuli with plenty of real-world value. Priuli leaves, and Andrea arrives with the lenses. Galileo holds them in his hands towards the window; through them Andrea then Galileo can make out tiny details from houses many yards away.

Scene II: Galileo, along with his daughter Virginia and friend Sagredo, are at an official function along with the senators of Venice. They are near the Venice harbor where a great many ships are gathered. Priuli introduces Galileo, and Galileo informs the senators about his new invention, the telescope, which he claims he has been working



on a long seventeen years. Galileo believes the telescope will be invaluable to the Venetian navy because sailors using telescopes will be able to see enemy ships well before the enemy ship can see them. Virginia presents the telescope to the senators on a cushion. There is much applause and praise for Galileo. Priuli assures Galileo that the telescope is worth at least 500 scudi a year. Galileo's money problems are apparently solved. As the Senators marvel at the telescope, Galileo tells Sagredo that he has already found out two things about the universe by using the telescope; the moon does not give off its own light and out of what the Milky Way galaxy is composed.

A man named Matti approaches Galileo and wishes to lure him away from Venice in order to invent things for Florence. Galileo states he can draw up a copy of the telescope for Matti, but he does not have the time or inclination to work for Florence.

Scenes I - II Analysis

The introduction of the geocentric astronomical model is a very visual way of demonstrating the main thrust of the drama to follow - that of Galileo's heliocentric model of the universe and the conflict it creates. Galileo compares the geocentric model to aristocracy, the notion that the aristocracy believe that are at the center of society and that everyone else revolves around them. Therefore, Galileo's heliocentric model will not only be a revolution in science, it will be a revolution in the social order. Given the playwright Bertolt Brecht's Marxist views, it is not surprising that Brecht would be interested in introducing class and the toppling of the aristocracy in with Galileo's scientific achievement.

Galileo's blunt discourse with the young student Ludovico, whom Galileo almost dismisses, helps to characterize Galileo as an old crank, a cantankerous grump who has little patience for those of lesser intellect and learning. However, Galileo takes the time to teach his housekeeper's boy, Andrea, about the universe, so already there are several sides to Galileo.

Galileo is also deceptive, shrewd, and pragmatic. He claims the invention of the telescope (which he heard about from Ludovico) for himself, claiming it took him a long seventeen years to accomplish. He has presented the telescope not for the glory and advantage of the Venetian navy, which he claims in Scene II, but for money.



Scenes III - IV

Scenes III - IV Summary

Scene III: Galileo is with his friend Sagredo at home as both take turns looking through a telescope. Visual evidence points to no other conclusion but that the moon has peaks and valleys just like the earth, which is unheard of. Galileo states that, to an observer on the moon, the earth would appear sometimes like a crescent, sometimes like half a circle, just as the moon does to those on earth.

Priuli visits. Galileo's so-called invention, the telescope, has arrived by the boatload to Venice and will be peddled on every street corner starting in the morning for a mere 2 scudi. The Venetian senators will be furious when they realize their "naval advantage" is something everyone in Europe has. Priuli is hurt and feels swindled by Galileo, who got his money. Galileo states that he may be on to something even more valuable than the telescope, that he is making sense of the movement of the stars and may come up with a way to tell time based on the movements of the stars. Priuli leaves in a huff. Galileo defends his actions to Sagredo, stating he needed the money, and his daughter Virginia needs a dowry.

Observing points of light around Jupiter and referring to charts, Galileo and Sagredo come to the conclusion that there must be satellites orbiting Jupiter, as if Jupiter was another earth and there were other moons. This means that the two-thousand-years old model of the cosmos, that of fixed spheres encircling the earth, is false. Sagredo is astounded and asks Galileo where God is in this new system of understanding. Galileo states he is a mathematician not a theologian. Sagredo warns that Galileo's theories are downright dangerous to Galileo and that ten years ago a man named Bruno was burned at the stake for espousing similar views. Galileo is not worried.

Later, Galileo states that he may take up Matti's offer after all and go to Florence. He has written a formal letter to the Medicis of Florence asking to join their court. This would provide a cushy job for Galileo. This makes Sagredo very worried; monks control the Florence court, and Galileo's view of the universe amounts to sacrilege. Sagredo fears Galileo will be burned at the stake, but Galileo is intent on Florence.

Scene IV: Some time has passed, and Galileo is now in a new home in Florence. He is by his telescope, attended by many court members, including the young Prince Medici (a boy of nine), a philosopher, a mathematician, several attending ladies, and Lord Chamberlain. Andrea and Mrs. Sarti are also in attendance, along with a new servant of Galileo's, an old man named Federzoni.

The philosopher states that Aristotle has laid down a harmonious, perfect view of the universe, and now Galileo is attempting to introduce chaos and disharmony into such a perfect tradition. Galileo keeps his responses diplomatic and subservient, merely asking if the Prince or anyone else would like to see the moons of Jupiter through his



telescope. The mathematician mentions the possibility that the telescope is defective and may not be depicting what Galileo thinks it is. They again charge that Galileo is trying to destroy two-thousand years of perfectly fine tradition given to them by the unquestionable Aristotle. Galileo doesn't see the sense in defending "shaken teachings," and states that his time with the sailors of Venice deep at sea has taught him a great many things about the sky. The philosopher dismisses the sailors for their low class.

In the end, the young Prince is whisked away to another engagement, and no one in the Prince's retinue has dared look through the telescope. The Lord Chamberlain informs Galileo that they will get the opinion from the preeminent astronomer Christopher Clavius, in regards to Galileo and his theories.

Scenes III - IV Analysis

Scenes III and IV accelerate and sharpen the drama by demonstrating exactly what Galileo is up against in regards to his revolutionary theories. Sagredo in Scene III confides his fear and anxiety about Galileo's future safety and mentions Bruno, who was burned at the stake ten years earlier for holding similar views about the cosmos. The mention of Bruno and his manner of execution provides a very real threat for the audience to digest. Priuli's entrance in Scene III and his huff about Galileo's ruse concerning the telescope provides some comic relief and a lighter moment in what is otherwise a serious and cerebral scene. The character of Sagredo further allows the audience to understand the theological consequences for Galileo's theories in the context of the seventeenth century. That man is not the center of the universe, is a concept which is anathema to contemporary Christian thought of Galileo's day. Why would God have sent his only Son to a planet like many other planets, twirling on the edge of the universe?

Where Scene III foreshadows and predicts conflict in Florence, Scene IV makes this conflict real. Galileo is truly challenged on his views for the first time; with Scene IV comes the sense of how ingrained the old idea of the universe is. For the philosopher and mathematician defending the status quo, the "truth" is a dangerous notion that can lead "anywhere," including presumably to the devil and away from God. There is also a class issue. When Galileo contends that he learned many important things from sailors, he is more easily dismissed because of the low status of who he interacted with and learned from.



Scenes V - VI

Scenes V - VI Summary

Scene V: Now at the Papal College in Rome, Galileo is outside waiting upon the judgment of the most trusted astronomer Christopher Clavius. He must suffer through various monks, prelates, and scholars making fun of his theory. They chide "Mother Earth" for drinking too much and physically act out what they imagine life would be like on a moving Earth.

An "Old Cardinal" emerges and, dispensing with the frivolity of the lower church members, calls Galileo a "slave of a multiplication table" and an "enemy of mankind" for his heliocentric model. When introduced to Galileo, the Old Cardinal ominously sees a resemblance in Galileo to Bruno, the man burned at the stake. The Old Cardinal then launches into a diatribe, stating he simply won't tolerate Galileo's theory and that the one and true God places Man at the center of the universe.

Christopher Clavius emerges from seclusion and announces that Galileo is correct in his views. The Old Cardinal is spared from hearing Clavius' pronouncement and is whisked away by his handlers. A Little Monk tells Galileo that now the theologians will have to "set the heavens right again."

Scene VI: The scene is Cardinal Bellarmin's house. Bellarmin is having a party and has invited Galileo. Everything seems festive and relaxed. Galileo is with his now teenage daughter Virginia, who is promised to Ludovico his old student. Galileo is introduced to Bellarmin and another cardinal, Barberini, who exchange witticisms and proverbs from the Bible with Galileo, who is up to the task. When Bellarmin asks Galileo how Man, the created, could come to know the truth about God the Creator (in terms of how God created the universe), Galileo states that man can be blind to what the Bible means just as man can be blind to what the sky and the stars mean. This "crosses the line"; Bellarmin sternly reminds Galileo that it is the Church that interprets the Bible and not laymen like Galileo. At this time Bellarmin also officially warns Galileo against doing anything further with his heliocentric model. A secretary is there to transcribe the conversation and make it official. Galileo tries to protest, but Bellarmin is firm, stating that Science must be subservient to the Church and that there are things Man is not meant to know.

In the last section of the scene, the Church Inquisitor speaks with daughter Virginia and, in a polite but subtly menacing way, tells her she should look after her father and rein in his imagination.

Scenes V - VI Analysis

Whereas in Scene IV Galileo was receiving resistance to his ideas from the court and aristocracy, Scene V shows Galileo receiving even more fervent and threatening



resistance from the church hierarchy. Those on the lower rungs of the church hierarchy, the monks and prelates, roundly and childishly mock Galileo, physically acting out a scenario in which the earth is moving beneath their feet like a log rolling in water. In contrast, the Old Cardinal reacts with disgust and righteous anger, believing Galileo to mock the very God who has provided for him. At the end of Scene V, Clavius emerges and states that Galileo is extracting the correct truths from his telescope observations. The Old Cardinal is taken home and spared from the knowledge, demonstrating that the "Old Guard" of the church is wholly unprepared for Galileo's revelations. The scene ends with a "Little Monk" ominously stating that it is now time for the theologians to set the heavens right again, meaning that the church will go to war with Galileo.

Scene VI has a rather dramatic sharp turn in the middle. The first half is full of festiveness and gaiety; Galileo appears to be the toast of the town; his daughter is grown up and betrothed to Ludovico, and Galileo's exchanges with the church representatives, Bellarmin and Barberini seem to be light and harmless as they exchange Proverbs. However, Galileo crosses the line when he infers that the church is blind to the true meaning of the Bible, just as they are to the true meaning of the sky. Bellarmin strongly reminds Galileo that it is not his place to interpret the Bible, and thereafter, Galileo is officially warned (in front of Secretaries) against furthering his heliocentric model of the universe.

The Inquisitor's final dialogue with Virginia is ominous in that it indicates that not only Galileo but his family is in danger. Virginia is urged to stay with her father and tend to him; the implicit threat is clear that there are consequences for the family should Galileo remain untethered with his dangerous thinking.



Scenes VII - VIII

Scenes VII - VIII Summary

Scene VII: The "Little Monk" from Scene V visits Galileo and informs him that he has given up his career as a physicist in light of Galileo's recent discoveries. Little Monk tells the story of his poor family in Campagna who grows olives. This hand-to-mouth existence is all they have known. Little Monk believes that his family continues to suffer and toil because they believe that God watches over them, has a plan for them, and promises to reward their suffering. Galileo's work threatens this very belief, and Little Monk believes that the comfort provided by God (or the belief of God) is worth more than discovering the physics of the universe.

Galileo responds that technology and knowledge could bring Little Monk's family and others like them to even greater heights of happiness and prosperity. He gives the example of the irrigation technology he invented, something that could truly help Little Monk's family. However, Little Monk's family must help themselves; Galileo contends that they must strive for knowledge for knowledge to benefit them.

Frustrated, Galileo shows Little Monk a manuscript describing what makes the ocean ebb and flow (the moon). Little Monk, despite himself, is captivated and begins to read the manuscript. Galileo ribs him for his "blasphemy" and wonders how long he (Galileo) can stay silent to the public about what he knows. The scene ends with Galileo helping Little Monk decipher the manuscript.

Scene VIII: Eight years have passed. In Galileo's home, the same servants help Galileo with a new experiment. Galileo has abandoned astronomy (his nearby telescope has a cloth over it) and is instead investigating why certain objects float in water and others sink. The Rector of the University (the "Philosopher" of Scene IV) arrives with a new manuscript about the phenomenon known as sunspots. Galileo refuses to look at it, as he wants to stir up no more trouble. Galileo shows his servants that Aristotle's theory behind sinking or floating - it depends on whether an object can "divide" the water - is false, by showing that an iron needle on a piece of paper indeed floats.

Ludovico returns from his country and his vineyards. He has come to wed Virginia, who goes to get her wedding dress on to show Ludovico. Ludovico brings two pieces of news: one, Christopher Clavius is investigating the sunspots and the scientific community is abuzz with theories; and two, the Pope is on his deathbed and is likely to be succeeded by Cardinal Barberini, a more progressive member of the church who used to be a mathematician. Galileo is overjoyed; he feels that with a less conservative Pope, he might take up astronomy again without threat. He admits that he is very interested in the new sunspot research and would like to prove false the current theories about them.



Galileo slyly asks Ludovico why he has delayed marrying his daughter for these eight years. Ludovico admits that he worried that Galileo might take up astronomy again. If Ludovico was associated by marriage with Galileo's blasphemous studies, Ludovico might also be in danger from the church, and the peasants on his land, which Ludovico calls mere animals, may revolt. Galileo champions knowledge and truth over Ludovico's concerns and boldly decides to conduct his experiments anew with the telescope. His servants happily set up the telescope and his instruments.

Ludovico calls off the marriage and decides never to see Virginia again. He leaves. Galileo begins his research. Virginia enters with her wedding dress on, sees Galileo at the telescope, and realizes what has transpired. She faints.

Scenes VII - VIII Analysis

Brecht gives Little Monk a very generous and heartfelt monologue to establish the logic behind the forces conspiring against Galileo. In Scene VI, we saw the religion in the form of an all-powerful theocracy which sees Galileo's research as a danger to the social order and thus a danger to their power. In scene VII, religion is given a much more benevolent face. Little Monk, like Galileo, is a scientist who has given up his occupation and his passion not for church power, but because of his poor family, and not wanting to shatter the very beliefs that keep them going. Here Little Monk is appealing to Galileo's emotion rather than intellect, and his pleading works. By Scene VIII, Galileo has abandoned astronomy for years and has taken up the very innocent and safe scientific research of objects floating on water.

Scene VIII reveals a defeated Galileo, who has caved into the pressures of the Church and Little Monk's emotional appeal). He has retained his prestige and is called "the greatest living authority on physics" by the community. And yet, he is unhappy, as evidenced by the suddenness with which Galileo jumps at the chance to restart his astronomy research with the changing of the Pope. However, Galileo's decision does not come without a severe consequence; he loses a potential son-in-law, in a time and culture when there is a heavy burden on a family to marry off its daughters. Thus, Galileo's decision has come at the expense of Virginia, who Galileo previously said is not very smart and whose window for marriage is drawing to a close. The audience is left to decide whether Galileo's decision is bold and courageous or inconsiderate and harmful to his family.



Scenes IX - X

Scenes IX - X Summary

Scene IX: Scene IX is a carnival scene not involving any of the primary characters. It depicts April Fool's Day, 1632. A ballad singer sings about the established order of the universe with the earth at the center and the strict hierarchy thereafter (Cardinals circle Pope, Bishops circle Cardinals, etc.). The singer then states how Galileo's revelations have disrupted this view of the universe. Without this order, the singer sardonically sings (in verse), the peasants are likely to act out and do what they please. A "dwarf-astronomer" and other carnival dancers and performers act out the singer's words as they delight and amuse the gathered crowd.

The ballad singer reveals more consequences of this new disorder. Carpenters will build for themselves, and not the church. Tenants might oust their lords. Farmers may use their cows' milk to feed their babies instead of enrich the priests. After this verse passage, a "rich couple" (performers) are harassed by the carnival actors, who steal their fine garments. The ballad singer speaks to the ambivalence some may have at the prospect of a New Age: chaos may reign, but obviously there are many injustices that could be addressed with a toppling of the existing order.

Finally, a parade float in the shape of Galileo is brought forth. Galileo is depicted holding out a bible with its pages crossed out and shaking his head "No." Galileo is pronounced as "The Bible-Killer" as the gathered crowd roars approval.

Scene X: Galileo and Virginia are at the Florence court, waiting on Prince Medici. They are intentionally ignored by the rector. They encounter Matti, the iron founder, who confides that he is firmly on Galileo's side, the side of truth and knowledge. Matti characterizes Italy as a repressive, ignorant place. If the Church ever acts against Galileo, Matti assures Galileo that he has many friends who would come to his aid. Galileo, for his part, wants no part of allies or people wishing him to be the face of a scientific revolution; he wants to merely be a scientist who reports his findings.

The Inquisitor meets Galileo, and says that the Prince is unable to greet Galileo. Galileo offers his latest book on astronomy as a gift to the Prince, but the Inquisitor refuses to accept the book. Instead, the Inquisitor states that the Florence court will no longer oppose a request from Rome for Galileo to be summoned and questioned for his beliefs.

Scenes IX - X Analysis

Scene IX is a departure from the rest of Galileo, a carnival scene not involving any of the principal characters. As such, it does not move the narrative forward or provide insight into any character. Instead, it is conceptual in nature. It broadens the consequences of Galileo's scientific revelations and applies it to Marxist class struggles.

The ballad singer, the lynchpin of this conceptual framework, first speaks of the old order, known as the Great Chain of Being, in which there is a rigid hierarchy which maintains social order. By taking earth from the center of this social order, Galileo in effect undermines the very foundation of society. Brecht, being a Marxist, specifically summons up the notion of dialectical materialism, the idea that history is a series of class struggles. In the "New Age" Galileo is ushering in, opposed classes (the Marxist "thesis" and "antithesis") will clash, resulting in a new world order ("synthesis").

Scene X represents Galileo at his most fearful and cowardly. However, even this "cowardice" is flavored with complexity. When Galileo is approached by Matti and assured he has powerful friends, Galileo shows timidity and fearfulness when he wishes not to be seen with Matti and wishes Matti would keep his voice down. However, Galileo also makes it clear he does not want to be the figurehead of a movement, not only because he fears the consequences, but because it is not his place as a scientist to lead. He wishes only to conduct his research and report his findings, and then society can do with it what it will.



Scenes XI - XII

Scenes XI - XII Summary

Scene XI: Barberini, now the Pope, is preparing to make a public appearance, and as the scene proceeds, Barberini gradually assumes the vestments of the Pope. Barberini is resisting the Inquisitor in regards to Galileo's fate. Barberini (indicated before as a former mathematician) refuses to "set myself up against the multiplication table" by punishing Galileo. The Inquisitor reminds Barberini of the enormous burden he has and the vast amounts of people who are looking to him to guide them. Barberini seems to buckle under the tremendous pressure, but in the end he will not issue a "condemnation of physical facts" and neither will Barberini condemn Galileo to torture or death. He allows Galileo to undergo an inquisition, but with no torture, only the threat of torture. The Inquisitor agrees and leaves to arrange Galileo's inquisition.

Scene XII: Andrea, Federzoni, Virginia, and Little Monk are in Rome, in the garden of the Florentine ambassador, awaiting the outcome of Galileo's trial (inquisition). Virginia takes the time to pray; the others express their hope that Galileo will not recant, in the name of truth. An official comes to them and says that Galileo is expected to recant at five o'clock and that a bell will ring at that time as a sign of Galileo's "repentance." All the servants wait with bated breath for five o'clock. Minutes pass, five o'clock passes, and there is still no bell. The servants take this as a sign that Galileo refused to recant, and they rejoice. Andrea and Federzoni go so far as to proclaim that a new age of reason has begun with Galileo's decision.

Unfortunately, the bell sounds, and a town crier issues Galileo's refutation of his astronomy theories. His servants and daughter are heartbroken. Galileo comes out, and no one greets him; everyone is ashamed and disappointed and cannot bear to look at him.

Scenes XI - XII Analysis

The manner in which Barberini gradually assumes the vestments of the Pope throughout Scene XI is certainly intentional. His vestments are not only a symbol of the burdens and responsibilities of the Pope Barberini now must carry, they also symbolize a change in the man himself. At the start of the scene, Barberini is adamant and strong in his refusals to deny or punish Galileo (and therefore the progress of science); by the end, dressed fully as the Pope, he agrees to Galileo's trial short of torture or death.

Scene XII represents the climax of the play; interestingly, it hardly features Galileo, whose critical choice (upon which most of the drama depends) is made offscreen and only represented by the tolling of the bell. The choice - whether Galileo will falsely repent to save his life, or refuse to bow to the Church and face death in return for standing up for science and the truth - has many consequences. Galileo's personal

reputation with his closest associates - his gathered servants and his daughter - is immediately at stake. Additionally, Federzoni believes that nothing short of a New Age of Reason is dependent on Galileo's actions. Also, as we have seen in the carnival scene and elsewhere, Galileo's decision implicitly determines whether the repressive and unjust traditional social order will remain in place, or whether it will be toppled.



Scenes XIII - XIV

Scenes XIII - XIV Summary

Scene XIII: Perhaps three or more years have passed. Galileo has become somewhat senile and nearly blind. He is guarded by a Church official and is essentially a prisoner. Virginia, now forty, cares for him. An anonymous person sends a goose to Galileo as a gift; Virginia gives orders for the chef to prepare the goose.

Virginia has written down a dictation by Galileo, concerning some minor unrest in Genoa and Galileo's advice to the Archbishop about how to deal with it. Virginia thinks it's a fine letter and perfectly safe to send. There is a knock at the door, and Andrea enters. Virginia is afraid Galileo will not want to see Andrea, but Galileo invites him in. Andrea reveals that science has ground to a standstill after Galileo's recantation, not only in Italy but across Europe. Virginia leaves to help the cook. Galileo, alone with Andrea, then confesses he has finished his "Discorsi," his grand work about the cosmos. He had written it secretly, page by page, and deposited it in a hollowed-out globe on the desk. Andrea recovers it and sticks it under his coat. Andrea is elated; he takes this newest revelation to mean that Galileo fooled the Church all along, that it was his plan to continue his work in secret, and that Galileo ultimately recanted only to live long enough to finish his masterwork.

Galileo says that none of this is true; he had no plans to continue work and only continued to work out of irresistible habit. In fact, Galileo states that he is a "sell-out," a traitor, that he has betrayed his profession and that he was a coward who feared death. Andrea states that fear of death is human; nevertheless, Galileo feels his research has been perverted to serve those in power, and that he hadn't the valor to fight the way he should have. Galileo colorfully states that the "new age" they envisioned has turned into a "blood-spattered whore" instead. Andrea leaves both with Galileo's "Discorsi" and a more optimistic view of things than Galileo has.

Scene XIV: Andrea is heading out of Italy and is waiting at the customs office. A customs officer inquires as to his possessions and particularly his books, and Andrea assures him that all his books contain harmless mathematical formulas, which satisfies the official. As Andrea is waiting to be able to leave, he sees a group of children singing a nursery rhyme about a neighbor who they think is a witch. In her home, where they cannot see her, she is casting a witch-like shadow.

Andrea takes one boy aside and asks how he is sure the woman is a witch. Andrea tells the boy he must trust his own eyes and not rumor or what the others say. Andrea lifts the boy so he can see over the woman's fence, and the boy sees only a regular old lady stirring porridge, and not a witch on a broomstick like the words he was singing. However, the boy goes back to the children and joins in their chant about the "witch" once again. The customs officer laughs at Andrea's folly. The play ends with a sort of

extra-textual verse, warning the audience to guard the light of science well, or else it will spiral downward and "consume us all."

Scenes XIII - XIV Analysis

The play has taken a tragic turn, as Galileo has been revealed to be a coward with his act of false repentance. By repenting, Galileo has "unseen" what he has seen with his own eyes, a ludicrous situation as pointed out by Galileo's servants in Scene XII. As a physical reminder of Galileo acquiring "intellectual blindness," Galileo in his final years is nearly blind. His blindness is directly tied to his scientific pursuits; his daughter warns him against writing anything down because it worsens his eyes, but in fact Galileo has been writing in secret (his Discorsi).

Smartly, Brecht provides the audience with a false sense of hope in this scene. Andrea is overjoyed that Galileo has been writing in secret, considering it Galileo's final act of defiance, an indication that Galileo "had the last laugh" in regards to his dealings with the Church. Unfortunately this is not the case. Galileo has finished his Discorsi out of a sort of habit, an addiction he cannot stop. There is nothing more lofty to it. In Galileo's final major speech, he declares himself a poor scientist who has betrayed his field.

Scene XIV rings the final bell of pessimism. Andrea pulls a boy aside and shows him the woman the mob of children had been demonizing as a witch is merely an old woman stirring porridge. The boy, like Galileo, acquires his own "blindness" in refusing to believe even his own eyes, rejoining the mob. Brecht's final statement indicates that science is at constant odds with the ignorance inherent in human nature.



Characters

Galileo Galilei

Galileo Galilei, at the start of the play, is a highly-respected scientist and astronomer and professor at the University of Padua. He has a brilliant mind and is especially adept at looking at the natural world with fresh, unprejudiced eyes; that is, he does not rely on preconceived notions or faith. This puts him directly at odds with the establishment in the form of the Catholic Church, which depends on the long-held view of the universe as one reason for its continued power.

He is confident in his abilities and acumen and has little patience for those of lesser intellect or those too invested in the traditional (wrong) view of the universe. He is also slyly shrewd, as evidenced by the episode in which he claimed the telescope as his own invention and stated he worked on it for seventeen years, when in fact he merely stole the idea and appropriated it for money.

The central question of the play is whether Galileo will have the courage and strength to stand up to the Church and refuse to recant his evidence for a heliocentric model of the universe. In the last few scenes, Galileo reveals he does not have such strength; he gives in to the Church and recants on his astronomy, disappointing his family and servants, who deem him a coward. Years later, a broken man, Galileo believes he betrayed his profession and therefore betrayed the truth by his cowardly act.

Andrea Sarti

Andrea Sarti is the son of Galileo's housekeeper, Mrs. Sarti, and is approximately nine years old when the play begins. He is very curious, and Galileo is generous enough to treat him many times as a surrogate son, teaching him some science when Andrea expresses curiosity. In the first scene, by circling Andrea seated in a chair around an iron washstand, Galileo demonstrates to Andrea that it's possible for the sun to be in a fixed position even though it appears to the eye to move across the sky.

Andrea grows a son- or grandson-like attachment to Galileo. He comes to admire Galileo for his commitment to science and his bravery in pursuing astronomy even when it runs counter to Christian dogma. However, he also suffers quietly through the eight years in which Galileo gives up astronomy after a threat from the Church. Galileo's decision to take up astronomy again upon the change of Pope similarly infuses Andrea with renewed energy and confidence in his hero Galileo.

When Galileo is undergoing his inquisition, Andrea is his biggest and most vocal supporter, confident Galileo will not cave in. Naturally, Andrea is then perhaps the most heartbroken and crushed when Galileo does cave in to Church pressure. Andrea cannot bear to speak to Galileo for years, during which Galileo is under house arrest. Andrea finally visits Galileo and is treated to a bittersweet gift with Galileo's completed Discorsi



on astronomy. Andrea believes Galileo planned his recantation and outsmarted the Church; Galileo sadly informs him this is not so. Regardless, Andrea summons up his own courage by smuggling Galileo's Discorsi out of town, intent on carrying on Galileo's legacy.

Ludovico Marsili

Ludovico is a student who comes to study under Galileo. He stays with Galileo for years afterward, eventually becoming engaged to Galileo's daughter Virginia. However, when Galileo takes up astronomy despite the Church warning him not to, Ludovico feels in personal danger, calling off the engagement and severing ties with the Galileis.

Virginia Galilei

Virginia is Galileo's daughter. Galileo worries about Virginia finding a husband because her dowry is not large and Virginia is "not that smart." Galileo essentially ruins Virginia's chance for a husband when he decides to take up astronomy, after which Ludovico breaks off his engagement with Virginia. In Galileo's later years, unmarried Virginia becomes Galileo's nursemaid and caretaker.

Federzoni

Federzoni is an older servant Galileo acquires upon his move to Florence from Venice. He is smart but does not have the education or the knowledge of Latin in order to truly understand Galileo's experiments. However, he does act as a trusty lab assistant and helper.

Christopher Clavius

Christopher Clavius is Rome's preeminent astronomer. Galileo's heliocentric evidence is brought to Clavius to prove or disprove. Clavius admits that Galileo is accurate in his findings, which rocks the Church.

The Little Monk

The Little Monk abandons science after Galileo's heliocentric model is proved. He believes religion is more important to people than science, especially poor people who otherwise would have nothing else for which to live. His impassioned plea to Galileo is one of the reasons Galileo initially abandons astronomy.



Cardinal Barberini

Cardinal Barberini, along with Cardinal Bellarmine, officially warns Galileo against pursuing his dangerous astronomical theories. Later Barberini becomes Pope. A former mathematician, Barberini is very reticent to take any action against Galileo, but in the end he caves to pressure and allows an inquisition against Galileo.

Mrs. Sarti

Mrs. Sarti is Galileo's longtime housekeeper. She is very comfortable with Galileo and speaks her mind with a sharp tongue. She is also Andrea's mother.

Sagredo

Sagredo is Galileo's good friend while Galileo is living in Venice. Sagredo helps Galileo conduct his telescope experiments and helps with referring to existing astronomical charts. Sagredo warns against Galileo moving to Florence because the Church has more influence there than in Venice, but Galileo does not heed the warning.



Objects/Places

Geocentric Astronomical Model

Galileo receives a geocentric model of the universe at the beginning of the play. This geocentric model has been the belief for over two thousand years and is the model Galileo challenges.

Telescope

Galileo learns of the telescope from his student Ludovico. Galileo introduces it as his own invention in Venice in order to receive money from the University. Later, Galileo uses an improved telescope to make key observations about the cosmos which refute the geocentric model of the universe.

Venice

At the beginning of the play, Galileo lives in Venice. Later, at the promise of a cushy job as court astronomer, Galileo moves to Florence.

Florence

Galileo's move to Florence is his undoing because Florence is more tightly controlled by the Church than Venice. Galileo's theories are ill-received in Florence, eventually leading to Galileo's inquisition.

The Four Moons of Jupiter

Through research with his telescope, Galileo discovers Jupiter has moons which orbit it, evidence which flies in the face of the geocentric view of the universe. This is the key evidence which Christopher Clavius confirms in Rome.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is Galileo's chief opponent. They rely upon the current view of the universe as part of their rationale to retain power. Galileo's radical views threatens this existing power structure.



Irrigation Technology

Galileo had previously invented irrigation technology. He points to this irrigation technology as the kind of science which could benefit poor people.

Floating Objects Experiments

After Galileo gives up astronomy, he takes to determining why and how objects float or sink in water. This is "safe," non-threatening research that will not ruffle any feathers in the Church hierarchy.

April Fool's Carnival

On April Fool's Day, a carnival in the street features a ballad singer singing about Galileo's danger to the established world order and how the man's ideas might lead not only to better understanding of the heavens but to class struggles and the toppling of the Church.

Discorsi

The Discorsi is the result of Galileo's lifelong research in astronomy. Under house arrest after he recants his research, Galileo finishes his Discorsi in secret, and the book is secreted away by Andrea at the end of the play.



Themes

Science Versus Religion

The conflict between science (which is aligned with truth and knowledge) and religion (which is aligned with ignorance and power mongering) is the most obvious conflict in Galileo. Galileo's research into the stars is so dangerous because of its potential to upset the existing religious hierarchy. In the Middle Ages and later, there developed a notion called the Great Chain of Being. This long-standing religious belief established a rigid hierarchy, with God at the top, the Pope beneath him, the Cardinals beneath the Pope, et cetera, down to the serf or peasant at the bottom. Because this chain was supposed to be divinely ordered, it was nearly impossible to question. It became part of the Church's rationale for its permanent power over the rest of society.

Galileo's heliocentric evidence threatened this theory of the Great Chain of Being. Suddenly, the earth and its people are not the center of the universe. The consequences are several. The Great Chain of Being is threatened; the universe seems a less rational, ordered place, and the Church's position is more arbitrary and tyrannical than God sent; peasants would begin to doubt their lowly place in the supposed hierarchy.

Also, for many, such as the Old Cardinal, Galileo's heliocentric model cheapens humanity. Earth becomes just another spinning globe careening through space, along with many other similar globes. How can Man be special in this system? Why would God have sent his only son Jesus Christ to such a people, if they were not central to the universe? Galileo opens a Pandora's Box of sorts with his research, and for these reasons the Church is quick to force his abjuration.

Trust Your Eyes

Through some of the play, Galileo carries a pebble with him which he flips from hand to hand. This reminds him to trust his eyes (the stone falls; thus, there is gravity) rather than rely on faith. Similarly, the telescope becomes another symbol of this directive Galileo has given himself. Scene Four brings the telescope to the foreground. The mathematician wonders whether Galileo's eyeglass is reliable. Galileo assures the skeptical Florentine court that the telescope will allow them to see the sky better than anyone had previously. The philosopher and mathematician use tradition and abstract notions to defend their reluctance to look through the telescope. The truth might "lead us anywhere," says the philosopher, while the mathematician believes looking through the telescope is tantamount to discarding two thousand years of teachings. (Scene 4, page 68.)

Galileo then refers to the Venetian sailors with whom he sailed. These men, "unread" unlike the philosopher and mathematician, depend on their own senses rather than



education. And in this way, they taught Galileo many things. Galileo further states that fools can be educated, and the uneducated can possess the sort of intellectual curiosity to usher in a new age of reason. Galileo here is championing the lower class and denigrating the upper class, dismissing the value of education that only the richest can afford, turning the world order upset down just as surely as his research threatens to do. This move is egalitarian, progressive, and dangerous to those in power.

The thematic importance of senses is physically manifest in Galileo's failing eyesight. After Galileo's abjuration, when he renounces his findings under oath and essentially "unsees" what he has seen, appropriately he is nearly blind years later when he is under house arrest and tended to by Virginia. With his abjuration, Galileo has in essence betrayed his senses, denied them; they in the end ironically betray him as well.

Class Struggles

Playwright Bertolt Brecht was a lifelong Marxist, and that philosophy with its emphasis on history as class struggle, is evident in Galileo. Brecht includes the potential of class warfare as one of the consequences of Galileo's heliocentric research. To briefly summarize, Marxists believed in the process of dialectical materialism, in which history (and indeed, most of the physical world) is seen as a series of opposites clashing, and a new "something" emerging from that clash. In Marxist language, a thesis and an antithesis come into conflict, with the result being a synthesis that resembles parts of both the thesis and antithesis. In the case of human history, Marx specifically applied this paradigm to class struggles.

As evidenced by the conceptual carnival scene, Galileo's research has the potential for this kind of paradigm. The ballad singer states that, with long-held religious beliefs shaken by Galileo, a great uncertainty will spread, and "each of us would say and do just what he pleases." Unfettered by religion, peasants would rise up, with carpenters building for themselves rather than pews for the church, cobblers making their own shoes, tenants ousting their landlords. In short, the peasants (thesis) would clash with the aristocracy and Church (antithesis) in order to establish a more egalitarian new world order (synthesis). This is the promise and potential of the final scene, in which Andrea smuggles Galileo's Discorsi out into Europe.

Style

Point of View

As a play, Galileo has little choice but to take place in the third-person perspective. Though the audience is usually attached narratively with Galileo following his actions and speeches, at key points several scenes do not involve Galileo. This would include Scene Nine, a carnival scene. This scene is crucial in providing a historic context for Galileo's research in order to attain a broad sense of how Galileo is affecting the world and the existing social order. This augments the importance and weight of Galileo's actions; Galileo is not just affecting his servants and daughter but potentially the entire class structure and the hegemony of the Church.

A second time the point of view breaks from its alliance with the protagonist Galileo is Scene Eleven, in which Barberini as the new pope, decides Galileo's fate. The third and most important break from Galileo occurs in Scene Twelve, which bears important dramatic consequences. Scene Twelve is centered on the servants' and Virginia's hopes and fears regarding Galileo's inquisition, their desire that Galileo defy Church authority. The most important event of the entire play, Galileo's abjuration, happens offscreen. This decision maximizes the dramatic tension of the moment (Will he or won't he?), including the false hope of the church bells not ringing at exactly five o' clock. It also again broadens the consequences of what Galileo is doing; his servants could be said to represent "the people" in general. Galileo's abjuration crushes the servants, as it crushes Italy and, indeed, perhaps all of Europe, as the audience is told that science grinds to a near halt after Galileo's choice.

Setting

Galileo takes place in the early seventeenth century, true to the time period in which the historical Galileo lived. Setting is crucial because in this time period the Catholic Church, especially in Italy, has a huge amount of power and influence. Galileo threatens the existing order because his research pokes holes in the cosmology the Church has long depended on as part of its rationale for power. The first section of the play takes place in Venice where Galileo has taught and lived for some years. Eventually, Galileo decides to move to Florence with the promise of a lucrative appointment as court astronomer. This change of locations proves to be crucial to the narrative. As Sagredo warns Galileo (and informs the audience), the Florentine court is heavily influenced by monks (and thus the Church), much more so than the court of Venice. As a result, where Galileo may have been tolerated for his radical views in Venice, he is shunned and threatened in Florence, where members of the court refuse to look through his telescope or hear his views on the universe.

Towards the end, after Galileo demonstrates his cowardice, the setting reflects this dramatic downturn. Several years pass, and Galileo is depicted as an enervated old



man. He is under house arrest in Rome, a far cry from his stature as a well-respected scientist in Act One.

Language and Meaning

Galileo's intelligence and shrewdness are paramount in his characterization. As such, Galileo displays a good amount of wit, puns, sarcasms, and sly analogies, especially when he must speak carefully or in intercourse with someone who might be dangerous and mean him harm. This is evident in Scene Six, in which Cardinals Bellarmine and Barberini confront Galileo about his teachings. Galileo defuses the situation by quoting proverbs from the Bible, ones which defend his point of view about the value of truth. Galileo starts with the proverb, "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him." The corn in this case is truth, which in one sense could be said to offer a sort of intellectual sustenance. By using quotes from the Bible, Galileo shows that (at least ostensibly) he is a believer and good member of the Church. He is also providing wisdom that the Cardinals really cannot refute, given the divine and unquestionable nature of the Bible.

Sly Galileo is also capable of false modesty, such as in Scene Two when he addresses the Venetian Senators. In his speech introducing the telescope, he calls himself "your obedient servant" and states that he created the telescope (a falsehood) "on the most scientific and Christian principles." As with quoting proverbs, Galileo is quick to mark himself a good Christian.

Because he is normally loquacious, Galileo's fall is made even sadder in Scene Twelve by Galileo's very inability to offer an explanation or excuse to his servants after he emerges from his abjuration. By Scene Thirteen, Galileo has lost his linguistic fluency, making short, uninspired remarks about the goose that just arrived or other mundane things to Virginia. For the great, talkative scientist, this is truly a tragic fall.

Structure

Galileo is a play featuring fourteen scenes. As with most written plays, the text is composed primarily of dialogue, with some stage direction, and very little visual description. Scene One is largely expositional - it introduces Galileo, his heliocentric view of the universe as contrasted to the widely held geocentric view, his servants and daughter, the student Ludovico, Galileo's need for money, and the telescope. Scene Two's purpose is primarily characterization, as it shows Galileo shrewdly passing off the telescope as his own invention in order to gain money. Scene Three provides a sort of inciting incident; Galileo discovers that moons orbit Jupiter, damning testimony against the geocentric view. Galileo's instinct about the heliocentric nature of the solar system is finally married with concrete evidence. At the end of the scene Galileo decides to move to Florence where he will be in danger because of his views. Thus, at the end of scene three, the crucial conflict and question of the play is established, marking an act break.



Act Two is comprised of Scenes four through seven. Galileo has dared to introduce the Church and society to his views, and at the conclusion of Scene Six, Galileo has been officially warned against pursuing his research further. Scene Seven is the final push Galileo requires (in the form of Little Monk's story), and by the end of the act Galileo has decided to give up astronomy.

Act Three includes Scene Eight, Galileo's renewal of his research, Scene Nine, which shows in a conceptual way the effect and potential consequences of Galileo's research, and Scene Ten, in which Galileo is abandoned by the Florentine court and exposed to inquisition.

Act Four involves Galileo's inquisition, starting first with the Pope's reluctant decision to submit Galileo to questioning, and then Galileo's ultimate capitulation and his servants' disappointment. These actions are encompassed by Scenes Eleven and Twelve. By this time, the question or central conflict set up in Act One is settled; Galileo has failed to stand up to the Church in the name of science.

Act Five can be seen as a sort of epilogue, comprised of Scene Thirteen, with Galileo as a broken, old, blind man under house arrest, and Scene Fourteen, a mixed conclusion insofar that the promise of Andrea smuggling Galileo's Discorsi out of Italy is tempered by Andrea's encounter with the mob of children, and the little boy's inability to separate from the mob mentality.



Quotes

"GALILEO: [...] A new age was coming. I was onto it years ago. I was a young man, in Siena. There was a group of masons arguing. They had to raise a block of granite. It was hot. To help matters, one of them wanted to try a new arrangement of ropes. After five minutes' discussion, out went a method which had been employed for a thousand years. The millennium of faith is ended, said I, this is the millennium of doubt. And we are pulling out of that contraption. The sayings of the wise men won't wash any more. Everybody, at last, is getting nosy. I predict that in our time astronomy will become the gossip of the market place and the sons of fishwives will pack the schools." (Scene One, pages 48-49)

"SAGREDO: What do you think is going to happen to you for saying that there is another sun around which other earths revolve? And that there are only stars and no difference between earth and heaven? Where is God then?

GALILEO: What do you mean?

SAGREDO: God? Where is God?

GALILEO (angrily): Not there! Any more than He'd be here - if creatures from the moon came down to look for Him!

SAGREDO: Then where is He?

GALILEO: I'm not a theologian: I'm a mathematician.

SAGREDO: You are a human being! (Almost shouting:) Where is God in your system of the universe?

GALILEO: Within ourselves. Or - nowhere." (Scene Three, pages 62-63)

"GALILEO (keeping his temper): 'Truth is the daughter of Time, not of Authority.' Gentlemen, the sum of our knowledge is pitiful. It has been my singular good fortune to find a new instrument which brings a small patch of the universe a little bit closer. It is at your disposal.

PHILOSOPHER: Where is all this leading?

GALILEO: Are we, as scholars, concerned with where the truth might lead us?

PHILOSOPHER: Mr. Galilei, the truth might lead us anywhere!" (Scene Four, page 68)

"OLD CARDINAL (disregarding him): So you have degraded the earth despite the fact that you live by her and receive everything from her. I won't have it! I won't have it! I won't be a nobody on an inconsequential star briefly twirling hither and thither. I tread the earth, and the earth is firm beneath my feet, and there is no motion to the earth, and the earth is the center of all things, and I am the center of the earth, and the eye of the Creator is upon me. About me revolve, affixed to their crystal shells, the lesser lights of the stars and the great light of the sun, created to give light upon me that God might see me - Man, God's greatest effort, the center of creation." (Scene Five, page 73)

"BELLARMIN (to Galileo): Does it not appear more probable - even to you - that the Creator knows more about His work than the created?

GALILEO: In his blindness man is liable to misread not only the sky but also the Bible.

BELLARMIN: The interpretation of the Bible is a matter for the ministers of God. (Galileo



remains silent.) At last you are quiet. (He gestures to the Secretaries. They start writing.) Tonight the Holy Office has decided that the theory according to which the earth goes around the sun is foolish, absurd, and a heresy. I am charged, Mr. Galilei, with cautioning you to abandon these teachings." (Scene Six, page 79)

"LITTLE MONK: [...] They [Little Monk's peasant family] have been told that God relies upon them and that the pageant of the world has been written around them that they may be tested in the important or unimportant parts handed out to them. How could they take it, were I to tell them that they are on a lump of stone ceaselessly spinning in empty space, circling around a second-rate star? What, then, would be the use of their patience, their acceptance of misery? What comfort, then, the Holy Scriptures, which have mercifully explained their crucifixion?" (Scene Seven, pages 83-84)

"LUDOVICO: I have seen the day when my poor mother has had to have a dog whipped before their eyes to remind them to keep their place. Oh, you may have seen the waving corn from the window of your comfortable coach. You have, no doubt, nibbled our olives, and absentmindedly eaten our cheese, but you can have no idea how much responsibility that sort of thing entails.

GALILEO: Young man, I do not eat my cheese absentmindedly." (Scene Eight, page 95)

"BALLAD SINGER:

Up stood the learned Galileo

Glanced briefly at the sun

And said: 'Almighty God was wrong

In Genesis, Chapter One!'

Now that was rash, my friends, it is no matter small:

For heresy will spread today like foul diseases.

Change Holy Writ, forsooth? What will be left at all?

Why: each of us would say and do just what he pleases!" (Scene Nine, page 99)

"POPE: [...] I do not want to hear a condemnation of physical facts. I do not want to hear battle cries: Church, Church, Church! Reason, Reason, Reason! (Pause.) These shuffling feet are intolerable. Has the whole world come to my door?

INQUISITOR: Not the whole world, Your Holiness. A select gathering of the faithful. (Scene Eleven, pages 109-110)

"ANDREA: So force cannot accomplish everything. What has been seen can't be unseen. Man is constant in the face of death.

FEDERZONI: June 22, 1633: dawn of the age of reason. I wouldn't have wanted to go on living if he had recanted.

LITTLE MONK: I didn't say anything, but I was in agony. O ye of little faith!

ANDREA: I was sure.

FEDERZONI: It would have turned our morning to night.

ANDREA: It would have been as if the mountain had turned to water.

LITTLE MONK (kneeling down, crying): O God, I thank Thee.

ANDREA: Beaten humanity can lift its head. A man has stood up and said No." (Scene Twelve, page 113)



"ANDREA: But you have contributed. Science has only one commandment: contribution. And you have contributed more than any man for a hundred years.
GALILEO: Have I? Then welcome to my gutter, dear colleague in science and brother in treason: I sold out, you are a buyer. The first sight of the book! His mouth watered and his scoldings were drowned. Blessed be our bargaining, whitewashing, death-fearing community!" (Scene Thirteen, pages 122-123)

"May you now guard science's light,
Kindle it and use it right,
Lest it be a flame to fall
Downward to consume us all." (Scene Fourteen, page 129)



Topics for Discussion

Of what is the pebble Galileo frequently tosses from hand to hand a symbol or reminder?

What is the meaning of Galileo's remark to Andrea at the end of Scene Twelve: "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero."

Why has Brecht inserted brief, rhyming poems at the beginning of many scenes? What do these verse lines accomplish?

Give at least three reasons why Galileo believes he has betrayed his profession by the end of the play.

What final statement does the end scene make about the relationship between religion and science? Is this a pessimistic or an optimistic statement? What are the dangers and hopes about this relationship for the future?

Why does Ludovico break off his engagement with Virginia in Scene Eight?

Explain Little Monk's reasons for upholding religion over science.