And What If I Spoke of Despair Study Guide

And What If I Spoke of Despair by Ellen Bass

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Introduction

Ellen Bass's "And What If I Spoke of Despair" was first published in the *Missouri Review* in 2001, although it experienced a wider distribution with its 2002 publication in Bass's latest poetry collection, *Mules of Love*. Bass's poem discusses her despair over the actions of modern humans, including the destruction of the environment and genetic engineering, two factors that make her lose hope in the sanctity of humanity as a whole. In her poem, Bass cautions her readers to do their part to fight these issues. Bass wrote her poem at a time when environmentalism and genetic engineering were both hot topics in the media, often leading to polarized debates. Unlike most of Bass's nonfiction works, like *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1988), this poem does not deal with the issue of child abuse. The poem does, however, address negative issues, like much of Bass's poetry and nonfiction. A current copy of the poem can be found in *Mules of Love*, which was published by BOA Editions, Ltd., as part of the American Poets Continuum Series, in 2002.

Author Biography

Bass was born on June 16, 1947, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bass attended Goucher College, where she graduated magna cum laude in 1968 with her bachelor's degree. She pursued a master's degree at Boston University and graduated in 1970. From 1970-1974, Bass worked as an administrator at Project Place, a social service center in Boston. Bass has been teaching Writing About Our Lives workshops since 1974 in Santa Cruz, California. She also teaches nationally and internationally at writing conferences and universities.

In the early 1970s, Bass also began publishing her own and others' poetry. In 1973, she coedited (with Florence Howe) a collection of poems entitled *No More Masks: An Anthology of Poems by Women*. This collection included selections of Bass's own poetry, but she soon began to publish her own volumes, beginning with *I'm Not Your Laughing Daughter*, which was also published in 1973. Her other poetry collections include *Of Separateness and Merging* (1977), *For Earthly Survival* (1980), *Our Stunning Harvest: Poems* (1985) and *Mules of Love* (2002), which includes, "And What If I Spoke of Despair," a poem that was chosen for the 2002 Editor's Prize from the *Missouri Review*.

Bass is most known for her nonfiction works, such as *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1988) and *Beginning to Heal: A First Book for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1993), both of which she wrote with Laura Davis. These books, and others like it, have helped countless survivors come to terms with their painful pasts and move on with their lives.

Poem Text

And what if I spoke of despair□who doesn't
feel it? Who doesn't know the way it seizes,
leaving us limp, deafened by the slosh
of our own blood, rushing
through the narrow, personal
channels of grief. It's beauty
that brings it on, calls it out from the wings
for one more song. Rain
pooled on a fallen oak leaf, reflecting
the pale cloudy sky, dark canopy
of foliage not yet fallen. Or the red moon
in September, so large you have to pull over
at the top of Bayona and stare, like a photo
of a lover in his uniform, not yet gone;
or your own self, as a child,
on that day your family stayed
at the sea, watching the sun drift down,
lazy as a beach ball, and you fell asleep with sand
in the crack of your smooth behind.
That's when you can't deny it. Water. Air.
They're still here, like a mother's palms,
sweeping hair off our brow, her scent
swirling around us. But now your own
car is pumping poison, delivering its fair
share of destruction. We've created a salmon
with the red, white, and blue shining on one side.
Frog genes spliced into tomatoes□as if
the tomato hasn't been humiliated enough.
I heard a man argue that genetic
engineering was more dangerous
than a nuclear bomb. Should I be thankful
he was alarmed by one threat, or worried
he'd gotten used to the other? Maybe I can't
offer you any more than you can offer me□
but what if I stopped on the trail, with shreds
of manzanita bark lying in russet scrolls
and yellow bay leaves, little lanterns
in the dim afternoon, and cradled despair
in my arms, the way I held my own babies
after they'd fallen asleep, when there was no
reason to hold them, only
I didn't want to put them down.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-6

"And What If I Spoke of Despair" begins with the titular question: "And what if I spoke of despair□ who doesn't / feel it?" Immediately, readers are engaged, because the poet is implying that everybody, including her readers, feels despair. In the second through sixth lines, she uses a long sentence to go into more detail about the physical effects of despair on people. The poet uses the phrase "Who doesn't know the way it seizes," to underscore her belief that everybody feels despair at some point or another. Likewise, by noting the blood sloshing through "our" veins, she attributes the rush of blood□the physical side effect of an increased heart rate, one of the side effects of many powerful emotions such as fear or despair□to the community at large. At the same time, the poet is careful to note that, while everybody feels despair, there is no comfort in this fact; grief is still very much a "personal" experience. Having defined her belief that despair effects everybody, although in individual ways, the poet now hooks the reader with a very odd statement that starts in the last half of line six and continues through until line eight.

Lines 7-11

The statement, "It's beauty / that brings it on, calls it out from the wings / for one more song," seems out of place. Bass is deliberately trying to disorient her readers. In the previous lines, she has introduced the idea of despair and grief, so one might expect that the rest of the poem is going to be a dark poem, filled with negative images. Bass takes the exact opposite approach, however. She says that the beauty of nature brings on her personal despair. She notes a very pastoral, natural image, "Rain / pooled on a fallen oak leaf." The pooled rain creates a mirror, in which the poet can see a reflection of a cloudy sky, an image that implies an uncertain future. At this point, Bass still has not explained why these beautiful images of nature make her grieve.

Lines 12-19

Over the next few lines, Bass continues this trend of providing a natural image, yet does not explain why this brings her pain. She talks about "the red moon / in September," which is so massive and awe-inspiring that people feel compelled to stop their cars and get out and look at it. Following this image, at the end of line thirteen and into the next line, Bass switches gears somewhat, with the phrase: "like a photo / of a lover in his uniform, not yet gone." The reader starts to get an indication of why natural images are bringing the poet grief. The hypothetical photo of the soldier in uniform, and the observation that he is "not yet gone," implies that someday he will be. Military service can be a dangerous job, and the poet is noting that even though the lover is alive in her hypothetical photo, he may someday live on only in the photo. In the same way, the

poet is implying that someday natural phenomena might only be as alive as the images in a photo.

Although the poet is giving some indication that she is worried over the future life of nature, she has not yet explained why exactly she is concerned. At the beginning of line fifteen, the poet once again turns the discussion from the global, general images of nature, to the specific life of the reader. She says "or your own self, as a child," encouraging each reader to remember back to his or her own childhood. The poet draws on an image that many of her readers will identify with, a family day on the beach. The scene she draws is one of peace and innocence, of a child falling asleep in the sun, without a care in the world.

Lines 20-25

At the beginning of line twenty, however, the poet brings the reader back from this happy memory into the present. It is at this point that the poet confronts the reader directly, "That's when you can't deny it." The poet talks about the fact that elements like water and air are still in existence, and equates these natural elements with a mother's nurturing, which she expresses in simple images: "sweeping hair off our brow, her scent / swirling around us." This underscores the family image that she already used of a child at the beach. Up until now, Bass has combined beautiful images of nature with an increasing sense of doom but has not explained why people should be concerned. In the middle of line twenty-three, however, the poet notes that the child, humanity, is destroying its mother, nature. Ultimately, humanity's pollution, such as the kind created by automobiles, could destroy Mother Nature's ability to nurture. Bass holds all humanity responsible, including the readers: "But now your own / car is pumping poison, delivering its fair / share of destruction." In the middle of line twenty-five, the poet begins to discuss genetic engineering, another factor that she says is destroying nature.

Lines 26-28

She starts by talking about a salmon that has been genetically engineered "with the red, white, and blue shining on one side." The colors refer to the colors of the American flag. Bass is noting the fact that when countries begin genetic engineering, they take ownership of nature and could start literally modifying natural organisms like fish to display a symbol of ownership, in this case the American flag. While Bass feels this is bad enough, in line twenty-seven, Bass notes that genetic engineering sometimes crosses even more profound natural boundaries, such as the boundary between plant and animal□as in the case of "Frog genes spliced into tomatoes." Bass sees this as an affront to the tomato, which she says has been "humiliated enough." Readers might wonder what Bass means by this statement. Most likely, the poet is referring to various genetic experiments on tomatoes that took place around the turn of the twenty-first century, when Bass wrote the poem.

Lines 29-33

In line twenty-nine, Bass uses the idea of genetic engineering to segue into the threat of nuclear war: "I heard a man argue that genetic / engineering was more dangerous / than a nuclear bomb." Through another question, presumably directed at the reader, Bass wonders about the implications of this argument: "Should I be thankful / he was alarmed by one threat, or worried / he'd gotten used to the other?" Bass is noting the fact that the threat of nuclear warfare, while still a threat, has been around for six decades, since the end of World War II ushered in the atomic age. This has given many people time to get used to it. The widespread discussion and use of genetic engineering, however, is relatively new. So for many it can be perceived as more of a threat, because people are not used to it yet. Bass's question also implies, in a subtle way, that if genetic engineering is allowed to continue, perhaps someday people will get used to this, too. At the end of line thirty-three, Bass shifts gears one last time.

Lines 34-42

For these remaining nine lines, Bass acknowledges that she has reason to lose hope that these issues will be resolved: "Maybe I can't / offer you any more than you can offer me." In other words, Bass is saying that she does not have any solutions to offer the reader, and the reader most likely does not have any solutions to offer her. Yet, Bass is defiant and refuses to just sit and do nothing. Her way of coping with the problems addressed in the poem is to confront her despair directly. In this final, extended image, the poet stands in a very natural setting, "on the trail, with shreds / of manzanita bark lying in russet scrolls / and yellow bay leaves." In this setting, the poet embraces despair as she has her own children. Just as she sometimes held her children even when it was unnecessary to hold them, the poet acknowledges that embracing despair is an unnecessary act because it probably will not change anything.

Summary

"And What if I Spoke of Despair?" is a short poem about a lifetime of loving the Earth, despair over the state of the natural environment and the hope that the globe can be loved appropriately.

The poem begins with the question asked in the title, "And what if I spoke of despair?" and then validates that every person feels despair at some point. Every person can feel hopelessness running inside himself as if it is blood coursing through veins. Although the feeling of despair is a universal one, the actual source of the despair is very personal.

Normally, beauty prompts the hopeless feeling and brings the resulting ennui forward. For the author, that beauty arrives in the form of nature's evolutions, such as the rain puddling on a fallen leaf, fall foliage or a September moon which demands that a person stop driving, pull over and just stare heavenward. Gazing lovingly at the moon is like looking at a photograph of a loved one in a uniform who has not yet left. Beauty can also be found in the memory of a day at the beach surrounded by a family that stays to watch the sun setting over the water. The water and the air are the constants in life, just like the comfort of a mother's touch.

People take all these beauties for granted. They drive cars that pollute the air and dump waste that pollutes the rivers so that "we've created a salmon with the red, white and blue shining on one side." Even tomatoes, which have been "humiliated enough," are not safe from man's experimentation.

One man's argument is that genetic engineering is more dangerous than nuclear weapons. The author is not sure if she should be thankful this particular person is still aware enough to be alarmed or frightened that he has become acclimated enough to consider the second option as less of a threat.

The author has no immediate answers for the world's environmental distress and does not ask for any solutions from the reader. There is one thought, though, that occurs to the author as she walks a path strewn with manzanita bark and yellow bay leaves. There cannot be any harm in cradling despair like a mother holds her baby after he falls asleep and then does not relinquish the child when the immediate reason to hold is gone, simply because the mother does not want to let go.

Analysis

Although the poem's title points to despair, the author is hopeful in her love and faith that it can be conquered, or at the very least, consoled. The idea that generates the despair is the harm done to the globe and the natural environment. Environmental issues belong to each person on the planet, but the author thinks they can only be felt personally on an individual basis for the most impact.

The poignant examples of beauty in nature trigger despair because of their ever-present fragility. The author provides examples that are universal in their appeal but are experienced personally, such as the rain on autumn leaves, the red moon in September or a family's summer outing at the beach. The possibility of losing these exquisite experiences generates despair.

The poem's theme is important, but it also exemplifies interesting style and technique. The author writes almost lyrically in describing what she loves. For example, the description of pulling over the car and watching the red September moon "like a photo of a lover in his uniform, not yet gone." The sense of longing is almost palpable in this line as everyone can identify with staring at a photograph of someone loved and lost. The imagery here is vivid.

The description of the summer day is vivid as well. The author writes about "that day your family stayed at the sea, watching the sun drift down, lazy as a beach ball, and you fell asleep with sand in the crack of your smooth behind." The visual imagery of the beach ball-like sun and the tactile imagery of the gritty sand evokes memories that mere statement of facts would not be able to portray.

Even the descriptions of some of the harm done to the earth are conveyed with vibrant imagery as in, the "salmon with the red, white, and blue shining on one side" or the tomatoes that endure experiments "as if the tomato hasn't been humiliated enough." The author finds a succinct but visual way to say that U.S. companies are polluting the rivers and manipulating nature with more regard for profit than the harm they inflict.

The author also uses personification in the example of the "humiliated tomatoes." Tomatoes obviously have no emotions, but the author projects the characteristic of humiliation onto this inanimate object to make the point that the humble fruit has been tested past the point of common sense.

The author weaves some wit into the poem by speaking of the humiliated tomatoes or the "crack of your smooth behind" to provide a bit of humorous relief from the gravity of the topic. Humor is a universal emotion that most people can understand, and the author employs it to engender sympathy for the issue.

At the end of the case for environmental consciousness lies the despair that one person feels when facing such a monumental issue. There are certainly small factions of people addressing various elements of the problem all over the world, but when faced with the possibility of losing the beauty taken for granted in a lifetime, there is little that one person alone can do.

Perhaps the only option is, as the author suggests, holding the despair like a child and not putting it down. In closing, the author wants the reader to know that the challenges facing the planet are real, whether they are as far away as the moon or as close as the yellow bay leaves underfoot. The only thing to do is hold any despair close and don't put it down, because acknowledging it is the only hope for remedy.

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Themes

Despair

As the title indicates, the poet is mainly discussing despair, which is a profound and total loss of hope. In the beginning of the poem, Bass describes the physical effects of despair, the sudden rush of blood through a person's veins when they begin to feel this powerful emotion, the way that despair "seizes, / leaving us limp." Following this introduction, Bass gives readers several examples that explain why she is losing hope. She cites several natural items, such as rain, sky, leaves, and sand, drawing the reader into the natural world. She also talks about lost loved ones, or at least the potential for lost loved ones, by invoking a hypothetical "photo / of a lover in his uniform, not yet gone." This draws the reader into the human world. Throughout the poem, Bass warms her readers up to both of these worlds, invoking ideas with which most readers can identify, such as a family day at the beach, where "you fell asleep with sand / in the crack of your smooth behind." Bass speaks about the natural and human worlds in ways that imply they may not exist, at least in their present forms, someday. Over the course of the poem, Bass reveals that her despair is generated from the fact that the purity of nature and the sanctity of humanity, two things in which she believes deeply, are being compromised in various ways.

Environmental Destruction

The first major way that nature is being destroyed is through pollution. The example she cites is air pollution: "But now your own / car is pumping poison, delivering its fair / share of destruction." Air pollution results from the release of certain chemicals into the air. One of the most common is the release of carbon monoxide, which is a by-product from the use of internal combustion engines found in many vehicles. This is a form of pollution that many people, including Bass's readers, help to create. Air pollution is not the only environmentally destructive thing that humanity creates, but it is the only one mentioned in the poem. This is intentional on Bass's part. Generally speaking, poets aim to utilize as little space as possible to convey their meaning to the reader. Each word has a purpose, and extraneous words or lines are ruthlessly cut, so that the poem can be tightly constructed and have the most impact. Bass realizes that discussions of environmental destruction are generally not limited to one issue, such as air pollution. Like the Earth's ecosystem, many aspects of environmentalism are interconnected, and it is difficult to discuss one environmental issue without getting into other related issues. Bass could have filled this section of her poem with several examples of environmental destruction to get her point across. Yet, this is unnecessary, because most of her audience will understand that air pollution from cars is not the only issue that threatens to destroy the environment.

Genetic Engineering

Genetic engineering, on the other hand, is relatively new, so Bass feels compelled to give more than one example. Although some of Bass's audience may be familiar with the various genetic experiments that are being performed these days, they might not realize the extent to which genetics is being used to modify animals and plants. For this reason, Bass gives one example of each. The first example, a "salmon / with the red, white, and blue shining on one side," demonstrates the sometimes ludicrous applications that humans have for science. Genetic engineering gives humanity the power to change nature any way it wants, in theory at least, and Bass notes that this power is being used in frivolous ways□such as creating signs of ownership like the American flag.

In her second example, which addresses genetically modified food, Bass paints a Frankensteinlike picture of weird experiments involving mismatched parts□in this case "Frog genes spliced into tomatoes." Nature would never create this combination, and Bass is saying that since humanity is doing this, it is threatening the purity of both nature and humanity. Although the poem only directly addresses the genetic engineering of fish and tomatoes, the unspoken fear is that this tampering might eventually lead to tampering with or cloning of human genes. This is why Bass cites one man's argument that genetic engineering is "more dangerous / than a nuclear bomb." While a nuclear bomb can kill an immense number of people, it has only the power to destroy. Some people believe this is secondary to the effects of genetic engineering, which can change humanity itself at the genetic level.

Style

Imagery

One of the reasons that Bass's poem works so well is her use of powerful imagery that is both positive and negative. The poem begins with a negative image of the effects of despair that cause many to be deafened "by the slosh / of our own blood." The imagery soon turns positive, however, when Bass says "It's beauty" that evokes her despair. At this cue, Bass switches gears and gives the reader several positive images of natural and human beauty. Bass paints natural pictures such as "Rain / pooled on a fallen oak leaf," a sublime September moon, and even the image of her readers in childhood, frolicking at the beach, unaware of anything bad. Because the poet goes to such great lengths to show the good things about nature and humanity, these images give the poem more impact when it turns dark. The images ultimately work as an emotional hook to grab the reader, because the poet's argument, revealed over time through the poem, is that these pretty pictures might not exist in the future if current trends in environmental destruction and genetic engineering continue. At the end of the poem, these two image systems, negative and positive, combine in one final, powerful image of the poet embracing her despair even as she stands among the source of it□the beautiful nature that she fears will someday be destroyed or altered beyond recognition.

Personification

Besides imagery, Bass also relies on personification to explain the depths of her despair. Personification is a technique by which the poet ascribes human qualities to nonhuman objects or ideas. When she first introduces the beautiful nature that she is afraid of losing, Bass talks about it as if it is alive in the human sense: "It's beauty / that brings it on, calls it out from the wings / for one more song." Beauty is an intangible concept. It has no physical form, so it cannot actually call out. In the poet's world, however, beauty becomes a living thing, calling out despair, which in turn sings its mournful song. This is another use of personification, since despair is also an intangible concept that could not literally sing in the real world.

Bass uses other examples of personification in the poem, such as the "humiliated" tomato. The most notable use of personification, however, is the depiction of nature as a human mother. People use the term Mother Nature frequently, as a respectful way of referring to the natural world that has supported humankind since its inception. In this poem, however, Bass is giving Mother Nature actual, mother-like qualities, once again in the human sense. The water and air that the poet references act like a nurturing human mother, "sweeping hair off our brow." Bass's purpose for this soon becomes clear. By making nature a living, humanlike thing, the effect is stronger when the poet talks about humanity killing it. Humans destroy plants, animals, and other agents of nature on a routine basis, and many do not notice. The loss of human life, however, is more likely to elicit an emotional response. Because of this, when Bass talks about

humanity's "mother" being poisoned by air pollution, it seems like even more of a tragedy.

Historical Context

Environmentalism

Although environmentalism had existed in one form or another for centuries, environmental consciousness as we know it today did not happen until the late 1980s and early 1990s, thanks in large part to a number of high-profile environmental incidents. In 1985, French government agents sank the *Rainbow Warrior*, the flagship of the nonviolent, environmental pressure group, Greenpeace, in Auckland Harbor, New Zealand. The same year, British meteorologists confirmed their earlier suspicion that humans' use of certain chemicals had created a hole in Earth's ozone layer over Antarctica. The 1989 Exxon *Valdez* oil tanker spill, however, was the incident that really galvanized the public. On March 24, the tanker crashed into an underwater reef, dumping more than ten million gallons of oil into the pristine waters of Alaska's Prince William Sound. Shortly after this accident, the media began to cover all environmental issues, including pollution, deforestation, acid rain, the widespread use of landfills and incinerators, overpopulation, and wildlife extinction. This trend continued off and on throughout the 1990s, sparking an interest in recycling and other ecologically friendly methods that many consumers tried. Although environmentalism was still active by the time Bass wrote her poem in 2001, the world was beginning to turn its attention to more pressing issues, the most prominent being the new war against terrorism.

Genetically Modified Food

The 1997 announcement of the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first adult mammal clone, sparked a wealth of debates about cloning, as well as genetic engineering in general. By the time Bass wrote her poem, one of the most heated debates was about the use of genetic engineering to modify foods. A massive protest movement began in Great Britain and spread to the rest of Europe and the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century. Proponents of genetically modified (GM) foods claimed that crops could be made that were resistant to attacks by insects. They also stated that they could genetically engineer crops that included vaccines, which could in turn help fight diseases like hepatitis B. Opponents claimed that scientists were tampering too much with nature and that researchers could not possibly predict all of the potential consequences of such measures. Many people were also concerned about the commer- cialization of engineered crops. Large firms in the United States bought up many varieties of seeds, and some speculated that in the future the world's crops could be owned by a few companies who would determine the fate of much of the world's food supply.

Despite the controversy, scientists continued to study and implement new genetic methods. In 2001, researchers at Cornell University identified a gene in tomato plants that helps to determine the size of the tomato fruit. This landmark discovery caused some to speculate that crops in the future might be engineered to larger, previously

unattainable sizes. Proponents of genetically modified foods say that larger fruits could be used to help wipe out starvation on a global level, since each fruit could feed more people.

Critical Overview

One searches in vain for criticism on Bass's "And What If I Spoke of Despair" or any of her poetry, for that matter. The most likely reason for this is that Bass is known mostly for her self-help books designed to help childhood survivors of sexual abuse, the most famous of which is *The Courage to Heal* (1988). Bass has also written *Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth* (1996), a book designed to guide gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth through sexual-identity issues. "And What If I Spoke of Despair," while different in theme than most of Bass's other works, still deals with negative issues□the destruction of the environment and genetic engineering, as opposed to child abuse.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses Bass's use of opposites, symbolism, and metaphor in her poem.

Throughout history, poets have often written elegies□mournful, sorrowful poetry that expresses despair over something that is gone, generally something that was once living and is now dead. In most cases, the poet writes about a person or group of people that have passed away. Bass's poem is slightly different. Her elegy mourns the loss of nature itself, which is being altered by human intervention through processes such as environmental destruction and genetic engineering. Since her poem is mourning the loss of something, it does not differ in a basic sense from any other elegy. Bass's poem does have one huge difference, however. Her poem is an elegy for something that is not yet dead. As she is writing her poem, nature is still alive. Bass's point is that it will not be alive, or at least will not be alive in the same form, if current human interventions continue in the future. Bass uses several techniques to convince her readers to mourn the loss of something that is not yet gone, including juxtaposition of opposites and the use of symbolism and metaphor.

Bass's poem employs several techniques to give it a powerful effect. The first of these, and the technique that gives the poem its overall structure, is the juxtaposition of opposites. Throughout the poem, Bass bounces back and forth from positive to negative images and ideas, beginning with the overall negative idea of despair itself. Despair is a monumental feeling that affects everybody, as Bass notes when she says "who doesn't / feel it?" While despair affects everybody, it also does so in ways that are unique to each person. Although each person feels the same rushing of blood that is the physical side effect of powerful emotions like despair, Bass says that this blood rushes "through the narrow, personal / channels of grief." This image of personal grief only lasts for the first six lines.

At this point, Bass juxtaposes the negative image of despair with the positive image of beauty: "It's beauty / that brings it on, calls it out from the wings / for one more song." Here, Bass identifies several positive images of nature, such as rain, which pools "on a fallen oak leaf." She also reflects on the image of a beautiful September moon. Yet, even in the midst of these positive images, she carries the thread of negativity. For example, while the rain on the leaf is beautiful, it also reflects "the pale cloudy sky." The cloudy sky implies an uncertain future; it might rain again or it might not. Images like this draw on both the positive and negative feelings that the poet is trying to convey. Bass also uses this juxtaposition technique in her discussion of the September moon, which she says people are drawn to stare at, "like a photo / of a lover in his uniform, not yet gone." While the image of the beautiful red moon is inherently positive, the photo of the soldier has negative implications, namely of the possibility of the soldier's death. People who sign up for or are drafted into military service recognize that there is always the chance they might not return from fighting. By using a photo of a loved one in uniform,

an inherently positive image, and juxtaposing this image with the possibility of the soldier's death, Bass once again carries the thread of negativity, albeit in a subtle sense.

This juxtaposition continues throughout the poem in several ways. Bass juxtaposes a pleasant image of a happy childhood day at the beach "on that day your family stayed / at the sea, watching the sun drift down" with the direct address to the reader: "That's when you can't deny it." This abrupt switch from a dream-like memory to an accusation-style directive produces a negative feeling in the reader, which only continues as the poem juxtaposes a living Mother Earth with the humanproduced poisons that are killing her, salmon that have been genetically enhanced to display signs of ownership, and tomatoes that have been crossed with frogs.

In addition to juxtaposing these images and ideas, Bass also chooses her words very carefully, in many cases selecting words and phrases that have symbolic meanings. A symbol is a physical object, action, or gesture that also represents an abstract concept, without losing its original identity. Symbols appear in literature in one of two ways. They can be local symbols, meaning that their symbolism is only relevant within a specific literary work. They can also be universal symbols, meaning that their symbolism is based on traditional associations that are widely recognized, regardless of context. The poem relies on the latter type. Early in the poem, Bass uses the image of blood rushing through a person's veins to indicate the physical effects of despair, as noted above. There is a second purpose, however. Blood is a universal symbol that is often used to denote violence. Many of the negative images that Bass goes on to describe in the poem□such as the air pollution□imply violence, at least indirectly. The pollution is destructive, and is killing Mother Earth, just as a "nuclear bomb" has drastic and violent effects on the Earth. Even genetic engineering is considered dangerous because it disrupts the natural order of things. All of these are human inventions. Humans in general are often described as destructive animals, so Bass's use of the blood symbol is an effective, if subtle, way to underscore the theme of human-induced destruction.

Other potent symbols in the poem include childhood. Children, and childhood in general, is often a symbol for innocence, since most children are not aware of, nor understand, the various negative aspects of humanity. The example that Bass uses of the child at the beach underscores this idea of the innocence of childhood: "watching the sun drift down, / lazy as a beach ball, and you fell asleep with sand / in the crack of your smooth behind." The image is one of peace. The child does not have a care in the world and so can drift off to sleep with no worries. Even the use of the word "smooth" denotes the difference between children, whose smooth skin is a universal sign of youth, and adults, who become more wrinkled and haggard over time.

This symbol is ultimately not positive. While many poets have talked about the positive aspects of childhood, in this poem childhood, like the beauty of nature, is a negative thing because it indicates something positive that is gone. Bass's readers are no longer children. They can no longer simply fall asleep on a beach without a care in the world; they must face the negative issues of humanity. Likewise, Mother Nature is changing. The various forms of pollution will have an effect on her, changing her appearance just as time marks the smooth skin of a baby with wrinkles. Unlike the human process of

aging, however, the destruction of the Earth's environment is not natural and could be prevented.

It is this realization that leads to the most powerful image in the poem. She "cradled despair / in my arms, the way I held my own babies." A metaphor is a technique where the poet gives an object a secondary meaning that does not normally belong to it. Bass does not literally mean that despair is one of her children, a situation that is physically impossible in the real world. Metaphorically speaking, however, and within the context of the poem, Bass does embrace her despair like she would one of her babies. The idea of cradling a negative emotion like despair is strange and sets up a compelling image for readers. This is especially true, since cradling is a protective gesture, and is generally considered a positive thing. As Bass notes, this maternal, protective instinct is hard to shut off sometimes. She remembers back to the time when she "held my own babies / after they'd fallen asleep, when there was no / reason to hold them." Despite the fact that the gesture was unnecessary, Bass notes that she "didn't want to put them down." Likewise, Bass feels the same way about her despair.

This idea, ultimately, leads to Bass's main point. She recognizes that there is probably nothing she, or any one person, can do to reverse the trends of environmental destruction, genetic engineering, and other human factors that are destroying nature and humanity as she knows it. Yet, she refuses to let her despair go and move on with her life. Holding on to these powerful emotions is the lesser of two negative choices. For the poet, it is better to mourn the future loss of nature and humanity, even if her suffering has no effect on a global scale, than to put her emotions aside and perhaps become as barren as life itself may be in the future.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on "And What If I Spoke of Despair," in *Poetry for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses the poet's protest against genetic engineering.

Bass's "And What If I Spoke of Despair" is a poem of passive protest. The poet sets appreciation of nature and her memories of childhood innocence against the ugly fact of environmental degradation caused by human activities. The despair the speaker feels is because she apparently sees no way of preventing or reversing the threat to the human environment. Instead of pursuing action to remedy the situation, the speaker concludes by turning her mind in on itself, examining the feeling of despair and musing over what attitude to adopt to it.

The poem mentions two man-made disruptions of the beauty of nature that the poet sees in phenomena, such as rain gathered on a fallen oak leaf or a full moon in September. The first is the pollution caused by the gasoline-powered automobile, "pumping poison, delivering its fair / share of destruction." The pollution caused by automobiles is due to the carbon dioxide they emit, which is one of the chief causes of the phenomenon of global warming. Although the causes of global warming have long been known, the world community has still to take effective measures to combat it. Bass brings the problem home to the reader in a personal way by saying it is "your own car" that is doing the poisoning (by which she means herself, but the reader feels the jab too). In other words, the polluting is not something that is being done to people against their will or unbeknownst to them by some large corporation that can be conveniently demonized; ordinary citizens are doing it themselves.

The pollution caused by the automobile is a well-known fact. Less well known is the second target of the poet, to which Bass devotes much more space. This is the genetic engineering (GE) of food crops, fish, and animals that has become widespread since the mid-1990s.

Genetic engineering is the process by which scientists, using what are called recombinant DNA techniques, alter the genes of an organism. Genes carry the information that specifies the structures of an organism. When genes are individually manipulated, it is possible to cross the species barrier and create organisms that are not found in nature. The ostensible purpose is to make the food more useful or convenient for humans. For example, in genetic engineering, genes from arctic flounder, which give the flounder its "antifreeze" qualities, are spliced into a tomato so that the tomato is able to withstand cold temperatures and avoid frost damage.

Being forced to accommodate the genes of a fish was not the first indignity to be suffered by the "humiliated" tomato of the poem. The tomato was also the first food to be genetically engineered and sold to consumers. This was in the form of the Flavr Savr tomato, made by Calgene, that had been engineered to stay firm for longer, thus acquiring a longer shelf life. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved it for

sale in 1994. The Flavr Savr tomato was a commercial failure, however, since consumers resisted the idea of a genetically engineered product. It was withdrawn from the market in 1996.

Critics of genetic engineering claim that foods produced by use of recombinant DNA techniques may not be safe and may also damage the environment. A case in point, as highlighted in the poem, is that of salmon. By the use of foreign growth hormone genes, select salmon have been genetically engineered to grow to market size in half the time it takes normal salmon. Some ecologists fear that such salmon (which have not yet been approved by the FDA for human consumption) will escape from fish farms and mix with the wild salmon population. The ecological effects this might produce are unknown. A study at Purdue University concluded that genetically engineered salmon could eradicate natural populations of wild fish. This is because the genetically engineered male salmon would be larger at sexual maturity and would thereby attract more mates, and so would quickly spread the genetically engineered characteristics to wild populations.

The attempt to create GE salmon has already had unwanted effects. According to a report by the Associated Press in 2000 (referred to in Cummins and Lilleston's *Genetically Engineered Food*), one company in New Zealand decided to discontinue its interest in GE salmon because of fear of where the technology could lead. Some of the salmon had deformed heads and other abnormalities.

Bearing in mind this and other concerns about the ecological effects, still untested and unknown, that GE organisms may have, the immense ramifications of genetic engineering can be readily understood. As Suzanne Wuerthele (quoted in Cummins and Lilleston), a toxicologist with the Environmental Protection Agency, said in 2000, "This is probably one of the most technologically powerful developments the world has ever seen. It's the biological equivalent of splitting the atom." This explains Bass's comments in the poem that she heard a man say that genetic engineering is "more dangerous / than a nuclear bomb."

What drives the recent explosion of genetically engineered products, advocates say, is a desire to grow better food and to solve the world's food problem. Opponents say it is really about over-enthusiastic scientific experimentation allied with the desire for corporate profits. The salmon in the poem is red, white, and blue□not literally, but because it has been patented in the United States by the company that developed it. Virtually all genetically engineered foods, even though the companies that create them are often multinational, have been granted U.S. patents. A patent gives the owner the exclusive right to an invention and any profit that accrues from it. Patents on living organisms have been allowed since a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1980. The patenting of a product, whether animal, plant, or seed, allows the companies concerned to reap a speedy return on the massive investments they put into the development of genetically engineered organisms.

The idea that living organisms can be patented by profit-driven private corporations is disturbing to many people. How can life be "owned" in this way, they argue. Add to this

the fear that genetic engineering is in any case a violation of the integrity of nature, and the impulse that drives "And What If I Spoke of Despair" becomes clear. Nature is no longer nature as it came fresh from God's hands, with inviolable barriers placed between species, but a man-made jumble, created out of partial, highly fallible scientific knowledge that could cause irreversible damage to the fragile, interdependent ecosphere that humans share with all other life. Once a genetically engineered organism is released into the environment, for good or ill, it can never be recalled.

So, the speaker in Bass's poem feels despair, and she feels it, the poem hints, not just for herself but also for the young, who must live with the legacy of the previous generation's mistakes. The images of childhood innocence□children playing in the sand, babies sleeping in the arms of their mother□add poignancy to the poet's belief that nature, which has sustained humanity throughout its existence as a species, has now become the victim of the humans it nourishes. It is as if the child has turned on the mother and forgotten its filial obligations. This analogy is suggested by the recurring tender images of human mother and child. These serve as an ironic commentary on the ruptured relationship between Mother Nature and her human children, which has been violated by the carelessness and selfishness of the child.

The speaker's despair at humanity's arrogance and foolishness is not, many would say, surprising. She is not the first and will not be the last to feel that way. What is perhaps surprising is her unusually passive, contemplative reaction to the ills she depicts. Many people who feel the way she appears to feel take courage from action. They actively oppose what they believe is wrong and encourage others to do so as well. The poet's attitude is quite different. She ceases, it seems, to think further about what Mother Nature suffers at the hands of her children and returns to an exploration of the feeling of despair with which the poem began. Rather than examining the reasons why despair has appeared in her life, she contemplates the feeling as an object in itself. She seems to be weighing different ways of dealing with this emotion, exploring what it really might be and what possibilities lie within it. The emphasis has shifted from the outer world, with its hopeless rash of insoluble problems, to the inner world, full of mysterious possibilities. The speaker wonders what would happen if she were to embrace the feeling of despair as if it were something to be loved and cherished. She imagines a situation in which, surrounded by examples of nature's own beauty, she might "cradle" despair. This at first seems a curiously passive way to end a poem that has expressed such a keen awareness of social and environmental problems. One might perhaps call it a fatalistic or pessimistic attitude. It is as if, renouncing all hope, a condemned prisoner has attained a state of calm: nothing can be done, so the inevitable fate must be embraced.

It may also be much more than this. The last eight lines of the poem hint at the speaker's readiness to explore a counterintuitive method of dealing with a negative, strength-sapping emotion such as despair. Rather than fighting against it, which is the normal human instinct, the poet suggests accepting it. Perhaps the belief that informs the poet at this point is that to fight against an emotion only has the effect of making it stronger; to accept it lessens its grip. Embracing despair rather than running from it therefore offers, paradoxically, a way beyond it. At least this is what the speaker seems

to envision, although she does not actually take the proposed step. Her thought remains at the stage of "what if"—an approach contemplated but not yet taken. She clearly hopes, at some level of her being, that like a fairy tale in which the feared monster turns into a charming prince, the emotion she experiences as despair may turn out to be, once known and welcomed, no more substantial than a cloud that temporarily hides the sun. For there is no doubt that this poem that begins in despair ends with a startling image of serenity and happiness.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on "And What If I Spoke of Despair," in *Poetry for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Topics for Further Study

Read through magazines, newspapers, or other media sources to research the major issues in the debate over human cloning. Plot the pros and cons of these issues on a board, citing at least one media source for each pro and con.

Imagine that it is a time in the future and you are the world's first human clone. Write a short journal entry that describes what your life is like on a typical day. Be creative and try to incorporate situations that only a human clone would face.

Research the pros and cons of genetically modified foods. Pick one major associated issue (ethical, political, medical, etc.) and use that issue to write and deliver a speech that explains why you are either for or against genetically modified foods. Use whatever support you can find to make your case and provide supplementary photos, charts, or other graphics, if possible.

Research the state of environmentalism today and compare it to the state of environmentalism in the late 1980s, in the period following the Exxon *Valdez* oil spill. Research and discuss the effectiveness of environmentally motivated efforts such as recycling and paperwork reduction.

Research the various processes that are required to create nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as which countries have the most of these weapons. Create a board that lists all of these weapons. For each one, include a capsule description of the weapon and list the five countries who possess the largest amounts of these weapons.

What Do I Read Next?

Over the past two decades, Bass's *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (1988), written with Laura Davis, has become one of the standard self-help works for abuse survivors.

Bass's first nonfiction book is a collection of writings by women survivors of abuse: *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (co-edited with Louise Thornton).

The end of the world, by man-made or natural disasters, has been a favorite topic of science fiction writers for the last century. In *Bangs and Whimpers: Stories about the End of the World* (1999), editor James Frenkel collects nineteen apocalyptic tales by noted authors, including Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Connie Willis, and Robert Heinlein.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) is a nightmarish vision of what could happen in the future if politics and genetic technology supersede humanity. Huxley's novel depicts a futuristic, "ideal" world where there is no sickness, disease, or war. However, to achieve this ideal, people are mass-produced in test tubes and social classes are created through genetic manipulations that predetermine a person's intelligence and body type.

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), which is a collection of essays, chronicles Thoreau's attempts to get away from human civilization by living on his own in the woods. Today, the book is generally known by the shorter name of *Walden*.

Further Study

McGee, Glenn, ed., *The Human Cloning Debate*, 3d ed., Berkeley Hills Books, 2002.

First published after the 1997 cloning of the sheep Dolly, this updated collection of essays outlines the major ethical issues involved in human cloning. It also gives a comprehensive overview, in layperson's terms, of the science involved in cloning.

Nader, Ralph, and Martin Teitel, *Genetically Engineered Food: Changing the Nature of Nature*, 2d ed., Inner Traditions International, 2001.

Nader, a well-known environmentalist and Green Party political candidate, and Teitel give a thorough overview of how food is genetically engineered. The authors also examine the potential ethical and environmental consequences of genetically engineered food.

Schor, Juliet, and Betsy Taylor, eds., *Sustainable Planet: Solutions for the Twenty-First Century*, Beacon Press, 2003.

Schor and Taylor, both involved administratively with the Center for a New American Dream (CNAD), compile sixteen essays from a variety of environmental commentators. The mission of CNAD is to protect the environment, enhance the quality of life, and promote social justice. Each essay offers suggestions for how to achieve this goal.

Stock, Gregory, *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Stock is the director of the Program of Medicine, Technology and Society for the School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. In this book, Stock discusses his belief that the same genetic engineering that is being used to redesign natural foods like tomatoes will also be used to redesign humans at the genetic level.

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Steinberg, Mark L., and Sharon D. Cosloy, *The Facts on File Dictionary of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering*, rev. ed., Checkmark Books, 2001.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, PfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of PfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of PfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by PfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

PfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Poetry for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Poetry for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Poetry for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from PfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from PfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Poetry for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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