Beyond the Horizon Study Guide

Beyond the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill

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Introduction

Eugene O'Neill's seminal, Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Beyond the Horizon*, was written in 1918 but not produced or published until 1920, when it made its debut in New York. *Beyond the Horizon* was O'Neill's first successful full-length play, and it signaled a change in American drama. Critics and audiences responded favorably to O'Neill's dark, tragic vision, which contrasted sharply with the unrealistic, melodramatic plays of the day. The play drew heavily on O'Neill's own experiences, including his tuberculosis and his sea voyages. During one of these sea trips, he met a Norwegian sailor who criticized his choice of going to sea as opposed to staying on his family's farm. Taking this idea as a starting point, O'Neill crafted a tale of missed opportunities and failed dreams, involving two brothers. Robert, a poetic but sickly dreamer, wants to go to sea to strengthen his health and see the world. His brother, Andrew, is a born farmer who wants nothing more than to work on his family's farm. Because they love the same woman, both brothers choose to go against their natures. Robert stays on the farm, and Andrew goes to sea.

While some critics have interpreted the play's tragic ending to mean that one should follow his or her own dreams, others have seen a darker message: it does not matter what choice one makes because even dreams that come true are not fulfilling. Although O'Neill's later autobiographical tragedies, namely *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, have surpassed *Beyond the Horizon* in many critics' eyes, most still acknowledge the earlier play as the first success in O'Neill's career and one that had a strong influence on his early development as a playwright. The play has been widely anthologized and is available in *Four Plays by Eugene O'Neill*, published by Signet Classic in 1998.

Author Biography

Eugene O'Neill was born on October 16, 1888, in New York City, into a dysfunctional family. O'Neill's mother, Mary, became addicted to morphine as a result of pain suffered during Eugene's birth. O'Neill's father, James, was a famous actor and was so obsessed with his poor background that he only acted in plays that were surefire financial successes, such as *The Count of Monte Cristo.* As a result, critics widely proclaimed the waste of James's talent.

O'Neill lived his early life on the road; his family accompanied James on acting tours. In 1902, when he was fourteen, O'Neill learned of his mother's addiction when she ran out of morphine and tried to drown herself. As a result, the boy renounced his mother's Catholic faith. O'Neill's education took place in several different boarding schools while he was on the road with his father, and later the future playwright flunked out of Princeton. He eloped, in the first of three ill-fated marriages, with Kathleen Jenkins. Unable to deal with the responsibility of marriage or fatherhood, O'Neill did not live with his first wife and instead devoted his energies to a string of odd jobs that his father found for him, including assistant stage manager (1910), actor (1912), and sailor.

O'Neill found new strength at sea, and when he returned, he arranged to be caught with a prostitute so that he could legally get a divorce from his first wife. He then attempted suicide, and when he recovered, he found out that he had the lung disease tuberculosis. In 1914, while recuperating in a sanitarium, O'Neill decided to become a playwright and spent a year at Harvard taking a playwriting course. His first plays were short, one-act productions, many of which drew on his experiences at sea. These short plays led to some success. In 1918, O'Neill wrote his first full-length play that went into production, *Beyond the Horizon*. The play marked his debut on Broadway, in 1920, and won the Pulitzer Prize the same year. O'Neill received many other awards for his plays, including Pulitzer Prizes for *Anna Christie* (1922) and *Strange Interlude* (1928).

Although he received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1936, O'Neill's tragedies were no longer enjoyed by an America that was, at this point, in the grips of the Great Depression. *Days Without End* (1933), for example, was not received well. O'Neill shunned theater production for the rest of his life and concentrated on writing distinctly autobiographical plays, including *The Iceman Cometh* (1946) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1957), a painful play that was so close to O'Neill's experiences that he delayed publication until after his death. O'Neill died on November 27, 1953, in Boston, Massachusetts.

Plot Summary

Act 1, Scene 1

Beyond the Horizon begins on a country road that runs through the bustling Mayo family farm, where the entire play takes place. Robert, a delicate, poetic young man, sits on a fence by the road, reading a book. His hardy older brother, Andrew, whom most people call Andy, comes in from working in the fields and stops to talk to Robert, who is leaving the next morning to go away on a sea voyage for three years with their uncle. Andy says that everybody will miss him, including Andy, who, as a farmer, does not understand Robert's dream to see the world.

It is obvious from the behavior of the two brothers that they are both in love with Ruth Atkins, who is coming to Robert's farewell dinner with her mother. Andy leaves to wash up before dinner, and Ruth stops by to talk to Robert. She tells him that her widowed, invalid mother nags at her constantly. Ruth says she will miss Robert while he is on his trip. He tells her that the trip has been a dream of his ever since he was a sickly child, but he also says that he is going because he loves her and does not want to interfere with her future with Andy. Ruth is shocked and says that she loves Robert, not Andy. She talks him into canceling his voyage, but he looks wistfully over his shoulder at the horizon.

Act 1, Scene 2

Later that night, Andy sits with his father James, his mother Kate, and her brother Captain Dick Scott, who is telling an old sea story. Everybody else is distracted and sad over the thought of Robert's leaving. Robert, meanwhile, has gone with Ruth to wheel her mother home. Andy leaves to check on one of the cows, and Mr. Mayo tells the others he hopes that Andy and Ruth get married, since the Atkins farm is next door to the Mayo farm, and Andy could manage both. Mrs. Mayo says that she does not think Ruth loves Andy. Robert walks in and announces that he is canceling his voyage, since Ruth has told him she loves him. Everybody is glad except Scott, who is losing a shipmate, and Andy, who has been quietly listening from the doorway. Andy forces a smile and congratulates Robert, then says that he is going to take Robert's place on the voyage. Scott is overjoyed, but Mr. Mayo is shocked and accuses Andy of running away because Ruth did not choose him. Andy lies, saying that he hates the farm and wants to get away. His father disowns him and storms out. Robert knows Andy's decision is because of Ruth but says that if he were in Andy's place, he would do the same thing.

Act 2, Scene 1

Three years later, the signs of neglect on the farm are evident from the condition of the farmhouse. Mrs. Mayo and Mrs. Atkins sit at the table, talking about Robert's mismanagement of both farms, Andy's expected arrival, and whether or not Mr. Mayo

forgave Andy before he died. Both women agree that Ruth and Andy would have made a better match. Ruth, who looks much older after three years, comes in with Mary, her sickly child. All three women talk about Andy, whom they expect will stay to help renovate the farm. Mrs. Atkins and Mrs. Mayo go outside to escape the heat of the farmhouse. Robert comes in, and they argue about Robert not eating dinner, Ruth's pining over Andy's letters, Mary not taking a nap, and Robert's preference for books instead of work. Ben, the farmhand, comes in, announcing that he is quitting because he is embarrassed to work on such a poor farm. Robert and Ruth have a vicious fight, telling each other that their marriage has been a mistake. Robert says he wishes he had gone to sea, and Ruth says that she loves Andy and wishes Robert would leave. Andy arrives.

Act 2, Scene 2

Later that day, Robert sits on a boulder on the farm, gazing off toward the horizon. Andy comes up and says he is giving up his career at sea to move to Argentina and invest in the lucrative grain business in Buenos Aires. Robert is dismayed that Andy is not staying on at the Mayo farm, and they talk about the farm's bad condition. Andy offers to give his savings to Robert to save the farm, but Robert refuses and becomes infuriated. Ruth stops by and it is evident that she has put on makeup and gotten dressed up for Andy. Ruth sends Robert and Mary away on a work task and tells Andy that she cannot wait until he takes over. Andy tells Ruth that he is leaving but that he is going to hire some help to run the farm. He also tells Ruth that he loves her like a sister. Ruth is distraught over Andy's unexpected leaving as well as over the fact that he no longer loves her, and she rebukes him. Andy is confused at these outbursts and thinks he is not wanted. They are interrupted by Captain Scott, who tells Andy a ship is ready to leave for Argentina the next morning. This is the only ship that is going to Argentina for months, so Andy decides to take it. Andy and Captain Scott leave to walk toward the Mayo farmhouse, and Ruth breaks down crying.

Act 3, Scene 1

Five years later, the farmhouse is in total decay. Robert, who is obviously sick, talks with Ruth about Andy's imminent arrival, Mary's death, his sickness, and their money problems. Ruth puts Robert back to bed and talks to her mother about Jake, the hired hand who has just quit because Robert owed him money. Andy and a medical specialist, Doctor Fawcett, arrive. While the doctor examines Robert, Andy and Ruth talk about Robert's condition. Ruth says they could not afford to contact Andy sooner and that Robert has steadily lost interest in everything since Mary and his mother died. Andy says he needs to go away again, because he has lost most of his money on speculative investments, but that there is enough left over in his savings to fix the farm. Doctor Fawcett comes out of the room and says that Robert is dying. Robert says that his dying wish is to have Andy marry Ruth, then he goes to lie down again. Andy is confused over this request until Ruth tells Andy about the fight she and Robert had over

Andy five years ago. Ruth goes to the bedroom to tell Robert that she does not love Andy and cannot marry him, but Robert has climbed out the window.

Act 3, Scene 2

A few minutes later, Robert stumbles into the same section of country road where the play started, although the fields are no longer healthy. Andy and Ruth rush up to Robert, who tells them he wants to die outside. Robert is happy because with his death, he says, he will finally be able to journey beyond the horizon. Robert dies, saying once again that Andy needs to take care of Ruth. Andy looks at Ruth, telling her they have both screwed things up but that perhaps in the future, things will be better, suggesting that maybe they will get married. Ruth, however, is exhausted and gives no sign that she agrees.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

This scene is set by the side of a road stretching into the distance. In the twilight of early evening on a day in May, a man in his early twenties, who looks like an intellectual (Robert) sits on a fence and reads. He looks up towards the horizon, suddenly thoughtful.

Robert's older brother Andrew (a more rugged and earthy kind of man) calls out to him. Robert turns, startled. Andrew joins him on the fence, teases him for being such a daydreamer, and asks to look at the book. Robert hands it to him, warning him, "don't get it full of dirt." Andrew responds by saying it, "isn't dirt – it's good clean earth."

As Andrew looks through the book, he quotes some of the poetry. Andrew teases Robert about how he took a liking to that "stuff" at college and he suggests that Robert should have stayed in school. Robert tells him that just because he reads; it doesn't mean he's interested in being a student. All Robert wants is to, "keep on moving so that [he] won't take root in any one place." Andrew suggests that the trip Robert's about to take will, "keep [him] moving, all right."

At the mention of the trip, the brothers fall silent for a moment, then Andrew mentions that Robert will be gone for three years because he is sailing to Japan, India, Australia, South Africa, and South America which are all places mentioned by their Uncle Dick, the sea captain with whom Robert will be apprenticing. Andrew mentions that their mother will miss Robert while he's gone, and that their father isn't happy about the trip either, even though he isn't talking about it much. Andrew also admits that he'll miss Robert himself. Andrew talks about how he and Robert aren't like most brothers, "fighting and separated a lot of the time." Robert says it's hard for him too, but that he's got something calling him. When Robert gestures towards the horizon, Andrew tells him that he doesn't have to explain: he wants to go, that's all there is to it.

Robert thanks him for understanding. Andrew then talks about how everybody in the family knows the trip will be good for Robert's health but Robert protests that, even though he was sick a lot as a child, the trip has nothing to *do* with his health. He says he's doing a lot better, and if his health was the only reason to go on the ship, he'd stay on the farm and "start plowing." This starts Andrew talking about how different they are. He says that plowing and farming just aren't part of Robert's nature. Robert agrees, saying that Andrew is just like their dad: the farm is a life's work for both of them. Andrew talks about all the possibilities in Robert's trip; for making money, for becoming an officer, for going anywhere he wants without having to pay for it, and for opportunities in the new parts of the world just opening up. He jokes about Robert becoming a millionaire, and asks him to bring some money home once in a while, since the farm could use it.

Robert protests that none of those "practical" things are what interest him about the trip He says that it's, "Beauty that's calling [him], the beauty of the far off and unknown," as well as the mystery of the wide open spaces and the joy of just wandering, "in quest of the secret which is hidden over there, beyond the horizon." Andrew calls him "nutty," saying that everything Robert's looking for is right there on the farm. There is enough of horizon, and "beauty enough for anyone," on the farm.

Robert jumps off the fence to goes to get ready for supper. Robert mentions that Ruth and her mother are joining the family for dinner. At the mention of Ruth's name, the brothers are suddenly quiet again. They both start to say something, but they both decide it'd be better to say nothing. Andrew heads for the house. Robert is left alone for a moment, and then Ruth (a young woman in her early twenties) hurries on. She startles him when she calls him.

Robert assumes she is looking for Andrew, but she says she'd come looking for *him.* Robert then assumes that she wants to talk to him before he leaves, but Ruth tells him his mother is anxious for him to hurry home for supper. They talk for a moment about *Ruth's* mother, who's in a wheelchair. Ruth mentions her wish that her mother would, "try to make the best of things that can't be helped," and complains about her mother's nagging. Ruth says that she wishes she was going away with Robert. She admits that everybody is going to miss him a lot, particularly her and Andrew. Robert suggests that Ruth and Andrew will have each other, but Ruth argues that while he's away and seeing lots of new sights and new people, she and Andrew will be at home with the old routine. When she talks about all the opportunities that Robert will have, Robert becomes angry, saying he's had enough of that from Andrew.

Ruth asks him why he wants to go. In a long speech, Robert explains that when he was little and sickly, his mother would push his chair to the window and tell him to look out and be quiet. He says that he used to imagine all the wonderful things that were out there in the world, "beyond the horizon," and sometimes he started to cry because he was sad that he'd never see them. Now that he's able to go, he says, he *has* to. When he asks Ruth if she understands, she says yes, "[he puts] things so beautifully." They share an intimate embrace, but separate when Robert starts to tell her the other reason that he's going; he loves her but knows that she and Andrew are in love. Robert is going away to let them be together and to keep himself from being unhappy. Ruth says she doesn't love Andrew at all, she loves Robert.

Robert has difficulty believing her but she convinces him. Ruth asks him to not leave. When Robert suggests that she should come with him, she says she can't leave her mother. When Robert protests that he'll be letting down Uncle Dick if he stays, Ruth says that he won't mind as long as he knows that, "it's for your happiness to stay." Ruth starts to cry. Robert promises her that he won't go and he wonders if Andrew was right; that all the things he'd been looking for were actually right there on the farm. He wonders if love was actually, "the secret that called … from over the world's rim," and if he'd found it in Ruth's arms.

He suggests they tell their families right away, but Ruth talks him out of it. She tells him to wait until after she's gone since there would, "be such a scene with them all together." Robert agrees with her, and they head home for supper. Before they leave, they look up into the sky and see the evening star which is their star. Ruth urges Robert to hurry. Robert takes one last look at the horizon and allows Ruth to pull him away.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

Two aspects of the setting of this scene foreshadow the rest of the play. The fact that it's on a road indicates that the three central characters (Robert, Andrew and Ruth) are all at the beginning of a spiritual and/or emotional journey and the fact that it's set at sunset indicates that their journeys are going to take them into spiritual and emotional darkness. This idea is supported by the setting for the last scene of the play which is the same location as this but it is set at sunrise, indicating that the characters have come to the *end* of their journeys.

Another piece of foreshadowing appears when Robert and Andrew discuss Robert's health. His childhood illness foreshadows events later in the play, when Robert's physical weakness leads to his illness and ultimate death. A third piece of foreshadowing occurs when Ruth speaks unhappily about her mother's nagging as well as her unhappiness and unwillingness to face things, "that can't be helped." These are all facets of Ruth's character that she displays later in the play.

The differences between Robert and Andrew, in terms of character and philosophy, are vividly portrayed. It is clear that these differences are the result of their inner nature, or who they are, as opposed to how they act or what they think. The differences between their natures introduce the playwright's exploration of his theme. The theme of the piece is; if a person doesn't follow his or her inner nature, it leads to tragedy and death (physical, emotional or both).

This is also true of Ruth. Ruth says she loves Robert and that she doesn't love Andrew even though she does love him, as we find out later. In other words, she doesn't follow her inner nature either. The difference between Ruth and the brothers is that Andrew and Robert each have a real understanding of their inner natures, but Ruth doesn't. The similarity between Ruth, Andrew and Robert is that they all make life-changing decisions base on impulses instead of listening to their own inner natures; Robert decides to stay because he suddenly feels love for Ruth; Ruth decides to marry Robert because she feels excited when he speaks poetically to her; and Andrew (in the next scene) decides to take Robert's place on the boat because he suddenly feels hurt and resentful.

The character of Ruth's mother is another illustration of the playwright's theme. Her physical disability illustrates the emotional and spiritual disability that Robert, Ruth and Andrew will all experience as a result of their mistaken choices.

The star that Robert and Ruth see at the end of the scene represents their hope and their faith that their choices will work out for the best.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

This scene takes place in the main room of the farmhouse. At this point it's neat, tidy and well kept.

Andrew and his parents, Kate and James, are only half-listening as Uncle Dick (Kate's brother) comes to the end of a funny story about a woman from a mission who was curious about where seagulls sleep. As Uncle Dick makes fun of the woman's lack of knowledge Kate asks where seagulls sleep. Uncle Dick and James both tease her but Andrew remains silent.

Uncle Dick asks why the three of them are sitting so quietly, "like [they're] settin' up with a corpse." Kate and James explain that they're upset and worried about Robert leaving with him early the next morning. Uncle Dick says the voyage will make a man of Robert and that it will give him a trade for the rest of his life. Kate says she hopes he won't be away for the rest of his life because she wants him to come home and marry.

Andrew reminds them that leaving is something Robert's been dreaming about for years, and that it wouldn't be fair to keep him at home. James agrees with Andrew and says that ends the argument. Kate wonders why Robert volunteered to push Ruth's mother home when it's usually Andrew who does it and James wonders why he's taking such a long time to come back. Andrew says that Robert volunteered right away when it was time for Ruth and her mother to leave and goes out to the barn to check the livestock.

When he's gone, Uncle Dick suggests that Andrew would make a better, "sea-faring man," than Robert. James tells him that Andrew is a farmer through and through and he expresses confidence that Andrew will turn the farm into, "one of the slickest, best payin' farms in the state." Kate comments that Andrew seems strangely quiet, but James says it's only because he's leaving. Kate takes her thought even further and wonders why Ruth, Andrew, and Robert seemed so "stirred up" at dinner and didn't eat much food. James says again that they were all thinking about Robert leaving, but Kate thinks that something else was going on. Kate wonders if her sons had an argument about Ruth. James talks about his hopes that Ruth and Andrew would eventually get together, not just because they love each other, but because the families' two farms are next to each other, and would make a "first class" place if they were joined together. Kate says that she doesn't think Ruth loves Andrew and she hints that Ruth might love Robert instead. James laughs that off, saying that Ruth loves Robert as a friend and nothing more.

Robert comes in, and after answering a couple of questions about why he took so long, he announces that he's not going away in the morning after all. As Andrew comes in and listens, without anyone noticing him, Robert says that he and Ruth confessed their love

for each other and want to be together. Kate and James are both happy that he's staying, and that Robert and Ruth will be together.

After a moment Andrew comes forward and offers his congratulations. Robert accepts them but he sees that Andrew is hurt. Kate asks why Uncle Dick hasn't offered his congratulations. Uncle Dick shakes Robert's hand, but asks if he's sure. Robert says he's found, "a bigger dream." He promises his parents to work hard on the farm and be as good a farmer as both Andrew and his father. When James agrees to teach him, Uncle Dick seems amazed that James is going to allow Robert to stay, and says he's ashamed of Robert, "lettin' a little huggin' and kissin' in the dark [spoil] your chances to make a man out o' yourself." Robert, Kate and James all try to calm Uncle Dick down, but he loses his temper and takes everybody to task for giving in to, "all this silly lovin' business." He then asks what he's supposed to do with the cabin he prepared especially for Robert and what he's supposed to tell the hands that put all the work into making the cabin ready. James suggests that Uncle Dick go out and find himself a wife to live in that cabin. When Uncle Dick swears at James, Andrew steps forward and says that he'll take the cabin in Robert's place.

Robert immediately tries to talk him out of it, but Andrew tells him to not interfere. When Kate says that Andrew's only joking Andrew declares that he's not joking and James says it doesn't look to him as though it's a joking matter to Andrew. When James asks why he wants to go, Andrew says he's always wanted to go and never mentioned it because Robert was going so thought "it was no use." James tells Andrew it's not fair to run off when there's so much work to do on the farm. When Andrew says that Robert can pick up the slack or James can hire someone to come in and do the work, James loses his temper. James tells Andrew he's avoiding his "rightful responsibility," calls him a liar, and accuses him of running away because Robert "got Ruth" instead of him.

Kate tries to calm Andrew and James down but it doesn't work. Andrew protests that he is telling the truth, but James tells him he's, "pilin' lie on lie." Andrew shouts that he's tired of the farm and that he's, "through for good and all." He says that if Uncle Dick doesn't take him on his ship he'll find another one. James swears at Andrew and they're about to come to blows but Robert and Uncle Dick come between them. James says if Andrew's still there in the morning he'll be thrown out and he tells Andrew never to come back. James stalks out, followed by Kate who pleads with him to take back what he said.

Uncle Dick tells Andrew that James will calm down and apologize. Andrew tells him that James isn't the sort to apologize, and he says that he (Andrew) plans to follow through with his plan to take Robert's place. Uncle Dick tells Andrew that he'll be glad to have him on board, he thinks they'll get along well, to pack up, and to get some sleep. He says they'll be leaving extra early to avoid any more arguments and goes out.

Robert and Andrew are left alone. Andrew tells Robert that it will all work out for the best. When Robert tells Andrew that he knows Andrew lied about always wanting to travel, Andrew admits it is a lie. Andrew goes on to wish Robert and Ruth, "all the good luck in the world," but says he couldn't stay on the farm after doing everything he did for

the farm thinking, "she cared for [him]." Robert says that if he'd known what would happen, he'd never have said anything to Ruth about how he felt. Andrew says that would've been worse because it would have led to suffering for Ruth. Andrew says that he's got to get away to face how he made a fool of himself and he asks Robert what he'd do if he were in the same situation. Robert says that he would leave. Andrew takes this as a sign that Robert understands why he's doing what he's doing. When Robert cries out that the situation is "damnable," Andrew soothes him by telling him that Ruth made a good choice and suggests they go to bed because he feels "dead." Andrew blows out the lamp, and repeats that, "everything'll turn out all right in the end." The two brothers stumble through the dark to their bedrooms.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

The description of the farmhouse in this scene as neat and tidy illustrates the beginning of the journey that the three central characters are on At this point, things are relatively fine and everybody is on the paths they had planned to be on all their lives. As their journey into emotional and spiritual darkness continues, and as their despair deepens, the house becomes untidier and dirtier, symbolizing the disintegration of their lives.

In terms of dramatic action, the movement of the scene begins quietly and builds through a series of revelations (that Robert is staying on the farm that he and Ruth are to be married, and that Andrew is taking Robert's place) which trigger increased between the characters. The conflict leads to a climax (when James tells Robert to never come home) and a denouement, or falling action, when Robert and Andrew make peace with each other about their various decisions. This makes the structure of this scene similar to the structure of the entire play.

Other basic elements of this scene are constructed in a similarly straightforward and effective way. Kate and James are clearly defined parental figures (stern father, loving mother) with traditional values and positions. As characters they aren't much deeper than that, and the playwright doesn't need them to be since they are supporting characters in the play and are present only to provide additional conflict, context, and illumination of the basic conflict.

The irony in this scene is that Andrew makes his decision to leave for the same reason that Robert made his decision to leave: they each thought that the other one was in love with Ruth.

The final few moments of this scene again illustrate the playwright's theme: when Andrew says he feels "dead" it is symbolic of how all three of the central characters; Robert, Ruth and Andrew, will die emotionally and spiritually as a result of the choices they've made in these first two scenes. When Andrew blows out the lamp, it symbolizes again the darkness that the three of them are heading into.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

This scene is again set in the main room of the farmhouse, but things have changed: there's an atmosphere of carelessness, shabbiness, and untidiness.

It's a hot day. Kate and Mrs. Atkins (Ruth's mother) sit at the table. Mrs. Atkins is busy knitting while Kate's knitting sits forgotten on the table. Mrs. Atkins comments that Robert's late for dinner again, and she says that she doesn't know why Ruth puts up with it. Kate, her voice dull and quiet, explains that Robert's always been late for things, and that he can't help it. Mrs. Atkins asks how Kate can keep finding excuses for him. She goes on to say that she's pointed out to both Ruth and Robert, "thousands of times" how things should be done, including managing the farm, but they pay no attention to her. Kate explains that Robert never really took to farming, and that he can't be expected to learn everything "in a day." Mrs. Atkins retorts that he's had three years to learn, and that things have gone from bad to worse since James died two years ago. She tells Kate that Ruth has been coming to her for advice. Ruth has told her mother that Robert was planning to mortgage the farm because there was no other way to get through to harvest. Kate says that maybe Robert could manage until Andrew gets home, but she admits that she doesn't have a clear idea of when that will be as Andrew's last letter was vague. She sighs, wishing that James could have forgiven Andrew before he died. She says that it was stubbornness that killed James as well as a broken heart.

A baby cries in the kitchen. Mrs. Atkins complains that the baby cries on purpose just, "to set a body's nerves on edge." Kate says the baby's just sickly, and Mrs. Atkins says that the baby gets it from Robert, who was always, "ailin' as a child." Mrs. Atkins complains that Ruth and Robert should never have gotten married in the first place. Kate agrees, saying that she thought Ruth and Andrew would have made a better match.

Ruth (who seems older and very tired) comes in from the kitchen carrying the baby, two year old Mary. Mary reaches for her doll, which is underneath the table. Ruth struggles with her, telling her it's time for a nap, but eventually gives in to keep Mary from whining. Ruth complains about Robert coming in late for dinner late. When Mrs. Atkins nags Ruth about letting him get away with it, Ruth snaps back at her mother to stop nagging. Ruth then changes the subject. She wonders when Andrew will come home. She and Kate both hope that Andrew will fix everything that's gone wrong with the farm when he shows up. Mrs. Atkins tells Kate to wheel her outside and into the shade of a tree and then she tells Ruth that she should join them and, "learn [Robert] a lesson and let him get his own dinner." Ruth stays inside, saying she's got to put the baby to bed but when Kate and Mrs. Atkins are gone, she reads a letter from Andrew instead of putting Mary to bed.

Robert comes in from outside, without her noticing, and watches her read the letter. Mary calls out happily for her "dada," but when Robert picks her up Ruth complains that he'll just get her all worked up and she won't go down for her nap. Robert says that he'll put Mary down and he asks Ruth why she is reading the letter. He says that he thought she'd, "know it by heart by this time." Ruth angrily says she's got a right to read it and asks him if he wants his dinner. Robert says he's not hungry but when Ruth says she's been keeping it warm he asks her to bring it in and he'll try to eat. Ruth tries to take Mary away from her "dada," but when she cries Robert says she's fine where she is and will fall asleep in a minute. Ruth says that Mary's got to learn to mind her mother and threatens to spank her. Robert loses his temper and tells Ruth he won't let her threaten Mary. Robert and Ruth look at each other angrily, until Ruth goes into the kitchen. Robert puts Mary to sleep.

Ruth brings Robert's dinner, puts it on the table, and goes back into the kitchen. Robert comes back in and starts reading instead of eating. Ruth comes back and chides him for reading all the time, saying there's work that'll, "never get done by reading books all the time." Robert tells her to stop nagging. He says that he's got enough troubles without her adding to them and that he's tried hard to keep things going in spite of bad luck and of being basically unsuited for the job in the first place. He asks for her help, and promises to make more of an effort to be on time. Ruth reluctantly agrees.

Ben, the hired hand, comes in with two pieces of news; a piece of equipment's broken and that he's quitting. When Robert asks him why he's leaving at the busiest time of year for the farm, Ben tells him that he's a good farm hand but he can't stand being laughed at by the other hands and the other farmers, who make fun of Robert's lack of skill. Robert says he can't pay Ben until the next day. Ben threatens trouble if he doesn't get paid and leaves.

Robert says that Ben's attitude is an example of the kind of bad luck he's been having. Ruth says that Ben wouldn't dare act that way with anyone else, and that it's a good thing that Andrew's coming back. Robert wonders out loud about the things that Andrew's seen and complains that the hills he used to dream about crossing now feel like a prison. He says that if it wasn't for Ruth and Mary, he'd chuck his whole life and go on the journey he always dreamed about. Ruth accuses him of thinking he's better than everyone else. Ruth yells at Robert telling him that; she hates the sight of him and she wishes that she'd seen him for the way he really was instead of falling in love with his poetic ideas. Robert angrily expresses his wish that he'd found out how "mean and small" she was before they got married. Ruth tells him to go on and leave if he wants to because Andrew will fix up the whole place when he gets back. Ruth admits that she loves Andrew not Robert and she claims that Andrew loves her. Robert calls her a slut.

Mary whimpers in the bedroom, which makes Ruth and Robert stop their quarrel. In the silence, they hear the sound of a motor from the road. Ruth runs for the door, but Robert tells her to go in to Mary. Andrew calls "Ahoy!" from offstage. Ruth goes into the bedroom. Robert goes to the door to meet his brother.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

The setting of this scene illustrates the emotional and spiritual states of the two central characters in the scene, Robert and Ruth. Just as their home has become untidy, their lives have become untidy and difficult.

The conversation between Mrs. Atkins and Kate is an example of exposition (information given to the audience). In this case, we learn that it's been three years since the last scene, that James has been dead for two years, that Robert has made a mess of the farm, that James died without forgiving Andrew for leaving, and that everybody hopes that when Andrew comes home, everything will turn out all right. The character of Mary symbolizes that hope. The fact that Robert has a better relationship with Mary than Ruth represents the truth and depth of his feelings for Andrew, as opposed to Ruth's feelings for him which she uses as a weapon against Robert.

The central conflict in this scene, between Ruth and Robert, is over the way the farm is run. The conflict begins when Ruth complains about Robert reading and continues when Robert confesses he still has dreams about going beyond the mountains. The conflict escalates when Ruth screams at Robert that she still loves Andrew. In other words, the conflict exists because Ruth and Robert aren't living according to their inner natures as established in the first scene. This scene; therefore, effectively dramatizes the playwright's theme which is that living in a way that's not connected to one's inner nature creates conflict and pain.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

This scene is set on the top of a hill on the farm. The sea is visible in the distance. Robert sits on a rock, staring out at the horizon, while Mary plays nearby. Mary sees that Robert's unhappy and tries to comfort him. Robert asks her how she'd feel about "dada" going far away. When she becomes upset, he tries to comfort her by saying that "Uncle Andy" will stay with her, but it doesn't work because she wants her "dada" to stay. Robert tells her he was only joking and that he wouldn't, "leave his little Mary." She goes back to playing, but a moment later calls out that there's a man coming.

Andrew, tanned and looking authoritative, "as though [he's] accustomed to give and have them obeyed," comes up the hill in search of Robert. He plays for a moment with Mary and then joins Robert on the top of the hill. Andrew teases Robert about acting just the way he used to. Andrew says it's great to be back home, but is concerned at how things are going. Robert doesn't want to talk about the farm so he asks Andrew about his trip, saying that his letters were, "sketchy, to say the least." Andrew tells him about how the ship went through a typhoon and barely survived. He says the storm would have cured Robert of his dreams of being at sea. He goes on to describe the Far East as smelly and filthy, but he talks about Argentina as a place with a lot of opportunity. He tells Robert that as soon as he's visited for a few weeks and gotten the farm back in shape he's going to get a job on a ship heading for Argentina. Andrew plans to accept a job offer from a friend he made on his travels. This news upsets Robert, but Andrew doesn't seem to notice. Andrew offers to lend Robert some money to get the farm back on its feet, but Robert refuses, saying that Andrew will need the money to start things up in Argentina. Andrew tries to convince Robert to change his mind, but Robert refuses absolutely.

Andrew changes the subject by asking if James ever "softened up" about him. Robert says that James, "never understood, that's a kinder way of putting it." Andrew tells Robert that he got over his feelings for Ruth after about six months at sea, and he says that he's now certain he was never actually "in love," he only loved her like a brother. He tells Robert he plans to tell Ruth and apologize, but Robert tells him to keep quiet, for Ruth's sake. When Andrew tries to talk about it further, Robert's temper flares and he tells Andrew to stop talking about it. He apologizes for losing his temper, and asks where Uncle Dick went. Andrew tells him that Uncle Dick went down to the port to tend to the ship.

Mary calls out that "Mama" (Ruth) is coming. Ruth comes up the hill, dressed in white and looking rested and pretty. She tells Robert that their new hired hand wants to speak with him. When Robert gets up to leave, she tells him to take Mary along. They leave with Mary skipping along at her father's side.

Ruth invites Andrew to sit beside her, saying it will be just like old times. When Andrew sits beside her, she says she feels like she's taken a holiday in honor of his visit, and announces that Kate has decided to cook dinner that night in honor of Andrew's return. Ruth complains about Robert, and when Andrew starts to defend him she says that the days of trouble are over, now that Andrew's back to take charge. Andrew suggests hiring an experienced farmer to help Robert around the farm but Ruth doesn't see what he's getting at. Andrew tells her that he's going to Argentina. Ruth asks whether Robert tried to keep him from going and she reacts angrily when Andrew tells her that he didn't. Ruth pleads with him to stay. She tells him how upset Kate will be if he goes away again and how the farm will be ruined. Andrew promises to come back after a couple of years of making money, settle again on the farm, and turn it into, "the crackiest place in the whole state." In the meantime, he says, he'll help them, "from down there." He talks excitedly about the good feeling he has about a new life in Argentina, and how he couldn't be content settling on the farm right now.

Ruth suddenly asks whether Robert said anything to Andrew about her. When Andrew says he didn't, Ruth asks him if he's telling the truth, which leads him to protest that he has never lied to her before. She asks whether Andrew's leaving this time for the same reason as he left last time. Andrew tells her that he no longer loves her and describes what he used to feel as "silly nonsense." He tells Ruth that he's realized she's like a sister to him. Half-laughing and half-crying, she asks him to stop talking. Andrew says he feels like he's always, "putting his foot in it" today. Ruth asks whether he told Robert what he just told her. When he says that he did, she gets hysterical and tells him to leave her alone. Andrew moves away from her and sees Uncle Dick coming up the hill with Robert and Mary. Ruth asks him to stop talking. Andrew moves further away, his feelings hurt.

Uncle Dick, Robert and Mary come up the hill. Mary runs to Ruth, who holds her tight. Uncle Dick announces that he's got some news for Andrew; there's a ship in the harbor leaving for Argentina the next day, and if Andrew wants a job on it, he can have it. Andrew says he'd like to take it because, "there may not be another ship … in months." He then realizes that it would mean leaving the farm before he's had a chance to fix it up. Robert suggests that it's too good a chance for Andrew to pass up, but that he's not going to make the choice for him. Ruth suddenly turns and tells Andrew to go.

In the silent moment that follows, Andrew decides that he will go, saying the sooner he goes the sooner he'll be back. He promises that he won't have "empty hands" next time. Uncle Dick urges him to hurry up, and suggests that they go back to the ship right away. When Robert reminds them that Kate is making a special dinner for them, Andrew decides to stay at least for that. As Andrew and Uncle Dick go down to the house, Mary tells Robert that, "Mama's crying." Robert tells her that Mama's eyes are just sore from the sun. Ruth wipes her eyes, takes Mary's hand, and leads her down the hill. Robert remains looking out at the sea and then he slowly follows them.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

The setting of this scene, outside, on a hill overlooking the sea, is another symbol of hope. Ruth and Robert hope that Andrew will stay and bring the farm back to life, and Andrew hopes that he will be successful in Argentina. The fact that these two hopes are for exactly opposite things makes the setting ironic and deepens the central conflict of both the scene and the play. The conflict is further deepened when Ruth appears in her white dress, which also symbolizes hope.

By showing us Andrew's perceptions (of the typhoon and of the unpleasantness of the Far East) juxtaposed with Robert's refusal to accept Andrew's experiences as reality, the playwright once again illustrates the play's theme. The contrasting perspectives of the two brothers suggest that if Robert had gone on the trip he'd have experienced the wonder of what Andrew experienced and found a kind of emotional and spiritual fulfillment that Andrew didn't. Andrew; however, might have found fulfillment if he'd stayed true to his nature and stayed on the farm instead of Robert.

When Andrew speaks about how he truly feels about Ruth, there may be a question in our minds whether he's actually telling the truth. Andrew may only have convinced himself that he doesn't love Ruth in order to spare himself any more pain (the way he convinced himself earlier that leaving was the right thing for him to do). In terms of Andrew's journey (through emotional and spiritual darkness) and its relationship to the play's theme (of living according one's nature versus denying one's nature), it would seem to make sense that he has convinced himself that he doesn't love Ruth. By denying how he feels, and telling Ruth, he moves the play and all three of the central characters further along on their journeys.

Andrew's decision to go to Argentina right away continues to illustrate the play's theme. Once again he follows an emotional impulse (this time to take the trip) rather than being true to his inner nature.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

This scene is set again in the main room of the farmhouse. The atmosphere is even bleaker than before; curtains are torn, everything is dirty, and the atmosphere is one of, "habitual poverty."

Ruth sits by the stove, stretching out her hands towards the warmth. She wears black, as if she's in mourning and seems to be completely defeated by life. Mrs. Atkins, still in her wheelchair, sits closer to the stove, asleep.

Robert comes out of the bedroom and he is thin and unhealthy-looking. Ruth tells him to come closer to the fire where it's warm. Robert refuses, saying he's warm enough. Ruth says that's because of, "the fever," and tells him the doctor's instructions were that Robert shouldn't get out of bed. Robert calls the doctor an, "old fool of a country quack," and that he's, "always helped us to die … Pa and Ma and … Mary." Ruth says he did the best he could, and that Andrew's bringing a doctor when he comes. Robert asks if that's why Ruth is waiting up; for Andrew. Ruth says somebody's got to meet him after he's been gone for five years.

Robert asks to see Andrew's most recent telegrams and Ruth passes them over. The first telegram is from New York and it says that Andrew will be home as soon as his business is completed. Robert cynically comments that with Andrew, business has always come first. Robert also comments on the fact that Andrew concluded his telegram with, "Hope you all are well!" Ruth says she told Andrew in her reply about Robert's illness, saying it was something in his lungs. Robert angrily tells her again that his illness is pleurisy, which affects the tissue outside the lungs. Ruth doesn't seem to care.

Andrew's next telegram says that he's leaving New York on the midnight train and that he's bringing a specialist. Robert estimates that Andrew should be arriving any time. He notices Mrs. Atkins, and asks Ruth whether she's waiting for Andrew too. When Ruth doesn't respond, Robert comments that Mrs. Atkins is lucky that she's able to sleep so easily as he just lay in the dark thinking, "of how hard these last years must have been for [Ruth]." When he apologizes, Ruth just says they're all past now, and they were hard on everybody. Robert agrees, and says the last eight months since Mary … he can't complete the sentence. Ruth says Mary is better off being dead. Robert angrily tells her mother to stop saying Mary's death was because of a, "weak constitution inherited from [him]." Robert complains that she's always nagging him to accept more money from Andrew. When Ruth protests that Andrew's got money to spare and that as Robert's brother it wouldn't cause any harm, Robert assumes that she's interested in Andrew only because she still loves him. He starts bragging about the good he's done for the farm and then stops himself as he remembers all the debts, taxes and mortgages he's

gotten himself into. He calls himself a fool and tells Ruth he doesn't blame her for hating him and loving Andrew. Ruth says she doesn't hate him and that she loves nobody.

Robert tells Ruth some of the other thoughts he was having while he was lying awake in the bedroom; of moving to the city, of the two of them starting a new life together, and of becoming a writer. Ruth says it's not possible because of her mother. Robert says that's just an excuse. He thinks she wants to stay because she's still in love with Andrew. When his excitement and anger make Robert start coughing, Ruth quickly reassures him again that she doesn't love Andrew and promises to move to the city with him. Robert speaks with energy and enthusiasm about their new life together and kisses Ruth happily. He says that all their suffering has been a test, "through which [they] had to pass to prove [them]selves worthy of a finer realization … and now the dream is to come true!" Ruth agrees, but she tells him again to go back to bed. Robert refuses because he wants to see the sun rise as it's a sign of good fortune. He goes to the window but it's still too early. Suddenly his energy fades away, and Ruth has to help him back into bed.

When she comes back, Ruth wakes up Mrs. Atkins and tells her what just happened. Mrs. Atkins wonders again why Ruth ever married Robert in the first place. Mrs. Atkins reminds Ruth that if she (Mrs. Atkins) hadn't been handing over the money that she'd been saving for her old age, Ruth and Robert would be in the poorhouse. Ruth tells her that she'll get Andrew to pay her back, and Robert will never know. Mrs. Atkins asks whether Ruth thinks the specialist Andrew's bringing with him will do Robert any good. Ruth says she doesn't know. As Ruth notices that the sky is starting to lighten, a car is heard outside. Mrs. Atkins nags Ruth about the state of the house, but Ruth doesn't seem to care. Mrs. Atkins tells her to push her into the kitchen because she doesn't want to be seen, "looking a sight." Ruth wheels her out just as Andrew comes in. Like Robert and Ruth, he's changed a great deal. Andrew appears more decisive, more strained, and perhaps even more cunning. The Doctor comes in behind him.

Ruth rushes in and greets them both. Andrew's more interested in seeing Robert than her and, after asking Ruth where Robert is, Andrew shows the Doctor into the bedroom. He soon comes back, leaving the Doctor with Robert, and asks Ruth how long Robert's been this bad. Ruth tells him he's been having difficulty ever since Mary died. Andrew angrily asks why she didn't let him know before. Ruth tells him that she wanted to send word, but that Robert wouldn't let her. Ruth claims that Robert was too proud to ask for help. Andrew says that Ruth was probably, "so used to the idea of his being delicate that [she] took his sickness as a matter of course." Ruth tells him a letter would have taken too long and a telegraph would have cost too much money.

As if for the first time Andrew sees the conditions of poverty that Robert and Ruth are living in and asks in disbelief how it happened. Ruth tells him that Robert took a lot less interest in the farm and in life after Kate died; the men he hired all cheated him; and when Mary died, he lost interest completely. She says that Robert, "just stayed indoors and took to reading books again." That was when Ruth started asking her mother for help. Andrew asks if Robert's mind has gone. Ruth tells him, "Mary's dying broke him up terrible, but he's used to her being gone by this." Andrew asks if she's used to it. Ruth

answers him with, "There's a time comes when you don't mind any more – anything." Andrew apologizes for being angry with her, saying the sight of Robert in such bad condition really upset him. Ruth says it doesn't matter.

Andrew then talks about his plans. Once Robert is on his feet again, the two of them will get the farm back in shape before Andrew goes back to New York. When Ruth says she thought he was back permanently, Andrew explains that he lost all the money that he made in Argentina and had resolved to come back home for good. But while he was in New York, he saw a chance to make all his money back, and invested almost everything he had left, and lost all that as well. He's got a few thousand left and he plans to go back to Argentina and make back everything he lost, "in a year or so." He says there's enough to fix the farm before he leaves, that he won't go until Robert's back on his feet, and in the meantime he'll, "make things fly around here." He makes Ruth promise not to tell Robert about the lost money in Argentina.

The Doctor returns with the news that Robert is dying, there's nothing he can do, and that Robert has a few days or even just a few hours left to live. Ruth and Andrew both react with shock as the Doctor says that six months ago there might have been something he could have done. He tells them that he lied to Robert and said that a change of climate might help. In a hurry to catch a train, the Doctor leaves, saying, "there is always that last chance – the miracle." Andrew walks him out to the car. When he returns he says they should go in to see Robert, although he's afraid Robert will see the truth in his face.

Robert comes out of the bedroom and Andrew promises to take Robert to Arizona to make him well again saying, "there must be a chance." Robert asks why there must. Andrew tries to put Robert back to bed, but Robert wants to sit by the window. Robert declares that, "a dying man has some rights." Andrew tells him not to talk that way, but Robert insists that he be allowed to speak. He knows he's dying because he saw it in the Doctor's face. After Andrew protests that there may still be a miracle, Robert says he doesn't believe in miracles and that he knows, "more than any doctor on earth could know – because [he feels] what's coming." He changes the subject, and asks Andrew how things are for him.

Andrew lets Robert continue to believe that he's rich. Andrew tells him that he sold out of the partnership he'd started in Argentina and got into speculating. Robert says that that explains the change he'd sensed in his brother, "a farmer … [gambling] … with scraps of paper. There's a spiritual significance in that picture, Andy." He goes on to describe Andrew as a failure, in the same way that he and Ruth have also been failures. He starts to say that Andrew will have to "suffer" to win his life back, but he can't continue. After Andrew says he understands what Robert's getting at, Robert tells him that Ruth has suffered the most of any of them, and that when she's a widow Andrew must marry her. As Ruth reacts with shock, Andrew takes Robert back to bed. Robert takes a last glance out the window and notices that it's almost sunrise. As they go into the bedroom Robert tells Andrew to shut the door because he wants to be alone.

When Andrew comes back, Ruth asks him if he thinks Robert is crazy. Andrew agrees that the fever has probably affected Robert's mind, although there was some sense to what he said. He asks Ruth what she thinks about Robert's idea of them marrying. Ruth tells him about the argument she and Robert had when Andrew last visited. She tells him that she'd told Robert she'd made a mistake in marrying him and that she had always loved Andrew. As Andrew listens, stunned, Ruth tells him that she'd hoped Mary would help, but it hadn't; that she grew to hate Robert; and she was unable to acknowledge the truth of her feelings for Andrew before it was too late. Andrew asks whether she knew how much Robert loved her and why she couldn't have kept silent and not "tortured" him for all these years. Andrew then asks whether Robert still thinks Ruth loves him (Andrew). Ruth says that it seems to her he does think that. When Andrew tells her it's outrageous and that she can't love him, Ruth says, "I wouldn't know how to feel love, even if I tried, any more." Andrew tells her outright that he doesn't love her. Andrew also tells her how he'd have done anything to save Robert pain and he wonders what he's going to do about Robert's request that he and Ruth marry. Ruth suggests that Andrew lie, but he turns on her and says that she's got to be the one to lie, in order to give Robert peace. He tells her that she's got to go in and tell him that what she said all those years ago was, "a mistake, that [she] only said so because [she was] mad and didn't know what [she] was saying." When Ruth says he wouldn't believe her, he pleads with her to try, saying she'd never forgive herself if she didn't at least try.

Ruth agrees to try. She goes into the bedroom, and then comes out quickly saying that Robert is gone and that the window's wide open. Andrew grabs her and they hurry out to look for him.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

The setting of this scene indicates the spiritual and emotional state of the three central characters. The poverty of the room illustrates the fact that all three of the central characters have hit rock bottom. This is further indicated when it's revealed that Mary has died because Mary represented hope in the earlier scenes. Mary's death is a symbol of the death of hope in the lives of Robert, Ruth, and Andrew. Even though Andrew and Robert talk about new hope and about their dreams for the future, we know that these are only false hopes. We know that Robert will never make it to the city and become a writer because he's dying, just as we know that Andrew will fail in speculation because he's not following his inner nature. This is another expansion of the playwright's theme. In this scene the playwright is suggesting that denying one's inner nature results in the creation of false hopes and eventual death (as mentioned before, spiritual, physical, or both). Ruth is already spiritually dead; Robert is almost physically dead; but there remains a small spark of possibility for redemption in Andrew. When Andrew realizes how much he cares for Robert and the role he's played, by following his impulsive choices, in Robert's destruction.

When Robert asks to sit by the window instead of being put back to bed, it echoes what he said earlier (in Act One, Scene One, to Ruth) about being ill as a child and being placed in front of the window.

Robert describes the suffering of the last several years as a "test." He believes that he and Ruth will get their reward, and he tells Andrew that he'll have to suffer to earn his reward. Robert's philosophy's echo some of the basic principles of Christian beliefs. These beliefs are partly founded on the principle that heaven is the ultimate reward for those who have struggled to live a good life. By giving Robert this perspective, in other words, by making Christian philosophy part of his personal beliefs and character, the playwright is adding another aspect to the play's theme. The playwright is suggesting that worldly suffering is at least partly caused by turning against our inner nature (this is not just an aspect of Christian philosophy; it's also an element of Buddhism and other spiritual belief systems). When we get to Robert's death in the final scene, this aspect of the play's theme is explored even further.

When Robert speaks of the, "spiritual significance" of Andrew becoming a speculator, it indicates that this is part of the playwright's theme. As mentioned before, Andrew hasn't lived according to his true nature, but in this moment Robert realizes that the same thing is true of all three of them. He tries to set things right, and get Andrew and Ruth back to their true natures, by insisting that they get married once he's dead, but it's too late. Ruth's admission of her mistakes can't bring her any closer to what her true feelings were as she says she's not able to feel anything anymore. Meanwhile, Andrew's still attached to his false hopes for business success in Argentina, which makes us wonder whether the spark of hope we discussed earlier will actually survive.

Andrew's reaction to Ruth's story of who she truly loved and what she told Robert again raises the question of whether Andrew ever really did love Ruth or whether he convinced himself that he didn't. In drama in general, the more insistent a person is that something isn't true, the more likely it is true. In other words, the louder a person protests, the more he or she is covering up the truth. If we follow this logic through in this scene, it makes Andrew's extreme reaction look as though he's covering up for his true feelings for Ruth, which may, in turn, be connected to the one spark of his inner nature that he has remaining.

This scene prepares us for the climax of the play, which takes place in the next scene.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

This scene is set in the same place as the first scene of the play; by the side of a road on the farm.

Robert staggers on and sits weakly on the side of a ditch where he can see the sun rise. After a moment Ruth and Andrew hurry on and join him, concerned. Andrew tries to take him back to bed, but Robert refuses to go, saying simply that he's dying. Ruth sits beside him and puts his head in her lap.

Robert talks almost deliriously about being unable to stand being in the room any longer, and how it seems, "as if all [his] life [he'd] been cooped up in a room." He says he wants to die in the way he might have done if he'd had more courage, "alone … in a ditch by the open road … watching the sun rise." Andrew urges him not to talk in order to save his strength. Robert says the Doctor told him to go to the, "far off places" to be cured. Robert then says he was right, and that it's, "too late for this life" but … he starts to cough, and can't finish the thought. Andrew begins to cry, but Robert urges him to not feel sorry because he is finally free, "to wander on and on – eternally!" Again almost delirious, Robert talks about hearing the voices calling from beyond the hills the way they used to when he was a child, "and this time [he's] going!" His excitement weakens him, and he collapses. With his final words he urges Andrew to remember Ruth, that she's suffered, and that only through sacrifice can the secret, "beyond the horizon," be reached. As Robert dies, Andrew promises to take care of Ruth.

Andrew confronts Ruth about not telling Robert the lie about their past argument. Ruth says he was so happy in his final moments that she couldn't lie to him. Andrew furiously calls Ruth a murderess! In tears, Ruth protests that she couldn't help it, that Robert knew that Ruth had suffered too, and that he'd asked Andrew to remember that.

Andrew calms down and asks for Ruth's forgiveness. Andrew claims that they must try to help each other and that they might, in time come to know the right thing to do. Andrew starts to say, "and perhaps we-" but he can't finish the thought. Ruth looks at him with no sign that she's heard, "her mind already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope."

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

By setting this scene in the same place as he set the first scene, the playwright indicates that this scene completes the journey begun by all three characters in the first scene. Also, by setting it at sunrise, he completes his statement of theme*:* that the long darkness caused by mistaken choices can, and will, come to an end if people just remain true to their inner nature. This scene and the moment of Robert's death is the play's climax.

The ending of Ruth's journey, in spite of the promise of hope contained in the sunrise, is that she remains spiritually dead. Robert's ending is the end of his physical life, but the beginning of a new spiritual journey. For Andrew, the spark of hope that we saw in the previous scene begins to grow into something bigger. He may have decided to live according to his inner nature by staying on the farm and beginning a new spiritual and physical life. The sunrise in this scene symbolizes the growth of Andrew's hope, concluding the play on a positive note in spite of Robert's death and Ruth's emotional remoteness.

The thought that Robert can't complete when the coughing fit makes him stop talking is that it's too late to go to far off places in this life, but in the next life (after he dies) he'll be a far off place (i.e. heaven). In other words, his death is the ultimate cure for his physical suffering and his spiritual suffering will also be cured by his death. This again suggests that Robert's journey contains aspects of Christian philosophy.

The thought that Andrew can't complete at the end of the play is his expression of hope that both he and Ruth can finally live the lives they were meant to live. He can't complete the thought because he sees, in Ruth's silence, the fact that she's beyond hope. We are; however, left with the hope that Andrew sees possibilities for himself. Because he's finally being true to his inner nature they may all be redeemed.

This again ties the action of this scene to Christian philosophy. Additionally, the fact that this scene is set at sunrise reflects Christian philosophy because Christ is often described as, "the light of the world." In Christian writings an image of a new beginning is portrayed at sunrise on Easter Morning, the day of Christ's resurrection. Robert dies at sunrise. Because sunrise represents living according to one's inner nature, and a new beginning in Christ, Robert's death indicates that an aspect of his inner nature (and therefore ours) is connected to God. It suggests that only by living according to our inner nature are we living the life that God has created us to live (as Christ did).

Characters

Mrs. Atkins

Mrs. Atkins is Ruth's widowed, invalid mother, who never forgives her daughter for marrying Robert Mayo instead of Andy. Mrs. Atkins criticizes Robert's inefficiency in running both the Mayo farm and her farm. She also complains about Ruth and Robert's sickly child, Mary, who often cries to her mother. Mrs. Atkins is an extremely religious person and says cruelly to Kate Mayo that her husband died early because he was a sinner and that the ill-fated marriage between Robert and Ruth was also a result of God's will. Although Mrs. Atkins claims in the second act that she is about to die, she outlives many of the other characters and survives until the end of the play. At this point, she is sneaking money to Ruth behind Robert's back to help pay the bills, since Robert is having a hard time keeping the farm running on his own.

Ruth Atkins

Ruth Atkins is Mrs. Atkins's daughter and the wife of Robert Mayo. In the beginning, she dates Andy, but she falls in love with Robert when he speaks about his dream of going on a sea voyage. As a result, she tells him she does not love Andy and convinces Robert not to go on his voyage. Her choice influences Andy to leave the Mayo farm and take Robert's place on the voyage, since he cannot bear to see Ruth with another man, especially his brother. As the play goes on, Ruth's happiness and her ability to love slowly wane. Three years later, Ruth has aged considerably. She and Robert hate each other, and Ruth says she loves Andy. They both agree that if it were not for Mary (their small, sickly child) they would leave each other. Ruth tries to rekindle the flame with Andy when he comes home for a visit, but before she can tell him her feelings, he lets her know that he does not love her anymore. Ruth is hurt and is rude to Andy, who assumes she does not want him around.

When Andy comes home again five years later, Mary has died, and Ruth is a broken woman. Like the Mayo farm, her life is in decay, and she sits around while Robert's health quickly declines. She accepts money from her mother, behind Robert's back, to help pay the bills. When Robert shows some renewed energy in his feverish state and says that they should move to the city and start over, Ruth is frightened. When Andy comes in with a medical specialist, who tells them that Robert is dying, and Andy blames Ruth, she is too exhausted to fight back. Robert's dying wish is to have Andy marry Ruth, which Andy suggests at the end of the play. But, Ruth is too exhausted to care and does not indicate whether she will be willing to do this.

Ben

Ben is the farmhand who quits working for Robert because he is ashamed to work for such a poor farm.

Doctor Fawcett

Doctor Fawcett is the specialist that Andy brings to see Robert. Fawcett tells Andy and Ruth that Robert is dying of tuberculosis and that if Robert had gotten to a better climate six months earlier, he might have survived.

Andrew Mayo

Andrew Mayo, or Andy, as most of his family calls him, is the son who is expected to take over the Mayo farm. He shocks everybody when he leaves the farm to go on a sea voyage with his uncle, Captain Scott. In the beginning, Andy is in love with Ruth Atkins and is looking forward to taking over the farm. He is distraught when his brother, Robert, whom he loves dearly, decides to cancel his sea voyage to marry Ruth and stay on the farm. Andy's decision to go to sea creates a permanent rift between him and his father, James, who dies while Andy is at sea. During Andy's three years at sea, Captain Scott trains him to become a naval officer, a career that he decides to abandon after his first voyage. The first time he comes home to visit, he makes it a point to tell both Robert and Ruth that he does not love Ruth anymore, thinking that it will remove the awkwardness between them. Instead, he hurts Ruth, who was preparing to declare her love for him.

Before Andy arrives home for his first visit, everybody places their hopes on him, thinking from his letters that he will stay to work on the farm and undo the damage that Robert has done. However, Andy lets everybody know that he is shipping out to Buenos Aires, where he plans to get rich in the grain business and send money home to help everybody. When he comes home five years later, he has gotten rich but lost almost all of his fortune through speculative investing. Andy brings a medical specialist with him, who tells Andy and Ruth that Robert is dying. Andy is angry at first and takes it out on Ruth for not contacting him sooner, until he realizes that Ruth and Robert were too poor, and Robert was too proud, to contact him. Although Andy plans to go back to Buenos Aires to make another fortune, Robert's dying wish is to have Andy marry Ruth and take care of her. Andy suggests to Ruth at the end of the play that maybe this plan would work out all right, but Ruth is exhausted from her disastrous marriage to Robert and shows no sign of agreement.

Mr. James Mayo

James Mayo is the father of Andrew and Robert. He dies while Andy is at sea. In the beginning, Andy is planning on working on his father's farm for the rest of his life, and James's love and respect for his son and his son's skills are evident. However, after Robert announces that he is staying home to marry Ruth, and Andy responds by saying he will take Robert's place on the voyage, James accuses Andy of evasion. They get into a big fight, and Andy lies, saying that he hates the farm and wants to see the world. James is shocked and hurt, and he disowns his son. Several of the characters later discuss whether James ever forgave Andy for leaving. Most think he did not.

Mrs. Kate Mayo

Kate Mayo is the mother of Andrew and Robert. She also dies while Andy is at sea. Kate is the one who realizes that Ruth is not in love with Andy and is overjoyed when Robert decides to cancel his sea voyage. She tries to smooth over the fight between James and Andy, and after James's death, she is the only one who believes that, in his heart, her husband did forgive Andy. Kate sits by silently while Robert's marriage and the farm are in trouble, trusting that Robert can handle himself, although she agrees with Mrs. Atkins that Andy and Ruth would have made a better match. When Andy comes home three years after going to sea, she, like everybody else, thinks he is coming home to stay. She plans a big dinner for him. Her death is one of the factors that leads to Robert's decline in health.

Mary Mayo

Mary Mayo is the sickly child of Robert and Ruth. She dies sometime between Andy's first and second visits home. Her death is one of the factors that leads to Robert's steady decline in health.

Robert Mayo

Robert Mayo is Andrew's brother, who cancels his sea voyage to stay on the Mayo farm and marry Ruth Atkins. His decision influences Andy to take Robert's place, since Andy also loves Ruth and cannot stand to see somebody else with her. Robert's marriage is ill-fated, since he is not a farmer like Andy and does not know how to properly manage a farm; his situation gets even worse after his father dies. Robert spends a lot of time daydreaming about the voyage he never took, and as a result he loses farmhands and barely makes enough money to pay the bills. Without his knowledge, Ruth accepts money from her mother to help pay the bills. When Andy comes home after his first voyage, Robert, like everybody else, hopes that Andy will take over the farm once again and is distraught when he finds out that Andy is leaving again.

Robert's marriage to Ruth deteriorates while Andy is at sea, and the only thing that keeps them together is their daughter, Mary. When Robert's mother and Mary die, Robert's health rapidly declines. Robert becomes confined to a sickbed. At one point, sick with fever, Robert gets a burst of energy and tells Ruth they should move to the city and start over. Ruth sends an urgent message to Andy, who comes home. Andy brings a medical specialist with him, who tells them that Robert is dying of a lung disease and that if they had taken Robert away to a better climate six months earlier, he might have lived. Andy is distraught, but Ruth accepts this as just one more tragedy in her life. Robert, meanwhile, is overjoyed, because he sees his death as his opportunity to finally leave the farm and travel "beyond the horizon." Robert's dying wish is to have Andy marry Ruth and take care of her.

Ruth Mayo

See Ruth Atkins

Captain Dick Scott

Captain Dick Scott is Kate Mayo's brother and the uncle of Robert and Andrew. In the beginning of the play, Scott has made plans for Robert to accompany him on a sea voyage. When Robert backs out to stay on the farm and marry Ruth, Scott is distraught, because he wanted somebody to talk to and train on the voyage. He is also concerned that his shipmates will think that Robert's empty bunk was meant for a woman who jilted their captain and that he will take a lot of teasing for this. As a result, he is overjoyed when Andy decides to take Robert's place and tells Andy that he will make a better seaman than his sickly brother, anyway. Scott trains Andy to be an officer and gives him the tip that a ship is leaving for Buenos Aires, where Andy works for five years trying to make a fortune in the grain business.

Themes

Dreams

Dreams provide the main theme of the play. Every one of the characters has dreams. Ruth dreams of having a husband. James dreams of having a bigger farm and hopes that his son, Andy, will marry Ruth Atkins so that they can take over the adjoining Atkins farm. Says James, "Joined together they'd make a jim-dandy of a place, with plenty o' room to work in." However, the biggest dreamers in the story are Robert and Andy, who have opposite dreams. Robert is a poet and has the romantic dream of going "beyond the horizon" to experience the world. Andy, on the other hand, is a born farmer and dreams of nothing more than marrying Ruth and taking care of the Mayo farm. They acknowledge this to each other in the first scene, when Andy says to Robert, "Farming ain't your nature," and Robert says to Andy, "You're wedded to the soil." Neither of them understands the other's dreams, but they support each other.

Ruth is the key character that interrupts these dreams. She gets caught up in Robert's romantic vision of the sea, and when he admits that he is also leaving because he loves her, she renounces her love for Andy and asks Robert to stay: "Please tell me you won't go!" Ruth's request and Robert's decision to stay set everybody's lives on a tragic course, leading to the early deaths of most of the characters and the possible ruination of Andy and Ruth. James predicts that this will happen when he declares that only bad things happen when people give up their natural dreams: "You're runnin' against your own nature, and you're goin' to be a' mighty sorry for it if you do."

Responsibility

For both Robert and Andy, dreams are also responsibilities. Robert has signed up with his uncle, Captain Scott, to work on the sea voyage. When he backs out, he neglects his responsibility, a fact that irks Captain Scott, who has gone to great lengths to accommodate Robert. Says Scott, "Ain't I made all arrangements with the owners and stocked up with some special grub all on Robert's account?" Meanwhile, Andy has trained since he was a boy to manage the Mayo farm, and when he backs out of this responsibility, his father challenges him on it: "The farm is your'n as well as mine . . . and what you're sayin' you intend doin' is just skulking out o' your rightful responsibility."

As the play progresses, O'Neill gives other examples of neglected responsibilities. Robert prefers reading books and daydreaming to working on the farm, a fact that Ruth notes: "And besides, you've got your own work that's got to be done. . . . Work you'll never get done by reading books all the time." However, Ruth is also guilty of neglected responsibilities. Ruth has a responsibility to Mary to be a good mother, but she instead takes out her feelings of anger on the child, trying to force her roughly to take a nap—terrifying the child with threats of "good spankings." This is contrasted sharply with Robert's caring treatment of Mary, as shown by the stage directions: "*He gathers her up*

in his arms carefully and carries her into the bedroom. His voice can be heard faintly as he lulls the child to sleep." In the end, Robert appeals to Andy's sense of responsibility when he voices his dying wish to have Andy marry Ruth and take care of her. Andy notes to Ruth that he cannot ignore this wish by promising his brother he will marry Ruth and then not following through: "What? Lie to him now—when he's dying?"

Choices

At various points along the way, the characters have choices. When Andy returns after three years at sea, he has the choice of leaving again or of staying at the Mayo farm. The latter is a logical choice, since the main reason he left—his love for Ruth—is no longer an issue. However, Andy says to Robert, "I'm certain now I never was in love." He chooses to go to Buenos Aires to make money speculating in grain instead of staying at the farm that he used to love. In the end, Robert notes that this choice has made Andy the biggest failure of them all: "You—a farmer—to gamble in a wheat pit with scraps of paper." Robert's choices also increase his unhappiness, however. His biggest choice, and the one which, as noted above, sets the play on its tragic course, is the choice to stay on the farm.

However, three years later, when Robert has a chance to change things during Andy's return, he makes the disastrous choices to not tell Andy about his failed marriage and to not accept Andy's offer of financial assistance. "No. You need that for your start in Buenos Aires," Robert tells Andy. Although Andy tries to argue with Robert on this point, Robert refuses to listen. He also does not try to convince Andy to stay. This point is noted angrily by Ruth when she is speaking to Andy. "And didn't he try to stop you from going?" Robert's pride in not asking for money or asking his brother to stay and help contributes directly to his death at the end. If he had appealed to his rich brother earlier, Andy and Ruth could have gotten Robert to a better climate and perhaps saved his life. As Doctor Fawcett says, "That might have prolonged his life six months ago. (Andrew *groans.*) But now—. (*He shrugs his shoulders significantly.*)"

Happiness

The play also causes the reader or viewer to question what really makes people happy. In the beginning, everybody is going along on what seems to be his or her true path. Robert is going to sea, while Ruth will most likely marry Andy, who will take over the Mayo farm. When Robert, Ruth, and Andy deviate from their intended paths, however, they all become unhappy. But there is some question as to whether they would have found true happiness if they had stayed on their original paths. Although Ruth says later that she has always loved Andy, she initially says that she is in love with Robert: "I don't! I don't love Andy! I don't." This is the exact opposite of her later comment to Robert, "I do love Andy. I do! I do! I always loved him." This leads one to believe that Ruth would not be happy with either man. If Robert had gone away to sea and Ruth had married Andy out of necessity and not love, she may not have been any happier than she was

with Robert. In other words, without marrying Robert and seeing that he was not the right one for her, she might never have realized that she loved Andy.

Similarly, there is some question as to whether Robert would have been truly happy at sea. Andy's experiences in the Far East that Robert has dreamed of are not enjoyable, as he notes to Robert on his first trip home: "One walk down one of their filthy narrow streets with the tropic sun beating on it would sicken you for life with the 'wonder and mystery' you used to dream of." It is unclear whether Robert would have had a different experience. Even the ending is ambiguous. Andy says everything may work out in the end, but Ruth's reaction of hopelessness leaves the audience to question whether true happiness is possible for these two characters: "*She remains silent, gazing at him dully with the sad humility of exhaustion, her mind already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope.*"

Style

Tragedy

O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* was a striking departure from most of the melodramatic dramas of the day. The play featured real tragedy, which became a hallmark of many twentieth-century dramas in America. Tragedy has a long literary history, dating back to the plays of the ancient Greeks, when tragic events were depicted as a result of a character flaw or defect. Although the definitions and uses of tragedy have changed in many ways since then, most tragedies still hinge on a bad decision by a character or characters. In O'Neill's play, these decisions are influenced by love. It is Robert's love for Ruth that causes him to make his impulsive but important life decision, as the stage directions note: "ROBERT (*face to face with a definite, final decision, betrays the conflict going on within him*): 'But—Ruth—I—Uncle Dick—.'" Ruth is adamant, however, and finally breaks down crying, the final step that influences his decision: "ROBERT (*conquered by this appeal—an irrevocable decision in his voice*): 'I won't go, Ruth. I promise you.'"

Robert's decision influences Andy to make his own tragic decision to go to sea. Says Andrew, "You've made your decision, Rob, and now I've made mine." Andy also making his decision out of love. He cannot stand to see Ruth with another man, least of all his brother: "I've got to get away and try to forget, if I can."Mr. Mayo exposes Andy's choice as a brash defense against heartache, "You're runnin' away 'cause you're put out and riled 'cause your own brother's got Ruth 'stead o' you." These two tragic decisions ultimately lead to many tragic consequences, including the deaths of most of the characters. James dies while Andy is at sea, and Mrs. Mayo notes that his death was a result of her husband's inability to publicly forgive Andy for his decision: "It was that brought on his death—breaking his heart just on account of his stubborn pride." Mrs. Mayo is in turn affected by her husband's death as well as by the decay of the farm and her son's unhappy marriage, as the stage directions indicate: "MRS. MAYO'S *face has lost all character, disintegrated, become a weak mask wearing a helpless, doleful expression of being constantly on the verge of comfortless tears.*" In addition, Mary is chronically ill. Says Mrs. Atkins, "She gets it right from her Pa—being sickly all the time. . . . It was a crazy mistake for them two to get married." Eventually, Mary dies, too, and in the end, Robert himself dies, both tragic events brought on by the decisions of Robert and Andy to go against their respective natures.

Irony

The play has a strong sense of dramatic irony, a feeling produced in audience members when they are led to believe that one situation will unfold, while in reality, the opposite becomes true. At the end of the play, the audience, like the characters, is struck with the bitter irony of the main characters' wasted lives. All three of them—Robert, Ruth, and Andy—have gotten the exact opposite of what they wanted. Andy ran away from his

farming dreams, thinking it would be worse to stay and witness his brother and Ruth together. Ruth wanted a happy marriage with a man she loved, but as she notes to Andy at the end, "You see I'd found out I'd made a mistake about Rob soon after we were married—when it was too late." So, Andy runs away out of his jealousy over the relationship between Ruth and Robert, which ironically fails shortly after he leaves to go to sea, when Ruth realizes that Andy is the one for her. Meanwhile, Robert stays on the farm, thinking he will find true happiness with Ruth. Instead, he finds only misery and death, constantly yearning for the life at sea that Andy hates.

Even worse, Ruth's failed marriage has drained her so much that, as she tells Robert, "I don't love anyone." She has lost the ability to love. The tragic irony of this situation is multiplied when Robert pushes Ruth and Andy together at the end of the play, asking them to get married and honor his dying wish. At this point, Andy is willing to give it a try out of duty to his brother: "We must try to help each other—and—in time—we'll come to know what's right." But the damage is irreversible. The situation has changed since Andy left eight years ago, and even if they do get married as Andy had originally hoped, things will never be the same.

Mood

O'Neill's play calls for several staging techniques that are intended to evoke a mood in the audience. One of these, the change in seasons, is particularly effective. When the play begins, the stage directions note the following: "*The hushed twilight of a day in May is just beginning.*" This spring day in the first act progresses to "*a hot, sun-baked day in mid-summer*" in the second act. Finally, in the last act, it is "*a day toward the end of October.*" The gradual move from spring—associated with youth and hope—to late fall—a time of fading life before the death of winter sets in—mirrors the tragic action of the play and helps to darken the mood.

Historical Context

Although O'Neill wrote the tragic *Beyond the Horizon* in 1918, it features no reference to the biggest tragedy of the time, World War I, which ended the same year. This may be because O'Neill intended his story to take place in the years before World War I started. Or, it may be because the play features enough tragedy without mentioning the war. In any case, farmers and some merchant seamen - two occupations represented in the play by the Mayo brothers - were greatly affected by the war.

Even before the United States officially entered the war in 1917, American farms were helping to provide food supplies to the Allied forces. These exports, along with the exportation of munitions, helped aid the war effort and led to greater economic prosperity in the United States during the first few years of the war. As J. M. Roberts notes in his *Twentieth Century: The History of the World, 1901 to 2000:* "The Allies were the main customers of American industry and farmers; Allied spending fuelled an economic boom in the United States." However, the American merchant ships that delivered these goods were increasingly in danger from German submarines. In January 1917, Germany declared that it would sink any ship that attempted to deliver supplies to Allied forces, including neutral American ships. In March, German submarines made good on this promise when they sank some American merchant ships, sparking a national movement that advocated the United States' entry into the war. America declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.

While the United States' neutral status had helped to produce an economic boom through the increased production of food and other supplies for Allied Forces, America's entry into the war threatened to diminish this production. In May 1917, Wilson signed the Selective Service Act, forcing many young men to register for military service. Many farmers and farm workers were drafted to fight in the war, which left gaps in the nation's workforce. The loss of workers on farms - and in factories - threatened to compromise America's ability to maintain the high production rates that it had enjoyed since the beginning of the war. In an effort to standardize production and ensure that none of the nation's supplies would be secretly transported to German forces, Wilson announced in July that he was taking official control over America's necessities. This included the pricing and transportation of food and other essential war supplies. Wheat prices were fixed and the railroads - as well as some merchant ships - were requisitioned for use by the government.

At the same time, at least one notable private effort was underway to help farmers maintain their high production levels. In October 1917, automaker Henry Ford, who had made history with his mass-produced Model T automobile (introduced in 1908), began producing the world's first mass-produced tractors. In fact, for Ford, who grew up on a farm and who was a champion for farmers, this was the realization of a dream. As Robert Lacey notes in his book, *Ford: The Men and the Machine:* "Almost as soon as the Ford Motor Company started making money, Henry Ford had started trying to develop a tractor." Since the executives in the Ford Motor Company had little interest in this agricultural venture, in 1916, Ford founded a new company, Henry Ford & Son, to

produce his "Fordson" tractors. Although tractors had been in limited use for years, they were too heavy and expensive for most farms. The gasoline-engine Fordson tractor, however, was lighter and much less expensive than other tractors. Fordsons were mass-produced on the same type of assembly line that Ford had implemented in 1913 for the production of his Model Ts, and became a viable option for farmers looking to replace farm-hands who were off fighting the war.

At the end of the war, American farms remained a crucial industry, and one that was increasingly aided by the tractor. Tractors brought power that revolutionized farming, and helped to replace horses as the method used to plow the fields. As Roberts notes, "power did more than perform traditional tasks more efficiently: it broke in new land." With their greater power, tractors gave farmers the ability to plow tough land that had previously been useless for crops. Tractors helped farmers increase their crop yields, which in turn helped to meet the increased food demands during the final months of the war. Even after the war ended in November 1918, these increased crop yields went to good use, as the United States pledged itself to helping combat food shortages in much of Europe - where resources had been severely depleted during the war.

Critical Overview

Beyond the Horizon is one of Eugene O'Neill's most famous plays, although it started from humble origins. In 1918, after writing several unsuccessful and unproduced longer plays, O'Neill wrote *Beyond the Horizon*, which was bought by actor and producer John Williams. Two years later, in 1920, the play was finally produced. However, Williams made the choice to start it off as a matinee, using actors borrowed from his other current productions instead of giving the play its own billing. The play soon proved worthy of a run on Broadway.

Overall, the critics praised the play. Says J. Rankin Towse in his 1920 review of the play for the *New York Post,* "There can be no question that it is a work of uncommon merit and definite ability, distinguished by general superiority from the great bulk of contemporaneous productions." However, Towse also notes that the play "is not quite a masterpiece," although "it is exceedingly promising juvenile work." Towse, like many critics, found fault with the play's original length; it was much longer than other plays of the day. Part of this length was due to the set changes in between scenes. As Ronald H. Wainscott notes in his 1988 book, *Staging O'Neill: The Experimental Years, 1920-1934,* "four complete set changes were required, and each shift was time consuming." As Wainscott says, reviewers also noted that the shabby sets were themselves "both inappropriate for the play and far beneath the usual standard for a Broadway production." In addition, many critics noted that O'Neill's call for a very young child to play Mary was unrealistic. As Wainscott notes, "O'Neill complicated the predicament by including the toddler in two scenes and by giving her important dialogue and stage business."

Despite critics' issues with the physical presentation, most agreed that the play was something new and that O'Neill was a new type of playwright. However, when *Beyond the Horizon* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1920, many, including O'Neill, were surprised. O'Neill proved that he was not a passing fad when he again won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922 and 1928. In 1936, after reviewing O'Neill's body of work, Lionel Trilling notes in his *New Republic* article "Eugene O'Neill," "Whatever is unclear about Eugene O'Neill, one thing is certainly clear - his genius." However, at this point, not all critics or audiences agreed, and many of O'Neill's plays of the time were not received well by depression era audiences, who probably had enough tragedy in their own lives already.

O'Neill became popular again in the years following World War II, and his popularity has only increased since. While *Beyond the Horizon* is regarded as one of O'Neill's most important and seminal plays, it has rarely seen revival productions, unlike O'Neill's other plays, which have enjoyed many stage reproductions. The meaning of the play has changed for critics throughout the years. While early critics saw O'Neill's play as a message that people should follow their dreams and not go against their natures, later critics, like Linda Ben-Zvi, in her 1988 *Modern Drama* article "Freedom and Fixity in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," think the opposite. Says Ben-Zvi: "In almost all O'Neill's works, when characters do actually get 'beyond the horizon,' what they find is far less than what they expected."

Critics throughout the years have also noted the autobiographical quality of the play, particularly in the character of Robert. Says Virginia Floyd in her 1985 book, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill: A New Assessment,* "Robert is obviously a self-portrait. He is given not only O'Neill's physical characteristics but also some of his biographical background, having spent a year at college and experienced a long illness."

Today, O'Neill is widely regarded as one of America's greatest playwrights, and many point to *Beyond the Horizon* as the seminal success that started him on his path to greatness.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses O'Neill's use of staging techniques to underscore and amplify the tragic mood of his play.

In his essay "O'Neill and the Cult of Sincerity," Ronald H. Wikander notes the response of O'Neill's father, James, when he saw *Beyond the Horizon*: "Are you trying to send the audience home to commit suicide?" This reaction underscores the fact that O'Neill's play is impressively tragic. O'Neill increases the level of tragedy in his play through his detailed stage requirements. Through the use of stage techniques such as lighting, the use of interior and exterior sets, costumes, and makeup, O'Neill amplifies the already dark mood of the play as it progresses.

O'Neill considered his play an experiment in which he could break many of the conventions of the day. The play was widely regarded as too long, and it contained a number of specific set requirements that many thought complicated the production. One of the simpler stage techniques that O'Neill employed was the use of lighting. In the first act, O'Neill's stage directions talk about the sky, which "*glows with the crimson flush of the sunset. This fades gradually as the action of the scene progresses.*" The gradual darkening of the light mirrors the change in mood, which starts out light but gets tense as soon as the two brothers start talking about Ruth, whom they both obviously love. Says Andrew, "I'd better run along. I've got to wash up some as long as Ruth's Ma is coming over for supper." Robert replies, "(*pointedly - almost bitterly*): And Ruth." Robert is jealous that Andy has Ruth's love, and his dark mood is reflected in the fading light of day. This negative feeling culminates in Robert's obvious regret, later in the play, over his decision to forgo the sea voyage and marry Ruth. As Robert and Ruth are walking off at the end of the scene, Robert stops to focus "*on the horizon*" and finally "*shakes his head impatiently, as though he were throwing off some disturbing thought.*" Robert is not the only one who is disturbed. Thanks to the tension of the first scene, which is underscored by the diminishing lighting, the audience starts to feel a little uneasy, too.

In addition to lighting, O'Neill makes use of contrasting interior and exterior scenes that emphasize the tragic mistakes the characters have made. In the beginning of the first act, Robert sits on a fence "*reading a book by the fading sunset light. He shuts this . . . and turns his head toward the horizon, gazing out over the fields and hills.*" Robert is happy, looking forward to the future that he has dreamed about, when he will finally get to travel abroad and see the world beyond the horizon, which symbolizes the freedom that Robert yearns for. In the next scene, as Robert and the others are inside "*the small sitting room of the Mayo farmhouse.*" The farmhouse is neat and tidy, the sign "*of the orderly comfort of a simple, hard-earned prosperity.*" This is the type of life that Andy plans to live and Robert dreads. However, when the two brothers make their fateful decisions, Robert confines himself to the "simple" life of a farmer, while Andy chooses the life of freedom outdoors, a freedom that has never appealed to him. This sharp contrast between interior and exterior is evident in the remaining two acts, both of which start in the farmhouse and end outdoors with the horizon in view. In his 1979 book,

Eugene O'Neill, Frederic I. Carpenter notes this fact: "The structure of the play emphasizes the conflict of the two opposing ideals of adventure and security; of the two brothers who embody them."

As the play progresses, both the interior and exterior sets degrade noticeably, signifying the neglect and decay that has come about as a result of the two brothers' tragic decisions. At the beginning of the second act, the farmhouse "*gives evidence of carelessness,*" as O'Neill's stage directions indicate. "*The chairs appear shabby from lack of paint; the table cover is spotted and askew; holes show in the curtains.*" At the beginning of the third act, the damage is even worse: "*The curtains at the windows are torn and dirty and one of them is missing. The closed desk is gray with accumulated dust as if it had not been used in years.*" The damage is not limited to the interior. The farm itself, depicted in the exterior scenes, also degrades from the healthy, robust farm in the first act, which has "*rolling hills with their freshly plowed fields clearly divided from each other, checkerboard fashion, by the lines of stone walls and rough snake-fences.*" By the last scene of the play, the farm is showing obvious signs of the neglect that Robert, Ruth, and Andrew have all been referring to in the second act: "*The field in the foreground has an uncultivated appearance as if it had been allowed to remain fallow the preceding summer.*" And the apple tree, which in the first scene was "*just budding into leaf,*" now "*is leafless and seems dead.*" Everything about the interior and exterior sets has been designed to signify the decay in the main characters' lives and to amplify the dark, tragic mood that the characters and plot create for the audience.

Some early critics did not appreciate what O'Neill was trying to do with the interior and exterior sets, and they focused only on the delays the set changes caused for the audience. Writes A. R. Fulton in his 1946 book, *Drama and Theatre Illustrated by Seven Modern Plays,* "The critics objected to this arrangement, contending that no purpose was thereby served which could not have been served by staging the entire play in the single interior set."

O'Neill's play also required extensive attention to detail in makeup and costume, another way that he indicated the regression of the characters' lives. In the case of Robert and Ruth, the signs of degradation are obvious in their appearances, which get excessively dirtier as the play goes on. In the beginning of the play, Robert is described as "*delicate and refined, leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin.*" He is wearing "*gray corduroy trousers pushed into high laced boots, and a blue flannel shirt with a bright colored tie.*" All in all, Robert is the ideal image of the cultured student. However, in the beginning of the second act, Robert is described as depressed and filthy: "*His eyes are dull and lifeless, his face burned by the sun and unshaven for days. Streaks of sweat have smudged the layer of dust on his cheeks.*" Just as Robert has been unable to take care of the farm, he has given up taking care of himself, letting his once-neat appearance decay. By the last act, Robert is depleted: "*His hair is long and unkempt, his face and body emaciated.*"

Ruth's appearance also changes. In the beginning, she is described as "*a healthy, blonde, out-of-doors girl of twenty, with a graceful, slender figure.*" Ruth is a naturally beautiful, vibrant young woman, full of vitality, and she easily commands the attention of

both Robert and Andy. However, three years later, at the beginning of the second act, she "*has aged appreciably. Her face has lost its youth and freshness. There is a trace in her expression of something hard and spiteful.*" Also, in the beginning of the play, "She wears a simple white dress," while in the second act, her attire has changed to "*a gingham dress with a soiled apron tied around her waist.*" Finally, in the last act, a mere five years later, Ruth "*has aged horribly. Her pale, deeply-lined face has the stony lack of expression of one to whom nothing more can ever happen.*" In addition, her dress is in "*negligent disorder,*" her hair is "*slovenly*" and "*streaked with gray,*" and she wears black mourning clothes. Her clothes have steadily darkened just as the mood of the play has darkened. The fresh-faced young woman of twenty becomes an old woman at only twenty-eight, a tragic transformation that is depicted through costumes and makeup as the tragedy enveloping all the characters develops.

Andy's countenance changes throughout the play, but in different ways than Robert and Ruth. In the beginning, Andy is the consummate farmer, dressing in "*overalls, leather boots, a gray flannel shirt open at the neck, and a soft, mud-stained hat pushed back on his head.*" While the other characters get more unkempt and dirty as the play progresses, Andy gets progressively more businesslike and professional. In the second act, when Andy comes home for the first time, the description in the stage directions note that, although he has not changed much, "*there is a decided change in his manner. The old easy-going good nature seems to have been partly lost in a breezy, business-like briskness of voice and gesture.*" In addition, he has traded his comfortable and slightly messy farm clothes for "*the simple blue uniform and cap of a merchant ship's officer.*" In the last act, Andy's transformation from good-natured farmer to ruthless businessman is complete, as his appearance indicates: "*His face seems to have grown high strung, hardened. . . . His eyes are keener and more alert. There is even a suggestion of ruthless cunning about them*"; he is "*dressed in an expensive business suit and appears stouter.*" When the story starts, Andy is a muscular farmer who loves nothing better than to spend time, working the earth. By the end of the story, Andy has been transformed into a high-strung businessman who makes his living trading the grain he once loved to create. The changes in his attire and makeup amplify the tragedy of his transformation as he betrays his love and talent for farming by evading heartache.

O'Neill's play is noted for its gritty, tragic qualities. During the course of the play, dreams are crushed, almost all of the characters die, and the surviving characters are irreversibly changed. But these factors are not the only ones that invoke a dark mood in O'Neill's audience. O'Neill increases the level of tragedy in his play through his detailed stage requirements. Even without the extremely descriptive stage directions, O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* is a tragic play. However, through the use of special techniques in lighting, set design, costuming, and makeup, O'Neill amplifies the tragic mood the play induces in the audience. In the end, every element in this carefully designed play works to magnify the overwhelming sense of despair.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on *Beyond the Horizon,* in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Miliora analyzes the Mayo family psychologically, focusing on the narcissistic dreams of Robert and Andy.

Beyond the Horizon depicts the Mayos, a farming family. The major characters are the two brothers, Andrew, who is older, and Robert; their parents, James and Kate Mayo; Captain Dick Scott, who is Kate's brother; Ruth Atkins and her mother, Mrs. Atkins; and Mary, the child of Robert and Ruth. The drama turns on the relationship of the two brothers to Ruth and the ensuing dynamics among family members. Both Andrew and Robert are in love with Ruth, but at the play's opening, Robert has kept secret his feelings about Ruth. The family assumes that Andrew and Ruth will marry.

Robert is planning to leave the farm the following morning and begin a three-year sea journey on his Uncle Scott's ship. When he says goodbye to Ruth, he confesses that he loves her. Ruth is overjoyed and acknowledges that she loves him, rather than Andy. Robert decides that he will marry Ruth and remain on the farm. He and Ruth inform the Mayo family that evening. The news shocks and injures Andrew, but he tries to hide his feelings. He congratulates Robert, but tells his uncle that he will take Robert's place on the ship the following morning. Andy's unexpected decision precipitates a quarrel between him and his father.

The hostility that develops between father and son is the key to an appreciation of the play from the perspective of home and family. O'Neill's description of the Mayo home in the opening act indicates that the family is a cohesive unit. The two brothers are very close and the parents appear to have a warm relationship with each other and with their sons. Each of the brothers has been affirmed to do what he is most inclined to do. In short, the Mayos seemingly constitute a supportive self object milieu.

James Mayo had assumed that his elder son, Andy, would marry Ruth and that the two farms would merge. The news that Ruth loves Robert, rather than Andy, is disruptive to the family's cohesiveness. Andy, who loves Ruth, is very disappointed, narcissistically injured, and humiliated. His emotional reaction is apparent later in the scene when he tells Robert that, after all the plans he has made, he can not bear to remain on the farm and watch Robert and Ruth live together. This indicates that he feels foolish, demeaned in front of his family. Understandably, Andy seizes the opportunity to take his brother's place on the ship, feeling that this would allow him to get away from the humiliation that he feels at home.

James does not deal with Andy in an empathic way. He and Andy had been united in working the farm and he feels Andy's leaving as a loss. He becomes angry and confronts Andy about Ruth's rejection of him. He refers to his leaving as running away because Robert "got Ruth 'stead o' you . . . ." Andy's sense of humiliation is exacerbated by this statement made before the family. He becomes enraged and, in retaliation, he declares that he hates the farm. This retort fuels the cycle of hurt and rage, and the quarrel between father and son escalates into bitter antagonism. Reconciliation is

seemingly impossible because both men have been narcissistically injured and both are unable to transcend their sense of injury and vehement rage. Robert's asking his father and brother, in the midst of the hostility, if they have gone mad suggests the psychotic-like level of the rage.

By the end of the first act, the supportive milieu that formerly existed within the Mayo family has been shattered. Robert feels responsible for the enmity and he is saddened. He knows that his brother wanted Ruth and he wishes that he had never told Ruth that he loved her.

The second act is set three years later. James Mayo has died and Mrs. Mayo states that his "stubborn pride . . . brought on his death." This statement indicates that his quarrel with Andy and the rage that was provoked that night continued to affect him as well as the family as a whole. The description of the sitting room, which indicates carelessness and inefficiency, suggests that the family members are depressed. There is antagonism, complaining, and blaming among them. It is apparent that the family is no longer a cohesive or supportive unit. Robert seems to be particularly depressed. He is not doing well as a farmer and hears, on a consistent basis, that he is a failure. His inefficiency (as a farmer) and depression derive, at least in part, from the lack of a supportive family milieu that he needs to sustain him.

A violent quarrel erupts between Ruth and Robert. This shatters the bond between them as well as whatever illusions Robert had that Ruth loves him. As a result, he feels even more alone and in despair. When Andy returns for a visit, both Ruth and Robert are distressed to learn that he will not remain on the farm. Robert needs his help and Ruth had imagined that he still loved her. Andy is oblivious to his family's needs. He is unempathic toward his brother, thinking only of himself and his wish for material success. He expects to be understood by the family but makes no attempt to understand their plight. Andy's departure leaves the depressed family without any hope.

Five years later, the hopelessness, resignation, and despair within the family have reached crisis proportion. The death of his child, Mary, has caused Robert to sink into a deep depression, and he has become seriously ill as well. Ruth is "without feeling," that is, also in the throes of a depression and a sense of hopelessness. In the final act, Andy's greed and selfishness are acutely apparent. He has been away for five years trying to amass a fortune, and he has never concerned himself with the family or farm. Robert, on the other hand, thinks of Ruth's welfare even as he is dying.

In addition to the theme of destruction of a sense of home and family, the play depicts the importance of a dream or a narcissistic illusion in organizing one's sense of self and sustaining self-cohesion. However, because they tend to be tenuous, illusions require affirmation from one's human surround in order to maintain one's sense of self.

Robert puts aside his dream of searching for beauty "beyond the horizon" and substitutes an illusion of having a happy and loving life with Ruth on the farm. This illusion is not affirmed. Indeed, Robert suffers considerable repudiation of his efforts at farming and, ultimately, he discovers that Ruth's declarations of love for him were lies.

The death of his little daughter - "our last hope of happiness" - shatters his illusions completely. As a result, Robert's sense of self is seriously depleted. This sense of depletion is made concrete in the play by virtue of the depression and death, that is, the laying waste of the farm as well as of the characters.

Early in the play, Andy's sense of self is organized in terms of a narcissistic fantasy of being a successful farmer. He is perceived as successful in this regard by his family and neighbors. Within this milieu that affirms him, his sense of self is cohesive. Moreover, Andy has a dream of making a life with Ruth. When Ruth announces her love for Robert, Andy's dream is shattered and he fragments under the pressure of his father's attack. He reconstitutes his sense of self in terms of new illusions of attaining material success in foreign lands. Because his narcissism is relatively immature or archaic, Andy needs to show his family that he is eminently successful. His sense of self-worth is at stake. He becomes driven by greed in order to attain unlimited wealth as if this will negate the earlier sense of humiliation that he suffered before his family.

There are two "homes" in the play - the farm and the sea. O'Neill dichotomizes the two and concretizes this distinction by having each of the brothers inclined toward one or the other. O'Neill suggests that it is important for each person to follow his or her true nature.

Neither of the two "homes" is a sustaining self object milieu because of the narcissistic and emotional elements inherent in each. Andy goes off to sea because of humiliation, rage, and greed. Robert stays on the farm because of the illusion that Ruth loves him. O'Neill suggests that it is not the place *per se* that creates a sense of home, but rather, it is the relational context within the family that defines a real home. When there is narcissistic injury, rage, and a lack of empathy within the family, the sense of home can be destroyed.

As in a number of his plays, O'Neill includes the themes of betrayal and greed as significant in defining the emotional climate among the members of a family. Robert believes that Ruth loves him as Andy did earlier. In this context, Ruth is cast in the role of the betrayer who intrudes into the family milieu and disturbs its peace and harmony. Using the character of Andy, we can see the relationship between greed and emotional miserliness: Andy is driven by greed and lacks a capacity for empathy.

With his depictions of the two brothers, O'Neill suggests that individuals cannot experience both familial love and individual freedom. Robert chooses love and loses freedom. Andy loses love and, seemingly, attains freedom. However, neither brother gains what he sought. As suggested by the dramatic climax, true freedom is attained only in death.

There are several autobiographical elements in the play. The hostility that erupts between father and elder son in the Mayo family is suggestive of the hostility between James and Jamie in *Long Day's Journey*. According to the Gelbs (1960,1962), James O'Neill wanted Jamie to follow him in the theatre. His disappointment about his elder son parallels that of James Mayo in *Beyond the Horizon*. Moreover, the relationship

between the Mayo brothers suggests elements of the relationship between Eugene and Jamie. In the play, Andy and Robert are rivals for the same woman. In the O'Neill family, Jamie and Eugene were rivals for their mother's affection. Robert's replacing Andy on the farm is indicative of O'Neill's experience with Jamie. In O'Neill's mind, Jamie was the more talented, the one who should have become the writer, and he (Eugene) felt that he had usurped Jamie's talent.

Robert's experience of feeling foolish because he had believed Ruth's assertions of love for him is consonant with O'Neill's about his mother. As Robert felt betrayed when he realized Ruth's true feelings, so O'Neill felt betrayed when he learned what he imagined were his mother's true feelings about him.

Source: Maria T. Miliora, "Loss of a Sense of Home, Family, Belonging: Narcissism, Alienation and Madness," in *Narcissism, the Family, and Madness: A Self-Psychological Study of Eugene O'Neill and His Plays,* Peter Lang Publishing, 2000, pp. 69-84.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Voglino explores how the last scene of Beyond the Horizon *contrasts with the predictability of the rest of the drama, chiefly through Robert's "theatrically heightened speeches."*

Beyond the Horizon, completed in 1918, was O'Neill's first full-length drama to be produced (1920) and his first play to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Despite contemporary praise for its powerful realism, early reviewers voiced an awareness that the play was flawed. Some objected to its graphic depiction of tuberculosis; others, to what they considered its excessive length. Predictability and over explicitness were two of the more significant faults pointed out. Early reviewers Alexander Woollcott and Heywood Broun targeted the final scene for its illusion-dispelling effect. Broun attributed the break in the impact of the drama to the lowering of the curtain before the very short final scene, which he argued "compels a wait at a time when tension is seriously impaired." Although Broun's explanation seems feasible enough regarding the reaction of an audience attending a staged production, the wait for a scene change does not account for the similar discomfort experienced by readers. The illusion-dispelling quality noted by Woollcott and Broun seems more likely attributable to the sudden change in tone, matter, and the demand placed upon the audience by the final scene, which raises questions when the audience has been prepared to expect a conclusion. More recent criticism of the play's closure has focused on its ambiguity.

Up until the last scene, however, *Beyond the Horizon*, an explicitly presented, highly predictable drama, is more remarkable for its lack of ambiguity. The play is composed of three acts, each divided into two scenes. Audience expectations regarding closure are set up in the first act. Two brothers, very different in character, exchange destinies. Young Robert Mayo, upon learning that his friend Ruth loves him, renounces his chance to fulfill his lifelong dream of exploring "beyond the horizon" on his uncle's ship. Instead of sailing around the world as he had intended, he remains home to marry and work the family farm, a job for which he is physically and emotionally unsuited. His brother, Andrew, who loves farmwork and had intended to marry Ruth, good-naturedly takes Robert's place on the three-year voyage. Before the end of act 1 James Mayo, the father, announces the theme of the play. He warns Andrew, "You're runnin' against your own nature, and you're goin' to be a'mighty sorry for it if you do."

For the next three scenes, the drama rather laboriously depicts the progressive fulfillment of the father's dire prediction - intended for Andrew - with regard to both brothers. Robert, upon whose plight the play focuses, has betrayed his poet's awareness of a higher reality by surrendering to his biological attraction to Ruth. His initial moment of decision results in seemingly endless suffering in the form of poverty, marital unhappiness, and a recurrence of the tuberculosis that causes his death. By the end of the play his character has deteriorated as well: he has become jealous and vengeful. Andrew's punishment for not remaining on the Mayo farm is more subtle. After the voyage with his uncle he undertakes a huge farming venture in Argentina and accumulates a large fortune, which he proceeds to lose through unwise speculation. As

might be expected to result from his risk-fraught lifestyle, his eyes develop a look of "*ruthless cunning,*" and he becomes inclined to distrust people. Upon returning to the Mayo farm five years later, he discovers himself bereft of family as well as financial security. His parents having already died, and his sole sibling dying, Andrew is left with only his sister-in-law, Ruth, whom the dying Robert has requested he marry, and whom Andrew has grown to despise.

Thus far the plot has proceeded rather steadily toward its predictable end, like Hofmannsthal's arrow speeding toward its target. The spectator's "perception of structure" has led him to anticipate that closure will be synonymous with the ultimate fulfillment of the father's prophetic warning to his sons for "runnin' against [their] . . . nature[s]." Another important structural device that the audience expects to influence closure is the technique of ironic reversal established early in the play with the brothers' exchange of destinies and repeated at significant intervals throughout the drama. This pattern of reversing the expectations of the characters in *Beyond the Horizon* is, in fact, repeated so consistently as to give away the plot. As H. G. Kemelman observed (1932), "The complete and perfect frustration of the characters destroys all suspense. The audience knows what is coming: after the first act, they can predict the rest of the play." For example, at the start of act 2 all the characters have their hopes pinned on Andrew's imminent return from the voyage. Ruth hopes to renew Andrew's former romantic interest in her; Robert and his mother expect Andrew to take charge of the failing farm. Their very eagerness prepares the audience for the disappointment that will ensue: Andrew sails off for Argentina the next day. A nearly identical situation occurs at the beginning of act 3, when everyone is once again waiting for Andrew's return. Ruth has telegraphed Andrew about Robert's need for medical attention. She and her mother are desperately hoping for financial assistance, since Robert has been too ill to work the farm. Robert, who deludes himself about the gravity of his illness, also hopes to borrow money from his brother so that he and Ruth can move to the city. The audience, recalling the pattern of ironic reversal that has been established in acts 1 and 2, expects a repeat performance of Andrew's first homecoming, which in fact occurs. Andrew arrives at the Mayo farm financially and spiritually broken. The specialist he brings is too late to save Robert's life.

If the play had ended at this highly foreseeable, if somewhat tedious, point, its conclusion would meet both Barbara Herrnstein Smith's requirement for closure (in poetry) that it result in a cessation of expectations for the audience and June Schlueter's condition that the production of meaning be complete. The theme "be true to yourself" has been hammered in relentlessly from start to finish: Robert's self-betrayal has resulted in misery for all concerned. The total sum of his life's efforts is zero - no children, no crops, no happiness, and no literary output (he speculates on his potential for writing). With Robert dying, Ruth exhausted, and Andrew at the nadir of his personal and financial fortunes, nothing more of interest can be expected to occur. The viewer is ready to accept the lamentable end toward which the structure of the play has led.

The viewer is in for a surprise, however. The "perverse mind" of Eugene O'Neill would not allow this "reasonably contented ending" for which he has meticulously prepared throughout the drama. The fact is, the very concept of "contentment" appears to have

had a derogatory connotation to O'Neill, who in 1921 defined "happiness" as "an intensified feeling of the significant worth of man's being and becoming . . . not a *mere smirking contentment* with ones lot" (emphasis added). In *Beyond the Horizon*, instead of being satisfied with the ending within easy grasp, the playwright demonstrates his preference for the unattainable by introducing Robert's theatrically heightened speeches in the final scene. The spectator is startled by the change in tone, which suggests a redemption not supported by the action of the play, and which contrasts strangely with the preceding, naturalistically detailed rendition of poverty and misery. Nor is the spectator prepared for the new interpretive demand placed upon him at this late stage. Unsettled from his comfortably receptive position, he needs to rekindle his imagination, which has been smothered by the play's over-explicitness. He must first decide Robert's intent in bequeathing his wife to his brother. Is the dying Robert acting out of a spirit of forgiveness and camaraderie? Or is he trying to punish his brother, regarding whom he has exhibited bitter jealousy only a short time earlier in this very scene? The viewer or reader may also need to make decisions regarding his own eschatology in order to interpret the closure, which O'Neill leaves ambiguous. The dying Robert joyfully purports to have been redeemed through suffering and sacrifice, so that he may resume his earlier-abandoned quest after death. Is the audience to conclude that Robert's self-assessment is correct, or that he dies tragically self-deluded? If the viewer concludes Robert is deluded, as I believe further analysis confirms, the question becomes the nature of Robert's self-delusion. Does the play depict his irrevocable forfeiture, through marrying Ruth instead of sailing "beyond the horizon," of his right to pursue the "quest"? Or is he deluded about the very possibility of undertaking such a quest? Without an understanding of Robert's final condition, the production of meaning that ought to result from the closure is incomplete, leaving closure *en l'air.*

Modern closural theories attest to the prerogative of individuals to assist in creating their own closures for ambiguous works. Interpretation is no longer the mere act of "*construing,*" but "the art of *constructing,*" asserts Stanley Fish. The reader, says Wolfgang Iser, must "[work] things out for himself." According to Henry J. Schmidt the reader's effort to impose closure on an ambiguous work can have the propitious effect of "assuring one of the correctness of one's beliefs and of the fundamental stability of one's social and moral environment."

A number of readers and viewers have chosen to interpret the ambiguous ending affirmatively. Like Robert Mayo, who invents a gratifying fiction to ensure that his suffering not be meaningless, some readers and viewers may deliberately seek "the promise of a morally legible universe" in Robert's poetic last speeches. Thus, even so illustrious a critic as T. S. Eliot, fresh from completing his celebrated religious work, *The Waste Land* (1922), was able to perceive the ending of *Beyond the Horizon* as "magnificent." Similarly, Arthur Hobson Quinn (1927) was impressed by the "exaltation of the spirit" in Robert's dying speech: "I'm happy at last . . . free to wander on and on - eternally! . . . It isn't the end. It's a free beginning - the start of my voyage! I've won . . . the right of release - beyond the horizon!." Even some very reputable modern critics have taken Robert's final speech literally. Travis Bogard describes Robert's death as "close to a blessing, both a release from pain and a reunification with the element that is rightfully his . . . he moves through death into the mainstream of continuous life energy.

In Edmund Tyrone's words, he has 'dissolved' into the secret." Still more recently Virginia Floyd has interpreted the final scene as signifying redemption through suffering.

Nevertheless, a consideration of what precedes and succeeds Robert's triumphant dying speech, as well as Robert's character and O'Neill's own comments pertaining to Robert, would seem to preclude the positive readings of the closure that O'Neill's poetic language suggests. In dying, Robert says he has been redeemed through suffering, that he has "won to [his] trip - the right of release - beyond the horizon" through the "sacrifice[s]" he has made. However, nothing in the play indicates any "sacrifice" on Robert's part. If anyone has sacrificed it is Andrew, who surrendered both Ruth and the farm to his brother. But even Andrew's sacrifice was minimal: he later realizes he never loved Ruth, and satisfies his farming instinct on a much larger scale in Argentina. As for Robert, he merely made the wrong choice and was too weak to extricate himself from the consequences. This is not "sin," for which Robert requires "redemption," but mere human frailty. His fidelity to Ruth even after the collapse of their relationship seems less attributable to "sacrifice" - particularly after their little daughter's death - than passivity coupled with illness on his part.

Far from being redeemed through suffering in any significant sense, Robert, as I have indicated, undergoes a deterioration of character as a result of his unhappy marriage and the death of his child. In acts 1 and 2 Robert is gentle and loving until his nagging wife expresses the wish she had married Andrew instead of him. In act 3 the couple's personalities seem to have reversed. Now Ruth wearily ministers to her sick husband's needs, while Robert indulges in vehement name-calling: Ruth is a "fool"; the local doctor is a "damned ignoramus." Still embittered by Ruth's "defection" of five years ago (her preference for Andrew), Robert jealously accuses his wife, who numbed with despair no longer feels love for anyone, of still waiting for Andrew as she did in act 2. Raging with fever, Robert can scarcely contain his envy of the brother he once loved: "Andy's made a big success of himself. . . . And now he's coming home to let us admire his greatness."

Although Robert still has lucid moments in which he recognizes his accountability, he deliberately sets himself up as a kind of prophet for the purpose of judging and administering punishment to his brother. Seizing upon Andrew's unfortunate financial history, Robert professes to see a "spiritual significance in [the] picture" of his brother "gambl[ing] in a wheat pit with scraps of paper." Mercilessly attacking Andrew in his most vulnerable area, he continues, "[Y]ou're the deepest-dyed failure of the three [of us], Andy. You've spent eight years running away from yourself [Robert conveniently forgets that it was his action which sent Andrew away]. . . . You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership." Yet Robert is guilty of the same self-betrayal. He, too, has lost his "harmonious partnership" with life, and now it appears, from the change in his character, that he has lost not only the life he might have had, but the very self that once dreamed of that life. After telling Andrew he must "be punished" and will "have to suffer to win back", he makes what on the surface would appear a magnanimous dying gesture were it not for the implications of "punishment" and "suffering" that immediately precede it. He orders Andrew to marry Ruth: "Remember, Andy, Ruth has suffered double her share. . . . Only through contact

with suffering, Andy, will you - awaken. Listen. You must marry Ruth - afterwards." The insinuation is that the suffering involved in being wedded to Ruth will "redeem" Andrew in the same manner as it did Robert - destroy what may remain of his character and perhaps cause his death.

The final closure does not bode well for Andrew and Ruth. If Robert had deliberately set out to destroy the possibility of a meaningful relationship between them, he could scarcely have accomplished his goal any more effectively than by commanding them to marry. The closing dialogue of the play, which ought - if anything - to clarify the author's intent, decidedly undercuts an affirmative reading of Robert's death. As Andrew and Ruth face each other across Robert's corpse, Andrew is furious with Ruth for not reassuring Robert she had not meant what she once said about preferring Andrew. Gradually his anger subsides, however, as a result of Ruth's sobs and the memory of Robert's dying wish that they wed. As the play closes, Andrew falters with empty words regarding their future. Ruth, for her part, is too far "*beyond the further troubling of any hope"* even to care. Although their future relationship is left somewhat open, audience expectations regarding the possibility of happiness for them together have ceased. If they do eventually marry, their union will most likely continue the cycle of misery established in the beginning of the play with Ruth's marriage to Robert.

If Marianna Torgovnick's assertion with regard to the novel that the ending is "the single place where an author most pressingly desires to make his points" may be considered applicable to drama, it is significant that O'Neill finishes the play with this despairing tableau. Albert E. Kalson and Lisa M. Schwerdt conclude, "There is nothing ahead for the dead or the living - only repetition, never change." The hopefulness of Robert's dying speech appears effectively negated by the depiction of misery that succeeds it.

Far from being redeemed through suffering, as some critics have interpreted the closure, Robert is one of O'Neill's many self-deluded characters. He began dreaming by the window as a sickly child in order to forget his pain. Throughout his life he seems to have lived more significantly in dreams and poetry than through his actions. Like Tenny son's Lady of Shalott his perception of reality, or the outside world as it exists objectively, is clouded. He never realizes Ruth loves him until she tells him, nor does he recognize that she has stopped loving him until she tells him. Moreover, even Robert's dream of the quest is but dimly conceived: it is not powerful enough in his mind to compel him to sacrifice in order to achieve it (in the manner in which O'Neill, himself, sacrificed for his goal to create drama). Instead Robert rather lazily attempts to exchange one dream for another: "I think love must have been the secret - the secret that called to me from over the world's rim - the secret beyond every horizon." In act 3, raging with fever, he is more deluded than ever. Like the sickly child who dreamed by the window to forget his pain, he plans to start a new life in the city: "Life owes us some happiness after what we've been through. *(vehemently)* It must! Otherwise our suffering would be meaningless - and that is unthinkable." In desperate need of illusion to validate his wasted life, he goes to the window seeking confirmation of his new dream in the rising of the sun. But he is too early; the sun has not risen yet. All he sees is black and gray, which he himself concludes to be "not a very happy augury." After overhearing the specialist brought in by Andrew confirms his imminent death, Robert quickly grasps

at a new dream, one less easily dispelled as illusory. He claims to be continuing his original plan to journey "beyond the horizon," having won through "sacrifice" the "right of release," and envisions himself "happy at last" and "free to wander on and on - eternally." Like Captain Bartlett in another play written the same year, *Where the Cross Is Made* (1918), who dies happy in the belief that his treasure has been restored, Robert Mayo dies as deluded as he has lived.

O'Neill did not admire this young man gifted with a poet's imagination who clipped his wings through lack of character to pursue his goal and, consequently, remained literally and figuratively bound to the soil below. Several years earlier (1914) O'Neill had defined "be[ing] true to one-self and one's highest hope" as the ultimate "good." That same year he had sent Beatrice Ashe an excerpt of writing that had impressed him as valid: "[T]he only way in this world to play for anything you want is to be willing to go after it with all you've got - to be willing to push every last chip to the middle of the table. It don't make a bit of difference what it is: if you get a hand you want, play it!" Robert Mayo was not willing to push that "last chip" to the table, and O'Neill saw him as a moral coward:

a weaker type . . . a man who would have my Norwegian's
inborn craving for the sea's unrest, only in him
it would be conscious, too conscious, intellectually
diluted into a vague, intangible, romantic wanderlust.
His powers of resistance, both moral and physical,
would also probably be correspondingly watered. He
would throw away his instinctive dream and accept
the thralldom of the farm for - why almost any nice
little poetical craving - the romance of sex, say.

O'Neill himself could have been saddled with a wife and child as a very young man. Out of conscience he married the respectable Kathleen Jenkins, whom he had impregnated, in 1909. Immediately afterward, however, he departed on a series of adventurous voyages, only meeting the son she later bore him (Eugene O'Neill Jr.) one time before he was grown. In *Beyond the Horizon*, written nine years later, the same year as his second marriage to Agnes Boulton, O'Neill may unconsciously have been attempting to justify his desertion of Kathleen as preferable to a life of clipped wings like Robert's.

In one of his more lucid final moments, Robert Mayo condemns himself for his lack of courage regarding the pursuit of his dream. Fleeing his sickbed for the outdoor road, from which he can view his last sunrise, Robert assesses his life:

I couldn't stand it back there in the room. It seemed as
if all my life - I'd been cooped in a room. *So I thought*
I'd try to end as I might have - if I'd had the courage - alone -
in a ditch by the open road - watching the sun
rise. (emphasis added)

He then invents an elaborate fiction concerning his death to compensate for his wasted life, thus qualifying him to take his place among the numerous men and women in the O'Neill canon who, unable to face reality, resort to the comfort of dreams. But although O'Neill sympathized with his weaker fellow men who need dreams in order to survive, he did not admire them or depict them as heroes. Robert deludes himself in his final speeches: he never attains that mystical glimpse of the ultimate that he proclaims. As William J. Scheick concludes, "Rob never crosses the threshold, never penetrates in fact, language or dream the mystery beyond the horizon of life." Through his denial of the dream he has progressed to disillusionment, suffering, bitterness, and death, and that is the extent of his journey.

Finally, although the self-deluded nature of Robert's final speeches seems clear upon closer examination, the ultimate nature of Robert's tragedy remains ambiguous. Is Robert to be pitied because, through his own admitted moral cowardice, he has failed to pursue the mystical quest that once beckoned him "beyond the horizon"? Or does Robert's tragedy involve his delusion about the very existence of such a quest in the hostile world of the play? Scheick concludes, "Everything in the play

. . . implies the inability of humanity to get beyond the horizon in any sense; . . . such a quest . . . is an illusion characteristic of, perhaps crucial to human life, and defines its radical tragic nature." Although Scheick's argument has merit in consideration of O'Neill's frequent depiction of the human need for "pipe dreams" (*The Iceman Cometh*) in his plays, O'Neill himself appears to have been preoccupied with such a quest. In *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941), Edmund Tyrone, the fictional counterpart of his youthful self, describes a moment of mystical oneness with the universe when "the veil of things" is drawn back: "For a second you see - and seeing the secret, are the secret. For a second there is meaning!" Edmund's narration of his experience at sea suggests that O'Neill's own quest for spiritual significance "beyond the horizon" was not without its occasional rewards (which explains why Robert Mayo's dying speech is so poetically rendered as to convince some viewers or readers of its truth). Furthermore, in 1922 O'Neill expressed his admiration for those who sought to soar through the pursuit of unattainable goals:

Man wills his own defeat when he pursues the unattainable.
But his *struggle* is his success! He is an
example of the spiritual significance which life attains
when it aims high enough. . . .

As stated earlier, O'Neill's own most ambitious endeavor to reach "beyond the horizon" is represented by his effort to attain extraordinary dramatic goals through writing plays. His choice of the word "*un*attainable" regarding his quest, however, suggests uncertainty on his part. It seems possible that O'Neill's failure to clarify the nature of Robert Mayo's tragedy and thus render the closure more meaningful is the result of the playwright's own qualms regarding the validity of such a quest, given man's limitations and the hostile universe in which he has been placed. Terry Eagleton, who defends the

reader's right to construct or write his own "sub-text" for ambiguous or evasive works, maintains that "what [a work] does not say, and how it does not say it, may be as important as what it articulates; what seems absent, marginal, or ambivalent about it may provide a central clue to its meanings." The ambiguous ending of *Beyond the Horizon* may represent O'Neill's own doubts concerning his goal to create significant drama, toward which he was sacrificing and dedicating his life.

In conclusion, ambiguous endings are popular in this age, which favors "openness" in preference to those endings described by William Carlos Williams (with reference to poetry) as clicking shut like the lid of a box. It would seem that the ambiguity ought not to be merely imposed upon the play's closure, however, but ought to proceed naturally from the preceding drama. For closure to be effective in an open-ended work (which includes plays with ambiguous endings), asserts Marianna Torgovnick, the test is "the honesty and the appropriateness of the ending's relationship to beginning and middle." The problem with the ambiguity in *Beyond the Horizon* is that the change in tone and demand upon the audience occurs too suddenly (early critics noted the illusion-dispelling effect of the last scene): the audience is not prepared for openness in such an explicitly presented play. In his later plays O'Neill will make ambiguous closures more integral to the dramas, as in *The Iceman Cometh* (1940), for example, a play filled with mystery and uncertainty from the beginning.

O'Neill will undergo a similar evolution by the later plays concerning his facility to maintain suspense. In contrast to the laborious predictability or Robert's deterioration in *Beyond the Horizon*, in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943) another self betrayed character, Jim Tyrone, journeys toward his destruction. Yet in this very concentrated drama, which occupies only some eighteen hours (in contrast to the novelistic *Beyond the Horizon*, which is spread out over eight years), O'Neill structures the action so that the audience retains some hope for Jim Tyrone's salvation almost until the end.

Source: Barbara Voglino, "Unsettling Ambiguity in *Beyond the Horizon,*" in *Perverse Mind: Eugene O'Neill's Struggle with Closure,* Associated University Presses, 1999, pp. 25-34.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Black compares Beyond the Horizon *to plays by Sophocles and Euripides in arguing that it is "the first play by an American that can justly be called a tragedy."*

Beyond the Horizon (1918), Eugene O'Neill's first successful long play, does not hold a very prominent place in the O'Neill canon. It deserves better. Although an obviously early work, it is the first play by an American that can justly be called a tragedy. O'Neill would not consistently reach tragic levels so high until the late 1930s. I will try to defend this large claim by drawing analogies between the meanings of the play and the tragic vision I construe in O'Neill's ancient companions, Sophocles and Euripides.

Like the Attic Greeks, O'Neill is preoccupied with the discoveries people continually make of their mortality, impotence, and unimportance, of the difference between the powers they believe themselves to have and the weaknesses circumstances reveal. O'Neill's characters may sometimes seek knowledge of themselves, but their most important discoveries tend to be of the nature of the world. The world is far from being the place human thought and institutions describe, ruled by people for the glory of God, or ruled through science and reason for the glorification of humanity. Instead, the world seems, to the Greeks and O'Neill, to consist of forces not in the least susceptible to human influence. Oedipus, an exemplary humanist, falls tragically because he believes reason and forethought can deflect the course of events already set in motion. Pentheus ridicules the "mythical" story of his aunt's impregnation by Zeus with a rational explanation, that she must have had a human lover. Armed with reason, and representing the law as well as the oligarchy, he assumes he cannot fail to overpower the youth who madly claims to be the god. Reason and human power make it impossible for Pentheus to avoid the god's dreadful seduction. Encounters with these forces so stun human self-esteem that people can only deny or distort memory of the event.

Nothing should seem stranger than the popularity of an Aeschylus, a Sophocles, a Euripides, a Shakespeare, a Strindberg, an O'Neill, a Bergman. Tragedy should head the list of arts and sciences that Freud once grouped with psychoanalysis. They have in common the success of their insults to human arrogance. The Pythagoreans, Aristarchus, and Copernicus; Darwin, his followers and predecessors: they all made it difficult to believe that God so favored those He made in His image that He put them in the center of His universe. Psychoanalysis shows that consciousness is an exceptional, rather than usual, mental state, and that we therefore do not control our own thoughts or acts, even though we continue to be responsible for them. The latter describes the true Oedipal tragedy: not the conflicts of a young child, but the dilemma of the tyrant of Thebes, who finally knows himself to have had no control over his terrible lot, but whose self-esteem will not permit him to deny responsibility for his acts. Should he disavow responsibility, he embraces helplessness and impotence. Consciousness, reason, and reasonable action represent the height of human potential - and are of little consequence.

The historical eras that have nurtured tragic literature have generally regarded humankind as the finest work of God or life. Perhaps it is only in confident times that people can entertain notions of their own unimportance. However it may be, they occasionally rediscover the triviality of human force compared to the power of natural processes. Pentheus cannot protect himself because he cannot imagine that something within himself, his perverse sexual longing, might overpower his will and reason. Nor can Oedipus imagine that anything might circumvent his determination not to murder the kindly king of Corinth. The discovery must be even more unpleasant when the person who makes it embodies the most admired human qualities and finds that they help hardly at all at the most important moments.

Discovering one's impotence and unimportance is not in itself necessarily tragic, even for one with great gifts and powers. The pitiful or ironic may become tragic when a playwright can make it possible for a character or an audience to perceive the delusion and change with sympathy and empathy. Most often that occurs when a character can articulate the vision of the world that the play newly discovers. The change that occurs when a character or audience discovers the world anew resembles the changes that sometimes occur in the private drama of the analytic consulting room. Stanley Cavell describes the magnitude of change in a way that applies both to literary tragedy and to moments of personal insight:

> [The] problems are solved only when they disappear, and answers are arrived at only when there are no longer questions. . . . The more one learns, so to speak, the hang of oneself, and mounts one's problems, the less one is able to *say* what one has learned; not because you have *forgotten* what it was, but because nothing you said would seem like an answer or a solution: there is no longer any question or problem which your words would match. You have reached conviction, but not about a proposition; and consistency, but not in a theory. You are different, what you recognize as problems are different, your world is different. . . . And this is the sense, in which what a work of art means cannot be *said.*

Cavell conveys the exaltation that sometimes, in literary tragedy, accompanies the most terrible discoveries. We approach the essence of tragedy when we say that it calls upon our best qualities of understanding, action, reason, and sensibility in order to make us conscious that action, reason, and sensibility have little power.

Like Sophocles and Euripides, O'Neill has the fate to regard the world from a point of view which finds tragedy in the falls engendered by the very qualities civilized people most value. O'Neill selected teachers like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Strindberg whose views of life opposed the modern spirit, not so much by mocking or deploring its manners and materialism, but by evoking old values and gods, by thinking along lines

distant from or tangential to Judaic, Christian, or other modern traditions. Louis Sheaffer, one of the few recent writers who has tried to give *Beyond the Horizon* its due, correctly points out that despite his sympathy for experimentation and the new theater, O'Neill swims "against the tide" of modernism. To any who object that O'Neill is not a poet whose English is to be compared to the Attic of Sophocles or Euripides there is an answer: that O'Neill is not less effective than the Greeks are in most translations; and for Greekless readers of several centuries, that has been quite a lot.

Beyond the Horizon concludes with the dying Robert Mayo strangely insisting that his brother Andy must marry Ruth, Robert's wife, when Robert dies: not to ensure Ruth's protection, but to "awaken" Andy. Ruth has known suffering, has "suffered double her share," Robert reminds his brother. "[O]nly through sacrifice," he says, "only through contact with suffering, Andy, will you - awaken." Robert dies urging Andy to "Remember!" and speaking the name of the sun as it rises over the hills.

The injunction means little to Andy, but O'Neill suggests it means something to Ruth she cannot express, and it is clear he intends the audience to understand. Everything in the play has led to it. The world of the play is governed by powers impervious to human consciousness, intellect, will, or longing, powers unchanged since ancient times, unaffected by progress, science, rationalism, technology. In defiance, the characters take as their motto the rubric: I think, therefore I know what is wrong and what I deserve; I think, therefore I demand justice.

They determinedly reject the lesson of their own experience, that suffering inescapably accompanies growth and development, and that justice occurs rarely, and even then perhaps only in someone's mind. In the 1920 text Robert makes explicit a meaning latent in most of his actions when he whimsically tells his father, "I'm never going to grow up - if I can help it." Although he refuses to recognize it at the time, Robert reminds us that the change he resists is relentless.

Shortly before he himself awakens, Robert tells Ruth: "Life owes us some happiness after what we've been through. (*Vehemently*) It must! Otherwise our suffering would be meaningless - and that is unthinkable." The dream of meaning, reason, order, and justice occurs during the sleep of life, tortured for Robert and Ruth, vaguely restless for Andy. Tragedy exists in the awakening from the dream.

It is understandable that those fates give the worst lot in life, like Ruth and himself, would always long hungrily for whatever comes easily to those more fortunate. Because it can be understood, it implies the existence of a world order that fits with a human sense of justice and deserving. But when someone like Andy who "belongs," someone who succeeds at whatever he tries, someone who feels at one with his work and his place in the world, still is driven to the magic of gambling, the implication of order is denied. Andy's gambling implies that satisfaction exists in human life only by chance. Now that he is about to die, Robert can deny no longer that even if the fates had been kinder to him and Ruth, neither would have been any happier, nor freer than Andy is of the vague dissatisfaction that always wants more.

The example of Andy awakens Robert by pulverizing the remaining shards of his battered romanticism. When Andy transforms himself from creating in nature, from being in harmony with life, and becomes instead an entrepreneur with both eyes on the main chance, that awakens Robert to the importance of human arrogance, his own as well as Andy's. To create from the soil may be the work of a man at one with himself and his world. "[T]o gamble in a wheat pit with scraps of paper," as Robert says, has "a spiritual significance." It reduces the edible results of one's labor as a creature in nature into mere symbols of exchangeable value. The goal of life changes from that of maintaining harmony between one's environment and one's self to that of acquiring symbols that boast of dominance and control over other people, over the natural world, and over the gods and fates.

O'Neill avoids making Andy an object of satire. He shows him having more capacity for self-discipline and hard work than either Robert or Ruth. Up to a point he understands his business failure and its causes. He sympathizes with Ruth's frustrations and forebears to judge her harshly even when she sets brother against brother. Although he has no sensibility for things that attract Robert, he respects his brother and remains loyal to him even after Robert has won away his woman. Nevertheless something is missing. His greed in itself is not wrong, only natural. But he cannot care to understand or respect himself or his world, and in the long run that makes it hard to take him seriously. He is born at one with his world and throws away his birthright without ever noticing he has had it or lost it. Andy by himself, is not a tragic figure. But his situation becomes significant through his brother's understanding.

Self-indulgent and impulsive, cursed by a taste for the poetic without being given the talent to be a poet himself, Robert seems like poor stuff to make us perceive the tragic in life. Doris Falk puts the rationalist case against Robert, and against the play's final credibility.

3 The insight he suddenly achieves comes not, however, from experience, but from intuition. Robert's inner and outer experience might logically have led him to the acceptance of death as a release after long suffering, but not necessarily to a revelation that sacrifice is the secret of life. Even if his conclusion could be said to have a psychological or poetic logic of its own, Robert's sudden arrival at such a conclusion makes it seem to be a *non sequitur.*

Robert seems to reach his conclusion suddenly only if one assumes that throughout the play he futilely seeks "the secret of life." He doesn't. He spends the play trying to avoid it, while he looks for the beautiful. Robert does not arrive suddenly at his conclusion. He is, at the last, finally unable to continue denying what he has known all along. Like *Oedipus the King, Beyond the Horizon* shows its characters struggling against becoming aware of things they have always known. Like Oedipus, Robert spends most of the play trying to avoid the unthinkable.

Robert's conclusion is not precisely that "sacrifice is the secret of life." The "secret" - if it is a secret - is the thing Robert has tried so long to deny: that despite all the suffering, life has nothing to do with human notions of meaning, justice, or order. Ruth's suffering may awaken Andy, not because suffering itself is meaningful or important, but because it results from continuing to demand that life eventually repay suffering or need or want with happiness or gratification.

"I'm a failure," Robert tells Andy, "and Ruth's another - but we can both justly lay some of the blame for our stumbling on God." God has made Ruth a person whose birth causes her mother's permanent paralysis and bitterness, and made Robert always to be ill and to fail. What is worse, both are given impulses toward hopefulness, the one poetic, the other romantic, that make it almost impossible for them to accept their lots.

As Robert continues, his understanding increases. When he speaks of Andy being "the deepest-dyed failure of the three" of them, the business failure is not the failure Robert means. Robert remembers Andy being a "creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership." The loss of harmony causes Robert to understand that Andy has never valued what he has had and doesn't miss it now that it is gone. Without even knowing it, he tells Andy, "You've spent eight years running away from yourself." Andy's flight is symbolized by his gambling, an act that proves he has never in the least understood or valued the nature of what he has had.

It seems to me sound to compare Robert's understanding of Andy to the situation of the young Oedipus. Upon learning his monstrous *moira,* he does everything that intelligence, courage, and action can do to avert the mated disasters. The tragedy of Oedipus lies not in his fated acts, nor in the failure of his efforts to do the impossible. The tragedy lies in his confident belief that the world is a place where human will, intelligence, courage, and energy can supersede the casual weavings of the fates. The shock of discovery comes to Oedipus when he can no longer deny that the world is a place in which human power is trivial, no matter how far-sighted, energetic, and strong-willed a person may be. The tragedy of Oedipus lies in the mistaken understanding of the world generated by the most esteemed human qualities.

So too in *Beyond the Horizon.* By the end of the play Robert can force us to consider his discomforting view of the world. In the world he knows, human thought, hopes, wishes, and actions have practically no effect except upon the feelings and longings of those who think and act. We delude ourselves, Robert believes, if we imagine that reason and knowledge permit us to control the world or our lives. They symbolize humanity gone wrong, in conflict with the world and itself. The old gods of the seas, lightning, vengeance, and hospitality are forgotten in the age of the dynamo and the stock exchange. Any such beliefs are dreams, and Robert tries to awaken his brother from his sleep.

He understands that Andy, who has received so much more from the fates than he or Ruth, fails most greatly of the three when he turns his back on his talent. Therefore Robert urges him to find himself again, to awaken to the loss of harmony with his life and world that he has unknowingly sustained. Awakening to the loss will cause Andy to

suffer, and suffering is what he must do, or else remain asleep. Such is the sense of Robert's strange injunction that his brother must marry Ruth and learn from her to know suffering. Robert's recognition transforms Andy's failure from the trivial to the tragic.

Andy is O'Neill's sample American, as fortunately endowed by the fates as the American land itself. But he has no more sense of natural economy than Americans have proved to have, turning away from the gifts of forests, soil, and climate. Andy gambling in the wheat pit to win something for nothing epitomizes the new American dream. He differs hardly at all from Ruth impulsively seeking escape from suffering in romance, or Robert convincing himself that he can fulfill his wanderer's spirit without leaving home.

Robert reaches more than "self-knowledge" at the end, and through Robert, O'Neill reaches authentically tragic depths. Robert discovers that the world is not the place he, Ruth, and Andy have assumed it to be, a place in which one can attain the new without relinquishing the old. Robert's recognition forces him to see the matter of his own dying as a small affair. He sacrifices the illusion that he is important. He compels our respect, not because he has a touch of the poet but in spite of it. Robert is no more heroic than old Oedipus, come to rave and be buried in Colonos, nor Philoctetes gone quirky from his wound and isolation, nor Ajax maddened into assassinating cattle, nor Heracles maddened into murdering his woman and children, nor Medea, nor the others. Like these strange figures, Robert has wounds and madness that alert us; they warn that he may know something about the world we need to know. The recognition of his own unimportance requires that we honour Robert with our most serious attention.

O'Neill repeats and develops the figure and the dilemma of Andy throughout his writing career, in characters as diverse as Brutus Jones, Marco Polo, William Brown, and Simon Harford. In 1946, almost three decades after writing *Beyond the Horizon*, with America at its height of optimistic self-confidence and world power in the afterglow of World War II, O'Neill tells a group of reporters, "[The United States,] instead of being the most successful country in the world, is . . . the greatest failure because it was given everything, more than any other country."

The principal theme of the unfinished "cycle" of plays O'Neill calls "A Tale of Possessors Dispossessed" is the loss of one's soul caused by believing one can possess the world. He continues to see America's failure represented in the betrayal of the land, a land that rewards cultivation by giving its people the easiest and richest life of any land on earth. America fails when its nationalist ideals tempt it into competing with European lands for economic and political power to wield over other nations. To do so it must sacrifice the aim of attunement with natural forces that once inspired it and once made the imaginary ideal American the fool of God.

Beyond the Horizon shows O'Neill's affinity with the fifth-century Greeks, one that exists more deeply in the mind than could be reached by calculated imitation or by years of rereading Nietzsche or the plays. It is a sensibility always aware of the danger of neglecting necessity, that knows the force of *moira* to exceed that of the gods. As with the Ajax or old Oedipus of Sophocles, or the Iphigeneia and Polyxena of Euripides, the sense of tragic exaltation comes only at the moment of the character's dying. In his

manner of dying Robert Mayo compels our respect. He wins it when we witness him renounce his claim to a special status and rejoin his fellows in mortal humiliation and the impotence of ordinary life. The renunciation gives Robert's call to "Remember!" and his vision of the sun the status of prophecy.

Source: Stephen A. Black, "America's First Tragedy," in *English Studies in Canada,* Vol. 13, No. 2, June 1987, pp. 195-203.

Adaptations

Beyond the Horizon was adapted as a television movie by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1975. The film, directed by Rick Hauser and Michael Kahn IV, features Richard Backus as Robert Mayo and Maria Tucci as Ruth Atkins. It is available on video from the Broadway Theatre Archive.

Topics for Further Study

O'Neill gives his play an ambiguous ending, leaving the audience to wonder what happens to Ruth and Andy. Write a plot summary for a fourth act to the play. Discuss whether Andy and Ruth get married, where they live (together or separately), and how their lives end. Use elements from the first three acts of the play to support your ideas.

Research what the life of a farmer was like in the late 1910s and what life is like for today's farmers. Using this information, plot a typical day in the life of a farmer from each era, scheduling each major task. How did the hours, work environment, and lifestyle of a farmer in the early twentieth century compare to those of a modern farmer?

Research what life at sea was like for a young, untrained man in his twenties during this time period, including his shipboard duties and the steps he followed to advance through the ranks. Using this information, write a short job description—in the style of a modern employment ad—for an entry-level sailor position, incorporating a specific description of duties as well as the advancement potential of the job.

Robert is a chronically sick person who eventually dies of tuberculosis, although the doctor says that he could have possibly restored his health by going to a better climate. Research health-related travel, sanitariums, and other methods that people used in the early twentieth century to combat tuberculosis and other serious illnesses. How successful were these measures? How do you think Robert's health would have fared if he had taken the sea voyage as he had initially planned?

Compare and Contrast

Late 1910s-Late 1920s: Because of technological advances in farming, many farm workers lose their jobs, while many farms experience crop surpluses. However, the surpluses lead to lower crop prices, which cause many farms to struggle financially. Displaced farm workers and farmers head to already crowded cities to seek their fortunes there.

Today: The majority of people continue to live in cities or in the large suburban areas that surround them. Farming is one of the least popular vocations, and many tasks traditionally performed by the farmer are now handled by machines.

Late 1910s-Late 1920s: Following World War I, the New York Stock Exchange experiences a surge in speculative investing by ordinary Americans, prompting inflated stock prices and making many Americans wealthy. Many people borrow their investment money on margin, intending to pay it back with their stock profits. When the stock market crashes in 1929, many stocks become worthless, and investors are unable to pay their debts. The resulting financial disaster leads to the Great Depression.

Today: The United States experiences an economic downturn following the crash of inflated technology stocks, many associated with newly popular Internet companies.

Late 1910s-Late 1920s: The Panama Canal, a waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in Central America, is built by the United States, which also has complete ownership of and responsibility for the canal. Panama quickly becomes an international shipping and trade center.

Today: After nearly a century of control by the United States, the Panama Canal is now under the full jurisdiction of Panama as a result of 1970s treaties between the two nations. For the first time in its history as an independent nation, Panama has full control of all of its land.

What Do I Read Next?

In *Beyond the Horizon,* Robert offers to take Ruth with him on his three-year voyage; in addition, Captain Dick Scott is worried that his crew will think Robert's empty cabin was intended for a lover who jilted him. Wives and mistresses are two of the many roles that women have held in naval history. Women also served as nurses and in some cases disguised themselves as male sailors. In his *Women Sailors and Sailors' Women: An Untold Maritime History* (2001), noted nautical historian David Cordingly examines the rich history of women at sea, focusing mainly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the play, life on the Mayo farm becomes a prison for Robert and Ruth. However, as Michael Dregni shows in his nostalgic collection *This Old Farm: A Treasury of Family Farm Memories*

(1999), family life on farms in both the United States and Canada was enjoyable for many. The essays, fiction, photography, and artwork detail the various aspects of the farming life and include everything from a radio monologue by noted commentator Garrison Keillor to a commentary on tractor repair.

Arthur Miller's classic play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) features the story of Willy Loman, a salesman who dreams of being successful. Through the examination of one day in Loman's life, Miller exposes the American dream that many people have and the tragedy that can result when this dream is not achievable.

O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh,* first published in 1946, is considered by many to be his best play. The story, which drew heavily on the tragedies in O'Neill's own life, details life in a skid row saloon in 1912, where society's losers—including drifters, prostitutes, and con artists—drown their failures in alcohol and talk about the successes they plan to have in the future. The one highlight in their lives is the annual visit of Hickey, a salesman who normally brings good times. However, this year, Hickey is a changed man who attempts to get the bar patrons to give up their unrealistic dreams and get their lives back on track.

O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey into Night,* was written in 1940, but the playwright was so concerned about the stark depictions of his dysfunctional family that he originally intended it to be published twenty-five years after his death. However, since the members of the O'Neill family portrayed in the play had already died, O'Neill's widow authorized the publication of the play in 1956. This harrowing play features one day in the life of the Tyrone family. The youngest son Edmond suffers from tuberculosis and hates his father, the mother is addicted to drugs, and the older son is an alcoholic.

Before he wrote *Beyond the Horizon,* which only refers to the sea, O'Neill wrote a number of one-act plays that take place on a steamship at sea.

The Long Voyage Home and Other Plays, published in 1995, contains four of these plays, including the title work, first published in 1917; *Bound East for Cardiff* (1916); *The Moon of the Caribbees* (1918); and *In the Zone* (1919).

O'Neill wrote letters to various people in his life, but none are more telling than those he wrote to his second wife, Agnes Boulton. In *A Wind Is Rising: The Correspondence of Agnes Boulton and Eugene O'Neill* (2000), editor William Davies King collects these letters, which detail O'Neill's personal view of life in the spotlight. The book also includes a brief background of the lives of Boulton and O'Neill.

Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize-winning play

A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) details the relations among Blanche DuBois; her sister, Stella Kowalski; and Stella's husband, Stanley. When Blanche, an aging southern belle, comes to stay with the Kowalskis, her idealistic dream world clashes with Stanley's brutish realism, which threatens to destroy her.

Further Study

Black, Stephen A., *Eugene O'Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy,* Yale University Press, 2002.

Black is an English professor and a psychoanalyst, and he uses both of these skills in this exhaustively researched biography of O'Neill. Starting with his mother's addiction to morphine as a result of O'Neill's birth, the playwright's life was plagued by a number of tragedies, including alcoholism, family strife, a string of unhappy marriages, many deaths, and the estrangement of his children.

Brietzke, Zander, *The Aesthetics of Failure: Dynamic Structure in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill,* McFarland & Company, 2001.

Although some of O'Neill's plays are considered great works of art, other critics have noted the lack of quality in many of his published works. Brietzke examines this fact in light of O'Neill's own theory that tragedy requires failure. The book includes a chronological listing of O'Neill's plays, including production history, characters, and plot summaries.

Finch, Christopher, *In the Market: The Illustrated History of Financial Markets,* Abbeville Press, Inc., 2001.

In *Beyond the Horizon,* Andy tries his luck at investing in the commodities market, the latest of humanity's marketplaces. Finch's engaging book details the history of financial marketplaces from 3500 B.C. to the present. The book includes a time line of historical events, a glossary of financial terms, and more than one hundred short biographies of famous and infamous men and women in the financial world.

Liu, HaiPing, and Lowell Swortzell, eds., *Eugene O'Neill in China: An International Centenary Celebration,* Greenwood Publishing Group, 1992.

During the centennial celebration of O'Neill's birth, O'Neill scholars from around the world met in China to present their latest findings. This book collects some of the notable papers that were presented at the conference. Topics include the influence of Taoism on O'Neill's art, O'Neill's work in relation to the work of other playwrights, O'Neill's characterizations of women, and an examination of international productions of O'Neill's plays.

Shafer, Yvonne, ed., *Performing O'Neill: Conversations with Actors and Directors,* Palgrave, 2000.

For this volume, Shafer, one of the leading O'Neill scholars, conducted interviews with eleven famous actors and directors who have interpreted O'Neill's plays during the last century. Both actors and directors discuss the challenges they faced when bringing

O'Neill's gritty visions of life to the stage. The stellar list of interviewees includes James Earl Jones, Jason Robards, Theresa Wright, Theodore Mann, and Jane Alexander.

Shaughnessy, Edward L., *Down the Nights and Down the Days: Eugene O'Neill's Catholic Sensibility,* University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.

Due to O'Neill's renunciation of his Catholic faith as a teenager, most critics have ignored this aspect of the playwright's life as an influence on his work. Shaughnessy, however, argues that O'Neill's Irish-Catholic upbringing influenced the moral quality of his work and examines this idea while discussing several of O'Neill's plays.

Siebold, Thomas, ed., *Readings on Eugene O'Neill,* Greenhaven Press, 1998.

This accessible, diverse collection of O'Neill criticism includes offerings from literary analysts, psychologists, playwrights, and reviewers. The book gives a broad perspective on O'Neill's work without getting bogged down in specific critical debates.

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BOOKRAGS

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Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) 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, DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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

DfS 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 Drama 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 DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS 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 Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama 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 DfS 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.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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:

Editor, Drama for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535