Brand Study Guide

Brand by Henrik Ibsen

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Henrik Ibsen's religious drama, *Brand*, caused a huge stir when it was first published in Scandinavia in 1866. Although it was well received in Denmark, it was highly debated in Norway, Ibsen's pious homeland. Ibsen wrote the play while on a self-imposed exile in Italy, which began in 1864. Although the play's sources of inspiration have been interpreted in many different ways, it is likely that the work□like Ibsen's exile□was a statement on Norway's failure to join with its Danish neighbors in preventing Germany from taking two of Denmark's duchies in 1864. The play was the first commercial and critical success of Ibsen's and paved the way for his future successes, starting with *Peer Gynt*, which he published a year after *Brand*. Both plays are verse dramas□plays written in the style of a poem□a more literary but less common type of modern drama.

Brand was a cathartic writing experience for Ibsen, who never intended the play to be staged. Like the inspiration for the play, the meaning in the work has also been interpreted in many different ways. The main character, Brand, is a pastor who holds himself and all of his followers, including his wife, to the rigid command of "Naught or All!" This essentially means that people must be willing to risk their lives and all earthly attachments if they wish to find eternal salvation. Brand is tested on this faith, and even though he falters a few times, he nevertheless goes the distance, sacrificing his mother, son, and wife in an attempt to adhere to his beliefs. The ambiguous ending has been interpreted in many contradictory ways, including that Brand's life is either meaningful or worthless. Although this is one of Ibsen's major works, it is currently out of print. Various translations can often be found in libraries. One such translation is the 1960 Doubleday edition, translated by Michael Meyer.

Author Biography

Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skien, Norway, to a wealthy family. However, in 1834, Ibsen's family lost its money when the family business failed. When he was fifteen, Ibsen left school to work as a pharmacist's assistant, although he eventually tried to get admitted to Christiania University. When he failed the entrance exams, Ibsen turned his attention to writing and wrote his first play, *Cataline*, in 1850. At this point, Ibsen's work was relatively unknown, so he became assistant stage manager at the Norwegian Theater in Bergen, where he was expected to write and produce one drama each year. These early plays were not well received, and in 1862 Ibsen petitioned the government for a pension that would allow him to travel while he wrote. He was eventually given a small stipend in 1864.

The same year, Ibsen began a self-imposed exile from Norway that would last for the majority of his adult life. Although many critics say that Ibsen left his country to get away from bad memories of his father's failed business and Ibsen's own failure as a stage manager, the playwright himself said that he needed to leave his homeland to write drama that accurately reflected Norwegian life. While in Italy during the first few years of his exile, Ibsen published *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867), two plays that made him famous. From this point on, Ibsen's works were more popular, but in some cases, such as 1879's *A Doll's House*, which addressed the oppression of women, his plays dealt with controversial topics.

In 1891, Ibsen returned to Norway from his twenty-seven-year exile and continued to write major plays, including *The Master Builder* (1892) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). Shortly after completing *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), a highly autobiographical play in which Ibsen questions his own life as an artist, Ibsen suffered several strokes, which rendered him an invalid until his death several years later. Ibsen died on May 23, 1906, in Oslo, Norway.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Brand begins in the frigid mountains of Norway in the mid-eighteenth century. Brand, a pastor, strides confidently through the dangerous and disorienting mountain mist, while a peasant□crossing the mountains with his son to be with his dying daughter□turns back and tries to convince Brand to do the same. Brand is unshakable in his will, however, and challenges the peasant to risk his life for the daughter he loves. The weather clears, and Brand comes across a young couple□Einar, an artist, and Agnes. Although the couple is happy, Brand is grim and says he is on his way to the funeral of the false God that people have been worshipping. Although Einar is defiant and brushes off Brand's speeches, which he sees as religious fanaticism that belongs to an earlier age, Agnes is affected and is no longer carefree. Brand meets Gerd, a mad girl, who throws stones at a hawk that only she can see and tells him about the Ice-Church, a natural, church-like formation of ice in the mountains. Brand tells Gerd to stay away from the church because the formation is unstable and could come crashing down in an avalanche. Gerd invites Brand to come with her, then screams when she sees the imaginary hawk again. She runs away. Brand reflects on all of the travelers he has seen thus far and concludes that none of them is living life the way it should be lived. Brand goes down into the valley.

Act 2

By the fiord□a narrow inlet of water surrounded by mountains, which leads to the sea□Brand comes upon a group of peasants begging the town's sheriff for food. Brand offers sermons instead of money, and the hungry peasants move in to beat Brand. They are interrupted by a woman who begs Brand to come across the stormy bay to her house to perform last rites for her husband who has killed their starving child out of mercy and has mortally wounded himself out of shame for the act. Brand prepares to brave the stormy boat ride to the woman's house. He asks for help from the woman, but she is afraid for her life and will not go; neither will most of the crowd. Only Agnes, the bride of Einar, decides to leave her new husband to help Brand. Together, they make it in time to perform the last rites. The crowd arrives much later, impressed by Brand's courage. A man asks him to stay on as their pastor. Brand refuses at first, not wishing to waste his life in this small village when he could do greater good in the world at large. Brand's mother walks up and attempts to bequeath her fortune to him, as long as he agrees to hoard it and to give his mother her last rites on her deathbed. Brand says that he will not give her last rites unless she gives her entire fortune away to charity. His mother initially refuses to do this, although she leaves the possibility that she may change her mind. Einar comes up and asks Agnes to return to him, but Agnes chooses to align herself with Brand and his rigid demand of "Naught or All," meaning that she must give herself totally to God without attachments to safety, either personal or financial, and other earthly aspects.

Act 3

Three years later, Brand and Agnes are married and living in the little village by the fiord where Brand has decided to serve as pastor. Brand's mother is on her deathbed, and he waits for her summons, refusing to go serve her last rites until she agrees to give her fortune up to charity. At the same time, Brand and Agnes discuss the fact that their son, Alf, is becoming sick. Various messengers come to Brand, telling him that his mother is willing to give up half of her fortune, then nine-tenths, but she is unwilling to give up all of it. Although other characters accuse Brand of being too hard, including Agnes, he sticks to his pledge and refuses to administer last rites to his mother. The sheriff comes up and says that, since Brand is rich from his inheritance, he should use the money to move away. The sheriff is worried that Brand's depressing sermons are affecting the townspeople and disturbing a sense of peace and harmony. Brand refuses to leave and declares war on the sheriff. The doctor comes up to tell Brand that his mother is dead and accuses him of being too hard on her. At Agnes's frantic request, the doctor looks at Alf and says that if they do not move to a warmer climate, the boy will die. In a panic, Brand says he will leave, until the doctor points out Brand's hypocrisy. At this point, Gerd, a mad little girl, arrives. Brand takes her ravings as a sign that he should stay, and although Agnes is crushed that they have to sacrifice their son's health to do it, she agrees to stay with Brand.

Act 4

It is Christmas Eve, and Agnes is mourning their dead child. Brand asks his wife not to cry over Alf, as grief is a worldly attachment. Although it takes a while, Agnes finally dries her tears and tries to continue with the Christmas celebration, honoring Jesus instead of mourning her child. The sheriff arrives and says that Brand has won his war, as the majority of the townspeople are following his sermons. The sheriff offers a truce and asks if Brand will donate his inheritance to build a multipurpose building that can be used as a poor house and jail. However, Brand has other plans, which are to build a new church, an idea that the sheriff does not like when he thinks the townspeople will have to pay for it. However, when Brand says he will cover the expense, the sheriff suddenly supports the idea. The sheriff mentions that gypsies have come to town. He also says that, in the past, Brand's mother had spurned the advances of a gypsy man, who instead married another gypsy and had a number of children□including the mad girl, Gerd, for whom the townspeople have been providing food and clothes. The sheriff leaves, and Agnes looks out at Alf's grave, daydreaming about her dead son. Brand catches her doing this, then catches her taking out Alf's old clothes. A gypsy woman comes to the door, begging for clothes for her freezing child. At Brand's request, Agnes eventually gives the gypsy woman Alf's clothes, the last remnant that she has to commemorate her dead son. However, this act is not good enough for Brand; Agnes must avow that she has given the clothes willingly.

Act 5

A year and a half later, the new church is completed, and the town is ready to throw a big celebration. The clerk and schoolmaster talk about the church and about how Brand's grim teachings interfere with the harmony of the village. They hear Brand playing a mournful tune on an organ, and they talk about Agnes's death. They momentarily lose their composure and talk about the possibility that they themselves might follow Brand's grim teachings. The sheriff comes up to Brand, who is unhappy about the grand church he has built, seeing it as yet another abstraction from God. The sheriff talks about the celebration, in which Brand is to be made a knight. Brand is mortified that they are going to try to make him a celebrity, which he sees as being even farther removed from God. Brand leaves, running into the dean, who echoes the sheriff's sentiments and tells Brand that, with this new church, he now serves the government and that he wants Brand to give lighter sermons. Einar, the former artist, comes up to Brand. Einar has had a revelation, has given up his prideful dependence on willpower, and has sacrificed his life to God. He condemns Brand for his own pride.

The crowd starts getting rowdy, wanting the celebration to start. Brand addresses them, inciting them to follow him. The majority follows Brand into the mountains, but the followers have doubts and begin to stone Brand, thinking he has tricked them. The dean and sheriff follow the crowd. When the crowd turns on Brand, because he cannot offer them anything but a rough life, the dean and the sheriff coax them back to town with the lie that an abundance of fish has come into the bay. Wounded, Brand continues on into the mountains, where he sees a vision of his wife, Agnes, who tells him to give up his strict policy of "Naught or All." Brand refuses, and the vision vanishes. Gerd appears with a rifle, sees Brand's wounds, and equates him with Christ. Gerd tells Brand that they are in the Ice-Church, and when she thinks she sees the hawk of Compromise, she fires, killing them both in an avalanche. As he dies, Brand calls out to God, asking him how to achieve salvation. A voice responds: "God is Love!"

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Brand is a complex, multi-textured dramatic poem that chronicles the inner struggle of Brand, a man passionate to the point of obsession about bringing the message of the true God to his people. The action of the piece is defined by its central irony, that Brand's idea of God is limited and negative and refuses to admit any other possibilities until the very end of his life and of the play. It's these limitations, rather than his faith, that define the play's core theme - the exploration of faith is the means, rather than the end.

Brand crosses a mountain range. A Peasant traveling with him calls for him to slow down, while the Peasant's Son worries that they're crossing an area of thin ice that might collapse and send them all falling into a deep crevasse. Brand insists they keep going, saying that because he's a priest he must do as God tells him to do and adding that because someone once walked on water, he has faith he can walk on ice. This can be interpreted as a reference to Christ, who in the Bible was described as walking on water in the middle of a storm. The Peasant describes Brand as mad, and the Son begs to go back. Still, Brand says the Peasant doesn't know God, and God doesn't know him. The Peasant calls him a hard man and turns to go back home. An avalanche begins, and the Peasant grabs Brand in order to get him out of its way. Brand frees himself and moves off. The Peasant and his Son return the way they came.

Brand speaks in soliloquy about his contempt for the Peasant, saying he'd gladly help the man if he were only willing to help himself. Brand comments on the foolishness of valuing life so much at the expense of living spiritually and smilingly recalls his childhood imaginings of a fish afraid of water and an owl afraid of the dark. He compares humanity to both animals, saying that human beings are meant to live in the world for which they were made but are afraid of it. He says men are particularly afraid of the end of that life. That end can be interpreted as death, heaven and ultimate reunion with God. As the mist clears, Brand sees a group of villagers bidding farewell to a young man and woman and describes the air and earth around them in joyfully poetic terms as they approach

Agnes and Einar laugh and sing playfully as they chase each other on. Brand shouts to them that they're about to fall over the edge of a precipice, and they stop. Agnes and Einar tell him not to worry, saying that if they die their joy will reunite them in Heaven. As they invite Brand to join them in joy, they speak in detail about Einar's joy in his work as a painter and their mutual joy in their marriage. They reveal that they're looking forward to a long and happy life together in a far away land to which they're sailing in a couple of days. Brand turns to go, but Einar suddenly stops him when he remembers the two of them were in school together. Conversation reveals that Brand will be on the same ship. He says pointedly that he's going to bury the joyful God that Einar just described, speaking at length about how he's disgusted by the easy faith practiced by people like

Einar, Agnes and the general population. He says the true spirit of God will soon rise again and recreate Man in his image. He then leaves, he and Einar each urging the other to open his mind to a new experience of God.

Agnes walks for a moment with Einar, but then she feels uncomfortable because of what she describes as a cloud passing over her. Einar tells her she wasn't frightened until Brand spoke so harshly, and he urges her to forget him, referring to a glimpse of sky just visible in the scudding clouds. Agnes, though, isn't paying attention. She asks Einar whether he noticed that as Brand was talking, he seemed to get taller.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

This piece of work was originally published as a poem, rather than as a play. Its characters and story are grounded in symbolism as much as they're grounded in realism. This symbolism emerges as much through the development of action and relationship, incident and conversation as it does through the language in which the play/poem is written. For example, setting this scene within the context of a journey across a dangerous mountain range creates the metaphorical impression that the scene, and the play, are extended metaphors for the dangerous journey not just of life, but of realizing true faith. In the same way, Brand's conversation with the Peasant about the crevasse over which they're walking, as well as the conversation between Brand and Einar about the precipice on which Einar and Agnes are standing, both refer to the deep, dangerous, empty life that Brand believes the Peasant and Einar are about to enter into. In the same vein, Brand's conversations with the Peasant and Einar embody the tensions between different views of God. The Peasant represents the view that God is an unreal, ancient, irrelevant ideal. Einar represents the view that God is joy, love and harmony, and Brand represents the view that God is stern, judgmental and righteous. It's this view, and Brand's actions as a result of holding it, that dominate the play's narrative and theme.

Time and again, Brand confronts people from this rigid, judgmental stance. Time and again, he overpowers them with the force of his beliefs, and time and again, his views come across as shallow, limited and even inhumane, as they do in this scene. The point must be made here that the meaning of the play is not so much to explore Brand's religious views, but that he holds them and acts on them in the way that he does. In other words, the play's central question, repeatedly dramatized through the action is this: Is righteousness right? The answer to this question appears to be no, an answer definitively dramatized at the end of the play in a moment foreshadowed in this first scene through the repeated image, or motif, of the avalanche.

The meaning of this image can be understood through an examination of the circumstances in which avalanches occur, particularly this first instance and the one at the end of the play. In this scene the avalanche threatens to overwhelm Brand but fails to do so. Juxtaposed with his determination and his complete rejection of the Peasant's concerns, the image illuminates the absolute strength of Brand's faith and his unshakable belief that he is a kind of prophet for the judgment of God. His is a very Old

Testament view. At the end of the play, however, he can't evade the avalanche, faces death and in his final moments questions whether his faith has truly served him. In short, the use of the image at the end of the play defines its use at the beginning and throughout, illuminating the core conflict between Brand's version of faith and all other versions and defining the core theme relating to the dangers of narrow visions in general.

A soliloquy such as Brand's long speech in the middle of the scene is a commonly used theatrical device in which a character reveals his/her innermost thoughts, feelings or dilemmas. Specifically, this and Brand's many other soliloquies are used to define his faith, exploring its limits and rigidities from various poetic and metaphoric perspectives. It's interesting to note that the intellectual, emotional and spiritual content of the soliloquies extend into to Brand's comments to both Einar and the Peasant. This suggests that Brand's inner thoughts are easily expressed outwardly and that he says what he thinks, feels and believes. As the play progresses, the soliloquies change purpose, illuminating the conflict Brand feels between his outer actions and inner beliefs, his professions of faith and his intuitive understandings.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Brand walks along a mountain pass, commenting in soliloquy that he recognizes the site of his old home village and that it seems so small and dull. He also comments on how alone he felt as a child, how he felt his soul was inhibited from living in its true spirit and how in coming home he feels his strength leaving him. He sees a procession of people going into an old stone church in a valley below, speaks at angry length about their emptiness of faith and prepares to move on - but then someone throws a stone at him.

Gerd appears, continuing to throw stones and revealing in disjointed speech that she's trying to chase away a predatory hawk. Brand says he can see no hawk, and it can be understood that Gerd is chasing away something imaginary. She says she's going to church, and when Brand points to the church below, she scornfully says she's going to her ice church up in the mountains. This leads Brand to recall stories he heard as a child about such a church. It is dangerous and precariously positioned under a ledge of snow that could avalanche down at any second. He tells Gerd to come with him to the church in the valley. Gerd refuses, saying she's going up to her church, referring in poetic language to its natural beauty and to the fact that the hawk can't get in. She sees the hawk coming and runs away towards her church.

Brand wonders in soliloquy which is the right church and which disciples are stumbling further from the truth. He refers in imagery to Einar and Agnes' wild and joyful faith, to dull, stolid faith represented by the church in the valley and followed by the Peasant and to the dangerous, near-insane faith represented by the ice church. He says he must be on his guard against this "triple threat" and realizes his life's mission is to promote the true faith and fight for the "inheritors of heaven," presumably those that believe the way he does. A stage direction here is important: "he descends into the valley."

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

This scene contains the climax of the act, or the high point of emotion and action so far. This climax comes in Brand's second soliloquy of the scene, when he realizes the nature of his mission - to fight these three other kinds of faith and act as a prophet of his own. The scene builds to this climax through the appearance of Gerd, her confrontation with Brand and her eloquently poetic description of yet another interpretation of God, the natural God of the ice church. What's noteworthy here is that Brand sees Gerd's faith in terms of an avalanche, dangerous and unpredictable. This repeats the image established in the previous scene, of the avalanche as a symbol of broader perspectives. Meanwhile, it's interesting to note that at the end of the scene Brand goes into the valley, the site of a dull faith that he knows he can challenge and defeat, as opposed to going up to the ice church, the site of a faith and experience of God that could challenge and overwhelm his. At the end of the play, it eventually does. His choice

suggests that he doesn't feel as strong and determined in his faith as he says he does. In other words, his blustering faith can be seen as a compensation for an internal lack of faith, symbolized by the hawk that Gerd, whose faith in her ice church is absolute, repeatedly manages to chase away. This lack of faith becomes more overt and less symbolic as the play continues.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

This scene is set in Brand's home village, outside its small stone church in the middle of a storm. A crowd of struggling peasants jostles the Mayor as he hands out provisions. Agnes and Einar are there as well, having given away all their possessions to help the needy. The Mayor catches sight of Brand watching from the hillside and calls for him to come and help. Brand refuses, talking at length about his disgust with the villagers asking for handouts instead of responding to God's will for them to create their own lives with courage and strength. Some members of the crowd find encouragement in his words, but others become angry at his apparent heartlessness and prepare to attack him.

A Peasant Woman rushes into the village, shouting hysterically for a priest. She tells how she and her husband and children are starving, how her husband drowned their youngest child so there was one less mouth to feed and how he's standing on the edge of the river in shock, preparing to kill himself. The Mayor refuses to help, saying the family is not in his constituency. Brand calls for a boat to take him across the river to the man, but several villagers comment that the storm is making the river impassable. Brand commandeers a boat and asks who will go with him to help bail and man the sails. Even the Peasant Woman refuses to go. Agnes tries to convince Einar to go, saying that she's realized how empty their faith is and that Brand's is the true faith. Einar says he's too young and that he enjoys life too much. Agnes resolves to go and runs to the boat. Einar struggles to hold her back, but Agnes evades him. Brand and Agnes set sail and disappear. The Villagers watch them go, narrating their progress on the wild river and the sudden appearance of Gerd laughing on the hillside. They refer to Brand as a priest. They speak admiringly of him, say he's the kind of priest their town needs and disperse.

Left alone, the Mayor comments that it's foolish to interfere in the lives of other people, saying he always does his duty but only within the boundaries of his own constituency.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

This scene essentially serves to define Brand's courage as inspired and fueled by his faith. Because of his portrayal here as a man of action, the ambivalence of the play's theme comes into play. Brand's singleness of purpose and clarity of vision can be seen here as admirable, leading him as it does to practice what he preaches - walk the walk as well as talk the talk. This attitude clearly serves as inspiration to Agnes, in the same way as faith in action can and perhaps should serve as inspiration to those whose faith consists more of talking about ideals than living them. In short, Brand's faith here is a good and powerful and inspiring thing. Later, however, as his relationship with Agnes and indeed all his relationships develop, the hardness and narrowness of his faith

becomes further defined, revealing the other side of the coin - the limits of Brand's courage.

The key symbol in this scene is the storm, representing as it does the unpredictable violence that life can perform on the human spirit. Brand's courage in setting sail, therefore, is another way in which his power and courage is presented. His courage in the face of the weather symbolizes his courage in the face of the world.

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 1

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 1 Summary

Outside the cottage, Agnes sits looking out at the water as Brand comes out. He speaks poetically about the peace in the face of the man who just died, wondering if all change comes so easily and peacefully. He says the man had no real idea of the depths of his sin and refers to how he had no idea of what had "branded" him. He also speaks poetically about the man's two little children. He says that their father's sin has made them sinners and wonders whether it's possible for anyone to escape the taint of sin. He comments on the way that everyone seems to be living under the shadow of the impending avalanche of guilt.

Some of the villagers appear, bringing with them scraps of food and clothing for the abandoned children. Their Leader comments on how impressed they are with the way Brand actually acted on his spiritual beliefs and asks him to be their priest. Brand says his desire and call are to serve the whole world, speaking poetically about his larger mission. The Leader says he and the other villagers understand his actions, not his words. Brand starts to leave, protesting that nothing can or should obstruct the call of the inner self, and the Leader tells him that his actions proved that point exactly but then curses Brand for letting them see the power of the soul for such a brief time. He then leads the other villagers off. Brand watches them go, commenting in poetic soliloquy about how miserable they all look. He's about to leave when he sees Agnes and asks what she's looking at. She speaks poetically about seeing a world about to be created, referring to surging faith in herself and to visions and intuitions of a loving, generous God calling her to join Brand's mission. Brand enthusiastically talks about how the human will can and will be conquered within the self and says that if the world should ever try to challenge or change his mission, he will fight back furiously. He reflects for a moment on his earlier comments about the dead man and humanity's inheritance of guilt and then sees an old woman coming. With sudden fear, he realizes it's his mother.

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 1 Analysis

This section is essentially set-up for the confrontations that occur in the second part of the scene between Brand and his mother. One noteworthy element is the repeated image of the avalanche, this time representing a negative aspect of the previously discussed broader perspective it first represented (Act 1, Scene 2), an obsession with material possessions. This obsession is also represented by Brand's mother in the latter half of the scene, meaning that the mention of the avalanche here foreshadows the avalanche of worldliness Brand is confronted with in the latter part of the scene.

Another noteworthy element is the use of the term "branded" to describe the recently dead man and his children having been branded with sin. This functions on two levels. The first and most obvious is the reference to Brand's name. The suggestion is that

Brand himself has been "branded," and on first glance it seems that the use of the term is ironic. Where the dead man has been branded with sin, Brand has been branded with righteousness. In the larger context of the play as a whole, which makes the thematic point that Brand's self-righteousness is itself a sin, the use of the term "branded" can be interpreted as *not* ironic. Brand has also been "branded" as a sinner. The difference is that unlike the man, who from the description of the Peasant Woman in the previous scene seems to know he's a sinner, Brand has no idea whatsoever.

What exactly is Brand's sin? There are clues here that it's something other than the previously discussed sin of self-righteousness, clues developed in the following encounter with Mother. In this section, Brand refers to the sin of the father being passed on to the child. It can be seen in the following section that the sin of Brand's mother has been passed on to her child - the sin of obsession. She's obsessed with worldly things, while he's obsessed with spiritual things, but the idea here is that they're both obsessed, to the point that they're both unable to perceive of any other possible way of relating to the world. Another possibility can be found in his conversation with Agnes, in which Brand seems focused more on the glory of his mission than actually on saving souls. This aspect to his personality continues throughout the play, albeit at times in less obvious terms, suggesting that at least part of his sinful nature is pride. Pride is at the core of the sin of obsession, and his pride in his position leads him to become obsessed with achieving and maintaining that position.

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 2

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 2 Summary

Mother appears, complaining about how the sun is blinding her. She recognizes Brand and comments ironically on how home is a good place for him to be - where it's cold, like him. Brand tries to leave, and Mother comments that he's always running away. Brand comments that she always wanted him to leave, and Mother comments on how big and strong he's become. Then she warns him to be careful, referring to him being the last of the family line. She begins to talk about how much he will inherit from her, but he cuts her off, accusing her of wanting to buy him. She reminds him she's not getting any younger, saying everything she possesses has been made ready for him to take when she dies. She adds that there's not much but enough for him to live on in comfort for the rest of the life. She says there's only one condition, that he marry and pass on the inheritance to his children. Brand wonders aloud what she would do if he spent her money frivolously, and she reacts angrily, saying it's her soul he'd be spending.

Mother's comments lead Brand to angrily recall when he was watching over his ill father. She came in, shoved aside his father's body to pull out bundles of money, kept whispering "more" and then searched the entire room, finally going out and complaining about how little there was. Mother says she was desperate. It was the habit of the village for people to give away their heart and soul for gold and riches, and she speaks poetically about the beautiful part of herself she lost, calling it love. She refers to loving one young man but being forced to marry another, whom her father thought would earn a good living but who turned out to be useless. She says her fortune came from her hard work alone and that her only consolation is that her son turned out to be a priest, someone who at the last would comfort her soul and take care of what her body earned. Brand tells her she's deluding herself, saying she's squandered and defiled the gift of a soul given her by God. He promises to make sure all her earthly debts are paid, but he adds that only she can settle the debts of her sins. It must be done by repentance. Mother says she needs to get home, saying she's more comfortable where it's dark than she is in the light. Brand tells her to go, saying when the time comes for her to repent, he'll be there to help her cast off all her earthly possessions and life and go naked to her grave. She says that if she did that her life would be wasted and reminds him how much she sacrificed for him, saying that she's now going to go home and weep for him as if he were dead. She goes out, saying that if by dying she loses everything she's lived for, she'll keep it with her to the end of her life.

After Mother has gone, Brand turns to Agnes, saying he sees his mission differently now. He explains that instead of seeing the glory of his mission, he feels called to humbler service, waking the people of the village to their own individual wills and purposes and inspiring them to devote their bodies and souls to worshipping God.

Einar suddenly appears, demanding that Brand return Agnes to him. Brand says he can take her, but Einar demands that she choose. Then, when she indicates she's staying

with Brand, Einar reminds her of the beauty of the life they once desired. Agnes says again that she's choosing life with Brand, who asks her to reconsider the choice she's making, talking about how dark and difficult their path together would be. Agnes says she has no fear of the dark, referring to how she has a star in her life, meaning Brand. Einar urges her to forget this madness, while Brand urges her to choose and goes out. Einar describes the choice between him and Brand as a choice between darkness and light, between living Brand's life as opposed to her own. Agnes says she chooses the dark, since beyond the dark lies the sunrise. She follows Brand out. Einar watches her go and then goes out in the opposite direction.

Act 2, Scene 2, Part 2 Analysis

The imagistic and symbolic values given to the characters in the play, their situations and their relationships are developed further in this section with Mother's comparison of Brand to "light." There are two aspects to this image. The first is fairly obvious - Brand as illuminator of a deeper, more spiritual truth. This is certainly how the villagers have seen him, how Agnes sees him and on some level how he sees himself. The second aspect to this image refers to the way his mother sees him, as a kind of light in her old age, the one thing that's kept her going, illuminated her way and sustained her through all her hard work. He is her one hope of redemption, both in spiritual terms (i.e. redeeming her sin) and in material terms (i.e. redeeming all her hard work and making it useful in the world). The irony of this image is that Brand repeatedly refers to the path that he's on as a dark one. Examples of this can be found in his repeated comments to Agnes later in the scene and in his confrontation with Einar, who is, as discussed later, much more of a genuine personification of light. At the same time, Agnes' comments about her choice to be with Brand do have a point, that after the dark comes the sunrise, and it's this point that provides an interesting piece of foreshadowing. At the end of the play, Brand finally sees the true sprit of God emerging from his self-imposed darkness.

Another piece of important foreshadowing comes at the conclusion of the confrontation with Mother, in which they both refer to the moment of her death and his appearance at her bedside. In Act 3, that circumstance does arise, fueling that act's essential conflict and illustrating the depths of Brand's rigidity and self-righteousness. Both these aspects to his character are also foreshadowed here. A third piece of foreshadowing can be found in Mother's reference to having spent her life in service of material goods and having lost her capacity to love. This foreshadows what happens to Agnes later in the play, who spends her life in the service of Brand's vision, loses her capacity to love and eventually loses her life. Yet another piece of foreshadowing occurs in Mother's reference to having given up love to pursue material gain, a comment that foreshadows the revelation in Act 4, Scene 2 that the man she rejected was Gerd's father.

There is some question as to what triggers Brand's sudden shift of perspective in this section, from pursuit of worldly glory to his determination to work on a smaller scale with the individuals of the village. The answer may lie in his encounter with his Mother. After seeing the extent of her obsession with the worldly, and after his musings on the nature

of the will and the self in the previous section, it seems he's discovered that the transformation he seeks begins in the wills and souls of people like his mother. The suggestion here, which he seems to be taking to heart, is that he has to start small and think small, rather than in terms of whole worlds.

The last section makes up the climax of the act, the confrontation between light (Einar) and dark (Brand). There is an element of romance about Agnes' attitudes at this point, an element that Brand first of all doesn't seem to notice and would find distasteful if he did. More importantly, this section is notable for the contrast between the two perspectives of God - Einar's bright God of joy and Brand's dark God of judgment. This is the last time in the play that a character actually advocates for that God of joy. From this point on, Brand's vision and perspective dominate. In the last act, even Einar becomes worn down by his determination. His spirit of love and joy is overwhelmed and ultimately destroyed by Brand's obsession, an aspect of the story that vividly illustrates the play's theme about the negative, destructive nature of narrow visions like Brand's.

Act 3, Part 1

Act 3, Part 1 Summary

This act is set three years after the conclusion of Act 2. Brand sits on the steps outside the parsonage. Agnes asks why he's spending so much time looking out at the water, and Brand explains that he's waiting for a message from his mother. The implication is that he's waiting for word that she's repented her sins and is ready to see him on his terms. Agnes urges him to go without getting a message, but Brand refuses. Agnes refers to him as hard, and Brand asks whether he's been hard to her. She says with a smile that he hasn't been. They then each suggest that the other is secretly afraid, and after Brand pushes her, Agnes admits that she's afraid for their son. Brand assures her that nothing will happen to him. They watch him peacefully sleeping, and Brand talks at length about how life with his family has brought him courage to do what he has to do, adding that all the tenderness he never expressed to his parents seems to have been reserved for his wife and son. Agnes assures him that he brings love into the lives of all the people of the village, but then she tells him there's a hard edge to his love, referring his continual preaching that the way to God is "all or nothing." Brand reminds her that Christ lived that way, and no man can be expected to live with less devotion. Agnes is carried away with his passion and agrees with him, begging to be led by him.

The Doctor arrives, saying that he never expected to hear such passion from Brand and revealing that Brand's mother is close to death. He and Brand argue over who is truly fulfilling his duty to her - the Doctor by coming as soon as he's sent for or Brand, who's waiting to be asked for before blessing her. The Doctor calls him hard, but Brand says he's proving himself a good son by taking on her debts of guilt. This is a reference to Brand's comments in Act 2, Scene 2 about the debt of guilt passed on by the man who killed himself and to his belief that all people pass on similar debts to their children. He says that come what may, he is secure in his own will. The Doctor comments that that may be true, but as he goes away, he adds that Brand has nevertheless been unable to love.

Brand angrily comments at length on the emptiness and insincerity of love. Agnes agrees but admits that she occasionally asks herself whether that belief is true. Brand says insistently that the only aspect of being human that can bring satisfaction is acting on the individual will, referring to Christ's decision to not only accept suffering and death but to will it and want it as the only way to salvation. Agnes pleads with him to support her in her weakness. Brand, who seems to be paying no attention, talks about how the only time for love is after the will has triumphed and how the only love that can be accepted even at that time is the love of God. He goes into the house, and Agnes watches him go, narrating as Brand embraces their son but then suddenly jumps up from the bed. Brand reappears, saying that their son seems ill and telling Agnes to not be afraid.

A Villager appears with the news that Brand's mother is crying out that she'll give him half her possessions if he'll bless her. Brand insists he'll only come if she renounces everything. The Villager tries to talk him into returning to the village with him, but Brand refuses. The Villager goes out, describing Brand as hard. Brand speaks contemptuously about how people like his mother view God as someone to be bargained with. A Second Villager comes with news that Brand's mother is now offering nine tenths of her possessions. Again Brand refuses, and the Second Villager goes.

Agnes tells Brand that sometimes he terrifies her, saying that no one can live according to his terms. Brand says it's only because humanity has become too shallow and self-serving. He then admits to at times longing for the chance to raise his arms to embrace his fellow human beings instead of raising them in judgment. He asks Agnes to go and watch over their son, and she goes in. When she's gone, Brand reveals in soliloquy that he's afraid God is asking him to make the same sacrifice demanded of Abraham, the sacrifice of his son's life. He also reveals his belief that he's made enough sacrifice by letting go of his dream to change the world and settling with Agnes to work more quietly. He then looks out at the road, wondering why his mother is being so stubborn. He catches a glimpse of another visitor and wonders if it's someone bringing the message he longs to hear, but then he discovers it's only the Mayor.

Act 3, Part 1 Analysis

This section of the play externalizes and dramatizes Brand's inner conflict. This conflict can be described as being between his desire for human connection and his determination to live according to what he believes is the stern will of his God. The latter is expressed through his repeated and lengthy comments on the necessity for sacrifice, his refusal to admit that love is a positive force and his insistence that he's carrying his mother's debt of guilt. It's interesting to note how insistent he is on all these points, particularly when placed along side the glimpses of tenderness, compassion and love he offers. It almost seems as though he's over-compensating, expressing so much toughness and resolution because he feels soft and lacking in resolve, and as a result feels self-doubt and weakness.

Brand's desire for human connection, meanwhile, is expressed most overtly through his admission that he occasionally longs for physical comfort, through his expressions of tenderness towards both his wife and his son. It's expressed more subtly through his repeated refusal to bless his mother, which may not, as it first appears, be pure judgmentalism. As previously mentioned, there are glimpses throughout the scene of Brand's capacity for compassion. Within that context, and also within the context of his relationship with his mother as a whole, it becomes possible to see that his single-mindedness is at least partially motivated by general concern for the well being of her soul. He wants her to be saved, and he wants her to go to heaven. Therefore, there is a kind of compassion in him. In that sense, there is also compassion in him for humanity as a whole. The point about Brand's mission, made clearly for the first time in this scene through its exploration of his inner conflict, is that he masks that compassion in a hard, unyielding belief in his own righteous cause. In his own slightly perverse way, he does

care. He just doesn't allow himself to care for most people as overtly or in the same way as he lets himself care for his wife and son. His caring manifests as insistence upon the ultimate well being of people's souls, as opposed to what he sees as the superficial good and comfort of their bodies. As the action of the play progresses, Brand comes to see any kind of caring as a weakness and hardens himself even further. This again illustrates the play's ultimate point - that narrowness of vision hardens an individual to what makes life pleasurable, tolerable and joyful.

All that being said, Brand's arrogance, self-righteousness and self-centeredness still control both his actions and his words. This is indicated by the reference to his "all or nothing" philosophy, by his implicit likening of himself to Christ, by his insistence that he's secure in his own will and most notably by his belief that he's made enough sacrifice. Brand in this scene reveals his hypocrisy, asking more and more sacrifice of his mother but insisting that he himself has made enough sacrifice. This hypocrisy and belief system is about to be challenged, however, as later in the play Brand is forced to accept the sacrifice of both his son and his wife.

Act 3, Part 2

Act 3, Part 2 Summary

The Mayor greets Brand politely. He expresses sympathy for Mother's illness, mentions that Brand stands to inherit her considerable estate and suggests that once she dies, Brand should move away, explaining that Brand's vision and practice is better suited to a larger center. He reminisces at length about the village's past glories, including stories of two mighty warriors, and then suggests that Brand's plan to combine the ideal and the practical sides of life is inappropriate, caught up as everyone is in the struggle to simply making a living. Brand insists that the people of the village are lazy. The Mayor insists that all the people, including himself, are working very hard, and that if Brand is staying, his preaching must be restricted to Sundays. The Mayor says that the working people must be allowed to work. Brand insists that he, like all men, must be allowed to respond to his individual call from God in his own way. He says the Mayor has dulled the people's thoughts and faith and shouts that he's going to war to win the people's souls. The Mayor vows to defeat him, and Brand insists that he will win. He says again that he's staying and insists that he has the best men. The Mayor leaves, saying he has the most.

After the Mayor has gone, Brand speaks in soliloquy about how the Mayor is a good, hardworking man but has destroyed his community more than any disaster ever could. He suddenly remembers the message he's waiting for and runs out to greet the arriving Doctor. The Doctor tells him his mother has died, clinging to all her worldly goods up until the end. He also says his mother's last words were: "God is not as hard as my own son." Brand collapses, referring to how his mother died still believing the lie of life - that material goods have value. The Doctor tries to reassure him that every generation's belief in God is different and that the first law of God's teaching is humanity. Brand angrily says that being "humane" has softened humanity's will and prevents it from achieving the goal of complete submission to God. He rants contemptuously about how people are being turned into "humanists," saying that if people like that had their way, God would have rescued Christ from the Cross. No sacrifice would ever be necessary.

Agnes rushes out and takes the Doctor into the house. While they're gone, Brand speaks in soliloquy about how he's more determined than ever to continue his crusade. The Doctor hurries back out, urging Brand to leave because the climate is killing his son. For a moment, Brand is tempted and tells Agnes to prepare to go. After Agnes goes into the house, the Doctor points out that Brand is harsh when it comes to judging the feelings of others. As soon as his own happiness is threatened, though, he's all too quick to abandon the calling he's been so proud of and give in to impulses and feeling. As Brand wonders aloud whether he's being blind now or whether he was blind before, the Doctor tells him he's behaving as a father should. He thinks Brand is a bigger and better man now and urges him to take a good long look at himself.

Act 3, Part 2 Analysis

This section of the play deepens Brand's internal conflict between compassion and determination. There are two primary developments here. One proves to be a relatively easy challenge for Brand to face down, and the other brings him to a point of emotional and spiritual crisis. A third follows in the next section, the climax of not just the act but of the play to this point.

The first important development occurs through Brand's confrontation with the Mayor. While the Mayor may have a point about how the simplicity of village life doesn't allow for the kind of passionate devotion advocated by Brand, it's also clear that he's quite self-motivated, threatened by Brand's power and determined to preserve his own sense of control over the village. In short, he's a politician. This aspect to the Mayor's character is developed further later on in the play, meaning that the self-interest he hints at in this scene is foreshadowing of the more overt self-interest he exhibits later.

The second confrontation is more challenging, as the Doctor brings news that Brand's mission to save his mother's soul has failed. It's not going too far to suggest that on some level, Brand's entire mission and sense of self depended upon her agreeing to die on his terms. Her refusal to do so is a profound spiritual blow, the effect of which is compounded by the Doctor's comments about being humane, points that are reiterated when Brand is challenged to act in just such a humane way in order to save his son's life. The Doctor makes some very telling points in this section, suggesting to Brand that his actions are of a kind that he's just condemned. It's clear that the play is intending to point out Brand's hypocrisy in the same way the Doctor is. The play's thematic point about the dangers of narrow visions can only be made if Brand reacts in the way he does in the following scene - in complete rejection of the Doctor's proposed humanism. In other words, the action of this scene makes it vividly clear that narrowness of perspective, not just religious perspective but narrowness in general, leads to smallness, bitterness, tragedy, pain and rejection. Only openness and compassion, of the kind advocated by the Doctor and eventually embraced by Brand at the end of the play, can bring humanity into a full and genuine life.

Act 3, Part 3

Act 3, Part 3 Summary

As the Doctor goes out, Agnes comes out with her son in her arms. Brand doesn't notice her. He is instead focused on a Villager who comes with a warning that the Mayor is spreading the rumor that Brand is a hypocrite because now that his mother has died he's planning to take her money and abandon his cause. The Villager reminds Brand of how often and how loudly he claimed that ensuring the well being of the souls in the village was his mission and that they all must fight and never give in. The Villager says that he has been saved because of Brand's work. He then goes out, confident that Brand will abandon neither him nor God.

As Agnes is saying she's ready to leave, Gerd runs by, shouting that the priest has left and that as a result all the goblins and evil spirits in the hills are gathering. Brand says he hasn't left, but Gerd says he's not the priest she means. She refers to another priest that was carried away by the hawk she chased away earlier. She says that now the way has been cleared for the priest of her ice church to take charge and speak in words that echo across the world. Brand accuses her of speaking about "heathen idols," but she suggests that Agnes and the baby are the real idols, speaking at mad poetic length about the evils that have been released now the priest has been carried away. As Gerd goes, Agnes tells Brand it's time to leave. Brand asks her to choose which direction to go, out the gate to save their son or back into the house to continue their work. At first, Agnes can't believe Brand is asking her to choose, but then she submits her will to his and agrees to go into the house. She calls out to God to accept the sacrifice she's offering (her son), prays for the strength to navigate the terrors of this world and goes into the house. Brand breaks down and weeps, crying to Christ to give him light.

Act 3, Part 3 Analysis

This section contains the climax of the confrontation that has been building throughout the act between Brand's mission and his humanity. The stakes are raised considerably for Brand with the entrance of the Villager, whose belief that Brand has saved him plays powerfully into his ambitious self-righteousness and indicates to him that his mission is not in vain. It's interesting to note that Agnes and the baby are onstage during this whole time, providing a visual representation of the other aspect of life to which Brand is being pulled. It's also interesting to note how Gerd refers to Agnes as a false idol. Even though Gerd is mentally unstable, it's apparent that Brand sees her on some level as speaking a truth. This is made clear when, immediately after she makes this comment, Brand clearly rejects the humanist values embodied by Agnes and the baby and embraces his own mission more fervently than before. He sees her as a "false idol" and rejects her. This doesn't mean that he's without doubts or regrets in doing so. Brand's final moment of collapse indicates that on some level he's aware of exactly what he's sacrificing. The point here, though, is that he is still prepared to make the sacrifice. He's still an

absolutist when it comes to his faith. As a result of Gerd's arrival, he's been jarred out of the arrogant self-satisfaction with which he claimed there was no further need for him to sacrifice. He has once again accepted that the way he believes God has chosen for him requires even more pain. Once he grieves here, he never grieves again - at least until the end of the play, when he realizes the mistakes he's made. The irony, of course, is that the false idol Gerd really means is the inspiration to continue Brand that finds in Agnes. To him, she is the embodiment of his mission, the *real* false idol here.

Gerd's reappearance also marks the return of the intense imagery of the play's earlier scenes, a style that had less focus in the scenes with Brand's mother, the Mayor and the Doctor. Gerd's imagery carries with it complex layers of meaning, saying one thing to Brand and another to those observing his story as audience members or readers. To Brand, her story of the hawk flying away with the priest and leaving the priest of the ice church in charge suggests to him that it's time to let go of his old vision of himself and embrace a new vision. This can be seen as the determination to fight with renewed vigor against the goblins and trolls of materialism so that the white, holy and natural way to God that he believes is represented by the ice church can truly lead the people.

The true meaning of Gerd's vision, however, can be found in the previous appearances of her imagery. The hawk, as discussed in reference to Act 1, Scene 2, actually represents a lack of faith. This means that her vision actually represents how Brand is being carried away by a lack of faith and understanding of the true nature of God, represented by the purity, strength and radiance of the priest of the ice church. This, as also discussed in the context of Act 1, Scene 2, represents a broader, more welcoming and more humane vision of God. Gerd's vision therefore embodies the play's core conflict, between breadth and narrowness of vision. It also symbolizes this moment of crisis in Brand's life. When faced with the choice to act with compassion or with faith, Brand chooses faith. The results of this choice are in turn symbolized by Gerd's trolls and goblins, which represent the true power of Brand's anger, judgmentalism and hardness.

Brand's final moments of prayer can be interpreted in one of two ways. Either he realizes the mistake he's making by not embracing humanism, or he's praying for strength to face the sacrifices and dangers ahead. Given where he goes in the following acts, deeper into narrowness of perspective, it would seem he's praying for the latter.

Act 4, Part 1

Act 4, Part 1 Summary

This act is set on Christmas Eve. Agnes waits anxiously for Brand to return, speaking with brief poetic beauty about the gentle prettiness of the falling snow. Brand comes in, and Agnes greets him anxiously. Conversation reveals that he's been gone for two days and that she's decorated their house with what little greenery she could salvage from the evergreen planted near their son's grave. As Agnes weeps, Brand at first tries to comfort her, but then he harshly tries to get her to face reality. Finally, he admits he's grieving as well but says they must be strong together. Agnes asks Brand to remember her suffering and that it's not as easy for her to feel strong. Brand tells her that even now, in his moments of grief, he feels God's tender and supportive love close by. Agnes expresses the wish that he would always feel that way, but Brand says he can't let himself, saying his mission demands that he see God as great and strong. He gives Agnes permission to look on God as loving, reminding her that it's her duty as his wife to do what she must in order to support him. Agnes speaks about a dream she had in which her son was alive again, visiting her and calling for her. She also says she has moments of desiring to reconnect with the God of her youth (the God that she and Einar celebrated in Act 1, Scene 1), adding that Brand's church, and therefore his God, are too small for her.

Brand says he's heard the same from other people, including Gerd, and he suddenly realizes that's got to be his new mission, building a larger church. He thanks Agnes for inspiring him to perceive the truth, and he asks her to have patience with him in the same way that she wants him to have patience with her. Agnes vows to put away her memories, be a true wife to him and work with him to achieve his goals. One way she can do that, she says, is to keep the house clean. As she starts to tidy up, she makes plans to get the Christmas candles and decorations in order that God may look down and see his children (herself and Brand) celebrating their place in God's plan. As she goes out, Brand comments on her courage and prays that God give her strength and release him from the necessity to be harsh with her. He says that he's got enough strength to carry the burden of God's wrath.

Act 4, Part 1 Analysis

The main purpose of this section is exposition, or establishing the circumstances within which the drama to follow will play out. Normally such exposition occurs at the beginning of a play, but because so much has happened to Brand and Agnes between the end of the previous act and the beginning of this one, it's necessary to provide some explanation. The most important piece of information offered here is that Brand and Agnes' son is dead, a development in the narrative that doesn't come as a complete surprise. Neither does the intensity of Agnes' grief, an aspect to her character that deepens throughout this act and is the source of its essential conflict. What might come

as a surprise is Brand's admission that he at least feels the beginnings of grief, but this is less of a surprise when it's remembered that the struggle between forbearance and deep feeling, between emotional control and emotional release, has been his internal struggle throughout the play. This act, as a whole, delineates the climax of that struggle, when he has to fight the hardest to keep his emotions at bay so that he can live the strong, faithful life he believes God demands of him. This scene, therefore, establishes him at the beginning of that climax, struggling with the same intensity of grief as Agnes and more able to fight it down and keep it under control, but just barely.

The second key conflict of the act also begins in this scene, with Brand's sudden inspiration to build a larger church. Aside from the fact that this intention forms the basis of his conflict with the Mayor in the following section, it also illustrates a fundamental paradox in Brand's character. To begin with, he misunderstands Agnes' point. He thinks she means that the physical church is too small, when what she really means is that his definition of God is too narrow, his definition of a godly life is too limited and his beliefs on how people should behave are too restrictive. The paradox here is that Brand believes that people will find their way to God more easily if they have a bigger building in which to worship. In other words, he's trying to accomplish a spiritual goal by creating a more of an earthly, worldly presence. This means that as Brand begins his conflict with the Mayor over the new church, the play's theme warning against narrowness of vision takes on a new aspect, illustrating how such narrowness of vision can lead to hypocrisy.

Act 4, Part 2

Act 4, Part 2 Summary

The Mayor comes in, saying he's giving up his fight to get Brand to leave because too many people have gone to Brand's side. After a lengthy debate over whether the Mayor's withdrawal is a morally correct choice, the Mayor admits that his ultimate goal is to regain his influence with the people. He talks at length about how Brand has inspired him to help improve people's lives. He talks specifically about eradicating poverty by building a large "pest-house" in which the poor can live. He suggests the "pest-house" be joined to a jail, an auditorium where elections and receptions can be held and a madhouse. He says that public demand for such a facility is increasing, and he claims it will meet all the needs of the community, civic and political and social, for generations. When Brand comments that it will cost a lot of money, the Mayor admits it will but says the money can be collected if Brand gets behind the project and offers his support. He then suggests that if Brand does so, there will be a reward or remuneration. Brand says the Mayor is too late, revealing his plans to rebuild the church as a much larger building that he says will be more valuable to the community.

The Mayor angrily demands that Brand call off his plans, but Brand refuses, saying the current church is too small. The Mayor says he's never seen it full, but Brand says there isn't room in it for even one soul to "spread its wings." The Mayor says comments like that prove his madhouse is essential and then says he cannot allow his plans to be disrupted. The church has stood on the same site since the time of the ancient warriors (first mentioned in Act 3, Part 2), has served well since that time and will continue to serve just as well. When he asks how Brand hopes to finance the church, Brand tells him he plans to use the inheritance he received from his mother. The Mayor speaks with disbelief about how Brand withheld all the money when the village's poor needed it, describes the building of the church as an "avalanche" of generosity and then suggests that the two of them build the church together. He speaks at length about how excited he is about the possibility, saying he'll gain much more influence this way than with his original plan, and suggests that the idea wouldn't have occurred to Brand if he hadn't mentioned his own plan. When Brand reminds him of how he just spoke so highly of the church, the Mayor says it's old and rickety and must be pulled down.

Brand asks what would happen if the public rejected the plan, and the Mayor says he'll be able to get the people onboard without any difficulty. He adds that even if he can't, he'll tear the old church down himself, by hand if he has to. He then prepares to leave, saying he has to take care of a group of roguish gypsies arrested at the entrance to the village. Brand reminds him this is the season of peace and good will. This leads the Mayor to tell him that one of the gypsies was once in love with Brand's mother. When she rejected him in favor of a man who could provide a better life for her, he went off, got involved with a gypsy girl and fathered several children, one of which is Gerd. He jokes that the only reason Gerd exists is that the man loved Brand's mother, and then he repeats his intention to put and keep the gypsies in jail. When Brand reminds him of

his plan to build a home for just that kind of people, the Mayor tells him to let go of the past and move on and then goes out.

Brand speaks in soliloquy about the guilt and confusion he feels and about his belief that the death of his son was atonement for the sins of his mother. He also refers to his belief that redemption can only result from the kind of sacrifice that led to his son's death. He muses on the question of whether people's prayer is a scream for mercy, a plea for compassion or an attempt to escape from the evils of their lives. He wonders about how and why he prayed at the time of his son's death, whether he felt peace or spiritual refreshment, whether God heard and what his reaction was. He expresses his belief that he's alone in the dark, commenting that there's only one person who can provide light for him. He calls for Agnes to bring in the candles.

Act 4, Part 2 Analysis

On one level, the lengthy confrontation between the Mayor and Brand symbolizes the ongoing, and some would say eternal, conflict between earthly and spiritual desires. The Mayor, ever the politician, seems at first glance to represent earthly needs for influence, power and reputation. Brand, on the other hand, seems to represent more spiritual aspirations. His poetic comment about souls spreading their wings is his main, and almost only, argument. It's interesting to note that in contrast to his usual verbosity, Brand in this section says practically nothing. The Mayor does all the talking. This is partly because the Mayor is, as mentioned, a politician, and there's little that politicians like more than the sound of their own voice. There's a deeper meaning to the contrast between the Mayor's talkativeness and Brand's relative silence, though, a meaning related directly to the scene's second level of function. This is the idea that essentially, the Mayor and Brand are after the same thing. They both want more influence and control. They both see a large building as the means to accomplishing their aims, and they're both prepared to do whatever it takes to get it. For the Mayor, this means compromise, while for Brand it means remaining firm. While their tactics are different, their intent is the same. Once again Brand's hypocrisy is highlighted, to the point where it appears to be self-deluding as well as self-aggrandizing. This in turn reiterates the play's thematic point warning against blindness and obsession in anyone with narrow perspectives like Brand's and the Mayor's.

The image of the avalanche appears again, but here it functions on a more ironic level. On previous occasions, the avalanche represented a broader perspective on God and on human relationships. On a superficial level, this is exactly what both the Mayor's and Brand's ideas are - giving those who need it more of a chance to experience God and the fullness of their humanity. The irony is that for both the Mayor and Brand, the church is in fact a temple to their own egos. There's no broader perspective to it at all.

An interesting, almost peculiar, aspect to the scene is the Mayor's references to Brand's mother and to Gerd. His comment that the only reason Gerd exists is because the gypsy man loved Brand's mother seems particularly pointed. On one level, the fact that Gerd appears to be at least somewhat crazed seems to make the thematic suggestion

that rejected love leads to insanity. This point could be extended to include Agnes, whose ultimate rejection of her love for her son drives her to the brink of madness, and Brand, whose rejection of love in general drives him to a kind of madness born of obsession. On another level, however, because Gerd functions in the play as a kind of frantic beacon of spiritual truth, the phrasing of the Mayor's comment (that the only reason Gerd exists is that her father loved Brand's mother) seems to suggest that truth can only be discovered as the result of an act of love, even if that love is misdirected. On a third level, the story warns of what happens when love is rejected. Given the unhappiness of Brand's mother, both spoken about and revealed through the action, the Mayor's comment seems to suggest that love is the true source of peace and joy. This is the opposite of the material gain chosen by Brand's mother which led to her deep unhappiness and eventually the rejection of her son and in turn caused them both even deeper unhappiness. This is also the opposite of the way Brand has chosen to live his life.

Brand's lengthy soliloquy develops the play's questioning of the nature of love even further, albeit indirectly. At this point in the play he is at his most vulnerable, questioning his faith and perspectives more than he has in the past or will again. He seems, in the following section, to react to this vulnerability with more anger, repression and self-righteousness than ever, clearly indicating his belief that any vulnerability, particularly his own and Agnes', as a weakness. In terms of the love question, then, his quiet comment that Agnes is his only sort of light seems to be an admission, without putting it into words, that it's her love that sustains him, not the unquestioning devotion he demands from her in the following section. This is again an example of how he masks his true nature with what he thinks he needs to be, a result of the narrowness of vision that the play repeatedly and deeply warns against.

Act 4, Part 3

Act 4, Part 3 Summary

Agnes comes in with candles, teasing Brand about how he will never admit that he's cold. She recalls how their son used to reach for the candle's light, imagines him seeing it from his grave and cleans the window so he can see better. Brand angrily insists that she close the shutters. At first she refuses, but then she does as he demands. He speaks sarcastically about how she finds such loving sanctuary in her vision of God, saying that her sacrifice hasn't been all she could make. She says she's got nothing left to sacrifice, but he says as long as she grieves, the sacrifice of her son means nothing. She comments that his love is hard, and he asks whether it's too hard for her. She then says it's not, expressing again her willingness to do as he demands. He says he needs to leave her in order to find peace so he can start work on his new church. She begs him to stay, but he goes out into his room, refusing to allow her to reopen the shutters.

Agnes speaks in soliloquy about how her loneliness is so painful to bear, listening as Brand reads aloud to himself. She comments on how the God celebrated at Christmas seems to be unable to hear "the cries of lonely mothers." She suddenly changes her focus, reminding herself sternly of the work she and Brand have to do, and then she tells herself that before she starts that work she can look at her mementos of her son one last time. She kneels before a chest of drawers, and as she's opening it, Brand appears without her noticing. He watches as she takes out their son's clothes, caresses them and recalls the times he wore them. In an aside, he prays that someone else remove these memories from her so she can follow through on their work.

A knock on the door startles Agnes and causes her to turn around and see Brand. Before either of them can say anything, the door bursts open, and a ragged Woman comes in, carrying a baby. She asks Agnes to give her the clothes, saying that she's rich. Agnes says the Woman is richer, a reference to how she still has her child while Agnes' is dead. Brand asks what she wants, and the Woman says she'd rather go back out into the storm than listen to his preaching. Brand comments that the Woman's appearance has made him nervous. Agnes invites the Woman to sit by the fire, but the Woman refuses, explaining that she's a gypsy. Gypsy children can't rest indoors, but must rest in the country. She says she can't stay in any one place very long because the police are after her. She pleads for them to give her some clothes to keep her baby warm. Brand says that if she stays, the baby can be washed clean of the "brand" he's been given, but the Woman angrily tells him it's impossible, referring to Brand as one of the men who cast him out and "branded" him in the first place.

Brand tells Agnes that she knows what she has to do, and it can be understood that he's demanding that she give the Woman their son's clothes. Agnes refuses, and the Woman pleads. Brand insists, saying it will be the ultimate sacrifice and proof of her complete devotion to God and to Brand's mission. Agnes at first volunteers to share the clothes, saying that she can yield to Brand's demands no further. Brand asks Agnes

whether her need is greater than the Woman's, and Agnes is goaded into angrily handing over everything. The Woman takes everything and runs out.

Agnes asks Brand whether he's satisfied. Brand asks whether she gave the clothes willingly, and when she says she didn't, he says it was still not enough. Agnes confesses that she kept back a small knitted cap. Brand angrily tells her she's still in the power of false idols. She gives him the cap, "willingly," and he takes it out to the Woman, whom he says is sitting on the step. When he comes back in, Agnes is apparently transformed, speaking ecstatically about how she's free, saying she envisions her son in heaven and has no desire to have him back and thanking Brand for inspiring her. She then says the choice is now his, "all or nothing," saying that anyone who sees God as clearly and fully as she has will surely die. He protests that he can't do without her, and she says he faces the same choice she just did. He can let her take back the clothes and be the loving wife to him she was once, albeit a sinner, or he can leave her in her state of fatal ecstasy. Brand reminds her of his mission and says he has no choice. He has to let her stay as she is. She embraces him, thanks him again for his inspiration, says that the remnants of despair still linger and asks him to watch over her as she sleeps. She then goes off to bed, saying that now she can rest. Left alone, Brand speaks in brief soliloquy about his need to remain strong, saying true victory can come only after everything else has been lost. This can be understood to refer to the loss of both his son and his wife.

Act 4, Part 3 Analysis

Brand is never as judgmental or as demanding as he is here - of himself as well as of his wife. His demands that Agnes reject her grief and memories serve as an externalization of his demands on himself. He needs to reject all tender feelings towards his son and indeed his life in order to live the life he believe God demands of him, the "all or nothing" life, and he attempts to accomplish this goal by demanding the same of his wife. Her banishing of her memories is traumatic but accomplishes Brand's goals for her. Still, he fails to accomplish his goals for himself. His brief soliloquy at the end of the scene is a clear indication that he's still struggling with his own grief, feelings and memories, a struggle that continues until the very last line of the play.

The play's tendency to give symbolic value to incidents and characters emerges again with the appearance of the Gypsy Woman, who is a personification of the parent's drive to do whatever it takes to save his or her child's life. This functions in two ways. Firstly, it is a confrontation with an aspect of themselves that both Brand and Agnes suppressed, having chosen instead to follow Brand's ambitions as opposed to take care of their son. The visit can also be seen as a kind of justice, the suggestion being that Agnes and Brand didn't care for or feel for their son when he was alive. Therefore, there's no reason they should feel so much and need so much when he's dead. Meanwhile, Agnes appears to go a little mad as the result of the Woman's visit, an aspect to her character and her situation that has a clearly thematic resonance. Her son was, and even in death continues to be, her opportunity to express love. She never has it, and never will have it, with Brand. The narrowness of vision she adopts is the kind of narrowness the play is

warning against, meaning that her apparent madness is another manifestation of that warning.

Also in terms of the play's symbolism, it's interesting to note that where once Brand was described in poetic terms relating to light (Act 2, Scene 2, Part 2), it's now Agnes who represents light. Because this representation is juxtaposed with her intense feelings of love and devotion for her son, the play is making the point that love is the true light, an idea that in turn reiterates the previously discussed idea that the truest way to experience God is through love. By the end of the act, Agnes has rejected that aspect of God in favor of Brand's obsession, has apparently lost her mind and as will be revealed in the following and final act, will also lose her life.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1 Summary

This act is set a year and a half after the events of Act 4 and takes place outside Brand's new church. The Schoolmaster and the Sexton decorate the church for its consecration, talking about the numbers of people arriving and about how life before Brand began preaching was simple and focused on hard work. They also talk about how they as public officials have to keep themselves apart from controversies such as those that seem to be arising around Brand and the way he preaches. The Sexton speaks of an acquaintance who described the village since Brand arrived as having developed more promise.

As the Schoolmaster and the Sexton debate the meaning of the term "promise," their argument is interrupted by the sound of Brand playing the organ inside the church. The Sexton comments that Brand seems to be obsessed with some private pain, adding that every note from the organ seems to be "a tear shed for his wife and child." He and the Schoolmaster comment that the sadness in the music is almost enough to make them sad and argue over whether it's appropriate for public officials like them to have such feelings. This leads the Sexton to observe that the Schoolmaster sounds like he's feeling as uneasy as the other people of the village about the opening of the new church. They talk about how the people have all been uneasy since the old church was torn down and how that unease has increased the closer the new church has come to completion. They realize they're both having feelings and quickly hurry off before the feelings can become any stronger.

The organ music becomes louder and concludes with a painful sounding discord. A moment later, Brand comes out of the church and speaks in a long soliloquy about how difficult it is for him to make beautiful music. He expresses his doubts about whether the church will actually be as great as he intends it to be. He wishes that Agnes were still alive to see it and share in its glory, saying that she was the only person who could banish his doubts. He then comments on the decorations put in place by the Sexton and Schoolmaster and wishes he could "hide [his] shame" in the lair of some animal.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 1 Analysis

On a technical level, this section lays suspenseful foundations for the conflict to come. The sense of foreboding discussed by the Sexton and Schoolmaster combines with Brand's own doubts and forebodings to suggest that the church won't fulfill anybody's expectations, Brand's or the villagers. This idea is developed further through the clear symbolic value of the new church arising as the result of the destruction of the old. Ways of life and belief are being challenged, broken down and replaced. This symbol in turn foreshadows the ultimate destruction of Brand's belief system at the end of the play. Brand's discomfort comes from a subconscious awareness that this change is coming

and also an intuitive understanding that this new church is the ultimate manifestation of that wrong-headedness. This intuition is indicated by his longing for Agnes and his reluctance to be present for the ceremonies. Somewhere inside he feels he's done the wrong thing, even though he's convinced himself and the world that he's done the right thing. This self-doubt is the "shame" he needs to hide, and he actually does hide it beneath the aggressive attitudes and confrontations he instigates throughout the remainder of the act.

Meanwhile, Brand's love and loneliness for Agnes and his son continue to haunt him in spite of his efforts to banish love from his life. At this point those feelings manifest in his music, with his attempts to keep those feelings at bay satirized in the comic comments about feelings made by the Sexton and the Schoolmaster. Satire is a form of writing in which a trait or characteristic of an individual or a group is exaggerated in order to point out how foolish or ridiculous it is. The ridiculousness of the Sexton and Schoolmaster's comments about feelings are therefore a satire on Brand's efforts to ignore or bury his feelings, reiterating from another perspective the play's thematic point that narrowness of vision leads ultimately to unhappiness and pain.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2 Summary

The Mayor comes in wearing formal clothes and congratulates Brand on his achievement. Brand expresses his unease, but the Mayor tells him he needs to get over it and prepare to preach a thunderous sermon, saying the church's acoustics will make it sound even more impressive. Brand says the church is still too small, leading the Mayor to tell him he won't allow all the hopes of the people to be crushed by Brand telling them the building they've invested so much money and hope in is no good. He tells Brand he's to receive a medal in honor of his achievement, but Brand angrily tells him that the greatness that should be celebrated is the greatness of the soul, not the greatness of material possessions like the church. He then tells the Mayor to find an excuse to explain to the people why he (Brand) is not at the celebration and moves away. The Mayor comments that he doesn't understand and goes out. When he's gone, Brand comments in a brief soliloquy on how lonely he feels, how he despises the Mayor and how he misses Agnes.

The Dean of the church comes in, thanking Brand for all the work he did to get the church finished. Brand says the church is far from complete, adding that it needs a refreshed spirit and a free soul. The Dean tells him those things will come in time, saying the church's architecture and acoustics will lead the people to that spirit. He sees that Brand seems upset and tired, speaks at length about how the speeches, food and celebrations at the consecration will cheer him up and then raises the delicate subject of Brand's responsibilities and behavior within the church. He says that up to now Brand has put too much emphasis on the duties of the individual to serve God, and Brand must now shift the focus of both his preaching and his example to the service of the state and the community. When Brand reacts with anger, the Dean tries to assure him that individuals can still be taken care of within the context of the church's service to the state. He speaks at length about the state's responsibilities to the people and how everyone is best served if they are less individual and more focused on a common cause, way of life and belief system.

Brand claims that the Dean is asking him to deny his own ideals and the achievement represented by the church, but the Dean says he can still live by those ideals, just in private and away from any influence he might have over the community. He refers to the Mayor's goal of living in a humane society and urges Brand to see what he's being asked to do as humane. Brand demands that the Dean go away, but the Dean remains, speaking at length about his belief that Brand merely needs time and opportunity for reflection in order to see the wisdom of what's being proposed. He then goes out, referring to the sermon he's about to preach about how any and all obscuring of the image of the Lord should be avoided.

In soliloquy, Brand realizes the mistake he's made by building the church. He has allowed himself to come close to living the kind of spiritually empty life he's always

fought against. He becomes aware that the call he thought he was answering, to serve God by building the church, was a delusion. He never truly felt the peace and grace he thought he did, and he is in desperate need of true inspiration.

At that moment, Einar, pale and thin, comes in. Brand rushes to embrace him, saying he's glad to see someone "whose heart was not of wood or stone." Einar tells him he has no need of Brand's embrace, saying he's grateful to Brand for showing him the error of his previous form of faith. He tells how he was seduced into sin and illness by the talents for music and joy he believed he possessed. He became a preacher and eventually a missionary, and he's now on his way to save the souls of Africans. Brand asks whether Einar has any curiosity about what happened to Agnes, and in spite of Einar's repeated comments that he has no interest, Brand begins to detail the joy and happiness of their life together. Finally, Einar asks whether her faith was strong, and when Brand says it was, Einar says that both she and Brand are doomed to hell and that only he (Einar) is pure and clean and sinless. He and Brand describe each other as abominations, and then Einar goes out, saying again that he's a pure and true servant of God. After he's gone, Brand shouts that now he has the courage he needs to stand on his own.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 2 Analysis

The three encounters in this section each serve, in their own way, to move Brand even closer to his climactic encounter with the truth of God's love at the end of the play. The conversation with the Mayor makes him realize that he's done just what Mother has done, put too much time and attention and value on earthly goals and achievements. The conversation with the Dean makes him realize that his original goal of helping each individual live according to his own will and develop his own relationship with God has been overtaken by society's goal of conformity and community. The conversation with Einar reminds him of the singleness of purpose he once had and also combines with the negative aspects of his accomplishment, which have been made clear in the other two conversations, to inspire him to return to that purpose. It's important to note, however, that throughout this section Brand repeatedly speaks of his need for the inspiration and support of Agnes, who as has previously been discussed represents God's love in both Brand's life and in the play. Once again Brand is being pulled in two directions, the first being what he believes God to be and what he believes God needs him to be (narrowness), and the second being what God truly is (a broader perspective).

There is a profound irony in the confrontation with Einar, in that Brand for whatever reason is completely blind to the fact that Einar is mirroring his own attitudes right back at him. He fails to see that Einar's self-righteousness and narrowness of perspective is his own. In calling Einar an abomination, Brand is calling himself an abomination, and in proclaiming his determination to live his mission in the same way as Einar is, he is setting himself again on the journey that he has just realized is a false one. That journey can be seen as taking him towards the kind of earthly power and influence symbolized by the new church, a journey that the previous confrontations have indicated will end in self-doubt, emptiness and regret.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 3

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 3 Summary

The Mayor hurries in, urging Brand to get ready for the celebration. Brand says he's preparing to leave, referring to how excitedly demanding the people of the village are becoming. The villagers appear, shouting for the church to be opened. The Dean, the Mayor and the Schoolmaster all rush in, urging Brand to try to control them. Brand speaks to the crowd, urging them to create new lives for themselves. He says he was wrong to suggest they could find their way to God through the construction of a new building rather than by living according to the law of "all or nothing." He shouts that the word of God must be lived in every aspect of daily life, in nature, storms, sun and the music of the organ and of singing. He describes the church as being derelict in spirit, the people as having cast away their true souls by being too intent upon just surviving and the way to connect with God as coming to him with the openness and innocence of children. He shouts that God's church is infinite and not confined within the walls of a building and that the people need to live their faith in every moment.

As Brand continues, the crowd cheers in support of him, which leads the Dean and the Mayor to worry that their influence is slipping away. Brand throws the keys of the church into the river, urging the crowd to break the bonds of their old beliefs and follow him into the mountains and out into the world, making it all a "mighty temple." The crowd lifts him onto their shoulders, and he is carried out. The Mayor and the Dean try to call the crowd back, but no one is listening. When everyone is gone, the Dean seems about to weep with sadness and disappointment. The Mayor, however, says angrily that Brand will soon be brought down and follows the crowd out with the clear intention of bringing everyone back. The Dean comments in soliloquy that his spirits are already rising, and he follows the Mayor out, hoping he can find a comfortable and experienced horse to ride over the mountains.

Act 5, Scene 1, Part 3 Analysis

The argument could very easily be made that in his rousing speech to the villagers, Brand has it right. To live a life in God, humanity has to live its *life* in God, not just make visits to a church on Sunday mornings. Faith, Brand seems to be saying, must be in God, not in the preachers or buildings or institutions representing God. The argument could also be made, however, that many of those preachers and institutions make those arguments for the same reason that Brand makes them here - as a means to gaining influence. This argument can be made because Brand in this scene is ultimately the same as Brand throughout the play. He says and does what he says and does to gain influence. He wants to control. He wants to make people do and think and feel the way he believes is the *right* way to do and think and feel. The irony is that in spite of what he says and does, he is clearly not spiritually inspired. If he were, he would have accepted the true inspiration symbolized offered by the love of Agnes and his son. He would not

have shut that love away in the name of sacrifice, and he would not be so conflicted. If he weren't conflicted, there would be no play and no reason for his story to be told, but that's another discussion altogether.

Brand's true question is why the enthusiasm he awakens in the villagers is so short-lived, a situation that will be made clear in the following scene. He says he wants the villagers to live their own lives according to their own wills, but from what he says and what he does, it's patently clear that that's not true. He wants them to live according to his will, not God's will. He wants them to live according to what he has *decided* is God's will. His leadership, as it has been throughout the play, is self-centered, not other-centered. This is the cornerstone of the play's theme and action, with the climax of both drawing closer as the result of the events in the following scene.

Act 5, Scene 2

Act 5, Scene 2 Summary

Brand urges the villagers, including the Sexton and the Schoolmaster, to follow him further into the mountains. The pleas of several villagers for food, water and rest only inspire him to urge them on more insistently. When they ask how long their journey will be and what rewards lie ahead, he loses his temper and speaks at very angry length about how they must sacrifice everything, even their lives. They shout that he has betrayed them, but Brand says he has merely kept his word, saying again that only complete surrender to the pursuit will bring them to the truth. As the villagers debate whether to kill him, the Dean appears and urges them to return home, saying they'll be forgiven for abandoning their lives. As he speaks of how they have stepped beyond the bounds and logic of their world, the Schoolmaster says Brand has shown them the emptiness of that world. The Dean says the community's passion for Brand's ideals will soon pass, and the village will regain its contentment and peace.

As Brand is asking that the people choose, the Mayor appears and announces that there is a gigantic school of fish in the river, enough to bring good times for everyone. Brand again demands that the people choose, and the Dean calls the arrival of the fish a sign from God. The Mayor says that God can take care of himself, hinting that the villagers should take care of themselves. As some of the villagers debate whether to return to their homes, the Sexton and the Schoolmaster quietly ask the Mayor whether their jobs are safe. Just as quietly, the Dean hints that if they help persuade the crowd, their jobs will indeed be safe. The Sexton and Schoolmaster shout to the crowd to return, while the Dean and the Mayor remind them about how Brand treated his mother, wife and child. Brand shouts for them to continue on their way, but the villagers drive him away.

The Dean assures the villagers their homes and lives will be exactly as they left them, and the Mayor promises to establish a council that will monitor the way the town functions. The villagers return to the town, and the Dean comments on the good fortune of the appearance of the fish. The Mayor admits that he made up the story and apologizes for lying, but the Dean tells him that such lies are completely understandable. They notice that Brand is being followed by Gerd and comment sarcastically that he deserves someone as insane as she is. After the Mayor has a very brief attack of conscience about the way Brand was treated, he and the Dean return to the village as well.

Act 5, Scene 2 Analysis

Brand's harshness reappears in this scene as his insistence on "all or nothing" brings him into conflict with the villagers, who ultimately prove all too eager to be convinced that life at home is much more appealing than the life offered by Brand. On one level,

this scene can be interpreted as having parallels to the story of Christ, whose disciples were admittedly on a harsh and challenging journey and ended up leaving Him alone to face his destiny, albeit by falling asleep rather than literally turning their backs on him. On another level more relevant to the play's overall theme, their reaction can be seen as another dramatization of the way Brand's narrowness and selfishness of vision overwhelms his sense of compassion and realism. Taking this point further, once again the determination of the Dean and the Mayor to have influence over the villagers mirrors and satirizes Brand's. The way the Mayor is willing to say anything to gain control, and the way the Dean is willing to go along with whatever the Mayor says, ironically point up the way Brand is prepared to do and/or say anything in order to maintain his influence. Meanwhile, the mention of Gerd, who represents instinctive faith in the natural God and a wider perspective on how to serve Him, foreshadows the end of the play, in which Brand finally makes those realizations himself.

Act 5, Scene 3

Act 5, Scene 3 Summary

Brand begins a long soliloquy by commenting on how the thought of sacrifice seems to have been too much for the villagers and how cowardice seems to no longer be a crime. He then talks about how he confronted his own fears by imagining the coming daylight, both spiritual and actual, and about how his belief in the coming light of God has been betrayed by the unwillingness of man to sacrifice. He talks about the misery of life and about mankind's ugliness, saying the future will only become worse. He becomes ironic as he comments that Christ's death must have been in vain if people aren't prepared to make themselves worthy of his sacrifice by making sacrifices themselves. As he wonders aloud whether all his life, his faith has been a mistake, an "invisible choir" sings to him that because he's a being of flesh and blood, his faith will never be as pure as he believes it should be. Brand rants against God, saying He made him sacrifice everything only to lose his battle. As the Choir continues, Brand breaks down and weeps.

Agnes appears, bathed in light and resembling an angel. Brand starts to run to her, but she tells him there is a great chasm between them and urges him to bridge it by letting go of his belief in "all or nothing." Brand confesses that he can't let go, and Agnes reminds him that following that path led him only to despair. Brand insists that it's the correct path, and Agnes again tempts him with love and peace. Again, though, Brand refuses. At last Agnes disappears, saying the world she represents has no more use for him.

Brand speaks in soliloquy about how Agnes, as she disappeared, resembled a hawk. Gerd suddenly appears, carrying a gun, pursuing her hawk and urging Brand to help her hunt it down. Brand says the hawk can't be caught, and Gerd comments on how he seems broken. Brand tells her that the people he fought so hard to lead betrayed him. Gerd mistakes his wounds for those of Christ, offering to fall on her knees and worship him. Brand pushes her away. She then asks whether he knows where he's standing, and he realizes he's standing in the ice church. He breaks down and weeps, yearning for light and serenity and gentleness. He says that Christ has passed him by. Gerd becomes frightened, saying Brand's tears are going to melt the ice church. Brand calms himself, finds a kind of serenity and says that until this moment he has been a tablet upon which God could write. Now, he shall write his own poem through weeping and prayer.

Gerd sees the hawk, shoots to bring it down and shouts that it's dead. At the same time, the echoes of the gunshot trigger an avalanche. Gerd mistakes the rushing snow for the hawk, purified into growing, flowing whiteness after its death. She falls to the ground and is quickly overwhelmed. Brand cries out his final question - is there no salvation? After he too is overwhelmed by the snow, a Voice pronounces that "God is love."

Act 5, Scene 3 Analysis

The previously discussed idea that *Brand* is about narrowness and obsession in general, as opposed to religious obsession, develops further in this scene and climaxes with the enveloping of both Gerd and Brand in the avalanche. As has also been discussed, the avalanche is a symbol of broader perspectives. When Brand and Gerd are overwhelmed and conquered by the snow, they're taken over by new ways of viewing life and themselves - Brand by a broader perspective on God and Gerd by a broader perspective on reality. The appearance of the invisible choir and of Agnes-as-angel foreshadow this expansion of perception, an expansion that in spite of his determination to triumph with his version of God's will, Brand is helpless to resist. This means that the moment of his confrontation with the snow is the climax of his long, symbol-filled journey and of the play itself. He's finally able to experience the truth - not necessarily understand it or live it, but experience it.

The symbolic value of the hawk alters slightly in this scene. Yes, it continues to represent a lack of faith, but because the image is juxtaposed with the appearance of the transfigured Agnes, that lack of faith can be defined as Agnes' ultimate lack of faith in the gospel according to Brand. This idea is supported by the fact that throughout the play, even though she repeatedly expresses both her devotion to and need for Brand, Agnes maintains her broader perspective. Her appearance as an angel therefore embodies her true faith and perspective, meaning that her transformation into the hawk represents her ultimate lack of faith in Brand. At the same time, the fact that Brand can actually see the hawk, or at least understand what it means, represents Brand's recognition of his lack of faith in his own message. This means that Gerd killing the hawk represents the end of that lack of faith and the beginning of Brand's rebirth into a new faith and perspective. This in turn means that the gunshot also has symbolic value. It doesn't actually kill the hawk, which is a figment of two imaginations, but it does trigger the avalanche, the onrushing purity of new life, hope and perspective that is the symbol of Brand's rebirth. He finally realizes that living according to the rule of "all or nothing" is to live a life of emptiness - an ironic observation to say the least, since he only learned that lesson by dying, i.e. truly giving his all.

Characters

Agnes

Agnes is, first, wife to Einar, then to Brand, whom she obeys until the end of her life, even when it means losing her life and the life of her son. At the beginning of the play, Agnes is a carefree, young woman, recently engaged to Einar. Brand gives them a sermon, which falls on Einar's deaf ears but impacts Agnes, so much so that when Brand asks for a volunteer to risk his or her life to help someone, Agnes leaves Einar to help Brand. Agnes decides to leave Einar for good, marries Brand, and has a child with him. Although Agnes has agreed to Brand's harsh requirement of "Naught or All!" she struggles with Brand's decision to stay in the harsh weather of the village when it means the death of their son. She follows Brand in the end, however, as she eventually does when Brand commands her to stop grieving for their dead son. When Brand tells Agnes to get rid of her last memories of their son, as well as his clothes□donating them to a needy gypsy woman□she once again falters at first but eventually adheres to Brand's strict religious requirements and gives up her earthly attachments. Agnes also dies from the harsh weather in the mountains, and her death greatly affects Brand, so much so that when he is tempted in the mountains by a vision, it takes the form of Agnes.

Brand

Brand is the unyielding title character, a priest who forces himself and his family to adhere to a strict religious life, even though it means the death of them all. Brand is driven by his strong will, which he thinks is the way to God. He believes that by having the personal strength to relinquish all of one's earthly attachments, a person can achieve eternal salvation. Brand's faith is fiery, as are the gloomy sermons that he gives to villagers. Brand repeatedly puts his life on the line for his principles, thinking that an attachment to one's life is unholy. He counts on his enormous strength of will to get him through situations, and most of the time he is successful, overcoming great odds to live through storms and in harsh climates that ultimately kill his wife, Agnes, and their son, Alf.

Brand's famous requirement for his wife or for anybody who chooses to follow him is "Naught or All!" meaning that one must be willing to give everything in order to be saved. Brand is tested in his faith on several occasions. When his mother is on her deathbed, he refuses to give her last rites because she will not give up her hard-earned fortune to charity. When his son is given the prognosis of death if Brand does not move him to a warmer climate, Brand nevertheless stays in the mountains, sacrificing his son, because he has a job to do with his parish. Although Brand's own faith wavers on occasion, he is reminded of his mission by others, such as the mad girl, Gerd, and the doctor, and is ultimately able to stick to his rigid faith. At the end, Brand's rigid faith is put in question, first by Einar, a reformed man who tells Brand that he himself was only saved when he gave up his pride and his belief in his own strength. Einar senses similar

qualities in Brand and declares him damned. In the end, Brand retreats to the mountains, where he is tempted by a vision of his dead wife—who tries unsuccessfully to get Brand to compromise his ideals. He also runs into the mad girl, Gerd, who reveres him like Christ and kills them both when she shoots her own vision, the hawk of compromise, causing a massive avalanche. As Brand dies, he appeals to heaven, asking how a man can achieve salvation. A voice answers, "God is Love!" ending the play on an ambiguous note.

Brand's Mother

Brand's mother dies without receiving last rites from her son because she refuses to donate her hard-earned money to charity. Brand warns her that he will not perform last rites for her unless she gives away all of her money, but his mother has had to suffer greatly for the money, and she wants Brand to hoard it after she is gone. Although his mother ultimately offers to give nine-tenths of her money away, it is not enough for Brand, who requires her to give it all away.

A Clerk

The clerk is a normally rational person who decides to go with Brand at the end of the play, although, like others, he turns on the priest. When the clerk and the schoolmaster are talking before the dedication of the new church, they both betray a sense of emotion, which is quickly suppressed. However, when Brand gives his fiery sermon to the crowd, the clerk follows him up into the mountains. Even after he has turned on Brand, the clerk is afraid to go back to town, since he is afraid he has lost his job. He is relieved to find out that he has not.

The Dean

The dean tells Brand that since the priest has built the new church, he must now serve two masters—the people and the state. He also tells Brand that his gloomy sermons do not serve the needs of the state and that Brand needs to tone down his fiery proclamations. Brand refuses, but the dean says it is no use. Brand tries to run away to the mountains, taking many of the townspeople with him. When they turn on Brand, the dean is there with the sheriff to reclaim them, saying that they will have a much easier life in the village than with Brand. The people gladly go with the dean and the sheriff.

The Doctor

The doctor attends Brand's mother on her deathbed and, like many others, accuses Brand of being too strict in his requirements for faith. The doctor also lets Brand know that his son will die if Brand and Agnes do not move to a warmer climate. When Brand has a moment of weakness and says he will leave at once, the doctor calls him a hypocrite, although he says that most men are. This, along with the appearance of

Gerd, helps to convince Brand to stand by his strict faith and stay, even though it means the death of his son.

Einar

Einar is the hedonistic artist, initially engaged to Agnes, who eventually trades his wanton ways for faith in God. When Einar is first introduced, he is a happy bridegroom, and he and Agnes look forward to their happy and carefree lives together. After Agnes leaves him to marry Brand and commit herself to Brand's harsh lifestyle, Einar commits himself to a life of sin but is saved by a few nuns and eventually becomes a missionary. He tells Brand that his salvation came from transferring his faith in his human will to prayer and says that Brand is damned□presumably because Brand still believes in the strength of human will.

Gerd

Gerd is the mad little girl who appears several times in the play when Brand is doubting himself. Gerd is the daughter of a gypsy man who was spurned by Brand's mother. The townspeople have been feeding and clothing Gerd. She has religious visions, and she inspires Brand to stick to his strict morals, such as when her presence encourages him to stay living in the fiord□even though it means the death of his son. At the end of the play, when Brand walks alone through the mountains, Gerd appears with a rifle, saying that she is hunting the hawk of compromise. For once, Brand has seen the hawk, in the vision of his dead wife, Agnes, who has tried to convince him to give up his strict beliefs. Gerd believes that Brand is Christ, since the priest's wounds from the villagers match Christ's wounds. At the end, Gerd shoots the hawk in the Ice-Church, which causes the avalanche that kills both Gerd and Brand.

The Schoolmaster

The schoolmaster of the village is a rational person who eventually succumbs to Brand's powerful preaching at the end and follows him into the mountains. He is one of many who turn on Brand when the priest cannot offer guarantees of an easy life. Even after he has turned on Brand, the schoolmaster is afraid to go back to town, since he is afraid he has lost his job. He is relieved to find out that he has not.

The Sheriff

The sheriff, Brand's nemesis, tries several times to get Brand to leave the village, since the priest's gloomy teaching disrupts orderly village life. The sheriff first meets Brand when the sheriff is giving out food to the poor. When Brand offers sermons instead of donations, the sheriff is angry. When Brand is about to receive his inheritance, the sheriff encourages Brand to take the money and leave. When Brand refuses, the sheriff threatens him, and Brand declares war. Later, the sheriff declares Brand the winner of

their war, as Brand has won the support of the majority of people. The sheriff offers a truce and tries to get Brand to use his inheritance to build a new poor house, which will also serve many other functions. Brand, however, wants to build a new church, which the sheriff supports. On the day the church is to be dedicated in a big party, Brand realizes his mistake and tries to get back to the simple life once again, going into the mountains, away from the showy church, to seek the simple life. When Brand incites a number of villagers to follow him into the mountains, the sheriff is worried but bides his time. He follows the crowd, which turns on Brand after he promises them a hard life but a good afterlife. The sheriff then dupes the villagers into coming home by lying to them, saying that millions of fish have entered the fiord.

The Woman

The woman saves Brand from being beaten by the townspeople in the beginning by her frantic request for a priest to administer last rites for her husband. Although the woman is glad Brand is willing to cross the stormy bay to her house, she will not, for fear of losing her life.

Themes

Willpower

Depending on how one looks at the ambiguous ending of the play, Brand's iron strength of will is either a curse or a blessing. If one interprets the ending statement, "God is Love!" to mean that Brand should have focused less on prideful will and more on love, then it is a curse. If, however, one takes the voice to mean that God is acknowledging Brand's hard work and welcoming him to heaven at the hour of Brand's death, then his will is a blessing. In any case, Brand's will is his personal driving force, and it becomes the driving force of the play. With rare exception, the other characters are not able to use their strength of willpower in the absolute way that Brand does. As Brand notes after the peasant and his son refuse to cross the mountains to be with the peasant's dying daughter, Brand would help people like this if he could: "But help is useless to a man / Who does not *will* save where he *can*!"

In other words, if somebody is only willing to give up items that are expendable, then it is not a true sacrifice. When it comes to giving up irreplaceable items, such as one's life, most people fail the test, as Brand says: "Much will they give with willing mind, / Leave them but Life, dear Life, behind." Brand, however, follows his own ideal, as one of the village men notes after Brand braves the stormy fiord to administer last rites to a man. Says the village man, "*You* have the strength. . . . The way you showed, you *went,* at length." In other words, Brand is not all talk; he has done exactly what he said he was going to do.

Religious Conviction

In the majority of cases, Brand's will is tied to his religious conviction. Unlike the villagers, who Brand says follow a "bald, grey, skull-cap-pated God," a meek divine being that is convenient for the villagers, Brand's God is a powerful vision from more devout times: "And He is young, like Hercules,□ / No grandad in the seventies." Brand's vision of God does not allow a compromise. Instead, Brand, in serving his God, adheres to the phrase "Naught or All!" which does not give room for compromise. Throughout the story, he lives by this strict code and insists that anybody who follows him does the same. At the end of the play, a number of townspeople become inspired by Brand's impassioned sermon and follow him into the mountains.

However, it is not long before the crowd starts complaining about the harsh conditions in the mountains. "I haven't had a crumb today," says one person, instigating several to ask for food and drink. Other people cry out such complaints as "My child is sick!" and "My foot is sore!" Brand admonishes them: "The wage before the work you claim," saying that they need to work before they will get their salvation. Several members of the crowd take this to mean that they will get their salvation during their lives and start asking very specific questions such as "Can I be certain of my life?" and "What's *my*

share, when the prize is won?" Brand tells them that they must give up their tendency to compromise and that their reward will be in heaven, and the crowd, who feels tricked, turns on Brand. The rigid religious conviction that Brand demonstrates is not inherent in most of the other characters, who do not have enough patience or faith.

Sacrifice

As part of the strength of will and the religious conviction that Brand requires of his followers, he also instructs them to make certain sacrifices other than their lives, such as giving up earthly ties like money. When Brand's mother tells him she is bequeathing the hard-earned family fortune to him, as long as he hoards it after she is dead, Brand refuses to do this. He also refuses to give his mother her last rites until she gives the money away to charity: "That of free will you cast away / All that binds you to the clay." However, Brand's mother is unable to make this sacrifice and so goes to her grave without receiving her last rites. In addition to their lives and money, characters must also be willing to sacrifice the lives of other loved ones. Brand does this with his mother when he refuses her last rites. He also sacrifices his son, Alf, and calls upon his wife to perform this sacrifice willingly. Even after Alf is dead□as a result of the cold weather of the mountain parish that Brand refuses to abandon□Brand asks Agnes to give up all of her memories of the child, even to sacrifice his baby clothes. Although Agnes does this, Brand is doubtful that she has done it wholeheartedly: "Did you with a willing heart / Face the gift, nor grudge the smart?" In other words, in order for Agnes's sacrifice to be totally pure, she must not only willingly give away the clothes but must do so without bitterness. Although Agnes eventually succeeds, most characters in the play are not able to make this type of sacrifice.

Style

Verse Drama

Ibsen wrote his play as a verse drama, also known as a dramatic poem, a play that is composed entirely of lines of poetry. This more romantic, less realistic style of play is less common in modern drama. From the first conversation in the play, the exchange between Brand and the peasant man, it is evident that the play is a verse drama. The first sign is that the dialogue is arranged into lines, as opposed to paragraph style. For example, when the peasant is describing the bad weather conditions and the near invisibility of Brand in the fog, he says: "The mist is closing in so thick, / A body's eyesight barely passes / Beyond the measure of his stick." This example also illustrates the second sign that marks the play as a verse drama□the rhymes. Although the rhymes continue throughout the poem, they do not follow a set pattern or scheme, as many rhyming poems do.

Symbolism

Ibsen is known for heavy use of symbolism in his plays, and this one is no different. The play incorporates a number of aspects that symbolize religious objects or ideas. For example, the mountains suggest proximity to God as the setting of the natural Ice-Church, which collapses on Brand at the ambiguous end, as the place where God answers Brand's exclamation prior to his death, and as a setting where characters retreat from the perversions of humanity, such as Brand's self-imposed exile. Believing that the church is not large enough, Brand builds another one, then realizes his mistake, telling the people, "Out from here, where God is not! / Can He dwell in such a spot," and then throwing the keys to the new church into the river. Brand has realized that, no matter what kind of church he builds in the valley, it will always be tainted by humanity. As a result, Brand goes into the mountains and, ultimately, ends up at the Ice-Church.

Other religious symbols that Ibsen plants in the mountains include Brand himself, who, after being stoned by the villagers, resembles Christ. Says Gerd when she sees Brand's wounds: "On thy brow, the red drops stand / Where the thorns' sharp teeth have caught it! / Aye 'tis *thee* the Cross did bear!" In addition, Gerd sees the vision of a hawk, which she says is "Compromise," ambiguously symbolizing either the lack of religious conviction in many of the peripheral characters or the overbearing will of Brand.

Satire

The play also makes use of satire, a technique used to depict characters or their actions in a manner that scorns and ridicules to prove a point that the playwright wishes to make. In this case, Ibsen satirizes many government or social institutions, through many general characters such as the sheriff and the dean. The sheriff is depicted as an unscrupulous person who will do what it takes to maintain harmony in the village. When

the sheriff first meets Brand, he does not like the pastor, since Brand does not give comforting sermons. The sheriff makes this clear when he comes to visit Brand and encourages him to leave, letting him know that "You've set all harmony a jangle." At the end of the play, when the villagers follow Brand into the mountains, the sheriff is not worried and uses a lie to win the villagers back: "Because a shoal of fish / Has come into the fiord□by millions!" When the sheriff and the dean are discussing this miracle later on, the sheriff admits that there are no fish:

Besides, a day or two days hence,
When folk have found their common sense,
Who'll care a rap if victory
Was won by truth or by a lie?

This comment satirizes government officials who are willing to lie or to perform other dishonest deeds in order to get their way. The dean is also a morally suspect character, who gives Brand all sorts of advice about how to tone down his sermons and serve two masters□the people and the state: "Our working days you know, are six; / We save the seventh for emotion." The dean has relegated religion to one day a week so that the majority of the week can be devoted to work activities, which more directly benefit the state. This type of mentality contradicts Brand's entire style of life and satirizes the government institutions that hold this same view.

Historical Context

Charles Darwin

In November 1859, the English naturalist Charles Darwin published his book, *On the Origin of Species,* and the world was never the same again. Darwin's theory of evolution, based on his plant and animal research from a five-year voyage around the world on the H.M.S. *Beagle,* posed the idea that all species had evolved from a limited number of common ancestors through a process known as natural selection. Through natural selection, only those animals that possessed the random mutations necessary to adapt to changing environments were able to reproduce often enough to pass on their genes successfully. Viewed over a long timescale, these mutations could cause one species to evolve into a totally new species. Darwin's theory had horrible implications for the religion. If humans had evolved, they said, it challenged the idea of a human creation by God and, some said, the very existence of God.

Land Disputes in Northern Europe

In the mid-1800s, two wars broke out in connection with the administration of two duchies, Schleswig and Holbein. Although the lands had been under Danish rule for centuries, the inhabitants were mostly German. In 1863, when the Danish King, Frederick VII, tried to formally annex Schleswig, the German inhabitants revolted. The neighboring Germanic country of Prussia got involved and encouraged Austria to support its war against Denmark for control of the duchies. In 1864, the Norwegian parliament voted not to back Denmark in its fight against Prussia, a decision that disgusted Ibsen and others who supported a united Scandinavia. The Danish army was easily defeated by Prussian forces later that year, and Denmark turned over control of the two duchies to Prussia and Austria.

Prussia and Austria split the administration of the territories between them□Austria controlled Holstein, and Prussia controlled Schleswig. This arrangement led to tensions between the two countries, which then took up arms against each other in 1865 in the Austro-Prussian War, also known as the Seven Weeks' War. Prussian troops, making use of railroads and using newer breech-loading rifles, easily conquered the Austrian and other Germanic forces, which were still using older, muzzle-loading guns. In addition to annexing the combined Schleswig Holstein, Prussia's win also led to its annexation of five of Austria's six allies, instantly changing the political landscape of Germany.

Alfred Nobel's Discovery of Dynamite

While the breech-loading rifle represented a major advance in the design of guns, at the same time, a Swedish pacifist, Alfred Nobel, was working on an invention that would eventually change the face of explosives□and battles□forever. In 1866, Nobel, who was

manufacturing and performing dangerous experiments on nitroglycerin□an explosive liquid□set off an accidental explosion that ruined his factory and killed his brother and workers. Although the Swedish government refused Nobel's request to rebuild his factory after the explosion, the next year, Nobel, whom some called a mad scientist, was able to perfect his discovery, combining the liquid nitroglycerin with sand to create portable explosive sticks known as dynamite.

Critical Overview

Brand has always been a work that invites many interpretations, beginning with its stormy reception in Norway in 1866. In F. L. Lucas's 1962 book, *The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg,* Lucas notes that "its effect on Norwegian pietism was like pitching a millstone into a small pond." Likewise, in his 1969 book, *Ibsen: A Portrait of the Artist,* Hans Heiberg notes that "all over Norway the controversy raged, becoming the subject of sermons from pulpits, as well as social debate." However, while many Norwegians took Ibsen's attacks personally, in Denmark, Heiberg says that the book was considered by critics "a sensational break-through of Norwegian literature." The book was a popular success, and Heiberg notes that it was reprinted three times within the same year, "an almost unheard-of sales success."

With the success of *Brand*, which he wrote while on a self-imposed exile in Italy, Ibsen also achieved financial freedom. Though early reactions were mixed, the play is generally been received well now, although interpretations throughout the years have differed greatly. In 1889, Edmund Gosse of the *Fortnightly Review* called the play a "beautiful Puritan opera," whereas, in 1931, in his book, *The Life of Ibsen, Vol. 2,* Halvdan Koht says that Ibsen's intended meaning of the play "was that it was not honest or worthy of a human being to do anything else than to stand alone, to be one's self." There was a massive amount of scholarship on Ibsen and his works in the 1960s, when critics focused on many different aspects of the play. In his 1961 article in *The Lock Haven Bulletin,* Irving Deer identified a sharply divided critical argument that had sprung up by that point: "Simply stated, the controversy boils down to whether Ibsen intended him to be a hero or a villain."

Likewise, a year later, in 1962, Lucas notes only one aspect of the play, the ambiguous voice at the end of the work, spawned at least five different interpretations by critics, including that "this voice is the Devil's," it is "the voice of God" either condemning or welcoming Brand as a result of his adherence to his rigid faith, it is the "real or imagined" voice "of the dead Agnes," it is "the voice of Brand's own soul," and it "is what Ibsen says it is□simply a voice." This assessment is representative of other aspects in the play, which have also been debated endlessly.

One of the other aspects that academics in the 1960s focused on was the connection between *Brand* and the writings of the philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. As Heiberg notes, "Kierkegaard was undoubtedly one of the godparents of the fundamental ideas behind *Brand*." In her 1966 book,

Ibsen, The Norwegian: A Revaluation, M. C. Bradbrook also notes this, saying that "Kierkegaard too demanded that a man should give his All." Heiberg notes one other idea about the play, that it "is first and foremost Ibsen's settlement with himself," a sentiment that has been echoed by other critics. As biographical and critical studies have illustrated, and as Ibsen's own comments verified, *Brand* was a cathartic experience for the playwright, in which he explored his own views about life and religion.

Debates over the play's meaning continue today. However, regardless of how people interpret the play, there is no doubt that *Brand*, along with his next play, *Peer Gynt*, is considered one of Ibsen's major works and the seminal work that helped lead to his immense critical and popular success both in Scandinavia and around the world.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses Brand's conflicting desires, which ultimately drive him mad and lead him to death.

In Ibsen's *Brand*, the title character has such strength of conviction that he sacrifices everything, including his family, to stick to his beliefs. On the surface, this appears to be a noble thing to do. In fact, many critics, like Edmund Gosse, who in the 1889 *Fortnightly Review* notes that the play is a "beautiful Puritan opera," have seen Brand as a hero. However, as Irving Deer states in his 1961 article, "Ibsen's *Brand:* Paradox and the Symbolic Hero," this is not a foregone conclusion with all critics. Wrote Deer, "Simply stated, the controversy boils down to whether Ibsen intended him to be a hero or a villain." By studying Brand's spiritual journey, however, it appears that Ibsen meant to show Brand as a man who ultimately goes mad from the strain of trying to reconcile the contradictory ends of religious fanaticism and humanity.

At the beginning of the play, the audience is led to believe, as are the peasant and his son, that Brand is not a normal human. He claims himself to be "a Great One's messenger" and shows little concern for the bad weather in the mountains, which the peasant fears will kill them all if they continue on. Brand says he is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice if God requires it: "If of my life the Lord hath need / Then welcome precipice and flood!" The peasants think that Brand is crazy and do not follow him. Brand notes that these peasants, like most others in the world, are unwilling to make ultimate sacrifices: "Much will they give with willing mind, / Leave them but Life, dear Life, behind." With this thought, Brand suddenly remembers his childhood and "two fancies of the brain" that he had. He describes these states of mind as "An Owl that dreads the dark, a fish / With water-fright." In other words, as a child, he had a fear of living the life that he was meant to live. Just as an owl is meant to live at night and a fish is meant to live in water, Brand felt that he was "bound to bear" a burden and, as a child, had a moment of weakness about this fact.

This passage introduces the idea that Brand is not invincible, as audience members might first believe after seeing him risk his life and survive harsh mountain weather whereas normal mortals turn back. It also underscores the idea that Brand is different from many other humans, who live in fear most of their lives, as other characters show. Brand is so strong in his mission for God that the fears only appear to have plagued him when he was a child. At this point, the audience gets another glimpse into Brand's past, when he runs into Agnes and Einar - a boy with whom he went to school. Einar describes Brand's childhood as follows: "Aye, the same solitary elf / Whom, still sufficient to himself / No games could ever draw away." Brand, with his philosophical thoughts and fears about the meaning of his life and his greater mission, chose to isolate himself from the other schoolchildren. This is an important idea that Ibsen plants in the beginning because it foreshadows what will eventually happen to Brand as he alienates himself from the human race as a whole.

It is appropriate, then, that after Brand meets Einar in the mountains, he runs into Gerd, a mad little gypsy girl who has visions. She questions Brand: "You saw the hawk just now?" Brand is not mad, however, and so cannot see the visions that Gerd speaks of. Gerd is not deterred. When they start to talk about the church in the valley where Brand is headed, Gerd makes mention of a much more impressive one, "A church built out of ice and snow!" Brand recognizes that Gerd is talking about the Ice-Church, a natural, chapel-shaped structure that exists in the mountains, but he warns Gerd that she should not go there, for fear of an avalanche: "A sudden lurch / Of wind may break the hanging ice: / A shout, a rifle-shot, suffice - ." The rifle-shot foreshadows the avalanche at the end that kills both Brand and Gerd, but more important, this reference to the Ice-Church helps to illustrate Brand's mentality at the beginning of the play. While he is willing to face any danger and give his life for his mission to God, he does not see the Ice-Church as a worthy spiritual endeavor, and so he cautions against going there.

When Brand's mother arrives, the audience gets one more example of Brand's self-imposed exclusion from humanity: says Brand to his mother, "I've gone against you from my youth; / You've been no mother, I no son, / Till you are grey and I am grown." Brand is disgusted with his mother's materialistic behavior, which first manifests itself after his mother dies. Unseen by his mother, Brand watches as she loots his father's dead body, searching for money, then expands her search to the rest of the room: "Finding, she seized with falcon's pounce / 'Twixt tears and glee, each several ounce." This base materialism horrified the young Brand and shaped his disparaging view of humanity: "Barely one in thousands sees / How mere life is one immense / Towering mountain of offence!" Instead of living an offensive life with other humans, Brand devotes himself to what he believes is a higher cause, setting the ultimately unachievable goal of suppressing his humanity through sheer will. When the doctor accuses Brand of being inhumane, since he would not give his mother last rites after her failure to give up material goods, Brand states his view of humanity:

Humane! That word's relaxing whine
Is now the whole world's countersign!
It serves the weakling to conceal
The abdication of his will;

However, even though Brand tries to suppress his humanity, this is impossible, a fact that gradually becomes clear. Although Brand is not interested in preserving his money, his power, or his physical health, as others are, he does have an obsession with his mission - something that he is initially unwilling to give up. One of the peasant men points this hypocrisy out to Brand when he is trying to talk Brand into abandoning his grander plans and do a good service by helping their village: "This Call of yours, this holy strife / You yearn for and will not let drop - / It is then dear to you?" Brand is emphatic, letting the man know that "It is my life to me!" At this point, the man turns Brand's words back on himself, saying that, as Brand has counseled others to be willing to give up things that are dear to them, such as their lives, Brand should be willing to give up his own "life." Brand recognizes this and decides to stay.

Even though he stays in the village, Brand tries to maintain his seclusion from humanity. Says Brand: "Of what the paltering world calls love, / I will not know, I cannot speak; / I know but His who reigns above." This, however, is not true, because he falls in love with Agnes, his wife, and loves their son, Alf. These attachments threaten to compromise Brand's mission, starting with his son, Alf. Brand and Agnes are unsure whether or not Alf will be able to survive the harsh weather in the fiord, but Brand is convinced that the sacrifices he has already made for God mean that he will not be called upon to sacrifice Alf, too: "He will not take away our joy . . . / My little lad in time will grow / As big and strong as can be found." However, as he starts to dwell on this idea, he realizes the immensity of such a sacrifice, questioning the possibility of it along with his strength of will: "But if He dared demand?" When the doctor tells Brand and Agnes that their son will die if they do not leave, Brand immediately says he will go, even though it will mean abandoning his parish and his mission. Here, he is responding to his human emotions, which want to preserve the life of his son. However, he is eventually able to suppress these emotions once again, and through the strength of his will, he stays at the parish, sacrificing his son for his mission.

Although Alf's death affects Brand greatly, he suppresses his grief, though barely, and requires Agnes to do the same. But when Agnes dies, Brand can no longer suppress his humanity, and the strain of trying to follow his mission while ignoring his humanity is apparent. Says the clerk: "Aye, he's not quite right: / He's felt a lonely, gnawing tooth / Since he became a widower." The clerk notes that Brand expresses his grief by playing the organ and that "Each note's as wild / As if he wept for wife and child." The musical notes are not the only thing that is wild about Brand at this point. When the townspeople try to make him a hero, idolizing him and the new church he has built, Brand is once again disgusted with the materialism of humanity, which now has intruded into his vocation. He gives an impassioned speech to the crowd about "the flaw, in me and you," and the impressed crowd follows Brand into the mountains.

The dean is worried that Brand is stealing their villagers, but the sheriff says: "Who would butt against a bull? / Let him have his craze out full!" The sheriff can see that Brand has gone mad from the strain of trying unsuccessfully to suppress his humanity, and he knows that the villagers will eventually turn on Brand when he offers them gloomy sermons instead of comfort. When this inevitably happens, the clerk, echoing the sentiment of many others, says: "Let be the lunatic!" Brand retreats into the upper reaches of the mountains. He is distraught, searching for the strength of will he once had, and at this point totally mad from his grief:

Alf and Agnes! O come back
Where the peaks are bleak and black
Lone I sit, the wind blows through me
Chilled by visions weary and gloomy -

At this point, in his despair, Brand sees a vision of his dead wife, Agnes, tempting him to compromise and give up his mission. Brand fights the vision, however, and refuses to give up his mission, saying: "Wandering dreams no more are rife: / No, the horror now is

. . . life!" Having exiled himself from humanity, Brand now turns his back on his life and the memory of his wife. As the vision disappears, Gerd, the mad girl, comes up to him. She asks him if he has seen the hawk of compromise, her vision from before, and he admits: "Aye! For once I saw him true." Although Brand shied away from Gerd before, now he finds in her the only human company he can have, since, in her madness, she has set herself on a similar mission as Brand - hunting down and killing the spirit of compromise. Unlike in the beginning of the play, Brand now willingly allows Gerd to lead him to the Ice-Church, where she sees the hawk and shoots him with her rifle. The resulting avalanche buries them both but not before Brand calls out to God asking if human will is enough to achieve salvation. Brand hears a voice cry out, "God is Love!" Although there are several interpretations of this, the most likely, given Brand's steady breakdown into madness, is that he is hearing a voice that does not exist.

Since he was a child, Brand has attempted to adhere to an impossible ideal, which was easy enough for him to do when he had no attachments. However, by falling in love with Agnes and loving their son, Alf, he succumbed to one of the human material weaknesses that he has despised since his childhood. Over the course of the play, Brand's attempt to suppress this weakness fails, and the strain, coupled with the grief over his dead family, slowly drives him mad.

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

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Brustein explores connections between Ibsen's leaving his native Norway and the rich inspiration present in Brand, *calling the drama "a sudden revelation from the depths of an original mind."*

Any discussion of Ibsen's mature art must start with *Brand*, since this monolithic masterpiece is not only the first play he completed after leaving his native country, but his first, and possibly his greatest, work of enduring power. Nothing in Ibsen's previous writings prepares us for a play of this scope, not even the substantial talent he displays in *The Vikings at Helgeland* and *The Pretenders*, for *Brand* is like a sudden revelation from the depths of an original mind. It is highly probable that Ibsen's achievement in *Brand* was intimately connected with his departure from Norway, for he seemed to find an important source of creative power in his self-imposed exile: "I had to escape the swinishness up there to feel fully cleansed," he wrote to his mother-in-law from Rome. "I could never lead a consistent spiritual life there. I was one man in my work and another outside - and for that reason my work failed in consistency too." Ibsen's desire for creative consistency was certainly fulfilled during his sojourn in Rome. Besides filling him with admiration for the "indescribable harmony" of his new surroundings ("beautiful, wonderful, magical," he called them), Ibsen's *Italienische Reise*, like Goethe's before him, seems to have opened him up to an expansive romanticism. Ibsen himself was quite conscious of the influence of Rome on his art, for in describing to a friend how *Brand* had come to be written, he said: "Add to this Rome with its ideal peace, association with the carefree artist community, an existence in an atmosphere which can only be compared with that of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* - and you have the conditions productive of *Brand*." It was a period of the most exquisite freedom Ibsen had ever known, and his nostalgia for these years was later to find expression in Oswald's enthusiastic descriptions of the buoyant *livsglaede* (joy of life) to be found in the Paris artist community.

On the surface, *Brand* - an epic of snow and ice with a glacial Northern atmosphere and a forbidding central figure - would seem to have little in common with this warm, sunny Italian world. Yet the sense of abandon which Ibsen was experiencing is reflected in the play's openness of form and richness of inspiration ("May I not . . . point to *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*," wrote Ibsen later, "and say: 'See, the wine cup has done this!'"). Though it was originally conceived as a narrative poem, Ibsen soon reworked *Brand* into a five-act poetic drama, a work so conscientiously long and unstageable that Ibsen was astonished when a Scandinavian company decided to produce it. For Ibsen, exulting in the luxury of pure self-expression, had written the work unmindful of the limiting demands of an audience or the restricting requirements of a theatre. Having finally freed his imagination from its frozen Northern vaults, Ibsen had at last discovered how to make his work an integral part of his spiritual life. The solution was simple enough; he had to be the same person *in* his work as outside it. Although in *The Pretenders* Ibsen had dramatized the conflicts in his own soul through a fictional external action, *Brand* has the most thoroughgoing revelation of his rebellious interior life that Ibsen had yet attempted, an act of total purgation, in which he exorcised the troll battle within his heart

and mind by transforming it into art. With *Brand*, Ibsen confronted for the first time and in combination the great subjects which were to occupy him successively during the course of his career: the state of man in the universe, the state of modern society, and the state of his own feverish, divided soul.

The play, a storage house for all of Ibsen's future themes and conflicts, is constructed like a series of interlocking arches, each ascending higher than the last. The lowest arch is a domestic drama, in which Ibsen examines the relationship of the idealist to his family (the basis for later plays like *The Wild Duck*); the middle arch is a social-political drama, in which he analyzes the effect of the aristocratic individual on a democratic community (the basis for plays like *An Enemy of the People*); and the highest arch is a religious drama, in which he shows the rivalry between the messianic rebel and the nineteenth-century God (the basis for plays like *The Master Builder*). Pastor Brand - a reforming minister of extraordinary zeal (his very name means "sword and fire") - is the hero of all three dramas, and Ibsen's supreme idealist, individualist, and rebel. In the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, and those apostles of religious purification who arise in human history to change the course of the world, Brand is remorselessly dedicated to his cause. Like Luther, he has elected to be the "chastiser of the age," scourging the excesses of individuals and institutions; like Moses, he is determined to bring new codes of spiritual purity to a generation of idlers, appeasers, and dreamers; and like Christ, he is committed to the salvation of all mankind through a complete transformation of human character. Brand, however, is a very peculiar Christian, if indeed he can be called Christian at all. Intensely masculine, patristic, strict, and unyielding, he rejects the compassionate side of Christianity in his determination to close the gap between what is and what should be by making human practice conform to spiritual ideals. Actually, Brand is more extreme than the most apocalyptic Puritan reformers, a Savonarola of the will who brings Protestant individualism to the furthest reaches of its own implications. For, as Brand develops his theology, he demands not only that each man become his own Church, but - so strict are the extremes of his ideal - *even his own God.*

Man becomes a god by imitating God, but Brand's God - not a "gentle wind" but a "storm" - is almost inimitable, being the purest and most uncompromising of celestial beings. He is identified with the Ideal itself, to be attained through the unlimited striving of the human will. Because of his emphasis on will, the mortal sin for Brand is cowardice and half-heartedness. Like Kierkegaard before him, and Nietzsche after, Brand is disposed towards the great saint or the great sinner - the man who lives his life extremely with a purpose either good or evil - but he cannot abide the will-less mediocrities who fail to be anything fully. Brand's Devil, therefore, is the spirit of compromise, while his concept of evil is identified with the middle way of moderation, accommodation, luxury, ease, and moral laziness. Taking "All or nothing" as his rebellious credo, he has resolved to make "heirs of heaven" out of the dull and cloddish inhabitants of the modern world, fashioning a new race of heroes to match the heroic figures of the past.

Brand, who follows his own precepts with uncompromising integrity, is himself one of these heroes - but at a terrific cost. Struggling painfully to conquer any emotions which

might lead him from the path of righteousness, he becomes contemptuous of any but the hardest virtues: for him, love is merely a smirch of lies ("Faced by his generation / Which is lax and slothful, the best love is hate"), while charity and humanitarianism are the encouragement of human weakness ("Was God humane when Jesus died?"). Thus, Brand finally succeeds in suppressing his own human feelings, an ambiguous victory which makes him at the same time both wholly admirable and wholly impossible. Like most monastic, disciplinary types, he has something forbidding and inhuman in his nature. Ibsen usually associates him with images of cold and hardness (snow, steel, iron, stone); even the conditions of his birth (he was "born by a cold fjord in the shadow of a barren mountain") suggest his ice-like qualities. By comparison, the beauty-loving painter Ejnar and his lovely fiancee Agnes are identified with "mountain air, the sunshine, the dew, and the scent of pines," and their pursuit of Southern pleasures is a striking contrast to Brand's single-minded pursuit of the ideal.

Yet, such is Brand's heroic stature, fierce courage, and charismatic power that by the end of Act II Agnes has been converted to his religion of "grayness," leaving Ejnar to take up her duties by Brand's side. It is in the domestic scenes that follow (Acts III and IV) that Brand's defective humanity is most strongly dramatized, for his fanatic ideals of moral purity succeed in destroying his entire family; first his mother, who dies unshriven when Brand refuses to visit her unless she freely gives away her fortune; then his young son Alf, a victim of the Northern cold who has been refused the Southern warmth (an Ibsenist image for love); and finally Agnes herself, forced into dreadful choices and ultimately deprived of even the relics of her mother love. All this while, Brand has been engaged in a terrific struggle with himself, torn between his ideal and his love for Agnes and Alf. Yet his decision to be a god has left him with no real choice; and when Agnes warns him "He dies who sees Jehovah face to face," he can only accept the terrible implications of his Godhead and let her die. When she abdicates her painful life with an ecstatic cry ("I am free Brand! I am free!"), Brand has achieved a moral victory only through the sacrifice of everything he loved in the world - as Shaw put in through "having caused more intense suffering by his saintliness that the most talented sinner could possibly have done with twice his opportunities."

Yet it is only in the domestic portions of the play that Brand emerges as a villain-idealist; like all great reformers (even Christ treated his family with scant respect), he has no time or capacity for a happy private life. When he plays a public role, in the social-political scenes, he is a bright contrast to the citizenry he has come to reform. Here, Brand, a typical *Sturmund Drang* hero, is the individual at war with society, denouncing its worm-eaten conventions, its limited aspirations, its corrupt institutions. His antagonist, in this drama, is the Mayor, society's elected representative - like Mayor Peter Stockmann and Peter Mortensgard, a "typical man of the people," and therefore Brand's instinctive enemy. The conflict between them arises from their conflicting expectations from their constituents. Brand, appealing to spiritual man, seeks the salvation of the individual through a revolution in his moral consciousness; the Mayor, appealing to social man, seeks the pacification of the community through attention to its material needs. Wishing to make life easier, the Mayor wants to construct public buildings; Brand, wishing to make life harder, wants to construct a new Church. This conflict - in which Brand obviously expresses Ibsen's own predisposition in favor of the

individual against the community, the moral against the social, the spiritual against the material, radical revolution against moderation and compromise - is ultimately irreconcilable. But since Brand's following has increased, the Mayor, pulling his sheets to the wind, capitulates, following the desires of the compact majority by helping Brand with his plans. The Mayor, however, has not lost the battle. He has merely made a strategic retreat in order to assimilate his enemy. And, as for Brand, his temporary success has made him unwittingly betray his own ideal.

In Act V, which forms the climax of the religious drama and the heart of the play, Brand becomes what Ibsen really intended him to be - neither a villain-idealist nor a hero-reformer but a tragic sufferer existing independently of moral judgments. At the beginning of the act, Brand is seen as a fashionable preacher, a popular commercial personality like Billy Graham. His new Church is about to open and Brand himself is to be decorated by the State for his services to the community. Multitudes have gathered for the event - vaguely sensing that the destruction of the old Church was some form of sacrilege and trembling with apprehension "as though they had been summoned to elect a new God." Brand himself is very morose; he cannot pray and his soul is full of discords. His mood grows blacker when the Provost - the theological counterpart of the Mayor - begins to inform him that religion is merely an instrument of the State to insure itself against unrest. When he warns Brand to concern himself with the needs of the community rather than the salvation of the individual, Brand suddenly becomes aware that the Church is a lie and that he has become a corrupt institution himself. Ignoring the Provost's contention that "the man who fights alone will never achieve anything of a lasting nature," he tells his enthusiastic followers that the only true Church is the wild and natural world of the fjords and moorlands, not yet tainted by human compromise, hypocrisy, and evil: "God is not here! / His kingdom is perfect freedom."

Like Moses leading his people towards the beautiful Promised Land, Brand makes his way upwards to the freedom and purity of the cliffs and mountains. But like Moses' followers, the people begin to slacken and grumble when the way grows hard. The Grand Inquisitor, in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov,* had told the resurrected Christ that the common man seeks not Godhead, but miracle, mystery, and authority. And now it is Brand's turn to learn of human limitation, as his followers clamor for water, bread, prophecies, security, and miracles in place of the spiritual victory he promises. When he offers them no more than "a new will," "a new faith," and "a crown of thorns," they feel betrayed and begin to stone their Messiah. And when the Mayor arrives with the Provost to reclaim the sheep-like flock with a promise of food and safety, they repudiate Brand's salvation altogether, meekly returning to their secular lives below.

Brand is left alone on the moorlands, torn and bleeding, to meditate upon his mistakes. In putting vengeance, justice, and retribution before forgiveness, charity, and compassion; in repudiating the "God of every dull and earthbound slave," Brand has pursued Godhead through the pursuit of an incorruptible ideal. But while making him Godlike, this quest has also made him a rebel against the very Deity he had tried to serve. Brand's messianism has turned him into something harder and crueler than God, and it has broken the backs of his all-too-human followers. Now Brand must learn that man cannot be God; that he must live with the Devil if he is to live at all; and that even

the freedom of the will is limited by the inexorable determinism of inherited sin. Now, like Moses on Mount Nebo, Brand is denied the promised land, and must await retribution himself. Yet, still he adheres to his ideal. When a specter appears, in the shape of Agnes, offering him warmth, love, and forgiveness if he will only renounce the awful words *"All or nothing,"* Brand refuses; and when the spirit is transformed into a hawk flying across the moorlands, Brand recognizes his ancient enemy, the Devil of Compromise.

Still struggling upwards, Brand finally reaches the Ice Church, a mighty chasm between peaks and summits where "cataract and avalanche sing Mass." It is Brand's true parish, for there, in the ideal habitat of the extreme Romantic, Brand may preach his gospel of the absolute, free from the human world and its compromising influences. When Gerd - the wild gypsy girl who has accompanied him - suddenly has a half-ironic, half-sincere vision of Brand as the incarnation of Christ and begins worshiping him as a God, Brand, at last, gives way to human feeling:

Until today I sought to be a tablet
On which God could write. Now my life
Shall flow rich and warm. The mist is breaking.
I can weep! I can kneel! I can pray!

But it is too late. Shooting at the devil-hawk with her rifle, Gerd has started an avalanche, and Brand is about to be buried in the snow. At the last minute, Brand asks a final tortured question of God: "If not by Will, how can man be redeemed?" And the answer comes from the heavens in booming tones: *Han er deus caritatis* - "He is the God of charity, mercy, love."

It is an answer, which completes the play, but denies its philosophical basis. For if Brand's severe demands have all been wrong, and man is redeemed only through love, then the whole intellectual structure of the work collapses; and Brand's relentless attacks on compromise and accommodation are all superfluous. We must remember, however, that Ibsen is not rejecting Brand's revolt as an idea; he is merely rejecting it as a form of action. And since Brand's judge is a God of love, even Brand, we must assume, is forgiven at the last. The ending of *Brand*, nevertheless, like the ending of so many of Ibsen's plays, is inconclusive, an early example of Ibsen's failure to integrate his drama of ideas with his drama of action - and this itself is the result of his refusal to adopt a positive synthetic doctrine. Up until the

ending, we can regard Brand *both* as a great hero-saint-reformer with a redeeming message of salvation *and* as a flawed, repressed, and ice-cold being whose ruthless dedication to an impossible ideal causes untold suffering and needless deaths. Up until the ending, we can admire Ibsen's extraordinary capacity for keeping two antithetical attitudes in his mind at the same time, so that he is able to exalt messianic rebellion as an idea, while condemning it in practice. But the ending demands a synthesis which the author cannot provide; instead, he chooses to invalidate the intellectual hypothesis of his play. Still, even in this vaguely unsatisfying ending, one is filled with admiration for

this defeated, yet triumphantly Godlike hero whose eternal struggle upwards has somehow enlarged the spiritual boundaries of man.

We must conclude, then, that both the success and failure of the play stem from the unreconciled conflicts of the playwright. For Ibsen's split attitude towards his hero reflects the clash in his own soul between the twin poles of his temperament - the Romantic idealism of the reforming rebel and the Classical detachment of the objective artist. This dualism - fatal to a man of action but invaluable to a dramatist - is present whenever Ibsen examines the effect of absolute idealism on private happiness, a subject that is to obsess him all his life. But though he will treat this delicate theme again and again in the future, he will never make a presentation of such compelling power and grandeur.

Source: Robert Brustein, "Henrik Ibsen," in *The Theatre of Revolt,* Little, Brown and Company, 1962, pp. 35-84.

Topics for Further Study

Ibsen is not the only Norwegian who left the country in the nineteenth century. Between 1815 and 1915, tens of millions of Norwegians migrated to the United States. Research the history of this mass exodus, and compare Ibsen's reasons for leaving the country with the motivations of the masses who came to America.

Darwin's evolutionary theories instigated a debate between evolutionists and creationists that still rages in some areas today. Research a historical case, legal or otherwise, that illustrates this conflict. Write a short script for a modern-day court television episode in which the two parties argue their beliefs in front of a judge.

Brand can be, and has been, described as a religious fanatic. Choose another religious group or cult labeled fanatical from history, and research its beliefs. Then, taking the viewpoint of one of the members, write a newspaper editorial that explains what types of conflicts or persecutions members of the group face, using your research to support your claims.

Ibsen was in the extreme group that supported maintaining an alliance with other Scandinavian countries when it came to dealing with wars and other foreign affairs. Find another Scandinavian who held this belief, and research how this person fought for this unification. Write a journal entry from this person's point of view, detailing the struggles faced by Scandinavians of this belief.

Compare Norway's refusal to support Denmark to the political policy of Norway, Denmark, and other Scandinavian countries during World War II, when Nazi Germany fought with much of Europe. How did the actions of Scandinavian countries affect the outcome of the war? If they did not greatly affect the war, discuss how they could have.

Compare and Contrast

Late 1850s - Mid-1860s: Denmark and Norway face unification issues, which eventually factor into the two wars in Northern Europe over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. At the same time, the United States faces its own unification issues, which erupt in a vicious civil war.

Today: The United States stands unified against a common enemy - terrorism - following vicious attacks by terrorist groups on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Late 1850s-Mid-1860s: Swedish pacifist Alfred Nobel performs a number of experiments on explosives. These experiments lead to the creation of nitroglycerin, which ultimately takes the portable form of dynamite. This powerful explosive is sometimes employed as a weapon.

Today: Terrorists make isolated attacks using bacteriological weapons like anthrax, and there is some concern that terrorists may resort to other, newer forms of warfare.

Late 1850s-Mid-1860s: Charles Darwin publishes his landmark argument about evolution, *On the Origin of Species,* which shakes up the religious and educational worlds, igniting a controversy between creationists and evolutionists.

Today: Most public schools teach evolution, which is a respected scientific discipline. Academia explores the links between science and religion and identifies some potential bridges between the formerly contradictory disciplines.

What Do I Read Next?

Anton Chekhov, along with Ibsen and August Strindberg, is widely considered to be one of the three most influential playwrights in early modern drama. Like Ibsen's *Brand,* Chekhov's *The Seagull,* originally published in 1895, deliberately goes against the stage conventions of the day. Instead of building the dramatic action as the play goes on, Chekhov reduces it. Instead of introducing one major protagonist, Chekhov introduces several. The play also borrows the type of overt symbolism recognized in Ibsen's plays.

Ibsen's *A Doll House,* originally published in Norwegian in 1879 and translated into English in 1889 as *A Doll's House,* is one of Ibsen's most famous and most controversial plays. The story concerns the oppression and liberation of a woman in a middle-class marriage and was ahead of its time in its promotion of women's rights.

Peer Gynt (1867), the play Ibsen wrote directly after *Brand,* is in many ways exactly the opposite of the earlier play, as evidenced by their respective title characters. Brand is a devout pastor, while Peer Gynt is a storyteller and liar. *Peer Gynt* also employs a much lighter tone than the heavy-handed religious feeling in *Brand.* The latter play is considered by many to be the single most definitive work that represents life in Norway at the time.

In the late 1300s, a poet named William Langland wrote three versions of a Middle English poem, "The Vision of Piers Plowman." In modern translations, the title of the poem has often been shortened to "Piers Plowman." The poem features a title character who has many religious experiences□through the form of several dream visions□and who ultimately rebels against the corruption that he finds in both the religion and politics of his time.

C. S. Lewis, an Oxford professor and English man of letters in the twentieth century, experienced a profound conversion to Christianity. After this, he was extremely outspoken and gave a number of radio addresses on various aspects of Christianity. *Mere Christianity,* originally published in 1952, collects and expands on three of Lewis's radio lectures□"The Case for Christianity," "Christian Behaviour," and "Beyond Personality." Together, these three talks outline the primary beliefs of Christianity, in an informal and conversational argument.

August Strindberg, along with Ibsen and Chekhov, is widely considered to be one of the three most influential playwrights in early modern drama. One of Strindberg's most famous plays, *Miss Julie,* originally published in Swedish in 1888 and translated into English in 1912, was written without act divisions□a departure from nineteenth-century stage conventions.

Further Study

Adler, Stella, *Stella Adler on Ibsen, Strindberg, and Chekhov,* edited by Barry Paris, Vintage Books, 2000.

This book offers an engaging way for actors and non-actors alike to approach works by the three playwrights. Adler, a famous actress and acting instructor, discusses the best way for actors to approach roles in the plays, while giving an academic analysis of the major works.

Donnelly, Marian C., *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries,* MIT Press, 1991.

Donnelly's book gives a detailed account of Nordic building, starting with the remains of structures that date back to 7,500 B.C. and continuing through to the 1970s. The book covers structures and the architects who created them, from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and the Faroes.

Goldman, Michael, *Ibsen,* Columbia University Press, 1998.

Goldman explores the often-overlooked connection between Ibsen's dramatic art and the effects that specific dramatic techniques have on audiences who experience the plays. The book offers a thorough discussion of many of Ibsen's major plays, including *Peer Gynt, The Master Builder, A Doll's House,* and *The Wild Duck.*

Kierkegaard, Søren, *The Essential Kierkegaard,* edited by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, 2000.

Most critics acknowledge the profound influence that Kierkegaard had on Ibsen's beliefs and on his dramatic works. This comprehensive anthology collects the major works of the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher.

Marker, Frederick J., and Lise Lone Marker, *Ibsen's Lively Art: A Performance Study of the Major Plays,* Cambridge University Press, 1989.

In this production study of six of Ibsen's major plays, the Markers explore non-English theatrical productions from other countries, including Germany, Russia, France, and Scandinavia. The book covers early productions from Ibsen's life up to more modern and unconventional interpretations of the plays in the twentieth century.

Roesdahl, Else, *The Vikings,* Penguin USA, 1999.

Brand mentions the legendary exploits of the Vikings, the Nordic conquerors who initially inhabited the Scandinavian countries. Traditionally, Vikings have been largely viewed as lawless pirates who plundered at will. In her extensive study, Roesdahl digs underneath the legends, incorporating the latest archaeological research to provide an accurate description of the geography, culture, and lifestyle of the Vikings. The book also includes a section on how the Vikings have influenced modern culture.

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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.

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

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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:

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