Business Study Guide

Business by Victor Hernandez Cruz

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Introduction

"Business" is the third poem of a suite of five poems in Victor Hernández Cruz's 1973 collection, *Mainland*. Other poems in the suite include "Atmosphere," "Memory," "Love," and "Music." Like the other poems, "Business" relays the sayings of Don Arturo, a wise man who offers parables and cryptic "messages" on universal topics, although unlike the other poems, "Business" is longer, consisting of 34 short, clipped lines of free verse. The poem tells the story of a street vendor and musician who sold puppets and played guitar and was regularly arrested for doing so. Don Arturo relates how detectives and clerks loved the puppet show the man put on during his court appearance and bought puppets and whistles from him. When the judge responds to the detectives' and clerks' enthusiasm for the "criminal's" entertainment with indignance, the musician says that his business is "monkey business." Cruz tells a similar story about Don Arturo, apparently a real person and friend, in his essay "Don Arturo: A Story of Migration."

The subject of the poem is business, and its central theme the conflict between institutionalized ideas of business, as represented by the state, and personal ideas of business, as represented by the musician. Cruz suggests that institutionalized notions of business are impersonal, humorless, and destructive, whereas business rooted in human connection and contact is emotionally satisfying and life-affirming. The fact that the police and clerks fell in love with the musician's puppet show also suggests that institutionalized business, regulated by licenses, taxes, and the like, is out of step with what most people want and need. Cruz represents the musician as a trickster figure who manages to usurp authority by understanding human beings' desire to be free. The parable-like quality of the anecdote and the fact that it is related in a straightforward and simple manner by someone who speaks from a position of authority not rooted in the state give this poem universal appeal. It is a poem about the triumph of the little guy.

Author Biography

Born in the barrio El Guanabano in the town of Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico, in 1949 to Severo and Rosa Cruz, Victor Hernandez Cruz and his family moved to Spanish Harlem in New York City in 1954. This part of the city teemed with immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Cruz was surrounded with new sights, smells, and sounds, some familiar and some strange. Learning English along with a new culture was both a challenge and a reward for the young Cruz, who made the intersections between his new home and his old the material for much of his writing. Although he dropped out of high school during his senior year, Cruz became a voracious reader and writer as a teenager, self-publishing his first book when he was only seventeen years old.

The 1960s were exciting times for emerging writers. Small presses sprung up everywhere and increasingly paid more attention to publishing the works of those from underrepresented and neglected populations. Along with writers such as Piri Thomas, a novelist, Cruz developed a reputation as a leading "Nuyorican" writer (the "Nuyo" stands for New York, and "rican" for Puerto Rican). Much of Cruz's poetry addresses life on the streets and the difficulty of negotiating one's ethnic identity and cultural heritage in an often hostile country. Like those he writes about, Cruz is a survivor. Although he writes in English, Cruz often leavens his poetry and prose with Spanish. Critics sometimes refer to this hybrid language as "Spanglish." Like Cruz, many Puerto Ricans are of Indian (Taino) and African descent as well, and Cruz's writing appears frequently in African-American literature anthologies. He often refers to himself as Afro-Latin.

An essayist, novelist, and editor as well as a poet, Cruz remains one of the most prolific and visible spokesmen for minority literature in the United States. His works include *Papa Got His Gun and Other Poems* (1966), *Snaps* (1969), *Mainland* (1973), *Tropicalization* (1976), *By Lingual Wholes* (1982), *Rhythm, Content [and] Flavor* (1989), *Red Beans* (1991), and *Panoramas* (1997), all poetry or poetry and prose collections. Cruz has also published two novels: *Down These Mean Streets* in 1967, and *Savior, Savior Hold My Hand* in 1972. His short-story collection *Low Writings* came out in 1980. Cruz has taught at a number of high schools and universities and frequently gives public readings of his work. He has also successfully participated in poetry "slams," a public event in which poets compete both individually and in teams against one another.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-5

The poem's title, "Business," like the titles of the four other poems included in the suite with "Business," alerts readers that the poem will address a universal subject. The other poems, "Atmosphere," "Love," "Music," and "Memory," are all about figuratively explaining the meaning of their titles. All of the titles are abstract nouns, that is, they are ideas more than images. As with the other poems, "Business" begins by attributing what is said to Don Arturo, a persona Cruz uses to evoke the sense of folk wisdom. The term "persona" derives from the Latin term *dramatis personae* and literally means the mask worn by actors in classical theater. Today persona usually refers to the character that the "I" in a lyrical or narrative poem takes on. Cruz's poem, however, is reported, rather than direct, speech. "Don" means sir, and is a title formerly attached to the last name of a Spaniard of high rank. By beginning his story with the words "There was a man," Arturo signals that the anecdote belongs to the realm of myth. The musician is as much entertainer as he is businessman, and readers are meant to sympathize with him. Although the poem does have a "folklorish" quality to it, it is important to know that Cruz bases the poem on an actual man named Don Arturo, a Cuban immigrant and friend of Cruz who lives in New York City. ***Lines 6-15*** By first showing the joy people experienced from the street musician's entertainment, and then saying that he was arrested "three times a week" for his work, Cruz underscores how the law can often work against the desires of ordinary people. Not only is the musician penalized for performing on the street, but so are the "huge crowds" who come to see him, as they are now deprived of his music and his toys. The Don Arturo on whom the poem is based used to play his guitar and sell his puppets outside of Gimbel's and Macy's in New York City, two of the largest department stores in two of the busiest parts of Manhattan. As with the character in the poem, Arturo was also arrested regularly.

Lines 16-25

Humor and irony are at work in this poem. Readers don't expect a man arrested for a petty crime to even have the opportunity to perform in court. His performance is funny for two reasons: first, because it involves a puppet show, something usually associated with children and, often, silliness; second, because he performs in a courtroom, a place conventionally associated with somber and dry activity. The detectives' and court clerks' response to the performance is also humorous, as they "rolled on the floor." It is ironic that these people bought puppets and whistles from the man because they are part of the very system that is prosecuting him for selling them. The detectives and court clerks are linked to the crowds that came to see the man perform in shopping areas in that they also belong to the working class. By buying puppets and responding to him the way they do the detectives and clerks show their allegiance to the values of the working class. They demonstrate that although they work for the state, they are not its puppets who blindly behave as they are directed.

Lines 25-34

The judge functions here as a symbol of institutional authority. His anger is the humorless anger of the state responding to something it does not condone nor understand. It is significant that the word "business," the poem's title, is uttered for the first time by the judge. When he asks "What kind of business is this[?]," he is using a rhetorical question, that is, a question which does not expect an answer and is more like a statement. The musician, symbolically representing the "little man," continues his irreverent behavior when he answers, "I am the monkey man / and the / Monkey man sells / Monkey business." These last lines provide the moral, or the message, of Don Arturo's story: Government may work to keep the little man in his place but in time the little man will win out.

The idea of business in its various guises is suggested in a number of ways in the poem. On a concrete and practical level, the musician is engaged in business, playing his guitar and selling his puppets and whistles to make a living. This kind of business conflicts with the business of the state, which is to regulate trading activity. By breaking the law and actively disrespecting the authority of the state, the musician engages in "monkey business." The musician's attitude at the end of the poem is that what he does is nobody's business but his own.

Summary

"Business" is one of the poems in the *Mainland* collection by Victor Hernandez Cruz. The poem speaks about the regular arrest of a street vendor whose subsequent performances in the courtroom delight everyone but the judge, who does not appreciate the vendor's apparent disrespect for convention.

The beginning of the poem attributes the story to a man named Don Arturo who says that there used to be a man who sold puppets and whistles to make his living. This man would also play guitar to attract people to his goods at shopping areas. Huge crowds would gather to see the man, and they would buy his puppets and whistles and throw coins into his guitar. Selling on the street in this fashion was against the law, so the man was arrested at least three times each week.

During each of the vendor's courtroom appearances, he would perform a puppet show for the detectives and court clerks, who would laugh hysterically at the antics. At the end of his courtroom performances, the people in the courtroom would always buy puppets and whistles from the man. The judge did not appreciate the interruption of the proceedings and demanded to know what kind of business was going on. The man replied that he was the Monkey man and that the Monkey man sells Monkey business.

Analysis

Cruz uses the literary technique of telling a fable to make a point without the need for identifying specific people or entities. As a fable, the story is told in the past tense, and the poem is presented from the third person narrative perspective, which means that the actions of the central character are observable while his thoughts and motivations remain unstated.

Cruz also utilizes much symbolism in the poem, especially with the items sold by the man. Puppets and whistles would probably be considered children's items, and yet the man's puppets symbolize the role of politicians and the common man under bureaucratic rule. The whistles represent the opportunity to call attention to inequities in the system and the injustices imposed on common people and those trying to conduct their own business. The man is able to make the court clerks and detectives laugh at his courtroom antics, which symbolizes their understanding and empathy for the man's situation as they, too, are subject to the same abstract rules which govern men's lives.

The man's statement that he is in the business of monkey business is meant to embarrass and show disdain for the judge, who symbolizes bureaucracy and government control. Ironically, the system devotes an inordinate amount of time and expense arresting and trying the vendor several times each week in order to squelch his activities, when he probably makes more money from his days in the courthouse than he does out on the streets where he is in violation.

In spite of the restraints and rules inflicted on working men, the man's feisty spirit and love of music provide a message of hope that the human spirit is indomitable and will persevere in spite of restrictions.

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Themes

Individualism

"Business" takes as its primary message the idea that individuals are more important and, in the long run, stronger than the state under which they live. Individualism, especially in the West, and in America in particular, forms the philosophical basis for modern democracies. The inalienable rights of the individual are codified in the Bill of Rights, which is the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Such rights restrict government's interference in the lives of its citizens. "Business" draws on the long history of individualism in America, eliciting sympathy from readers for the plight of a simple street musician who has been denied his right to make a living. Cruz highlights the importance of the individual in the West in two ways: one, he makes the main character in the story a vendor and a musician, someone who both sells things for a living and artistically expresses himself through his music; two, he places the individual in opposition to the law, an institutional branch of government which often squashes the rights of individuals. The judge's angry question, "What kind of business / is this[?]," is rhetorical, and meant to suggest that the kind of business practiced by the musician is against the law. The vendor first violated the law (presumably) by selling his wares and performing on the street, and then showed his contempt for the law by doing the same thing in court and winning over the detectives and court clerks. The judge symbolically represents not only the law but also the idea of collectivism, which puts the many ahead of the individual. The vendor's "monkey business" is the business of mischief, meant not only to disobey the law but to do it in such a way as to embarrass the law (represented by the judge) as much as possible. The embarrassment is meant to demonstrate that certain kinds of behavior may be illegal but not necessarily wrong, and that individuals are more important than abstract laws.

Law and Order

"Business" implicitly asks the question of how far the law should go in maintaining order in society. Cruz presents us with the dilemma of a person trying to make a living doing what he does best: singing, putting on puppet shows, and selling puppets and whistles. By all accounts the actions of this man are harmless. Indeed, he is giving pleasure to the many who watch him, as evidenced by the "huge crowds" he draws in shopping areas. He, like the crowds who stop to see him, is governed by the more elemental and emotional law of give and take. It is obvious that the public loves the musician. He not only draws "huge crowds" who give him money, but he also wins over the detectives and court clerks, who "rolled on the floor" in laughter after his puppet show. His arrest for accepting money from people is (presumably) because he is performing without a license. Rationales for licensing street performers include the need to maintain public order and the need to protect "legitimate" (i.e., licensed, tax-paying) businesses from competition. Public order, however, is often gained at the expense of joy and more basic human desires and needs. Regulation of street performers also acts in the best interest

of those with money who can afford to open nightclubs and other venues where people pay substantially more money to see acts than they would tip performers such as Don Arturo's guitarist. In this way, order is maintained for the many at the expense of the few. The only way for those oppressed by the (unfair) laws of the society to succeed is to be mischievous, like the musician, who flouts the law by flaunting his puppets.

Style

Parable

"Business" is a humorous anecdote in the form of a parable. Anecdotes are short stories, often conversational, told about a particular event. The reported speech in "Business" □ the poet's report of Don Arturo and Arturo's of the musician and judge□also underscores that conversational quality, as does the poem's use of nonliterary language.

Parables are short narratives told to make a point or to draw an analogy. The Bible is full of parables that Christ used to illustrate his teachings. In "Business" Cruz employs Don Arturo, a person of unknown origins, but someone Cruz implies holds high status in his community.

Symbolism

"Business" also employs symbolic imagery to point to a moral. Puppets are symbolic of the way the man himself is treated under the state, and highlight the idea that people who do not resist being manipulated and treated like puppets become puppets. "Monkey man" and "monkey business" are also symbolic terms, meant to suggest the mischief the man embodies in court and the notion that mischief is a form of behavior necessary to avoid becoming a puppet of the state.

Symbols can be public or private. Public symbols, like those Cruz uses, are easy to interpret because they signify an idea or thing familiar to a given culture or society. For example, in the United States the bald eagle symbolizes patriotism and pride in America. Private symbols are much more difficult to interpret because poets imbue them with personal meaning sometimes not accessible to readers, especially readers unfamiliar with a writer's work or life.

Historical Context

In "Don Arturo: A Story of Migration," an essay which originally appeared in Cruz's *By Lingual Wholes*, Cruz tells the story of Don Arturo, the character who relates the anecdote of the street musician in "Business." A musician himself and somewhat of a Don Juan, Arturo migrated to New York City in 1926 from Cuba. Cruz relates how Arturo seduced the wife of the minister who led the Christian band for which Arturo played guitar. Arturo traveled to the United States with the minister and band and played with them until the Great Depression hit, at which point Cruz writes that Arturo quit the band and became a street musician. In this essay it is clear that the street vendor and musician Don Arturo describes in "Business" is, in fact, himself. Cruz has taken language directly from the poem and used it in his story of Arturo. Compare the following paragraph to the poem:

When the market crashed he [Arturo] became a street
musician, taking a position outside Macy's and sometimes
Gimbel's. He played many instruments at the
same time, even putting a tambourine on his feet. He
sang popular Latin-American songs and told jokes.
Sometimes he got arrested and he put puppet shows
on in the courtroom. The court clerks rolled on
the floor.

When Cruz wrote this piece in 1981 he described Arturo as a 78-year-old bon vivant with few regrets in life. Arturo was still in New York City and full of the mischief he showed as the "Monkey man" in "Business." The Don Arturo of Cruz's essay offers witty observations about life and surviving under adverse circumstances just as the Don Arturo of Cruz's poems does.

Although Arturo migrated to the States in the '20s, the wave of Puerto Rican migration came much later, in the '50s and '60s. According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the number of Puerto Ricans in the United States almost quintupled from 1950 to 1970. In 1950, 301,000 Puerto Ricans lived in the states; in 1960, 890,000; by 1970, more than 1,400,000 lived in the states, the overwhelming majority of them in New York City. Today some 1,000,000 live in New York City, and 250,000 live in northern New Jersey. Out of this tremendous influx of Puerto Ricans to the mainland came the Nuyorican literary movement, of which Cruz was a leading figure. In their foreword to *The Puerto Rican Poets,* a seminal bilingual anthology of Nuyorican writing published in 1971, editors Alfredo Matilla and Iván Siláen write that "Puerto Rican poetry of the twentieth century, in Puerto Rico as well as New York, with a few exceptions, is a struggle against the agony of the ghetto (in the colony and the metropolis) and against the imposition of a crushing colonial state of mind." It is this drive for independence and freedom from the petty laws and crushing poverty so prevalent in city life that the musician in "Business" embodies. Cruz writes that "Don Arturo was an expert at survival."

Coming from a culture which values storytelling, many Nuyorican poets such as Cruz also became known for their high-powered readings. Cruz, in fact, is helped by his theater background, having written for and performed with various groups through the years, including the East Harlem Gut Theatre, a Puerto Rican collective of actors, musicians, and writers Cruz helped to found. In 1989 Nuyorican poet Miguel Algarin founded the Nuyorican Cafe in New York City, giving Nuyorican writers and performers a venue for their art. In 1998, poets from the Nuyorican Cafe won the Annual National Slam Poetry Tournament, a competition in which poets from various cities compete against each other by performing their poems and being evaluated by a panel of judges. Cruz himself occasionally performs at these events.

Literary Heritage

Victor Hernández Cruz writes out of the Nuyorican (sometimes called Neorican or Nurican) tradition. Either born in the United States, or born in Puerto Rico and raised on the mainland, Nuyorican writers infuse their adopted English language with Spanish and Black English to craft poems and stories about their experience on the United States' mainland. Puerto Ricans have a mixture of Taino, Arawak, Spanish, and African blood. The Taino and Arawak are native peoples that Ponce de Leon largely annihilated before bringing in African slaves to work the Spaniards' sugar plantations.

Because the vast majority of Puerto Ricans who moved to the mainland after World War II in search of economic opportunity settled in New York City or northern New Jersey, their poems and stories often address urban subjects and the difficulties of negotiating a new culture. The implicit subject of much Nuyorican writing is identity, and the ways in which Puerto Ricans often struggle to develop or retain a coherent one in the face of the many linguistic and ethnic barriers of the mainland. Jesus Colon's collection of sketches and essays, *A Puerto Rican in New York* (1961), is one of the first postwar books by a Puerto Rican to examine closely the real-life obstacles and joys of a Puerto Rican living in New York. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a flourishing of Nuyorican writing, with writers such as Piri Thomas and Cruz helping to bring the Puerto Rican experience to a wider readership.

Critical Overview

"Business" is a small poem, both in length and in ambition. Accordingly, critics have not paid much attention to it. However, they have reviewed *Mainland* , the collection in which it appeared. Writing for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Pamela Masingale Lewis notes that "reviewers of *Mainland* were pleased to see themes which departed from the New York experience. They marveled at the presence of multiple cultures in Cruz's poetry. One critic noted that the *Mainland voice is "more developed" and less self-conscious than that of Snaps* [Cruz's previous collection], but felt the abstractions were inappropriate for the sensuous imagery. On the whole, *Mainland* was lauded by critics for its diverse themes and the ease with which Cruz exposes the underside of mainland U.S.A. Reviewing *Mainland* for *Library Journal*, Dorothy Nyren writes that Cruz's "juxtaposition and intermingling of Latin and Anglo ways of seeing things gives an inner tension to the verse that makes it continually surprising and interesting." Laverne González, writing in the *Biographical Dictionary of Hispanic Literature in the United States*, agrees, saying that for Cruz, "Memory of the island experience invades and informs the mainland experience as images, languages, and allusions mingle with the reality of the Bronx, the United States, particularly California, and finally Puerto Rico again."

Allen Ginsberg and Ishmael Reed, two poets known for their experiments with poetic form and controversial content, were effusive in their praise of *Mainland*. On the book's dust jacket, Reed writes, "Victor Hernández Cruz is an original American poet. He is young, together, and his work is heavy pagan feet crushing the necks of the Imperial dead." Ginsberg's praise, like his poetry, is almost hallucinatory: "Poesy news front space anxiety police age inner city, spontaneous urban American language as Williams wished, high school street consciousness transparent, original soul looking out intelligent Bronx windows." Ginsberg's reference is to William Carlos Williams, the influential twentieth- century American poet who encouraged poets to discover the American idiom in their own neighborhoods.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

A widely published poet, fiction writer, and critic, Semansky teaches literature and writing at Portland Community College. In the following essay Semansky examines Cruz's poem "Business" in relation to the other poems which accompany it and in relation to the poem's speaker, Don Arturo.

Victor Hernandez Cruz's poem "Business" is the third poem in a suite of poems in his collection entitled *Mainland*. The other poems in the suite are "Atmosphere," "Love," "Memory," and "Music." All of these poems are both descriptive *and* didactic, that is, they both portray and instruct. This makes sense for a book which takes as its theme life in the United States from the perspective of someone who was born on the small island of Puerto Rico. As a group, then, these poems can be seen as a primer meant to educate readers on what to keep and think about when making the move to the mainland. As a poem, "Business" includes within it ideas and themes addressed in the other suite poems. An examination of these poems first will provide the groundwork for an analysis of "Business."

Before looking at the poems, however, it is necessary to consider the poems' speakers, for these are poems within poems. Cruz as the poet "reports" the words of a man named Don Arturo. Each poem begins "Don Arturo says"; Don Arturo is both a "type" of person and a real person, whom Cruz has written about before. As a type, he personifies the wise man who has lived a full and adventurous life and now dispenses advice about his experience so that others can learn from him. The real Don Arturo, the one about whom Cruz has written, is an elderly Cuban emigre with whom Cruz shares wine while listening to his adventures and pronouncements. In "Don Arturo: A Story of Migration," which appears in Cruz's collection *Red Beans*, Cruz describes Arturo in 1981: "Now 78, he still cultivates his famous corner in the Village [i.e., Greenwich Village in New York City, a famous bohemian neighborhood] come spring and summer. He savors memory like espresso coffee. He calls up his beautiful moments with women like an encyclopedia, though his memory sometimes scatters. The details he gives shine like light bulbs and make bridges with each other."

That the poems all begin "Don Arturo says" is significant because these poems carry the power of speech, of being passed down orally. Such a means of cultural transmission tells us that these poems circulate in a close-knit community which has a strong sense of cultural identity. All of them also espouse individualism and the idea that one must live in the present and the present must be seized. They suggest that passion is a greater good than reason, which can often squelch human capacity for joy. There are certain things about living on the mainland that one needs to understand in order to survive. In both "Atmosphere" and "Memory" Don Arturo tells readers "You have to know." What is it, however, that readers must know? Here is "Atmosphere":

Don Arturo says: You have to know what the atmosphere
is creating You have to know Because if it's
good You can go somewhere and make your own.

This small poem underscores the importance of self-awareness, and how the environment contributes to what one feels. It also highlights the capacity that human beings have to make their own way in the world, to create an atmosphere they can live in. Don Arturo's advice on "Memory" also points to the importance of self-awareness, this time in relation to words.

Don Arturo says: You have to know what you once
said / Because it could travel in the air for years / And
return in different clothes / And then you have to buy it.

The message here? Choose your words carefully because they could come back to bite you. Much of what Don Arturo offers in the way of advice is standard fare; that is, most of us, whether we are from Puerto Rico, Missouri, or China have heard this kind of advice in some form or another. What makes these poems different is precisely their form. Although the two poems above are straightforward and relatively easy to "decode," his poems on love and music are not. In "Love," for example, Cruz uses surrealist imagery to describe how the emotion can sometimes cripple our ability to think clearly.

Don Arturo says: If you put your hands in all the time /
Some day it will fly away with your mind.

Consistent with his advice to be self-aware, "Love" both warns of the danger of falling in love (too often) while also (seemingly) celebrating the euphoria of such an emotion. "Music" is similarly contradictory in its message:

Don Arturo says: There's supposed to be more sauce
than fish / It suppose to be like riding on a horse or
stepping out of the room / Without a single motion.

Readers are told what music *should* be like, suggesting that they *might* be experiencing it differently. Music, according to the speaker, should be an almost out-of-body experience, where the dancer and the dance become one. Rather than leading to an unawareness of one's environment, something that Arturo cautioned against in "Atmosphere," such mind-body unity allows the dancer to live fully in the present, in harmony with the surroundings. Music plays an integral role in Puerto Rican culture and in Cruz's poetry in general. It is no surprise that the central character in the longest Don Arturo poem, "Business," is a busker. He makes his living selling puppets and whistles and playing his guitar on the city streets. Unfortunately, the law does not condone the entertainer's business, arresting him regularly for what readers can only assume would be not having a license. In court, the same detectives who arrested him were won over by the man's performance and bought toys from him. When this happened

The judge got angry and yelled: What kind of business
is this / And the man said I am the monkey man and
the / Monkey man sells Monkey business.

The "monkey man" responds as he does because he is appalled by the atmosphere in which he finds himself and so, as Arturo advises, he creates his own. The law in this case hampers the man from enjoying his life and from giving joy to others. "Monkey" is used both symbolically and ironically here. Monkeys are mischievous animals, and "monkey business" suggests that the man does what comes naturally to him, as a monkey. But mischief is closely aligned to play, to a sense of living in the moment unencumbered by the petty requirements of governmental bureaucracy. Symbolically monkeys signify a prior unconscious part of humanity and are often linked to sorcerers and magic in folklore. The magic of this monkey man is his capacity to seduce others with his music and his puppets, to make them forget about their surroundings and to experience the joy of music and play. The phrase can also be read as ironic. That is, the musician doesn't really think of himself as a monkey man, but he is merely continuing to flout the law by responding to the judge in this (disrespectful) manner. The ambiguity of this poem's ending points to the lesson that Don Arturo wants readers to understand: be alive to the possibilities of the moment, and don't be beaten down by the system.

The business of "Business," then, is the work of the individual to stay alive in the world, a world often hostile to one's existence. It isn't mere physical survival that Don Arturo wants to teach readers about but emotional survival as well: the capacity to do what one loves best and to make a living at it, regardless of obstacles. The real Don Arturo, Cruz tells us, is also a survivor. After ingratiating himself to a minister and winning a place as a guitarist in the minister's band, Arturo seduced the minister's wife. Then, after tiring of the band, he became a street musician and vendor, selling toys and putting on puppet shows. The "monkey man" that Arturo describes in his story is Arturo himself. Cruz has fashioned a set of poems out of his experience with the actual Don Arturo; in this way, his poem can be seen as belonging to the genre of creative nonfiction, a label usually assigned to lyrical prose. This ingenious way of making poetry shows that Cruz, as a poet and storyteller, is also a survivor, refashioning the raw material of his own experience into both entertaining and meaningful forms.

Source: Chris Semansky, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Topics for Further Study

Interview at least five people, asking them about laws which they believe are unfair, then research the origins of those laws. Are the governmental reasons given for the laws' existence still valid today? Why or why not? How do the reasons of those you interviewed stack up against the government's explanation for the laws?

Research the regulations for street vending and performing in your city or town and then write an essay speculating on how you think Cruz's vendor would be treated if he were to ply his business in your neighborhood.

Interview a few recent immigrants to the United States, asking them about the role of street vending or performing in their countries. What differences do you see between their attitudes towards vending/performing and the attitudes of people in this country?

Spend a day at your local courthouse observing trials and proceedings, then write a description of your observations. Pay attention to the behavior of those being charged with crimes. Write a descriptive essay of your experience.

Compose an essay about an event in your life when you challenged institutional authority (school, the law, etc.), then craft a poem out of your essay. In what ways is the poem different from the essay?

Read Cruz's essay "Don Arturo: A Story of Migration" included in his collections *By Lingual Wholes* and *Red Beans*. The last sentence of the essay reads, "The way he got here the story you have been told." What do these words say about the truth of the essay, and what does the essay say about the truth of his poem "Business"?

Compare and Contrast

1972: The first bilingual anthology of Puerto Rican poetry is published, *The Puerto Rican Poets,* beginning the second wave of Nuyorican literature. Cruz is among those included.

1989: The Nuyorican Cafe in New York City opens, giving Puerto Rican writers, poets, and performers wider exposure.

1972: Almost one-and-a-half million Puerto Ricans live in the United States, up from only 301,000 in 1950.

1989: The number of Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. has grown to 2,300,000, with most of them living in New York City and northern New Jersey.

What Do I Read Next?

Turner, Faythe, ed., *Puerto Rican Writers at Home in the USA*, published in 1991, is an anthology of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction from Puerto Rican writers in the United States. Included in the anthology are writers who gained recognition in mid-century such as Piri Thomas and Miguel Piñero, as well as later writers like Cruz.

Ray Gonzalez's anthology *Currents from the Dancing River: Contemporary Latino Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry* collects writing from all Spanish-speaking people of the United States, both immigrants and native-born.

Cruz's 1997 book *Panoramas* contains many autobiographical essays as well as a hearty dose of his poetry.

Cruz's essay on Don Arturo, the man who relates the story of the street vendor in "Business," was originally published in his *By Lingual Wholes* in 1982 and reprinted in his 1991 collection of poetry and prose, *Red Beans*. In "Don Arturo: A Story of Migration," Cruz recounts incidents from the life of a now-elderly Cuban man who immigrated to New City in 1926. This essay is indispensable for understanding "Business."

Further Study

Cruz, Victor Hernández, Leroy Quintana, and Virgil Suárez, eds., *Paper Dance: 55 Latino Poets*, Persea Books, 2000.

Presenting the work of both well-known and lesserknown Latino and Latina poets living in the United States, this anthology explores relationships between tradition and change, Spanish and English, rural and urban, private and public, female and male, and young and old.

Jones, LeRoi, and Larry Neal, eds., *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, William Morrow, 1968.

As a poet with African as well as Spanish and Indian blood, Cruz's writing frequently appears in anthologies of African-American literature. *Black Fire* is one of the first such anthologies to publish Cruz and provides a strong sampling of African-American writers whose reputations would grow in the coming decades.

Matilla, Alfredo, and Iván Siláen, eds., *The Puerto Rican Poets*, Bantam Books, 1972.

Matilla and Siláen put together the first bilingual anthology of Puerto Rican poetry that spans the twentieth century. This anthology contains many names not included in subsequent anthologies of Puerto Rican literature.

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Babáin, Maria Teresa, and Stan Steiner, eds., *Borinquen*, Knopf, 1974.

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Marzán, Julio, *Inventing a Word*, Columbia University Press, 1980.

Masingale Lewis, Pamela, *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Afro-American Poets since 1955*, edited by Trudier Harris and Thadious M. Davis, Vol. 41, Gale, 1985, pp. 74-84.

Nyren, Dorothy, review of *Mainland*, in *Library Journal*, February, 1973, p. 549.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literature of Developing Nations for Students (LDNfS) 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, LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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

LDNfS 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 Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS series.

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

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

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

Citing Literature of Developing Nations for Students

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

□Night.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

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

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

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS, 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 Literature of Developing Nations 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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