The Big Money Study Guide

The Big Money by John Dos Passos

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Introduction

John Dos Passos's *The Big Money* (1936) argues that the pursuit of the American dream ends in corruption. No matter what good intentions the characters possess, the desire for big money tarnishes, and eventually destroys, their authenticity. Dos Passos illustrates this idea by detailing the personal journey of each character and providing a sketch of an actual public figure whose life parallels, frames, or comments on the fictional characters' lives. For example, Dos Passos tells the story of Charley Anderson, an upstanding young mechanic who earned the Croix de Guerre during the War. Though Anderson starts out a simple mechanic, his longing for the American dream pushes him to a bigger and better career in aviation. Success, greed, and lust quickly lead to Charley's downfall. Dos Passos uses biographical pieces about famed inventors Henry Ford, Frederick Winslow Taylor, and Thorstein Veblen to put Charley's unhappy tale in context. *The Big Money* also showcases Dos Passos's subjective, stream-of-consciousness invention, the Camera Eye. Expressing an autobiographical viewpoint of sorts, the Camera Eye offers a fluid, first-person look at the world.

John Dos Passos is an author from the "Lost Generation," a term Gertrude Stein used to describe American bohemian-modernist writers of the 1920s and 1930s who lived in Europe during World War I and the Depression years. His novel *The Big Money* (1936) marks the end of that Lost Generation, a time of disillusionment, cynicism, and youthful idealism. Dos Passos, along with his fellow writers, witnessed the horrors of war and contemplated the true meaning of life and humanity, particularly in terms of American materialism and excess. Ironically, due to Dos Passos's changing political views, he became relatively unknown compared to Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and other members of the Lost Generation.

The Big Money is the third and final book in a series called the "U.S.A. Trilogy." Alfred Kazin in "Dos Passos, Society, and the Individual" calls *The Big Money* "the most ambitious" of the series. Stylistically speaking, *The Big Money* resembles the other two novels in the trilogy—*42nd Parallel* and *1919*—by telling the stories of Mary French, Margo Dowling, Richard Ellsworth Savage, among others, through a stream-of-consciousness technique and a montage of biographical, journalistic, and fictional pieces. This fragmented style reflects the Lost Generation's uncertainty and search for self in a world where the future was no longer guaranteed. The "U.S.A. Trilogy," published after six years of writing, describes the eternal, and often unsuccessful, quest for the American dream.

Author Biography

John Dos Passos

John Dos Passos was born in Chicago on January 14, 1896 and educated around the world. After graduating from Harvard University in 1916, Dos Passos went to study art and architecture in Spain. This worldly schooling inspired Dos Passos's interest in international social and political activity and led to his voluntary participation as an ambulance driver in France and Italy during World War I. Despite his active role in the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps, Dos Passos found time to finish his first novel in 1918, the year he joined the U.S. military. Dos Passos continued to write throughout his military career, and his works, in both theme and character, stand as a testament to his experiences in the war. During World War II, Dos Passos broadened his writing career by working as a journalist.

John Dos Passos wrote *The Big Money*, the first novel in his "U.S.A. Trilogy," in 1936. In 1947, his wife of eighteen years died in an automobile accident that left him partially blind. In his later career, Dos Passos leaned toward Communism and became conservative in his political views; some critics claim his work lost impact stylistically after his turn of opinion. In addition to more than forty novels, Dos Passos also wrote travel books, poetry, plays, and political essays. He died on September 28, 1970, in Baltimore.

Plot Summary

Chapter 1: Charley Anderson

Lieutenant Charley Anderson, war ace, returns to America on a ship from France. He looks forward to being home.

In "Newsreel XLIV," the repetition of the lyric "*Yankee doodle*" juxtaposed against capitalized headlines such as "DEADLOCK UNBROKEN AS FIGHT SPREADS" as well as against a journalistic piece about "democratic rights" being trampled shows the crumbling of America from within.

Chapter 2: Charley Anderson

Charley finds a room at a hotel, then gets a drink with his friend Ollie Taylor. At a dinner party, Charley enjoys the company of pretty young Doris Humphries.

In "Newsreel XLV," lyrics also illustrate the power women have over men as a "*St. Louis woman wid her diamon' rings / Pulls dat man aroun' by her apron strings*." This section reveals how women influence men's buying behaviors in their pursuit of "*social prestige*." With this commentary, headlines reveal violence: a "DAYLIGHT HOLDUP," a "MAN SLAIN," a "DESPERATE REVOLVER BATTLE."

The "American Plan" begins with the image of Frederick Winslow Taylor, a pioneering efficiency expert. While attending Harvard, "he broke down from overwork [so] the doctor suggested manual labor." Taylor became a machinist and gradually worked his way through the ranks to become chief engineer of Pennsylvania's Midvale Iron Works Plant. Obsessed with production, he developed the "Taylor System of Scientific Management," and although he "increased efficiency" for Bethlehem Steel, he was fired. Eventually, Taylor had a breakdown and died of pneumonia "with a watch in his hand" in 1915 on his fifty-ninth birthday.

"Newsreel XLVI" focuses on men returning from World War I with headlines like "EXSERVICE MEN DEMAND JOBS." The lyrics, "*No one knows / No one cares if I'm weary / Oh how soon they forgot Château-Thierry*," express the emotions of ex-soldiers. Irony comes with the headline "PROSPERITY FOR ALL SEEN ASSURED," as returning servicemen struggle to find their place in this world and "assured" success.

The narrator of "The Camera Eye (43)" is unknown, yet the "eye" offers a string of memories that affect the narrator physically and emotionally; for example his "throat tightens when the redstacked steamer churning the faintlyheaving slatecolored swell" and his "spine stiffens with the remembered chill of the offshore Atlantic." By connecting images of food, the hustle-bustle of the daily commute, and eventually of "shantytowns," the narrator provides a stark contrast between the quintessential image of American "home" and white-collar success to negative, even realistic, images of American life.

Finally, life ends "in the old graveyard by the brokendown brick church" and by pulling in one final image of a soldier returning home from France after many "hated years in the latrinestench at Brocourt."

"Newsreel XLVII" focuses on prospects society in a series of advertisements: "boy seeking future offered opportunity … good positions for bright … CHANCE FOR ADVANCEMENT … boy to learn … errand boy." The lyrics in this section represent the boy's response to these employment calls: "*Oh tell me how long / I'll have to wait / … / Do I get it now / Or must I hesitate / … / Oh tell me how long*."

"The Camera Eye (44)" views an "unnamed arrival" from the Foreign Legion returning to Manhattan. In New York, he is in a completely different world and is "stuffed into a boiled shirt a tailcoat too small a pair of dresstrousers too large," as if it is a "forsomebodyelsetailored suit." This young man is offered an "opportunity," because of his supposed skill with a "foreign language," but cannot take it because he is not the man the men offering the job believe him to be—a case of "mistaken identity."

Chapter 3: Charley Anderson

Charley meets his brother Jim, old man Vogel, and his Aunt Hartmann. Jim owns a Ford automobile agency. Charley and Jim visit their dying mother in the hospital. She considers Charley her "prodigal son," because he "made quite a name for himself over there" in the war zone. Jim wants Charley to use his "returnedhero" status, as well as his "connections in the Legion and aviation," to boost business for his automobile shop. But Charley already has "an aviation proposition" with his former commanding officer. Charley's mother dies, and feeling lonely, he visits a girl he once knew, Emiscah. They make love after she becomes upset about her tedious job. Emiscah writes a note telling him she "never loved anybody but him." Not wanting to marry, Charley rejects her.

The family reads the mother's will. While Charley wants to invest in "airplane motors," Jim wants him to invest in a "sure thing": the Ford. Charley decides to sign over his money to Jim, on the condition that Jim lends him four hundred dollars immediately for Charley to invest. Emiscah threatens to kill herself unless he visits her. He plans to lie but, seeing her so "thin and pale," makes another date with her. He leaves town, though he feels a bit guilty.

In "Newsreel XLVIII," industry is taking over America, as shown by the first line, "truly the Steel Corporation stands forth as a corporate colossus both physically and financially." The era's dance halls are portrayed in the lyrics, "*Now the folks in Georgia they done gone wild / Over that brand new dancin' style / Called Shake That Thing*." There is also tragedy, reflected in the headlines "Woman of Mystery Tries Suicide in Park Lake" and "BOMB WAGON TRACED TO JERSEY," while the headline "LETTER SAID GET OUT OF WALL STREET" foreshadows tragedy to come.

The section "Tin Lizzie" focuses on Henry Ford. Raised on a farm, he believes "big money" can be found with "quick turnover, cheap interchangeable easilyreplaced

standardized parts." When machinists are not happy with the way Ford runs production, he gives workers a small "cut in the profits." Eventually the workers turn on Ford and the "strings" he attaches to salaries and profit-making: "cops broke heads, job-hunters threw bricks," and chaos destroyed Ford's property. Later, to raise money to buy out his minority stockholders, Ford makes buyers pay cash on the dollar for cars, rather than using credit. In 1922, Ford becomes "the richest man in the world." However, Ford lowers wages and alienates workers by forcibly preventing them from unionizing. Ironically, in a world changing because of industry, Ford lives out his old age in old-fashioned traditions and "the way it used to be, / in the days of horses and buggies."

"Newsreel XLIX" begins with the lyrics, "*Jack o' Diamonds Jack o' Diamonds / You rob my pocket of silver and gold*." The newsreel shows the dark product that American industry churned out:

the men who … were fighting their battle for democracy upon the bloodstained fields of France [with] their instruments of murder, their automatic rifles, their machineguns, their cannon that could clear a street two miles long in a few minutes and the helmets that the workers of Gary had produced.

The newsreel also mentions the new business of "purchasing evidence of indebtedness."

Chapter 4: Charley Anderson

Charley returns to New York. He runs out of money and needs to find something to "tide [him] over" until his big plans come to fruition. He dates Doris Humphries and asks her to "hold off on the other guys for a little while" until he becomes financially secure. She declines. Charley joins a poker game at the repair shop where he works and saves some of his winnings. He also dates Eveline Hutchins Johnson, Al's sister-in-law, and at the same time, receives a letter from Emiscah, who asks for money. Not wanting to commit to any of these women, Charley uses his poker winnings to "arrange meetings with agreeable young women."

Charley's fortunes finally improve when he gets a position as a supervising engineer at the Askew-Merritt Company "earning two hundred and fifty a week." Charley has doubts about the men behind the deal.

"Newsreel L" assures that "with few exceptions the management of our government has been and is in honest and competent hands, that the finances are sound and well managed." The headline, "GRAND JURY WILL QUIZ BALLPLAYERS," refers to the 1919 World Series scandal, in which eight Chicago White Sox baseball players deliberately lost the World Series. Other headlines depict industrial progress: "NEWLY DESIGNED GEARS AFFORDING NOT / ONLY GREATER STRENGTH AND LONGER / LIFE BUT INCREASED SMOOTHNESS." As technology becomes more streamlined, people's lives are adversely affected.

"The Bitter Drink" offers a biography of Thorstein Veblen, economist and sociologist. He became famous after writing *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), a satire about American society. He was a "brilliant unsound eccentric" who "suffered from woman trouble." He published several books, including *The Theory of Business Enterprise, The Instinct of Workmanship*, and *The Vested Interests and The Common Man*, which marked a society "dominated by monopoly capital" and demonstrated the "sabotage of life by blind need for money profits." After advocating for the working class and efficiency in production, he died bitter and wanted his life and work to be forgotten.

"Newsreel LI" offers a glimpse of the role of women in society. The contrast between "GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS," and those women offered respectable positions, such as "caretakers … cashiers … chambermaids … waitresses … cleaners … file clerks" is sharp. However, these jobs for "intelligent young women" do not reflect the "good chance for advancement" and the promise of "good salaries, commissions, bonuses, prizes, and business opportunities" the newsreel claims.

Chapter 5: Mary French

Mary French was raised in a typical American house. After her father loses money in an investment and her brother dies, Mary's family moves to Trinidad where her father becomes a doctor at the mines. When her mother inherits money after Mary's grandfather's death, the family moves to Colorado Springs where Mary feels alienated because the high school girls only "talk about parties and the Country Club and sets of tennis."

Mary attends Vassar and is friends with "lush and Jewish and noisy" Ada Cohn. During Mary's time at Vassar, her parents divorce. Mary and Ada take summer jobs in Chicago "doing settlementwork," but Ada has a "nervous breakdown" over the "way poor people lived." Mary spends the new semester at Vassar attending "lectures about current events and social conditions." Mary returns home when her mother falls ill. She fills in for her father's administrative assistant and finds the job exhausting. In her spare time, she reads *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. One morning, she discovers her father dead. She intends to return to Vassar, but she ultimately decides to stay in Chicago.

Chapter 6: Mary French

Mary attends a lecture by George Barrow and begins dating him. Over the summer, she takes a miserable job as a "countergirl." She quits and eventually gets a job at the *Times-Sentinel* reporting "both sides" of a story involving agitators of a mill strike. Mary conducts interviews, guided by Gus Moscowski, an officeboy for Amalgamated, who shows her "how folks live on fortytwo cents an hour." The squalor upsets Mary. She is fired because she reveals both sides, as assigned. She works with Gus doing publicity for the Amalgamated, or the unionizers. She falls for Gus, but he is arrested "distributing leaflets." When George Barrow returns to town with the Senatorial Investigating

Commission, he asks her to be his secretary. She agrees, hoping to defend the striking workers from "inside" Washington.

In Washington, Mary and George develop a relationship. George insists "the workingman is often his own worst enemy." Mary tells George they "are as responsible as anybody for selling out the steelworkers" and she no longer wants to be a "laborfaker," earning her "living off the workingclass." Mary soon realizes she is pregnant, and, fearful George will pressure her to marry him, she thinks about suicide. She heads to New York and begs Ada to help her get an abortion. Eventually she tells George about her predicament in a "specialdelivery letter" and he gives her the address of a doctor. Mary gets the abortion and, not long afterward, seeks new employment.

"The Camera Eye (46)" shows the life of the "walking desperate." It also tells the story of those trying to help those "underdog" unionizers "urging action in the crowded hall." This section also shows the guilt industry leaders feel about laying a false foundation for the American dream: "why not tell these men stamping in the wind that we stand on a quicksand?"

"Newsreel LII" looks at the day's seamy goings on. The "BODY TIED IN BAG" is anonymous, like the "Two Women's Bodies in Slayer's Baggage" and the "Girl Out of Work" who "Dies From Poison."

"Art and Isadora" offers a biographical snapshot of dancer Isadora Duncan. As a young woman, Isadora danced at clubs and onstage in New York where her family ran up bills and neglected rent. They traveled the world, "staying at the best hotels … in a flutter of unpaid bills." She "was the vogue" and was "considered dangerous by the authorities." She returned to America "in triumph" but "found no freedom for Art" there. "At the height of her glory," Isadora's children and their nurse drowned in a freak car accident. Isadora drank heavily, dated many men, tried to commit suicide, and lost her money, but kept dancing. She died when her scarf caught in the wheel of a car and broke her neck.

"Newsreel LIII" asks the question, "ARE YOU NEW YORK'S MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL STENOGRAPHER?"

Chapter 7: Margo Dowling

"Margie" meets Fred, her drunken father, every night at the train station on his way home. She dreams about escaping her life but has happy memories of summers spent with her father and stepmother Agnes. When Fred gets arrested, Agnes and Margie leave for Brooklyn where Agnes's parents live. Margie does not like Brooklyn, and when Agnes gets a job as a cook, she sends Margie to live at a convent. The convent is dark and oppressive and Margie is thrilled to move to a brownstone with Agnes and her husband, Mr. Frank Mandeville, an actor with a musical act.

Billed as Little Margo, Margie joins the Musical Mandevilles act. Margie develops a crush on Frank Mandeville and one afternoon, when Frank comes home drunk, depressed over signing a contract to perform on "the filthy stage of a burlesque house,"

he rapes her, then threatens to kill her if she tells. Margie gravitates toward Tony Garrido, a guitar player from Cuba, and wants to run off and marry him. Tony does not want to get married, but they take the plunge and move to Havana.

"Newsreel LIV" offers a wide view of society, starting with the "morning's trading" and ending with Rudolph Valentino "collaps[ing] … in his apartment at the Hotel Ambassador." The section shows celebrities and working-class folk alike falling into despair, as a "RUSSIAN BARONESS [COMMITS] SUICIDE IN MIAMI," "3000 AMERICANS ARE FOUND PENNILESS IN PARIS," and a "*poor girl*" laments her sad fortune in song, despite President Coolidge ironically advocating prosperity "Under His Policies."

"Adagio Dancer" tells the story of actor Rudolph Valentino. After arriving from Italy, he took odd jobs in New York but longed for a life in the "brightlights." The handsome young man eventually ended up on a vaudeville tour where he adopted his new name. Soon, in Hollywood, he got his big break in the film *The Four Horsemen*. Valentino lived the life of luxury and was the object of worship and scandal. He died at the age of thirty-one from complications from a gastric ulcer. His funeral was a chaotic mob scene.

"Newsreel LV" opens with the image of "THRONGS IN STREETS" and the repetitive lyrics, "*Close the doors / They are coming / Through the windows*." In addition, the "'Physician' Who Took Prominent Part in Valentino Funeral" is "Exposed as Former Convict."

"The Camera Eye (47)" describes the texture of the port as the "sirens boom in the fog over the harbor." The harbor offers opportunity, inviting people to "join up sign on the dotted line enlist" and to "rebuild yesterday." The Camera Eye also sees life on the street: the "old men chewing in lunchrooms," the "drunk bums," and the "two shadows [kissing] under the stoop of the brown-stone." These all take on the role of "unidentified stranger," of faceless people trying to eek out an existence.

Chapter 8: Charley Anderson

Charley meets with broker Nat Benton. Charley has been busy in manufacturing and lives with Joe Askew's family. Charley goes to a dinner party at Doris Humphries's apartment. Drunk on champagne, he talks to Doris about marriage, but she rejects him. He finds solace in a prostitute and forces her to pretend she is Doris. Charley, Andy Merritt, and Joe Askew fly "one of the sample planes" to Washington, D.C., "to show off some of [Charley's] patents to the experts at the War Department." Merritt thinks they will need "a separate corporation" to market their new airplane starter. Merritt remains in New York to "negotiate contracts with the government experts," but if those do not succeed, they have "big offers from Detroit" lined up. Charley celebrates their near-success, but he works hard as production ramps up. He acquires "all the Askew-Merritt stock he [can] get his hands on" and discovers the world of credit and debt.

James Yardley Farrell of the Tern Company asks Charley to work for him in Detroit, suggesting that "in a new industry like [theirs] the setup changes fast." Doris evades Charley when he wants desperately to marry her. She writes a letter saying she is

marrying someone else. Charley carouses to forget and exchanges his Askew-Merritt stock for Tern stock, bound for Detroit.

"Newsreel LVI" and "The Camera Eye (48)" focus on people traveling, either to check on their fortunes or to seek their fortunes elsewhere after life does not work out as they planned. The lyrics, "*Feel that boat arockin*'" and "*What's that whistle sayin' / All aboard*," are followed by an image of a "LINER AFIRE," then by the refrain of someone "*goin' where there's more*." The Camera Eye's frequent repetition of the word "westbound" underscores the determination and desperation of the speaker to arrive at his final destination. Lyrics also urge escape: "*get away old man get away*."

Chapter 9: Margo Dowling

Margo and Tony arrive in Havana. Margo is dismayed by the "fine residential section," which is "full of dust and oily smells and wagons and mulecarts." Tony forgets to translate for Margo, who becomes frustrated. Tony and Margo fight about her unhappiness; when she punches Tony in the eye, the neighborhood teases him. Pregnant, Margo thinks about killing herself but decides against it. The old women deliver her baby, which is blind and soon dies. Margo writes "desperate letters to Agnes," asking for money and wanting to return home. She visits the consul, and a young man named George offers to help. They have a romantic tryst, and George promises to "write her every day."

Agnes is now the manager of one of Miss Franklyn's tea rooms and takes Margo to a new apartment. Frank makes a pass at Margo, who slaps him soundly and threatens to tell Agnes what happened between them in the past.

"Newsreel LVII" shows how ordinary women were overcome by life's problems while royal women could let the world pass outside their train window, with headlines like "UNHAPPY WIFE TRIES TO DIE," "Society Women Seek Jobs in Vain," and "QUEEN SLEEPS AS HER TRAIN DEPARTS."

Chapter 10: Margo Dowling

Margo goes to work as a chorus girl for Flo Ziegfield and dates Tad Whittlesea, Yale halfback and millionaire's son. Margo considers Tad too much of a spendthrift; he does not seem good enough for her future plans. She dates married casting director Jerry Herman and rejects Tad when he calls. Margo juggles Jerry and Tad. Soon, Jerry grows frustrated with Margo's behavior and breaks up with her. Tad invites her to go on a cruise from Jacksonville to the West Indies. Margo asks Queenie Riggs, a friend from the company, to accompany her, while Tad brings Dick Rogers to complete the foursome. Margo refuses to have sex with Tad on the train to Jacksonville, telling him "Heaven won't protect a workinggirl unless she protects herself." Tad proposes when they arrive at the port in Jacksonville. She does not agree absolutely, but he buys her a ring.

When the boat has engine trouble, they return to Jacksonville where Margo sees Tony at a bar. She finds him unattractive and effeminate. Tony refers to her as "his dear wife," and Tad invites him on their cruise. In the morning, Margo gets a letter with some money from Tad, canceling their trip. Margo takes care of Tony when he becomes ill from too much drinking. He steals her money and jewelry and leaves her with his hotel bill. She contemplates hocking her engagement ring for a bus ticket home.

"Newsreel LVIII" asserts that paradise has been overtaken by industry and progress. The Bay of Biscayne bank stands where "a farmer's hitching-yard" used to be and the Hotel Royal Palm rises from "vegetable patches." The lyrics, "*Lazy River flowing to the southland / Down where I long to be*," echo this nostalgic look at the past. Also, the contrast between women's expected and unexpected roles in society is shown through the headlines, "WOMAN DIRECTS HIGHWAY ROBBERY" and "GIRL EVANGELS AWAIT CHRIST IN NEW YORK."

"The Campers at Kitty Hawk" recalls the first flight conducted by Orville and Wilbur Wright "and notes that "in two years they had a plane that would cover twenty-four miles at a stretch." But "the Wright brothers passed out of the headlines" in the blur of new inventors, war, and the stock market.

Detroit, that "marvelous industrial beehive," is the focus of "Newsreel LIX." The headlines, "DETROIT LEADS THE WORLD IN THE MANUFACTURE OF AUTOMOBILES," "DETROIT THE DYNAMIC RANKS HIGH," and "DETROIT THE CITY WHERE LIFE IS WORTH LIVING," show a city where progress never sleeps and the American dream is within reach. Song lyrics belie the headlines: "*I've a longing for my Omaha town / I long to go there and settle down*."

Chapter 11: Charley Anderson

Charley arrives in Detroit for his new job. At a Country Club dance, he meets Anne Bledsoe, his boss's daughter, who enjoys flying. Over the summer, they spend much of their time together. Charley is a success; "As vicepresident and consulting engineer of the Tern Company he was making $25,000 a year." He and Bill Cermak attempt to develop a new motor.

One afternoon on the Farrells' yacht, he proposes to Anne. She cannot commit to an answer. Charley kisses Gladys Wheatley, who is dating Anne's brother. A week after the boat ride, Gladys introduces Charley to her parents. Mr. Wheatley assumes they will marry. Not long after Thanksgiving, Charley and Gladys's engagement, announced at a dinner party thrown by the Wheatleys, hits the papers. They have a son and a daughter right away, and Gladys focuses her energies on the babies, rather than on Charley. Charley kisses his secretary Elsie Finnegan.

Charley and Bill Cermak test out a new motor and have an accident. Bill dies of a skull fracture, while Charley is left with fractured ribs and breathing problems. Bill's widow sues the company for $500,000. Charley invites Nat Benton to go on a fishing trip in the

Florida Keys. On his way to meet Nat, he picks up a girl at a sodashop and offers her a ride to Miami; the girl is Margo Dowling. While Charley and Nat are on vacation, the Tern stock plummets. Charley loses big and sells all his airplane stock. To forget his troubles, he has sex with a girl he met once when he was out with Nat. During his interlude, a lawyer bursts in and announces that Gladys is suing him for divorce.

"Newsreel LX" reflects difficulties of marriage: "To young Scotty marriage seemed just a lark, a wild time in good standing. But when she began to demand money and the extravagant things he couldn't afford did Céline meet him halfway?" The tone becomes optimistic with the clip, "speculative sentiment was encouraged at the opening of the week by the clearer outlook," and the lyrics, "*Good-bye east and goodbye west / Good-bye north and all the rest / Hello Swan-ee Hello*."

Chapter 12: Margo Dowling

Margo returns to New York City. She dates Charley, who "kept offering to set [her] up in an apartment on Park Avenue." She allows him to play some of her money on the stockmarket. Jules Piquot, a "middleaged roundfaced Frenchman" shows interest in Margo. She models for him, but he is "going broke." He has a change of fortune when Vogue decides to photograph his collection. The photographer offers to take pictures of Margo at his studio, which are semi-nudes. Piquot dies owing Margo "back wages"; Margo asks Charley for money. Tony shows up at Margo's after being beaten up by a gang. She asks Charley for more money, but he reveals that he is "hard up for cash, that his wife had everything tied up on him, that he'd had severe losses on the market." She commits Tony to a sanatorium and goes back to her job as an entertainer in Miami.

"Newsreel LXI" suggests that anyone with money can buy paradise, as the "TOWN SITE OF JUPITER SOLD FOR TEN MILLION DOLLARS," and "*like Aladdin with his magic lamp, the Capitalist, the Investor and the Builder converted what was once a desolate swamp into a wonderful city*." Florida equates with success, as shown in the "ACRES OF GOLD NEAR TAMPA," specifically "the *spot where your future joy, contentment and happiness is so sure that to deviate is to pass up the outstanding opportunity of your lifetime*." This dream is in dire contrast to the tragedy as a "GIANT AIRSHIP BREAKS IN TWO IN MID-FLIGHT" and a husband following his "WIFE IN LEAP FROM WINDOW."

Chapter 13: Charley Anderson

Over the years, Charley has grown weary, cynical, and out of shape, despite his nickname as the "boy wizard of aviation financing." He is still carousing. Soon, however, he is out of a job when a deal with Merritt and Farrell falls apart and a patent suit develops. Charley heads for Florida. On the way he meets Margo, who joins him for the rest of his trip south. When they arrive in Florida, Margo suggests they go "on the wagon" and stop drinking so much. The senator sends him a veiled warning via a telegram: Sell stocks because a bill would soon be passed "to subsidize airlines." While the stocks were substantially lower, Charley begins to buy them back in hopes of

making a profit. He goes fishing with the senator's friend Judge Homer Cassidy, who, like Charley, also wants to "make a pile" of money.

After a night of drinking, Charley takes a girl named Eileen for a wild ride; he races a train and tries to "beat [it] to the crossin'." Charley and Eileen end up in the hospital after the car stalls on the tracks. Margo visits him and asks for money. She also tells him Eileen's family plans to sue him. His brother Jim flies down to Florida and asks if he has a will. Jim also suggests Charley give him power of attorney.

"Newsreel LXII" debunks the myth of living happily ever after in paradise, as "celery growers [use] a spray containing deadly poison," "banks are having trouble in Florida," a "HURRICANE SWEEPS SOUTH FLORIDA," and "MARTIAL LAW LOOMS."

Chapter 14: Margo Dowling

Agnes comes to Florida after Charley's death, where Margo lives in a house Charley rented for her. Charley's brother is "threatening to sue to get back some securities." Judge Cassidy tells Margo that Charley "left his affairs in considerable confusion." Cliff Wegman arrives and asks Margo to marry him. She declines, not wanting anything to sidetrack her career. Margo has success investing in Miami real estate, but her assets are not liquid. Tony wants Margo to send him back to Havana. Instead Margo, Agnes, and Tony drive to Hollywood, so Margo can be a movie star.

"Newsreel LXIII" follows the exploits, triumphs, and dangers of celebrity pilot Charles Lindbergh.

The section "Architect" profiles Frank Lloyd Wright. As a young man, he arrived in Chicago with ambition and little money. He landed a job at an architect's office. "The son and grandson of preachers, he became a preacher in blueprints" and sought to rebuild America with a "new clean construction." His life was stormy, as he "raised children, had rows with wives, overstepped boundaries, got into difficulties with the law, divorce-courts, bankruptcy" and projects not completed.

"Newsreel LXIV" offers international snapshots, from "WEIRD FISH DRAWN FROM SARGASSO SEA" and "RUM RING LINKS NATIONS" to "GRAVE FOREBODING UNSETTLES MOSCOW" and "600 PUT TO DEATH AT ONCE IN CANTON."

"Newsreel LXV" reports the stock market crash, along with the lyrics, "*Bring me a pillow for my poor head / A hammer to knock out my brains / For the whiskey has ruined this body of mine / And the red lights have run me insane*." The newsreel ends with Smythe, who dies in agony after becoming infected from constant exposure to fumes at his job with an oil company.

Chapter 15: Mary French

Mary French lives in Ada's New York apartment rent-free when Ada leaves town for Michigan. Mary works as a researcher for the International Ladies' Garment Workers and Ben Compton, one of the "classwar prisoners released from Atlanta," stays with her. He is shaken by his experiences. After a week, they decide "that they [love] each other." Needing money, Mary asks her mother, now a Republican State Committeewoman, for $500. Ben uses the funds to pay for printing costs to support a strike. Eventually, Mary finds her own apartment and struggles to provide for them. Ben travels frequently to support labor rights. Mary battles for the strike committee; interviewing the strikers and their families, "she only [sleeps] four or five hours a night" and "[takes] to smoking a great deal." Her relationship with Ben begins to suffer. Mary moves to Boston, taking a position "on the Sacco-Vanzetti case." She writes articles, makes speeches, and feeds information to newspapermen for other stories. She takes more active roles in protests and has run-ins with the police.

"Newsreel LXVI" and "The Camera Eye (50)" return to the Sacco-Vanzetti case of 1927, about two who were convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of a "paymaster." The lyrics of a labor movement anthem are scattered throughout the newsreel: "*For justice thunders condemnation / … / Arise rejected of the earth / … / It is final conflict / Let each stand in his place / … / The International Party / … / Shall be the human race*." The Camera Eye begins with an image common to participants of the labor movement: "they have clubbed us off the streets they are stronger they are rich they hire and fire the politicians the newspaper editors the old judges." The Camera Eye ends with the line "we stand defeated America."

"Poor Little Rich Boy" profiles millionaire William Randolph Hearst. Hearst made his fortune in newspapers, married a dancer, and became the governor of New York. But by 1914, "his affairs were in such a scramble he had trouble borrowing a million dollars and politically he was ratpoison," because he sympathized with the Germans and "opposed the peace of Versailles." Hearst retreats to his "castle" in California and dies an eccentric.

Chapter 16: Richard Ellsworth Savage

Dick finds himself strapped for cash; his personal and professional life is "lonely and hellish." He socializes and works with people either who are struggling to achieve their own American dreams or who have struggled and are now successful, like E. R. Bingham. At forty, Bingham was "in the midst of a severe economic struggle" and "was a physical wreck," but ultimately ended up creating what he calls "a healthy American home." Dick drinks to numb his emotions and has sex with two transvestite prostitutes who take his money. He is a hypocrite when he suggests to a colleague that they fire a young man because he "drinks too much" and does not do "serious work."

"Newsreel LXVIII" and "The Camera Eye (51)" present a mosaic of social, political, and international commentaries. Wall Street is "Stunned" but is "SURE TO RECOVER FROM

SLUMP." People still long to invest their hard earnings in the American dream but are wary of the market, as shown by a clip from an advice column: "I have saved four thousand dollars which I want to invest for a better income. Do you think I might buy stocks?" The anger and violence of the labor unions continue, as captured in the headlines, "MILL THUGS IN MURDER RAID" and "RADICALS FIGHT WITH CHAIRS AT UNITY MEETING." At the same time, hope remains, as "REAL VALUES [ARE] UNHARMED" and the "PRESIDENT SEES PROSPERITY NEAR." But the Camera Eye shows the hopelessness of American poverty, as "a man halfsits halflies propped up by an old woman two wrinkled girls that might be young chunks of coal flare in the hearth … without help in the valley hemmed by dark strike-silent hills the man will die."

"Power Superpower" presents a biography of Samuel Insull, who worked for Thomas Edison as an assistant. Not long after getting the company established in electricity, he moved on to gas; "When politicians got in his way, he bought them, when laborleaders got in his way he bought them." Soon, he controlled the light and power companies, "coalmines and tractioncompanies" across the United States, effectively manipulating "a twelfth of the power output of America." But the stock market crash brought him "on his knees to the bankers" and he was "forced to resign" from his companies. Insull and his wife escaped to Canada, then to Europe. Eventually he was forced from Greece and brought back to the United States where he was put on trial. Insull recounted his rags-to-riches story and cried for jury sympathy, earning his "not guilty" verdict.

Chapter 17: Mary French

Mary fills her life supporting the workers' rights, even at the expense of her personal relationships.

"Vag" ends the novel with the image of a hitchhiking vagabond used to hunger, poor health, and jail time. Making his way across the United States, he is abused by the police. He once "went to school," hoping for "opportunity" and a life "bigger than [his] neighbor."

Themes

The Dark Side of the American Dream

The Big Money deals with the bright illusion of the American dream: In this land of opportunities, everyone can have the lives they want. Jobs are plentiful, home is more than a roof and four walls, and every American can own a Tin Lizzie. World War I has made people weary, wounded, and looking for a better future. Emerging victorious from battles overseas, "America the Beautiful" beckons. But the pursuit of big money does not lead to contentment, companionship, or consciousness. The characters in the novel become numb as one opportunity after another brings them further from personal satisfaction. Mary French, a doctor's daughter from Colorado, goes from one job to the next and ends up an inconsequential worker bee for the labor revolution. Margo Dowling begins as a child actress, marries a man with a drinking problem, and ultimately becomes a mistress and a showgirl. Charley Anderson leaves the war a hero and dies a pathetic businessman after getting hit by a train. Richard Ellsworth Savage is a junior public relations executive looking to make the big money. For them, the American dream is not a possibility but a given. All work hard, sacrificing intimacy and love for success; they only have one goal: money. Unfortunately, money slips through their fingers as quickly as they can make it.

Along the road to achieving their dreams, the characters become sidetracked by lust, greed, and other vices. Dos Passos shows the gradual decay of the American dream as ambition and selfishness lead to bad decisions, tunnel vision, and a loss of direction. Alcohol and sex are used to erase feelings of emptiness and loneliness. The American dream deteriorates, as the quest for a happy ending makes a tragic turn. Like Dos Passos's repeated images of Florida, the American dream glitters like paradise, but is emotional chaos built on water and sand.

Fragments of the American Dream

John Dos Passos's unique storytelling style successfully serves the subject matter of *The Big Money*. The years during and after World War I marked a time of social, political, and economic upheaval. Some people struggled to make ends meet on the streets, while others drank champagne as they grew further in debt. The rich could become poor overnight, and vice versa; nothing was solid or predictable. The American dream was falling to pieces, and Dos Passos's fragmented approach captures this inevitable crash. By interspersing poetics with prose and quickly cutting from one character to another, Dos Passos uses the structure of the novel itself to frame its content. The collage of newsreels and use of fictional and nonfictional characters makes the reader feel like a participant in both story and history. Dos Passos wants the reader's experience to echo the characters': At first, the American dream seems whole and hopeful, but by the end the dream has shattered.

In addition, Dos Passos blends genres to illustrate how fiction and nonfiction are intertwined or, more specifically, how fiction may hold a mirror up to truth and reality. Juxtaposing Henry Ford against Charley Anderson or Isadora Duncan against Margo Dowling shows the reader that Dos Passos's story is not simply the made-up musing of an author, but rather a catalyst for the reader to think about patterns, likenesses, choices made, and roads not taken. The constant comparisons and contrasts also demonstrate how successful icons began as ordinary people with flaws, foibles, and big dreams.

Historical Context

The Lost Generation

The Lost Generation refers to a group of American literary intellectuals, poets, artists, bohemians, and writers who lived primarily in Paris but also other parts of Europe from the time period spanning the end of World War I to the beginning of the Great Depression. The term "Lost Generation" is attributed to Gertrude Stein but was popularized by Ernest Hemingway. In Hemingway's book *A Moveable Feast* (published posthumously in 1964), one chapter is entitled "Une Génération Perdue" Since the term is used to describe the generation of youth that came of age during World War I, this generation of youthful idealists who drank too much, had love affairs, sought the meaning of life, and created some of the best American literature is sometimes also referred to as the "World War I Generation." In France, they were known as the *Generation du Feu*, or the "Generation of Fire". Some of the more notable literary figures from this generation are F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and John Dos Passos. Some works representative of this period are *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).

Driving an Ambulance in World War I

Like the characters in *The Big Money*, Dos Passos contributed to American efforts in World War I, a conflict spanning the years between 1914 and 1918. The Allied Powers —France, the Russian Empire, the United Kingdom, and ultimately the United States— defeated the Central Powers, comprised of Austria-Hungary and the German and Ottoman Empires. The United States was reluctant to join the conflict; however, in April 1917, after the passenger ship *Lusitania* and several merchant ships were sunk by German submarines, the United States declared war. Like many of his fellow writers, such as Ernest Hemingway, e. e. cummings, and Somerset Maugham, Dos Passos was an ambulance driver; it was an exciting, novel occupation for young adventurous men. In addition, many young men longed to jump into battle but did not pass the army's physical fitness test. Dos Passos's near-sightedness was so severe he could not see the largest letter written on an eye chart.

Three main volunteer ambulance groups served the various fronts: the American Field Service (AFS), Norton-Harjes, and the American Red Cross operation in Italy. Wrote Dos Passos prior to his employment, "I'm going to France with the Norton-Harjes as soon as I can take a course in running a machine." According to Steve Ruediger, when Dos Passos arrived on the front and took the driver's seat, he was not an extremely cautious driver; in fact, he was known to take "many chances far beyond the inherent risks of ambulance driving, which many considered risky enough."

Called "The War to End All Wars," World War I introduced modern mechanized weaponry and poison gas to the battlefront and paved the way for wars to come.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression was a devastating economic downturn starting in 1929, though not fully felt until 1930. The start of the Great Depression is often considered to be the New York stock market crash in October 1929, but, no one can really know the definitive reason for its cause. One leading theory is the unbalanced distribution of wealth: Only a very small percentage of the population held the bulk of the wealth in the country while the majority of the population could barely make ends meet. In addition, an oversupply of goods caused by the efficiency of industrialization allowed for tremendous output from factories. This created an environment of too much supply and not enough demand. Because of the large wealth distribution gap between the haves and have-nots, many people could not afford to buy these overabundant products. Those without the means to buy goods relied on credit, thus creating large amounts of debt. These large debts contributed to making the initial recession in 1930 turn into a true depression by 1933. Conservative spending lowered demand for new products. Continuing this spiral, companies predicted poor profits and cut back on capital investments. Banks became more conservative in their lending practices; by 1933, nearly half the banks in the United States had failed. To further complicate matters, the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, which lasted about a decade, combined a drought lasting many years and poor farming practices such as over-plowing and over-grazing. The land was destroyed, and unemployment became rampant as hundreds of thousands of Americans took to the streets in search of basic necessities such as food, shelter, and work. After World War I, the United States was the biggest financier to post-war Great Britain and Germany, so after the depression hit the United States, it eventually trickled to Europe.

Critical Overview

Dos Passos had a varied and successful career, despite his gradual exile from literary acceptance because of his political views. J. Donald Adams, in a 1936 review in the *New York Times*, praises Dos Passos for his "keen eye for so many different kinds of people." Adams goes on to say that Dos Passos may not be as skilled as some more experienced writers, but he is "one of the ablest naturalistic craftsmen" working in the novel genre. Adams does note Dos Passos's piecemeal style as both ineffective and disruptive to the narrative.

Dos Passos's *The Big Money* beat out Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* as the Best Book of 1937, as honored by national writers and critics and reported by the *New York Times*. Mason Wade, in his article "Novelist of America," declares that Dos Passos's "achievement has not yet received the attention it deserves." Wade claims that Dos Passos's work warranted a Pulitzer Prize, because "his five important novels constitute an unequaled portrait of twentieth century America." Wade also extols Dos Passos's "sensitivity and his feeling for language, coupled with his zest for experience" and calls him both a "romantic and a realist."

Vincent McHugh calls Dos Passos's "U.S.A. Trilogy" a "Picaresque Monument to the Past" in the title to his 1943 article in the *New York Times*. Mc Hugh sets the novels "alongside the thesis novels of Upton Sinclair and Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy*." He considers the trilogy to be "the most formidable and accomplished novel of the American Twenties and Thirties." But McHugh also agrees with many critics in saying that Dos Passos's characters "lack passion, concentration, hard-packed depth"; however, to McHugh, that lack works with Dos Passos's themes and narratives.

In a 1950 newspaper article, Granville Hicks calls Dos Passos as "a true explorer in his day," but also noted that his "political confusion" led to a decline of "literary mastery." That same year, Martin Kallich in the *Antioch Review* claims that Dos Passos's works follow the trajectory of his political beliefs, particularly marking his change from individualist to socialist to conservative. Two decades later, in May 1971, Alfred Kazin asks, "What Ever Happened to Dos Passos After 'U.S.A.'?" Kazin, writing for the *New York Times*, claims that the "decline of his later fiction" resulted not from his "right-wing National Review indifference to the masses" but from his style change—from controversial social commentary to historical works.

More recently, Dos Passos has gained the recognition many have always thought he deserved. In the *Washington Times* in 1996, George Core claims "Dos Passos did more to forge the modern novel in the United States than any author of his times but Faulkner" and points to "the range of technique and style in 'U.S.A.'" as "breathtaking." Core also notes,

In its use of fact for the purposes of fiction, "U.S.A." influenced the development of the nonfiction-novel genre as it has been written by Norman Mailer, Truman Capote and

others. Indeed, it has influenced this genre as much as it has the standard novel through its technical innovations and sympathy with the down and out.

In 2003, Vincent Balitas of the *Washington Times* argues for Dos Passos's place in the "literary pantheon." He writes, "John Dos Passos was a very intelligent writer whose talent often seems to have been subservient to his political and social agendas. He witnessed firsthand the violence and sheer brutality of war. He saw the corruption of corporate and industrial capitalism, and the lack of justice among the have-nots." Balitas also suggests that Dos Passos's work was vital to the "development of American literature" and while recognizing Dos Passos's flaws, also acknowledges his "innovations" and "historical conscience."

A thirteen-tape unabridged audio cassette version of *The Big Money* was released by Books on Tape in 1984. It is read by Michael Prichard.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

In the following excerpt, Aaron explores Dos Passos's blending of history and fiction, particularly in the cast of characters in his "U.S.A. Trilogy," to vividly capture a moment in the American culture. The Big Money *is the third volume of the trilogy*.

[Text Not Available]

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Source: Daniel Aaron, "U.S.A.," in *American Heritage*, Vol. 47, No. 4, July-August 1996, pp. 63-72.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) 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, NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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

NfS 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 Novels 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 NfS series.

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

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels 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 NfS 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." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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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