Chocolates Study Guide

Chocolates by Louis Simpson

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Introduction

"Chocolates" appears in Louis Simpson's collection of poetry *Caviare at the Funeral* in Section Three, directly after the title poem. Both the title poem, "Caviare at the Funeral," and "Chocolates," reference or feature Russian writer Anton Chekhov, the nineteenth-century playwright and fiction writer known for his realistic portrayals of Russian life. Simpson's idea of poetry as primarily a narrative act that details the real lives of people matches Chekhov's own idea of what makes effective writing. "Chocolates" is a narrative poem that recounts a true story about people who go to visit Chekhov. After struggling to make conversation, the group livens after Chekhov asks them if they like chocolates.

In his essay "Chocolates" from his *Selected Prose,* Simpson writes that he was at a friend's house reading the daily newspaper when something sparked his memory of hearing about the incident on which the poem is based. Simpson says that he picked up a notepad and wrote the poem in a few minutes. With the exception of a few minor revisions, the poem was published as is. Simpson notes two changes he made from the original story. The first is that in the poem the speaker describes the visitors as "some people," whereas in the actual incident the visitors were women. Simpson says he made this change to avoid the appearance that either he or Chekhov was condescending to women. The second change is the detail of Chekhov taking his visitors' hands as they left. This is something that Simpson says he imagines that Chekhov would have done.

This poem conveys the idea that human life consists of material events and things. Poetry itself should also consist of these events and things, and not metaphysical questions which can never be answered. Chekhov, though widely considered a genius, was uncomfortable talking about himself. In this poem his genius was in his ability to coax others to talk about subjects which really mattered to them, such as their preferences for different kinds of chocolates.

A number of the poems in *Caviare at the Funeral* take Russia or people associated withRussia as their subject. Simpson's mother's family was from Russia, and in his poem "Why Do You Write about Russia?", also included in this collection, the speaker remembers the voices of his mother and grandmother, who would tell him stories of life in Russia.

When I think about Russia it's not that area of the earth's surface with Leningrad to the West andSiberia to the East□I don't know anything about the continental mass.

It's a sound, such as you hear in a sea breaking along a shore

My people came fromRussia, bringing with them nothing but that sound.

For Simpson, the sound of the storytelling voice is the most human element of stories, more compelling than the story itself. He attempts to embody that voice in "Chocolates" and his other poems.

Author Biography

As the son of a mother of Russian ancestry and a celebrated writer himself, Louis Simpson is well qualified to write about the popular Russian writer Anton Chekhov. Simpson was born in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies, in 1923, to Aston Simpson, a lawyer, and Rosalind Marantz Simpson, a World War I émigré and actress. His father was successful, and the Simpsons led a privileged life, with a large house, and maids, cooks, chauffeurs, and assorted other servants. In Simpson's own words they lived as "well-to-do colonials." His mother's storytelling was an early influence on Simpson's writing. She told stories about growing up inPoland and she told fairytales. Simpson's childhood desire, in fact, was not to be a poet but to write stories.

Educated atMunro College, referred to by islanders as the "Eton of Jamaica," the young Simpson read English literature and English history, and cultivated the taste of an Englishman. But he was not English; he was Jamaican. In his book of autobiographical essays *The King My Father's Wreck,* Simpson said that many Jamaicans had an inferiority complex because of this discrepancy. Simpson's eight years at Munro (from the age of nine to seventeen) were difficult. The poet has written that some of the teachers were sadists and that bullying, both by teachers and other students, was the norm. Aston Simpson and Rosalind divorced when Simpson was a teenager, and when his father died, Simpson discovered that he had been left almost nothing of the estate, which his father had willed to his second wife. Simpson left soon after for America andNew York City to visit his mother.

In New York, Simpson studied literature at Columbia University and, after a three-year stint in the military during World War II, returned toColumbia to complete his Ph.D. After working as a book editor and reporter, Simpson settled down to a career in academia. From 1959 to 1967 he was a Professor of English at the University of California atBerkeley, and from 1967 until his retirement in 1993, he was a Professor of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Although Simpson's literary style has evolved over his career, he has always believed that poetry is about the emotions, and that successful poetry should make people feel. Much of his early poetry, especially, *The Arrivistes* and *Good News of Death and Other Poems,* was written in conventionally ordered meter and rhyme, although it addressed contemporary subject matter. This changed in his Pulitzer Prize-winning collection *At the End of the*

Open Road.
In this collection, Simpson deviates somewhat from his tight forms and experiments more with imagery to shoulder the emotional weight of his poems. Whereas his earlier work was more realistic in its depiction of character and event, his middle period explored what critics came to call "deep imagery" or "emotive imagination" to give resonance to his words. In the third phase of Simpson's career, his poems reveal a heightened sensitivity to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of other people. This is particularly evident in poems like "Chocolates" in *Caviare at the Funeral.* In the last few

decades he has been associated with a group of writers who are attempting to bring narrative back to poetry, specifically poets and writers associated with Story Line Press, which has published much of the poet's recent work. Simpson is also a critic, having published a number of books on other poets, including *Three on the Tower,* a study of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams, and *A Revolution in Taste: Studies of Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, and Robert Lowell.* In addition he translates poetry from the French. His *Modern Poets of France: A Bilingual Anthology* won theAcademy of American Poets 1998 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award.

Poem Text

Once some people were visiting Chekhov.
While they made remarks about his genius
the Master fidgeted. Finally
he said, "Do you like chocolates?"
They were astonished, and silent.
He repeated the question,
whereupon one lady plucked up her courage
and murmured shyly, "Yes."
"Tell me," he said, leaning forward,
light glinting from his spectacles,
"what kind? The light, sweet chocolate
or the dark, bitter kind?"
The conversation became general.
They spoke of cherry centers,
of almonds and Brazil nuts.
Losing their inhibitions
they interrupted one another.
For people may not know what they think
about politics in the Balkans,
or the vexed question of men and women,
but everyone has a definite opinion
about the flavor of shredded coconut.
Finally someone spoke of chocolates filled with

liqueur,

and everyone, even the author of *Uncle Vanya,*

was at a loss for words.

As they were leaving he stood by the door

and took their hands.

In the coach returning toPetersburg

they agreed that it had been a most

unusual conversation.

Plot Summary

Stanza 1:

The opening stanza of "Chocolates" begins by recounting a story about the Russian writer and physician, Anton Chekhov. Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904) wrote plays and stories known for their detailed characterizations of men and women who were frequently frustrated in their desires to live good and meaningful lives. His sympathy for his characters and his ability to present the comedy, tragedy, and pathos of a story all at once mark him as one of the most admired storytellers of the nineteenth century. Some of his best-known short stories include "My Life" (1896), "About Love" (1898), and "The Lady with the Little Dog" (1899). His plays include *The Seagull* (1895), *Uncle Vanya* (1901), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). The success of Simpson's poem, in no small part, depends on readers' familiarity with either Chekhov's life or his plays and stories, or both. Chekhov frequently had visitors, and by referring to Chekhov as "the Master" the speaker underscores his own attitude towards Chekhov, which is one of respect, even reverence. Being spoken to *as* a genius makes Chekhov uncomfortable, and he changes the topic to the seemingly mundane subject of chocolates.

Stanza 2:

This stanza continues the scene initiated in the first stanza. From the visitors' surprised responses, readers understand that they did not expect the great Chekhov to broach such a question as "Do you like chocolates?" Though Simpson does not physically depict any of the visitors, his description of their reactions enables readers to imagine people with a rather formal demeanor. Using words such as "astonished," and "whereupon," also highlight the speaker's own formality. It is obvious that he is comfortable describing the interactions of these characters.

Stanza 3:

Whereas the second stanza focused on the visitors, this stanza focuses on Chekhov. Simpson provides just the right details to allow readers to visualize the scene. Combined with Chekhov's "leaning forward" when he speaks to the lady, the image of the "light glinting from his spectacles" suggests almost a mischievous and seductive quality to the writer's actions. A simple question such as that asked in lines three and four takes on added significance. Light and dark chocolate suggest ways of describing the world or one's desires without actually being symbols of either.

Stanzas 4 and 5:

Chekhov's seemingly innocuous and strange question has occasioned a burst of talk, as the conversation about chocolates is now in high gear, with everyone contributing. The formerly staid and reserved visitors are now alive and expressive, not worrying about how they are perceived. Implicit in this description is not only the importance of the material and sensuous world in human beings' lives, but of the small, often overlooked things such as chocolates. The speaker begins to draw the distinction between weighty topics such as politics and men and women, and shredded coconut (an ingredient in some chocolates) in the final three lines of stanza four and then runs the sentence over into the next stanza. This break between stanzas anticipates a break in the action of the story itself, as someone's comment about "chocolates filled with liqueur" stops the heated conversation cold. These lines are humorous because they are presented as sounding almost scandalous. Simpson has written that during poetry readings these lines also receive the most laughs.

The speaker pokes a little fun at Chekhov himself in the last few lines of stanza five. *Uncle Vanya* is one of Chekhov's most popular and often staged plays, full of witty and droll dialogue. It would be hard to imagine one of the characters in the play being at a "loss for words."

Stanza 6:

In this stanza the scene changes, leaving readers to imagine what occurred after the conversation ended. Two images end the poem: the first is of Chekhov himself, presented as the gracious host he has been, taking his visitors' hands in a gesture of friendship and good will. The final image is of the visitors returning toPetersburg. That the visitors live in Petersburg□the second largest city inRussia and a place of great architectural and natural beauty□tells readers that they are probably sophisticated and cultured. During its history,Petersburg changed its name three times. Initially it was named after the fortressSt. Petersburg, so called in honor of Peter the Great's patron saint, St. Peter. At the start of the twentieth century the name was changed to Petrograd, translated from the Russian as "the City ofPeter." After Lenin died in 1924, the city's name was changed again, this time to Leningrad, which means "the city ofLenin." Its original name was reinstated in 1991. From 1712 to 1917,St. Petersburg was the capital of the Russian empire.

The understatement of the last line is in keeping with the understated tone throughout the poem and highlights the formal quality of the characters' social relationships. That the subject they discuss is chocolates as opposed to, for example, baseball games or beer, also highlights the social class of the visitors and of Chekhov.

Themes

Artists and Society

While initially appearing to undermine the notion that artists are geniuses, "Chocolates" ultimately reinforces it. The idea of genius has been associated with writers since the seventeenth century, and generally has meant a person with exceptional ability that often possesses a kind of rar-ified knowledge. The speaker presents Chekhov as a "Master," highlighting his own belief in the writer's genius, but he also questions the notion that genius exists on a plane separate from ordinary life and ordinary people. The genius of Chekhov, Simpson suggests, resides precisely in his connection to ordinary life, in his ability to empathize with regular people. Chekhov's ability to change an uncomfortable and tense situation into one where everyone is relaxed underscores this "ordinary genius" because it shows his concern for others. He "fidgets" when asked about his genius. He does not have to be nor does he want to be the center of attention, and is content that the conversation has taken on a life of its own.

When the conversation becomes tense in the fifth stanza, even Chekhov is "at a loss for words," once again demonstrating his "ordinariness," and the power of such a seemingly ordinary topic. His "ordinariness" shows his social genius in the manner in which he graciously says goodbye to his guests, taking their hands in a gesture of affection. This final gesture reinforces the idea that a true genius is someone who belongs to the people, not someone who sets himself apart from them.

Art and Experience

"Chocolates" is an example of mimetic verse, whose chief aim is to imitate reality and give pleasure to the reader. Aristotle defined poetry as an imitation of human actions, but historically critics have argued over what actions were worth representing, with earlier critics claiming that only the actions of "great men" were worthy of poetry. With the nineteenth century, however, and the advent of Romantic poetry, the poet's feelings and imagination became the stuff of representation, and language a tool by which human beings could more deeply experience the world.

Simpson grabs the reader's attention and interest in the first stanza by mentioning Chekhov, a well-known writer, and by implicitly asking readers to imagine themselves at his house in the nineteenth century. Human beings love gossip and this poem is one form of gossip, as it recounts an actual experience between a popular person and his admirers. The poem sustains a readers' interest because it is a narrative, and human beings have an almost genetic need for stories, to "find out what happens next." By providing details such as dialogue and descriptions of the characters' gestures, Simpson successfully persuades readers that they too are in the room during the event. Representational, or mimetic, literature is successful when it works at the level of emotion and perception. Readers empathize with both Chekhov and the visitors as they,

no doubt, have been in similar social situations. Readers need not understand the poem so long as they *experience* what it represents. They experience the poem through imagining themselves in the place of the characters.

It is important that the poem carries no explicit moral, simply an ending, with which readers can take as they see fit. Simpson accomplishes this by not psychologizing the actions of his characters, but simply describing them. In his essay "To Make Words Disappear," included in his *Selected Prose,* Simpson writes "I would like to write poems that make people laugh or make them want to cry, without their thinking that they were reading poetry. The poem would be an experience□not just talking about life□but life itself. I think that the object of writing is to make words disappear."

Style

Narrative

"Chocolates" is a narrative poem composed of six free-verse stanzas and told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. An omniscient narrator has access to actions everywhere in the story. Narratives are stories and constitute a sub-genre of poetry whose basic elements are plot, character, atmosphere, and theme. "Chocolates" is constructed primarily of dialogue and description. Most of the action in the poem takes place in the reported speech. However, Simpson makes use of ellipsis in his transition from one scene to the next. Ellipsis literally means omission. In narrative, it refers to leaving out action, leaving readers to infer what happened through using their imagination. For example, readers have to imagine what happened after the abrupt end of the conversation in stanza five, for the next thing that occurs is the guests leaving.

Characterization

Simpson characterizes the people in his poem through their actions. Rather than tell readers what Chekhov and the visitors are like, he shows them. The narrator himself is also a character in the poem. Readers can tell, through the details he chooses to include and omit, and the vocabulary that he uses, that he admires Chekhov.

Tone

The tone, or atmosphere, of "Chocolates" is relatively formal, and comic. This is in keeping with the setting, the house of an intellectual and a cultural icon, Anton Chekhov, and the discrepancy between what readers imagine conversations in such a setting are about and what they actually are about. The language of the poem is restrained, the sentences simple and declarative, making the comic effect subtle.

Historical Context

"Chocolates" takes place in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century in the house of Russian writer Anton Chekhov. Simpson often writes about historical people and events, and sometimes fictionalizes or embellishes events to get closer to the emotional truth of his subject. But he is by no means a confessional poet, as Peter Stitt wrote: "Although Louis Simpson writes a poetry of personality, and although the most important unifying feature of his work is the sensibility that lies at its heart, he is not a confessional poet. In fact, Simpson has been very hard on this type of poetry, which he sees as part of the "cult of sincerity." Confessional poetry is personal because it takes for its subject matter the literal details of the poet's life and feelings, the truth of that life as lived in the real world; Simpson's poetry is personal because it emerges from and expresses a single, central, perceiving sensibility." Simpson has written a number of poems about Chekhov, and *Caviare at the Funeral* itself contains a number of poems aboutRussia and a few which feature or address Chekhov in some way. His interest inRussia and Chekhov is partly personal□Simpson's mother is of Russian ancestry□and partly aesthetic□Simpson admires Chekhov's approach towards writing.

Many critics consider Anton Pavlovich Chekhov the father of the modern short story and of the modern play. Born in 1860 in the Russian coastal town of Taganrog, near theBlack Sea, Chekhov was the son of a grocer and the grandson of a serf; his knowledge of the working classes was deep. Like Simpson's mother, Chekhov's mother was a first-rate storyteller and a chief influence on the writer's own narrative art. Chekhov's early adolescence was traumatic. After his father's business failed and the family lost their home, the family moved toMoscow, leaving Chekhov behind to finish school. Chekhov made ends meet by tutoring younger schoolboys and selling off family goods bit by bit. Later he began selling satirical stories to comic magazines. In both his plays and his stories Chekhov aimed for economy of language and for presenting people as they were without psychologizing their actions. Often, Chekhov ignored plot and focused on the atmosphere or mood of a story, showing character through a combination of external detail and psychic projection. Chekhovian themes include the meaninglessness of human endeavors, disillusionment, poverty, inscrutable state bureaucracy, and the difficulties inherent in human communication.

Hudson Review, stating that "Chocolates" is one of "his most compelling" poems in the *Caviare at the Funeral.* Douglas Dunn agreed, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement* that "Chocolates" "is an amusing account of an incident from Chekhov's life," and observing that "The Chekhovian atmosphere on which Simpson's imagination seems to thrive is peculiarly adaptable to American settings. His storytelling also reminded me of a remark made by one of Chekhov's characters□'Keep it brief and skip the psychology.'"

On the dust jacket of *Caviare at the Funeral* poet William Matthews wrote "If Chekhov were an American poet alive now, his gentle and heartbreaking poems would read like these, and like these would release slowly, almost reluctantly, but certainly their fierce and balanced compassion."

Critical Overview

"Chocolates" is one of Simpson's more popular later poems. He has written an essay on how he composed the poem and what reactions to it have been, which initially appeared in *Forty-Five Contemporary Poets: The Creative Process,* edited by Alberta Turner. The essay has subsequently been reprinted in a few anthologies and in Simpson's own *Selected Prose.* In the essay Simpson notes that the poem has had favorable reactions from the public. The poet writes "I recall a letter in theLondon *Times* praising 'Chocolates' because, the letter-writer said, it showed that poetry could be understood."

In the introduction to *On Louis Simpson: Depths Beyond Happiness,* editor and critic Hank Lazer wrote that with *Caviare at the Funeral,* the collection in which "Chocolates" appears, "Simpson achieved consistent mastery of his new narrative style." Lazer pointed out that from this collection on, Simpson received renewed attention from critics. Paul Breslin noted in the *New York Times Book Review* that "[Simpson] has learned, from his heroes, Chekhov and Proust, the significance of the seemingly trivial detail and the importance of memory." Peter Makuck, in his review of *Caviare at the Funeral* in *Tar River Poetry* also praises the collection, writing that "[h]is new book, perhaps his richest yet, is vintage Simpson and provides the reading we have come to relish: freshness of sensation, telling detail, an ability to accommodate the humorous, the terrible, and the lyrical almost simultaneously." G. E. Murray complimented Simpson's storytelling voice in his article in the

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Semansky publishes widely on twentieth-century poetry and culture. In the following essay, Semansky considers "Chocolates" in relation to Simpson's poems on the art of poetry and as an example of narrative poetry.

Much of the poetry written in the latter half of the twentieth century has been lyric poetry. Lyric poetry, by its very definition, is short and focuses on the subjective thoughts and emotions of the speaker. For lyric poetry, the "I" is at the center of the universe, and the imagination helps to shape the speaker's thoughts and emotion. Louis Simpson's poetry, especially the poetry written in the latter part of his career, has aimed at bringing poetry back to its narrative, or storytelling roots. His poetry tells stories about other people, not himself. "Chocolates" is one such example of Simpson's narrative poetry.

In the same collection in which "Chocolates" appears, Simpson includes poems that describe his theory of how he writes. These poems can help readers appreciate poems such as "Chocolates." "The Art of Storytelling" recounts a story about a kosher butcher (a *shocket)* who one day was accosted, verbally abused and, eventually, conscripted into the navy by three sailors. The speaker summarizes the story of the butcher's life, his acceptance of his fate and his adventures on the high seas, and states: "It wasn't a bad life□nothing is." This line highlights Simpson's belief that anyone's life is suitable material for poetry. The mundane, the spectacular, the ordinary are all roughly parallel in Simpson's universe. All lives have stories, and all are worthy of poetry.

The last few stanzas of "The Art of Storytelling" provide additional evidence for what Simpson believes is important in poetry. After the speaker of the poem finishes the story of the butcher, he draws attention to the fact that the story he is telling about the butcher is in fact a story he had been told. The poem, then, is a recounting of a recounting. Simpson writes:

At this point, the person telling the story

would say, "This shocket-sailor

was one of our relatives, a distant cousin."

It was always so, they knew they could depend on it.

Even if the story made no sense,

the one in the story would be a relative□

a definite connection with the family.

Although the smallest life is worth writing about, Simpson points out that human beings are most interested in stories about their own families, people who have some connection to them. Stories need not have morals, nor do the actions of the characters

need to be explained, justified, or psychologized in any way. The story itself, and the audience's connection to and trust in the storyteller are what is important.

Anton Chekhov, the subject of "Chocolates" is, like Simpson's mother's family, Russian, and Chekhov has been a muse of sorts for Simpson's own writing, often appearing in his prose and poetry. In fact, the title of the collection in which "Chocolates" appears, *Caviare at the Funeral,* comes from Chekhov's story "In the Ravine." And the anecdote about Chekhov that makes up "Chocolates" is fittingly Chekhovian, that is, it is written in the narrative style that Chekhov himself used.

Traditionally, narratives consist of theme, atmosphere or tone, character, and plot. The focus of "Chocolates," like the focus of many of Chekhov's stories, is on mood and atmosphere, and the speaker's voice accounts for much of that mood. Voice and atmosphere are often difficult concepts to grasp. Voice, or as some critics say, tone, reflects the *attitude* of the speaker towards the subject or towards the reader. Think of the phrase "tone of voice" in this respect. Atmosphere, on the other hand, is the *effect* of the writer's voice *on* the reader. Both of these elements can be hard to pin down, especially the latter, as any given work can have a number of effects on its readers depending on the era and culture in which the work is read, and the readers' own sensibilities, age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and awareness of literary traditions.

The voice in "Chocolates" is matter-of-fact, yet somewhat formal and understated. The speaker refers to Chekhov as "the Master," a name commonly used for the Russian writer, but still one that shows Simpson's respectful, even reverential attitude towards Chekhov. The combination of conversational phrasing (e.g., "Once some people were visiting Chekhov") and reportage makes for a realistic poem, for a desire to show things as they really happened. Readers are persuaded to believe that the poem is a true account of an event. The event itself, of course, is fairly ordinary: some people are making a visit. That they are visiting someone of Chekhov's stature piques readers' interest. In an essay he wrote about "Chocolates," Simpson has this to say about the visit:

Superficially it may appear that I am poking fun at the kind of people who would go to see a famous author, but readers who feel superior to these visitors are missing the point. In real life I might find such people absurd but I would not hold them up to ridicule in a poem□I am more intelligent when I write than I am in person. The desire to see and speak to a great man or woman is not something to poke fun at. Only snobs, who are usually people of no talent, look down on those who have a sincere wish to better themselves.

Although readers aren't bound to experience the poem the way in which Simpson wants us to, his claim that he is not "ridiculing" the visitors at least helps us to understand his intention that "Chocolates" is not necessarily a comic poem, even though the situation described is comic. It's comic because of the importance the group attaches to its preferences for certain kinds of chocolate, and the passion with which they discuss their preferences. But as Simpson himself says, "It didn't have to be chocolates□anything they liked would have done ... birthdays, for instance, or picnics ... but chocolates were

a happy choice. The visitors were relieved□like the audience at a poetry reading when the solemnity is broken." What readers remember most about this poem, however, isn't necessarily what happened, the plot of the story, but rather its voice, its levelness and sincerity. We trust the storyteller. Simpson writes about the importance of voice in storytelling in his poem "Why Do You Write About Russia?" Here he recounts stories his mother used to tell him about life in the "old country" when he visited her in New York:

These stories were told,

against a background of tropical night ...

a sea breeze stirring the flowers

that open at dusk, smelling like perfume.

The voice that spoke of freezing cold

itself was warm and infinitely comforting.

So it is with poetry: whatever numbing horrors it may speak of, the voice itself tells of love and infinite wonder.

What stories or poems say about their subjects is usually referred to as their theme, and themes can be multiple. A significant theme of "Chocolates" is the idea that given the opportunity most people would rather talk about the world as it is rather than the world as they want it to be. The visitors are relieved that they don't have to discuss "politics in the Balkans, / or the vexed question of men and women," which are perhaps the subjects they felt they' d have to discuss at the house of a great thinker like Chekhov. This theme runs throughout Simpson's poetry and underscores the importance he places in the universe of things, rather than ideas *per se.* Simpson has always considered himself a realist, that is, someone who unflinchingly looks at the world and says what he sees.

Who are "most people," though? Simpson creates his characters through imagination, but his imagination is itself based on his experience in the material world. Rendering drawing-room characters who come to visit a great writer wasn't difficult for Simpson, as he himself has led a relatively privileged life, first in Jamaica as a member of a prominent and successful family, then in theUnited States as a university professor. In the section called "Profession of Faith" from his poem "Unfinished Life," Simpson describes how he develops characters:

As a writer I imagine characters, giving them definite features and bodies, a color of hair. I imagine what they feel and, finally make them speak.

Increasingly I have come to believe

that the things we imagine

are not amusements, they are real.

Reality, then, for the poet has as much to do with the poet's capacity to empathize with others as it does with his ability to choose the right word. This feature of Simpson's poetry distinguishes it from other poetry that is more focused on getting the external details of narrative right. Simpson, however, injects his stories with a lyric sensibility, as he works as much at trying to inhabit the minds and bodies of those he describes as he does at depicting their actions. Using his imagination like this puts Simpson squarely in the romantic camp of poets such as William Wordsworth, who described poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility." But the imagination itself is part of life, part of the physical world for Simpson. Again, in "Profession of Faith," he writes:

The things we see and the things we imagine, afterwards, when you think about them, are equally composed of words.

It is the words we use, finally, that matter, if anything does.

It is also these words that Simpson attempts to make as transparent as possible, for in storytelling the voice should act as a camera throwing up images on the screen of the reader's imagination. The final lines of "Chocolates" leaves us with just such images. Imagine the last stanza as a scene: first a shot of Chekhov standing near the door, graciously taking the hands of his guests, then a shot of the guests themselves in the carriage heading home, recounting their experience. The effect of cutting from the first to the second image leaves readers with a sense of Chekhov's magnanimity and a feeling for the odd and various events that make up human lives. Readers share this feeling because rather than telling us directly that the experience was strange, Simpson makes it part of the conversation reported by the poem's speaker. We hear it and see it, and make sense of it on our own. In his essay "To Make Words Disappear" from his *Selected Prose* Simpson writes "I don't care about writing that merely tells me that the writer is having a feeling. I want to be able to experience the feeling. I want lyric or narrative poetry."

Source: Chris Semansky, in an essay for *Poetry for Students,* Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Taibl has published most frequently in fields of nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry. In the following essay, she discusses binaries and their meanings in "Chocolates."

"Chocolates" is a poem about meeting places; the point where the individual sees himself as a part of the community and where the foreign and exotic appear in the common, elevating the ordinary to the extraordinary. The poem uses opposites, or binaries, to explore how perceived extremes are found within one another. Louis Simpson has explored style binaries, journeying from the structure of traditional English verse to a new kind of non-metrical verse that captures a distinct quality of being American. Simpson uses this nonmetrical verse to polish common scenes to an extraordinary sheen. In "Chocolates," which is a part of the 1980 collection *Caviare at the Funeral,* a fictionalized Chekhov, the great Russian writer and playwright, is portrayed as an individual with a common passion for chocolate. This passion is a meeting point, something that is shared between the genius and his visitors, a nameless, common lot. Chekhov, "the Master," set aside by his genius, connects with his visitors and they with him, and an ordinary meeting is elevated to an extraordinary event. The visit inspires boundaries in class and chasms in knowledge to disintegrate like a chocolate melting on the tongue.

Simpson uses narrative, or a poem in the mode of storytelling, as a kind of trope, or figure of speech. Figurative language in poetry is a kind of pleasant literary manipulation. It is using words to evoke some deeper meaning, elevating them beyond their commonness. It is saying one thing and meaning another. Simpson shies away from traditional figures and conceits and relies on the narrative to do this work. Simpson pits the life of the mind against the vulgarity of the middle-class, their ignorance of current affairs and shallowness of spirit. The poem shames people who, as the poem states, "may not know what they think about politics in the Balkans, or the vexed question of men and women," just as it celebrates the fact that "everyone has a definite opinion about the flavor of shredded coconut." Simpson pokes fun at the discrepancies in the perceived importance of these topics, but seems also to say that to have any kind of conviction is a beautiful thing; it brings people together, even if it is about shredded coconut. Opposites are nothing if not designed to define this middle ground. In the meeting place between binaries, or opposites, Simpson defines a place for the reader as well.

Simpson uses a third person point of view in the poem, which is telltale of his work. He has been likened to the poet Robert Browning, who also put a unique spin on this point of view. Yohma Gray in his article, "Poets in Progress: The Poetry of Louis Simpson" in *Poets in Progress* writes, "Although he [Simpson] sometimes writes in the third person, the reader senses a subjective T in the poem, just as Browning often writes in the first person but conveys the sense of an objective 'he.'" This unique third person point of view that hints of the "I" allows Simpson to welcome his readers into the lives of his drama. His is a sympathizing voice, without being self-indulgent, to invite the reader to sympathize with his characters. In "Chocolates," the learned reader stoops to the role of

the visitor faced with the genius of Chekhov. The reader is also Chekhov, the one set aside, estranged by his own persona, a source of magic and exile. In his autobiography, *The King My Father's Wreck,* Simpson writes about discovering the great Russian playwright exclaiming that "He [Chekhov] knew how to tell a story about ordinary people who turned out to be extraordinary." This is exactly what Simpson provides the reader in "Chocolates," a place for ordinary people to be extraordinary, even if it is only in the space of one small visit, and even if it is only in a conversation about chocolates. Simpson makes the visitors' commonness something extraordinary by placing it on Chekhov's plane.

Sympathizing with the realm of an ordinary society comes late in Simpson's poetic career. Its strict metrical form colors his earlier work. It is tight and generally unyielding to the subject. As Simpson changed his form to a more free flowing verse, his personality as a poet was birthed. The critic and writer Peter Stitt wrote about the phases of Simpson's poetic career in his article "Louis Simpson: In Search of the American Self," in *The World's Hieroglyphic Beauty: Five American Poets.* He divides Simpson's career into three phases, the first marked by traditional English verse detached from the society in which the poet lived, the second marked by a departure from the formal structured verse to a more free verse and the third, which begins in the mid-1970s, as a melding of literary skill with the humanity of which it speaks. Stitt wrote about the transition from the second to the third phase, "through a dual interest in the work of Chekhov and in his [Simpson's] own Jewish Russian ancestors, the sensibility of these poems recognizes his inherent kinship with the ordinary citizens of the society he had been hating." This kinship is exemplified in "Chocolates" as two disparate characters, that of the learned genius, set apart by his knowledge, and that of his visitors, ordinary citizens of the society, who discover a shared love and interest in a common thing.

The dualisms presented in "Chocolates," the individual against the society and the learned versus the generally ignorant, are true for Simpson as a poet as well, as he shares a commonality with the fictionalized Chekhov. The poet is, in general, as Stitt described, "seen as different from most people, one of the 'strange kind.' This strangeness results from a commitment not just to poetry but to a life of the mind generally." This strangeness of the poet and of a life of learning appears again and again in Simpson's work, yet the poet overcomes and unites with society. The poet is Chekhov seeing himself in his visitors. He is living the life of the mind as the writer, yet seeing himself, indeed, reading himself in the reader, who is the ordinary citizen of the society. This discovery of one element in the other, the poet in the people and the people in poet, is what makes the poem's realization extraordinary.

Simpson's characters help illuminate the extraordinary as they are painted in their stark reality. In *The King My Father's Wreck,* Simpson talks about the trend in American writing to dumb down characters, make them easily digestible, easy in every way to read and forget. He says, "there's a tradition in the States that puts down any kind of learning. Writers are supposed to be naïve, and the characters in American fiction don't think about books." In "Chocolates," this unique piece of American fiction, the visitors also appear quite ignorant and shallow. In this way, the narrative does nothing for the

idea of being American. Yet, even in their ignorance, they come to voice their opinions and state their preferences. The poem gives them a self as it is defined through each other and their opposite. As the poem elevates the visitors to Chekhov's plane, it also brings the genius down to touching level as Chekhov the man becomes real. In portraying his characters in this way, Simpson makes a special invitation to readers, to meet themselves at the place between the fictional Chekhov and his visitors, to know themselves at the meeting place, to know for the sake of knowing.

To know for the sake of knowing which chocolates are delicious, to have preferences, to have an opinion about the flavor of shredded coconut, to interrupt the flow of a conversation to voice an idea; all are scenes of empowerment in "Chocolates" and in many of Simpson's later works. Yohma Gray said, "There is a value simply in knowing, and Louis Simpson's poetry reflects and refines that value." This is a great compliment to the poet who is dissuaded from entering his poetry in the first person, in preaching, or being the all-knowing voice in his lines. Simpson's goal, as he states it, is "to render the thing itself exactly as it happened." In doing so, the narrative becomes a trope, injecting the common with the extraordinary, commenting on a middle-class vulgarity that lacks opinion and is poorly educated, yet celebrating in that commonness, that an opinion can be achieved.

By rendering the scene exactly as it appears, Simpson refines the notion begun by the imagist movement. Imagism was a movement that flourished inEngland in the early twentieth century. It was begun as a revolt against what Ezra Pound, an imagist by name, called the "rather blurry, messy ... sentimentalistic mannerish" poetry at the turn of the century. The imagists, among them such names as Pound, Amy Lowell, Hilda Doolittle, and William Carlos Williams, undertook to render as exactly and tersely as possible, without comment or generalization, the writer's response to a visual object or scene. Simpson, an inheritor of their ideas, portrays the scene without metaphor, without the masks of figurative language. He creates the scene's depth by utilizing the narrative and bending it to his goal. Simpson simply tells us about the visit between Chekhov and his guests. The narrative details lead readers to ruminate over the individual in community, the foreign and the common, and the learned and the ignorant. This type of imagism, sympathetic and true, gives Simpson a name in modern poetry. Yohma Gray wrote, "He [Simpson] sees reality through particulars; he is a kind of 'responsible vagrant' who finds meaning in any situation." The scene, the image, is rendered exactly as it is, and it speaks.

The image, or in Simpson's case, the whole scene, is heavy with its own baggage. Meaning is found in the interaction of the image with the readers' understanding and feeling of the image. This pregnancy of the image recalls T. S. Eliot's objective correlative. Eliot argued that each emotion composing the image has its own recipe. An author knows the ingredients to this recipe and when he mixes the ingredients, he knows what response he will elicit. By using certain images and details, the response is certain. As Peter Stitt wrote, "if the image is properly prepared for and invested with appropriate suggestions, it should call up in the reader the same emotions it evokes in the author or in the character he is writing." Simpson does this in "Chocolates," as he writes the details of the scene, the "Brazil nuts," and the "sweet chocolate" or the "dark

and bitter kind." He relies on our own feelings and opinions about chocolates. The scene is rendered exactly, with just enough detail to invest it with the ingredients of the readers' own emotional life.

Simpson connects intimately with the reader. In an article he wrote for *Harper's* magazine in 1965 called "What's In It For Me," Simpson wrote, "We are still waiting for the poetry of feeling, words as common as a loaf of bread, which yet give off vibrations." This is what Simpson gives us, words and scenes as common as loaves of bread, but giving off vibrations. Part of this narrative's vibration stems from the fact that it remains lyrical, or song-like, at its base. The ebb and flow of the poem, the rhythms and incantations make the narrative sing. This is an act of creative intimacy by the poet. As Stitt wrote, "the work is defined most centrally by the personality of the poet himself." Simpson identifies with the characters in his narrative. He is Chekhov finding himself in his visitors. He is the visitor encountering the "unusual." He is judging and celebrating the extraordinary in the common.

Even in intimacy, Simpson stays away from the confessional. Though he shares crucial material about his life and beliefs as a poet, he avoids delving into the tradition of psychic biography. He does not claim the confessional "I" as Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, or Sylvia Plath do. Simpson's third person narrative with a subjective "I" relates elements of his life to the reader, but avoids what he has called "the cult of sincerity." Simpson describes his relationship with the poem, "I have a very funny sense of myself in the poem□I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about how the poem makes a self for me." Perhaps this is the ground he shares most intimately with his reader. The poem makes selves for them too. They are Chekhov feeling the strangeness of their minds' life. They are the visitors without opinions. They are Chekhov finding himself in his visitors. They are the visitors finding opinions. They are the individual finding the community of the poem, finding the self in the poem, and discovering that the poem is a meeting place.

Source: Erika Taibl, in an essay for *Poetry for Students,* Gale Group, 2001.

Adaptations

Watershed Tapes has put out a cassette of Simpson reading his poems. The cassette is titled *Louis Simpson: Physical Universe.*

More than 200 Chekhov stories can be read online at http://eldred.ne.mediaone.net/ac/chekhov. html

TheAcademy of American Poets sponsors a website on Louis Simpson's poetry and prose: http://www.poets.org/lit/poet/lsimpfst.htm

In 1983 New Letters on the Air recorded and published a cassette of Simpson reading his poems on public radio.

Topics for Further Study

Write the dialogue that you think might have occurred between the fifth and sixth stanzas.

Compose a poem about the most unusual conversation in which you have ever participated, then describe why it was unusual.

Re-write "Chocolates" as prose. Does reading the poem as prose change its meaning or effect? How?

Think of a famous writer that you would like to visit. What would you talk to him or her about? Write a dialogue of your conversation.

After reading a few chapters from Simpson's autobiography *The King My Father's Wreck* and completing biographical research on Chekhov, write a poem in which Chekhov visits Simpson.

Simpson himself has written that "Chocolates" is a poem about happiness, specifically "the delight we feel when we are able to express our happiness to another person." After defining what happiness means to you, locate the points in the poem that you believe contribute to the notion that the characters are happy.

Discuss how "Chocolates" can be read as a poem about social class.

Compare and Contrast

In 1980 when "Chocolates" was published in *Caviare at the Funeral,* a group of poets were arguing against the ubiquity of lyric poetry in theUnited States, and against the overuse of the confessional "I," claiming that, among other things, it suggested isolation of the self from the larger human community. In the 1980s this loose group of poets were considered part of the Expansive Movement in poetry, which called for a return to narrative and formalism. In his essay "Poetry and Politics" included in the anthology *Poetry After Modernism,* poet and critic Frederick Pollack claimed that after modernism "Poetry seems not to be a *public* discourse at all, or to be only incidentally or vestigially public." Pollack uses Simpson's poem "In the Suburbs" to underscore the lemming-like attitude of writers who ignore the possibility that language in general, and poetry in particular, can represent a world outside of itself. Pollack denounces the tendencies of groups such as those aligned with the L=a=n=g=u=a=g=e poets, some of whom hold that language and poetry refer only to themselves. Like other writers in the anthology, Pollack wants poetry to be "about something" other than the petty travails of the self. The editor of *Poetry After Modernism,* Robert McDowell, himself a leading critic of much contemporary poetry, has argued that poetry has become largely the domain of academic critics and the privileged few. Poets such as John Ashbery, McDowell has written, do poetry a disservice because their language is often abstract and difficult. McDowell's Story Line Press, founded in 1985, has attempted to cultivate a popular audience for poetry by publishing writers who embrace the possibilities of storytelling in their art. Other poets besides Simpson who are considered to be part of the Expansive Movement in poetry include Frederick Turner, John Gery, Mark Jarman, Rita Dove, Dick Allen, and Dana Gioia.

1980 also marked the beginning of the "Reagan Revolution." Former actor and ex-governor of California Ronald Reagan was elected to his first term as United States President in a landslide victory over Jimmy Carter. Reagan's promise of tax cuts, reduced social welfare, and government deregulation appealed both to traditional Republican and conservative voters as well as to many Democrats, who increasingly blamed the government for the depressed economy and what they perceived asAmerica's diminished role in world affairs. In foreign policy, Reagan was an unabashed and at times vocal opponent of détente with theSoviet Union.

The Economic Recovery Act of 1982 reduced individual income taxes by twenty-three percent over three years. However, that could not stop the country from a deepening recession. In 1982, unemployment stood at 10.8 percent, and budget deficits increased. The country recovered from the recession in the mid-80s but more than half of the nine million new jobs that were created were low-paying jobs in the service sector with salaries of less than $7,000 a year.

What Do I Read Next?

A fine introductory book on Anton Chekhov's stories and plays is Donald Rayfield's *Understanding Chekhov: A Critical Study of Chekhov's Prose and Drama,* published in 1999 by theUniversity of Wisconsin Press. Rayfield's study is geared towards the beginning Chekhov student. He provides close readings of stories and plays, and draws connections between them and European literature of the time.

For an understanding of what Simpson thinks should be important to poetry readers, read his 1967 textbook, *An Introduction to Poetry,* published bySt. Martin's Press.

Ronald Moran's 1972 study of Simpson, *Louis Simpson,* published by Twayne, offers a fine introduction to Simpson's early work. Moran's study, however, ends with Simpson's 1971 collection *Adventures of the Letter I,* published by Oxford University Press.

Simpson's poems are included in the 1986 anthology of formal verse, *Strong Measures,* edited by David Jauss, and published by Harper and Row.

Simpson's *Selected Prose,* published in 1989 by Paragon House, includes an essay on his poem, "Chocolates," and other previously uncollected essays.

Further Study

Simpson, Louis, *Caviare at the Funeral,* Franklin Watts,1980.

In poems which closely resemble anecdotes and vignettes, *Caviare at the Funeral* reports on the lives of people and places which have had an impact on Simpson. He writes about America,Russia, and the Australian Outback with an equal degree of passion and insight. This is a very accessible collection of poems.

--------, *The Character of the Poet,* University of Michigan Press, 1986.

Simpson's collection of short and occasional pieces provides a glimpse into his motivations for writing and his attitudes towards other modern and contemporary poets.

Stepanchev, Stephen, *American Poetry Since 1945,* Harper,1965.

Stepanchev's literary history is a highly readable account of the aesthetic and ideological movements in American poetry after World War II.

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--------, *"Waterloo, The Story of an Obsession,"* in *The King My Father's Wreck,* Story Line Press, 1995, pp. 10-11.

--------, *"What's In It for Me?"* in *Harper's,* 1965, p. 173.

Stitt, Peter, "Louis Simpson: In Search of the American Self," in *The World's Hieroglyphic Beauty: Five American Poets,* 1985, pp. 109-139.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Poetry for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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