Chorale Study Guide

Chorale by Kevin Young (poet)

Contents

Introduction

In his third collection of poetry, *Jelly Roll: A Blues* (2003), Kevin Young presents the reader with verses drawing first and foremost on the musical genre of the title and also on a wide variety of other historical genres. The titles of the poems themselves are the first indication of his inspirations: □Rhythm & Blues,□ □Early Blues,□ □Blues,□ and □Late Blues□ affirm the collection's foundation; □Dixieland,□ □Ragtime,□ and □Boogie-Woogie□ indicate that Young is wandering further afield while nevertheless remaining rooted in the blues tradition; and □Etude□ (a composition with both technical and artistic merit), □Cantata□ (a composition employing voices in various forms), and □Rhapsody□ (an irregular, improvisational composition) offer evidence of the author's widespread understanding of the essence of music. Indeed, nearly all of the more than one hundred poems in the collection reverberate with musicality, with fifteen titles including the word *song*. The work's opening epigraph consists of fourteen lines of lyrics written by the blues guitarist Robert Johnson.

□Chorale□ fits neatly into this musical framework. According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, a *chorale* is □a hymn or psalm sung to a traditional or composed melody in church.□ In appearing directly after the extended ruminations of □Sleepwalking Psalms□ and a few poems before □Jubilee□□where the word *jubilee* has religious connotations both within the Roman Catholic Church and among African Americans regardless of denomination□□Chorale□ can be seen as providing something of a core of spirituality within the collection as a whole.

Outside the literal context of its title, □Chorale□ can be read as a lamentation of uncertainty. The narrator seems to question what the world has thus far given him and what he can reasonably expect from it in the future. The reader, in turn, wonders along with him. The poem is brief; it consists of eight couplets, or two-line stanzas, and a solitary closing line. In all, the poet uses only sixty-four words to communicate the essence of his train of thought, such that the reader must approach the poem with the utmost attention in attempting to grasp that essence.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: American

Birthdate: 1970

Kevin Young was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, on November 8, 1970, although his family's roots lie in Louisiana, where his forefathers were preachers, musicians, and storytellers. His family moved six times before he reached the age of ten. After attending middle school and high school in Kansas, he earned admission to Harvard University, where he studied under the Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney. While he was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he joined a group called the Dark Room Collective, which offered support for black artists in various fields. After graduation, Young spent two years at Stanford University, in California, as a Stegner Fellow and then earned a master of fine arts degree from Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island.

Young's first book of poetry, *Most Way Home* (1995), was selected and published as part of the National Poetry Series and won the Zacharis First Book Award, presented by the literary journal *Ploughshares* and Emerson College. His second collection, *To Repel Ghosts: Five Sides in B Minor*, which he musically dubbed a □double album,□ was inspired by the art of the late Jean-Michel Basquiat, an African American. In association with this collection, Young contributed to an installation called *Two Cents*, featuring both Basquiat's art and his poetry, which toured across the nation. Young next produced the collections *Jelly Roll: A Blues* (2003), in which □Chorale□ appears, and *Black Maria* (2005), his poetic interpretation of film noir. Young also has edited *Giant Steps: The New Generation of African American Writers* (2001), *Blues Poems* (2003), and *John Berryman: Selected Poems* (2004) and has written a number of essays. He has served as professor at the University of Georgia, Indiana University, and Emory University.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-5

Beyond the significance of the title, the first two lines of □Chorale□ seem to make clear that it can be read in a religious context. The first line mentions □belief,□ while the second mentions □faith.□ Further, the reader can understand that this context has conflicting connotations for the narrator, as the □belief□ is described as □difficult,□ the □faith□ as □terrible.□ Still, while □terrible□ is most commonly used in a strictly negative sense, the word can also be read, more neutrally, as indicating that something is □formidable,□ □awesome,□ or □great.□ Thus, the reader cannot necessarily conclude that the narrator has a negative opinion of faith. Notably, the first two lines feature the repetition of the opening word □quite.□

Line 3, as a continuation of line 2, indicates that the narrator is not, after all, speaking of □faith□ in a wholly generic sense, and indeed, the reader may need to move beyond a spiritual context in order to understand the poem. Lines 2 through 5, in their entirety, read as follows: □Quite terrible, faith / that the night, again, / will nominate / you a running mate.□ (Note that when reading the poem as a whole, so as to fully reveal its aesthetic, or artistic, value, substantial pauses might be given between lines and stanzas, in accordance with the format. In the course of interpretation, on the other hand, lines may be better read with attention given only to punctuation; as such, the meanings of individual phrases may be easier to determine.) In literal terms, this sentence has evident political overtones, endowing the thought with a certain dryness. Temporarily setting aside the word □again,□ the reader may understand that when the narrator refers to □faith / that the night . . . / will nominate / you a running mate,□ he may be referring to a romantic context. As such, instead of actually choosing his or her own □running mate,□ the person addressed by the narrator has that complementary person chosen by □the night,□ or by fate, or chance, alone. In that the poem's addressee may be convinced that this will happen □again,□ the reader may understand, perhaps, that the addressee has allowed random romantic pairings to occur on more than one occasion.

Lines 6-12

As indicated by the hyphen closing line 5, the phrase begun in line 6 is a second ending for the sentence started in line 2. As such, the lines might together read, □Quite terrible, faith / . . . / that we are of the elect / & have not yet / found out.□ Here again the narrator uses a word with political overtones, □elect.□ Within a religious context, on the other hand, the phrase □of the elect□ can mean □chosen for salvation through divine mercy.□ Thus, the narrator is likely pointing out the □terribleness□ of the conviction that two people, that is, the two people whom the night may choose as running mates, might be destined to be together, in a sort of heaven. These two people □have not yet / found out,□ of course, because they have not yet met each other. Throughout *Jelly Roll*,

Young employs an ampersand in place of the word *and*, most likely simply to reduce the attention that would otherwise be given to the insignificant word. In recordings of his readings, Young indeed pronounces the ampersand more like □an□ than □and.□

The second half of line 8 again takes up the thread of the same phrase, although this time beginning a new sentence, one that will not turn out to be a complete sentence, confirming that this is another continuation of line 2. Here, the narrator once more uses a first-person plural pronoun; earlier he employed □we,□ and now he employs □us.□ He seems to be universalizing his meditations; that is, he is aware that many people may share his sentiments regarding the hope that a □running mate□ might one day be fortuitously found. He indicates again the role that fate may play in this search, as we may hope that □the tide / still might toss us up / another,□ where the tide, as a force of nature, is certainly beyond any human being's control.

The second half of line 10, together with lines 11 and 12, seems to constitute a series of vague proclamations of the beauty of the □running mate□ who might one day appear. Indeed, this unknown person is essentially featureless. The narrator refers to □eyes / & stars,□ perhaps juxtaposing the glowing orbs of a person's countenance with those of the sky, again invoking a grand image of nature. Also, as astrologers □read□ the stars in considering the future, this reference may rouse further thoughts of fatefulness in the reader. In that the person in question consists only of eyes, teeth□both of which are white□and arms that are □alive,□ the reader may imagine this person in a shadowed context, such as, perhaps, a nightclub.

Lines 13-17

Lines 13 and 14 make further reference to the idealized future seen between these two people who have been brought together by chance, as the found person is described as □someone we will, all / night, keep.□ The final lines depart from the dreamy tone maintained by the majority of the poem, in a sense returning to the more negative connotations of the first two lines. The narrator makes reference to □spiders / that skitter,□ or move in a jerky way. These spiders, in addition to some unnamed thing, share his □shivering bed,□ which may be understood to be so, perhaps, because the narrator is usually cold there in his solitude. Whether the unnamed thing sharing the bed is another person□a person who does little to make it any warmer□the narrator's own fantasies, or some other object or idea entirely is unclear. Regardless, in that the spiders □cobweb,□ or make webs that lie unused and accumulate dust, the reader may attribute a certain stagnancy to the narrator's general state of existence.

Themes

Spirituality

While the title of this poem, □Chorale,□ can refer more generally to a chorus or choir, the word's origins are distinctly religious, and the scholarly Young, who attended several prestigious institutions of higher education, would certainly have given due consideration to this fact. Indeed, his opening references to □belief□ and □faith□ would seem to leave little doubt that the poem has a religious aspect. Beyond these opening lines, however, the only phrase with direct association with religion is □of the elect,□ which has connotations concerning the salvation of the soul. The reader might then consider the poem's spiritual aspects in a more general sense. The narrator certainly makes subtle references to fate, or predestination, which is often thought of in spiritual terms. Many religions hold that God has preordained all that will occur within his creation, and the narrator may be alluding to the presence of such a religious attitude in those who nevertheless imagine that □the night□ may provide them with their predestined mates.

Sadness

While a certain hope is evident throughout the poem, most pointedly in lines 10 through 12, with line 11 containing the poem's one exclamation point, the underlying sentiment seems to be one of sadness. The first two lines refer to this hope, or □faith,□ as □terrible,□ perhaps in that the narrator understands to a certain extent that his hopes, and indeed the hopes of many, are unfounded, unbearable, or unrealistic. After wandering through his hopeful ruminations, the narrator concludes with references to cobwebs, reflecting a reality undisturbed by mere hopes, and his □shivering□ bed. In that the reader has no reason to believe that the narrator is incapable of retaining his physical warmth with, say, blankets, she can understand the implied coldness to be mental or emotional, such as the coldness caused by solitude, or, perhaps, by physical closeness to one with whom no emotional closeness exists.

Style

Anaphora

Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of multiple lines or clauses. In this poem, anaphora is used but twice. First, each of the first two lines begins with the word ⬜quite.⬜ In that the construction appears at the beginning of this short poem, it helps set a tone that is maintained throughout. The words ⬜difficult⬜ and ⬜terrible⬜ are given particular attention and stress, and wherever the poem wanders thence, the reader does not forget that everything being described can essentially be modified with those two words. Indeed, the second example of anaphora is connected to the first: line 3, line 6, and the second half of line 8 all begin with the word ⬜that,⬜ specifically because they are all describing things in which a certain ⬜terrible⬜ ⬜faith⬜ is held.

Rhythm and Rhyme

As Young's collection is subtitled ⬜A Blues,⬜ the reader would expect his poems to demonstrate a certain musicality. Here, this musicality is evident not in a structured meter maintained throughout the poem but in isolated incidences of rhythmicity and rhyme. The first two lines each open with a one-syllable word followed by a three-syllable word. In lines 4 and 5, the word ⬜nominate⬜ and the term ⬜running mate⬜ have the same pattern of syllable stress, in addition to rhyming. In lines 7 and 8, on the other hand, the phrase ⬜have not yet / found out⬜ demands that the reader slow to a staccato thumping. Much of the following verse meanders without musicality, featuring only the distant rhymes of ⬜teeth⬜ and ⬜keep,⬜ perhaps indicating the arrhythmic nature of the distant hopes being described. In the end, the reader is left with the mournful tapping out of the phrases ⬜skitter & cobweb⬜ and ⬜shivering bed,⬜ featuring the double rhymes of ⬜skitter⬜ and ⬜shiver⬜ alongside ⬜web⬜ and ⬜bed.⬜

Deemphasized Structure

The structure of ⬜Chorale⬜ seems to be fairly unimportant with respect to the poem's overall meaning. The lines are presented in couplets, but beyond the first two lines, no couplet presents a single coherent thought. Punctuation appears at the ends of lines as often as in the middles. Further, the reader might consider that most of the poems in *Jelly Roll* feature precisely the same general format, with couplets running into one another and lines rarely longer than five words. As such, one might conclude that Young does not intend for the structure to have a substantial impact on the meaning of the poem. Indeed, in recordings of Young reading his poetry aloud, sometimes he pauses significantly between lines and stanzas and sometimes he does not. As such, he tends to place greater emphasis on each individual word, as one might expect in such a brief
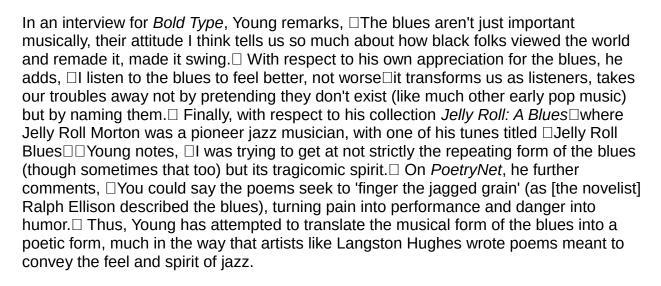
poem. His use of ampersands in place of the word *and* would seem to be further indication of his desire to waste as little space in his verse as possible.

Historical Context

The Blues

The blues are considered by many to be the ultimate source of virtually all modern genres of music. From blues came jazz; from jazz came rock and roll. Hip-hop, rap, alternative rock, and so on can all be seen as sprouting from these original genres. The blues themselves originated in African American spirituals sung on plantations by laboring slaves, with the call-and-response format, employed both vocally and instrumentally, evincing the genre's roots in West African music in particular. The blues, specifically, are held to have come into existence in the early twentieth century, with W. C. Handy playing one of the most significant roles. Robert Johnson, who is quoted in the opening epigraph of Young's collection, is generally credited with standardizing the twelve-bar blues, a term that refers to a certain style of chord progression.

In an interview for *Bold Type*, Young remarks, The blues aren't just important musically, their attitude I think tells us so much about how black folks viewed the world and remade it, made it swing. With respect to his own appreciation for the blues, he adds, I listen to the blues to feel better, not worse it transforms us as listeners, takes our troubles away not by pretending they don't exist (like much other early pop music) but by naming them. Finally, with respect to his collection *Jelly Roll: A Blues* where Jelly Roll Morton was a pioneer jazz musician, with one of his tunes titled Jelly Roll Blues Young notes, I was trying to get at not strictly the repeating form of the blues (though sometimes that too) but its tragicomic spirit. On *PoetryNet*, he further comments, You could say the poems seek to 'finger the jagged grain' (as [the novelist] Ralph Ellison described the blues), turning pain into performance and danger into humor. Thus, Young has attempted to translate the musical form of the blues into a poetic form, much in the way that artists like Langston Hughes wrote poems meant to convey the feel and spirit of jazz.

The Black Arts Movement

The Black Arts movement is considered the cultural extension of the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s. During this time period, a number of publishing houses and periodicals, under black ownership, assisted in the greatly increased production of literature and poetry by black authors. In association with the often militant Black Power movement, which opposed many forms of integration as disguised methods of assimilating blacks into white culture, Black Arts writers did not feel compelled to produce work that harmonized with the preexisting canon of works by white writers. Similarly, writers of this era did not shy away from making political statements that might otherwise have been seen as detrimental, in preventing the authors in question from being fully accepted by white society. In this cultural context arose the proliferation of poetry that drew on the distinctly African American musical

form of jazz. In fully embracing his own cultural context, as well as that of his ancestors, Young can be seen as echoing the heralding cries of his literary predecessors.

Post-Soul

In his introduction to the anthology *Giant Steps: The New Generation of African American Writers* (2000), which he edited, Young makes reference to □the post-soul writer.□ The term *post-soul* was coined by the writer and filmmaker Nelson George to describe the black world that came into existence after the □soul power□ advances of the 1960s. Young writes, □Just as previous generations made a way of no way, forging not just themselves but a brilliant array of opportunities for us to occupy, we are taking culture, both black and popular, and attempting to make it sing.□ In summing up the significance of various African American movements, Young notes, □Soul, another parallel to Black Arts, for me also parallels, if not creates, the rise of a black popular culture.□ Thus, post-soul writers are sustaining the outspoken tradition fostered by their foremothers and forefathers, asserting that black literature and arts constitute not just an extension of American cultural traditions but a permanent cultural tradition in and of themselves.

Critical Overview

With respect to *Jelly Roll*, critics have almost universally lauded Young's ability to absorb the reader in the rhythmic flow of his writing. In the *Hudson Review*, Mark Jarman declares, Young makes a supple, changeable music out of the marriage of dialect and standard English. Jarman presents a sample of Young's verse and then adds, You can hear the sound of this voice alive on the vivid page. That's poetry. In classifying the verse in *Jelly Roll* as among the best poetry of 2003 in *Library Journal*, Barbara Hoffert notes, Young struts his stuff with verve, tossing us off-kilter lines with a sort of insouciant melancholy. He'll get under your skin. In *Black Issues Book Review*, Dike Okoro observes, The jazzy swagger and the quirky syntax (and the omnipresent long dash) marry to produce a dizzying flow.

Still, some reviewers have found Young's linguistic presentation disagreeable. In *Poetry*, Brian Phillips makes reference to the fact that Young was educated at Harvard and questions the veracity of his poetic voice. He contends that, at times, dialect simply pinch-hits for poetic effort. Phillips presents lines from Disaster Movie Theme Music, found in *Jelly Roll*, which include the phrases mom'n thems and Heard tell you / were a-ready lost and remarks, Surely this is imitation, mere strategic typography: this is not Young's voice. Interestingly, with respect to the same passage, Mark Jarman remarks, I may have been living in the South too long, but to my ear 'mom'n thems' is just right. Thus, perhaps each individual reader must decide for herself whether Young's use of dialect is effective.

Okoro and Phillips question whether Young's blues framework is used successfully. Okoro states, His wit, an essential ingredient in the blues, is at times awkwardly employed, such that the reader's faith in the authentic sentiment of the poems might be undermined. Phillips notes,

The need to engraft an approved cultural paradigm onto the expression of one's experience in art is dangerous to a lyric poet. The danger is that it will excuse the kind of aesthetic laziness . . . in which one writes down to the authenticity of a tradition one is intellectually or experientially beyond.

Indeed, Phillips believes that Young can fulfill his amply evident promise as a poet only by forgoing his reliance, however intellectually sound, on established African American forms.

Overall, regardless of their opinions of Young's use of dialect and his overarching construct, reviewers have tended to see and admire the sizable heart from which his poems have issued forth. In *Library Journal*, Fred Muratori asserts that Young manages to explore the hazardous dimensions of emotional commitment with gritty grace and disarming candor. Similarly, a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer states, The verse here shows Young to be not only a terrific love poet but one of real emotional variety. In closing, the reviewer notes, Young has daringly likened himself in earlier poems and

prose to Langston Hughes: this versatile tour de force may well justify the ambitious comparison.

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Holmes is a freelance writer and editor. In this essay, he considers the intersection of romance and religion in Chorale and other poems in Young's Jelly Roll: A Blues.

The opening lines of Chorale—Quite difficult, belief / Quite terrible, faith are undeniably striking. The anaphoric use of the adverb quite immediately focuses the reader's attention on the seemingly negative adjectives that follow, difficult and terrible, and throughout the rest of the brief poem the echo of those words is felt, if not actually heard, in the mind of the reader. As for the nouns that close these two lines, belief and faith, either alone might bear various meanings, but in concert they certainly conjure thoughts of religiousness and spirituality. Indeed, a *chorale* is a churchly hymn or song; thus, the theme of the poem would seem to be concretized. Yet, beyond a later mention of the elect, which can be understood as referring to those divinely chosen for salvation, the theme of religion seems to be thence cast aside in favor of meditations on the possibility of predestined romance. Rather than dismissing the originally understood theme, however, the reader might consider what can be found at the intersection of the two substantial issues of religion and romance.

In fact, that intersection is prominent in a number of poems in Young's *Jelly Roll*. In Sleepwalking Psalms, an extended lamentation on the departure of a loved one (which immediately precedes Chorale), Young offers the following: There are no more saints / only people with pain / who want someone to blame. / Or praise. Here he may be contending that religion, particularly Christianity, is no longer primarily a moral system in which people transcend worldly concerns and disseminate positive energy through acts of benevolence, such as with, say, Mother Teresa. Instead, religion has evolved into a framework of authority that allows individuals to absolve themselves of responsibility for whatever adversity, or even fortune, they have encountered by holding some god accountable instead. After commenting on these people with pain, Young affirms, I am one of them, of course. Two stanzas later, he refers to the woman who left him as being a hairshirt, an uncomfortable garment worn by some Catholics to signify their penance. That is, perhaps he retains his torturous remembrances of this woman as a way of asserting to himself that God, or, essentially, the woman herself, has forsaken him; he, of course, cannot be blamed for this misfortune.

Similarly couched references to the religious aspect of romance are made in succeeding poems, beginning with Torch Song (which immediately follows Chorale): The heaven of her / hips over me, such sway / She got some saint / standing at the gate / keeping the crowds away. Thus, the woman in question is herself both heaven and the chief resident of heaven. The narrator then declares that he would build a church and slave away in his Sunday best just to see this woman, further equating her with God. The first lines of the next poem, Fish Story, read, For you I would give up / God repeal / once & for all, unkneel. Thus, he is turning away from God and toward the woman. In Jubilee, Young opens with Sister, you

are a late-night / preacher☐ and closes with ☐just don't leave me lone / like God / done, promising return.☐

Indeed, Young seems to have been, to a certain extent, abandoned by God. Illuminating thoughts on the fading importance of religion, especially among intellectuals☐which Young should certainly be considered, as his multiple volumes of poetry and degrees from Harvard and Brown attest☐can be found in *The Future of an Illusion*, by Sigmund Freud. Therein, Freud asserts that rational evidence for the existence of God is, in truth, utterly absent; all that can lead a rational person to believe in God, then, are the assertions of other persons, none of whom have had any more verifiable proof of God's existence than can be found in modern times. For the rationally grounded person, God must cease to exist. The closing lines of ☐Jubilee,☐ cited earlier, would seem ample evidence that Young has found himself in this state of mind.

In *Future*, Freud also posits the reason that God was invented in the first place: ☐When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father.☐ Indeed, in ancient times, people had much to fear from nature, including droughts, deluges, and pestilence. In modern times, on the other hand, civilization, at least in America, has essentially subdued nature, to the extent that for most people fear of nature's power is not a driving psychological concern. Apart from such catastrophes as hurricanes and earthquakes, Americans, particularly those with ample wealth, are well insulated from the worst effects of weather, sickness, and other natural forces. Thus, protection is no longer an essential trait for a divine being. What, then, might God become? Freud reminds us who the original iconic figure is for all humans: ☐The mother, who satisfies the child's hunger, becomes its first love-object and certainly also its first protection against all the undefined dangers which threaten it in the external world.☐ Only with the heightening of these external threats is the mother ☐replaced by the stronger father.☐

As such, for the modern male, who is quite possibly never confronted with external threats that can be warded off only by a powerful father figure, the mother retains her position of supremacy. In adulthood, of course, any male must inevitably renounce the worship of his own mother. Taking the mother's place, then, will be the object of his romantic affection, who may be a particular woman (considering heterosexuality in this argument, where a similar argument might be made regarding homosexuality), with whom he may or may not have already had a relationship or a romantic encounter, or perhaps in time an idealized woman, whom he will marry and with whom he will start a family.

Young leaves little doubt that he has often engaged in this type of romantic worship. In ☐Threnody,☐ he remarks, presumably of a romantic interest, ☐Without you I got no one / to say *sorry* to.☐ That is, he yearns for someone to bless him with forgiveness, as with Catholic confession. Freud asserts, ☐The superior wisdom which directs this course of things, the infinite goodness that expresses itself in it, the justice that achieves its aim in it☐these are the attributes of the divine beings who also created us and the world as a whole.☐ Young seems to hope that he will find this wisdom, goodness, and

justice not in God, in whom he no longer believes, but in the woman who can forgive his sins.

Chorale epitomizes Young's worship of the woman. Quite terrible is his faith in finding this idealized woman, perhaps because he is on some level aware of the inauspicious nature of his idolatry. Indeed, in an ideal relationship, neither of the two individuals can have an idealized view of the other; rather, they must be equals. In Chorale, the very forces of nature from which a father-figure god might have once offered Young protection have transformed into forces that he hopes will one day bring him his idealized other. These forces are represented here by the night, or the unknown, and the tide, or the elements. In his description of the future object of his affection, he can only vaguely state, what eyes / & stars, what teeth! / such arms, alive, and indeed, one rarely assigns distinct physical features to an imagined god; rather, one will simply know this god when one sees him or her. Also, in mentioning stars, Young again invokes the heavens in reference to a woman.

Based on the contents of Chorale, Young's state of mind is still in the course of a certain evolution. He recognizes that his trust in fate, and particularly in the coming of that one messianic woman who will prove to be his own personal object of worship, is difficult; he may prove able to bear his reliance on this essentially spiritual construct for only so long. It is unclear the degree to which his worship has progressed beyond that of a particular individual with whom he desires immediate physical contact to that of a woman, known or unknown, with whom he would wish to spend the rest of his life. The lines someone we will, all / night, keep might seem to suggest relatively shallow desires, but the tone of the poem appears to indicate that all / night is here intended to represent the rest of his life, that is, all night for every night to come. Having established himself as a terrific love poet, as described by a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer, Young may find himself further conflicted when he next produces a volume of personal poetry. (His collection *Black Maria*, which followed *Jelly Roll*, is an interpretation of film noir and as such constitutes a more fictional approach to poetry.) Will he be true to whatever further mental and spiritual development he will have undergone, as one would expect such an intelligent man to undergo, or will he seek to recreate, or perhaps rechannel, the palpable heartache he once felt? The reader can only await.

Source: Michael Allen Holmes, Critical Essay on Chorale, in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #2

Hart is a published writer and former teacher. In this essay, she explores the mixture of religion, nature, politics, and the blues in Young's poem.

In the seventeen short lines of Young's poem □Chorale,□ the poet hints at several diverse topics, as he wends his way from beginning to end. In the first few lines, one might be led to believe that the poem is about religion or spirituality. The last line of the poem conjures up the emotional image of loneliness. Between the beginning and the end are allusions to politics and nature. In addition, the poem resonates with lyrics from a blues song, with its reference to lost or elusive love. It is as if the reader is traveling down an unknown waterway. Just when the reader thinks that he or she has grasped the intent of the poet, the poem rounds yet another bend in the river.
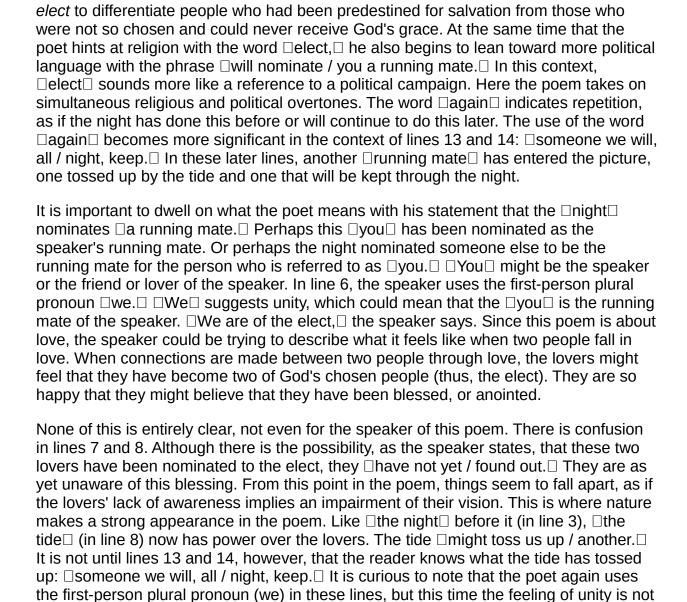
Young's poem begins, in its very title, with a sense of religion. A chorale is a religious hymn sung to a melody. The religious rebel Martin Luther is credited with creating the first chorales, which were sung by his congregations. Later, Johann Sebastian Bach added harmonies to the simple musical lines of religious chorales. Basically, however, chorales were written in uncomplicated, rhyming lines for ordinary people to sing. Although there is no rhyming in Young's □Chorale,□ the surface simplicity of the stanzas are reflective of the original Lutheran church songs.

In the first two lines of the poem, Young mentions both □belief□ and □faith.□ Although these words can be used in a secular context, it is quite common for most people to first react to them with the understanding that they are imbued with either a spiritual or a religious connotation. If someone were to ask a person, □What is your faith?□ most people would reply by naming their affiliation with a church or a spiritual practice. Young sets his readers up to assume this religious attitude by combining a religiously inclined title with a spiritually inclined first two lines. So begins a somewhat bewildering journey through Young's poem.

If the reader looks back at the first two lines, after realizing that this is not really a poem about spirituality, the words take on a different meaning. □Belief□ and □faith□ could, after all, be references to something more generic, as one would find in such aphorisms as □love conquers all.□ These types of beliefs can indeed be □quite difficult□ if circumstances prove that all is not conquered by love after all. Having faith in someone who is not worthy of one's trust can be □quite terrible.□ With the opening lines, then, the poet could be reflecting on a sad ending to a relationship, one in which he had, at some time, great faith and belief. Remembering his faith and belief in his former lover could very well now be extremely difficult and terrible to bear.

In the third line, the poet continues with his thoughts on faith. The speaker of this poem refers to faith in reference to □the night,□ which is imbued with a sense of power: □the night, again, / will nominate.□ One might question whether the word □night□ suggests a god or some other strong spiritual influence. There is also an overtone of religion in the third stanza (line 6) with the term □elect.□ Those of the Puritan faith used the term

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elect to differentiate people who had been predestined for salvation from those who were not so chosen and could never receive God's grace. At the same time that the poet hints at religion with the word □elect,□ he also begins to lean toward more political language with the phrase □will nominate / you a running mate.□ In this context, □elect□ sounds more like a reference to a political campaign. Here the poem takes on simultaneous religious and political overtones. The word □again□ indicates repetition, as if the night has done this before or will continue to do this later. The use of the word □again□ becomes more significant in the context of lines 13 and 14: □someone we will, all / night, keep.□ In these later lines, another □running mate□ has entered the picture, one tossed up by the tide and one that will be kept through the night.

It is important to dwell on what the poet means with his statement that the □night□ nominates □a running mate.□ Perhaps this □you□ has been nominated as the speaker's running mate. Or perhaps the night nominated someone else to be the running mate for the person who is referred to as □you.□ □You□ might be the speaker or the friend or lover of the speaker. In line 6, the speaker uses the first-person plural pronoun □we.□ □We□ suggests unity, which could mean that the □you□ is the running mate of the speaker. □We are of the elect,□ the speaker says. Since this poem is about love, the speaker could be trying to describe what it feels like when two people fall in love. When connections are made between two people through love, the lovers might feel that they have become two of God's chosen people (thus, the elect). They are so happy that they might believe that they have been blessed, or anointed.

None of this is entirely clear, not even for the speaker of this poem. There is confusion in lines 7 and 8. Although there is the possibility, as the speaker states, that these two lovers have been nominated to the elect, they □have not yet / found out.□ They are as yet unaware of this blessing. From this point in the poem, things seem to fall apart, as if the lovers' lack of awareness implies an impairment of their vision. This is where nature makes a strong appearance in the poem. Like □the night□ before it (in line 3), □the tide□ (in line 8) now has power over the lovers. The tide □might toss us up / another.□ It is not until lines 13 and 14, however, that the reader knows what the tide has tossed up: □someone we will, all / night, keep.□ It is curious to note that the poet again uses the first-person plural pronoun (we) in these lines, but this time the feeling of unity is not as strong. Rather, it seems as if the lovers are no longer together or else that their previous union is beginning to crumble□someone has come between them. The tide is challenging the lovers. There is someone new in their midst that one of them will □all / night, keep.□ The last line implies that the speaker has been left out in the cold.

It is in the last lines of this poem that a true sense of the blues comes in. The speaker is lonely and sad, a typical theme of the blues. The running mate is not present. The speaker is left to ruminate about the past, as he looks around his room and notices only the spiders and the cobwebs. Spiders, like the tide, are part of nature, but there are few people who can think of spiders without feeling skittish. The image of spiders might have been chosen as a metaphor for the speaker's discomfort. Spiders in one's bed do not conjure up images of a good night's sleep. The presence of cobwebs indicates a space that has accumulated dust and dirt, a place that has not seen much movement. The untidy bed in what seems to be a close room not entered by anyone but the

speaker might portray a sense of the speaker's depression. If spiders and cobwebs were not enough to make readers grasp the speaker's emotions, the last line of the poem makes matters clear. The spiders share the speaker's shivering bed. He might be pleading for some unknown person to share his lonely bed as well, but a shivering bed is not very inviting.

These last images accurately portray the distraught feelings and loneliness of the speaker. They are also capable of eliciting the sympathy of readers. But they do not beckon; they do not entice. They fend off, as if the speaker is mournfully singing his blues while signaling that he does not want anyone to come too close. The speaker might be so lost in his journey that he is not yet ready to step out of the boat that is carrying him down the river of the blues.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on Chorale, in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #3

Bussey is an independent writer specializing in literature. In this essay, she explores the relevance of musical form and content in Young's Chorale.

Young's 2003 poetry collection, *Jelly Roll: A Blues,* showcases the poet's particular expertise in music as it relates to poetry. Although the poems include a wide range of subjects and tones, they are held together by the influence of American music. Young's comfort with the form is evident in the intimacy of his poems and his willingness to explore personal and sometimes painful musings. In □Chorale,□ he expresses loneliness and hope within the twin contexts of blues music and the chorale. These two musical forms are very different, yet the poem is cohesive and the voice sympathetic. Somehow, Young draws on these disparate musical influences in a way that works for the poem.

The collection *Jelly Roll* bears the subtitle *A Blues*. It is fair, then, to read the poems Young chose to include in the collection with the blues in mind. Young is known for his deep interest in African American history and music (especially the blues) and for finding poetic inspiration in those studies. His writing participates in and continues the history, tradition, and culture of African Americans, but he brings to his work contemporary style and settings. Young's expertise in blues lyrics qualified him to edit *Blues Poems*, an anthology of poetry by great blues musicians, such as Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters, alongside the poetry of poets inspired by blues music, such as Langston Hughes and W. H. Auden. All of this biographical context points to how deeply blues music influences Young's individual voice and how natural it is that he should use it as a context for an entire collection of poetry.

Blues, like jazz, is a distinctly American style of music. A shortened version of the □blue devils,□ *blues* refers to experiencing hard times and feeling low. The music grew out of African American spirituals, chants, and work songs. It is characterized by □blue notes,□ specific musical notes that set an emotional tone, and □call-and-response□ patterns in the lyrics. Call-and-response is intended to mirror everyday communication in that it uses phrases that seem to suggest a dialogue and build a narrative. This type of communication is common in West African communities that use call-and-response formally in everything from political participation to religion and music. The roots of call-and-response run deep, and Young knows very well how significant this pattern is to African American culture. In □Chorale,□ Young suggests this pattern in the particular way he uses anastrophe, or the inversion of the usual order of words in a sentence to build a particular effect. Anastrophe is evident in the first two lines of the poem and again in line 12. Young takes unified thoughts and breaks them into two separate utterances. In the first line, for example, instead of writing, □Belief is quite difficult,□ he writes, □Quite difficult, belief.□ The word □belief□ seems to answer the question of what is difficult. It is a subtle form of call-and-response.

The first two lines also demonstrate how □Chorale□ is consistent with blues from a content perspective. Blues is often about struggles, love problems, oppression and

hopelessness, and feeling vulnerable to greater or more powerful forces. Blues music also carries a strong narrative element, so that a blues song tells a story that often explains the singer's plight. The song itself seems to arise from the singer's need to tell his or her sad story, and the listener is moved to sympathize with the singer. In ☐Chorale,☐ Young borrows heavily from the tradition of blues content. The poem is about loneliness, as the speaker describes in the last three lines, ☐just these spiders / that skitter & cobweb, / share my shivering bed.☐ He is alone with spiders and cobwebs, and his bed is both literally and figuratively cold. Although the crux of the poem is that the ☐tide☐ will probably ☐toss up☐ someone whom the speaker can keep ☐all night,☐ he does not speak of true love, and the notion of hope is both difficult and terrifying (according to the first two lines of the poem). The little hope the speaker has seems to be merely for a respite from his loneliness, but not a love relationship that would actually banish it.

The speaker's sense of powerlessness is also consistent with the blues point of view. He does not feel the least bit in control of his love life but is instead subject to the whims of ☐the night☐ that will choose a ☐running mate☐ for him. His only choice is seemingly to wait and see who this person will be. He writes that ☐we are of the elect / & have not yet / found out.☐ The tide, without his agency, might ☐toss up / another.☐ This is a very fatalistic view of love, in which the speaker is really nothing but a pawn of fate; he never even considers claiming authority over his own love relationships. Blues often laments powerlessness and oppression, and here Young borrows that theme to describe the speaker's view of love.

Still, Young named the poem ☐Chorale.☐ In many ways, the chorale stands in stark contrast to blues music, yet Young's poem joins the two in a unified and meaningful way. Despite the disparate influences of the chorale and blues, the poem is better for having them both. While blues is distinctly American and secular, the chorale has its roots in European religious music. Traditionally, a chorale was a hymn sung by an entire Lutheran congregation. That it was a hymn means it was intended to be a form of worship or to teach theological truths. What is important for Young's poem, however, is that it was sung by the entire congregation. It was intended as a group, or universal, expression. Thus, the feelings described by the poem's speaker are part of the common human experience. The speaker becomes not just a single person alone in bed at night but, in fact, anyone who has ever felt alone. Indeed, the speaker becomes the reader, and the reader identifies with the struggles the speaker faces.

In form, the chorale is very different from Young's poem. Traditional chorales were subject to rather specific criteria, such as rhyming lines, simple melodies, and certain stanzaic conventions. Young's poem is written in free-verse couplets with heavy use of enjambment. In enjambment, a phrase or sentence runs over from one line of verse to the next, splitting closely related words and sometimes forming two distinct thoughts. While chorales were formal, ☐Chorale☐ is very natural and loose in its rhythms. It is fair to draw the conclusion, then, that Young wants the reader to focus more on the collective nature of the chorale's presentation than on the rigors of the form.

Combing the different forms of the blues and the chorale, Young creates a poem that holds together well. Both forms□blues and the chorale□arose from human experience and the need for self-expression. Whether in Europe hundreds of years ago or in America in the early twentieth century, people have always felt drawn to music as an outlet for expression. While the chorale and blues are very different musical forms, they both encompass a wide range of expression that can overlap. In □Chorale,□ Young finds the area where the forms converge, without forcing them to work together. Ultimately, the poem works because the speaker's feelings and language patterns arise from blues and the universality of experience arises from the chorale. The poem is a sophisticated blend of styles, but the style does not detract from the speaker's central expression of loneliness with slight hope in fate.

Source: Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on □Chorale,□ in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Adaptations

Video clips of Young reading several poems from *Jelly Roll* can be found on the Random House website, at http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/young/desktop.html.

In an interview conducted by Renée Montagne, aired on National Public Radio's *Morning Edition* on March 3, 2005, and found online at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4520872, Young can be heard commenting on and reading from his 2005 collection, *Black Maria*.

Topics for Further Study

Young based his second collection of poetry, *To Repel Ghosts*, on the life and art of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Base your own work of art on Young's □Chorale.□ This work could be a painting of a scene from the poem (such as the narrator's □shivering bed□), a collage of the images found in the poem, or some other artistic presentation. As Young does not offer a wide variety of physical description, feel free to produce a work of art that provides an abstract interpretation of the poem.

Write a poem of at least twenty lines in the style of □Chorale□ on the subject of destiny. You may want to answer questions such as the following: Where do you think your life or the lives of others might lead, romantically or perhaps professionally? How much control will you have over the course of events that you will experience? Use metaphors to communicate your thoughts. Write your poem in couplets, with short lines, occasionally employing rhyme and rhythm. Read your poem aloud to the class, identifying afterward several locations where you believe the flow of your poem was musical.

Choose and read two other poems from Young's collection *Jelly Roll* and two poems from one of his other collections. (All of these poems should be at least ten lines long.) In an essay, for each pair of poems consider the following questions: How are the two poems similar, and how are they different? How do the poems reflect the overall theme of the collection? Do you think that the presence of the theme makes the poems stronger or weaker? Then, for the two pairs of poems together, answer the following questions: What aspects of the poems suggest that they were all written by the same author? Do you prefer the poems from one collection over the poems from the other? Why or why not? Within your essay, comment on any other aspects of the poems you find deserving of comment.

Research the history of the blues, focusing on its original development and also addressing its development throughout the twentieth century. Present your findings in an essay. At the conclusion of your essay, discuss how well you think Young has contributed to the history of the blues, through both his own collection *Jelly Roll* and the collection *Blues Poems*, which he edited.

What Do I Read Next?

Kevin Young's first collection, *Most Way Home* (1995), won the Zacharis First Book Award from the literary magazine *Ploughshares* and features a somewhat wider variety of form than is found in *Jelly Roll*.

One of Young's favorite poetry collections is *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz* (1961), by the groundbreaking African American intellectual Langston Hughes.

Another collection of poems admired by Young, especially in that it originally brought him to the realization that poetry could speak of the profoundly personal, is Rita Dove's *Thomas and Beulah* (1986).

Young has been compared to the poet Yusef Komunyakaa. Komunyakaa's collection *Neon Vernacular: New and Selected Poems* (1993) includes samplings from earlier works as well as original material and earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1994.

Young has cited □Blues People: Negro Music in White America□ (1963), by Imamu Amiri Baraka, who was originally named LeRoi Jones, as offering a good account of the social relevance of the blues.

Further Study

George, Nelson, *Post-Soul Nation: The Explosive, Contradictory, Triumphant, and Tragic 1980s as Experienced by African Americans (Previously Known as Blacks and before That Negroes)*, Viking, 2004.

George characterizes the era that was the 1980s in terms of the African American experience, with extensive reference to a wide variety of aspects of popular culture, including music, television, and literature.

Komunyakaa, Yusef, *Blue Notes: Essays, Interviews, and Commentaries*, University of Michigan Press, 2000.

This text offers a sampling of writings by Komunyakaa (to whom Young has been compared) with respect to his influences, his own poetry, and his artistic sensibilities.

Wald, Elijah, *Escaping the Delta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of Blues*, Amistad, 2004.

This historical work examines in extensive detail the inception of the blues and offers a short biography of Robert Johnson, one of the genre's most influential figures.

Young, Kevin, ed., *Blues Poems*, Knopf, 2003.

This collection offers a variety of poems, selected by Young, that can be considered influential to or exemplary of blues poetry, by such authors as Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Allen Ginsberg.

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□□□, *Jelly Roll: A Blues*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003, pp. 111, 115, 116, 118, 177.

□□□, □Poet of the Month: Kevin Young,□ on *PoetryNet*, May 2003, available online at http://members.aol.com/poetrynet/month/archive/young/index.html.

Young, Kevin, and Ernest Hilbert, □A Conversation with Kevin Young,□ in *Bold Type*, Vol. 6, No. 11, available online at http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0403/poetry/young_interview.html.

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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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