

Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition Study Guide

**Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition by Álvar Núñez
Cabeza de Vaca**

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Introduction

The *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* (1555) is Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's account of his years as a survivor of a doomed Spanish mission, lost in what is now the southern part of the United States. The expedition landed at present-day Tampa Bay, Florida, and moved from Florida to Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico. The *Chronicle* is the first published book by a European about what was to become the United States. Originally published in Spanish as *La relación que dio Aluar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca de lo acaescido en las Indians en la armada donde yua por gouernador Pamphilo de Narbeaz* in 1542, revised and expanded as *La Relacion y comentarios del gouernador Aluar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca* in 1555, the book fueled interest in exploring and conquering North America among its original readers. Cabeza de Vaca included information about gold and copper, as well as other metals and minerals in the area, objects of desire for many an explorer who followed him.

Cabeza de Vaca was a member of an expedition that left Spain in 1527 headed by Pánfilo de Narváez, who was to be the governor of what the Spanish called La Florida. Even before arriving there, the voyagers dealt with many problems, including a hurricane that sank two of its ships. At Narváez's insistence, most of the expedition party moved inland to explore and claim territory. Only Cabeza de Vaca and three others of the original crew who took the inland journey made it back to Spain alive.

The text of the *Chronicle* details the author's often challenging experiences as a member of the expedition. Cabeza de Vaca spent many years moving through territory not previously seen or explored by Europeans, suffering from soul-crushing hunger, thirst, and physical pain. He was among the first white men to see bison, and he writes about the many Indian tribes he encountered and lived with, their social customs, and the local land, flora, and fauna. Eventually, Cabeza de Vaca and the three other men remaining from the original expedition found other Spaniards and reached Mexico City in 1536, and they were able to return to Europe in 1537.

The *Chronicle* was originally written for the king of Spain as a private report in 1537. Cabeza de Vaca was trying to convince his king to name him governor of La Florida, but the position went to Hernando de Soto. The author later received his own governorship in South America in 1540. In 1542, the *Chronicle* was published in Spain to a limited circulation. The 1555 version of the *Chronicle* became more widely read. It was a more elaborate, detailed second edition, and focused on improving Cabeza de Vaca's reputation after his own governorship in South America proved a failure and landed the author in jail. The *Chronicle* was first translated into English in 1851 by Thomas Buckingham Smith, around the same time the United States gained territory from Mexico after the Mexican-American War.

While in many senses the expedition at the heart of the *Chronicle* was a failure, the book describes a triumph of perseverance. Though all of their possessions were lost and he and his companions often lacked food and water, they were able to adapt to the environment as well as many aspects of the Indian way of life. Cabeza de Vaca

repeatedly emphasizes that he lived as naked as many of the Indians for much of his journey; they did what they had to do to survive. As the natural riches and native cultures Cabeza de Vaca encountered sparked the European imagination and drive to claim and conquer, the *Chronicle* is a critical link in the chain of events that shaped the modern North American political, social, and economic landscape.



Author Biography

Alvar Núñez Cabeza De Vaca

Born between 1485 and 1492 probably in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was a member of a distinguished family. Pedro de Vera, his maternal grandfather, was involved with conquering the Canary Islands. Cabeza de Vaca served several stints as a soldier fighting in Italy and Spain for both King Carlos V and for four Dukes of Medina Sidonia.

In 1542, Cabeza de Vaca traveled with the party of the new governor of Florida, Pánfilo de Narváez, to explore the new Spanish territory. The expedition was a complete debacle, with only the author and a few others surviving the inland journey. Cabeza de Vaca wrote of his years of hardships in *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition (La relación)*, first published in 1542 and updated in 1555.

Before publication of the book, Cabeza de Vaca had already returned to the Americas to serve as governor of the Río de la Plata beginning in 1541. This experience was also disastrous, ending in mutiny. In 1544, he returned to Spain as a prisoner charged with corruption and spent eight years in jail. He wrote another memoir about the experience in *Comentarios*. Cabeza de Vaca died in 1559 or 1560 in Spain.

Chapter 1: When the Fleet Left Spain and the Men Who Went with It

On June 27, 1527, the Narváez expedition leaves Spain. It is headed by Pánfilo de Narváez, who is to serve as the governor of the part of North America that includes the Cape of Florida. He has with him five ships and about six hundred men, including the author, who is the expedition's treasurer and head of legal issues.

On a governor-ordered trip to buy supplies in a port city in Trinidad, Cabeza de Vaca barely escapes death as a hurricane hits. The author and about thirty men are on shore while the hurricane rages, and they are the only survivors from the two ships that were originally sent for supplies. The governor arrives with his ships a few days later, in early November 1527. The expedition remains in the port of Xagua until February 1528 as many of the survivors are now afraid to sail in winter.

Chapter 2: How the Governor Came to Xagua and Brought a Pilot with Him

When they sail again, they continue to face storms as they head toward Florida. The expedition finally reaches Florida on April 12, 1528, and sails along the coast until they reach a bay inhabited by Indians.



Chapter 3: How We Arrived in Florida

Alonso Enriquez, the expedition's comptroller, trades for food with the Indians. The next day, the governor and the men, including the author, go ashore. Narváez claims the land in the name of the king of Spain. Cabeza de Vaca reports that the Indians want them to leave, but they do not do anything about it except to leave themselves.

Chapter 4: How We Went to the Interior

Two days later, the governor decides to start exploring the land. On the second trek inland a few days later, a small party captures four Indians, who take the group to their village. They find items from Castile and New Spain, as well as some gold. The Indians tell them about a distant place called Apalache, which has a great deal of gold and other valuables. The expedition plans to take some of these Indians as guides and go there.

The governor meets with a few of the leaders of the expedition and lays out his plan to move inland while his ships remain sailing along the coast until they reach a certain harbor. Cabeza de Vaca vehemently disagrees with the plan. He wants to go back on the ships and look for a better place to make port. The others believe some should travel on land along the coast until they reach the harbor and the ships and the rest of the expedition should follow. The governor selects the second plan and heads the land expedition.

The governor wants Cabeza de Vaca to take charge of the ships, but he will not. Cabeza de Vaca writes, "I refused to accept because I felt sure that he would never see the ships again, nor the ships him." The author insists on taking the inland journey with the governor.

Chapter 5: How the Governor Left the Ships

Starting off on May 1, the governor and his party of three hundred men travel for fifteen days along the coast. They have to cross a swift river, a task that takes a day. On the other side, they find Indians and eventually obtain food in their village. After spending time searching for a harbor and finding none, the party continues to look for Apalache.

About a month later, they meet an Indian chief who is the enemy of the Apalache and is willing to aid the Christians (the author's term for the members of his expedition). The party crosses another river, deep and swift, and lose their first man, who drowns with his horse. They eventually reach Apalache without letting the Indians therein know of their presence. The party has suffered on their long, arduous journey and are happy to reach their destination.



Chapter 6: How We Got to Apalache

Cabeza de Vaca leads the small party to enter the Apalache village. Though attacked by the Indian men, the hostile ones soon retreat. The author describes what they find in the village, including a significant amount of corn.

Chapter 7: the Lay of the Land

After describing the area surrounding the village and the attacks on them by the Indians, Cabeza de Vaca reports they stay for nearly a month. Learning that there is another, more prosperous Indian village called Aute to the south and closer to the sea, the expedition moves there. This excursion also experiences Indian attacks, during which the second Spaniard dies. When they reach Aute, the Indians are gone and their lodges burned, but their crops are still intact.

Cabeza de Vaca soon takes a party of fifty men to look for the sea. They find an inlet but determine that the seacoast is still far off. Returning to Aute, Cabeza de Vaca and his party find many of the men, including the governor, are ill and had been attacked by Indians the previous night.

Chapter 8: How We Left Aute

Though weak from the horrible conditions and extreme illness, the whole party goes to the inlet spot Cabeza de Vaca has found. There is little hope of surviving there. They decide to build ships to leave, using local wood and plants and materials they had brought from Spain. They build five boats between early August and late September, during which time they raid local Indian villages and eat all but one of their horses to survive. The expedition—now just 242 men—finally leaves what they call the Bay of Horses.

Chapter 9: How We Left the Bay of Horses

After a week of sailing along the coast, they encounter Indians in canoes near an island. The Christians take the five canoes abandoned by the Indians as well as the food supplies they find in lodges on the island. For a month, the party sails in this manner, "plying the coast toward the River of Palms" (westward along the Gulf of Mexico), with their supplies dwindling. Finding a small island, they set anchor there, where an intense storm prevents their departure for six days. There is no fresh water, and several men die from drinking saltwater. Even though the storm has not stopped, they decide they must sail on.

They decide to follow an Indian canoe they encountered earlier, which leads them to an Indian village. Though they exchange corn for fish there, they soon fall under attack again. The governor is hurt, and they return to the boats. Traveling farther, they encounter more Indians who offer to get them water as long as one man, Doroteo Teodoro, comes with them. Teodoro takes a black man from the expedition and some



containers for water; and the Indians leave two of their own as hostages. The Indians return the vessels but neither the two Christians nor the promised water.

Chapter 10: on the Skirmish We Had with the Indians

The next morning, the Indians want the two Indian hostages left with the expedition to be returned to them, but the governor will not do so until the Christians are returned. Sailing on, the Christians find a cape, a freshwater river, and a bay with many islands. Collecting fresh water from the river, they try to near the river's shore but are unsuccessful because of the sea's movement.

The boats start drifting apart from each other into deep water. When Cabeza de Vaca's boat nears the governor's, he asks for instructions. He recounts that "He answered that this was no time for orders; that each one should do the best he could to save himself." The governor tells him to row to shore but will not help Cabeza de Vaca's boat, which is full of weak men. Instead, Cabeza de Vaca's boat travels with the boat headed by Captains Peñalosa and Tellez. When a storm overtakes them, the Peñalosa/Tellez boat is lost. Eventually, the men on Cabeza de Vaca's boat become increasingly ill. Death seems near for all one night, but in the morning they finally reach shore, on November 6.

Chapter 11: What Happened to Lope De Oviedo with Some Indians

After eating, the most physically robust man, Lope de Oviedo, does some exploring. He learns that they are on an island. "A hundred Indian archers" follow Oviedo back, and the men are terrified since only three of them can even stand up. Though the Indians are ready to attack, the Christians appease them with beads and trinkets. The Indians promise to bring food the next day.

Chapter 12: How the Indians Brought Us Food

The Indians feed the men for several days, until Cabeza de Vaca and his men decide to continue on their voyage. They strip naked to get the boat out of the sand. Two waves across the bow overturn the boat, drowning several men. The rest make it back to shore, having lost everything. "We were in such a state that our bones could easily be counted and we looked like death itself," Cabeza de Vaca writes.

The Indians again bring them food, but they are afraid of the white men's changed appearance. Though some of the men do not want Cabeza de Vaca to ask the Indians to take them to their village, the author decides that this is the only way to survive. The Indians take care of them. Cabeza de Vaca explains, "In the morning they again gave us fish and roots, and treated us so well that we were reassured, losing to some extent our apprehension of being sacrificed."



Chapter 13: How We Learned About Other Christians

After noticing an unfamiliar trinket one Indian has, Cabeza de Vaca learns that there are other Christians nearby. They turn out to be Captains Dorantes and del Castillo and their crews, safe and in the care of other Indians. They try to repair their boats, but the weather and lack of clothing compel most of the men to remain there for the winter.

Chapter 14: How Four Christians Departed

Many die that winter, and five men who stay on the coast resort to cannibalism as they face starvation. Of the eighty men from both boats, only fifteen are still alive. The Indians begin dying from sickness and blame the Christians for their illness. Though the Indians are planning to kill the remaining Christians, one of their own dissuades them, arguing that if the Christians had such power more of them would have survived. They call the island the "Isle of Misfortune." The author also describes some of the Indians' social customs, including body piercings, division of labor, and mourning and marriage rituals. In April, the Christians and the Indians go to the mainland and celebrate and feast on blackberries for a month.

Chapter 15: What Happened to Us on the Isle of Misfortune

Describing more Indian customs on the island, Cabeza de Vaca also relates that the Indians essentially force the Christians to act as medicine men. Their method of healing is to breathe on their patients, make the sign of the cross over them, and pray. He also describes the Indians' clothing and organization, noting: "They are very liberal toward each other with what they have. There is no ruler among them. All who are of the same descent cluster together."

Chapter 16: How the Christians Left the Island

In the spring, Dorantes and Castillo organize a meeting of the fourteen expedition members who are still alive on the island. By this time, Cabeza de Vaca is on the mainland, ill and perhaps near death. Most of the men from the island try to visit him there, but he is too sick to see them. Dorantes and Castillo, and ten others who are healthy enough to try, leave the island. Cabeza de Vaca reports that he ran from the Indians from the island because they made him work too much. He went to live among the Charrucans, mainland Indians who live in the forest. He had more freedom to move around as he became a trader, operating inland and along the coast among the Indians. Despite an improved life, he continues to suffer physically from the conditions. He writes, "I spent nearly six years in this country, alone with them and as naked as they were."

Cabeza de Vaca remains so long because another Christian, Lope de Oviedo, still lives on the island. It takes the author that long to convince him to leave and look for other Christians. As they travel along the coast, they learn some Indians have killed a few of their compatriots for fun, but three are still alive, barely surviving the ill treatment.



Oviedo decides not to stay on but chooses to return with some women of the Deaguanes Indians. Cabeza de Vaca stays, the lone Christian among the brutish Quevenes Indians.

Chapter 17: How the Indians Arrived with Andrés Dorantes and Castillo and Estevanico

Some Indians from a different tribe than the Quevenes lead Cabeza de Vaca to Dorantes, Castillo, and Estevanico. The author convinces Dorantes and Castillo to escape and go to "a country of Christians." To facilitate this plan, Cabeza de Vaca agrees to be a slave to the Indian family holding Dorantes until the spring, when the Indians harvest and live off of prickly pear. The author also learns of the tragic fate of most of the rest of the expedition, most of whom died from illness, starvation, or violence, and many of whom resorted to cannibalizing the dead. Esquivel, the last to survive by cannibalism, was taken by an Indian and lived to tell Figueroa his tale.

Chapter 18: Esquivel's Account, Related by Figueroa

The fates of the expedition survivors passed from man to man until it thus reached Cabeza de Vaca. He begins this chapter by further describing the lot of others from the expedition, including how Dorantes, Castillo, and Estevanico, a Moorish slave of the Spaniards, came to be where they are as slaves. He also includes further information about the Indians' life and customs, including the Marianes Indians killing of all female infants lest they bear children who will become enemies of the tribe. He notes, "They are great liars and drunkards, and drink to become intoxicated. They are so accustomed to running that, without resting or getting tired, they run from morning till night in pursuit of a deer." He also describes a cow-like animal, probably buffalo, as being numerous, large, and delicious.

Chapter 19: How the Indians Separated Us

Because of a conflict between the Indians, the first prickly pear time did not allow the men to escape as planned. Cabeza de Vaca and the others have to live with the Indians for another year, and he is treated badly. A year later, despite the Indians separating the four Christians, they meet up again at the next year's prickly pear time.

Chapter 20: How We Fled

The four men manage to flee, and they eventually find welcome shelter with the Avavares Indians. The Avavares already know about the Christians from their trade with other tribes that had held them captive previously. The Avavares believe the Christians are medicine men.



Chapter 21: How We Cured Several Sick People

The Indians ask Castillo to heal their headaches. He makes the sign of the cross over each patient; the healing works, and many soon demand the same treatment. The four decide to stay the winter with these Indians. While hunting with them for food, Cabeza de Vaca gets lost for five days and is feared dead for a time.

Chapter 22: How the Following Day They Brought Other Sick People

More Indians seek healing from Castillo. Using the same technique, he heals five paralyzed people. When they are healed, Indians from a number of tribes ask Castillo to heal them. The author explains:

We all prayed to [God] as well as we could to restore them to health and he, seeing there was no other way of getting those people to help us so that we might be saved from our miserable existence, had mercy on us.

Soon, all four men are healing the Indians. The Indians tell a tale about a demon who terrorized them a decade or more before, and the Christians convince them that if they would "be Christians, like ourselves, they would not have to fear that man." The Avavares like the idea.

The four stay with the Avavares for about eight months, before moving on and staying with other tribes. Of the Fig Indians, Cabeza de Vaca notes, "they judge the seasons by the ripening of fruit, by the time that fish die, and by the appearance of the stars, and in all of this they are very clever and expert." They remain naked and hungry, for food is scarce. They begin to make items such as arrows, nets, and lodge matting under contract for the Indians, as well as items for barter.

Chapter 23: How We Departed After Eating the Dogs

After eating two dogs they acquired in barter, the four continue to travel on a trail, eating what they can find. They stay with another group of Indians who treat them very well. "Our departure pained them greatly, and we left them in tears."

Chapter 24: the Customs of the Indians of That Land

Cabeza de Vaca describes more of the culture among the Indians, focusing on women, marriage, interpersonal disagreements, and warfare.

Chapter 25: How Ready the Indians Are with Weapons

Cabeza de Vaca continues his discussion of the way Indians live. He praises their skill with bows and arrows, and their fearlessness in the face of European weapons. "Horses are what the Indians dread most, and the means by which they will be overcome." He advises on tactics against the Indians in battle and commends their physical



capabilities, writing, "Their eyesight, hearing, and senses in general are better, I believe, than those of any other men on earth."

Chapter 26: on Nations and Languages

Cabeza de Vaca describes the location of various tribes and Indian languages, listing the Cavoques, Han, Charruco, Deguenes, Mendicans, Quevenes, Marianes, Guaycones, Yguaces, Atayos, Decubadaos, Quitoles, Chavavares, Maliacones, Cultalchulches, Susolas, Comos, Camolas, Figs, and Cuchendados, all of whom they have encountered since landing at the Isle of Misfortune. He also talks about how they produce a smoke from a certain leaf that makes them intoxicated, and homosexual marriage found among some tribes.

Chapter 27: How We Moved and Were Received

The next group the Christians stay with also do not want Cabeza de Vaca and his group to leave but make them a feast and try to convince them to stay. The Christians depart despite their hosts' efforts, get lost, and find a new tribe who greets them eagerly. The Christians work as healers for these Indians as well. The situation is repeated with the next tribe as well.

Chapter 28: on Another New Custom

The four continue to travel from Indian village to Indian village, seeing mountains and nearing the sea. They are followed by groups of Indians, who steal from the new Indians they encounter. This situation displeases Cabeza de Vaca, but the new tribes they visit learn to hide their belongings. The group continues to cross the country inland instead of along the coast, eventually losing their Indian escorts who do not want to take the route the four have chosen. When they come upon a lodge, they "were welcomed with tears and deep sorrow [because] they already knew that, wherever we arrived, the people would be robbed and plundered by those in our company." The Indians are relieved when the Christians arrive unaccompanied, and they are shocked the next day when they are plundered by the white men's prior companions. The myths around the men grow as looters advise the looted:

In consolation, the robbers told them that we were children of the sun and had the power to cure the sick or kill them.... They also enjoined them to treat us with great reverence, be careful no to arouse our wrath, to give us all their possessions, and to guide us to where there were many people, and that wherever we should come to they should steal and rob everything the others had, which was the custom.

Chapter 29: How They Steal from One Another

The four Christians persist in their journey, again with more Indians following them, and continue to receive food and gifts. Cabeza de Vaca performs crude surgery on one Indian who has a long arrowhead lodged near his heart. The author successfully



removes it, bringing him and his traveling companions much fame. They learn that there is copper in the ground in another location, which the author believes to be near a different sea than the one they have come from.

Chapter 30: How the Manner of Reception Changed

As their travels continue, the Indians begin giving them their possessions when Cabeza de Vaca and his companions enter their homes. The four distribute the goods among the many Indians who follow them and have already lost their possessions. The group continues to travel through a mountainous desert, across a river, and to a plain. They decide to go north. After an event when many of the Indians fall sick and die, and which the Indians believe is the result of the Christians' displeasure with them, they travel on. The four eventually reach an Indian village with permanent housing. These Indians greet them with lodgings already prepared for them and feed them well with beans and squash. They do not raise corn because the weather is too dry, and they ask the Christians to pray for rain. These Indians advise them not to travel north, because food is so scarce they will not eat for weeks if they go that way.

Chapter 31: How We Followed the Corn Trail

The Christians travel in the direction of the sunset for many days along a river and through a plain between mountain ranges without much food. They finally reach an Indian village with permanent housing, which has the corn they seek. The four then continue their journey, passing through similar villages with an abundance of corn and beans. The group receives many gifts of food, hides, blankets, coral, turquoise, and even emeralds while being asked by the Indians to bless them. The author comments that the women of these tribes are treated better and dressed better than those they had previously encountered. They exert authority over those Indians who travel with them and are able to communicate with a number of tribes. They also share their faith and explain the concepts of God and heaven to the Indians. "These people are well made and apt to follow any line that is well traced for them," Cabeza de Vaca notes of the Indians' acceptance of Christianity.

Chapter 32: How They Gave Us Hearts of Deer

In the village where they were given the emeralds, "they also gave Dorantes more than six hundred open hearts of deer." The Christians call the place, "the village of the hearts." While still in that settlement, Castillo notices that an Indian is wearing a sword belt buckle around his neck, and the four learn that Christians had been there previously, but left by the sea. Cabeza de Vaca writes, "We gave God our Lord many thanks for what we had heard, for we were despairing of ever hearing of Christians again."

They learn that Indians have abandoned their villages and are hiding in the mountains because of these Christians, whom the Indians fear because they destroyed villages and kidnapped many people. The author describes their reaction:



This filled our hearts with sorrow, seeing the land so fertile and beautiful, so full of water and streams, but abandoned and the places burned down, and the people, so thin and wan, fleeing and hiding.

Yet these same remaining Indians give Cabeza de Vaca and his companions blankets and food, and show them respect. He writes, "it clearly shows how, in order to bring these people to Christianity and obedience unto Your Imperial Majesty, they should be well treated, and not otherwise." Cabeza de Vaca learns that some other Christians have recently passed through the area. He also notes that there are indications of valuable metals including copper, gold, and iron in the area.

Chapter 33: How We Saw Traces of Christians

Knowing that the other Christians are nearby, Cabeza de Vaca, Estevanico, and eleven Indians follow the trail to find them, reaching them a day later. He writes, "They stared at me for quite a while, speechless. Their surprise was so great that they could not find words to ask me anything." Cabeza de Vaca is taken to their commander, Diego de Alcazar, who is having problems capturing Indians. He has Alcazar certify when he met them and what state he was in when they found each other.

Chapter 34: How I Sent for the Christians

After the four are reunited and the Indians in hiding are brought forth, the group headed by Alcazar asks Cabeza de Vaca to instruct the Indians to bring them food, which he does. The two groups then come in conflict as Alcazar's group wants to enslave the Indians, an idea Cabeza de Vaca and his men detest. The Indians do not want to leave the four until they find other Indian companions for them, another concept Alcazar's group does not understand. The Indians trust Cabeza de Vaca and his companions but not the other Christians. The author finally persuades the Indians to return to their lives, though the other Christians deceive Cabeza de Vaca and his companions by leading them around in a manner that prevents communication with the Indians, who indeed are enslaved.

Chapter 35: How Well the Chief Magistrate Received Us on the Night of Our Arrival

When the four meet the Chief Magistrate of Culiacan, Melchor Diaz, he apologizes for the actions of the Alcazar group and wants Cabeza de Vaca and his friends to convince the Indians to return. The four do the best they can with a few Indians who are brought there, but many of the Indians cannot be found because they are hiding in the woods from the Christians. Diaz then speaks in the name of the four, invoking God and telling them to serve Him so they can be friends. The Indians agree to become Christians and return home.



Chapter 36: How We Had Churches Built in That Land

An agreement is reached where the Indian will build churches, put up crosses, and allow children of chiefs to be baptized, while the Christians vow not to raid or enslave the Indians. The four move on to the village of San Miguel, where Alcazar reports the Indians have upheld their end of the bargain and returned home. The author makes a special note in his narrative to his king of the religious customs of the Indians:

In the two thousand leagues we traveled, on land, and by sea in boats, in the ten months more after our rescue from captivity that we untiringly walked across land, nowhere did we come upon either sacrifices or idolatry.

Cabeza de Vaca and his companions eventually travel to Compostela. They eventually reach Mexico, where they receive a warm welcome from the authorities.

Chapter 37: What Occurred When I Wished to Return

After wintering in Mexico, Cabeza de Vaca sails to Vera Cruz, then Havana. Near Bermuda, the ship he is on gets temporarily lost in a storm but continues across the Atlantic. When they pass the island of Corvo, a French ship tries to take them over, but they are saved by the Portuguese navy. The ship finally reaches Lisbon, Portugal, on August 9, 1537.

Chapter 38: What Happened to the Others Who Went to the Indies

Cabeza de Vaca relates what happened to the three ships originally left behind when the first went ashore in Florida: The ships sailed, hugging the coast and looking for their captain and crew for a year, then returned home.

Plot Summary

As *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* opens, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca addresses the king of his country, recognizing that it is in his service that the author has gone on his travels. He concludes, "this is the only thing that a man who left there naked could bring back with him."



Themes

Righteousness of Purpose

Cabeza de Vaca's perspective as an observer trying to understand the environment and the Indian culture and beliefs is important to the thematic understanding of the *Chronicle*. The author's absolute faith in the righteousness of his king and his god permeates his narrative, and foreshadows the attitude of the Europeans who would follow him into the New World. While he appreciates the landscape and the people he encounters, he does not question whether they should be subject to his country and their religion, and he uses his account to both tempt his countrymen and advise them about how to pursue conquest of this new world.

In one sense, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* underscores the importance of the frontier as an opportunity to explore the unknown and seek opportunity. The original purpose of the governor's mission is to establish claims in Florida and much of what is now the southeastern United States. While the governor does state this fact when his expedition first lands, exploration falls to survival as the primary goal. However, Cabeza de Vaca never forgets that he is an explorer and regularly describes the landscape, social customs of the Indians, and other aspects of the various Indian tribes. The episodes in which Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions act as medicine men, healing any sick Indian with prayer, making the sign of the cross, and breathing on the patient, underscores the author's faith in Christianity as a protective and transforming force in this frontier. He also notes when they learn about precious metals, and where they believe gold, copper, and other such desired objects can be found. Though the text focuses on the difficulty of the journey, Cabeza de Vaca also writes to stimulate interest in what else can be found in this part of the world for future Europeans—those who would arrive on these shores to pursue what would become the American dream.

Survival

One of the major themes of *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* is how Cabeza de Vaca and some of his companions are able to adapt to the environment and overcome many hardships to survive—a theme that would define countless other American dreams in the five hundred years to follow. Traveling from what is now Florida westward, the author reports that over time many from the expedition die from various causes, including drowning, hunger and thirst, Indian attack, and illness. The four who make it home to Spain survive by recovering from illness, enduring thirst and hunger, befriending Indians who help them along the way, and moving in the direction to find other Christians. Despite overwhelming odds, they are able to adapt to their environment, persevere, and survive. They keep pressing forward to find their Christian brethren and return home, while the author also is able to note much about the Indians and the environment.



Cabeza de Vaca writes about a number of occasions when he makes choices that allow him to survive in spite of his environment and the hardships therein. After being separated from the governor and many of the other members of the inland expedition in the boats soon after leaving the Bay of Horses, Cabeza de Vaca takes tenacious action after tenacious action to ensure survival. Facing hostile Indians on the island in chapter 11, he gives them beads and bells as a sign of friendship. This action leads to the Indians calling off any attack and bringing food to the weak men. In the next chapter, the author dismisses the concerns of some of his group and asks these Indians to take them to their homes. This action ensures the survival of the group, though the move is a risky proposition. The Indians could attack them or sacrifice them, but instead they keep a number of the men alive for a significant time.

While the actions of Cabeza de Vaca and his companions are motivated by their drive to survive, their actions and circumstances change them as well. For the author and the three men who make it to the safety of their countrymen after years of wandering, the landscape and environment push them to their limits and transform what those limits are. After having to push the boat out of sand in chapter 12, Cabeza de Vaca reveals that he and many others in his group lived naked like the Indians for much of the rest of the time they are there. The author refers to this fact several times in the text. They also learn to deal with being hungry, thirsty, and ill, as well as recovering from these conditions. The survivors do whatever they have to, including temporarily submitting to being enslaved, to survive when nearly everyone who went on the governor's inland expedition loses his life.

When they have a chance to eat something, no matter how foreign, they generally take it. While Cabeza de Vaca reports in chapter 12 that he cannot bring himself to eat horsemeat and rarely ate fish during the time the boats are being built, he later admits that he ate the dogs that he and his three companions acquire in trade. He eats raw corn when he has to, as well as many other roots, prickly pear, blackberries, raw meat, and even the scrapings from skins he is processing for tanning. Even some of the Indians are surprised how they adapted eating only irregularly. In chapter 31, Cabeza de Vaca writes,

While traveling with them we used to go the whole day without food, until nighttime, and then we would eat so little that the Indians were amazed. They never saw us tired, because we were, in reality, so inured to hardships that we no longer felt them.

By the end of their journey, the Indians feel protective of the four, who basically live like they do, while the white men the four have been seeking barely recognize them as their countrymen.

Historical Context

Pre-european Native Americans

At the time of Cabeza de Vaca's journey in North America, the area and its indigenous peoples were relatively unknown to European explorers. American Indians, as the native peoples came to be called, lived in separate tribes with different languages and dialects of common languages as well.

The total population of the Indians in the whole of the future United States at this time is unknown, though in Florida alone it is believed there were about 100,000 native peoples before European contact. The highest concentration of native peoples could be found in the Pacific Northwest, along the Mississippi River, and in the basin of the Alleghenies where timber was readily accessible. There were also significant settlements along the Rio Grande River in New Mexico and Arizona as well as parts of the northeast. Southern Texas, California, and much of northern Mexico were only sparsely populated because of the hot, dry climate.

Most Indian tribes were autonomous and fought with each other to obtain spoils or tribute. Within each tribe, land was owned communally, not individually, and there were no written laws. Custom was the primary means of organizing tribal society, and shamans often held the most power. In terms of religion, Indians practiced animism, the belief that spirits formed the world and could manifest themselves anywhere. Indians in the southeast and southwestern portions of the United States primarily subsisted on agriculture, though hunting was the primary occupation of some tribes in Texas. Indian tribes who lived near the coast of the Caribbean Sea relied on fishing as their source of food.

Spanish in North America

The first Europeans to settle in North America were Spaniards, who used the general term "the Western Indies" to describe the area. After Christopher Columbus's early expedition in the last decade of fifteenth century, others in the employ of Spain visited North America regularly in the late 1400s and early 1500s. Spain established its first colony in the Americas in the larger Antilles in 1493.

Within sixty years, Spain had colonies in present-day Mexico and locations south through Central and South America. Some colonies were located on the coast, but the Spaniards established locations inland as well. Parts of North America also came under Spanish control. Juan Ponce de León first reached Florida in 1513, looking for the legendary fountain of youth, not to mention riches. The goal of the Narváez expedition a few years later was to establish a colonial presence in La Florida.

Other Spanish explorations of North America followed. Hernando de Soto explored the southeastern portion of the future United States from 1539 to 1542. Francisco Vásquez



de Coronado was the first to travel around and conquer parts of the southwest and Great Plains in the early 1540s. From 1542 to 1543, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo led an excursion up the California coast.

Only one Spanish settlement of significance was established in the future United States, located in St. Augustine, Florida. Some conquistadors failed, such as Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón who unsuccessfully tried to start a colony in what is now South Carolina in 1526. This colony began with five hundred men, women, and children, both Spanish and slaves, but three hundred of them died within three months and the colony was abandoned.

The Spanish monarchy controlled the conquered parts of North, South, and Central America as a dominion of the Spanish crown. Royal permission was needed to explore and establish colonies. The crown held tight control over the colonies, to the point of deciding who was allowed to come to the area. The interests and needs of the Spanish nation were put over anyone who lived in the North American colonies, including Spanish colonists.

Spain was primarily interested in the Americas as a source of precious metals. Spain once had its own rich supply of gold and silver, but it had been mined out by the Romans when they occupied the country before the Dark Ages. Many Spaniards believed that the Americas would provide a rich source of gold, silver, and other metals. They mined such metals beginning in the sixteenth and through the seventeenth century, primarily in South America, until the supply of raw materials began to give out.

In pursuit of this wealth, Spaniards had to cope with the Indian population. At first, there was some debate among the Spanish over whether or not Indians were even humans. The Spanish eventually accepted Indians as human but saw them as childlike and in need of guidance to become the equals of whites. The Indians were also used as a source of labor for the Spanish colonists, who enslaved many native peoples.

Critical Overview

The original critical opinion of the *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* is unknown, save that it influenced its readers to look to North America as a place full of potential for gaining wealth through gold as well as other metals and minerals. It was only available in Spanish and Italian until the mid-nineteenth century, when translations were made into German, French, and English. By the twentieth century, a number of English versions were available.

Many modern readers of English translations find the book exhilarating. Reviewing a new translations of the text, a critic in the *National Geographic Adventure* comments, "The book is as exciting and short as the trip was arduous and long. Cabeza de Vaca writes with breathless energy of the marvels he saw and the sufferings he endured."

Most critics acknowledge that the *Chronicle* was important in the launching of further exploration of North America. Tom Noel of the *Rocky Mountain News* writes in a review of the same translation, "Cabeza de Vaca's journey and his 1542 book about it launched a great American myth—that some fabulously rich American Indians lived in the Golden Cities of Cibola."

Some critics believe that the *Chronicle* was more a novel than a factual account, especially the 1555 edition. This edition was expanded in part to help Cabeza de Vaca's reputation in light of the aftermath of his failed governorship in South America. Stephen Petty writes in his paper "Cabeza de Vaca: A Model for Multiculturalism," "The text is novelistic in that the subjective experience is allowed to enter an official report: this is an intimate tale of survival and salvation as it addresses the large themes that dominated the Old World-New World encounter."

Despite such concerns, many critics praise the ethnographic work Cabeza de Vaca did in the book. They note his key eye for observing Indians, their customs, nature, and the landscape. They also laud him for making an effort to understand the Indians and emphasize the importance of respecting, not enslaving, them. While Louis Werner of *Americas* is one critic who praises Cabeza de Vaca's ethnographic work, the critic also admits "the book's veracity is today contested by scholars, many of whom read the tale more as a confabulation of magic realism than a true account of actual events."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



Critical Essay #1

In the following excerpt, Pollard traces modern Latin American literature to Cabeza de Vaca, whom he credits with first separating the American perspective from the European.

Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged. We have seen such simple currents lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity. (T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent")

Cabeza de Vaca (1991) is a film directed by Nicolás Echevarría, featuring Juan Diego, Daniel Giménez Cacho, and Roberto Sosa. The screenplay is loosely based on Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*. The film depicts Cabeza de Vaca living among the Iguase Indians, emphasizing his mental state and the changes he undergoes because of his experience. *Cabeza de Vaca* is available on DVD from New Concorde DVD.

Haniel Long's *Interlinera to Cabeza de Vaca* (1936), later published as *The Power Within Us*, is a lengthy prose poem broken up into short stanzas. It describes the poet's interpretation of the thoughts and emotions of Cabeza de Vaca on his journey. A version of *The Power Within Us* was published in 2006 by Kessinger Publishing.

George Antheil's "Cabeza de Vaca: A Cantata Based On the Experiences and letters of Alvar Nunez, 'Cabeza de Vaca'" (1961) is a score for oboe, piano, and percussion inspired by *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition*. Another version, called "Cabeza de Vaca," was written in 1955 for chorus and orchestras.

The boom that took place in Latin American narrative after WWII not only produced a large and diverse group of highly talented writers and a great quantity of experimental, technically advanced works, but it began (and only began) to gain exposure—in the United States, Europe, and even in Latin America itself—for a literature that had previously only been known to a few people in academic and cultural circles. Furthermore, this boom was a continent-wide, international Latin American



phenomenon, and the writers involved in it saw it as a means by which Latin American literature and culture could become a force within the international mainstream, and used it to garner political, critical, and economic power. With its aid, Latin America would move beyond a ghettoized, impoverished, third world existence, and no longer be subordinated to the whims and machinations of the first world. For the Argentine author Julio Cortazar, this boom was a catalyst for a Latin American identity: "Finally, what is the boom but the most extraordinary dose of consciousness for the Latin American pueblo, a part of its very identity? What is this dose of consciousness but a very important part of our disalienation?"

This search for identity arose out of the ascendance of the middle class in Latin America and the correlative improvement in the quality of education in the decade prior to the war. What resulted was a higher literacy rate and a greater need for an active publishing industry. For the Uruguayan critic Emir Rodriguez Monegal, "The generation of readers that began to take shape in 1939 had the advantage of more universities and secondary schools, more libraries, more bookstores and magazines; there were, over all, Latin American publishers that not only translated and adapted universal culture but that also promoted national and Latin American culture." All this activity spawned a multinational publishing industry that not only spanned the limits of the continent (from Sudamericana in Argentina to Joaquin Mortiz in Mexico) but became international (Seix-Barral in Spain). Now Latin American writers were read throughout the continent by a much broader readership. Moreover, reprints of older, long out-of-print works augmented this new narrative, and reinforced the sense that a new, independent cultural identity had been born in Latin America.

Ironically, though, these post-war authors found no "literary fathers" among their immediate predecessors. They rejected the criollismo and costumbrismo—patterned after nineteenth-century European realism—that had become standard fictional paradigms in Latin America. As they saw it, these literary forms fostered a sense of regionalism and/or nationalism that had effectively isolated the author within the borders of his or her own country and severely limited intellectual and imaginative stimuli. And since their predecessors had, for all intents and purposes, mined the nation and the region for all it was worth—at least within the limits of realism—the "boom" authors felt asphyxiated and turned outward in search of new stimuli, which they discovered in the form of international modernism. There is perhaps no better indicator of this turn than the fact that a majority of these authors have spent much of their time abroad. The Cuban Alejo Carpentier lived most of his life in France, as did Cortazar. The Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa lived in Paris and London. The Columbian Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Mexico and has spent much of his life in Europe. All actively sought the mainstream centers of Western culture: places they had read about as they were growing up, places that had captured their imaginations and to which—trapped in the Latin American "provinces"—they felt a great deal of cultural allegiance. It is here, caught between the margin and the mainstream, national and international allegiances, that the post-war Latin American writer begins to fashion a new cultural identity.



If we believe T. S. Eliot—a disaffected North American—such an identity necessarily fits "within" an overarching European tradition. Literature produced in Latin America may give rise to a broad-based hemispheric culture or a set of national cultures, each with its own peculiar traits, yet either way all remain inextricably bound to and rooted in Europe: simultaneity is always enacted within a Eurocentric horizon. Certainly, the postwar boom authors cultivated such an "historical sense," yet they were not comfortable simply buying back into a European tradition. If they did not adhere to the "successes" of their own preceding generations, neither did they want to be mere adherents to the mainstream. For Eliot, "every nation, every race, has not only its creative, but its own critical turn of mind." This critical turn may, as Eliot sees it, trumpet the "peculiar essence" of nation or race while ignoring the greater tradition of which it is a part, or through "great labor" it may "obtain" that tradition. The boom authors put in the long hours necessary to claim Europe as their own, yet they were not satisfied with the given horizon. Instead, they worked to create a revamped tradition that would mirror and privilege their geographical and intellectual remove from the mainstream. To put it more simply, they would create a tradition that could move outside the boundaries of Europe. To illustrate, I want to look at three self-styled literary histories by Alejo Carpentier, his fellow Cuban Jose Lezama Lima, and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. These authors do not merely not acquiesce to the traditional centers of power in Europe and the United States; they actually revise Western literary history itself so as to endow Latin American narrative with a privileged place within it. From this perspective, postwar Latin American narrative is not only a part of the modernist canon but extends that canon into the postmodern. La nueva narrativa becomes a central player in world literature because it is not merely a repetition, secondary and redundant, but something truly "new" in the international literary marketplace. And as might be expected from a young, ambitious group of authors who would make a bid for Old World recognition yet are novices on its center stage, the claims they make for inclusion in a mainstream tradition are based on their very newness, in which the New World plays the most significant part, as both the place and the "tradition" that grounds their identity—an anchor for their foray back to Europe.

For Carpentier, Lezama Lima, and Fuentes, literary history is essentially baroque. Originally, the baroque was an aesthetic that consciously set out to break with classicism. In regard to Latin America, it is best to conceive of it as a generic trope—a break with convention—which is expressed as an antagonistic relationship between margin and center. Initially, the New World was meant to be nothing more than an extension, a simple ornament, of the Old. Colonial policy not only demanded dependency, but the maintenance of a strict, Eurocentric identity as well. The New World was never supposed to become independent and autonomous. In *Questing Fictions*, Djelal Kadir notes that Europe and Spain imagined the New World long before the western hemisphere was discovered:

The most commonly recalled of these structures comprise the antipodean speculations of Parmenides, reauthorized by Aristotle—the notion that the oikoumene, man's home in the cosmos, the world, must have a counter-ballast; Plato's mythological Atlantis; the New World prophesied by the biblical Book of Revelations—a new earth, a millennial



kingdom, the eschatological other world; the Hermetic Utopia of Hermes Trismegistus' Adocentyn, later become Tomasso Campanella's City of the Sun.

Christopher Columbus took with him this long history of utopias when he sailed in quest of India, and they provide the ur-narrative from which Latin America was originally conceived. Yet Columbus (re)discovered neither India nor Europe's idealized vision/extension of itself, and it is this error that "founds" Latin America's difference: "America, as 'premeditated creation' of European history, as 'a chapter in the history of European utopias,' contends with the previously mentioned structures of its founding by constantly refinding those inventive frames, appropriating them." Latin America defines itself as this "errant quest": the mistaken journey whose end is irrevocably deferred because it cannot find the utopia it had hoped to discover in the New World, yet a journey that never ends, for utopian desire is as irrevocable as the deferment of its realization. Correlatively, as the quest errs in search of the ideals that motivate it, it wanders through what Kadir calls the "abysmal void" of the New World. "Horrified" by that emptiness, utopic desire attempts to fill it by reproducing those absent ideals—a Eurocentric hermeneutic—but it only succeeds in supplementing them.

Among the narratives of conquest and exploration, the *Naufragios [The Shipwrecks]* of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca may best exemplify this peculiar brand of horror and errancy. In the ingenious, revisionary synthesis he achieves between Old and New Worlds, Cabeza de Vaca stands as one of the first true Americans. Moreover, if we look at him as a writer, he is a predecessor to and paradigm for the likes of Carpentier, Fuentes, and Lezama Lima. Correlatively, it might be interesting for us to think of these postmodern writers as "versions" of their colonial antecedent.

Cabeza de Vaca wrote to claim his own rightful credentials as an explorer, to please the Spanish government, and to secure another royal appointment. He wrote to salvage his own success from the failed expedition of Panfilo de Narvaez, which erred quite a bit, ultimately leaving only a few survivors stranded on the coast of Texas. Needless to say, without these errors, there would be no *Naufragios*. Yet, in spite of the conventional political purpose of the narrative, Cabeza de Vaca produces something unique, redefining Eurocentric notions of humanity and culture while placing Old and New Worlds on a near egalitarian footing. His retelling of his ten years amongst the Indians of the southern United States and northern Mexico is a deft attempt at cultural bridging that refuses to subordinate the New to the Old, the American to the European. In spite of shipwreck, death, hunger, cannibalism, enslavement—in spite of being stripped of the trappings of European civilization and having every justification for suffering what we call today "culture shock"—Cabeza de Vaca, unlike a "humanist" like Juan de Sepulveda, treats the Indians he encounters as fully human rather than subhuman, and their cultures as worthy of study and recording rather than exploitation and destruction. Yet he was not one to be acculturated. When he became a healer for the Indians, though they saw him and his companions as semi-divine shamans from the "land of the sun," he sees himself as a good, Christian faith healer, conduit of God's will. In an unknown land, Cabeza de Vaca finds that Christianity has resonance; correlatively, throughout the narrative, he constructs a perspective that insists on the essential continuity between Old and New Worlds.



This perspective comes most clear near the end of the narrative when it is sorely tried by Spanish greed, exploitation, and duplicity. When he witnesses the devastation caused to the coastal Indians by the Spanish attempts to enslave them, Cabeza de Vaca sympathizes with the Indians without condemning the Spanish incursion. Pursuing diplomacy, he wins promises from the Spaniards that they would cease and desist, but those promises are quickly broken. Again, Cabeza de Vaca does not denounce their actions. Instead, still living by his wits, he comes up with a scheme to convert the Indians, for if they are Christians and if they build churches—that is, if they act as humans in the eyes of the Spaniards—then they will not be enslaved. Through this ingenious solution, Cabeza de Vaca not only provides a hopeful closure for his narrative but offers proof of the viability of his perspective. He is the perfect explorer, for, unlike Panfilo de Narvaez, what he discovers is that the New World can be colonized. Just what Spain wanted to hear. Yet Cabeza de Vaca was radically transformed by his experiences. He opened himself up to other cultures and peoples, sympathized with them, then redefined his Eurocentric notions of humanity to account for their alterity. Out of the "horrors" of his experience, Cabeza de Vaca fills the New World with his own peculiar version of Christianity. He may reconfirm Spain's colonial vision, but not without letting a little air into it to make room for the differential nature of American reality—revision and supplement.

Source: Scott Pollard, "Canonizing Revision: Literary History and the Post-modern Latin American Writer," in *College Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 3, October 1993, pp. 133-47.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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



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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized



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

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



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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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



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

Citing Novels for Students

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

“Night.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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