Cymbeline Study Guide

Cymbeline by William Shakespeare

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Introduction

Cymbeline deals with a concept as familiar to modern audiences as it was to Shakespeare's audiences: nationalism. The play is set in the ancient, pre- Christian past, a time when the Roman Empire was flourishing and England, or Britain, was an island country comprised of numerous feudal territories with distinctly tribal loyalties. During the reign of Julius Caesar, Roman soldiers occupied England but eventually withdrew when England's isolation and the constant vigilance necessary to contain Celtic barbarities became too much of a drain on Roman resources. Rome still considered England a colony and demanded tribute, a kind of monetary tax, and King Cymbeline's refusal to pay that tribute is the central issue of Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare, though, wrote *Cymbeline* in the early seventeenth century, a time when England was beginning to emerge as an empire in its own right, an empire rivaling that of Rome. It was an era that saw the beginning of English colonization and the flourishing of English arts and literature; these developments contributed to feelings of pride in the English, pride in their nation (nationalism). Shakespeare's play gives the impression that Cymbeline rules a united nation, a political reality that did not come into existence until the late fifteenth century. In the early seventeenth century, England greatly respected the legacy of Roman civilization and saw itself as the next great empire, an attitude Shakespeare reflects in his depiction of not only Cymbeline's refusal to pay tribute but also the superior nobility of the English characters over the Roman ones in the play.

Although Cymbeline says, at the end of the play, that he has earlier been dissuaded from paying tribute to Rome by the influence of the queen, the play seems to indicate that there is widespread support for his refusal to do so. When Philario, Posthumus's Italian host, says that he thinks England will pay the tribute, Posthumus objects that England will fight before it grovels to Rome, a fight in which England will show a military strength and united resolve that has been, so far, underestimated. When Caius Lucius departs from Cymbeline's palace to report Cymbeline's refusal of Augustus's demand, Cymbeline himself says, "Our subjects, sir, / Will not endure [Augustus's] yoke" (III.v.4-5). And when the queen remarks that it is too bad Caius Lucius has left frowning, Cloten says, "'Tis all the better, / Your valiant Britains have their wishes in it" (III.v.19-20). After the English soldiers have defeated the Romans, proving themselves equal or superior, Cymbeline can graciously agree to pay the tribute. It was never a question of money; it was a question of English pride. Even Jupiter, the Romans' supreme god, reluctantly endorses the fact that England is equal to Rome. In the tablet that he leaves with Posthumus, Jupiter reveals that, only when the English royal family is reunited, will "Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty" (V.v.441-42). Philarmonus, the Roman soothsayer, interprets the prediction of England's flourishing as the union of "Th' imperial Caesar" and "the radiant Cymbeline, / Which shines here in the west" (V.v.474-76). The message is clear: England has proved its worthiness to be Rome's successor.

In comparison to the Roman characters in the play, the English characters are depicted as being more noble. Jachimo is a swaggering braggart, the kind of Italian courtier Shakespeare and his Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaries so loved to ridicule

and stereotype for their decadence and arrogance. He thinks he can get any woman that he wants, even Imogen, who Posthumus describes as unquestionably chaste. But Jachimo cannot assail Imogen's chastity and innocence, because she is, as her name suggests, the ideal "image" of womanhood, against which the women of all other nations pale in comparison. Jachimo admits as much when, in his long-winded confession of villainy made to Cymbeline in the last scene, he refers to Imogen as "That paragon, thy daughter" (V.v.147). Although Jachimo gets the upper hand over Posthumus by tricking him, Posthumus proves superior in the end. In the battle, the disguised Posthumus easily bests Jachimo and disarms him, leaving the Italian courtier to wonder aloud about the strength of England's aristocrats, its peasants proving so strong. In the last scene of the play, Posthumus forgives Jachimo and tells him, "Live, / And deal with others better" (V.v.418-19). Like Cymbeline, Posthumus can be generous and gracious from a position of d e m o n - s t r a The play's best argument for the superior nobility of its English characters comes in the depiction of Cymbeline's two sons, Guiderius .and Arviragus. Belarius never ceases to be amazed at the inherent nobility they display, as we discover in our first encounter with him in front of the cave in which he has raised them. He says that the boys have no idea they are the sons of a king

... and though train'd up thus meanly
I' th' cave [wherein they] bow, their thoughts do
hit
The roofs of palaces, and nature prompts them
In simple and low things to prince it much
Beyond the trick of others.
(III.iii.82-86)

Their great eagerness to join the battle and their display of courage in the fighting attest to an inborn virtue. And when Guiderius kills and beheads Cloten, he is performing yet another noble deed by preventing the evil blood of the queen and the ignorant blood of Cloten from polluting the truly royal blood of Cymbeline and his children.

For modern audiences, this idea of nationalism pride in ones nation is a familiar one. National pride, for example, fuels the competitive atmosphere of world-wide sporting events, such as the Olympics. Sometimes, however, feelings of nationalism become transformed into a destructive force. Ethnocentrism occurs when feelings of pride become an attitude of cultural or national superiority. When groups of people feel that their nation or their culture is superior to another nation or culture, the result can be violence. We can see this in gang warfare, and in wars between countries, or groups of people within countries. What twentieth century wars may have been fueled by feelings of ethnocentrism? Does nationalism always lead to ethnocentrism? Or can people be proud of their country or culture without feeling that other countries or cultures are inferior? How are nationalism, ethnocentrism, and racism related?

Plot Summary

Act I

Cymbeline, the king of Britain, has a daughter Imogen from a former marriage. His new queen wants Imogen to marry her son Cloten, also from a former marriage. But Imogen instead marries Posthumus Leonatus, a man very much admired for his courage and his intelligence. Cymbeline banishes Posthumus and confines Imogen to the management of the queen. Just before Posthumus leaves England for the home of Philarius in Italy, the queen allows the couple a few moments to say goodbye. She then informs Cymbeline of their whereabouts, and the displeased king surprises the couple and chases Posthumus away. Posthumus and Imogen only have time to exchange tokens. He gives her a bracelet, and she gives him a diamond ring. Posthumus leaves his servant Pisanio in England to act as a liaison between himself and Imogen. Pisanio enters and reports that Cloten has assaulted Posthumus as the latter made his way to the departing ship, nothing coming of the engagement because Posthumus did not take Cloten seriously. Meanwhile, Doctor Cornelius gives the queen what she thinks are deadly poisons, the queen offering that she will use the poisons on small animals to study the effects and formulate antidotes. Doctor Cornelius does not trust her and has given her potions that will only incapacitate the taker, leaving him refreshed when the effects wear off. The queen hands the drug to Pisanio, telling him it is an effective restorative, hoping he will poison himself. She then coaxes him to leave the service of Posthumus and serve her. Pisanio declines the offer.

In Italy, Jachimo, a friend of Philario, bets Posthumus gold against his ring that he can seduce Imogen. Jachimo arrives in England and presents Imogen with a commendatory letter of introduction from Posthumus. He tells Imogen that Posthumus is sleeping with other women in Italy. To be revenged, she should sleep with Jachimo. Imogen is outraged, and Jachimo apologizes, saying he was only testing the virtue Posthumus had so often extolled. He asks Imogen if she will keep a trunk for him. The trunk, he explains, contains valuables about which he is concerned, being that he is a foreigner in a strange place. She readily agrees to keep the trunk for him in her bedchamber.

Act II

Jachimo has hidden himself in the trunk which is now in Imogen's bedroom. When she falls asleep, he sneaks out and writes down everything he observes in the room, records that there is a strangely shaped mole on her breast, and steals Posthumus's bracelet from her arm. He sneaks back into the trunk to wait for morning. In the morning, Cloten has musicians play outside Imogen's door so that she might awake to sweet music and thank him for the kindness he has done for her. Cymbeline and the queen find him outside of Imogen's chamber and encourage him in his wooing of her. But when he speaks with Imogen, she tries to discourage his suit, telling him she is not attracted to him in the least. When Cloten criticizes Posthumus, Imogen says Cloten is a

despicable creature worth less than any one of Posthumus's garments. She discovers her bracelet missing and sends Pisanio to look for it. In Italy, Philario and Posthumus discuss the mission of Caius Lucius, who is a general of the Roman forces and who is, at that moment, in England to ask Cymbeline to pay tribute to the Roman Emperor Augustus. Posthumus thinks the English king will resist and thinks the English forces will surprise the Romans with their courage and prowess. Jachimo returns to Italy and says that he has seduced Imogen. He describes the bedchamber, but Posthumus objects that such a description could have resulted from hearsay. Jachimo then produces the bracelet. Posthumus is ready to concede the bet, but Philario objects that the bracelet might have been lost. When Jachimo describes the mole on Imogen's breast, he wins the wager, and Posthumus goes off alone to rage against the weak and false nature of women.

Act III

Cymbeline meets with Caius Lucius and informs him of his decision not to pay tribute to Rome. Caius Lucius then declares war on Britain. Pisanio receives two letters from Posthumus. The first letter informs Imogen that Posthumus will soon be at Milford-Haven in Wales; she might meet him there if she so desires. The second letter instructs Pisanio to kill Imogen at Milford-Haven because she has proved to be untrue to Posthumus. Outside of a cave in Wales, we meet Belarius, a lord banished by Cymbeline some twenty years earlier on false report; the lord now uses the name of Morgan. We also meet Guiderius and Arviragus, Cymbeline's two sons abducted by Belarius when they were infants. Guiderius and Arviragus are assumed to be the sons of Belarius/Morgan and are called Polydore and Cadwal respectively. They are off to hunt for their dinner.

Pisanio and Imogen are now in Wales also. Pisanio shows Imogen the letter with Posthumus's instructions for killing her. Imogen wants Pisanio to carry out his instructions on the spot, but Pisanio has a different plan. He has brought men's clothing for Imogen, and he suggests that she disguise herself like a man and secure passage with Caius Lucius when he sails from Britain. He gives her the drug which the queen has given him and passes along the misinformation that it is a medicine for the cure of fatigue and illness. When Imogen is discovered missing at Cymbeline's court, the king rages, and Cloten intercepts the recently returned Pisanio and demands to know where Imogen is. Pisanio gives Cloten the letter which implies that Imogen will meet Posthumus at Milford-Haven. Cloten coaxes Pisanio to serve him. Pisanio agrees only to temporarily appease Cloten. Pisanio's first task is to bring Cloten some of Posthumus's clothes. Meanwhile, in her masculine disguise, Imogen travels for two days until hunger makes her too weak to go on. She enters the cave of Belarius and eats some of the food there. She is discovered in the cave by Belarius and Cymbeline's two sons upon their return from hunting. Imogen is fearful, but Belarius treats her kindly, and Guiderius and Arviragus, ironically, vow to treat her like a brother. In the last scene, two Roman senators appear, briefly discussing preparations for war with England.

Act IV

Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus leave the cave in the morning to hunt. Imogen remains behind because she is ill. As they leave, she takes some of the medicine Pisanio has given her. Outside the cave, Belarius and Cymbeline's sons encounter Cloten, who has arrived near that place following the directions in Posthumus's letter to Imogen. Belarius recognizes Cloten from years before, and he and Arviaragus go off to see whether or not Cloten has come alone, while Guiderius confronts Cloten. Cloten threatens Guiderius, assuming he is a lawless mountaineer. They fight, and Guiderius kills Cloten, cutting off his head. Arviragus returns to the cave and thinks that Imogen is dead. Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus place Imogen's body next to the headless corpse of Cloten, intending to return at midnight and strew the bodies with dew-laden flowers. In the meantime, Imogen awakes, sees the headless corpse dressed in Posthumus's clothes, and assumes it is Posthumus. She immediately thinks that Pisanio, in league with Cloten, is responsible for the murder of Posthumus, believing he forged the letters and purposfully misinformed her about the nature of the drug she has ingested. She throws herself upon the corpse crying. She is discovered in this position by Caius Lucius and his military officers as they travel by preparing to receive troops from the continent and wage war with the English. Caius Lucius thinks that Imogen is a loyal page lamenting the death of his master, and Imogen, for her own safety, plays along. She tells the Roman general that her name is Fidele, and her dead master Richard du Champ. Caius Lucius, impressed by her loyalty, requests that she enlist in his service.

At Cymbeline's palace, the queen has become sick worrying about Cloten, and the king, too, misses Cloten's services at a time of impending war. Cymbeline threatens to torture Pisanio, believing he knows where Imogen has gone. Pisanio protests that he knows nothing, intending to make up for his deception with Cymbeline by fighting bravely in the upcoming battles. A lord of Cymbeline's court supports Pisanio; he vows that Pisanio was at court on the day of Imogen's disappearance.

Back in Wales, Guiderius and Arviragus are enthusiastic about enlisting with the English troops and repelling the Romans. Belarius is hesitant, fearing he will be recognized. Eventually, he gives in to the insistent enthusiasm of his two youthful charges.

Act V

Posthumus receives a bloody cloth and believes that Pisanio has sent it to him as proof that he has killed Imogen as instructed. He now regrets giving Pisanio those instructions and feels he must die to compensate for having been instrumental in Imogen's death. He has come to Britain as part of a contingent of Italian gentry led by Jachimo to fight against the Britains, but he disguises himself as an English peasant and fights against the Romans. At first, the Roman soldiers rout the English forces, and Cymbeline is captured as those English forces flee. But Belarius, Guiderius, and Aviragus rescue Cymbeline and make a brave stand, stemming the retreat of the English soldiers.

Posthumus joins them in the rescue and fights recklessly, hoping that he will die in battle. He fights with Jachimo and disarms him. The English win the battle, and Belarius, Guiderius, and Aviragus are honored for their bravery. Cymbeline searchs for the fourth brave soldier Posthumus in a peasant's garb but cannot find him to reward him. Posthumus has switched back to the uniform of a Roman soldier. He is arrested and is taken to jail. When he falls asleep, the souls of his deceased father, mother, and brothers appear to him in a dream. These ghostly apparitions implore Jupiter to take pity on Posthumus and reward him for his noble actions. Descending upon an eagle, Jupiter is upset to be so summoned by these ghostly souls, and he commands them back to the nether regions, telling them that the lives of mortals are his concern, not theirs. Before Jupiter departs, he leaves a tablet on which there is a riddling prediction. The ghosts of Posthumus's family place the table on his sleeping form and vanish. When Posthumus wakes, he does not understand what is written there. Moments later, he is taken from jail and led, along with a number of other Roman prisoners, to Cymbeline's tent. Cymbeline has just learned from Cornelius that the queen has died after confessing that she had intended to poison both the king and his daughter Imogen in order to make Cloten king. Cymbeline pronounces that all the Roman prisoners must die. Caius Lucius asks that his boy, really Imogen in disguise, might be spared. Cymbeline grants that request. Imogen, seeing Posthumus's diamond ring on the finger of Jachimo, is allowed to question him. He reveals the extent of his deceptive villainy regarding Posthumus and Imogen. Next, all deceptions and confusions are revealed, with Posthumus, Pisanio, and Cornelius all stepping forward and uncovering their roles in the preceding action, and Imogen's true identity being revealed. Guiderius then admits that he killed and beheaded Cloten. Cymbeline sentences him to death for treasonously killing a prince, but Belario makes it known that Guiderius and Aviragus are really Cymbeline's sons, stolen from him twenty years before by Belarius himself. Cymbeline is overwhelmed but joyous at the many revelations that have come in such rapid succession. Philarmonus, the Roman soothsayer, interprets Jupiter's tablet, which has predicted the reunion of Cymbeline's family and the improved relations of Rome and England. Cymbeline frees the Roman prisoners and announces that he will pay Rome its tribute, having only refused to do so previously at the insistence of the queen.

Characters

Apparitions

These are the ghosts of Posthumus's father, mother, and two brothers. They appear to Posthumus in a dream while he sleeps in jail, desperate to end his own life. Sicilius, Posthumus's father, died fighting bravely in battle, as did Posthumus's two brothers. Posthumus's mother died giving birth to him. The apparitions lament that Posthumus is in such a state of despair, and they implore Jupiter to reward Posthumus for his brave actions in battle and his faithfulness to Imogen. They believe that Posthumus is the victim of Cymbeline's unfair banishment of him.

Arviragus

Arviragus is the son of Cymbeline and the brother of Guiderius, and Imogen. As an infant, he was abducted by Belarius, who raised him for twenty years in the primitive wilds of Wales and renamed him Cadwal. Even though Arviragus has been raised in a cave, he demonstrates the inborn virtue one would expect in the son of a king. He is eager for experiences beyond the homely life of hunting and gathering which he now lives with Belarius, the man he knows as his father. He envies his older brother, Guiderius, when the latter kills Cloten. He wishes that he might have had the opportunity to display his strength and courage in the face of danger. Arviragus feels an instant love for and kinship with Imogen, whom he thinks is a boy and later calls "brother," when he discovers her in the cave. Later, thinking that Imogen has died, he carries her from the cave and convinces Guiderius that they should conduct for her the same funeral rights they conducted for Euriphile, the woman they believed to be their mother. They sing a beautiful song at Imogen's grave and strew her body with flowers. When his brother, Guiderius announces that he will fight on the side of the English in the battle that looms ahead, Arviragus cannot be restrained from going as well. Alongside Belarius and his brother, he fights bravely in that battle, the three of them rescuing Cymbeline and reversing the Roman surge. He, along with Belarius and Guiderius, is honored by Cymbeline for his bravery. In the last scene of the play, he learns of his true identity and is reunited with his father King Cymbeline.

Attendants

These attendants appear in several scenes without speaking. They attend Cymbeline and the queen at Cymbeline's palace.

Belarius

Belarius is an English lord who has been banished by Cymbeline twenty years earlier. He claims to have been a loyal follower of Cymbeline, having nobly fought for his king.

Cymbeline, though, believed the false report of another man who was jealous of Belarius. Taking revenge, Belarius kidnapped Cymbeline's two infant sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, and raised them in a cave in Wales. He married Euriphile, the nurse of those two boys, after she helped him with the abduction, and Guiderius and Arviragus grew up believing that Euriphile was their mother and Belarius their father. In Wales, Belarius takes the name of Morgan and renames Cymbeline's two sons Polydore and Cadwal. Belarius entertains his two adopted sons with stories of his exploits in days gone by. He is delighted with the princely grace and strength they exhibit despite being raised in such primitive surroundings. Even though Belarius does not know that the young boy discovered in his cave is Imogen, he is pleased that Guiderius and Arviragus treat that young boy with love and kindness. Even when Arviragus says that he would rather see Belarius than Fidele, the name of Imogen as the young boy, die, Belarius is impressed. He believes that Arviragus knows by instinct that Belarius is not his father. Belarius recognizes Cloten when he shows up at the cave, and he is fearful that others might follow. After Guiderius kills Cloten, Belarius insist that Cloten, no matter how loathsome, is a prince and should be given a decent burial. Worried that he, too, might be recognized, Belarius is reluctant to join the battle. Once he does so, he fights valiantly alongside his two adopted sons and is honored by Cymbeline for his efforts. When Cymbeline condemns Guiderius for killing Cloten, Belarius steps forward and reveals who Guiderius and his brother really are. Cymbeline, in the end, forgives him.

British Captains

These British captains apprehend Posthumus after the battle. Posthumus has changed into the uniform of a Roman soldier. They turn Posthumus over to Cymbeline, who has two jailers take him away.

Caius Lucius

See Lucius

Cadwall

See Arviragus

Cloten

Cloten is the son of the queen by a former marriage. He wants to marry Imogen and despises Posthumus for depriving him of that opportunity. He is depicted as a quarrelsome and boorish fool. He threatens Posthumus with his sword when Posthumus is leaving to begin his exile in Italy. No one is hurt in that quarrel, only because Posthumus does not take Cloten's threat seriously. No one but the queen seems to like Cloten. He is often in the company of two lords of Cymbeline's court, who ridicule him when he is out of earshot. Cloten lends his voice to the queen's insistence

that Cymbeline not pay tribute to Rome, but he only mimics and seconds his mother. Cloten makes a futile effort to impress Imogen by having the musicians wake her with sweet song, an action which initially inspires sympathy in some audiences. That is until he ignores her attempts to reject him gently and viciously derides Posthumus. He is terribly upset when Imogen says that he is not worth Posthumus's "meanest garment" (II.iii.133). He finds it fitting, then, that he wears Posthumus's clothes as he sets off to intercept Imogen and Posthumus at Imogen. Instead, he meets Guiderius. Even in this confrontation, Cloten acts in an imperious and obnoxious manner. Guiderius kills Cloten and beheads him. Later, Imogen awakes next to Cloten's headless body and assumes, because Cloten is wearing Posthumus's clothes, that he is Posthumus. This is either proof of the axiom that "the clothes make the man" or proof that Cloten's description of himself is accurate when he says, "I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as [Posthumus's]" (IV.i.9-10).

Cornelius

Cornelius is a physician with an extensive knowledge of herbs and medicines. He has been imparting some of that knowledge to the queen, who is an eager student because she would make her own poisons. Early in the play, Cornelius gives the queen the powerful poison she has requested, ostensibly to kill small vermin, but really intended to kill Pisanio, or hopefully, Cymbeline. But Cornelius informs the audience, in an aside, that he does not trust the queen. He has handed over a drug that will make the person drinking it appear temporarily dead but feel wonderfully invigorated when the effects wear off. In the last scene of the play, he again explains the nature of the drug when Imogen accuses Pisanio of poisoning her. He also informs Cymbeline that the queen has died after confessing her evil intentions, explaining that she had intended to poison Imogen and use a slow-working drug on the king himself so that Cloten might gain the crown.

Cymbeline

Cymbeline is the king of England. Imogen is his daughter by a former marriage, as are his two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, who were abducted from him by Belarius when the two boys were just infants. His present queen has a son named Cloten, and she convinces Cymbeline that a marriage between Imogen and her son would be an expedient one. Politically, a marriage between Cloten and Imogen would make more sense than her marriage to Posthumus, who is an aristocrat but not a prince, since it would give the impression of a greatly consolidated Britain. But Imogen has, in fact, married Posthumus, and Cymbeline, largely at the insistence of the queen, banishes Posthumus from the kingdom. As an example of how the queen manipulates Cymbeline, we need only observe her first appearance in the play. She allows Imogen and Posthumus a few moments of farewell, but then immediately informs Cymbeline that the couple are together in the garden. An angry Cymbeline surprises them and drives Posthumus off. He places Imogen under a kind of house arrest, putting the queen

in charge of her freedom. Cymbeline also encourages Cloten to woo Imogen, thinking her resentment will fade and time will weaken her resistance to Cloten's proposals.

But Cymbeline has a greater problem than his daughter's unfortunate marriage. Caius Lucius, the Roman general, has landed in England to demand that Augustus Caesar be paid the tribute promised many years before, by an agreement between Julius Caesar and Cymbeline's uncle, Cassibelan. Cymbeline refuses to pay the tribute he knows he has a good deal of support in doing so and Caius Lucius declares war on Britain. Cymbeline has anticipated this declaration; and he has his defenses ready. During the battle that ensues, Cymbeline is temporarily captured by the Romans, and his English troops flee in retreat. But he is rescued by Belarius, Guiderius, Arviragus, and Posthumus, the latter disguised as an English peasant. The bold actions of these four men stem the retreat, and Cymbeline honors their noble actions. At the end of the play, he has the Roman prisoners brought to his tent and condemns them all to death. Caius Lucius says that if the tables were turned, the Romans would not be executing their English prisoners. They would treat them with more respect.

Cymbeline eventually changes his mind and frees the Roman prisoners. He has, in the meantime, been reunited with his two long-lost sons; he has rediscovered Imogen; he has learned that the queen never loved him and had sought to destroy his royal family; and he has accepted Posthumus as a member of that royal family, as one that the king has raised from youth. Cymbeline can now afford to treat the Romans kindly. The battle has proven that the Britains are strong and equal to the Romans, and Jupiter's prediction that Caesar and Cymbeline would blend, harmoniously, in the rays of the sun is fulfilled. Cymbeline can speak from a position of generosity and strength. He bows to no other nation, but, at the same time, he develops, in friendly relationships with other nations, the allies necessary to account, historically, for England having become the world power it is when Shakespeare imagines its ancient past in *Cymbeline.* Although he is the title character of the play and does not appear in a great many of the scenes, Cymbeline has a large presence in the play. In the final scene, he is the object of everyone's attention. He receives one startling revelation after another until he is overwhelmed, and is pivotal in each character's disclosure of events.

Dutchman

The Dutchman appears without speaking in I.iv, the scene in which Posthumus arrives at Philario's house in Italy and wagers that Imogen will resist Jachimo's advances.

Fidele

See Imogen

Frenchman

The Frenchman is present when Posthumus arrives at Philario's house in Italy. He has met Posthumus before in France, and he agrees with Jachimo that Posthumus is not as perfectly wonderful as he is made out to be. He reminds Posthumus of the duel Posthumus had in France with another man, a duel stemming from a petty dispute in which Posthumus proclaimed his mistress more beautiful than any woman in France.

Gentlemen

These are two gentlemen of Cymbeline's court. They appear in the first scene of the play and, in their conversation, inform the audience that although Cymbeline is annoyed with Imogen for marrying Posthumus, all of Cymbeline's courtiers believe Imogen has done well to shun the match the queen had hoped she would make with her son, the foolish and ill-mannered Cloten. The courtiers, however, hide their pleasure from the displeased Cymbeline. The two gentlemen praise Posthumus and discuss his commendable heritage. They do not approve of Cymbeline's banishment of him.

Guiderius

Guiderius is the older son of Cymbeline and the brother of Arviragus and Imogen. As an infant, he was kidnapped from Cymbeline by Belarius, who raised him for twenty years in the wilds of Wales near Milford-Haven and renamed him Polydore. He thinks Belarius is his father. According to Belarius, Guiderius showed early signs of his princely nature. When Belarius would tell his tales of past adventures, Guiderius would listen raptly, his excitement evident, his desire for challenging experiences clearly expressed in his stiff attentiveness.

Like Arviragus, he feels an instant bond of kinship with Imogen and mourns her when he thinks she has died. He, too, sings at her grave and strews her body with flowers. When Belarius and Arviragus check to see if Cloten has been followed, Guiderius confronts Cloten, who abuses him and treats him as inferior. Guiderius's royal blood rebels at that abuse, and he defends himself against Cloten's attack, killing him. Quite pleased with himself, he presents Cloten's severed head to Belarius, almost as if it were a trophy or an emblem of his manhood. Guiderius fights on the side of the English in the battle alongside Belarius and his brother. He fights bravely in that battle and is honored by Cymbeline for his bravery. In the last scene of the play, he steps forward to admit he has killed Cloten, and Cymbeline immediately sentences him to death for killing a prince. Belarius, though, says, "Stay, sir King. / This man is better than the man he slew" (V.v.302- 03). Belarius reveals the true identity of Guiderius, who is then reunited with his father the king.

Helen

Helen is a lady waiting on Imogen. With Jachimo hiding in the trunk that has been placed in Imogen's room, Helen, upon request, informs Imogen that it is midnight and is instructed to leave the taper burning and wake Imogen at four in the morning.

Imogen

Imogen is the daughter of Cymbeline by a former marriage. She marries Posthumus, but the queen, Cymbeline's present wife, does not approve of the marriage that has left her son, Cloten, out of the picture. She plots to kill Imogen. Meanwhile, Jachimo, who has made a bet with Posthumus regarding Imogen's faithfulness, tells Imogen that Posthumus has been unfaithful to her. After suggesting that as revenge Imogen sleep with him, Jachimo tells Imogen he was only testing the virtue Posthumus has so highly praised. Jachimo then hides in Imogen's room, gathers some incriminating "evidence," and convinces Posthumus that Imogen has been unfaithful. Posthumus then arranges to have Pisanio kill Imogen. To avoid killing her as Posthumus has directed him to do, Pisanio fits Imogen with boy's clothes and sends her to Caius Lucius's departing ship in Milford-Haven. On the way there, however, Imogen is overcome with hunger and fatigue and finds herself in the cave of Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus. She does not know that the latter two are actually her brothers, but they share an unspoken bond with her that prompts them to call her "brother." After she appears to die, the result of the drug Pisanio has given her, her two brothers lay her in a grave and conduct funeral rites for her. She awakes in that grave next to the headless corpse of Cloten, which she thinks is the lifeless body of Posthumus. She throws herself on that body, weeping and moaning until Caius Lucius discovers her and makes her his page, thinking all the while that she is a boy. After the battle, she is taken to Cymbeline's tent along with the rest of the Roman prisoners. Caius Lucius begs Cymbeline to spare her, and, instead of pleading for Caius Lucius' life, as he fully expects she will, she takes the opportunity to question Jachimo. about the ring he is wearing, her ring. In the process of that questioning, the truth comes out, and all the confusions of the play are clarified in rapid succession. As Imogen's name suggests, she is the "image" of the ideal woman, the woman of Britain, exceeding the women of all other nations. When she adopts the disguise of a young boy, she takes the name "Fidele," another indication that she is meant to be seen as the model of faithfulness. In Jupiter's revelation, Imogen is the "piece of tender air" (V.v.446) that embraces Posthumus, the "lion's whelp" (V.v.443). At the end of the play, Imogen embraces Posthumus, and he says, "Hang there like fruit, my soul, / Till the tree die!" (V.v.262-63). In the union of Imogen's soul and Posthumus's treelike physical strength will be born the fruit of Britain, its future princes.

Jachimo

Jachimo is an Italian lord. He is arrogant and brash, believing that he can have any woman he desires. He is present at Philario's house as Philario awaits the arrival of Posthumus. Jachimo claims to have met Posthumus before, a meeting in which Posthumus did not impress him very much. Jachimo is surprised that Posthumus

regularly receives so much praise. When Posthumus enters and the Frenchman recalls how Posthumus, in the past, dueled another Frenchman in defense of Imogen's great beauty, Jachimo baits Posthumus. Jachimo wagers gold against the diamond ring Imogen has given Posthumus that he can seduce Imogen. When he arrives in England to attempt that seduction, he decides to be direct. He tells Imogen that Posthumus is sleeping around in Italy; she might avenge Posthumus's infidelity by sleeping with Jachimo. When Imogen is outraged and threatens to tell her father, Jachimo realizes that Imogen is as unimpeachable as Posthumus has claimed. Since directness has not worked, he tries deception. He apologizes for his behavior, which he says was meant to test her, and convinces her to store a trunk containing valuables for him and hides in that trunk as it is placed in her chamber. At midnight, when she has fallen asleep, he sneaks out and takes inventory of the room and records a distinguishing mark on her breast. He also steals her bracelet. He needs to win the wager, or Posthumus has pledged that he will answer with his sword for impugning Imogen's reputation. He returns to Italy and presents Posthumus with the alleged evidence he has garnered. Posthumus accepts Jachimo's claim to have seduced Imogen. Later, during the battle, Jachimo encounters Posthumus, who has disguised himself like an English peasant, and is disarmed by him, both figuratively and literally. He cannot believe that an English peasant could have so bested him. In the last scene of the play, Jachimo is taken as a prisoner to Cymbeline's tent, where he is forced to confess his deception of Posthumus. The confession is full of flowery speech and tedious metaphors, prompting Cymbeline to say, "I stand on fire: / Come to the matter" (V.v. 168-69). Jachimo is representative of the declining integrity and concern with fashion that many Elizabethans associated with the Italian gentry.

Jailers

The jailers take possession of Posthumus from Cymbeline and hold him prisoner after he has been apprehended by the two British captains. They are amazed that Posthumus is so pleased with his imprisonment and the prospect of being hanged. After Posthumus has awakened from his dream, in which he saw the apparitions of his family and a vision of Jupiter, the jailers take him to be hanged. But they are interrupted by a messenger who directs them to take the prisoner to the king. One of the jailers says, "Unless a man would marry a gallows and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone" (V.iv.198- 99): in all his experience, this jailer has never seen a prisoner so eager to die.

Ladies

These are the ladies of Cymbeline's court. They are seen attending the queen and Imogen. In V.v, two ladies affirm that what Cornelius has told Cymbeline about the queen's dying confession is true.

Leonatus (Posthumus Leonatus):

Posthumus is the husband of Imogen. His marriage to her displeases Cymbeline, and he is banished from England. He goes to Italy to stay at the home of Philario, a friend of Posthumus's deceased father. While there, he enters into an ill-advised wager with Jachimo, who thinks that he can seduce Imogen despite Posthumus's great confidence in her unfailing virtue. When Jachimo presents him with false proof that he has accomplished what he set out to do, Posthumus rails against Imogen and denounces all women, attributing to them every kind of vice and weakness. He writes Pisanio two letters, one meant to deceive Imogen into thinking that he might be met at Milford-Haven in Wales, the other directing Pisanio to kill Imogen when she travels to the appointed place. Pisanio sends him a bloody cloth meant to mislead Posthumus into thinking that Imogen has been killed and thereby set his mind at rest. The bloody cloth has the opposite effect; it throws Posthumus into a state of despair and bitter self-recrimination. He comes to England as part of an army of Italian gentry intending to fight the Britains, but he disguises himself as an English peasant and fights recklessly against the Romans, seeking death. That desire for death makes him change back to the uniform of a Roman soldier after the English have won the battle, in hopes that he might be captured and executed. He almost gets his wish, but as he is being led to the gallows, a messenger tells his jailers to take him to Cymbeline's tent instead. Once there, he discovers that Imogen is not dead, and he is reunited with her and is accepted by Cymbeline.

Posthumus is a difficult character to understand fully. His name can be roughly translated as "'inheriting the qualities of a lion", and at first he does not live up to either the implication of his name or the praise he receives from others. Those praises probably result from the actions of his father, Sicilius, and his two brothers, all three dying bravely in battle. Early in the play, Posthumus is praised before the fact, everyone expecting that he will live up to the reputation of his father and his two brothers. At the beginning of the play, one of the gentlemen of Cymbeline's court says of Posthumus, "I do not think / So fair an outward and such stuff within / Endows a man but he" (I.i.22-24). This is strong praise, but Jachimo says that he has seen Posthumus in Britain, and "He was then of a crescent note, expected to prove so worthy as since he hath been allow'd the name of (I.iv.1-3). This is hollow praise, and the Frenchman adds, "I have seen him in France. We had very many there could behold the sun with as firm eyes as he" (I.iv.ll- 13). Posthumus confirms their skepticism; he does not act very nobly. Although Imogen does not die, Posthumus is guilty of intent to commit murder. When he receives the bloody cloth, he moans, "0 Pisanio, / Every good servant does not all commands" (V.i.5-6). He wants to shift part of the blame to Pisanio, a blame that would rest entirely on Posthumus even if Pisanio had done as directed. Posthumus might be commended for fighting so bravely in the battle, but that bravery seems to stem more from Posthumus's despair (he fights fiercely and carelessly in battle because he wants to die) than it does from nobility. Perhaps the truest statement about Posthumus's inner qualities is made by one of the gentlemen at the beginning of the play, who says that Imogen has chosen Posthumus, "and his virtue / By her election may be truly read, / What kind of man he is" (I.i.52-54). That is, Posthumus only has greatness in being the

husband of Imogen. When he is reunited with Imogen, she embraces him, and he says, "Hang there like fruit, my soul, / Till the tree die!" (V.v.262-63): she is the soul that completes him.

Lords

For the most part, these are the lords of Cymbeline's court, who attend the king without speaking. Two of these lords are with Cloten during scenes in which Cloten has just come from a bowler in II.i. To his face, the two lords agree with Cloten's boastful rationalizations of his behavior. In queen that Caius Lucius has arrived as an ambassador from Rome. In III.v, a messenger is sent to fetch Imogen for the queen and Cymbeline. He returns and announces that the doors of Imogen's chamber are all locked and there was no response to his knocking. In FV.iv, a messenger interrupts the jailers as they conduct Posthumus to the gallows. He directs the jailers to take their prisoner to Cymbeline's tent. asides, they make fun of his idiotic behavior and misplaced pride. The effect of their sarcasm is quite comic. For example, Cloten complains that, while bowling, he was scolded for swearing by a man of lesser rank than him. He says, "Whoreson dog! I gave him satisfaction! / Would he had been one of my rank! (II.i.14-15), to which one of the lords responds, "To have smell'd like a fool" (II.i.l6).In V.iii, a Britain Lord, who has fled the battle, meets Posthumus and inquires what the outcome of that battle was. Posthumus considers him a pampered coward for having fled the action.

Lucius (Caius Lucius):

Caius Lucius is the general of the Roman forces. He comes to England as an ambassador for Emperor Augustus and requests that Cymbeline pay tribute to Rome under an agreement formed in the bygone days of Julius Caesar. When Cymbeline refuses that request, Caius Lucius declares war on England. Despite his declaration, he is treated graciously as a respected ambassador by Cymbeline and the queen. During his preparations for battle, Cauis Lucius comes upon Fidele/Imogen and impresses her into service. Caius Lucius is portrayed as a noble character, somewhat matter-of-fact but neither corrupt nor greedy. His only fault is that he is on the wrong side of the conflict. When he is taken before Cymbeline as a prisoner at the end of the play, he asks that Cymbeline save the life of his boy Fidele. Cymbeline grants him that request and says that Fidele may save one other person. Caius Lucius then says, "I do not bid thee beg my life, good lad, / And yet I know thou wilt" (V.v.102- 03). When Fidele does not immediately name him, Caius Lucius is shocked. The arrogance he shows in this scene is, perhaps, meant to be representative of Rome's arrogance toward England.

Messengers

There are several messengers in the play. In II.iii, a messenger announces to Cymbeline and the queen that Caius Lucius has arrived as an ambassador from Rome. In III.v, a messenger is sent to fetch Imogen for the queen and Cymbeline. He returns and announces that the

doors of Imogen's chamber are all locked and there was no response to his knocking. In FV.iv, a messenger interrupts the jailers as they conduct Posthumus to the gallows. He directs the jailers to take their prisoner to Cymbeline's tent.

Morgan

See Belarius

Musicians

The musicians are directed by Cloten to play outside of Imogen's door and wake her with sweet harmonies. They sing a short song with beautiful lyrical imagery. Cloten hopes that providing Imogen this novelty will ingratiate him with her.

Officers

The officers appear without speaking in the last scene of the play. They are present at Cymbeline's tent in the English camp after the battle.

Philario

Philario is an Italian who fought with Posthumus's father, Sicilius. When Posthumus is banished by Cymbeline, Philario welcomes him to his home because he feels indebted to the deceased Sicilius for having saved his life. When Jachimo and the Frenchman offer that they were not very impressed with Posthumus when they met him in the past, Philario suggests that they met him in his youth; he has since grown into his praises. Philario discusses with Posthumus the situation between Rome and England, offering his opinion that the English will surely pay the tribute, an opinion with which Posthumus disagrees. As Jachimo presents evidence to Posthumus of his seduction of Imogen, Philario objects that the bracelet is no proof since it could have been found or stolen by Jachimo. He has thought the wager a bad idea from the start, and the tension between his friends seems to make him uneasy.

Philamonus

Philarmonus is a Roman soothsayer, one who can interpret mysterious signs in nature and the heavens. In IV.ii, he predicts success for the Roman forces because he has seen a vision of the Roman eagle flying from the south to the west and disappearing in the rays of the sun. He is wrong. At the end of the play he revises his interpretation of that vision, offering that it was really a prediction of Rome's reunion with England, harmony between Caesar and Cymbeline. Philarmonus is called upon to read the revelation from Jupiter that Posthumus could not understand. Philarmonus explains that Posthumus, as his name suggests, is the "lion's whelp" (V.v.443). Imogen is the "piece

of tender air" (V.v.446) that embraces Posthumus. Cymbeline is the "lofty cedar" (V.v.453). The "lopp'd branches (V.v.446) which must be regrafted to that cedar, are Guiderius and Arviragus. The message seems clear: when Cymbeline accepts Posthumus as his son-in-law and is surrounded again by his children, the English royal family will find strength, and England will prosper.

Pisanio

Pisanio is the servant of Posthumus. When his master goes to Italy in exile, Pisanio stays in England to act as a go-between for Posthumus and Imogen. He resists the queen's request that he switch his allegiance from Posthumus to her, knowing the queen's character. When Posthumus informs him by letter that Imogen has proved false, Pisanio is dismayed and believes, accurately, that his master has been deceived by the Italians. He disobeys Posthumus's command to kill Imogen at Milford-Haven and, instead, outfits her like a young boy and sends her to Caius Lucius, who he believes is about to sail from England. On parting from Imogen, he hands her the drug the queen has earlier handed him. He thinks the drug is a medicinal elixir for curing illness, while the queen thinks it is a deadly poison, which she had hoped Pisanio would ingest. When Pisanio returns to Cymbeline's palace from Milford-Haven, he is confronted by the suspicious and jealous Cloten, who tries to bribe Pisanio into switching his loyalty from Posthumus to him. Pisanio makes Cloten believe that he will serve him. He procures some of Posthumus's clothes for Cloten and gives him the letter with which Posthumus has deceived Imogen into travelling to Milford-Haven, the letter which describes the supposed meeting place of the temporarily alienated couple. Pisanio sees no harm in supplying this information to Cloten since he believes Imogen will be long gone before Cloten arrives in Wales. Pisanio is exceptionally loyal to Posthumus, and he feels terrible, later, when he has to lie to Cymbeline to protect his master. He makes it clear that he will make up for his deception by fighting loyally for the king in the near future. In the scene of multiple revelations that ends the play, it is Pisanio who first identifies Fidele as Imogen. She accuses him of poisoning her, but Cornelius clears Pisanio of any ill intent.

Polydore

See Guiderius

Posthumus (Posthumus Leonatus):

See Leonatus

Queen

The queen is the wife of Cymbeline. Cloten is her son from a former marriage. She has great influence with Cymbeline and uses that influence to effect her own ends. Her

greatest desire is to see Cloten crowned king of England. To that end, she convinces Cymbeline that Posthumus should be banished, since his marriage to Imogen prevents Imogen's marriage to Cloten. It would seem that Cymbeline is the only character in the play who cannot see through the queen's deception. The two gentlemen of Cymbeline's court who introduce the narrative see how manipulative she is, and Imogen, too, knows that the queen is not being truthful when she offers to be Imogen's advocate and plead with Cymbeline to soften his sentence of Posthumus. Cornelius, who has been instructing the queen in the manufacture and use of herbs for medicines and poisons, does not trust her. Instead of the deadly poison she has asked for, he passes to her a drug that only appears to act like a poison. Pisanio refuses to become her servant as he accepts from her the drug with which she hopes he will poison himself. The queen is instrumental in convincing Cymbeline to refuse Rome the tribute it demands. She also convinces Cloten to persist in his wooing of Imogen. She tells him that Imogen will come around, eventually, and agree to marry him. On her deathbed, the queen confesses, in the hearing of Cornelius and two ladies, that she never loved Cymbeline and had intended to kill him with slow-working drugs. She also confesses her intention to kill Imogen so that Cloten might inherit the crown. Cornelius reports in V.v.27 that the queen died directly after making these confessions.

Roman Captain

Listed as "Captains" in the stage directions, there seems to be only one Roman captain with a speaking part in the play. He informs Caius Lucius that Jachimo will soon arrive in England leading a group of Italian aristocrats who have been levied for battle in England. This captain is with Caius Lucius when the latter meets Fidele (Imogen).

Roman Senators

Two Roman senators appear briefly in III.vii. They instruct the tribunes to levy an army of soldiers from amongst the Italian gentry. This army will then fight the Britains since the Roman common soldiers are busy fighting the Pannonians and Dalmatians, and the Roman legion in France are too weak to mount an attack on England.

Soldiers

Soldiers are listed in the Dramatis Personae but not in the stage directions. Since the play depicts several scenes of battle, it can be assumed that the soldiers are present to represent the battle.

Spaniard

The Spaniard appears without speaking in I.iv, the scene in which Posthumus arrives at Philario's house in Italy and wagers that Imogen will resist Jachimo's advances.

Tribunes

Two Roman tribunes appear briefly in Ill.vii. They are instructed by two Roman senators to raise an army of Italian gentry to fight the Britains. Caius Lucius will be in command of that army.

Further Study

Bergeron, David M. *"Cymbeline:* Shakespeare's Last Roman Play." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1980): 31-41. Bergeron examines Shakespeare's understanding of Roman history and discusses Shakespeare's sources for the characters in *Cymbeline.*

"Sexuality in *Cymbeline." Essays in Literature* 10, no. 2(1983): 159-68.

Bergeron argues that since sexuality assures regeneration, it is often celebrated in the comic world. Bergeron discusses the implications of Cloten's and Jachimo's failure to find sexual fulfillment.

Bryant, Peter. "The Cave Scenes in *Cymbeline:* A Critical Note." *Standpunte* 23, no. 5 (1970): 14-22.

Bryant discusses how Guiderius and Arviragus demonstrate their true nobility despite their homely surroundings and unsophisticated upbringing.

Colley, John Scott. "Disguise and New Guise in *Cymbeline." Shakespeare Studies 1* (1974): 233-52.

Colley examines how the characters' various disguises reveal their inner qualities. He discusses Cloten, Imogen, and Posthumus.

Hunt Maurice. "Shakespeare's Empirical Romance: *Cymbeline* and Modern Knowledge." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22, no. 3 (1980): 322-42.

Hunt argues that Cymbeline, Imogen, and Posthumus gain knowledge through their suffering.

Kay, Carol McGinnis. "Generic Sleight-of-Hand in *Cymbeline." South Atlantic Review* 46, no. 4 (1981): 34-40.

Kay examines the elements of folklore in *Cymbeline,* especially its fairy tale beginning.

Lawry, J. S. "'Perishing Root and Increasing Vine' *Cymbeline." Shakespeare Studies* 12 (1979): 179-93.

Lawry examines how the play compares and contrasts the nations of Rome and England. The harmony of the play's ending anticipates the birth of Christianity.

Leggatt, Alexander. "The Island of Miracles: An Approach to *Cymbeline." Shakespeare Studies* 10 (1977): 191-209.

Leggatt argues that *Cymbeline* demonstrates a concern with England's destiny. He sees Jupiter's saving of Posthumus as analogous to Christ's saving of humanity.

Mowat, Barbara. *"Cymbeline:* Crude Dramaturgy and Aesthetic Distance." *Renaissance Papers* (1966): 39-47.

Mowat is chiefly concerned with how Shakespeare employs certain dramatic techniques for his own artistic purposes.

Siemon, James Edward. "Noble Virtue in *Cymbeline."* Shakespeare Survey 29 (1976): 51-61.

Siemon argues that Posthumus changes throughout the course of *Cymbeline.* He compares the actions of Posthumus to the praise he receives from other characters early in the play.

Smith, Hallett. Introduction to *Cymbeline,* by William Shakespeare. In *The Riverside Shakespeare,* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, 1517-20. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

Smith provides an overview of the sources for *Cymbeline* and its textual history. He analyzes the major characters in *Cymbeline* and compares the play to Shakespeare's other romances.

Swander, Homer. *"Cymbeline* and the 'Blameless Hero.'" *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 31, no. 3 (1964): 259-70.

Swander argues that Posthumus does not live up to the praises he receives early in the play. He traces the changes in Posthumus, asserting that Posthumus eventually arrives at an unconventional excellence.

Taylor, Michael. "The Pastoral Reckoning in *Cymbeline."* Shakespeare Survey 36 (1983): 97-106.

Taylor suggests that the innocence of Imogen's pastoral world is shattered by actions of Posthumus and the discovery of Cloten's headless corpse.

Thorne, William Barry. *"Cymbeline:* 'Lopp'd Branches' and the Concept of Regeneration." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 20, no. 2(1969): 143-59.

Thorne discusses the communal harmony and coming together of the young and old as elements of folklore in *Cymbeline.*

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) 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, SfS 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 SfS 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 SfS 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 SfS 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.
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- 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

SfS 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 Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

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