

The Closers Study Guide

The Closers by Michael Connelly

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Introduction

Harry Bosch is an authority figure, sworn to enforce the law. His trouble is that he cares for truth more than law and for authority even less than that. Michael Connelly's *The Closers* is his tenth mystery novel starring LAPD detective Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch. Though *The Closers*, published by Warner Books, is the eleventh novel to feature Bosch, it is a standalone work that does not ask the reader to have any prior experience with the character to enjoy the book.

In *The Closers*, Bosch comes out of early retirement to return to the police force. He has been assigned to work in the Open-Unsolved Unit, solving years-old crimes that have gone cold. In his first case, Bosch and his partner Kizmin Rider investigate the death of a sixteen-year-old Chatsworth girl who was taken from her home and killed on a nearby hill in 1988. Their investigation leads them from the homeless district of downtown Los Angeles, where the victim's father was swallowed by a black hole of grief and alcoholism years before, to the highest offices of the police department itself, where Bosch's old nemesis Irvin S. Irving may be involved in a cover-up.

A successful novelist for over a decade, Connelly grounds his fiction in his real-life experience as a crime reporter in South Florida and Los Angeles, starting when he graduated from college in 1980. His direct contact with actual Los Angeles cold-case detectives has helped him to create an accurate portrayal of the department, its people, and the challenging cases they face. In a 2005 editorial for the *Los Angeles Times*, Connelly explains what he has learned about cold cases through his research and writing:

Cold-case detectives tell me that there is no such thing as closure, that a violent death leaves a hole in loved ones and even communities that can never be completely filled. They see those holes every time they reopen an old case.

They say there may not be closure, but there always are answers that can be found, and sometimes there is even justice.



Author Biography

Michael Connelly was born on July 21, 1956. His desire to become a writer was born while he attended the University of Florida, where he first read the works of detective novelist Raymond Chandler. After earning a degree in journalism, Connelly worked as a crime reporter for various newspapers in South Florida. One story he co-authored was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, which helped Connelly earn a position as a crime reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*. After spending three years learning the ins and outs of the Los Angeles Police Department, Connelly began work on his first novel.

Connelly decided to write a crime novel featuring a Los Angeles Police Department detective as the main character. He named his detective Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch, after the renowned Renaissance painter, who is most famous for his grotesque depictions of sinners in Hell in his triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. According to Connelly, quoted from his own official website, "I thought this would be the perfect name for my character because I saw the metaphoric possibilities of juxtaposing contemporary Los Angeles with some of the Bosch paintings." His first novel, *The Black Echo*, was published in 1992; the book earned Connelly an Edgar Award, given by the Mystery Writers of America, for best first novel.

Connelly quickly followed *The Black Echo* with several more novels about Detective Harry Bosch, including *The Black Ice* (1993) and *The Concrete Blonde* (1994). Although Connelly's Harry Bosch series has proved to be his main focus, he has also written several books featuring other main characters, including a journalist in *The Poet* (1996), a lawyer in *The Lincoln Lawyer*, and a police detective in failing health who receives the heart of a murder victim as a transplant in *Blood Work* (1998). *The Closers* (2005) is the eleventh novel to feature Harry Bosch, with the twelfth, *Echo Park*, scheduled for publication in the fall of 2006.

Connelly has also worked on screenplay adaptations of his novels, as well as a short-lived television series called *Level 9* for UPN. A filmed adaptation of his novel *Blood Work*, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood, was released in 2002. In 2003 and 2004, Connelly served as the President of the Mystery Writers of America—the organization that gave him an Edgar Award for his first novel. As of 2006, Connelly lives in Florida with his family, where he continues to write fiction.



Plot Summary

Part One: Blue Religion

Part Two: High Jingo

Part Three: Darkness Waits



Characters

David Allmand

David Allmand is the California Highway Patrol investigator who responds to the scene of Roland Mackey's murder. The investigator indicates that Mackey was struck by the "disabled" car awaiting a tow and that the car pulled forward and struck the back of the tow truck a second time.

Atkins

Mrs. Atkins is the counter clerk at Hillside Preparatory, the school Rebecca Verloren attended when she was murdered. Mrs. Atkins checks the school records to confirm that Roland Mackey was never a student at Hillside Prep. Later, Mrs. Atkins finds Kaitlyn Sobek so that Bosch can question her about her cell phone, which was used by Roland Mackey's killer.

Harry Bosch

Heironymous Bosch, known to most by his nickname Harry, is a detective for the Open-Unsolved Unit of the Los Angeles Police Department. He is over fifty years old, and he has just returned to the police force after three years of retirement. The chief of police tells Bosch to think of himself as a rookie, and Bosch recognizes that he is somewhat out of practice for the job. However, he is eager to help the forgotten victims of the city's "cold cases" find justice, and his partner, Kizmin Rider, is the perfect complement to Bosch's decidedly old-school method of solving cases.

Heironymus Bosch

See Harry Bosch.

An abridged audio adaptation of *The Closers* was released by Books on Tape in 2005. The book is read by Len Cariou and is currently available on compact disc.

An unabridged audio recording of *The Closers* was released by Time Warner Audiobooks in 2005. Like the abridged version, the narrator is Len Cariou, and it is currently available on both audio cassette and compact disc. This version is also available as an audio download through www.audible.com.

The Closers has been released in electronic book format for both Adobe Reader and Microsoft Reader. Both versions are available through www.amazon.com.



William Burkhart

William "Billy" Burkhart is a former member of the Chatsworth Eights and Roland Mackey's current roommate. Although Burkhart was convicted of a hate crime in 1988, he is eventually ruled out as a suspect in the murders of both Rebecca Verloren and Roland Mackey.

The Chief of Police

The Los Angeles Police Department Chief of Police, unnamed in the book, is Irvin S. Irving's successor to the office. He makes it clear to Bosch that the LAPD is no longer a place where officers can bend the rules to suit them; he also makes it clear that Bosch is starting out fresh and will work on probation for one year before his reinstatement is permanent. He asks Bosch to attend a cadet graduation ceremony as his guest, where he surprises both Bosch and Irving by announcing Irving's immediate retirement.

Anne Demchak

Demchak is the judge who rules on Bosch and Rider's wiretap request for Roland Mackey's personal, home, and workplace phones. At first she denies the request, but Bosch appeals to her as a mother and convinces her to grant the detectives a seventy-two hour tap.

Jerry Edgar

Jerry Edgar is one of Harry Bosch's former partners. He currently works for Hollywood Division. Edgar helps Bosch by providing background information about the Chatsworth Eights.

Arturo Garcia

Arturo Garcia is one of the two detectives assigned to investigate Rebecca Verloren's murder in 1988. Although Bosch is critical of his original work on the case, Garcia has been promoted to the rank of commander in the LAPD. He helps Bosch and Rider by arranging for an article about the murder to appear in the *Daily News*.

Ron Green

Ron Green was one of the two detectives assigned to investigate Rebecca Verloren's murder in 1988. Although widely credited as being a better detective than his partner, Arturo Garcia, Green ultimately steers the Verloren investigation away from any connection to the Chatsworth Eights after being pressured by Irving. Green later retires from the force and ultimately takes his own life.



Irvin S. Irving

Irvin S. Irving is the former LAPD Chief of Police, who "had been unceremoniously pushed out of power by the new chief and given a virtually meaningless posting and assignment outside of Parker Center." Irving is one of Bosch's longtime enemies in the department; he believes that Bosch will make a huge mistake on the job that will discredit the new chief. At the time of Rebecca Verloren's murder, Irving was in charge of the LAPD's secretive Public Disorder Unit, which was responsible for investigating the white supremacist group known as the Chatsworth Eights. At a cadet graduation ceremony at the end of the book, the police chief surprises Irving by announcing that Irving is retiring from the police force, effective immediately.

Rick Jackson

Rick Jackson is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Jackson's partner is Tim Marcia. Bosch knows both Jackson and Marcia from prior cases he worked before his first retirement. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Jackson and Marcia work the "street team" day shift, visually monitoring Mackey and Tampa Towing. Later that night, Jackson and Marcia are assigned to head the investigation into Mackey's death.

Thelma Kibble

Thelma Kibble is Roland Mackey's former probation officer. She recalls that Mackey had trouble addressing her as an authority figure because she is black; he requested a new probation officer but was denied.

Daniel Kotchof

Daniel Kotchof is Rebecca Verloren's former boyfriend, who was living in Hawaii with his parents at the time of her murder. Rebecca's mother believes that Kotchof called her daughter every night up until she was killed. Kotchof insists that he stopped calling Rebecca almost a full year before she died.

Vicki Landreth

Vicki Landreth is the vice artist for Hollywood Division and one of Bosch's former co-workers. Landreth draws temporary Nazi-themed tattoos on Bosch so that he can gain Roland Mackey's trust. Afterward, Bosch and Landreth spend the night together.



Roland Mackey

Roland Mackey is a tow truck driver who was once a member of the white supremacist gang known as the Chatsworth Eights. Mackey's DNA is found on the gun that was used to murder Rebecca Verloren, which leads detectives Bosch and Rider to suspect him of the murder. Though Mackey's racist ties make him a tempting suspect, the detectives eventually discover that he was not directly involved in the shooting—he simply provided the gun to the real killer. After the Rebecca Verloren case is re-opened, Verloren's killer also murders Mackey to keep Mackey from revealing his identity.

Tim Marcia

Tim Marcia is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Marcia's partner is Rick Jackson. Bosch knows both Jackson and Marcia from prior cases he worked before his first retirement. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Jackson and Marcia work the "street team" day shift, visually monitoring Mackey and Tampa Towing. Later that night, Jackson and Marcia are assigned to head the investigation into Mackey's death.

John McLellan

John McLellan is a detective and longtime associate of Irvin S. Irving. When he was with the Public Disorder Unit, McLellan was the officer who investigated the possible connection between the Chatsworth Eights and the murder of Rebecca Verloren.

Belinda Messier

Belinda Messier is William Burkhart's girlfriend. The two are together at the time of Mackey's murder, and both are brought in for questioning. Neither one provides any useful information, and neither is arrested.

Michelle Murphy

Michelle Murphy is a friend of Roland Mackey. After Mackey learns of the article about Rebecca Verloren, he calls Murphy and asks her to read him the article.

Jean Nord

Jean Nord is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Nord's partner is Kevin Robinson. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Nord and Robinson are assigned to monitor phone calls in the sound room during the night shift; after Mackey's murder, the two interview the employees at Tampa Towing.



Gabe Norona

Gabe Norona is the LAPD police captain whose jurisdiction covers, among other departments, the Open-Unsolved Unit. As captain, Norona approves the wiretap request for Mackey's phones and provides additional officers to help with the surveillance.

Raj Patel

Raj Patel is the crime scene investigator who responds to the scene of Roland Mackey's murder. He discovers that the second impact of the killer's car has left sufficient transfer evidence to make a match against a suspect's vehicle, if one is found. He is also the investigator that discovers the killer's finger and palm prints on a wood slat on the underside of Rebecca Verloren's bed seventeen years after the murder. Raj Patel is the brother of assistant medical examiner Ravi Patel.

Ravi Patel

Ravi Patel is the assistant medical examiner who responds to the scene of Roland Mackey's murder. He initially concludes that Mackey was struck only once and that he probably died when his lungs filled with blood from his injuries. Ravi Patel's brother is crime scene investigator Raj Patel.

Abel Pratt

Abel Pratt is the officer in charge of the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit. He works directly with Bosch and Rider to monitor the progress of their investigation, and he also coordinates the entire Open-Unsolved staff to help out during the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey.

Robert Renner

Robert Renner is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Renner's partner is Victor Robleto. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Robleto and Renner are assigned to monitor phone calls in the sound room during the day shift. Renner seems happy to work the case as long as necessary, because he wants to earn overtime pay.

Kizmin Rider

Kizmin Rider, or Kiz for short, is a detective in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit. She is Harry Bosch's partner, and she is instrumental in orchestrating Bosch's return to the police force. Rider and Bosch were partners before his retirement, and during Bosch's



time away from the force, Rider worked closely with the chief of police as a policy analyst.

Rider's expertise with modern investigative techniques, as well as her connections with high-level decision makers on the force, complement Bosch's tried-and-true methods.

Kevin Robinson

Kevin Robinson is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Robinson's partner is Jean Nord. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Robinson and Nord are assigned to monitor phone calls in the sound room during the night shift; after Mackey's murder, the two interview the employees at Tampa Towing.

Victor Robleto

Victor Robleto is one of the detectives who work in the LAPD Open-Unsolved Unit with Harry Bosch. Robleto's partner is Robert Renner. During the wiretap surveillance of Roland Mackey, Robleto and Renner are assigned to monitor phone calls in the sound room during the day shift.

Richard Ross

Captain Ross was the head of the LAPD Internal Affairs Division at the time of Rebecca Verloren's murder. When Ross's son was discovered to be the leader of the white supremacist gang the Chatsworth Eights, Irvin S. Irving agreed to cover it up in exchange for Ross's future cooperation.

Richard Ross

Richard Ross, Jr., was the son of Captain Richard Ross, head of the LAPD Internal Affairs Division at the time of Rebecca Verloren's murder. He was also the leader of a white supremacist gang known as the Chatsworth Eights. After his connection to the gang was discovered, his father protected him from prosecution and sent him away to Idaho, where he was later killed in a car accident.

Bailey Sable

Bailey Sable—maiden name Bailey Koster—was one of Rebecca Verloren's friends prior to her murder in 1988. Sable is currently a teacher at Hillside Prep, the school the girls attended together. Sable does not recognize Roland Mackey's name or picture when questioned by Bosch and Rider. Sable is the teacher who confiscates Kaitlyn Sobek's cell phone after she is caught using it during class.



Frank Simmons

Frank Simmons is a former member of the Chatsworth Eights who later served time for selling machine guns, and he still appears to believe in white supremacy. Bosch pretends to know Simmons to form a bond with Roland Mackey, who considers Simmons a friend.

Amanda Sobek

Amanda Sobek is the listed owner of a cell phone used to call Tampa Towing on the day Roland Mackey is killed. Bosch and Rider believe the killer used the phone to confirm where Mackey worked, as well as to find out his schedule. Her daughter is Kaitlyn Sobek.

Kaitlyn Sobek

Kaitlyn Sobek is a student at Hillside Preparatory whose cell phone is used by Roland Mackey's killer. She admits to Bosch that her phone was taken away from her by teacher Bailey Sable after Kaitlyn used it during class; the phone was then given to the school principal, Gordon Stoddard, until the end of the school day. Her mother is Amanda Sobek.

Gordon Stoddard

Gordon Stoddard is the principal of Hillside Preparatory, the school Rebecca Verloren attended at the time of her murder. Bosch and Rider eventually discover that Stoddard, a science teacher at the time, had an affair with Rebecca beginning in 1987 that resulted in her becoming pregnant. After Stoddard forced her to end the pregnancy, Rebecca ended their affair. Stoddard then killed Rebecca and attempted to make it look like suicide.

When Bosch and Rider discover Stoddard is the killer, he flees to the Verloren house and tries to take his own life in Rebecca's bedroom, but the detectives stop him and arrest him. While in jail awaiting trial, Stoddard is stabbed and killed by an inmate. That inmate turns out to be Robert Verloren, Rebecca's troubled father.

Grace Tanaka

Grace Tanaka was one of Rebecca Verloren's close friends just prior to her murder. Tanaka lives in the San Francisco area, where she works as a metal sculptor. Tanaka tells Bosch and Rider that she does not recognize Roland Mackey.



Muriel Verloren

Muriel Verloren is the mother of murder victim Rebecca Verloren. After her daughter's murder, Muriel closes off her daughter's room and leaves it virtually untouched for seventeen years. Muriel agrees to be interviewed and photographed for a newspaper article after Bosch convinces her that it will help catch Rebecca's killer.

Rebecca Verloren

Rebecca Verloren is a sixteen-year-old girl who was murdered in Chatsworth in 1988. The murder was poorly staged to resemble a suicide, but investigators discover that the girl was attacked with a stun gun before she was killed. The case remains unsolved for seventeen years, until a DNA match leads Open-Unsolved Unit detectives Bosch and Rider to re-examine the case. Rebecca is biracial, with a black father and a white mother, which leads the detectives to consider the possibility that her murder was racially motivated.

Robert Verloren

Robert Verloren is the father of Rebecca Verloren, who was taken from her home and murdered in 1988. Before his daughter's murder, Robert ran a successful Malibu restaurant; afterward, he leaves his wife and loses himself in alcoholism for many years. When Bosch finds him in L.A.'s homeless district, he is working as a breakfast cook for one of the city shelters. He later goes to jail under an alias and kills his daughter's killer.

Emmy Ward

Emmy Ward is a photographer for the *Daily News*. She is also McKenzie Ward's sister and accompanies McKenzie during her interviews with Commander Garcia and Muriel Verloren.

Mckenzie Ward

McKenzie Ward is a staff writer for the *Daily News*. She agrees to write an article about the Rebecca Verloren case that Bosch hopes will flush out Mackey and any accomplices he might have. In exchange, Ward is promised an exclusive story after the killer is apprehended.

Sam Weiss

Sam Weiss is the original owner of the Colt .45 pistol that was used to kill Rebecca Verloren. He originally bought the gun to protect himself from the Chatsworth Eights, who had been threatening him because he is Jewish. Although he believes the racist



gang members burglarized his home and stole the gun, none of them are prosecuted for the crime.

Tara Wood

Tara Wood was one of Rebecca Verloren's close friends just prior to her murder. She currently works as a publicist for CBS, and she seems more interested in having Bosch meet with writers from one of the network's police dramas than in solving Rebecca Verloren's murder.



Themes

Second Chances

In many ways, *The Closers* is a story about second chances. At the start of the novel, protagonist Harry Bosch is returning to the Los Angeles Police Department after three years in retirement. At first, he enjoys his free time after leaving the department, but he soon begins to walk with a limp. The reason, Bosch explains to his partner Kiz Rider, is because he cannot get used to walking without the weight of his gun on his side. As Bosch tells her, "The point is, I need the gun. I need the badge. Otherwise I'm out of balance." Thanks to his partner's lobbying on his behalf, Bosch gets his second chance as a detective. At the same time, Bosch—who originally left the department not because of the job itself, but because of the corruption and political intrigue within the department—is giving the LAPD a second chance. His longtime nemesis, Irvin S. Irving, is no longer in charge of the department, and the new police chief seems intent on cleaning up the mess Irving has left.

Bosch's first case after his return to the force is a second chance as well. At the start of the novel, a DNA match is found in a seventeen-year-old unsolved murder case. This "cold hit" represents a second chance to find Rebecca Verloren's murderer, and Bosch and Rider seize the opportunity. When Bosch searches for Rebecca's father, Robert, he discovers that Robert has been out of touch with regular society for many years, dwelling in the homeless district of downtown Los Angeles. He has only recently begun to recover from the devastating loss of his daughter; as he explains to Bosch, "What happened to me is that I tripped and fell into a black hole. Took me a long time to see the light and my way out." Both men's second chances involve the need to right past wrongs and to find the purpose in their lives.

Duality

In *The Closers*, Connelly uses the concept of duality as a visual and thematic motif throughout the book. Rebecca Verloren, for example, is a victim who is both black and white, both girl and woman. Before her death, her parents and friends view her as a girl, even though she is carrying on an affair with one of her teachers and has even had an abortion. Two detectives solve her case: a black woman who embraces modern investigative methods, and a white man who prefers old-school techniques. The character of Harry Bosch represents his own unique duality: Having returned to the police force after retiring years earlier, he is both a veteran and a rookie, or as the police chief calls him, "A boot—the oldest living boot at that."

Racism

In *The Closers*, the theme of racism is central to Bosch and Rider's investigation of the Rebecca Verloren case. As soon as they begin to research the DNA match from the



murder weapon, they suspect that race may have played a part in the murder. The suspect linked to the weapon, Roland Mackey, is a white supremacist, and because the victim was biracial, the connection seems plausible. While Mackey is under surveillance, Bosch—wearing temporary Nazi-themed tattoos—engages him in a racist dialogue to gain his trust. Connections between powerful men in the corridors of power and the white-supremacist group the Chatsworth Eights also come to light, if not as a motive in the Verloren murder, then at least as evidence of police corruption.

Style

Limited Omniscient Third-person Point of View

The Closers is written using third-person limited narrative, also known as limited omniscient narrative. This means that the story is told from an "all-knowing" or omniscient viewpoint, yet that knowledge is limited to the thoughts and feelings of one character. In *The Closers*, the reader is given access to Harry Bosch's thoughts and feelings, even though Bosch is not directly telling the story. Readers know this because the narrator refers to Bosch in the third person ("he") instead of the first person ("I"). The thoughts of other characters in the novel are only revealed through their words or behavior.

It is worth noting that Connelly has also written at least one of his Harry Bosch novels—*Lost Light* (2003)—as a first-person narrative from Bosch's viewpoint.

Police Procedural

The Closers is an example of a type of mystery novel known as a police procedural. A police procedural focuses on creating a realistic depiction of the inner workings of a police department or division. It follows a single officer throughout his or her entire working day, relating all job duties and conversations in detail. Police procedurals are often written by current or former police officers, because they require an intimate knowledge of the real-life methods and procedures used by police departments. Police procedurals frequently take place in large metropolitan areas such as New York, London, or Los Angeles, and often feature detectives as the main characters. The cast of a modern police procedural is often very large, which reflects the real-life interdependence between specialized departments—such as forensics, genetic matching, and ballistics analysis—that modern investigative techniques require. In addition, as police forces employ increasingly sophisticated techniques to solve crimes, police procedurals often contain passages that explain these techniques in terms easily understood by the reader.

In an effort to ground the story, some police procedurals reference real-world events and criminal cases related to the story or the setting of the novel. In *The Closers*, for example, the characters make reference to the riots that took place in Los Angeles in 1992, as well as barricades placed around Parker Center, headquarters for the Los Angeles Police Department, after the September 11 terrorist attack on New York City in 2001. Connelly also includes two characters in his book that are based on actual cold-case detectives who have helped the author with his research, Tim Marcia and Rick Jackson. Although meant to provide a realistic picture of modern police work, police procedurals often focus specifically on high-profile crimes such as murder, and usually downplay the significance of informants in solving crimes in the real world.

Historical Context

The Lapd Crash Unit and Rampart Scandal

In the early 1970s, the Los Angeles Police Department established a unit called Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums, or CRASH for short. The purpose of the unit was to combat the continuing increase in criminal gang activity in the inner-city areas of Los Angeles. During the 1980s, LAPD Police Chief Daryl Gates greatly expanded CRASH units as gang violence escalated in the area. Members of the community, who saw CRASH officers as eager to arrest without cause and equally eager to use violence to subdue suspects, often questioned the unit's tactics. In an interview for the PBS program *Frontline*, defense attorney Gerald Chaleff described members of the CRASH unit in this way: "They were some of the most, you could say, gung-ho or ambitious officers that wanted to get into this office, because it was highly prized, and they had freedom of movement and activity."

As conditions in inner-city neighborhoods worsened, the number of complaints about CRASH officers—particularly those working in the low-income areas overseen by the Rampart Division—continued to grow. As Chaleff put it, "Many people who would say that the CRASH unit in Rampart became just another gang, and that's how they dealt with things." In 1997 and 1998, a string of scandals rocked the Los Angeles Police Department: A white officer shot another off-duty officer (who was black) in an act of what was thought by many to be "road rage"; an officer named David Mack planned and executed the robbery of a Bank of America branch with the help of his girlfriend, who was the bank's assistant manager; and a member of the Rampart CRASH unit named Rafael Perez was caught after stealing six pounds of cocaine from the division's property room.

To minimize his sentence, Perez agreed to reveal other instances of corruption within the Rampart division. His most shocking story involved the shooting and framing for murder of an innocent man; the man, Javier Ovando, was eventually released from prison and was awarded \$15 million after suing the Los Angeles Police Department. Perez's testimony resulted in dozens of other overturned convictions. In 2000, police chief Bernard Parks shut down the CRASH program and replaced it with a new anti-gang unit.

In *The Closers*, Deputy Chief Irvin S. Irving is described as being the former head of the Public Disorder Unit, a secretive task force that dealt with gang violence and was seemingly overrun with corruption. In this way, Connelly's fictional Public Disorder Unit resembles the real-life CRASH unit.



Racial Tensions and the Los Angeles Riots

Throughout the 1980s, tensions between Los Angeles police officers and inner-city residents began to rise as special task forces—such as the CRASH unit—cracked down on gang activity with ever-harsher methods. In *Policing Gangs in America*, by Charles M. Katz and Vincent J. Webb, the authors describe the subculture that arose within the department among some officers assigned to anti-gang units:

The subculture was characterized by a mindset in which officers saw all young Hispanic and African American males as gang members, believing that any and all efforts to remove them from the community could and should be used.

In 1991, a bystander videotaped four LAPD officers beating and arresting a black man named Rodney King after he had reportedly led officers on a high-speed chase through the downtown area known as Lake View Terrace. The tape showed at least two officers repeatedly striking King with steel batons while he lay on the pavement. Afterward, one of the officers, Laurence Powell, sent the following transmission to fellow officers on his in-car computer: "I haven't beaten anyone this bad in a long time." The videotape of the beating was aired on local television news and was picked up by CNN and other national media venues. The four officers were put on trial for their conduct one year later. The trial, originally slated to be heard in Los Angeles County, was moved to nearby Ventura County—an area with far fewer minority citizens and a large community of current and former police officers—in an effort to secure a jury that had not been influenced by media exposure.

On April 29, 1992, three of the officers were acquitted. Jurors failed to reach a verdict on the fourth officer, Laurence Powell. Many Los Angeles citizens were outraged by the decision. Thousands took to the streets in protest; in the ensuing chaos, local businesses were looted and many citizens fell victim to random acts of violence. The riots lasted six days and resulted in more than fifty deaths and an estimated one billion dollars in damages.

The following year, the four LAPD officers were tried in federal court for violating King's civil rights. Two of the officers—one of them Powell—were found guilty, and were sentenced to thirty months in prison. King was eventually awarded a settlement for \$3.8 million over the incident, which also led to a comprehensive investigation into the Los Angeles Police Department's treatment of racial minorities.

Critical Overview

When *The Closers* was published in 2005, Michael Connelly's reputation as a best-selling novelist was already well established. In fact, *The Closers* is Connelly's eleventh novel featuring detective Harry Bosch. In Connelly's two previous Bosch novels, *Lost Light* (2003) and *The Narrows* (2004), the author had steered away from police procedural toward more conventional detective stories as his main character retired from the police force and opened his own detective agency. With *The Closers*, Connelly had already developed reader expectations with his previous books, and most reviewers judged the book not simply as a standalone novel but within the context of the entire Harry Bosch series.

In a review for the *Miami Herald*, Connie Ogle stated that Connelly "provides what is essentially a clinic on how to keep a series compelling." She also noted, "In addition to being a fascinating mystery, *The Closers* is a profoundly moving story about the importance of finding and recommitting yourself to a purpose, no matter who or what you are." Janet Maslin, writing for the *New York Times*, seemed pleased that Connelly has returned Bosch to his element, observing that "this book's Harry sticks to his knitting and delivers a sharp, straightforward police procedural." Maslin also complimented Connelly for his ability "to make his doomy, secretive Los Angeles a living, breathing character in his stories." Marilyn Stasio, also writing for the *New York Times*, proclaimed that with this novel, "Connelly artfully reclaims the procedural genre." Stasio in particular noted that "the technical drill in this narrative is as detailed as it gets."

Other critics have declared that *The Closers* is not just a well-done police procedural, but a well-done novel. Bill Ott, in a review for *Booklist*, wrote, "Connelly sets up a great premise ... and he makes the most of it." An unnamed reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* wrote, "In Connelly/Bosch's world, character, context and procedure are what count, and once again the author proves a master at all." The reviewer also credited the author for infusing the novel with "astonishing moral force," and concluded with this assessment:

Connelly comes as close as anyone to being today's Dostoyevsky of crime literature, and this is one of his finest novels to date, a likely candidate not only for book award nominations but for major bestsellerdom.

In contrast, Jennifer Reese of *Entertainment Weekly*, in a rare, somewhat negative review of the novel, referred to the book as a "workmanlike thriller" and "another one of Connelly's circuitous trips through the streets and subcultures of contemporary Los Angeles." Reese finally declared, "this plodding expedition never really takes off." If sales are any indication, however, readers agreed with the critical majority: *The Closers* debuted at number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was a 2005 Quill Award nominee.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2



Critical Essay #1

*In this essay, pop-culture writer Greg Wilson examines Connelly's use of race in *The Closers* and argues that it fails to live up to its promises.*

In *The Closers*, Michael Connelly offers fans their tenth novel focusing on the exploits of Detective Hieronymus "Harry" Bosch. This time around, Bosch is working in the Open-Unsolved Unit of the LAPD, trying to crack the case of a sixteen-year-old girl murdered seventeen years before. The more closely Bosch examines the case, the more he is convinced—and therefore convinces the reader—that race played an important part in the murder. For all his intimations about racial issues in *The Closers*, however, Connelly never makes them an important part of the book. They are merely sensationalistic window dressing used to promise the reader more than the author delivers.

Early on, Bosch remarks to partner Kiz Rider that he likes his coffee "black, just like I like my partners." The line, aside from being a not-so-funny rehash of a line so clichéd it was used as a gag in the 1980 movie *Airplane*, is clearly meant for a single utilitarian purpose: It informs readers who might be recent comers to Connelly's Bosch series—as well as longtime readers who might have forgotten—that Rider is black. Rider's response, however, provides the author with the perfect opportunity to show the reader how the force has changed since Bosch's retirement. She makes a lighthearted threat about writing Bosch up for the comment, which might be seen as an indication of the new leadership at the Los Angeles Police Department. The reader has already learned that the new police chief, with whom Rider has been working closely, is intent on clearing out all the old traces of corruption and impropriety on the force. Although Rider is clearly joking with her comment, it suggests an environment far different from the one Bosch left years earlier; it suggests a sensitivity to racial issues so heightened that the mere mention of an officer's race might be considered offensive.

This vision of a new LAPD contrasts elegantly with Connelly's later revelations about the now-disbanded Public Disorder Unit, an insular task force that dealt with race- and gang-related issues in the years before the Los Angeles Riots in 1992. After speaking with Robert Verloren, the black father of biracial murder victim Rebecca Verloren, Bosch believes that the Public Disorder Unit pressured the original investigators into avoiding any possible racial angle with regard to the murder. This, along with the DNA recovered from the weapon—belonging to a former member of a white supremacist gang—convinces Bosch that race played a key part in the murder and that the Public Disorder Unit was instrumental in obstructing the investigation. This fits well with Bosch's view of the old LAPD, overrun with corruption and insensitive to issues of race, oblivious to the rising tensions that would lead to inner-city riots just a few years later.

Unfortunately, this elegant contrast is undermined by the tone of the rest of the novel. If the force were indeed new and improved with regard to racial sensitivity, for example, how could an officer—Kiz Rider, of all people—refer to a detective team consisting of one Asian American and one Hispanic American as "Rice and Beans"? It seems so much worse that the reference is made in such a matter-of-fact tone, without humor or



affection or even disdain. It is simply accepted that detectives Choi and Ortega are universally known as Rice and Beans, and indeed, Bosch immediately recognizes them by their nicknames. Whether or not the reader considers the monikers offensive is beside the point. By putting those words in the mouth of the one character who seems most in touch with the "new order" of the LAPD, a character who also happens to be an African American woman, Connelly invalidates the notion that the force's racial sensitivity has really improved much at all.

Within the Rebecca Verloren investigation, the issue of race is placed center stage after the aforementioned DNA match is made. At first, Bosch does not even realize that the victim is biracial. He only discovers this after seeing a picture of both of her parents at graveside during her funeral service. Once he does, though, Bosch decides that this explains the daughter's "exotically attractive" appearance. This leads him to the theory that Mackey, who by all accounts did not know Rebecca Verloren, saw her somewhere and was able to tell that she was the product of a mixed-race relationship, and for that reason, targeted her for attack by the racist terror squad known as the Chatsworth Eights. (This, of course, would grant Mackey powers of observation that exceeded the abilities of a seasoned detective.)

Bosch's conversation with Rebecca's father, Robert, only further convinces Bosch that the murder has a racial component not yet investigated. Robert tells Bosch that when he asked investigators if they had looked into the possibility that the killing was racially motivated, he was threatened into silence—an posture for which he has never forgiven himself. This makes the race angle resonate that much more deeply, since Robert originally had the same hunch as Bosch but allowed himself to be intimidated by two white police officers.

Connelly even gives the reader an up-close view of the ugliness of Roland Mackey's racism through an elaborate and downright theatrical setup Bosch orchestrates. The detective has a makeup artist friend draw neo-Nazi symbols on his neck and arm, and he poses as a customer in need of a tow truck to get some time alone with Mackey. His ultimate goal is simply to let Mackey know that an article about the Verloren case has just appeared in the local paper, and to leave said newspaper behind with the hope that he will read it. (It bears mentioning that the detectives know Mackey is functionally illiterate, and yet, even though he spends hours of his work shifts watching television, none of the detectives ever brings up the idea of planting a news story on the local television news.) During Bosch's ride with Mackey, readers learn not only that Mackey's racist attitudes are as strong as ever, but also that he is not afraid to act on his anger toward minorities. While driving, Mackey cuts off an Asian American driving a Pinto and screams obscenities at him simply because the man is not white.

Of course, in a mystery novel, it would be silly to offer so much circumstantial evidence against a suspect unless he really is *not* the killer. Inevitably, Mackey meets his end at the hands of the real killer, and Bosch and company are left re-examining old evidence in search of a new theory. They ultimately discover that race had absolutely nothing to do with the killings. Rebecca had been engaging in an affair with one of her teachers at the private school she attended, and after she ended the relationship, he ended her life.

This is a sadly plausible solution to the case, and it is likely to surprise the reader. However, as realistic and unexpected as this solution may be, it is a total violation of the spirit of the book. It is nothing more than a "Gotcha!" pulled on the unsuspecting reader at the expense of offering a more meaningful story.

Because the majority of the book deliberately suggests to the reader that race is an important part of Rebecca Verloren's murder, Connelly fails to deliver by entirely removing the issue of race from the last several chapters. This might well be exactly how such a case would play out in real life, but real life seldom makes for great novels without some substantial reshaping. Instead of offering a viable suspect as a red herring, Connelly has instead used the entire issue of race as a red herring. This renders nearly everything that happens in the first three-fourths of the book utterly meaningless. If this were the point of the book—to deconstruct the traditional components of a detective novel to make some greater point—then perhaps an argument could be made in its favor. However, the novel is clearly intended as a conventional detective story. As it is, the effect is unfortunate: It merely supports the elitist notion that genre fiction is in an entirely different class than "real" literature, and that books written as entertainment need not aspire to any higher aims.

The real crime in *The Closers*—Rebecca Verloren's murder notwithstanding—is that Connelly offers such a fertile premise yet fails to follow through. He sets a dining table fit for a feast, but, instead of offering the reader something substantial, he simply yanks the cloth out from under his own creation as a parlor trick.

Source: Greg Wilson, Critical Essay on *The Closers*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.



Critical Essay #2

*In the following essay, Connelly "interviews" his character Harry Bosch, the Los Angeles police detective at work in several of his novels, including *The Closers*.*

The following interview between Michael Connelly and Harry Bosch took place on March 25, 2005 in a Hollywood Boulevard cyber café called the Frontal Lobe. As is Bosch's usual practice, he insisted that the interview be taped, transcribed and presented without editing.

3/25/05 1:21 p.m.

Connelly: Okay, we're recording.

Bosch: This is the same place you interviewed me in last time, isn't it?

Connelly: Yeah, I think so. About three years ago. Why? You don't like it?

Bosch: I don't know. All these computers ... sort of makes me feel like General Custer at the last stand or something.

Connelly: Surrounded by the enemy, huh?

Bosch: It's just not my style, I guess.

Connelly: Well, we don't have to do it here. You want to go to Musso's? We could walk over there.

Bosch: No, you don't go to Musso's for coffee. And it's too early for a martini.

Connelly: Especially now that you are back on the force. You have that responsibility that comes with carrying a badge again.

Bosch: Something like that.

Connelly: That's what I wanted to get into. You left the department three years ago—in fact, that's what we talked about last time. But now you are back. How and why?

The Black Echo (1992) is Michael Connelly's first Harry Bosch novel, and it earned the author an Edgar Award. In the book, Harry Bosch recognizes a dead body found in a drainage pipe as one of his old comrades from a tour in Vietnam; he soon discovers that the man was also a suspected bank robber, and that there is more to the case than just robbery.

In *The Poet* (1996), Connelly offers the reader an entirely new viewpoint character: Denver crime journalist Jack McEvoy, who suspects that his twin brother's apparent suicide was actually part of a serial killer's twisted pattern. Although the novel does not



feature Harry Bosch, its sequel, *The Narrows*, draws Bosch into the ongoing mystery surrounding the killer known as "the Poet."

Resurrection Men: An Inspector Rebus Novel, by Ian Rankin (2003), offers a Scottish take on the police procedural genre. Rebus, a detective in Edinburgh, is given a second chance at his career after he throws a cup of tea at one of his superiors. Attending a rehabilitation class with other "resurrection men," Rebus uncovers corruption on the force.

The Big Sleep, by Raymond Chandler (1939), is the first novel-length work by the author Connelly has cited as one of his greatest literary heroes. The book, which is a notoriously complex tale of blackmail and murder, also introduces readers to Philip Marlowe—widely recognized as one of the greatest fictional detectives of all time.

Bosch: The how is the easy part. The department has a policy of hiring detectives back if it is within three years of retirement. I was sort of reminded of it at the right moment and I applied for reinstatement. Here I am.

Connelly: And the why?

Bosch: That's a little complicated and hard to put into words.

Connelly: I heard that you told your partner that you started limping and you realized you were out of balance because you weren't used to walking without a gun on your hip.

Bosch: I did say that but that was probably because I couldn't put the answer into the right words.

Connelly: What about now?

Bosch: Well, if you start with the belief that I have a certain talent and purpose in this life, then you see that by going back to the department I put myself in a position to make the best of both. What I am saying is that I made a mistake when I retired. I left Hollywood Division after a particularly difficult and frustrating case. I walked out with a box of files from open cases and I thought I would spend the rest of my days working on them and I would be satisfied.

Connelly: I think I understand. Did you—

Bosch: Actually, satisfied is the wrong word. Did you ever see that movie *Ride the High Country*? It's one of Peckinpah's first flicks—I mean I think it was—and anyway at one point the main character says that all he wanted out of life was to be able to come home justified. That's not the direct quote. I can't remember the direct quote. But that's what he was saying. At the end of the day, he wanted to walk through the front door justified.

Connelly: So what you are saying is that you want to be justified ...



Bosch: Yeah, every man and woman wants to be justified in how they live and what they do and in what they believe. And I wasn't feeling that anymore. I solved a few of those cases I took home with me when I walked out but I didn't feel justified in what I was doing. You see, I told you, it's hard to explain.

Connelly: Justified ...

Bosch: Yeah ...

Connelly: When did you see this movie?

Bosch: Oh, way back. That was the Sanctuary.

Connelly: Sanctuary? What is that?

Bosch: It was a military hospital boat. I was on it in the South China Sea. This is like thirty-five years ago. I got wounded in a tunnel in Cu Chi and I was on the Sanctuary for about three weeks recovering. They showed movies almost every night out on the deck. They'd put up a screen and turn on the projector. It was mostly stuff that was a few years old, at least. And that's when I saw *Ride the High Country*. That line about being justified, a lot of us on that boat took it to heart.

Connelly: So your life is about being justified and that's what brought you back to the force.

Bosch: My life is about a lot of things, just like with anybody else. But I found that when I quit the force and was working cases on my own that I was still missing something.

Connelly: Well, you said that you solved a few cases while you were retired. Didn't you feel justified in that?

Bosch: I did but it wasn't the same. I felt like I was doing it for myself, like I was putting myself ahead of the mission.

Connelly: I don't understand.

Bosch: That's what I am telling you. It is hard to understand. I'm not sure I understand it myself. All I know is that I was working cases without a badge and it somehow seemed selfish. I was being self-indulgent. I felt like the boy who takes his football home with him because he's not getting enough passes. He takes the ball home with him and it ruins the game for everybody. Working cases from home wasn't the best use of my ...

Connelly: Skills?

Bosch: Sort of, but I'm not sure what the word is.

Connelly: Talent?

Bosch: No, not that.



Connelly: Your purpose?

Bosch: Yeah, that comes closest. My purpose. I know I have a purpose or a mission—and I know that sounds weird to say out loud. In fact, I don't think I ever have before. But I have thought about it. Thought about it a lot. I have a mission in this life. A purpose. And I realized that I wasn't serving that purpose by chucking the badge and going home with my box of files. If I was going to honor the purpose and continue the mission, I had to get back inside. And just as I was thinking about all of this a perfect opportunity came up.

Connelly: Which was the Open-Unsolved Unit?

Bosch: Exactly. There was a slot in OU and once I got there I knew I was in the right place at the right time.

Connelly: Tell me about the unit.

Bosch: We're the closers. We close the cases nobody has been able to. The police chief and the guy who runs the unit think it's the most important place to be in the department. Because it's the place where we don't forget. A city that forgets its victims isn't a city anymore. It's a place that's lost. That's what they say.

Connelly: And you believe it?

Bosch: I do.

Connelly: Well, what makes the people on this squad so special?

Bosch: Nothing other than that we all recognize the mission. But the secret to our success is not that. It's usually science. We use forensic techniques not available back in the day that these crimes were committed and investigated.

Connelly: So it's that techniques and technology have improved. It's not that you are making up for incompetence in previous investigations.

Bosch: I am not going to get into criticizing former or fellow detectives. Besides, coming back as a retread I am on one year's probation. The Chief can fire me without cause during probation. I don't want to say something in an interview that might make him exercise that option.

Connelly: Did you just say 'retread'?

Bosch: That's what they call the detectives that come back after retirement.

Connelly: That's really endearing, isn't it. They must love you guys.

Bosch: I never thought of it that way.



Connelly: Okay. Let's talk about the investigations. They must be different than conducting the investigation of a contemporary murder. You know, something that is brand new.

Bosch: We call them fresh kills. And in Open-Unsolved we work old kills. Cold cases, as they used to be called, before the Chief said he didn't like that term because cases should never go cold in the LAPD.

Connelly: Sounds like a good public relations stunt. You don't like something, just rename it so it doesn't offend you anymore.

Bosch: No comment.

Connelly: Right, you're on probation.

Bosch: You got it.

Connelly: So how are the cases different?

Bosch: Well, two things really. One is you are dealing with cold trails—places and people who have changed over time. People move on. Crimes scenes get paved over. So you really have to dig harder. And the people involved are different, too. With a fresh kill you are taking and breaking the news to the family. With an old case you are seeing the long term effects that an untimely and usually violent death has on individuals and families. I'm still new at it but I think that aspect will be the single toughest burden to carry. I can tell that I get attached to these cases much more than anything before.

Connelly: So do you think you are going to stick around this time?

Bosch: As long as they'll let me.

Connelly: And how do you feel at the end of the day when you come in through your front door?

Bosch: Like I'm riding the high country.

Connelly: Are you justified?

Bosch: Yes, I am justified.

Connelly: Good. I'm glad. And I think that's it for now. I'll turn the tape off. See you next ti

—

End of tape.

Source: Michael Connelly, "Michael Connelly 'Interviews' Harry Bosch," in *MichaelConnelly.com*, March 25, 2005.



Topics for Further Study

- In *The Closers*, detectives Harry Bosch and Kiz Rider work in LAPD's Open-Unsolved Unit to solve a seventeen-year-old murder. Such cases are often referred to as "cold cases," because the investigative trail has stalled and been abandoned. Despite recent breakthroughs in investigative techniques such as DNA matching, these cases are often very difficult to solve, and some believe that cold-case investigators would be better utilized investigating more recent crimes. Do you believe that a police force should devote its resources to attempting to solve cold cases? Or should police concentrate only on recent crimes that stand a much better chance of being solved? Write an essay stating your view, and support your position with reasons and examples.
- In *The Closers*, the detectives who work for the Open-Unsolved Unit rely on a variety of specialists to analyze different kinds of crime scene evidence. The same is true for real-life detectives. For example, a genetic technician might compare DNA samples to look for a match, while an accident investigator might look at skid marks and vehicle damage to determine the cause of a car accident. Research one specialized branch of modern criminal investigation—hair and fiber analysis, for example. Write a report describing its history, and provide at least one real-life example where a specialist from your chosen discipline provided information crucial to solving a case.
- In *The Closers*, when Harry Bosch returns to police work years after retiring, he tells his partner his reason for returning: "The point is, I need the gun. I need the badge. Otherwise I'm out of balance." Think about a hobby or habit that you particularly enjoy. If you were no longer able to do it, would you feel "out of balance" like Bosch? What would you do instead? Write an essay describing why this particular endeavor is so important to you, using examples from your own experience to share your perspective.
- Research a crime that has gone unsolved. It could be an infamous murder or string of murders, such as the Jack the Ripper killings, or perhaps a bank robbery where the thieves escaped with the money. Write a report detailing the facts of the case as they are known. Be sure to include any plausible theories or speculation about the real identity of the perpetrator.
- Have different group members read different, earlier titles of Connelly's Harry Bosch novels, such as *The Black Echo* (1992) or *The Concrete Blonde* (1994), and prepare a character study of the protagonist and present their findings. As a group, discuss the development of Harry Bosch as a character, focusing in particular on the ways he evolves through the series, as well as the immutable traits that define him as a personality.

Further Study

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In this book, anthropologist Barker documents over two decades of fieldwork studying Los Angeles police officers in their element. She paints a detailed picture not only of the structure and environment that LAPD officers inhabit, but also of the ways in which these elements shape an officer's behavior and attitudes.

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Through extensive interviews with white supremacists, this book provides an in-depth look at their beliefs and attitudes without condemning or condoning those involved. The authors simply seek to understand why such people think the way they do and to share that understanding with the reader.

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This book, a companion to the A&E television series *Cold Case Files*, provides detailed information about numerous cold cases and the modern investigative techniques that have helped solve them.



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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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