Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta Study Guide

Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta by Reetika Vazirani

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta Study Guide....1

Contents....2

Introduction....3

Author Biography....4

Plot Summary....5

Themes....8

Style....10

Historical Context....12

Critical Overview....14

Criticism....15

Critical Essay #1....16

Critical Essay #2....19

Critical Essay #3....22

Topics for Further Study....25

What Do I Read Next?....26

Further Study....27

Bibliography....28

Copyright Information....29

Introduction

Reetika Vazirani's poem □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ focuses on a mother figure, very possibly the poet's own mother. Indeed, Vazirani used the name Maya to denote her mother in previous poems. This poem was written before the poet conceived her son, which supports the assumption that she describes her own mother, who had given birth to a son and several daughters and was a widow, as is the speaker in the poem. No matter to whom the poet refers, the speaker is a mother, recounting her life experiences.

The poem makes allusions to Indian culture that are easily related to any society. Motherhood, after all, is a human condition. The love shown for the mother and the mother's reciprocal pride in her offspring can be understood no matter what part of the world the reader is from. Sadness underlies the images, such as mention of prejudice brought on by the dark skin color of the mother and her children. The sadness is concealed, however, by a happiness expressed through love, gifts given, and the bright colors of the silken sarongs.

□Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ was first published in *Prairie Schooner* in 1998. It was reprinted in *The 2000 Pushcart Prize Anthology*, *The New American Poets* (2000), and Vazirani's second book of poetry, *World Hotel* (2002).

Author Biography

Nationality 1: Indian

Nationality 2: American

Birthdate: 1962

Deathdate: 2003

Reetika Vazirani was a prize-winning poet who died tragically at the age of forty. In 2003, the year Vazirani died, the second of her two collections, *World Hotel* (2002), in which the poem "Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta" appears, received the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award. Vazirani was born in Patiala, Punjab, India on August 9, 1962, but her parents immigrated to the United States in 1968. She grew up in Maryland and, as a child, took ballet lessons and ran on her high school track team. Vazirani attended Wellesley College for her undergraduate degree and then the University of Virginia, where she earned a master of fine arts degree. After graduate school, Vazirani taught creative writing at various schools, including the University of Virginia, Sweet Briar College, and the University of Oregon.

Vazirani's father had wanted his daughter to become a physician, but Vazirani found that her passions pulled her toward the written word. Once she latched on to poetry, Vazirani focused on improving her skills, getting her work published, and gaining the notice of a literary audience. She began to realize her goals and supported herself through teaching. Vazirani's first poetry collection, *White Elephants* (1996), was honored with the Barnard New Women Poets Prize. Vazirani led a somewhat typical middle-class life, but she seemed troubled. Many of her poems deal with the topic of otherness, as if she felt that she was part of no particular group with which she could identify, either in her adopted land or the country of her parents.

When Vazirani was eleven years old, her father committed suicide. Paula Span notes in "The Failing Light" that in 2003, Vazirani wrote a letter to the poet Rita Dove, her former teacher, telling Dove: "I have been desperate, silent, silenced, alone, hungry, angry, and crushed." Vazirani used these words to describe her experiences of pregnancy and motherhood and her relationship with the father of her son, the poet Yusef Komunyakaa. Although Komunyakaa supported the boy, he and Vazirani never married and lived together only a short time. They were estranged at the time of Vazirani's death, but it is unclear whether the estrangement was the cause of Vazirani's depression. On July 18, 2003, a friend found the bodies of Vazirani and her two-year-old son on the dining room floor of the house in Washington, D.C., in which Vazirani was temporarily living. Both the child and the poet had stab wounds. Telephone messages and notes were later found, indicating that Vazirani had killed her son and herself.

Plot Summary

Stanza 1

□Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ begins by making reference to a pattern in which one's mind can become stuck, in this instance, repeating the scenes of mistakes. The first line moves, without punctuation, into the second, □the revolving door of days.□ The imagined door turns around and around, replaying and cycling through errors over and over again. The feeling is not pleasant, but line 3 announces, □Now it's over,□ suggesting relief. In line 4, the speaker says, □There's no one point thank god in the turning world.□ Perhaps the speaker has not been caught in the trap of revolving doors, or errors. She was not stuck; she was □always moving.□ □Always moving□ was sometimes tiring but also pleasant; the speaker says that she was also □laughing.□

Despite the laughter, the circumstances of the speaker's life have been difficult: she is a □widow.□ The word □widow□ is associated in the next line with the word □freedom,□ which is an unusual interpretation of matters. After mentioning her freedom, the speaker brings in the image of □*Vidua paradisea*,□ a small bird. The Latin name of this brownish finch translates to □paradise widow.□ This particular bird is often used as a pet, a caged bird, so the image is perhaps contradictory. It seems as though the speaker, as a widow, experiences a thwarted or restricted freedom. Perhaps in this metaphor the speaker is pointing out that the loss of a husband is difficult to endure but that there is a measure of freedom to be found in her new life and even pleasures to be enjoyed. Maybe the speaker felt like a caged bird when she was married but has been released in her widowhood. In lines 10 and 11, the speaker is flying free and happy □singly.□

The speaker states that happiness was her □giraffe,□ an animal native to Africa. Happiness is linked here to the □face of Africa.□ The speaker may be remembering an experience of visiting Africa, a place where she found happiness. In lines 13 through 15, the mother ponders her children, remembering being pregnant with them, and speaks of □glamour days.□ This indicates a time of ease, when the mother had time to think of herself as a woman, to relax and read women's fashion magazines, such as *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*. In line 18, the speaker states, □We have made this world□; she follows with the word □brown□ in line 19. Stopping at □world□ suggests that the speaker feels that she and her children have made this world, possibly her personal world. Connecting □world□ to □brown□ in the sentence □We have made this world / brown□ may be a reference to brown skin, linking back to Africa. A third interpretation could be that beautiful brown women have made the world or, more specifically, that they have made the world of glamour magazines □brown.□ As the stanza continues, these women are both □laughing□ and crying as they share their chores as well as their emotions. There is a sense of a closely knit family of □brown women.□

The location of the references in lines 21 through 23 of the poem is unclear: □In hotels men asked my girls to fetch them towels / In restaurants they asked us for bread.□ In any case, the speaker's □girls□ are described as servants. There is irony in the last line

of the stanza: □Today I'm a civil servant on the Hill,□ perhaps a reference to Capitol Hill, where the affairs of government are conducted. The speaker works for the government but is still called a servant, albeit a civil servant. There seems to be an implied correspondence of race and the servant class. A servant is typically a lowly position, relegated to those who lack status. Servants are often immigrants and people of color.

Stanza 2

□From the mall□ at the beginning of stanza 2 may be a play on words. □Mall□ could mean a shopping mall or the National Mall, which is the strip of land between the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument, in Washington, D.C. From the □mall,□ the speaker's children bring her □colorful sarongs,□ or Asian garments. A list follows of gifts given to certain females, perhaps the speaker's children. Someone named Mina receives pearls, Tara a purse, and Lata □lime shoes.□ These are not ordinary gifts; they are of exquisite and unusual quality. Mikimoto pearls are world renowned, and □Paloma□ could imply that the purse is one from the collection of the designer Paloma Picasso. □Devi□ does not receive a gift but rather gives the speaker □her eclectic lit eyes / the glamour of our wilder regions.□ The coupling of □eclectic□ with □glamour□ suggests that Devi is a heterogeneous and exotic blend of foreign elements. Perhaps Devi herself is the richest gift.

The last two lines of stanza 2 take the reader to India. The line □Bombay weavers on the twenty-four-hour looms□ conjures images of long, tedious hours spent laboring. The next line suggests a comparison between India and the United States: □Shocking pink is the navy of India.□ In India, shocking pink may be as ordinary as navy blue is in the United States, especially on Capitol Hill. □Shocking pink□ also may refer to the □wilder regions□ of line 31 of the poem. The United States can be seen as dull and confined compared with India.

Stanza 3

The beginning of stanza 3 is similar to that of stanza 1 in that the speaker is inside her mind again, listening. She may be listening to memories: □my mind is a trip / . . . I flew over oceans / I flew in the face of skies.□ It is as if the speaker is remembering leaving India, □orienting my loss of caste in a molting nation / my dark complexion.□ In Hindu India, dark-complexioned people tend to be of the lower castes. The speaker may be thinking that her dark skin will no longer make a difference in her new home. In the lines □The folly of envy / wishing all my life to be fair,□ the word □fair□ may mean light coloring as opposed to dark coloring, but it also may suggest the unfairness of caste systems and discrimination. The line □My jealous god leaves□ may imply that in leaving India behind, along with her envy of those with lighter skin, the speaker has also left behind her jealousy.

The end of stanza 3 returns to the theme of motherhood. The speaker says: □*Hello son this is your mother* □ as if she has been separated from him for a while and is now returning. Lines 45 and 46 read as if the speaker has brought gifts of □*maroon saris* □ and □*maroon bras* □ for her daughters. The speaker then seems to look around and take in the beauty and blessedness of her children. She is proud of them, and when she is with them (□*When you gather around me* □), the speaker feels as if the world has renewed itself.

Themes

Discrimination

The theme of discrimination is clear in □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta.□ The speaker and her daughters are mistaken for, or assumed to be, servants in the restaurants and hotels they visit, rather than being acknowledged as equals of the other patrons. It is because of their brown skin, the poem implies, that this discrimination occurs. Another undercurrent of discrimination occurs in line 23 of stanza 1, which immediately follows the telling of the hotel and restaurant experiences: □Today I'm a civil servant on the Hill.□ Although discrimination is not overtly stated in this line, its association with the previous statements of discrimination suggests that the speaker is giving another example of being perceived as having a lower status. The word □servant□ is closely related to what the men in the hotels assume the women to be. There is also irony in the last line of stanza 1. A civil servant earns a good living and is respected. Nonetheless, a servant is a servant, especially on Capitol Hill, where the power is retained by the senators, representatives, lawyers, and lobbyists. A civil servant is fairly low on the ladder of success in that environment. A servant's role is to serve, much as the workers who bring bread in a restaurant and towels in a hotel.

Discrimination is also present in the mention of caste, the strict categorization of status according to one's birth in Hindu India. Dark complexions are discriminated against both in India and in the United States, two locations implied in this poem. Emphasizing discrimination based on skin color comes through in the speaker's comment that she is □wishing all my life to be fair□ and the mention of her jealousy, which is assumed to be roused by lighter-skinned women. The theme of discrimination is played against the mother's love. Discrimination would seem to make one's life miserable, but the speaker has days of laughing and happiness, which appear to be based on her love of her children.

Mother's Love

The love of the speaker for her children is the dominant theme of □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta.□ Despite hardship, such as discrimination and the loss of her husband, the speaker has found joy in life. When the speaker mentions her children, as adults, as children, or even still in her womb, the images are filled with a sense of completion and pride. □I am proud to have borne you,□ the speaker says. Despite all her trials, the moving, and the insults, no one can take away from her the love of her children. She shares laughing with them, the giving and receiving of gifts. When they □gather around me,□ the speaker states, □newness comes into the world.□ Her world is made fresh in simply looking at her children and being in their presence.

In writing of mother's love, the poet is showing her own love of her mother. The reader can feel this love come through the speaker, even though the speaker represents the

poet's mother. That is why the title of the poem includes a reference to □daughter.□ The daughter, the poet, pays tribute to her mother's strengths and unselfish compassion for her children through the poem.

Freedom

Images of freedom are woven through □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ in subtle ways. □Now it's over,□ the speaker states in line 3 of stanza 1. There is a release of some kind, possibly from the replaying of errors mentioned in line 1. In line 4, the speaker thanks god, not as a prayer but as an interjection. It is an appeal or an announcement of gratitude. The verb □flew□ in line 10 of stanza 1 is another symbol of freedom. The speaker flies like the □*Vidua paradisea*,□ the widow of paradise. Despite her difficulties, the speaker states that she □was always moving,□ another symbol of freedom. Even though the terrain was restricted, the speaker was not trapped. There is also mention of □glamour days.□ To be able to dwell on glamour, a woman has to have an excess of time, which is related to freedom. The woman is not tied to drudgery. The word □glamour□ is repeated in □the glamour of our wilder regions,□ which gives the sense of freedom in the wild, an untying from the strings of society. In stanza 3, the speaker states, □My jealous god leaves.□ With this subtle reference to a type of freedom, the speaker has no need for envy. Her mind is free of this disabling emotion. The theme of freedom, like the theme of mother's love, plays in opposition to the theme of discrimination. One sets off the other, making each stand out more emphatically.

Style

Metaphor

In □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ the poet makes consistent use of metaphor, a comparison of two unlike things in which the essence of one is identified with the qualities of the other. In stanza 1, she refers to □the revolving door of days.□ A revolving door has a circular motion, similar to the circling of the rising and setting sun. The metaphor suggests an element of sameness. One day resembles another, as a revolving door passes again and again through the same space. In the same stanza, the poet writes, □To be a widow is an old / freedom.□ This is not the usual interpretation of widowhood. Rather than coloring widowhood as completely sorrowful, the poet suggests that there is something liberating about it. Metaphors offer readers images that enhance the meaning of words and give the imagination a picture with which to work in trying to understand the meaning or the emotions that underlie a poem.

Free Verse

In free verse, the poet is not restricted to traditional rules of poetry that dictate that lines must have a rhyme scheme or meter or be of a consistent length. □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ has lines and stanzas of varying lengths, and there are no apparent rhymes. The poetic devices of metaphor and enjambment are used, however, and attention is paid to the overall rhythmic beat of syllables. Although the beat is not consistent throughout the poem, there are lines that mimic one another in the number of beats. These techniques distinguish a free-verse poem from prose.

Enjambment

The term *enjambment* can be traced to a French word meaning □to straddle.□ Some poetic lines purposely do just that: their sense straddles two lines. A poet might use enjambment for emphasis, for ambiguity, or to maintain an established rhythm. In □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ enjambment occurs in lines 18 and 19, □We have made this world / brown women.□ Enjambment leaves room for interpretation. Readers might ask whether the poet means □We have made this world brown, women.□ Or perhaps she means □We have made this world, brown women.□ The enjambment makes readers stop and contemplate the various possible meanings, taking from the poem a meaning of their own.

Italicized Words

In several spots, the poet has used italics. In line 9, for instance, the speaker mentions a certain type of finch, giving its Latin (or scientific) name. The name, *Vidua paradisea*, recalls her mother's widowed state, suggesting that perhaps the caged bird has been

freed. In lines 17 and 18, the poet lists the names of certain fashion magazines that she read in her □glamour days,□ making those days come alive again. The final lines of the poem are also italicized, implying that the mother is talking aloud to her children. Previously the mother seems to have been speaking to herself or to the reader. In these last lines, there is a heightened sense of the human voice, one filled with love and pride for the children.

Punctuation

There is no punctuation in this poem, although the poet occasionally uses capitalization to suggest where new sentences begin. This gives the poem a feeling of freedom, like flowing water or moving air. The technique also places importance on the ends of each line, as that is the only clear definition of some kind of stop. This lack of punctuation, especially when combined with the dashes used in the title, lends a sense of unity or a connectedness to all the words and to all the lines of the poem, as if the poem were one long sentence, a sentence that never ends.

Historical Context

Multicultural Poetry

Being immersed in a new culture can give immigrants important and distinct points of view, especially if the language of their home differs from that of their adopted country. Learning a new language often forces a person to think in different ways, because language is more than just words. Language helps shape the way a person sees, understands, and explains the world. Having come to live in a new culture, an immigrant also has the advantage of comparison. What does the new culture have that the original culture does not and vice versa? In the assimilation process, immigrants decide, either consciously or subconsciously, how to change to fit in and what elements of their heritage to retain.

Since the 1960s, a growing awareness of multiculturalism (which was brought to the forefront of intellectual discussions through the Civil Rights movement) has resulted in a demand for a wider selection of published works by ethnically diverse authors. Publishers have responded with works by individual authors as well as collections of the works of immigrant poets, telling of their challenges and celebrations in assimilating to a new life. The voices of Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and others from the original immigrant generation through second and third generations are being heard in all genres, including poetry. Courses on multicultural poetry are abundant on most college campuses, as are websites devoted to promoting multicultural poetry and literature.

Indian Castes and Culture

In □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ the poet uses the phrase □orienting my loss of caste,□ referring to the caste system prevalent in the Hindu communities of India. Some people in India believe that the caste system is for the best because it helps maintain social order, but the caste system also can be experienced as extreme segregation and discrimination, with which many people in the United States are familiar.

There are thousands of castes in Hindu India, which fall into four main categories. The Brahmin caste consists of priests and spiritual teachers. The Kshatriya includes rulers, warriors, and landowners. The Vaishya caste is made up of merchants. The Shudra caste comprises artisans and farmers. Persons belonging to the Dalit group, a fifth category, typically work in jobs that are considered disgusting, such as those that deal with the dead or with bodily wastes. They were once considered outside the caste system and called □untouchables,□ but this category has been officially abolished in modern India (though it still exists in social practice in some areas). In an attempt to raise the status of the untouchables, the Indian political and spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi referred to them as Harijans, or □people of Vishnu□ (which is essentially the

same as saying □the people of God□). Gandhi, a member of the Vaishya caste, also went against society's rules and adopted a Harijan child.

Being born into a specific caste determines such factors as wealth and opportunity. The higher castes have the most potential for living a comfortable life. The Dalit usually work at menial jobs and are at risk of being harmed physically, psychologically, and financially if they try to rise above their predetermined status. The Indian constitution makes caste discrimination illegal, but that has not completely changed the social attitude, especially in the countryside, where most people live. In urban centers, discrimination is less prevalent. Scholarships, for example, have been provided to people in the Dalit group in an attempt to better their traditional educational level and allow them a chance to advance in life.

Immigration

In 2003, 33.5 million foreign-born people accounted for approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population. Of that number, one million persons (or 3 percent of the foreign-born population) were from India, the third-largest immigrant group (behind Mexican Americans and Filipino Americans). Immigrants from India tend to be highly educated and often receive visas based on their educational training and the need of U.S. businesses to fill specialized positions. States with large Indian populations include California, New Jersey, and New York. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of immigrants from India more than doubled, increasing from slightly more than 450,000 in 1990 to a just over one million in 2000. In 2003, fifty thousand immigrants from India arrived in the United States.

Students who come to the United States to go to school have great influence on the U.S. economy. Estimates of the amount of money fed into the economy reach twelve billion dollars. Making the transition to the United States goes more smoothly for students from India than for students from some other countries, mainly because most students from India learn English before their arrival. In 2003, more than 74,000 persons from India were granted student visas to attend U.S. schools.

Critical Overview

World Hotel, Vazirani's second collection, in which □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ appears, was brought to the attention of readers of the *Washington Post* by the poet and columnist Rita Dove, who begins her review of the book by stating that it had been her policy not to feature works by her friends, colleagues, or former students. In the case of Vazirani, who was once a student of Dove's, the columnist writes, □I feel compelled to make an exception in the case of Reetika Vazirani. After all, she was an exception as a student.□ The collection, Dove concludes, offers □penetrating portraits from and keen glimpses into a world which□for all its unfamiliar place names and vivid accessories□we recognize as strikingly similar to our own.□

□Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ won the 1999 Pushcart Prize and thus was published in the Pushcart anthology the following year. It also was anthologized in *New American Poets*. The collection *World Hotel* has not received any awards, but Michael Scharf writes in *Publishers Weekly*, □This book's style and substance should get it nominated for one or another prize.□ Scharf considers the poems in the collection a □blend of tersely bittersweet lyricism and biographical data.□ Vazirani's strengths, according to Scharf, include □clarity, geographical detail, and a way with short, unpunctuated lines.□

A reviewer for the *Virginia Quarterly Review* finds that Vazirani's □poems have always concerned themselves with one place: the colonized and colonizing human heart.□ The reviewer also refers to *World Hotel* as an extension of Vazirani's first book, as she further explores □the stylistic and thematic range of her□ earlier poems. Vazirani does so, according to the writer, □in daring ways.□ Paula Span's memorial to Vazirani in the *Washington Post* states that Vazirani's poetry is distinguished because of the poet's skill: □She was known for continual revisions, for chipping at each line, sanding down every couplet.□

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Hart is a published writer and former teacher. In this essay, she examines the contradictory emotions in Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta to show how the poet uses the emotions to accentuate one another.

□Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ is full of conflicting emotions, which are at the same time often understated. Perhaps *conflicting* does not fully describe their mission. It is possible that the poet uses oppositional emotions to highlight one another or to emphasize one over another, much in the way a painter uses dark colors to make the lighter hues stand out. Pairing emotions in this way demonstrates how one feeling can work as shadow, making the other stand out as if lit by a blazing sun.

The exact meaning of the first four lines of stanza 1 of Vazirani's poem is not clear. The underlying feelings are, in order, frustration, release, and celebration. It is as if these emotions were being expressed in a rising scale, the most negative emotion being offered and then its betterment replacing it twofold. To begin, the speaker states, □To replay errors / the revolving door of days.□ These lines suggest how one might feel in the throes of depression. No matter what one does, the mistakes keep repeating, whether in real-life experiences or in the mind. A person makes an embarrassing error, and the mind tends to replay it, trying to make it right or learn from the mistake so as not to repeat it. The process of replaying takes a great deal of mental energy. While the mind is stuck on the errors, not much else is accomplished. People who think in these terms may be constantly denigrating themselves. Their confidence and their focus may suffer. In lines 3 and 4, the speaker then states, □Now it's over / There's no one point thank god in the turning world.□ The frustration and agony are finished, at least for a time. □Thank god,□ the speaker states, for making the world in such a way that there is □no one point.□ Time moves on, things change, and people learn and grow. The speaker appears to be celebrating those facts.

In line 6, there is another apparent comparison of differing emotions. The speaker states that she was □tired too but laughing.□ Life has been wearing her out, but she is not too tired to find happiness. She does not say that she has been tired *and* laughing, which would imply two possibly different situations. Rather, she implies that she has been laughing despite her exertions. No matter what life experiences have been thrown her way, the speaker has been able to handle them. She sees both sides of each situation, or, possibly, she sees beyond the situation. Whatever the difficulty, the speaker has handled it in an objective manner, never abandoning her sense of humor. Sometimes people find that laughing at their pain helps them to step back from it. The replacement of an emotion on the more negative end of the spectrum with one on the positive end is a strategy that optimistic people, people with faith that everything works out for the best, use to propel them through life. The poet must have seen this attribute in her mother and chooses to honor her mother for the strength she used in moving through life. It seems, for example, that the poet's mother has demonstrated courage in her widowhood. Her mother could have succumbed to depression and the pressures of raising her children on her own. Instead, she has taken from her situation the positive

aspects, or so the speaker suggests. The mother describes herself in widowhood as a bird that finds freedom.

In lines 15 through 18, the speaker refers to her pregnancies and then immediately speaks of □glamour days.□ Many women do not equate pregnancy with glamour. Although pregnancy is a beautiful state, most people do not naturally associate it with the type of feminine beauty and allure found in such women's magazines as *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*. Pregnancy is not typically considered fashionable in that sense. Some women become distraught with their bulk during pregnancy, and bulk is certainly not represented in the thin models who grace the pages of these magazines. The speaker does not seem bothered by the changes in her body during pregnancy. Instead, she seems to be rejoicing in them. Whether or not she would be called glamorous by the editors of the magazines she is reading, she herself is feeling glamorous.

At the end of stanza 1 is another juxtaposition: □brown women / laughing.□ Are they laughing so hard that they clear away everyone else who has been sitting near them? Are they laughing while they work through the chore of clearing the table of the dirty dishes? The image is open-ended. The reader can choose the interpretation. The main point is that the women are together and they are laughing, despite the □brown□ skins that sometimes bring ridicule. The women are demeaned despite their laughter. Others try to put them in a significantly lower place. The women's brown faces may laugh, but the indignation of being discriminated against still hurts. The poet has taken her speaker from laughter to pain. In the face of laughter, the pain of prejudice hurts all the more.

In stanza 2, the speaker is honored by her children as they bring □colorful sarongs□ to □drape□ her ankles. One can almost picture the mother sitting in a chair, with her children nestled around her as she opens the gifts. The bright colors bring memories of home. The speaker recalls □Bombay weavers on the twenty-four-hour looms.□ These bright colors are the result of the dreadful conditions endured by the weavers of the fabric. The never-ending grind of the weavers' labor is an integral part of the bright fabric. The speaker cannot separate the two images. She can enjoy and feel pleasure in the gifts, but she cannot forget how fortunate she is compared with those who must work long, debilitating hours for poor pay. The □shocking pink□ can have a hidden meaning. It may refer to the brightness of the color, but it also may be an allusion to shocking working conditions. The speaker has escaped the caste system and the discrimination that she experienced in her homeland and found freedom, but many others are still suffering.

In stanza 3, the speaker returns in her mind to her homeland, the place she refers to as □a molting nation.□ She has left behind her □caste,□ □the folly of envy,□ and a □jealous god,□ though she remembers them. She recalls □wishing all my life to be fair.□ Here, □fair□ could be construed in two ways, as light-complexioned or as just and nondiscriminatory. It could be that she envisions her new life as one in which she is not viewed and judged by her complexion or her caste. The speaker's thoughts turn to her children, as if she has suddenly spotted them, and her mood becomes happier. She sees her children and salutes her son: □*Hello son this is your mother*.□ The speaker then hands her daughters positive reminders of her homeland. □*Here daughters take*

these maroon saris,□ she tells them. The saris are not □shocking pink.□ The tones are more somber but also more regal. The speaker is restored. She feels happy again, and she passes this feeling on to her children. □*I am proud to have borne you*,□ she tells them. Children cannot expect or want to hear their mothers say words that are more positive. The poem comes to a place in the emotional spectrum opposite to the one at which it begins. It starts with replayed errors and ends with a world reborn. □*When you gather around me / newness comes into the world*,□ the speaker tells her children. There is hope.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #2

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century poetry. In this essay, he discusses Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta in the context of the experience of Indian immigrants to the United States.

As a poet of the Indian diaspora until her tragic death in 2003, Vazirani was a lively contributor to the outpouring of writings by South Asian immigrants to the United States that has made its mark on American literature over the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. The essential task of this new Indian American literature is to come to terms with the immigrant experience in all its variety. As Craig Tapping puts it in his essay □South Asia/North America: New Dwellings and the Past,□ □Like other ethnic literatures in North America, writing by immigrants from the Indian subcontinent is concerned with personal and communal identity, recollection of the homeland, and the active response to this 'new' world.□

Bharati Mukherjee, an Indian-born writer who immigrated to the United States and fully embraced American culture, had this to say about the contribution made by such immigrants to American literature:

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. . . . We have experienced rapid changes in the history of the nations in which we lived. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. Our lives are remarkable, often heroic.

The theme of the poem is acceptance in the face of constant change; it tells a story of a progression from self-denial and even self-shame to an affirmation and celebration of Maya-Seeta's Indian culture even though she has spent many years in the new world of America. (*Maya* and *Seeta* are names that the poet gives to her mother in other poems in her □Inventing Maya□ section.) The poem also affirms the blessings of family, in particular, Maya-Seeta's son and her daughters, through whom continuity is expressed in the midst of cultural transformation.

The poem is a little more complex than it might first appear. As Marilyn Hacker commented in her introduction to Vazirani's first collection, *White Elephants*, Vazirani's poems often involve □shifts in scene, time, focus, point of view, [and they] demand an approach more akin to a verbal equivalent of cinema than to 'straightforward' narrative prose.□ Thus □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ shifts scenes rapidly as the speaker recalls her peripatetic, restless life, which involved travel by ship and air around the world, and records her own changing attitudes to it. The note of acceptance, as if it is something newly found, is heard in the first four lines:

To replay errors

the revolving door of days

Now it's over

There's no one point thank god in the turning world

The last line quoted is an allusion to T. S. Eliot's poem □Burnt Norton,□ which contains the line □At the still point of the turning world,□ a stillness that the speaker of Vazirani's poem has learned not to seek. For her, everything is movement, flux, change, and, she appears to be saying, it is now time to cease dwelling on past mistakes, even if they were seemingly endlessly repeated. Now is the time, as the poem will go on to state, to embrace and celebrate change as well as the permanent nature of her self-identity.

It was not always so, as the poem makes clear. Looking back, Maya-Seeta acknowledges what she lost when she left her native India, a strictly stratified society in which she had her own place, determined by tradition and culture. She exchanged this □loss of caste□ for a □molting nation,□ the United States. The word □molting□ carries connotations of self-renewal by shedding of the old (as an animal may shed fur or skin), and also of □melting,□ as in the common expression that America is a melting pot in which new immigrants gradually lose their ethnic and cultural differences and form a new identity as part of the American mainstream. At first in the United States, it would appear that Maya-Seeta was overwhelmed by the dominance of the white culture she encountered there. Like the young black girl in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), who is so bombarded with images of beauty by white culture that she can conceive beauty only in terms of possessing blue eyes, Maya-Seta internalized a kind of self-negating racism in which she regarded being brown-skinned (□my dark complexion□) as unfortunate, and □wish[ed] all [her] life to be fair.□ Vazirani the poet once mentioned that her mother used to use Porcelana skin cream, which to her daughter was a sign of her desire for whiteness, a desire to erase who she really was.

The problems Maya-Seeta and her family faced in an alien culture and how she made her response are clear from these lines:

In hotels men asked my girls to fetch them towels

In restaurants they asked us for bread

Today I'm a civil servant on the Hill

In addition to pride in achievement is the note of affirmation, celebration, and joy that is heard in the poem and that will finally become its dominant voice:

. . . We have made this world

Brown women

Laughing till we cleared the dining table

The joyful affirmation of an exotic (to American eyes) culture is sounded again in the following lines.

Devi gives me her eclectic lit eyes

the glamour of our wilder regions

Bombay weavers on the twenty-four-hour looms

shocking pink is the navy of India

Here daughters take these maroon saris

these maroon bras

I am proud to have borne you

When you gather around me

newness comes into the world

The last line develops the idea hinted at earlier. The newness that the mother celebrates is neither entirely Indian nor entirely American but rather a unique product of the interaction of two cultures in the experience of Indian immigrants and those of Indian heritage born in America. As many immigrants know, this can be a delicate balancing act, but Maya-Seeta in this poem seems to be able to straddle two cultural worlds and to uphold the value of both of them. Her position, which by implication may also be that of the poet, is unlike that adopted by such Indian writers as V. S. Naipaul (to expand the discussion to an expatriate writing in Britain), whose work expresses a constant sense of exile, as if there is no possibility of finding a real home. Nor does it resemble the opposite position of a writer such as Bharati Mukherjee, who took American citizenship, embraced the new culture, and identified herself not as Indian American but as American. If in □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ America is the headquarters of a multicultural □world hotel,□ the poem suggests that all guests, Western and Eastern, are welcome, and each has a contribution to make as □newness□ is perpetually born into a constantly changing world.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #3

Holmes is a freelance writer and editor. In this essay, he interprets Vazirani's poem as so highly artful as to defy academic analysis.

One might contend that all forms of art draw to some extent on the emotions of their audience, whether they are readers, listeners, viewers, or appreciators of other kinds. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* gives the relevant definition of art as □the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects,□ where an object that might be labeled *aesthetically pleasing* could in most cases be described as in some way *beautiful*. With respect to written work, a range of artfulness can be found in the various forms: a classification might hold technical writing and textbooks as entirely artless, nonfiction prose as somewhat artful (as limited by the intent to convey information), fictional prose as generally artful (as limited by intellectualization), and poetry perhaps as the most artful use of the written word. Of course, some poems are more artful than others.

Arguably, the presence of any sort of established structure, whereby the poet is guided not by his or her own □creative imagination□ but by formulaic convention, detracts from artfulness. The least artful poetry, then, lends itself well to analysis, as a keen critic might find conventionally formulaic elements with regard to meter, rhyme scheme, construction, and so on. (□Unartful□ poetry, as defined for the purpose of this essay, may certainly still be deemed *good* poetry, as long as one finds it pleasing.) The most artful poetry, which might be expected to rely more heavily on emotional impact than on intellectual relevance, will likely have little if anything for a critic to □analyze.□ That is, if a poet has written verse from a purely self-directed imaginative, emotional standpoint, one would search in vain for the intentional use of constructions so as to elicit certain responses in readers, because in being guided by her emotion the poet would not have consciously constructed the poem with any reader in mind but herself. The poet may certainly reread and revise her poem so as to hone the wording with the utmost care, but if she does so only to please her own eyes and ears, the critic has no genuine manner of approaching the poem other than to simply enjoy it or not. Vazirani's verse would seem to be precisely such truly artful work.

Vazirani has been widely recognized as both an emotional person and an emotional poet. Sadly, her father committed suicide when she was an adolescent, and her mother took pains to prevent her and her siblings from learning of the circumstances surrounding his death, perhaps ultimately heightening the confusion and trauma they experienced. In □The Failing Light,□ a posthumous biographical appreciation of the poet written for the *Washington Post*, Paula Span states, □She knew suffering, even despair. Her father's death haunted her.□ With regard to her life experience, Vazirani was born in India but moved to the United States at a very young age and professed to feel profound cultural displacement. Span cites a letter that Vazirani wrote to her poetic mentor, Rita Dove, in which she remarked, □I have been desperate, silent, silenced, alone, hungry, angry, and crushed.□ Span quotes Kendra Hamilton, a friend of the poet, as saying, □She had a longing for a home of her own that was overwhelming.□ In truth,

perhaps no evidence need be given regarding the degree to which Vazirani was guided by her emotions other than the fact that she committed suicide after first taking the life of her beloved two-year-old son□acts that could have been perpetrated only by a person truly overwhelmed by her own sentiments.

The poem □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ would seem to very well represent Vazirani's virtual indifference toward structural elements. (Much □free verse□ does follow poetic conventions, simply in less obvious ways.) The three stanzas are of no particular length. Lines are typically short, but the poet is not constrained by artificial attempts at brevity, as evinced by the fourth line, □There's no one point thank god in the turning world,□ as well as the last several lines of the first stanza. Vazirani uses no punctuation, yet a semblance of sentence structure is provided by the occasional lines that begin with capital letters. Interestingly, lines 9 and 17-18 begin with italicized terms and then feature lengthy spaces before romanized words; a poet explicitly concerned with the appearance of her poem would have likely presented the romanized characters on the following line, without losing much in the way of meaning. (Of course, the association between the magazine title □*cosmopolitan* □ and the statement □We have made this world□ is a very strong one.)

Further, Vazirani is not afraid to include elements that are somewhat esoteric, in that the depth of their relevance cannot be understood by a reader unaware of the poet's life circumstances. Lines 7 and 8, □To be a widow is an old / freedom I have known,□ are given no explication and as such may come across as quite mysterious. Lines 11 and 12, □and happiness was my giraffe / in the face of Africa,□ do little more for the reader than tie together the notions inherent in those four nouns. The gifts enumerated in lines 27 to 31, while colorful, also seem to bear relevance that is mostly unexplained; in fact, this passage perhaps more than any other indicates to the reader that he is not *expected* to fully grasp everything. If Vazirani had been seeking to provide full understanding to a specific audience, she might have explained why, for example, a □Paloma purse,□ in particular, is worth mentioning□but she does not.

Line 34, □Listen I am listening,□ may offer the surest evidence that Vazirani wrote □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ not *for* anyone but herself (and, of course, her family). As indicated by biographical information, the poem is understood to be written from the point of view of the poet's mother, and the title certainly stresses the interplay between the identities of daughter and mother. Here, Vazirani seems to be concluding her maternal ruminations by inhabiting both mother and daughter at once; she is both speaker□commanding someone to listen□and listener herself. At this point in the poem, the reader may almost feel as though he is intruding on a private conversation between mother and daughter. Thus, the world depicted in this poem was not created *for* the reader; the reader is merely allowed to look into that world and so to understand for himself whatever he is able to understand. The last six lines, a direct address from mother to son and daughters, seem to solidify the notion that the poet has all along been guided only by her emotions; she did not □construct□ the poem but instead allowed it to flow forth from her mind, with the fluidity of stream of consciousness or spontaneously spoken words.

In her article, Paula Span quotes Charles Rowell, editor of the African diaspora literary magazine *Callaloo*, in which Vazirani was published, as saying with respect to the poet's work, □This is devotion to language, devotion to craft, the assumption that a poem is a piece of art, not just an assertion of an emotion or some sort of divine inspiration.□ Here, Rowell has almost presented □art□ and □emotion□ as contradictory; at the very least he seems to be saying that art is more than mere emotion. Yet he is more specifically stating that art is necessarily more than □an assertion of an emotion.□ That is, Vazirani does not simply gush forth with the kind of emotional release one might find in electronic mail correspondence between close friends. Rather, she has so fully refined the *expression* of her emotions as to be able to convey them through images and loosely connected statements that reach the reader only on the most subtle, sublime level. Indeed, if the emotion inherent in □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta□ were to be explicated in prose form, many pages would have been needed. In distilling her emotions and presenting them in poetic form with the utmost artfulness, Vazirani manages to inspire in her readers the sorts of visceral surges of emotion of their own that can arise only in the absence of unartistic, formulaic structure and intellectualization.

Source: Michael Allen Holmes, Critical Essay on □Daughter-Mother-Maya-Seeta,□ in *Poetry for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Topics for Further Study

Compare the poetry of Vazirani with the poetry of Sylvia Plath. Choose two poems by each poet that express similar feelings, topics, or themes. Specify the similarities. Look for evidence of depression that may indicate the poets' states of mind. Present your findings to your class.

Gather statistics on suicide rates among poets and other artists. Look for studies that have linked creativity to an inclination to depression. What other professions, if any, are associated with a high rate of suicide? Compare these rates with the rate in the general population. Note the age groups that have the highest rates of suicide. Create a chart delineating your findings.

Research the caste system of Hindu India. Examine the religious and social aspects. How do Hindus rationalize the caste system? What did Mahatma Gandhi have to say about it? What are politicians in India doing to alleviate the discrimination that continues there? Gather your findings in a research paper.

Talk to people who have emigrated from other countries to your city or state. What have been some of the changes in their lives? How does the original culture differ from the adopted culture? What, if any, forms of discrimination did these people feel in their homeland? What kinds of discrimination do they feel in the United States? What, if any, differences do they perceive in the way they raise their children and the way people who are naturalized U.S. citizens raise their families? Summarize your findings in a report. Invite one of your interviewees to your class and lead a question-and-answer session.

What Do I Read Next?

Vazirani's first award-winning collection, *White Elephants* (1996), pays special attention to the challenges of assimilation in a new country. The theme of □other□ is prevalent in these poems. The writer recalls memories and stories of her homeland and transfers them to her experiences in the United States.

Mother Love (1995), by Rita Dove, gives insight into how Dove's poetry and instruction influenced Vazirani.

Neon Vernacular (1993), by Yusef Komunyakaa□an award-winning poet and the winner of the Pulitzer Prize, addresses themes such as the Vietnam War and the loneliness of growing up as an African American in the Deep South.

Vazirani was influenced by the work of the poet Seamus Heaney. Heaney's eleventh book of poems, *Electric Light* (2001), brings together reflections on Ireland, the poet's family, and the art of poetry. Heaney's sense of the importance of place is also a theme important to Vazirani.

Immigrant poets' voices can be read in collections such as *Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry* (1994), edited by Maria Mazziotti Gillan and Jennifer Gillan.

Sylvia Plath, another American poet who suffered from depression and committed suicide, wrote journals collected in *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* (2000). Plath's husband, the poet Ted Hughes, published his edited versions of Plath's journals in 1982. The 2000 edition, however, collected by Karen V. Kukil, adds material left out by Hughes.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is a novel about life in India in the late 1960s told through the eyes of the female member of a set of twins. Part of the story is recounted from the child's point of view and the rest from the adult perspective. The language of the novel is almost as fascinating as the complicated story itself.

Further Study

Jamison, Kay Redfield, *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide*, Vintage, 2000.

Jamison, a professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University who once contemplated her own suicide, provides insight into the mind of those who consider or commit suicide.

Kolanad, Gitanjali, *Culture Shock! India*, Time Books International, 2003.

Vazirani went through her own version of cultural shock in the United States. This book is a guide to the culture and etiquette of the various regions of India.

Oliver, Mary, *A Poetry Handbook*, Harcourt, 1995.

Oliver, the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award, provides insider information on how to write poetry. She never says that writing poetry is easy, but she equips students with poetic tools and insights.

Yapko, Michael D., *Breaking the Patterns of Depression*, Main Street Books, 1998.

Yapko, a clinical psychologist and expert on depression, articulates the clinical definitions of depression in accessible language and offers exercises and treatments that complement the use of medications.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Poetry for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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