The Dead of the House Study Guide

The Dead of the House by Hannah Green

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Hannah Green's only novel, *The Dead of the House* (1972), has been praised for its evocative language and lyrical prose. The novel originally appeared in the *New Yorker* as a series of shorter fictional pieces. It was published as a novel in 1971 to critical and commercial praise; when it was reprinted in 1996, the novel was discovered by a new generation of readers.

The novel is the story of a girl's passage from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Moreover, it is a much broader history of her entire family. *The Dead of the House* also paints a rich picture of an older American family and its place within the history of America. In addition, it hearkens back to the mythology of the American West.

Author Biography

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Green was born in 1927. Her father was a foreign copyright and trademark agent, like his fictional counterpart in *The Dead of the House,* and her mother was a homemaker. She attended Wellesley College, studying with Wallace Stegner and receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948. She later went to Stanford University, receiving a Master's degree in 1956. While at Stanford, she studied with the celebrated Russian writer, Vladimir Nabokov

In the early 1960s she began writing what would ultimately become *The Dead of the House.*

In 1970, she was hired as a professor by Columbia University, a position that she held until her retirement. Initially *The Dead of the House* was published in a shorter form in *The New Yorker;* in 1972 it came out in novel form and attracted critical and commercial attention. In 1985 *In the City of Paris,* a juvenile novel about French culture and the wonders of Paris, was published.

Green died of lung cancer on October 16, 1996, in New York City. At the time of her death, she had completed *Golden Spark, Little Saint: My Book of the Hours of Saint Foy,* which has never been published.

Plot Summary

Section One: In My Grandfather's House

The first part of the novel is concerned with the events of Vanessa's childhood, but also with the stones and history of her family. As the name of the section implies, nearly all of this portion of the novel takes place in Grandpa Nye's house located in Cincinnati, Ohio.

While the story is told from a mix of voices filtered through Vanessa's memory, certain events fit within the narrative at the time they are happening. Vanessa's grandmother dies. After the funeral, her grandfather marries Janice, his housekeeper. She is then referred to as Aunt Janice, as the age gap between Grandpa Nye and her seems too large for her to be called grandmother. Vanessa relates much of the history of the family through remembered conversations with her grandfather.

Grandpa Nye and Vanessa's father tell her about her late Uncle Joab. She also takes possession of a book of Joab's poetry; besides reading and memorizing the poems, she adorns the book with flowers, as if it were his grave or even the man himself.

Grandpa Nye tells her many stories: some about his family history, or things that happened to people he knew. He has a skull tattoo and cross-bones on his chest, done himself when he was only a boy. He also tells her of the wonders of his many canoe trips across the wild waterways of Canada, and his friendship with an Indian guide.

Section Two: Summer Afternoon, Summer Afternoon

This section takes place primarily at the Nye family's vacation home in Neahwantah, Michigan. An exploration of Vanessa's adolescence and young adulthood, it chronicles her gradual sexual and mental awakening. She explores her love for Dirk Monroe, as well as her intense love for and jealousy of her sister, Lisa

Vanessa returns again and again to one event. She remembers arriving early for dinner at her grandfather's house to hear him read the DeGolyer family manuscript to her. The oldest piece of written history relevant to the family, he tells her about it and promises it to her several times before she at last has it. She also finds herself increasingly drawn to the story of Tecumseh.

Upon returning from Michigan, the narrative shifts forward in time. After December 7, 1941, there is a focus on World War II. Vanessa works after school rolling bandages for the Red Cross. Dirk comes to visit, and he kisses her. In 1943, Isabel, Vanessa's mother, begins working for the Draft Board. Vanessa is still doing her after-school work for the Red Cross. Dirk comes once more to visit. Their passion nearly overwhelms them as they become more physically intimate in the Nye family parlor. Three weeks after shipping out, Dirk Monroe is killed. On May 7, 1944, he is buried at sea. Upon hearing the news, Vanessa feels that she should cry, but does not.

Section Three: And Here Tecumseh Fell

This section begins with Vanessa stepping off an airplane. It is December 22,1954, and she is returning home after a year at graduate school in California. Besides the holidays, she is returning home because of her grandfather's illness. Her sister, Lisa, is in an unhappy marriage to a doctor, and has a daughter of her own. Grandpa Nye is in the hospital, suffering the effects of multiple strokes. Vanessa suddenly finds that her parents have grown old.

When she visits her grandfather in the hospital, he is uncommunicative and nearly comatose. She is struck by how hideous and horrible Aunt Janice, her grandfather's second wife, seems to have become. All Aunt Janice talks about is the death of her dog, Calvin. Yet she giggles nervously when talking about it, and does not say anything about the impending death of her husband.

Vanessa visits her grandfather's house for the last time, since it is being sold and he and his wife have long since moved out. A gradual narrative of the events leading up to the sale of the house is revealed. Vanessa and her sister search the house for the last of her grandfather's wine but find none.

As Vanessa gathers with her family for the holiday dinner, the truth of the Nye family past is revealed to her by her father. He tells her that her grandfather never really knew how to manage his money, and that he made some very bad business decisions. He also reveals his own feelings of insecurity that plagued him when Vanessa was young.

In the final scene, the family is gathered at the dinner table reminiscing about the family when the phone rings. Vanessa's father, Morgan, comes into the room and announces, "Papa is dead " The novel ends with these words

In My Grandfather's House

In My Grandfather's House Summary

This story is told from the perspective of the narrator, a young girl named Vanessa, whose grandfather has been the major influence in her life. She begins by sharing the history and lineage of her family as far back as her great-great-grandfather who brought his family to America from England in 1840. Her grandfather begins to tell her the story one more time about how it all took place. They stand on the porch of his Tudor-style home in Cincinnati, Ohio; its wild lawn bordered by similar homes with neatly manicured lawns. This is probably the first time she has noticed the outward signs of how her Grandpa Nye is different from anybody else.

Vanessa's great-great-grandfather had been a minister in the Baptist faith when he received a message from God that he should go to America. His wife was blessed with considerably more common sense and thought the idea was ridiculous. However, her husband wasn't to be swayed and eventually the family took up residence in Quebec. The family thrived and produced seven children, only one of whom didn't reach adulthood.

Vanessa could never get enough of her grandfather's stories and begged for more. This time he relayed their odyssey from Quebec to Cincinnati and how his own grandfather met and married the daughter of a Baptist minister recently moved to Montreal. For ten years, they thrived and created a big, happy family. They were absolutely devoted to their children and their adoration was returned in kind. A chance meeting of one of his wife's cousins persuaded their father to move to Cincinnati where the opportunities were robust and the children continued to thrive in the wild nature they found there.

The Ohio River was no match for the St. Lawrence Seaway the Nye children were used to, but as they floated on rafts with their friends, they could have been on any waterway in the world. Grandpa Nye's days of swimming and digging for Indian arrowheads are the most memorable times of his life. Probably most memorable time from that summer was the birth of the L F B M club - the Lively Five of the Blue Miami. Grandpa Nye and four of his buddies swore their faithfulness to each other and carved the club's initials into their not-anywhere-near-manly chests and then ground ashes into the grooves to make sure they would stick. Even to this day the faint scars can be seen on the old man's chest like a badge of boyhood that he'll never lose.

Grandpa Nye eventually attended Farmers' College where he soaked up the information presented to him and was honored to spend time in the company of Mr. Bronson Alcott (who would have preferred to be remembered for his association with Thoreau and Emerson, and not as the father of Louisa May Alcott, whose books he thought to be a bit of drivel). Grandpa also had his theory of creationism tested by the teachings of Alfred Russel Wallace, Darwin's partner on the development of the theory of evolution.

Grandpa Nye eventually married Laura Washburn, the daughter of a high school principal, and they would have five children - Charles, Nathaniel, Joab, Edward, and Morgan. Nathaniel died as a child and Joab died at age 23 when he succumbed to the combination of ether and gas during a hernia operation. Vanessa keeps a book of Joab's poetry by her bedside and imagines that she takes after him with the drama of his robust and literary life tragically cut short. Grandpa Nye keeps the family alive with their pictures hung all over the house. Every way you turned, you could see their eyes watching you watching them.

There were no pictures of Grandmother Nye, however, and Vanessa's only recollection of her is seeing her lying in her casket in the great parlor of her house and thinking that she wanted to kiss her slightly smiling lips but her mother yanked her away before she could. Soon after, Grandpa Nye married Miss Janice, who had been their housekeeper. Vanessa could never bring herself to call her Grandmother.

Through the years, Grandpa Nye and his brothers and sisters would continue to talk about their mother, raving about how refined and elegant she was; and so intelligent too but always driving her husband for something. All Vanessa could conjure up was the image of her body in the casket, which made her think of all the dead in the house - Nathaniel, Joab, Grandma Nye and Great Grandmother Vanessa - and the calm secrets that they took with them to the grave. Their wills to live still hung in the air like screams.

Reading her Uncle Joab's poetry reinforces Vanessa's melancholy. In the spring she takes the book outside where the grass is soft and the air filled with the perfume of blossoms from the budding trees, and she imagines him buried near the roots of all those things.

When her grandfather has finished telling the story of his boyhood, he forgets that he hasn't told Vanessa yet about his mother's family, the DeGolyers. James DeGolyer had come from France as a soldier to fight in Canada in 1748. Soon he would marry a girl from five generations of New England farmers. James and his sons fought in the American Revolution.

While her grandfather was quiet, collecting his thoughts, Vanessa thought how much he looked like Tecumseh with his long weathered cheeks and distinctive profile. She asks whether there is any Indian blood in the family and he says not, but there is a sense of wildness that runs through them that makes them seem like it. Some of the finest times of his life had been spent on the water paddling canoes and now that he is too old to do it anymore, he is filled with immense sadness for his lost youth.

In My Grandfather's House Analysis

The author places high regard for family history and lineage and gives more than a passing accounting of the Nye family. She wants us to know that there is depth and reason and destiny in all the things that add up to make Vanessa: she is the sum total of all the people who came before her, living and dead. Vanessa has the sensitivity of a

person much beyond her years as she can conjure up those who have already died and tries to connect with people she has never even known. The sense of place and the exquisite sadness of their being gone could be a melancholy outpouring but she seems to be fascinated with origins and extensions and these "dead of the house" are still there in some way for her.

Summer Afternoon, Summer Afternoon

Summer Afternoon, Summer Afternoon Summary

It is early June 1940, and Vanessa gives up on her homework temporarily to help her mother prepare dinner. Her sister, Lisa, plays the piano in the living room where her father, fresh from a shower and a martini, listens intently while lost in his own thoughts. Vanessa would give almost anything to be like her younger sister, who is prettier and more popular, especially with the boys. Instead, the boys say Vanessa acts too young.

If only Vanessa could do something right. Her mother is always harping on her to tuck in her blouse or pay attention to something important she was trying to relay. Consequently, Vanessa has decided, without too much effort, that she hates Lisa and her mother because of the huge annoyances they continue to be.

Vanessa wonders if her father can sense her adoration of him or whether he think she's repulsive and just tolerates her presence. The only solution available to her seems to be hiding away in her room to comb her hair again and put on some makeup, most of which she immediately wipes off. The reflection in the mirror is not at all what she envisions in her mind and she resigns herself to her fate of being too tall and too ugly for her own good.

Soon enough, school is out for the summer and life is good again with long, hot afternoons splashing in Grandmother Marston's pool and drinking cold Cokes at her friend Janey's house. The girls have also begun their daily countdown as the family prepares for its annual vacation in Neah, Michigan, and finally it is time to bring the suitcases down from the attic and tuck inside all the little stacks of clothes they have been setting aside for weeks.

The night before Vanessa and her family are set to take off, they head to Grandpa Nye's house for dinner. As their mother and father join their grandfather and his new wife, Aunt Janice, in the library, Lisa and Vanessa explore the big house with the same awe as if it's their first visit. They are always amazed at the collection of cat statues and figurines crowding the lighted armoire in the entranceway.

Cats from all over the world in every conceivable medium, pose, and expression stare at them from their little glass shelves. No one knows how this huge feline gathering started, but every time someone returns from any travel, invariably they will have brought some sort of cat to add to his collection. The piece de resistance, though is the mummified cat brought all the way from Luxor, Egypt in 1908. This cat continues to make the rounds of most of the schools in Cincinnati whenever there is a course on Egyptian studies.

Their grandfather, who wants them to go to the basement to help him pick out a bottle of wine for dinner, interrupts the girls. Even a trip to the cellar is delightful with this man in

his wrinkled suit that smells of wood and wine because they feel that being close to him is being close to history and their real sense of family.

At dinner, Grandpa Nye tells the girls that the roads they will travel on tomorrow are the same paths that Anthony Wayne traveled in the Indian campaigns of the early 1790s. So when the family pulls out at 4:30 the next morning, Vanessa is alert to the names of towns and creeks and makes notes in the family's travel journal. It's as if her grandfather is sitting beside her telling her the importance and significance of the hallowed ground speeding by under their tires.

After stopping for groceries, the family continues on to Neah and spots the girls' friends, Dirk and Elihu, out on the water in their sailboat *Annabel Lee.* They boys see the girls arriving and gracefully turn the boat around in the West Bay. The cottage is musty and cool and Vanessa thinks to herself that it smells like a forest as she reaches for her canvas Smelly-Boy, a jacket named for its original strong canvas scent which it has long since lost in the passing down from several generations. She reaches inside the pocket to feel the stone and the sand she had left in there last year as a reminder of the passing of a wonderful summer.

Lisa and Vanessa join their friends for their usual summer activities: sailing, fires on the beach, and swimming. All summer, Vanessa and Dirk tease each other but he would never kiss her, even though she gave him plenty of opportunities. Her confidence wasn't shaken though; she is more secure in her looks this year and she takes heart that it will be just a matter of time before she and Dirk are more than just friends.

The summers at the cottage were good for the girls' parents too. Her father and mother embraced more and joked more and her father even took to showing all the kids how to shoot craps on the front porch. Sometimes he would even swallow minnows to show off how he swallowed goldfish in his college days. No matter what he did, he was entertaining and everyone liked being around him. The days were especially golden that summer.

Their father's stories also included some of his father's writings about wilderness adventures in his book *Summer Wanderings in Northern Canada.* Trips in little canoes no longer satisfied the old man so after the Canadian National Railroad was completed, he would take the train to the farthest point, debark and then spend the summers exploring during what he called the happiest times of his life.

There were stories of whitewater rafting and sitting with Indians around campfires and treks through forests that were so ambitious and lyrical that had Vanessa not known they were true she would have thought her father had created his own legends.

Vanessa and Lisa were scooted off to bed by their mother but decided instead to skinny dip by moonlight. They swam until their bodies tingled and only the forest could see their secrets. They wished that Grandpa Nye wasn't too old to be with them for going on a canoe trip with him seemed the ideal way to discover him and the wilderness he loved.

Summer was now long over and this gray day in October was not the kind you see on calendar pages highlighting fall foliage. Nevertheless, Vanessa's mood is bright for she's on the way to Grandpa Nye's house after school. Just seeing the light on in his library and smelling the wood burning in his fireplace warmed her even though she was still blocks away. She loved how his smile was always partly for her and partly for the book he had just left.

Grandpa Nye knows Vanessa wants to be a writer when she finishes school and nothing could please him more. He had a brief career as a newspaper reporter, which included his two favorite things - word and travel. However, his family was young and he needed a better income so he devoted his time to lecturing. A more lucrative opportunity arose when he joined the Morgan Burke Company, which dealt in iron, coke, and coal. Eventually, he took over running the entire company.

Feeling the need to pass on information of a more proverbial nature, Grandpa Nye tells Vanessa that he feels younger at age 79 than he did when he was 21. He counsels her that there will be both great joys as well as disappointments in her life, but a person can't ever be alone when there are such magnificent rivers and lakes for company. For him, these have always been living things and each trip was like returning to an old friend. Plus, you can never be alone if you have good books; his passion for them remains to this day and he delights in each one as if it were his very first, *The Arabian Nights.*

The old man admits that while he will read anything, local history has always fascinated him, specifically that of the Ohio Valley and the life of William Henry Harrison, whose life in that area, both before and after his presidency, is well documented. Grandpa Nye is even writing his own book about the man, *Old Tippecanoe: The Life and Times of William Henry Harrison.*

As Vanessa looks over the books and engravings about Harrison, she feels Tecumseh's spirit rather than that of Harrison. It is almost as if he is watching her from the corner of the room and she is drawn to a photo on the wall of a piece of marble inscribed with the date and location of the Indian chief's death.

Grandpa Nye relates the events leading up to Tecumseh's fall and laments the fact that the only mark of the occasion is that small piece of marble that sits beside the main road between Toronto and Detroit. The old man offers his granddaughter a cigar and the two of them sit and puff in silence for a short while as if in some Indian ritual of respect for greatness that has been humbled.

Today is also the day that Vanessa's grandfather had promised to tell Vanessa about the DeGolyer branch of her family tree. He begins with his great-grandfather, James DeGolyer, who enlisted in the French army in 1839. He had gone to Canada with the army and then moved to what is now known as Massachusetts. He married and had five children, eventually settling in Ohio.

James DeGolyer had been a man of intellectual pursuits, having come from a noble lineage in France where the name was spelled de Gaullier. He had studied for the priesthood but entered the army at a young age upon some disagreement with his father. During the battle at Flanders, part of his skull was shot off and he was thrown on a heap of dead soldiers. Still clinging to life, he was rescued and had a glimpse of his own brains in the mirror of the surgeon who ultimately saved him.

During his time in Canada with the army, James learned about the Indians and their wilderness environment. Once, while on a scouting expedition with two Indians, he offered to pay them to guide him to the English colonies. However, during the night he heard the two plotting to lead him back to the French and collect a reward, so he tomahawked them both in their sleep.

Grandpa Nye continues with several more stories similar to this one, telling of the brave and adventurous spirit of this man whose blood runs through Vanessa too. She is humbled and in awe at being a part of such a man.

It is now dinnertime and Vanessa's parents and Lisa have arrived to have dinner with the old man. They drink his homemade wine and listen to more stories, and afterward they looked at ancient photographs that make some of the story people come alive once again.

Vanessa is on the way to a sorority club meeting with her friend, Janey, when the news on the radio announces that Pearl Harbor has been attacked. Not knowing what to do, the girls continue on to their meeting but Vanessa can't help but feel a strange emptiness and sense of futility. The war didn't really change their day-to-day lives until the following May when they began to fold bandages at the Red Cross after school. Vanessa thought of the boys, not much older than she, who would need the gauze she now held and wished there were some other ways she could help.

That summer, the family again went to their cottage at Neah in Michigan. Vanessa and Dirk sailed the *Annabel Lee* expertly through the West Bay but they couldn't help but think of the bombs exploding in Europe. The rest of the summer continued with their usual activities with friends and Vanessa got reacquainted with the depths of the surrounding forest. Dirk still had not kissed her, and that was the only mystery that consumed Vanessa.

In October, Vanessa received a letter from Dirk. Postmarked from Yale, he signed it "love and kisses." She could hardly breathe from the pleasure of it all. As usual, she didn't see him again until the next summer, but this year he was particularly attentive and finally the glorious night came when he kissed her in plain view of the honeysuckles and the moon.

When Dirk came to visit in December, he was on furlough from the navy. He and Vanessa were all so grown up and drank sherry with her parents before dinner. They sang together at the piano and kissed in the dark after the rest of the family had gone to

bed. The next day, her mother lectured her about the beauty and responsibilities of sex and she blanched in mortification.

On the day before Dirk shipped out from San Francisco, he called Vanessa. They finally confessed their love for each other and made tentative plans to marry after he got out of the service. Three weeks later, he was killed after being hit by a shell while standing on the deck of his ship on a glorious day in May.

Summer Afternoon, Summer Afternoon Analysis

There is an overwhelming sense of history and family from this author, who launches into exceedingly detailed accounts of lineage and family members. Vanessa doesn't tire of it though, and seems to be enthralled by anything her grandfather says or does. Her adolescence is typical for middle class Midwestern America in the 1940s, with the same angst that most young girls suffer about their looks and their first loves.

There are the familiar themes of her adoration of her father and total rejection of her mother, who Vanessa sees as a threat and an evil force. There is also the sibling rivalry of the prettier sister who is more popular with the boys at school. Vanessa's male attention stems from the adults in her family with whom she relates because of their adventurous spirits and senses of largesse.

Vanessa's primary relationship is ultimately the one with Grandpa Nye, who sees so much of his own blood in her and can speak to her quick mind and open heart. She relishes the stories of his boyhood and young manhood and tries to imagine what he must have been like. She wishes now that she could take him back to the waters and the wilderness that he adores.

Throughout the book, there is a strong reverence for the North American Indians and their culture and the material is presented respectfully through Grandpa Nye's retelling of the family history and legends. Vanessa even equates her grandfather's intelligence and demeanor to that of Tecumseh's nobility and even thinks that she can sense the chief's presence at times, so strong is the connection.

There is a strong thread of education in the book, too: education gained through both first-hand exploration of an area and through the journeys waiting in books. Grandpa Nye encourages Vanessa to read everything and she will always have companionship, even at life's emptiest moments.

Vanessa's education wouldn't be complete without the exploration of first love and she finds that with Dirk, the boy of her summer vacations. Each year, their friendship grows but it isn't until he is ready to ship off to war that they declare their feelings. Unfortunately, these are painfully cut short when he is killed in the service. The insecurities and sense of futility she was already experiencing are just magnified with the devastation created by his loss and it will affect her for her whole life as most first loves do.

And Here Tecumseh Fell

And Here Tecumseh Fell Summary

Ten years have passed and Vanessa has come home for Christmas to find her parents waiting for her at the airport. They stand side by side as they always have and it strikes her as somehow sad that they seemed to be one person, not two separate personalities. They exchange the usual pleasantries and ask about her progress in grad school in California and let her know that Lisa and her little girl, Amy, will be home from Boston tomorrow morning.

At home nothing much seems changed; drinks before dinner, her mother in pearls. Nobody has brought up the fact that Grandpa Nye is dying in the hospital, where he has been for several weeks ever since Aunt Janice deposited him there. The housekeeper, Eugenie, is the only one with enough courage to speak of it and tells Vanessa that Mr. Nye has been going through an awfully hard time about his father's imminent death.

Vanessa takes note that Grandpa Nye's cabinet with all the cats has found a new home now in the dining room. The table is set for the festive season and Vanessa notices the gold wine goblets that were Grandpa Nye's also gracing the table. The old man is here in spirit even though he's miles away in a hospital.

Even though her husband is almost paralyzed in his distress, Vanessa's mother refuses to acknowledge that anything has changed. She has created such a fragile veneer of appearances all these years for her husband and she feels that if anything slips, it will be even more devastating for him - she cannot risk it. Dinner continues as it always does and the veneer of emotions remains intact.

Later on before she goes to sleep, Vanessa lies in her childhood bed and wonders what happened to her parents, who now seem so frail and vulnerable. She curls up from fear as much as she does from the cold sheets.

The next day brightens a bit with the arrival of Lisa and Amy, who join Vanessa and their mother for afternoon tea with their Aunt Aggie. Vanessa leaves early so she can be at the house when her father comes home from work. When she arrives, she finds him in the kitchen with his scotch. He has just received a call confirming that Grandpa Nye is near death. Amazingly, he turns the conversation to Vanessa's life and how he doesn't understand why she isn't moving forward with her life. Given her intellectual prowess and educational advantages, she should be better positioned by now. Vanessa tells him she has suffered problems and setbacks that she hasn't shared and wishes that he would back off a little bit. Her father feels that Vanessa doesn't share anything with them and they just want to know about her life.

Fortunately, Vanessa's mother comes into the kitchen to break up the little confrontation. There is clearly tension between her parents that stems from issues not at all related to

Vanessa's life in California. Vanessa and Lisa commiserate and agree that things have changed and they can't stand to be in this house anymore. Nothing is like it used to be.

Lisa has come back to Ohio for Christmas because her physician husband, Stewart, is on duty over the holiday. She reveals to Vanessa that their marriage has been in some trouble and even Amy is not a delight to her anymore. Lisa had hoped that coming home would have been some comfort but finds instead that the tension between her parents just sets her own nerves more on edge. The sisters agree that their father has withdrawn and their mother escapes through her mystery novels. They wonder what happened to the laughing from their childhood.

Vanessa and Lisa offer to walk the dog so they can escape the house for a short while. It seems odd that so much has stayed the same in their old neighborhood while their own lives have taken such dramatic turns. Vanessa feels conflicted lately: she knows this is where she belongs, but when she's in California she doesn't have to see how the love is missing from her parents' lives.

It also concerns Vanessa that bombers are being made three minutes up the road and atomic bombs are being stored in warehouses. Her family would be wiped out should there ever be an attack on those facilities.

Lisa and Vanessa decide to drink some of Grandpa Nye's wine when they return home from their walk. Vanessa holds the bottle up to the light and remembers when her grandfather would do the same in his dusty wine cellar every time she accompanied him to the basement of his old house. The ritual of wine selection is one of Vanessa's favorite memories of visiting the old man. She can still remember the purple stains on his fingers and his clothes every autumn from his days spent plucking the grapes along the banks of the Ohio River.

Grandpa Nye would always let Vanessa choose a bottle of wine for dinner and also one to take home for her father. The old man prided himself on his winemaking skills, which he was sure stemmed in part from the DeGolyer side of the family that owned some of the finest vineyards in Bordeaux.

Unfortunately, this bottle of Grandpa's wine has gone bad and even the light reflecting off the honey colored goblets that were also his could not save it. It seemed that everything was souring for their beloved grandfather. His second wife, who they called Aunt Janice because they couldn't bring themselves to call her Grandma, had sold his old house and moved Grandpa to a new one that she had decorated after careful scrutiny of all the recent ladies magazines. Grandpa never really seemed to fit into that house with its built-in appliances and gleaming surfaces; he belonged with the cabinet with the odd cats and the dusty books and manuscripts piled up in his library.

Christmas Eve morning dawns and Eugenie is serving up some opinions with the holiday breakfast. She tells Vanessa and Lisa about the condition of Grandpa Nye's house when everything had been moved out. Of course, there was dust everywhere but

there were also curious things in the attic, such as 16 silk top hats that Grandpa would wear in his earlier days on the lecture tours.

Vanessa remembers that she saw her grandfather only once at one of his public speeches. He was 89 years old and was scheduled to give a talk at the ceremony to lay the cornerstone for the new public library. Unfortunately, he had fallen ill and no one expected a man of his age to appear on such a blustery day in October even under the best of circumstances.

However, just as the ceremony was scheduled to begin, Grandpa Nye arrived in a black limousine and, with the help of his chauffeur, made it to the podium just in time. He was not about to be kept away from something that had been a driving force all his life. Grandpa had worked tirelessly for the pursuit of education in the city of Cincinnati and had even borrowed $180,000 in his own name during the height of the Depression to keep the library open. So, Grandpa Nye stood in the falling snow on that stage and spoke of this proud moment for this city blessed by many other good fortunes. It was the last time he ever spoke in public.

Vanessa is jolted out of her reverie by her mother's voice declaring that there is much work to do before the Christmas Eve dinner that night and they must also find time to visit Grandpa Nye in the hospital.

When the family arrives at his hospital room, Grandpa Nye is lying propped up on pillows and staring straight ahead with a look of emptiness and terror at the same time. Apparently, he has suffered another stroke overnight: his words are halting and he doesn't seem to recognize any of his visitors.

Amazingly, Aunt Janice seems oblivious to her husband's condition and shows more emotion over the recent death of her dog. There was little more that the family could do for Grandpa and they all told him goodbye. When Vanessa turned to look at him as she left his room, he had managed to sit up and was watching them leave.

When the family reached the hospital lobby, Aunt Janice pleaded with Vanessa's father to do something about Grandpa Nye. She herself couldn't take him home, what with all the equipment that would have to be brought in and the nurses that would eat all her food. Vanessa's father excused himself and immediately retrieved his flask from the glove compartment of the car. He snapped at Vanessa when she asked why Grandpa couldn't go home to die.

After lunch, Vanessa and her father take a walk and they talk about Grandpa Nye and the successes and failures of his life. He wasn't always a brilliant businessman but he was an avid scholar who imparted the love of knowledge and adventure to his children and grandchildren. This which will stand them in good stead, and that is the best legacy of all.

Christmas Eve night arrives with the customary holiday traditions, complete with the overloaded tree and the blazing fire in the fireplace. Soon Amy will add her stocking to the hearth that held Lisa's and Vanessa's stockings for so many years. Vanessa's

mother glows as she tells the story of Vanessa's first Christmas, and it strikes Vanessa that her mother actually did love her after all.

Amy sits in her grandmother's lap to hear the reading of *The Night Before Christmas,* at the end of which everyone in the room chimes in with "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night." Lisa entertains everyone by playing Christmas carols on the piano and for a few minutes everyone is happy again and things are like they used to be.

The doorbell brings their dinner guests of a few family members, including Aunt Janice. She is taking some time away from Grandpa Nye's hospital room, a fact that infuriates a few of those present. Nevertheless, the veneer of proper behavior is held intact and a glorious dinner is served, followed soon by a phone call from the hospital telling the family that Grandpa Nye is dead.

And Here Tecumseh Fell Analysis

Vanessa has become the latest casualty in the long march of time. In her mind, her parents are still happy and her beloved Grandfather still smokes his cigars and tells stories of the glorious past. The loss of Grandpa Nye is particularly poignant for her because she is so much like him in his interests and what he always called the wildness of her spirit. The two of them are indeed kindred spirits and losing her grandfather is losing a huge part of herself.

Vanessa will always wonder about her grandfather's ability to be at one both with the wilds of the waters and woods as well as with the volumes in a library. He embodies the characteristics of a Renaissance man whose interests don't conflict but enhance each other.

The author doesn't give the reader any earth shattering revelations or events; she simply shares the state of being human as it is captured in the microcosm of a family with strong ties to heritage and familial pride. The themes of love, redemption, and ultimate acceptance are prevalent throughout the book as seen through Vanessa's eyes and perceptions of what she is told of the process of life unfolding.

There is also an unrelenting reverence for age throughout the piece, as evidenced in so many elements - the retelling of the histories and stories of the Nye and DeGolyer families; the respect for nature and the native people who settled in this part of the country; the avid consumption of classic literature; and finally the wisdom of Grandpa Nye and his sage advice. Vanessa will pass on this reverence in her life and honor her grandfather and the nobility of the line of which she is a part.

Characters

Eugenie

Eugenie is the family's African American housekeeper. Known only by her first name, Eugenie takes care of the family, and helps clean Grandfather Nye's house when they move out.

Aunt Janice

See Janice Nye

Uncle Joab

See Joab Nye

Dirk Monroe

Dirk is Vanessa's first love. She doesn't seem to be truly in love with him; he just seems fated for her, in much the same way her parents met and seemed destined for each other. He is killed three weeks after setting off for boot camp. Vanessa does not express particular sadness over his death.

Grandfather Nye

See Nathaniel Nye

Isabel Nye

The mother of Vanessa and Lisa, Isabel Nye is a comfortably privileged woman who does not always know quite what to do with her children. Raised in relatively wealthy circumstances, she is accustomed to having things naturally her way.

Janice Nye

Janice is not the aunt of Vanessa and Lisa; she is Nathaniel's second wife. She is known as Aunt Janice because of the great age difference between her and Nathaniel. Originally his housekeeper, she becomes a caregiver after their marriage. Her role is making sure her husband does not fall down the stairs, shopping, and entertaining people. In Vanessa's eyes, Janice is a shallow and insensitive person who cares more about her dog than her husband. Janice sells the Nye family house, claiming that the

age and upkeep are too much for them to handle. This sends Nathaniel into a depression; he eventually has a stroke and ends up in hospital.

Joab Nye

Joab Nye is the late son of Nathaniel Nye, brother of Vanessa's father. After dying during a hernia operation at the age of twenty-three, Nathaniel collects his verse into book form to immortalize his son.

Lisa Nye

Lisa is Vanessa's younger sister and is described as beautiful like their mother, Isabel. While Lisa and Vanessa spend a lot of time together, they are not particularly close. Lisa is like her mother in more ways than just her beauty. She is fawned over by boys, while the older Vanessa is usually ignored She seems much more comfortable with her role of beautiful and feminine woman than Vanessa would be.

Lisa and Vanessa have several strange and long-standing conflicts based on sibling rivalry In the final section of the novel, the sisters finally discuss and resolve these episodes. The end of novel finds Lisa unhappily married with a daughter, Amy.

Morgan Nye

Morgan is Vanessa's father, as well as the son of Nathaniel Nye. He is a copyright and patent agent, like Green's own father. Through the recollections of Morgan and his wife, Isabel, as well as Nathaniel, it is apparent that Morgan is raising his daughters in much the same way he himself was raised. He too spent summers at the family's home at Neahtawantah, on Traverse Bay in Michigan. During his summers there, he met his wife.

Morgan's occasional loudness and exuberance suggest that he drinks too much. His bouts of melancholy regarding his dead brother Joab are melodramatic Morgan says of Joab, "if *he* had only lived, I would have loved him more than any human being." While otherwise a quiet man, episodes like these give a sense of both passion and immense sadness to Morgan Nye.

Nathaniel Nye

Nathaniel (also known as Grandpa Nye and Papa Nye) is the patriarch of the Nye family and is grandfather to both Vanessa and Lisa. Nathaniel is a former reporter, editor, professional speaker, and retired businessman. He is a man given to expounding freely about history, both that of the family and historical figures. He is also willing to tell the tales of his own life, with Vanessa being his favorite audience. Nathaniel's most cherished image of himself is as an outdoorsman and naturalist. Until his the end of his

life, Nathaniel is an active man. He climbs trees to get the grapes for his wine. He makes the wine himself, and cuts wood for his fireplace. He longs for one last grand canoe trip across the wild rivers of Canada.

Papa Nye

See Nathaniel Nye

Vanessa Nye

The protagonist of the novel, Vanessa relates the story of her life from her childhood to adulthood. As a young girl, she is curious and asks her grandfather to repeat stories she has already heard, because she wishes to remember his stories. Most of the first section of the book is made up of recalled conversations or observations she has heard from others.

As the story progresses, Vanessa becomes more proactive and less of a passive observer. She is also a very insecure girl: she is concerned with whether or not boys like her, and if her father likes her sister better. Growing up, she becomes more aware of her body and explores the feeling of sun and water on her skin. She has her first stirrings of sexual feeling when she begins dating Dirk Monroe, her childhood friend.

As an adult, Vanessa is less self-absorbed and more concerned about the feelings of others. Her academic success and independence has led to a sense of security and confidence.

Themes

Man Against Nature

The ambiguous relationship between man and his environment is explored in *The Dead of the House.* Nathaniel Nye, Vanessa's grandfather and the idealized representation of man, is the character most associated with this thematic concern. The veteran of many canoeing expeditions through the rivers and untouched regions of Canada "before the white man found it," Nathaniel is constantly torn between his need to civilize and conquer nature and his desire to live in harmony with it. He tells Vanessa several stories of his boyhood, when he and his friends would camp next to the river and spy out on the ships just as the Native Americans had before them. As an older man, he hires Native American guides to take him to isolated, untouched areas

When Vanessa's story begins, Nathaniel is an old man. He lives his life within the boundaries of civilization in a large house in a nice neighborhood in Cincinnati. Still clinging to his desire to somehow have contact with nature, he goes on missions to harvest the wild grapes, which he crushes to make his wine. In this way, he fulfills his desires: he takes the wild fruit and makes it into something himself.

Writing

Writing is used as a thematic device□both to connect the events and histories within the story with the characters, as well as to connect the whole with the novel itself. Writing, as a form as well as a narrative device, takes many forms within the novel.

Writing something down implies permanence. By publishing his written histories of the family, Nathaniel has made them immortal When his son Joab dies, Nathaniel has his book of poetry published. Thus, though his son his dead, he still lives through his writing and need never die; he will also exist for those, like Vanessa, who never knew him. While many of the anecdotes and events of his own life would seem to be lost with Nathaniel when he dies, the existence of Vanessa's own narrative makes sure that this is not so. Green transcends the limits of the text and transfers them from within to without. The fact that the reader has the book to read implies that her narrative□and thus the history of the family and those within it□do and will exist.

The idea of the written word and the fact that it becomes written history once it is written down makes the idea of the book into a complete circle. While it begins in Vanessa's childhood when her grandfather is old and ostensibly ends when he dies, this is not the case. The last line of the book is "Papa is dead." Yet the very completion of the novel, and the writing of Vanessa's story, makes this meaningless. Having set down the last words of the story, the story has been written and is permanent. That the story has an end means that Papa is not dead. He is immortal.

Lineage versus Heredity

The concepts of lineage and heredity play important roles in the book. Within a family, it is typical for some amount of a person's self-identity to be shaped both by the reality of inheritance of traits, known as heredity, as well as by the perceived notion of such, known as lineage. The difference between the two ideas of lineage and heredity is fairly straightforward, and is often referred to as nature versus nurture. Heredity implies inheritance, or the direct passage of traits through a parent to a child. Lineage is much broader and harder to quantify. It can be as simple as the idea of "coming from a good family," or something more abstract, like the idea of someone somehow being the "black sheep of the family."

Vanessa's heredity complicates her life She does not look like her mother, while her sister Lisa does. Because her father loves her mother, Vanessa assumes that since she does not resemble her and her sister does, her father naturally loves her sister more. This is further complicated by the fact that she looks like her grandmother, who eventually went insane. She naturally fears this connection to her heredity, as well as her disappointment at not simply being beautiful like her mother

Her lineage is something else altogether. She is descended from orators, preachers and explorers. This sort of lineage would imply an adventurous nature, and Vanessa is true to it While she does not literally explore things with a canoe and Indian guide, she does explore the history of her family, with her questions as the vehicle of exploration and her grandfather as her guide. She is outspoken and is never afraid to ask questions or speak her mind; this ties in with her natural desire for exploration, making her quests for knowledge and identity easier to come by.

Her grandfather tells Vanessa many times that "you take after your pirate ancestor on your grandmother Nye's side of the family." This particular implication of her lineage implies that Vanessa is not possessed of a nature willing to follow within the bounds of convention. Vanessa, whether through her true lineage or her own nature, follows this idea. Rather than marry and have children□as her mother, grandmother, and sister have done□ she makes her own way She goes to college and then to graduate school, at a time when it was not common for many women to do so. She is, in her own way, a rebel□or even a pirate, when it is considered that she has plundered her grandfather's life and stories for her own

Style

Stream of Consciousness

Much of *The Dead of the* the first part□is told in a stream-of-consciousness style. The term was coined by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the flow of thoughts experienced by the waking mind It is now used to describe a narrative method by which novelists can convey the unspoken thoughts and feelings of their characters without using the conventions of explicatory dialogue and narrative voice. The most famous novelists that utilize this technique are James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. In fact, Woolf s technique is very similar to Green's in that her novels attempt to convey the thoughts and perspectives of multiple characters through the lens of a single narrative voice.

Green uses this technique to allow Vanessa's narrative to skip from current events to recollected conversations with her grandfather and back again at random. This frees the story from traditional literary linear narrative technique, and represents Vanessa's evolving relationship with her family. The degree to which the novel is told in stream of consciousness is tied directly to Vanessa's age. The novel is divided into three parts. In the first, she is a child, and events are much more likely to be freed from the constraints of traditional narrative In the second part, as she is an adolescent and the narrative is more structured. She is developing a more solid consciousness, and is more aware of the tilings around her as her world expands. By the third part of the book, Vanessa is a young adult and the narrative is "concrete." This follows naturally on both theories of psychology and the nature of memory. As her mind develops and matures, she sees things in an increasingly mature and logical fashion. On the other hand, it would be natural for the memories of her childhood and youth to grow less focused as she moves further away from them in time.

In this way, the early events of the novel and her recollections of them are both less clear and less focused, while her adult recollections, being told in the true narrative present, are more focused and follow a naturalistic chronology. As a first-person narrative in the form of a memoir, *The Dead of the House* structures itself as a continuous act of recollection, rather than a story which develops over time. Many of the earlier recollections of the book are drawn from subconscious or dimly remembered parts of her childhood, and therefore seem disjointed and random. The closer the story moves to the present, the more "real" and more immediate the events become.

Oral History

Oral history is made up of stories about real people and events that are passed down from one generation to another within cultures that lack a written language. While important for recounting past events that occur both within the culture and to the historian and his own family, the purpose of oral history is much more important to the

nature of family itself. In certain African tribes, all families have a member who serves the purpose of official oral historian; this person is known as a *griot,* and the concept of oral history itself is sometimes called *griot.*

The *griot* is responsible for not only the knowledge and history of the family or culture and the events which have transpired, but also for the names of every relative past and present, and then-actual relation to each other. This effects other members of *griot* cultures, so that it is very common for everyone to be able to name hundreds, if not thousands, of their relatives. To do this is a source of pride. Thus, oral history enables cultures and families to have much closer bonds than one would find in written language cultures. History, culture, and lineage are very real and immediate within cultures that rely on oral history.

Much of *The Dead of the House* is told through a stylized, written version of oral history. Many of Vanessa's conversations with her grandfather, parents, and others are recounted not as text, but as dialogue. This differs from standard dialogue in that it is not told as it is happening, but rather is recounted at a later date Being a first-person narrative told in the present tense, the insertions of conversations of the past into the story that do not follow the linear narrative makes them a literal form of "oral history," rather than a further narrative within the story.

Like the *griot* cultures of Africa, the use of oral history within *The Dead of the House* makes history and relatives real to both the keeper of the knowledge and the one who has the knowledge imparted to them. While Vanessa has access to the books about her family and the poems of her Uncle Joab, the oral recollections of her grandfather and father make them all the more real to her. While her grandfather does not speak much of him, she receives the knowledge□the oral history□of her Uncle Joab from her father, giving her insights into his life and personality that his poems never could. Oral history makes history real, and personal. It comes from those familiar with the person or situation, and gives one intimate knowledge. The oral history of the Nyes is the constitutive basis of their family, and brings Vanessa closer to those around her and those who lived before.

Historical Context

The Mid-1960s

The 1960s were a decade of great cultural upheaval and change. The beginning of the decade saw landmark legislation to outlaw racial discrimination in any form. Rock-and-roll music, which had been growing in popularity since the 1950s, became a full-blown phenomenon in the early 1960s. Many social commentators viewed the increasing popularity of this kind of music as a sign of impending cultural collapse. This new music was considered fast-paced, bass-heavy, and immoral. It was also viewed as connected to music that had its origins in African American communities, such as rhythm and blues and jazz. The combination of popularized "black music" and desegregation with its attendant effects seemed to be tearing down the walls between white culture and black culture.

The moral decay of American society was thought to be reinforced by the introduction of the birth control pill, which was developed in the late 1950s and widely available by 1962. Many perceived the concept of sexual intercourse outside marriage as another sign of the moral collapse of society; the pill certainly took away the most feared consequence of sexual behavior□unwanted pregnancy. With more control of one's own body and the increasing number of women entering the workforce and colleges, divorce rates exploded, concerning conservative elements even more. At the same time, feminist groups appeared, and women become a forceful, politically active group. The last line of *The Dead of the House*　"Papa is dead"□ can be read as a commentary on the death of patriarchal society.

The Late 1960s

By the end of the decade, America's youth was energized in their opposition to the Vietnam War and their exploration of new sexual freedoms, the increasingly hedonistic and rebellious culture, and the use of drugs by the nation's youth. A growing gap between the values of the older generation and the younger one became known as the "generation gap." Tension arose between these two generations as youth culture rejected many of the materialistic values and concerns of past generations.

Indian Activism in the 1960s

In the 1960s the Indian Reform Movement became a popular cause for many American people. Probably the best known activist group, the American Indian Movement (AIM), formed in Minneapolis in 1968 to protest against police brutality. After that, the group went on to lead several high-profile protests. In 1970 they occupied a portion of the land at the base of the Mount Rushmore Memorial.

At the same time, other Native American groups were drawing attention to the government's neglect of Native American people. One hundred Native Americans took over Alcatraz Island in 1969, offering to buy the former federal prison back from the government for twenty-four dollars in glass beads (the price allegedly paid to Indians for Manhattan Island in 1626).

The most infamous protest was the siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. The site of a famous massacre of three hundred Indian men, women, and children in 1890, members of AIM and the Sioux nation took hostages in a small hilltop church in Wounded Knee, on the Oglala Reservation, in 1973. The siege attracted international press attention. Two Native Americans were killed during the resulting gunfire, and one hundred were arrested; but as a result, the government promised to hold hearings on Indian rights. After one meeting with representatives from the White House, no further government action regarding Native American rights took place.

Critical Overview

The initial publication of *The Dead of the House* in 1972 had an immediate impact on literary critics, who lavished it with praise. These early reviews focused on two major issues: the first was the narrative techniques of the novel; and the second was to contextualize it within the social and political upheaval of the day.

Richard Elman's influential review deemed *The Dead of the House* "one of the most important works of fiction" to come out in years. He compared reading it to "falling in love," and singled it out as a "beautiful book" that was notable for its lack of "bigger issues." In fact, Green's novel is "nowhere bigger than itself, nowhere grander than its own scope or subject." L J. Davis' review was similarly rhapsodic, calling Green's work "less a novel than a kind of dream ... a transcendental novel"

While both Elman and Davis stressed the singularity of Green's achievement, other reviewers interpreted it as a response to contemporary culture. Donald Markos drew attention to the complex ironies within the novel, focusing on the paradoxical representation of Grandfather Nye as a "mutual admirer of both Tecumseh and William Henry Harrison"□ both colonizer and colonized. "Without an awareness of these ironies, " Markos maintained, "the reader is likely to mistake the novel as a nostalgic celebration of bygone America."

When *The Dead of the House* was reissued in 1996, many reviewers wrote nostalgically about the first time they read it. A *The Washington Post* reviewer referred to it as "the semi-legendary 1971 novel□remembered by all who read it for its quietly perfect evocation of a young girl's coming of age." This and other newer reviews tended to do exactly what Markos warned against in 1973□remove the text from its sociopolitical context, and read it as "a wistful reminiscence of family life and a vanished American past"

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5

Critical Essay #1

Tabitha McIntosh-Byrd is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. In the following essay she analyzes the roles of language, narration, and self-creation in the formation of American identity in The Dead of the House.

The Dead of the House is a complex narrative: its story is assembled rather than told, its crisis points are implied rather than stated, and it offers very little access to simple interpretation Early reviewers praised this dense insularity□reading it as a deliberate rejection of the social commentary and ideologically charged literary experimentation of the early 1970s. However, the very act of assemblage that the text enacts reveals the internal fault lines that deliberately shoot through the whole. The densely layered narrative is woven from grandfather's, father's, and uncle's voices, and is blended with extracts from histories, biographies, and autobiographies of the family's men.

From this linguistic melange of masculinity, the narrator, Vanessa, gradually emerges as the dominant speaker□a progression to a stronger female self that develops with adolescence and ends with maturity. As the narrator reaches adulthood, the novel ends and the symbolic ascendance of a new form of authority connoted by the loaded final words□"Papa is dead." If patriarchy is, as this ending implies, finished in mid-1950s Ohio, this conclusion invites a retrospective rereading of the significance of the narrative that leads to this. In fact, a close reading of the novel reveals not the simple minded nostalgia that early reviewers lauded, but a deliberate evocation of nostalgic sentiment that is carefully and thoroughly deconstructed and rejected in the closing section of the text.

The dominant voice of the novel□and the character whose death forces its closure□is Grandfather Nye, the patrician, cultured patriarch of the Nye family. Keeper of family memories and mythology, Nye's Emersonian vision of American life celebrates Western man as wilderness hero, gentleman farmer, and spiritual subject. The first section of the novel, "My Grandfather's House," is just that, his "house"□a recreation of the Nye's seductive and self-serving domestic, social, natural, and psychological space. As *The Dead of the House* progresses, the text's unquestioning alignment with Nye's transcendentalist idealism unravels, revealing a gradual explication and uncovering of the colonial, commercial, and industrial bases of the family This is primarily achieved through a subtle yet pointed elaboration on the commodification, artifact fetishism, and active absorption of Native American culture.

Not only do the Nye men trade, covet and own metonymic material indicators of native identity□ arrows, vases etc.□they also are implicitly shown as part of the elision of "real" native America from the Americas. Just as Native American culture is reified and accumulated as trophies, so does the culture which produced these artifacts become de-centered from the text and the country□pushed out into reservations of both narrative plot and historical ghettoes.

This process is exemplified in Grandfather Nye's relationship with Alfred McCloud, his "Indian guide" and "a gentleman and a scholar." As Vanessa relates, she learns a more rounded version of the truth from his letter stored in the Cincinnati Historical Society. "I can not," Alfred writes to Nye, "furnish you with any items from hunting as you requested for your lecture.... Today in Ontario there are ten white men hunting to one Indian ... today the white man hold supremacy, and the poor Indian has to stand back and come back to the reserve." While Nye sees Alfred as a vicarious self whose function is to provide him with artifacts for his lectures, Alfred is fully aware that this process is one whereby he and his people are marginalized, overridden, and removed from the land. The fetishization of Alfred as an archetype both ignores and enables the economic realities that are restructuring the continent.

Only when Vanessa is an adult can she understand and visualize this process. Her figurative blindness is Uteralized as she finally sees the collection of bones in her father's study□the product of a burial site from which site the Nye boys "scrambled" to grab the tibias and craniums of the valley's prior residents. Her father explains that gathering "Indian relics" had always fascinated them: "Edward retrieved a nice shoulder and forearm A few thigh bones and some ribs were accumulated. A further skull with an arrowhead imbedded in it was found. I don't recall much in the way of beads and pottery from that grave robbery." in a gruesome literalization of the pirate flag, Vanessa's father has an actual skull and crossed bones displayed in his room, making the Nye's pirate heritage vividly and horrifically real. Yes, Vanessa's has always known she came from pirate stock, but the piracy is here shown to be far more recent than either she or any of her family can articulate.

The colonizing self that this key scene throws into stark relief is constructed from a multiplicity of narratives□both historical and personal□that thread throughout the text. Grandfather Nye's book, known as the DeGolyer manuscript, is the oral history which ties the Nyes together□all of these act upon each other to create an assemblage of a colonizing narrative; a story of heritage and family that glorifies and edits the past, collapsing history into family in a project that justifies and elides the questionable/immoral practices that got them where they are. The transcendentalist self-creation of Grandfather Nye acts as a mythology of exploration□a mythopoetic reimagining of his alignment with an idealized Natural World, which places him within it as participant, instead of external and in hostile relationship to it.

Thus his project acts as a justification for land claims by eliding the very act of acquisition and possession. After all, if he is a man of nature, then he has just as much right to lay train lines in the wilderness and take control of Native American lands, as those native peoples to do be there in the first place, Nye is more Indian than the Indians□ their true inheritor and avatar (so the self-serving narrative goes), and thus the real Native Americans can be discarded It is important to note that Nye bears the pirate flag on his own body: the skull and crossbones tattooed permanently into his skin as an immediate iconic reminder of his true function

Nor are Native Americans the only dispossessed and elided group within the Nye's story. Everything is narrative, and everyone is subsumed within its narrative

imperatives. The latter part of the novel takes place in the 1950s□a time of social upheaval, civil rights agitation, and conflict between the old and news forms of representing and understanding race. Yet within the Nye family it is business as usual. The only African American who intrudes upon then: text is the housekeeper, Eugenia.

However, there are fictional African Americans present, the representation of whom acts as a pivotal scene in the novel's closing pages. Vanessa's childhood memory of Eliza's house has double significance as both a metaphoric representation of her transition to independent adulthood, and as a commentary on the textual invisibility of black America. "Children, this is the Eliza house," their mother tells them as children. "This is where Eliza hid after she crossed the river on the ice." Vanessa explains that, "She was a little colored girl who was a slave, but now she was free." The "house" that Vanessa's mother points out is both real and fictional□a matenal space that has been overwritten with a textual reality. Eliza is the escaped slave girl from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Her flight to safety is one of the compelling and persuasive narratives of white, bourgeoisie American womanhood in the abolitionism struggle.

The history of slavery of African Americans and□by extension□of the current civil rights struggle, has thus been completely absorbed into a self-serving literature of enabling womanhood. Real inequality is glossed by the narrative of reforming bourgeoisie women□of "good" women whose sentimental view of slaves thus becomes the preeminent justification for their failure to view and support civil rights struggles in the present. History, reality, and inequality are made textual and malleable□the subject and matter of orality and memory, not lived experience. Evidence of real iniquity is ignored by reifying the fantasies of the nineteenth century□conferring "fact" (the house) upon fiction (the Eliza story); fictional sympathy into fine moral sentiment. Eugenia can remain in the kitchen and at her chores, as long as Eliza's house is designated as real.

The role of textuality is indicated in more (and more complex) ways than these. Not only the Nye's family history, but also his immediate personal history is subject to a literary reformation. As the revelations and dropped comments of part three reveal, the liberal arts haven of Vanessa's childhood was only the final incarnation of the man. His latter professional life is inextricably tied to storytelling; his status as a lecturer for hire acting as a reification of the narrative principle that structures his familial relations. Library patron, lecturer, author□these are the roles that structure Vanessa's perception of her grandfather

Yet the brothers make it suddenly clear that these are the hobbies of old age, rather than vocation. In fact, the family's finances are, in essence, based on heavy industry□"iron and coal ... [and] manganese ore." Nor is this all. The Nye family business is predicated on exploitation and war profiteering□shipping resources to "a Europe devastated by war" and buying goods from cheap, nonunion Southern sources. These businesses have collapsed due to Grandfather Nye's failures as a commercial manager. As his son says baldly, "Papa didn't always handle things correctly." Just as the idyllic nature/man relationship is exploded by the decayed bodies that Vanessa can finally perceive, so too is the myth of liberal humanities life destroyed. The Nyes are not

romantic self-creations but an inextricable part of the commercial and industrial expansion of Ohio.

By the end of *The Dead of the House,* the phrase, *Here Tecumseh Fell* has taken on different meanings. On the one hand, Grandfather Nye's cherished narrative of self is as a woodsman/ wilderness dweller□an association of himself with the iconic figure of Tecumseh that forces the most obvious interpretation of the heading. Tecumseh is Nye, and the section shows his death□Here Nye (Tecumseh) dies (Fell). The real Tecumseh is thus absorbed into Nye's symbolic self-presentation, so that he becomes an avatar of self□a means of identifying Grandfather Nye with the DeGolyer manuscript and myths. This very absorption inevitably leads to the alternative interpretation of the title.

As the narrative thrust of the section makes clear through the bones and scattered corporeality of Native Americans that litter the house, the real Tecumseh□the scattered body of his people□is thrust insistently onto center stage. Tecumseh thus shifts from being the avatar, to being the victim of Nye and his fellow western explorers. This it is here□with "us" and with the Nye's□that Tecum-seh fell. He fell in the process by which the Nye family rose□his descent the inevitable product of their economic, manufacturing ascent.

Source; Tabitha Mclntosh-Byrd, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Markos describes the novel as a chronicle "of paradise lost through *innocence " as it describes the values and moral failures of figures from the American past.*

One begins reading *The Dead of the House* with the curiously refreshing sense that this is not going to be a fashionably "absurd" contemporary novel. The manner is realistic. Instead of caricature and fantasy, we are introduced to characters of full dimensions with roots lying deep in a recognizable version of American history. Hannah Green, through her narrator, writes lovingly of an American family, of ancestors who throve on this continent, beginning with the first Nye who came to the New World as a minister called by God and the first DeGolyer who came as a deserter from the French army. The record of this first DeGolyer's adventures on the new continent, including his service in the Revolution and his ultimate withdrawal from white society to live out his last days among the Indians, wonderfully evokes the beauty and freedom of the original American forest which still lingers in the narrator's memories of her girlhood vacations in the Michigan woods and lakes. It may be, as Wallace Stegner says on the book flap, that "this is a novel that is going to reassure many readers who have not lost faith in the family"; yet there is a mood which runs counter to the seemingly nostalgic presentation of the traditionally admired American character. The novel turns out in the end to be a chronicle of lost innocence□or, more accurately, of paradise lost *through* innocence.

Though there are frequent shifts in time and narrator, the novel does have something of a loose plot structure controlled by the narrator's quest to identify herself with her family's past. The first section, "In My Grandfather's House," introduces the narrator's Grandpa Nye, a representative American and the narrator's chief link to her ancestral past. Through stories and written records the narrator, Vanessa, learns of her ancestors' removal to the New World, their settlement in Ohio, and her Grandpa Nye's paradisiacal boyhood along the Ohio River. This is followed in the second section, "Summer Afternoon, Summer Afternoon," by an account of Vanessa's own awkward, dreamy, painful, and ecstatic girlhood, particularly the summers spent in Michigan. We learn a good deal more about Grandpa Nye here, and also about the more exotic DeGolyer side of the family. In Grandpa Nye, as in Vanessa, the DeGolyer wildness and imagination have combined with the gentility and moral character of the Nyes.

The final third of the book deals with the condition of the Nye family during Grandpa Nye's declining years in the early 1950s. The younger Nyes are admirable, but lesser men than their forefathers. A breakdown in family structure has begun to show, but the author does not simply play off the present against the past, for the structure had developed a crack long ago. Grandpa Nye, now in his senility and removed to a hospital by his second wife who fails to appreciate his stature or the roots that go back so deep in American history, is presented as lost and terror-stricken. All his sense of failure seems to have centered in the memory of his first wife, who went mad. Vanessa, in a significant passage, imagines him pondering over what externally seems to have been a rich and rewarding life: "What was it [I] failed to understand?"

In the preface, Hannah Green states that she had attempted to write "a very real book, which is, in fact, a dream." The record of the fabulous Nyes and DeGolyers as filtered through their troubled and nostalgic contemporary descendant, can indeed be read as a dreamlike American fable Grandpa Nye, respected by governors and presidents, is "connected to History," and his failure of awareness is an American failure.

Grandpa Nye's ninety years cover a rich variety of experience as Latinist, historian, Chautauqua lecturer, outdoorsman, storyteller, wine-maker, and businessman; but the novel makes a particular point of identifying him with the Indian. In his privately published *Memories of My Boyhood,* Grandpa Nye wrote of his idyllic boyhood: "It was our ambition to be as nearly savage as possible." Aside from boyhood, his happiest memories are of canoe trips into the Canadian wilderness with his friend and Indian guide, Alfred. The third section of the book, "And Here Tecumseh Fell," explicitly identifies Grandpa Nye with the great Indian leader. Grandpa Nye's love of nature and his outlook in general are strikingly Emersonian: "... one can never be lonely when he has the fields and the forest, the rivers and lakes for his companions. They never seemed to be inanimate things; rather they are living things." And it is here, perhaps, in Grandpa Nye's Emersonianism that his flaw is to be found' he lacks a sufficient sense of evil. For one thing, his culture has not provided him with this sense. His Chautauqua lectures included picturesque topics like "Washington, City of Magnificent Distances" and "Emerson and Concord." His enthusiasm for reading includes Macaulay, Southey, Milton, and Shakespeare, but no mention of Melville, Crane, Hemingway, Faulkner, or Eliot. Nor is Grandpa Nye capable of learning much about the nature of evil from reading Shakespeare or Milton.

The result of this genteel cultural background is that Grandpa Nye lives in a compartmentalized world. The most striking evidence of this is his mutual and uncritical admiration for both Tecumseh and William Henry Harrison who defeated the Indian forces under Tecumseh and later made use of his popularity as an Indian fighter in his campaign for president. Grandpa Nye is, in fact, an expert on Harrison, yet never once in the book does he indicate any sense of the social injustice which drove Tecumseh into organizing resistance. Grandpa Nye's blindness comes out in the unconscious tone of condescension in speaking of his Indian friend, Alfred: "not only a superior Indian, but a superior man ... with an appreciation of Nature that was unusual in an Indian. I verily believe that his delight in the beauty of the land and water was as great as mine." A further ironic discrepancy in this vein is his love of his annual Canadian canoe trips and his ownership of a company which sells pig iron, coke, and coal. Grandpa Nye welcomes the Canadian National Railroad which makes it possible to penetrate to the heart of the Canadian wilderness (and to leave comfortably in a Pullman car), unaware that the extension of technology is also deadly to the very thing he loves. The reader may discover further discrepancies for himself, though they are not as obvious as they seem to be here, for the author's method is not the traditional modern one, fostered by *The Waste Land,* of using immediately opposed juxtapositions; but the discrepancies are there and are available to reflection. Without an awareness of these ironies, the reader is likely to mistake the novel as a nostalgic celebration of a bygone America.

The novel does have its faults. Some of the historical accounts are insufficiently integrated into the fictional narration. The author too often relies on hints where important matters of motivation are concerned (was Joab Nye's death a suicide or accident? What is the significance of Grandmother Nye's madness? And did both of them have a perception of evil that was lacking in the other Nyes?). Some of the symbolism is too easy and intrusive (the "filth" discovered in cleaning Grandpa Nye's abandoned house or the wine that has "soured" as his spirit declines). Yet *The Dead of the House* is an important book for its evocation and implicit judgment of the American past□the enduring values and virtues of some of its best men, as well as their ultimate moral failure.

Source: Donald Markos, "Of Grandfathers Hannah Green's The Dead of the House," in *Southern Review,* Vol. 9, No 3, Summer, 1973, pp. 713-16.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Spacks discusses the influence of memory on the creation of Green's novel.

.. .The narratives of self-revelation that seem to issue from and speak to the vital imagination are marked by their air of restraint. Understatement can be as cliched as its opposite, but one must welcome a book that limits its opportunities for self-indulgence, assuming that in private as well as public life surfaces may suggest interiors more accurately than mindless introspection, and that form means more than starting somewhere and stopping some arbitrary distance further on. Two comparably compelling examples of fictional reminiscence are *The Lizards*□about an inarticulate Italian girl with an efficient lawyer mother□and *The Dead of the House,* a tale of a young American girl and her relation to a complex family tradition. In a prefatory note, Hannah Green comments explicitly on the novelistic relation between fiction and fact: "I got the idea from life, but I have proceeded from vision. I have made use in equal parts of memory, record, and imagination." The intimate mystery of memory is the source of the book's power. Green's episodes have the air of being recalled, not created, and they conquer the imagination as one's own memories do, true both to the consciousness that recalls them and to an imaginable world outside that consciousness. "Memory, record, and imagination," closely linked in experience, are often indistinguishable from one another. So it is in *The Dead of the House,* where the creative power of the imagination operates on fact to generate memory, which in turn makes imagination inseparable from fact.

"Memory," in this novel, is both individual and collective, existing in the minds of the family as a whole as well as in the narrator's consciousness. It is a formative power. Listening to family reminiscences, Vanessa comments: "I felt as if I were beautiful. I felt as if I were growing, harmonizing, settling into a form filled long ago in turn by these women, my great-grandmother and her daughter." Reminiscence creates both the old form and its new content, shaping and expanding the personality of the listener. It may be in detail inaccurate: Vanessa recalls that her sister won the pearl in their father's oyster, Lisa remembers Vanessa as winner. But the pearl's possessor is irrelevant. That the sisters recall events differently helps to define their natures. Memory, creating character, generating truth, is the subject and technique of the book Its benignity incorporates misunderstanding, hostility (Lisa confessing that she always hated her sister), violence, death, without sentimentalizing them. When it avoids direct recollection of emotion, the avoidance is itself a statement.

"Good-bye, Vanessa. You're swell," he said, and hung up, and three weeks later, out in the Pacific where he stood on the deck of his ship, he was hit by a shell. He was buried at sea, May 7,1944. I shut the door of my room; I drew down the blinds and doubled over.

Mama was home from the draft board I heard her outdoors in the drive talking to Helen Foster

"And Derek Monroe, his uncle whom he was named for, was killed in France in the *First* World War," Mama said, an awful pleasure wincing in her voice.

The naive sentence structure and vocabulary, the reportorial detail, intensify the reader's awareness that the narrator□not at all naive, by no means merely a reporter□fails to state her own feelings at a crucial moment. The complexity and intensity of her intolerable emotion are suggested by the girl's actions and by the unstated effect of her mother's "awful pleasure." The interstices of memory are as revealing as its densities. *The Dead of the House* offers remarkable variety of emotional texture within its prevailing atmosphere of nostalgia.

Source: Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Fiction Chronicle," in *Hudson Review,* Vol. XXV, No 3, Autumn, 1972, pp 500-01.

Critical Essay #4

In the following excerpt, Davis describes Green's novel as a dream, a prose poem, and a transcendental novel.

The Dead of the House is less a novel than a kind of dream, a protracted prose poem of singular delicacy, filled with generosity, love, and wisdom, and steeped in lore__ [It] is a deeply felt, uniquely American fiction....

How strange it is to come upon a transcendental novel in the last third of the 20th century. Like most works of fiction, it is about life as it is lived on earth; unlike so many, it has something of importance to say on the subject, with a touch that is as light and dry as a blown leaf or the touch of an old man's hand. It is a book to make its readers feel fortunate.

Source: L **J.** Davis, "An Accumulation of Time Past," in *Book World Washington Post,* February 27, 1972, p 4.

Critical Essay #5

In the following excerpt, Elman praises Green's novel for its quality as a fictional memoir and for its imagination.

[The Dead of the House] is one of the most important works of fiction I have read in quite a while. It is not "major," propounds no theories, participates in neither rear nor avant-garde maneuvers. Hannah Green's novel simply is, a family chronicle and a fictional memoir□always spontaneous, rich in atmosphere, its feelings specified, felt, projected. A beautiful book, nowhere bigger than itself, nowhere grander than its own scope or subject. It has been shaped with the caressing skill of a lover of people and words, but the words do not take over and perform a sideshow, and the people aren't always *that* lovable, and Hannah Green is aware of that, too....

I mean to say that I was not simply reading about childhood, or girlhood, or adolescence, about Ohio families and Indian forebears. I was also given a wonderful opportunity to get close to the imagination of another living person, an intelligence that was both gracious and funky, witty and charming. It was like falling in love. I was, for as long as it took, able to surrender my own callow-ness and smugness to the ecstasy that is fiction, is art.

Source: Richard Elman, "Great Antidote for Self-Contempt," *mNewYorkTimesBookReview,* February 13,1972, P 5

Topics for Further Study

Research the history of Native American cultures in the Ohio Valley. Write a history of the Nye family from the perspective of the people whose land was taken.

Read the first chapter of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man* and compare it to the first section of *The Dead of the House.* How do Joyce and Green convey the experience of childhood through their narrative techniques?

Apart from Eugenia, African Americans are invisible in this novel. Read Tom Morrison's *Beloved* and compare her version of Ohio history with Green's.

The Dead of the House is a semi-autobiographical novel that contains many autobiographical and biographical texts. Write an autobiography of yourself that includes the texts of your family's lives

In a 1972 *New York Times Review of Books* article, critic Richard Elman said that reading *The Dead of the House* was "like falling in love." What do you think he meant by this?

Compare and Contrast

Late 1940s: The Indian Relocation program uses government money to move Native Americans off of the reservations. The aim is to assimilate them into mainstream culture and provide economic and social opportunities.

1970s: The American Indian Movement (AIM) stages protests for the rights of native peoples, including marches on Washington, the occupations of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) Offices, and the sieges at Wounded Knee and Alcatraz Island.

Today: Government efforts strive to make Native American groups economically self-sufficient. After concerted counterintelligence operations by the Federal government, American Indian protest movements have been considerably weakened Leonard Peltier, an AIM member, is still imprisoned on what many to believe to be false charges.

1950s: In the postwar housing boom, suburbs begin springing up around major urban areas. This is fueled by the building of the national highway system.

1970s: America's major cities see large population drops as migration to the suburbs becomes epidemic. Further roads and highways are built, and the reliance on cars becomes a major issue with the OPEC gas crisis.

Today: Urban renewal schemes and public transport are key issues in many U.S. cities. Two decades of cheap gasoline have caused a resurgence in large, inefficient vehicles, even as the nation's highway infrastructure slowly crumbles.

1972: After more than a decade of civil rights protests, the fight for equality turns violent on a national scale in the mid-1960s, with race riots in major cities across America.

Today: Federal laws against discrimination are generally enforced, and abusers are subject to civil suits.

What Do I Read Next?

Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) is a collection of interlocking stories concerned with small town life in turn-of-the-century Ohio.

John Sugden's biography of Tecumseh, *Tecumseh: A Life,* was published in 1998. Sugden presents the cultural clashes, struggles, and bloody conflicts caused by westward expansion.

As I Lay Dying, the 1930 novel by William Faulkner, explores the impact and death of a family matriarch.

Virginia Woolf s *To The Lighthouse* (1927) cemented its author's reputation as one of the preeminent novelists of the twentieth century. Woolf s novel concerns a family who travel to a holiday home before and after the death of the family matriarch.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is James Joyce's experimental 1916 novel about the development of Stephen Dedalus. Like Green, Joyce uses linguistic innovation to convey the experience of maturation.

Further Study

Meyer Spacks, Patricia, *The Hudson Review,* Vol. XXV, No 3, Autumn, 1972, pp. 500-01. Offers a stylistic examination of Green's novel

Thomas, Robert M, "Hannah Green, 69, an Author Who Pursued Perfection, Dies," in *The New York Times,* October 18, 1996, Section D, p. 21

Essentially an obituary, Thomas's article reveals many interesting biographical details about Green, as well as some of the history of the book itself.

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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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