The Deep Study Guide

The Deep by Mary Swan

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Introduction

"The Deep," a novella by Canadian writer Mary Swan, was first published in the Canadian literary journal *The Malahat Review* in 2000. This story won the 2001 O. Henry Award for short fiction. "The Deep" has been republished in several books, including a collection of Swan's short fiction, *The Deep and Other Stories* (2004).

"The Deep" is a haunting tale about the life and death of twin sisters during World War I. The story is a complex weave of historical themes such as women's involvement in the war effort and more universal themes such as dysfunctional families. This story also explores the unique bond between identical twins. Swan has been writing and publishing short stories in the United States and Canada since the 1980s; "The Deep" is her most widely read and best-received work as of 2005.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: Canadian

Mary Swan is a very private person, and not much is known about her life. It is known that she graduated from York University and the University of Guelph, both in Ontario, Canada. As of 2005, she lives in Guelph, which is near Toronto, with her husband and daughter. She works at the University of Guelph library. Swan has traveled all over Europe.

As of 2005 Swan had been writing for over twenty years, ten of which were spent sporadically working on □The Deep.□ Her short stories have been published in numerous literary magazines, including *The Malahat Review*, *Harpers*, and the *Ontario Review*. Her work has also been anthologized in *Emergent Voices*, *Best Canadian Stories 92*, and *Coming Attractions*.

Swan came to popular attention when her short story □The Deep□ won the 2001 O. Henry Award. □The Deep□ was published as a novella chapbook in 2002 and then in a collection of Swan's short stories, *The Deep and Other Stories*, in 2004. Swan's other volume of short stories, *Emma's Hands*, was published by Porcupine Press in 2003.

Plot Summary

After

□The Deep□ begins with the description of a room with tall windows and gauzy curtains. This first section is short, ending with a memory of a story about a queen's funeral.

How to Begin

An unnamed narrator describes what it is like to wake up uncertain of who and where one is. While the narrator is asleep, it may be 1918 France.

Survival Suit

The unnamed narrators, twins, are preparing to leave on a journey requiring camp equipment and vaccinations. They have lunch with Miss Reilly, who gives them each a pen so they will write her letters. The twins spend the next day with their father. He is terrified about their boat passage and insists on buying them survival suits. The twins are reminded of their doll Ophelia whom they tried unsuccessfully to float in a stream.

The Castle

The twins remember their mother as a sad woman and matter-of-factly state that they killed her□by being born. Their mother was distant from them, always resting. There is an implication that she suffered from postpartum depression. The twins' older brothers despised them for making their mother ill.

When the twins were young they went crawling through the kitchen garden, pretending to be an imprisoned princess. A fair-haired, blue-eyed prince riding a white horse would come to the rescue. He looked just like their father did as a young man. Their father smelled of the city: □cigars and dust and ashes.□ They thought he did not care about them but when they were older they realize he probably just does not know what to do with daughters.

The Corporal Remembers

Corporal Easton describes the twin girls as □skittish white horses.□

The Fountain

The twins recall two portraits of their mother, one a formal painting, the other a sketch. In the sketch their mother wears a yellow dress and sits by a fountain with her sons, Marcus and James. The painting entrances the twins, □like a window to another world, and it seemed quite possible that by staring hard enough, we could step right through.□ When they are old enough to figure it out, the date on this painting indicates that their mother was pregnant with them when she posed for the artist. They realize, □we were already growing beneath that yellow dress, getting ready to smash that world to pieces.□

The twins recall how the fountain was demolished and replaced by a flower bed. When they were very young the girl watching them fell asleep. As the twins remember it, unsupervised they played under the water, finding □absolute silence and peace□ there. The final image is of two people carrying two bodies dripping wet and laying them on a stone. This image of the girls drowned foreshadows (or anticipates) their later double suicide.

Mrs. Moore

Mrs. Moore remembers the twins, Ruth and Esther, as serious-natured. She says they hung out with a young man who was handsome and funny. Mrs. Moore implies that he was being treated for a sexually transmitted disease. After he left the interim camp he would stop by to visit the twins, to work □that charm of his□ on them. She recalls how strangely identical the sisters were, even individually referring to themselves as □we.□ Mrs. Moore speculates that maybe they both fell for that young man.

The Headmistress□1

The headmistress, Miss Reilly, recalls a meeting with the twins' father in which he implores her to convince his daughters not to go abroad. She refuses on the grounds that the twins are adults. But inwardly she feels some guilt. The headmistress and the father first met fifteen years earlier when he enrolled his daughters as pupils. He and the headmistress felt an immediate connection.

She considers something that has recently happened to be her fault. She remembers the letters she wrote to the twins, reassuring them in their work abroad but feels that she missed seeing something in their letters. Lastly the headmistress remembers a young lover who went to Africa after she refused to marry him. He died of a fever there. She would not marry him because she thought she needed an education and that marriage would deter her from that path.

Sailing

The twins stand on board, watching their father wave goodbye. His frantic waving makes them think they are seeing his real self. He has always moved slowly but now he is frenetic, just as he was the day their mother died and he raced up the stairs. The twins watch their father grow smaller as the ship sails away. They wonder why this departure should be such a big deal since they've been to Europe before.

On the ship the twins meet Elizabeth. She readily talks about herself, telling the twins that she volunteered so that she could look for her brother Arthur, who drives ambulances. His family has not heard from him in over six months. The twins are struck by how different their own family is. Their brother Marcus was too busy to come to the dock and their brother James was killed in action already. They remember James coming home to get some things after he enlisted. James was full of bravado but when he put another log on the fire, he burned his finger. The twins saw his tears and asked if he was afraid and he said that he was. Their sadness over his death is not for love but for the lack of it.

Life is different in camp, running the canteen. Everything they are occupied with is much more concrete□headaches, food shortages, sore feet, missing soldiers.

The Headmistress□2

Miss Reilly recalls first meeting the twins when they interviewed to attend her school: □[T]here was no hesitation, no collision, conversation flowing easily from one or the other so that the effect was of talking to a single person.□ She refers to news about the twins, mentions a memorial service. She looks at an old portrait of them taken a couple years after they started school. The photographer, Mr. Jones, failed to capture the essence of the twins in separate portraits and had to pose them together.

Letter

The letter is from the twins to their father. They thank him for sending gifts and tell him that they are close to the front, staffing a canteen at an interim camp. They describe their daily routine and the people they work with□primarily Mrs. Moore and Berthe. Although the work is hard, they feel it is important. On their free day they go to nearby hospitals and volunteer.

Stain

The twins remember their mother died on a Sunday morning in early June. Someone cried out and everyone went running to her room. Their father dropped his ink pen as he dashed up the stairs and Mrs. B picked it up. The pen made a stain in her apron pocket that spread as if □slowly to cover [the twins'] whole lives.□

Marcus

Marcus remembers, on the day the girls were born, being called home from school because his mother was dying. He and his brother James tried killing the twins a few times. The twins seemed distant, almost foreign to him. The day of their mother's funeral the twins sliced themselves with glass. Marcus and James were glad to hear them cry.

The War Book

The twins conceive of a book they call *The War Book* in which they would record all the individual moments, questions, answers, and observations that people experience during the war. And that would be the only way to communicate it, to give someone an idea of how it was.

The twins remember Hugh's story about his childhood friend Tom. Hugh and Tom signed up for the war together, and one quiet morning Tom was killed by a sniper while Hugh was bent over looking at something on the ground. Hugh became obsessed with trying to figure out if there were a way it could have been avoided and Tom's life saved.

Rain

The twins think about the rain that falls at the end of a tiring day. They think about how the rain is falling all across the country, straight to the Atlantic Ocean where beneath the surface everything is still and quiet. They think about their empty bedroom in England and declare that it is impossible for them to be there now.

In His Study the Father Closes His Eyes

The father feels the absence of his children in the house. He has decided to sell his house now that his wife and three of his children are dead. He mourns for the twins, recalling how he waved madly to them from the dock in the hopes that it would help them remember where to return.

His second son Marcus is still alive, living in the city. The father wonders if he will marry and have children of his own. Marcus is a successful businessman. The war has been good for business and that carries its own kind of guilt.

The twins' father remembers Anne Reilly, the headmistress. He acknowledges that there was always a possibility of a relationship with her. He remembers their first meeting, how he opened up to her. He kept on guard around her after that.

Soldiers�1

The twins recall a story Hugh told them. A soldier named Baker survived an assault and appeared to be fine. About two weeks later he began to cry and could not stop except when he was sleeping. Baker swore he was happy but he was so busy constantly clearing tears from his vision that his company had to send him back to civilian life.

Soldiers�2

Smythe, a soldier at the interim camp, was a �pig of a man� with little eyes. He offered to help the twins with a heavy pot and grabbed one of them around the waist. Hugh intervened, sending Smythe away. This was the first time the twins met Hugh.

Soldiers�3

The twins recall seeing a woman in a car in front of them while they were in Paris. She was with an officer and they knew she was a hired escort and hoped she would be treated well. But even as they thought it the officer grabbed her head and forced it down.

They also remember at a café sitting next to a table where two soldiers were filling an eleven-year-old boy with wine, chocolate, and friendly words. The twins see these bullies, cowards, and liars are also fighting for their country but their deaths in the trenches seem less of a tragedy.

Thinking about Home

Home was a remembered context that sustained people during the war, a reminder of a normal life; however, people superstitiously did not talk about going home. The twins recall standing in a smelly, smoky train station and seeing a mud- and blood-stained ten-year-old girl carrying a baby. They go to her, take the baby, and guide her toward those who can help.

Mrs. Moore misses her daughter, who is about to have a baby. The soldiers all have letters about home, even Smythe. �So even if they don't speak about *after*, it's always there, and home is something to go back to.� At the hospital the twins help a boy whose hands had been blown off. They suggest he cut his thick, curly hair but he says he will not because his girlfriend at home loves to push back his hair. Another boy at the hospital is very ill and heavily drugged. He endlessly repeats a list, and people eventually deduce that it is a list of street names. No one knows him or where he is from so people guess that it is a route he imagines using to walk back home.

The twins think about their life back in England and feel distanced from it. They cannot remember ever being apart. Their experiences are thoroughly intertwined.

Interview

The twins tell a journalist□in response to a question about what it is like near the front□about walking along and finding an amputated child's hand.

Nan

Nan was originally caretaker to the twins' mother, Alice, and planned to retire to her sister's seaside cottage after the twins were born. She stayed on after the birth of the twins left Alice weak. Nan remembers the twins were serious as children but still normal. They had a secret language when they were five years old. They never really had close friends in school□just each other. Nan, like the twins' father, blames Miss Reilly for using her influence on the girls to get them to help out with the war effort. Nan remembers that □[t]alking to them was like talking to one person.□ She could not imagine them as married, normal adults. They came to visit her before they left for France. She tried to convince them not to go but they were determined. She knew she would not see them again.

In the Cellar

The twins run into Elizabeth in the cellar of a Parisian hotel during an air raid alert. She is very thin from being ill with the flu. Her family got word that Art died, and now Elizabeth is trying to find his burial place and take a picture of it. She confides in the twins that she feels broken and does not know how to go home. The twins comfort her and assure her that it will be all right, but they feel hypocritical.

The Sea King

The twins remember Nan's stories about the Sea King, an angry, wrathful figure. They wonder if he is not mad but sad because he has lost his children to the world of men. They see themselves as the Sea King's lost daughters.

Classmates

This section is told from the point of view of an old classmate, Jane. The twins run into Jane and Marjorie at a café in Paris. They are helping refugees but envy the twins for being so close to the front lines. The classmates' remembrances of the war are much lighter, and they do not appear to be emotionally damaged the way the twins and Elizabeth are.

Yellow Leaves

The twins remember how they were surprised by the noisiness of camp when they first arrived. During their last morning at home they sat outside and listened to leaves falling as the sun warmed the ice that encased them. Now they hear the horses, cars, feet, planes, and other sounds of the world mashed together: □This is the sound of the modern world, the world we are fighting for.□

Letter

In a letter address to Miss Reilly, the twins express unhappiness that their father is making so much money off the war. They tell her how Paris is changed by the war, with taped up windows, sandbags, and soldiers. They write about their old classmates, remarking that she must be proud that so many of her students have joined the war effort. The twins wonder whether they could be of more use working with refugees or helping in a hospital. But their work at the canteen is also important.

They write about a dance they have to attend that night. They do not like the dances because the men vastly outnumber the women and the room is hot and crowded. They change partners every two minutes and sometimes there are fights.

The twins report seeing their first Germans recently; they noted how they were no different than their own men. □Oh, sometimes this war seems like a terrible machine, carried along by its own momentum. Chewing up lives and spitting them out.□ They wonder whether it was right to get involved with the war.

Sainte Germaine

The twins ask Hugh what it is like to fight in the war. He says it is mostly boring and that it has its own kind of logic. The three of them take an outing to Bar sur Aube and sit watching a well in the town square. They see one woman subtly ostracized by the others and make the connection between this scene and what Hugh is saying about war having its own logic.

They leave town to go swimming in a river. The twins admire Hugh for not bothering to try and tell them apart like most people do. □As if together we were too much for them, as if the only way they could deal with us was to divide, diminish us.□ The twins enjoy the swim in the river until they hit a cold patch in the water, panic, and quickly get out. Hugh asks them about the scars on their legs, and they tell him about their mother's death and how they acted out by drawing these lines on their legs with glass.

Hugh asks what it is like to be a twin. They tell him that it is safe because twins are never alone. He tells them about being raised by his widowed aunt□his parents are supposedly dead but he does not completely believe it. He tells them about his life-long friend Tom who shared his family with Hugh.

They retire to a nearby inn which is on a cliff. Hugh says it is the cliff of Sainte Germaine. Attila was camped on this cliff and demanded the town of Bar send up a pretty girl. They sent Germaine who, when she reached the top, ran off the edge of the cliff. Hugh argues that living is still the better choice.

On the drive back, Ruth wakes to hear Esther laughing with Hugh in the dark car.

Hugh

Hugh wants a quiet place to retire. When he first saw the twins and their twinned movements in the canteen, he found that quiet place inside himself. He would stay after the canteen closed and help clean up, then the three of them would talk. He saved things he saw to tell them; he liked to make them laugh. He learned about their deaths from an old newspaper while he was in Germany after the war.

About the Sentry

The sentry saw something that changed him imperceptibly and irrevocably. He blamed himself for what happened, but it is not clear yet what has occurred.

Near the Field of Crosses

Ruth thinks about how lives are made up of memories and moments strung together. She notes that each cross marks a life lived. Once she and Esther shared all their experiences, but then Ruth had a private and separate memory of waking in a dark car and hearing her sister and Hugh laughing.

In the Evening

Esther remembers the drive back from Bar sur Aube. Esther and Hugh talked while Ruth was asleep in the backseat, and Esther was overwhelmed by the sense that Hugh was talking only to her. One night she waits until Ruth is busy writing a letter. She takes a walk, hoping to intercept Hugh but he never comes. She is late arriving at the canteen and lies about why to Ruth. Hugh does not come to the canteen that night and the next day they see him as he is leaving with other soldiers. He went to a bar the night before and looks beaten up. Esther feels the chasm between her and her sister begin to widen.

Armistice

When the gunfire ceases for good, Berthe weeps. Everyone goes into town to celebrate, but the revelry is so frenzied and drunken that the twins return to camp. They hoped to sleep well, but instead they dream of dead men.

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Teacup

The twins receive papers releasing them from duty. They miss their original camp, seeing now strange faces and fighting among restless men ready to go home. But also a new distance exists between the twins which has been developing since the night Esther lied to her sister. Their disconnection makes Esther think of Nan's teacup, which broke. Even though Nan fixed it and it still held liquid, one could see the place where it split.

Journey

The twins board a crowded train. The other people are happy, but the twins feel trapped. They remember the pleasure of sitting at a window on a rainy day, reading, imagining a hero appearing: On the train we understood that there were no heroes, that such a life could not possibly be ours. They traveled for two days on the train, watching the passing scenery of blasted villages and people on foot. Their heads hurt. They eventually arrive in Bordeaux where they are swept along again, almost helplessly, up onto the ship to cross the English Channel.

Dr. Maitland

Dr. Maitland, a medical doctor aboard the ship, goes to see the twins in their cabin before the ship sails. One is pacing and the other is sitting at a desk, writing. They tell the doctor that they have not slept in two days and their heads hurt a lot. She gives them a sedative and promises to return in the morning. In retrospect, after the twins die, the doctor wonders how she could have prevented their double suicide. She understands that the war has been stressful and returning to a normal life is incomprehensible.

The Deep

The twins feel separated from each other, in pieces, grating against each other. Their heads hurt. They realize they are the same age their mother was when they were born. Their ills are beyond the help of the sedatives the doctor gives them. They finally decide what they have to do when the beam from the lighthouse cuts through their cabin.

Testimony of the Sentry

The sentry, Walter Allingham, saw two young women walking on deck around seven o'clock. They stopped at the bow and first one then the other quickly climbed the rail and jumped into the water.

After

Muffled sounds come through two tall windows draped in thin, white curtains. The twins wonder if someone has died.

Characters

Mr. A

See Father

Alice

See Mother

Walter Allingham

See Sentry

Mrs. B

Mrs. B is the housekeeper for the twins' family.

Baker

Baker is a soldier who survives an attack only to later be afflicted with tear ducts that run constantly, rendering him incapable of serving in combat. His story is ironic because he was a comedian before the war and now he cannot stop crying.

Berthe

Berthe is a French woman from a nearby town who works with the twins and Mrs. Moore at the canteen. She only speaks French but the twins translate for her. When the guns stop firing on Armistice Day, she weeps.

Corporal Easton

Corporal Easton drives the twins and others into town to celebrate on Armistice Day. He describes the twins as skittish white horses.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a British girl whom the twins meet on their crossing to France. She has light-colored hair, blue eyes, and is about twenty-two years old. She is very open about herself, telling the twins that she has signed up as a nurse so that she can come to

France and look for her younger brother, Arthur, who drives ambulances. Their family has not heard from him in six months and is very worried. She has four other younger siblings, and their father is very ill so they do not have a lot of money.

When next the twins meet Elizabeth, after the Armistice, she is broken inside like they are, unsure of how to return home. She is very thin from a bout with influenza. She has learned her brother died shortly after arriving and has spent her time trying to find his burial place and take a photograph of it.

Esther

Esther is Ruth's identical twin and one of the central characters in this story. The father of the twins tells the two apart because he notes that Esther has a higher arch to her eyebrows. The twins are calm and serious, always referring to themselves as □we.□ Their mother became gravely ill from their birth and she died a few years later. Their two older brothers hate them for being born and taking their mother's vitality. Their father is remote but not unkind, and the twins suspect this is because he does not know what to do with daughters.

When the twins are eleven their father sends them to a nearby school. When they are twenty-six years old, under the influence of their former headmistress Miss Reilly, they decide to sign up to help with the war. They are given short notice to prepare to leave. Their father becomes very worried and attentive.

They are assigned to work at a canteen in an interim camp near the front lines in eastern France. They give out cigarettes, coffee, cocoa, sandwiches, and cakes. They help the soldiers with small tasks such as writing letters and mending clothes. They befriend a particular soldier, Hugh, who has a profound impact on their lives. On the return drive from a vacation in a nearby town, Esther and Hugh stay up talking and laughing while Ruth falls asleep. Esther later tries to intercept Hugh alone but he is elsewhere. A rift begins between her and her sister.

The war ends soon thereafter and their heads pound as they numbly go through the motions of returning home. Shortly after their ship sails for England, they jump overboard, committing suicide.

Father

Mr. A is father to James, Marcus, Ruth, and Esther. He is a grey-haired, successful businessman who appears to have had all the trappings of a happy life at one point. But his wife was very weak after their twin daughters were born and a few years later she died. His sons are sent away to boarding school because they threaten the lives of the twins. When the twins are eleven their father sends them to a nearby school as day pupils. He and the headmistress Anne Reilly have a spark between them, but she is confused by it and he chooses to ignore it because she makes him feel so vulnerable.

His eldest son James died in the war as a soldier. When Ruth and Esther sign up to help in the war abroad, their father tries to get them to stay home and, failing that, buys them rubber and cork survival suits to take on their boat crossing. He writes them letters and feels guilty for making profit off the war.

After his daughters commit suicide, he decides he must sell his empty house. His only remaining child, Marcus, lives in the city and has a career as a businessman. The father wonders if Marcus will marry, have children, and lead a normal life.

Hugh

Hugh is a British soldier in France. He smokes a pipe and wears worn smoke-colored sweaters and socks made for him by a girl back home. Hugh was raised by his aunt because his parents are either missing or dead. He and his childhood friend Tom enlisted in the war together; Tom is killed one quiet morning by sniper fire that could have just as easily killed Hugh, who was right next to him.

Hugh meets the twins at an interim camp near the front lines. For Hugh, the twins fulfill a need for peacefulness. The three quickly become friends, taking trips together on their days off. Returning from one of these trips, Esther becomes romantically interested in Hugh while her sister Ruth is asleep. Before a relationship can develop, Hugh is sent back to the trenches. After the war ends, Hugh is sent to Germany, and it is there, in an old newspaper, that he learns of the twins' suicide.

James

James is the twins' older brother and the eldest child of the four. He is described as stocky, with pale eyes and a square chin. He takes after his father. James is arrogant and despises his younger sisters for causing his mother to become ill and eventually die. He and his brother Marcus, as children, try to kill the twins. The boys are sent away to boarding school. When World War I breaks out, James enlists and dies very soon after he is sent off to fight.

Jane

Jane is an old classmate of the twins' from Miss Reilly's school. She lives in Paris with former classmate, Marjorie. They work with war refugees, but Jane is jealous of the twins because the twins work close to the front lines.

Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones is a young photographer who is hired in 1905 by Miss Reilly to take portraits of the students and staff of her school. He is very serious about his art, retaking portraits whenever they do not meet his artistic standard. He is never satisfied with his

photographs of the twins until he poses them together. They are about thirteen years old at the time.

Dr. Maitland

Dr. Maitland is a medical doctor on the ship departing France for England at the end of the war. She visits the twins in their room on the ship after they complain of headaches and insomnia. She gives them a sedative. When their suicide is later reported, she states that there was no way she could have known that they posed this risk to themselves.

Marcus

Marcus is the twins' brother. He is older than the twins and younger than James. Like James, he is pale, but unlike James, he is tall. As children he follows James's lead, participating in attempts to murder their younger sisters. As an adult, he becomes a successful businessman like his father and lives in the city. He is the only child left alive at the end of the story, and his father wonders if Marcus will marry and have children.

Marjorie

Marjorie, an old classmate of the twins, is Jane's roommate in Paris where they work with war refugees.

Mrs. Moore

Mrs. Moore is the woman in charge of the interim camp canteen to which the twins are assigned during the war. She dates Dr. Thomas until he is sent home and then she dates Colonel MacAndrew. She has a daughter back home who is about to have her first baby.

Mother

Ruth and Esther's mother, Alice, loses her health after the birth of her twin daughters. Her condition is never specified but may be postpartum depression. She lingers on for several years, resting all the time and rarely interacting with her children. For this condition, the twins are resented by their brothers.

Nan

Nan is the twins' Irish nanny. She was the nanny for their mother Alice before they were born. Nan planned on retiring to her sister's seaside cottage but stayed with Alice after

the twins were born because Alice was so weak from the birth. Nan grew up on an island and misses the seashore. She never does make it to her sister's cottage because her sister dies before Nan can retire.

Miss Anne Reilly

Miss Reilly is the headmistress for a girls' boarding school. Ruth and Esther attend her school as day pupils. Attractive and intelligent, she has focused on her education and career rather than pursuing romance. She was raised by her aunt and uncle after her parents died and it was an unpleasant situation. When she was young, she turned down a young man's offer of marriage because she felt she needed to get an education rather than be a wife. He shortly thereafter went to Africa and died of a fever. There is a spark of interest between Miss Reilly and the twins' widowed father, but neither does anything about it.

Miss Reilly feels guilty for not having better prepared Ruth and Esther to deal emotionally with the war, thus possibly saving them from suicide. Other people—the twins' father and Nan—also feel Miss Reilly bears responsibility for what happens to the twins.

Ruth

Ruth is Ether's identical twin sister. The twins are extremely close, to the point that they seamlessly complete each others' sentences and refer to themselves as “we.” They consider themselves responsible for their mother's death simply by being born. They never get along with their two brothers, who hate them for making their mother so ill. Their father is not a warm man, although he does care about them.

Ruth and her sister sign up to aid in the war effort abroad, inspired by the confidence of their former headmistress, Miss Anne Reilly. They believe what she says, that women can change the world. They are assigned to work in an interim camp canteen in France near the front lines. While there they become friends with a soldier named Hugh. On a night drive home from a short holiday, Ruth falls asleep in the backseat of the car. She wakes up to hear Esther laughing with Hugh. Later she is struck that up until then her experiences and Esther's have been exactly the same. Esther falls for Hugh. Nothing happens between them, but the close relationship between the sisters is changed forever. Without the stability of that relationship, broken and hurting from what they see and experience of the war, Ruth and her sister Esther commit suicide by jumping off the bow of the ship bound for home.

Sentry

The sentry, Walter Allingham, of the 339th Field Artillery, is stationed on deck the Sunday night the twins take their lives. He sees them walk past him and then they climb the rail and jump before he can stop them.

Smythe

Smythe, who has a wife and three children back home, is a creepy soldier with small eyes. He makes the twins uncomfortable, getting too close physically after he offers to help them clean the canteen one night. Hugh intervenes and Smythe leaves.

Tom

Tom is Hugh's childhood friend. Tom and his family befriend Hugh when he is left to be raised by his aunt after his parents die. Tom and Hugh enlist in the war together. Tom is killed by sniper fire one quiet morning while Hugh is bent over looking at something on the ground. Hugh is devastated by the death of his friend but manages to carry on.

Themes

Dysfunctional Relationships

Relationships are highlighted in this story because of how the story is told. Half the story is told from the twins' point of view and the other half is told from that of people who knew the twins with varying levels of intimacy. The twins are not very close to anyone except each other, and in fact, their closeness seems to exclude others.

They never have much of a relationship with their mother whose health is fragile. She is always removed from them, resting up in her room or on the verandah, watching them from a distance. She dies while the twins are very young, depriving them of an important relationship in their formative years.

The ruined relationship between the twins and their older brothers is a direct result of the twins' birth and, later, their mother's death. James and Marcus resent and hate the twins because they hold the twins responsible for their mother's ill health. Marcus and Nan both refer to attempts by the boys to kill their sisters. In order to protect the twins, the boys are sent away to school.

Their father is a successful businessman who had a perfect life□with wife, house, and sons□before the twins are born. He does not appear to ever be upset with his daughters or even blame them for the role they played in altering his apparently perfect family life. The twins suspect, however, that he does not know what to do with them because they are girls. Their impulse is both to act out against him and show off to make him proud.

Hugh has the most complex effect on the twins of all the people they meet during the war. The three of them are drawn together, as if they are kindred spirits, but Hugh unwittingly comes between the two women, affecting them in a way that no one else ever has. Esther is drawn to Hugh and to the sense of individuality that she feels when talking to him while her sister is asleep. This small event initiates a wedge between the sisters, which gives them separate experiences and suggests to them that heroes will not come to them. This awareness co-occurs with the end of the war.

In the end the most dysfunctional relationship in this story is the one between the twins because it is so close that the exclusion of others is an increasing strain as they get older. Any small intrusion is catastrophic to their balance because they are unused to individuality and to sharing each other with other people.

Roles of Women

□The Deep□ examines the roles of women in Europe during the early 1900s. The twins fulfill many traditional roles such as daughter, sister, student, and domestic help. As students of Miss Reilly, they are encouraged to act out their nurturance and charity for

others. So when World War I begins, the twins sign up to help the war effort. They are sent to eastern France, near the front lines. There they work in a canteen in an interim camp, supplying soldiers with hot drinks, food, cigarettes, and a place to sit and relax. On their days off, the twins help out the over-burdened staff at nearby hospitals. Whenever there is a dance, they have to go because the women are extremely outnumbered by the men. They loathe this duty because even though it is deemed important for morale, there is nothing romantic or graceful about these dances. They are just female bodies for entertaining or comforting the soldiers.

Survival

The story of the twins' life is one of survival. They are born to a mother who barely lives through the birth, and because of the threat they posed to her life, they immediately come under threat from their own brothers. When their mother finally dies, they cut their legs with glass found in the kitchen garden but are luckily found and cleaned up before anything worse happens.

As adults, the twins resolve to help in the war effort. Then faced with the horrors of war, like the soldiers, they struggle to find a way to return to normal life. Although their life never was normal, they cannot return to what they knew before the war. Onboard the ship to return home, their relationship with each other in tatters, the twins realize they cannot survive this world any longer as they are. They take their lives by jumping overboard and drowning, thereby erasing their need to understand what has happened and find a way to continue living.

Hugh, by contrast, survives the loss of his best and oldest friend, Tom. He feels incredible guilt that it was Tom's life taken by the sniper's bullet and not his. Hugh searches for answers as to why Tom died but eventually comes to accept that there is no rational answer. He also survives his friendship with the twins, which became subtly volatile when one sister yearned for his separate attention. There is an implication that Hugh understood what was going on because on his last night at the interim camp, he went to a bar rather than to the canteen as was his habit. Thus he avoided meeting up with Esther alone. Unfortunately, irreparable damage had already been done to the twins' relationship.

Style

Non-Linear Narrative

The plot is told in a non-linear form, meaning that it is not chronological but jumps around in time. Half of the story pieces are told by the twins and generally are presented chronologically from their departure from England for France to the moment when they commit suicide in the English Channel on the return trip. Their narrations are filled with flashbacks.

The other narrative sections are told by people who are acquainted with the twins. These include everyone from their father to the woman in charge of the canteen where they work during the war. All of these sections are told from a time after the twins have died and some read as if the person speaking is being interviewed about his or her experiences with the twins.

Characterization

Characterization involves delineating details regarding physical attributes, personality, and history. Characterization is achieved by showing (rather than telling) the reader what a character thinks, what a character says and does, and what others say about the character. The many characters are dramatized in separate sections in which they have their separate opportunities to give their perceptions regarding the twins. Those who knew the twins focus on their memories of them; even minor characters give their remembrances of the twins. In this way they serve as witnesses, helping to explain the past and perhaps in part explaining the double suicide. For example, the head mistress is guilt-ridden for having encouraged the girls to volunteer; forlorn Elizabeth testifies to the effect war has on civilians who for whatever reasons went to war-torn France, the twins' sad and lonely father expresses how a man feels who outlives his children. Such a large number of characters in a short story can have the negative effect of complicating the storyline, but Swan expertly focuses their separate perceptions of the twins. Through their perspectives, Swan provides a fuller context in which to analyze what exactly happened to the twins that may account for their double suicide.

Historical Context

World War I

World War I (1914-1918), also known as the Great War, was the largest war known in history up to that point. The catalyst for the war was the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, by a Serbian rebel. The reasons for the outbreak of war are still debated although many agree that rising nationalism across Europe and western Asia as well as a heated arms race had much to do with the quick actions countries such as Russia and Austria-Hungary took over what initially appeared to be a minor conflict.

The Allied Powers of World War I were Britain, Russia, and France. The Central Powers were Germany and Austria-Hungary. Many other nations were involved in the war, whether willingly or not, such as Serbia, Belgium, Italy, Japan, the Ottoman Empire, Greece, China, Brazil, and the United States. This war is infamous for its trench warfare, chemical warfare, and air bombings. More than 9 million people died as a result of World War I; over 23 million were wounded.

World War I ended with a series of armistices, or cease-fire agreements, the final one being signed by Germany on November 11, 1918. The Treaty of Versailles, signed on June 28, 1919, marked the official end of the war and assigned much of the blame and reparation responsibility to Germany. During the Great War, four empires fell□German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian□leaving the map of Europe and Western Asia dramatically changed. The war also redefined how conflicts were fought between modern nations.

Women's Suffrage

Suffrage is defined as the civil right to vote. Women's suffrage was an important social and political issue that surfaced in the nineteenth century and was heatedly debated in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the United States women won the right to vote in 1920. It took five years of debate in Congress and the Senate to pass the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which states, □The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.□

In the United Kingdom, a series of laws permitting women of specific ages, marital statuses, and classes to vote were passed between 1869 and 1918. In 1928 a woman's right to vote was made equal to that of a man's in the United Kingdom. Women did not have the right to vote in France until 1945, after World War II.

World War I aided women's suffrage in all countries. Many men were either off fighting or dead, so women had to step into roles men traditionally held at home and in the

workplace and to earn money for their families. This drove many women to seek an equal voice in political representation.

Critical Overview

Swan's work has received limited critical attention. Swan published about a dozen stories in various literary magazines across North America and had no books published before she won the 2001 O. Henry Award with her story �The Deep.� Some journals in which her work was published are high caliber publications, such as *Harpers* and the *Ontario Review*. �The Deep� was republished in Swan's first book, a collection of short stories, *The Deep and Other Stories*. This collection was short-listed for the 2003 Commonwealth Writer's Prize �Best First Book� category.

In her introduction to Swan's story in the official O. Henry award volume, Mary Gordon, one of the judges for the 2001 O. Henry Award, commended Swan and �The Deep�:

I chose this story as first among so many strong others because of its utter originality, its daring to assert the primacy of complexity and mystery, its avoidance of the current appetite for ironic anomie and thinness.

Reviews of the �The Deep� have mostly been praiseworthy. Harvey Grossinger, writing for the *Houston Chronicle*, considers Swan's win to be �deserving.� Charles May, writing for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in a broader article about judging �best� stories, says that Swan's story �nicely embodies all three of the criteria of poetry, mystery, and large truths urged by short fiction writers over the years.�

However, an anonymous reviewer for *M2 Best Books* is less taken with �The Deep� than most people, describing the story as beautiful but too distant for readers to sympathize with the characters. Yet a *Publishers Weekly* anonymous review describes *The Deep and Other Stories* as �an intense, accomplished first collection.� A review in *Kirkus Reviews* states that the collection is �wonderful.� Prudence Peiffer for *Library Journal* also celebrates Swan's rich prose, writing that Swan has a �strong command of metaphorical language.� Marta Segal for *Booklist* describes Swan's collection as �graceful� and concludes that �Swan has a calm, almost resigned voice.�

Unfortunately, Swan's other work has not received the same admiration as her award-winning story. Grossinger acknowledges this disappointment, stating that none of the other stories in her collection *The Deep and Other Stories* �displays either the mastery of craft or the intellectual reach of 'The Deep.'� Reviews of Swan's second collection *Emma's Hands* are mixed at best.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Carol Ullmann is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, Ullmann examines the complexity of relationships in Swan's short story The Deep.

Mary Swan's "The Deep" is a novella rich with characters. The twins Ruth and Esther are at the axis of the interconnections between characters—each has relevance to the narrative because of his or her relationship to the twins. This story tells the life and death of the twins through the people they have known. Half of the story is told through their own eyes and from their memories and half is from the perspective and memory of people the twins have known. The twins have affected them all.

Ruth and Esther's family relationships are at once sad, strange, and yet familiar in the sense that no one's family is perfect. All families suffer unhappy times, anger, grief, distance, dysfuntionality, discord, regret, aggression, and other skeletons. While the reader experiences the twins' family traumas and tensions firsthand from many of the family members involved, it is actually the twins' friendship with Elizabeth that exposes how odd Ruth and Esther feel about their family. They see Elizabeth's family as loving while their own is cold and haunted. They do not feel they can expose the environment they come from to her for fear that she will not understand—or else understand too well and have it reflect badly upon them.

The twins' dead mother, Alice, and their alienated older brothers, James and Marcus, seem more standard fare for the dysfunctional family. Their mother's condition is only alluded to but she appears to suffer from debilitating postpartum depression following the birth of the twins. If she was depressed, she may have died by committing suicide—but the author gives no clues about this. James and Marcus grow up hating the twins for what they see as taking their mother from them. The reason for this emotion is understandable on the one hand and terrible on the other. Marcus explains, "James thought we should kill them, and we tried a few times. I don't remember how, childish things I'm sure, but someone always stopped us."

Their father, Mr. A, is much more complex than the other family members. He is a man who is simultaneously successful and a failure. He has done very well as a businessman and even in his personal life once performed well by securing the beautiful wife, the charming country estate, and not one son, but two. In his twin daughters he has both his future and the end of his earlier successful era. Although business continues to thrive—even flourish magnificently, disgustingly—during the war, the father pays on the personal front. His wife's health declines after the birth of their twin daughters; his sons hate their younger sisters and try to kill them; his wife dies; and the twins grow up strange, remote, and serious. They are normal enough as children, despite their seriousness, but Nan had her doubts for their future: "I used to wonder how they would ever get married and have a normal life. It was impossible to imagine them separated like that."

The twins' father seems to first realize, or perhaps first express, the importance of what he has in his daughters when they prepare to leave. Since they are female he perhaps never conceived that they too would leave for war. For a man who has already lost a wife and a son, he seems to feel the loss of his daughters at the mere suggestion of their assignment abroad. Failing to convince them to stay and failing to convince their former headmistress, Miss Reilly, to talk them into staying, he does the only thing he can think of to keep them safe short of going with them. He insists on buying them survival suits: rubber suits lined with cork designed to keep a person afloat and alive for 48 hours should their ship go down. The twins think it is silly but they go along with the purchase of the suits to appease their father in this small way. "Father seemed quite relieved that he had been able to purchase what was required to keep us safe." It is ironic that they later die by drowning. "Someone had told him that the crossing was more dangerous than anything we'd be close to in France. . . ." This is both true and not true—the twins commit suicide on the return crossing but the damage is done to them while they are in France.

The purchase of the survival suits is the father's hopeless gesture against fate. In one way or another, his daughters' lives had been under threat since they were born. He has done what he must to keep them safe (such as sending his sons to boarding school) but he has never been warm and affectionate with his daughters, which may be underlined by his own ambivalence about their presence in his life, a presence that heralded family hardship. If he blames them at all for the death of their mother, though, it is never apparent. Instead they appear to slip from his grasp as surely as their mother did.

Miss Anne Reilly, the twins' headmistress, inspires the twins with her talk of the capabilities of women and how women can do their part in the war effort. The twins and other classmates of theirs decide to sign up to help out after they graduate from school when the war breaks out. Miss Reilly, faced with the outcome of her influence—the suicide of the twins—and the twins' father asking her to intervene so they won't leave in the first place, begins to realize what her power is. "It comes to me that all the things I've said and done, all the battles fought, have been from this position of warmth and comfort." She wonders if she has used her power correctly and if she has properly prepared her students. "Perhaps I should have given them armor. Taught them to think but not to feel, taught them to save themselves."

Miss Reilly sends the twins off with her best intentions, her righteous conviction. She gives them pens and keeps up a correspondence. She is mentor and friend to them, but ultimately feels she has failed to support them as a mentor or friend would. She does not listen to what they say in their letters, only hearing what she wants to hear. The twins did not know how to process the horrors and pains they had experienced and then return to what they had once known at home. No normal future existed for them because of their upbringing, their unusual closeness as sisters, their lack of close friends, and their alienation from their family.

Miss Reilly herself has always chosen the practical over the romantic—an education over a potential husband and later she chooses pride over Mr. A, understanding him as a shrewd businessman rather than a grieving widower. The romantic interest between

Miss Reilly and the twins' father is undeclared and unexplored. Neither is therefore able to provide the twins with a role model for a healthy romantic relationship.

The one apparent romantic interest for the twins was Hugh. He was a fast and true friend to them both, finding an elusive inner peace he long sought after meeting the twins, in their strange and perfect synchronicity. It is ironic, then, that Hugh is the catalyst for the discord that develops and quickly destroys Ruth and Esther. Esther's interest in Hugh□the simple first infatuation of youth□develops from a nighttime car ride where she finds herself talking to him alone while Ruth sleeps. She relishes the feeling that he is focused on *her* and this sense of individuality strengthens her but at the expense of her sister's strength.

Overcome with awkwardness concerning the trip home, unsure how they can reconcile their wartime experiences with the life that was and will be, the twins are emotionally unstable. This is not an unusual condition for those who experienced and survived the war, whether they were soldiers or not. Elizabeth suffers the same reluctance to go home and appeals to the twins: □'Something is broken in me. It's all just a horrible mess, and there's no meaning in any of it.'□ Dr. Maitland also refers to the difficulties many people have returning to a normal life after the war: □You can't imagine what it was like, the stress we'd all been living under.□

Hugh tips the scale. Although he has found his inner peace in the existence of these twins, he unwittingly robs them of their peace. The broken feeling the war has left the twins with becomes a throb in their heads that will not quit. Without each other they are groundless and without purchase. Their home was actually always in each other□and they lose that before they leave France.

The relationship between twins has long been a mystery of human nature. Swan's story takes this inexplicable, almost supernatural relationship to an extreme to illustrate her tale about women during the Great War. The twining of relationships throughout this story makes the net that holds the narrative together as it loops back and forth through the lives of Ruth and Esther.

Source: Carol Ullmann, Critical Essay on □The Deep,□ in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

BOOKRAGS

Critical Essay #2

Monahan has a Ph.D. in English and operates an editing service, The Inkwell Works. In the following essay, Monahan examines various ways in which Mary Swan explores the concept of identity in the case of identical twins.

Mary Swan's story □The Deep□ explores the concept of identity by tracing the complicated psychological development of identical twin sisters, whose sexual maturation ends their exclusive childhood relationship and contributes to their double suicide. The natural process of differentiation is stalled in the case of Esther and Ruth by their inability to relinquish their initial relationship to each other in the face of attachment to a sexual partner. Partly they are unable because of their distorted relationship to their mother, their alleged role in her death, and the way their births supposedly destroyed the world of the family that existed before them. Feeling guilty for having been born and facing early on the death of their soldier brother James, the twins volunteer to serve behind the Western Front. This work submerges them in the surreal social disruption and trauma of war at the same time that it exposes them to adult sexual interaction. The narrative comes piecemeal, through the twins' statements as they go through their experiences and by others who reflect about them after the fact of their deaths. In this multiple handling of point of view, Swan gives readers a chance to see the twins from their own perspective and from the perspective of witnesses who seek to understand what happened to them. One important message in the story is that in the case of Esther and Ruth sexual attachment to a partner corrodes their conjoined identity and paradoxically in order to save this sense of self they elect to kill themselves.

Awareness of separate identity is a developmental process: the fetus in utero probably does not distinguish itself from its mother. After birth, the baby begins to sense that its mother is separate from itself and indeed that the self exists even when the mother is absent. (Peek-a-boo games illustrate this discovery of the separate self and the pleasure of reconnection with the returning other who is not the self.) However, in the case of identical twins this process of differentiation is likely to be complicated by the very fact that the world of each twin presents a carbon copy of the self. For each sister, to be in the world with the identical sibling is to experience the self as both subject and object; the self and also its focal point or mirror image. In Swan's story, the protagonists are unable to adapt and evolve separately, and facing debilitating psychic fragmentation, they choose suicide, jumping overboard into the salt sea, which suggests a return to the amniotic fluid in which they began. In this case in which identity is established through exclusive identification with the twin, one sibling's nascent sexual attachment to a soldier heralds the siblings' destruction.

From early on Esther and Ruth see themselves as one (they speak of □our headache,□ □our skin□). The two are inseparable and speak in unison, generally using the first-person plural, □we,□ instead of the first-person singular, □I.□ Miss Riley reports that speaking to them had □the effect . . . of talking to a single person.□ They share the same experience and the same relationship with parents who do not seem pressed to distinguish them from each other. Their mother calls each of them, □my darling.□ When

she dies after a long siege of postpartum depression, their older brothers accuse the twins of murdering her, and the twins accept that accusation as a fait accompli (completed act): □We killed her, of course; everyone knew that.□ Esther and Ruth turn inward perhaps all the more for being born into a family in which the mother dies early on and the father (who is a surviving twin himself) absents himself psychologically, in which older male sibs blame them for destroying a perfect family by being born into it. In part children look to their parents and older siblings for clues about their own identity, for familial characteristics, shared attitudes and beliefs, a common lifestyle. But in this case, the twins are oddly unable to identify with their birth family; they are more alike between themselves than they are like any other member of the family. As their nurse Nan says, □they only had each other.□ Away in Europe the twins think of home, but not as □something to go back to□ but rather as □something to figure out, to understand.□ By contrast to the problem home presents to them, they are pleased with being twins: □It's safe,□ they tell Hugh.

The narrow world of family home and property and the wider world of school and later volunteer service in Europe penetrate that twins' safety by increasing increments and finally erode it. As children, the sisters remain quite insulated at home while their brothers, Marcus and James, are sent away to boarding school. The twins stare at portraits of their mother, calculating by the date of one that she was pregnant with them when it was painted, scrutinizing the scene for evidence of the familial world which their births transformed. Moreover, their private play at home shows their assimilation of literature and fairy tale, and unbeknownst to them it foreshadows their adult experience.

An initial literary detail occurs in their comments about their doll, which they call Ophelia, and which when they want it to float down stream does so only □facedown.□ This literary allusion (or reference) is to Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* in which Ophelia is frustrated in her love for Prince Hamlet and when he scorns her decides to drown herself in a river. The play involves a problematic relationship between mother and child and the apparent or feigned madness of both Hamlet and Ophelia, so it is a rich reference point for Swan's story. A second reference is to the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty. As children the twins imagine themselves □under a spell□; they crawl □through the tangled vines in the kitchen garden□ and fantasize that the vines twine all over the house sealing it. They imagine a prince (who looks surprisingly like a younger version of their father) who carves his way through, leaving □his horse grazing in the hallway while he rescue[s] the sleeping princess.□ For the following feast, the princess □would wear a sea-green gown . . . and dance with the prince until morning.□ Important works of literature and fairy tales convey paradigmatic relationships and values: the twins' appropriation of the Sleeping Beauty tale delivers wish-fulfillment, vindication, and prophecy. First, the tale rewinds the withdrawal and death of their mother and reunites her with an earlier form of their father, thus reestablishing the world the twins' birth is said to have destroyed. Then too the tale of sexual awakening from a hundred-year-long virginal sleep predicts the female's life in adult sexual relationship with the male. In this second meaning, the story foreshadows (or anticipates) trouble for the twins when their sexual maturity comes face to face with a suitable male and dispels their obsessive fixation on one another. The sexually awakened female finds a new component in her

own identity and turns to her partner, defining herself in relationship to this new and different other, thus demoting sibling and birth family to roles of lesser significance.

When the twins' father seeks a local school to which the twins can attend as day students, the girls come under the supervision of Miss Riley, a feminist who has chosen education and work over marriage and motherhood and yet who longs for the wider public sphere of action. Pursuing education, developing abilities, preparing oneself for the adult world of work and social roles, all serve as a bridge for the twins in their movement from the private sphere of home to the public one of action. As the twins volunteer to serve behind the Western Front, Miss Riley envies them the opportunity they have for adventure. After their deaths and now in retrospect, Miss Riley feels responsible in part for their decision to go to Europe, guilty for having encouraged them. In their going perhaps she saw an extension of her hopes for a life that mattered in the world, one that proved □women's capabilities.□ In their deaths, she is called to remember the suitor she refused who went off into the world and died.

The twins' work in camps behind the lines combines several typical female roles: they serve food and wash dishes, and at dances they partner soldiers for two-minute intervals of music. On their off days they assist in nearby hospitals, running errands and writing letters for injured soldiers. Inevitably they attract male attention, and this is how they meet Hugh. Initially, Hugh is different because in becoming their friend he does not try to tell them apart. In fact, when he first sees them, their synchronized gesture of brushing their hair from their eyes communicates a wholeness or oneness to Hugh which he finds comforting. In grief over the arbitrary and senseless death of his longtime friend with whom he enlisted, Hugh sees in Esther and Ruth's partnership a soothing image of connection. Yet he disrupts that connection, unwittingly creating an irreversible fissure. En route back from the threesome's all-day outing, Ruth awakens in the car to Hugh laughing with Esther over something Ruth did not hear. Suddenly a palpable space erupts between the twins; Esther explains, inserting a new □We□ and a new □I□ as she does so: □We were talking, Hugh and I, . . . and suddenly I felt such a great opening up. And I realized . . . it was because Hugh was talking to *me*.□ The next day Esther lies to Ruth, claiming to go out for a stroll when she hopes to meet Hugh. The meeting does not occur; Hugh leaves camp with other soldiers, □leaving me,□ Esther laments, □with a broken thing to try to put together.□ Given earlier references to Sleeping Beauty, Hugh's role here is plain. He awakens the one sister to her single identity and her response to him disconnects her from her still-sleeping twin. A permanent breach has occurred between the siblings which corrupts their mental health.

When the Armistice takes place, the twins feel □spun loose,□ aimless without their work and suffering □a strangeness□ between them which was □the worse part.□ Esther explains that it was like they had suffered a stroke, □a severing in the brain,□ and with it, □a terrible thrumming panic.□ Having identified themselves in terms of one another and in terms of their closed and exclusive relationship, they are now traumatized by the disconnection which sexual awakening brings. As soon as Esther defines herself in relation to Hugh, she no longer mirrors Ruth. Esther explains the rift between her and Ruth as □a terrible pounding in our heads.□ By the time the twins are onboard for their

return Atlantic crossing, they are acting separately. The doctor who checks on them later reports that when she entered their cabin one was sitting at a desk □scribbling on pieces of paper that fell to the floor□ and the other was □pacing back and forth, her hands in her hair.□

The twins regress in the face of this chaos: then in a psychotic fusing the □we□ resumes in the penultimate section of the story: They say, □Without each other we are in pieces . . . we have to find a way back.□ The sentry on deck later reports how directly the twins climbed over the railing and jumped into the sea. He blames himself for not acting quickly to stop them. In psychological terms, in mythical terms, the double suicide is the snap return to the absolute oneness of their beginning. They return to the sea, to the amniotic connection of one undivided child bathed in the maternal womb. Having witnessed the fragmentation, loneliness, and widespread destruction of war, having felt the separateness that comes with individual sexual awakening, they recoil, seeking in death what they believe was theirs before their birth. In □The Deep□ Mary Swan provides readers with a way of understanding how an arrested, rigid sense of identity blocks autonomous development and adult sexual bonding in the case of identical twins and effects their ultimate regression, which is suicide.

Source: Melodie Monahan, Critical Essay on □The Deep,□ in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Critical Essay #3

Timothy Dunham has a master's degree in communication and bachelor's degree in English. In the following essay, Dunham considers how 1 Corinthians 13:12 casts some light on   The Deep,   providing insight into the actions of the protagonists Esther and Ruth.

□For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known□ (1 Cor. 13:12). These frequently quoted words of Saint Paul from I Corinthians, in the Authorized (King James) Version, have served as inspiration to philosophers and poets throughout the centuries and are at the heart of Mary Swan's novella, □The Deep,□ a haunting tale of twin sisters Esther and Ruth who abandon a life of privilege in Canada and set sail for France to play a part in the horrific drama that is World War I. Employing a unique narrative technique, Swan recounts the story of the twins by weaving a tapestry of vignettes in different voices: memories of the twins and of those who knew them, letters they wrote to their father and their former headmistress, family members' impressions of them, and even snatches of memory from soldiers who crossed paths with them. The reader is carried along with the twins on an unnerving, yet oddly hopeful journey from a world of quiet certitude into a world of chaos and ambiguity where Saint Paul's words become starkly real.

The mirror metaphor as Paul uses it to explain limited human knowledge was often echoed by writers of the English Renaissance. Defining the □Idols of the Tribe□ in his *Aphorisms* (1625), Francis Bacon says, for example, that it is difficult to get at truth because much of what people see in the world is based on personal perception of it: □The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.□ In □A Sermon Preached at St. Paul's for Easter-Day, 1628,□ John Donne expounds on the apostle's words, saying that before coming to a knowledge of God, human understanding of the world is blurred, □an obscure riddle, a representation, darkly, and in part, as we translate it.□ It may be argued that Swan seems to have had this metaphor in mind as she composed □The Deep,□ a metaphor she develops with specific imagery, both visual and aural, that lucidly reflects the world in which the twins are submerged: a world filled with ambiguity, where everything the twins know and believe is called into question and all is an obscure riddle.

The first image, in Baconian terms, is one of a false mirror. It appears at those moments (all in France) when the twins reflect back on their childhood and question whether things really happened as they remember. In the vignette, □The Fountain,□ the twins recall the time when they, hand-in-hand, climbed into the fountain in their yard and immersed themselves. Their recollection is vivid, even to the point of relating sensory details: □And we remember the magic of underwater, the absolute silence and peace. It's not likely there were fish in that fountain, but we remember the color, the darting streaks of light.□ But they are not sure what happened after that. They have two equally clear memories, one of helping each other out of the fountain on a bright day and

walking toward the house where a door was opening and a white shape was running, the other of being carried from the fountain by two dark figures on a dismal, rainy day, “held forward in their arms like an offering about to be deposited on a stone.” What is unclear is which, or if either, memory is accurate.

Furthermore, in the vignette, “Thinking about Home,” the twins share many memories that they both remember exactly the same way, right down to the sound, feel, and taste. Before coming to France they would not have thought it strange to have identical memories; it would not have been questioned, not even considered, because that is just how it was. Life on the war-ravaged landscape of France, however, changes this unison. Their eyes are opened to the dark reality that things are not always what they appear to be, and they begin to have reservations and doubts, wondering what they experienced separately that they chose to forget:

So many things seemed strange, there in France. It did not seem possible that our life was as we remembered it. But we both remembered it, so wasn't that some kind of proof? We were not together every minute of our childhood, every minute of our lives, although most, perhaps. But there must have been times when one of us was in a room but not the other. When only one of saw something, heard something, was spoken to. But we don't remember anything like that.

The next image Swan uses is a dominant one that permeates the entire story: the aural image of muddled sound, suggestive of E. M. Forster's “ou-boum” (the same monotonous echo produced by every sound, no matter if it is the blowing of a nose or the squeak of a boot) in the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India* (1924). Coming from the quiet and peaceful environs of their home in Canada, the twins are unprepared for the noise of war, not the sounds of battle, but the “constant ruckus” that comes with living in a large group of people: “The shouting in the camp, the singing and sounds of hammering. Horses and motors and airplanes if they're near. The racket in the canteen or mess hall, always something.”

In the midst of all this commotion, the twins are reminded of a sound they heard right before they left for France: they were sitting on their kitchen porch when the silence was shattered by the snap and clatter of frosted yellow maple leaves thawing in the sun and falling to the ground. In one sense, the sound of falling leaves raises a specter of doubt as to whether life back home was really as quiet as they remember. More significantly, though, it serves as the twins' initiation into a world of constant noise. Like the “ou-boum” in a Marabar Cave, the sound of the modern world in “The Deep” is just one collective racket that saturates and unsettles the twins' lives: “There's no place for contemplation, no space for it, every waking moment, and even sleeping ones, filled with sound.” And like “ou-boum,” “racket” is devoid of real meaning; it is a collection of sounds comprising one distinct ambiguous sound, an apt symbol for a world the twins refer to as “the world of foggy air.”

Swan makes use of the same image but handles it a little differently, in the bookend vignette, “After.” Here, the twins describe the muddled sound of the street coming in through the windows of their house; but it is not a racket, it is muffled. The image neatly

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operates as a metaphor for ambiguity while setting up the dread revelation that in the twins' minds ambiguity is tantamount to death:

Sounds reach us from the street, wheels turning and hard shoes and sometimes a voice raised, calling out something, and they are muffled, all these sounds. Distant. Father told us once about the Queen's funeral, straw laid in the street to mute the sound. It is like that, and we wonder if someone has died.

Consequently, this image of muddled sound foreshadows the closing moments of the twins' lives when they take their lives, making the plunge from the world of foggy air into the next.

The last image is a visual one that also serves as the story's primary symbol: a broken teacup. The twins tell a story of how their housekeeper, Nan, once broke her favorite teacup and spent the entire evening carefully gluing it back together. After that it still held tea, but the crack was always visible. While in France, the twins learn they are living in a world, which, like Nan's teacup, is fragile, broken, and can never be restored to the world they once knew (or thought they knew). Symbolically, the broken teacup points to the brokenness people experience in wartime.

The twins encounter three forms of brokenness. The first form is a broken spirit, a result of the senseless tragedy of war. During an air-raid alert one night in Paris, the twins bump into Elizabeth, a friend they met on the Atlantic crossing. Elizabeth came to France to look for her brother who, as it turns out, was killed in battle. As they wait out the alert in the hotel cellar, Elizabeth tells the twins that the war experience has broken her in such a way that she does know how she can go home again. She is a different person than she was when she arrived, and the world is now an ambiguous place: □'Something is broken in me. It's all just a horrible mess, and there's no meaning in any of it.'□ All the twins can do is hold Elizabeth's hands and tell her that, in the end, the world will be a better place. It's a lie, of course. In the vignette □Thinking about Home,□ the twins' sentiments about home are the same as Elizabeth's: Home is not something they can go back to. The war has broken their spirits too.

The second form of brokenness is broken relationship. It comes as a result of the twins' friendship with the soldier Hugh and is set in motion one night while the three of them are driving back to camp from an outing. Ruth falls asleep in the back seat and wakes to find her sister and Hugh laughing. The unity of the twins' relationship is instantly breached. For the first time the twins can remember, memories are created that they do not share. (In Ruth's case, it is the memory of suddenly waking in the dark car to find Esther and Hugh laughing, while, for Esther, it is talking with Hugh while Esther sleeps in the back seat.) For the first time, the pronoun □I□ must be used to refer to each of them. After a lifetime of using the pronoun □we,□ □I□ sounds very lonely indeed.

It is the lie, however, that causes the permanent break. Esther is so overcome with emotion from the brand new experience of a having a man speak solely to her that she decides to meet Hugh, alone. Hoping to meet him on one of his evening walks, Esther tells Ruth she is going out for a stroll. She leaves Ruth to her letter writing and goes to

wait for Hugh on the path. He never comes. Esther returns late with the excuse, Sorry, I lost track of time. From this moment forward nothing can ever be the same. No matter how they try to mend their relationship the crack will remain, and this is something the twins cannot live with. The crack represents a break with the past, a past of unison and total shared existence, and it indicates an uncertain future, a future the twins are unequipped to handle. On the train ride back to the Atlantic they look at their reflections in the carriage window and whisper, What can we do? What can we ever do?

In a sense, these two forms of brokenness comprise the third form: a broken world. It is beautifully illustrated in the vignette, Saint Germaine, which describes the outing Hugh and the twins take to the French town of Bar-Sur-Aube. While relaxing at a table, they observe some women chatting at the ancient well in the town square, a peaceful picture of life as it has been for centuries. Hugh picks up on this, saying, 'This should be what's real . . . What's been forever, what will go on, long after we're gone.' No sooner does he say this than another woman, dressed the same way and about the same age as the others, approaches the well to draw water. For no apparent reason, the group does not look at her, does not as much as acknowledge her presence. They continue chatting as if she were not there. The woman's face reveals nothing, but her body language as she walks away shows she is not oblivious to the situation. Immediately, the twins realize that the words Hugh just spoke apply to this, too. The world is not, never has been, and never will be a perfect place. It is a world of ostracism and hate, of sadness and despair, of destruction and death. Taken altogether, these things amount to one deep ou-boum in the twins' ears, and it is the sound of ambiguity, the sound of death. In a world such as this, where nothing can be seen except through a glass, darkly, the twins decide to complete their journey the only way they know how.

The final stage of their journey may seem bleak or depressing to some readers; after all, the twins commit suicide at the end. However, within the framework of the I Corinthians 13:12 metaphor, it may be understood paradoxically as hopeful. The vignette, The Sea King, which is the heart of the story and its spiritual foundation, supports this reading. In it, the twins reflect on a tale Nan told them when they were young about the Sea King, a violent and merciless creator of storms and destroyer of ships. The Sea King lived in a palace at the bottom of the ocean and wreaked havoc on passing ships, causing them to sink so he could steal their treasure. He used the bones of the dead sailors to build his gates and their skulls to guard his treasure room. In light of the twins' experiences in France, one might expect that reflecting on such a tale of mayhem and destruction would have a negative effect on their psyches, but it does not. In fact, the effect is just the opposite.

First of all, the tale of the Sea King helps the twins to believe in pure possibility. More specifically, it offers a belief that there is something more out there than what this broken world presents: something supernatural, something spiritual, something magical, something that cannot be proved wrong, something like the Sea King. In a world such as this, according to the twins, why can't the Sea King exist? They explain:

We know, of course we know, that it's just a story Nan told. Spun out of her Irish dreams and taking hold in ours. . . . But we live in a world where everything we know has been proved wrong, a world gone completely mad. If this world can exist, then anything is possible.

The tale of the Sea King gives the twins hope. They reason that, if anything is possible in this world, then it is possible the tale was wrong. Perhaps the Sea King was not the angry dealer of death and destruction Nan portrayed him to be. Perhaps, they say, his kingdom was a beautiful, gentle place, his wrath really sorrow, pining for lost children who had disappeared into the world of men. Perhaps they are these lost children, the Sea King's beautiful daughters . . . wandering ill at ease through the world of foggy air. If anything is possible, then there is hope that, somewhere out there, a better world awaits.

Perhaps this hope is what motivates the twins when they leap from the bow of the ship. Knowing they will never find peace in this world, they seek for it the only way they know how: by going underwater. Underwater is the place of their childhood fountain, a world of color and quietness. Underwater is the realm of the Sea King, a world of gentleness and peace. Underwater is the world of light, where the twins no longer see though a glass darkly, but face to face with the Father, no longer lost but found.

Source: Timothy Dunham, Critical Essay on The Deep, in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Topics for Further Study

During World War I (1914-1919) women had to take on many roles traditionally held by men, such as mechanics, bus drivers, and assembly line workers. Research women' work during this period and make a list of five to ten of these roles. How many of these roles are apparent in Swan's story? Do you think there are roles today that are only open to men or only open to women simply because of tradition? Prepare a short presentation, with visual aids, about women during the Great War, focusing on the role you selected.

O. Henry is a well-known, American short story writer. Read a biography of O. Henry and then three of his short stories. Write a paper about O. Henry's life and how it may have shaped both his stories and those of writers who followed him. When possible use the three stories you used by way of examples.

Research the psychology and biology of identical and fraternal twins. Write a short story or poem about what you think it is like to be a twin or about observing twins using information found in your research.

Classical and folk music were popular in Europe during World War I, while jazz and folk were popular in the United States. Research one of these music styles in the time of the first world war and prepare a musical presentation comparing songs from then and today (in the same genre). Create a CD or cassette tape mix of these songs to share with your classmates as part of the presentation.

Who is your favorite relative and why? How long have you known each other? What do you like to do together when you see each other? Create a visual representation—for example, a painting, diorama, or movie—celebrating this person's strengths and the positive influence he or she has had in your life.

What Do I Read Next?

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage: Stories (2002), by Alice Munro, is a collection of short stories by an acclaimed Canadian writer. Munro often focuses on female protagonists and themes that appeal to women.

Emma's Hands (2003) is Mary Swan's second collection of short stories. These stories range all over the world and across time. Swan's elegant and poetic style continues with the stories in this collection.

Prize Stories 2001: The O. Henry Awards (2001), edited by Larry Dark, contains seventeen stories judged by Dark to be the best published in U.S. and Canadian periodicals during 2000. Swan's first-place story appears in this collection.

We Were the Mulvaneys (1996), by Joyce Carol Oates, is the story of a family that seems to have it all, until things take a turn for the worse. Oates is one of the most prolific and respected of U.S. novelists writing in the early 2000s.

Forgotten Voices of the Great War: A History of World War I in the Words of the Men and Women Who Were There (2004), by Max Arthur, tells the true story of what World War I was like for the people who lived through it. This book arose out of a thirty-year project by the British Imperial War Museum to collect firsthand accounts of World War I experiences from soldiers of many nationalities.

Further Study

Allen, Hervey, *Toward the Flame: A Memoir of World War I*, illustrated by Lyle Justis, Bison Books, 2003.

Allen's memoir is about his service as a soldier during World War I. He recounts a march across the beautiful French countryside toward a battle that results in the destruction of his unit.

Howells, Coral Ann, *Contemporary Canadian Women's Fiction: Refiguring Identities*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

In a series of essays, Howells examines the theme of changing cultural and national identities through Canadian fiction by women writers since the mid-1990s. She explores works by Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Carol Shields, among others.

Mayle, Peter, *A Year in Provence*, Vintage, 1991.

Mayle, a British travel writer, spent a year in the south of France and writes with candor and humor about his experiences in this memoir-travelogue.

Smith, C. Alphonse, *O. Henry*, University Press of the Pacific, 2003.

William Sidney Porter, whose pseudonym was O. Henry, was one of the most famous American short story writers, with over six hundred tales to his name. This comprehensive biography based on Porter's letters and other original sources, was first published in 1916.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) 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, SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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

SSfS 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS 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 Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories 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 SSfS 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.” Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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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