Design for Dying Study Guide

Design for Dying by Timothy Leary

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Design for Dying was published in the United States in 1997, a year after Timothy Leary died. Although most of the book is written from Leary's point of view, R. U. Sirius played a major part in editing it, shaping various essays and notes of Leary's into a coherent text. Sirius's voice is as prominent as Leary's. The book resembles a casebook in form, with three major sections labeled "Living," "Dying," and "Designer Dying," and an addendum. Each section is further broken down into short chapters with headings such as "Drugs,' ' "Death is the Ultimate Trip," "The Cryonics Option," and so forth. Leary expounds on his theories, reflects on his experiences, and offers advice on independent living and dying. The addendum contains Leary's friends' and acquaintances' reflections on Leary, including their favorite memories of him. These eulogizers constitute a veritable index of the American counterculture of the last thirty years

The book is most productively read as Leary's theoretical autobiography. Although Leary includes anecdotes and a discussion of the events in his life, the bulk of the writing comprises Leary's iconoclastic reading of the meaning and art of existence. The themes he addresses are the ones that have occupied him for most of his life: drugs, sex, individual freedom, psychology, death, and technology. A complement to his website, which tracked Leary's movements and condition during his last days, *Design for Dying* offers the thoughts of one of the twentieth-century's most controversial thinkers and cultural figures.

Author Biography

Timothy Francis Leary, along with Dr. Richard Alpert (known later as Ram Dass), was at the center of the 1960s drug culture and psychedelic revolution. Born October 22, 1920, in Springfield, Massachusetts, Leary was a typical overachieving child of middle-class parents. He attended a number of schools, garnering degrees from the University of Alabama (A.B., 1943) and the University of California at Berkeley (Ph.D. in psychology, 1950).

Leary's life changed in 1959, when he left his job as assistant professor at the University of California at Berkeley and accepted a position as lecturer in psychology at Harvard University. At Harvard, Leary met Richard Alpert and, backed by the United States government, the two began conducting experiments with psilocybin, a hallucinogenic mushroom. In 1963, Leary left Harvard to found the League of Spiritual Discovery, a group dedicated to exploring the relationship between drugs and consciousness. The group's headquarters, in an upstate New York mansion, became a magnet for writers, artists, and philosophers, many of whom also identified themselves as spiritual explorers.

During the 1960s, Leary became an outspoken advocate for LSD and helped to popularize the drug, speaking of it in religious terms. His 1968 book, *High Priest,* details many of Leary's acid trips. His continued exhortations to people to "turn on, tune in, and drop out," and his flouting of drug laws, however, put Leary on the government's wrong side. In 1970, he was twice sentenced to ten-year federal prison terms, once in Houston, Texas, and once in Santa Ana, California, for marijuana possession. After escaping from prison, Leary was captured in Afghanistan and brought back to the United States, where he served an abbreviated sentence.

In the last decade of his life, Leary reinvented himself a number of times, using his counter-cultural status to preach about cybernetics, exo-psychology, outer-space travel, cryonics, and, of course, the consciousness-raising properties of LSD and other drugs. During this period of his life, Leary, who had become an avowed futurist, waxed philosophical on the possibilities of computer technology, writing computer software programs and lecturing on the possibilities of artificial intelligence.

After battling advanced prostate cancer, Leary died on May 31, 1996, in Beverly Hills, California. His body is not cryogenically preserved, as he once desired. Instead, his ashes were put in a capsule and launched into space, where they will orbit for a few years, before burning up in the earth's atmosphere.*Design for Dying,* which in part chronicles Leary's "planned death," was published posthumously in 1997.

Plot Summary

Introductions

Design for Dying contains two introductions: one by Leary and one by R. U. Sirius. Leary introduces readers to the event that incited the book: his 1995 diagnosis of prostate cancer. This led him to think more thoroughly and more practically about how he wanted to die. "Even if you've lived your life like a complete slob," Leary writes, "you can die with terrific style. I call it 'Designer Dying.'" Leary poses a handful of questions related to main taining a life of "self-reliance and personal growth," which he addresses in the rest of the book.

Sirius's introduction discusses Leary's original plan, to die on the Internet, and fantasizes about what such a death might have looked like. He praises Leary for his honesty and his unrelenting critique of dishonest discourse and claims that Leary's dying "performance" was successful.

Chapter 1

Leary recounts "making a pact" with his DNA in 1962, promising to probe the meaning of life as deeply as possible. His conclusions were that the future is unpredictable and that the true meaning of life is recursive, that is, the purpose of life is to seek the purpose of life. Leary makes comparisons between the human body and computers and suggests that people should "see the goal of humankind as mutation," requiring human participation. Using the language of physics, he thinks through many of the same questions that philosophers and theorists address, examining human identity in relation to dichotomies such as time and space and matter and energy. A typical Leary question and answer from the chapter: "Is the universe fundamentally continuous or discrete? One can only answer 'yes.'"

Chapter 2

In this chapter, Leary draws parallels between alchemy and computer technology, claiming that both involve symbolic systems largely unknown to the general public. He calls the field resulting from the evolution of cybernetics□the field which uses the details of systems to divine their organizational principles□"cybernautics," to describe its exploratory and magical nature. Leary claims that abstract mathematics, the ultimate theoretical system, is becoming more important in helping human beings learn about themselves.

Chapter 3-5

In these chapters, Leary discusses what he calls the "tools of human evolution and self-definition," topics he has explored throughout his life. These tools are language, drugs, and psychology. Language, Leary claims, enslaves human thought. It is a system of self-referentiality that can never really describe the world outside of itself. In his chapter on drugs, Leary cites Terence McKenna as someone with a grip on the truth of human evolution. McKenna theorizes that human beings evolved largely through eating mind-altering plants such as psilocybin. Human beings' continued interest in consciousness expanding drugs, as manifest in the popularity of LSD, mescaline, marijuana, and other drugs, shows that drugs continue to play a role in the evolution of human consciousness. According to Leary, America' s anti-drug campaign is, in reality, a campaign against human evolution. Lastly, Leary examines psychology. To Leary, psychology is a tool that has been used to control and mold people by dictating what normal behavior is. Leary, who himself participated in government research at Berkeley and Harvard, writes that, through the use of psychology, "the industrial age ideology of factory life and factory death was imposed by the military-industrial complex of the twentieth century."

Chapter 6

Leary sets forth his theory that "evolution is a participatory sport." He details the stages and "circuits " of his theory, paying homage to writer Robert Anton Wilson, who has also described this theory. Mutants, "certain human beings . .. [who] activate the post-hive, post-modern, postterrestrial neural circuits 'prematurely,'" are those alienated from contemporary human concerns and who live in the future. Leary calls these mutants "agents" and "evolutionary scouts." Agents activate social change, and the rise of the Internet signals a victory for "countercultural mutation." Leary implies that he is one such agent.

Chapter 7

This chapter begins the second section of the book, titled "Dying." Leary expresses the joy he felt when told he was dying. He took charge of his life, deciding how much and what kind of media coverage he would permit, and developed a homepage to track his dying. In this chapter, Leary supplies a few quotes he dispensed to journalists from the *Washington Post, New York Times,* and other publications, describing his "House Party for Intelligent Dying."

Chapter 8

In this chapter, Leary lists his daily drug intake during his dying days. He discusses society's taboos against "celebratory dying," society's fear of death, and the ways in which the government has conspired to take people's autonomy away from them when

they are dying. He ends the chapter by praising Jack Kevorkian for his efforts to help people die with dignity, suggesting that Kevorkian needs to be more publicly proud of his activism.

Chapter 9

Leary lays out his own plan for his death and offers advice to others who are dying. His suggested plan includes extending control over the nervous system, using techniques such as hypnosis and meditation; becoming educated about one's culture's death rituals; and "rehearsing" for death by taking drugs such as ketamine, which creates a near-death experience (NDE).

Chapter 10

In this chapter, Leary reviews some of the literature on what happens to the brain at death. Calling death "the ultimate trip," Leary says that upon death consciousness returns to the nervous system and "We become every form of life that has ever lived and will live

Chapter 11-12

These two chapters begin the last section of the book, titled "Designer Dying." Calling human beings "information processes," Leary explores alternatives to biological death, making the case for cryonics (i.e., deep-freezing the body or brain), preservation of tissue or DNA, direct brain-computer transfer, isomorphic mapping of neural networks to silicon chips, and other futurist ideas. He refers to William Gibson, the author of dystopian novels such as *Neuromancer*, whose own ideas on human mutation and technology mesh with Leary's. Leary claims that since human beings are primarily made of information, many options exist for post-biological storage of that information.

Chapter 13-14

These chapters outline Leary's thinking on nanotechnology and cyborgization. The former refers to the manipulation of matter at the cellular level, often by tiny robots. Nanotechnology may make possible the reengineering and repair of DNA in the near future. Cyborgization refers to the process by which the intersection between machines and human beings blurs. Leary hopes that becoming more machine-like will help the human species to evolve.

Chapter 15

This chapter, written wholly by Sirius, is the book's shortest. Sirius reviews some of the injustices done to Leary through his life (e.g., FBI defamation of his image, poor

reception of his work by critics, etc.) and provides a short explanation of Leary's decision to not be cryogenically preserved after death.

Addendum

In this section, a host of Leary's friends, family, and associates pays tribute to him. This section was developed by Sirius, who included it so readers could understand not only Leary the scientist, whose writing could be off-putting, but Leary the friend, the human being behind the public persona and cultural icon. Sirius asked respondents to answer two questions: "What was the lesson for you of Tim's performance of the dying process?" and "What's your favorite memory of Tim from that time?" Sirius begins the section by recounting his own first meeting with Leary in 1980.

Characters

Richard Alpert

See Ram Dass

John Perry Barlow

Barlow was the lyricist for the rock band the Grateful Dead and is a spokesperson for cyberculture causes and issues. He writes that Leary taught him that "It's never too late to come into a sense of the spirit." Barlow and his partner, Cynthia, who was dying of cancer, spent Cynthia's last day alive with Leary. Her death helped Barlow think more clearly about "the second commonest event in the world"□ death□and most people's existence in a state of denial about it.

Denis Berry

Berry was a friend of Leary's who spent considerable time with him during his last days.

Sarah Brown

Brown was Leary's granddaughter. Leary's death taught her the lesson that "everybody must and will die."

David Byrne

Byrne is an international rock star and the lead singer of the Talking Heads. He remembers Leary as someone who "performed" his life and as a loyal friend who put others before himself.

Dean Chamberlain

Chamberlain is a professional photographer who documented Leary's last days. He first met Leary in 1996, after Leary had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Chamberlain encouraged Leary to make "word drawings" of his thinking as his cognitive skills began to fade. As a photographer would, Chamberlain describes Leary in terms of light, writing, "The closer Tim got to death, the more I saw him take great pleasure in the wordlessness of illumination."

Robin Christiansen

Christiansen was a friend, a massage therapist, and an artist. He gave Leary massages twice weekly for the last five months of his life. His favorite memory of Leary was taking hallucinogenic drugs with him during his last days.

Aleister Crowley

Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was a controversial poet and occultist. Born in Leamington, Warwickshire, England, the son of a wealthy Christian brewer, Crowley became disgusted with Christianity and developed an interest in the occult and alchemy, joining the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He advocated the use of drugs to expand consciousness and believed that people should have complete freedom of sexual expression, as long as they hurt no one. Crowley influenced many artists and musicians and is still revered as a prophet of the possible. Leary mentions Crowley when Leary compares alchemy to contemporary computer culture, claiming that both are forms of magic.

Ram Dass

Dass, formerly known as Richard Alpert, is a spiritual teacher and was Leary's original partner in 1960s psychedelic research. He is perhaps best known for his book *Be Here Now*, which became a slogan of the 1960s counterculture.

Albert Einstein

Einstein (1879-1955) was a German-American physicist who developed the theory of relativity, which holds that physical laws are the same in all inertial reference systems. Leary mentions Einstein in discussing how the laws of stability and gravity have changed since Einstein's time, suggesting that the universe is a much more chaotic place than previously thought.

Aileen Getty

Getty was a close friend of Leary's whose favorite memory of Leary was sleeping with him five days before he died.

William Gibson

Gibson is a science fiction and cyberpunk writer and author of the bestseller *Neuromancer*. Gibson is often credited with introducing the word "cyberspace" into popular culture.

Nina Graboi

Graboi was a close friend of Leary's from the 1960s and an unofficial mother figure to many members of Leary's changing entourage. Graboi wrote that Leary's "dying show was the greatest show on earth."

James Grauerholz

Grauerholz was a Beat writer and assistant to William Burroughs, Leary's friend. He first met Leary at a 1978 convention.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Kübler-Ross is the author of the influential book *On Death and Dying*, one of the first books to closely examine the phenomenon of dying in Western society and to propose humane alternatives to hospital death. Leary cites Ross' book as an example of a positive approach to thinking about dying and death.

Ken Kesey

Kesey is a counterculture figure from the 1960s and unofficial leader of the Merry Pranksters, a group of hippies, writers, and artists who traveled the country in a refurbished school bus dubbed "Further." The Merry Pranksters were popularized in Tom Wolfe's book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. Kesey is the author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Sometimes a Great Notion*, among other works. Leary (when he discovered that he was dying of cancer) is reported to have told Kesey, "I've exhausted this planet's particular pleasures."

Jack Kevorkian

Kevorkian is a Michigan-based physician and staunch advocate of physician-assisted suicide and the right to die. He gained notoriety in the 1980s and 1990s by helping scores of people suffering from terminal illnesses to end their own lives. Leary, who calls Kevorkian "the greatest taboo smasher of all" and "one of the great revolutionaries of the twentieth century," lauds Kevorkian's actions but writes that Kevorkian must work on his style and not present himself as a victim in the national press. Kevorkian is currently in prison, having been convicted of second-degree murder.

Paul Krassner

Krassner was a yippie and cofounder of the underground journal *The Realist*. Krassner writes that "the lesson of [Leary's] death was the lesson of his life, to have as much fun

as possible, to be in control of that fun, to communicate that sense of fun to others, and to be responsible to it himself."

R. D. Laing

Laing was a controversial British psychiatrist, poet, and counterculture figure of the 1960s and 1970s who advocated experimental treatment for sufferers of mental illness. He experimented with many drugs and introduced Leary to heroin.

Timothy Leary

Timothy Leary is the author of *Design for Dying*, a research psychiatrist, a former Harvard professor, and a counterculture figure who advocated individual control over living and dying. Leary was involved with many influential underground groups, including Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters. *Design for Dying* begins in 1995 with Leary's discovery that he has prostate cancer. Leary spends most of the book theorizing and polemicizing, not only about dying and dying well, but also about living. His academic background is evident in his pedantic and jargon-ridden writing. But his authority as a spokesman for the counterculture is also evident, as he has lived what he preaches.

Zach Leary

Zach Leary was Timothy Leary's stepson by his fourth wife, Barbara. He was impressed with the bravado and courage with which Leary approached his death and comments on his stepfather's desire to keep those around him happy during his dying days.

Terence McKenna

McKenna is a writer who has theorized that the evolution of human beings was propelled in part through their prehuman ancestors' diet of psychotropic plants, including psilocybin mushrooms. Leary uses McKenna to bolster his own position that drugs are an integral part of ongoing human evolution and that the anti-drug crusade is actually a campaign waged against the expansion of human consciousness and the evolution of human beings.

Ralph Metzner

Metzner was a close friend and one of Leary's partners in psychedelic research. Metzner, like most others associated with Leary, was impressed by the way he took charge of his own dying.

Doug Rushkoff

Rushkoff is a writer and media theorist who describes Leary's performance of his death as a "meme," a unit of hypothesized cultural DNA, analogous to the biological gene. Rushkoff describes the media spectacle around Leary's dying and links the public's fascination with it to baby boomers' experiences of having their parents die. "He was dying for the rest of us," Rushkoff writes.

Michael D. Segel

Segel was Leary's friend and a filmmaker. He produced a number of Hollywood shows with Leary, in which Leary posed as a philosopher and asked provocative questions of the audience. One of these questions addressed the possibility of a future in which people could choose to have their bodies deep-frozen in liquid nitrogen and reanimated at a later time. Segel took Leary on the last road trip of his life, which included a meeting with Ken Kesey and some of the Merry Pranksters.

R. U. Sirius

R. U. Sirius is the pseudonym for a figure who has been active in the counterculture over the last few decades. Sirius has written prolifically on art and cyberculture and was the editor-in-chief of *Mondo 2000*, the first cyberculture magazine. He is a regular contributor to *Wired* magazine and lectures internationally on the intersection of technology and culture. Sirius was a personal friend of Leary's and edited *Design for Dying*.

Trudy Truelove

Truelove is an artist and musician and was Leary's assistant during his last days, helping with the press and scheduling appearances. She writes about Leary's love of media attention. Truelove was particularly moved by the stark difference between movies and photos of Leary when he was a younger man and his deteriorated state during his dying days.

Stacy Valis

Valis works in the art department at Warner Brothers and is married to Dean Chamberlain, Leary's photographer. She functioned as a kind of "den mother" in Leary's house during the last months of his life, looking after household necessities. By her own admission, Valis was not a part of the counterculture, and her own drug history was minimal. She knew little about Leary prior to meeting him through her husband. Her anecdote in the book's addendum underscores the idea that Leary was more than simply a hero to those who were on society's fringes; he was also, as Valis writes, an

"unwaveringly brave, honest, loving, tireless man with an unequaled work ethic, enthusiasm in the face of all adversities, and unconditional love and support for those of us fortunate enough to have orbited him."

Themes

Death

At a point in Western history when people are more alienated from their own dying than ever before, *Design for Dying* strikes a blow for individuals trying to reclaim control over their own dying. Throughout his book, Leary champions individual autonomy, calling the way that people live in the United States a form of "factory life" and their deaths a form of "factory dying." Mass culture seeks to strip autonomy from the individual, reducing his or her choices. Most people, Leary claims, die as they live, beholden to the institutions that have raised them and helped form their desires. By writing about his dying days and the choices he made regarding his own death, Leary demystifies the aura surrounding death and the western taboo against talking about it in public. Not only does Leary discuss his death publicly, but he also developed a website dedicated to chronicling his progress toward death. By publicly displaying his dying on the Internet, Leary challenged the status quo, which views death as a private domain to be shared only with loved ones. By "celebrating" his dying, Leary questioned the assumption that death should be a process accompanied by mourning and sadness.

Meaning

Philosophers have long pondered the meaning of human life, the reasons people are alive, and their purpose on the planet. Leary addresses this topic by treating the statement as part of a broader system of meaning-making, in which the purpose of an individual human life isn't the most important thing. Leary views individual identity and self-consciousness as an evolutionary phase that human beings uniquely inhabit, but through which they also pass. By looking at human beings as a species that continues to change and evolve, Leary can consider himself a part of that process. His purpose for being alive, then, is to be a part of the broader evolution of his species. For Leary, that part involves his role as an "agent" for changing human consciousness, which he claims is anchored to industrial and capitalist ways of being. Living a "factory life," according to Leary, means existing for no consciously chosen reason at all. It means, for example, holding a job that one dislikes simply because everyone else does, to pay the bills, or so one can accumulate unnecessary things. Living an autonomous life means being aware of the origins of one's desires and making choices based on one's true desires rather than the desires society teaches.

Style

Style

Design for Dying is both a memoir, a recollection of personal experience, and a treatise, a formal, systematic description of a subject. It is a memoir because Leary reflects on his life and the lessons he has learned; it is a treatise because Leary outlines not only how he lived, but why he made the choices he did. By systematically laying out his thinking on subjects such as drugs, language, technology, death, sex, and consciousness, Leary shows readers the principles that undergirded his life.

Tone

Leary was a scientist and he often wrote as one. His prose, even in a book as intimate as *Design for Dying*, is frequently dominated by jargon, awkward metaphors, and convoluted reasoning and syntax. The sections that Sirius wrote are more direct and less weighed down by Leary's attempts to articulate paradox. Leary's problem was in trying to find a language for experiences that are mystical and beyond language's capacity to describe. Sticking to scientific concepts and terminology only obscures his message, and when he tried to use common speech, he often sounds goofy and dated. This flaw can be partially attributed to the challenge Sirius faced in constructing the book from Leary's notes and past essays. Sirius and Leary each narrate part of the book, then a host of friends and associates recount their experiences with Leary. The effect is closer to collage than unified narrative.

Testimonial

Testimonials are first-person accounts of an event or phenomenon. The addendum to *Design for Dying* contains numerous testimonials by various friends of Leary's, recounting memories of him. In this way, the addendum functions as a series of eulogies (tributes to the deceased often delivered by loved ones at the funeral). Ending the book in this manner gives the work as a whole a warmer tone.

Historical Context

The 1990s witnessed the popularization of the right-to-die movement, the movement seeking the right to doctor-assisted suicide for the terminally ill, and support for euthanasia. Oregon has been the national focal point of the debate. In 1980, Derek Humphry founded the Hemlock Society in Eugene, Oregon. The group has grown to be the oldest and largest right-to-die organization in the United States. Humphry is the author of the popular book *Final Exit*, a primer on self-euthanasia (what Humphry calls "self-deliverance"), including the thirteen steps for using a plastic bag to kill oneself. In 1994, Oregon became the first state to vote into law a measure guaranteeing the right to doctor-assisted suicide, passing it with 51 percent support.

From the beginning, opponents of physician-assisted suicide measures and bills argued on religious, philosophical, and legal terms against such a right. Many of these arguments turn on the idea that those with terminal illnesses are not mentally qualified to make such a decision. Opponents tried to repeal the Oregon law in 1997 but were defeated with a 60 percent vote in favor of retaining the measure. Congress has sought to circumvent Oregon's law, fearing that other states would follow Oregon's example and pass assisted-suicide measures or bills. The House of Representatives has passed an act which prohibits federal financial assistance to support assisted suicide and intends that federal funds not be used to promote such activities. Congressional opponents to the right-to-die movement have also attempted to pass legislation banning the federal government from licensing physicians to prescribe drugs for assisted suicide.

The man at the center of the assisted suicide movement has been Jack Kevorkian, a Michigan-based physician whose personal crusade is to help the terminally ill end their lives in dignified and comfortable manners. Kevorkian took to draping himself in the American flag during press conferences and posing as Uncle Sam to underscore his point: that he is fighting against government's intrusion into the most intimate parts of its citizens' lives and for individual freedom. After years of being charged but never convicted, and of helping others to end their lives, Kevorkian was found guilty of second-degree murder in 1999 and sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in prison for injecting terminally ill fifty-two-year-old Thomas Youk with a lethal cocktail of chemicals. The primary evidence against Kevorkian, whom opponents deride as "Dr. Death," was a videotape Kevorkian made of the event and sent to the television show *60 Minutes*. Kevorkian claims that by doing this he was trying to force the legal system to grapple with the reality of assisted suicide. Although Leary did not commit suicide, physician-assisted or otherwise, he praises Kevorkian for sacrificing his own life and freedom to help others who were suffering end their lives in a way of their own choosing.

Critical Overview

A controversial figure in life as well as death, Leary managed to tweak more than a few reviewers' nerves with his posthumous book. British fiction writer Will Self, no stranger to controversy, writes that Leary's prose style suffered when he wrote about his transcendent experiences: "It's a shame, because much of what Leary has to say could, potentially, be of interest; if only he wouldn't freight his text with willfully crap coinages and hideously convoluted clusters of dense, neologistic verbiage." Writing for *Library Journal*, Ben O'Sickey has no such reservations, asserting that "This ... book examines the process of death and dying in a way you've never read before." In a novel use of Leary's ideas, Ryan Matthews, writing for *Progressive Grocer*, argues that the grocery industry, small grocers in particular, should learn from Leary's claim that unpredictability and chaos are the norm and that today's world is one of systems, information, and algorithms. Citing Leary's statement that one should not confuse consistency with truth, Matthews asks grocers, "Are we really prepared to think in new ways, to speak a new language and, most importantly, to dream new dreams?" Zach Leary's talk about his stepfather's book appears in *Whole Earth*, offering the praise one might expect from a son. Leary offers snapshots from the LSD guru's last few days and says of his stepfather's passing: "If there is such a thing as a beautiful death, he died it."

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Semansky, author of the poetry collection Death, but at a Good Price, *publishes widely in the field of twentieth-century culture and literature. In the following essay, he considers the idea of the "good death" in* Design for Dying.

Dying the "good death" has long been a topic of study for sociologists: how people behave during their last days is seen by society as a marker of how they lived. Popular wisdom has it that the response of the dying to death's call embodies his or her character. In his *book Dying of Cancer: The Final Year of Life*, Allan Keelehear summarizes the various kinds of behavior that have characterized the good death in different cultures and historical periods. These behaviors include the "Good Christian Death" of the European Middle Ages and the "Good Warrior Death" of ancient Greece. However, according to Keelehear, "Today, the ideology behind the ideal good death does not reflect and support the values or influence of one institution, whether this is the Church or the politico-military establishment. Today, the ideal good death finds one in old age, under medical care and materially prepared for the economic and social welfare of survivors."

This, however, is precisely the kind of death that Timothy Leary wants to help others avoid. "Even if you've lived your life like a complete slob," he writes, "you can die with terrific style. I call it 'Designer Dying.'" Leary's posthumously published book, *Design for Dying*, purports to explain and describe his life and death as one of the twentieth century's most controversial figures. By writing about his death as he was dying, and by celebrating that dying, Leary asks readers to accept the idea that they, too, can have a good death, if they can see through the ways in which they have been programmed to fear death. Such an idea is presumptuous at best, naïve and deceitful at worst. Leary's death, like his life, was largely one of privilege, and his dying "performance" was enabled by that privilege.

Leary's recipe for choosing the means of one's death depends largely on having the means, both intellectually and materially, to be able to choose. As an intellectual educated at the United States' top universities, Leary was able to "think through" the ideologies which underpinned his life. It was partly this ability to think, nurtured and developed during his education at the University of California at Berkeley and his later research there and at Harvard University that provided him with the intellectual rigor to examine ideas closely. Arguing that the "herd" historically has helped to "imprint" the "dying reflex" on human beings, Leary asserts that today, with more information available to individuals through technology, people have the opportunity to resist herd mentality and reprogram their own response to death. Such a claim, however, assumes that people know first, how to access that information and second, how to use it properly.

Though technology has evolved to the point where information can be freely stored and shared, not everyone has equal access to that information. The term "digital divide" designates the reality that only some people are benefiting from the tremendous

developments in computer technology. Those on the "other" side of the divide include minorities, especially African Americans, those in lower income brackets, and those with little or no access to computer technology in their workplaces. As Leary's call for people to educate themselves rests largely on their access to computers, those with little or no access are at a disadvantage. With the amount of information available to those with computer access increasing daily, that disadvantage grows proportionately.

In addition to education, Leary's own material success made it physically easier for him to die the way he desired. His life as a prolific writer and public speaker provided him with a home in Beverly Hills and considerable financial success. While dying, he was surrounded by friends and associates who attended to his every wish. These friends fed his need for attention and love and kept him well supplied with a variety of drugs, both legal and illegal. Leary claims that his daily "self-medication" during his last year included the following: "2 cups of caffeine; 13 cigarettes; 2 Vicodin; 1 glass of white wine; 1 highball; 1 line of cocaine; 12 balloons of nitrous oxide; 4 Leary biscuits (marijuana in melted cheese on a Ritz cracker)." In short, Leary did not contemplate suicide because he managed to control his pain and was daily reassured of his continued value to the living.

Others diagnosed with terminal illnesses are not nearly so lucky. Many, especially the poor, are racked with pain and do not have access to adequate pain relief, do not have strong support networks, and frequently think of themselves as a burden on the living. Dying at home, thought by many to be the primary ingredient of the good death, can be a burden unless one has the resources, emotional and financial, of a Timothy Leary. Marilyn Webb, editor of *Psychology Today*, writes:

The sad secret that many don't want to admit is that care at home, wonderful as it can be in helping a patient to a good death, is hard on families. Home care may allow for those close, intimate, late-night times with the dying family member ... but there are also the difficult times: changing diapers, losing sleep or feeling intense anxiety because the patient is in pain or can't breathe.

For those not as privileged as Leary, the "choice" to be anxious, scared, and mournful about their coming deaths is as informed by the lack of these resources as Leary's choice to celebrate his death was informed by their availability.

Leary was also able to work until the day he died, an activity which provides many people with a sense of self-worth. This, of course, was because Leary's life had become his work. The publication of *Design for Dying* was enabled by Leary's death, as was the production of numerous other books, documentaries, and photo exhibits. Leary's dying became his work. Such seamlessness between one's professional and personal life is impossible for others

By calling his death a "performance," Leary draws attention to the authenticity of his remarks in the book. In the addendum, R. U. Sirius underscores the difference between Leary, the public figure, and Leary, the friend, and others write about Leary's skill as a performer and showman. Taking Leary's many, and often contradictory, selves into

account, it becomes more difficult to assess the claims he makes for the experience of his own death. Writer Will Self also questions the sincerity of how Leary's death is described. Calling Leary a "put-on artist," Self writes:

In truth Leary's final months, during which he railed against the morbidity of our attitudes towards death and plundered the wilder fringes of contemporary scientific thought for the furniture of an afterlife, can be read as a perverse return to the lonely, strict Catholic boyhood that really made him what he was. This is the sad current that lies beneath *Design for Dying*, a book which on the surface is a studied reprise of all Leary's crankiness.

Self writes that "while Leary wanted us to believe he was dying as he had lived, the truth was that he wouldn't have minded a crumb of good old-fashioned absolution when it came to the crunch."

Contrary to the opinion of many, Leary was an elitist, in life as well as in death. Though he professed to desire nothing short of the liberation of the human mind and the evolution of human consciousness, his dying performance was that of a man who set an example to which few, even if they wanted to, could aspire.

Source: Chris Semansky, Critical Essay on *Design for Dying*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Winters is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, she discusses themes in, and critical responses to, Timothy Leary's Design for Dying.

"When I learned that I was dying, I was thrilled," Timothy Leary writes in *Design for Dying*. When Leary discovered that he had prostate cancer, and that it was terminal, he saw it as a chance to put into practice his own theories about conscious dying, a topic he'd written and thought about for many years. In addition, he decided to use the occasion to publicize his theories on dying by making his death a public event. Through his website, www.leary.com, he shared the progress of his illness with fans and other curious people. For a while, he said, he considered committing suicide and broadcasting the act live over the Internet. He also considered cryogenic preservation, a process in which his brain would be frozen, so that someday, if future technology allowed, his brain could be defrosted, brought back to life, and allowed to experience life in a future century. In the end, he rejected both of these ideas and died at home, in the company of friends and family.

Design for Dying was published eighteen months after Leary's death and offers his thoughts on his impending death, his reflections on social attitudes toward death and dying, and his theories of how people can take control of their own death and dying. He believes that, ultimately, people could avoid what they now know as death by achieving various forms of continuity and immortality. For Leary, death is "the ultimate trip," and he advises people to think carefully about death, to plan for it, and to make it an expression of their own values and beliefs, rather than allowing it to be an empty, socially controlled, and unexamined ritual.

"Instead of treating the last act in your life in terms of fear, weakness, and helplessness, think of it as a triumphant graduation," Leary writes. "Friends and family members should treat the situation with openness, rather than avoidance. Celebrate. Discuss. Plan for that final moment."

This advice, as Leary notes, is not new. Others who work in the field of death and dying, such as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (*On Death and Dying*, 1997) and Stephen Levine (*Healing into Life and Death*, 1989), advocate dying with awareness, dignity, and emotional openness. Leary acknowledges his debt to them but adds an antiauthoritarian twist, adding death to a list of other issues that are under strict, but rarely acknowledged, social and religious control. These issues of "birth, embodiment, and death" include test-tube fertilization, contraception, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, cloning, sperm banks, egg banks, and DNA banks. According to Leary, these areas are rigidly controlled by religious and governmental forces, who do not want people to gain access to them. Leary believes that the fear of death is the key to such religious and political control of the masses. Why? Because if people aren't afraid of death, they won't bother to be religious or to toe the political line, and the authorities will therefore no longer be in control.

Leary recommends that people overcome their fear of death by "experimental dying" through meditation, hypnosis, the cultivation of "out-of-body experiences," and the use of drugs. According to Leary, the "final trip" is very similar to some drug experiences, and thus, those who have frequently used drugs are likely to find the death experience familiar and less terrifying. In addition, frequent experience of meditative and other transcendent states can prepare one for the moment of "de-animation," as Leary calls death. He also advocates, "reprogramming your death imprint," or visualizing one's own death, and at the same time cultivating a mental state of peace, ease, and humor, rather than the fear, gloom, and confusion many people associate with death.

Although the book is purportedly about death, a close examination reveals that much of it is concerned with the question of how individuals can achieve a form of immortality. Leary predicts that "the concept of involuntary, irreversible metabolic coma known as 'death' is about to become an outmoded, antiquated superstition." Leary argues that because humans are repositories of information, it makes sense to try to preserve that information for as long as possible. The information can be biological, such as the DNA encoded in our cells; physical, such as the actual physical body; emotional; intellectual; or experiential. For Leary, the problem of "death" is really a problem of information storage, since if this information could somehow be saved, the individual would not really be dead; parts of the individual, if not the whole individual, would live on after the moment traditionally called death.

Leary presents various options for not-really-dying, including cryonics□freezing the brain or the entire body, so that at some point in the future the individual can be revived. Even if this were possible, however, it seems a mere postponement of the eventual certainty of death□since the individual would obviously have to die sometime. Leary is entertained by this idea and considered having his own head removed and frozen after his death. (He had a contract with a cryonics organization to do so, but the deal eventually fell through.) He admits that the notion appealed to his antiestablishment sensibilities: "The idea of keeping someone's head in suspension pushes people's taboo buttons even more than whole-body suspension, which is one fun reason to *do* it."

Leary also describes another set of possible methods "for attaining immortality," which he labels "cybernetic." In these methods, an individual's stored knowledge, experience, DNA, and personality could somehow be transferred to a computer or computer-like device. As support for these ideas, Leary cites works of science fiction, such as *Schizmatrix* by Bruce Sterling, but seems to take them more as works of science than fiction. It's unclear how much of this he truly believed was possible and how much of it he saw simply as a realm of fascinating possibilities.

In an article in *Spike* magazine, Chris Mitchell notes that, with *Design for Dying*, Leary was still trying to shake people up and break open unexam-ined social taboos. Mitchell also comments that Leary's daily drug intake, published on his Web site and listed in the book, "gives plenty of ammunition to those who would want to write this book off as a collection of drug-crazed ramblings." It's true that Leary's enthusiastic support for drug use tends to undermine his credibility. As Philip Zaleski wrote in the *New York Times*, much of the book, particularly the first half, "is a rehash of Leary's kookier obsessions."

Indeed, some of Leary's theories do appear outlandish, such as the idea that a frozen brain could be revived and, at some future date, implanted in another person. "I want my brain to be put into a beautiful, young, black woman," he writes, not addressing the question of what would happen to the young woman's brain and personality. Another outlandish concept is his notion that a person's brain could be scanned and the contents uploaded into a computer. He writes that, in his view, there are two possibilities for the "near-future" human□the "cyborg," or human-machine hybrid, and the "postbiological," or electronic life-form, that exists only in computer networks but is nevertheless "human." As Zaleski implies, it's not just the possibility of these ideas that's in question; it's whether or not Leary truly believed these things were possible. In the book, all these ideas are presented with equal seriousness, as if Leary wholeheartedly believed their advent was just around the corner. For most people, belief in such things is more than enough to classify Leary as, at the least, eccentric.

Among the enthusiastic promotions of drug experience, the endorsement of science-fictional immortality as an option, and the admonitions to do some things mainly because they will upset the status quo, Leary gives some sound advice and makes some thoughtful remarks. "Face it," he writes. "At this point in human history, we're all terminal. It behooves us to focus some time and energy and courage on regaining personal and group autonomy over the dying process."

He's correct to write that death is one of the least-examined life events in modern Western soci ety and the least individualized. Few people are prepared for their own deaths, despite the fact that, as Leary writes, death is "the singular transcendent experience that *every*, person will undergo." In addition, his advice to meditate on one's impending death, plan for it, talk openly about it, and involve loved ones in the process is supported by current psychological and spiritual opinion, exemplified by thoughtful writers on death, including Kübler-Ross and Levine. These actions do take away much of the fear of death, and they make the process of death easier and more comfortable for both the dying person and those who are left behind. As a *Booklist* reviewer, cited by Amazon.com, notes, Leary's advice to treat death as a "graduation" and to have a party on the occasion of one's own death is "giddily attractive," as is the notion that, in one's death, one should reflect one's own ideas and values, not those of others. For example, a nonreligious person may not be interested in spending time with a cleric at the time of death, but may find more meaning in listening to much-loved music or being taken in a wheelchair to spend time under the stars. Such possibilities run counter to cultural stereotypes about an "appropriate" death, but they are liberating and stimulating, and all would do well to consider them.

A Publishers Weekly reviewer summed up *Design for Dying* by writing, "Leary was a great gamester who engaged hierarchies of Western thought in a battle until the end. Here he plays out the final moments of his own game with verve and vitality."

Source: Kelly Winters, Critical Essay on *Design for Dying*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #3

McClure holds an Ed.D. in reading and is a freelance writer, assistant professor of education, and owner of an educational resources and consulting firm. In this essay, she considers the influence of Leary's basic existentialist nature on his views of life and death.

"Turn on. Tune in. Drop out." Perhaps Timothy Leary's most famous six words, the phrases bring forth vivid images of the 1960s: free-flowing hallucinogenic drugs; rowdy anti-establishment activists; and glaze-eyed, stoned-out hippies. According to Christopher Graves (webmaster for the Timothy Leary homepage), however, it was the media that twisted Leary's words to mean that everyone should get high and do nothing constructive. Leary's true intent was more existentialist in nature. That is, Leary wanted people to choose to be physically, mentally, and emotionally present in the world; to be full participants in their lives; and to take charge of their own destinies. To Leary, being "turned on" meant acknowledging and using one's birth-given intelligence; being "tuned in" meant investigating the meaning of life and taking an active part in defining it; and "dropping out" meant making the right choices for one's own life□being able to say "No" and "Why not?" (reportedly, Leary's last words). Leary's *Design for Dying* presents his views on life and death. The book incorporates Leary's eight-circuit theory of human evolution, his interpretation of the cyber-age, and his perceptions of the dying process. Overall, *Design for Dying* makes a case for the continuity of the universe and a person's search for a self who can evolve with time and place.

Design for Dying reveals not only a road map for dying with one's dignity intact but also a plan for living life to its fullest. The first half of the book is entitled "Living," and here Leary introduces the idea that people should recognize that they are part of an evolutionary plan. Leary believes that the human body contains the code for continuing the evolution of the human being, or for preventing the extinction of the species. The code contains instructions for humans' evolution from life forms intended to live on Earth to life forms that continue their existence after death and beyond the earth's boundaries. His eight-circuit theory of evolution, first described in the 1970s and reiterated in *Design for Dying*, proposes that human beings□to this point□have evolved through the first four circuits, or the embryonic stages, of an earthbound life. These circuits carry the human through the stages of life from birth to old age. Leary calls these circuits biosurvival, emotional, laryngeal/manipulative, and sexual domestication. These circuits embody life as it is□recognizable stages through which all people pass. On the other hand, the last four circuits□ neurosomatic, neuroelectric, neurogenetic, and neuroatomic□take the person beyond life as it is to life as it could be. Leary proposes a form of life no longer bound to the earth, but evolved to a form that escapes terrestrial boundaries. That is, Leary believes that humans take on new life forms at death. He views death, therefore, not as the end of life, but as the transition to the highest rung on the evolutionary ladder. Leary proposes that, in death, people carry with them the genetic imprint of the stages through which they have successfully traveled. Dy ing does not put an end to living, but provides a different vehicle through which the genetic code can be transmitted.

Leary says that people who recognize this plan for evolution—and who understand that they have an active role to play in the continuation of the species—are "turned on." Furthermore, Leary stresses that it is not just a chosen few who can visualize and interact with the plan, but that all people have the intellect and ability to do so. It is each person's choice to rise above and live beyond a banal existence—in effect, to "turn on"—and to move from the first four circuits of human evolution into the last four circuits.

Leary thinks that some people actually move into the latter four circuits before it is the right evolutionary time. In *Design for Dying*, Leary calls these people "mutational agents." They have evolved to higher levels and have the capability of carrying the human genetic code to places beyond the earth's boundaries, infinitely continuing the existence of mankind.

Typically, the terms "mutant" and "agent" have negative connotations. Leary, however, uses the terms in a positive way, to describe people who have "turned on" and who are "tuning in" to the world as it could be. In other words, mutants have recognized the continuity of life and understand that they have the opportunity to become agents in the evolutionary process. According to Leary, mutants understand that the very purpose of human existence is "to look within and without and to decode the purpose of life."

Leary says that DNA creates nervous systems which all contain the same instructions for the evolution of mankind. What differentiates people are personality, ego, and mind, which are the results of accidental imprints on the nervous system. Leary goes on to explain that mutants become evolutionary agents when they can voluntarily and selectively suspend the imprints that have made them unique individuals. Through this suspension of their imprints, individuals avail themselves of the evolutionary information accessible only in the final four circuits of Leary's model. From Leary's viewpoint, people who suspend their imprints are then thinking and acting like the DNA code itself, designing new life forms or nervous systems. Having this higher-level evolutionary information, the mutational agents will then save the human species.

According to Leary, mutants in American society have been actively involved in tuning in, or becoming evolutionary agents, for years. Many of these mutants use drugs to expand their minds. For example, the hippies of the 1960s used drugs such as LSD to "trip." Supposedly, tripping enables people to be more creative and to view the world in unique ways—to see beyond the earth's boundaries to the next evolutionary stages. Leary himself advocates the use of drugs to enhance thought and experience; he "prescribes" a drug for improving each of the life stages in his evolutionary theory. Most Americans, on the other hand, will not use drugs for this purpose. These people, according to Leary, might never be able to access the higher stages of evolution because their minds are closed to new ideas. Leary believes, though, that a new age has come wherein people have something other than drugs that will stimulate the mind—computers. According to Leary, computers and technology offer a new arena for thinking that most of the general population will find both accessible and acceptable. He sees the computer age as a new awakening for society and cyberspace as an open space that can be easily utilized by anyone who is interested in tuning in.

Leary believes that the largest part of tuning in is the process of identifying one's self, and Leary thinks that technology will enhance this process. The model of self that Leary describes evolves from the sciences of technology, biology, and mathematics. Basically, it says that people have an inside being, are surrounded by outside information, and have the ability to receive and react to that information. Leary believes that identifying one's self involves determining "the location of individualized and generalized consciousness within space and time." In other words, Leary believes that people identify themselves through their emotions, their perceptions of their surroundings, and their interactions with others. Another way to describe this is to say that people react with specific emotions to everything they experience through their senses. Leary connects the identification of self with technology as follows. As technology evolves, it is changing the concepts of space and time. The world, in effect, is shrinking as people are able to more quickly and efficiently exchange ideas and move from place to place. The result is increased opportunity for people to interact in different ways, with different surroundings, and with a variety of individuals from around the world. That is, technology is recreating the concept of self by helping people expand their views, allowing for rapid exchange of ideas, and providing a means for storing the ideas.

As technology improves, then, the "self" expands. Leary notes that the new generation of computers allows for more direct communications between the human and the machine. To illustrate, at medical research institutions around the world, scientists are creating artificial limbs that will move when the paralyzed person wearing them thinks about moving them. When thinking actually becomes doing, according to Leary, machines will have acquired human qualities to an extent that the expanded self includes the machine. In other words, computers will become more like humans, able to function with little human input. Leary believes that at some point in time, computer chips will have evolved to the point that they contain programs that can produce human beings. Leary predicts that when scientists accomplish this, the "self" will be continued on a microchip. When death of the human body occurs, the "self" will continue through the information contained on the chip. Thus, technology is evolving to ensure the continuity of life and the human species by providing the means for expanding and storing the concept of self.

With this view towards the definition of an expanded self and a continuation of life through technology, Leary With this view towards the definition of an expanded self and a continuation of life through technology, Leary writes *Design for Dying* as a blueprint for living and evolving through the stages of his evolutionary theory. In the first half of the book, Leary presents his theory and his views on living life to its fullest. In living, people have the opportunity to recognize that they are part of a larger evolutionary plan (to turn on) and to participate fully in the implementation of that plan (to tune in). In designing the way in which they will participate, people make choices for their lives. Leary refers to this as "dropping out." This does not mean that people turn their backs on society□as some have interpreted it to mean□but instead, that people make choices that fit their individual lifestyles.writes Design for Dying as a blueprint for living and evolving through the stages of his evolutionary theory. In the first half of the book, Leary presents his theory and his views on living life to its fullest. In living, people have the opportunity to recognize that they are part of a larger evolutionary plan (to turn on) and to participate

fully in the implementation of that plan (to tune in). In designing the way in which they will participate, people make choices for their lives. Leary refers to this as "dropping out." This does not mean that people turn their backs on society□as some have interpreted it to mean□but instead, that people make choices that fit their individual lifestyles.

In the second half of his book, Leary considers the individual's ultimate opportunity to "drop out." Leary contemplates dying. Leary's attitude is that death should be celebrated at home in the presence of family and friends as a "graduation" from ideas to wisdom. He has no use for the morbid traditions associated with the coming of death, believing them to be a product of the controlling nature of modern society. He views resuscitative efforts by hospital staff, for example, as society's final attempts to dominate, and he detests the implication that the dying are victims. He believes that society is doing a disservice to people in teaching them to fear, deny, and postpone death at all costs. Instead, society should embrace death and rejoice in the life cycle.

On a more individual level, Leary feels that knowing that death is coming provides individuals with the final opportunity to make choices□to decide how to "drop out" of society. Leary suggests that the first choice people should make when they learn they are dying is to reprogram their imprints for dying. That is, people should rethink their interpretations of, and responses to, death. Reprogramming the dying imprint suggests replacing negative associations with positive ones. For example, instead of thinking about the funeral and burial, people should try to visualize positive images such as meeting family and friends. The second choice people should make is to continue living in the present and believing in the future of an ongoing existence. According to Leary's theory of evolution, dying means not the end but the beginning of a different life form. He says that while consciousness has left the body, it has not disappeared; it has merely merged with the genetic code. A new life form emerges that contains all of the code for life before and after its existence on Earth. Thus, life is everlasting. As the result of technological advances, people may soon have a third choice they can make about dying. People may be able to choose alternatives to irreversible death. Many scientific organizations are investigating methods by which the structure of human tissues can be preserved for later reanimation. These technological preservations produce reversible metabolic coma and include such methods as cryogenics and cryonic preservation of neural tissue. Leary further theorizes that the science of nanotechnology will find a way to preserve even memory and personality, reducing them to programs contained on a microchip.

In the final analysis, Leary provides an optimistic view of life and death in *Design for Dying*. Life is, first, about "turning on"□understanding the continuity of the universe. Life is then about "tuning in"□making one's own life a participatory sport and creating a life that defines one's self. Life is, finally, about "dropping out"□making choices that will make one's own life and death a pleasant journey. In Leary's estimation, those who "turn on, tune in, and drop out" will make a positive contribution to the continuation of the species

Source: Nancy Clark McClure, Critical Essay on *Design for Dying*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001.

Adaptations

Beyond Life with Timothy Leary, a video released in 1997, contains interviews with Leary just before his death, as well as interviews from the 1960s.

The documentary *Timothy Leary's Last Trip*, released in 1997, provides an in-depth history of Leary's place in America's counterculture, from the early 1960s until his death. Much of the film concerns Leary's associations with Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters and their experiments with LSD.

Timothy Leary's Dead is one in a spate of documentaries released after Leary's death, but it is probably the most controversial. Directed by Paul Davids, this 1996 film gained fame for its shocking scene of the removal and freezing of Leary's head, something sources closer to Leary insist never happened.

Leary's homepage, at http://www.leary.com (March 2001), contains a trove of text and photos on Leary's life and work.

Topics for Further Study

Write your own obituary, speculating about what you will have done in your life. Then ask at least two other people you know to write obituaries for you. What differences do you notice between what other people think you will do and what you think?

If you were diagnosed with a terminal illness today, how would you spend the rest of your life? Write a plan, detailing what you would do if you knew your days were numbered.

Interview people who were in their twenties during the 1960s and interview people who are now in their twenties, asking them their views on the use of drugs such as LSD and marijuana. What similarities and differences do you see?

Before deciding against it, Leary intended to broadcast his death over the Internet. How do you think dying in public changes one's experience of death? Would you choose to die like this? Why or why not?

Cryonics is the practice of deep-freezing the body until such time that technology can "reanimate" it. If future human beings had the possibility of living forever, how would they change the way they live? How would the possibility of immortality affect laws, customs, and the management of natural resources?

After researching the issue of physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill, write an essay arguing for or against it. Provide evidence for your reasoning.

What Do I Read Next?

The second edition of Leary's *High Priest* was published in 1995. The updated book contains an introduction by Allen Ginsberg and details of psychedelic trips Leary and his friends took before LSD became illegal. Sharing Leary's "trips" were Aldous Huxley, Gordon Wasson, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Ram Dass, Ralph Metzner, and others.

Leary's 1994 *Chaos & Cyber Culture* provides a solid introduction to Leary's theories on the possibilities of techno-culture. Like all of his work, this book addresses human evolution and ways in which human beings can free themselves from the shackles of government control and groupthink.

Psycho-Cybernetics, first published in 1960, was written by Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon who became a leading voice for cybernetic expansion of human possibility. This book provides a solid introduction to psycho-cybernetics as well as techniques for relaxation and visualization.

Software is a 1982 science-fiction novel by Rudy Rucker, one of Leary's favorite writers. The plot centers on sentient robots that overthrow their human masters. Leary often wrote about artificial intelligence and the consequences of machines developing consciousness.

Forever For All: Moral Philosophy, Cryonics, and the Scientific Prospects for Immortality, by R. Michael Perry, was released in 2000. Perry's essays examine the relationships between mortality and consciousness, questioning the possibility and consequences of human immortality.

Further Study

Dass, Ram, *Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying*, Riverhead Books, 2000.

Ram Dass, formerly Richard Alpert, philosophizes on aging and dying, writing that self-enlightenment comes from stepping away from the ego-self and into the soul-self, where people can witness their thoughts and emotions and assess their effects.

Forte, Robert, ed., *Timothy Leary: Outside Looking In*, Park St. Press, 1999.

A documenter of psychedelic history and phenomenology, Forte provides a multi-faceted look at Leary' s life and writings. These essays by and interviews with Leary address the philosopher's favorite themes: drugs, religion, and death.

Wolfe, Tom, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1999.

Perhaps the definitive book of the 1960s, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* recounts author Tom Wolfe's trip across America with Ken Kesey and his band, The Merry Pranksters. Wolfe recounts a visit to Leary's Millbrook house in upstate New York, where experiments with LSD were a part of daily life.

Bibliography

Humphry, Derek, *Final Exit*, Dell Publishing, 1997.

Keelehear, Allan, *Dying of Cancer: The Final Year of Life*, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1990.

Leary, Zach, "I'd Love a Hot Dog from That Central Computer," *in Whole Earth*, No. 90, Summer 1997, p. 33.

Matthews, Ryan, "Turn On and Tune In," *in Progressive Grocer*, Vol. 76, No. 7, July 1997,p. 19.

O'Sickey Ben, Review in *Library Journal*, Vol. 122, No. 12, July 1997, p. 116. Self, Will, "A Teen for Eternity," in *New Statesman*, Vol. 126, No. 4351, September 12, 1997, p. 44.

Timothy Leary, http://www.leary.com (May 1999).

Webb, Marilyn, *The Good Death: The New American Search to Reshape the End of Life*, Bantam Books, 1999.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Nonfiction Classics for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) 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, NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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 NCfS 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

NCfS 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 Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NCfS 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 Nonfiction Classics for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS 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.□ Nonfiction Classics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS, 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 Nonfiction Classics 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 NCfS, 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 Nonfiction Classics 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:

Editor, Nonfiction Classics for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535