Detective Story Study Guide

Detective Story by Sidney Kingsley

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Introduction

Sidney Kingsley's play *Detective Story* was a critical and popular success during its time, garnering the 1949 Edgar Allan Poe Award and a successful run on Broadway. *Detective Story* was adapted to the screen as a major motion picture starring Kirk Douglas and became a prototype for later movie and television police crime dramas.

Detective Story centers on the decisions of James McLeod, a New York City police detective who self-righteously regards himself as a sovereign judge of the rights and wrongs of others. McLeod performs his job with complete disregard for the rights of the accused and the laws of due process in the American justice system. He brutalizes Kurt Schneider, a man who has turned himself in to the police due to an arrest warrant, under suspicion of performing illegal abortions. McLeod is convinced that Schneider is guilty and disregards the legal process by which the man has the right to a fair trial in order to determine his guilt or innocence. When McLeod learns that his own wife once obtained an abortion from Schneider, he is unable to forgive his wife for her past decisions, and his marriage is destroyed. Only in his dying moments, having received a fatal gunshot wound from an already apprehended burglar, does McLeod realize that he himself is guilty of failing to forgive others for their mistakes.

Kingsley wrote *Detective Story* as a message about the importance of maintaining the rights of the accused and upholding due process in law to the principles of democracy. He was particularly concerned with the threat of a corrupt or totalitarian police force to a free society. In an introduction to *Detective Story*, Kingsley explained:

When I named my police station the Twenty-First Precinct, I hoped some of the audience might ask themselves whether we will be living in a police state in the twenty-first century, or whether we will be getting the protection of the police in accord with the rules of a free society.

In *Detective Story*, Kingsley explores themes of forgiveness and compassion, democracy and justice, police brutality, and self-righteousness in judging others.

Author Biography

Sidney Kingsley was born Sidney Kieschner on October 22, 1906, in New York City. He graduated from high school in 1924 and attended Cornell University, earning a bachelor's degree in 1928.

Upon graduating from college, Kingsley worked as an actor with the Tremont Stock Company in the Bronx. In 1929, he moved to California, where he found work as a play reader for theater companies and as a scenario reader for Paramount Pictures. During this time, Kingsley continued to write and develop his own dramatic works. Over the course of his life, he wrote a total of nine professionally produced plays, some of which he himself directed. In 1939, he married actress Madge Evans, with whom he later cowrote several plays.

Kingsley's first Broadway play, *Men in White* (1933), was his most successful, earning him the 1934 Pulitzer Prize for best American play. *Men in White* concerns the dilemmas of a young doctor who must choose between idealistic service to humanity through his work and a fulfilling personal life through marriage to the woman he loves. *Men in White* was adapted as a major motion picture starring Clark Gable and Myrna Loy, produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) in 1934.

Dead End (1935), Kingsley's second Broadway play, concerns crime life in the slums of New York City. *Dead End* is considered to have been highly influential in raising public awareness about urban poverty. In 1937, it was adapted as a major motion picture produced by United Artists and starring Humphrey Bogart.

From 1939 to 1943, during the World War II years, Kingsley served in the military, earning the rank of lieutenant. His experiences as a veteran in the postwar period provided him with insight he used in developing the character of Arthur in his play *Detective Story*. Arthur is a veteran of World War II who has had trouble adjusting to civilian life after his traumatic experiences in the war.

Kingsley's play *The Patriots* (1943), cowritten with his wife, concerns the conflict between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton over questions of what principles constitute good democratic government. Although *The Patriots* was popular with theater-going audiences, it was controversial among critics, raising issues of historical accuracy and literary quality. Nonetheless, Kingsley received the 1943 New York Drama Critics Circle award for best play for the *The Patriots*.

Kingsley wrote the original story line for the film *Homecoming* (1948), produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. He adapted the play *Darkness at Noon* (1951), for which he received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, from a novel by Arthur Koestler.

In 1951, Kingsley received the medal of merit for outstanding drama, awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He died of a stroke on March 20, 1995, in Oakland, New Jersey.

Plot Summary

Act 1

In act 1, several police detectives and other police precinct employees process arrests and attend to the routine business of the police station. Two men, Charlie and Lewis, are brought in, having just been arrested for burglary. Detective McLeod enters with Arthur, a young man he has just arrested for stealing $480 from his employer. Arthur claims he has never been arrested before and that he cannot give the money back because he has already spent it. Joe Feinson, a reporter familiar to the employees of the police station, hangs around, hoping for a lead on a good newspaper story.

Endicott Sims, an attorney representing Mr. Kurt Schneider, enters the station. There is a warrant out for the arrest of Schneider, who is being accused of performing illegal abortions, although he claims to be a vegetable farmer in New Jersey. Sims later brings Schneider into the station, warning the police officers to observe his client's legal rights.

Alone with Schneider in an office of the police station, McLeod tries to pressure him into signing a confession that he has practiced illegal abortion services, but Schneider refuses. McLeod explains that a young woman, Miss Harris, is currently in the hospital in critical condition from internal injuries received while obtaining an abortion from Schneider. McLeod asserts that the Harris girl has identified Schneider as the man who performed the abortion, and McLeod plans to bring Schneider to the hospital so that she may identify him in person. McLeod needs this concrete evidence in order to bring Schneider to trial. However, he receives a phone call from the hospital indicating that the Harris girl has died. He now has no evidence against Schneider.

Frustrated, McLeod shoves Schneider, slaps him, and kicks him, knocking him down on the floor. Other detectives come running into the office to see what has happened. Schneider writhes and moans on the floor and then seems to lose consciousness. Before he does, however, he asks the detectives to contact a man by the name of Tami Giacoppetti.

Act 2

Act 2 takes place about an hour later. Schneider is in the hospital being examined to determine if McLeod inflicted any significant injury to him. Lieutenant Monaghan chastises McLeod for assaulting Schneider. Sims, Schneider's lawyer, warns that he will charge McLeod with felonious assault if it turns out that Schneider is injured.

Sims privately tells the lieutenant that McLeod's insistence on convicting Schneider is a matter of personal vengeance, not just a matter of doing his duty as a detective. Sims suggests that the lieutenant call McLeod's wife to ask about what he is referring to. While McLeod is busy with other matters, the lieutenant calls McLeod's wife, Mary, and asks her to come to the station.

Meanwhile, other detectives and police officers have discovered numerous items of stolen property stored at Charlie's apartment. The detectives find Charlie's police record and learn that he has been convicted and served prison sentences several times in the past for a variety of crimes. They taunt Charlie by telling him that with his record he will certainly be given a life sentence for his recent crimes.

Mr. Pritchett, the employer from whom Arthur stole money, enters the police station. Suzie Carmichael, an old friend who grew up with Arthur, arrives and offers to pay back the money Arthur took. Mr. Pritchett is willing to accept the money, but McLeod asserts that Arthur is a thief and that he himself intends to see him prosecuted as a criminal.

The lieutenant learns that Mary McLeod has arrived at the police station. Because he does not want McLeod to know that his wife is there, the lieutenant sends McLeod to dig up some old, obscure police files so as to get him out of the way for a while. The lieutenant takes Mary into his office and asks her directly if she ever obtained an abortion from Kurt Schneider. Mary says she has never heard of Schneider and insists that she has no idea what he is referring to.

The lieutenant then brings Tami Giacoppetti into his office. Tami and Mary clearly recognize each other. The lieutenant speaks to Tami privately, asking how he knows Mary. Tami explains that, although he has been married for fifteen years, he had an affair with Mary about seven years earlier. He explains that Mary had gotten pregnant from him and then disappeared without contacting him. After he found out that Kurt Schneider had performed an abortion on Mary, Tami beat up Schneider. He claims that he would have beat up Mary, too, but he had been unable to find her.

Mary insists that McLeod knows nothing about her past relationship with Tami or about her having obtained an abortion from Schneider. The lieutenant explains that if McLeod knew that his wife had once obtained an abortion from Schneider, then his physical assault of Schneider would be regarded as a personal vendetta against the man; however, if Mary is being truthful in stating that McLeod knows nothing about her having gotten an abortion from Schneider, then the assault will be considered less serious because it was not motivated by personal vengeance.

At this point, McLeod returns with the old files he had been ordered to dig up. He then goes into the lieutenant's office, where Mary, Tami, and the lieutenant have been talking. Mary and McLeod are left to speak privately, and Mary admits to him that she had gotten pregnant from Tami several years before she and McLeod met and that she had obtained an abortion from Schneider.

McLeod responds to Mary's admission with rage and disgust. He calls Mary a "whore" and a murderer. Mary admits that she made mistakes in the past and that she regrets it. She begs McLeod to try to understand her situation at the time and to forgive her, but he refuses to understand or forgive. Mary runs out of the office in tears.

Act 3

Act 3 begins about an hour later. Mary enters the lieutenant's office of the police station, where McLeod is sitting. She tells McLeod that she is leaving him. She has her things packed and there is a taxi waiting outside. McLeod begs her not to leave him, but she insists that he will never be able to forgive her for her past and that she could not live with him under such conditions. McLeod continues to insist that Mary go home so they can work things out between them in the morning. He finally convinces Mary to wipe away her tears and go home.

While Mary is in the washroom, Sims walks into the office, demanding to speak with McLeod about Schneider. McLeod realizes that Schneider will once again go free because McLeod does not have a witness to testify that Schneider has performed an illegal abortion. Sims, however, suggests to McLeod that Mary, his wife, could testify against Schneider. Sims then leaves the police station.

When Mary returns from the washroom, McLeod is once again bitter and unforgiving toward her. He indicates that he is disgusted by the thought that she had been involved with other men before she met him. Mary realizes that McLeod will never be able to forgive her for her past. She once again asserts that she is going to leave him and that he will never see her again. Mary then leaves the police station.

Charlie, one of the burglars brought in to the station earlier in the evening, takes an opportunity to seize a gun that one of the detectives has set on his desk. McLeod lunges at Charlie, and Charlie shoots him three times in the belly. The other detectives then knock the gun out of Charlie's hands and beat him to the ground.

McLeod is fatally wounded but still alive. He demands that Brody take the handcuffs off Arthur, drop the charges against him, and let him go home. As he is dying, McLeod asks for a priest and then begins to pray to God for forgiveness. McLeod dies, and Gallagher calls the hospital to send a priest to the station and administer Last Rites.

Characters

Detective Lou Brody

Detective Lou Brody has been McLeod's partner on the police force for thirteen years. Brody's son, Michael, served in the navy during World War II and was killed when his ship was sunk in the Pacific Ocean. Brody is particularly sympathetic to Arthur because Arthur also served in the navy during the war. Brody feels that if his son had lived, he would have had problems adjusting to life after the war similar to those that Arthur has had. Brody pleads with McLeod to be understanding about Arthur's troubles and to give him another chance instead of pressing criminal charges against him, but McLeod is unmoved and refuses to give Arthur a break. As McLeod is dying, he tells Brody to rake the handcuffs off Arthur and let him go free, which Brody does.

Detective Mike Callahan

Callahan is one of the detectives in the precinct office. He works on the case of the two burglars, Charlie and Lewis. In the final moments of the play, Charlie seizes Callahan's gun, which he has set on his desk, and hits Callahan over the head with it, knocking him down.

Susan Carmichael

Susan Carmichael is an old friend of Arthur's who grew up with him in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Susan arrives at the police station after Arthur is arrested in order to try to help him. She pawns some of her belongings to repay Mr. Pritchett for the money Arthur stole from him. Susan is in love with Arthur, although Arthur has always been in love with Susan's sister, Joy. Toward the end of the play, Arthur decides to transfer his affections from Joy to Susan, who suggests that they both go back home to Ann Arbor together.

Charlie

Charlie is arrested and brought into the police station with Lewis, his partner-in-crime. Charlie at first denies that he has ever been arrested before. After he is fingerprinted, however, the detectives find his file and learn that he has been arrested and served prison sentences for a variety of crimes. The detectives taunt Charlie, telling him that, given his past record, he will certainly be given a life sentence in prison.

In the final moments of the play, Charlie seizes the opportunity to grab an unattended gun from the top of a detective's desk. Charlie tells the police that, facing a life sentence, he has nothing more to lose by shooting at them. When McLeod starts to approach him, Charlie shoots McLeod three times, ultimately killing him.

Detective Nicholas Dakis

Nicholas Dakis is one of the detectives in the precinct office. He is described as a middle-aged Greek American, who performs his job efficiently and unemotionally. Dakis's partner is Detective Gallagher. As the play opens, Dakis is booking a young woman who has been arrested for shoplifting. He continues to process her case throughout the play. Toward the end, Dakis leaves with the Shoplifter to take her to night court.

Mrs. Farragut

Mrs. Farragut is an elderly woman who regularly comes to the police station, complaining that her neighbors, who are foreigners, are building atomic bombs in their apartment. Mrs. Farragut represents the atmosphere of fear and paranoia that characterized the cold war era.

Joe Feinson

Joe Feinson is a newspaper reporter who hangs around the police station, hoping for a good story. McLeod refers to Joe by the nickname Yussel. Various details suggest that Joe is Jewish, and McLeod occasionally speaks to him in Yiddish.

At one point, Joe warns McLeod that he needs to change his ways and become more tolerant of the mistakes of others or he is heading for a fall, but McLeod simply scoffs at this. Joe's warning turns out to be accurate in that McLeod soon destroys his own marriage by his inability to forgive his wife for her past. As McLeod is dying, he asks Joe to find Mary, ask her to forgive him (McLeod), and help her out in any way he can.

Joe represents the importance of a free press to upholding the principles of democracy. He tells one of the detectives:

A free press is the tocsin of a free people. The law keeps you in line, we keep the law in line, the people keep us in line, you keep the people in line. . . . That's democracy!

First Cat Burglar

See Charlie

Detective Gallagher

Gallagher is one of the detectives in the precinct office. He is described as a good-looking man, about twenty-seven years old. Gallagher's partner is Detective Dakis.

Tami Giacoppetti

Tami Giacoppetti is a small-time gangster. Seven years before the events in the play take place, Tami had an affair with Mary. When Mary got pregnant from this affair, she left Tami, and he was unable to find her. But when he found out that Mary had obtained an abortion from Kurt Schneider, Tami beat Schneider up. He claims that he would have beat up Mary if he had been able to find her.

When Tami is brought into the police station and sees Mary, he tells the lieutenant about his affair with her and about Mary getting an abortion from Schneider. The lieutenant gets Mary to admit that this is true.

Jiggs

Jiggs is the nickname by which Susan Carmichael calls Arthur Kindred.

Detective Keogh

Keogh is one of the detectives who works in the precinct station. Keogh frequently bursts into opera singing while performing his job. Keogh's singing of opera, with its emphasis on strong emotions of passion and suffering, places him in contrast to McLeod, who performs his duty without compassion for the suffering of others.

Arthur Kindred

Arthur Kindred is a young man, aged twenty-seven, who has been arrested for stealing several hundred dollars from Mr. Pritchett, his employer. Arthur is in love with Joy Carmichael, now a successful fashion model, whom he grew up with. Arthur explains that he stole the money so that he could take Joy out and try to win back her love by spending a lot of money on her.

Arthur served in the navy during World War II and received a Silver Star for his heroism in rescuing a sailor from a burning ship. He was released with an honorable discharge after he had a nervous breakdown following a shipwreck he survived. Arthur describes his difficulties in adjusting to civilian life after the war, in part due to the trauma he suffered. He had always wanted to finish college and become a history teacher, but when he returned from the war, he felt that he could not pick up his studies where he had left off, and he lost his sense of direction in life.

Toward the end of the play, Arthur realizes that he will never get Joy back, that she is not the same person she was when they were kids. After Susan, Joy's younger sister, declares her love for Arthur, he decides to transfer his affections from Joy to her and agrees to go with Susan to their hometown in Ann Arbor, Michigan. As McLeod is dying

from a gunshot wound, he orders Brody to unhandcuff Arthur, drop all charges against him, and let him go free.

Lewis

Lewis is the partner-in-crime of Charlie. With Charlie, Lewis has stolen valuables from many different wealthy people.

Detective James McLeod

James McLeod is the central character in *Detective Story*. McLeod considers himself to be a good detective because he holds strong principles that he refuses to compromise. He is determined to see Kurt Schneider, whom he accuses of performing illegal abortions, convicted of murder.

McLeod's world is thrown off balance, however, when he finds out that Mary, his wife of three years, was once the mistress of a married man (before she and McLeod ever met) and once obtained an abortion from Kurt Schneider. Upon learning of this, McLeod calls Mary a "whore" and is unable to forgive her, either for having been involved with a man before him or for having obtained an abortion.

When Mary threatens to leave him, McLeod softens and assures her that he cannot live without her, that they will work out their problems somehow. But when faced with the prospect that Mary could be used to testify as a witness to prove that Schneider has performed illegal abortions, McLeod is once again disgusted with the thought of his wife having been involved with other men before she met him. Seeing that he will never be able to truly forgive her for her past, Mary tells McLeod she is leaving him for good.

With nothing left to live for, McLeod lunges at Charlie, a criminal who threatens him with a loaded gun. Charlie shoots McLeod in the belly. As he is dying, McLeod says a prayer to God, begging forgiveness for his sins.

Mary McLeod

Mary McLeod has been married to James McLeod for three years. Before she met her husband, she was involved with Tami Giacoppetti, a married man who made her his mistress. After she got pregnant by Tami, Mary left him and obtained an illegal abortion from Kurt Schneider. Mary has never told McLeod of her past because she knew he would leave her if he found out.

After the lieutenant calls Mary into the police station and forces her to admit to having obtained an abortion from Schneider, she is left to face McLeod's response to this information. Mary pleads with McLeod to understand that she regrets some of the decisions she made in the past but that she was young and vulnerable at the time. When she realizes that McLeod will never be able to truly forgive her for her past, Mary

is determined to leave him. She runs out of the police station in tears, telling him he will never see her again.

Lieutenant Monoghan

Lieutenant Monoghan is described as "an old-time police officer." He does not personally like McLeod, but he considers him a valuable asset to the precinct police station because McLeod is honest. The lieutenant is very concerned about McLeod brutalizing Schneider, however, because he does not want his precinct to be accused of misconduct.

The lieutenant occupies himself with investigating Sims's accusation that McLeod has a personal vendetta against Schneider. The lieutenant calls Mary McLeod and Tami Giacoppetti into his office and learns about Mary having obtained an abortion from Schneider. He then tries to determine if McLeod knew anything about Mary's dealings with Schneider. When he learns that McLeod knew nothing of this, the lieutenant is relieved because that means McLeod cannot be accused of having a personal interest in punishing Schneider.

Mr. Pritchett

Mr. Pritchett is Arthur's employer from whom he stole several hundred dollars. Mr. Pritchett comes into the police station after Arthur is arrested. When Susan offers to repay the money Arthur took, Mr. Pritchett is willing to accept her offer and drop any charges. However, McLeod insists that Arthur is a thief and must be tried as a criminal, regardless of whether or not Mr. Pritchett wishes to press charges. Pressured by McLeod, Mr. Pritchett leaves the police station with the intention of pressing charges against Arthur.

Kurt Schneider

Kurt Schneider turns himself in to the police in response to a warrant for his arrest, pending charges of performing illegal abortions. A young woman by the name of Miss Harris dies while in the hospital from internal injuries sustained after she obtained an abortion from Schneider. Schneider claims to be a vegetable farmer in New Jersey, but McLeod is determined to see him convicted of murder for his illegal abortion practices.

While Schneider is at the police station, McLeod tries to force him to sign a written confession of guilt. When Schneider refuses to sign, stating his right not to do so, McLeod shoves him, slaps him, and knocks him down. Schneider appears to lose consciousness from the assault and is taken to the hospital. The detectives later receive a call from the hospital, informing them that Schneider was not seriously injured by McLeod. Regardless of his guilt or innocence, Schneider is a victim of police brutality because McLeod employed physical violence in an effort to extract a forced confession from him.

Second Cat Burglar

See Lewis

Shoplifter

The character designated as Shoplifter is a young woman who has been arrested for stealing a pocketbook worth $6. Detective Dakis processes her arrest and leaves to take her to night court toward the end of the play.

Counselor Endicott Sims

Counselor Endicott Sims, about thirty-five years old, is the lawyer representing Kurt Schneider. Sims persists in warning McLeod and the other detectives not to violate the constitutional rights of his client. Sims represents the ideals of the American justice system, which is based on due process and the rights of the accused.

Yussel

See Joe Feinson

Themes

Forgiveness and Compassion

McLeod's major character flaw is that he lacks the ability to forgive others for their mistakes, as well as the compassion to understand the circumstances that lead people to make poor decisions. Brody pleads with McLeod to allow Arthur to go free, based on the idea that this is his first arrest, and he deserves another chance to make a good life. Brody asks McLeod to have compassion for the fact that Arthur has been traumatized by his experiences while fighting in World War II and that he deserves some understanding of his difficulties in adjusting to life after the war. Until his dying moments, however, McLeod refuses to grant forgiveness to Arthur, stating that he cannot compromise his principles.

McLeod is also unwilling to forgive Mary, his wife, for mistakes she made in the past before she even met him. Mary begs McLeod to understand how naive and vulnerable she was when she made these decisions, and she begs him to have compassion for her situation at the time. But McLeod refuses to offer her the compassion and forgiveness she asks of him.

Only in his dying moments does McLeod truly understand the concepts of compassion and forgiveness. He orders Brody to set Arthur free, and he asks Joe to ask Mary to forgive him (McLeod) for how he treated her. Finally, McLeod dies with a prayer on his lips, begging God to forgive him for his sins.

Democracy and Justice

Sims, Schneider's lawyer, functions as the mouthpiece for Kingsley in *Detective Story*, upholding the principles of due process in law and the importance of the rights of the accused□constitutional rights that Kingsley wished to emphasize as central to the functioning of a free democratic society. Sims tells the police, "I'm not going to allow you to violate [Schneider's] constitutional rights." He later asserts:

Every man has a right to counsel, no matter how guilty he might seem to you, or to me, for that matter. Every man has a right not to be arbitrarily judged, particularly by men in authority; not by you, not by the Congress, not even by the president of the United States. The theory being these human rights are derived from God himself.

McLeod, on the other hand, has no interest in the principles of due process and the rights of the accused. McLeod completely disregards the constitutional rights of people whom he deems to be guilty. Kingsley regarded police officials like McLeod as a serious threat to the functioning of a free democratic society.

Police Brutality

Kingsley wrote *Detective Story* as a condemnation of police brutality, of police officers taking the law into their own hands by physically assaulting individuals whom they have arrested. Because he has no regard for due process and the rights of the accused, McLeod does not hesitate to use police brutality against Schneider. He shoves, slaps, and knocks Schneider down, simply because he feels he has a right to punish Schneider with his own hands, regardless of the fact that Schneider has not even been put on trial yet. As Schneider's lawyer, Sims does everything he can to defend his client's right not to be subjected to police brutality.

Kingsley felt that true democracy is dependent on the fair and equitable enforcement of the law and the rights of the accused. As he explained in an introduction to a published version of *Detective Story*:

My feeling is that there can be happiness for the people of the world only if a firm protection for human rights is incorporated in the world of government. Police power is a symbol, a measuring rod, of freedom in a society. When the police power answers to the code of democratic human rights, you have a free society.

The Right to Judge

Underlying McLeod's unwillingness to forgive others, or to have compassion for the mistakes of others, is his self-righteousness. McLeod considers himself to be a flawlessly principled man. He arrogantly assumes that he has an absolute understanding of right and wrong and that this gives him the right to make judgments as to the guilt or innocence of others. While ruthlessly pointing out the moral flaws in everyone around him, McLeod refuses to acknowledge his own moral flaws. While considering himself to be absolutely free of guilt, McLeod is in fact guilty of self-righteously judging others.

The theme of the right to judge is developed in *Detective Story* through many references to God and religion. Kingsley's message is not necessarily a religious one, however; rather, he makes the argument that no one individual person has the right to sit in judgment of another human being and that a system of justice that protects the rights of the individual is the most democratic method of maintaining law and order without any one man playing the role of God in casting down judgments upon others.

Style

Realism

Kingsley's *Detective Story* is written in the style of realism. Realism characterizes literature that strives to portray real-life circumstances as accurately as possible. Kingsley prepared for the writing of *Detective Story* by spending many hours in a New York City police precinct station, in order to render his characters, their speech, and the nature of their professional work as accurately as possible.

In order to prepare for the writing of *Detective Story*, Kingsley observed police stations and district attorney's offices and followed detectives on their rounds, gathering information that filled thirty notebooks. In an introduction to *Detective Story*, Kingsley explained:

I realized that though the police station had been exploited perhaps more than any other background in literature□in thousands of whodunits□there had never been a completely honest picture.

Although the specific characters and stories in *Detective Story* are fictional, Kingsley explores such real-life societal issues as the principles of democracy, due process in law, police brutality, abortion laws, and the plight of World War II veterans.

The Social Problem Play

Detective Story is a "social problem play" in the sense that Kingsley's aim in writing it was to explore a specific set of societal problems. Kingsley utilized his realistic portrayal of life in a police station in order to explore societal issues of democracy and justice. As he explained, "I saw that the measure of a free society can be taken right there in a police station, in the relation of police activity to constitutional law." Kingsley hoped that, with *Detective Story*, he "would stir people to feel the necessity for keeping public control over police power."

Symbolism

Throughout *Detective Story*, Kingsley utilizes the symbol of the heart to evoke its traditional associations as the realm of love, emotion, and humanity. This symbol is used to emphasize the message that McLeod is lacking in the qualities of the heart possessed by other characters in the play.

Arthur has a heart with the name Joy, the woman he is in love with, tattooed on his arm. Arthur is motivated to steal money by what he describes as his "hunger" for love. The heart on Arthur's arm is an expression of his need for love, compassion, and

understanding. One might extend this tattoo symbol on Arthur's arm to hint at the common expression "He wears his heart on his sleeve."

Detective Gus Keogh, who tends to burst out in opera singing at his own whim, first enters the play "pouring out Canio's heartbreak from *Pagliacci*." This refers to the Italian opera known as *Pagliacci* (1892), written by Ruggero Leoncavallo. Keogh's singing of opera□which is associated with melodramatic expressions of intense emotion such as heartbreak□while on duty as a police officer provides a contrast to the cold, heartless approach that McLeod takes to his job.

In act 3, McLeod makes the argument to Brody to "Be logical" about convicting Arthur, whom Brody would like to see set free. Brody responds, "To hell with logic. I seen you logic the life out of a thing. Heart! Heart! The world's crying for a little heart." Brody then offers McLeod a drink, saying, "Maybe it'll melt that rock you got in there for a heart." Like Brody, Kingsley seems to be "crying for a little heart" in the world through the medium of his play.

Historical Context

American Drama in the 1940s

During the post—World War II era, when *Detective Story* was first written and produced, American drama was dominated by two playwrights, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, in comparison to whom Kingsley is considered a minor playwright. Arthur Miller (born 1915) is best known for his works *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953). Tennessee Williams (1911—1983), a southern writer, is considered to be perhaps the best American playwright of the twentieth century. His many great works include *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955).

The Cold War

In the wake of World War II, which ended in 1945, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union soon developed into what became known as the Cold War (a term first used in 1947). It is referred to as a "cold" war because it did not primarily involve actual combat or military attacks between the nations. It was, rather, characterized by diplomatic tensions, wrangling over political struggles in other nations, and a buildup of nuclear weaponry by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

The original basis of the Cold War was a fear on the part of the United States and Britain that the Soviet Union's communist ideology and domination of its neighboring nations would result in the spread of communist government throughout Europe and other parts of the world. By 1948, the Soviet Union had invaded and installed communist governments in many nations of Eastern Europe. In order to bolster themselves against this threat, the United States, Britain, and several European nations joined resources in 1949 to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an alliance against the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its neighboring communist nations in turn joined resources to form the Warsaw Pact in 1955, an alliance in opposition to NATO.

The forty-year-long nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union began in 1949 when the Soviets tested their first atomic warhead. Through the character of Mrs. Farragut in *Detective Story*, Kingsley parodies the atmosphere of paranoia and fear of the impending threat of nuclear war that characterized the Cold War era. Mrs. Farragut comes into the police station on a regular basis, insisting that the foreigners living in the apartment next to hers are building atomic bombs and demanding that the police provide protection against this threat.

The end of the Cold War was the result of events that took place between 1989 and 1991. The efforts of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during the late 1980s to institute government reforms soon resulted in the breakup of the Soviet Union. By 1991, the

Soviet Union was dissolved, giving rise to fifteen different sovereign nations, many of them establishing newly formed democratic governments.

Rights of the Accused in the American Legal System

The phrase "rights of the accused" refers to the laws within any legal system that are designed to protect the individual rights of a person accused of a crime and to ensure that individual receives a fair trial before a court of law. The phrase "due process" refers to the specific rules and procedures that are designed to ensure the protection and enforcement of the rights of the accused. In the United States legal system, due process and the rights of the accused are assured by both the Fifth and the Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. The Fourteenth Amendment, passed in 1868, includes the statement that "No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." The due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment has been interpreted through various court rulings in the twentieth century to include the guarantee of a fair trial, the right to an impartial judge, and the right to legal counsel.

Critical Overview

In a memorial statement upon the death of Kingsley in 1995, Robert Anderson wrote:

Sidney was part of that extraordinary group of playwrights who came into being in the 1930s and 1940s, which heralded the arrival of the new American theatre and the new American drama.

Kingsley is generally remembered as a noteworthy but minor American playwright whose works addressed serious social problems in popular, dramatically well-crafted Broadway plays. He is praised for his dramatic craftsmanship in writing emotionally engaging yet serious melodramas that also carry a moral message.

Kingsley's plays have been applauded for their treatment of issues pertaining to American democracy and their expression of hope that justice and democracy will prevail over corruption and tyranny. In her introduction to *Sidney Kingsley: Five Award Winning Plays*, Nena Couch observed, "Kingsley has used his naturalistic writing style to present major American social problems on the stage."

Critics today assert that many of the societal issues addressed in Kingsley's plays, such as police brutality in *Detective Story*, remain as relevant today as they were fifty years ago. As Couch noted,

The abuse of power by the individual is an issue as old as humankind, and certainly the abuse of power by police is an ongoing problem as well. . . . To the extent that audiences perceive Kingsley's message regarding the police state, *Detective Story* remains timely.

However, Kingsley's plays are now widely considered to be dated, addressing ongoing societal issues yet stylistically lacking in timeless, universal appeal or lasting literary merit.

Since its original production in 1949, critics have enthusiastically praised *Detective Story* for its accurate, meticulously researched, realistic detail in portraying a New York City precinct police station. Some critics found the characters in *Detective Story* to be well rounded; others found them to be stock characters lacking in depth or complexity. Some found the drama and pacing of *Detective Story* to be gripping and emotionally engaging; others felt that the story is predictable and overly melodramatic.

Several revival productions of *Detective Story* were staged during the 1980s, in Los Angeles, Tokyo, and England.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Brent holds a Ph.D. in American culture from the University of Michigan. In this essay, Brent explicates literary references in Kingsley's play.

In *Detective Story*, Kingsley makes a number of references to other works of literature, including the Sermon on the Mount from biblical literature, the Oracle at Delphi from ancient Greek mythology, and the nineteenth-century novels *Moby Dick* and *Les Miserables*. In order to appreciate these references, it is helpful to have some knowledge of the individual works to which they refer.

In his introduction to *Detective Story*, Kingsley explains that he took as his premise for the play the saying "Judge not, lest ye be judged," from the Sermon on the Mount. This is a reference to the biblical Sermon on the Mount, a collection of the teachings of Jesus as written in *Matthew*. This statement may be interpreted as a warning that no individual man or woman has the right to cast judgment upon another, because each individual has his or her own moral failings. Another way to put this would be to say that no individual human should have the arrogance to assume that he or she may play God in determining the good or evil of another person, or in meting out punishment for the sins of others. Several additional literary references in *Detective Story* elaborate upon this message.

In act 2 of *Detective Story*, Joe warns McLeod that his arrogance in believing he has a right to judge the guilt or innocence of others and his lack of compassion for human frailty will ultimately lead to his downfall. Joe tells McLeod, "Remember, we're all of us falling down all the time. Don't be so intolerant." Joe then says, "You're digging your own grave," and advises McLeod to "humble yourself!"

McLeod responds jokingly to this warning, by telling Joe, "You're very Delphic today," and referring to him as the "oracle" of the City College of New York (CCNY). McLeod's joking response is a reference to the Oracle at Delphi, from ancient Greek mythology. An oracle in ancient mythology was a divine communication delivered through a medium, usually in the form of a prophesy of future events. The most famous oracle in Greek mythology was the Oracle at Delphi, located in the Temple of Apollo. Apollo was an ancient Greek god, associated with the sun, whose many powers included the power to make men aware of their own guilt and to absolve them of that guilt.

When McLeod jokingly refers to Joe as the "oracle of CCNY," he is suggesting that Joe seems to be delivering a divine prophesy in warning McLeod that he is headed for a fall. The reference goes deeper, however, in the sense that Joe is trying to make McLeod aware of being guilty of self-righteousness and to suggest that McLeod may be absolved of this guilt if he humbles himself and becomes more tolerant of the mistakes of others. Joe turns out to be accurate in his prediction that McLeod's moral arrogance and his lack of tolerance will ultimately lead to his downfall. Joe's warning thus turns out to have the quality of an oracle of Apollo.

In act 1 of *Detective Story*, Joe refers to McLeod as "Captain Ahab pursuing the great gray Leviathan." This is a reference to the American novel *Moby Dick* (1851), by Herman Melville. In *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab devotes his life to the crazed pursuit of a white whale that he calls Moby Dick. The whale is also referred to in the story as the "great Leviathan," a term drawn from Jewish biblical text. In the Old Testament, the Leviathan is a many-headed sea serpent that God kills and gives to the Hebrews for food to eat.

Captain Ahab pursues Moby Dick throughout the world, determined to kill the whale as punishment for a past event in which a whale attacked and disabled Ahab, leaving him with only one leg. Captain Ahab's pursuit of the whale is fuelled by a crazed moral indignation that ultimately leads to his own death. For Ahab, Moby Dick is the embodiment of evil, and he feels compelled to punish the whale by killing it. In Melville's novel, Captain Ahab symbolizes man's arrogance in trying to play God, to cast down judgment and mete out punishment for the sins of others.

In *Detective Story*, Joe compares McLeod to Captain Ahab in the sense that McLeod pursues criminals with a sort of crazed moral indignation that is ultimately self-destructive. Further, McLeod, like Captain Ahab, has the arrogance to believe that he has the right to play God, to cast down judgment and mete out punishment to the people whom he arrests.

In act 2 of *Detective Story*, Mr. Pritchett mentions a movie he once saw in which a man, Jean Valjean, steals a loaf of bread in order to feed his sister's nine starving children. As a result, Jean Valjean is arrested for this petty theft and sent to prison for twenty years. Mr. Pritchett is here referring to a film adaptation of the French novel *Les Miserables* (1862), by Victor Hugo (1802—1885). The title *Les Miserables* may be translated as "the wretched," but most English translations retain the French title. Mr. Pritchett would have seen the 1935 film adaptation of *Les Miserables*, which starred Frederick March and Charles Laughton. (Other film adaptations of *Les Miserables* were made in 1957, 1978, 1995, and 1998.)

Kingsley's reference to *Les Miserables* is significant to the central themes of *Detective Story*. *Les Miserables* was written as an indictment of the legal system in France at the time, which Hugo saw as rigid and merciless. Such a rigid, merciless justice system is the type of legal system Kingsley feared for the future of the United States□if the principles of due process and the constitutional rights of the individual that underlie the American justice system are not upheld, protected, and enforced.

Les Miserables demonstrates the injustices of a legal system that so severely punishes a man who commits a petty crime in trying to do an act of good□helping to feed starving children. Mr. Pritchett explains that he was on Jean Valjean's side in the story because Jean Valjean committed a crime only out of true desperation and a desire to do good. Mr. Pritchett points out, however, that Arthur did not steal because he was starving and needed to eat, but because he wanted to take a woman out on the town for a night. Arthur then says he *is* starving□not for food, but for love. "You can be hungry for other things besides bread," he tells Mr. Pritchett.

The reference to *Les Miserables* is also significant in that the central antagonist is a detective, Inspector Javert, who devotes twenty-five years to the maniacal pursuit of Jean Valjean, after the latter escapes from prison and becomes an upstanding citizen. Javert adheres to a rigid concept of right and wrong and refuses to take into account the circumstances of Jean Valjean's past poverty or present life of good works. McLeod in *Detective Story*, like Javert in *Les Miserables*, also adheres to a rigid, black-and-white concept of justice and refuses to take into account the circumstances of the lives of characters, such as Arthur, who have been arrested for petty crimes.

In the end of *Les Miserables*, Inspector Javert finally comes to the realization that he himself is the real criminal, in devoting his life to the pursuit and persecution of Jean Valjean and that Jean Valjean himself is innocent. With this realization, Javert chooses to sacrifice his own life and allow Jean Valjean to go free. Kingsley's *Detective Story* echoes this earlier story, in that Detective McLeod, in the end realizing how wrong he has been, sacrifices his own life and allows Arthur, the young man he has arrested, to go free.

Like Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* and Inspector Javert in *Les Miserables*, McLeod in Kingsley's *Detective Story* maniacally pursues those whom he has judged with a sense of moral indignation that is ultimately inhumane and contrary to the practice of true, democratic justice. In the end, McLeod, like Captain Ahab and Detective Javert, finds that his determination to play God□to judge and punish others□leads to his own destruction□a sort of divine punishment for his sins in trying to play God.

However, Kingsley's message in *Detective Story*, "Judge not, lest ye be judged," though drawn from the Sermon on the Mount, is not necessarily one of religious doctrine. Rather, Kingsley conveys the idea that, as no one man has the right to judge or punish another, a fair and equitable legal system distributes the role of judgment among many individuals through the principles of due process in the functioning of a free and democratic society.

Source: Liz Brent, Critical Essay on *Detective Story*, in *Drama for Students*, Gale, 2004.

Adaptations

Detective Story was adapted to the screen as a major motion picture in 1951. It starred Kirk Douglas and was directed by William Wyler and produced by Paramount Pictures.

Topics for Further Study

Kingsley wrote *Detective Story* in support of laws protecting the rights of the accused in the American legal system. Learn more about the rights of the accused in the United States, from the moment of arrest through the process of trial by jury. Search for information on such topics as the Fifth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, due process, and the Supreme Court rulings of *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964) and *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966). Write an essay in which you first explain current laws protecting the rights of the accused. Discuss your own views on these laws. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them? Why? Provide examples to help explain your point of view on these issues.

One of Kingsley's primary concerns in writing *Detective Story* was the issue of police brutality and police corruption. Do some research to find articles about police brutality and/or police corruption in newspaper and magazine reports. Find three articles that discuss a single incident in which there is some accusation of police brutality or corruption. Write an essay discussing the different perspectives on this incident that are presented by the different articles. Write down your own opinion of the incident, based on what you have read.

As part of his research for *Detective Story*, Kingsley spent many hours in a New York City police precinct station observing the daily activities of law enforcement from that perspective. Contact your local police station or precinct station and ask if you may arrange to spend several hours observing the daily operations of the station office. You might also ask if you may interview several employees of the police station. Write an essay describing what you observed. What kinds of decisions do individuals working in a police station need to make in regard to specific situations that arise?

Several of the characters in Kingsley's *Detective Story* are veterans of World War II. Some reference is made to the kinds of experiences these men had in the war, as well as the difficulties they faced in adjusting to daily life after their tour of duty. If you know someone who has served in military combat (such as a relative or family friend), ask if you may interview that person about his or her experiences during and after his or her tour of duty.

One of the central themes of *Detective Story* is forgiveness. McLeod is ultimately condemned within the play for failing to forgive other people for their mistakes in life. Write a personal essay about your own experience with the concept of forgiveness. Has there ever been a situation in which you were faced with a decision of whether or not to forgive another person for something he or she had done? What thoughts and feelings led you to make this decision? Has there ever been a situation in which another person made a decision to forgive or not to forgive you for something you had done? What thoughts and feelings did you have about this situation and about whether or not the other person chose to forgive you?

Compare and Contrast

1940s: In the wake of World War II, the era of the Cold War is characterized by a nuclear arms buildup by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Today: The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the Cold War era and resulted in a considerable reduction in stockpiles of nuclear weaponry in both the United States and the nations of the former Soviet Union.

1940s: Police interrogation procedures regularly employ methods for extracting forced confessions from individuals who have been arrested.

Today: As a result of legislation enacted in the 1960s, the rights of the accused in cases of arrest have been expanded to ensure due process and greater protection of individual constitutional rights. The 1964 Supreme Court decision of *Escobedo v. Illinois* ruled that persons under arrest must be notified of their right to consult an attorney. The 1966 Supreme Court decision of *Miranda v. Arizona* specified a code of conduct that must be followed by police officials in the process of interrogating criminal suspects held in custody. The purpose of the Miranda ruling was to ensure the Fifth Amendment right of the individual not to be compelled to incriminate himself or herself. These procedures are known as the Miranda warnings and include informing accused individuals of the right to remain silent and the right to seek the counsel of an attorney, as well as stating that anything they say may be used against them in a court of law.

1940s: Abortion is illegal in the United States, resulting in an underground industry in illegal abortion services. Because they are not regulated by medical health standards, illegal abortions are unsafe and often fatal to the women obtaining them.

Today: Abortion is now legal in the United States, as of the 1973 Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*. Legal abortions are performed by licensed doctors in hospitals and clinics that meet national health standards. As a result, abortion procedures are relatively safe and rarely fatal to the women obtaining abortions. Abortion, however, remains an extremely controversial issue, with many people lobbying to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. As a result of these efforts, recent Supreme Court rulings have upheld the rights of individual states to place severe restrictions on abortion.

1940s: Many young men returning from combat in World War II have trouble adjusting to civilian life after the traumas experienced during the war. Long-term emotional problems resulting from war experience are not widely recognized by the public, although the term "shell-shocked" is carried over from World War I.

Today: The clinical concept of "post-traumatic stress disorder" provides a greater level of understanding of the problems faced by veterans returning from combat. Many veterans of the Vietnam War in particular continue to experience psychological problems as a result of their traumatic experiences during the war.

What Do I Read Next?

Men in White (1933), one of Kingsley's most successful plays, concerns the struggles of a doctor who must choose between his personal life and his commitment to medicine.

Dead End (1936), another of Kingsley's most celebrated plays, concerns the conditions of urban life in the slums.

Death of a Salesman (1949), by American playwright Arthur Miller, was first written and produced in the same year as *Detective Story*. *Death of a Salesmen* concerns the inner struggles of an aging salesman whose disillusionment with his own life leads to tragedy.

A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), by American playwright Tennessee Williams, explores the tensions among an aging southern belle by the name of Blanche DuBois, her younger sister Stella, and her sister's working-class husband, Stanley.

Fair Trial: Rights of the Accused in American History (1992), by David J. Bodenhamer, discusses criminal procedure and due process in the American legal system.

The Role of the Police in American Society: A Documentary History (1999), edited by Bryan Vila and Cynthia Morris, is a collection of primary documents that demonstrate changing attitudes about the societal role of law enforcement throughout American history.

The Cruel Peace: Everyday Life in the Cold War (1991), by Fred Inglis, explores the impact of international politics on the lives of ordinary people during the era of the Cold War.

Further Study

Babington, Anthony, *Shell-Shock: A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis*, Leo Cooper, 1997.

Babington explores the historical development of psychological theories regarding the impact of combat experiences on the individual.

Gluck, Sherna Berger, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*, G. K. Hall, 1987.

Gluck examines the societal and cultural impact of women working in the defense industry during World War II.

Hahn, Harlan, and Judson L. Jeffries, *Urban America and Its Police: From the Postcolonial Era through the Turbulent 1960s*, University Press of Colorado, 2003.

Hahn and Jeffries trace the history of law enforcement in American cities.

Kennett, Lee, *G. I.: The American Soldier in World War II*, Scribner, 1987.

Kennett provides an account of the role and experience of American soldiers during World War II.

Nelson, Jill, *Police Brutality: An Anthology*, W. W. Norton, 2000.

Nelson presents a collection of critical essays by various authors on the subject of police brutality in American cities, focusing particularly on police violence in the African American community.

Solomon, Zahava, *Combat Stress Reaction: The Enduring Toll of War*, Plenum Press, 1993.

Solomon discusses long-term mental health issues for war veterans, such as war neurosis and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Wilson, Christopher P., *Cop Knowledge: Police Power and Cultural Narrative in Twentieth-Century America*, University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Wilson analyzes the representation of police in popular American culture throughout the twentieth century.

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□□□, Introduction to *Detective Story*, in *Sidney Kingsley: Five Prizewinning Plays*, edited by Nena Couch, Ohio State University Press, 1995, pp. 241—44.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) 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, DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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 DfS 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

DfS 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 Drama 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 DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS 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 Drama for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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 DfS, 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 Drama 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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