Driving Miss Daisy Study Guide

Driving Miss Daisy by Alfred Uhry

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".

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".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Alfred Uhry had already been writing for musical theater for twenty-five years when his first nonmu-sical play *Driving Miss Daisy* became a surprise smash hit. Originally slated to run for five weeks at a small theater in New York City, demand for tickets was so high that it moved to a larger theater where it ran for about three years. Uhry also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. In his preface to the published play, Uhry commented on the experience.

When I wrote this play I never dreamed I would be writing an introduction to it because I never thought it would get this far.... When I wonder how all this happened ... I can come up with only one answer. I wrote what I knew to be the truth and people have recognized it as such.

Indeed, the numerous critics who lauded the play displayed remarkable similarity in their comments. They liked the play's sincerity, dignity, and honesty. Dealing with issues that plague all people white or African American, northern or southern the appeal of *Driving Miss Daisy* is universal.

Driving Miss Daisy went on to become an equally successful movie, winning best picture, best actress, and best screenplay adaptation for Uhry. Uhry's surprise success has also given him the freedom to continue pursuing his writing. In plays and musicals since *Driving Miss Daisy*, Uhry has continued to explore issues of concern to southern Jews, but his work is essentially about basic humanity.

Author Biography

Alfred Uhry was born around 1936 to an upper-middle-class German-Jewish family. He grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where his father was a furniture designer. He left the South in 1958 to attend Brown University in Rhode Island, and he graduated with a degree in English. Uhry next moved to New York to begin his career in show business. He began collaborating with the composer Robert Waldman. Theirplay *The Robber Bride groom* (1975) was their most successful, earning Uhry a Tony nomination and a Drama Desk nomination. It is a musical based on the southern writer Eudora Welly's novella. Uhry wrote the book and the lyrics. The play was a surprise hit Off-Broadway and moved to Broadway for the 1976-77 season.

He continued to work on other musicals, many of which closed on opening night or soon thereafter, or never even opened. To earn a living, he also wrote lyrics for television shows and commercials and also taught English and drama at a New York high school. In 1984, Uhry was struggling to get a workshop production of a musical about Al Capone off the ground and thinking about leaving theater. Suddenly, the idea came to him to write a play instead.

The characters in *Driving Miss Daisy* (1987) are based on people that Uhry knew growing up, including his grandmother and her African-American chauffeur. The play, Uhry's first, was an instant success, quickly moving from the 74-seat Studio Theatre to another larger Off-Broadway theater and winning for Uhry another Drama Desk nomination. The play ran for three years. It was produced in regional theaters, by a national touring company, and in London, England. In 1988, it won a Pulitzer Prize.

It was also made into a movie. Uhry wrote the adaptation, for which he won an Academy Award. He had prior screenplay experience, having helped finish the script for the 1988 film *Mystic Pizza.* The *film, Driving Miss Daisy*, also won the 1990 Academy Award for best picture.

After his surprise hit, Uhry was approached by the Olympic Games Cultural Olympiad to produce a play for the 1996 Olympic Games that would be held in Atlanta. The play he wrote, *The Ghost of Ballyhoo,* won him another Tony Award the following year. In 1998, he wrote the book for the musical *Parade*, which played at Lincoln Center in New York.

Plot Summary

The play spans a period of twenty-five years in an unbroken series of segments. At the beginning of the play, Daisy Werthan, a seventy-two-year-old, southern Jewish widow, has just crashed her brand-new car while backing it out of the garage. After the accident, her son Boolie insists that she is not capable of driving. Over her protests, he hires a driver Hoke Coleburn, an uneducated African American who is sixty. At first, Daisy wants nothing to do with Hoke. She is afraid of giving herself the airs of a rich person, even though Boolie is paying Hoke's salary. She strongly values her independence, so she also resents having someone around her house.

For the first week or so of Hoke's employment, Daisy refuses to let him drive her anywhere. He spends his time sitting in the kitchen. One day, however, he points out that a lady such as herself should not be taking the bus. He also points out that he is taking her son's money for doing nothing. Daisy responds by reminding Hoke that she does not come from a wealthy background, but she relents and allows him to drive her to the grocery store. She insists on maintaining control, however, telling him where to turn and how fast to drive. On another outing, she gets upset when he parks in front of the temple to pick her up, afraid that people will thinking she is giving herself airs.

One morning Boolie comes over after Daisy calls him up, extremely upset. She has discovered that Hoke is stealing from her a can of salmon. She wants Boolie to fire Hoke right away. Her words also show her prejudice against African Americans. Boolie, at last, gives up. When Hoke arrives, Boolie calls him aside for a talk. First, however, Hoke wants to give something to Daisy a can of salmon to replace the one he ate the day before. Daisy, trying to regain her dignity, says goodbye to Boolie.

Hoke continues to drive for Daisy. She also teaches him to read and write. When she gets a new car, he buys her old one from the dealer.

When Daisy is in her eighties, she makes a trip by car to Alabama for a family birthday party. She is upset that Boolie will not accompany her, but he and his wife are going to New York and already have theater tickets. On the trip, Daisy learns that this is Hoke's first time leaving Georgia. Suddenly, Daisy realizes that Hoke has taken a wrong turn. She gets frantic and wishes aloud that she had taken the train instead. The day is very long. It is after nightfall that they near Mobile. Hoke wants to stop to urinate, but Daisy forbids him from doing so as they are already late. At first Hoke obeys her, but then he pulls over to the side of the road. Daisy exclaims at his impertinence, but Hoke does not back down.

Hoke is exceedingly loyal to Daisy, but not so loyal that he does not use another job offer as leverage to get a pay raise. He tells Boolie how much he enjoys being fought over. One winter morning, there is an ice storm. The power has gone out and the roads are frozen over. On the telephone, Boolie tells Daisy he will be over as soon as the roads are clear. Right away, however, Hoke comes in. He has experience driving on icy

roads from his days as a deliveryman. When Boolie calls back, Daisy tells him not to worry about coming over because Hoke is with her.

In the next segment, Daisy is on her way to temple, but there is a bad traffic jam. Hoke tells her that the temple has been bombed. Daisy is shocked and distressed. She says the temple is Reformed and can't understand why it was bombed. Hoke tells his own story of seeing his friend's father hanging from a tree, when he was just a boy. Daisy doesn't see why Hoke tells the story it has nothing to do with the temple and she doesn't even believe that Hoke got the truth. She refuses to see Hoke's linkage of prejudice against Jews and African Americans. Though she is quite upset by what has happened, she tries to deny it.

Another ten years or so has passed. Daisy and Boolie get into an argument about a Jewish organization's banquet for Martin Luther King, Jr. Daisy assumes Boolie will go with her, but he doesn't want to. He says it will hurt his business. Daisy plans on going, nonetheless. Hoke drives her to the dinner. At the last minute, she offhandedly invites Hoke to the dinner, but he refuses because she didn't ask him beforehand, like she would anyone else.

As Daisy gets older, she begins to lose her reason. One day Hoke must call Boolie because Daisy is having a delusion. She thinks she is a schoolteacher and she is upset because she can't find her students' papers. Before Boolie's arrival, she has a moment of clarity, and she tells Hoke that he is her best friend.

In the play's final segment, Daisy is ninety-seven and Hoke is eighty-five. Hoke no longer drives; instead, he relies on his granddaughter to get around. Boolie is about to sell Daisy's house she has been living in a nursing home for two years. Hoke and Boolie go to visit her on Thanksgiving. She doesn't say much to either of them, but when Boolie starts talking she asks him to leave, reminding him that Hoke came to see her. She tries to pick up her fork and eat her pie. Hoke takes the plate and the fork from her and feeds her a small bite of pie.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

"Driving Miss Daisy" is a one Act play by Alfred Uhry. The Pulitzer Prize winning drama takes place mostly in Atlanta, Georgia from 1948 to 1973. Only three characters appear on stage. Daisy Werthan is a Jewish widow who shown from age 72 until 97. Her chauffer, Hoke Coleburn, is a black man who ages from 60 to 85. The third character, Boolie Werthan, is Daisy's son. He is 40 years old when the play opens. Although this is a one act play, the action shifts frequently as the characters are seen changing over the course of 25 years.

The play starts in the dark. Offstage, Daisy calls her to maid that she is going to the market. A car ignition is turned on and a loud crash is heard. The lights come up in Daisy's living room. She is wearing a summer dress. Her son, Boolie, is arguing with her about the car accident. Daisy blames the car, saying she would not have crashed in her old La Salle. Boolie says Daisy has wrecked her Packard, a two-car garage and a tool shed in the accident. He says she shouldn't be allowed to drive anymore and suggests she hire a driver. Daisy refuses. She does not want to spend the money on a chauffeur and is against allowing someone in her home. She reminds Boolie that she grew up without help. Boolie suggests that she acting prejudiced. Daisy is outraged and insists that she is not prejudiced. The two then discuss a dinner party Boolie is going to that night with his wife, Florine. Daisy comments that Florine must think it is "heaven on earth" to socialize with Episcopalians. Boolie tells his mother he is going to start interviewing men for Daisy. Daisy defiantly refuses the help.

The scene changes to Boolie's office. He interviews Hoke Colburn, a black man dressed in a shiny suit. Hoke says he wants to work for a Jewish family He tells Boolie about the Jewish judge he used to work for and details his job history. Boolie warns Hoke that Daisy will be hard to deal with, but Hoke isn't worried. They agree on a $20 a week salary.

The lights come up on Daisy's living room. Hoke appears and greets her. He lists a few things that the maid, Idella, needs from the grocery store. Daisy says she will take the trolley. Hoke tries to persuade her to let him drive her. When she refuses, he suggests other jobs he can do, like planting a vegetable garden. He mentions that Daisy is rich and she becomes angry, denying that she is wealthy. She irrationally says resents Hoke and Idella discussing her behind her back in her own home. Daisy finally agrees to let Hoke drive her to the Piggly Wiggly. All the way to the grocery story she hounds him, first about his driving speed and then about the route he takes. She demands to be in total control, even insisting on which parking space he takes. She takes the keys as she walks into the store. Hoke runs to a pay phone and calls Boolie. Hoke reports that Daisy has allowed him to drive. He says, "Yassuh, only took six days. Same time it take the Lawd to make the worl'."

It is another day. Hoke has just picked up Daisy from the temple. She is furious that he parked at the front door to get her because she is worried it will look like she is pretending to be wealthy. She reminds Hoke that when she was growing up on Forsyth Street she only had meat once a week and taught fifth grade. Hoke is frustrated with the conversation and says, "Miz Daisy, you needs a chauffeur and Lawd knows I needs a job. Let's jes' leave it at dat."

Daisy is in her living room. It is clear by her winter dress that the seasons have once again changed. Time is passing. She has called Boolie over because she wants to fire Hoke. She says he stole a can of salmon from her pantry. It cost thirty-three cents. Boolie is angry that Daisy is being cheap and is so willing to get rid of Hoke. Hoke then arrives for work. Before Daisy can say anything, he tells her he has brought a can of salmon. He explains he ate one of hers the day before because the left over pork chops she gave him were dry. Daisy looks down at the empty can of salmon in her hand. She tries to be dignified as she tells Boolie goodbye.

It is now Spring. Hoke and Daisy are at a cemetery. Daisy is working on her husband's gravestone. Daisy tells Hoke that her friend, Rose Bauer, has given her flowers and asked that they be placed on Mr. Bauer's headstone. She asks Hoke to get the flowers from the car and put them on the grave Hoke comes back a few minutes later with the flowers. Deeply embarrassed, he tells Daisy he can not read. She asks him if he knows his ABCs. He says yes. She explains how to sound out the name Bauer and then instructs him to look for a name that starts with "B" and ends with "R". Hoke thanks her, but she dismisses him, saying she hasn't done anything.

The scene changes to Christmas. Boolie and his wife are celebrating the holiday, even though they are Jewish. Daisy does not approve, but allows Hoke to drive her to their home. Before going inside, Daisy gives Hoke a package. She reminds him that she doesn't give Christmas gifts. She says it is something she just found that morning. Hoke opens it and is touched to see it is a reading book for fifth grade students. Hoke promises not to tell anyone that she has given him a present.

Time passes. Hoke and Boolie are in the car, both in the front seat. Hoke is driving. The men discuss the new car Daisy has purchased. Boolie says he thinks Hoke will miss the old car they are driving in. Hoke tells Boolie that won't miss it because he has just purchased it from the car dealership where Daisy traded it in for her new car. Boolie asks why he didn't just buy it from Daisy because it would have been cheaper. Hoke explains that Daisy already too involved with his life. He wanted to buy the car on his own.

It is morning. Daisy is going on a trip. She is anxious and crabby; constantly reminding Hoke what time she wants to leave. Boolie arrives and Daisy berates him. She is traveling to a relative's ninetieth birthday party and is angry that Boolie and Florine are not going. Daisy gets into the car. Boolie tells Hoke that he doesn't know how Hoke is going to be able to put up with Daisy all day during the long drive. The pair set off for the trip.

Hoke and Daisy have stopped for lunch. They talk about traveling and Hoke says this is the first time he has ever left Georgia. They are now in Alabama. Later, they realize they have made a wrong turn. Daisy is upset about the prospect of arriving late. She says her relatives have fixed a crab dinner that will now be ruined. She blames being lost on Hoke, even though she is the one holding the map.

Hoke tells her that they have to stop so he can go to the bathroom. She says he should have gone at the gas station. He reminds her that black men can't use the toilet at the Standard Oil Station. She says there is no time to stop. He'll have to wait until they get to Mobile. Hoke agrees. A minute later he stops. Daisy is angry that he is defying her orders. Hoke yells at her:

"I ain't no dog and I ain' no chile and I ain' jes'a back of the neck you look at while you going' wherever you want to go. I a man nearly seventy-two years old and I know when my bladder full and I getting' out dis car and goin' off down de road like I got to do. And I'm takin' de car keys dis time. And that's de end of it."

Hoke gets out of the car. She angrily calls after him. When he doesn't answer, she becomes afraid and whimpers his name.

The scene changes to Boolie's office. Hoke has arrived. He tells Boolie another woman has offered him a job. Boolie agrees to pay him 75 dollars a week in order to keep him.

It is winter. A storm has knocked out the electricity. Hoke arrives, despite the icy weather. He has brought her coffee. She is touched. They talk pleasantly, remembering Idella, who died some time earlier. Hoke goes into the kitchen. Boolie calls to check on Daisy and is surprised to hear that Hoke has braved the weather and come to work. He is even more surprised when Daisy complements Hoke for coming to work in such bad weather.

The scene switches to a traffic jam. Hoke is taking Daisy to her temple. He tells her that a policeman has just told him that her synagogue has been bombed. She doesn't believe it. She can't understand why someone would bomb a reform temple and wonders if they meant to bomb one of the conservative synagogues. Hoke tells her that the bombers don't care what kind of temple it was. He compares racism towards Jewish people to the racism suffered by black Americans. To make his point, he tells her a story about a lynching he witnessed. She is shocked and sickened by his description and insists he stop talking about it.

More time passes. Daisy has bought tickets to hear Martin Luther King speak. She wants Boolie to go to the banquet, but he declines saying it would be bad for his business. He says a lot of the men he does business with would not like it. He suggests she take Hoke, but she says he wouldn't go.

Hoke is driving Daisy to the banquet. Daisy tells Hoke he doesn't need to go to the event because he can hear Martin Luther King talk every Sunday at a local church. Daisy then says that it is wonderful the way things are changing. Hoke is angry. He says the invitation came in the mail a month ago and if Daisy wanted him to go she would

have asked him. Daisy says he is welcome to go inside with her. Hoke says, "Things changin' but they aint change all dat much."

More time passes. Daisy is now getting much older. She is showing signs of dementia. In a moment of clarity, she tells Hoke that he is her best friend and takes his hand.

The scene changes. Hoke is now 85 years old. He and Boolie are in Daisy's living room. Boolie is selling the house because Daisy has been in a nursing home for two years. Boolie tells Hoke he will still send his check every week for as long as he is alive.

Daisy is now 97 years old. She uses a walker and has become fragile. Boolie and Hoke have come to see her on Thanksgiving Day. Daisy tells Boolie to leave the room so she can visit with Hoke. She dozes for a minute and then asks Hoke if Boolie is still paying him. Hoke sees her Thanksgiving pie on the table uneaten. He comments on it and she tries to pick up her fork. He offers to help her takes the pie plate and fork. He gently feeds her. The lights slowly fade.

Analysis

With "Driving Miss Daisy," Uhry provides a look at the complex racial relationships in the South during the mid-20th century. Slavery is long over, but Hoke comments that not much as changed. He still must act in complete deference to Daisy. Several times during the play, Daisy insists that she is not prejudiced, yet she constantly reminds Hoke of his subordinate place in her household. She also comments that having black employees is like having children in the house.

As the years pass, Daisy begins to change with the times. She decides that Martin Luther King is wonderful and buys tickets to banquet to hear him speak. However, Daisy's new interest in civil rights does not extend to her own household. She refuses to believe that Hoke might want to attend the event because she does not see him as an individual with his own thoughts and dreams. Even when she arrives at the banquet with extra tickets, she makes Hoke wait in the car. She has the audacity to say that she is glad that times are changing for black Americans, while she subordinates the black American she is closest to. Daisy knows that her actions hurt Hoke, but she is not willing to attend a social function with a black man.

Daisy also is quick to repeatedly remind Hoke that she is not rich. Yet, she is fiercely proud and protective of her possessions. She wants Hoke to know that he is simply a servant in her fine home. Perhaps she is scared to depend on Hoke, because if she needs him, she can not feel superior to him. For all of her ideas of equality, she is not ready to get rid of class distinctions.

One of the most powerful moments in the play comes when Hoke finally stands up to Daisy. She has denied him permission to go to the bathroom. She also cruelly tells him he should have gone at the gas station, even though she knows black people are not allowed to use the station's toilet. At first, Hoke is willing to put up with yet another humiliation. However, he changes his mind and stops the car. Hoke stands up for

himself, reminding Daisy he is a grown man, not a child or just a neck she stares at while in the back seat of her car. Hoke demands dignity and leaves Daisy in the car by herself. She calls out to him with anger but her tone changes when she becomes frightened, realizing she needs him.

While Hoke struggles under racism, Daisy struggles against getting older. The play starts with Daisy coming to terms with no longer being able to drive. Her car symbolizes her independence and freedom of movement. Without it, she must admit that she can no longer take care of herself. Hiring Hoke is a psychological blow and makes her feel threatened. Once she agrees to the arrangement, she relentlessly criticizes Hoke's driving skills. Daisy feels that she needs to be in charge of her driver in order to still control her own life.

However, what starts as a story of racism and the fear of growing old turns into a loving tale of friendship. At first, Daisy and Hoke are kept to together by necessity. Daisy needs a driver and Hoke needs a job. However, as the play progresses, they come to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. Hoke treats Daisy with unwavering kindness. She teaches him to read. When her temple is bombed, Hoke shows Daisy that they share the same enemies. She can't bear to admit it, so she demands he stop speaking. However, she has gotten the message. They have something in common after all.

Daisy does not change entirely, but she does finally realize what Hoke has come to mean to her. He is her best friend and, in fact, has been for years before she can admit it. Now as she approaches the end of her life, Hoke is still caring for her. He is no longer an employee. He visits her as a friend, which makes his simple gesture of feeding her pie a beautiful act of love.

Characters

Hoke Coleburn

Hoke is sixty years old when the play begins. He is an unemployed, uneducated African American. He has worked as a driver and deliveryman previously. He is pleased when Boolie hires him, both for the job and because he likes to work for Jews. He is extremely patient with Daisy and tolerant of her barely disguised prejudices. He also is not afraid to speak up to her, always, however, in a quiet, respectful manner. When his dignity is at stake, he speaks up for his rights. His integrity teaches Daisy how to be a more humane person. Hoke also develops as a result of their friendship, for instance, Daisy teaches him to read. Perhaps most importantly, the financial security Hoke obtains over the twenty-five years brings him greater self-confidence and self-respect.

Daisy

Daisy is a seventy-two-year-old widow living alone when the play opens. She is independent and stubborn, but her son Boolie insists on hiring a driver for her after she crashes her car while backing out of the garage. Daisy deeply resents Hoke and the implication that she is no longer able to control her own life. However, Hoke's mild manner eventually wins her over, and she finally allows him to drive her to the market. He serves as her driver for the next twenty-five years. Through her friendship with Hoke, Daisy loses some of her deep-rooted prejudice against African Americans and even comes to consider herself a supporter of civil rights. Although she becomes unable to care for herself as she gets older, eventually moving to a nursing home, she never loses her determination or her sense of self. Some of the characteristics that identified her at the beginning of the play, such as her bossiness or her sense of humor, are with her as strongly at the end of the play.

Boolie Werthan

Boolie is Daisy's son. He is forty years old when the play begins. He has taken over his father's printing company, and, over the course of the play, he develops into one of the city's leading business figures. As the years pass, he becomes more conscious of how he will be perceived by society, and, consequently, does not want to attend the United Jewish Appeal banquet for Martin Luther King, Jr. Boolie takes good care of his mother, but he sometimes neglects her feelings. When her opinion disagrees with his, he generally overrides her without thinking about what she really wants or why she wants it. However, he humors his mother's stubbornness rather than try to understand it.

Florine Werthan

Although Boolie's wife Florine is never seen by the audience, she is still a lively character. She is Jewish but socializes with the Christian community and surrounds herself with Christian trappings, such as Christmas decorations. She has high social aspirations and is a member of many organizations. She values social status and symbols more than she does family, and primarily because of this, Daisy thinks she is shallow and foolish.

Themes

Race and Prejudice

Race and prejudice are important themes in the play. Prejudice is demonstrated against both African Americans and Jews. Several brief statements remind readers of the situation for African Americans in the South. Hoke tells Boolie that he has had a hard time finding a job, for "[T]hey hirin' young if they hirin' colored." Years later, Hoke refers to the fact that African Americans cannot use white facilities. Prejudice against Jews is demonstrated through the bombing of the temple and Boolie's reference to businessmen who dislike and stereotype Jews. He recognizes their belief that "as long as you got to deal with Jews, the really smart ones come from New York." Hoke also specifically mentions the way many Southerners feel toward Jews: "People always talkin "bout they stingy and they cheap, but doan' say none of that roun' me."

Daisy, herself a Jew, feels prejudice against African Americans, though she denies it. When the play opens, Daisy refers to African Americans as "them," which does not escape Boolie's notice. After she is convinced that Hoke is stealing from her, she becomes more aggressive in her accusations. "They all take things, you know," she tells Boolie. Later in the same scene, she even says, "They are like having little children in the house. They want something so they just take it. Not a smidgin of manners. No conscience." She also mimics the speech of uneducated African Americans like Hoke: "'Nome,' he'll say." Daisy's accusations, which indict all African Americans, backfire when Hoke brings her a new can of salmon. She can no longer hold his actions against an entire race. Throughout the course of the play, however, Daisy begins to lose her prejudices. She even argues with Boolie about their presence at a banquet honoring civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.

Despite this change, she still does not see the prejudiced world around her clearly, and does not understand that some white Southerners dislike Jews as much as they dislike African Americans. When the temple is bombed, she is certain it must be a mistake "I'm sure they meant to bomb one of the conservative synagogues or the orthodox one. The temple is reform" or that Hoke misheard the police officer. Hoke, however, understands better than Daisy. "It doan' matter to them people," he says. "A Jew is a Jew to them folks. Jes' like light or dark we all the same nigger." Daisy refuses to believe this, for even though she makes great strides in combating her prejudice, she still feels superior to Hoke, for many reasons: she is wealthier, she is his employer, and she is white. Because of this innate feeling, she does not invite Hoke to attend the King banquet with her until virtually the last minute. Hoke pridefully refuses, knowing that it is only because she takes him for granted that she did not speak with him about it sooner.

Friendship

The relationship between Daisy and Hoke is at the heart of this play. When Daisy first meets Hoke, she dislikes him, both because he is African American and because she resents his presence in her home. Over the years, she comes to grow fond of Hoke, though her gruff speech would not indicate this. Both Hoke and Daisy, however, understand the feelings that they share. On the day of the ice storm, Hoke drives to her home despite the slick roads. He wants to be there for Daisy, whom he knows will be alone. Although Daisy is "*[TJouchecT'* and calls his actions "sweet," she still reproves him for tracking dirt into her kitchen. Hoke says, "Now Miz Daisy, what you think I am? A mess?" Though Daisy responds in the affirmative, the stage directions note, *"This is an old routine between them and not without affection.*" It is not until Daisy is much older and getting occasionally confused that she puts her feelings into words. "You're my best friend," she tells Hoke, and she takes hold of his hand. It seems likely that she wants to express her feelings for Hoke while she is still able to do so.

Growing Old

An important theme in the play is growing old. The play spans twenty-five years. By its end, Daisy is ninety-seven, Hoke is eighty-five, and Boolie is sixty-five. The characters all experience changes over the years. Daisy becomes more liberal, while Boolie becomes more conservative. Daisy and Hoke also become good friends. The two share the knowledge of the difficulties of aging. When Daisy grows confused, thinking that she is still a teacher, she says to Hoke, "I'm being trouble. Oh God, I don't want to be trouble to anybody." She realizes that her aging is making her more difficult, and she is afraid that she will become a burden. Hoke points out that she at least has the benefit of aging in comfort. "You want something to cry about, I take you to the state home, show you what layin' out dere in de halls."

Eventually, Boolie puts Daisy in a nursing home. The stage directions note that "*[S]he seems fragile and diminished, but still vital*." Her aging has not made her unwilling to speak her mind. "Go charm the nurses," she tells Boolie when she wants him to leave. Though she is unable to feed herself very well, she still has her mind.

For his part, Hoke has changed too. He can no longer drive and, instead, must rely on his granddaughter to chauffeur him around. Through Hoke's inability to drive, the play also demonstrates that as people get older, they lose their independence, in a sense, becoming more like children again. Hoke is unable to visit Daisy often because the bus doesn't go to the nursing home. Hoke admits that "It hard [to visit Daisy], not drivin'." At this point in their lives, people like Daisy and Hoke must rely on others for almost everything even for the maintenance of cherished friendships.

Style

Symbolism

Daisy's automobiles (of which there are many) are central symbols in the play. For Daisy, driving her own car represents freedom. This freedom is taken away from her when Boolie hires Hoke. For Hoke, Daisy's cars the Oldsmobile that he purchases used from the dealer after Boolie gets Daisy a new car represents a rise in social status. "Keep them ashes off my 'polstry," he warns Boolie, as the two men drive to the dealership. For Boolie, however, the car is just an object, a large, dangerous object in the hands of his mother, which he places in the hands of a driver he can trust.

Even when Daisy relents and allows Hoke to drive her car in a sense, take away her freedom she does her best to continue to assert herself. On their first trip together, Daisy tries to instruct Hoke on the route to take. "I want to go to it [the Piggly Wiggly] the way I always go," she says, demonstrating her fixation with being in charge of herself. Hoke, however, rejects her orders, refusing to turn as she tells him to, because he knows a better route to the store. This exchange shows each person's basic nature: Daisy's stubborn insistence on denying that change can occur, and Hoke's quiet yet resolute manner of teaching Daisy to accept change.

Daisy's house also has symbolic meaning. Like the car, it symbolizes her independence. She feels she should be in charge of her house, thus when Boolie hires Hoke, her control of this sphere is undermined. The other characters recognize what the house means to Daisy. Boolie does not sell it until she has been in the nursing home for several years and will never come home. "It feels funny to sell the house while Mama's still alive," he says to Hoke, "I know I'm doing the right thing." He looks to Hoke for affirmation, which he finds, but he also admits that he is not going to tell his mother what he is doing. Hoke also agrees with this decision. Both men know that Daisy will not idly abide the only symbol of her independent adulthood being taken away.

Setting

Almost the entire play takes place in Atlanta, Georgia. Daisy has spent her life in the city, though she grew up in a much poorer section of town. She is a part of Atlanta's Jewish community. She belongs to a temple and takes part in Jewish cultural events. Boolie has also spent his life in Atlanta. He has taken over his father's printing business, and he becomes a leading figure in the city's circle of businessmen. Though his wife, Florine, is also Jewish, she socializes within the Christian community because it gives her higher status.

Even though Atlanta is a thriving city, the atmosphere is more that of a small town. The people within Daisy's social circle are all well acquainted. Even Hoke has a connection

to the Werthans prior to working as Daisy's chauffeur. He used to work for a Jewish judge whom Boolie knows.

Although Daisy leads an insular life, she does get out of the city. Boolie, as well, takes trips to New York. Hoke, however, has never left Georgia before he drives Daisy to attend a funeral in Alabama. Hoke originally comes from a farm near Macon, and his recollection of the lynching of his friend's father serves as a reminder of the racial violence that regularly took place in the rural South. Although his family also lives in Atlanta, they clearly belong to the generations of African Americans who leave the South, or if staying there, make the choice to do so. His daughter, married to a train porter, has visited northern cities such as New York and Detroit and urges her father to do so. His granddaughter still lives in Atlanta, but she is an educated scientist, teaching at an African-American college.

Structure

The play has no specific acts and scenes. Instead, it is divided up into segments, some of which flow one into the other, others that do not. The play also spans twenty-five years, so sometimes large amounts of time pass between segments. This structure frees the action of the play from time or plot constraints. Uhry can create exactly which incidents he believes will be the most evocative. The structure also emphasizes the compactness of the characters' lives. Though the fluid structure would seem to indicate that little changes over the course of twenty-five years, that is not the play's reality.

Historical Context

The 1940s

After the end of World War II, American society and economy saw significant changes. During the war, many women, Mexican Americans, and African Americans were employed in defense factories. After the war ended, however, as government measures encouraged employers to hire veterans, many of these people lost their jobs. Congress even abolished the Fair Employment Practices Committee, which had protected African Americans from job discrimination. Overall, however, unemployment remained low, and incomes increased. Even though the economy experienced dramatic inflation, many Americans, who had scrimped during the war years, were eager to spend their savings. Rising consumerism helped lead to a new era of prosperity.

President Harry S. Truman ran for reelection in 1948. His stand on civil rights became an important issue in the campaign. Two years earlier, in 1946, African-American civil rights groups had urged Truman to act against racism. African Americans faced segregation and discrimination in housing and employment. African Americans in many areas continued to be lynched, a crime that the courts ignored. Also, Southern African Americans were prevented from voting through the use of poll taxes. In 1948, Truman banned racial discrimination in the military and in federal jobs. In response, Southern Democrats formed their own party, one that called for continued racial segregation. Despite these party divisions, Truman won the presidency.

The Civil Rights Movement

African Americans began taking a more active stance in the 1950s to end discrimination in the United States. During the 1950s, the Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of schools and transportation systems. President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957. The first civil rights law passed since Reconstruction, this act made it a federal crime to prevent any qualified person from voting. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., also emerged as an important civil rights leader. He urged the use of nonviolent resistance to bring about the end of racial discrimination. King was assassinated in 1968.

In the 1960s, civil rights activists continued to challenge racist policies in interstate transportation and voter registration. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, barring discrimination in employment and public accommodations, and giving the Justice Department the power to enforce school desegregation. Congress also passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which put the voter registration process under federal control. Within three years, over half of all eligible African Americans in the South had registered to vote.

Despite these successes, many African Americans grew to question the effectiveness of nonviolent protest. Some felt they should use violence for self-defense, while others did not want to integrate into white society at all. These African Americans adopted the slogan "Black Power," which became widely used by the late 1960s. They wanted greater economic and political power and even complete separation from white society.

Throughout the 1970s, African Americans, as well as other minority groups, continued to fight for equal rights. President Richard Nixon, however, vowed to not ask for any new civil rights legislation. When the Supreme Court ruled in 1971 that busing could be used to integrate schools, he denounced their decision. By the middle of the decade, more African Americans were enrolling in college, holding professional jobs, and serving in public office. African-American political leaders formed strong alliances and effective lobbies.

Women and Society

Although popular culture in the 1950s presented the ideal woman as a full-time suburban homemaker, many women in that decade held jobs outside the home. By the 1960s, the women's movement was experiencing a widespread revival. Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* vehemently rejected the popular notion that women were content with fulfilling the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. Friedan charged that many women felt stifled by this domestic life. The National Organization for Women, a women's rights group, was formed in 1966, and more and more women joined the movement throughout the 1970s.

The National Women's Political Caucus, founded in 1971, encouraged women to run for political office. Women's leaders believed that women in public office would contribute to the shaping of public policy in favor of equal rights. In 1972, Congress passed the Education Amendments Act, which outlawed sexual discrimination in higher education. Many all-male schools began to allow women to enroll. The women's rights movement, however, failed to win passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, or ERA, a constitutional amendment barring discrimination on the basis of sex. Although Congress passed the ERA in 1972, not enough states ratified the bill, therefore it never became a law.

The Aging Population

Several measures contributed to a changing lifestyle for elderly Americans. President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated the Medicare program in 1965, which offered national health insurance to people over the age of 65. Americans were living longer, so by the 1970s, the aging population contributed to a dramatic rise in U.S. spending on health care from $74 billion in 1970 to around $884 billion in 1993.

Critical Overview

Driving Miss Daisy was the first play that Alfred Uhry wrote and he based it on people he had known growing up in the South, particularly his grandmother and her driver. The play's original schedule called for it to run for five weeks at Playwrights Horizon, a New York nonprofit theater that seated an audience of seventy-four. When the five-week run was up, the play was extended another five weeks, and when that was up, the play moved to a bigger theater. A year and a half later, the show was still playing in New York, and also around the country. Uhry also won the Pulitzer Prize.

Audiences and critics immediately responded to the play, even when its premise seemed distinctly unpromising. In *American Theatre*, Don Shewey recalls his experience.

I remember trudging upstairs ... to see a play that sounded distinctly unpromising. It was about gads! an elderly white woman and her black chauffeur. On one hand, it sounded politically unsavory: Have we progressed no further than portraying African-Americans onstage as servants. On the other hand, it sounded theatrically too dreary for words: How could it be anything but a parade of predictable Sunday-school pieties about how we're all alike under the skin and we should all get along? I personally resisted every inch of the way the feeling I left the theatre with that night: Wow, [this] is a good play!

Critics commented on the play's appeal, in fact, often using that very word. In the New York Times, Mel Gussow refers to the play's "homespun appeal" and its "renewed sincerity." Robert Brustein writes in the New Republic that the play "has both appealing brevity and considerable quality." He calls viewing the play "an experience of considerable power and sensitivity." These critics, along with others, responded to the play's basic humanity and the truths it told. "It is the work of decent people," writes Brustein, "working against odds to show how humans still manage to reach out to each other in a divided world." Judy Lee Oliva, in *Contemporary Dramatists*, says that "*Driving Miss Daisy* is a play about dignity in which all the characters strive to hold onto their personal integrity."

The play deftly presents an overview of the changing values and times in the South. Spanning from 1948 to 1972, the play alludes to important themes of the twentieth century, such as racism and prejudice. Its focus on the relationship between two people allows for a more personalized view of historical realities. Oliva notes that the play is "representative of a time in history and tells about that time via this one story." However, as Gussow points out, "history remains background. The principal story is the personal relationship, the interdependence of the two irrevocably allied Southerners."

Critics overwhelmingly warmed to the characters, who carried this play smoothly along: the crusty Daisy and the restrained but prideful Hoke. Gussow declares that the play sometimes "seems more like an extended character sketch or family memoir than an actual drama." Even Florine, the invisible character, emerges, "deftly characterized by

the playwright," writes Brustein, "with simple strokes through Daisy's attitude toward her."

Uhry's subtlety of writing was also appreciated. Oliva calls Uhry "a master of understatement." Notes Gussow, "The play remains quiet, and it becomes disarming, as it delineates the characters with almost offhand glimpses." He uses Hoke's casual declaration "The first time I left Georgia was 25 minutes ago" as an example of this technique. Oliva further believes that Driving Miss Daisy was distinguished from other plays of the decade by "the subtlety with which the playwright empowers his dramaturgy, enabling him to address issues of race and ethnicity and to explore conflicts of old versus young, rich versus poor, Jew versus gentile, while maintaining the emphasis on the very human relationship that develops between Daisy andHoke."

Even after its New York run ended, *Driving Miss Daisy* remained with the American audience. Uhry adapted it into a film that came out in 1989. Like the play, it garnered numerous positive reviews including one from Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* who declared it to be "the most successful stage-to-screen translation" since *Dangerous Liaisons*. *Driving Miss Daisy* went on to win Academy Awards for best actress, best screenplay adaptation, and best film.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, she compares Daisy and Hoke, discussing fundamental similarities that contribute to their friendship as well as differences that influence their actions.

More than twenty years after Alfred Uhry arrived in New York with dreams of becoming a lyricist, he made a surprise hit with his first original play, *Driving Miss Daisy.* Uhry had actually made the decision to leave the theater for good when, as he told a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, he suddenly decided to write a play about his grandmother. Lena Guthman Fox was a former schoolteacher who insisted on driving long after she could safely do so, so her family hired Will Coleman, an African-American chauffeur. Uhry believed that exploring their friendship could, at the least, counter misperceptions about racial relations in the South. *Driving Miss Daisy* took New York's theater-going crowd by storm and played Off-Broadway for three years.

Daisy Werthan is the play's title character, but she shares the stage and the audience's respect with Hoke Coleburn, the illiterate African-American man, twelve years her junior, who nevertheless becomes her "best friend." The two older people, though of vastly different backgrounds and socioeconomic classes, are able to establish a valuable relationship. They share crucial similarities, yet their differences allow them the opportunity to learn from each other and enrich their lives.

The play opens with Daisy's refusal to acknowledge that she is no longer capable of driving safely. "It was the car's fault," she declares, speaking of her accident. She longs for her old car. "You should have let me keep my La Salle.... It never would have behaved this way," she tells Boolie. Daisy wants to be in control of her own life. Don Shewey, writing in *American Theatre*, points out some of the reasons for Daisy's stubbornness. "Her physical and social vulnerability, because of her age and because she's Jewish in an overwhelmingly Christian society, only exacerbates the sharpness with which she hides her fear and fragility."

Hoke also suffers the same vulnerability, because of his age, but primarily because of his racial background. Unlike Daisy, he admits to this insecurity. When Boolie comments that Hoke has been out of work for a long time, he frankly replies, "Well, Mist' Werthan, you try bein' me and looking for work. They hirin' young if they hirin' colored, an' they ain' even hirin' much young, seems like."

Though Daisy is white and Hoke is black, they both have preconceived notions of race. Daisy holds deep-seated prejudices against African Americans, but she does not acknowledge them, for they are simply the fabric of her society. For instance, a missing can of salmon provides all the opportunity she needs to denounce his race: "They want something so they just take it," she says to her son, Boolie. Over the years, Hoke's quiet honesty and dignity force Daisy to rethink her ideas.

Hoke also has strong notions about Jews. Unlike Daisy, however, his prejudices are positive. "I'd druther drive for Jews," he tells Boolie during his interview. "People always talkin "bout they stingy and they cheap, but doan' say none of that roun' me." He holds Jews in higher esteem than their Christian counterparts for no truly valid reason the same way that Daisy's prejudices have no basis.

Both Daisy and Hoke are formidably stubborn, but they have different ways of showing this trait. Daisy tends toward verbal protestation, as when Boolie tells her that he is going to hire a driver. Though she speaks loudly and vehemently, the play aptly demonstrates Daisy's habit of eventually succumbing, though she acts like she is not doing so even while it is happening. She also attempts to maintain control of her own life by placing herself in charge of the unimportant details that comprise her surroundings, including the speed at which Hoke drives. Hoke, in contrast, speaks little but takes firm action. He sums up his strategy for getting his way in the initial job interview: "I hold on no matter what way she run me. When I nothin' but a little boy down there on the farm above Macon, I use to wrastle hogs to the ground at killin' time, and ain' no hog get away from me yet." The following exchange, which takes place on their first car ride together, typifies each character's determination:

DAISY: ... Where are you going? HOKE: To the grocery store. DAISY: Then why didn't you turn on Highland Avenue? HOKE: Piggly Wiggly ain' on Highland Avenue. It on Euclid, down near the DAISY: I know where it is and I want to go to it the way I always go. On Highland Avenue. HOKE: That three blocks out of the way, Miz Daisy. DAISY: Go back! Go back this minute! HOKE: We in the wrong lane! I cain' jes' DAISY: Go back I said! If you don't, I'll get out of this car and walk! HOKE: We niovin' You cain' open the do'! DAISY: This is wrong! Where are you taking me? HOKE: The sto'. DAISY: This is wrong. You have to go back to Highland Avenue! HOKE: Mmmm-hmmmm. DAISY: I've been driving to Piggly Wiggly since the day they put it up and opened it for business. This isn' t the way! Go back! Go back this minute! HOKE: Yonder the Piggly Wiggly. DAISY: Get ready to turn now. HOKE: Yassum.

The exchange also shows their manner of dealing with each other. Daisy quite vocally makes demands. Hoke, quietly, ignores them and continues on his chosen path. To get her way, Daisy makes threats ("I'll get out of this car and walk.") and validates her superior knowledge ("I've been driving to the Piggly Wiggly since the day ... they opened it for business."). As her futile protests grow more frantic, Hoke responds by not responding ("Mmmm-hmmmm."). When Daisy finally accedes that Hoke has gotten his way ("Yonder the Piggly Wiggly."), she again grasps control of the situation ("Get ready to turn now."), at which point Hoke is smart enough to let her salvage her pride ("Yassum."). This pattern repeats itself over the years, but becomes increasingly shortened. Decades later, Hoke is driving Daisy to a banquet for Martin Luther King, Jr.:

DAISY: You forgot to turn. HOKE: Ain' this dinner at the Biltmo'? DAISY: You know it is. HOKE: Biltmo' straight thissaway. DAISY: You know so much. HOKE: Yassum. I do. DAISY: I've lived in Atlanta all my life. HOKE: And ain' run a car in onto twenty years.

Both Hoke and Daisy know that, despite their age or race, they have basic human rights. As Daisy points out to Boolie at the very beginning of the play, "I am seventy-years old as you so gallantly reminded me and I am a widow, but unless they rewrote the Constitution and didn't tell me, I still have rights. And one of my rights is the right to invite who I want not who you want into my house." Daisy, of course, loses this argument, primarily because it is theoretical and really has little meaning in her daily life. In the grand scheme, Daisy's rights are not trodden upon to any significant extent.

Hoke has a different experience. Though Daisy does not realize it, she continually questions his human dignity, and the audience can gather, other whites in Southern society do just the same. On the trip to Alabama, Hoke needs to urinate. When Daisy tells him that "there's no time to stop" and that they will "be in Mobile soon," Hoke also feels compelled to remind Daisy of his rights and follow up on his declaration:

HOKE: Yassum. (He drives a minute then stops the car.) Nome. DAISY: I told you to wait! HOKE: Yassum. I hear you. How you think I feel havin' to ax you when can I make my water like some damn dog? DAISY: Why, Hoke! I'd be ashamed! HOKE: I ain't no dog and I ain' no chile and I ain' jes' a back of the neck you look at while you goin' wherever you want to go. I a man nearly seventy-two years old and I know when my bladder full and I getting' out dis car and goin' off down de road like I got to do. And I'm takin' de car key dis time. And that's de end of it.

Unlike Daisy, Hoke must stick to his resolution because much higher stakes are involved.

Although Hoke makes points such as this, and even though Daisy comes to move away from her prejudice and to accept Hoke as a friend, she still cannot bring herself to treat him as an equal. The Martin Luther King, Jr., banquet best shows Daisy's struggle. She wants Hoke to accompany her but waits until the last minute to tell him, "Boolie said you wanted to go to this dinner with me tonight." With pride, Hoke refuses to attend: "next time you ask me someplace, ask me regular." Only at the end of the play is Daisy able to treat Hoke in a way consistent with her feelings: she takes his hand.

Daisy and Hoke are also drawn together partially because they both reside outside the norm of Southern society. Daisy, not surprisingly, refuses to acknowledge this truth. The temple bombing perfectly illustrates this concept. Daisy can't believe that her synagogue has been the object of attack. "Well, it's a mistake. I'm sure they meant to bomb one of the conservative synagogues or the orthodox one. The temple is reform." Hoke understands the mindset of prejudiced people: "It doan' matter to them people. A Jew is a Jew to them folks. Jes' like light or dark, we all the same nigger." This "otherness" help Daisy and Hoke to form a meaningful, lasting friendship that is mutually beneficial. Daisy strengthens Hoke's inner world, giving him access to the tools that will bring greater self-respect, such as a steady income, a car, and the ability to read. Hoke strengthens Daisy's outer world, helping her to become a better person, one who can move beyond her proscribed point of view and embrace concepts, such as civil rights, that will bring positive change to others. At the end of the play, their cohesiveness is

demonstrated by this simple act: *"(He cuts a small piece of pie with the fork and gently feeds it to her. Then another as the lights fade slowly out.).*"

Source: Rena Korb, in an essay for Drama for Students, Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Christopher Edwards portrays Driving Miss Daisy as a "sentimental" and "comfortable" play in the following review.

Hay fever (the ailment not the play) prevented me from writing a column last week. Here are a couple of the more interesting productions that opened in the last two weeks.

Comfortable is one word for Alfred Uhry's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Driving Miss Daisy.* Sentimental is another. What has become of this American award? I had just begun to think that if David Mamet could win it (for *Glengarry Glenn Ross*) then perhaps we could start taking it seriously again. Mamet was an original talent, without any doubt. This piece is an example of cosy American liberalism murmuring reassuring noises to itself. Purring is general, all over Broadway.

It is 1948. Rich, crusty old Atlanta Jewess (Wendy Hiller as Daisy) is persuaded by long-suffering son Boolie (Barry Foster) to employ poor illiterate old black chauffeur Hoke (Clarke Peters). Daisy, in her seventies, is unfit to drive, but wishes to soldier independently on (hurray for indomitable old bats like Daisy). The last thing she wants is an old black in the house (boo, but we know she will learn), least of all one who might disturb her frank idea of the stereotype nigger ('they all take things'). But the author has a stereotype of his own in store. Enter Hoke, as honest as the day is long (hurray again), quietly dignified (goes without saying, but more cheers), loyal to his old charge and full of homely Deep South insight; oppression breeds wisdom in a black man's soul, yessir.

It is not the message that deprives the piece of bite so much as its user-friendly serrations; an autumnal glow just will bathe every prejudice in sight. And of course there is the utter predictability of the play's ending. Twenty-five years on, in 1973, shared racial suffering and common humanity have sealed a geriatric concord. At the end, old Hoke visits older Daisy in the nursing home to feed her Thanksgiving pie.

Both lead actors are excellent. The considerable virtues of the production lie in the playing. Clarke Peter's Hoke is sparky, outspoken and engagingly ingenuous. Wendy Hiller completely eschews the Jewishness of Daisy, but that which would be unforgivable on Broadway is not much missed in the West End. Her cantankerous hauteur manages to be funny, vilely prejudiced and quaintly heroic virtu refusing to give any quarter. But experience and old age bring her round. Her style of tight, crusty humour, of inarticulate expressiveness, does its best to cut across sentimentality. This is most notable in the scene where Hoke is driving her to the synagogue, burnt down by anti-semites. The event prompts Hoke's own youthful memories of lynched blacks dangling from trees. Daisy's tears at this point confirm a sense of identity with Hoke that her snobbery has been resisting throughout. Wendy Hiller ages so touchingly, and accurately, too (she is into her nineties by the end) making faint, fluttering, expressive gestures of protest and despair with her hands. In fact both actors manage to create an

air of simple, characterful spontaneity that almost overcomes the formulaic promptings of the text.

Source: Christopher Edwards, "Southern Comfort," in Spectator, Vol. 260, No. 8345, June 18, 1988, pp. 38-39.

Critical Essay #3

Robert Brustein presents a review in which he expresses that Driving Miss Daisy is an "experience of considerable power and sensitivity."

New American plays, banished from New York's main stem, are cropping up in out-of-the-way quarters in modest productions. I belatedly popped in on two such works of reputation, both of them set in the South. My seat was warm for only one act of Robert Harling's *Steel Magnolias* at the Lucille Lortel Theatre an excruciatingly cute concoction in the Beth Henley manner about a bunch of gabby women in a beauty parlor trading artificial wisecracks (sample: ' Tm not crazy I've just been in a bad mood for forty years"). At the John Houseman Theatre, however, Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy,* which might sound equally unappealing in bare outline, proved to be an experience of considerable power and sensitivity.

It was also exquisitely acted and directed, one of those rare moments in theater when every aspect of production seems to be controlled by a single unifying imagination, *Driving Miss Daisy* plays for about 90 minutes without intermission, further documenting my only formula for popularity on the stage these days that critics and audiences will embrace most warmly those productions that last an intermissionless hour and a half. (Paradoxically, they are only slightly less enthusiastic about those lasting between four and nine hours with breaks for lunch and dinner.) I can't say why this is so perhaps it is a consequence of the fast forward buttons on our VCRs. I only know that brevity now seems to have become a more important factor than quality in determining theatrical success.

Driving Miss Daisy has both appealing brevity and considerable quality. It is a first play by Uhry, who has hitherto been associated with musicals (he wrote book and lyrics for *The Robber Bridegroom*). If his talent holds against the inevitable pressures, we have another gifted playwright in our midst. Uhry comes from a German-Jewish family in Atlanta. His play is apparently autobiographical, a series of vignettes about the relationship between an aging Southern Jewish matriarch (presumably his grandmother) and her only slightly less venerable black chauffeur. Having once again totaled her car, Daisy Werthan is now considered too feeble to drive. Her son, Boolie, employs Hoke Coleburn to transport her back and forth to the supermarket, the synagogue, the cemetery where her husband is buried invariably over Daisy's contentious objections. The play concerns the evolving intimacy between these two aged people, the gentle, bemused black man and the cranky Southern Jewess who resists his services a kind of *I'm Not Rappaport* without the jokes. The old alliance between Jews and blacks is somewhat strained these days. It was already strained in the South during the period of the play, 1948 to 1973. Although "Miss Daisy" (as Hoke calls her, using the common form of subordinate Negro address) persists in believing that she feels no bigotry toward blacks, she is deeply opposed to Hoke's presence in her house, and not just because he reminds her of her helplessness. Daisy embodies all the racial prejudices of her class toward the "other" that Hoke represents.

Including an assumption about thieving black people. Daisy complains to her son that she is missing a can of salmon, having found the empty can under the coffee grounds. Hardly a generous spirit, she assumes that Hoke has stolen this 33-cent item and wants him dismissed. Hoke enters, offering her another can of salmon, to admit he helped himself because the pork chops she gave him were "stiff."

But Hoke, though unfailingly courteous, is not merely a passive image of virtue. It takes him six days to persuade Daisy to let him drive her car ("the same time it took the Lord to make the world"), and when he finally gets her in the Oldsmobile, grumbling and complaining, driving becomes an occasion for a battle of wills. "Hold on, you're speeding," she tells him, as he hurtles along at 19 miles per hour; they have a quarrel about the proper route to the supermarket; she complains that he parked the sedan in front of the synagogue ("like I was Queen of Romania") instead of at the side entrance. A former teacher, Daisy is sensitive about being wealthy ("I don't want you, I don't need you, and I don't like you saying I'm rich"), while Hoke tries to persuade her there's nothing wrong with having a little money.

They disagree about everything and Hoke spends his days moping in the kitchen, a talkative man deprived of conversation. Only when they drive to visit her husband's grave does some intimacy spring up between them. Unable to make out the writing on the gravestone, Hoke arouses Daisy's tutorial instincts by admitting he's illiterate. Before long she is teaching him to read phonetically, and later gives him a handwriting copy book as a gift.

Daisy denies this is a Christmas present. She disapproves deeply of Jews who observe that holiday, chief among them her daughter-in-law, Floreen, whose idea of heaven on earth, she says, is "socializing with Episcopalians." Floreen is an invisible character, deftly characterized by the playwright with simple strokes through Daisy's attitude toward her. Floreen puts reindeer in her trees, a Christmas wreath in every window. ("If I had [her] nose," snorts Daisy, "I wouldn't go around saying Merry Christmas to anyone.") Despite her nose, Floreen ends up as a Republican National Committeewoman, the type of woman who goes to New York to see *My Fair Lady* rather than attend the funeral of Daisy's brother in Mobile.

The trip to Mobile inspires tender and nostalgic memories in Daisy, who recalls tasting salt water on her face at her brother's wedding. As for Hoke, he admits to having never left Georgia before, and "Alabama ain't lookin' like much so far." Yet even this intimate journey inspires arguments. Hoke has to pass water; Daisy wants him to wait until they reach a Standard Oil gas station. But colored people aren't allowed to use white rest rooms and Hoke, shouting he will not be treated like a dog, stops the car and disappears into a bush. Her small piping "Hoke?" signifies a belated realization of just how much she needs him.

Going to the synagogue one morning, both of them see a big mess in the road. The temple has been bombed. By whom? "Always the same ones," says Hoke. Daisy is convinced the hoodlums meant to bomb the conservative synagogue, but as Hoke observes, "A Jew is a Jew just as in the dark we're all the same nigger." This shared

suffering moves Hoke to speak of a time when the father of his friend was lynched, his hands tied behind his back and flies all over his body. "Why did you tell me that story?" asks Daisy. "Stop talking to me."

By the time she's nearing 90, and extremely feeble, Daisy has developed enough social conscience to help organize a United Jewish Appeal banquet honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Now it is her son, a successful banker with business to conduct with a racist clientele, who is hesitant about public demonstration of Jewish-black friendship. But Daisy persists. "Isn't it wonderful the way things are changing?" she says to Hoke, who grumbles, "Things ain't changed that much." Daisy has waited until the very day of the King memorial to invite him to join her at the banquet and with quiet pride he refuses.

Growing senile in her 90s, confused and rambling, convinced she's teaching school again, Daisy realizes, with a start, that Hoke, the black man, is her best friend. And when her son and Hoke come to visit her in the nursing home, it is Hoke she wishes to talk to. "How old are you?" he asks. "I'm doing the best I can." "Me too," he responds, "... that's all there is to it." In the final action of the play, a sweet, delicate moment, he feeds her two pieces of pie.

This odd love story, though it never underestimates the difficulty of intimacy between the races, could easily grow mawkish. It is a tribute to Uhry's discreet understatement that the sentiment does not grow into corn or into The Corn Is Green. It is also a testimony to the gracefully detailed direction of Ron Lagomarsino and the splendid acting performances of Dana Ivey as Daisy Werthan and Morgan Freeman as Hoke Coleburn. (Ray Gill, playing Boolie like a portly young Charles Durning, is also effective in a more sketchy role.) The way Ivey and Freeman each age 25 years in the course of the action has been widely admired, and it should be. This is not a technical stunt, but the achievement of two gifted actors fully inhabiting their roles. Padded and spectacled in her flowered dress and lace collar, Ivey gives Daisy a growing fragility, inwardness, and snappishness that personifies perfectly realized old age, while Freeman's gray-haired, hatchet-faced, stooped, vaguely cadaverous Hoke is a portrait of a dignified, endearing soul. When he simulates driving the car, sitting on a stool, gently turning the wheel, and raising his eyes as if to watch his passenger in a rearview mirror, he creates a space filled with serenity.

The economy of the acting is matched by that of the production. Thomas Lynch's setting consists of a scrim, a few sticks of furniture, and two stools that represent the front and back seats of the car. Arden Fingerhut's lighting enhances the multiple scene changes. And Robert Waldman' s string trio composition viola, cello, and banjo blends atmospheric music with the twangy sounds of the South. Driving Miss Daisy is all of a piece, combining elements of sense and sensibility, not to mention generous portions of pride and prejudice. It is the work of decent people, working against odds to show how humans still manage to reach out to each other in a divided world.

Source: Robert Brustein, "Elegy for Old Age," in New Republic, Vol., 197, No. 3793, September 28,1987, pp. 28-30.

Critical Essay #4

In the following review, John Simon offers an illustration of the main characters in the play Driving Miss Daisy.

There is a kind of play as redolent of the good old days as 5-cent beer and about as likely to make a comeback. What a sweet surprise, then, to find Driving *Miss Daisy,* a two-and-a-half-character play by Alfred Uhry (author and lyricist of *The Robber Bridegroom*, which I missed), at the tiny upstairs theater of Playwrights Horizons; it is full of an old-style unpretentiousness, coziness, and despite genuine emotions quietude. It concerns *Miss Daisy Werthan,* a crotchety, parsimonious, monumentally stubborn 72-year-old Atlanta widow, who, while insisting she can still drive, has to bow to the combined wills of her son, Boolie, and all the insurance companies in the land and accept a black chauffeur, Hoke, whom Boolie has hired for her.

Hoke is delighted that the Werthans are Jews, whom, in the past, he has found much easier to work for than Baptists. But he has never met the like of Miss Daisy for taciturn intractability, almost whimsical orneriness. He himself is a proud and determined man, respectful but never servile, possessed of amusingly ingenious ways to drive an iceberg as well as a car. The play covers, in bright but unflashy episodes, twenty-five years in these two lives, with Boolie providing an intermittent, droll or exasperated, obbligato to a duet that progresses from discord to close harmony in small, credible steps.

It is to Uhry's credit that there is no cheating. Miss Daisy, in her prosperity, never forgets her hard, impecunious childhood and struggling schoolteacher days; though she is not exactly a champion at the other virtues (except perhaps at propriety), in the generosity sweepstakes she was left at the starting gate. Her always-offstage maid, Idella, has come to terms with this; Boolie, who pays Hoke out of his pocket ("highway robbery," Daisy calls his modest salary), plays along with it; it is Hoke who, slowly, good-humoredly, dismantles Daisy's suspi-ciousness and isolation, even if he can never quite get her 'ungivingness' to give.

Still, Daisy teaches Hoke to read and write even as he teaches her about human rights and wrongs, and a prickly (on her part) and wary (on his) affection develops between them, the limits of which she will not overstep even after she, well into her nineties and after many changes in cars and conditions, declares him her best friend. Even more than a delicate miniaturist's talent, the playwright exhibits tact: He milks neither the sentiment nor the humor of the situation, and also resists, without avoiding the issues of racism and anti-Semitism, giving us a social tract. Neither the bombing of the synagogue to which Hoke has been regularly driving her nor the testimonial dinner for Martin Luther King Jr. that, despite her son's cautious abstention, she insists on attending can induce Miss Daisy to accept Hoke as her equal in every way.

The dialogue is savory and spirited, and although not a moment of *Driving Miss Daisy* becomes momentous, not a minute of its 80 is boring. Even the predictable, in Uhry's hands, manages to be idiosyncratic enough to be palatable, and connoisseurs of filigree

pleasures should feel snugly ensconced here. Those pleasures are vastly enhanced by a tastefully trimmed-down production, smartly and unfussily directed by Ron Lagomarsino and designed with elegant economy by Thomas Lynch (scenery), Michael Krass (costumes), and Ken Tabachnick (lights). But the evening's jewel is the acting. Dana Ivey, in splendid command of the accent, gives a performance exemplarily clean of outline yet rich in detail. I am not wholly sure that (without a chance for elaborate makeup) she really reaches 97 in the end, a feat even more rare on the stage than in life. And Ray Gill infuses the almost incidental role of Boolie with uncommon restraint and suggestiveness.

Primus inter pares, however, is Morgan Free-. A specialist in tough, violent, often malign parts, he plays Hoke with an easygoing steadfastness both ironic and overwhelmingly humane. His pliability is strength in action, his sarcastic muttering cauterizes as much as it cuts, his wry warmth is as devoid of self-abnegation as of self-righteousness, and his overarching shrewdness is always clearly at the service of decency and good sense. I cannot think of another actor who could get such emotional variety from mere "Yes'm"s, or whose last-ditch self-assertion could be more quietly commanding. A magnificent performance.

Source: John Simon, "Daisy and Miller," in *New York*, Vol. 20, No. 18, May 4, 1987, pp. 122, 124.

Critical Essay #5

In this article, Alfred Uhry describes his inspiration for creating the three characters in his play.

There was a real Miss Daisy. She was a friend of my grandmother's in Atlanta, back in the forties when I was a child. She was a "maiden lady" as we called it then, the last of a big family, and she lived in what I remember as a spooky old Victorian house. There was a Hoke, too. He was the sometime bartender at our German-Jewish country club, and, I believe, he supplemented his income by bartending at private parties around town. And Boolie . . . well, I didn't really know him, but he was the brother of my dear Aunt Marjorie's friend Rosalie. They were real people, all right, but I have used only their names in creating the three characters in *Driving Miss Daisy*. I wanted to use names that seemed particular to the Atlanta I grew up in. The actual characters, though, are made of little bits and pieces of my childhood. Quite a bit of my grandmother, Lena Guthman Fox, and her four older sisters have gone into Miss Daisy herself. And I guess my mother, Alene Fox Uhry, is in there too. Hoke is based on my grandmother's chauffeur, Will Coleman, but also on Bill and Riley and Marvin and Pete and other black chauffeurs I knew in those days. And Boolie is so many pieces of so many men I know (including me, I suppose) that it would be hard for me to say what exactly comes from what.

I find that there is unusual interest in my offstage character Florine, Boolie's wife. Many people have said (by mail or in person) that they know Florine, she is their aunt, their cousin, their old friend from home, etc., etc., etc., and who was she really? I will never tell.

When I wrote this play I never dreamed I would be writing an introduction to it because I never thought it would get this far. The original schedule was a five-week run at Playwrights Horizons, a New York nonprofit theatre, in the spring of 1987, and I made sure various family members from Atlanta would get to town during that period. The theatre seated seventy-four people. Just the right size, I thought, for a little play that could surely have appeal only to me, my family, and a few other southerners. To my amazement, the appeal was much wider. When the five weeks was up, the engagement was extended for another five weeks, and by then the demand for tickets was so great that we had to move to a bigger theatre.

Flash forward a year and a half. Now there are several companies playing and many more productions planned in all parts of the world. I am in the process of writing the screenplay. I have won the Pulitzer Prize. Even as I write these words they seem unbelievable to me. When I wonder how all this happened (which I do a lot!) I can come up with only one answer. I wrote what I knew to be the truth and people have recognized it as such.

And I have been remarkably lucky. My wife, Joanna, has believed in me for thirty years. How can you ever thank somebody for that? And my daughters, Emily, Elizabeth, Kate

and Nell, have always been loving and understanding about what I do for a living. Flora Roberts, my agent for twenty-five years, has always been my friend too, as well as a wonderful sounding board. I must also thank Jane Harmon, Robert Waldman, Andre Bishop, Ron Lagomarsino, Dana Ivey, Morgan Freeman, and Ray Gill for caring so much.

This has been one helluva ride!

Source: Alfred Uhry, "Preface," in *Driving Miss Daisy,* Theatre Communications Group, 1986, pp. vii ix.

Adaptations

Uhry wrote the screenplay adaptation for 1989's *Driving Miss Daisy*. The movie starred Jessica Tandy, Morgan Freeman, and Dan Ackroyd. Bruce Beresford directed it. Warner Home Video released it in 1990.

Topics for Further Study

One way that actors "get into" their roles is to imagine their characters in situations that are implied but not included in the play. Try to imagine these characters in other situations and write another short scene for inclusion in the play.

Imagine that Hoke overheard the conversation between Boolie and Daisy in which she implies that all African Americans are dishonest. How do you think he would react to such statements?

Conduct research to find out more about how racial relations have changed in the South from the 1940s to the present day. Write a paragraph about your findings.

Imagine that you are from another country and know nothing about race relations in the twentieth-century South. What might be your impression of race relations based solely on *Driving Miss Daisyl*

Read another play that portrays a Southern point of view and Southern issues. Tennessee Williams' A *Streetcar Named Desire* would be a good choice. How does the image of the South differ in the two plays? How is at alike?

Toward the end of the play, Daisy exclaims to Boolie, "I've never been prejudiced and you know it!" How do you think Hoke would respond? How would you respond?

Compare and Contrast

1950s: Of a total U.S. population of close to 164.3 million in 1955, around 7.4 million are aged between 65 and 79, or 4.5 percent.

1990s: Of a total U.S. population of 273.9 million in 1998, just over 18 million are aged between 65 and 79, or 6.6 percent.

1950s: In 1956, the Supreme Court rules that segregated transportation systems are illegal.

1960s: In 1960, the Supreme Court rules that segregation in certain public facilities is illegal.

1970s: In 1971, the Supreme Court upholds affirmative actions programs in schools and businesses.

1990s: In 1996, the Supreme Court hears a case involving allegations that federal prosecutors in Los Angeles selectively pursued and charged blacks in crack cocaine cases. The Court finds that the African-American defendants are unable to prove the allegations, so the guilty charge stands.

1950s and 1960s: African Americans stage numerous boycotts, marches, and sit-ins to protest segregation laws in the South.

1990s: Since passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discrimination in employment and in public accommodations has been illegal.

Mid-1960s: In 1964, less than 6 percent of eligible African Americans in Mississippi are registered to vote.

Late 1960s: By 1968, 59 percent of African Americans in Mississippi are registered to vote.

1990s: In 1990, 31.5 percent of African Americans of voting age in Mississippi are registered to vote.

1960s: In 1969, only about 1,500 African Americans hold elected office.

1970s: By the end of the decade, more than 4,500 African Americans hold elected office.

1990s: In 1997, there are 8,617 elected African-American officials throughout the United States.

1960s: In 1964, only about 200,000 African Americans attend college.

1970s: By the end of the decade, more than 800,000 African Americans attend college.

1990s: In 1994, about 36.7 percent of African Americans, out of a total population of 32.5 million, attended two- or four-year colleges.

What Do I Read Next?

Uhry's second play, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (1997) tackles the unexplored aspects of southern anti-Semitism. Uhry again returns to the affluent Jewish community in Atlanta.

Carson McCuller' s novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) draws on the Southern gothic tradition of American literature. The novel's protagonists including a man who is deaf and mute, an African-American doctor, and a widower all live in a Georgia mill town and are drawn together by their outsider status.

Lorraine Hansberry's three-act play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) explores what happens in 1940s Chicago when an African-American family attempts to move into an all-white neighborhood. This drama reflects Hansberry's own experiences of racial harassment.

Evan O'Connell's novel *Mrs. Bridge* (1959) chronicles the adult life of Mrs. Bridge, a welloff Midwestern matron. Though she enjoys life's comforts, Mrs. Bridge feels isolated from her husband and her three children.

Uhry's first theatrical success was based on the musical adaptation of Eudora Welly's novel *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942). This fairy tale tells the story of a highwayman who masquerades part-time as a gentleman. He kidnaps a planter's daughter, and she falls in love with him. The novel contains gothic horror, mystery, and magic.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe (1987) by Fannie Flagg tells the extraordinary friendship of two Southern women. After helping her friend escape from an abusive marriage, Idgie and Ruth set up a small cafe where everyone was welcome. The story is told through reminiscences of aging characters as well as in the small-town past.

Further Study

Shewey, Don, "Ballyhoo and Daisy, Too," in A*merican Theatre*, April, 1997, p. 24-27.

This article surrounds a talk between Shewey and Uhry about several of his plays, providing a unique look at Uhry's perspective of his work.

Sterritt, David, "A Voice for Themes Other Entertainers Have Left Behind," in *Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1997, p. 15.

This article discusses Uhry's work in relation to prevailing attitudes toward morality in the United States.

Bibliography

Brustein, Robert, Review of *Driving Miss Daisy in New Republic*, Vol. 197, No. 13, September 28, 1987, pp. 28-30.

Canby, Vincent, "'Miss Daisy,' Chamber Piece from the Stage" in *New York Times*, December 13, 1989, p. C19.

Gussow, Mel, Review of *Driving Miss Daisy in New York Times*, April 16, 1987, p. C22.

Oliva, Judy Lee, "Alfred Uhry: Overview," in *Contemporary Dramatists*, 5th ed., edited by K. A. Berney, St. James Press, 1993.

Shewey, Don, "Ballyhoo and Daisy, Too" in *American Theatre*, Vol. 14, April, 1997, p. 24-27.

Uhry, Alfred, Preface to *Driving Miss Daisy*, Theatre Communications Group, 1986.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Drama 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 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:

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