Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth Study Guide

Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth by Tom Stoppard

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Introduction

Dogg's Hamlet and *Cahoot's Macbeth* are two one-act plays by Tom Stoppard, which are often performed together as *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*. First published together in England in 1979, the two plays were inspired by separate sources. *Dogg's Hamlet* is an expanded version of two earlier, similar plays. The play is based on a section of the philosophical investigations by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who explored how people use language to communicate. The play introduces an alternate language, called Dogg, which uses English words that have different meanings in Dogg. This inconsistency leads to confusion on the part of the play's characters, who try to communicate in their respective languages, English and Dogg. By the end of this first play, the English-speaking character, Easy, is speaking Dogg.

Cahoot's Macbeth, which is more political in nature, was dedicated to a Czechoslovakian playwright, Pavel Kohout. Because censorship in his country prevented public theatrical productions, Kohout wrote an abbreviated version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* which he performed in people's living rooms. Stoppard's play features a similar living-room theatre production of *Macbeth,* which gets broken up by an inspector, who threatens to arrest the actors and audience members for breaking the censorship rules. However, Easy, the English-speaking character from the first play, arrives and teaches the actors Dogg. When the inspector comes back a second time and catches them speaking entirely in Dogg, he cannot arrest them because he does not understand what they are saying. Both plays are united in their use of a common invented language, but they also explore how manipulations of language—a characteristic technique of Stoppard's drama—can be used in various political and nonpolitical ways. A current copy of *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* can be found in *The Real Inspector Hound and Other Plays*, which was published by Grove Press in 1998.

Author Biography

Stoppard was born as Tomas Straussler on July 3, 1937, in Zlin, Czechoslovakia. In 1939, just prior to the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia during World War II, the Strausslers, who had at least some Jewish heritage and feared persecution, fled the country to Singapore. In 1942, the playwright's mother moved the playwright and his brother to India to escape the Japanese. The playwright's father, a doctor, stayed behind in Singapore, where he was killed. Mrs. Straussler married Major Kenneth Stoppard in 1946, and the family moved to England, where the young Stoppard received a traditional preparatory education and became a naturalized English citizen.

In 1954, Stoppard began his career as a journalist in Bristol, England, writing for the *Western Daily Press,* where he stayed until 1958, when he began writing for the *Evening World* in Bristol. In 1962, Stoppard moved to London, where he wrote theater criticism, radio plays, and his first stage play, *A Walk on the Water*, which was shown on television in 1963. However, it was not until 1966's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* that Stoppard achieved his first critical and popular success. Although some of his next plays explored political issues, it was not until the late 1970s that Stoppard wrote four plays that are commonly referred to as his dissident comedies. Among these was 1979's *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, two one-act plays linked through their use of a common invented language.

Stoppard is regarded as one of the preeminent post-World War II dramatists, and, as such, his plays have received several awards from the dramatic community, including Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Awards for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1968), *Travesties* (1976), and *The Real Thing* (1984). In addition, Stoppard has been recognized by the film community for his screenwriting work. He was nominated (along with Terry Gilliam and Charles McKeown) for an Academy Award in 1985 for *Brazil*. In 1998, Stoppard received the Academy Award (along with Marc Norman) for best screenplay written directly for the screen, for *Shakespeare in Love*.

Stoppard continues to live and work in London, England, and his latest plays include *Arcadia* (1993), *Indian Ink* (1995), and *The Invention of Love* (1997).

Plot Summary

Dogg's Hamlet

Dogg's Hamlet begins on an empty stage when Baker, a schoolboy, says, "Here," asking another boy to throw him a football. However, since he says it in "Dogg," a language that uses English words with unconventional meanings, what he really says is "Brick." From this point on, most of the characters in *Dogg's Hamlet* speak Dogg, which, to anybody who does not know it, sounds like gibberish. For the reader, Stoppard initially provides translations from Dogg to English in brackets, but audience members have no such aid and must learn Dogg as the play goes on. Baker joins Abel on the stage, and together they test the microphone, which is dead. Charlie and Abel fight over the football, and Dogg, the headmaster, arrives and takes it from them, hitting Abel in the process.

They make idle conversation with Dogg, who tells them that a lorry, or truck, is about to arrive. Dogg leaves, and the three boys eat their lunches, then Abel and Baker start rehearsing their lines for *Hamlet,* the school play they are acting in later that day. The play is in English, and the boys say their lines tonelessly, as if they are speaking a foreign language they do not quite understand. The lorry-driver, Easy, arrives with the materials needed to build the stage for the school play. He speaks in English, and the boys are confused. Baker tries to communicate by reciting one of the English lines from *Hamlet,* but it does not work. Dogg enters, and Easy wishes him a good afternoon, which is an insult in Dogg. Dogg threatens Easy, who is now very confused. Dogg looks at Easy's construction plans and positions everybody to start building the stage. Dogg starts off the construction by calling out "Plank," a word that means "Ready." Easy notes that the boys throw Dogg a plank, the first item they need to start building the stage, and he thinks everybody is finally speaking English. Easy calls for two more planks, and they are thrown to him. Dogg leaves, and the next time Easy calls for a plank, a block is thrown instead.

Easy is confused and passes the block back. This happens several times; then Easy walks off-stage and hits Abel, thinking Abel is giving him a hard time. The language confusion continues as they build the stage, and the audience hears Easy hit Abel again. Charlie has a radio, which broadcasts sports scores in Dogg. Dogg comes by when the platform is finished, and looks at the wall that the boys have built. Easy stands admiring the wall, which is composed of lettered blocks that spell out the words, "MATHS OLD EGG," three seemingly harmless words. Dogg reads the words and knocks Easy through the wall, offended. The words the boys have spelled out are an insult, written in Dogg, although Easy does not know this. The boys rebuild the wall twice more, each time creating seemingly harmless words that are actually insults in Dogg. Each time, Dogg takes offense at the words and throws Easy into the wall, knocking it down, although Easy dutifully throws himself through the wall the last time.

Finally, the letters on the wall are arranged correctly, reading "Dogg's Hamlet." Easy introduces the play, speaking Dogg, and Dogg's fifteen-minute version of *Hamlet* begins, with the three boys acting their parts and several others acting the other standard parts of *Hamlet,* in this highly abbreviated version of the play. Although the play is shortened, the lines are still borrowed directly from Shakespeare's original play. At the conclusion of the play, the actors come out for an encore, in which they act out the play again using Shakespeare's lines, although this time the play is cut down even more, and the actors fly through the dialogue in only a couple of minutes. Easy thanks the audience, in Dogg, and walks out.

Cahoot's Macbeth

Cahoot's Macbeth takes place in a living room across town, although when the play starts, there is such little light on the stage that the audience does not know this. Unlike the previous play, this play starts out in English, with several actors acting out an abbreviated performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* As in the earlier play, the lines are borrowed directly from Shakespeare's play. At a certain point in the play, a police siren is heard in the background, followed by a knocking noise at the door. These disturbances are incorporated into the dialogue of the play. The hostess goes offstage and lets a police inspector in to what is now an empty living room. He is surprised to find that the hostess is hosting a play in the living room of her home and references the audience—the audience who is watching Stoppard's play. Landovsky, the actor playing Macbeth, comes back into the room. The actors and the inspector talk about how public acting has been censored, and the inspector takes a seat in the audience, intending to watch the rest of the *Macbeth* production. The actors are wary, however, because they do not want to be arrested by the inspector for breaking censorship laws, which forbid acting.

The inspector tells them that they had better continue their acting for his pleasure and that if he does not like it, he is going to arrest them. The nervous actors reluctantly finish acting out the interrupted scene from their abbreviated version of *Macbeth,* and the inspector is not impressed, saying that the police do not like Shakespeare. The inspector says that the police would rather have people say that there is no freedom outright, instead of acting it out in cryptic plays. One of the actors, Cahoot, a banned writer, suddenly falls to his hands and knees and acts like a dog. The inspector asks him to make a statement, and Cahoot speaks in Shakespearean language. The inspector tells him that he cannot get around the law by quoting verse at him, then lists the various freedom-fighting organizations he has persecuted. Cahoot growls, which Macbeth says is due to the fact that he has been made a non person.

The inspector leaves, telling everybody else to go as well. However, the actors resume their play as soon as he is gone. After the play has progressed somewhat, Easy, the lorry-driver from the first play, arrives on stage, speaking Dogg. The actors continue to speak their lines from *Macbeth,* while Easy appears at various places on and around the stage, trying to get their attention. Macbeth starts to incorporate these appearances into the play, as if Easy were a ghostly apparition. Finally, the hostess stops the

production so they can talk to Easy. In Dogg, he tries to tell them that he has a load of materials for them. He opens the shutters and shows them his truck, and they start to understand him. The actors resume their acting.

Once again, the inspector arrives. Easy tries to talk to him in Dogg, and the hostess explains that Easy does not understand English. Cahoot enters and starts to speak to Easy in Dogg. Cahoot tells the others that Easy only speaks Dogg, a language that is caught, not learned. Easy starts speaking Dogg to the other actors, who are picking up on the language. The hostess tells the inspector to leave the stage so they can perform the final act of *Macbeth,* and the inspector warns her that the place is bugged and that the recording will be used against the actors at their trial. The actors resume acting *Macbeth,* although now they say all of their lines in Dogg. The phone rings, and the inspector answers it. His partner outside says that they cannot understand the words on the recording. The inspector is flustered and gets more so as the actors continue acting in Dogg, while Easy and some of the actors build steps on the stage, talking in Dogg as they work. The inspector finally blows up and calls in other policemen, who use the building materials to start walling up the stage—hiding the actors from the audience. The phone rings, and Easy answers it. As he talks into the mouthpiece to somebody, his language slowly changes from Dogg back into English. His last line is completely in English, and he says that it has been a funny week but that he expects he will be back by Tuesday.

Dogg's Hamlet

Dogg's Hamlet Summary

Dogg's Hamlet is a one-act play written by Tom Stoppard. It is usually performed along with another one-act play, *Cahoot's Macbeth*.

Dogg's Hamlet begins with a game of catch between two schoolboys, Baker and Abel. All their conversation is in Dogg language, which consists of words that sound English, but which have completely different meanings. For example Abel tests a microphone by counting, using the words sun, dock, and trog, instead of one, two, and three. Another schoolboy, Charlie, enters the game of catch and is harassed by Abel, who taunts him by taking the football. They trade insults in Dogg language.

Then Mr. Dogg, the school headmaster, arrives on the scene. He is looking for a truck, which will deliver the lumber to build a platform. When Dogg learns the truck is not there yet, he leaves the scene.

The three boys sit down to eat lunch, speaking in Dogg language all the while. Suddenly, Abel and Baker begin to speak English, but only because they are rehearsing for their school play, *Hamlet*. English, to these boys, is a foreign language.

The delivery truck arrives, but its driver, Easy, only speaks English. He offends the headmaster, because a common English greeting is an insult in Dogg language. Finally, Easy pulls from his pocket a diagram of a platform, and Mr. Dogg understands that his lumber has arrived. He positions Easy and the boys in a line from the truck off-stage to the place on-stage where the platform will be built.

When Mr. Dogg says, "plank", which means "ready" in Dogg, the first piece of lumber is passed down the line. It happens to be a plank, so Easy thinks he has understood what is going on, and he calls out, "plank," several times. After the first few planks, though, lumber in the shape of blocks, cubes, and slabs come. Easy becomes comically confused.

As this crew builds its stage, the audience begins to see that some of the blocks in the back wall have letters on them. Easy has not noticed the letters, it seems, and builds a wall that says MATHS OLD EGG. When the schoolmaster, Mr. Dogg, sees this, he hits Easy and knocks him through the wall. When the wall is rebuilt, it says MEG SHOT GLAD. Mr. Dogg knocks Easy through the wall again.

As the wall is being rebuilt for the second time, a ceremony begins. A lady comes forward to make a speech that sounds foul in English, but is apparently a normal school speech in Dogg language. The lady helps Mr. Dogg award a number of school trophies, all of them to a student named Fox Major. Instead of carrying his trophies off the stage, he takes away the table they were sitting on.

Then Mrs. Dogg comes forward to announce that it is time for William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. As all three exit the stage, the lady is clearly shocked that the wall now reads GOD SLAG THEM. Mr. Dogg gives Easy a dirty look from a distance, and Easy obligingly hurls himself through the wall.

As they rebuild the wall one last time, Easy and the schoolboys take turns venting insults about Mr. Dogg. As they do so, some elements of Dogg language creeps into Easy's speech, so that by the time the wall is rebuilt to say DOGGS HAM LET, Easy is speaking fluent Dogg.

Easy now announces the play, which is a version of *Hamlet* condensed so that it is now more comical than a tragic. Mr. Dogg, Mrs. Dogg, and the students are the actors. Fox Major, as the best in everything at school, plays Hamlet. Charlie, the brunt of abuse before, must play the girl, Ophelia. Upon conclusion of the acting, there is an even more condensed encore. The actors take their curtain call, and Easy begins to take down the stage by carrying a cube away, while thanking the audience in Dogg language by saying, Cube.

Dogg's Hamlet Analysis

The setting of *Dogg's Hamlet* would seem to be universal, except that the driver, Easy, also makes a delivery in the next play, which takes place in Czechoslovakia under Communist rule. Viewed alone, however, *Dogg's Hamlet* could take place on the grounds of any boys' school. There's nothing unusual about a group of youngsters making up their own language. It is one way they gain an identity separate from those in power over them.

However, in this case, the adults connected to the school also speak only Dogg. This language, named after the school's headmaster, seems to be a metaphor for the fact that our educational institutions are an important force in shaping the meaning of words.

The wall, which is built, torn down, and rebuilt several times, is another metaphor. It is a symbol for language, which can either be a platform for ideas, a bridge between people, or a wall. When Easy breaks through the wall voluntarily, he then crosses over to being able to communicate in Dogg.

As the first of this pair of one-act plays, *Dogg's Hamlet* introduces the theme of language in a light-hearted way. The differences in meaning between English and Dogg have no serious consequences, just comic effects. It is as if Tom Stoppard is using this play to challenge the audience's linguistic assumptions in a fun and friendly way, before he revisits the theme in a more somber mood in the second play.

Cahoot's Macbeth

Cahoot's Macbeth Summary

In the living room of an artist's apartment in Communist-occupied Czechoslovakia, a group of actors is performing Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for their friends. The government outlaws public performances.

The apartment is bugged, and the performance of *Macbeth* triggers a visit from the Inspector. In the middle of the production, right after Macbeth tells his wife he has murdered the king, police sirens and car doors' slamming are heard outside the apartment. The knocking in the play coincides with the Inspector's knock at the door.

The Inspector begins to interrogate the hostess and cast and orders the audience not to leave. The hostess protests that this is her home, and the actors and audience are her guests. The Inspector sits down to watch the play, threatening arrest if the actors do not proceed, and so the play continues.

When Macbeth is crowned king, the Inspector interrupts with applause and pronounces a happy ending. He accuses the hostess of breaking the law by entertaining men in her apartment. When she points out that *Macbeth* is not what that law refers to, the Inspector asserts that whoever controls the expression of language also controls its meaning. The Inspector scoffs when the actor playing Macbeth appeals to him based on the law and the Constitution.

Then the actor playing Banquo steps out of character and is Cahoot, a writer who has been blacklisted by the government. When the Inspector invites him to make a statement, he merely quotes lines from the play, clearly charging the government with foul play. The Inspector leaves, but the play continues.

Macbeth has just met with two murderers to plan the slaying of Banquo, when the audience hears Easy's truck pull up and park outside. Easy enters the scene, asking in Dogg for someone who can sign for the delivery and help him unload the truck. The actors are confused, but continue with their play, as the hostess leads Easy off-stage.

Easy provides some comic relief by approaching the stage, unwittingly, as Banquo's ghost, until Macbeth finally breaks character to ask what is going on. Apparently, Easy has completely forgotten how to speak and understand English. He can echo the English, but he cannot speak it meaningfully. The hostess comes forward, and Easy gives her a phrase book for translation.

Just then, the Inspector returns to the apartment. Cahoot enters the room and is able to communicate with Easy in Dogg, so he signs for the wood that Easy is delivering. In just a few moments, everyone but the Inspector is speaking Dogg. The production of Macbeth continues in Dogg.

The Inspector becomes angry and wants to arrest everybody. He calls for his chief via the bugged ceiling, but then, when the chief phones him, the Inspector claims to have everything under control, even though *Macbeth* continues, and Easy and others are building a platform from the lumber.

Then, the Inspector joins the cast, makes a speech in Dogg and helps build the platform. *Macbeth* concludes. Easy closes the scene. Suddenly speaking in English, he promises to be back next Tuesday.

Cahoot's Macbeth Analysis

Cahoot's Macbeth is a more serious play on the themes of language, who controls its expression, and how it's meaning is manipulated. Tom Stoppard wrote this play in honor of Pavel Kohout, a Czechoslovakian who was banned from working as a playwright. As an act of resistance, Kohout formed the Living Room Theatre troupe. Because public performances were defined as acts against the government, the actors were officially waitresses, street-cleaners, or paperboys, but they acted secretly in friends' homes in the evening. In Czechoslovakia under Communist rule, Shakespeare's lines were especially loaded with meaning. *Macbeth*, in particular, became a metaphor for the communist takeover. Speaking the lines was an act of resistance against Communist rule.

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, the character of the Inspector represents the government. He twists or ignores the meaning of words to suit his own agenda. As a human being, he may enjoy a good play, but as a government official, he fears the free expression of thought through art, especially language. He especially disapproves of Shakespeare, who was more interested in speaking to the common audience than in pandering to the authorities.

While the theme of language is an obvious link between the two plays, the character Easy provides a link between the first play and this one. He also provides some comic relief. Easy brings a new language from the schoolboys to the actors. Just as schoolboys make up their own language to distance themselves from those in power, the artists quickly take hold of Dogg language as a means of subverting the aims of the government. Thus, they extract language back from the hand of their oppressors and reinstate language as a means for their free expression.

Characters

Abel

In *Dogg's Hamlet*, Abel is one of three schoolboys who helps set up the production of *Hamlet* and acts in it. Abel is the boy who receives the most abuse in the play. In the beginning, the headmaster, Dogg, catches Abel playing with a football while they are setting up for their play and hits him for goofing off. When Easy, the lorry-driver, arrives, Abel and the others do not understand Easy's English and respond to him in Dogg. As a result of this language confusion, Abel does not hand Easy the right building materials when they are constructing the platform on the stage, and Easy takes his frustration out on Abel by hitting him. In the *Hamlet* production, Abel and Baker play guards.

Baker

In *Dogg's Hamlet*, Baker is one of three schoolboys who helps set up the production of *Hamlet* and acts in it. With Abel's help, Baker helps set up the microphone on the stage. When the boys do not understand Easy's English, Baker tries to speak to Easy in Shakespearean English, borrowing one of the lines from their production of *Hamlet.* Baker and Charlie are the ones who initially build the letter-block wall on stage, spelling out insulting words in Dogg, which gets Easy in trouble. In the *Hamlet* production, Abel and Baker play guards.

Cahoot

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, Cahoot is a censored writer and the only one of the *Macbeth* actors who initially speaks Dogg. When the inspector confronts the actors, Cahoot, who has, up until that point, played Banquo in their production of *Macbeth,* now acts like he has turned into a dog. He barks at the inspector and then speaks to him in Shakespearean language, but the inspector tells him to talk straight. When Easy arrives speaking in Dogg, Cahoot is the only one who can translate. Although the play was dedicated to the censored writer, Pavel Kohout, Stoppard claims that Cahoot is not Kohout.

Charlie

In *Dogg's Hamlet*, Charlie is one of three schoolboys who helps set up the production of *Hamlet* and acts in it. Baker and Charlie are the ones who initially build the letter-block wall on stage, spelling out insulting words in Dogg, which gets Easy in trouble. In the *Hamlet* production, Charlie plays Ophelia and wears a dress over his shorts.

Dogg

In *Dogg's Hamlet*, Dogg is the school's headmaster, who oversees the setup for the school's play, *Dogg's Hamlet.* When Easy first meets Dogg, Easy wishes him good afternoon, which is an insult in Dogg, the language named after the headmaster. As the play progresses, Easy inadvertently gets on the bad side of Dogg several more times when Baker and Charlie create a wall of letter-blocks, which spell out insults in Dogg. However, Easy does not realize these words, which are harmless in English, are insults. As a result, he is very surprised when Dogg repeatedly throws Easy into the wall, knocking it down and prompting the students to use the letter blocks to create new insults. In the *Hamlet* production, Dogg speaks the prologue. *Dogg's Hamlet* is dedicated to Ed Berman and Inter-Action Productions, a play group that performed many of Stoppard's plays. In the play, Berman is represented by Dogg.

Easy

The lorry-driver, Easy, is the only character who is present in both *Dogg's Hamlet* and *Cahoot's Macbeth*. In the former play, Easy, who works for Buxton's Deliveries, delivers a load of building materials to the school where the headmaster, Dogg, and three of his students, Abel, Charlie, and Baker, are getting ready to put on a play. Easy tries to speak to them in English, but they only speak Dogg, so he becomes very confused. Dogg sets them all to work building a platform on the stage. Easy gives instructions in English, which the schoolboys take for their Dogg equivalent, so Easy gets very confused when the building does not go the way he has planned. In addition, the schoolboys play a prank, rearranging the letter blocks of the play's title to say insulting things in Dogg—which happen to be normal, non-insulting words in English—and Dogg blames Easy for the insults. By the end of the first play, Easy has started to pick up on Dogg.

By the time Easy arrives at the living-room theater in *Cahoot's Macbeth*, he can only speak in Dogg and can no longer understand English. Unfortunately, most of the actors who are performing their illegal production of *Macbeth* can only understand English, so Easy is once again confused, although this time the situation is reversed. Easy finally makes them understand that he has brought building materials for their stage. At the same time, the inspector—who has come to shut down the production of *Macbeth* and arrest the actors and audience—gets very confused when he hears Easy speak in Dogg. When one of the other actors, Cahoot, comes in and sees Easy, he begins speaking to him in Dogg and explains to the other actors that this is what he is doing. Although the inspector does not catch on to Dogg language, the rest of the actors do, and for the rest of the play, they perform *Macbeth* completely in Dogg, while Easy and some of the actors build steps in the background. At the end of the play, Easy answers the phone and talks to the person on the other end, slowly switching back to talking in English.

The Hostess

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, the hostess owns the private residence where the actors are staging their abbreviated production of *Macbeth.* The hostess refers to members of her audience—which is actually Stoppard's audience—and tries to convince the inspector that the audience members are all personal friends of hers. In this way, she hopes to avoid being arrested. However, the inspector warns her that she is still liable for the acting, which is against censorship rules. When Easy arrives speaking Dogg, she thinks he might be crazy, although, like the other actors, she soon picks up the language.

The Inspector

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, the inspector is the policeman who has been staking out the hostess's home and who tries unsuccessfully to arrest the actors. When the inspector first arrives, he is light-hearted, referencing the odd jobs the actors have worked—such as working in newspaper kiosks—where he has admired their "acting." For the inspector and the police force, selling newspapers and working other non-acting jobs is the only form of artistic expression allowed. The inspector talks about the censorship that prevents the actors from acting. However, he still insists on seeing the actors perform their play and threatens them with legal action if they do not act for him.

However, at the end of the scene, the inspector says that he and the police do not like Shakespeare because his language is covert. Instead, they prefer a straightforward protest. He leaves, telling them they had better stop the play or he will arrest them. While he is gone, the actors resume their play, and Easy arrives speaking Dogg. The inspector comes back amidst all of this confusion, and lets them know he is recording everything that is being said, to use against them in court. The actors, who at this point have picked up Dogg, perform the rest of the play in Dogg, and the inspector is unable to arrest them as a result. In retaliation, the inspector uses Easy's building materials to construct a wall across the stage, cutting off the actors from the audience as the actors complete their production of *Macbeth.*

Landovsky

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, Landovsky is the actor who plays Macbeth. Landovsky is Pavel Landovsky, the actual Czechoslovakian actor who was banned from acting in public. The inspector has seen and enjoyed Landovsky's other "performances" in the odd jobs that the actor has been forced to take in place of acting.

Themes

Communication

Communication is the central theme of *Dogg's Hamlet*, and it provides a means for connecting this play to *Cahoot's Macbeth*. When the play begins, the schoolboys speak, using English words such as "Brick!" and "Cube," but they use them in ways that are unconventional for the presumably English speaking audience. For example, when Abel tests the microphone, he says, "Breakfast, breakfast . . . sun—dock—trog . . . ," a phrase that, in English, means "Testing, testing . . . one—two—three. . ." For Stoppard's readers, he includes translations in brackets, converting these Dogg words into English. Stoppard's audience, however, does not receive these translations and so must pick up the meaning in context.

This is also true for the character Easy, who becomes a representative for the audience. When Easy first arrives at the school to deliver building supplies and to help construct a platform for the stage, he only knows how to communicate in English. Like the audience members, who are also confused at first, Easy tries to understand what the schoolboys and Dogg, the headmaster, are saying. The schoolboys, who only understand Dogg, are equally as confused at the English. However, they have experienced at least one form of English—the Elizabethan English found in Shakespeare's plays—when practicing for their abbreviated version of *Hamlet.* Because of this, Baker tries to communicate with Easy at one point by quoting a line from Shakespeare: "By heaven I charge thee speak!" When they start building the platform, Easy is relieved to find that the schoolboys are using words in a context that he can understand—or so he thinks. When Dogg calls out "Plank!" a word that means "Ready" in Dogg, Easy notices that Abel throws in a plank from the truck. When Dogg leaves and has Easy take over, he then naturally starts to call out the names of the building materials he needs—in English—and so is frustrated and surprised when he does not always receive what he asks for.

However, by the end of *Dogg's Hamlet*, Easy has picked up on Dogg and no longer speaks English, as he demonstrates when he says, "Cube . . ." ("Thank You") to the audience and walks off. However, even at this point, Stoppard tricks the audience somewhat, because he has Easy say "Cube" while he is holding a cube, so the audience is left to wonder if he is speaking Dogg or English.

Censorship

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, the ability to communicate in Dogg eventually becomes a tool for fighting censorship. The play is set in a woman's living room—a supposedly nonpublic location where the actors can perform their plays, without having to worry about being arrested. However, while the actors are performing their abbreviated version of *Macbeth,* a police inspector arrives and looks for reasons to arrest the actors and hostess. He walks around the room, saying, "Testing, testing—one, two, three . . . ,"

which is, as Stoppard notes in the stage directions, an obvious sign that "*the room is bugged for sound.*" Stoppard provides other clues that the inspector is trying to set up an ambush, as when he talks to the ceiling, giving the phone number of the apartment to his partner who is recording the conversation: "Six seven eight one double one." Shortly after this, the phone rings, and the inspector answers it, acting like he does not know who it is: "Six seven eight one double one? Clear as a bell." This is an obvious test to see if the phone works so the inspector can communicate to his other officers outside, if necessary.

While the inspector acts like he is trying to hide his ambush at the beginning, as the play progresses, he becomes increasingly more vocal about the fact that he is there to arrest them for breaking the censorship rules, although he is willing to be lenient at first: "I don't want to spend all day taking statements. It's frankly not worth the candle for three years' maximum and I know you've been having a run of bad luck all round." At this point, the inspector gives a laundry list of ways that artists have been persecuted: "jobs lost, children failing exams, letters undelivered, driving licenses withdrawn, passports indefinitely postponed—and nothing on paper."

Subversion

Later on in the same long speech about censorship, the inspector says that the police do not like Shakespeare's plays, which can have hidden meanings and be used as a protest—in the same way that Stoppard is using *this* play as a protest. Says the inspector: "The chief says he'd rather you stood up and said, 'There is no freedom in this country,' then there's nothing underhand and we all know where we stand." However, later, the inspector lets them know what happens to people who speak out: "I arrested the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Persecuted for saying I unjustly persecuted the Committee for Free Expression, which I arrested for saying there wasn't any."

In the end, the actors are able to use subversive methods—the same type of subversion for which the inspector wants to arrest them—to defeat the inspector. When Easy, from the first play, arrives, he can at this point only understand Dogg, which he uses to tell them that he is delivering building materials. Says Easy, "Useless . . . useless . . . Buxtons cake hops . . . artichoke almost Leamington Spa . . ." The translation in English—"Afternoon . . . afternoon . . . Buxtons blocks and that . . . lorry from Leamington Spa"—is lost on most of the actors, who do not know how to speak Dogg. However, when Cahoot, one of the actors, comes in and hears Easy speaking in Dogg, he explains this fact to everybody, including the inspector. Pretty soon, all of the actors are speaking in Dogg, and even though the inspector knows that this is being used as a subversive language, he cannot do much about it. He and his officers are unable to understand Dogg. Says the inspector into the phone to the man recording the actors' language: "How the hell do I know? But if it's not free expression, I don't know what is!" In the end, the inspector cannot prosecute the actors for speaking what sounds like gibberish.

Dogg is offended, and "*grabs EASY by the lapels in a threatening manner.*" Easy is confused at this behavior and only gets more confused when, later in the play, Dogg looks over the wall that Baker and Abel have built from letter blocks. The letters spell out "MATHS OLD EGG," which Easy thinks is harmless enough. However, Dogg's violent reaction—which he repeats—indicates that these harmless English words are actually insulting in Dogg:

EASY *looks at the wall.* EASY
looks at Dogg. EASY *smiles.* DOGG *slaps* EASY *lightly on the cheek.*
EASY *opens his mouth to protest.* DOGG *cuffs him*
heavily on the other cheek and knocks EASY *through*
the wall which disintegrates.

Humor

As demonstrated above, Stoppard places his characters in situations where their lack of understanding of each other's language leads to humorous effects. He repeats this pattern throughout *Dogg's Hamlet*. Humor is expressed in other ways in the first play, namely in the abbreviated version of *Hamlet,* the play within the play. Although these plays use lines that are taken verbatim from Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* the normally tragic play itself is abbreviated, and it is acted by people who do not speak the language, so the normally tragic performance becomes humorous. For example, when Baker and Abel—who play guards in the play—are practicing their lines, Stoppard notes in the stage directions that "*They are not acting these lines at all, merely uttering them, tonelessly.*" In addition, since the *Hamlet* scene is speeded up, it leads to some comic effects. Abel says, "'Tis there. (*Pointing stage left*)," while Baker says, "'Tis there. (*Pointing stage right, their arms crossing awkwardly*)." This technique achieves its maximum effect during the encore, when the already condensed version of *Hamlet* is condensed even more, and the entire play takes place in only a few minutes. At this speed, the play becomes even funnier, because it no longer has any context and becomes merely a disembodied set of tragic quotes and events: "GERTRUDE: I am poisoned! (*Dies*) / LAERTES: Hamlet, thou art slain! (*Dies*) / HAMLET: Then venom to thy work!

.. . *Kills* CLAUDIUS."

In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, the humor is expressed in different ways, most notably in the dialogue of the inspector, who unintentionally says humorous things when he misunderstands the other characters.

Style

Language

Stoppard's obvious technique in both plays is his manipulation of language, something for which he is known. In this play, however, he creates an entirely new language, Dogg. Although at first it seems like the language is random, as Stoppard shows through his characters' interactions, he has chosen many of his words very carefully. For example, in some cases, harmless English words translate into insults or inappropriate slang in Dogg. In *Dogg's Hamlet*, Easy tries to say "Afternoon, squire" to Dogg, the supervisor on the job. However, as Stoppard notes in the translation brackets: "[This means in Dogg, *Get stuffed, you b——.]"

When the inspector asks Cahoot if he would like to make a statement, Cahoot quotes a line from Shakespeare's *Macbeth:* "Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all / As the weird sisters promised." The inspector, responding to the "weird sisters" part, says, "Kindly leave my wife's family out of this." In another instance, the inspector blows up at the actors, telling them they had better act for him. Right after this, "(*He goes back to his seat and says genially to audience*) / So sorry to interrupt."

Juxtaposition

Stoppard's two plays are filled with juxtapositions, starting with the structure. The first play is an instructional play, which teaches Easy and the audience how to understand the second play, a political play. Likewise, Stoppard's plays follow the style of prose dialogue found in most modern dramas, but this is juxtaposed next to the highly elevated Shakespearean language in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth,* which are both in verse. In addition, as noted above, Dogg language is juxtaposed next to English. Their differences and the miscommunications that these differences inspire lead to much of the humor in the first play.

Historical Context

Czechoslovakia Under Communist Rule

Following the death of Soviet communist dictator Josef Stalin in 1953, many European communist countries like Hungary and Poland breathed a sigh of relief and set about undoing the damage that the Soviet leader had caused during his reign of terror. Unfortunately, in Czechoslovakia, following the death of President Antonín Zápotocký, Antonín Novotný, a devoted Stalinist, became president in 1957. For the next decade, the Czech economy steadily declined, and political protests—often in the form of subversive plays—increased, in spite of censorship efforts.

Alexander Dubcek and Prague Spring

In January 1968, Novotný resigned from office and was replaced by Alexander Dubcek, a liberal communist leader who offered Czech citizens hope for a better life. Dubcek introduced widespread reforms in the communist system, opened lines of communication and trade with the West, encouraged complaints and suggestions from Czech citizens, and ended censorship in the arts. The resulting liberalization of Czechoslovakia was referred to by many as "Prague Spring," symbolizing the birth of a new way of life.

However, Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader in the Kremlin who had chosen Dubcek to rule Czechoslovakia—still technically a satellite Soviet country—was nervous about these reforms. Brezhnev feared that other satellite countries under Soviet rule would also try to liberate themselves and might rebel against the Soviet Union. In May 1968, Ludvík Vaculík, a Czech writer, published *The 2,000 Words,* a manifesto that denounced the Communist Party for its past behavior and current corruption. Brezhnev ordered Dubcek to condemn the manifesto, but Dubcek refused and assumed that Brezhnev would drop the issue.

Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia

On August 21, 1968, Prague Spring ended when troops from the Soviet Union and its allies invaded Czechoslovakia in warplanes and tanks, killing and wounding hundreds of citizens, who tried to fight back with everything from guns to sticks. Dubcek was arrested and dragged to Moscow in handcuffs. When he was returned to Czechoslovakia after a few days, his liberal spirit was defeated, and he no longer tried to institute any reforms. Dubcek was soon replaced by Gustav Husák, and Czechoslovakian citizens lost their freedom once again.

Censorship and the Artistic Resistance

Following the Soviet invasion, censorship was instituted once more. Some artists, like playwright, Václav Havel—whose plays had savagely criticized the communist system during the 1960s—were forbidden to publish or perform their works. In his 1997 book, *The Czech Republic,* Steven Otfinofski wrote: "Overnight, Czechoslovakia's most prominent playwright was a non-person." In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, Stoppard symbolizes this by having the writer, Cahoot, suddenly start acting like a dog. The inspector asks Macbeth (played by real-life actor Pavel Landovsky, another banned artist): "What is the matter with him?" Macbeth replies: "He's been made a non-person." Throughout the 1970s, Václev Havel—a playwright—and other dissidents were routinely arrested for their subversive efforts. In 1977, Havel, Landovsky, Pavel Kohout and other artists formed Charter 77, a human rights organization that opposed communism. Havel—who would eventually become the first president of the Czech Republic in the 1980s—was sentenced in 1979 to several years of hard labor as the result of his subversive efforts.

However, he also stated that the plays lack substance: "The Master Juggler has left us nothing to do but laugh, and that is a welcome but insufficient activity." In a 1980 review in the *Theatre Journal,* however, Gerlad M. Berkowitz found little fault with the two plays, calling the first "a delightful curtain-raiser" and commenting that the second demonstrates that "an artist's imagination is itself his greatest weapon against tyranny."

Critics have generally commented on the language of the plays. Wrote Felicia Hardison Londré in her 1993 entry on Stoppard for *Contemporary Dramatists:* "Stoppard makes fun of the arbitrariness of language by having some of his characters speak Dogg's language, which is composed of English words used to mean different things." On a similar note, in her 1993 essay, "Stoppard's Theatre of Unknowing," Mary A. Doll noted that the two plays juxtapose "traditional theatre with its expectations of top-down authority and elevated blank verse alongside post-Absurdist theatre with its confusion in rank ordering and idiomatic speech." In other words, Shakespeare, traditional theater that is considered high-brow for its formal conventions, is in this set of plays performed alongside more modern theater—which does not always adhere to these traditional artistic conventions.

When discussing *Cahoot's Macbeth*, most critics have noted Stoppard's obvious political commentary. Stated Benedict Nightingale, in his 1979 review for the *New Statesman, Cahoot's Macbeth* is "fresh evidence that its author is becoming a sort of one-man Amnesty International, with a special interest in his native Czechoslovakia." Still, as in other mixed reviews, Nightingale noted that the play degrades into a sort of "nuthouse lingo." Similarly, in her 1999 chapter on Stoppard's minor stage plays in *Twayne's English Authors Series Online,* Susan Rusinko noted that in both plays "plot mechanisms and ideas vie equally with each other for audience attention, sometimes distractingly."

Critical Overview

Stoppard's quirky *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* has an even more quirky creation history. The play began as a one-act play, entitled *Dogg's Our Pet*, which was performed in 1971 in London. In 1976, Stoppard wrote a different play, *The 15 Minute Dogg's Troupe Hamlet*. In 1979, this play was combined with *Dogg's Our Pet*, and the two plays were revised to create *Dogg's Hamlet*. In the same year, *Dogg's Hamlet* was combined with *Cahoot's Macbeth*, and the two have usually been performed together ever since.

Critical reaction to this set of plays has generally been mixed. In 1979, Brendan Gill noted in the *New Yorker* that Stoppard is an "ingenious author" and that the audience is "amused and instructed."

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses the inspector's inability to learn Dogg in Stoppard's play.

In *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, most of the characters who do not speak Dogg at the beginning have picked it up by the end, just by listening to others speak it. This mirrors the audience's experience as they learn Dogg along with the characters. However, there is one major character who does not understand Dogg—the inspector. In her 1999 chapter on Stoppard's political plays in *Twayne's English Authors Series Online,* Susan Rusinko noted of the inspector that "Without realizing it he has picked up some Dogg, thus illustrating the . . . earlier comment that one doesn't learn Dogg, but only catches it." Why is the inspector able to catch the Dogg language enough to repeat it but not understand it? Two of the inspector's characteristics prevent him from being able to ultimately understand Dogg—his confusion over how his own language works and his desire for normalcy.

When the inspector arrives at the hostess's apartment partway through *Cahoot's Macbeth*, it is instantly apparent that he is a little confused, as Stoppard notes in the stage directions: "*He seems surprised to find himself where he is.*" The inspector asks if he is at one of two different theaters and is

surprised when he finds out it is neither theater. Says the inspector, "I'm utterly nonplussed. I must have got my wires crossed somewhere." As the play continues, the audience gets a view of how utterly confused this individual is. In fact, it is ironic that at one point in the play, the inspector, threatening the hostess with potential legal action, tells her that "Words can be your friend or your enemy, depending on who's throwing the book, so watch your language." In *Cahoot's Macbeth*, words become the friend of the actors and the enemy of the inspector.

The inspector is a likely target to dupe through the use of words, because he does not have a good command of English as it is. He is constantly offering contradictory words or phrases in the same sentence and, on certain occasions, seems to search for the meaning even as he says them. For example, after the inspector has started examining the audience, he warns the hostess that "If there isn't a catch I'll put you up as a heroine of the revolution. I mean, the counter-revolution. No, I tell a lie, I mean the normalization—Yes, I know." Revolution and counter-revolution are contradictory terms, and normalization is another word for the type of censorship that Czechoslovakia imposed on its citizens in the 1970s. So, he could not very well arrest the hostess for being a heroine of the conformity that he is trying to enforce. In statements like these, the inspector shows himself to be something of a confused person when it comes to using and understanding words. Another example is when he congratulates one of the actors on the performance, saying, "Stunning! Incredible! Absolutely fair to middling." The first two are legitimate compliments, while the last statement can be viewed as an insult and definitely does not belong with the other two.

Still, it seems as if the inspector tries to flaunt his linguistic knowledge—or lack thereof. He often mixes foreign language fragments in with his statements, and they do not always make sense or belong in the sentence. For example, after he says that his initial assessment of *Macbeth* is good, he soon says that he was lying, because he is following the creed "when in Rome *parlezvous* as the natives do." This statement mixes Rome as a location, the French phrase *parlez vous,* and the word "natives," which implies Native Americans or some other form of tribal culture. In another instance, at the end of the play, after he gives a cue to Roger, the man running the tape recorder, the inspector is ready to try to arrest everybody. At this point he incorporates a couple of foreign languages along with English: "Right—that's it (*To ceiling.*) Roger! (*To the audience.*) Put your hands on your heads. Put your—placay manos—per capita . . . nix toiletto!" He also speaks in accents, such as when he hears a Scottish line from the Macbeth play and tries to mimic it: "Och aye, it's a braw bricht moonlicht nicked, and so are you, you haggis-headed dumbwits, hoots mon ye must think I was born yesterday."

In addition to creating strange foreign language concoctions, the inspector tends to mix his metaphors and other sayings. In one threat, he warns, "I'm the cream in your coffee, the sugar in your tank, and the breeze blowing down your neck." The first description is a positive one, whereas "sugar in your tank"—if Stoppard means it to refer to the prank of pouring sugar into someone's gas tank to incapacitate it—is definitely less pleasant than the first. And a "breeze blowing down your neck" is a neutral statement that is not inherently good or bad. The best example of the inspector mixing up his metaphors happens when he is discussing why artists are being censored:

> A few years ago, you suddenly had it on toast, but when they gave you an inch you overplayed your hand and rocked the boat so they pulled the rug out from under you, and now you're in the doghouse . . . I mean, that is pure fact. Metaphorically speaking. It describes what happened to you in a way that anybody can understand.

By the end of the play, the inspector is speaking Dogg, but he does not know it. Unwittingly, he gives a long speech in Dogg: "Scabs! Stinking slobs—crooks. You're nicked, Jock. Punks make me puke. Kick back, I'll break necks, smack chops, put yobs in padlocks and fix facts. Clamp down on poncy gits like a ton of bricks." The English words that the inspector uses all have a heated tone to them and sound like a threat. However, in Dogg, apparently the inspector has made a great speech, because everybody responds favorably to it, clapping and showing their praise.

In addition to not understanding the rules of his own language, which is often the precursor to effectively learning a new language, the inspector also has a lack of open-mindedness to anything that is not normal. When he first arrives, the inspector gives his view of artists. He tells the hostess: "I can see you're not at the bottom of the social heap. What do you do?" When the hostess tells him, "I'm an artist," the inspector notes: "Well it's not the first time I've been wrong." In other words, he sees artists as being at

the bottom of the social heap. When it comes to art, the inspector is only able to see and approve of art that adheres to the censorship laws, which is not art in the conventional sense. The inspector tells Landovsky (who plays Macbeth in the play) that he is a big fan of his, but Landovsky says he has not worked for years, meaning that the censorship laws have kept him from acting.

However, the inspector persists and asks him where he was the previous year. Landovsky says, "I was selling papers in—" Here, the inspector excitedly finishes Landovsky's sentence: "—the newspaper kiosk at the tram terminus, and you were wonderful! I said to my wife, that's Landovsky—the actor—isn't he great?" To the inspector, high art is the mundane task of selling newspapers and watching great acting is observing Landovsky saying "Getcha paper!" at his job. In fact, when faced with normal acting, the inspector does not always understand it. For example, after watching a part of *Macbeth,* a tragedy, he says, "Very good. Very good! And so nice to have a play with a happy ending for a change."

The inspector is so against uniqueness that he considers his barely educated coworkers a potential threat: "Yes, one of them can read and the other one can write. That's why we have to go around in threes—I have to keep an eye on those bloody intellectuals." The inspector prefers the normalization that Czechoslovakia is under, which keeps everybody at a certain intelligence level and discourages freedom of thought. When somebody asks him about their rights in the Constitution, he says: "Personally I can't read that stuff. Nobody talks like that so it's not reasonable to expect them to live like it." Even the Constitution falls outside the normalization that the inspector adheres to.

In the end, this dependency on normalcy, coupled with the inspector's inability to master the English language, prevents the inspector from understanding Dogg, an abnormal language. As a result, the very thing that terrifies him—freedom of expression—is performed right in front of him, and he is not able to do anything about it except try to wall off the stage so that the audience cannot see the show anymore.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Sammells explores the "spontaneous" language of dissent utilized by Stoppard in Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth.

In *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, however, Stoppard returns to the formal exuberance of the earlier stage plays. In the first half of the play, by staging a language-game from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations,* Stoppard attempts to teach a new language to the audience. This element of engagement is heightened in the second half when the bizarre proceedings (which have included crude slapstick and the staging of a ravaged Shakespearean text) are suddenly transposed into a new and menacing context. Philosophical parlour-game and mildly diverting stage-business are given a critically new aspect. *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* evinces, in this sense, the same intention as *Travesties;* both show Stoppard's desire to ambush his audience's assumptions about the kind of play they are watching.

The opening section (a conflation of two plays previously written for Ed Berman's Inter-Action Group, *The Fifteen Minute Hamlet* and *Dogg's Our Pet*) is a demonstration of the central tenet of *Philosophical Investigations*—that language is not a calculus logically inferred from the grid-pattern of reality but a form of life, a communal activity capable of change and growth. Indeed, the play shows Stoppard's discovery in *Philosophical Investigations* of ideas and tools which meet his needs as a dramatist, as well as some which deny them. First, the form of language analysis that is practised and recommended in *Philosophical Investigations* is an advance from that of *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus.*

Language is no longer to be analysed back, through a hierarchy of forms, to the reality it transposes. Language is now itself the primal reality; because it has no external support language is not reduced in analysis but laid bare. Analysis displays the manifold language-forms which have become so entwined and knotted that the whole has acquired a prodigious internal strength. Meaning, for the later Wittgenstein, is defined not by an appeal beyond language: it is identified quite squarely with use. Language is a public activity and understanding is defined accordingly as the applicational knowledge of certain operative conventions. Wittgenstein insists, as a consequence, that language can never be private, that it exists solely by virtue of its public presence. Such conclusions would appear to deny the strivings of the spiritual loner or dissident in their attempt to make language susceptible to private initiative: private intention and conviction are ever smothered by the public form of language.

There are, however, other implications to *Philosophical Investigations.* Wittgenstein claims that no discourse is inherently 'realistic' in the sense of being a simple transposition of a state of affairs beyond it. Indeed, freed from any obligation to exterior supports, language becomes alive, capable of change. *Philosophical Investigations* is full of reminders of this obvious fact about language—that it is a continual process of renewal and formation. There are, Wittgenstein tells us, *countless* different kinds of sentences, and 'this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types

of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten.' Pursuing this analogy between language-forms and the games we play he points to the case where we make up the rules as we go along, and 'there is even one where we can alter them—as we go along.'

Wittgenstein's insistence that no single language-form, or collection of rules, is guaranteed by external support parallels Stoppard's that language can be appropriated as a means of criticism. The possibility of dissent as a way of life with its own language—making up the rules, perhaps, as it goes along—becomes real. From this angle Wittgenstein's declaration of the impossibility of a private language looks rather different. When he says this he means that no language is necessarily *unteachable,* that no language is learnt simply by a process of introspection matched with ostensive definition. The language of dissent must, then, be a group activity: a form of life and a means of expression capable of being learned by others. (Just, in fact, as it is learnt by Anderson.) Language as dissent can be caught, learnt in a flash: 'And this is just what we say we do. That is to say: we sometimes describe what we do in these words. But there is nothing astonishing, nothing queer, about what happens.' *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* is about learning in a flash, about spontaneous dissent and the fitting of words to the requirements of a form of life.

The second half of the play presents us with the attempts of a group of dissident actors to perform a truncated version of *Macbeth* which, for the assembled audience, in portraying a brutal and illegal seizure of power, is a reflection of what has happened in Czechoslovakia. For the dissidents the crowning of Malcolm is both an assertion of hope and an affirmation of faith in the efficacy of criticism. The proceedings are constantly interrupted by the Inspector (a sinister development of Stoppard's earlier comic detectives, owing much to Orton's Truscott) who attempts to appropriate both the text and the performance by ending it at the crowning of Macbeth and lauding it with his ominous banalities: 'Very good. Very good! And so nice to have a play with a happy ending for a change.' Stoppard's audience have already picked up some Dogg-language before the interval as they follow the attempts of the lorry-driver, Easy, to make sense of the strange world he has wandered into. In the end, Easy learns Dogg for the specific purpose of abusing the authoritarian headmaster of the boys' school. His entrance in the second half, as he blunders into the action and confuses himself with Banquo's ghost, gives the troupe the chance to use Dogg to finish their performance of *Macbeth* in spite of the Inspector's intrusive presence.

The Inspector is a further demonstration of Stoppard's abiding claim that politically repressive systems are linguistically repressive also. The problem for the actors is that, like the jumpers, he can do with language what he will. 'I've got the penal code tattooed on my whistle,' he assures Landovsky, 'and there's a lot about you in it. Section 98, subversion—anyone acting out of hostility to the state. . .Section 100, incitement, anyone acting out of hostility to the state. . .I could nick you just for acting—and the sentence is double for an organized group, which I can make stick on Robinson Crusoe and his man any day of the week'. The pun, for the Inspector, is an offensive tactic, a means of making us listen in a certain way: 'You know as well as I do that this performance of yours goes right against the spirit of normalization. When you clean out

the stables, Cahoot, the muck is supposed to go into the gutter, not find its way back into the stalls'. 'Words,' he announces, happily, 'can be your friend or your enemy, depending on who's throwing the book, so watch your language.'

However, the inventiveness of the Inspector is matched, indeed surpassed, by that of the dissidents. Cahoot (who has earlier howled on all-fours and been accused by the Inspector of being in the 'doghouse') starts to abuse him, reminding the audience that 'Afternoon, squire,' means, in Dogg, 'Get stuffed, you bastard.' The Inspector asks where Easy learnt Dogg: 'You don't learn it,' replies Cahoot, 'you catch it'. This riposte is a triumphant reapplication of the formulaic identification of disease with dissent which is at the centre of *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, and evidence of Stoppard's appropriation of Wittgenstein's claim that we can learn in a flash. (Compare the Inspector's 'She's making it up as she goes along' when 'Lady Macbeth' starts to translate Shakespeare into Dogg, which is a similar reflection on Wittgenstein—this time on his remarks about the way we evolve rules for new language-games.) The performance of *Macbeth,* and that of Stoppard's own play, now speed to a climax. Dogg becomes a means of repelling the Inspector (his announcement that anything they say will be taken down and played back at the trial meets with the response, 'Bicycles! Plank!' and of completing *Macbeth* before he realises what is happening. He is at a complete loss as language is wrested from his control. In fact, it is now the Inspector who appears to be spouting nonsense: 'Wilco zebra over,' he bellows into his walkie-talkie, 'Green Charlie Angels 15 out'. By teaching his audience Dogg-language Stoppard has implicated them in an act of collective and effective dissent, completing the train of development which successively diminishes the isolation of his characters who criticise the premises and procedures of the Communist state.

In *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, the jokes, claimed Michael Billington in reviewing the first production, 'are too relentless and by the end the fun has become diagrammatic rather than, in any sense, spontaneous.' The remark reminds us of Stoppard's own praise of Muriel Spark in *Scene,* his claim that, at its best, her work does not so much promulgate a thesis as toy with it, and have fun with it. Although the emphasis on spontaneity is something of a red herring (we have seen how the 'playfulness' of Stoppard's drama is deliberate and pointed rather than simply high-spirited and diverting) Billington has located a problem with *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*. The play protests too much: the slapstick and hectic confusion of the finale are the work of the guilty conscience, abashed by its own earnestness. In *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, Professional Foul* and *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* Stoppard is on the attack against the iniquities of Communist governments in general, and that of Czechoslovakia in particular. Between the two latter, however, comes *Night and Day* and here, as in *The Real Thing*, his most recent stage play, he is on the defensive: both plays attempt to promulgate a thesis, mounting apologies for the political status quo in Britain. An examination of certain contradictions and confusions in Stoppard's thinking on the relationship of politics and art (and that of drama to the problems it addresses) will prepare the way for an understanding of how *Night and Day* and *The Real Thing* betray his distinctive gifts as a dramatist and how, in the name of freedom, they seek to deny to their audience the possibility of dissent.

Source: Neil Sammells, "The Dissidents," in *Tom Stoppard: The Artist as Critic,* Macmillan Press, 1988, pp. 111-22.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay excerpt, Billington examines the truncation of Shakespeare and the word games found in Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth.

At the same time as *Night and Day* was running at the Phoenix and *Undiscovered Country* at the Olivier (both plays deriving from mainstream European naturalism), Stoppard also had performed in London two linked one-act plays, *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* that were anti-naturalistic in style and cerebral. They brought together several of Stoppard's prime concerns: Shakespeare, Wittgenstein, language-games, and the heavy-handed persecution of artists (and many others) in Czechoslovakia. *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* were written for BARC: the British American Repertory Company which was devised by Ed Berman as a means of allowing non-star actors to function on either side of the Atlantic. It was a useful, if short-lived, idea. And it encouraged Stoppard to conceive an entertainment that was playful and serious at the same time, but, one is bound to say, nowhere near as successful as a naturalistic masterpiece like *Professional Foul* in plunging our noses into the Czech situation or achieving what Benedict Nightingale called a 'committed hilarity'.

Dogg's Hamlet (an extension of the earlier *Dogg's Our Pet*) was based partly on Wittgenstein's notion of language as an assemblage of games as various in their nature as hopscotch, polo and chess. Stoppard himself says, 'The appeal to me consisted in the possibility of writing a play which had to teach the audience the language the play was written in.' So we see a group of schoolboys, with names like Able, Baker, Charlie, erecting a platform for a prize-giving and speaking a nonsenselingo (Dogg) in which words often have the opposite meaning from their familiar associations. Thus when a schoolboy says to his headmaster 'Cretinous pig-faced git?' he is actually enquiring 'Have you got the time please, sir?' What complicates the situation is that the boys are also rehearsing the school play and lapse into Shakespearian English and that a lorry-driver, Easy, arrives with a load of blocks from Leamington Spa and also speaks received English. When he cries matily to the headmaster, 'Afternoon, Squire' he doesn't realise that translates in Dogg as 'Get stuffed, you bastard.' And when the headmaster says to him 'Moronic creep' his natural instinct is to grab him by the lapels not realising he is referring to the maroon carpet. Stoppard's point is perfectly clear: that language is an arbitrary means of signification. It also leads to some good jokes such as a figure of imperturbable regality beginning her speech to the assembled pupils with 'Scabs, slobs, yobs, yids, spicks, wops . . .' But although Stoppard proves to his, and our, satisfaction that language is a form of game and that we can very quickly become attuned to the new rules (Easy soon becomes conversant with Dogg), one is secretly rather glad when the joke is over and the letters spelling out 'Dogg's Hamlet' appear on the assembled blocks.

After this slightly dogged opening what follows is, in theatrical terms, hilarious: a potted 15-minute version of *Hamlet* as performed by Stoppard's students to whom Shakespeare is clearly a foreign language. Stoppard is by no means the first person to appreciate both the laughs you can get and the shock effects you can create by

chopping up Shakespeare and even transposing the lines. Many years ago in *Punch,* Paul Dehn came up with a potted *Macbeth* that boasted the memorable couplet, 'The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon,/ Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.' And, on a marginally higher level, Charles Marowitz has offered his own collage versions of *Hamlet, Macbeth* and *Othello.*

Marowitz's collage-effects are, for me, less theatrical than Stoppard's collegiate humour which both makes the point that you can preserve the salient points of *Hamlet* in a boiled-down version and also says something about the modern world's impatient hunger for compression and its short-circuiting of human sensibility. First Stoppard brings on Shakespeare himself who, in an opening Prologue, confirms the opinion of the lady who said that *Hamlet* was full of quotations by offering us all the best-known lines ending with 'Cat will mew and Dogg will have his day'. We then launch into what Jack Kroll in *Newsweek* called 'transistorized Shakespeare'. No sooner, for instance, has Hamlet said 'To be or not to be that is the question' than Ophelia rushes in crying 'My lord' and is peremptorily told 'Get thee to a nunnery'. On stage, the effect is of watching Hamlet played at lightning speed by the Keystone Cops. The joke is not at the expense of Shakespeare but of a modern society that has little time for philosophical digressions or teased-out dilemmas, and craves incessant action executed by moral ciphers. Spurred to an encore, the cast then do a 90-second repeat of the whole play that leaves one helpless with laughter.

Cahoot's Macbeth, in the second half of the evening, also plays on the idea of truncated Shakespeare and the power of words to take on new meanings depending on the context in which they are used. The purpose here is anything but frivolous since it is to draw attention to the iniquities of the Czech regime and the fact that an acclaimed actor, Pavel Landovsky, (who was driving the car on the day in January, 1977 when police stopped him and his friend's car and seized the document that became known as Charter '77) had been driven from his profession in the theatre and obliged to take Living-Room Theatre into people's homes. Interestingly, there is a similar company in Britain that, on request, will come and perform *A Streetcar Named Desire* or *The Servant* in your home; but what for us is bourgeois titillation is in Czechoslovakia the only means of self-expression for outlawed actors.

Stoppard imagines such a troupe performing *Macbeth* in a private sitting-room with us, the theatre audience, becoming the assembled playgoers. The performance is then interrupted by a grotesque Inspector (a favourite Stoppard character) who is both more theatrical than the actors and a sinister-comic agent of repression. The play works on several levels: on one, it is a reminder of the horrific modern applicability of Shakespeare's tragedy with its theme of the illegal usurpation of power; on another, it is a jokey farce that uses (like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and *The Real Inspector Hound*) the intrusion of reality into theatrical artifice.

It is a dangerous, tightrope-walking play because it makes us laugh at a situation that in real life is anything but funny. Stoppard gets away with it partly because of his own impeccable credentials as a human-rights campaigner, partly because there is nothing tentative or apologetic about his jokes, and partly because the laughs all point up the

gravity of the situation. Discovering a telephone under a tea-cosy, the Inspector is perturbed:

INSPECTOR: You've even got a telephone. I can see you're not at the bottom of the social heap. What do you do?
HOSTESS: I'm an artist.
INSPECTOR: Well it's not the first time I've been wrong.

In a country where, as Stoppard recorded in the

New York Review of Books, you can find boilers stoked by economists, streets swept by men reading Henry James in English, where filing-clerks rise early to write articles for learned journals abroad and where third-rate time-servers are chauffeured around in black, bulbous Tatra 603s, the Inspector's response is all too apt. What Stoppard does in the play is depict the upside-down nature of a society in which a fine actor like Landovsky is acclaimed by the coarse-grained Inspector for his work as a factory floor-cleaner or a newspaper seller and in which language itself is corrupted. George Orwell in *1984* and *Animal Farm* reminded us that language and liberty are intertwined and that when words are perverted or repressed so is freedom. Stoppard makes the same point through brutal, quick-fire comedy:

INSPECTOR (*to* HOSTESS): Which one were you?
HOSTESS: I'm not in it.
INSPECTOR: You're in it, up to here. It's pretty clear to me that this flat is being used for entertaining men. There is a law about that you know.
HOSTESS:I don't think MacBeth is what was meant.
INSPECTOR: Who's to say what was meant? Words can be your friend or your enemy depending on who's throwing the book, so watch your language.

Maybe there is something too direct and up-front about the way Stoppard sends a figure like Orton's Inspector Truscott from *Loot* crashing around pointing out the way artists are degraded, rooms are bugged, language is twisted and Shakespeare becomes a reckless subversive in a police-state: the play lacks the subtlety of *Professional Foul*. But it gets its point across through a mixture of unashamed farce and clear statement; and never more so than when the Inspector points out that Shakespeare—Old Bill as he is known to the force—becomes all too contemporary in politically explosive situations:

'The fact is that when you get a universal and timeless writer like Shakespeare there's a strong feeling that he could be spitting in the eyes of the beholder when he should be keeping his mind on Verona—hanging

around the "gents." You know what I mean. Unwittingly,
of course. He didn't know what he was doing,
at least you couldn't prove he did, which is what
makes the chief so prejudiced against him.'

I am reminded of Ian McKellen's account in the book, *A Night at the Theatre,* of playing Richard II in Bratislava in 1969 after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. During the scene where Richard weeps for joy to stand upon his kingdom once again, as McKellen spoke the familiar lines, 'Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand' he became aware of a collective mewing, grieving, crying sound from the audience: a token of their recognition of the earth as their only symbol of a future freedom and a continuing past. Stoppard also never lets us forget the relevance of *Macbeth* to modern Czechoslovakia even to the point of having a police-siren wail as Macduff cries 'Bleed, bleed, poor country.'

The good thing about *Cahoot's Macbeth* is that it brings home to spectators in privileged Britain and America a glimmer of what it must be like to live in a country where the simple act of putting on a play may land you in gaol. It is affirmative, committed, political: all those things one has always wished Stoppard to be. My only real cavil is that Stoppard's love of diagrammatic neatness slightly runs away with him and he rounds off the play by bringing back the Dogg-speaking lorry-driver, Easy, with a load of timber for Birnam Wood, the actors tune in to Dogg themselves and deliver the final speeches of *Macbeth* in this alternative language. It's a clever way of bringing the evening full circle and of harnessing Stoppard's fascination with word-games and Shakespeare to the un-containability of the Czech situation as Malcolm takes the crown off Macbeth's head and places it on his own. The implication is that change is inevitable. But, lively as *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* is, you feel at the end of the evening you haven't quite seen Stoppard stretching his talent to his fullest; and that his true direction for the future lies away from theatre-as-game and towards the excavation of true feeling. It wouldn't be fair to say that this generously-donated double-bill shows Stoppard BARC-ing up the wrong tree but it seems a digression from his exploration of a refined and heightened naturalism.

Source: Michael Billington, "Cricket Bats and Passion," in *Stoppard: The Playwright,* Methuen, 1987, pp. 132-68.

Topics for Further Study

Stoppard devoted *Cahoot's Macbeth* to his Czechoslovakian friend, Pavel Kohout, whose own plays were censored during the 1970s. Read one of Kohout's censored plays, and compare it to *Cahoot's Macbeth*, paying particular attention to how each play acts as political commentary.

Choose another era in history when a region experienced literary censorship for political reasons. Research the history and outcome of this dispute, and write a short biography about one of the literary leaders who was censored.

Research the history behind Czechoslovakia's split into the Czech and Slovak Republics. How did both cultures react to this political divide? Compare the two cultures as they exist today, paying particular attention to any artistic and political issues.

Trace the history of communism back to its origins. Using your research, create a timeline that details the major events in the history of communism, and explain how these events affected the world at large.

In the play, Stoppard creates an entirely new language, Dogg, which is derived from English words that have different meanings. Stoppard gives most of the English translations for the words in brackets throughout both plays. Using these, and any other sources mentioned in the play—such as the lyrics to the song "My Way"—create a Dogg-English phrasebook. Include a short introductory page that talks about any common patterns you find between the two languages.

Compare and Contrast

Late 1960s-Late 1970s: Many eastern European countries are under communist rule by the Soviet Union, including Czechoslovakia.

Today: China is the only major communist power in the world.

Late 1960s-Late 1970s: Prague Spring—a brief period of artistic and social revitalization in Czechoslovakia after decades of communist repression—is quickly suppressed by a Soviet invasion. Following the invasion, the works of many Czech writers and artists are censored.

Today: The former country of Czechoslovakia is now the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. In both republics, people enjoy increased artistic freedom.

Late 1960s-Late 1970s: The United States engages in a war in Vietnam to try to stop the spread of Communism in Asia.

Today: The United States engages in a war in Afghanistan to try to stop the spread of terrorism in the world.

What Do I Read Next?

Like the schoolboys in *Dogg's Hamlet,* the young gang members in Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1963) talk in a different language. After wreaking havoc on their community, their leader is eventually caught and entered into a criminal rehabilitation program, where even thinking of criminal activities makes him sick.

Stoppard dedicated *Cahoot's Macbeth* to the Czechoslovakian playwright Pavel Kohout, who faced censorship during communist rule in his homeland. Kohout's novel, *The Widow Killer,* published in 2000, takes place during World War II in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. This detective story concerns the events surrounding the assassination of a baroness and pairs a Gestapo agent and a Czech detective to solve the crime.

Stoppard is famous for his interest in both Shakespeare and language, which he explores in many of his plays. In *Coined by the Shakespeare: Words and Meanings First Used by the Bard* (1998), Jeffrey McQuain and Stanley Malless explore the enormous impact that Shakespeare has had on language.

In addition to plays, Stoppard has also worked on screenplays, such as his Academy Award-winning script *Shakespeare in Love* (1999), which he wrote with Marc Norman. This script incorporates many aspects from Shakespeare's life and uses poetic license to fill in the rest, creating an engaging story that utilizes the language skills of both Shakespeare and Stoppard.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* first published in the early 1600s, is considered by many to be the playwright's best work. The tragedy concerns the title character, the Danish prince who sees a ghost of his murdered father, who commands Hamlet to avenge him.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* first published in 1623, concerns the tragedy of the title character, who commits many murders. When three witches prophesy that he cannot be killed by any man who was born of a woman, Macbeth becomes overconfident, and, as a result, dies at the hand of a man who was removed from his mother's womb by cesarian section.

Stoppard's *Arcadia,* first published in 1993, explores complex mathematical and scientific concepts such as chaos theory. The play involves major characters from two different time periods in the same house, who are involved in a mystery that takes place in both eras.

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,* first published in 1967, is the play that made Stoppard famous. The play concerns Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* who talk about the play, tell jokes, and reflect on reality while they wait for their inevitable deaths.

Further Study

Fleming, John, *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order amid Chaos,* University of Texas Press, 2001.

Fleming offers the first book-length analysis of Stoppard's plays in almost a decade, taking an extensive look at Stoppard's three newest plays—*Arcadia, Indian Ink,* and *The Invention of Love.* In addition, the book gives a thorough overview of Stoppard's career and studies some of Stoppard's previously unpublished works.

Havel, Václev, and Karel Hvizdala, *Disturbing the Peace: A Conversation with Karel Hvizdala,* Vintage Books, 1991.

Havel, a former playwright, helped lead the struggle against Communism in Czechoslovakia and became president of the Czech republic. This book collects a series of interviews that Hvizdala conducted with Havel and offers an in-depth perspective of his experiences.

Kipfer, Barbara Ann, *The Order of Things: How Everything in the World Is Organized into Hierarchies, Structures & Pecking Orders,* Random House Reference, 1998.

Although technically a reference book, this eclectic and comprehensive information guide offers an engaging look into how everything in the world follows a specific order or structure. Kipfer is a language guru known for her thesauruses.

McCrum, Robert, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English,* Penguin USA, 1993.

This highly accessible book, the companion to the PBS series of the same name, offers an in-depth, illustrated view of how English evolved into the language it is today. It is a great overview for those interested in the rich linguistic history of English.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations: The English Text of the Third Edition,* translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Prentice Hall, 1999.

Wittgenstein's philosophical writings influenced a number of writers and academics, including Stoppard, who based *Dogg's Hamlet* on one of Wittgenstein's investigations. In addition to language, Wittgenstein investigates the concepts behind objects, categories, symbols, sensations, and other aspects of the human experience.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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