The Education of Henry Adams Study Guide

The Education of Henry Adams by Henry Adams

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

The Education of Henry Adams had been an important and influential text for a decade before Henry Adams was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in autobiography in 1918. The import of the text begins with its author, the weight of its influence with its first audience; its continued appreciation has as much to do with the first two factors as the fact that it was brilliantly constructed by a man of letters at the height of his powers.

Descended from one of America's most famous political families, Adams contributed a classic work of American historiography and one of the most famous autobiographies of American literature instead of making a great political contribution to the country. Adams does provide insight into the Adams family, a source of fascination not unlike the Kennedys, but he is curiously silent on two areas of his own life. Adams discusses his experience as private secretary to his father, minister to England during the American Civil War. However, he says almost nothing on his role as advisor and confidante to John Hay, secretary of state to President William McKinley and President Theodore Roosevelt, while the United States became a world power. The other deafening silence concerns the absence of the lessons he must have learned from his wife's suicide.

Adams' release of one hundred self-published folios of *The Education of Henry Adams* to some of the most powerful people on earth□from writers to heads of state□guaranteed interest. Those who were not among the first one hundred went to extraordinary lengths to glean any information about the contents. These one hundred copies had a preface authored by Adams. The second text was released to the general public after Adams died. This edition contained a preface penned by Adams but signed by Henry Cabot Lodge in 1918.

Author Biography

The fourth child of statesman and diplomat Charles Francis and Abigail Brown, Henry Adams was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 16,1838. At the age of four, having survived a bout with scarlet fever, Adams joined the rest of the family at their new home on Mount Vernon Street in Quincy, a suburb of Boston. Along with receiving an education appropriate to his class, Adams absorbed current political ideas from his father and those who visited the house, particularly Charles Sumner. Adams grew up believing himself to be a member of the ruling class destined to be involved in politics.

Adams attended Harvard College, receiving a bachelor of arts in 1858. Due to the influence of his tutor, James Russell Lowell, Adams pursued two years of graduate study at the University of Berlin. Due to his birth rank, the family had lower expectations for Adams, although he saw his role as private secretary to his father, during service as America's minister to Britain from 1861 to 1868, as a stepping stone to a career in politics. On the way to London, Adams met John Hay, Abraham Lincoln's private secretary, and they became lifelong friends.

Returning to Washington, D.C., from London in 1868, Adams used journalism to remain involved in politics. His time as a journalist ended when he accepted an invitation from Charles Eliot, president of Harvard College, to serve as assistant professor in medieval history and the editor of the *North American Review* in 1870. As an established man, Adams married Marian "Clover" Cooper in June of 1872. He gave up the Cambridge career in 1877, and the couple moved to Washington, D.C., where Adams began work on *History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison.*

Adams kept his domestic affairs to himself and as a result speculation surrounded his years of married life. Tragically, Clover ingested a photochemical solution and died in December 1885. In response, Adams withdrew from society. He completed his nine-volume history (1889-1891) that won the Loubat Prize from Columbia University. In 1894, he became president of the American Historical Association.

Until a stroke in 1912 curtailed his activities, Adams traveled, reflected, and advised John Hay. Adams' journey to the South Pacific, where he visited with the people of Samoa and Tahiti, inspired a reconsideration of civilization. Adams saw the people of the South Pacific as still living in a unified culture. In response, Adams felt that unity was precisely the element eluding the America of the nineteenth century. His search for that lost unity led him to revisit the Gothic cathedrals of Normandy and inspired him to write *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1905). By 1906, the companion volume, *The Education of Henry Adams* existed but only circulated privately in 1907. Though he wrote several thousand letters and a couple essays more, Adams' work of 1906 was his swan song. He died on March 27, 1918, in Washington, D.C.

Plot Summary

Early Years

Beginning at his birth, Adams' describes himself as being at the mercy of historical forces. He was born into a family with a founding father and second president of the nation, the sixth president, and the historical inertia of Boston's seat of the War for Independence against Great Britain. Adams comments on these forces and the way in which they display themselves while his earliest years are divided between the Brooks' home in Boston and the Adams' house in Quincy. After relating a remarkable lesson in discipline, taught to him by his grandfather, John Quincy Adams, Adams discusses his development in the shadow of his father's character. Adams molds himself after Charles Francis by observing him in comparison with other political figures that frequent the house, namely Charles Sumner. Throughout his childhood in Quincy and Boston, Henry Adams is "free to turn with the world." Washington, D.C., would change that.

School Years

In 1850, Adams travels with his father to Washington, D.C., to visit his grandmother, Louisa. While there, Adams' belief in his destiny becomes bolstered while he tours the Senate Chamber and visits President Taylor in the White House, a home he views as that of his family. He and his father tour Mount Vernon where the paradox of George Washington, symbol of freedom and slave owner, do not phase Adams. Back in Boston, Adams lost Sumner to a Congressional term in Washington, D.C.

Adams attends Harvard College where disillusionment sets in. Except for a few quirky Virginians, Adams finds his classmates unremarkable. Although Adams ranked near the bottom of his class, he was elected Class Orator and delivered the commencement address. From Harvard College, Adams headed to the University of Berlin for two years. He had thought it was the place to study Civil Law but his enthusiasm was stymied by "the lecture system in its deadliest form as it flourished in the thirteenth century." His other excuse for not studying was the city. A change to Dresden improved his scenery but not his study. He finds that the Germany he loved was a romanticized eighteenth-century Germany, not the militarized Germany of Bismarck. Fortunately, his sister□now married to Charles Kuhn□ lures him to Switzerland and then Italy. Adams heads home after an accident causes his sister's death.

The Civil War

Since Adams had not embarked on any career, he accompanied his father to Washington, D.C., in the capacity of a private secretary. Adams intended to continue his law studies by reading Blackstone. Instead, the excitement of secession and possible war stopped progress on those lines as he joined the rest of the nation in the education of war. The first events came in the congressional battle to keep Virginia in the Union.

Seward in the Senate and Charles Francis in the House led these efforts. As Lincoln's term in office opened, Adams meets John Hay but loses Sumner's friendship during the emergency wrangling.

Lincoln wisely sent Charles Francis to London as the American minister. There the legation's chief function was to maintain America's dignity at the seat of the British Empire while diffusing the British intent of illegally aiding the Confederates. With his few friends and his own social standing, Charles Francis played his role in British domestic politics and he played for time. Political success remained impossible while the Union Army suffered defeat but Charles' constancy paid large dividends in 1863 during "The Battle of the Rams," the ironclads *Monitor and Merrimac.* His use of British society and British law were now supported by Union victories and Britain was forced to dry-dock several ironclads that they had hoped to send to the Confederacy. Meanwhile, Adams discerned many lessons about the way British power works and how British minds operate. However, while an American politician might master the ecology of London utilizing family and social connection as well as brains, such an education exactly disabled him for service anywhere else.

A Career Despite Himself

Adams has a career in journalism, which begins with the publication of some of his letters home in Boston. Persuaded by his success and his family, he decides to take advantage of his connections and pursue writing to the extent of his powers. He begins writing while still working for his father and mostly out of boredom. He has several scoops published anonymously, which luckily do not create a scandal for his father. Attracted by the latest scientific theories disrupting the natural sciences, Adams successfully aids in their popularization through his magazine articles. This period of almost normal professionalism leads to a position as assistant professor at Harvard as well as a magazine editor. His career ends in 1877 when he decides that institutional education is useless.

Man as a Force

Remarking from the vantage point of 1892, Adams finished his education in 1871 when he began to apply it; this marked the beginning of his last section of his work. In this section, Adams reflects on the acceleration of change in American society wrought by technology and a shift to a "banker's world." His venues for reflection include the World's Fairs and the careers of his closest friends. In Chicago and again in Paris, he dwells on the power of the new machines at the heart of societal change. In response, he positions Hay and Clarence King as representatives of the new ideal American. In contrast to his own failure to attain a position of power, his best friends sit at the height of politics and science, respectively. Hay's accomplishments, as secretary of state, reveal a hope for the future and show that power does not always corrupt but, with some men, leads to a better world. King's accomplishments in the West promise to yield an even more prosperous, larger, America.

Throughout this last section, Adams discusses the current state of scientific history and poses guiding principles for further study. His prognostications have the appearance of prophecy but they are the result of a careful analysis and employment of a grammar. Realizing through Hay that the problems of the Atlantic World were being resolved, Adams notes that the future challenge will be a greatly expanded and powerful Russia. Finally, Adams believes that history will become a hard science complete with algorithms and laws.

Chapter 1 Quincy (1838 - 1848)

Chapter 1 Quincy (1838 - 1848) Summary

Adams's education begins in Quincy, Massachusetts, a small Massachusetts town two hours walk from Boston. It is the home of his great-grandfather, President John Adams, and his grandfather, John Quincy Adams. He sets out the main formative influences on his early character: his elite birth, a serious case of Scarlet Fever, the start of his formal education, and the changing seasons. Regarding the first, he was a direct descendant of the Adams line, which included the patriot Samuel Adams and would later include his father Charles Francis Adams. He took his circumstances as natural and assumed that other boys had backgrounds as special as his, and did not realize the doors that such a background would open. The second major impact was a serious case of Scarlet Fever, which almost killed him when he was 8. He survives, but is smaller in stature than his brothers. He falls behind them physically but moves ahead mentally - he doesn't realize it at the time, but his illness and its effects cause him to question the world around him, to consider rather than to act. The third major influence is the start of his formal education in school, against which he rebels at first, until his grand father, J. Q. Adams, leads him there by hand. The final major influence on his early years was the seasons - winter and summer, which for him are nature and school, respectively. The sense impressions of the season, the smells and sights, stay with him all his life, and in youth encourage a sense of dualism, winter in opposition to summer, school in opposition to nature

Chapter 1 Quincy (1838 - 1848) Analysis

Adams begins by explaining the initial conditions of his education. To a certain extent, his future is determined by his past. He will inherit the attitudes of his ancestors and his family, and, in later chapters, he will act and react to them until he finally strikes out on his own course. He will take his own course with education because already, at a young age, he is rebelling against traditional education. His definition of education is rather broad, and includes not only scholastic education, but also everything that he learns from his experiences and conversations.

Chapter 2 Boston (1848-1854)

Chapter 2 Boston (1848-1854) Summary

Charles Francis Adams, Henry's father, inherited a "Puritan" bias and is anti-slavery from birth; a trait passed on to Henry. Charles is an outsider in Boston because of his firm stance against slavery, which puts him at odds with such figures as Daniel Webster and other leading members of Boston society. He eventually founds an abolitionist party, the Free Soil Party, and runs for vice-president.

Henry Adams describes himself as dogmatic and says that, had be been born in an earlier century, he would have gone into the church. For him, anti-slavery is like a religious war, a continuation of the Puritan struggle. His education so far is mostly a matter of inheriting the opinions of his relatives; his father is a chief influence in these six years.

C.F. Adam's character plays the largest role in his education, specifically his "unusual poise of judgement and temper." He avoided putting on airs and belonged to none of the Boston cliques; he did not try to act "English." He establishes his own party in an attempt to take a stance on abolition without appeasing the South or inciting violent reaction in the North. The Free Soil Party brings several important figures to the Adams house for meetings that Henry attends, the most important of whom is Charles Sumner, who is, to young Adams, a hero. Sumner is a great orator and a success in Europe, but almost totally unwelcome in Boston because of his outspoken abolitionism.

Moral law rules politics, but Adams, although moral, is not religious at all - he says that the religious sense has atrophied in New England.

Adams, being forced to learn by rote, hates school and considers the years between 10 and 16 to have been thrown away. He was happiest to be reading alone in the summer.

Chapter 2 Boston (1848-1854) Analysis

Adams continues to detail the early influences on his development, setting out three important sources of influence: his father, Charles Sumner, and the past. His father will continue to be an influence on Adam's education for many years - to the extent that Adams has "teachers" during his "education," his father will be the one who teaches longest and leaves the most enduring impression.

Sumner will also play a role through out Adams' life; by introducing him now, he shows how close Sumner had been to the family and to his father in order to build up to the later conflict between them.

The third major influence is the past, here expressed as the remains of a Puritan outlook. The Puritans were above all religious, and Adams, even at an early age, is

without religion, yet he still shares their moral outlook. This is a book about, as Adams will later write, "20th Century multiplicity"; however, before he can deal with the 20th Century, in the closing chapters and at the end of his life and education, he has to deal with the preceding centuries - not only the 19th Century in which he lives most of his life, but the preceding centuries as well, from which the transitional 19th Century has grown.

Chapter 3 Washington (1850-1854)

Chapter 3 Washington (1850-1854) Summary

Adams takes a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1850, and this step in his education, helps to fix his worldview. It is his first time in a slave state. To him, everything in the South seems ragged and poor, and he concludes that slavery is the cause.. He calls the South "the sum of all wicked ness," and yet at the same time, he finds it appealing. He becomes more firmly anti-slavery, and yet begins to be aware of contradictions in the world. The more he is educated the less he understands. The sense of contradiction deepens, because everyone reveres George Washington, yet Washington comes from Virginia, a slave state, and slavery is the sum of all wickedness and the cause, for Adams, of all that he finds unappealing about the South. He accepts the contradiction. Adams is still dogmatic in his views, and the issue of slavery only deepens his Puritan sensibilities.

During these 5 years, Henry has his first experience with practical politics, and has to try to "reconcile 16th century principles with 18th century statesmanship and late 19th century party politics." His father's Free Soil Party is composed of statesmen of the old school, men of principles, but they had to rely on the new mechanics of party politics - deal making and compromises, in order to attain power to set their plans in action. They strike a corrupt bargain with the Democrats to give the governorship of Massachusetts to the Democrats in exchange for a Senate seat. Adams also ignores the moral contradiction here as well, because the Senator will be his friend Charles Sumner, in whose election he takes personal pride. His education stalls here, caught between these contradictions. Finishing high school, he feels he has no education at all, and that "he [knows] not where or how to begin."

Chapter 3 Washington (1850-1854) Analysis

Adams has his first experience with political contradictions, and cannot sort out the George Washington/Slavery and Free Soil/Corruption connections. These contradictions are partially the creation of Adams' mind - because he is still immature, he looks at politics very idealistically, and approaches the issues from his conservative New England background. Adams writes: "The boy might ignore, as a mere historical puzzle, the question of how to deduce George Washington from the sum of all wicked ness, but he himself helped to deduce Charles Sumner from the sum of all political corruption." What is significant is that he falters - rather than force the world to fit into his preconceptions, he concludes he has no education at all, and starts over. Since his education has not equipped him to understand how Washington could be both Southern and virtuous, or Sumner moral and at the same time politically suspect, it is a failure, but he considers this very failure to be part of his education

Chapter 4 Harvard (1854-1858)

Chapter 4 Harvard (1854-1858) Summary

In June of 1854, Adams is happy to put high school behind him, and heads to Harvard College, which he and his peers attend not for the sake of a good education, but for social connections and out of class traditions. Harvard creates good citizens, but not good leaders, and its influence is chiefly negative. The students form a typical group of New Englanders, and Adams gets nothing from them, because they are all the same as him. Adams also gets little from his teachers, and considers his years at college a waste of time. He prefers to be educated alone. His political biases, however, were weakened at Harvard, as it was a place of no bias, of no strong opinions or forces. "Harvard College was a negative force, and even negative forces can have value."

His social position is his only capital. He makes no useful acquaintances at Harvard. "Looking at life as a social relation . .. did no good," the education that students received at Harvard is ill suited to the sort of world that they will be entering. Adams begins writing at this time, though he feels his work is weak. He aims to become the Class Orator, the representative of the class at graduation, which would be both a political and a literary success. He is surprised to be a candidate, as he is not popular, and surprised to be elected, not only because his opponent was a better and more popular scholar, but also because he was not a representative of the general type of the college. His oration is described as lacking enthusiasm, but Adams says that this is just what the college taught, and he is said to be very self-possessed, which is, for Adams, the most valuable lesson from Harvard. Having stood before their peers, the harshest critics, for four years, the graduates were ready to stand alone before the world. "As yet, he knew nothing. Education had not begun."

Chapter 4 Harvard (1854-1858) Analysis

Harvard seems today to be the epitome of elite education, but in Adams' time, it was only an institution for making elite connections. He comes away from college, the point at which most people would assume education to be complete, saying his education has yet to begin. In the future, most of his education will be solitary, following at last the ideal of his youth. Adams also comes away from Harvard with an understanding of how education should not be conducted - as he says, it as a negative influence. When he returns to Harvard, many years later, he will conduct his classes in what is almost the opposite of the way he was educated. However, the self-possession that he gained will be an important element of his future journey in search of education. It will be many years before he really does stand alone, but the seed is planted during his time at Harvard, just as his view of a proper education grew from his childhood experiences.

Chapter 5 Berlin (1858-1859)

Chapter 5 Berlin (1858-1859) Summary

He begins his "3rd or 4th attempt at education" in November 1858. He stops first in England, which seems not to have changed since Charles I - the high aristocracy and Dickens' world are both readily seen. His trip though Birmingham and the Black District comes as a shock, and the manufacturing area seems like a fiery black pit. "The Black District was a practical education, but it was infinitely far in the distance."

His education progresses backwards - London is still 18th century, and Germany is even older. He quickly makes friends in Berlin and falls into the social scene, and then begins with the University. He finds it to be even worse than Harvard - education there is in the form of endless lectures, which he feels are a waste of time. What little is learned in the lecture halls could be more quickly learned reading alone, but in order to get a degree and be certified, one must pay the fees and attend the lectures. He tries instead to concentrate on learning German, but falls behind in his studies. In he end, he enrolls in a German high school with 12 and 13-year-old boys in order to get a better grasp of the language. He finds this system of education worst of all - everything by rote, the system completely rigid. He notes that "the curious and perplexing result of the total failure of German education was that the student's only clear gain, - his single step to a higher life, - came from time wasted; studies neglected; vices indulged; education reversed; - it came from the despised beer-garden and music-hall, and it was accidental, unintended, unforeseen. In this sort of environment, Adams reaches the pinnacle of his education: listening idly to some Beethoven, who had never interested him before (music in general was uninteresting), he suddenly begins to understand it. The experience was wonderful, but it was not really education.

Chapter 5 Berlin (1858-1859) Analysis

Berlin is like Harvard, in being a negative influence. Adams' learns more about what he does not want, and learns it quickly enough that he can set out in search of an education that does suit him. He is also beginning to shed his old-fashioned views as a result. Though he says earlier that he thought like someone from the 18th century, his experience in a Germany oriented on 18th century (or earlier) ways of thinking shows him that his attitude is merely a prejudice, and that what he needs to seek is more oriented towards the future. The book is about the 20th century, and the transition of the 19th century into the 20th, and so what Adams is doing now, in his life and in his book, is exploring, experiencing, and then rejecting the old ways of thinking that were still dominant in the transitional 19th century to prepare for moving on to the new ideas that have yet to take hold.

Chapter 6 Rome (1859-1860)

Chapter 6 Rome (1859-1860) Summary

Adams moves to Dresden to continue studying German and to attempt to pick up further "accidental education" as he had when he engaged with Beethoven at the end of his stay in Berlin. War breaks out between France and Germany over Italy. His sister, now married to Charles Kuhn, arrives in Switzerland and meets with Adams. For a time, he lets her decide on the course of his education: "No woman had ever driven him wrong, no man had ever driven him right." She identifies with the Italian cause, and as soon as the armistice is declared, they take a trip to Italy. This is another accidental education for Adams. The grandeur and the enduring ancient history present in Rome make a strong impression on him, as does a later, more "accidental" experience. Passing through the wrecked landscape, and seeing the long lines of guns and soldiers guarding the Italian-Austrian border leave strong impressions on his mind.

In Dresden he feels he has no plan or purpose in Germany. He gives up on this course of education and decides to return home, though he feels the only answer he will be able to give his father, if asked what he has done in his time studying abroad, is to say, "Sir, I am a tourist."

Chapter 6 Rome (1859-1860) Analysis

The lines of Austrian soldiers and guns that Adams sees in Italy are echoed much later in the book when he begins to see metaphorical "lines of force" everywhere. The war is very influential, and is probably the beginning of Adams' search for a better solution to conflict, in which diplomacy replaces warfare. He is typically self-deprecating though, when he claims that he has learned nothing more than how to be a tourist. Even though he gains nothing like a formal education from his experiences, he comes away with an accidental education. For Adams, it is more important to move through the world, gaining experience, than to simply study in anticipation of achieving a predetermined level of knowledge.

Chapter 7 Treason (1860-1861)

Chapter 7 Treason (1860-1861) Summary

After ten years, Washington, D.C. still feels the same; it is still a rough and unfinished place. The sense of unity, of faith in the Union, is not strong, and much North/South hostility abounds. Adams finds that everyone seems ignorant, especially the cotton planters, who understand least of all what the result of their actions might be. Adams considers it a "lesson in the working of excess power in inadequate hands" and concludes that "he could learn nothing but cross-purpose" in Washington. He searches for someone who can serve as a teacher: only his old friends Sumner and Seward seem worthwhile. Adams also meets John Hay for the first time, a young man serving as a private secretary. They become fast friends; as Adams says, "friends are born, not made."

Adams does a lot of work, in terms of cultivating acquaintances that will later prove useful in writing, but receives little education because, as he is fond of noting, no one can teach. He thinks little of Lincoln at first: if anyone needs education, he thinks, it is Lincoln, but he later reappraises him. The only educator in all of this is Sumner, but not in any way that Adams would have expected. Through the growing conflict, Adams follows the party line, being loyal during a time of crisis, and is shocked when Sumner denounces the course that the government is taking in order to keep the Southern states in the Union. Sumner not only denounces the course, but also holds Adams' father partly responsible for it, and breaks off all relations with the Adams family. According to Adams, the greatest lessons are those that permanently shock, and this time, the lesson was "that a friend in power is a friend lost."

Chapter 7 Treason (1860-1861) Analysis

Adams returns to the lesson, "a friend in power is a friend lost" many times in the course of the book. It is one of the most important lessons of his life. Power corrupts. Adams is still learning to distrust power and authority. His meeting with Hay in the same chapter when he loses Sumner foreshadows later events, when Hay rises to prominence while Adams takes a different course, always remaining out of office. It may be because of his experience of the change in Sumner's loyalty and principles as a result of coming to power that keeps Adams from assuming a position with the federal government as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had done.

Chapter 8 Diplomacy (1861)

Chapter 8 Diplomacy (1861) Summary

Lincoln immediately appoints Charles Francis Adams as Minister to England. April 1861 is the end of Henry Adams' attempts studying Law, as he once again becomes his father's private secretary. His father receives the post through Seward, who is opposed by Sumner. When war breaks out, Adams' brother is in the Army, while he is sent to fight the war, diplomatically, in England. A small, humble delegation is sent out, like adventurers, as Adams ancestors had been, with no real support besides Seward - the Senate is against them, especially Sumner. Adams thought at first that the English would be friendly towards them and towards their cause, but reality was very different. Even though Adams, as a New Englander, feels English, even though both sides are anti-slavery, England recognizes the belligerency of the South. Adams finds that the powers in England do not care about slavers, but rather about weakening the United States.

In spite of all this, his father is perfectly balanced and poised, while the English are civil, despite the possibility of war if England does not stay neutral. Even though his father was relatively secure, Adams finds himself in an absurd social situation: as a young man and a private secretary, he has no real position. He feels that he cannot help his father at all; secretaries, in general, have no use; and he has humorous, if not sometimes embarrassing, difficulties with English social etiquette.

During this time, Adams is also writing for several newspapers, sometimes for London, sometimes for Boston. This plan backfires when a long letter to his brother about the situation in England, which is published in Boston, is picked up by the Times in London and satirized. However, since the editors of the Times don't know Adams' connection to the American Legation, the damage is minimal; he is too marginal to matter.

Although he counts Mrs. Russell Sturgis as one of the good female influences on his development, in general Adams and his father have little connection with society. His father finds supporters in Monkton Milnes and William E. Forster, who operated socially, and, on a different level, John Bright and Richard Cobden, two of the heavyweights of Parliament, but in general, C.F. Adams is ignored, though not ridiculed, as his social standing is too good for mockery. Adams himself sees no point in society, and waits to go home.

Chapter 8 Diplomacy (1861) Analysis

Adams speaks of his time with the diplomatic mission as being parallel to, and as important as, his brother's efforts in the Army. The American Legation is on a risky mission, with little support, in unfriendly territory. At the same time, though, this seems to have hardly been the case. The most severe difficulties that Adams faced were those

of English etiquette. Otherwise, the full weight of responsibility and action fell on his father's shoulders. To the extent that there was any sort of adventure, that any battles were fought, they took place in parlours and yielded only a bit of influence or support. For the most part, Adams does little while in England, but this period is important because it is the start of his effort to come to terms with part of the past in forming his educational foundation. As a New Englander, he has a close connection with England. His experiences while living there will eventually help him to break away from his quasi-English identity and adopt an American outlook.

Chapter 9 Foes and Friends (1862)

Chapter 9 Foes and Friends (1862) Summary

Henry Adams suspects that the British want war after they allow two Confederate ships to escape their harbour, which constitutes a violation of neutrality. After the second Battle of Bull Run, he decides to join the Army. Though his parents are not surprised, they, and his brother Brooks, weigh in against it, which changes his mind. His father suggests that it is too late to do any good, as the war will be over soon - it would be better to stay and assist him here, diplomatically, than to leave and arrive too late to do any good in the States.

English opinion is strongly against the Union. Lincoln is demonised in the press, as is Seward. Adams' old hero, Carlyle, is exposed as a rabid fool when he makes outlandish statements in support of the South, and as a result, Adams begins to doubt his idols. Lord Palmerston, the English Prime Minister, is a scheming opportunist to be avoided at all costs - he has a reputation for exploiting and ruining foreign Ministers for his own political gain. However, his wife, Lady Palmerston, is widely seen as "sympathetique" and their home, Cambridge House, is the best political house. Adams has no success in the elite society of Cambridge House, though.

Lord Russell is the English Foreign Secretary, but Palmerston often overreaches and deals with foreign affairs on his own. He wants a quarrel with Adams' father and the U.S., and tries to use an inflammatory note about an incident in New Orleans to incite Parliament against the Union. Before he can, however, C.F. Adams manages to defuse the situation, not only winning the behind-the-scenes political struggle, but also going so far as to close all contact with Palmerston, unless conducted through the proper channels via Lord Russell.

As a side effect of his father's victory, Adams is no longer invited to Cambridge House. He finds instead a different kind of society led by Monkton Milnes, a Yorkshireman, an eccentric, and a major force in English society. On a winter visit, Adams meets several peers, most importantly Charles Swinbourne, who awes the assembled guests with his poetry and conversation, and who is both medieval and modern, an important bridge for Adams in his education.

Chapter 9 Foes and Friends (1862) Analysis

The chapter begins with a description of Adams' reaction to the Second Battle of Bull Run, a major battle in the American Civil War; the remainder describes one of the major "battles" fought by the American Legation in London. Whether one appreciates the stress of the situation and the strategy employed by his father or not, it is apparent that Adams highly values diplomacy. Diplomacy, rather than outright war, is seen to be the proper way to regulate force and resolve disputes. Even though Adams will not pursue

diplomacy, the work of one of his closest friends, John Hay, as Ambassador to England (filling the position of Adams' father) and later as Secretary of State, will play a large part in later chapters. When Adams arrives, England is still antagonistic to the United States; after several diplomatic battles like this one, the two will eventually join forces.

Chapter 10 Political Morality (1862)

Chapter 10 Political Morality (1862) Summary

Adams is almost promoted to Assistant Secretary, an official position. As a son, as well as a member of the Legation, he is more useful without a regular official position because he is able to act independently. At the same time, Seward begins attempting to strengthen the Legation. One of the new arrivals is Thurlow Weed. Adams likes him, and considers him a complete American education in himself. Unselfish and a good politician, Weed plays with political appointments, office seekers and allies like cards, managing to impartially delegate positions and power to create the best outcome, which impresses Adams, who had begun to consider all politicians as dishonest. William M. Evarts is another addition, coming as legal counsel and providing a certain moral authority: "The world can absorb only doses of truth. Too much would kill it."

Most people assume that Lord Russell, as Foreign Secretary, is a liar. Confederate cruisers escape because Russell delays action, allowing them to get away. Adams asks - is this due to bad intent? Russell tries to avoid responsibility for the escape, and succeeds to the point that most people believe he is innocent of trying to intervene in the war on the side of the South, and that Palmerston was instead to blame for the British breaches of neutrality. Adam's father dies believing that Russell was as trustworthy as he had thought he was during the war, but after Russell passes away, a new biography appears, revealing that, if anything, the "trustworthy" Russell was more aggressive than Palmerston in his attempts to assist the South and thus break up the Union. William Gladstone was also heavily involved in schemes to assist the South and break up the United States -- he was, in fact, despite being the most learned of all of them, the most wild in his support of an attempt to recognize and support the South, which would have included Napoleon III, who would have received claims in the southern states. In the end, Adams is left confused, as Palmerston, despite being a villain, appears to be far more honorable than suspected, while Russell is revealed as having been untrustworthy, though ineffectual, and the eminent Gladstone seems to have been the most dangerous and irrational of all of them.

Chapter 10 Political Morality (1862) Analysis

Adams pairs the ethical and rational approaches of Weed and Evarts against the political immorality of Russell and Gladstone. Weed tells the young Adams that one should never start out assuming that a politician can never be trusted while Evarts tells him that people can only take doses of the truth and that their job is to figure out how large a dose the world will tolerate. In the end, we learn that none of the powerful and well-regarded figures the Adams's were dealing with were trustworthy; Adams only learns about their duplicity after their deaths. He thus learns first-hand that politicians cannot be trusted and that the truth is only delivered in doses while at the same time seeing how it is possible to operate in such an environment: his father trusted Russell,

and would have acted the same way regardless of whether he knew the truth or not. Adams later states that all men are moved by motives and that all motives are provided by "forces," and he will try to understand the forces that shape history, but he is never able arrive at an understanding of historical and personal forces that is intimate enough to explain the shocking behaviours of Russell and Gladstone.

Chapter 11 The Battle of the Rams (1863)

Chapter 11 The Battle of the Rams (1863) Summary

Charles Francis Adams never worries much and is friendly with Russell. He never knows of the betrayal, and even if he would have known, it would not have affected his diplomatic relations - he has to assume that all his foreign contacts had certain motivations and intentions and trust/distrust them just enough to do his job, and, at any rate, there is a second conflict to test the English intent.

An English shipbuilding firm, Lairds, is constructing ironclad rams, which would be used by the Confederates to break the Union blockade. As the rams are obviously intended for the Confederates, and since no British firm can build ships for the Confederate war effort without government collusion, at least to the extent of ignoring the construction, the English are coming close to violating their neutrality and siding with the South. Stopping the rams is a diplomatic battle on the level of the military battles fought by the Union in 1863. Just as the Union begins to turn the tide of the war with victories in Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Adams' father wins a major victory against Lord Russell. Russell claims to be unable to intervene, stalling until the rams can be completed and put to sea, but C.F. Adams continues to press for a response, going so far as to state that failure to intervene represents a declaration of war by the English against the US. Russell, greatly embarrassed at being out-maneuvered, is forced to relent and stop the rams. It is a victory so total that Henry Adams cannot conceive of a greater life-and-death battle in the war effort. Russell, despite his self-justifications, acts like a fool, and, when Adams later finds out about the extent of Russell's deceits, it upsets his ideas about the trustworthiness of politicians.

Adams has his own victory moment when, at a reception hosted by Milnes, he and the American victories are celebrated in the presence of Delane, the Times editor who had mocked him earlier.

Chapter 11 The Battle of the Rams (1863) Analysis

Adams again constructs a narrative that emphasizes the importance of diplomacy. As he had paired himself in the Legation with his brother in the Army, now he couples the Union's success in negotiations with England with success on the battlefield. An incident that amounts, basically, to passing notes back and forth is shown to be as influential and as necessary as the bloody, costly victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Diplomacy can be a powerful force; more importantly, honest diplomacy can be such a force. Adams' father does not lie like his opponents; indeed, he trusts them even though he knows that they may, or probably do lie, and yet he emerges victorious because he approaches the situation calmly and rationally. Seeing the ranks of Austrian troops arrayed in lines of force in Italy made a deep impression in young Adams. What he sees now is the possibility of a different way of opposing or using force.

Chapter 12 Eccentricity (1863)

Chapter 12 Eccentricity (1863) Summary

Nearly everyone in England seems, to Adams, to be eccentric. The eccentrics are attracted to the Rebels cause, excepting those like Milnes, Forster, Cobden, and Bright. In the end, the eccentrics help the Union cause just by being so eccentric that their support of the South does little good. The Confederates contributed their own eccentrics as well. Mason is a terrible choice for Ambassador, who accomplishes little, despite have a field of near-total opportunity. The position, as during the American Revolution, calls for someone like Benjamin Franklin, but Mason doesn't know much of the world, and doesn't have a sense of humour. Lamar, the Confederate ambassador to Moscow, would have been a much better choice. Not true eccentric, he was amused most by his English allies, who assure him that their government will not act against the Lairds and the rams. The Lairds choose Roebuck to represent them - an old egotistic eccentric, a former tribune of the people, who ends up defeated and embarrassed on the floor of Parliament by Adams' ally Bright, despite his assurances that there will be no problem getting the Confederacy officially recognized.

Adams asks - is eccentricity ever strength? Most of English society considers Bright, a man who has the courage to attack and insult all branches of society when provoked, to be eccentric, while Adams finds him conventional; they call him un-English, while Adams considers him to be quite English - honest and practical. The intellectual opposites of Bright (who supported the Union even though he was a conservative) are the "anti-slavery doctrinaires," who, despite their freethinking pose, don't actually have the courage or life to fight against slavery. Adams finds them to be the weakest and most eccentric of all. He concludes, then, that eccentricity is a weakness.

Chapter 12 Eccentricity (1863) Analysis

Though this book is intended to be an illustration of Adams' education and an exploration and analysis of the forces and processes that resulted in what he later observes as "20th Century multiplicity," Adams diverges from the scheme in this chapter and discusses what is, if anything, an anti-force impeding development. Adams becomes friends with many artists and scientists throughout his life, including men who are in something like the avant-garde of their professions - he attempts to introduce Charles Lyell's ideas to the United States; he admires Swinbourne. By eccentricity he does not simply mean thinking that goes against the prevailing climate of thought, for he would not then be able to embrace ideas of evolution, or of technological progress. Even though his outlook and his sympathies are, for years, with the 17th and 18th centuries rather than the 19th, he still looks forward to the 20th and remarks often that his education is not suited to the century in which he lives. The eccentricity that he describes as weakness rather than strength is any thinking that fails to engage the world as it is.

While Bright behaves in a manner that his contemporaries find odd, he does so because he is attacking the institutions and attitudes he feels are hindering England's advancement. The 'anti-slavery doctrinaires,' however, do not engage the world - they do no work to realize their goals; they live in a fantasy world. Likewise, Mason and Roebuck - rather than trying to understand the conditions of their world - in this case, Parliament and the relative strength of Bright and the other allies of the Union, they behave as though they will succeed simply because they imagine their case to be stronger. Avant-garde thinking, oppositional thinking, combined with an understanding of the world, is a strength; without this understanding (which is Adams' goal in this book), it is eccentricity and weakness.

Chapter 13 The Perfection of Human Society (1864)

Chapter 13 The Perfection of Human Society (1864) Summary

Charles Francis Adams' success in the Battle of the Rams leads to a sort of official recognition of the American Legation as members of the Opposition, which grants them a higher social position and greater respect. Henry Adams' role, however, is still undefined. He exists in London as a son, a private secretary, a young man, but never as a diplomat.

His next education is in English social life. In English society, foreigners expect to be snubbed, and Adams has no idea how to ingratiate himself. He finds English society to be old-fashioned, not fit for 1870 or 1900. There are many subdivisions, all of which are closed to him. As he has no real social interests, such as, for example, English sporting life, he has both no way and no reason to enter proper English society. As he casts about, disinterested and disappointed by society, nothing of great interest happens to him besides a meeting with Charles Milnes Gaskell, yet another Yorkshire connection, a relative of Monkton Milnes, and instant friend. As Adams says of him: "Intimates are Predestined."

Chapter 13 The Perfection of Human Society (1864) Analysis

Adams is still searching for his place in life. He finds, unsurprisingly, that it is not in society. English society, not fit for 1870 or 1900, is another of the forces slowing progress. The title of the chapter is ironic; English society is shown to be shallow, old-fashioned, and closed to men like him, whose interests and abilities are suited to the next century. The social cliques are organized around, for example, sporting life, while Adams would rather see an open society devoted to the new technologies, political reforms, and other ideas that will shape the future. The only important contact that he makes during this time is Gaskell; their relationship takes place outside of English society life. The old form of social life, which should enable men to make such important contacts, is a failure here. Most of Adams' important friendships, those that he feels are predestined, owe little or nothing to society. Even his relationship with Monkton Milnes, who was a major force in English society, was a product of a sort of anti-society: his most important meeting with Milnes occurs when he is invited, along with other young men of potential, to a weekend at Milnes' house in Yorkshire, very far from the usual English society. The development of English society, as Adams observes it, is not perfect, and may be over..

Chapter 14 Dilettantism (1865-1866)

Chapter 14 Dilettantism (1865-1866) Summary

Charles Francis Adams is on firm ground in 1864, with the results of the war and with Lincoln back in office, and is looking forward to going home in 1865. His son Henry gets a chance to act again as a son, escorting part of his family on a 6-month trip through Italy while they recover from an illness. Lincoln is assassinated while Adams is in Rome. The Legation stays on in London; Andrew Johnson can't spare time and attention to change the diplomatic corps while trying to deal with the situation at home.

However, Adams needs a new education. His time with the Legation is drawing to an end. The Law is closed to him because of his experience with diplomacy, but diplomacy is also closed to him because, as his father points out, he could never get a post as interesting or challenging as the one he has occupied as a mere private secretary in London during the war. Even as head of a legation, nothing can compare. Like his old friends, he is adrift. Only the press, "the last refuge of the educated poor," seems promising.

At the same time, he begins to acquire an art collection, acting on the recommendations of his better-educated and more artistic friends in London. In the course of collecting and appraising, he discovers that no one in authority really knows much more than he does. He buys a recommended drawing, one that may be a Raphael, and takes it to several experts, none of whom, not even those at the prestigious British Museum, can prove or disprove that it is real. Adams continues to collect, for his own pleasure, writing some articles for the North American Review, and living, he says, like an English dilettante.

Chapter 14 Dilettantism (1865-1866) Analysis

Adams seems to waste another chapter of his Education idling. Just as he becomes unfocused in his life, his story of his education seems to be derailed; however, he does receive further education, of negative value, while living as a "dilettante." The most important lesson Adams learns, to his amusement, is that the "experts" cannot be trusted. No one can definitively say whether his drawing is or is not a Raphael - not the art dealers nor the officials at the museum; none of the members of the established order can answer his questions. They have authority and they are well regarded, but are not the best judges of artistic quality. Again, in preparing for the "new age," Adams points out the flaws in the present system, which are the result of too great a reliance on the ideas and attitudes of the past, of inherited privilege and authority. It is not the British Museum that determines, for Adams, whether a drawing has merit, but one of his artist friends, a member of his forward-looking generation.

Chapter 15 Darwinism (1867-1868)

Chapter 15 Darwinism (1867-1868) Summary

To Adams, natural selection, uniform evolution, unity and uniformity are good and proper replacements for God. Charles Lyell visits the Legation, and Adams volunteers to introduce his principles to the United States. When he begins reading and writing about the subject, however, he finds himself stuck on Glacier Theory, and he cannot rectify uniform evolution/progress with the start-and-stop change proposed by the theory. He becomes confused by Darwinism, because nothing seems to work out as the theory suggests that it should. Irreligious Darwinism begins to seem like a dogma all the same as Adams sees evidence of non-uniformity, non-evolution, and non-selection. He comes away from the experience still seeking absolute standards and Unity.

Adams turns now to finance, working on solving the problem of specie-payments that faced the U.S. in the aftermath of the Civil War. He discovers from his research in England, after 6 months of work, that, contrary to popular belief in the U.S., the best course is to leave the currency alone, rather than restrain it. He divides his report into two articles and sends both to the North American Review. Both are accepted and he joins the permanent staff. Still, none of the great men of his generation are yet recognizable as such. Adams still feels that he has learned and understands nothing. Seven years of England seems to result only in his learning to not care much about England.

Chapter 15 Darwinism (1867-1868) Analysis

In this chapter, Adams begins the intellectual journey that will result in his Dynamic Theory of History. He also begins the sort of serious writing that will become his career.

Adams finds holes in the Darwinist explanation of the world, and he is never able to reconcile his world-view with that presented by Darwin. As a result of this failure, he will turn away from science as an explanation for progress even though his later thinking mirrors Darwinism in its attempt to find the cause of complexity arising from unity. Instead of science, Adams adopts history as the medium for his theorizing.

Chapter 16 The Press (1868)

Chapter 16 The Press (1868) Summary

Adams returns home, finally, in July of 1868. He does not fit into the new American society. A new age is coming, powered by coal and steam, etc. The railroad represents the future. Adams, like many of his peers, casts about looking for work. His education is not suited to working for the railroads; he wants to find a way to break into the press. He already had the North American Review for his long articles, and the Nation for correspondence, but he needs a New York daily as his real platform. Not finding a way to make it in New York, he heads instead to Washington, D.C., led by Evarts. Washington seems to be the same as it was before. Adams begins to work with the Treasury. The Secretary of the Treasury is Hugh McCullogh, a banker. Though Adams is inclined to dislike him because of his background - bankers are narrow-minded and inflexible, in his mind - he finds that McCullogh is doing an excellent job. He has gathered many young men like Adams around him, many from the Army, all with a volunteer spirit, to lead the way to reform: American finances need to be fixed. Adams joins with Evarts and the two try to solve the problem of Legal Tender, which brings him into friendly contact with Chief Justice Chase, who sees Adams as an ally with valuable connections to the press.

While thus living and working in Washington, Adams meets Sumner on the street. They renew their friendship after a break of eight years, with the regal super-Senator Sumner acting as though nothing had happened, despite his fight with Adams' father. Adams finds Sumner, a representative of the true spirit of the Senatorial class, to be an outdated type. At the same time, the education of Henry Adams is useless, and he must, once again, start over.

Chapter 16 The Press (1868) Analysis

Adams returns to the U.S. occupied, not with Darwinism, but with finance and reform, continuing with the line of development begun in the last chapter. In this way, he is grounding himself, avoiding eccentricity. He will later concern himself with creating his own sort of Darwinism, a theory and approach to understanding historical development, rather than biological development, but for the time being, he is focused on practical matters. This chapter marks the beginning of a long period of practical development in his education, and he will focus more on the press and the present than on a great theory until many years after he feels that his education has finished. At the same time, he is very conscious of the new forces at work in America. The railroad and similar technological advances will play a large role in his later thinking, as will the changes brought about by a more capitalistic society. Railroads and finance will be the subjects of some of his most important articles. At the same time, the railroad is a symbol of how far Adams is behind the times. He is not suited to work for the railroads, and therefore

his education is not suited to the conditions of late 19th century. Sumner educated him; if the one is outdated, then so is the other.

Chapter 17 President Grant (1869)

Chapter 17 President Grant (1869) Summary

Adams finds that Washington, D.C. is still dull and unformed, with no society to compare with the rest of the world; he manages to get by fairly well anyway. Adams writes finance articles for the Edinburgh Review in an attempt to get on the staff. He creates a scheme for the North American Review, which he calls Sessions, after a similar series of articles in England, to review American politics. By this point, with his family background and the connections he's made over the years, he has access in Washington and influence with the press, and so there is great potential for the project.

At this time, it seems that everyone is ready and waiting for Grant to take over: Grant is viewed much like a second George Washington, a general and man of action who will reorganize and reform the government where the politicians have failed. Adams notes that one might compare Congressmen to hogs, but that Senators, who take self-importance to absurd levels, are even worse. The common feeling is that only someone from outside the system can clear things up. Adams and his peers are thus disappointed when the Cabinet Grant appoints turns out to be poorly chosen and conventional. Adams loses his hope for a reform movement.

Adams is living at this point in a boarding house with Adam Badeau, a former officer and Grant's biographer; through him, he meets President Grant. Adams finds Grant to be, like Garibaldi, all action and energy, devoid of intellect. He calls him a primitive type of man, a representative of the type that should have been extinct in this changing age - instead, he is the President of the United States. With no real opposition righting for reform, and with a man like Grant installed at it's head, Adams wonders if America is reverting by electing a caveman, if it is devolving, but he has no answer.

Chapter 17 President Grant (1869) Analysis

Throughout the book, Adams is waiting for Washington, D.C. to reform itself, but he never has a clear opportunity to participate. Even though he will later see great technological progress, he never notes such progress in politics, because men like Grant are continually coming to power, who are either not improvements, or even regressions, who make appointments based on self interest or favouritism. The political condition of Washington changes little over the course of the book, and every time Adams returns, he finds that there is no room for a progressive young man like himself. It is odd, then, that he considers America to be accelerating and developing when the political institutions do not keep pace with the technology and capitalism that he later witnesses.

Chapter 18 Free Fight (1869-1870)

Chapter 18 Free Fight (1869-1870) Summary

Adams returns to Quincy and Boston. News of a massive scandal, involving the financier Jay Gould, gold, and the Erie Railway, breaks. Adams, along with his brother Brooks, begins a journalistic investigation: his brother handles the Railway angle, while he attacks the gold issue. Adams finds he was right in his opinion of the Grant government as non-reforming: President Grant and other high-ranking persons and agencies in the Federal Government are suspected of having been involved. It seems that Gould has bought the support of Secretary of the Treasury Boutwell and of Grant.

Because he has no connections with the current Treasury regime, Adams turns to the State Department and the Departments of the Interior, looking to assist in reforms there while doing his investigations. In doing so, he once again puts himself on the wrong side of Sumner, who is attempting to craft his own foreign policy even though he doesn't have official control. His major aim is to force Britain to give Canada to the US. As a result, there is no obvious agency in charge of policy - President Grant and the Interior and State Departments all seem turned against one another. Adams instead winds up working to defend the Supreme Court from an attack by the Executive Branch over the issue of Legal Tender. Adams takes over an article drafted by Frank Waller and has it published in the North American Review, defending the Chief Justice and earning the disapproval of the Treasury Department. Politics seems to break down in feuding, and Adams cannot identify a working system in the confusion. He finishes the New York Gold Conspiracy article and sends it to the Edinburgh Review - it seems better to publish it in England, because the Erie Railroad has a presence there as well, and because anything about America published in the English press would be pirated and spread around the US press much more widely than if it was published locally.

Chapter 18 Free Fight (1869-1870) Analysis

Adams depicts Washington in chaos, wracked by political feuding and scandals. His best response is to use the press to effect change, and eventually, because of the results of his articles, he will come to a certain level of national prominence. The North American Review will eventually become his platform, even as he becomes more and more distant from the politics in Washington. Adams supports a rational, grounded approach to dealing with national issues, but Washington is still caught up in the old attitudes that lead to favouritism and corruption. It does not seem like American politics will ever evolve beyond this, with the exceptions of his father and John Hay, both of whom do their important work overseas, away from the influence of Washington.

Chapter 19 Chaos (1870)

Chapter 19 Chaos (1870) Summary

Adams returns to London, in part to see that his article on the Erie Canal/Gold conspiracy is published. His old friends and contacts from his stay as part of the Legation during the Civil War are still in office and doing well. Adams gets caught up with life in England again, and loses sight of his education. He is surprised when the Edinburgh Review rejects his article for fear of being sued for libel - he had expected that the British press, or at least journals like the Edinburgh Review, would have stronger editorial principles. He decides to send the article to the Westminster Review, a less prestigious publication, but one that seems more willing to take risks. While In England, he gets news that his sister has been injured in Italy; he arrives to find her dying, slowly and in agony, from tetanus. The shock of witnessing her painful decline shatters many of his illusions about life. War breaks out between France and Germany. And, while this is worrying, Adams is not too concerned, as he is staying at a former monastery in England as a guest of his friend Milnes Gaskell. While thus relaxing, he receives a letter from the new president of Harvard, inviting him to takes up a new professorship in the history of the Middle Ages. Adams, feeling completely unqualified to teach such a subject, declines.

He returns to the US feeling that he has failed, only to find that his last article in the North American Review was a great success, widely read and even more widely pirated by American newspapers. The Westminster Review prints his conspiracy article, and it is also successful, and pirated even more widely. Adams then heads to Washington, but his brother Brooks persuades him to take Harvard's offer - Adams needs Harvard more than Harvard needs Adams and, in addition to teaching, he will be able to take over the North American Review as the editor-in-chief. In any event, there is no room for him in Washington, as all the young men like him have been forced into opposition.

Chapter 19 Chaos (1870) Analysis

Adams experiences and thoughts about publishing and the distribution of ideas seem very forward-looking, especially given the current debates about piracy in the media. His goal was to have the results of his research on the Jay Gould/Erie Railway conspiracy published as widely as possible and to have the greatest effect on the conspirators. At the same time, he was not writing for a wide audience: his works for the reviews were far longer than articles that might appear in modern magazines. They were detailed and well argued and not mass-media friendly. Adams mentions that it does not matter if a writer reaches 500,000 or 5,000 readers, because, if he reaches the right 5,000, they will reach 500,000 for him. He actually uses media piracy as his means of distribution: he could not get a position with a New York daily; instead, he writes a long article for an English review, which attracts the attention of the New York dailies and the other national media, which then, because of the state of copyright laws, pirate (which is his

word) his work, reprinting it and/or adapting it for their audiences. He doesn't earn any money from this method of distribution, but money was never his goal - distribution itself was.

Chapter 20 Failure (1871)

Chapter 20 Failure (1871) Summary

Adams rents a room in an old house in Cambridge that had once belonged to an aunt on the Everett side of the family. His brother Brooks is living there as well. Adams is busy much of the time, trying to organize his lessons. As he is ignorant of the Middle Ages, he has to make it up as he goes along, teaching himself the subject, and learning how to be a professor, while educating the students. For him, "the only privilege a student had that was worth his claiming, was that of talking to the professor, and the professor was bound to encourage it." He teaches by historical method, a new technique, and has his students make a free investigation of the birth and evolution of Law in the Middle Ages. He does this in part because, not knowing how to teach, he doesn't want to have to pretend to know either. Though he becomes very highly regarded, he is never content with what he taught or how he taught it.

Editing the Review is tiresome - as editor, he has so many responsibilities that he has no time for creative work - but he does benefit form expanding his literary acquaintances, like Frank Emmons, who invites him to join a geological survey, the Fortieth Parallel Survey. While exploring by himself, Adams gets lost. He decides to let his mule guide him back by instinct; it brings him to a small cabin, where he meets Clarence King, who becomes another of Adams' instant friends. King, energetic and scientifically organized, is one of Adams' ideal American types.

Chapter 20 Failure (1871) Analysis

Adams once again meets an important friend outside of the sort of normal society discussed on The Perfection of Human Society.

Adams teaching style mirrors his approach to his own life-long education - a free investigation, outside the typical educational structures, led not by a teacher who knows everything, and thus sits in authority over the student, but rather by a teacher who knows as little as the student, and acts instead as a partner in a dialogue. Throughout the book, Adams declares his education to be useless, poor, unfinished, or not yet begun, because he is continually searching. He tries to avoid hypocrisy by avoiding exposing his students to all the educational methods that had caused him so much distress in his education. Even though he is self-deprecating through out the chapter, and titles it "Failure," his style of teaching is actually highly regarded and successful; he is a pedagogical pioneer. One reason that he calls this period "Failure," despite becoming a professor and an editor-in-chief, is that he has returned to Harvard, which he had never wanted to do after graduating; a second explanation is his ironic New England sense of self-deprecation. In terms of position and influence, he is now a success.

Chapter 21 Twenty Years After (1892)

Chapter 21 Twenty Years After (1892) Summary

Adams skips ahead by twenty years. This book is a story of education, and his, he says, ended in 1871; he has spent the last twenty years of his life applying it.

He is lying in bed in London, ill. He has nothing about which to complain, regarding his last years. Even though he continues to think deeply, he doesn't want to begin a new education at his age - the old one, he says, was "poor and difficult enough." Making a new education even more difficult is the fact that, to Adams, the world is no longer simple, and thus cannot be expressed simply. Whether in art or in science, a more complex and varied description is now necessary.

He travels back to the U.S. on the steamer "Teutonic," which he holds as a technological marvel of progress, and a vast improvement over his first trans-Atlantic voyage. With Cleveland vying for the presidency, Adams finds that Washington is still Washington, still undeveloped compared to other cities, still full of the same political rivalries. While technology has made great improvements, Washington has not. Adams' friend Hay is in and out of politics; both of them write important works of American history, though, looking back, they are not sure what they have succeeded at and what they have not. As time passes, the new generation begins to take over, moving faster than Adams,' and not recognizing their predecessors.

Chapter 21 Twenty Years After (1892) Analysis

Twenty years later, technology has made great progress, but Washington has not. The world is not evolving uniformly; the constant lack of change that Adams finds in his visits to Washington is analogous to the incidents of apparent non-evolution that he found in Darwinism. Any theory of progress must account for such contradictions - later, Adams will begin to think in terms of force or motion and inertia; the steamer will be a representative of force; politics will be a representative of inertia.

Twenty years have made the world more complex, they have begun to force out his generation, they have improved the trans-Atlantic steamer to the point that is seems unrecognizable compared with the one that he took on his first ocean voyage, and they have begun to draw the 19th century to an end. Even though Adams says that he is too old to begin a new education, he will begin again in an attempt to understand the forces at work. After twenty years of applied education and the years of practical education that preceded them, he is ready to begin a grounded theoretical education without becoming eccentric.

Chapter 22 Silence (1894-1898)

Chapter 22 Silence (1894-1898) Summary

Adams attempts to analyze the failure of Clarence King, the man whom Adams had considered to be the ideal American type of his generation, but he fails to find a satisfying explanation. He travels a lot, and muses on the sense that everything is falling apart and that, in the end, there will be nothing more for him to say, only to remain silent. He rejects this solution, however.

He leaves Washington when McKinley is elected president and begins to make appointments based on favoritism rather than merit, which Adams still refuses to accept. Besides finding a good influence in Mrs. Cabot Lodge, who insures that he stays in contact with his society, nothing positive happens. Adams decides that, for him, at least, the 19th century is already over.

Chapter 22 Silence (1894-1898) Analysis

Adams rejects silence as a reaction to the coming end of the century and the approaching end of his generation because he feels that he is, despite all the setbacks and failures suffered by his friends, the forces of progress are still pulling him forward. He feels that the 19th century is over already, but this is not a negative feeling, because he has been looking forward to the 20th century all along. The 19th century has appeared throughout this book as a transitional age. Adams was born in the early 19th century and grew up with the attitudes and outlook of the 18th or 17th centuries, which permeated his family and social circle. He spends time in Germany, which seemed caught, deliberately, in the Middle Ages, and in England, which seemed old fashioned. The purpose of the 18th century, if it can be said to have one, is to close the 18th century and lay the groundwork for the 20th century, when the dynamos and other new technologies, and the new capitalism he has observed, will be fully appreciated and utilized.

Chapter 23 Indian Summer (1898-1899)

Chapter 23 Indian Summer (1898-1899) Summary

The Spanish-American War breaks out. England aligns itself with the U.S. because of the threat to stability presented by Germany. Adams is pleased to see that, at last, England and the U.S. are allies. His friend Hay is the US representative in London, and doing very well. So well, in fact, that he is chosen to be the next Secretary of State. Adams prepares himself to lose his friend once he assumes power.

Adams travels more, thinking more about the acceleration and division of progress. He tries to return to the Law, since politics seems to him to be chaos, but it is too late.

He spends time with John Lafarge, a stained-glass maker and artist, who educates him on the history of the cathedral at Chartres. Lafarge seems to be the only person who still feels what the old masters felt when looking at and working with glass. He is one of Adams' last links with the unified 13th century state of mind.

Meanwhile, back in England, Hay struggles to contain the Russians and the Germans, attempting to achieve his own kind of unity through a multi-national treaty agreement. Adams wonders if unity can still be achieved. He also wonders about science. At sixty, he is still searching.

Chapter 23 Indian Summer (1898-1899) Analysis

Adams pairs the now-impossible artistic unity of the 13th century (he earlier noted that the world had become too complex to represent it simply in art) with the possibility of political unity in the future. The diplomatic difficulties of Hay are far more important to Adams than the Spanish-American War because, as noted earlier, he sees diplomacy as being a more effective way of controlling force than warfare. How, though, can international unity be possible when it seems like artistic unity is not? If the major powers can move to a state where diplomacy rather than war is the sole method of conflict resolution, they will have progressed to a higher level - more force will be brought to bear by fewer people. Adams's father fought a diplomatic battle, essentially one-on-one, with Lord Russell, which was as important as the battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and yet completely bloodless. Now Hay is fighting with the Russian and German ambassadors on the same level that the US is fighting with Spain, but again, bloodlessly.

Chapter 24 The Dynamo and The Virgin (1900)

Chapter 24 The Dynamo and The Virgin (1900) Summary

Adams begins to develop his theory of Force. Guided by Langley of the Smithsonian, he attends the new Chicago Exhibition; it is amazing and revealing. The dynamo seems to him to call force from nothing, from the earth, and speeds everything up. Adams struggles to make sense of all this progress, and finds himself "caught between two kingdoms of force." He names these the Virgin and the Dynamo. The Virgin is the representative of the old unified sense of force, while the Dynamo represents its manifestation in modern life. Women had represented force in the past because of their power of reproduction. Force and sex had come together in the goddess, but now he says, if it survived at all, sex was only sentiment, blotted out of American life and art by the Puritans. Adams thinks of his friend St. Gaudens, the leading American sculptor, who has great talent but still, being too modern, fails to understand the female-force. It seems that, for Gaudens, a horse personifies power better than a woman. Adams begins to think about the subject even more.

Chapter 24 The Dynamo and The Virgin (1900) Analysis

Adams is thinking of the Virgin in a Christian sense, though he avoids making it explicit; otherwise, it makes no sense to refer to the force inherent in women, specifically their ability to reproduce. If he were only concerned with woman/reproduction, he would have done better to name his symbol the Mother. However, he ties his Virgin to the Virgin Mary, and he locates her specifically at the Cathedral in Chartres, his symbol of 13th century unity. Not only is the former personification of force female, it is religious as well. The dynamo is the opposite: it is not a force for human reproduction but for manufacturing or industrial reproduction. It is male rather than female, and multiple rather than unified, since it can be used by any trained operator to provide the force for any industrial application. Even though Adams is interested in progress, he is not pleased to see the Virgin replaced by the Dynamo; he prefers it, however, to a state of inertia where neither the Virgin nor the Dynamo seems to be guiding development, and since he recognizes the inevitability of progress, he welcomes the new dynamic age.

Chapter 25 Twilight (1901)

Chapter 25 Twilight (1901) Summary

The major powers are fighting over access to China, which proves to be interesting to the student. Hay stands alone, attempting to preserve the balance. With the Senate opposing most of his measures, he is under a great deal of stress. Meanwhile, Clarence King retires to Arizona. With Hay facing opposition from the very people whose interests he was trying to protect, and with King, who could have been the greatest man of his generation, essentially waiting to die, Adams feels that society does not value real worth. The end of his generation seems to be drawing near.

For his part, Adams devotes himself for a time to trying to understand magnetism, a force known for thousands of years, yet still not understood. If God is unity, and Satan is complexity, then Adams is caught in between. He struggles his whole life for unity, but does not find it. He looks over his old work for Charles Lyell, and then reads up on the new research in geology. He finds himself returning to the problems he had with Darwinism- he still, with all of his increased learning, cannot reconcile evolution with his observations. Some things do not change; some things seem to have no beginning. Adams cannot make sense of geology. As things become more complex, a larger synthesis is needed to unify the multiplicity of ideas, actions, and observations -yet this larger synthesis cannot hold for long before a new theory is called for. To Adams, the sum of all knowledge gains nothing in this life for it fails to provide something concrete.

Chapter 25 Twilight (1901) Analysis

Adams writes that knowledge is worthless if it does not provide a concrete basis for understanding the world. The problem that arises for him is that every increase in knowledge seems to result in an increase of complexity and the only way to deal with complexity is to try to find some way to unify it. His difficulties with using evolution as a unifying theory occurred when he discovered facts that couldn't be explained by the theory. It is possible to create a new theory to cover the new discoveries, but the result is that the theory becomes more complex as well and, in the case of technology, a better theory will make more discoveries possible, requiring new attempts to create a unifying theory. In this light, his search for unity seems more like a search for simplicity. He identifies the 13th century as a time of unified understanding, but it could be that individuals then were struggling with what they saw as complexity just as Adams is struggling now.

Chapter 26 Teufelsdrtzck (1901)

Chapter 26 Teufelsdrtzck (1901) Summary

Adams travels to Paris, where he remains for some time before going, on an invitation from Mrs. Bay Lodge, with the Lodges to Bayreuth. He finds that the atmosphere in Bayreuth is not what it once had been - the modern age has encroached too far for him to lose himself in the romanticism of the setting.

With Bay Lodge and Joe Stickney, Adams decides to become, jokingly, a Conservative Christian Anarchist. The goal of the movement is to accelerate, to increase force, to reduce friction - which, to Adams, seems to be the natural course.

Of course, the idea of Conservative Christian Anarchy makes little sense, and so, seeking real conservative Christian anarchists, Adams goes to Russia. He finds Russia mad, obtuse, primitive, and existing outside of civilization and evolution. Russia is represented by acceleration but by inertia, and the sheer size of Russia and its inertia threatens to crush other countries and cultures. He travels next to Stockholm, and sees it as a country pressed by ancient northern ice and by Russian inertia, both of which exert the inexorable pressure of glaciers. This inertia represents the only major threat to acceleration and progress.

Chapter 26 Teufelsdrtzck (1901) Analysis

Russia has been a looming danger for several chapters; now, Adams reveals why. It is not because of political differences, but because of inertia. While the U.S. is developing dynamically, Russia is still only developing inertially. Rather than making progress, it is merely expanding, spreading like a glacier. When Adams had been reading Lyell's geography, it was the Glacial Theory that first makes him question Lyell's and Darwin's explanations of development. Glacial inertial Russia serves the same purpose, politically. It is both a danger to other countries and cultures and a stumbling block to understanding the world in terms of acceleration. Russia is related to the Virgin; in order for the Dynamo and acceleration to guide progress, it must be somehow overcome.

Chapter 27 The Height of Knowledge (1902)

Chapter 27 The Height of Knowledge (1902) Summary

Adams and Hay become depressed as President McKinley is assassinated and their friend King lies dying. Theodore Roosevelt, with whom they had been friends in Washington, assumes the Presidency. He is, like Grant and Garibaldi, a man who is "pure act"; as he is in power, he will no longer be a friend, according to Adams' experience.

Hay, however, does not cease to impress Adams. As Secretary of State, he is at the height of his powers, working, through treaties and alliances, to combine governments in something that reminds Adams of a socialist international scheme. That Hay, a conservative, should seem to be acting like a socialist strikes Adams as odd, but, at the same time, it makes sense as a way to pursue unity in an increasingly fragmented world.

Henry Cabot Lodge reveals himself to be another American type, a man with many faces and facets because he has a long history, personal and family, in the U.S., and he carries this entire history within himself and is not afraid to show it. At the same time, he looks actively towards his future and seeks to realize it.

Chapter 27 The Height of Knowledge (1902) Analysis

Yet again, a "primitive" type of man comes to power in Washington. If Grant was a sign that America was not evolving, was perhaps devolving, then Roosevelt must also be a sign of Washington's lack of development, even if Adams does not say so explicitly. Politics continues to lag behind science in progress. At the same time, however, Adams' human Dynamo is present in the form of Secretary of State Hay, who is attempting to bring all the major powers together without war - if Roosevelt could be a sign of inertia at home, Hay could be a sign of progress abroad.

Adams' description of Lodge could be a description of his book, which contains a long history, which he draws freely from, while always looking to the future.

Chapter 28 The Abyss of Ignorance (1902)

Chapter 28 The Abyss of Ignorance (1902) Summary

Adams returns for another stay in Paris. He begins to see lines of force everywhere, signs of forces pulling man this way and that. Repulsion, for him, is "only a battle of attractions." Man once thought about the mystery of force as love of God and love of power, but as the religious feeling has decayed (Adams, despite having felt like a Puritan in his youth, was never religious), as the Virgin has been replaced by the Dynamo, modern man no longer has a unified basis for understanding the world. Continuing to develop his theory, he writes that restlessness forces action - that "ennui, like Natural Selection, accounted for change but failed to account for direction of change." He become so interested in the idea that the world is spreading apart that he decides to write a double book examining the phenomena. The first book will be about the cathedral at Chartres, about the Virgin, and about the Unity achieved in the 13th Century; the second will be about "20th Century multiplicity," and will be entitled "The Education of Henry Adams."

Chapter 28 The Abyss of Ignorance (1902) Analysis

Even though Adams states that this book is to be about 20th century multiplicity, it often isn't. Much of it takes place in the 19th century and, though it may explain the roots of 20th century multiplicity, it cannot fully enumerate, examine, or explain them, since Adams has not really experienced the 20th century. In fact, much of it reads like an autobiography or a memoir, even though Adams at several points pauses to remark that this is only the story of his education. It often has little to do with the 20th century or with multiplicity or acceleration or progress, and more to do with anecdotes. It is interesting that he thinks that this format will be the best way to expose the lines of force that he claims to see, and explain how they contributed to the 20th century; if he is honest here when he states his purpose, he only begins to discuss his topic in earnest in last third of the book, and even then, not without mundane interruptions.

Chapter 29 Vis Inertiae (1903)

Chapter 29 Vis Inertiae (1903) Summary

Hay is still at his peak, but a great crisis is at hand: control of access to China is threatened by the German/Russian diplomatic alliance. Russia, with its vast size and inertia, is particularly dangerous and difficult to stop. Unexpectedly, the Kaiser replaces his former minister in London, Holleben, who had worked closely with the Russians against Hay, with someone less supportive of Russia. Hay is now able to concentrate all his effort on negotiations with and against Cassini, the Russian minister. Russia seems to be poised, regardless, to roll over China, and thus to roll over Hay. The Russian inertia that Adams had observed earlier begins to have an effect on the stability of the world. Adams wonders, "what and where the vis nova that could hold it's own before this prodigious ices-cap of inertia? What was movement of inertia, and what its laws"

According to Adams, all minds move: inertial minds are always moving and being moved by a motive. "If the laws of inertia are to be sought anywhere with certainty, it is the feminine mind." Adams finds that there is inertia both in terms of sex and race (Russia). Women, he says, are better than men; American men are failures; women, though unnoticed, are the power behind them. He notes, jokingly yet seriously, that the wives of all his powerful friends are more capable than the men.

Chapter 29 Vis Inertiae (1903) Analysis

If the feminine mind holds the keys to the laws of inertia, then inertia is linked with the Virgin, and thus also with unity. Russia would also be linked to the Virgin, and thus to unity. And so unity is a sign of inertia, while multiplicity is a sign of acceleration. But even though inertia is dangerous, as represented by Russia, it must also be a positive, because Adams identifies it with women, who he declares to be superior to American men, and with the Virgin, which he clearly respects.

It must be possible, then, for inertia and acceleration to exist together, unless Adams sees women becoming more like men as multiplicity and acceleration become the norm in the 20th century. This could be a premonition of women's suffrage and emancipation.

Chapter 30 The Grammar of Science (1903)

Chapter 30 The Grammar of Science (1903) Summary

Adams reads a book called "Grammar of Science," by Karl Pearson, after it is recommended to him. The book is supposed to be revolutionary in explaining the new science and demolishing the prejudices that still existed from the science of earlier centuries but Adams finds it to be twenty years behind the times, and a pale imitation of a book by Stallo that Adams had read years ago. Adams surveys various scientific views that attempt in various ways to explain how to look at the world, how to produce a theory or synthesis that would make a unity out of the observed complexity, but the only formula that satisfies Adams is "Matter [is] Motion, - Motion [is] Matter, - the thing moved" which is his own coinage. He arrives at it after reading several attempts to reduce the world to essential elements; for him, motion, in the sense of accelerating (technological) progress was the principle element that needed to be understood.

Chapter 30 The Grammar of Science (1903) Analysis

Adams again turns to science and comes away unimpressed by the unifying theories that are being published. However, since he is still searching for unity, for a theory that can replace God, settles on his "motion" formulation, which reappears later in his attempt at constructing a dynamic theory of history based on forces that attract and repel and on the notion of cultures being in states of either acceleration or inertia. The key, though, is the emphasis on motion, on movement, which Adams sees as emblematic of the US in the 20th century.

Chapter 31 Vis Nova (1903-1904)

Chapter 31 Vis Nova (1903-1904) Summary

International unity is threatened by the looming war between Russia and Japan. Hay's plans are in jeopardy, but he is still famous and powerful. On a vacation to recuperate from the stress of his position, he visits the St. Louis Exhibition; Adams accompanies him. The exhibition, full of new technological advances, is as amazing as ever; to Adams, the chaos of education is a dream. His next stop, after this latest visit to the Dynamo, is to Coutinces in France, to see the Virgin. Examining the artistry there, he notices that even in the past, there were signs of the coming complexity - even though the acceleration is only really noticeable now, it had been going on for quite some time, as culture moved away from unity towards complexity. Adams decides to work out a dynamic theory of history.

Chapter 31 Vis Nova (1903-1904) Analysis

It seems like Adams is accelerating noticeably now as well, attempting, at this late stage of his life, to work out a theory of history. Looking back, there are signs much earlier in the book of his growing complexity - every time that he notices that the education provided by an institution or experience is not suited to the 19th or 20th century, he seems to be straining against the inertia around him. Since his childhood, he has also been moving away from unity, in the form of his Puritan attitudes, towards something more complex. At no stage can a culture or a person truly be said to exist in unity or complexity - it is all a matter of perspective.

Chapter 32 A Dynamic Theory of History (1904)

Chapter 32 A Dynamic Theory of History (1904) Summary

Adams works out the basic definitions for his dynamic theory of history. Progress is the "development and economy of forces." Force is "anything that does, or helps to do work." Man is " the sum of the forces that attract him." The entire theory is based on motivating forces resulting in work and or progress being accomplished.

Adams writes that man is attracted to energy and force and power; in the past, he called it divine and worshipped it - unable to define force, man symbolizes it an d pursues it. The present is not so different from the past, it is only more complex: instead of machines, early civilization had slaves, but the pursuit and use of force was the same. However, in the past, there were powerful intuitions that regulated the acceleration that Adams observes. What the Church really condemned, thinks Adams, were anarchists, not atheists. It had stood against anything that would hasten the breakdown of the unity, anything that would, as Adams would like, remove the friction inhibiting progress.

Chapter 32 A Dynamic Theory of History (1904) Analysis

As Adams states it here, the real opposition is not acceleration versus inertia, or unity versus complexity, but institutions that seek to preserve what they take consider to be unity against the natural increase in complexity. The atheists were condemned not because they did not believe in God, but because, by not believing in God, they threatened the authority of the Church to regulate culture so that progress or increased complexity was impossible. However the state that institutions, like the Church, sought to maintain was already complex, and already represented a breakdown of the old order. There were no dynamos or machines in the past, Adams points out, but there were slaves, and they were used in an analogous manner.

Chapter 33 A Law of Acceleration (1904)

Chapter 33 A Law of Acceleration (1904) Summary

Adams writes that 19th Century society measures its progress by coal output. The Dynamo is the symbol of the age; "the ratio of increase in the volume of coal power may serve as a dynamometer," and "by the rate of progress since 1800, every American who lived into the year 2000 would know how to control unlimited power." It is not just the world in general that is accelerating, but America in particular, led by its advances in science, it's growth in political and economic power, it's conversion to capitalism. Acceleration, and thus the expansion of the nation in space and in power, is the guiding law of America in the 20th Century.

Chapter 33 A Law of Acceleration (1904) Analysis

Adams puts forth a very optimistic view of "acceleration," in which he ignores all the possible problems that might arise in a society continually accelerating, increasing its industry, its production and consumption of energy, and its complexity. He may be optimistic, but it does not seem unreasonable to assume that, based on the rate of progress, an American in 2000 might know how to control unlimited power, if one thinks only in terms of technical knowledge, of being able to flip a switch and access electricity to light a house and run a computer and download a copy of Adams' book via the Internet, but there is no evidence that an American might know how to control that power in any other sense. Even though he saw the steamer develop into a machine vastly superior to the one he first travelled on in the space of twenty years, he also saw a Washington that hardly changed. Adams does not do enough to address the social and cultural inertia that he observes coexisting with technological acceleration.

Chapter 34 Nunc Age (1905)

Chapter 34 Nunc Age (1905) Summary

Adams returns to New York and is impressed by the size and power of the city, though not necessarily pleased with it. It seems like a city devoted to the acceleration and power of the Dynamo, but also of all the anarchy and chaos brought about by the fragmentation and complexity at work since his moment of unity in the 13th century. "The new American must be either the child of the new forces or a chance sport of nature." Progress, in technology and in capitalism, is unstoppable, but Adams still has hopes for the future; Hay has come as close as possible to assuring world peace, at least for a while, and Adams hopes that he can return in 1938, the centenary of his birth, to see a world that has learned from its mistakes and mastered chaos and corruption.

Chapter 34 Nunc Age (1905) Analysis

As Adams points out, progress is unstoppable, and a new education is necessary, one that will prepare Americans to deal with the new forces - that is, to live with them and use them, rather than merely reacting to them. His own education did not prepare him, but it may be that this book will help lay the groundwork to create such an education. The new age that he depicts is not a utopia, and it is poised to turn into a dystopia - in the end, Adams is less enthusiastic than in the preceding chapters about the prospects of "removing friction" and allowing the new forces free play. He is also resigned, as it will not be his generation that experiences the results of the development that he charted in this book, and which he feels he helped to guide. He depicts himself and his peers moving off into the sunset as the new age begins.

Characters

Mrs. Louisa Catherine Adams

Despite Abigail's disapproval, Louisa was an ideal wife for John Quincy while they lived within the circle of European and American elite; as a wife of a Bostonian, Louisa fails miserably.

Mrs. Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, is the ideal eighteenth-century woman. Abigail's disapproval of Louisa (Johnson) as a suitable match for her son, John Quincy, provides insight into Adams' idea of women. He says that this moment of disapproval teaches the correctness of women's judgment.

Brooks Adams

While Adams teaches at Harvard, he rooms in the same house as his brother, Brooks, who was attending law school. Brooks, younger by a decade, influences Adams' thinking about history. Brooks "taught [Adams] that the relation between civilizations was that of trade." Due to Brooks' influence, Adams searches the ancient trading routes for "a city of thought" but does not find one.

Henry Brooks Adams

The main character of the story attempts to discuss what parts of education are useful according to his own experiences. His search for knowledge also imitates other spiritual odysseys like Dante's or that of John Bunyan's Christian. He gained little from structured educational experiences. Whether grade school or Harvard College, education by discipline is a large waste of time in his mind. Stubbornly, Adams sticks to the idea that four tools are necessary to any successful education. They are knowledge of German, Spanish, French, and a facility with mathematics. Those are the building blocks. Otherwise, he highlights certain lessons in his own life but does not come up with any kind of educational program.

Mrs. Abigail Brown Adams

Abigail Brown, daughter of Peter Brooks and wife of Charles Francis, proved to be a great asset to the American legation in London because she excelled in British custom. Adams realizes that his mother's success stems from her ability to assimilate.

Mr. Charles Francis Adams

Adams' father, Charles Francis, served as America's minister to the Court of St. James during the American Civil War. His diplomatic success in preventing the British from openly siding with the Southern Confederacy is a highpoint of Adams' education, though it disqualified him for a political career. Adams looks to his father as his first role model.

Adams realizes that his father's concern with national politics stems from a principled refusal to take part in the corruption of state politics. He also admires his father's mind as it interacts with allies in the parlor of the Quincy home. Adams judges his father's mind to be "the only perfectly balanced mind that ever existed in the name." This did not mean it was a brilliant mind but that it "worked with singular perfection" so that Charles Francis "stood alone"□without master. A motivating force for this mind was a staunch conviction of Puritan thought that prevented Charles Francis from compromising his abolitionist stance.

President John Quincy Adams

Adams holds up his grandfather, John Quincy, as an exemplar man of power who can coerce others into following a proper path. While a boy, Adams once attempted to avoid going to school by throwing a tantrum against his mother. This ended when "the President" silently ushered him all the way to his school desk. "The President... had shown no temper, no irritation, no personal feeling, and had made no display of force. Above all, he had held his tongue." The remarkable thing for Adams about this experience was the impact; the president acted so correctly that Adams felt no "rancor" but just the opposite, he admired where before he had been "paralyzed by awe." The episode is just one of many moments in the book when Adams reflects on the proper use of power.

George Sewall Boutwell

Boutwell's appointment to secretary of the treasury by President Grant suggests that the Grant administration, in Adams' terms, will be victimized by "inertia." Boutwell's incompetence encouraged the notorious robber baron, Jay Gould, to attempt to corner the gold market. A nationwide panic ensued. Sadly, Boutwell represents the type of politician "pathetic in their helplessness to do anything with power when it came to them."

John Bright

Orators like John Bright, one of the most eloquent orators of nineteenth-century Britain, succeed in politics not only as a result of having "the courage of a prize-fighter" but because "Bright knew his Englishmen better than England did." Consequently, Bright "knew what amount of violence in language was necessary to drive an idea into a

Lancashire or Yorkshire head." Bright's professional success bolsters Adams repertoire of lessons in national difference. Adams knows that Bright's methods would not work anywhere but amongst the English. Adams also sees that Bright's verbal violence combines with other qualities. Bright "betrayed no one, and he never advanced an opinion in practical matters that did not prove to be practical."

Peter Chardon Brooks

Adams' "other grandfather," Peter Brooks, was a wealthy banker whose fortune at his death was the largest in Boston. Brooks' estate was divided amongst the children and thus the Adams family increased in wealth through Abigail Brown's share.

Senator James Donald Cameron

Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania "had shipwrecked his career in the person of President Grant." Adams sees Cameron as a Pennsylvanian in the mold of Benjamin Franklin. For Adams, the Pennsylvanian puts aside his prejudices against the world once his interests are allied with those of others. Accordingly, Cameron was a member of Adams' circle as he was an ally of Hay, Lodge, and Roosevelt.

George Douglas Campbell

See Duke of Argyll

Duke of Argyll

One of Charles Francis' most valuable friends during his service at the Court of St. James was the duke of Argyll. The duke believed in Russell's honesty and Charles Francis follows him. Their gullibility amazes Adams.

Charles William Eliot

Adams had a brief career as a professor at the request of the president of Harvard College, Charles Eliot. After seven years, Adams views collegiate education, even under Eliot's reformed system, as costly and wasteful. Eliot "hinted that Adams's services merited recognition."

William Maxwell Evarts

Upon his return from London, Adams found welcome in the home of William Evarts, President Johnson's attorney general. They had long discussions about legal tender as

Evarts sought to defend the president's position, although, Evarts had opposed it in the past.

William Edward Forster

One of the British statesmen who helps Charles Francis and the cause of the Union was the talented young radical, William Edward Forster. According to Adams, Forster was "pure gold" even when he eventually became part of the establishment as he rose to the rank of cabinet minister.

William Evart Gladstone

Gladstone's confession of 1896 causes Adams to rethink his education as private secretary to his father. In 1905, Adams learns that Gladstone considered it a mistake on his part to have thought that Jefferson Davis had actually formed a nation□a gross mistake that nearly led to war□but still a mistake. Dumbfounded by the passage, Adams reflects that "he had seen nothing correctly at the time. His whole theory of conspiracy ... resolved itself into [Gladstone's] 'incredible grossness.'" However, as with his grandfather, Adams feels no rancor because he believes that nothing about an individual's psychology can impact an historical event.

John Hay

As a reward for his support of McKinley's Republican campaign for the presidency, Hay was appointed the American ambassador to England. However, when William R. Day left to finalize the outcome of the Spanish-American War in Paris, Hay was recalled to serve as secretary of state. He stayed in this position.

Hay is the ideal American for Adams in part because he brings to fruition the political machinations of Adams' forebears. Hay studies John Quincy's work closely and he seeks advice from Adams on a regular basis. In Hay's successful foreign policy, Adams sees "the family work of a hundred and fifty years fell at once into the grand perspective of true empire building."

Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar

Adams' continuing hopes for a political position are dashed when he finds himself in disagreement with his friend, Ebenezer Hoar, President Grant's attorney general. Adams writes an article in favor of the Supreme Court in the matter of the Legal Tender Cases. Hoar, as Grant's point man, favors the government's right to print paper specie. The Supreme Court decided against this in 1870 but after Grant appointed two more justices, the Court found in favor of the government when it revisited the question. As a result of the political fights, Hoar was driven from office.

Lord Houghton

See Richard Monckton Milnes

Clarence King

As the first head of the Geological Survey, Clarence King was a remarkable combination of hardy adventurer and scientist. The occupation and exploitation of the continent was made possible due to men like King. For Adams, King is larger than life□a scientist but also a man who can survive in the wilderness. However, King's abilities do not prevent his tragic end. Losing his fortune in the crash of 1893, King dies alone and forgotten in a hotel in the Southwest.

Mrs. Louisa Catherine Kuhn

Firstborn child to Charles Francis and Abigail Brown, Louisa "was one of the most sparkling creatures [Adams] met in a long and varied experience of bright women." Louisa married Charles Kuhn and invited Adams to join them on a European tour. Adams happily accepts an excuse to leave Germany. This experience reminds Adams of the superiority of nineteenth-century American women□ especially those of the Adams family□and his preference for being in their control.

Though Italy proved to be a wonderful influence on Adams, the death of Louisa becomes a powerful lesson; "he had never seen Nature□only her surface□the sugar-coating that she shows to youth." This was the first time Adams had watched someone die. Louisa had been thrown from a cab and bruised her foot. Tetanus had set in and "hour by hour the muscles grew rigid, while the mind remained bright, until after ten days of fiendish torture she died in convulsions." The "harsh brutality of chance" was not soon forgotten.

Mrs. Anna Cabot Mills Lodge

Along with Mrs. Cameron, Anna Lodge was a "dispenser of sunshine over Washington." Adams views Anna in a light usually reserved only for the women of his family. Mirroring the role of Louisa, Anna takes command of Adams. In 1895, when all the world seemed just simply too confusing to Adams, Anna gives him the busy task of serving as traveling companion and tutor to the Lodges and their two sons.

Henry Cabot Lodge

One of Adam's students at Harvard was Henry Lodge. Adams regarded Lodge as a younger brother or nephew and a source of solace toward the end of his life.

James Russell Lowell

Adams finds classes at Harvard a bore until he begins to take advantage of the German method of private readings used by James Russell Lowell. "Education was not serious" but Adams found Lowell to be a good conversationalist.

Richard Monckton Milnes

Richard Milnes epitomizes the "gargantuan type," the sort of man who is larger than life and whose grasp seems universal. Milnes was a member of the upper class whose breakfasts were so famous that nobody dared turn down an invitation but died to attend. He knew everyone and excelled in his literary and artistic tastes. As one of the pro-Union faction, he often provided refuge to Charles Francis at his home in Fryston.

Viscount Palmerston

When the Adams family journeys to the Court of St. James on behalf of the United States government in 1861, they find the British prime minister to be Palmerston. Known for his fiery defense of "British Interest," Adams likens his family to Christians showing up in Rome during the time of Emperor Tiberius when martyring Christians was good sport. Palmerston represents the despotic ruler who sacrifices others on a whim.

Earl John Russell

A study in British politicians is found in Palmerson's betise, John Russell. Of all the pro-Confederacy members of the British government, Russell's call for recognition of the American rebels is the loudest. In the end, his scheming falls apart and he must bow to Charles Francis and international law by finding new buyers for the deadly ironclads that he wanted to send against the Union Navy.

Governor William Henry Seward

William Seward was secretary of state to President Lincoln and friend of the Adams family since the days of the Free Soil Party.

Augustus St. Gaudens

Throughout the text, Adams lists Augustus St. Gaudens among the great artists of his day. In passing, Adams comments on his aesthetic reaction to the memorial Adams commissioned for Mrs. Henry Adams at Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C. The statue, in the text, is simply the virgin, the symbol of femininity, opposing the dynamo.

Charles Sumner

Until he disapproves of Charles Francis' appointment to head the legation to St. James Court in London, Charles Sumner stood fast as a friend of the family and a role model to young Adams. While still pursuing their unpopular abolitionist crusade as members of the Free Soil Party in Boston, Sumner stood out amongst Charles Francis' friends as "heroic." Sumner stood alone□he was without family and his political position made many doors closed to him. His lack of Boston allies outside the Adams' circle caused Sumner to cultivate his European connections. For this reason, he is one of the few American leaders during the Civil War of which the British think well.

Henry John Temple

See Viscount Palmerston

Themes

Education

Adams presents himself as a scientist who will sample and test various methods of education so that he may offer some wisdom for a man facing the twentieth century. As he says in the preface, "no one has discussed what part of education has, in his personal experience, turned out to be useful, and what not. This volume attempts to discuss it." Traditional systems of education are soundly rejected; a schoolmaster is "a man employed to tell lies to little boys." The lecture system found in colleges does not fair much better nor does scientific education: "the theory of scientific education failed where most theory fails□for want of money."

In the rejection of standard educational systems, Adams formulates an alternative understanding of education. The acquisition of knowledge should not be the mastery of the schoolmaster's unity or the complete embrace of all possible scientific facts. Instead, education "required conflict, competition, contradiction" and "accidental education" in order to see the "world exactly as it is." For this reason, he emphasizes those moments in life when he learned by accident. His experience with men, from his grandfather to his students, teaches him about power and the benefit of a balanced mind. His experience with women teaches the profound problem of multiplicity. Accidental education causes Adams to realize that society does not educate itself "or aimed at a conscious purpose." Consequently, Adams notes that successful minds are those that react to the capriciousness of reality.

While Adams hints throughout the work that education amounts to self-knowledge, his formulation of self-knowledge involves an understanding of the journey he has been through. Toward the end of the text, Adams says:

Every man with self-respect enough to become effective, if only as a machine, has had to account to himself for himself somehow, and to invent a formula of his own for his universe, if the standard formulas failed, there, whether finished or not, education stopped.

Though a man may "invent a formula," his success is not assured. To prove this, Adams compares the fate of Clarence King and John Hay, two men who were able to formulate their universe and be effective. Hay masters the instruments of state in order to guide the foreign policy of the country through two administrations. King also has a formula□literally, he has an ingenious one for surveying the 40th parallel. However, King's story proves that science cannot exist independently of money, which King loses in the economic downturn of 1893.

Technology

For Adams, technology is intrinsic to an understanding of the great difference between the late nineteenth and the thirteenth century. Moreover, technology holds the key to a bright future so long as a new mind will emerge within society that will not be overawed by it. Adams' inability to react appropriately to science and technology exacerbates his propensity for failure. This is presented early in the work through Adams' preference for a non-technological Boston to which the Boston and Albany Railroad has come regardless of his wishes. To his credit, Adams stubbornly faces the source of his discomfort with technology, especially with coal.

Adams constantly watches out for the extent to which a society, starting with his own, is burning coal. He knows that coal fuels industry, which fuels the economy. The cost to a society is the illness of its workers and of sections of the country. Still, Adams feels everyone must face up to coal in all its forms. For this reason, Adams describes coal production as a "Black District, another lesson, which needed much more to be rightly felt." Facing coal and its lesson becomes a rite of passage. Coal "made a boy uncomfortable.... The boy ran away from it, as he ran away from everything he disliked. " But a man of education will face coal and its meaning. Within his scientific observation of societies, "Coal-power alone asserted evolution□of power□and only by violence could be forced to assert selection of type." Thus, the country that makes the best use of their coal will, eventually, be the greatest industrial might. The other technology Adams celebrates is the railway. The train engine burns coal and, therefore, the miles of track are another indicator of a country's coal-power.

History

Throughout *The Education of Henry Adams,* Adams formulates a new idea about scientific history wherein historical events emerge out of chaos or from nowhere, like the *Pteraspis.* The only thing that events prove, for Adams, is the ever-changing nature of society. Adams' notion of history invalidates any attempt to assume a grand narrative of history like the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Venerable Bede." History, in this view, becomes a dynamic and ever-changing record of life. Narrative approaches, meanwhile, indicate the specific feature of society Adams loathes, inertia.

Through the experience of actually teaching history from this viewpoint, Adams realizes the difficulty. His approach encourages students to think independently but without mastery of a body of knowledge that could be examined or displayed in a measurable way. Thus, while his approach approximates a more accurate understanding of historical dynamism, ironically it fails to be useful.

Style

Autobiography

Adams uses his life story to illustrate his views of society, history, and education. However, his employment of the third person point of view serves to distance himself and the reader from the intimacy normally associated with the autobiographical form. As he confesses in his preface, the character of Henry Adams is a manikin□a figure adapted to the author's wants. In this case, the character of Adams becomes adapted to the larger purpose of exploring the theme of education that is a series of disillusionment with his "real" life, the promises of education, the United States as a nation, and women.

Other clues in the Preface and allusions scattered throughout the text technically support the conscientious illusion of autobiography and the admitted attempt at spiritual autobiography. In the preface, the figures of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and St. Augustine are invoked. Adams imitates their works to some extent in that he attempts to embody the fate of the nation. Later he will conjure Rasselas, Odysseus, and Dante. Like their works, his is a story of a journey toward knowledge. The fact that he never arrives at knowledge displays the impossibility of the quest. In other words, Adams' narrative device supports his theme of failure in order to operate as a reality check on those grandiose narratives of Western man.

Symbolism and Metaphor

Adams marks the break up of unity into chaos with various signs. Adams identifies these symbols and metaphors as such in the text. Due to the self-conscious discussion of symbols, they act as rational signposts for the larger theory of the work instead of romantic allusions. Adams consistently interrupts unified pictures with inhuman forces. One of the way s in which these two techniques work is exemplified in the death of his sister. His sister, symbolizing the unity of femininity and youth, has an accident that leads to an excruciating death. As Adams witnesses this, he identifies the entrance of nature into his text as a force of chaos that will forever disrupt attempts by humans to form unity.

Every time Adams mentions Quincy, the eighteenth century, or Boston, he evokes a string of nostalgia for a happier, quiet, almost Edenic time. Simultaneously, technologic representatives enter to ensure disruption and multiplicity. For Adams, a garden of bliss and rest is impossible for whenever a woman makes it likely, technology or other forces like a capricious nature, interrupt. The event of his sister's death encapsulates this construction, but the formula presents itself very early in the work. For example:

he and his eighteenth-century troglodytic Boston were suddenly cut apart□separated forever□in act if not in sentiment, by the opening of the Boston and Albany Railroad; the

appearance of the first Cunard steamers in the bay; and the telegraphic messages which carried [news] from Baltimore to Washington.

Motif

Thinking that a number of perplexing problems with a scientific approach to history can be cleared up through an understanding of evolution, Adams seeks out the ultimate parent. Sir Charles Lyell introduces him to the *Pteraspis.* The fish happens to be the first vertebrate but its existence clarifies nothing about evolution. The fish simply enables him to prove change. In terms of the evolutionary chart, before the fish is nothing and after the fish is everything. From this point on, *Pteraspis* serves as a shorthand for those men or machines that appear in history with profound effect but no obvious ancestry.

Another motif is Adams' actual or virtual sitting on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria di Ara Coeli in Rome. The first time he sits there, he explains the significance of his act; his guidebook told him it was the place where Edward Gibbon had sat when he conceived the idea of writing *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Mention, therefore, of the Ara Coeli invokes Gibbon, Rome, and the historiographic fact that despite Gibbon's monumental history on Rome, the mystery of the fall of Roman Civilization remains just as provocative. Both Ara Coeli and *Pteraspis* repeatedly show Adams the futility of his quest for ultimate education. The motifs declare that Adams will fail in his attempt to clearly trace a line of progress from the Middle Ages to the present

Obfuscation

The Education of Henry Adams does not faithfully represent historical events. Rather, Adams selects episodes when it suits his purpose for exploring themes. Certain events left out of the narrative lend support to the idea that part of the intent of the work was to mystify the elite of the United States. For example, Adams glosses over the fact that as capitalist industrialists moved toward full mass production, the skills of their workers dwindled, as one worker would insert a pin, another tighten a bolt, etc. Trained craftsmen were being replaced by unskilled laborers as technology became more prevalent. Adams does not hint at the embarrassing fate that befell his hero, Charles Sumner on the floor of the U.S. Senate Chamber when he was beaten with a cane. Violent outbursts with canes on the Senate floor were not unknown but Sumner spent the next three years recovering from the assault. Nor does Adams mention that Clarence King, under the name John Todd, had maintained a family with Ada Copeland, an African American□despite his proud recollection of his family's anti-slavery position.

Historical Context

Reform Era

A new spirit of civic awareness by members of the middle class who identified themselves as Progressives launched the Reform Era in the 1890s. Progressives believed that the rampant development of the economy had led to wasted resources, lives, and health. In response, Progressives applied a belief in maximum efficiency to every facet of life. Their goal was to make America a more efficient society and, in the end, more prosperous. The Progressives also applied new ideas about the individual. They replaced social Darwinism with envi-ronmentalism: good environments made good citizens. Thus, an improvement of society's environment (namely cities) would improve the citizenry. Both tenants were mixed with a fervent belief in the "Social Gospel" or a secularizing of the Christian gospels. Progressives, in other words, sought to make real the messages of "love of neighbor" that they believed Christ taught.

During the Reform Era, slums were cleared, houses built, and municipal services begun: sewage and water systems were installed and garbage pickup became customary. Political reform also made some headway as the corrupt political machines fell to the onslaught of Progressives and Populists. Labor movements seemed ascendant in the same era that Robber Barons ruled corporations whose annual profits dwarfed those of the entire U.S. tax revenue. Socialist parties were viable entities and would soon count mayors and governors. At the same time, the federal government regularly leant its troops to corporations engaged in battles with striking workers.

Progressives gradually looked to the federal government to increase its powers and control the reign of the Robber Barons. To this end, the Roosevelt administration began utilizing the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) that led to the dissolution of the Northern Securities Company under order of the Supreme Court in 1904. Real progress against monopolies would not be made, however, until the Taft Administration's victory over the American Tobacco Company and the Standard Oil Company (both in 1911). The Reform Era ended with World War I.

Panic of 1907

The gross national product (GNP) in the United States increased from $18.7 billion in 1900 to $35.3 billion in 1910. Along the way, serious doubts were cast on the economy by the crisis of 1907, and the stock market collapse of 1893 (which affected the Adams family fortunes negatively) was never far from the minds of investors. Early warning signs accompanied the dawn of the new century: runaway global economic growth combined with an increase in government security issues fueled stock speculation that met a credit supply that had been decreasing since 1900. Countries responded by increasing their interest rates. Banks in Tokyo began to fail in early 1907 and were soon followed by banks in Europe and South America. Stock prices began to fall as a

consequence but F. Augustus Heinze's attempt to corner the copper market almost destroyed the American financial market.

America Becomes a World Power

Responsibility for the emergence of the United States as a world power, normally attributed to Roosevelt, lies with Secretary of State John Hay. The most precious advantage Hay gained for this coming out was the roping in of European powers into an American system of peace in the Atlantic. Guided by conversations with Henry Adams, Hay made the United States appear benevolent toward other nations in the name of open markets and free trade. This rule set the pace for American Foreign Policy of the twentieth century.

Hay's diplomacy had the backing of American victories. A military defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War thrust America onto the world stage. This was accompanied by a display of force and technical ability through a circumnavigation of the globe by the U.S. Navy. Furthermore, successful construction of the long dreamed of Panama Canal, where the French had failed, crowned America's claim as an industrial power. These successes were unambiguous. However, the accomplishment of the "Open Door Policy" in China, paternalism in Latin America and the Philippines were less admirable.

The United States appeared to be a non-aggressor in the European race for colonies. Appearances aside, the United States agreed to allow European aggression so long as it respected the Monroe Doctrine (allowing the United States governance of the American hemisphere). This arrangement allowed the United States to violently put down the Filipino revolt and annex Hawaii. In all matters concerning the hemisphere, the American government took a stance favorable to multinational corporations.

Critical Overview

A discussion of the reception of the *The Education of Henry Adams* must first consider its route of dissemination. Adams first distributed his swan song to what amounts to a list of the one hundred most powerful and influential people of his time. He asked, in a rather tricky fashion, that each person correct their text and return it to him. Few were bold enough to do so and of those who did, Charles Eliot□who brought Adams to Harvard as professor of history and who created the famous Harvard Classics Series□returned his copy without comment.

Considering that the work won a Pulitzer for autobiography, biographers have found the text a tantalizing source for insight into the mind of Adams. Within this biographical criticism there are different points of emphasis. For example, Richard P. Blackmur, in *The Expense of Greatness,* focuses on the *The Education of Henry Adams* as Adams' reflection on his contribution to society. Gerrit H. Roelofs" 'Henry Adams: Pessimism and the Intelligent Use of Doom" disagrees with Blackmur. For Roelof, Adams is challenging the twentieth century to live up to the greatness of the nineteenth century.

Another emphasis of scholars discussing Adams' work focuses on those moments in the text that predict America's development. Granville Hickes concludes his review, "Struggle and Flight," with "it is little exaggeration to say that *The Education of Henry Adams* carries us from the adolescence of American industrial capitalism to its senility." Nearly fifty years later, William Wassertrom echoed Hicks, in *The Ironies of Progress,* saying, "it was indeed Henry Adams who first insisted that America itself belied progress, that these states did in fact symbolize the hope and despair of advanced industrial order in the world." Adams' obvious perspicuity in all matters of American industrial triumph made *The Education of Henry Adams* an inspirational text during the first decade of the Cold War. In *The Scientific Thought of Henry Adams,* Henry Wasser appreciates Adams' rationalization of historical thought and its use as a point of reflection. Wasser writes, "Adams is scientific in his history in the sense that he tries to deduce the laws of history from the laws of science wherein laws applicable to human society are a special case of the laws applicable to the entire universe."

Recent criticism is applying gender and postcolonial theory to show that Adams veils the patriarchal and imperial operations of his friends and peers. Martha Banta, in "Being a 'Begonia' in a Man's World," exposes how Adams manipulates the period's notions of masculinity. Banta raises the idea that "whether [Adams] viewed himself as living up to his credentials as a male within the masculine society through which he moved" matters in a consideration of the text. John Carlos Rowe investigates another area of mystique. In *"The Education of Henry Adams* and the American Empire," Rowe zeroes in on the avowed purpose of the text to explain "Twentieth-Century Multiplicity " with the complete absence of any mention of "the political forces clearly reshaping the globe at the turn of the century." All of the critics mentioned here and those left out do agree with current assessments that *The Education of Henry Adams* belongs in the list of the greatest nonfiction works of the twentieth century.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Hubbell seeks a Ph.D. in history with an emphasis on technological development at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he is a member of the Technoscience Research Group. In the following essay, he examines the relevance of Adams' work in the contemporary American philosophy of technology.

Long before the digital age caused headlines about digital divides and the rapidity of innovation, thinkers reflected upon human adaptation to accelerated technological innovation. *The Education of Henry Adams,* written as a reflection on the so-called second industrial revolution, was welcomed as such a reflection when it was published but has since become simply an autobiography. Adam's text explores the interaction between humans and technology, making note of generational tensions surrounding innovation. The idea of a child operating the VCR better than the parent enjoys the status of cliché now, but the concept of technology requiring new minds was not common knowledge at the time of Adams' writing. Yet, Adams foresaw that innovation would demand new types of people and personalities who in turn required greater technological complexity. In his work, Adams does not simply praise science or display the way in which technology awes the elderly; he also reveals the American pattern for embracing and adopting technology. The way in which Adams formulates his reflections early in the twentieth century has a similarity to the work of American philosopher of technology, Don Ihde, at the end of the century. Ihde, author of *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth,* without having read Adams uses the metaphoric device, the Garden of Eden, which is repeatedly used in *The Education of Henry Adams* to expose society's philosophy of technology.

Adams encapsulates this concern by tracing the trajectory of civilization as it evolved from the unity of Christendom (1200 A.D.) to multiplicity (1900 A.D.) through the heuristic device of the Garden of Eden. By way of contrast, Ihde uses the Garden of Eden motif to trace technological adaptation in different but contemporary cultures. He shows that even supposedly primitive tribes who, by definition, exist without the other worries of civilization live by virtue of technology exactly developed for their environment. Further, Adams shows that people are naturally quick to implement new technologies into an existing regime: "human activity from immemorial time and across the diversity of cultures has always been technologically embedded." This happens, according to Ihde, because technologies are multi-stable. By this term, he sums up the idea that while "technologies transform experience and its variations" for humans, the way in which this happens is without intent, or determinism. In other words, humans select technologies and utilize them for their specific purposes; they are not victimized by technology. Each accelerated stage of this process at once disturbs humans in their supposedly non-technological garden until the technology withdraws into the background. When humans grow accustomed to riding trains, for example, then train travel becomes a "normal" part of life, part of society's garden. While Adams would agree with this analysis, he would focus on the process by which a technological device becomes disturbing and then accepted by people. With wariness, Adams considers the

ability of the human mind to react quickly enough to innovation, a concern Ihde does not share.

While "The Dynamo and the Virgin," chapter XXV of *The Education of Henry Adams,* is one of the most often quoted chapters in the theoretical writings on technology, the rest of the book is often neglected. Many theorists have discussed Adams' arguments on science, but rarely has he been taken seriously as a philosopher of technology. Certainly, Adams helped popularize science and technology and he desired to examine history in scientific terms. But scientific elements in the course of historical reflection or moments of awe before dynamos do not begin to make a philosophy of technology. What proves that Adams is a philosopher of technology is his contention that technology always exists in relation to human society, represented by the metaphoric garden; through the garden motif he simulates the cultural process of technological adaptation. His formula shows that as technology grows more complex and prevalent, human society becomes a technologically embedded garden□a technical ecology that supports human interaction.

Throughout Adams' text, a form of technology, whether Faraday's magnet, Curie's radiation, or Lyell's Pteraspis, presents "evidence of growing complexity, and multiplicity, and even contradiction." This leads him to surmise that he was "still Adam in the Garden of Eden between God who was unity, Satan who was complexity, with no means of deciding which was truth." This self-reflection is part of Adams' problem: he wants to be in the position of making the choice. Adams wants to introduce technology to himself and to his world, his garden, and not be imposed upon. Thus, Adams tries to experience the entire rail network in America and see how it makes the great space of America a garden viewed comfortably from a window. However, technology arrives too quickly for Adams to adapt to it and he cannot help but grow angry, feel cheated, and attribute a consciousness or magic to it. When Adams is not deluding himself, he knows he exists in a multi-stable universe where he can receive telegraphed reports from his friends back in Washington, D.C., even while exploring the primitive land of the Laps: "the electro-dynamo-social universe worked better even than the sun." Adams does not hide from technology or fear it; rather, he wants to comprehend leisurely the import of technological arrivals. He wishes to appreciate the telegraph at his own pace, no matter how much it complicates his life. He desires to control technological introduction and use of technology, which is why he likes the automobile.

The human garden, for Adams, grows increasingly complex as humans develop their technology. Knowing that the past was simpler causes Adams to feel nostalgic. However, his nostalgia is ironic since Adams owes his awareness of the garden to which he attributes the most human balance, the Middle Ages, to a form of technology. The ultimate Garden of the Gothic Cathedrals of Normandy was made possible by the automobile:

the automobile alone could unite them in any reasonable sequence, and although the force of the automobile, for the purposes of a commercial traveler, seemed to have no relation whatever to the force that inspired a Gothic cathedral, the Virgin in the twelfth

century would have guided and controlled both bag-man and architect, as she controlled the seeker of history.

Adams knows that every human activity has been embedded with technology, but as a historian, he carefully denotes the arrival of each technology and the way it changes his garden. The number one machine disturbing his gardens is the railroad, but the steamer and the telegraph are worthy assistants while the automobile has not yet begun to alter the landscape. Adams begins this pattern of disruption of the old by the new early in the book, stating that "he and his eighteenth-century troglodytic Boston were suddenly cut apart□separated forever□in act if not in sentiment, by the opening of the Boston and Albany Railroad."

Understanding the formulation of past gardens, like Eden or his beloved eighteenth-century Boston, questions the view that this is Adams' professed discomfort with the technological development of society. Rather, Adams□far from being a failure□ successfully outlines the garden as the space of societal change where the interaction between humans and their technology plays out. Adams views the human mind as deftly integrating technology and nature in order to renew the garden. Consider again the definition that Adams puts forth of the ideal man, one who has a "formula of his own for his universe" that makes him capable of reacting to and with societal change. Place that man in the following context:

The movement from unity into multiplicity, between 1200 and 1900, was unbroken in sequence, and rapid in acceleration. Prolonged one generation longer, it would require a new social mind... [that can] enter a new phase subject to new laws. Thus far, since five or ten thousand years, the mind had successfully reacted, and nothing yet proved that it would fail to react□but it would need to jump.

Now the Garden, whether eighteenth-century Boston always presented by Adams as literally disrupted by the arrival of the Boston-Albany Railroad, or primitive Lapland disturbed by the telegraph, is a natural and healthy indicator of the acceleration in societal complexity in place from the beginning. Like Ihde, Adams does not believe in a non-technological Garden, even though his religious predilection leads him to long for one.

Usually, in literature, the Garden of Eden motif conjures the notion of unspoiled nature created by God and untouched by human innovation; knowledge and changes created by it come with Satan's influence and, therefore, technology is automatically coded as evil. Showing that Adams plays with this motif out of a concern with technology and not simply with the theme of science, involves returning to *The Education of Henry Adams* to take seriously his consistent disruption of the Garden of Eden motif with a technological device. As a historian who desires time for reflection and introduction of new technology, Adams allows technology to appear as an evil disturbance in a calm scene, a traditional use of the image of the garden. However, he always writes about the same technology elsewhere as he uses it or as he reflects on how a device, say a telegraph, facilitates a positive aspect of human society□communication. Upsetting as

the technology is at first, it eventually becomes essential to human society so much so that it becomes a natural part of living: it withdraws and embeds itself within the garden.

Adams' employment of this formula is not a means of predicting future dystopias, but of creating a system of education□a philosophy□wherein the human mind remains reactive to technology. The idea that people might be paralyzed in the face of a new technology and shy away from it frightens Adams. For this reason, Adams' formula presents a series of gardens in time or in space to show how human society, humanity's garden, has already been disrupted by technological innovation. Such gardens include his visit to the Laps in Scandinavia, the cathedrals of Normandy, or eighteenth-century Boston. Each idyllic and calm setting is disrupted by a train, a telegraphed message, or made possible only because of the automobile. In other words, technology is never absent from the garden; Adam's idea of education demands that people always be quick to integrate technology into their conceptualization of the "garden" of America.

Utopian writers, like Edward Bellamy, pinned their hopes for deliverance of utopia on the advancement of technology. Technology historians, like Lewis Mumford, or urban planners, like Patrick Geddes, also assumed that technology would eventually realize a more healthy and prosperous human environment. Thus, at the time of turn-of-the-century doom and gloom, optimism flowed concerning the future; yet all agreed a new citizen was necessary. Adams partook of this utopian discussion as the sober, patrician voice. He reveals a consciousness of a technologically embedded world□a more complex, multi-stable lifeworld□and the consequent problems associated therein. Adams earnestly desired to expose, for the benefit of Americans, the ways in which they might educate themselves to live within an industrialized America. Today, Ihde hopes to do the same thing using the heuristic device originated by Adams, the Garden of Eden, because Americans continue to cling to the notion of an unspoiled nature.

Source: Jeremy W. Hubbell, Critical Essay on *The Education of Henry Adams,* in*Nonfiction Classics for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Horwitz discusses Adams' ideas on history writing as found in The Education of Henry Adams.

Adams's parody of the autobiographical self resonates in his parallel genre of history-writing, and it is not accidental that the Adams persona defines the self as mistake while deciding to accept the post at Harvard. Adams's persona is a clear diminution of what E. R. A. Seligman and Charles A. Beard (both of Columbia University) called "the great man theory" of history-writing, which, along with a teleological idea of progress and a methodological confidence about identifying causes and their effects, was one of the three central premises of historical discourse at the time.

The great-man theory of history is familiar to us from traditional political history. In this model of historiography, as James Harvey Robinson (also of Columbia) wrote, the historian compiles "striking events of the past" and identifies them with "the achievements and fate of conspicuous persons." We "string our narrative upon a line of kings," Robinson sneered. The result is an annals of statesmenship, with, Seligman wrote, events "ascribed to great men" like Caesar, Napoleon, and Washington. This tendency is manifest in the major histories of the period (especially textbooks), like John W. Burgess's *Reconstruction and the Constitution* (1911) George Burton Adams's *European History* (1899) or *Civilization during the Middle Ages* (1894), and Woodrow Wilson's five-volume *History of the American People* (1901-1903), and including as well Robinson's own *An Introduction to the History of Western Europe* (1903), his colleague Beard's *Contemporary American History* (1914), and Beard and Robinson's *Outlines of European History* (1916). Henry Adams's own histories of the early republic, culminating in the monumental, nine-volume *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison* (1889-91), were focused through the activities of people like these two early Presidents and also *Albert Gallatin* (1879) and *John Randolph* (1882).

Almost despite their practice, prominent historians like the authors just listed objected that the great man theory, while it may fulfill our desire for the dramatic, as far too theatrical and arbitrary. As an alternative, the revisionists, who came to be known as the progressive historians, sought to "raise history to the rank of a science," as Adams wrote in *"The Tendency of History"* (1894), an open letter he wrote to the American Historical Association when his tenure as its president expired. By scientific, these scholars meant a history that discovered laws of historical action and development that were analogous if not equivalent to natural (meaning physical) laws. Ideally, these laws would, Frederick Teggart of the University of California wrote, "express the constant relations among phenomena." These constant relations amounted to the "continuity or unity of history," as Robinson phrased the principle for the Congress of Arts and Science at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. I cite Robinson's formulation among myriad others because its typical conflation of "continuity" with "unity" so nicely suggests the assumptions driving the doctrine, assumptions that *The Education* often ridicules. "Continuity " and "unity" are not, of course, synonyms. The successiveness or even

progression denoted by "continuity" connotes less coordination than does "unity." Nevertheless, the terms were used interchangeably, with the phrase "the unity of history" frequently used to stand for history's continuity.

Before the nineteenth century, the human species was thought to be discontinuous with other species, a special creature unrelated to so-called lower orders, divinely made out of nothing or out of dust. This idea was one element of the prevalent account of temporal alterations among species, called catastrophism. Catastrophism held that biological changes were sudden and wholesale, with later species, like humans, having no antecedents in earlier ones. Although portions of this idea survived to contest evolutionism, Jean Lamarck, Charles Lyell, and Charles Darwin□whatever the conflicts in their understanding of the mechanism of physiological change□generally established that humans had developed *from* other species. In their view, alterations from species to species and within species were not catastrophic, as Albion W. Small put it with reference to historical change, but incremental stages in the sequential modification that all species continually undergo.

The great-man theory suited the catastrophic model of historical narrative, positing that changes occur by the chance appearance of exceptional individuals. In contrast, the evolutionists, as Henry Adams called them in "Letter to American Teachers," believed that these conspicuous individuals must be understood as manifestations of particular historical conditions and confluences. For the evolutionists, the greatness of the great man was both function and emblem of historical context, which is to say of evolving historical forces. So understood, history could become an inquiry into the development of human phenomena. This reorientation led many historians to demand that their colleagues pursue "obscure" incidents, as Wilson wrote in his Chairman's Address to the Division of Historical Sciences at the Congress of Arts and Sciences convened at the 1904 St. Louis Universal Exposition. This willingness to entertain the importance of apparently insignificant matters was one of the hallmarks of the so-called New Historians, whose best known figure became James Harvey Robinson after he issued a collection of his essays entitled *The New History* (1912). Robinson forcefully opposed studying "conspicuous events and striking crises" and advocated examining "the small, the common, and the obscure," the "homely elements in human life."

In practice, historians did not heed this charge in any sustained way; nevertheless, the progressives' theoretical interest in the obscure detail and homely element exemplifies their evolutionary bent. Small details were the key antecedents in a progression□ not merely succession□of events, with later events evolving from (not just following) series of preceding events. Hence, these historians' commitment to evolution (continuity) was also a commitment to a narrative of progression in the root sense of the word. Antecedents did not merely precede their successors but prepared the way for them.

The continuity discoverable in the phenomenon of history became unity for these historians because they assumed that the progression they observed amounted to a teleological pattern that they called progress. Like continuity and unity, the terms progression and progress are surely not synonymous, but historians conflated them: as a narrative of progression, history was also, therefore, a narrative of progress, of what

Adams called "elevation," and Adams was a rare voice criticizing historians' elevation of progression into progress. Thinking of the phenomenon of history as progress and of history-writing as both the commemoration and continuation of that progress involves two related assumptions. First, it presumes the moral superiority of later to earlier forms of social organization and human conduct; second, it assumes that later stages of development are fulfilling the possibilities of earlier stages, and that some ultimate, even perfect form of social organization and human conduct is immanent in present conditions.

Students of the development of the historical discipline, like David Noble and Dorothy Ross, have noted what they call the millennialism of turn-of-the-century American historians, for whom Western civilization and especially American society were fulfilling a divine plan for the perfection of man. This teleological enthusiasm suffuses everything historians wrote. A concise example of millennialism appears in the contribution of Columbia' s William Sloane to the 1904 St. Louis Congress of Arts and Science. Sloane celebrates Giambattista Vico as the first "historical evolutionist. To him the story of a nation was the record of an ever complete realization in fact of certain remnants of a pre-natal revelation." This realization reveals a "law of moral progress" through which "all human faculties ... perfect themselves."

Frederick Jackson Turner extolled history in similarly exalted terms. "History [both the phenomenon and its study] has a unity and a continuity" because it is, "in truth, the self-consciousness of humanity," a self-consciousness acquired by understanding its development from the past, "the undeveloped present." Because history is the "becoming " of the present in the past and of both the past and future in the present, the study of history can "enable us to behold our own time and place as a part of the stupendous progress of the ages"; it can "enable us to realize the richness of our [unconscious] inheritance, the possibility of our lives, the grandeur of the present." In Turner's most famous essay, the frontier is a receding border where past the "inherited ways" of Europe and inchoate present the coarse, practical, and individualistic cross-fertilize to provide "a gate of escape from the bondage of the past." At the frontier, then, the Enlightenment past is at once continued and purified, and the present is an ever more perfect realization of democratic ideals.

Charles A. Beard, best known for criticizing the American Constitution as an expression of moneyed interests, is a supreme example of the progressive historians' teleological bent. In *The Industrial Revolution,* Beard bemoans the misery unleashed by industrialism, with its mechanization of individual action and subordination of the human "desire for freedom ... to the production of marketable commodities." Having made individualism possible in the first place, industrialism then compromised it. But ultimately industrialism redeems individualism. "The hope of the future," Beard urges in an idealistic Hegelian mode, is the very "corporate society" that evolved to sustain industrialism. For Beard, the individual is reempowered by being transfigured in the highest form of corporate organization, the trust. Without denying the trusts' dislocation of and at times violence against workers, Beard like most Americans who contemplated it, labor leaders like Eugene Debs no less than John D. Rockefeller considered the trust the latest manifestation and intimation of progress.

Progress, Beard reflects, consists of the substitution of "organization for chaos and anarchy," and "the trusts are merely pointing the way to higher forms of industrial methods in which the people, instead of a few capitalists, reap the benefits." As the frontier does for Turner, for Beard the trust represents a higher freedom than common individual freedom, creating "unity in diversity" by "increasing intercommunication of all parts of the world." Therefore, the trust induces "education from the lowest to the highest form," "training . .. the individual, so that in seeking the fullest satisfaction of his own nature he will harmoniously perform his function as a member of a corporate society." Through the trust, individualism is redeemed by being "elevated to social service," and therefore the trust is the fulfillment of both antecedent forms of organization and an innate human desire for freedom.

Beard is typical in transforming the identification of continuity in development into a celebration of progress toward a teleological order consolidated in the term unity. Some historians criticized their colleagues' millennial spirit. In 1916, Frederick Teggart urged historians to distinguish Darwinian evolution from their incurably teleological ideas of progress and unity. If Darwinian evolution speaks of "an orderly process" by which new forms of life emerge from old ones, nevertheless evolution manifests no intrinsic direction and seeks no goal or final shape. It effects, as David J. Hill put it, "variations" rather than linear development in human conduct and social organization. In a similar spirit, Adams wryly submitted that "evolutionists might be said to consider not the descent but the ascent of man." But Adams further, and uniquely, spurned the assumptions behind the Darwinian model of scientific history.

Source: Howard Horwitz, *"The Education* and the Salvation of History," in *New Essays on "The Education of Henry Adams,"* edited by John Carlos Rowe, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 125-30.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Harbert examines Adams' intentions in The Education of Henry Adams, *autobiographical and otherwise.*

For readers who have been fascinated by *The Education Henry Adams,* the most significant event of recent years was the appearance in 1973 of a carefully revised edition, corrected according to the author's final intentions and edited by Adams's chief biographer, Ernest Samuels. At long last, and for the first time since the book was put on sale in 1918, the title page of the *Education* appears without the infamous and misleading subtitle, "An autobiography." Those two words, added to the 1918 version without authorization from Adams himself, who died before that printing appeared, have been largely responsible for a general confusion about the author's intentions, and, in turn, for a profusion of conflicting opinions, comments, and judgments concerning the final success or failure of Adams's achievement. Yet, all together this almost uncollectable critical response to the book forms at best a partial truth; for by any conventional definition, at least, the *Education* must be seen to offer us something much larger than the usual understanding of "autobiography" allows. How the shade of Henry Adams, at his sardonic best, must relish the last of his many jokes□this one played unintentionally on the three generations of readers who have helped to keep the *Education* alive.

All this is not to say that the book is free of autobiographical influences. Quite the contrary: many scholars have noted the author's debts to Rousseau and Augustine, to the private literature of the Adams family, especially the diaries of John and John Quincy Adams; and to that peculiarly American strain of personal narrative which can be traced, with some variations, from the Puritans, through Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, to Henry James and Henry Adams. And convincing evidence of indebtedness to an autobiographical tradition is provided by Adams himself in his "Preface" to the *Education,* where he acknowledges a familiarity with a variety of personal narratives in the various forms of confessions, autobiographies, and memoirs, mentioning their authors by name. From the perspective of our usual interest in admitted and implied influences, then, Adams's reliance on a great autobiographical tradition is well established. So a sound case can be made□for treating his book as an impressive extension of that older tradition into the twentieth century. But, in fact, the *Education* should also be thought of, at least in part, as the first modern American autobiography, a seminal volume, as important in its way as was T. S. Eliot's announcements of modernity in his best poetry of the same period. To realize just how modern the *Education* really is, a reader need only compare it with the *Autobiography* of Henry's older brother, Charles Francis Adams II, published in 1916. Charles' s book shows what the mere conjunction of the well-established family writing habit, with a prosaic tradition of memoir-writing, and a pedestrian historical outlook could be expected to produce in the work of an almost exact contemporary. Nowhere in Charles's *Autobiography* does one find the play of artistic imagination that stamps Henry's *Education* as a unique work of genius, an account that is at once both traditional and highly experimental. For the

Education is an American classic, and readers must take it on its own terms or fail to comprehend its full meaning.

Nor was this uniqueness lost to T. S. Eliot himself. In one of the earliest reviews of Adams's book, titled "A Sceptical Patrician" and printed in the *Athenaeum* in 1919, the poet warned: "It is doubtful whether the book ought to be called an autobiography, for there is too little of the author in it." Unfortunately, while most readers of the very popular Education have recognized its autobiographical possibilities, few have taken Eliot's warning seriously enough.

Aside from Eliot's cautionary advice, which Adams had no opportunity to read, any more than he had a chance to strike the misleading subtitle from later reprintings, there is abundant external evidence that the author did not plan his work as simply yet another contribution to the tradition of American autobiography. Here, Adams's personal correspondence is extremely useful in putting us on the track of his thoughts concerning the autobiographical form in literature, even before he began the *Education.* Writing to Henry James in 1903 about the latter's biography of William Wetmore Story, Adams said:

The painful truth is that all of my New England generation, counting the half-century, 1820□1879, were in actual fact only one mind and nature; the individual was a facet of Boston ... Type Bourgeois bostonian *[sic]*! A type quite as good as another but more uniform.... God knows that we knew our want of knowledge! the *[sic]* self-distrust became introspection□nervous self-consciousness□irritable dislike of America, and antipathy to Boston.
So you have written not Story' s life, but your own and mine□pure autobiography....

Later, after he had completed the *Education,* Adams sent a copy of the private printing to James in 1908, together with a letter that explained: "The volume is a mere shield of protection in the grave. I advise you to take your own life in the same way, in order to prevent biographers from taking it in theirs." The truth found by biographers and autobiographers could prove to be "painful truth" indeed. As a biographer himself, Henry Adams knew this firsthand, having written the lives of Albert Gallatin, John Randolph, and Aaron Burr before he began the *Education.* Certainly the possibilities for using some version of autobiography as a "shield of protection " had occurred to Adams as early as 1891, when he wrote to his English friend, Charles Milnes Gaskell: "The moral seems to be that every man should write his life, to prevent some other fellow from taking it." So Adams determined to take his own life in literature but in a unique way, as he turned a chronological narrative of personal experience into an autobiographical literary experiment.

In the *Education* itself, perhaps the most obvious signal of the author's extraordinary intentions may be found on the "Contents" page. Surely a superb historian like Adams could do better than to leave such a hiatus as that between Chapter XX, entitled

"Failure (1871)" and Chapter XXI, entitled "Twenty Years After (1892)." For "protection, " of course, he had seen fit to leave this period in his life blank□a gap that excluded every detail of his relationship with Marion Hooper Adams, the wife who is never mentioned in the *Education*. Gone too, along with the personal version of his marriage, is all pretense to confessional sincerity or historical accuracy and completeness. Instead, as Adams makes clear, the reading game must be played by the author's own rules.

Nowhere is this made so clear as in the "Preface " to the *Education*. From that point onward in the book, the introduction of a "manikin" figure called "Henry Adams" serves to protect the real author from excessive self-revelation, by offering the disguise of personal experience as a covering for didactic art. From almost the first word, the reader is warned that he should not expect another confessional in the tradition of Rousseau or of the American Puritans. For Adams, the *Confessions,* although written like the *Education* "in the manner of the eighteenth century," can be instructive in the twentieth century only when correctly viewed or read. Timely interpretation emphasizes personal limitations rather than accomplishments, and makes the *Confessions* useful as a warning and not as a model.

As educator, Jean Jacques was in one respect, easily first; he erected a monument of warning against the Ego. Since his time, and largely thanks to him, the Ego has steadily tended to efface itself, and, for purposes of model, to become a manikin on which the toilet of education is to be draped in order to show the fit or misfit of the clothes. The object of study is the garment, not the figure. The tailor adapts the manikin as well as the clothes to his patron's wants. The tailor's object, in this volume, is to fit young men, in universities or elsewhere, to be men of the world, equipped for any emergency; and the garment offered to them is meant to show the faults of the patchwork fitted on their fathers....
The manikin, therefore, has the same value as any other geometrical figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition; it must have the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life. Who knows? Possibly it had!

Enter the manikin "Henry Adams" and exit all pretense of conscious self-revelation. As the author tells us 432 pages later,

Of all studies, the one he would rather have avoided was that of his own mind. He knew no tragedy so heart-rending as introspection, and the more, because□ as Mephistopheles said of Marguerite□he was not the first. Nearly all the highest intelligence known to history had drowned itself in the reflection of its own thought, and the bovine survivors had rudely told the truth about it, without affecting the intelligent.

Here, the "painful truth" Adams first had described to James emerged more painful still. The source was not simply personal revelation of the usual kind□the embarrassing

details of an outward life—but rather the traditional autobiographical practice of looking inward, and of telling truthfully what one has found. Far better to spare the pain and turn away from self, to teach, instead, in the words of the "Preface," "... young men, in universities or elsewhere, to be men of the world equipped for any emergency." And teach, Adams did in the pages of his book.

This is not the place to trace in detail the many lessons in politics, religion, philosophy, science,and art—which measure the author's didactic intention in the *Education*. These main lines of educative force also provide themes for the narrative; while the manikin's example demonstrates over and over the repeated "failure" of the subject ever to learn enough. Gradually, by accretion, this "failure" grows to seem conclusive—just as certain as the failure, in Adams's mind, of Rousseau in his *Confessions* to provide any effective guidance for modern man. Yet the larger, more general lesson here is one of change and not of failure alone; and to give it force, the author concentrates his attention on a central human figure, the persona Henry Adams, who grows from child to man as he tries out, for the reader's benefit, a variety of possibly educational experiences.

But finally the life of "Henry Adams" by itself does not teach enough to satisfy the author, who tells us why:

Truly the animal that is to be trained to unity must be caught young. Unity is vision; it must have been part of the process of learning to see. The older the mind, the older its complexities, and the further it looks, the more it sees, until even the stars resolve themselves into multiples; yet the child will always see but one.

Experience has led the manikin away from unity and instinct, and time has played him false, even while it pretended to educate.

In the face of such change, man must seek to recapture a sense of instinctive unity in art, as Adams hoped to do in his *Education*. For him, art was the only possible alternative to chaos, although for others who may be better educated than he, the author holds out another possibility of scientific unity, especially in the final chapters of his book and in his later essays. But the *Education* tells Henry Adams's story, beginning with his origins in "Quincy" (Chapter I) and "Boston" (Chapter II), and ending with the futuristic speculations that radiated from his mature mind. Put together in his way, the whole story is an experiment in didactic art—taking up in the twentieth century where Rousseau and Franklin left off. For, much as when he was a classroom instructor at Harvard College, the author of the *Education* still kept his faith in the timeless value of the teacher, who could shape human thought into worldly force, and effectively link the past and present with an uncertain future. As Adams wrote in the *Education,* "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." By reaching out to the "one [mind] in ten" that "sensibly reacts" to such teaching, the writer hoped to have his autobiographical lessons accepted by his readers in the same way that, in the "Preface," he claimed to use Rousseau's *Confessions,* as "a monument of warning against the Ego."

Finally, only the vigorously reacting mind, Adams believed, could benefit fully from lessons which otherwise became surface polish for the merely passive manikin:

The object of education for that mind should be the teaching itself how to react with vigor and economy. No doubt the world at large will always lag so far behind the active mind as to make a soft cushion of inertia to drop upon, as it did for Henry Adams; but education should try to lessen the obstacles, diminish the friction, invigorate the energy, and should train minds to react, not at haphazard, but by choice, on the lines of force that attract their world. What one knows is, in youth, of little moment; they know enough who know how to learn.

That rare tenth mind alone knows how to learn: it follows out Adams's lines of force and interest only to react against the egoistic example of the manikin. For that mind only, Adams holds out the hope of being prepared "by choice" to "jump" and stay ahead of the other expanding forces in the universe. Just such a mind might well succeed where the author knew himself to have failed; it might complete a patterning of life and experience with a mastery that would turn chaos into orderly design. Yet, so far as Adams could see in the *Education,* all education based on example□at least human example□was already obsolete. Traditional autobiography, like other forms of human experience, seemed to have reached the end of its usefulness, as education and as art.

What was left to Adams and to modern literature was experiment. So he attempted to turn his narrative of personal experience into something both artistic and useful. Alongside the warnings provided by the chronological gap in the narrative and by the manikin subject, the author developed a vocabulary of symbols, used to tie past experience to future possibility by drawing on instinct rather than reason. The most famous example, of course, is Chapter XXV, "The Dynamo and the Virgin," perhaps the best evidence that the *Education* can be read as modern art, as many anthologies testify.

I do not pretend in this brief survey to judge the *Education* either a failure or a success as art. Still it should be useful to point out that the overall effect of Adams's symbolic treatment□like the picture of the titular character in the book who is both manikin and tailor, and the impression created by the before-and-after organization□is once again to underscore division or contradiction in human experience, and to deny the possibility of unity in the "vision" of the aging author. Perhaps the "child will always see but one"; yet the reader of the *Education,* on the other hand, is left to yearn for such childish unity□ in subject matter, organization, and conclusion. The book lacks even an imposed authorial unity, in the form of a single symbolic pattern; and the reader cannot order the various lines of force and thought by reference to some convenient symbol, like the pond in *Walden*.

For Adams, "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man." By telling us only what he wanted to about his own life, Henry Adams played the part of a natural man who yet remained always something of a dreamer. While he was a teacher, he was also an artist, who sought to make his own story into didactic art of a high order, still leaving all judgments about his ultimate success to his readers. Meanwhile, the lessons

of his life became theirs to use as they saw fit. Properly, the final words about the didactic value of an autobiography might be expected to belong to the author, who could best summarize the meaning of his own life. But in Adams' s case, the authorial strategy was different. At the time that he was writing his life story, the author of the *Education* showed that he was too nimble or too evasive to be caught without "protection" and a "shield" for the future. In a letter to E. D. Shaw, the artist managed to shift the burden of interpretation from intention to response, as he showed how he had made the substance of his own experience into a heuristic experiment, designed to test his audience rather than to reveal himself:

All considerable artists make a point of compelling the public to think for itself, and their rule is to require each observer to see what he can, and this will be what the artist meant. To the artist the meaning is indifferent. Every man is his own artist before a work of art.

Taken as autobiography, then, the *Education* is most of all "a work of art." The genius of Adams's experiment in modernity lies in his dramatic conversion of the narrative and didactic conventions he has inherited□the stuff of traditional autobiography□to his own unique purposes. For, while he kept the surface appearance of the narrative of personal experience, perhaps to convince the public that they knew exactly what he was doing, Adams also offered his readers full artistic license to make every one of them his own autobiographer.

Source: Earl N. Harbert, "Henry Adams's *Education* and the Autobiographical Tradition," in *Tulane Studies in English,* Tulane University, Vol. 22, 1977, pp. 133-42.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Hahn asserts that Adams' portrayal of his life as a failure was a literary device used for dramatic effect.

Anyone beginning to read Henry Adams' *Education* for the first time gets the impression from the very first chapters that Adams thought his life had been a failure, and that he considered it a failure because his education had not fitted him to play a useful part in the new and different world that was coming into being in the nineteenth century. The book can therefore be taken□so it seems□as a protest, based on one man's experience, against the effect of technology and industrialism on the personal values of the social system which they displaced.

Throughout the book Henry Adams gives the impression of a man who wished to participate actively in affairs but always missed the chance to function effectively. There is a certain poignancy in his desire to understand why a man like himself, who started with every apparent advantage and set out with such faith and eagerness, should have ended with so little accomplished. His antecedents and his personal attainments had indicated a career in the Adams tradition; yet he never found an opportunity to make a contribution to his time comparable with what his forebears had accomplished.

This presentation of himself as a failure has usually been accepted by Adams' readers at face value. In the 1920's a whole "generation of futilitarians" (Louis Kronenberger's phrase) found that Adams' theme of maladjustment between a cultivated personality and an increasingly mechanized civilization presented exactly the predicament which they were experiencing. His book became the Bible of the younger generation struggling with the frustrations of a world they neither made nor understood.

Could it be, on the other hand, that the dominant theme of Henry Adams' book was a literary device of the author's rather than a reflection of the facts? One recent critic has advanced the theory that Henry Adams fancied himself as the "heroic failure " of a modern epic. From this point of view, the dramatic irony inherent in the repeated assertions that Adams never felt at home in the world and despaired of ever playing a significant part in it was a consciously cultivated irony. If true, this view of Adams' intention helps to explain some things about the book which otherwise strike the reader as puzzling. There is, for example, in the chapters devoted to Adams' travel-years after graduation a certain tone of insouciance□a pose of naiveté□ which leaves the reader with a very inadequate sense of how Adams reacted to the things he saw in Europe. He seems to be trying to emphasize the *lack* of "education" to be gained from the experiences available to a young man of his background in his day. And yet we know from the famous letters Adams wrote on subsequent travels that he was capable of responding richly to experience. In the *Education,* however, he gives the impression of making the grand tour without zest and of finding most things rather empty of meaning for him. This impression does not accord with what is otherwise known of his temperament. His attitude becomes understandable, however, if it can be regarded as a

consciously planned device for emphasizing his "failure" to find an acceptable place in a civilization with which he felt himself out of tune.

Actually, the burden of Henry Adams' complaint was not his own "failure" to adjust to the world but the realization that the world in which he lived as an adult had changed so much from the world in which he grew up as a child that the traditional values of his upbringing had become meaningless and inapplicable. A relatively uncomplicated agrarian America, operating on the basis of stern but comprehensible Puritan principles, was rapidly being transformed into a highly complex industrialized state, with a bewildering shift in the principles on which it operated and an apparent exclusion of morality from the political means for achieving its goals. The disappearance of the sort of world in which an Adams could have functioned and its displacement by a new world which required a type of "education" such as no previous Adams had ever had□that is the real theme of Henry Adams' long book. He took pleasure, it is true, in presenting himself as an anachronism from a former age and indulged his tragic feeling of having been born too late. But behind the mask of "the tragic failure" was another Henry Adams who was not lamenting his fate so much as making a genuine effort to understand the times that were out of joint.

Henry Adams knew that a man must thoroughly understand the world in which he finds himself in order to be able to grapple with it. He sensed that his "education" in the ways of the new world would require him, first of all, to unlearn everything that he had been taught. However, he *believed* in the values of his grandfather's world; it was the rejection of those values by the new world, rather than his own failure to accommodate himself to it, that represented for him the real tragedy he was writing about. Nevertheless, he felt it was important to get beyond the perspectives of his traditional background and to make the attempt to understand the contemporary world. Lacking the opportunity to participate in affairs, he became an observer and commentator, writing detailed accounts of the political events he was living through, frequently with penetrating remarks on the personalities of the chief participants. His political chapters served the purpose of underlining the corruption, vulgarity, and cynicism of the modern world from which he felt himself alienated. Until Lincoln Steffens painted the same picture in more vivid colors and with much greater detail, Adams' account of the unprincipled dealings in American public life was the classic portrayal of a burgeoning business civilization creating a chaos in which self-interest was the sole guiding principle.

But political events and economic developments were only the surface features, after all. Henry Adams' education in the nature of the modern world would not be complete□at least, he would never be satisfied□until he had fathomed the driving forces and motivations that accounted for the surface phenomena. He understood in a general way that modern science with its practical achievements was responsible for the transformations which had changed the easy-going world of his forebears into a totally different, enigmatic world, that nevertheless seemed amazingly alive. But he doubted the correctness of the common point of view which regarded progress as inevitable and the American brand of material achievement as the climax of all progress. What Henry Adams really sought from his "education" was a standard or principle of interpretation

by which he could estimate the truth of the world-view which made a virtue of chaos as long as it seemed to further "progress." As one who had been brought up in a tradition that gave great satisfaction through the unity and consistency of meaning it assigned to life, he was genuinely concerned to discover how it was possible to find a comparable satisfaction in a world that had become so complex and contradictory as to lose all unity and consistency of meaning.

Adams failed to solve the problem, at first, because he assumed from the start that satisfaction in life would be found only by those who learned to *control* the complicated, multiple forces dominant in the world in their time. When he saw politicians and business men who were not "educated," in his sense, *doing just that* with phenomenal success, and when he saw men like his friend Clarence King failing miserably even though trained (educated) for exercising such control, he became pessimistic about the value of "education" as a means of finding satisfaction in life. For him, satisfaction meant understanding as well as controlling. He observed, however, that the successful men of his day controlled the forces operating in the world without understanding them, or even being conscious of a need to understand them. Adams, therefore, despaired of the possibility of finding any principle of action in modern life that gave unity of meaning to the diverse activities it engendered.

Adams, however, was not prepared to accept "multiplicity" as any more than a descriptive term for the modern situation: it could not be made, his whole temperament told him, into a philosophical justification for the situation. And so, he continued to study, to observe, and to weigh, in a constant search for the meaning of his contemporary environment. He gave up, for the time being, the attempt to identify a unifying principle in the world as he knew it; and turning to the world of the Middle Ages, where unity and significance had permeated all of life, he proceeded to study it thoroughly in order to find out its secret. It has been customary to regard Henry Adams' love affair with the Middle Ages as a nostalgic search for the very things he missed in modern civilization. The contrast between the two ages is striking enough: on the one hand, chaos without meaning; on the other, a unifying principle that gave significance to all the parts. But when Henry Adams immersed himself in the medieval outlook on life, it was not to "go home" to a world for which he felt an instinctive sympathy actually he had been unaware of such a world before his tour of Normandy with the Henry Cabot Lodges. It was rather to gain perspective on his *own* world that he sought to understand medieval "unity" in contrast to nineteenth-century "multiplicity."

So satisfying did Henry Adams find the assurance and confidence reflected in the medieval point of view that he almost surrendered to it, and bowing himself before the Virgin of Chartres he asked for the peace that would come from understanding himself and his world as clearly as the Virgin's followers understood theirs. Significantly, he did not ask for "the peace which *passeth* understanding"; he insisted on *having* understanding; as a child of the scientific age, he *had to know*. So, wistfully, he started "once more" his search for "education" (enlightenment).

The real significance of Henry Adams' *Education* is not the story of maladjustment that it tells, nor yet the contrast between two civilizations that it makes, but the explanation

which the author eventually worked out for the trend of civilization from medieval unity to modern multiplicity. In a series of brilliant though still ironic chapters (31-34), Adams summed up what he had learned from his lifelong search for understanding of the world in which he lived. These philosophical chapters have seldom been taken quite seriously; they have sometimes been brushed aside as derivative: the chief idea in them came from the author's brother, Brooks Adams. But there is a philosophy of history in them, seemingly artificial because applied too mechanically, yet containing an explanation of modern "chaos" and the "multiplicity" of modern civilization which has proved to be so appropriate and so illuminating that it deserves reconsideration.

Henry Adams had learned, first of all, that modern science (itself an attempt to discover the immutable "laws of nature") had ended by discovering, in modern physical theory, that there were no simple, immutable laws of nature which gave unity, consistency, and order to the universe; that, rather, the laws of the physical world seemed to be infinitely complex, not always consistently predictable in their application, and hence undependable as a basis for finding order in the universe. In a word,Henry Adams came to the realization that such a system of order and unity as the medieval synthesis was the creation of the mind of man imposing its desire for simplicity and significance on the phenomena of the world at large. As he said himself, "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man."

Henry Adams had learned, in the second place, that the discoveries of modern science, destructive as they were to philosophical conceptions of the universe, were nevertheless making constructive contributions to the material comfort of mankind in the universe, by increasing man's knowledge of the number and kinds of physical energies available for application to his needs. As man's knowledge of the physical forces of nature became more complex (less unified even in theory), man's opportunities for bending them to his purposes increased proportionately. The "multiplicity" or complexity of modern industrialized life, in other words, corresponded to the actual "chaos" of forces existing in the physical universe.

In the light of these insights, it had been pointless as well as fruitless for Henry Adams to look for a unifying principle to explain the modern world. Multiplicity of conflicting forces was its chief characteristic, and inevitably so. Man might try to impose his control over the physical forces of nature and upon the human energies of society, but the resulting "order" was not inherent in either nature or society, and it lasted only as long as the mind of man thought the one and willed the other. Philosophically speaking, there was no "God" to give significance to the universe of forces and the world of energies. Logically, therefore, there was nothing wrong with the modern tendency to establish control of these forces and energies without understanding them. In relation to the universe and the world, men had become "as gods"□without the divine capacity, of course, to give real significance to what they were doing with their new powers. The significant fact, for Henry Adams, was that the tendency was irreversible. He had come to realize that there was no going back, that a world of meaningful unity had never really existed (outside the human mind), that a world of chaotic, conflicting forces corresponded more nearly to the reality than all the orderly worlds created by man's imagination and reason.

The most famous part of Henry Adams' philosophy of history was what he called "the law of acceleration" (unconsciously demonstrating within himself his view that, though there be no actual laws, even in history, the mind will impose law as a device to help itself understand what it is talking about). He thought he saw in history a consistent trend toward *increasing* control over the forces of nature. Starting in a small way with the discovery and exploitation of the power of a water wheel and the power in a windmill, man had then, with smaller and smaller gaps of time between discoveries, but larger and larger amounts of power at his disposal, proceeded to find and use steam power, electric power, and so on. Henry Adams was convinced that this "acceleration" in man's control of nature's forces would continue in geometric proportion, until (he predicted) man would have discovered within fifty years of Adams' time the ultimate source of power locked in the atom.

In his own generation, the symbol of modern man's control of force was the dynamo, which Henry Adams found to be the most fascinating embodiment of ultimate power under complete control yet devised. Fascinating he found it to watch in operation□but apalling to think about in its implications. As a symbol of force under control, it helped to explain to him the nature of the civilization in which he lived. As a prophecy of the trend of civilization, it suggested increasing efficiency in man's control of ultimate force until the human race reached the point where it could even destroy itself with atomic energy. This eventuality Henry Adams could not regard with complacency. He could not accept the view of his contemporaries that the history of mankind in modern times was a story of inevitable progress upwards. "Complexity, Multiplicity, even a step towards Anarchy, it might suggest, but what step towards perfection?"

It was not the ultimate denouement, however, that troubled Henry Adams in his innermost depths. That denouement, after all, remained only a logical possibility; it was not inevitably a foregone conclusion. He saw another already taking place which appalled him more specifically. As man's control of the forces of nature increased in efficiency, his will to dominate the social energies of mankind also increased, with a resulting tendency to *concentrate* the power inherent in the forces of society, again for the sake of efficiency. In other words, the technological advance of mankind was inexorably accompanied by a trend to regimentation and the collectivization of man's social relationships. It was the progressive destruction of human values in the accelerating trend towards a power civilization that appalled Henry Adams the most.

Here was the real tragedy of living modern times. Critics are mistaken to emphasize the tragedy implicit in the *Education* a personal one for Henry Adams. Adams would have insisted that he was describing a situation that constituted a tragedy for all thoughtful and sensitive souls. With the increase in the means of control over energy and power, all that was distinctively human in human life was gradually being supplanted by all that was mechanical and impersonal. Adams' book was not simply a protest against an intolerable situation by one who had been most uncomfortable in it; it was an attempt to instruct a whole new generation in the conditions under which life in modern times was being lived, and to emphasize that no other conditions were possible under the circumstances.

Henry Adams made all this sound very pessimistic. But behind the pessimistic tone of his discussion it is possible to discern a positive note of emphasis on continuing human values, particularly the human capacity for thought. It is true that, in its context, his quotation from Karl Pearson: "Order and reason, beauty and benevolence, are characteristics and conceptions which we find solely associated with the mind of man," sounds like a pessimistic acknowledgement of the fact that the universe does *not* contain order and reason but is essentially meaningless. On the other hand, like several ironic passages in Adams' last chapters, the quotation conceals his faith that, though the universe be meaningless, the very attempt of the human mind to create meaning from its diverse phenomena is the source of all truth and beauty and value in the *human* world. The meaningless chaos of the universe, though eternal, was as nothing compared with the ephemeral, but significant, flash of a human mind in the cosmic darkness.

Again, Henry Adams' parable of the young oyster, in which he compared the human mind to that little animal "secreting its universe to suit its conditions until it had built up a shell of nacre that embodied all its notions of the perfect," but "perishing in the face of the cyclonic hurricane or the volcanic upheaval of its bed," sounds like a realistic recognition of the fact that the universe has no interest in the existence of man and offers him only complete annihilation (death) as his ultimate fate. Few writers have described more pitilessly how completely indifferent the universe seems to be to the aspirations and strivings of the human race. Yet, behind the irony of the parable was the implication that it was precisely the aspiration and the striving that gave meaning, if only temporarily, to all that was human in an otherwise impersonal universe.

What Henry Adams accomplished in his *Education* was not only to describe remorselessly what kind of a world the modern world had become philosophically, as well as politically and economically; he also provided a point of view with which to face that world without despair.

Source: Herbert F. Hahn, *"The Education of Henry Adams* Reconsidered," in *College English,* Vol. 24, No. 6, March 1963, pp. 444-49.

Topics for Further Study

Imagine that *The Education of Henry Adams* will be published in 2007. What technological symbols could be used to interpret the twentieth century and prepare for the twenty-first century? Imitating the style Adams uses in his work, discuss those symbols in terms of their historical force through a description of an imagined event, like a World's Fair of the year 2005.

Compare the use of evolutionary theory in intellectual discourse of the late nineteenth century with the genetic explanations offered today. What are the dangers of popular usage of scientific theories? What are the benefits of making science transparent and accessible?

Explain the attraction that railroads have for Adams. What has happened over the last century to that rail network? What sort of analysis might Adams make of this change?

Coal is still our number one source for energy.What other sources of energy have been developed over the last century? Are those energy technologies sufficient to meet current and future needs? Discuss the challenges of energy policy in a particular country with reference to that country's historical development.

Select one of the many utopian novels written between Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and the general publication of *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). Compare the idea of the new human Adams puts forth to inhabit a technologically complex world to the ideal put forth by Utopian Socialists.

Jared Diamond, in his "Epilogue" to *Guns, Germs, and Steel,* discusses how history might become just as scientific as some natural sciences in which experimentation is impossible (like astronomy). Compare Diamond's reasoning with Adams' ideas on a scientific history. What future does history have as a science?

Compare and Contrast

1907: Reginald Aubrey Fessenden ushers in the year with the second broadcasted radio program on New Year's Eve, 1906. Due to atmospheric conditions, the broadcast reaches the West Indies from its origination at Brant Rock, Massachusetts.

Today: The internet continues to accelerate communications and media dissemination through worldwide fiber optic and satellite networks.

1907: Robert Baden-Powell returns from leading a camping trip of twenty-five boys on Brownsea Island to establish the Boy Scouts.

Today: The proud tradition of the Boy Scouts of America is under a cloud today due to its intolerance of openly gay scout masters.

1907: Utilizing a right recently given by the U.S. Congress to bar non-U.S.-passport bearing people from the country, President Roosevelt refuses entry of Japanese workers to the United States from Canada, Hawaii, and Mexico.

Today: The United States remains reluctant to welcome immigrants except in the case of Cubans or high-tech professionals.

1907: President Roosevelt withheld antitrust action against U.S. Steel so that J. P. Morgan could prop up the American market.

Today: The U.S. economy's incredible market pivots on one man, secretary of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan.

1900s: Department stores exist several decades before the first shopping centers are built. In 1907, one of the first such centers opens outside Baltimore, Roland Park Shopping Center. It lacks the intense planning and rationalization that would come to mark shopping center development. The first integrated mall is built outside Kansas City, Missouri, in 1922. It is called the Country Club Plaza.

Today: Minnesota, which hosted the first two-story mall in 1956 (Southdale Mall), has become home to the mother of all shopping malls□the Mall of America (1992). The gigantism, which marks malls today, testifies to their central place in American culture.

What Do I Read Next?

Adams described the unity of the medieval world-view as being reflected through its cathedrals in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.* The work was published privately in 1904.

In *A Letter to American Teachers of History* (1910), Adams calls upon his fellow historians to make whatever changes necessary to the curriculum in order to prepare students for the technology of the twentieth century. In his letter, Adams expresses a fear that if education is not reformed, the consequences may be dire.

Adams refers to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* as a model for his work. Rousseau wrote his autobiography as a justification for his actions in hope that he might regain his friends and country. The work was posthumously published beginning in 1782.

An experimental novel by Laurence Sterne, entitled *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,* was a surprising success from the moment of its release in 1759. Full of eighteenth-century British humor, this supposed autobiography shows some striking similarities to Adams' autobiography.

From Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 Frontier Thesis□which still holds sway amongst conservatives in America□to Charles Austin Beard's 1913 work *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution,* the writing of history in America became more scientific. Richard Hofstadter explores this transition in his 1968 work, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington.*

Historians of the early twentieth century rediscovered periods of history that had been defamed during the nineteenth century. Specifically, historians, like Adams, reappraised the Dark Ages. C. W. David discusses this reconsideration in "American Historiography of the Middle Ages, 1884-1934," in the April 1935 issue of *Speculum.*

Further Study

Geddes, Patrick, *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and to the Study of Civics,* Benn, 1968.

Beginning with an application of recent developments in cell theory, Geddes applies the notions of biology to urban planning. In this framework, the entire city with its people and industry form an organism within an ecology. Proper care of this system will evolve healthy, happy people.

Hays, Samuel P., *The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914,*University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Hays briefly delineates the events and ideas composing the Reform Era in the United States.

Highman, John, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* Vol. 43, No. 4, March 1957, 559-78.

Highman's look at anti-Semitic themes of late nineteenth-century literature includes a discussion of Adams' work.

Lyon, Melvin, *Symbol and Idea in Henry Adams,* University of Nebraska Press, 1970.

Lyon's book is a schematic breakdown of the themes and techniques Adams uses throughout his writing. The intent of the work is to show how those themes and techniques reveal Adams' s "program for improving society."

Mumford, Lewis, "The Nucleation of Power," in *The Myth of the Machine: the Pentagon of Power,* Columbia University Press, 1964, pp. 230-62.

Lewis Mumford argues that the advance of civilization depends upon the organization of humans into veritable construction machines. For Mumford, the complexity of human organization is more important than technological innovation.

Spring, Joel, *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy,*Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

Spring's work serves as a starting point for reflecting on the inadequacies of twentieth-century education systems to prepare people for the demands of a digital age.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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