Fiddler on the Roof Study Guide

Fiddler on the Roof by Joseph Stein

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Introduction

Joseph Stein's book for *Fiddler on the Roof* represents the author's best known and most successful work in musical comedy. It was one of the last big successes in an era of great musicals on Broadway. Following its debut on September 22, 1964, at the Imperial Theatre, *Fiddler* ran for 3242 performances, achieving the longest run for a musical up to that time. This success was ironic considering the play's producers' initial fears that, due to the ethnically based story, the musical might not appeal to a broad audience.

Fiddler is based on short stories written by Sholom Aleichem, a Jewish writer who wrote primarily in Yiddish. Despite the producers' reservations, a diverse audience embraced the musical, relating to its universal themes of family, love, dignity, and the importance of tradition. Many critics agreed. Theophilus Lewis, reviewing the original production in *America,* wrote, "Joseph Stein's story has dramatic dignity, a continuous flow of humor, and episodes of pathos that never descend to the maudlin." While most critics generally found the musical praiseworthy on many fronts the performances especially the original Tevye, Zero Mostel; the acting; music; choreography; and direction. Several critics, however, found the production too "Broadway" while others felt it was too sentimental.

Stein won three prestigious awards for *Fiddler on the Roof* in 1965: The Antoinette "Tony" PerryAward for best musical, the New York Drama Critics Award, and the Newspaper Guild Award. The B'nai B'rith society also bestowed their Music and Performing Award upon Stein for his "exceptional creative achievement" in 1965.

Author Biography

Joseph Stein was born on May 30, 1912, in New York City, the son of Charles and Emma (Rosenblum) Stein, Polish immigrants who emigrated to the United States. Growing up in the Bronx, Stein's father read him the stories of Sholom Aleichem, a noted author of Jewish folk tales. Stein would remember these stories when he was called upon to develop the musical that became *Fiddler on the Roof*. Stein did not immediately turn to the theater, though. He attended City College, earning his B.S.S. in 1935, then his Master of Social Work from Columbia in 1937. Stein then spent six years employed as a psychiatric social worker, from 1939 until 1945.

In 1946, Stein began writing for radio. He wrote for such shows as the *Henry Morgan Show and Kraft Music Hall*. In 1948, he and writing partner Will Glickman began writing for the stage, contributing sketches to Broadway revues as well as whole plays and the books for musicals. Through 1958, every theatrical production Stein wrote was a collaboration with Glickman. In 1955, the duo had their biggest success with their first musical play, *Plain and Fancy*. Stein also wrote for television from 1950-62, primarily for variety shows such as *Your Show of Shows and The Sid Caesar Show* and specials for stars like Phil Silvers and Debbie Reynolds.

Adaptations of other people's material proved to be the highpoint of Stein's career. In 1959, he had his first solo success with an adaptation of Sean O'Casey's *Juno*. An even bigger hit was Stein's adaptation of Carl Reiner's autobiography *Enter Laughing* in 1963. The apex of Stein's stage career, however, was writing the book for the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. Though backers were originally reluctant to produce the musical fearing it might have limited appeal, *Fiddler* went on to become a smash hit. Stein won three major awards for his effort, including the Antionette "Tony" Perry Award for best musical.

Stein continued to do well with adaptations. His next hit was the book for the 1968 musical *Zorba*, based on the novel *Zorba the Greek*. However, Stein's career was not as successful after that point, hitting a low in 1986. Stein wrote the book for the musical Rags, which was a continuation of the story told in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Unlike the original, *Rags* failed to catch on immediately and was a box office failure in its original five-day Broadway run. The musical did have some success Off-Broadway and in regional productions; it received a Tony Award nomination in 1987.

Stein was married to Sadie Singer until her death in 1974. The couple had three sons, Daniel, Harry, and Joshua. Stein remarried in 1976 to Elisa Loti, a former actress and psychotherapist.

Plot Summary

Act I, Prologue

Fiddler on the Roof opens outside dairyman Tevye's house in the village of Anatevka, Russia, in 1905. Tevye addresses the audience, telling them that tradition keeps balance in their lives. Everyone has a role in village life, both Jews, such as matchmakers and rabbis, and non-Jews, such as the Russian officials. As long as people stay in their place and do not bother each other, Tevye says everything will be all right.

Act I, Scene 1

In the kitchen of Tevye's house, his wife Golde and his daughters prepare for the Sabbath. Yente the village matchmaker comes to visit. She tells Golde that she has a husband for the eldest daughter, Tzeitel: Lazar Wolf, the butcher. Lazar is an older man, a widower. Golde is unsure about the match because Tevye wants his daughter to marry a learned man. Still, Golde agrees to arrange a meeting between her husband and Lazar. Not knowing the details of their mother's conversation, Tzeitel's sisters tease her about Yente finding her a husband. It is implied that Tzietel is only interested in Motel, a young, impoverished tailor. Hodel, the next oldest, is interested in the Rabbi's son. The sister's sing the song "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," in which they hope to find the perfect man.

Act I, Scene 2

Tevye arrives home just in time for Sabbath, the beginning of the Jewish holy day. His horse threw a shoe, and he had to make deliveries by foot. Tevye talks directly to God, saying that he wishes he was wealthy so he could better support his family. He sings the song "If I Were a Rich Man."

The villagers come to Tevye's house, demanding their dairy orders. One has a newspaper which says the Jews were all evicted from a nearby village. The men worry. A newcomer to the village, a young man named Perchik, tells them that they should know more about the outside world. After filling the villagers' orders, Tevye invites Perchik to stay with them for Sabbath dinner. Perchik will teach Tevye's daughters in exchange for the hospitality.

Act I, Scene 3

Tevye and Perchik enter the house. The daughters greet their father enthusiastically. Motel arrives, and Golde invites him to stay for supper as well. While the daughters and

guests wash up for the meal, Golde tells Tevye that Lazar Wolf wants to meet with him. Golde does not tell him why, and Tevye is convinced Lazar wants his new milk cow.

Tzeitel tells Motel that Yente had visited earlier. Tzeitel worries that a match has been made for her, but Motel assures her that he will be able to buy a sewing machine and impress her father enough to earn her hand in marriage. Tzeitel wants Motel to ask her father for permission immediately, but Motel is afraid. Still, Motel agrees to talk to him. Motel tries to bring up the subject, but the group gathers around the table to say Sabbath prayers, and he does not get a chance.

Act I, Scene 4

Tevye meets Lazar at the Inn. Before Tevye comes, Lazar brags to everyone present that he will probably be married. When Tevye comes, the conversation is tense. Lazar assumes that Tevye knows what the meeting is about, but Tevye still believes the discussion regards his cow. When the truth comes out, Tevye is upset. He does not like Lazar, but he reasons that the butcher does have a steady income. Tevye agrees to the match. Lazar tells everyone around them. Even the Russians are happy for him.

Act I, Scene 5

Outside of the Inn, the celebration continues. A Russian official, the constable, tells Tevye that their district will have to undergo a "little unofficial demonstration" to impress an inspector who may come through. He tells Tevye as a courtesy to warn the others, because he wants no trouble between them.

Act I, Scene 6

Outside Tevye's house, Perchik is giving a lesson to three of Tevye's daughters. Golde calls the girls away as they are needed to begin Tevye's work because he is still in bed. Before Hodel goes, she and Perchik talk. Perchik tells her she is smart. He dances with her in defiance of a local custom. Tevye enters followed by his wife. When Tzeitel comes out with several of her sisters, her parents tell her about the match with Lazar. While her parents, especially Golde, are happy, Tzeitel is not. She confides to her father that she does not want to marry the butcher. Tevye says he will not force her to marry. Motel runs in, breathless. Tevye tries to brush him off, but Motel insists on offering himself as a suitor for Tzeitel. Tevye calls him crazy. Motel tells him that he and Tzeitel pledged to marry over a year ago. Though Tevye is unsure about going against tradition□particularly breaking the agreement he made with Lazar□he agrees that the tailor should marry Tzeitel.

Act I, Scene 7

In Tevye and Golde's bedroom that night, Tevye tells his wife that he had a horrible dream: Lazar Wolf's first wife, Fruma-Sarah, came to Tevye and insisted that Tzeitel should not marry Lazar. Later in the dream, Golde's mother told the dairyman that Tzeitel should marry Motel. Golde is convinced then that Tzeitel should marry Motel.

Act I, Scene 8

On a street in the village, people discuss the fact that Tzeitel is marrying Motel instead of Lazar. People come to Motel's shop to congratulate him. When Chava, one of the sisters, is left in charge of the shop for a moment while Motel sees to his wedding hat, several Russians block her way inside. Another young Russian, Fyedka, insists that they stop teasing her. The Russians step aside and let her pass. Fyedka compliments her, telling her he has seen her reading and admires her thirst for knowledge; he gives Chava a book.

Act I, Scenes 9-10

In Tevye's yard, Motel and Tzeitel's wedding takes place.

Inside the house, the wedding reception takes place. The couple is toasted and gifts are given. Lazar stands up to congratulate them, but when Tevye interrupts him, Lazar turns angry at the fact that their agreement was broken. They argue for a while, until Perchik points out that Tzeitel wanted to marry Motel. The radical suggestion that a person's desires should take precedence over tradition disturbs the guests, especially Yente the matchmaker. Perchik continues to agitate the situation when he asks Hodel to dance. It is unheard for a man to dance with a girl at a wedding. Tevye then asks his wife to dance and soon the whole crowd is dancing with one another, save the bitter Yente and Lazar.

The reverie is interrupted by the Constable who says that the Russian officials must make their show of force that evening. Perchik tries to stop them but is clubbed down. Following the destruction, the Constable apologizes, and he and his men go to the next house. The guests begin cleaning up.

Act II, Prologue

Tevye talks to heaven. It is two months later and Motel and Tzeitel are happily married, but Motel still does not have his sewing machine. Tevye asks God to send his new son-in-law a sewing machine.

Act II, Scene 1

Outside of Tevye's house, Hodel and Perchik enter. Hodel is upset because Perchik is leaving for Kiev in the hopes of changing the Russian policies that resulted in the raid during Tzeitel's wedding reception. Perchik asks her to marry him and she agrees. Tevye comes in, and Perchik tells him what has been decided. Tevye says he will not give his permission. Hodel and Perchik explain that they are not asking for his permission, only his blessing. Tevye is upset but gives both his blessing and permission. He tells Golde of his decision, and she is angry at Tevye for not asking her feelings on the subject. They make up at the end of the scene, pledging their love to each other in the song "Do You Love Me?"

Act II, Scene 2

In the village, Yente tells Tzeitel that she has seen Chava with Fyedka. She gives Tzeitel a letter for Hodel from Perchik. He has been arrested in Kiev. The village becomes alight with gossip about the subject. Yente blames the uproar on men and women dancing together.

Act II, Scene 3

Outside of the railroad station, Hodel and Tevye wait for a train. Hodel is going to join Perchik in Siberia, where she will marry him. She wants to help him in his social activism. Tevye does not want her to go but blesses her journey just the same.

Act II, Scene 4-5

It is several months later, and the villagers talk about Tzeitel and Motel's new baby.

In Motel's shop, there is a new sewing machine. The rabbi blesses it. Fyedka comes in, and everyone is silent. When he leaves, Chava follows him. Chava tells him that she is afraid to tell her family about their relationship. Tevye comes by, and he asks them to remain only distant friends. Chava tells him they still want to be married. Tevye gets angry and says no.

Act II, Scene 6

Tevye pushes his cart on the road because his horse is sick. Golde finds him and tells him that Chava has left home with Fyedka. The couple were later married. Tevye says that Chava is dead to them now. He maintains this stance even when Chava arrives and pleads for her father's acceptance.

Act II, Scene 7

nside the barn, Yente finds Golde. Yente has brought two teenage boys for the remaining daughters, but Golde thinks they are too young to be married. Many villagers come into the barn followed by Tevye. There are rumors in the village. The Constable comes and tells everyone that they must sell everything and leave the village in three days. Tevye is angry but realizes the futility of fighting.

Act II, Scene 8

Outside of Tevye's house, everyone is packing. The youngest daughters are going with their parents to live in America, while Tzeitel, Motel and their child will live in Poland until they have saved enough money to journey to America. Yente states that she is going to the Holy Land. Golde insists on cleaning the house before they leave. Chava comes and says goodbye. She and Fyedka are going to Cracow. Tevye gives her his blessing before she leaves, mending the rift between them. The play ends with the family leaving for their train.

Act 1, Prologue

Act 1, Prologue Summary

The story begins outside Tevye's house, with a fiddler seated on the roof. Tevye addresses the audience, explaining that they are all as precarious as a fiddler on the roof, trying to stay up without breaking their necks. Why do they stay? It is because this small village is their home, and they keep their balance through tradition. They have traditions for every piece of their lives, such as always covering their heads and wearing a prayer shawl, which shows their constant devotion to God. Tevye tells the audience that he has no idea how the traditions began, but because of those traditions, everyone knows what part they play in life.

The village breaks into song about the types of parts each person plays in the village—mothers, fathers, sons, daughters. Then Tevye begins introducing various individuals in the village.

The matchmaker speaks to someone about his son. She has a perfect match for him. She is the shoemaker's daughter, but she has poor eyesight. The father protests, but the matchmaker reminds him that his son isn't much to look at, which is what makes it a perfect match.

The beggar asks for alms, and a man gives him a coin. The beggar complains that this man gave him 2 coins last week. The man explains that he had a bad week, but the beggar wants to know why he should suffer for someone else's bad week.

Another man speaks to the rabbi, asking for a proper blessing for the Tsar. The rabbi gives him a good one to bless the Tsar and keep him—away from the village.

Then there are the priest, the constable and several other Russians who inhabit the village, but outside the close Jewish circle. The Jews and other Russians try not to bother each other. However, there is an ongoing argument regarding the past sale of an animal, and whether that animal was a horse or a mule, and the villagers join in the argument before continuing with the song.

Tevye finished by repeating that without their traditions, their lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof. Everyone leaves the stage, and the house opens so the audience can see inside.

Act 1, Prologue Analysis

The metaphor that serves as the basis for the entire script is a very visual description. One can easily see someone (even without the help of someone on stage) tottering on the peak of a steep roof, trying to play a fiddle without slipping and falling down one side or the other.

Each character faces life with a similar sort of grim humor. The matchmaker tries to set up an unattractive bachelor with a nearly blind girl. A beggar complains of suffering for the misfortune of others. Then there is the tongue in cheek blessing for the Tsar from the rabbi and the horse mule argument, which the villagers almost gleefully become involved in, simply because it seems to be the traditional thing to do.

There is a fine line between "peer pressure" and "tradition" if no one knows where the traditions come from, as we will discover through the rest of the script.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Golde (Tevye's wife) and her daughters, Tzeitel and Hodel are preparing for the Sabbath in the house. Shprintze and Bielke, two of the younger daughters, carry logs in from outside.

Shprintze asks her mother where to put the wood. Golde tells her to put it by the stove and asks where Chava, the fifth daughter, is now. Hodel informs her that Chava is milking in the barn. Bielke asks when Papa will be home, but Golde scoffs, saying that he's never worried about when he'll be home for Sabbath. Tzeitel reminds her that he works hard, but Golde replies that his horse works harder than he does, reprimanding her daughter for defending him, since she has known her husband longer. However, she blesses him under her breath and then asks Shprintze to bring her more potatoes.

Chava enters, carrying a basket, as well as a book hidden underneath her apron. Golde asks if she has finished the milking. As Chava replies, she drops her book. Golde asks why she reads all the time, since it's not going to help her get a better husband, but hands the book back to her.

As Chava leaves, Shprintze returns with the basket of potatoes and tells Golde that Yente (the matchmaker) is coming. Hodel comments that maybe she's found a good match for Tzeitel. Golde agrees hopefully. However, Tzeitel complains, asking why she's coming when it's almost Sabbath. Shprintze and Bielke run out to play.

Tzeitel continues. Apparently, the last potential suitor Yente found for her was old and bald. Golde reminds her that she has no dowry and shouldn't be so picky. Tzeitel starts to say that she's not an old maid yet, but Golde interrupts, telling her not to tempt fate.

Yente arrives just as Tzeitel leaves the kitchen. She is excited about her news. She makes sure all the daughters are outside and compliments them, promising to find each of them husbands. Even a bad husband is better than no husband, and she should know, having been a widow for so long. All she does at night is think of her husband, which doesn't give her any pleasure anyway, since he wasn't much of a person, but he was better than nothing.

Motel, the young tailor, then enters, asking for Tzeitel. He has something to tell her. Golde tells him to come back later, but Tzeitel returns just then and greets him. Golde orders her to finish what she was doing and repeats to Motel that he should come back later. Motel consents and leaves.

Yente asked what Motel would have wanted with Tzeitel. Golde explains that they have been friends since they were babies. Yente is suspicious, but Golde says that they are just children, that Motel is nothing to worry about.

Yente talks about her husband again. Children are a blessing in one's old age, but her husband was never able to give her any. He was a good husband, never shouted at her, but he wasn't much of a man in many other ways, too. But she's not complaining as other women like to do. She begins getting ready to leave, saying that she needs to prepare her Sabbath table.

Golde stops her, reminding her about her news. Yente returns, lamenting that she's losing her mind. The news is regarding the butcher, Lazar Wolf. He's a good man and well off, but a lonely widower, and he has expressed interest in Tzeitel.

Golde is surprised and pleased at the prospect. She says that Tevye would prefer a learned man and doesn't like Lazar. Yente says that it's not Tevye who would be marrying him. She suggests that Golde send him to see Lazar without telling him why first. Let Lazar bring it up and convince him. She tells Golde not to thank her aside from her fee, which is paid by Lazar, and leaves the room.

Tzeitel enters again and asks what Yente wanted, but Golde refused to tell her. Hodel and Chava also return, and Hodel asks if Yente found a husband for Tzeitel, who replies that she is not anxious for a husband. Chava teases her about Motel, and Hodel says that Tzeitel has to have a match before they can find one for her. Chava chimes in, saying that she'd be next. Tzeitel is exasperated, and Hodel comments that *someone* needs to do it.

The 3 girls then sing about the matchmaker bringing each of them a husband—one who is intelligent, well off, kind, tall, handsome: everything to make up the husband of their dreams. They also realize, however, that they could get stuck with a ad husband, which scares them, so they are content for now to let the matchmaker take her time to find them each a perfect match.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

The beginning of the scene gives us a glimpse into a weekly tradition—preparing for the Sabbath, where all chores must be completed before sundown. The transition is smooth, from Tevye's point of view to the women's point of view. When Yente arrives, the discussion of matchmaking begins. Motel's arrival and ensuing conversation gives us a strong hint of who Tzeitel's match will be in the end, and we also see how women who have little to say in the matter can go about convincing a headstrong husband—arrange the matter so that the man who wants Tzeitel must do the convincing. We discover later how well that actually works.

Yente is a comically miserable character: complaining without complaining, using more visual turns of phrase and distracting herself with her own long speeches. One wonders if half of her clients agree to her matches simply to make her stop talking and go away!

The song for this scene, "Matchmaker, Matchmaker" shows the down to earth hopefulness for 3 girls from a poor family. They want to please their parents while still thinking of their own desires of one who is kind and handsome. Tzeitel pretends to be

Yente to bring home the point that a match could meet all of their expectations and still not be a husband they would want. This prospect makes the 2 younger girls rethink the situation, so the song ends with all 3 being content to wait for a good match instead of rushing Yente.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

We are outside Tevye's house once again. Tevye enters, pulling his cart. He stops and sits on the wagon seat before speaking. Tevye addresses God, asking why He continues to make his life so difficult—making his horse lose a shoe and go lame just before Sabbath, giving him 5 daughters and a life of poverty.

Golde comes out from the house, greets him and asks where his horse is. Tevye says he is at the blacksmith's for the Sabbath. Golde urges him to hurry; she has something to tell him.

After Golde goes back into the house. Tevye returns to his conversation with God. He's not really complaining about being poor; there are many poor people in the world, and there is no shame nor honor in being poor. Tevye asks if it would have been so bad if God had allowed him to have a small fortune, then begins singing about being rich, what kind of house he would have if he had money, how his wife would look, how the rest of the village would treat him honorably, how he would have more time to spend praying in the synagogue.

At the end of the song, Mordcha, Mendel, Perchik, Avram and several other townspeople enter. Mordcha and Mendel are complaining that Tevye forgot their orders for the Sabbath. Tevye begins to explain that he had some trouble with his horse, but they aren't listening. Avram waves a newspaper, announcing that there is terrible news in another town, where the Jews were all evicted. The newspaper doesn't say why they were forced to leave, but the townspeople begin to conjecture. Mordcha curses the Tsar.

Mendel asks Avram why he only brings bad news, but Avram defends himself, saying that he only read it and that it was an edict from the authorities. Mordcha curses the authorities. Perchik asks why they are cursing everyone instead of doing something about it.

Mendel comments that he's not from their village and asks where his *is* from. Perchik replies that he was a student at the university in Kiev. Mordcha asks if that's where he learned to criticize his elders.

The group argues. Perchik believes that people should do more that just talk—they should know what's going on outside. Mordcha says it will do no good. Avram says they can't both be right, Tevye says they are all right, and Mordcha says that Perchik is too young to be right.

All the townspeople leave, except Mendel, who still wants his order from Tevye. However, Tevye is trying to speak to Perchik. After the next few lines, Tevye notices Perchik eyeing the cheese hungrily and offers him a piece. Perchik declines, refusing to be a beggar, since he is unable to pay for it. Tevye insists, saying that it's a blessing that

he's able to give it away. Perchik takes the offered cheese as Tevye tells him that it's not a crime to be poor. Perchik replies that the rich are the criminals in this world and that their wealth will belong to the poor someday. Tevye agrees that it would be nice, but Mendel wonders how it would happen. Perchik explains that it will be ordinary people like them who will bring it about.

Tevye asks how he makes money in the meantime. Perchik tells him that he is a tutor and asks if he has children. Tevye replies that he has 5 daughters, and Perchik says that girls should learn, too. Mendel is shocked, calling Perchik a radical.

Perchik convinces Tevye to let him teach his daughters in trade for food. Tevye also invites him to stay for the Sabbath and bid Mendel a Good Sabbath. Mendel leaves as Tevye and Perchik enter the house.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

This scene concentrates on the men's place in the Jewish tradition of the village. Tevye is returning from his milk and cheese deliveries, but his horse has come up lame, so he must work that much harder to get home in time for the Sabbath. No one could be out after sunset, which is when the Sabbath traditionally begins.

Like most of the village, Tevye is poor, but he dreams of being rich. Unlike his daughters, however, unless he had been born rich, there is very little chance that he will have the opportunity to become wealthy.

Tevye also has a humorous and endearing habit of holding one sided conversations with God. These continue throughout the performance. These are an additional way for the character to talk to the audience without actually talking directly to us, thereby ruining the feeling that we are only outsiders.

Soon enough, we meet several other men in the village who have come for the orders Tevye had not brought them. One of these men also brings a newspaper and shares the news with the others. We discover that times have been hard for the country, since this man never seems to bring good news to his comrades.

Times are also changing outside the little village. The young newcomer, Perchik, is a fresh breeze through an open window. He has some radical ideas that shock and scandalize the more traditional men—teaching women, learning more about the outside world and applying lessons in the Bible to current times instead of living currently according to the Bible. Tevye does not seem phased by all of these new fangled ideas, though, and is willing to host this young man and allow him to tutor his daughters. As alluded to in the previous scene, Tevye is appreciative of learned men, and a university student who is knowledgeable in the scripture certainly fits the bill.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

The scene again begins inside the house. Tevye and Perchik have just entered while the women are still amidst preparations.

Tevye's daughters run to greet him, and they wish each other a Good Sabbath before he introduces his oldest daughter, Tzeitel. Tzeitel and Perchik exchange a "Good Sabbath," and Tevye kisses each of his five daughters.

Motel enters just then, almost getting a kiss from Tevye in turn. Tevye begins to introduce him, but Golde enters, interrupting him. Tevye introduces her to Perchik, telling her that he is a teacher from Kiev and will be staying for the Sabbath. He asks Shprintze and Bielke if they would like to take lessons from him. The two younger girls only giggle in response.

Perchik tries to tell them that he is a good teacher, but Hodel expresses her doubt. Perchik praises her "quick and witty tongue" to Tevye, who replies that the wit is from him and the tongue is from her mother. In the meantime, Golde is beginning to corral everyone for dinner. She allows Motel to also stay for the Sabbath, calling it another blessing and asking Tzeitel to prepare two more places. She also tells Shprintze and Bielke to get washed and get the table.

Tzeitel offers to get the table with help from Motel, so Golde sends Chava along with them. She also tells Perchik that he can wash at the well outside. Only Tevye and Golde are left for the moment.

Golde says she has something to tell him, but Tevye begins praying without letting her tell him first. Between Tevye's bouts of praying, Golde manages to inform him that Lazar Wolf, the butcher, wants to talk to him. She says that is important but claims she doesn't know what it's about. Tevye then assumes that it must be about his new milk cow, which Lazar Wolf cannot have. He eventually agrees to go speak to Lazar after the Sabbath. They exit with Tevye continuing to pray.

Next, Motel, Tzeitel and Chava bring the table in, and Chava exits. Tzeitel tells Motel that Yente, the matchmaker, visited earlier and urges Motel to speak to her father before it's too late. Motel assures her that he will be able to purchase a used sewing machine in a few weeks, which will help grow is tailoring business. Tzeitel is worried that it will be too late and wants him to ask her father for her hand now, while they're all gathered. Motel feels that Tevye will say no, since he is just a poor tailor, but he agrees to talk to him.

Tevye enters, saying everyone is late. Motel begins following him, attempting to get his attention. However, Tevye blusters loudly, so Motel loses his nerve and simply wishes

him a Good Sabbath. Tevye is irritated but returns the wish and summons the children again.

The song "Sabbath Prayer" begins. The parents—joined by the village—sing for protection from God for all of their children.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

This brief scene conveys much more in a few words and stage directions than many scenes do with long conversations. The small room on stage is full of bustling activity with the players running in and out to prepare the house for the Sabbath.

The family takes the extra guests in stride. In Jewish tradition, everyone must be cared for so that none of their number suffer from neglect, and those that offer what little they can are especially blessed for their charity and sacrifice.

Motel is a poor, unmarried tailor who probably cannot afford his own Sabbath dinner, and being an old family friend, staying for the Sabbath dinner at Tevye's house is normal. Being near the girl he loves is a bonus. However, his desperation to marry Tzeitel himself has not yet overcome his fear of her father, and especially his loud voice.

Perchik is independent and confident, bemused by Hodel's quick retort. We will see in future scenes how his relationship with this family grows through his time spent tutoring the daughters.

As the all knowing audience, we also learn what kind of a shock Tevye will have when he goes to speak to the butcher. Golde has already mentioned the lack of friendship between the two, but will Tevye be any more willing to give his eldest daughter to Lazar Wolf that he would his new milk cow?

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

It is the following evening at the village Inn. Avram, Lazar, Mendel and several other villagers are already sitting at tables. Lazar is impatiently drumming his fingers on the table and watching the door. He asks Mordcha for two glasses a bottle of the best brandy.

Avram and Mordcha are curious about the request, and Lazar says that there might be a party and a wedding. Mordcha offers to help make the wedding merry for a small fee. Lazar agrees, insert a small amount of sarcasm regarding the fee.

Several Russians enter, including Fyedka, and ask for Vodka. Then Tevye follows, and Lazar pretends to be unconcerned about watching the door anymore. Tevye and Mordcha greet one another, and Mendel expresses surprise that he is there so early. Tevye explains quietly to Mendel that Lazar wants to buy his new milk cow, then greets Lazar, who invites him to sit down and have a drink. Tevye agrees and they exchange stiff pleasantries before getting down to business.

Lazar begins to explain why he wanted to see Tevye, but Tevye tells him that there's no use in discussing it. Lazar is upset, but Tevye wants to know why he would want to get rid of "her." Lazar says he has others without "her," and Tevye assumes he will want another of his cows eventually. Lazar is confused, asking what he would do with two. He is a lonely man and only wants one.

Both men are confused at this point, and Tevye makes sure they are talking about his new cow, the one Lazar wanted to buy from him. Lazar breaks into laughter at the thought of wanting a cow to keep him company and manages to explain between peals of laughter that it was Tzeitel he wanted.

Tevye is surprised as Lazar explains that he sees Tzeitel in his butcher shop every Thursday, and he has grown to like her. He is well off and would take good care of her. Tevye wouldn't even need to provide a dowry and might get something in his purse instead. Tevye's temper flares, and he yells at Lazar for thinking he would sell his daughter for money. Lazar calms him, even a little embarrassed as he admits that he likes her, and asks again for Tevye's agreement.

Tevye turns aside to the audience to think through the decision. He's never liked Lazar and thinks he only talks about meat products, but not everyone can be a scholar, and Lazar *is* wealthy. His daughter would never know hunger again. The age difference would be for them to work out, but he's a good man, likes Tzeitel and would try to make her happy. After deliberating, he agrees to the match.

Lazar is delighted, and the two men drink on it. They are joined in song by the fiddler and the rest of the men in the bar. In song and dance, they drink to each other, to life

and to Tzeitel. The Russians even join in the festivities, blessing them and wishing for peace between all of them.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

This evening begins as a comedy of errors, with Lazar speaking of Tevye's daughter and Tevye speaking of his new milk cow. Once they set things straight halfway through their conversation, however, the rest is a party, to celebrate their agreement and the upcoming nuptials. Amidst their daily misery, they have not yet lost the ability to celebrate life and the joys that can come in unexpected moments. The culture in which they live has not separated the Jews and Gentiles so much yet that the Russians cannot join in their happiness. They bless the groom to be and dance for him in their own way. This will have to change due to other circumstances throughout Russia, but this will be told in a future scene.

We are also used as a sort of sounding board for Tevye as he puzzles through whether to let Lazar have his daughter or not. This is an interesting dramatic technique for a character to express his thoughts while other characters are "put on hold."

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

The party spills out onto the street outside the Inn. Lazar says that after the wedding, Tevye will be his father. Tevye replies that he always wanted a son, but expected him to be a little older than himself.

The constable enters and soberly interrupts the festivities. He asks one of the Russians what they are celebrating, and the man explains that Tevye's eldest daughter is to be married. The constable congratulates Tevye, who thanks him. Everyone but Tevye and the constable filter off stage.

The constable has news for Tevye, as a friend. He gives him this news because he likes him as an honorable person for a Jewish dog. Tevye is not quite sober, so he is bemused by this mixed compliment. The constable tells him that he has orders to arrange an unofficial demonstration soon. Tevye is shocked, thinking he means a massacre, but the constable says it will only be a little mischief to prove to the Inspector that the Russian military is doing their duty in Anatevka.

Tevye thanks him, and tells him he's a good man, even that it's too bad he's not a Jew. The constable is amused by the joke and congratulates him again on his daughter's upcoming marriage. He leaves once Tevye thanks him again.

Tevye turns to God once the constable is gone and asks why this news had to come today. Yes, the Jews are the Chosen People, but couldn't He choose someone else once in a while? Then he thanks God for sending a husband for Tzeitel and exits, dancing with the fiddler.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

After the celebration and camaraderie between cultures, the wet blanket is dropped. The split between the Jews and Russians appears once again in the brief conversation between the Constable and Tevye. No one seems to be in control, and Tevye is left heartbroken, asking God the same question many other do in similar situations: "WHY?"

However, the appearance of the fiddler is symbolic of the need to stay upright, to keep dancing and enjoy life while we are able.

Act 1, Scene 6

Act 1, Scene 6 Summary

It is the following day, and Perchik is teaching Shprintze and Bielke as they peel potatoes outside their home. Hodel cleans pails at the pump as she listens.

Perchik tells the story of Laban and Jacob, and how Jacob had to work for Laban for 7 years in order to marry his younger daughter Rachel, but Laban tricked Jacob and gave her his ugly, older daughter, Leah, instead. Jacob had to work another 7 years to get Rachel also. The lesson he teaches the girls from this is not to trust their employers.

Golde enters from the barn and asks if their father is up yet. Hodel says that he isn't, so Golde puts a stop to the lessons for now, saying that they will all have to do their father's work for him. He had stumbled home drunk the previous night, and Golde couldn't get him to say a thing. She sends Shprintze and Bielke to clean the barn, and tells Hodel to call her when her father finally gets up.

Hodel comments to Perchik on his lesson, and doubts that the rabbi would agree on his interpretation of the story. Perchik answers that the rabbi's son probably wouldn't, either. Hodel is embarrassed that her sisters have been telling Perchik about her interest, but Perchik asks why she is interested in someone she knows so little about. Would she be as interested if he were anyone else's son?

Hodel replies that at least he doesn't have any strange ideas about changing the world. Perchik explains that anything new would be strange to her. After all, God commanded there to be light. Hodel also doubts He was talking specifically to Perchik and begins to leave.

Perchik stops her by telling her she has spirit and maybe a little intelligence. Hodel thanks him, and Perchik asks about her curiosity. Hodel says that traditionally, a boy is to be respectful to a girl, but perhaps that is too old fashioned for him. Perchik makes fun of the never changing traditions, but Hodel defends them. Perchik explains that the traditions are changing everywhere but in this small village and gives the example of how men and women are to keep so separate. In the city, boys and girls can be affectionate without the permission of their parents or a matchmaker. They hold hands and even dance together. He grabs her and teaches her a dance he learned in Kiev. Hodel is pleasantly surprised, and Perchik affirms that they have just changed an old custom. Hodel is tongue tied.

She is saved by any further shocks by Tevye's painful entrance. Suffering from a hangover, he is not aware enough to call Hodel by her own name, but asks for Tzeitel. Hodel says she's in the barn, so Tevye asks her to call her out. After she leaves for the barn, Tevye greets Perchik, asking about the day's lesson. Perchik says he thinks they had a good beginning, but is watching Hodel as she leaves.

Golde arrives and asks what happened the previous evening, whether he saw Lazar Wolf and what they discussed. Tevye tells her to have patience and starts to quote his version of the Good Book's sayings. Golde is exasperated, but just then, Tzeitel returns with Hodel and Chava.

Tevye congratulates Tzeitel on her marriage. Golde is excited, and Tzeitel is confused as Tevye explains that Lazar Wolf has asked for her hand in marriage. Golde thanks God ecstatically as Tzeitel remains speechless, and says she will be a much better bride than Lazar's first wife as she hurries off to thank Yente.

Hodel and Chava give Tzeitel a quiet and sympathetic Mazeltov before exiting, and. Perchik congratulates her sarcastically for getting a wealthy husband. Tevye is surprised at these responses. Perchik feels that money is not a valid reason to marry. Tevye says that he only wants the best for Tzeitel and asks her for her response. Tzeitel barely says anything, and Perchik leaves in a huff. Once he is gone, Tzeitel breaks into tears, telling her father that she doesn't want to marry the butcher, that she can't. Tevye replies that she'll marry who he says she'll marry, but Tzeitel says she'll do anything else, if it's a matter of money, even hiring herself out as a servant, hauling rocks or digging ditches, but begs him not to make her marry Lazar.

Tevye is confused by this, asking what's wrong with the butcher. Tzeitel is convinced she'll be unhappy with him and repeats that she'd rather do hard labor. Tevye wants to stick with his agreement with Lazar, but Tzeitel wants to know if that's all she is to him. Tevye relents and will not force her to marry the butcher if she thinks she will be so unhappy with him.

Motel rushes in breathlessly and asks to speak with Tevye. Tevye attempts to put him off until later, but Motel is insistent. He says that he has heard about Tevye arranging a match for Tzeitel. He has a perfect match for her. Tevye raises his voice and starts to scare Motel, but eventually draws out of him that he wishes to marry Tzeitel himself.

Tevye is startled and bemused. He again turns to the audience to think this over, calling Motel crazy. Motel says it's a little unusual to be his own matchmaker, but times are changing, and he and Tzeitel had pledged to each other over a year ago that they would marry. Tevye continues his puzzling, singing to the audience. He wonders if anyone has to ask the father anymore, and Motel explains that he has wanted to ask him for some time but wanted to save up for his own sewing machine first. Then he uses Tzeitel's words from earlier and says that "even a poor tailor is entitled to some happiness." He promises Tevye that his daughter will not starve.

Tevye is impressed and returns to talking through the decision to the audience. Motel is honest and hard working, and he obviously loves Tzeitel. Things couldn't be worse for him right now, so they can only get better. He ends the deliberation with a little more singing and asks Motel and Tzeitel when the wedding should be. Motel and Tzeitel are happy, thanking him effusively. Tevye starts to leave, talking about modern children, then stops and wonders how he will tell his wife. He utters a simple "Help!" to Heaven as he leaves.

Motel and Tzeitel are still on stage. Tzeitel is impressed by Motel's handling of the request, and Motel calls it a miracle. He sings and compares their recent miracle to God saving Daniel in the lion's den, the walls of Jericho falling, Moses softening Pharoah's heart and parting the Red Sea, David slaying Goliath and God providing manna in the wilderness.

Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis

Here we see another meeting of the old and the new, and how new ideas about the world outside could turn the little village of Anatevka upside down. Traditions change quickly in this scene. The relationship between Perchik and Hodel buds as they talk, and Hodel begins to learn just how different—but not unpleasant—life might be outside their little village.

Tevye is again completely unaware of this, suffering from the hangover when he enters. He does not notice the long look from Perchik this time, and it's not for cheese.

His news, when he is finally well enough to give it, receives mixed responses, and Golde seems to be the only other person who is overjoyed at the prospect of the eldest daughter being married. However, we see that Tevye can be swayed by his daughters wishes, and he is rewarded immediately by another prospect of marriage and his tearful daughter's immediate happiness. He also gets his wish, mentioned in the previous scene, of having a son who is younger than himself.

Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 7 Summary

It is now dark in Tevye and Golde's bedroom. Tevye groans then screams, waking Golde. He continues to call for help, so Golde lights a lamp and shakes him awake. She asks what's wrong with him. Tevye opens his eyes, still acting frightened and asking where Fruma Sarah is. Golde wants to know what he's talking about, since Fruma Sarah, Lazar Wolf's first wife, has been dead for years. She asks him to tell her about his dream, and she'll tell him what it meant.

He begins to tell her that everyone they knew were at a celebration of some kind, including musicians. The dream sequence begins, and a Rabbi, women and musicians enter. Tevye joins them in his nightshirt. He tells Golde that her Grandmother Tzeitel walked in.

Golde is alarmed and asks how she looked. Tevye replies that she looked pretty good for having been dead for thirty years. Grandma Tzeitel enters singing Mazeltov to Tevye and Golde, praising the son in law, the tailor, Motel. Golde says she must have heard the news wrong and must have meant a butcher, not a tailor. Tevye speaks to Grandma Tzeitel, trying to correct her on behalf of Golde. Grandma Tzeitel is certain that she means the tailor, and her great grandchild Tzeitel was meant to marry Motel the tailor.

The others in the dream join in the well wishes as Grandma Tzeitel continues to sing about Motel Kamzoil. Golde says that they've announced their bargain with the butcher already. Tevye relays this to Grandma Tzeitel, but she screams and tells Tevye that it's his headache. The chorus sings about Motel, and Tevye attempts to correct them as well.

Just then, Fruma Sarah appears from beyond the grave and wants to know what this is about Tevye's daughter marrying her husband. Has he no thought for her feelings, handing over all of her belongings to a stranger? She then threatens the marriage, saying that she will visit Lazar and Tzeitel three weeks after the wedding and throttle her in their bed. As part of the dream sequence, she demonstrate the choking on Tevye.

Golde says that it's an evil spirit brought on by the butcher and curses it. She feels that if Grandmother Tzeitel came all the way from the grave to tell them that Tzeitel is to marry the tailor, then that's the best thing that could happen. She then sings and agrees that the tailor Motel Kamzoil will be their son in law. Tevye joins her and pretends not to remember Motel's name.

As the song ends, Golde goes back to sleep, and Tevye mouths a Thank You to God before going to sleep himself.

Act 1, Scene 7 Analysis

Tevye has found a way to break the news of the change in marriage arrangements to Golde. This is a fun scene with unreal interaction between Golde and Tevye and his dreamed characters.

However, the best way to convince Golde is apparently playing upon the traditional superstitions and respect for elders, even if those elders have been dead and buried for thirty years. Tevye has chosen to play upon the previous scene's mention of Lazar's first wife, Fruma Sarah, who was apparently a bitter, possessive woman and not at all well liked. In the telling of his supposed dream, Fruma Sarah has become insanely jealous and threatens their daughter with death if they go through with the agreement for Tzeitel to marry Lazar. The Grandmother is happy with the poor tailor as a grandson in law, so given the alternative of allowing her daughter to be killed, Golde is happy enough to accept the new arrangement. It seems as though she is also blaming the visitation of the evil spirit on the butcher himself.

Act 1, Scene 8

Act 1, Scene 8 Summary

The scene begins showing a village street and the interior of Motel's tailoring shop. Motel and Chava are inside and villagers are passing by outside. A man is selling bagels and other villagers talk about the change in marriage arrangements. Everyone is shocked that the change was from a wealthy man to a poor man.

Mordcha is behind the news at first, but Avram tells him the new arrangement. Mordcha says that it's terrible news, but he immediately pops into Motel's shop to say, "Mazeltov." Another woman speaks to Motel's mother, Shandel, saying that she can't believe the news. Shandel bridles, asking what's wrong with her son. The woman excuses herself with another Mazeltov.

Other villagers step into the shop to congratulate Motel, and Motel asks one of them, Yussel, if he has a wedding hat for him. Yussel answers that he has an expensive hat that Lazar Wolf ordered. Motel agrees to buy it, since he also got Lazar's bride. He asks Chava to watch the shop for a few moments while he's gone, and she agrees. Everyone but Chava leaves the shop. A few more villagers stop in and wish Chava a Mazeltov. She thanks them, and they leave. Fyedka, Sasha and another Russian enter the shop. Sasha and the other Russian mockingly wish Chava Mazeltov, and Chava attempts to leave, but they get in her way. Fyedka asks them to stop. Sasha starts to become angry at his defense of the Jewish girl, but Fyedka dismisses the other two and apologizes to Chava when they leave.

Chava remains defensive and asks if there was something he wanted. He says he wanted to talk to her, but she is not of the same mind. He says he's seen her in the bookseller's and that no many of the other village girls like to read. He offers her the book he has been holding. Chava declines, so Fyedka questions her reasons. He tells her a little about himself in a confident, disarming manner, but Chava says she doesn't think they should be talking like this. Fyedka replies that he often does things he shouldn't and urges her to take the book. It's even written by a Jewish author. She start to decliner again, but takes the book anyway. Fyedka offers to let her read it, and then they can talk about it later, as well as life and how they feel about things.

Motel enters again, and Chava puts the book on the table. Motel greets Fyedka, asking what he can do for him. Fyedka starts to leave, and Motel says he forgot his book. Chava claims the book, so Motel thanks her as she leaves with Fyedka.

Outside, Fyedka and Chava bid each other a good day and go their separate ways. Inside, Motel puts on his new wedding hat.

Act 1, Scene 8 Analysis

Tradition is still alive and well with the villagers. We see a sort of two faced response to the news as it spreads throughout the town. Everyone thinks it's terribly that Tzeitel will be marrying a poor man when she could have had a wealthy one, but they still shower the tailor with many a "Mazeltov."

Then another tradition is broken when a Russian, Fyedka, protects Chava from his fellow Russians. Chava is taken aback, not wanting to trust Fyedka. However, they share a common interest: reading. Another relationship, however unorthodox, begins.

Act 1, Scene 9

Act 1, Scene 9 Summary

We are now in part of Tevye's yard at night. Tzeitel enters, wearing a bridal gown, followed by Tevye, Golde, and her sisters and other relations. Guests also enter and light candles. The men all take their places on one side, the women on the other. Tzeitel and Motel stand together in the center. Motel places a veil over Tzeitel's head, and four men carrying in a canopy, followed by the Rabbi. The canopy is placed over Motel and Tzeitel, and the guests and family sing.

Tevye and Golde reminisce about when Tzeitel was young as the guests sing about how times change and time flies on through happiness and sadness. The newlyweds look natural together, as they should. Perchik and Hodel both wonder if they will each be married.

As they sing, the Rabbi lifts Tzeitel's veil, then prays over a glass goblet of wine. The bride and groom each sip from the goblet. Tzeitel walks in a circle around Motel, and then he places a ring on her finger. The Rabbi puts a wineglass on the floor. The song ends, everyone pauses, and Motel steps on the glass to break it. At that moment, everyone shouts, "Mazeltov!"

Act 1, Scene 9 Analysis

This brief scene really features the parents, Tevye and Golde, who suddenly realize that things have changed—their children are now adults but still reminisce about their childhood while Motel and Tzeitel go through the traditional Jewish wedding customs.

Though they are in Russia, there is also a play of words here. The song is about the passage of time and how the little ones grow up eventually. The root of Tzeitel's name, "Zeit" means "time" in German.

Act 1, Scene 10

Act 1, Scene 10 Summary

We can now see the rest of Tevye's yard. There is a short partition down the center, and tables are set up at the rear on each side. The musicians play, everyone dances, then sits down at the tables, the men on one side, the women on the other. Mordcha mounts a stool as the dance finishes and signals for silence.

Mordcha begins his speech, blessing the newlyweds, which is answered by everyone else. The Rabbi comes to the table slowly with Mendel's assistance. Mordcha introduces him and blesses him as well. The Rabbi answers him, then so does the rest of the group. Mordcha announces that the newlyweds will receive a new featherbed, goose pillows and a pair of candlesticks from Tzeitel's parents.

He then asks everyone to remember the dear departed who lived in pain and poverty and died the same way. Everyone mourns, and then Mordcha immediately stops and urges everyone to be happy and content, like Lazar Wolf, who has everything he wants except a wife. General laughter is heard, and Mordcha says that Lazar has no ill feelings toward the couple, but has some gifts that he would like to announce himself.

Lazar stands and repeats that he is not bitter. He gives Motel and Tzeitel 5 chickens for the first 5 Sabbaths of their married life. Everyone is appreciative of this gift.

Tevye also stands in order to accept the gift on behalf of his daughter and son in law and begins to quote one of his famous sayings. Lazar interrupts him, saying that he doesn't have to listen to Tevye's sayings. Why should he listen to a man who breaks his agreement? Mendel tries to stop the argument before it goes any further, but Lazar says he has a right to talk. Tevye becomes angry at this, and Lazar says it should have been his wedding.

The rest of the crowd murmur in response to one or the other, beginning to take sides in the verbal exchanges. Mendel is still trying to avoid Lazar shaming Tevye at his daughter's wedding, but Lazar has been shamed in front of the whole village. Mendel then calls attention to the Rabbi, who asks everyone to sit down. Everyone complies.

Mordcha suggests singing a song, but Tevye interrupts, yelling to Lazar that he can keep his diseased chickens, and the argument breaks out again, with the rest of the village once again taking sides. Golde says that they had a sign from the grave, and Yente scoffs at her. Chaos erupts—Perchik climbs on a stool to blank a pair of tin plates together, Mordcha is still trying to sing, and the rest continue to shout at each other. The Rabbi again asks everyone to sit down, and Mordcha suggests a dance. The music starts, but no one dances at first.

Eventually, Perchik crosses to the women's side and asks Hodel to dance with him. Everyone is shocked, of course, and Mendel calls it a sin. Perchik says it's no sin. Lazar

calls him a wild man, but Tevye defends him. Perchik asks the Rabbi if it's a sin. The Rabbi thumbs through a book and finds something, saying that dancing isn't forbidden. Tevye interrupts before he can say more. Perchik again asks Hodel to dance with him, and Hodel rises. Golde is surprised, but Hodel responds that it's only a dance. Perchik commands the musicians to play, and the two of them dance.

Lazar and Mendel are still surprised. Tevye takes his wife and begins to dance. Shandel calls out to Golde, then to Motel when he crosses to dance with Tzeitel. The three dancing pairs are joined by others. Lazar and Yente storm off stage. As the dance reaches a climax, the constable and his men arrive, carrying clubs. The dance stops slowly.

The constable sees that they came at a bad time, but orders are orders. He tells the musicians to play and asks his men to do their duty. The Russians destroy the scene, turning tables over, smashing dishes, throwing the candlesticks to the ground. Perchik grapples with the one who threw the candlesticks, but someone hits him in the head with a club, so he falls. The wedding guests leave, and Hodel runs to Perchik where he lies unconscious. The constable stops his men, apologizing to Tevye, and exits with them to vandalize other houses. Hodel helps Perchik into the house at Golde's request. Tevye asks the rest of them to clean up. The sounds of destruction pick up again in a nearby house, but the family continues to straighten the yard as the curtain falls.

Act 1, Scene 10 Analysis

The village has a new argument to rehash which might be as big as the horse mule disagreement from the Prologue. The village is taking sides, and even Yente has turned against Tevye, feeling that she has been over ridden against tradition.

However, the radical changing of traditions suddenly becomes more public with the help of Perchik. Not only does he defend Tzeitel's right to choose who to love and marry, but he begins a dance with a woman. Tevye's stubbornness comes through when he decides to continue angering those who have taken the side against him and support Perchik by dancing with his own wife. Motel has already grown more courage, simply in the process of asking Tevye for Tzeitel's hand and assists in the shock, even to the dismay of his own mother.

The village is once again reunited, just in time to be persecuted as a whole by another edict from the authorities. This time, it is a demonstration, probably of the power the Russian government has over the lowly Jews. Tevye's family is left to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives.

Act 2, Prologue

Act 2, Prologue Summary

Time has passed,. Tevye sits on a bench outside his house, talking to God again. He mentions the dowry He gave Tzeitel her wedding. Motel and Tzeitel have been married for two months now and are too happy together to realize how poor they are. But they work hard, and Motel is still trying to save for the sewing machine.

Tevye says he knows God is very busy with everything going on in the world, but couldn't He see a way to get Motel his machine? In addition to that, his horse's leg is having trouble. He starts to quote the Good Book again, realizes who he's talking to, and exits.

Act 2, Prologue Analysis

By way of another one sided conversation Tevye is having with God, we get the sense of a passage of more than a couple of hours or a day. Tzeitel and Motel are happy despite their poverty and what happened at their wedding. Things will yet turn around for them, as we shall see shortly.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

We are still outside Tevye's house, but it is afternoon. Hodel enters unhappily and is followed by Perchik, who is begging her not to be upset.

Hodel asks why she should be upset since he's leaving. Perchik tries to explain that they expect him Kiev by the next morning. Hodel wishes him a curt good bye. Perchik continues to tell her that the country is going through enormous changes that can't happen by themselves. Jews and Gentiles alike hate what is happening. Hodel is still short with him.

Perchik is frustrated. He feels that what happened at her sister's wedding is a sign of the violence happening all over the country. It was only a precursor of more to come. He asks if she understands this, and Hodel begins to relent.

However, Perchik has a political question he wants to discuss with her. It has to do with marriage. Hodel is interested. Perchik is fumbling for the right—and intelligent—words to say as he speaks of the shared beliefs and philosophy two people must have. Hodel prompts him to continue, inserting that affection must be a part of the relationship as well. She says she thinks he's asking her to marry him, and Perchik says that's correct. Hodel is relieved, and both are happy. Perchik breaks into song, joined by Hodel, ecstatic that they have everything they want and more now.

They begin to discuss when the wedding will be. Perchik tells her he will send for her as soon as possible. He explains that they won't have an easy life, but Hodel counters that it will be less hard if they are together.

Tevye comes in and greets them. Perchik tells him that he must leave right away. Tevye says that they will all miss him. Perchik continues, beginning to tell him that he and Hodel are engaged. Hodel finishes, and Tevye thinks they are merely joking. He separates them and says no. Hodel begins trying to convince Tevye, but he says that they probably think they have a right simply because he gave permission to Tzeitel and Motel, but Perchik is going away, Hodel is not, and his answer is no.

Hodel keeps telling him that he doesn't understand, but Tevye is patient, promising to find her someone in the village. Perchik finally pipes up to say that they are not asking for his permission, only his blessing. They will marry either way, but they would prefer to do it with his blessing.

Once again, Tevye gets surprised. He sings about his confusion over this turn of events. He feels that Perchik is abandoning Hodel, but Hodel explains that that will not be the case. Perchik promises to Tevye that he will send for her and marry her as soon as he is able. He loves her. Tevye relents, deciding that they have the same matchmaker that

Adam and Eve did, and that even their old traditions were new at some point. He gives them his blessing and permission.

Hodel and Perchik are relieved and thank him. Tevye wonders again how to tell Golde. Perchik suggests that he could tell her he's going to visit a rich uncle. Tevye tells him he can handle his own wife and calls loudly for Golde. Golde arrives, and Tevye becomes timid. He tells her that he's just been talking to Perchik and Hodel. They are very fond of each other, so he has given his permission to become engaged.

He begins to rush into the house, but Golde stops him. She is upset that he didn't ask her. Tevye loses his timidity in defense and roars that he is the father. Golde says that Perchik is nothing but a pauper. Tevye tries the idea of a rich uncle on her, then changes the subject. He explains that he likes Perchik, crazy as he is, but more importantly, Hodel loves him. He sings, asking Golde if she loves him. Eventually, he draws out of her that she has grown to love him over the last 25 years. He says that he loves her, too.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

The cascade of broken traditions continue. Perchik and Hodel becoming engaged without asking parental permission was unheard of previous to this. Tevye is shocked and bewildered that they are even refusing to ask for permission and are only asking for his blessing, but he relents. Traditions must have their start somewhere, and his next daughter seems to have the same matchmaker as Adam and Eve did.

The second half of the scene is a touching song between a husband and wife who have been married for twenty five years and grew to love each other in everything they have gone through. With nothing else to do about it, Golde must also agree to Hodel's engagement to yet another poor man.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

The scene changes to the village street outside Motel's shop again. Someone is selling fish. Yente, Tzeitel and other villagers cross, and the two women meet.

Yente greets Tzeitel and tells her about seeing Chava and Fyedka together, and not for the first time. Also she happened to be at the post office, and there was a letter for Hodel. Tzeitel starts away to collect the letter, but Yente already has it. She hands it to Tzeitel, who comments that it's already open as she exits.

Yente runs to one of the other village women to tell her what she has just heard. The song begins, and woman has a new variation on the story about Perchik getting arrested. By the end of the song, Perchik started the trouble, but Golde's been arrested, Hodel's left for Kiev, Motel studies dancing, Tevye is acting unusual, Shprintze has the measles, Bielke has the mumps, and it's all because of the men and women dancing together at the wedding.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

This scene is a giant game of "Telephone" throughout the village with a final punch line. Gossip spreads like the proverbial wildfire, but no one shares the same gossip from one person to the next, and soon everyone thinks that the whole of Tevye's family is suffering because they danced with each other at the wedding.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

We are at the railroad station outside, Hodel walks in, followed by her father who is carrying her suitcase. Hodel tells him that he doesn't have to wait. He'll be late for his customers. Tevye feels that he can wait for a little while. He asks to confirm that Perchik was arrested and convicted. Hodel defends him, saying that he did nothing wrong. Tevye is doubtful—why is he in trouble if he didn't do anything wrong? Hodel reminds him of Joseph, Abraham and Moses who all were in trouble at some point after not doing anything wrong.

Tevye asks where Perchik is right now, and Hodel explains that he is very far away, in Siberia. He didn't ask her to come; she wants to go to be with him and help him in his work. Hodel sings to Tevye, trying to make him understand why she's going so far away from home, explaining that home is with the man she loves.

Tevye wonders who will marry them if they will be in the middle of nowhere. Hodel promises to marry under a canopy, holding to tradition. Tevye agrees that a rabbi or two have probably also been arrested. He tells her that he is relying on Perchik's honor to treat her well and asks that she relay that to him. Hodel says that only God knows when they will see each other again, and Tevye replies that they must leave it in His hands.

He looks to Heaven, telling God to see that she dresses warm, then leaves Hodel sitting alone on the platform.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

"Trust" is the highlighted belief over tradition now. They are both trusting in God to protect Hodel from harm, as well as trusting in Perchik's honor to take good care of Hodel once she arrives in Siberia and marries him. It is because of her love for Perchik that Hodel has such trust, and Tevye's love for his daughter is the basis for his own trust.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

It is now several months later on the village street. Villagers enter, all talking about a new arrival at Motel and Tzeitel's, asking if each of the others have heard about it. They trade a Mazeltov.

Shandel crosses the stage in a rush, and a woman stops her, asking where she's running. Shandel tells her about a new arrival at her son Motel's. Everyone wishes Mazeltov to Shandel.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

Another brief scene where everyone is speaking of a new arrival almost leads us to believe that Tzeitel and Motel have had a child. Could it be…?

Act 2, Scene 5

Act 2, Scene 5 Summary

We are now in Motel's shop. Motel and Chava are inside, with villagers crowded around Motel. They part, revealing a used sewing machine. Everyone is congratulating him on the acquisition as Tzeitel enters. She asks if he's tried the machine yet, and he holds up two different color cloth pieces that have been sewn together. Tzeitel comments that it is beautiful, and they talk about how nice the stitches are. Motel says that from now on, all his clothes will be perfect and made by machine.

The Rabbi enters, and Motel shows him the new machine, asking for a blessing for it. The Rabbi says there is a blessing for everything and prays over it. Golde asks about the baby, which Tzeitel answers is fine.

Fyedka enters, bringing about a strained pause. Motel greets him, and Fyedka says he came for his shirt. Tzeitel calls attention to the sewing machine, drawing congratulations from Fyedka as well. He wishes them a Good Day after another moment and leaves the shop.

Golde wants to know how the machine works, and Motel shows her as Chava leaves the shop as well. Fyedka speaks to her and urges her to tell her family about the two of them. Chava promises to do so but admits that she afraid. Fyedka offers to talk to her father, but Chava tells him that would be the worst thing for the situation. Chava again promises to talk to her father.

Tevye arrives just then. Fyedka greets him, offering his hand. Tevye greets him in return but refuses to shake his hand properly. Fyedka leaves, giving Chava a significant look. Tevye asks her what they were talking about. Chava begins by saying that they were just talking, but then starts to tell him that they have known each other for a long time. Tevye stops her, telling her that it would be better if they remained friends at a distance, that she should remember they are from two different worlds. He is a different kind of man from what she should have. He starts to go into the shop, but she grabs his arm to tell him that the world is changing. Tevye denies this, saying that some things will not change. Chava finally gets up the nerve to tell him that she and Fyedka are going to marry. Tevye asks if she is out of her mind proposing to marrying outside of their faith. He wants to hear nothing more of it and demands that she never see him again. Chava is meek, but Golde, Shprintze and Bielke come out of the shop just then.

Golde says that it's time to go home for supper. Tevye wants to see Motel's new machine. Golde tells him that he can see it another time. Tevye blusters, demanding to see the machine, but Golde is unimpressed. Tevye asserts that he is the man of the family and head of the house. He will see Motel's machine. Then he strides authoritatively to the door, opens it to look in, shuts the door, turns to Golde and

announces that they can all now go home. They exit, but Chava remains where she was, watching them leave.

Act 2, Scene 5 Analysis

While there is a brief mention of the baby Motel and Tzeitel *have* already had, we discover that the "new arrival" is not a baby, but a sewing machine. But this is still cause for rejoicing for the new family, and the village has been rejoicing with them, old arguments put aside for the time being. When one thinks about the long hours of sewing clothing by hand, it's easy to understand the excitement of the machine, used or otherwise.

There is also a tentative crossing of the cultural bridge again with Fyedka and Chava, but Tevye is not initially ready to break the traditional separation just yet. Marrying outside of their faith goes a little deeper, and Tevye will have to reach that much deeper in order to come to terms with their relationship.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

Tevye is pulling his cart on an open road, talking to God. Apparently, his horse's leg is still having trouble. He admits that animals have the same right as humans, to rest when they are sick, etc. He turns the cart around to push it for a while.

Golde rushes on, calling for him. Tevye is a little surprised at her manner. Golde comes with news that Chava left home that morning with Fyedka. She looked everywhere for her, even going to the priest. The priest told her that Fyedka and Chava were married.

Tevye is shocked, but covers. He tells Golde to go home. They have other children there, and they both have work to do. Golde protests, but Tevye decides that Chava is dead to them now. They must forget her and go on. Golde leaves and Tevye begins singing about his third little girl who has left him. He is hurt and bewildered the she would do such a thing.

Chava enters, trying to talk to her father, begging him to stop and listen and accept them. Tevye asks God how he can accept them and deny everything he has always believed in. Yet how can he turn his back on his child? But he can only bend so far before breaking. He yells at Chava, denying her. She cries out to him as she exits slowly and the villagers sing "Tradition" quietly behind a transparent curtain.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

Now is Tevye's opportunity to reach into the depths of his heart. He feels that he must decide whether to turn his back on his faith or his daughter, and his faith wins out. He and Golde must now disown one of their daughters, even to her face.

Act 2, Scene 7

Act 2, Scene 7 Summary

Yente enters Tevye's barn with two teenage boys who are uncomfortable being there. She calls for Golde, announcing that she has the two boys she had told her about. Golde arrives, followed by Shprintze and Bielke. Yente continues, praising the boys' families and intelligence.

Golde isn't so sure; her remaining two daughters are still young. Yente tells her that these boys aren't grandfathers. They can make the arrangements not and not have to worry about anything later, when they are all old enough. Golde asks which daughter will get which boy. Yente waves away the question, saying that it doesn't matter. Golde begins saying that she'll have to talk to Tevye, but she is interrupted by the arrival of Lazar Wolf, Avram, Mendel, Mordcha and other villagers.

Avram asks for Tevye, and Golde replies that he's in the house. She asks if there is trouble. Avram tells Bielke and Shprintze to go call their father. Yente sends the boys home, asking them to tell their parents that she'll talk to them later. Golde is still confused and asking questions.

Tevye enters, and Avram asks is he has seen the constable today. Tevye hasn't, and Lazar explains that there have been some rumors in town. They had hoped that the constable would have had news for him. Tevye asks about the rumors. Avram starts to tell him about and edict in Zolodin, but he is interrupted by the entrance of the constable and two men.

Tevye welcomes him. The constable says they might as well all hear what he has to say. He asks how much time Tevye would need to sell his house and household goods. The villagers are stunned. Tevye asks why he should do such a thing. The constable explains that he came to tell Tevye that they must all leave Anatevka in three days. Tevye continues to ask why, but the constable doesn't know and becomes irritated. The Jews must leave all of the villages in the district. He has a written order that says as much.

The villagers are all shocked and are muttering amongst themselves. The constable still claims that he has nothing to do with the order, but they will all be forced out if they refuse to go. Some of the villagers threaten to defend themselves, but the constable advises against fighting the Russian army. Tevye commands the constable and his men to get off his land while it's still his land. The villagers crowd toward the Russians. The constable reminds them that they have three days as he and his men exit.

The villagers remain shell shocked. Mordcha suggests getting together with Zolodin, that maybe the people there have a plan. Another man is still suggesting defending themselves. Mendel suggests to the Rabbi that perhaps this would be a good time for

the Messiah to come, but the Rabbi resignedly tells him that it would be best to wait for him elsewhere.

The villagers begin to leave, wondering how they will manage everything in only three days, but Yente, Golde, Avram, Lazar, Mendel and Tevye remain to sing about their village, how small and rundown it is. They will have to survive elsewhere.

Act 2, Scene 7 Analysis

Yente is desperate, her services having been ignored for 3 out of 5 daughters. Golde, however, has just lost 3 of her daughters in a short amount of time. The heartbreak is still fresh from the third one, and she doesn't feel ready to discuss losing the remaining 2 quite so soon. Yente foolishly believes that locking the remaining 2 into a marriage contract will help them avoid the fate of their older sisters.

We discover shortly, however, that these arrangements won't matter when the authorities command all Jews to leave the village within 3 days. The villagers express a multitude of responses—anger, depression, desperation, looking for the Messiah and finally…resignation.

Act 2, Scene 8

Act 2, Scene 8 Summary

The final scene is outside Tevye's house once more. Motel and Tzeitel are packing baggage into a cart and a wagon. Shprintze and Bielke enter with bundles. Shprintze asks where they will live in America. Motel explains that they will live with their Uncle Abram, although he has not been told yet. Shprintze wishes Motel, Tzeitel and the baby were coming with them, but Tzeitel explains that they will be staying in Warsaw until they can afford to come to America.

Golde enters carrying goblets. She asks Motel to be careful with them, as they were wedding gifts to Golde and Tevye. Tzeitel asks Bielke and Shprintze to come help pack the rest of the clothes.

Yente enters to tell Golde that she will be going to the Holy Land, Israel, to be a matchmaker there. She believes it's her calling, helping families to grow in the Holy Land. She and Golde bid farewell to each other and embrace.

After Yente leaves, Golde sits sadly on a straw trunk to wrap a pair of silver goblets. Tevye urges her to hurry. They'll be together soon, even Motel, Tzeitel and the baby. Golde asks when they'll see Hodel and Perchik. Tevye explains that they haven't seen them yet, of course, but Perchik is still in prison but will be out soon. Hodel works, and when he is released, they will turn the world upside down together. They are happy, and Golde and Tevye will have the other children with them. Golde says quietly that not all of them will be there. Tevye tries to get her moving again. Golde says she still has to sweep the floor, not wanting to leave a dirty house.

Tevye is exasperated, but is met by Lazar Wolf when Golde goes back in the house. He will be going to Chicago to stay with his dead wife's brother. He hates him, but at least he's a relative. They embrace to say good bye and Lazar leaves.

Tevye enters the house, passing Tzeitel and asks if they are finished inside. She replies that they are almost done but then sees Chava and Fyedka outside as she is rummaging through one of the bundles she was carrying. Chava runs to her and the sisters embrace. Tzeitel is cautious, saying that their father will see her. Chava wants him to see her so she can say good bye to him. Tzeitel tells her he won't listen, but Chava replies that he will at least hear her. Tzeitel starts to offer to go and tell their mother, but Golde comes out just then and sees Chava. She starts toward her, but Tevye comes out of the house with a length of rope. He turns and goes back into the house, but comes back outside to tie up the straw trunk with his back to Chava and Fyedka.

Chava tells him that they came to say good bye. They are going to Cracow. Fyedka explains that they can't stay among people who would do this to others. Chava

continues, saying that they had wanted him to know that. She bids her farewells, waits for an answer and turns to go when she is met only by silence.

Tzeitel bids them both good bye. Tevye prompts her with "Good be with you" under his breath as he continues with the trunk. Tzeitel looks at him and repeats it. Chava offers to write to them in America, and Golde tells her that they'll be staying with Uncle Abram. Chava and Fyedka exit.

Tevye pretends to be irritated at Golde's announcement to "the whole world" about their business. Golde tells him to stop yelling and finish packing or they will be late. Motel, Shprintze and Bielke come out of the house. Tevye tells them not to forget the baby, which Tzeitel goes in to get. She comes out and she and Motel bid their farewells to the rest of the family. Motel promises to work hard so they can join them, and he and Tzeitel leave.

The rest of the family continues their packing. Shprintze and Bielke are childishly excited about the upcoming journey. Golde stops them, demanding that they behave themselves, and Tevye says it's time to go. The stage revolves with Tevye pulling the wagon in the opposite direction. The villagers and the fiddler join the circle. The movement stops, and after a moment the villagers filter off, leaving only Tevye's family. Tevye begins to pull the wagon offstage, and the fiddler appears, playing his theme. Tevye stops and beckons to the fiddler, who puts his fiddle under his arm and follows the family as the curtain falls.

Act 2, Scene 8 Analysis

Nearly all differences are put aside in their shared misery. Even Tevye and Lazar Wolf can embrace in friendship and farewell. Golde still mourns her daughter, Chava, however, who is safely married to a Russian. However, he is a very different kind of Russian who wants nothing to do with the persecution of the Jews. After hearing this, Tevye relents a little and sends God's blessing to them through Tzeitel.

The villagers each leave their village slowly, leaving the family alone briefly, but the fiddler's final appearance and Tevye's wordless invitation to him lets us know that they will continue to survive, like a fiddler on the roof!

Characters

Chava

Chava is the third oldest daughter of Tevye and Golde. She likes books and learning. She reluctantly falls in love with Fydeka, a Russian. When she marries him, her parents disown her. But when the Jews are forced out of the village, she visits her parents and they acknowledge her.

The Constable

The Constable is a local Russian official. Though friendly with Tevye, he follows his orders to first pillage the Jews, then force them to leave the area all together.

Fydeka

Fydeka is a young Russian man who is attracted to Chava. Noting her interest in books, he gives her a book to begin their courtship. He eventually marries her, though their union results in Chava's family disowning her. When the Russians force the Jews to leave the village, Fydeka tells Tevye and Golde that he and Chava are going to Cracow because they do not want to live in a country that treats people this way.

Golde

Golde is Tevye's wife and mother of his five daughters. They have been married for twenty-five years, and she is Tevye's helpmate in life and work. She runs their home efficiently. Like Tevye, Golde wants to uphold tradition, while making sure her children are taken care of. She is the first to agree to the match between Lazar and Tzeitel and only follows her husband's lead reluctantly when he tries to go against tradition. Still, she does not want to break off relations with her daughter Chava when she marries a Russian man. Her love of family outweighs tradition in the end.

Hodel

Hodel is Tevye and Golde's second oldest daughter. Though she is a traditionalist like her parents in the beginning, she falls in love with Perchik, the radical. She breaks tradition by telling her father she is marrying Perchik and only asking for his blessing. Hodel eventually moves to Siberia to marry Perchik.

Motel Kamzoil

Motel is the impoverished tailor who is secretly engaged to Tzeitel. Though he is afraid of Tevye, he asks him for Tzeitel's hand in marriage when he learns about the match with Lazar. Motel believes that even an impoverished tailor deserves a little happiness. He turns out to be a good husband for Tzeitel. Motel desperately wants a sewing machine and eventually gets it. At the end of the play, he and Tzeitel are moving to Warsaw so they can save money and eventually emigrate to the United States.

Perchik

Perchik is a young man from Kiev with an education. Under an arrangement with Tevye, he gives lessons to the daughters in exchange for food. Perchik falls in love with Hodel and becomes engaged to her. Perchik is responsible for introducing the idea of breaking tradition into the village. He convinces Hodel to dance with him. He believes also that the villagers should have an awareness of what is going on in the outside world, especially how forces are working against Jews within Russia. Perchik is eventually arrested in Kiev and sent to Siberia, where Hodel goes to marry him.

Tevye

Tevye is the main character in *Fiddler on the Roof*. He is an impoverished dairyman and community leader with a wife and five daughters. He has a loving relationship with his family. During the play, he struggles to support them and uphold traditions. He is not inflexible, however. He agrees to let Lazar Wolf marry his eldest daughter Tzeitel as Yente the matchmaker arranged, but when she wants to marry someone else, he lets her have her way. He disowns his daughter Chava when she marries a Russian, only acknowledging her at the end of the play.

Tevye is also generous, despite his stubbornness. When he realizes that Perchik is new in town, he invites the young man to eat Sabbath dinner with his family. He also arranges for Perchik to give his daughters lessons in exchange for food. Tevye is also the contact between the Jewish villagers and the local Russian constable. Their relationship is so friendly that the Constable warns Tevye when his men must raid the Jewish community. This relationship turns sour when the Constable has to tell Tevye that the Jews must leave the village. Tevye takes his family and moves the to the United States.

Tzeitel

Tzeitel is Tevye and Golde's eldest daughter; she is about twenty years old. She is in love with Motel, the impoverished tailor, and wants to marry him. They secretly pledged to marry about a year before the play begins. When Tevye tells her of the match that has been made between her and Lazar Wolf, she begs her father not to force her into

the marriage. He eventually agrees, and she happily marries the man she loves. Eventually she has a son with him. When the Jews are forced out of the village, she goes to Warsaw with her husband while they save money to move to America.

Lazar Wolf

Lazar is the local butcher and is relatively well off. A widower with no children, he asks Yente to make a match between him and Tzeitel. Though he gets Tevye to agree to the marriage, he is eventually stunned to learn that Tevye goes back on the agreement. He starts an argument over the matter at Tzeitel's wedding to Motel.

Yente

Yente is the village's matchmaker. She is a childless widow and meddles in everyone's business. She arranges the match between Lazar Wolf and Tzeitel and is appalled when Tevye allows her arrangement to fall apart. During the wedding scene, she demonstrates her loyalty to tradition by being one of only two people not to dance. At the end of the play, Yente tells Golde that she is moving to the Holy Land.

Themes

Custom and Tradition

Tradition is central to *Fiddler on the Roof*. All of the Jewish villagers look to tradition as a guide in their lives. Tradition dictates that a matchmaker aid in the arranging of marriages, not that couples decide for themselves who and when they will to marry. Custom dictates that only men dance at weddings, not that men ask women to dance. Tradition also regulates dress, food consumption, and who can interact with whom□especially in regard to Jewish/Russian relations. While Tevye upholds these traditions to the best of his ability, the times are changing and the old way of doing things comes under repeated questioning.

Perchik is the most vocal advocate of change, arguing that people must adapt to survive in the evolving world. Yet tradition dictates an ignorance of the outside world. Perchik tries to break through this ignorance to prepare people for the worst: harassment and expulsion by the Russians.

For his part, Tevye has a soft heart for his daughters, and he ultimately makes choices that will ensure their happiness. His efforts to please his children serves as a major engine for change in the play: He will go against the tradition of arranged marriages and allow two of his daughters to select their own husbands. While he initially chaffs at Chava' s choice of a Russian mate, Tevye eventually softens his stance against that union as well. By placing the needs of his family above the requirements of custom and tradition, by submitting to change and a new way of doing things, Tevye prepares his brood for the numerous changes that will confront them in the coming years.

Change and Transformation

Perchik and Tevye inevitably and sometimes unwittingly change local traditions in *Fiddler on the Roof*. When Tevye's eldest daughter, Tzeitel, tells him she does not want to marry Lazar, that she loves Motel, Tevye agrees to let her marry the poor tailor. He does this despite the fact that a match has been made by Yente and that he has made an agreement with Lazar. This goes entirely against the village's standard practice of young women marrying the men their fathers have selected for them. But to preserve a semblance of tradition, Tevye has to convince his wife Golde that Tzeitel's marrying Lazar would be wrong. He accomplishes this via a fictional dream that he relates to Golde.

Once this first change has taken place, the challenges to tradition continue, transforming Tevye's family. While Tzeitel and Motel ask Tevye's permission to marry, Hodel and Perchik only ask for his blessing. Tevye is not happy with this change in custom but agrees to it because it will make his daughter happy.

Perchik is the first to ask a woman to dance at a wedding. When he does this, most everyone follows his lead, breaking a long-standing tradition. Perchik also wants the villagers to realize that the world is changing and that the Russian czar is attacking Jewish settlements. Perchik is proven correct by the end of the play, when the local Russian officials inform the Jews that they must vacate the village in three days. This is the biggest change, for most everyone assumed they would live their entire lives in Anatevka.

Family and Religion

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, the centers of life are family and religion. Everything Tevye does serves one or the other, often both. Tevye works as a dairyman, and he sometimes has to pull the cart himself when his horse loses a shoe or is ill. He works hard to support his wife and five daughters. Many of his personal dilemmas surround the fact that he cannot afford five dowries□let alone one. He does not know how he will marry all of his daughters off. Each of the girls, though they may defy tradition, want their father's approval. Such paternal respect is important to them. When Tevye is uncertain or feels dragged down by his weighty decisions, he looks to his God. Tevye talks directly to his deity, asking for answers to his dilemmas. The Jewish religion also serves the village at large for it is the basis of many of its traditions.

Style

Setting

Fiddler on the Roof is a musical comedy that takes place in 1905 in the small Russian village of Anatevka. The action of the play occurs largely in and around the home of Tevye. The kitchen, Tevye's bedroom, the front yard, and the barn are the primary locations, in addition to some brief settings in the village, including an inn, Model's tailor shop, the train station, streets, and roads. Tevye's house emphasizes his importance as the primary character as well as the centrality of the family and its traditions in the play.

Monologue

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye has two kinds of monologues: those in which he prays, talking directly to God, and those in which he directly addresses the audience. Both kinds of monologues allow Tevye to express his religious beliefs, doubts, worries, and fears. He talks about his failing horse and the problem of supplying a dowry for his five daughters. When he talks to God, especially, the importance of religion and tradition are emphasized. When he talks directly to the audience, it is usually to comment on the action of the play. The use of monologue underlines that *Fiddler on the Roof* is told from Tevye's point of view and that he is the musical's primary character.

Tevye's monologues also serve to advance the story, especially at the beginning of Act II. In this monologue, Tevye updates the audience about what has taken place since the end of Act I.

Dance

Dance is used in *Fiddler on the Roof* to underscore the themes of the play. Perchik, especially, uses dance to challenge tradition. In Act I, scene 6, Perchik makes Hodel dance with him when no one is around, though women are not supposed to dance with men. Though Hodel has been obedient before, this act□and Perchik's infectious free spirit□leads her to question traditions. During Tzeitel's wedding, Perchik asks Hodel to dance again. She agrees, which leads to all the guests save two (Lazar and Yente) breaking the tradition.

Dance is also used in other ways in *Fiddler*. When Tevye agrees that Tzeitel will marry Lazar, he dances for joy. The whole inn joins him in this dance, including some Russians. Dance primarily serves as a symbol of freedom and happiness in the play.

Symbolism

The title of the musical is derived from its most obvious symbol: the fiddler on the roof. The fiddler, as Tevye tells the audience, represents the fragile balance of life in the village. Tevye says "every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck." The fiddler appears at key moments in the play: the prologue to Act I; Act I, scene 4, when Tevye agrees to the match between Tzeitel and *Lazar*; when Tevye is warned about the forthcoming pogrom (assault on the Jews' property); the wedding scene, where tradition is broken and the pogrom takes place; and at the very end of the play when the family leaves for America. Then, the fiddler climbs on to Tevye's wagon, indicating that challenges will confront them where ever they go.

Historical Context

The 1960s was one of the most prosperous decades in the history of the United States. Between 1960 and 1965, low unemployment and low inflation dominated. The average worker's salary increased by one-fifth. People had more money and more things to spend it on. Still, there was some labor unrest, such as a short strike by the United Auto Workers (UAW) against General Motors in 1964. Despite such incidents, America's economic strength contributed to its position as a world leader. This position was sometimes difficult and lead to long-term problems. America renewed its commitment to prevent the communist insurgency in the small Asian country of Vietnam in 1964 by committing the first significant troop dispatches to aid the South in their battle against the Vietcong in the North. The U.S. also continued its stance in the thirty-year-long Cold War, a power stalemate with the Soviet Union that pitted the implied threat of each country's nuclear arsenal against the other (the term "Cold War" originated from the fact that while war-like conditions existed between the two countries, the fear of nuclear devastation prevented any actual fighting or significant escalation of hostilities).

For many Americans, the world was becoming a much smaller place; improved and increasingly affordable modes of transportation made travel easier both within the North American continent and abroad. Where people could not travel, television expanded knowledge of the world at large, offering a vicarious means of global expedition. Television also opened people's eyes to the burgeoning social problems in America. This increased awareness of inequalities and injustice within their own borders motivated many people to become actively involved in the correction of such problems: activists took stands throughout the decade on such issues as civil rights, poverty, and war.

Though courts had affirmed many of the tenets of American civil rights in the 1950s, it was in the 1960s that activists fought, both passively and aggressively, for their implementation in a meaningful way; fights for equality in the workplace, in public institutions such as schools, and in other public places became widespread. In 1964, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which banned racial discrimination in public places and employment. President Johnson also lead a national war on poverty. To that end, he signed the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964 which funded youth programs, community-based anti-poverty measures, small business loans, and the creation of the Jobs Corps.

Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, women began demanding equal rights, especially as more women entered the workplace. The feminist movement also found inspiration in such books as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. One reason the women's movement gained power was the introduction of the birth control pill in the early-1960s. This medication sparked the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, enabling women (and men) to pursue sexual relationships without the risk of pregnancy.

Other social groups challenged traditional roles. Young people "revolted" in the 1960s, not just by participating in the rights movements. They protested against their parents

and society's values, especially the middle- and upper-class fixation with material wealth. When the United States became more deeply involved in Vietnam, college campuses were the frequent settings for powerful antiwar demonstrations. Some young men refused to fight in a war in which they did not believe and which they felt posed no threat to the American way of life.

Despite such momentous changes in society, Broadway theater, especially the musicals of the early-1960s, targeted an older, more conservative audience. Musicals were nostalgic for the great examples of the form from the past. The year 1964 had three such productions: *Fiddler on the Roof, Hello, Dolly!, and Funny Girl*. Movies were the exact opposite, with many independent filmmakers finding an outlet for their counter-culture agendas in film. The 1960s marked a significant turning point in western cinema, with many films rising to challenge the status quo; 1964 was the year that director Stanley Kubrick's landmark antiwar satire *Dr. Strangelove* debuted.

Critical Overview

When *Fiddler on the Roof had* its first out-of-town try-out in Detroit, Michigan, there was debate over whether the show would ever have the mass appeal to make it to Broadway. A reviewer from *Variety* predicted it would only have a slim chance to be successful. Still, good word of mouth spread through its next stop in Washington, D.C. By the time *Fiddler* reached Broadway, it was a blockbuster hit from the first night, September 22,1964. *Fiddler on the Roof* was the hit of the season and played on Broadway until July 2, 1972.

Still critics were unsure about the sustained appeal of such an ethnically specific play. Theophilus Lewis in *America* wrote, "Not that extravagant praise of *Fiddler* involves more than a remote risk." Nonetheless critics praised the source material, Sholom Aleichem's stories. Howard Taubman in the *New York Times* asked, "Who would have guessed that the stories of Sholom Aleichem would be suitable for the musical stage?" The reviewer in *Time* magazine said, "Paradoxically, *Fiddler's* conscientious good taste may have robbed it of the richer seasoning of the Sholem Aleichem tale it comes from. *Fiddler* does not swell with Aleichem's yeasty joy, pain and mystery of living."

Some critics thought that *Fiddler* would save Broadway. Taubman wrote: "It has been prophesied that the Broadway musical theater would take up the mantle of meaningfulness worn so carelessly by the American drama in recent years. *Fiddler on the Roof* does its bit to make on this prophesy."

Fiddler received many rave reviews for its content. Henry Hewes in the *Saturday Review of Literature* wrote, "Joseph Stein and his collaborators have ... arrived at a remarkably effective mixture that thoroughly entertains without ever losing a sense of connection with the more painful realities that underlie its humor, its beauty, and its ritual celebrations." Taubman argued that the play "catches the essence of a moment in history with sentiment and radiance. Compounded of the familiar materials of the musical theater□popular song, vivid dance movement, comedy and emotion□it combines and transcends them to arrive at an integrated achievement of uncommon quality."

Many of the critics who liked the play expected more from it, however. These critics believed the musical bowed too much to the cliches of Broadway. Taubman was one such critic. He wrote, "if I find fault with a gesture that is Broadway rather than the world of Sholom Aleichem, if I deplore a conventional scene, it is because *Fiddler on the Roof* is so fine that it deserves counsels towards perfection." In another review, Taubman said, "I wish it had the imagination and courage to turn away from all compromise with what are regarded as the Broadway necessities."

Several critics were not as impressed by *Fiddler on the Roof*. The critic from the *Nation* found the musical less satisfying than the source material, writing "I found it too endearing□worthy of the affection the enthusiastics had manifested. Yet thinking of it in its detail, the text lacked the full savor of the sources." Yet the critic went on to say that

he changed his mind over time. Wilfred Sheed, writing in the *Commonweal*, was more harsh. He wrote, "some of the attempts to establish an atmosphere of Yiddish quaintness in *Fiddler* are pushy and overexposed and fair game for straight criticism. There is too much formula here; the village of Anatevka unburdens itself of more wry resignation in a half an hour that you'd expect to hear in a year."

Still, Sheed, like many other critics, singled out the performance of Zero Mostel, the original production's Tevye, for praise. Theophilus Lewis in *America* believed that "In human values, Tevye is a magnificent character, and Zero Mostel's portrayal is a memorable one." Taubman agreed, saying "Zero Mostel's Tevye is so penetrating and heartwarming that you all but forget that it is a performance." Mostel's Tevye has come to be regarded as the ultimate interpretation of the role.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

In this essay, Petrusso discusses the breakdown of tradition in Fiddler on the Roof.

In *Fiddler on the Roof,* tradition is an important theme, defining the lifestyle of Jews living in Anatevka, Russia, in 1905. As the dairyman Tevye says to the audience in the prologue to Act I, "Because of our traditions, we've kept our balance for many, many years. Because of our traditions, everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do." Such traditions define every facet of Jewish life, including how young girls find husbands. But traditions that have not changed for many years are challenged in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Tevye, especially, is forced to accept change as well as force change himself. Most of these changes are related to marrying off his daughters but not all. Tradition is challenged in *Fiddler on the Roof,* primarily through Tevye and his daughters.

Though Tevye claims to embrace tradition in the prologue to the first act, he regularly cuts corners. He invites change into his house in the form of Perchik, a former student from Kiev who is an outsider in the village. In Act I, scene two, the other villagers are suspicious of Perchik's warnings about the changes taking place in the world at large. While they think that Tevye's inability to make his deliveries is "bigger news than the plague in Odessa." Perchik tells them: "You should know what's going on in the outside world." Despite the villagers distrust, Tevye invites Perchik in for Sabbath supper. Further, Tevye hires him to teach his daughters, though a villager calls the thought of educating girls "radical."

There are conservative forces in Tevye's household. Golde, Tevye's wife, does not believe in women's education. When she catches Chava with a book in the first scene of Act I, she says "You were reading again? Why does a girl have to read?Will it get her a better husband?" Later, in Act I, scene six, Golde interrupts her daughters' lessons with Perchik to have them help finish their father's work when he oversleeps.

While Tevye is a poor man who cannot afford dowries for his daughters, he wants learned men for their husbands. He agrees to Lazar's match, mostly because Lazar is a good man and relatively wealthy. However, when Tevye tells Tzeitel about the match in Act I, scene six, she begs him not make her marry Lazar. She tells her father, "Papa, I will be unhappy with him. All my life will be unhappy. I'll dig ditches, I'll haul rocks." This argument does not phase him, but when she says "Is that [an agreement] more important than I am, Papa? Papa, don't force me. I'll be unhappy all my days." His daughter's impassioned plea reaches his heart, and he agrees to dissolve his agreement with Lazar. Tevye's fondness for his daughters forces his second abandonment of tradition.

Tevye's daughters serve as some of the greatest agents of change in Stein's play. When Tzeitel believes that a match might have been made for her in Act I, scene three, she tells the man she really loves, Motel, that he must ask her father for her hand. Motel is afraid of Tevye and apprehensive because he is a poor tailor. He says that he does not

feel adequate enough to ask for her hand□at least not until he gets his new sewing machine. Though Motel does not work up enough courage in this scene, he is forced to do so in Act I, scene six, when Tevye tells Tzeitel about the match with Lazar.

Tevye does not abandon tradition without an argument, however. When Motel offers himself as a prospective husband for Tzeitel, Tevye says "Either you're completely out of your mind or you're crazy. Arranging a match for yourself. What are you, everything? The bridegroom, the matchmaker, the guests all rolled into one?" When Tevye finds out that Motel and Tzeitel gave a pledge to each other over a year ago, he is outraged. In a reprise of the song "Tradition," Tevye sings incredulously "They gave each other a pledge / Unheard of, absurd / Where do you think you are? / In Moscow? / In Paris? / This isn't the way it's done / Not here, not now / Some things I will not, I cannot, allow." Despite these misgivings, Tevye sees that his daughter is happy with the poor tailor and eventually relents. In fact, Tevye goes as far as to deceive his wife in Act I, scene seven, describing a horrific dream so that this wedding can occur.

Tevye's second daughter Hodel starts out as the family's biggest keeper of tradition next to her father. Early on, when Tzeitel worries that Yente has brought a match to her mother, Hodel says, "Well, somebody has to arrange the matches. Young people can't decide these things for themselves." Hodel likes the rabbi's son. She is even the first to be suspicious when Perchik says he is a "good teacher." She replies, "I heard once, the rabbi who must praise himself has a congregation of one."

But Hodel is the first daughter to really break tradition, under Perchik's influence. In Act I, scene six, she is left alone with him for a moment. Hodel perceives she has been insulted by Perchik and immediately turns to tradition for support. She tells him, "We have an old custom here. A boy acts respectfully to a girl. But, of course, that is too traditional for an advanced thinker like you." Perchik protests several lines later, stating that "our ways are changing all over but here. Here men and women must keep apart. Men study. Women in the kitchen. Boys and girls must not touch, should not even look at each other." Perchik goes on to tell her that in the city, men and women, girls and boys can dance together. He grabs her hand and starts to dance with her. Though startled, Hodel dances along.

Later, during Tzeitel's wedding, Hodel and Perchik are public agents of change. At the reception in Act I, scene ten, Perchik goes over to the women's side and asks Hodel to dance. While some villagers call this act a "sin," Tevye defends the young man's brash act. After Perchik and Hodel dance, Tevye joins in and makes Golde dance with him. Soon the rest of the village joins in, save *Lazar* and Yente. Both of them have suffered the most because of these breaks with tradition.

Finally, when Perchik must leave in Act II, scene one, he asks Hodel to marry him. She agrees, though it will be a hard life for her. Tevye enters and they tell him of their engagement. This break with tradition is again hard for him to understand. He believes they are asking for his permission and tells them no. Perchik tells him, "We are not asking for your permission, only for your blessing. We are going to get married." Tevye has another crisis of conscious, but he asks himself "did Adam and Eve have a

matchmaker? Yes, they did. Then it seems these two have the same matchmaker." Again, when Tevye sees that one of his daughters is happy, he gives in and breaks with tradition. He allows Hodel to travel to Siberia, where she will marry Perchik. There is no wedding for him to attend, though she promises to keep one tradition and marry under a "chupa" or canopy.

Of all of Tevye's daughters, however, Chava makes the biggest break with tradition. She crosses a line that even Tevye cannot allow. In Act I, scene eight, Chava minds Motel's tailor shop for a moment. During that time, a young Russian man named Fyedka begins to talk to her. He tells her, "I've often noticed you at the bookseller's. Not many girls in this village like to read." He goes on to offer a book to her. Chava is uncomfortable with him because he is not Jewish. She does not want to take the book, but she finds herself doing so. When Motel returns, she lies to him, saying that the book is her's. By Act II, scene two, the villagers, like Yente, have noticed that the Russian and Chava have been spending time together.

In Act II, scene five, things come to a head. Chava tells Fyedka that she is afraid to tell anyone about their relationship. When Tevye comes by, Fyedka wants to talk to him, but Chava says that she is the one who must confront her father. She argues, "The world is changing, Papa." He replies, "No. Some things do not change for us. Some things will never change." Chava then informs her father that she and Fyedka want to be married. He says that he will not allow it and grows angry. By the next scene, Chava has secretly married Fyedka and begs her father to accept the union. He cannot. Tevye asks, "Accept them? How can I accept them. Can I deny everything I believe in? On the other hand, can I deny my own child? On the other hand, how can I turn my back on my faith, my people? If I try to bend that far, I will break." Chava leaves with her husband, disowned. Tevye says that she is dead to him.

In the final scene of the musical, Chava comes with her husband to say goodbye following the Jews' expulsion from the village. Though Golde and Tzeitel warmly greet her, Tevye still cannot accept what she has done. Fyedka and Chava tell them that are leaving the village, too, because they do not want to be a part of this injustice. Just before the couple leaves Tevye tells Chava in a quiet way "God be with you," acknowledging her and the changes in tradition that inevitably have come to his family.

Tevye and his daughters force an evolution in society's transitions which predict greater changes for their village and their country. The community of Anatevka is literally breaking down at the end of *Fiddler on the Roof* just like the traditions that fell through the course of the play. A way of life is disintegrating, making way for new traditions and mores. Stein implies that people like Tevye contribute to such a process. By being innovators, the agents of change, those involved gain the strength of character to face an uncertain future.

Critical Essay #2

Reviewing a 1991 revival production of Fiddler on the Roof, *Disch finds that Stein's play still has the power to charm an audience. The critic summarized: "As of right now this is the best musical on Broadway*."

Of *Fiddler on the Roof* little more need be said that it is as good as ever. The art of curatorship has rarely been exercised so scrupulously in the Broadway theater. The Chagallesque sets by Boris Aronson have been faithfully reproduced; ditto the Zipprodt costumes. The credits at the foot of the program are worth quoting in full for what they may portend for future revivals: "Original Production Directed & Choreographed by Jerome Robbins," followed in letters half that size by "Choreography Reproduced by Sammy Dallas Bayes/Direction Reproduced by Ruth Mitchell." The role of Tevye is reproduced by Topol, who, oddly, seems younger this time round than in the 1970 movie version, when he had to work at looking the age he's now achieved naturally. So, if you loved *Fiddler* in 1964, you can love it again just the same; and if you missed it then, here's your chance. Book (Joseph Stein), score (Jerry Bock) and lyrics (Sheldon Harnick) may never before have meshed with this kind of Rolls-Royce precision.

Has Time, then, played none of its usual ironic tricks on the text? Well, it does seem darker to me now, and the final curtain, with Tevye heading for the New World but leaving behind three daughters probably destined to be victims of the Holocaust, seems overtly tragic. In the movie version, by contrast, the final emphasis is that Tevye's glass is half-full rather than half-empty: America awaits him, in Technicolor. And if *Fiddler's* a tragedy, then may it not be a tragic flaw in Tevye's character that he accedes to his daughters' determination to marry for love rather than prudentially? It's a question that makes the story a lot more interesting, though it must remain unanswerable. Everyone in the cast does a splendid job, but I won't recite the honor roll. I'll just give an unqualified recommendation. As of right now this is the best musical on Broadway.

Source: Thomas M. Disch, review of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the *Nation*, Vol. 252, no. 1, January 7/14, 1992, pp. 26-27.

Critical Essay #3

While finding the show "endearing worthy of affection," Clurman ultimately finds Stein's Fiddler on the Roof *to be less than great theatre*.

After seeing Fiddler on the Roof (based on some Yiddish short stories; book by Joseph Stein, music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick) numerous members of the audience confessed (or proclaimed) that they shed tears of compassion and gratitude; others have asserted that their hearts swelled in elation, while still others were convulsed with laughter. My own reception of the show was cool.

I too found it endearing□worthy of the affection the enthusiasts had manifested. Yet thinking of it in its detail, the text lacked the full savor of its sources; the music simply followed a pattern of suitable folk melodies without adding, or being equal, to them; Jerome Robbins' choreography, though correct in its method, was not□except for two instances□as brilliant as I had expected it to be. Boris Aronson's sets did not "overwhelm" me; even Zero Mostel's performance, which cements the diverse elements and gives them a core and a shape, was open to objections. Then, too, were not those critics right, in the press and the public, who maintained there was a Broadway taint in the mixture?

Yet the longer I reflected, the greater grew my regard for the show! The steadier my effort to arrive at a true appraisal of my feelings, the more clearly I realized that the general audience reaction was justified. By a too meticulous weighing and sifting of each of the performance's components one loses sight of the whole.

The production is actually discreet. For a popular ($350,000) musical there is a certain modesty in its effect. The vast machinery of production□I do not refer to the physical aspects alone□which must perforce go into the making of an entertainment of this sort has by an exercise of taste been reduced to a degree of intimacy that is almost surprising.

The choreography, for example, does not attempt to electrify: though it is rather more muscular, broader and certainly less "cosy" than Jewish folk dancing tends to be, Robbins has on the whole successfully combined the homeliness of such dancing with Cossack energy. And though Aronson's sets may remind one of Chagall, they do not really attempt to achieve Chagall-like results. (Chagall's art is always more emphatically Russian or French than anything else. Whatever their subject, his paintings possess a certain opulent flamboyance that is hardly Jewish.) Aronson, faced with the need to move his sets rapidly, as well as to give them the atmosphere of impoverishment required by the play's environment without robbing them of a certain quiet charm, has made his contribution to the proceedings relatively unobtrusive□which a Chagall stage design never is. (There is also in Aronson's pictorial scheme a nice contrast between the ramshackle drabness of the places in which the play's characters are housed and the profuse yet delicate greenery of the natural surroundings.) Considering too the

dizzying extravagance of Mostel's histrionic quality, his performance is remarkably reserved.

None of this, however, goes to the heart of the show's significance, which must be sought in its effect on the audience. That effect comes close, within the facile laughter, the snug appreciation of an anticipated showmanship, to something religious. To understand this one must turn to the play's original material: stories by Sholom Aleichem. Sholom Aleichem (pen name for Sholom Robinowitz, born in Russia in 1859, died in New York in 1916) was the great folk artist of Yiddish literature—an altogether unique figure who might without exaggeration be compared to Gogol. The essence of Sholom Aleichem's work is in a very special sense *moral*. It is the distillation of a humane sweetness from a context of sorrow. It represents the unforced emergence of a real joy and a true sanctification from the soil of life's workaday worries and pleasures. Although this blessed acceptance of the most commonplace facts of living—generally uncomfortable and graceless, to say the least—appears casual and unconscious in Sholom Aleichem, it is based on what, in the first and indeed the best of the play's numbers, is called "Tradition."

This tradition, which might superficially be taken to comprise little more than a set of obsolete habits, customs and pietistic prescriptions, is in fact the embodiment of profound culture. A people is not cultured primarily through the acquisition or even the making of works of art; it is cultured when values rooted in biologically and spiritually sound human impulses, having been codified, become the apparently instinctive and inevitable mode of its daily and hourly conduct. Sholom Aleichem's characters are a concentrate of man's belief in living which does not exclude his inevitable bewilderment and questioning of life's hardship and brutal confusion.

In the stories this is expressed as a kindness which does not recognize itself, as pity without self-congratulation, as familiar humor and irony without coarseness. This is beauty of content, if not of form. For the Eastern (Russian, Polish, Rumanian, Galician) Jews of yesteryear "would have been deeply puzzled," Irving Howe and Eleazer Greenberg have said in their admirable introduction to a collection of Yiddish stories, "by the idea that the aesthetic and the moral are distinct realms, for they saw beauty above all in behavior."

More of this meaning than we had a right to expect is contained in Fiddler on the Roof. Is it any wonder, then that an audience, living in one of the most heartless cities of the world at a time of conformity to the mechanics of production, an audience without much relation to any tradition beyond that expressed through lip service to epithets divested of living experience, an audience progressively more deprived of the warmth of personal contact and the example of dignified companionship, should weep thankfully and laugh in acclamation at these images of a good life lived by good people? In *Fiddler on the Roof* this audience finds a sense of what "togetherness" might signify. Without the cold breath of any dogma or didactics, it gets a whiff of fellow feeling for the unfortunate and the persecuted. It is a sentiment that acts as a kind of purification.

Is there too much "show biz" in *Fiddler on the Roof*? Undoubtedly. But apart from the fact that dramaturgic and musical equivalents of Sholom Aleichem's genius are not to be had for the asking, is it conceivable that a truly organic equivalent of the original stories could be produced in our time at a theatre on West 45th Street? The makers and players of *Fiddler on the Roof* are not of Kiev, 1905, nor do they live (even in memory) a life remotely akin to that of Tevye the Dairyman, his family and his friends, or of the author who begat them. The producers of *Fiddler on the Roof* are Broadway□as is the audience□and, in this instance, perhaps the best of it. Those who have attended some of the latter-day productions of the Yiddish stage itself will know that they too are as alien to the spirit of Sholom Aleichem as anything we see at the Imperial Theatre. /p>

The name of Chagall has almost unavoidably come up. The nearest thing to that artist's type of imagination dwells within *Fiddler on the Roof's* leading actor. Zero Mostel has "Chagall" in his head. Mostel's clown inspiration is unpredictably fantastic□altogether beyond the known or rational. One wishes this fantasy were allowed fuller scope in the show, even as compliments for its control are in order. For Mostel too, being part of Broadway, will fleetingly lapse into adulterations inhospitable to his fabulous talent.

source: Harold Clurman, review of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the *Nation,* Vol. 199, no. 10, October 12, 1964.

Adaptations

Fiddler on the Roof was adapted as an immensely popular film in 1971. This version was directed by Norman Jewison and stars Topol as Tevye, Norma Crane as Golde, Molly Picon as Yente, and Rosalind Harris as Tzeitel.

Topics for Further Study

Compare and contrast Tevye with the title character in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage*; both characters struggle to survive in tough times and a harsh environment. Focus on their quests to support and guide their children.

Research the history of the Jews in turn of the century Russia. Why was tradition□a central theme in *Fiddler on the Roof*□so important to their way of life?

Read the short stories by Sholem Aleichem (1894's Tevye and His Daughters) that are the basis for *Fiddler on the Roof*. How do the demands of the short story form affect how the stories are told? How are the tales told differently on the stage?

The title image and central metaphor of *Fiddler on the Roof*□the fiddler himself□comes from a painting by Marc Chagall. Research Chagall's background and his stylistic concerns as an artist. Compare and contrast Chagall with the Stein's play and its themes.

Compare and Contrast

1905: There is widespread student protest against the Russian injustices, particularly educational inequality.

1964: Students are among the first to demonstrate for greater civil rights and to speak out against American involvement in Vietnam.

Today: While the spirit of social protest is alive and well, nation-wide mass demonstrations are less common due to less overt social injustices and the absence of a war such as Vietnam.

1905: There is widespread prejudice against Jews in Russia. There are over 600 anti-Jewish riots called pogroms, many of which result in loss of property and life.

1964: There is widespread prejudice against African Americans in the United States, especially in the South. Violence is used in an attempt to deny them such basic civil rights as equal access to public services and integrated education.

Today: While prejudice against minorities remains, many institutional barriers have been overcome; there is significant legislation to ensure social equality. Prejudice and injustice still arise, however, as in the Los Angeles, California, riots that resulted following the acquittal of white police officers accused of beating black motorist Rodney King.

1905: By law, Jews are banned from many jobs in Russian society; they are denied positions simply because of their religion.

1964: Civil rights legislation in the United States seeks to address hiring practices that work against African Americans and other minorities.

Today: Conservative forces in the United States seek to rescind some aspects of the civil rights legislation, targeting Affirmative Action and other "quota" practices as reverse discrimination that works against qualified whites.

1905: The number of Jews allowed to receive a secondary or higher education is restricted by law.

1964: Though the American court system orders the desegregation of public schools, some state officials, especially in the South, are reluctant to follow through. Some openly defy the law.

Today: There is a debate over the merits of integration in education. Court-mandated bussing practices□enacted to integrate schools□ are phased out in some areas of the country.

What Do I Read Next?

Rags, a musical written by Joseph Stein that was first produced in 1986. It continues the story of Tevye and his family upon their arrival in the United States.

Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution 1881-1917, published by Hans Rogger in 1983, is a history of Russia, including treatment of the Jews and the events of the Revolution of 1905.

Wandering Star is a novel by Sholem Aleichem published in translation in 1952. It concerns a Yiddish theatrical group touring Russia.

Life Is with People: the Culture of the Shetetl, a nonfiction book published by Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog in 1952, describes the customs of a type of Jewish town known as a shetetl.

Native Land: A Selection of Soviet Jewish Writers is a collection of short stories compiled by Chaim Beider and published in 1980.

Further Study

Altman Richard and Mervyn Kaufman. *The Making of a Musical: Fiddler on the Roof*, Crown, 1971.

This book discusses *Fiddler on the Roof* from its conception to the original Broadway production as well as premiers in Europe and the Middle East. The evolution of the movie version is also included.

Guernsey, Otis L., Jr. *Broadway Song & Story: Playwrights, Lyricists, and Composers Discuss Their Hits*, Dodd, Mead, 1986, p. 115.

This is an interview with Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Joseph Stein on the creative process behind *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Rosenberg, Bernard, and Ernest Harbug. *The Broadway Musical: Collaboration in Commerce and Art,* Crown, 1971.

This book discusses the creative and financial processof putting together a Broadway musical, including *Fiddler on the Roof* in its discussion.

Suskin, Steven. *Opening Night on Broadway: A Critical Quotebook of the Golden Era of Musical Theatre*, Schirmer, 1990.

This book features summaries of critical response to and quotes from reviews of original Broadway productions, including *Fiddler on the Roof*.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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