The Girls Study Guide

The Girls by Joy Williams (writer)

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

“The Girls,” by Joy Williams, was first published in the *Idaho Review VI* in 2004 and later reprinted in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*, edited by Michael Chabon. Williams, who began publishing fiction in the 1960s, is often compared to Flannery O’Connor, an American writer known for her Southern gothic stories. Although Williams is not a southern writer, she does use the gothic and grotesque to great effect in her work. Williams has also been compared to American writer Raymond Carver. Devoted to the short story form, Carver is known as a minimalist—a style reflected in Williams’s own stories, which critics have sometimes described as cool and terse. Her style is a unique blend of the weird and the grim. Williams does not flinch from the harsh realities of life or bury her characters in fantasy, but her fiction always has a flavor of the fantastical or hyper-realistic.

“The Girls” is a story about cruelty and family dysfunction, featuring two sisters who are closer than twins and behave as if they are evil incarnate. The girls occupy themselves with tormenting their parents’ houseguests—until one guest turns the tables on them. This story, as with many of Williams’s other works of fiction, selects death as an available escape from life’s travails.

Author Biography

Williams was born February 11, 1944, in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, to William Lloyd, a minister, and Elisabeth (Thomas) Williams. She graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marietta College in Ohio in 1963. Williams received her Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing from the University of Iowa in 1965.

After college, Williams worked as a data analyst for the U.S. Navy for three years before turning to fiction writing full-time. Her first novel, *State of Grace* (1973), garnered Williams a lot of attention from readers and critics. *Taking Care* (1982), her first collection of short stories, exhibited Williams's ability with short fiction. As of 2006, she had written nine books of fiction and non-fiction. "The Girls" was originally published in the *Idaho Review VI* in 2004 and then anthologized by Michael Chabon in the 2005 edition of *The Best American Short Stories*.

Williams is known for her terse, direct prose and an imagination that makes free use of grotesque elements. Her stories and novels are unwavering in their handling of difficult subjects and emotions. Death and dysfunctional marriages appear frequently but always with a fresh flair. She frequently publishes her stories and essays in literary magazines, such as *Granta* and the *New Yorker*. Williams's work has also been widely anthologized over the course of her more than forty-year-long career. She received a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1973 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1974, among other honors. She was a finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for her novel, *The Quick and the Dead*. She has taught at many universities, including the University of Houston, the University of Florida, the University of Iowa, Ithaca College, and the University of Texas in Austin.

Williams married writer and editor Rust Hills, and they have a daughter together. As of 2006, Williams lived in Florida and Texas.

Plot Summary

“The Girls” opens with two sisters going through the personal belongings of their parents’ houseguest, Arleen, while she is in the shower. They are looking for her journal. They find the book, but Arleen finishes her shower before they can read anything so they flee downstairs. Arleen appears later and asks if the cat litter pan can be taken out of the bathroom because it smells. The girls are shocked at this request because they believe their cats can do no wrong. They dislike Arleen and wish she would leave so they ask her about her home. Arleen tells them it has very steep stairs which sometimes discourages her from going out because then she has to climb the stairs to return home. They also ask her how her birthday was, but their question is sneering because they feel that “The Birthday was more or less an idiotic American institution.” A few days earlier, on the evening of Arleen’s birthday, Arleen and Father Snow gave their house gift to the girls’ parents. It was a cocktail shaker, and the girls embarrassed everyone by showing off the other ten cocktail shakers their parents have already received as gifts.

Arleen leaves the girls to join Father Snow in the garden. The girls think about Father Snow, whom they feel is too indulgent in his grief. Holding their two cats, the sisters watch Arleen and Father Snow from a window and are convinced that she is in love with the sad man. The girls retire to the enclosed porch where they work on collages using found and stolen objects. The girls love the old house they live in with their parents but resent the fact that their parents have houseguests coming and going all summer long. The girls have never been interested in any of the houseguests except for one young woman who was an artist. None of the guests ever returns for a second stay—except for Father Snow, who is on his third visit. When Arleen first arrived, they did not think much of her, but now they dislike her.

Mommy calls her daughters to her and tells them Arleen saw their cats maim a mockingbird in the garden. The girls tell Mommy that their cats would never do that because they are nice house cats, even though they know the cats have already killed a dozen songbirds so far this summer. The sisters then leave for the beach where they lay in the sun, nude and admired, talking about their parents. They are worried that their parents are aging badly. When they return home, the house is quiet. Mommy has left a note telling them they are napping, and Father Snow and Arleen have gone out for ice cream. The girls immediately go upstairs to investigate their guests’ rooms. In Father Snow’s room, they find two smooth black stones which they think might represent him and his dead lover Donny. In Arleen’s room, they find her journal. Arleen appears just as they are about to start reading, and she tells them what she has written. It is about their mother. The girls find this very odd, and when Arleen mentions Mommy’s dreams, they do not believe her. Arleen takes her journal and leaves.

The girls go to their third-floor room to bathe before dinner. They come downstairs for cocktails and overhear Daddy telling Father Snow about a previous houseguest who had out-of-body experiences. The sisters do not think they can bear another night of their parents mingling with Father Snow and Arleen. Father Snow stirs the martinis and offers a prayer and then a toast for “those not with us tonight.” Father Snow, still

profoundly unhappy, confesses that he is thinking of resigning. The girls repeatedly say awkward or insulting things about Donny, but Father Snow does not seem to hear them. Bored, the sisters change the topic of the conversation, asking Mommy to tell everyone about how Daddy proposed to her. Mommy tells them about his sentimental proposal, but the girls want to hear the whole story so they tell it themselves.

It was winter and Daddy was in a hurry to meet Mommy for their date. He hit a man on the side of the road and did not stop because he did not want this new life which lay before him to be disrupted. Father Snow is deeply disturbed by this account. Mommy and Daddy are ashamed that their secret has been let out. Mommy tries to smooth it over with Father Snow, who is profoundly uncomfortable. The girls, meanwhile, are happy because they like this grotesque little tale about the beginning of their family. Mommy says she wants to do something about this accident after all these years, and Father Snow preaches about the meaning of the word repent and how inadequate it is. Daddy makes no apologies, stating, “We’ve had a good life . . . Full. Can’t take that away from us.”

The cats enter the room and jump on Arleen’s lap. She pets them, pulling a bloodsucker off of each, which the girls think is disgusting and falsified. They do not believe their cats would carry around such nasty little creatures and accuse her of being a magician. Arleen tells them she is a companion and adviser, and Father Snow praises her ability to listen and make decisions. Arleen suddenly turns to Mommy and tells her to get rid of her daughters. “High time for them to be gone.” She tells the girls that they are killing their mother. The girls are astonished, and no one knows what to say. Mommy tries to pass out more crackers and cheese, but the girls tell her to sit down. She does so, but her face goes strange, and she slides to the floor, taking a lamp with her and hitting her head on the fireplace lintel. Arleen and Father Snow get down to tend to her, but she is dead. Father Snow shakes off his depression and returns to his professional demeanor as he prepares to aid the newly dead.

Characters

Arleen

Arleen is Father Snow's companion and advisor. She joins him while he is a guest at Mommy and Daddy's big nineteenth-century house. She and Father Snow do not have a romantic relationship; she seems to be helping him work through his problems, probably in relation to his grief over the death of his lover Donny. Arleen is the only American character in this story, which is set in Great Britain. The girls describe her as plain and shy with long, beautiful auburn hair. They often belittle her clothing, demeanor, and mannerisms. Arleen catches the girls with her diary and recites for them what she has written in it about their mother. It does not make sense to the girls, who refuse to believe that their mother would be so intimate with this woman. This journal contains Arleen's notes because she is also examining Mommy to see what is making her ill. At the end of the story, Arleen reveals her diagnosis by recommending that Mommy kick her daughters out of the house because the girls are slowly killing her. If this wild declaration were not odd enough, Mommy suddenly has a stroke and drops dead.

Clarissa

See Mommy

Daddy

Daddy is a nearly invisible character. The girls worry that he is unhappy because he is drinking and smoking more than he used to and is sometimes harsh with them. In the final scene of the story, the girls reveal that Daddy hit and probably killed a man on the side of the road while driving to meet Mommy for a date and to ask her to marry him. The evening and the life ahead of him, he felt, were too important to muddle up with an accident so he drove on. This heartless and morally reprehensible act is reminiscent of how his daughters behave.

The Girls

The girls are sisters, thirty-one and thirty-three years of age. Their names are not given. They are the point of view characters and their personalities are indistinguishable. They do not have the closeness of twins, who do exhibit distinct personalities despite outward similarities. These sisters think and act as a single entity. They are British, beautiful, and obsessed with the idea of their own importance and attractiveness. They declare that they have never been in love and do not plan to marry because it would mean some level of separation from each other. They go to clubs but talk only to each other. The girls like to make collages with found items. They own two cats, on which they dote. They have a more than hearty enjoyment of the grotesque, from their cats' killing

songbirds in the garden to their father's striking down a man on the side of the road and leaving him there to die while Daddy hurried on to propose to his girlfriend. The girls are aware that their parents are unwell but refuse to believe that it has anything to do with them. They are narcissistic and believe themselves to be above reproach.

Mommy

Mommy is the mother of the two girls. She and Daddy have been married thirty-five years. Their daughters still live them in their nineteenth-century, three-storey house. Mommy is a very accommodating woman. Mommy and Daddy entertain houseguests all summer long, every summer, which irritates the daughters. The girls note that Mommy's "enchantment with life seemed to be waning," and they are concerned for her health. As revealed in Arleen's journal, Mommy has been consulting with Arleen about her health. Arleen reveals to the family at the end of the story that the girls are killing their mother and must move out. Caught between Arleen and her daughters, Mommy does not know what to do. She tries to pretend everything is normal, but she seizes up, possibly from a stroke or heart attack. Mommy falls to the floor, hitting her head on the lintel of the fireplace, and dies.

Father Snow

Father Snow is pastor at the city's Episcopal Church. He is a houseguest at Mommy and Daddy's house and is the only repeat houseguest, possibly because he is oblivious to the girls' torments. The girls call him Father Ice behind his back, a nickname they see as ironic since he is anything but ice-like, being very emotional. In this story, Father Snow is deeply depressed about the death of his lover, Donny. He likes to drink martinis, which he mixes for the family during cocktail hour. Father Snow snaps out of his depression at the very end of the story when Mommy drops dead, and he must use his training as a minister to tend to her departing soul.

Themes

Arrested Development

Arrested development is a term that refers to a maturation process which has ceased to progress. In “The Girls,” the title characters are in their early thirties but still live with their parents as if they were teenagers or younger. They do not hold down jobs, they do not have friends or boyfriends, and they are not attending college or in any way pursuing a life beyond the circle of their immediate family. This arrested development is a detriment to the girls themselves and the quality of life they lead, and in this case, it is also makes the girls a nuisance and occasional terror to their parents’ summer houseguests. The direst result of the girls’ arrested development is the drain on their mother. Because the girls have never broken away from their parents, they are in some mysterious way still drawing on their life force, particularly their mother’s. Arleen points this out to the entire family in the climax of the story, warning Mommy that she must make them leave, or they will literally be the death of her.

Arrested development is also reflected in Father Snow’s ceaseless mourning for his now deceased lover, Donny; however, his condition is temporary. In the midst of the story and from the mocking point-of-view of the girls, it seems that Father Snow will never stop weeping over Donny, but when Mommy falls and dies at the end of the story, he immediately leaves behind his grief to resume his professional role as a minister. Father Snow merely required a catalyst to launch him out of his depression. By contrast, the girls do not seem to be changeable in the least.

Narcissism

Narcissism is self-love. In the field of psychology, narcissism is considered a personality disorder that is diagnosed from a list of traits, of which at least five traits must be applicable. These traits include: a sense of self-importance; fantasizing about ideal love and unlimited success in life; belief that one is special and can only associate with certain other people; a belief that one must be admired; a sense of superior entitlement; a tendency to take advantage of others; an inability to empathize with other people; envy of other people or beliefs that others are envious of oneself; and arrogance. The girls exhibit many of these traits. Like narcissists, the girls also react badly to anyone who criticizes them because they take such criticism as an unwarranted, prejudicial indictment. Arleen refuses to see the girls as they want to be seen, and so they despise her. They also dislike Father Snow and think he is slow-witted because he cannot be affected by their tormenting.

Psychologists argue that narcissism, while its source is genetic, is exacerbated by poor parenting. In light of this view, the girls’ father can be seen to have actually done greater damage to his family when he chose not to turn back and help the man he hit on the side of the road and instead chose to hurry on to his date with his soon-to-be fiancée.

This self-involved and morally reprehensible behavior has been distilled in his daughters.

Sadism

Sadism is taking pleasure in inflicting emotional or physical pain on another living creature. It is a pervasive theme in “The Girls,” in which the sisters commit cruel acts. They delight in tormenting their parents’ houseguests, whom, as a rule, they despise. Their most recent victims are Father Snow and his American companion, Arleen; however, Father Snow is deaf to their incendiary comments. Thus, he is the only repeat houseguest the girls’ parents have had. The girls focus their cruelty on Arleen, snickering about her clothing, her whale-shaped purse, her shyness, how she celebrates her birthday, and what they imagine her relationship with Father Snow must be. They search her room for her journal, even going so far as to read it in front of her. The cats, as a reflection of their owners—the girls—hunt songbirds in the garden; their killing the birds delights the girls.

Style

Climax and Denouement

The climax of a story occurs when the plot reaches its crisis. It is often the most exciting part, when secrets are revealed. “The Girls” arrives at its climax when Arleen tells Mommy to get rid her daughters because the girls are killing her. This extraordinary announcement is surprising because it comes from quiet and differential Arleen and because of *what* Arleen is saying. The girls are shocked and, of course, deny her statement, but the reader, having seen into the mean, cold hearts of these sisters, knows what Arleen says is true. Arleen’s courageous statement about how toxic the girls are creates the climax of the story by bringing the truth out in the open.

Denouement derives from a French word meaning, to untie. It occurs after the climax and is the point in the story when the secrets and questions put forth in a story are resolved. In Williams’s short story, the denouement comes very quickly after the climax. Mommy tries to act as if everything is normal, offering her company more hors d’oeuvres. Her strange facial expression probably indicates a stroke. She falls off her chair and hits her head on the lintel of the fireplace, dying.

Protagonist and Antagonist

The protagonist is the main character of a story and often times the point-of-view character as well. The protagonists of “The Girls” are the girls themselves. Unlike many protagonists, though, these daughters are not sympathetic characters. They are needlessly cruel to others, spoiled, manipulative, and self-absorbed.

An antagonist is the character who opposes the protagonist. Although the antagonist is often a villain of some sort, in Williams’s story the antagonist is Arleen—the most realistic and sympathetic character in the story. Arleen reveals herself as the antagonist when she tells Mommy at the end of the story to get rid of the girls. The girls have thought that she was a silly woman and are shocked to discover that she is their most serious adversary.

Historical Context

Terrorism

Terrorism is an act of indiscriminate violence against civilians carried out by people of some political or religious affiliation with the intention of subverting the dominant power. Worldwide numbers of people who have died as a result of terror are usually much fewer than one thousand per year, as reported by the U.S. Department of the State, which has collected statistics on terrorism since 1968. The numbers of people killed or injured in terrorist attacks worldwide was especially high in 2001 at more than 3,500. Terrorist attacks have been a means of exerting pressure around the world for much of human history but were prominent in the minds of Americans in the early 2000s because of attacks such as the one against the *U.S.S. Cole* off the coast of Yemen on October 12, 2000 (17 dead and 40 wounded) and the one against the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (2,997 dead and an unknown number injured). Prominent terrorist attacks from the early 2000s outside the United States include the bombing of the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 (15 dead); the Passover Massacre in Israel on March 27, 2002 (30 dead and 140 wounded); the Bali bombing on October 12, 2002 (202 dead and 209 wounded); the Moscow Theater siege from October 23 until October 26, 2002 (171 dead and over 1,000 injured in the subsequent rescue-raid); and the Istanbul truck bombings of November 15 and November 20, 2003 (57 dead and 700 wounded). These attacks only represent a small number of the many terrorist actions that happened around the world in the early 2000s, especially in Israel and Iraq. Williams's story is concerned with a kind of terrorism closer to home: the girls are indiscriminate about torturing their parents' guests, so long as they keep their parents isolated from other people and thus have them all to themselves.

Anglo-American Relations

The United States and the United Kingdom have a close diplomatic relationship. They are each other's dearest political allies. In the early 2000s, U.S. president George W. Bush and U.K. prime minister Tony Blair joined forces in the so-called war on terror. The United Kingdom, among other European nations, assisted the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that began in October 2001; however, the United Kingdom stood alone among major European nations in supporting the U.S. war in Iraq, beginning in March 2003. President Bush maintained an approval rating of more than 50 percent for the first term of his presidency. His ratings fell below and stayed below 50 percent starting in spring of 2004. Prime Minister Blair likewise came under heavy criticism for supporting the United States in the Iraq invasion, especially after the revelation that there existed no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—the reason given by the Bush administration for invading the country in the first place.

The United States and the United Kingdom also have a strong trade relationship, investing heavily in each other's economies. Both countries have large Christian populations although diversity in ethnicity and religion is supported by law. The modern U.S. government was founded by English colonists escaping religious persecution in England which ties both nations together historically and culturally. Nevertheless, over two hundred years of separation between the two countries has led to significant cultural differences such as are seen in slang, popular foods, sports, and senses of humor. In Williams's story, the girls pick on Arlene about celebrating her birthday, declaring it to be a silly American custom. Although this is not an opinion shared with a majority of British citizens, the girls' general attitude also underlines the fact that the United States and the United Kingdom even differ in their approaches to common holidays and celebrations. For example, Halloween (October 31) is very popular in the United States whereas in the United Kingdom, Halloween is only briefly acknowledged as people prepare to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day on November 5 with bonfires, fireworks, and parties.

Critical Overview

Williams began her writing career with strength on her side: her first novel, *State of Grace* received a glowing review from *New York Times* critic Gail Godwin. Godwin hails Williams as a "first-rate new novelist." Alice Adams, in the *New York Times Book Review*, praises Williams as "talented" and "skillful," but her review of *The Changeling* is thoroughly negative. Adams is completely turned off by Williams's wild tale of animals as people and vice versa. Anatole Broyard's June 3, 1978, review of the novel for the *New York Times* is similarly proportioned: he is a fan of Williams's work in general but despises this book in particular. Both critics acknowledge that Williams took risks with her novel, pushing the boundaries of character and delving into the avant-garde.

Williams's first collection of short stories, *Taking Care*, received modest but positive attention. Her third novel, *Breaking and Entering*, was the subject of another good review in the *New York Times*. Reviewer Bret Easton Ellis, not a fan of Williams's first novel, found this book to be a better representation of her potential: "She's a stronger writer when she's less of a poet." Rand Richards Cooper, in reviewing Williams's third short story collection, *Escapes*, for the *New York Times Book Review* calls her landscapes, "both quirky and ominous," a description echoed by other critics, such as Michiko Kakutani.

Williams's fourth novel, *The Quick and the Dead*, was a finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize. An anonymous reviewer of that novel for *Publishers Weekly* describes Williams as "an artist attentive to real people's psyches." A critic for the *Economist* gives the novel a mixed review, claiming that its edginess can make the reader weary, but overall celebrating the author as "original, energetic, and viscously funny." Williams's foray into nonfiction, *Ill Nature*, a book about environmental degradation, was a cautious success. Stephanie Flack, writing in *Antioch Review* in the Fall 2002 issue, was impressed with her effort and scholarship but a little taken aback by the tone.

Williams's third collection of short stories, *Honored Guests*, was received coolly by the anonymous reviewer for *Kirkus Reviews*, who found the stories "seldom involving." A reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* was more impressed, describing the collection as "rich, darkly humorous and provocative." Benjamin Schwarz, reviewing for the *Atlantic Monthly* also praises Williams's collection of quirky tales and points to a legacy many critics observe: "Williams is . . . the heir to Flannery O'Connor—but she's also among the most original fiction writers at work today." David Gates, for *Newsweek International*, is charmed by restraint that "seems almost classical" and compares Williams, as others have, to writer Raymond Carver. But Stephen Metcalf, writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, gives a cool review. He is underwhelmed by her "terse, dread-filled writing style." *Books & Culture* critic Sara Miller also ends on a chilly note, observing that the stories "stop shy of redemption."

"The Girls" has not been collected in a book by Williams but was honored by Michael Chabon by inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*. Reviews of this collection make note of Williams's short story as one of the stronger ones in the

collection. Kakutani's words from a review of *Escapes* also serve as a good summation of Williams's writing career:

At her best . . . Ms. Williams demonstrates an intuitive ability to delineate the complexities of an individual character in a few brief pages, a gift for finding those significant moments that reveal the somber verities lurking beneath the flash and clamor of daily life.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Ullmann is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, she explores the theme of evil in Williams's short story.

"The Girls," by Joy Williams, is a story in which evil reigns, front and center. The protagonists—the main characters—are cruel and unsympathetic. Their antagonist, Arleen, is the one with whom the reader sympathizes because she is so credibly normal and appears to be vulnerable to the girls' attacks for much of the story. The evil within the girls seems outwardly expressed by their cats that kill songbirds in the garden, lounge around the house, and are generally aloof. Arleen's picking bloodsuckers off the cats at the end of the story is symbolic of her exorcising them of evil. The sudden death of the girls' mother following Arleen's pronouncement that the girls are killing her appears to validate what Arleen has said: her daughters are actually toxic.

The reality, as revealed by Arleen and the death of Mommy, is that the girls are predators, just like their cats, and are unable to deny their pets' temperament.

The girls are born of the evil act generated by their father, who struck a man on the side of the road on a snowy night and kept driving, too eager to pursue his own plans to take care of another person. Grotesquely, the girls delight in this story, as if they were part of some fantastical movie rather than privy to a horrible breach of moral responsibility in their parents' lives. Daddy's lack of conscience makes him in essence as evil as his daughters. Although the ways and reasons are never made explicit, Mommy and Daddy have clearly spoiled their daughters and encouraged their dependence. Their emotional development has been stunted, and they behave as if they were half their actual age—sneaky, naughty teenagers, completely absorbed in their own physical beauty and concerned only with what is of interest to them—themselves, their cats, and their parents. Completely narcissistic, the girls believe they are special, important, and do not tolerate their opinions being challenged. They manipulate their parents and try to manipulate the houseguests. They declare that they have never fallen in love and do not intend to marry. Disturbingly, the girls turn their self-absorption toward each other in a kind of twisted self-love. They are inseparable to the extent that they have no individual identity. Williams does not distinguish them (or their cats) with names. They move together, behaving in unison.

Their childish, narcissistic behavior has led them to treat most people around them with cruelty. They insinuate that Arleen should leave by asking her about her home as well as by asking Arleen if she had a nice birthday after telling everyone that they think birthdays are an "idiotic American institution." The sisters delight in embarrassing Father Snow and Arleen over their house gift of a cocktail shaker. They go searching repeatedly for Arleen's journal and when they find it, they intend to read it even when Arleen comes upon them. The sisters ask Father Snow about his relationship with

Donny, trying to drive him to anger or depression. When that fails, they comment on Donny's poor teeth and revel in the awkward silence. In an act of ultimate cruelty, the girls reveal their parents' awful secret about how their father hit a pedestrian with his car the night he proposed to Mommy. Their malice in embarrassing their parents before Father Snow and Arleen with this tale is surpassed in evilness only by their pure delight in the sordid story.

Father Snow represents goodness, although he is blind to evil. His name, Snow, implies purity, and his profession of Episcopal priest also speaks to his righteousness. Strangely, he is not the one who faces off with evil; indeed, he seems unable to recognize it. Although the girls make snide comments directly to Father Snow, he never replies or acknowledges in any way that he has heard these things. He seems to be particularly friendly with Mommy, holding her hand when she is distressed after her daughters tell everyone the terrible family secret of the man Daddy killed over thirty years ago. Father Snow is also the only person to call Mommy by her name, Clarissa. While he is impervious to their evil, he also cannot stop the daughters from hurting others. Father Snow's immunity to the girls' cruelty means that he is the only one of Mommy and Daddy's houseguests who has been able to make a return visit.

Arleen is Father Snow's companion and advisor as he works through his grief. She is able to follow through where Father Snow cannot. She recognizes the damage the girls are doing to the family and confronts the problem at the end of the story, telling Mommy to get rid of her daughters because they are killing her. While Arleen is unable to save Mommy, Mommy's sudden death provides Father Snow with the professional distraction he needs to move past his own grief over Donny and care for the newly dead.

Arleen is an antidote to the evil of the girls. The girls do not like Arleen, constantly making fun of her dress and behavior behind her back: "She had very much the manner of someone waiting to be dismissed. The girls loved it." But Arleen does nothing offensive to them. They are simply too self-absorbed to feel anything except adversarial toward other people. The girls also do not like the thought that their parents are friends with Father Snow and Arleen. But Arleen is helping Mommy as well as Father Snow, diagnosing Mommy's fading vigor. Although the girls do not recognize what the contents are about, Arleen's journal describes Mommy's ailments. The girls have already realized that something is wrong with their parents: Daddy "was sometimes gruff with them as though they were not everything to him! And Mommy's enchantment with life seemed to be waning." The reality, as revealed by Arleen and the death of Mommy, is that the girls are predators, just like their cats, and are unable to deny their pets' temperament: "they were efficient and ruthless and . . . the way in which they so naturally expressed their essential nature was something the girls admired very much." Given the evidence against the girls, it is perhaps not surprising to the reader that Mommy and Daddy fill their house with guests as often as they can, as a buffer against the poison of their daughters.

When Arleen pulls bloodsuckers off the girls' cats at the end of the story, she is in effect exorcising them of evil influence. The girls do not believe anything so disgusting could be found on their cats and that Arleen must be making it up. The betrayal of their cats is

the kind of variance that the girls cannot tolerate because of their narcissistic certainty that they are more important to their cats than anyone else—that they are, in fact, the center of the universe. In the ancient Egyptian mythos, cats were sacred to the gods and sometimes enacted their vengeance. In the Middle Ages, cats were believed to be companions to witches. In “The Girls,” the cats share a little in both these personas. From the perspective of the girls, the cats are indeed precious and admirable. From Arleen’s perspective, the cats are familiars to the wicked girls. Her plucking of bloodsuckers from their coats is her way of freeing them from the girls.

Mommy was not freed soon enough, however. Her health, especially her heart, is strained by the effort of supporting her narcissistic girls and her manslaughtering husband. “Daddy said that when you look death in the eye, you want to do it as calmly as a stroller looks into a shop window.” This calm—attributable to a lack of conscience, perhaps—pervades Daddy and the girls as well, leaving Mommy to feel everything and to go into death gracelessly.

The irony of Mommy’s death is that although the girls cause it, they probably do not want her dead because she takes care of them. The girls have so much control over their lives, their bodies, their pets, and their parents that they are completely astonished when Mommy falls and dies right at their feet. Neither the girls nor Daddy stands and rushes to Mommy’s side which makes the three of them seem cold by contrast to Arleen and Father Snow (who is not cold and impersonal as his name might imply). Arleen and Father Snow rush to Mommy’s side to hold her head and say the necessary prayers. It is also ironic that just before dying, Mommy is trying to repent for a decades-old sin which was the fault of her husband. She fails to complete her repentance before she collapses.

Evil is a balance for good. Some would even go so far as to describe the relationship between the two as interdependent, assuming *without evil, there is no good*. Williams provides interest in her short story by making the evil, unsympathetic characters, the girls, the protagonists and the heroine, Arleen, the antagonist. “The Girls,” therefore, is a not-so-classic story about the never-ending struggle between the forces of good and evil. The ending, in terms of this struggle, is ambiguous. Neither good nor evil wins this time. Arleen, fighting for good, still loses Mommy, who is broken down by her daughters’ stronger willpower. The daughters, in siding with evil, have still lost their mother and perhaps gained some skeptics.

Source: Carol Ullmann, Critical Essay on “The Girls,” in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #2

Dyer holds a Ph.D. in English literature and has published extensively on fiction, poetry, film, and television. He is also a freelance university teacher, writer, and educational consultant. In the following essay, he discusses "The Girls" as a story of dislocation and almost pathological insularity, showing its similarity to earlier stories by Poe and Faulkner.

The short story as a compressed narrative is a form particularly well suited to explore small worlds to explore the lives of individuals and communities that are closed off from the larger world. The catalogue of famous stories that deal with these small worlds includes Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1930), and Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" (1948). Each of these antecedents is a story about a dangerous stasis, an unwillingness or inability to change or to evolve in response to changing times. These are stories, too, that focus on characters who resist such changes, hiding themselves in houses or behind insular mindsets that are inevitably used to resist new ideas or visions about what the world is and might become.

In the end, Williams's story suggests that the material benefits of the dream life, however impressive they might appear on the surface, are spiritual handicaps, producing a vacuous wasteland within which the once realized dream proves to be much more a diversion than a clearly defined path to the future.

At times, as in Jackson's small town, the results of such a closing off are horrific. At other times, the implications are grotesque, as in the moment when Faulkner's townspeople realize the necrophilic behavior of Emily Grier. The sisters in Joy Williams's "The Girls" are the next generation of such closed off people. Reinforced by faith in the American dream, which promises to bring a regenerative prosperity and an organic goodness to the modern world, the sisters hide behind an almost pathological insularity. In tracing the sisters' movement toward what Father Snow calls the transformative illuminations of *meta-noia* (a profound change of mind), Williams underscores the temporary joys and the inevitable dangers of living a life with eyes half closed.

As Arthur Miller's classic play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) underscores dramatically, the American dream of shared prosperity and a good life does not automatically come true. Paradoxically, as Miller shows, the achievement of a higher standard of living in the postwar United States did not necessarily translate into the better life. As the dream lost its energy, the spiritual and cultural life waned, exemplified in Williams's story in Father Snow's crisis in faith and in the superficiality of the girls' lives. The post-dream world becomes a metaphoric desert in which the detritus of past generations is constantly recycled into imitative trends rather than producing rich sediment that can serve as the

foundation for a balanced and invigorating vision of the future. It is a world, as Father Snow comes to recognize, of the “old dead” rather than of “the quickening new.”

As Williams underscores, the residents of this world cannot see themselves as spiritually vacuous or particularly superficial. For instance, the sisters cannot see the ethical implications of their search of Arleen’s room, an incident that is the culmination of “the girls many clandestine visits to her room to find anything of interest.” More telling is the family’s reaction to the girls’ favorite story about how “Daddy ran over that man that winter night” and “didn’t stop even though he knew he’d very likely killed him because [he was] going to a concert.” Clearly, this is not a family that cares much about forging spiritual and personal connections but defines itself instead through a smug resistance to such connections. They are more concerned with getting on with selfish pursuits than with considering such troubling ideas as “guilt” or even *poenitare*, “which merely means to feel sorry, suggesting a change in the heart rather than in the mind.”

The disruptive presence of Father Snow and Arleen in the family’s daily routine underscores the woefully myopic condition of the culture that the girls define. The guests are a potentially transformative energy in the house, outsiders who have loved and lost and who bring to the jaded residence a willingness to recognize the beauty of the rain-drenched moors. They also recognize without hesitation the problems festering in the family like the bloodsuckers hiding in the fur of the family’s cats.

Like most truth speakers or visionaries, Arleen is seen by the sisters as little more than an old maid, a pathetic “*troll*” whose love life is described as “safe,” whose stories are “so droll, so retarded,” and whose willingness to tend to the cats’ wellbeing is marked as “disgusting.” Her views on life and on politics are devalued in a world that privileges insularity, pithy commentary, and an unfounded sense of moral and intellectual superiority. The girls scoff at Arleen, believing that she has lost sight of the dream-like prosperity around her. Seeing Arleen as an adversary instead of guest, a delusional antagonist rather than a seer, the girls delegitimize her potentially transformative interpretation. In turning away from the potentially redemptive powers in her observations, the girls turn away, too, from an enlightening moment and from an epiphany that might connect them for the first time to the world beyond the garden walls.

Closed to both the musings of both Arleen and Father Snow, including his discussion of repentance, the girls emphasize their obsessive attachment to the two remaining house cats and ignore the deeper truths circulating around them. The girls are drawn almost hypnotically to their pets. When confronted with Arleen’s observation that the cats have injured a mockingbird earlier in the day, the sisters resist: “‘Those weren’t our cats,’” they rejoined almost in unison, “‘our cats are sweet cats, old stay-at-home cats.” Moreover, they assert with passion, “‘such dreadful things don’t happen in our garden.’” The sisters state these beliefs as truth despite their firsthand knowledge that “even this early in the summer the cats had slaughtered no less than a dozen songbirds by visible count.”

To soothe themselves, the girls believe many self-deluding fictions, from the innocence of their beloved cats to the belief that to have “never been in love” marked them as somehow morally superior to Arleen and Father Snow. Even when Arleen catches the sisters in the act of reading her private journal, the sisters remain firm in their moral righteousness. Their reaction is not one of guilt or even embarrassment but “a perturbed silence” and forced imitation of “extreme wonder.”

But even their insularity has its limits. Forced to serve as captive audience to the real life trials and struggles that their two guests bring to the household, the sisters hear about failed and unrequited love affairs, a profound crisis of faith, and a range of intense, real world emotions that are almost beyond their imagining. Considered individually and as a couple, the guests are seen by the girls as antithetical to a household culture defined by stasis and homogeneity.

The girls are willing prisoners within their own home and eccentrics or oddities outside of it. Living “fearful of crime” and of any real engagement with the world, they are emotionally and intellectually bankrupt, a fact that leads Arleen to challenge them openly about their lies, their beloved cats, and, most provocatively, about the pressures they bring upon an aging mother whose health is in decline. Totally reliant on their parents, and totally cut off from the adult world in which they cannot function, the girls are seemingly oblivious to the fact that “Mommy and Daddy [are] changing” and that a powerful force is “hastening” toward their parents, “slowly . . . cloaked in the minutes and the months.” Hiding away in their “three-storied nineteenth-century house with fish shingles,” the sisters withdraw from the outside world into a place that is “tasteful, cold, and peculiar.”

The danger behind this peculiar, insular world is revealed when Arleen pulls the fat bloodsuckers from the beloved cats Challenging the girls’ vision of the world and speaking volumes to the oppressiveness of their spiritual void, Arleen’s actions symbolize the parasitic, which the sisters represent. Dismissing the truth that lies squirming before their eyes as “disgusting,” the girls push deeper still into their denial to accuse Arleen of producing the bloodsuckers “fraudulently” or through an “unchristian” magic.

Shock soon turns to grief, though, when Arleen speaks the taboo truth. Turning to Mommy, she says bluntly, that it is “high time for [the girls] to be gone” from the house that has shielded them from reality and moral responsibility. Unlike the other visitors who have passed through the home for decades, Arleen understands fully the erosion of the social and moral framework that grips the family, and she declares what all who have come before have also known to be true. As Father Snow acknowledges, Arleen is a woman who “can listen to anything and come to a swift decision” about what action needs to be taken. What she sees is a family that has been dying for years, Arleen is determined to burn away the “old dead” and move forward into a world energized by “the quickening new.”

Tragically, the truth brings death into an insular world that seems destined to change only in unhealthy ways. Sequestering themselves in their home and encountering the

world with assumed superiority, the girls dislocate themselves, disconnecting from the ability to dream of a better place of intimate connections and organic humanity. In the end, Williams's story suggests that the material benefits of the dream life, however impressive they might appear on the surface, are spiritual handicaps, producing a vacuous wasteland within which the once realized dream proves to be much more a diversion than a clearly defined path to the future.

Source: Klay Dyer, Critical Essay on "The Girls," in *Short Stories for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Topics for Further Study

• Residents of England and the United States both primarily speak English but have very different cultures. These differences are evident in vocabulary, which holidays are celebrated and how they are celebrated, dress, humor, food, sports, and more. One example of this cultural divide is that many English prefer tea whereas Americans generally prefer coffee. Do you know of any other cultural differences between England and the United States? Make a list of at least ten differences, researching them if need be. Share your list with your class to build a master list. Have hot tea with milk and sugar and shortbread cookies for full effect.

• Some people prefer cats, some prefer dogs, and others prefer neither. In “The Girls,” the sister are definitely cat people, and their cats seem to be reflections of their own personalities: aloof, lazy, and predatory. Research the history, biology, and culture of cats. A good reference for the culture of cats is Elizabeth Marshall Thomas’s *Tribe of Tiger*. Write a brief report that summarizes the most interesting things that you learned about the history, biology, and culture of cats. How does this expand your understanding of Williams’s story?

• Siblings are people born of the same parents or people who are raised together. Sometimes siblings are close friends, and sometimes they fight endlessly. Do you have any siblings? If so, do you fight a lot or are you very close or somewhere in between? If you do not have siblings, who do you spend a lot of time with outside of school? Maybe it is a cousin, a friend, or a neighbor. Do you get along or do you fight a lot? Write an essay about your sibling or friend, describing what you love and what you do not like about that person.

• Bullies pick on other people to hide their own insecurities, much like the girls in Williams’s story. Bullies use abusive language, physical force, and sometimes more subversive methods like exclusion. Write a short story about a bully from the bully’s point of view.

What Do I Read Next?

• *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please*? (1976) is Raymond Carver's first collection of short stories. He was dedicated to short forms of writing, leading some to declare that he revived the short story in North America. Williams and Carver were contemporaries (Carver died in 1988), and Williams's style is sometimes compared to his.

• *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955), by Flannery O'Connor, is a collection of short fiction by the famed but unfortunately short-lived southern American author. Williams is often considered by critics to be using styles and themes that are reminiscent of O'Connor's work, especially in both authors' use of the gothic and grotesque.

• *State of Grace* (1973) is Williams's first novel. It tells the tale of Kate Jackson's flight from her minister father's heavy-handed upbringing—and her eventual, inevitable return home.

• *Ill Nature: Rants and Reflections on Humanity and Other Animals* (2001) is Williams's book-length foray into non-fiction. She writes primarily about environmental degradation and no less urgently about human responsibility.

• *Summerland* (2002), by Michael Chabon, is a young adult novel about children who save the world by playing baseball. Chabon is the editor who chose Williams's "The Girls" for inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*. He often incorporates fantastical elements into his work, but it is far from gothic in nature.

• *Stranger Things Happen* (2001), by Kelly Link, is a collection of fantastical short stories. These stories lack the grimness of Williams's fiction but are equally wild in imaginative elements. Link appears alongside Williams in *The Best American Short Stories 2005*.

Further Study

Christopher, David, *British Culture*, Routledge, 2006.

Christopher's book is an introduction to the major movements within British culture, covering politics, language, literature, media, architecture, and more.

Hogle, Jerrold E., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

This book collects fourteen essays which examine gothic literature in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, drawing out connections to politics, racism, theater, film, human identity, and more.

Hotchkiss, Sandy, *Why Is It Always about You?: Saving Yourself from the Narcissists in Your Life*, Free Press, 2002.

This book about clinical narcissism was written for the popular market. It has chapters for different relationships, including parent, spouse, child, and coworker, and tips on how to live with a narcissist.

Oates, Joyce Carol, ed., *American Gothic Tales*, Plume, 1996.

This collection of forty short stories spans two hundred years of American gothic fiction and includes favorite American writers such as Washington Irving, Edgar Allen Poe, Stephen King, and Anne Rice.

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Gates, David, Review of *Honored Guest*, in *Newsweek International*, January 10, 2005, p. 49.

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“Joy Williams’s Teenage Misfits,” in *Economist*, No. 358, January 13, 2001, p. 7.

Kakutani, Michiko, “Taking to the Highway, Fleeing the Inescapable,” in *New York Times*, January 5, 1990, p. C28.

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Review of *The Quick and the Dead*, in *Publishers Weekly*, Vol. 247, No. 38, September 18, 2000, p. 88.

Schwarz, Benjamin, Review of *Honored Guest*, in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 294, No. 5, December 2004, p. 124.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) 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, SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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 SSfS 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

SSfS 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS 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 Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories 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 SSfS 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.” Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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 SSfS, 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 Short Stories 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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