The Glass of Milk Study Guide

The Glass of Milk by Manuel Rojas

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

In 1927, Manuel Rojas published his first signifi- cant collection of short stories, *Hombres del sur* (*Men of the South*), which included his short story "El vaso de leche". It is one of Rojas' best known and most widely anthologized tales.

"El vaso de leche" ("The Glass of Milk") is an intensely written short story that examines a brief moment in the life of a youth who is out of work and very hungry. The unnamed youth is refused work and refuses free food. He finally is overcome with a hunger stronger than his pride. He accepts some milk and cookies from the woman in the milk bar and experiences a powerful emotional release. She understands, and he leaves the cafe without paying.

Grafton Conliffe identifies Rojas as one of the premiere Chilean writers. He was innovative in character development, portraying hard-working, down-and-out people in a sensitive, sympathetic fashion. Cedomil Goic reports that Rojas was the first Chilean writer to use the subjective narrator, a narrator who makes comments on and takes part in the telling of the story. However, the narrator in "The Glass of Milk" is an objective narrator. Rojas acknowledged being influenced by the American writers Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner.

In his fiction, Rojas often included autobiographical material derived from his youth, when he and his family wandered about in the mountains of southern Chile and Argentina. However, this story is not about himself. It is a tale about the plight of the lower classes in his adopted homeland, as witnessed through the life of one young lad. Rojas does not preach; he lets his readers come to their own conclusions about the problems these people face.

Author Biography

Manuel Rojas was born on January 8, 1896, in Buenos Aires, Argentina; he died on March 11, 1973, in his adopted homeland, Chile. His family moved to Chile in 1899 and from then until 1922 they wandered back and forth between Chile and Argentina, working a variety of jobs to earn a meager living. He probably settled permanently in Chile in 1924. In 1927, he published his first collection of short stories, *Hombres del Sur*, which included the story "El vaso de leche" ("The Glass of Milk").

It was about this time that Rojas became associated with the political group called the Anarchists, who opposed the oppressive Chilean government. He wrote articles for the Anarchist newspapers, *La Batalla* (in Chile) and *La Protesta* (in Buenos Aires, Argentina). The Popular Front political party took control of the government in 1936. In 1938 Rojas published a collection of essays, *De la poesía a la revolución* (*From Poetry to Revolution*), many of which were written during the struggles with the government in the 1920s and early 1930s.

From then until 1951 Rojas did not publish anything in book form, concentrating on making contributions to the journal *Babel*. His most influential novel, *Hijo de ladrón* (literally "Son of a Thief," but published in English as *Born Guilty* in 1955) was published in Santiago de Chile. This novel draws heavily on his childhood experiences when his family wandered from town to town looking for work and food. In it he looks at the plight of the poor and indigent peasants who lived at the bottom of South American society at that time. His protagonist Aniceto is the son of a common thief and it is he who bears the weight of his father's crimes. The police and others in the story expect him to have adopted his father's illegal lifestyle. This novel, along with *Lanchas en la bahía* (1932) and *Mejor que el vino* (1958), form an autobiographical trilogy and are thought to be his best and most important works.

Rojas is thought by many critics to be the best Chilean writer of the first half of the twentieth century, if not the best of all time. His output includes poetry, short stories, essays, and novels. These works look sympathetically at the lives of the people in Chile during Rojas' lifetime. He takes a compassionate look at thieves, bums, and other members of the lowest stratum of society. He does not glorify their lives nor does he condemn them.

His short story "El vaso de leche" ("The Glass of Milk") is a tightly written tale that draws the reader into the complexities of the issues raised in it. It is one of his most widely anthologized stories. The main character is a youth who is out of work and very hungry, much like the protagonist in *Hijo de ladrón*. As in his novel, there are no simple answers to the questions posed by the situations encountered in the story. Rojas lets the reader arrive at the answers.

Rojas received several awards during his lifetime, including the Chilean National Prize for Literature in 1957.

Plot Summary

In "The Glass of Milk," a youth who has been expelled from a ship as a stowaway finds himself walking around the port looking for work to earn money to buy some food. He has not eaten in three days, yet he refuses a handout from a sailor and then watches hungrily as a "gaudy tramp" accepts the food and eats it. He finds some work unloading a vessel. After the first day he asks for his pay, but the foreman tells him that he will be paid at the close of the whole job. The foreman then offers him some money as a loan but the lad again refuses.

Soon his hunger gets the better of him and he decides to go to a cafe and eat, with the intention of not paying for the food. He does not care what they might do to him. He finds a milk bar and, after waiting for another customer to leave, he enters and sits alone. He orders some milk and wafers. But as he finishes the cookies, he begins to weep. The woman offers him a second helping of milk and cookies. After he eats, he leaves without paying. He resolves to pay her but as he walks back to the wharf he forgets his pledge. He sits on some burlap and watches the night activities at the docks. He falls asleep facing the sea.

Summary

"The Glass of Milk" is Manuel Rojas' short story about pride, despair and compassion when a young boy's hunger will not allow him to ask for desperately needed food, which is supplied unquestioningly by a kind woman.

As the story begins, a young man emerges from some freight cars on a shipyard dock, looks out to sea and walks idly along the wharf's edge. As the young man passes in front of a docked ship, a sailor who holds a white paper-wrapped bundle calls out to the boy, inquiring if he is hungry. The boy hesitates for a moment but replies that he is not hungry. He thanks the sailor and continues on his way, embarrassed that the sailor seems to think the boy is needy.

Soon after, the sailor calls out to a tramp passing behind the boy and inquires if the tramp is hungry. The tramp responds that he is hungry, and the sailor immediately throws down the white paper-wrapped package, which the tramp opens gleefully before he devours the still-warm food inside. Watching the tramp eating the food that could have been his, the boy counts three days since he himself has eaten. As hungry as he has been, the boy has not been able to ask for food from any of the sailors on the wharf for the past few days.

Discovered as a stowaway, the boy was left at this port six days ago with no money, food, friends or skills. The boy was able to sneak food as long as that ship was in port, but now that it is gone, he is completely without contacts or resources. Although this is a difficult time, the boy loves the seagoing life and has already made many trips on ships sailing the coast of South America. The skills learned on board render the boy virtually useless for employment on land. Now the boy walks the docks with the other tramps and sailors no longer connected to any ship who are forced to live by any means they can devise.

The next day, the boy resolves to find some sort of work to earn enough money to eat because his strength is failing fast. The boy is hired to work in a line of men loading huge sacks of wheat into a ship's cargo area. The morning passes without incident, but by noon, the boy is so weak from hunger that he must lie down and feign having no appetite. By the end of the workday, the boy is so hungry that he asks the foreman for an advance on his wages, but the foreman cannot pay until the entire job is completed. Out of kindness, the foreman offers the boy forty cents, but the boy declines and walks away in despair.

Feeling physically ill, the boy briefly hallucinates about his home and his family before his senses return him to the reality of his starvation. Instinctively, the boy knows that he will not last beyond the next hour and resigns to eat somewhere and let the proprietor punish him appropriately upon discovery that the boy cannot pay. Passing up the taverns because of the rough element of people, the boy chooses a milk bar with its little round tables topped with clean marble. The only customer in the milk bar is an old man who, undistracted, reads his newspaper while a half-filled glass of milk sits on the

table before him. The boy paces outside, willing the old man to leave so that the boy can drink the balance of the milk in that glass.

The boy continues to pace for fifteen minutes, glaring at the old man and now convinced that the old man is playing some evil game to see who can hold out longer. At last, the old man folds the paper, drinks the rest of his milk and leaves the cafy. The boy hesitates but finally enters the restaurant and trips over a chair before deciding on a seat at one of the tables. The boy orders a large glass of milk and inquires about the possibility of biscuits. There are no biscuits, but there are vanilla wafers.

The waitress resumes her place behind the counter and watches the boy, who surreptitiously drinks the milk so that he does not raise the woman's curiosity. The boy slowly begins to eat the wafers, and the burning in his stomach subsides a little. Just as his physical anguish diminishes, the boy's emotional stress takes over, and he begins to cry in his desperation. Drinking and eating between sobs, the boy finishes just as a huge tear drops into his empty glass. Sobs now shake his small body. The boy wails without moving for several minutes, and he barely notices the hand touching his hair in a comforting gesture and the waitress' voice telling him, "Cry, son, cry..."

The tears of pain are now replaced by tears of joy, and the boy feels a huge rush of relief before looking up to see the waitress, who has taken up her station behind the counter once more. The boy notices that there is another bowl of vanilla wafers and another glass of milk on the table in front of him. This time the boy eats and drinks slowly as if the waitress were his own mother and he were eating in the kitchen at home.

When darkness falls, the boy knows he must leave, but he hesitates, not sure of what to tell this generous woman. The boy rises and says, "Thank you very much, ma'am; goodbye..." The waitress bids the boy farewell, and he walks out onto the dock where the cool breeze refreshes his skin. As the boy walks, he vows to himself to repay the woman's kindness when he can, but a few minutes later all thoughts of repayment have evaporated with his hunger.

Coming to the water's edge, the boy, now invigorated, strides the wharf until he finds a stack of burlap sacks on which he reclines and falls asleep, his face turned toward the sea.

Analysis

The story is told from the third person limited narrative point of view, which means that the reader views the story's action from the main character's perspective. With this point of view, the reader is also aware of the main character's thoughts and emotions, but the author limits this intuition by excluding the thoughts of any other characters.

The story's setting is a wharf somewhere in South America and the immediate surroundings where the boy wanders is a rough part of the town. The author describes it by saying, "The great city that rose up beyond the back streets with their taverns and

cheap inns did not attract him; it seemed a place of slavery: stale, dark, without the grand sweep of the sea; among its high walls and narrow streets people lived and died bewildered by agonizing drudgery."

The author creates a bleak picture from the boy's perspective in his ravenous state. However, as the boy's fate is about to change, the scenery changes to "the outskirts of the city, and on one of the first streets he found a milk bar. It was a small, clean, and airy place, with little tables with marble tops. Behind the counter stood a blonde lady in a very white apron." The stark contrast between the two scenes symbolizes the boy's transition from despair to hope.

The author uses the literary device of a metaphor when describing the boy's love for the sea when he writes, "The boy was gripped by that fascination of the sea which molds the most peaceful and orderly lives as a strong arm a thin rod." The author wants the reader to understand that the lure of the sea is so strong for some people that it can wreak havoc with plans just as easily as a strong arm can bend a thin rod.

The author also uses the technique of repetition to relay the boy's thoughts about his hunger as he writes, "the main thing was to eat, eat, eat. A hundred times he mentally repeated the word: eat, eat, eat, until it lost its meaning, leaving his head feeling hot and empty." This technique leaves no question about the unrelenting hunger pains the boy experiences.

The primary theme of the story is loneliness as the main character travels alone on long ship journeys, even as a young boy. It is not clear why he is separated from his family, although he misses them desperately in his most vulnerable state of hunger. The boy also walks alone on the wharf, keeping a distance from other sailors. Even when the boy accepts the kindness from the waitress, he does not engage her in conversation, and she does not look at him, preferring to gaze out on the water.

The story is structured as a logical sequence of events with limited use of foreshadowing or flashbacks. The only real memory the author allows the boy is the feeling of comfort and warmth of his family when the boy almost passes out from hunger.

Although the boy has suffered desperate hunger and loneliness, it is clear that he will remain in this sea-going life, symbolized by his face turned toward the sea as he falls asleep. If the boy had intended to reject this lifestyle, the author would have positioned the sleeping boy with his back to the water, but the hunger for the ocean is greater than any pangs of hunger he can remember. He will wake tomorrow to face it again.

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Characters

The Milk Bar Woman

The cafe attendant is soft-spoken and gentle. She takes the youth's order and offers him a second helping after he finishes the first. She understands his need for food and his reluctance to accept charity. When the lad weeps, she comforts him. After he stops weeping he looks to her, but she is looking away. She does not ask for payment for the food.

The Old Sailor

He is a pipe-smoking seaman who offers a bundle of food to the lad. The thin youth refuses his offer. The sailor smiles when a second fellow accepts his offer without saying thanks.

The Thin Youth

This young fellow is an itinerant laborer on the waterfront who is in constant search of work. He is very hungry because he has not eaten in several days, but his pride keeps him from accepting handouts from others. When he asks the foreman for his daily wages, he is refused payment until the job is completed. He refuses to take a loan from the foreman. He wants to meet his own needs without accepting charity from others.

But his hunger pushes him to the brink of despair, and he decides to "eat anywhere, without paying, even if they shamed him, beat him, sent him to jail." He is willing to accept shame and disgrace for a meal.

He accepts food and comfort from the milk bar woman. He does not offer to pay for the food. He plans to repay her, but by the time he reaches the wharf, he has forgotten this.

Themes

Reality vs. Imagination

The youth leaves his home to live and work on the sea. But his life there is not as fascinating and orderly as he imagined. The reality he faces is a life of difficult, hard-to-find work and gnawing hunger.

Loneliness

This theme finds its place in much of the fiction of Rojas. In his best known novel, *Hijo de ladrón* (*Born Guilty*), the main character, Aniceto, struggles to overcome his loneliness. His father is a common criminal, and society believes that he too is a criminal. Aniceto is pushed to the lonely edges of society.

The youth in "The Glass of Milk" fights loneliness as he tries to fit in with other stevedores on the waterfront. Ironically, he remains outside the circles of other workers. When they eat lunch he goes off by himself. When he goes to the milk bar, he waits until it is empty before he enters, alone. Despite his search for companionship he remains alone throughout the story.

Style

Literary Style

Manuel Rojas began writing at the mid-point of the Naturalist Period in the history of Chilean literature. Naturalism is an extreme type of Realism in which the writer portrays the most grisly aspects of human nature. The characters in such stories usually come from the lowest stratum of society and their behavior is often unsavory.

Point of View

The storyteller in "The Glass of Milk" is a limited third-person narrator, sometimes called a non-participant narrator. A third-person narrator is one who is able to see all the actions of all the characters, all the time. But in this tale, it is limited because the narrator does not reveal what is happening inside the mind of every character, only that of the youth.

Setting

The setting for the story is the waterfront of a seaport on the Chilean coast. This area includes the wharf, some of the streets nearby, and a small milk bar on a side street. Rojas does not provide detailed descriptions of these areas but he includes enough for the reader to know that this is a rough part of town.

Irony

Rojas' writings are filled with irony, which is a way of writing in which the intended meaning is contrary to the meaning seemingly expressed. For example, in "The Glass of Milk" the youth says he is not hungry when in fact he is painfully hungry. He says this in an attempt to maintain his dignity.

Symbolism

A symbol is an object in a story that suggests something else. The pile of burlap is a symbol of the working world to which the youth returns at the close of the tale. The eyes of the youth, the woman, and the old man are symbols of entrances or portals through which their souls may be seen or shown.

Historical Context

Political History

Chile was the object of Spanish conquest in 1536 and 1537, when Diego de Almagro made the first contact with the indigenous populations, the Araucanians. He was an associate of Pizarro and later was given jurisdiction over the area. After his death his successors divided the country into portions that were given to wealthy Spanish patrons and associates. However, the native populations were not included in the division of the lands. They did not enjoy the benefits of the resources that were taken from the country, a fact that would eventually lead to uprisings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Spain controlled the area until Napoleon invaded Spain early in the nineteenth century, diverting Spanish attention to a defense of their homeland. Chile was granted independence on September 18, 1810, but it was not fully established until 1818, after a series of skirmishes between the Chileans (indigenous people and colonial Europeans) and the Spanish. The issue was finally settled in 1818 when Chile formed a navy that could protect the coast from the Spanish fleet. Still the country was plunged into anarchy until 1831, when a republic was established. From then until 1891 a series of republican governments came and went.

The government in Chile from 1891 to 1918 was a parliamentary system. But this time was also a period of unrest as the ruling parties, both political and economic, resorted to fraud and bribery to maintain their status and to gain more political and financial control of the country. These nefarious maneuvers created an ever-widening separation between the upper classes and the lower working classes. Then in the 1910s foreign demand for the country's minerals decreased, as did the wages for the laborers. In 1912 the Socialist Party was established in a bid to garner support from the workers. Labor unrest was exacerbated by worldwide economic pressures created by World War I, which reduced the demand for Chilean exports. By September 5, 1925, the situation had deteriorated to the point where a military junta was established. This junta was replaced by another in October of 1925.

In that month a *coup d'état* was engineered by the minister of war, who ruled from 1925 until 1931. The worldwide Great Depression was in full swing by then, and in 1935 the Radical Party took control, which lasted until 1952. Carlos Ibañez was elected to the presidency as an independent and remained in office until 1958. In this year Jorge Alessandri narrowly defeated a five-candidate slate which included Salvador Allende, who was elected in 1972. After Allende's assassination in 1973, Augusto Pinochet took control of the country and ruled as a military dictator until he was voted out of office in 1990. The election of presidents has been orderly since then.

Literary History

It was in these unsettled times that Rojas began writing. His first works were written in the second part of the Naturalist Period of literature of Chile. The Naturalist Period (1890-1935) was first dominated by Lastarria and his novel, *Salvad las aparencias!* But Vicente Grez (1847-1909) was the most prominent novelist of the generation. The second part of this period was strongly influenced by the writings of Eduardo Barrios, who created the psychological novel out of naturalist techniques.

Rojas was one of the more important short story writers of the period. His writings were not as grotesque as other writers' works. He focused on the people from the low classes and their struggles in life, but his characters were more sympathetically presented. Rojas was the first Chilean writer to use the subjective narrator, a narrator who was involved in the action in part or in whole. (An objective narrator, like the one in *"The Glass of Milk,"* tells the story without making judgmental comments about it.)

The latter part of the Naturalist Period included writers like Juan Marín and Salvador Reyes. These men voiced strong criticism and denunciation of the working conditions in the Chilean mining industry. Their works were condemned by the government when they were first published.

Early in his life, Rojas was an active participant in the opposition political party often called the Anarchists. Much of his early writings were contributions to the opposition's newspapers and other publications. These efforts were his attempts to draw attention to the plight of the working classes and to achieve a better life for them. Many of his novels and short stories tell of the struggles of the working classes.

World Recognition

Rojas' early writings exposed the lives and experiences of the lower classes, the *rotos* (the broken ones). His ability to create sympathetic characters from this part of society "earned him a vaunted place among Chilean novelists" according to Grafton J. Conliffe. Jaime Concha calls him "the outstanding Chilean writer of the first half of the 20th century." He won the Chilean National Prize for Literature in 1957.

Despite the Chilean setting for many of his stories, his writings received international admiration. He created characters that attain a universal appeal, teaching what Fernando Alegría calls "lessons about humanity." Because of his universality, his stories have been translated into many languages, including English, and his short fiction has been anthologized frequently.

Literary Heritage

The Roman Catholic Church exerted a great influence on the people of Chile. The Church came to South America with the first conquerors and, in addition to providing religious teaching for the Spanish conquistadors, it undertook an effort to convert the native population. Therefore the majority of the Chileans are governed by their religious affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has been successful in imprinting its social and ethical value system on the country.

Additional social influences come from the indigenous people who still live in the area. These include the descendants of the ancient peoples, the Araucanians, who were living there when the Spanish first occupied the country. Mystical and animistic beliefs still exist in these peoples' local communities. In some instances these combine with the Roman Catholicism and create a hybrid religion that blends native rituals with Church festivals.

An important aspect of "The Glass of Milk" involves the role of *machismo* in the lives of Latin American men and boys. It is very important for male members of this society to maintain an attitude and bearing of strength, self-sufficiency, and pride in the face of any and all situations. For the lad, he is unable to acknowledge his hunger even as it causes him to double up from pain.

Critical Overview

The short story "The Glass of Milk" has long been a favorite of readers in South America and in the United States. It is a tightly written story that captures the frustrations and desperation of a youth who is down on his luck. But just as with Rojas' other writing, it does this without preaching or demeaning the characters. Rojas' characters are largely drawn from his personal experiences when, as a lad, he wandered around the mountains of Chile and Argentina with his family in search of work and food.

His literary style is easily understood, without a lot of confusing detail. The action in his stories is concise, intense, and direct. Little extraneous information is included. His style is often called plain, according to Naomi Lindstrom. His narrators seldom make commentary on the actions of the characters. Much of his writing falls within the general category of Naturalism, a literary style that attempts to depict the life and times of characters in a brutally real manner. Its characters are drawn from the lower classes of society. Giovanni Pontiero says of Rojas' approach to character development, "his characters and situations are drawn with vigor and conviction." But even though they are from the lowest class of society they are creatures who maintain their "dignity and pride. . .even under the most abject conditions" according to Fernando Alegría.

In "The Glass of Milk" Rojas explores a day in the life of a down-and-out youth who is trying to make his way as a stevedore. Herman Hespelt says that the youth is portrayed with a "deep sensitivity and a warm understanding" that lets readers arrive at an affection for the lad. But Rojas does not preach and beg for this result. His writing is fraught with intensity and a strong dramatic impact but the story is the most important aspect of his writing.

In his fiction he is interested in telling a story, not so much in making a philosophic statement. As Mary Cannizzo states, "his novels reflect a social consciousness, but instead of being a propagandist he is primarily an artist." It is precisely his artistry that keeps readers coming back to his works. Another of his well-known tales, "El hombre de la rosa," "draws the reader back irresistibly, inviting a closer look," says Susan M. Linker. Rojas' works can be viewed "as a long biographical narration," but without the injection of his own person, says Fernando Alegría. Rojas calls upon his own youthful experiences to fill out the characters in his stories.

Rojas' short story "The Glass of Milk" is a widely anthologized and published tale. It was included in his first collection of short stories, *Hombres del sur*, published in 1927 and "acclaimed by Chilean critics as one of the best collections of short stories ever published in the country," according to Cannizzo. These tales are the first fictional works that look at the lower stratum of Chilean and Argentinean society with the same compassionate approach that would mark Rojas' major novels and later short stories. Cannizzo adds that his success as a writer on the world scene derives from the fact that he depicts Chilean characters and cultural customs in a universal manner by "attributing human significance to them." Their localized behaviors therefore become universal behaviors. According to Grafton Conliffe, Rojas' "innovative techniques and ability to

delineate memorable characters" are those aspects of his style that elevate his work to the position of high acclaim among Chilean writers.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Mowery has a Ph.D. in writing and literature from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. In the following essay he examines the psychological struggles of a lad trying to make his way among stevedores on the waterfront in Chile.

Henry David Thoreau wrote: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." In the story "The Glass of Milk," the main character, a thin youth, engages his sense of desperation as an internal quest for personal identity. He "was gripped by that fascination of the sea which molds the most peaceful and orderly lives as a strong arm a thin rod." He left the comfort of his family for the rough exotic life among the tramps and criminals, hoping to become a man among the stevedores who worked on the docks. He has spent several months working with some success at various tasks on ships plying the coasts of Chile. However at the start of the story he is down on his luck, out of work and out of food.

The boy's home life has seemed confining to him, so he seeks the freedom that he imagines he will find at sea. But along his way to becoming a free man, he becomes more and more constricted by the walls he builds to protect himself from everyone he meets. As he constructs them higher, he becomes more isolated from those among whom he desires acceptance. He is "without an acquaintance, without a penny, and without a trade." Even those skills he has are "almost useless on land." His pride becomes his most important possession and he sacrifices everything in order to keep it.

His pride keeps him from accepting anything that he perceives as a handout or charity. The sailor offers him a package of food, which he "heroically" refuses, believing that he must not show any sign of weakness. As a Latin-American youth he knows that to accept a handout would cost him his dignity. The "gaudy tramp" confirms his loss of dignity by accepting the package from the sailor. The youth's heroic arrogance makes him feel superior to the tramp who accepts the package. The lad knows that he could never rely on charity or he would lose the sense of manliness that he has cultivated. Indeed, this refusal of the package is not the first time he has done this. "And when, just as now, someone did offer him a handout" indicates a pattern of refusing offers of food.

Since he has been out of work for six days and has not eaten for three days, his hunger grows more and more intense. The pain of his hunger convinces him that "he could not hold out much longer." Then he decides "to resort to any means to get some food." His internal desperation has come to the surface. It is no longer Thoreau's "quiet desperation." He is determined to act. However, before he can act rashly, he gets work loading grain onto a ship.

In his search for acceptance among the men of the docks, he develops a strong sense of pride, which he uses to gird himself psychologically and to insulate himself from them. Despite his desire to be one of the guys, he remains apart from them. He does not eat with them at lunch time and when he looks for a place to eat in the evening he avoids the cafes where these men might congregate. At other times his timidity keeps

him from waiting "by the gangways at mealtimes" hoping to be offered some leftovers by the sailors.

As time moves on, the boy finds himself trapped by his walls as he searches for places to hide from the other stevedores. The high walls of the city, symbolic of the walls he is building within himself, are dark and threatening. The people are loud and intimidating. He wanders around looking for work or a place to eat, overwhelmed by the oppressive city surroundings. He is held back by his fears that the people would be able to see his pain and shame and that this would be seen as a weakness. His psychological walls will not allow him to accept a loan from the foreman. The irony of refusing the loan is that it reinforces his feelings of self-suffi- ciency by avoiding any obligation to anyone other than himself. But this false sense of self-sufficiency drags him deeper into despair.

When he has the vision of his home, it appears only "as if a window opens before him." This invisible barrier was once an obstacle that kept him confined at home but now, since he is on his own, it is the barrier preventing him from going back home. He does not want to admit that he could not make it on his own. But despite his strong desire to live on the open sea, he keeps looking for some job that would keep him "until he could get back to his home grounds." He is homesick. He yearns for his mother and his siblings.

Later as he is seated in the milk bar, "a blonde lady in a very white apron" comes to his table and wipes it off. She speaks "in a soft voice" asking what he wants to eat. When she leaves to get the milk and wafers, he rejoices in the knowledge that he will soon eat. As he prepares to eat he feels her eyes "watching him with curiosity and attention," but he refuses to look back at her. The quiet power of her maternal nature overcomes his timidity and shame and he accepts her tenderness.

However, he rejects any offerings of assistance from the men in the story. They are father figures to the boy, and because it is inappropriate for a Latino boy to show weakness of any kind, he rejects their assistance. It is unmanly for a man to show need of any sort, even though he could feel "his hunger increase with the refusal." The sailor offers him the food and he refuses because he was "ashamed that he had seemed to need charity." Later he rejects the foreman's offer of a loan "with an anguished smile." He does not want to let any adult male see his weaknesses. For him to accept a "handout" is demeaning, since the word handout implies condescension on the part of the giver and loss of dignity for the recipient, confirms Michael Waag.

Coupled with his reluctance to show weakness to stronger male figures, he is also concerned with a sense of morality. Included with this is a feeling that an individual must accept responsibility for one's actions, and that every responsibility brings with it a consequence that must be accepted. The youth accepts the responsibility to work in the boiler room on the ship after he is found as a stowaway. The irony is that he hides on the ship like a common criminal but gets to work like any other hired hand. Moreover, he is satisfied that, despite the illegality of being a stowaway, he has fulfilled his manly duty by working his way to the next port, where he is immediately put off the ship.

This sense of fulfilling an obligation no matter how it is obtained also arises as he determines to steal food to assuage his hunger. He accepts the obligation to pay for the food no matter what that entailed, whether they "shamed him, beat him, sent him to jail, anything." He is operating by the slogan "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime." For him it is an accepted obligation to be fulfilled after eating stolen food. And it is part of maintaining his idea of manhood. But by making this decision to accept the punishment, he breaches his own carefully established set of rules that keep him from being shamed. Now he turns this aversion into an obligation he must fulfill for getting something to eat.

Just as his search for the right cafe takes him to the outskirts of the city, his internal search takes him to the edges of his emotional self. After he selects a quiet milk bar, he refuses to enter when he sees an old man sitting there reading a newspaper and drinking a glass of milk. As he waits, his anxiety grows more intense and he begins to think of the man as "his enemy" who knew his plight and intent to steal a meal. His sense of pride is whipped into a new sense of fear and paranoia. He feels that he must demonstrate his strength of manhood by insulting the old man. His mental confrontation with the old man is yet another rejection of a father figure for the youth. His reaction to the man is ironic because he condemns him for taking so long to sit and read "for so small a purchase," when the boy intends to steal a meal. He is angry because the man is an inconvenience to the boy's entrance to the milk bar.

He does not act on his impulses to accost the old man because his sense of morality does not allow him to do so, knowing that it is not proper to insult anyone. His reluctance to act on his impulses occurs as he is face to face with his victim. His sense of outrage and anger at the man are diminished. The youth would have to look him in the eye to accost him and he could not reveal his own eyes to the man. The man puts on his glasses and walks away reading.

This fear of looking someone directly in the eyes happens again after he has accepted his meal from the woman. His sense of propriety now causes him to lose composure when he is face to face with the woman from whom he intends to steal the meal. It is only after she gives him a second helping that his feelings of guilt are eased and he feels comfortable enough to leave without paying. His only payment is his departing words: "Thank you very much ma'am; good-bye."

His walls are breached when he allows the woman to see his inner self. After she gives him the plate of cookies and the glass of milk, he refuses to look at her directly. He fears that "she would guess his situation and his shameful intentions" (eyes and glasses are symbolic portals to the soul). As his hunger is diminished, his inner burning begins to release itself. He weeps. After the woman strokes his head, he weeps more intensely and deeply.

In these poignant moments the boy has lowered his walls and let the woman comfort him and soothe his internal turmoil. In the vision that sent him on this quest for the milk bar, he saw his family, mother, sisters, and brothers, and he remembers the comfort of his home. Thus began the slow disassembly of his walls. The acceptance of his family

bonds, not the bonds of "slavery" to the work on the docks, causes him to relax the walls he had so carefully built over the past few months. He releases himself from the bonds of pride. Just as he lets go of those bonds, he finds himself outside the city. He has freed himself from the intimidation of the city's walls and the walls of his pride.

After he allows the woman to stroke his head and feed him, he regains his composure and leaves the bar. He has been fed physically and psychologically. He strides confidently as he hums on his way back to the wharf and the life of a stevedore. He returns to the dock thinking that he will repay the woman. But just as the tears on his face have disappeared, so too has that thought vanished. He enters the rough, working world when he sits on a pile of burlap and stares out at "the grand sweep of the sea," his idealized fantasy world. As he falls asleep, he is content with himself; he has eaten and he is reinvigorated, "like a new man. . .reassembled and united."

Source: Carl Mowery, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

Metzger is a Ph.D. specializing in literature and drama at the University of New Mexico, where she is a lecturer in the English department and an adjunct professor in the University Honors Program. In this essay, she discusses the divisions and implications of the feminine and masculine spheres present in Manuel Rojas' "The Glass of Milk."

Manuel Rojas' short story "The Glass of Milk" offers two distinct images, each one in direct opposition to the other. One image is that of the male sphere, the public sphere of male employment and masculine strength, a world of independence and self-sufficiency. This is the sphere that the boy seeks to join. This male sphere is balanced by the feminine sphere, the domestic world of comfort and nurturing, of tenderness and security. This is the world from which the boy has traveled on his journey to manhood. In spite of the unnamed youth's desire to locate himself solely in the masculine sphere, he is unable to completely break free of the feminine sphere, not yet understanding that for a man to find true balance, he must be able to exist in both worlds. The youthful protagonist of Rojas' story thinks that if he is to be a man and live successfully in the male world, he must first extradite himself from his mother's world.

The reader's first glimpse of the boy presents his conflict between hunger and pride, between those images that he thinks must exist in separate worlds. In his desire to be a man, the boy assumes that the only way he can prove his independence and self-sufficiency is by denying any offer of assistance. To accept food from the sailor is to admit that he cannot survive on his own. But, he is still an adolescent, and as such, he is in need of tenderness and nurturing, two things that the sailors on the docks do not have to give. Moreover, the boy thinks that men do not need tenderness and nurturing. For the boy, the docks are a man's world. The sailor with his pipe, the gaudy tramp begging for food, the men loading heavy sacks of wheat□these are all men, performing men's work and functioning as with strength and self-sufficiency. The boy is still too insecure in his adult maleness to approach these men for help; he cannot even acknowledge that he needs their help.

Rojas provides the boy with many of the elements of manhood. He has served as a mess boy on an earlier ship and been a stowaway on another. He has spent sufficient time on his own, earning a wage and supporting himself, and yet, insecurity still consumes him. In his study of the psychological conflict in "The Glass of Milk," Robert Scott suggests that the boy's inability to accept help is the insecurity of early adolescence. As evidence of this insecurity, Scott points to the boy's hesitancy:

> When he first appears on the scene, he seems doubtful as to which direction to take; he vacillates out of timidity and shame before refusing the food from the sailor; he waivers again, watching the stevedores, before asking for the job unloading cargo; he is reluctant to join the other men at lunch and remains alone; he waits until all the men have left the scene

> before asking the foreman for an advance in pay and will not enter the milk bar until the old man leaves; when he finally goes in, he stumbles over one of the chairs; he chooses a table in a corner; and finally, he is both unable to look the woman in the eye and incapable of any extended conversation with her.

In his hesitancy, the boy is timid, doubtful, and ashamed of his hunger. The homeless man is also hungry, but he is not ashamed of his hunger. He is older and more secure in his manhood, and for him, being hungry and accepting a handout does not exclude him from the male world. For the boy, however, hunger is a sign that he has not net earned full admission to this male realm.

When the day's work is finished, the boy is desperate enough for food that he asks for an advance on his earnings. This request denied, as he walks away the youth is very near collapsing. When he is at his most desperate time of need, the boy sees his home:

> Suddenly he felt his entrails on fire, and he stood still. He began to bend down, down, doubling over forcibly like a rod of steel, until he thought he would drop. At that instant, as if a window opened before him, he saw his home, the view from it, the faces of his mother, brothers and sisters, all that he wanted and loved appeared and disappeared before his eyes shut by fatigue. . .Then, little by little, the giddiness passed and he began to straighten up, while the burning subsided gradually.

In his moment of most extreme urgency, the boy sees the faces of his mother and siblings. He sees the feminine world of his mother and the safety that it offers. This vision gives him the strength to continue on. He does not see his father's face, and it is not the masculine world that gives him the strength to survive. It is, quite simply, the image of his mother's world that carries him toward the dairy bar.

The boy's need for the feminine sphere becomes evident in his selection of the dairy bar as his destination. Before he stops there, he passes up several nearby cheap grills. The grills are really representative of the male world, public places filled with people who gamble and drink. The dairy bar, on the other hand, is a child's world. This is the world of his mother, represented by milk and cookies and a sympathetic woman. Of course the boy does not know she is sympathetic, except intuitively. But like his mother, the woman in the dairy bar represents comfort and safety, and the familiarity of home□something he badly needs at this moment. The boy may desire manhood, but he is still a boy who has not eaten in three days, and who cannot manage even one more day without sustenance. While the boy cannot admit to his needs while in the male world, he can reveal his hunger and his loneliness to the woman in the dairy bar. For the boy, this is the essential difference between the male sphere and female sphere, the ability to admit to fallibility and vulnerability.

Certainly men can admit to these emotions, but the Latin *machismo* does not encourage this, and in the boy's effort to be a man, he does not yet understand that the essential strength of men can include an acknowledgment of need. Scott maintains that "it is indicative of the degree of insecurity in the youth that he cannot allow himself even a simple act of kindness from another man." Even the elderly man in the dairy bar is a threat, according to Scott, because the youth cannot allow any male "to witness such lack of manly dignity" as will occur when the boy eats without paying for his food□as he plans to do. To permit even the old man to see him would deny the boy the adult male status that he desires, whereas the woman's help does not compromise his maleness. The woman in the dairy bar assumes the mantle of the maternal, the feminine world of nurturing. In this private, domestic sphere of women, the boy can be a child again, drinking milk and eating cookies, much as he would in his mother's house. He needs the warmth and comfort of his mother, and so he instinctively seeks out this world, just as a small child refreshes himself in the warmth and safety of his mother's kitchen.

After the boy has eaten his cookies and milk, he is finally able to ask for the comfort that he needs. In the male world, he cannot cry, but in the women's world, tears and weeping are not badges of disgrace. With the woman, the youth can give in to his despair and loneliness. He can weep openly because she offers him the opportunity to do so. When he leaves the dairy bar, it is with stomach soothed and soul healed. Scott argues that through this show of community support, "the youth has 'learned' to accept support from others in a period of difficulty. This time he has opened himself to a mother figure; next time perhaps he will be able to be more open with men." But Scott's reading of Rojas' story is a psychological reading. A feminist reading of "The Glass of Milk" could posit that the youth has not learned to accept support from others. He has always known how to ask support of his mother, and at his moment of greatest need, he reverts back to what has always been acceptable□asking support of the feminine world. The boy is not any more ready to accept help from men than he was previously, and there is no reason provided in Rojas' text that suggests he will be comfortable accepting help from the masculine world until he is more comfortable with his newly acquired manhood. There is a reason that weeping before this woman creates "a great refreshing sensation . . .extinguishing the hot something that had nearly strangled him." After his tears, the boy eats "as if he were at home and his mother were that woman who was standing behind the counter." For the boy, that woman represents all the love and security of his mother's world. She represents the feminine sphere, and the boy's experience illustrates how essential both worlds are to his existence.

Source: Sheri E. Metzger, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #3

Brent has a Ph.D. in American culture, with a specialization in film studies, from the University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in the history of American cinema. In the following essay, Brent discusses descriptions of hunger in Rojas's story "The Glass of Milk."

Rojas's short story "The Glass of Milk" concerns a sailor boy, in a port town far from home, without money or a job, his body wracked with hunger, who is nonetheless too proud to admit to his hunger or accept the charity of others. Much of the story focuses on descriptions of the boy's experience of hunger, in terms of his perceptions of the world around him, his physical sensations, his thoughts and feelings, and his interactions with others.

As the story opens, a sailor, leaning on the rail of a ship, holds a package of food which he first offers to the boy as he passes by on the dock, and then gives to a tramp. This scene establishes a contrast between the reaction of the boy to this offer of charity and the reaction of the tramp, while also indicating that the boy's hunger is no less extreme, and his situation no less desperate, than that of the tramp. The first indication that the package held by the sailor contains food is that it is "grease-spotted." Upon first appearance on the scene, the boy's demeanor does not betray his hunger. He walks along the wharf "with his hands in his pockets, idling or thinking." At this point in the story, the narrator describes the scene as if from the perspective of the sailor, or any onlooker. Upon rereading, however, the reader, knowing that the boy is terribly hungry, can re-interpret this description of the boy as "idling or thinking" as an expression of his state of hunger and desperation. He may seem to the onlooker to be "idling" either because his hunger has put him in a state of listlessness, or because he is not sure what to do or where to go to obtain food. He may be "thinking" of ways out of his predicament. At the same time, he may have his hands in his pockets in an attempt not to betray to anyone how desperate he is. When the sailor calls out to the boy, asking if he is hungry, the boy's outward response at first seems ambivalent: "There was a brief silence during which the youth seemed to be thinking, and took one shorter step as if to stop. . . ." Although he denies to the sailor that he is hungry, the reader may interpret his behavior as an expression of the struggle within himself between his desperate need for food and his sense of pride, which prevents him from accepting the handout. He replies to the sailor "smiling feebly" that he is not hungry. His feeble smile in part indicates that he is so terribly hungry he can barely smile, yet his sense of pride causes him to try his best to appear unconcerned with food.

The "gaudy tramp" who does accept the sailor's offer of food represents an outward expression of the boy's feelings of hunger which he is too proud to demonstrate. While the boy is hesitant, and then refuses the charity, the tramp is overly eager to accept it, which he does so without pride or gratitude. The sailor asks the tramp if he is hungry, and "He had not yet finished the phrase when the tramp looked with shining eyes at the package the sailor held in his hand. . . ." While the boy lies, responding that he is not hungry, the tramp expresses outwardly what the boy experiences inside: "Yes, sir; I'm

very much hungry!" The tramp's eagerness to accept this charity is further indicated by the description of the package landing "in the eager hands" of the tramp. The tramp's happiness and eagerness in accepting this charity is further described by the way in which he "happily rubbed his hands" at the sight of the food.

The story goes on to describe in a variety of ways how hunger affects the boy, both physically and mentally. "He had not eaten for exactly three days and three long nights." Although he cannot bring himself to accept handouts, from both "timidity and shame," his refusal of the sailor's offer seems to exacerbate the hunger, as "he felt his hunger increase with the refusal." The boy's internal state of hunger affects his perceptions of the world around him, so that his impression of the port town in which he has been wandering hungrily takes on a dark, oppressive, and horrible demeanor: "It seemed a place of slavery; stale, dark, without the grand sweep of the sea; among its high walls and narrow streets people lived and died bewildered by agonizing drudgery."

Although he refuses to accept charity, the boy finally decides "to resort to any means to get some food." When he is hired to work loading cargo onto a steamship, he takes his place "enthusiastically" among the workers. However, his extreme hunger affects his ability to work, and he "began to feel tired and dizzy; he swayed as he crossed the gangplank, the heavy load on his shoulder. . . ." His hunger and exhaustion again cause him to look at the world around him as a dark, dirty, and unsightly place; he looks down at the water below the wharf, "stained with oil and littered with garbage." Because of his extreme hunger, he ends the workday "completely exhausted, covered with sweat, at the end of his rope." Although he decides to ask the foreman for an advance on his pay, his hunger leaves him "confused and stuttering." Refusing the foreman's paltry offer of the forty cents in his pocket, the boy thanks him "with an anguished smile." Again, as with the sailor, the boy attempts to hide his hunger and despair with a smile, but his true state of mind is expressed by his "anguish."

At this point, the story's description of the boy's hunger becomes more extreme and anguished, the physical sensations brought on by hunger more painful:

> Then the boy was seized by acute despair. He was hungry, hungry, hungry! Hunger doubled him over, like a heavy, broad whiplash. He saw everything through a blue haze, and he staggered like a drunk when he walked. Nevertheless, he would not have been able to complain or shout, for his suffering was deep and exhausting; it was not pain, but anguish, the end! It seemed to him that he was flattened out by a great weight.

The narrator uses several literary devices in depicting the extremes of hunger experienced by the boy. Repetition, such as in the phrase "hungry, hungry, hungry!" is used throughout the story to emphasize the boy's condition. The narrator also makes use of figurative language to depict the boy's state of hunger. The hunger "doubled him over, like a heavy, broad whiplash"; because of the hunger "it seemed to him that he

was flattened out by a great weight." The narrator further describes the ways in which hunger affects the boy's physical abilities; his vision is affected, as he "saw everything through a blue haze," as is his ability to walk, in that "he staggered like a drunk." Eventually, the hunger causes a burning sensation in his gut, as "he felt his entrails on fire, and he stood still. He began to bend down, down, doubling over forcibly like a rod of steel, until he thought he would drop."

Recovering slightly from this spell of dizziness caused by the hunger, "he made up his mind to eat anywhere, without paying, even." Again, the narrator uses the literary device of repetition to emphasize the boy's hunger and his determination to eat: "the main thing was to eat, eat, eat. A hundred times he mentally repeated the word: eat, eat, eat, until it lost its meaning, leaving his head feeling hot and empty." He imagines that he will eat somewhere, and then explain to the owner, "I was hungry, hungry, hungry, and I can't pay."

After the boy enters the milk bar and begins to drink the glass of milk and eat the wafers, the narrator describes the process by which his hunger subsides, leaving him with a new physical sensation in his body, and new vision of the world around him. As he begins to eat, "he felt the burning in his stomach diminishing, dying away." After he cries from relief, the food begins to restore the physical sensation of his body: ". . . he felt a great refreshing sensation spread inside him, extinguishing the hot something that had nearly strangled him." Unlike the tramp at the beginning of the story who did not bother to thank the sailor for his charity, the boy thanks the waitress at the milk bar for allowing him to eat and drink without paying for it. After he leaves the milk bar, the sensations in his body, previously wracked with hunger, are refreshing and energetic. "The wind blowing from the sea refreshed his face. . . ." His entire attitude and outlook on life are refreshed, as well. As he walks along, "he straightened up happily, strode on with assurance and determination." He walks along the sea, "with a spring in his step; he felt like a new man, as if his inner forces, previously scattered, had reassembled and united solidly." Whereas, in his hunger, the sea, the wharf, and the port town had seemed to him dirty and oppressive, the story ends, once he has eaten, with an image of the sea as lifegiving and full of hope: "He just felt alive, that was all. Then he fell asleep with his face toward the sea."

Source: Liz Brent, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Topics for Further Study

In the story "The Glass of Milk," the walls of the city are symbolic of the youth's internal psychological walls. What other symbols can you find in the story and how would understanding them help you to better understand the story?

Have you ever experienced the kind of hunger the youth experiences in the story? How did this change your behavior or attitudes then, and does that change still affect your life today? Explain in detail.

If *machismo* is the governing aspect of the youth's daily life, why and how does he allow himself to accept the comfort and ministrations of the woman in the milk bar?

Explain the change in attitude of the boy between the time he leaves the wharf to find the milk bar and his arrival back at the wharf. What physical and psychological differences do you see that account for any differences in his attitude?

Do you know any other stories in which an individual experiences a similar set of circumstances? How would you compare that tale with this one and what are the major differences between the two? If you do not know a fictional story, do you know any real-life tales of similar circumstances?

Compare and Contrast

Early Twentieth Century: In the 1920s and 1930s, economic and political life in Chile was in turmoil. By the middle of the 1930s the worldwide Great Depression was at its worst and had left its mark on the country, especially the working classes. This often led to violent political upheaval and the beginning of a series of ineffective presidencies.

Late Twentieth Century: In the 1990s, the political situation in Chile had begun to settle, beginning with the removal of the brutal dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1990. Democratic elections were held in 1999 and the freely elected government was installed in early 2000.

Early Twentieth Century: In the 1920s and 1930s, the literary culture in Chile was just beginning to expand. Manuel Rojas was the most important writer of the times.

Late Twentieth Century: In the 1990s, more writers emerged who have made significant contributions to the body of Chilean and world literature. A new generation of writers is focusing on the political events in Chile between 1973 and 1985. Their works deal with issues of internal repression and exile. In the 1990s folk literature has found an audience in Chile and elsewhere.

Early Twentieth Century: In the 1930s, the working classes were oppressed by both the political powers and the upper-class owners of the businesses in the country.

Late Twentieth Century: In the 1990s, political stability has been established. The economic situation in the country, while not as strong as many would like, has begun to produce a larger middle class. The workers receive higher wages and have more opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their incomes.

What Do I Read Next?

The short story "The Man and the Rose" by Manuel Rojas, published in 1963, is a tale of a clash of mysticism and religion in the natural world. It presents an interesting conflict between illusion and reality.

Hijo de ladrón (*Born Guilty*) by Manuel Rojas was published in 1951 in Santiago de Chile. This novel examines the life of a lad who tries to overcome his father's reputation as a criminal. The people the lad meets expect him to be as unsavory as his father. A theme from this story is the youth's fight against loneliness. It is part of a trilogy that is somewhat autobiographical and includes *Lanchas en la bahía* (1932) and *Mejor que el vino* (1958).

Rojas' collection of political essays, *De la poesía a la revolución* (*From Poetry to Revolution*), comes from the 1920s and 1930s. It was first published as a collection in 1938. These essays offer insight into his thinking and activism on behalf of the workers in Chile and Argentina.

Invisible Man (1952) by Ralph Ellison depicts the isolation and struggles of a southern black man in New York City. The protagonist faces many of the same kinds of situations that Aniceto faces in *Hijo de ladrón*.

Further Study

Fleak, Kenneth, *The Chilean Short Story: Writers from the Generation of 1950*, Peter Lang, 1989.

Chapter Two contains a section of general information on Manuel Rojas and his impact on Chilean short fiction.

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This section from the *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature* contains information that gives a broad overview of Chilean literature from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the end of the twentieth century.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literature of Developing Nations for Students (LDNfS) 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, LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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 LDNfS 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

LDNfS 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 Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS 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 Literature of Developing Nations for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS 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.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS, 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 Literature of Developing Nations 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 LDNfS, 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 Literature of Developing Nations 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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