Goodbye to All That Study Guide

Goodbye to All That by Robert Graves

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BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

There were many fine, powerful memoirs published about the First World War, and Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That* is considered to be one of the most honest and insightful. The descriptions of battle are horrifying, and the descriptions of military bungling and pomposity are darkly amusing. Graves' factual tone makes the remarkable seem unremarkable and the ordinary seem well worth examining. The book was published in 1929, more than ten years after the war's end, at a time when, like many writers who had lived through the war, Graves was still suffering from the trauma of fighting and was angry about the whole concept of war. His suffering shows in the disjointed methods he used□combining excerpts from letters, poems by himself and others, army commands and ramblings□ to create a sense of the disorder he had felt since his time in battle.

Graves revised *Good-Bye to All That* in 1957 at the request of an American publisher. While revision usually leads to improvement, many critics believe that the cuts he chose to make actually detracted from the book and made the book a less honest work, taking away some of the immediacy and confusion that made the original version ring so authentic. A major change in the 1957 edition, for example, is the removal of information about Laura Riding, a poet with whom Graves was deeply involved in 1929. Looking back almost thirty years later, their affair might have seemed unimportant to him, but the material that is in the earlier edition tells much about the author that should be taken into account when reading this autobiography.

Author Biography

Robert von Ranke Graves was one of the most prolific poets of the twentieth century, with an active career that spanned six decades. He was born in London, England, on July 24, 1895, and grew up in a well-established British family, with German ancestry on his mother's side and Irish on his father's. His mother's family, the von Rankes, was dominated by clergymen, while the Graveses of his father's side were generally intellectuals, right down to his father, who was an amateur poet and an inspector of schools. Graves was raised in an atmosphere of thoughtfulness and civility. He attended private preparatory schools until he was ready to go to Oxford, but his education was interrupted when he enlisted to fight in World War I soon after it began in 1914.

Graves' service in the war is told about in great detail in *Good-Bye to All That*, the memoir that he wrote when he was thirty-three, an age at which most people lack enough life experiences to fill a book. He was an officer in the war, serving in the trenches that were in such close proximity to the enemy that unexpected, violent death was commonplace. A punctured lung removed him from active duty, but he returned to France, and, despite his pacifist inclinations, he served in the army until the Armistice was declared in 1918.

After the war Graves went to Oxford, taking advantage of government money available to him. There he became acquainted with many of the great writers of his time, including T. S. Eliot, John Masefield, and England's Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges. His career as a poet bloomed, supported, as poets often are, by money made from teaching. At that time, his personal life became incredibly convoluted, as he tried to maintain a three-way marriage with his wife and Laura Riding, a poet who was both his lover and teacher. This experiment in flouting social and sexual conventions came to an end with Riding's attempted suicide and Graves' wife taking their four children and leaving him.

His career as a writer was remarkable for both its longevity and its diversity. He was primarily a poet, producing dozens of volumes of poetry between 1916 and 1975. He thought of himself as a poet and considered other work that he did as necessary to support himself. Graves is most remembered for prose works, though. His most famous work is the novel *I, Claudius*, which was a bestseller in 1935 and which was made into a very influential television series on the British Broadcasting Corporation in the 1970s. His biography of T. E. Lawrence, entitled *Lawrence and the Arabs*, was adapted to a major motion picture that has become a perennial classic. His translation of *The Rubáiyat of Omar Khayyám* became the classic translation, and his autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That* was re-released in a revised edition in 1957. These works were familiar across the world to people who had no idea their author wrote poems. When he died on December 7, 1985, in Deya, Majorca, Spain, Graves was a somewhat forgotten figure in British poetry, although his work continues to be examined in schools.

Plot Summary

Childhood

Good-Bye to All That begins with Robert Graves giving a brief account of his earliest memories, followed by a brief summary of what he is like at the time of writing: "My height is given as six feet two inches, my eyes as gray, and my hair as black." With those staples of "biographical convention," as he puts it, out of the way, Graves starts into the background of his family on both his mother's and father's sides, which is important information for showing the privileged class from which he came. His mother's German family is credited with being "a family of Saxon country pastors, not anciently noble" but educated and thoughtful people. From His father's Irish family, he sees an inherited gift for conversation. His father was an amateur poet but mostly a school-board official, and he was widowed with five daughters when he married Graves' mother. He was their third child together, born in 1895, when his mother was forty and his father forty-nine. Due to this great age difference, his father had little to do with the young Graves' childhood and is hardly mentioned in the book.

Unique memories of his childhood include the time he realized that he and the servants who worked for the family were of different classes; another, his "horror of Catholicism," which he learned growing up in a strictly Protestant household. In subsequent chapters, he explains that when he was not away at school, he was with his family at their house in Wimbledon or traveling, particularly to visit relatives in Germany.

School

Graves' childhood was spent moving from one preparatory school to another: his father disapproved of one, he was thrown out of another for using bad language, and he attended another for just one semester, "for my health." From the earliest schools, he remembers traumatic sexual encounters with girls. The daughter of one headmaster tried, with her friend, to find out about male anatomy by peeking down his shirt front, and, in what he calls "another frightening experience from this part of my life," he once had to go to his sister's school and wait for her, with dozens of girls walking past and staring at him. "[F]or months and even years afterwards my worst nightmares were of this girls' school," he explains, summarizing his fear as being "'Very Freudian,' as we say now."

The final prep school that he goes to, Charterhouse, is the one at which he spends the most time and the one that he dislikes the most. In his second year, he writes to his parents, listing the improper things that go on so that they will let him leave Charterhouse, but instead they take his letter to the headmaster, making Graves even more of an outcast. Left alone, he begins writing poetry and submits some of his work to the school's literary magazine, which leads to his joining the Poetry Society. There one of the other boys convinces him to try boxing, and he meets the character whom in the

book he calls by the pseudonym "Dick." The book strongly hints at Graves' relationships with other boys while growing up. "In English preparatory and public schools," he explains, "romance is necessarily homo-sexual." His relationship with Dick is one of the most important things in his life at Charterhouse.

The War

A few days after Great Britain declares war on Germany in 1914, Graves decides to leave Charterhouse and to enlist in the army. The war was expected to last only a few months, and he is desperate for an excuse to avoid graduating and moving on to college at Oxford. He takes a commission in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, a company with a long, revered history going back for several generations of British military service. After passing Officers' Training School, he enters the army as a lieutenant and, at age nineteen, is in charge of old soldiers who have already served in the army and have reenlisted. His first assignment is to a prison camp at Lancaster, where he watches enemy aliens. (The book confirms stories that the army denied about the mistreatment of prisoners.) While guarding them, he learns to be a proper soldier, picking up along the way the correct ways of giving orders and of behaving toward superior officers. In chapter XII of the book, by printing part of a short story that he wrote during the war about the experience, he reconstructs what he felt like when he arrived at the scene of battle in France. It provides a glimpse of one of the most glaring cases of officers being kept warm and dry and unaware of the damp, degrading, demoralizing conditions that the common soldiers face.

Life in the trenches soon becomes more boring than heroic. His descriptions of bloated bodies and men suddenly gunned down by snipers alternate with descriptions of the rations provided by the army and of quirky characters he has met. He describes the summer of 1915 as becoming more regimented, with new, more dangerous weapons and increased discipline. He also describes seeing the ghost of a dead comrade, noting that "Ghosts were numerous in France at the time." In September of that year, he takes part in an attack on the town of Auchy, which turns out to be one of the most senseless defeats in the book; the Germans are well-fortified, and Graves' company loses most of its men. After that action is over, and for the rest of the book, he has trouble with nerves.

In early 1916, Graves goes to England for an operation on his nose: it was broken during his days of boxing at school, leaving him unable to breathe through the army regulation gas mask. While he is away, a bloody battle at the Somme ends up killing sixty percent of the officers in his battalion, as well as tens of thousands of enlisted men. Graves returns to service, to another battalion at the Somme, and is soon seriously injured, getting shrapnel through his lungs and a piece of mortar embedded in his forehead. A well-meaning colonel, having noticed how far gone he is, writes to his parents that he has died in battle, a mistake that he corrects as soon as he is able. His battle career over, he is sent to England for a while to recuperate. He rejoins his battalion as soon as he can but quickly catches bronchitis, and the company doctor declares him too ill to serve in battle. He spends the rest of the war at desk jobs, such as adjudicating on a court marshal review board.

Post-war

Having married Nancy Nicholson during the war, Graves sets about, after the war's end, to create a family. Because they were both late children in large, spread-out families, the couple decides that their children should come quickly, while they are young. Between 1919 and 1925, Nancy gives birth to four children. Living off Graves' military pension, they do what they can to supplement their income, at one point opening a small store that fails, while Graves, at various times, takes teaching jobs. There is a little money coming in from his poetry but nothing substantial. Writing poetry is, however, the main focus of his life, and he develops his own sensibilities as a writer seriously. He publishes poetry books frequently and tries other styles to make money, but none of them is popular.

In 1925, he accepts a teaching position at the University of Cairo, where he teaches English. The story ends abruptly upon the family's return to England, a stylistic quirk that is accounted for in Graves' cryptic "Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding," who was his mistress and poetry mentor during the 1920s. He explains that he did not mention her in the book because mentioning her would have made her a flat character and demeaned her actual self but that the last few chapters "have a ghostly look" because of her absence from them. The epilogue gives a brief sketch of how she came to Islip at the request of Nancy and himself, how she accompanied them and the family to Cairo, and how she attempted suicide at the end of their affair by jumping out of a fourth-story window.

Prologue

Prologue Summary and Analysis

Graves states that the revised edition of the text has extensive modification from the original edition. Many trivial and boring passages were excised; several names were changed from false, anonymous, names to actual names; and the original Chapter 28 was replaced with completely re-written text.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Robert von Ranke Graves was born July 24th, 1895 in Wimbledon—near London. His earliest memories were of watching a parade honoring Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and sitting in the impressive personal library of his father while various relatives and local dignitaries participated in Shakespearean readings. Graves always considered himself a poet and writer, though sometimes indicated his profession as University Professor to avoid the social implications and complications of being a writer. He stood 6' 2" tall, weighed around 170 pounds, and had grey eyes and curly black hair. His nose was crooked due to a break and his face was not particularly symmetrical.

Graves offers a catalogue of his ancestral history, tracing one line back to 1267. His maternal pedigree includes many notable individuals, including the well-known historian Leopold von Ranke, Graves' great-uncle. Graves' mother, Amalie von Ranke, inherited a considerable sum through an unlikely stroke of fortune and owned a considerable amount of real estate. She was of German extraction. Graves' paternal pedigree traces back to 1485 and includes French nobles and English and Irish public officials. His paternal grandfather was the Protestant Bishop of Limerick and his father, Alfred Perceval Graves, was an English writer and poet. Alfred Graves' first wife bore him five children and then died of tuberculosis. He remarried Amalie von Ranke and had five more children, among them Robert Graves. Graves' ancestry gave him the air of a proper gentleman and his proper and dignified bearing always enabled him to receive the respect he felt due his station.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Amalie von Ranke desired to travel abroad and perform humanitarian service. When she met Alfred Graves, single father of five children, she felt that she could remain at home, become his wife, and perform humanitarian service of another kind. She subsequently bore two daughters and three sons. Robert Graves was thus the 8th of ten children. When Robert was born, his mother was forty years old and his father forty-nine; the large age difference between the latter children and the parents caused Graves and his full siblings to feel their parents were more grandparents than parents, though they got along well enough. Their upbringing during infancy was proper and normally strict. Graves was baptized into the Church of England and possessed religious fervor through about age sixteen. His father always encouraged an interest in literature.

Graves first became aware of class distinctions at age four and a half—he contracted Scarlet Fever and spent several months in hospital where he noted that a few patients—himself included—received preferential and deferential treatment. Returning home to further convalesce he realized for the first time that the various family servants were definitively not the equal of the family members. He also remembers the realization as an older child that his nurse, very dear to him, was intellectually dull and relatively uneducated.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Beginning at age six,Graves was sent to preparatory school. He moved through several schools in fairly rapid succession until his father finally settled on Charterhouse, an established and respected school. At school, Graves learned to participate in various sports, completed a standard course of education, and was socialized solely in the company of other boys. Thus, his earliest romantic feelings were necessarily homosexual.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Graves spent five of his childhood summers in Germany, accompanied by his mother and other siblings. In Germany, his time was spent with maternal relatives. Some of the relations lived in castles that were quite impressive and historical. One, built in the 9th century, was full of armor and shields and contained an enormous iron chest that had never been opened simply because of tradition. Graves recalls Germany as being beautiful, wonderful, and providing the happiest events in his childhood. The food, flora, and fauna were all enjoyable, and the respect he received because of his relatives' local prestige and lineage was comforting. Graves once again became aware of socio-economic differences between the classes as he contrasted his wealthy and influential relatives with the poor immigrant workers who labored on the local lands, still managed in a Feudal style. Graves and his siblings were brought up with a strict and so-called proper social code that placed women secondary to men and the lower classes as morally inferior to the bourgeoisie. In early life, Graves' Germanic heritage was a source of pride. As the Great War approached, however, it became a source of shame to him, and he insisted that he was simply Irish. Graves' analysis of class in Chapters 2 and 4 is not carried forward through the remainder of the autobiography with any emphasis.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Graves early pre-school childhood was largely spent at Wimbledon. Childhood pursuits were serious and did not include theater or common literature. Instead, Graves and his siblings were schooled from an early age and their entertainment was always educational. Amalie told the children moralistic stories and was a penurious woman and an inveterate packrat. Even though Wimbledon appears to have been a normal childhood experience, Graves looked back upon it with distaste. Instead, Graves remembered summer trips to the North Welsh coast as being pleasant and enjoyable and felt the countryside to be a peaceful home and a preferable alternative to the London area.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

Robert Graves completed his education at Charterhouse in July of 1914. Before leaving, he had a long and humorous discussion with his friend, Nevill Barbour, about the apparent evils of public schools in general and Charterhouse specifically. They loathed the fourteen years they had spent in education and dreaded the coming three years at St. John's College, Oxford. Graves, in fact, did not enter St. John's College, Oxford until 1919 and did not complete his degree until 1926.

Graves' experience at Charterhouse was demeaning and unpleasant, particularly for the first several years. He was an excellent scholar, but as such was not valued by the other students who instead saw him as rather a fool. He was inept at sports and completely ignorant of sexual matters—both inexcusable shortcomings according to his peers. His parents, though wealthy, did not provide pocket money and his clothing and possessions were second-rate by contemporary standards. Finally, his middle name of von Ranke was clearly German and a nearly universal hatred for all things Germanic was developing throughout the public schools; most students saw war with Germany as inevitable. Furthermore, a school bully singled out Graves for the routine yet tortuous experience of being relentlessly hazed. Graves was also disgusted by the somewhat common practice of physical homosexual activities between students.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

As Graves progressed through the forms at Charterhouse, his situation slowly improved because, as an older boy, he was less often physically harassed. He was socially isolated and treated poorly by most students and reacted by further deliberately withdrawing from the social sphere. His fortune changed, however, when he met Raymond Rodakowski, a fellow student, at an informal poetry club. Raymond encouraged Graves to take up boxing as an alternative to other sports, noting that the school's football players were afraid of boxers. Graves took up boxing and was generally left alone thereafter.

The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a tedious recounting of a prolonged school incident involving a conflict between the school's football club and the debate society. The football club was held in universal esteem but the older and wiser debate society members took umbrage at their treatment and successfully sought revenge through carefully orchestrated petty maneuvering. Eventually this resulted in the diminishing prestige of the football club. The minutia and details of the proceedings are rather uninteresting.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Near the end of his schooling at Charterhouse, Graves entered the school boxing competition and won 1st prize in both the welter- and middle-weight divisions, posting several knock-out victories and impressing the other students with his physical ability. At roughly the same time, Graves developed an amorous but not physically erotic relationship with a younger student whom he refers to as Dick; a relationship he was teased and hazed about. Ordered to break off the friendship by schoolteachers and the Headmaster, Graves refused (his amorous attraction to Dick would last through distant scandal until about 1919). In his final year at school, Graves functioned as an assistant editor of two school literary magazines, including *The Carthusian*. Graves also met the famous mountaineer George Mallory, then a young schoolmaster at Charterhouse. The two men formed a lasting friendship.

During Graves' final year at school, war fever continued to build in England. A military officer lectured the students on the need to prepare for a war that seemed inevitable. Graves thereafter resigned from Officers' Training Corps in revolt to implicit obedience to orders and argued against universal conscription. His position was extremely unpopular. Graves states that at least one in three of his fellow students were killed during World War I. Of the survivors many, if not most, were seriously wounded.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

While at Charterhouse, Graves became good friends with George Mallory. Mallory was at that time already an accomplished mountaineer and introduced Graves to the sport of climbing around the area of Snowdon. Mallory instructed Graves on several climbs, which Graves recalled in great detail. Graves found climbing to be entirely fulfilling and exhilarating. Graves states that, in his opinion, Mallory must have reached the summit of Mount Everest on the ill-fated 1924 attempt.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

One week after Graves finished school at Charterhouse, England declared war on Germany. Various propagandistic media stories immediately circulated about supposed German atrocities; as the days went by the stories became increasingly anti-German. Graves' family contained many members—often close relatives—who fought in the German armed forces during the war; he lists several and notes that nearly without exception they were all killed in action.

Excited by the prospect of war, Graves enlisted in a local unit. The enlistment secretary suggested Graves enroll as an officer, due to his educational background and having served briefly in the Officers' Training Corps. Thus, Graves enrolled at the nearest regimental depft—the Royal Welch Fusiliers at Wrexham. Graves spent three weeks in basic training, making several standard military gaffes such as saluting the Bandmaster. He was subsequently transferred to the 3rd Battalion, a militia battalion, in Lancaster where he oversaw the guarding of foreign nationals who had been interred as prisoners of war. The prisoners were nearly all Germans who had been living or working in England prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Graves was placed in charge of fifty Special Reservists and attempted to organize them into a useful guard detachment.

Graves initially rubbed his superior officer the wrong way. Thus, he was retained on guard duty supervision as other men were shipped off to combat before him. Eventually, Graves participated in a local boxing match where he made a solid showing. This so impressed the commanding officer that Graves was at once dispatched to Wrexham and assigned to a unit destined for combat in France. Graves then offers a catalogue of officers he knew who had already been killed in the war and relates a few concise anecdotes regarding other officers. He recalls, with distaste, having served in the Orderly Room during various disciplinary actions for minor offenses, and he relates several amusing anecdotes regarding offenses and punishments.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

Graves had selected the Royal Welch Fusiliers regiment, the twenty-third regiment, quite by accident of geography, but he came to hold the regiment in particular regard and was glad that he was part of it. The Royal Welch Fusiliers had an impressive twenty-nine battle-honors and was composed of two pre-1888 regiments that were now organized as the 1st and 2nd battalions. The regiment was notorious for having participated in the four hardest-fought victories of the British army and once charged a body of cavalry many time their own strength, driving it from the field. The regiment had surrendered at Yorktown but it was not accounted a disgrace as it had been abandoned by the Navy. The regiment also fought at Lexington, Guildford Court House, and made a suicidal advance up Bunker Hill. The regiment thus had a proud heritage that Graves learned and enjoyed.

The regiment also enjoyed two particular honors—before and during the war they were allowed to wear a certain distinctive style of five black ribbons on the back of their crimson dress tunics, called a flash, and—after the war—they were allowed to spell the division's title Welch with a 'c' instead of the modern 's'. Graves then offers a concise catalogue of the performance of various battalions during the previous several decades. During World War I, the regiment fought with distinction but suffered incredible casualties, as was unfortunately only too common for line-battalion units. Graves states that the unit's fighting strength was no more than 800 men, although, so great were battle casualties, fifteen or twenty thousand men passed through the unit over the course of the war. Even with this huge influx of new conscripts and constant loss of established personnel, the regimental troops never lost their *esprit de corps*, and always had a fairly sound knowledge of the regimental history.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 12 begins the author's memoirs regarding his personal wartime experiences. It follows a generally chronological development from the point that Graves arrived with five other Royal Welch Fusilier officers in France, near Le Havre. The author notes that the chapter was originally written in 1916 while still fresh in his memory, but was originally created in novelized form. The autobiographical chapter was re-written from the novelized memoir.

Although being officers of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, Graves and a few other officers were initially deployed to the Welsh Regiment. Graves was placed in command of a platoon of Welshmen who ranged in age from fifteen to an incredible sixty-three, though most were within the regulation age limits. The unit traveled by train and foot to Cambrin, occasionally experiencing desultory shelling from German artillery. Eventually Graves and his men reached the trenches and took their place in the mud.

The men of the Welsh Regiment were independent thinkers and disliked being yelled at or commanded about; instead, they preferred to have objectives and rationales for orders explained. Once they felt informed, however, they were a decent enough lot of soldiers. The entire company, and even regiment, enjoyed a casual camaraderie and a very relaxed standard of military discipline that initially shocked Graves, though he later found it agreeable. Graves relates several anecdotes from his initial days in the trenches, including a distant gas attack that turned out to be a false alarm, and discovering the body of an English suicide in an observation post, rifle muzzle in mouth and toe thrust through trigger guard. It was the first dead man he saw in France.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 12 continues the author's memoirs regarding his personal wartime experiences. It follows a generally chronological development and includes summarizations taken from personal letters sent home during May and June of 1915.

Graves catalogues the sixty-plus pounds of standard equipment issued to newly arriving soldiers. He concisely describes the moral and physical effects of German artillery barrages, notes some of the drills which were routinely demanded in rear areas, relates a few songs enjoyed by the soldiers of the period, and shares several short but interesting anecdotes. For example, before a mass attack, the English soldiers would usually pool their cash into a so-called sweepstakes; the pot would later be evenly divided between the survivors as a sort of consolation prize for having survived the attack unscathed.

From the Cambrin trenches Graves was billeted in a rear area for training, then moved into the Cuinchy Brick Stacks trenches, then was billeted in Bythune, moved back into a sector of trenches where military action was more intensive, and then once again billeted behind the lines, this time in Vermelles.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

During the summer of 1915, the English soldiers were equipped with new types of trench weapons and the artillery units received much heavier guns. Graves spent the summer months in the Cambrin and Cuinchy trenches between rear area billets in Bythune and the surrounding villages. As the weeks went by, he found that he had become pessimistic, nervous, and highly superstitious—all traits that he initially found repulsive in old hands. Death was so omnipresent that his battalion, at a regular strength of roughly 800, enlisted perhaps 20,000 men on its rolls throughout the war.

Graves received a letter from a cousin informing him that Jack, his beloved school chum, was acting untoward; a later letter from Jack claimed the cousin to be misinformed and malicious. Somehow, Graves took the schoolhouse news seriously enough. He was finally happy to receive a transfer from the Welsh Regiment to his own Royal Welch Fusiliers. He deliberately took a roundabout voyage on the transfer and arrived after spending two days to travel scarcely seventeen miles. He discovered that the Royal Welch Fusiliers were highly structured and very focused on proper and correct military etiquette. He found the change jarring and somewhat ridiculous, but adapted. He was posted to the 3rd Battalion but assigned to the 2nd Battalion, into 'A' company, serving under Captain Thomas, who was a very quiet but fairly well respected soldier. The regiment's second-in-command, referred to only as Buzz Off, was a pompous and ridiculous figure who snuck about waiting to catch men failing to demonstrate proper military etiquette; he was universally disliked if not despised. Graves found the 2nd Battalion unusually punctilious in the observance of the minutia of military etiquette. On a few occasions, the German and British forces communicated with each other by lobbing notes tied around defused grenades back and forth between the trenches; in these notes they wrote mostly about women and politics.

Graves then explains the concept of relative risk, a philosophy evolved by the combatants in the trenches. The general idea was to assess the likelihood of a particular action resulting in one's death. For example, a 'one in eight' chance was undertaken only for very good reasons or under direct orders whereas a 'one in two hundred' chance would often be undertaken as a matter of convenience. Graves was ordered out on his first patrol into 'no man's land' and skulked about in terror. The expedition was uneventful and he continued, by night over the next weeks, to foray into the area between the trenches.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

In August of 1915, it became obvious that a major offensive in the area around La Bassye was being planned; the resultant British offensive would come to be known as the Battle of Loos. New divisions were brought up behind the lines, heavier artillery pieces were deployed, and artillery shells were stockpiled in vast quantities. As this was going on Graves was issued a six-day pass and returned to London on leave. He found it bizarrely otherworldly and spent almost the entire time wandering alone through the countryside, walking over hills. He then returned to the trenches in France and took up the command of a platoon in 'A' Company, 2nd Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regiment, 7th Division, British Expeditionary Force.

In mid-September, an enormous artillery bombardment supposedly began to crush the German lines, preparatory to an assault. The bombardment went on for days and days. Finally, Graves attended a regimental-level planning meeting where objectives were distributed to the officers. Many officers laughed out loud at the ludicrously optimistic orders. After leaving their own trenches and traversing No Man's Land, they are to cross three lines of trenches spread over 600 yards, then cross two railways, then cross another trench and take a fortified strongpoint. They are then to proceed another 400 yards across two more trenches and assault and capture a fortified town. If this goes as planned, they are to again continue on and take and hold a further fortified town, visible in the distance, about which little is known. The planning meeting also included a discussion of the planned use of the so-called accessory; that is, poisonous chlorine gas which would be released upon the German lines. It was referred to only as the 'accessory' and not as gas to provide some modicum of information security. New equipage orders were also issued.

Nearly all of the junior officers predicted a cock-up disaster, and Captain Thomas stated that the use of poison gas was—or at least should have been—considered unsporting and avoided entirely, particularly by the British. Graves was nervous, depressed, and afraid. He states that his ground-level view of the Battle of Loos is personal but confusing, as he did not have all of the details.

Just hours before the offensive's starting time, the main British artillery dump was hit by German shells and exploded. Thus, in the last few critical hours, the British artillery bombardment of the German trenches faltered and then petered out nearly completely. The predicted wind, blowing from the English to the German trenches, did not materialize, but the chlorine gas stupidly was released despite this. It clouded around the British front, restricting visibility, and then blew back onto the British lines and pooled in the British trenches, causing confusion and horrible casualties. Confused by the gas and the cessation of major artillery shelling, many units set off before the designated hour, charging across the field piecemeal into the uncut British barbed wire and friendly fire from behind, as well as German fire from the enemy trenches some 200 yards

distant. Some new officers failed to perform and many, many other officers were killed along with entire platoons that were simply wiped out. As Graves' platoon stood in the relative safety of the British trenches awaiting their start-off order, he became very nervous. Their attack was postponed indefinitely and Graves consumed a large amount of whiskey to steady his nerves. He fretted for a while until his unit's attack was canceled outright. That night, Graves and others ventured into No Man's Land and rescued survivors. He states that approximately 550 men from his 800-man battalion were casualties after the first day of combat; the casualties included Captain Thomas, who was killed.

The next day a fresh offensive was announced, though the planning was even worse than before. This time the wind blew fair for the English and the poisonous chlorine gas wafted away from their lines and into the German lines. A brief artillery barrage was accompanied by an advance assault carried out on a tentative and limited scale. Although it succeeded in gaining the German trenches it was soon driven back. Graves waited with his platoon for the signal to start the main offensive but it, too, was eventually canceled. Over the next days, various skirmishes occurred and the approximately 50,000 British casualties were recovered and borne away on stretchers through the rat-infested muddy trenches. Graves and the other survivors were stunned at the carnage, and the Battle of Loos came to a sputtering conclusion.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

A few days later, the units were alerted for another assault. They stood ready for hours but that attack, also, was finally canceled. The men had originally sent their personal equipment, including blankets, clothing, and personal care items to the rear area so that equipment would not clutter the trenches during the offensive; thus, they subsisted in the trenches for days without useful sleep or clean clothing. Graves fell into a black depression and became pessimistic about everything. He learned that he had been gazetted a captain but took little pleasure in the promotion.

He read a newspaper article about a well-known noble's son—in fact, his amorous school chum Dick—who had been convicted of 'sexual delinquency', apparently soliciting homosexual intercourse from Canadian soldiers. Graves was disgusted and disheartened but decided to think of Dick as simply dead. He was by then apparently too depressed to give much consideration to the distant past life of school friendships. He noted his own developing neurasthenia and states that neurasthenia and alcoholism were rampant among those who managed to survive, particularly among officers. Graves states that the effective service-life of an officer peaks at four weeks' experience and then gradually declines to near-worthlessness after about ten months due to nerves; Graves had then served for five months. He comments on the rampant cases of 'trench feet' disease, feeling that it results mostly from low morale. Soldiers contracted 'trench feet' because they sought it in order to escape the trenches, if even for just a few days.

In November, Graves was transferred to the 1st Battalion and found it more relaxed in discipline. He was appointed as the second-in-command of 'A' Company under Captain Richardson. He then spent a few weeks in the freezing mud of the trenches as winter began before his unit was transferred to a rear area for six weeks of rear-echelon training. He met Siegfried Sassoon, a poet, and they developed a lasting friendship. He also met David Thomas, a 2nd lieutenant from the 3rd Battalion. The three young men became constant companions and close friends, even as they endured the ridiculously rigorous military etiquette of the rear areas. Graves was then sent off to train new arrivals in the disciplines of trench warfare. His training position lasted for eight weeks and he found it quite enjoyable, if boring.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

Graves spent eight weeks at the Harfleur 'Bull Ring' in the rear area conducting drills for new units in a field of model trenches. He delivered a few lectures and spent many hours chatting with other officers. They discussed the frequent stories of rampant atrocities purported to have been committed by this or that unit or nationality. Graves dismisses them all as improbable. They also discussed the morale and fighting capabilities of the various regiments with which they were familiar. They argued the merits of parade-ground drill. Graves then mentions that religious feeling among the soldiers was nearly non-existent; amidst the continued death and maiming, faith in God quickly waned. Furthermore, the Anglican chaplains proved entirely out of touch with the situation and spent their time far behind the lines in relative safety.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

In March of 1916, Graves rejoined the 1st battalion as units were sent forward to prepare for the offensive on the Somme. He spent some time in the Fricourt trenches, which were cut through chalky rock, and notes that they were much nicer than most trenches. The Germans continued to deploy new weapons of great destruction. Thus, the English were exultant when their first shipment of new Stokes' Mortars arrived. They expended huge amounts of mortar shells 'paying back' the Germans. During this period, David Thomas was killed; Graves was despondent, but Siegfried Sassoon became enraged, vowing undying hatred for the Germans.

In preparation for the Somme, offensive new gasmasks were issued. The design of the mask required a soldier to breathe in through the nose; Grave's broken and badly-set nose prevented him from breathing through his nose and he was thus unable to use the new gas masks. As German gas attacks were probable, this was a serious danger and Graves was sent back to England for corrective surgery.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary and Analysis

Graves again found England otherworldly. His mother forced him to attend a long church service. He sat in the pew and detested the service, and distracted himself by composing Latin epigrams. Over the next several days, he visited the dentist and then underwent an operation on his nose. During his recovery, he purchased a tiny cottage from his mother and lived in it for a few days, pretending to be an established poet far from the war. After he recuperated somewhat, he rejoined the 3rd Battalion at Litherland, near Liverpool. In July of 1916, he returned to the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regiment in France and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion. He spent time in the trenches around Givenchy and, once again, received a chilly reception from the troops because of his German middle name. The local English units participated in numerous small-scale trench raids, which were largely successful in killing Germans.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary and Analysis

Graves' unit was then transferred by rail to the Somme. In the trenches, he again met Siegfried Sassoon who was by then referred to as 'Mad Jack' because of his many daring, often somewhat insane, exploits. Graves was assigned to 'D' Company, which trailed along in support of the main line of attack. They were sent to the area around Martinpuich. After the long transport, Graves was so tired that he easily slept through a massive German bombardment on his position. A few days later, they advanced and constructed two strong points in front of the main trench. One night while Grave's platoon was fortifying a strong point, an English unit mistook them for a German unit and attempted to surrender to them. The Somme offensive ground on and Graves gives the strength of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regiment during mid-July at 800 combat-effectives, which includes drivers, cooks, and other non-combatants.

One day in late July, Graves' company moved forward in artillery formation and took a direct barrage of artillery fire which instantly killed roughly one-third of the men; when the shells stopped, the battalion numbered only eighty men. Graves was also hit in the face, the thigh, the hand, and his chest was pierced through-and-through by a shell splinter. The medics assured him the wound was fatal. His commanding officer was informed that he either had or would shortly die and sent a letter of condolence to Graves' mother; he also enrolled Graves in the killed-in-action report, which was particularly long.

Nevertheless, Graves survived despite being left untreated for over twenty-four hours. He later learned that the assault successfully captured the objective, and he then went through a series of medical transfers. On July 24, 1916, his 21st birthday, he finally was able to write a letter home telling his parents of his survival. His mother received the official notice of death and, the next day, the letter from her son—she believed that he must have died shortly after writing the letter. Graves eventually arrived at the hospital in Rouen, received treatment, and recuperated. He was then transferred to England.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary and Analysis

Graves found an England gripped in a frenzy of war—everywhere patriotism and military sentiment were displayed. He found the shift in social awareness jarring. Siegfried Sassoon was also injured, somewhat lightly, and returned to England for convalescence. Graves and Sassoon spent many hours together writing poetry and discussing the absurdities of the English media's portrayal of the war. The text then includes one lengthy letter putatively from a mother—it is a fairly vapid outpouring of meaningless sentiment and war fervor; Graves also provides numerous brief media clippings praising the letter as representative of English sentiment in general.

Graves and Sassoon eventually rejoined the 3rd Battalion in England and assisted in the training of new soldiers—the draft had by then replaced the voluntary enlistment system. The two veteran soldiers continued to relax, have fun, and goof off. While others complained of the war rationing of food, they marveled at the relative abundance. Finally, after nearly half a year at home Graves passed a medical inspection and was shipped back to France in January of 1917.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary and Analysis

Graves rejoined the 2nd Battalion near Bouchavesnes on the Somme. The Regimental doctor refused to allow Graves to rejoin combat, however, so Graves was assigned to the headquarters company. After a few weeks, Graves developed an abscessed tooth and performed a forty-mile round-trip horseback ride to have the tooth extracted. As part of the headquarters company, Graves became familiar with many cases of military justice, which was harsh. Deserters or those who exhibit cowardice were, if convicted, summarily executed. During one brief period, Graves was left in command of the Battalion. He attended a company attack planning meeting where he flatly denounced the proposed assault as suicidal; much to his amazement, the attack was called off. Some weeks later, Graves and another soldier went in search of some missing horses. Graves spent too many hours outside in the freezing temperatures and, still seriously hampered by his lung wound, collapsed. He convalesced in a field hospital and was then returned to England, destined for Oxford.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

Graves recuperated and entered active duty as a drill and musketry instructor for the Oxford school's battalions. His platoon consisted of a wide variety of nationalities. Graves pushed himself too hard, again, and eventually collapsed. He was once again forced to enter a period of convalescence for many weeks. Previously, Graves and other officers had been allowed to convalesce at their personal homes. Too many, however, never returned to duty, and thus the policy was changed to require convalescence while on light-duty assignment under military supervision. Meanwhile, Graves made the acquaintance of many significant literary figures at Oxford. Nearly everyone at Oxford was anti-war, many openly critical of the government's handling of the entire affair. Graves, in marked contrast, considered the war evil and pointless but maintained that home-front criticisms are counter-productive. Graves also spent his days walking, reading, and having what fun he could. Finally, on November 11th, 1918, the armistice was announced and hostilities ceased.

Note that Chapters 24 and 25 both cover the same time period as Chapter 23; thus, the subsequent two chapters are not arranged chronologically.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary and Analysis

In March of 1917, Sassoon was still in the 2nd Battalion in the trenches near Morlancourt. Graves and Sassoon exchanged letters throughout the period. In the letters, Sassoon became increasingly erratic in his political views. Sassoon's exploits on the battlefield became increasingly impressive but also increasingly dangerous. Sassoon was again wounded and returned to England for convalescence. In England, he met several anti-war pacifists who recruited him to their cause—he deserted his post and sent a letter to his commanding officer denouncing the war and announcing his intention to refuse further service. Sassoon mailed a clipping of his letter—widely published in newspapers—to Graves. Upon its receipt, Graves immediately realized that Sassoon would face court martial and a prison sentence for his actions. Graves immediately made several contacts and called in whatever political favors he possessed. His intervention resulted in Sassoon being sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital for treatment of neurasthenia, rather than a dishonorable discharge. At Craiglockhart, Sassoon met and befriended fellow-poet Wilfred Owen, later killed in combat, as well as Professor W.H.R. Rivers, the principle medical officer in service at the hospital.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary and Analysis

Meanwhile, Graves' health continued to deteriorate and he developed several nervous disorders. For example, he became obsessed with the idea of a gas attack—even the smell of flowers would convince him that poison gas was about—and any loud noises would startle him, sending him diving to the floor. He was transferred from his training position to less-intensive duty at Oswestry where he oversaw various transfers of men and materiel. Here he commenced a correspondence with Nancy Nicholson, a young woman with whom he had a passing acquaintance. On his next leave, October 1917, he called on her at home. After this, their letters took on a romantic character. Nicholson, like Graves, was against organized religion and rather anti-war. She also was an ardent feminist, and saw all social problems in terms of women's rights.

Graves was then dispatched to Cork, Ireland, by a strange accident of military orders. In Ireland, he was largely responsible for commanding reserve troops who restrained locals from participating in nationalistic uprisings. While he found the job distasteful, he performed it, as was his duty. Graves returned to London in December of 1917, and became engaged to Nicholson. He also sought a private medical opinion and was informed that he would never be able to return to active military duty at the front. Graves, twenty-two, and Nicholson, eighteen, were married in January of 1918. Both virgins, their wedding night was full of embarrassments that were only somewhat eased by a Zeppelin bombing raid not far from their hotel.

Most of Graves' friends, including Sassoon, disapproved of his marriage. Sassoon, by this time, had recovered sufficiently to desire to return to the front. He was instead sent on active duty to Palestine where the combat was less intensive. By April, however, Sassoon's military unit was back in the trenches in France. Nicholson's brother was killed in the fighting only weeks before the November Armistice ended hostilities.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

Graves' first child, a daughter named Jenny, was born in January of 1919. Graves returned to his duty station in Limerick where clashes between the troops and local young men were common. Graves found his service less interesting and pined to be home with his wife and child. After some consideration, he resigned his commission and demobilized as a student at Oxford. When Graves' discharge came through, his commanding officer refused to honor it because he wanted Graves to perform in the Battalion theatrical. Graves was incensed, but then realized that he was running a fever and probably had contracted Spanish Influenza. As he had no desire to convalesce from the influenza in an Irish hospital, Graves snuck about and got his demobilization order signed and completed, partly through finagling and partly through blind luck. After a remarkably rapid transit, Graves attained his home in England and sent for the doctor who informed him that the influenza would surely kill him. Graves mentally refused death and slowly recovered his strength. Still plagued by neurasthenia, Graves entered school at Oxford. Meanwhile, Nicholson gradually came to resent her status as wife in marriage and often wished aloud for some way to be un-married; yet, divorce was viewed as equally patriarchal and distasteful.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 27 marks a considerable shift in the chronological pace and topical focus of the autobiography. For Chapters 27 through 32, the pace sweeps in far more time for every chapter, a single chapter often spanning years. Graves necessarily provides less detail about events, and those events described often involve him only tangentially, or as an observer. Thus, the remainder of the autobiography reads more like a collection of interesting anecdotes than the personal-history style of the war-era chapters.

In October of 1919, Oxford still had very low enrollment and Graves found the campus to be nearly deserted. Graves read a course in English Literature but found it tedious as he had difficulty with several professors because of his unsympathetic views on eighteenth-century poetry. Throughout his school studies, and continuing until at least 1928, Graves constantly suffered from an illusory life of being at war in the trenches of France—today the condition would be referred to as shell-shock with flashbacks, Graves refers to it as neurasthenia and illusion. Socially, England became vehemently anti-French and, strangely, pro-German. The Germans were admitted as fine fighting men and some even went so far as to claim that England had entered the war on the 'wrong' side. Graves met and developed friendships with several notable literary figures at Oxford, including John Masefield, Robert Nichols, and T. E. Lawrence. Graves also accidentally met Dick, who was then studying at Oxford. He found Dick grown up, greatly changed, and unattractive. Graves' first son, David, was born in March of 1920.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary and Analysis

Graves and T. E. Lawrence developed a sincere and deep friendship. Both veterans of the war, they tacitly agreed to never speak of the war and instead focused on literature and common social circles. Graves recounts several anecdotes about Lawrence. On one occasion, Lawrence introduced Graves to Ezra Pound.

Graves and Nicholson went riding one day and visited their acquaintance, Thomas Hardy. They spent a pleasant afternoon discussing society and literature and then stayed for the night, departing in the morning. Later, Nicholson decided to open a shop and, for six months, they did a brisk business in groceries and goods. Graves again contracted influenza, however, and the economy began to collapse. Soon enough, the shop was closed and the stock liquidated. Nicholson's father paid off some of the debt and Lawrence allowed Graves to serially publish his forthcoming book and use the profits to satisfy the remainder of the bankruptcy; Lawrence refused to personally benefit from his war-time experiences. Meanwhile, Graves moved his family out to a village house that he rented from his mother.

Like Chapter 27, Chapter 28 is largely composed of Graves' comments on famous literary figures. As such, the two chapters are interesting but not particularly central to the autobiography.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 29 Graves returns to somewhat autobiographical elements but intersperses them with anecdotes of local life and amusing historical facts about Islip—the town in which he lived for several years.

Graves and Nicholson continued to live together. He started playing football with a team in the town, routinely assisted homeless ex-soldiers, and assisted in raising his children. Graves' second daughter, Catherine, was born in 1922 and his fourth and last child, a son named Sam, was born in 1924. Graves lightly participated in local politics and spent his time at school, and writing and publishing poetry. He gives a brief but rather tedious recounting of a Parish Council meeting discussion in which he participated.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary and Analysis

While at Oxford in his latter years, Graves was tutored by Sir Walter Raleigh—the two men shared much in common and treated each other as equals. Then, in rapid succession, Raleigh, Rivers, and Mallory died. Graves continued to attend Oxford through 1926, writing poetry and making the acquaintance of many poets, including Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, T. S. Eliot, Osbert Sitwell, and Sacheverell Sitwell. Toward the end of his schooling, Nancy's health began to fail and her doctor advised her to live in Egypt to convalesce in its warm airs. Graves finally completed his bachelor's of literature degree and fortuitously secured a position as Professor of English Literature at the Royal Egyptian University of Cairo.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary and Analysis

Sassoon visited Graves on the ship before his departure for Egypt in 1926. The ship stopped at Gibraltar and then passed close to an erupting volcano. Graves had relatives living in Cairo and they helped him locate suitable housing. The university was newly founded and few of the students were fluent in English or French, yet most of the professors spoke only one or both of those two languages. Graves' lectures turned into rather comic weekly affairs where he had to shout to be heard over the excited students. Lectures, handouts, and examinations were all translated in Arabic. Graves enjoyed learning the local customs and culture and discusses some interesting aspects of Egyptian life. Nevertheless, the politics of school life were complex and distasteful and Graves found the standard of academia execrable. However, Graves was highly paid, lightly worked, and found the time somewhat enjoyable.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary and Analysis

While in Cairo, Graves acted as examiner for the diploma class of the Higher Training College. Those who passed the examination would go on to offer English instruction at primary and secondary schools. Graves found the average candidate stunningly unprepared and presents three essays as an apology for his rapid abandonment of his teaching post in Cairo. The first essay, by Mahmoud Mohammed Mahmoud, examines the nature of the environment as a factor in evolution—the essay is nearly unreadable and largely nonsensical. The second essay, by Mohammed Mahmoud Mohammed, presumably examines the character of Lady Macbeth but in reality is simply an extensive quote from Shakespeare presented as the student's work (at the very least, the plagiarized Shakespearean text is at least grammatically correct). The third and final essay, by Mahmoud Mahmoud Mohammed, examines the best use of leisure time—the essay is nearly unreadable, largely nonsensical, and constantly self-contradictory.

Graves resigned his teaching position. He attended several lavish parties held in his honor and then spent several weeks writing. All of his children contracted measles and received only indifferent medical attention. Frustrated with the entire experience, and faced with a failing marriage, Graves and Nicholson returned to Islip in 1926, much to the disappointment of Graves' parents. From 1926 to 1929, Graves' marriage continued to disintegrate. Nicholson retained the children in 1929 when Graves "went abroad, resolved never to make England my home again; which explains the 'Good-bye to All That' of this title" (p. 343).

Epilogue

Epilogue Summary and Analysis

The 1957 revision of the text included an epilogue. The original text was written in 1929 when Graves was thirty-three years old. In the intervening twenty-eight years, Graves feels that little of import has transpired in his life. He moved to Majorca, Spain, where he lived until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. He then moved around Europe and the United States of America for three years and then passed World War II living in England. After the war, he returned to Majorca. Three of his children joined the Armed Forces during World War II, with one of them being killed in action. Graves volunteered for infantry service during World War II but his offer was declined. Eventually, Graves and Nicholson divorced. Graves re-married and had four more children. He closes the text by noting that Majorca, once rural and wonderful, had lately been discovered as a resort destination and had been saddled with all of the accompanying problems.

Characters

Daisy

While the Graves family is living a peaceful suburban life in Islip, they try to be as good as they can to the unemployed beggars who have found themselves out of work in the postwar economy, especially those who have been in the service. Daisy is the thirteen-year-old daughter of one of those men. To save the trouble of worrying about her on the road, the Graves take Daisy into their house, offering to adopt her.

Daisy, as Graves puts it, "was not a success." She is big and coarse and awkward, unwilling to go to school; she argues with children her own age and is homesick for life on the road. When hobos come around asking for handouts, she chases them away, knowing better than the Graves which ones are able-bodied but unwilling to work. The next time that her father passes through town, he takes Daisy with him.

Dick

Biographers have identified the boy whom Graves refers to as "Dick" to be George Johnstone. At Charterhouse, Dick is admittedly one of the most important things in Graves' life. He is three years younger than Graves; they meet when they are both in the choir. It is implied, though never stated, that there is a romantic relationship between them. Dick weaves in and out of chapter VII, always mentioned as an important fact of Graves' life, although the book only talks about his attachment to Dick without ever showing them interacting. When a poem that he writes about Dick gets him called before the headmaster as "filthy," Graves threatens to reveal the fact that the headmaster is guilty of kissing Dick, too. When Dick is sent for, he confirms the story, although he later admits that he made it up.

While Graves is away at war, fighting in the trenches, he receives news that Dick "was not at all the sort of innocent fellow I took him for." Since the news was sent by a cousin who has a grudge against him, Graves decides to forget about it. Later, a colleague sends him a newspaper clipping about a court case in which a sixteen-year-old boy□Dick□ was arrested near Charterhouse for propositioning a soldier. The article is written to complain that the boy had been given a light sentence because he came from an aristocratic family. After reading it, Graves decides that Dick must have been driven insane by the war, because he knows that there is insanity in his family. After this, Graves decides, "It would be easy to think of him as dead."

Laura Riding Gottschalk

See Laura Riding

Robert Graves

Graves is of course the central figure of his autobiography. The book starts with a chronology of his family, tracing it back for centuries on both his mother's and his father's sides and pointing out famous people with whom the family interacted in order to establish the author's social rank. His childhood is spent in Wimbledon, with some summers spent in Germany visiting relatives on his mother's side. He ends up going to six preparatory schools, changing often because his father, an education specialist, disagrees with their programs, and this leaves Graves with a negative impression of the strictness and artificiality of the education system. He hints at sexuality with the sentence, "In English preparatory schools romance is necessarily homosexual," but, even though romances are hinted at (especially with the boy referred to as "Dick"), he gives no specific confirmation of any involvements. At his last school, Charterhouse, he learns to fit into the tight social order by taking up boxing, which establishes his niche as an athlete and leaves him with a broken nose.

Most of the book is about Graves' service in the First World War. He is attached to the Second Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. His involvement in fighting is minimal; the French and Germans have fairly intricate systems of trenches dug across from each other, and there are only occasional reasons to go out into the open, called "No-Man's Land," where one might be exposed to gunfire. For the most part, the danger is in standing up and being shot by one of the German snipers, who always seem to be ready for anyone. In the few cases in which there are outright attacks, such as the attack at the Somme, where Graves is injured, he offers graphic descriptions of the deaths that surround him. Because he is a gentleman-officer, Graves does not let his punctured lung keep him out of the service, and he returns to his battalion as soon as he can, only to find that he is too injured to bear the strain of war.

After leaving the service, Graves turns his attention to writing. He attends Oxford, only because the government is willing to pay his tuition, and he meets dozens of famous, influential writers. Teaching English is not, however, something that he wants to do. After he and his wife and children leave Oxford, they take a small cottage in Islip, living in near poverty and taking charitable contributions from friends to get by. A few friends recommend him for a teaching position at the University of Cairo, and the book's final chapters are spent describing the ways of the Egyptian people. Much detail about his personal life is missing from these chapters, which, by no coincidence, cover the years of his life that the poet Laura Riding was traveling with his family.

Thomas Hardy

Hardy is one of England's greatest literary figures. His international reputation was established by the five novels he published before the turn of the century, from *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874 to *Jude the Obscure* in 1895. When Graves and Nancy go to see Hardy on one of their bicycle trips, he has them stay until the next morning. They talk about writing, about the neighbors, and about fashions. Near eighty

by then, Hardy is bemused by Nancy's feminism, and he takes Graves' advice on handling autograph seekers.

T. E. Lawrence

Lawrence was an internationally respected hero in the First World War, having mobilized the Arabs to revolt against Turkish control of their country, weakening Turkey and, by extension, the entire Ottoman Empire. When Graves meets him in 1919, Lawrence has already achieved legendary status. They enjoy each other's company, talking about poetry. In 1927, Graves is contacted by a publisher to write a biography about Colonel Lawrence. The book turned out to be a bestseller, giving Graves his first taste of financial success.

George Mallory

Mallory is an instructor at Charterhouse school who befriends Graves. He is only twenty-five or -six at the time of their meeting, but he seems much younger, making people assume that he is a student. He becomes an admirer of Graves' poetry and shows it to others. It is Mallory who introduces Graves to the sport of mountain climbing. "George was one of the three or four best climbers in climbing history," Graves explains. The book later mentions that Mallory died climbing Mount Everest after the war.

John Masefield

Masefield is one of the most famous poets of the World War I generation. When they move to Oxford after the war, Graves and his family rent a house on Masefield's property. They expand the house to include a little shop, but they have trouble keeping it going, and so they go bankrupt. The Masefields are not interested in continuing the shop after Graves and his wife are forced to move away.

Nancy Nicholson

Nancy Nicholson is Graves' wife and the mother of his four children. Graves meets Nancy in 1916, when he is on leave after having his nose operated on. She is sixteen. He has come to visit her brother, whom he knows from the army, and after leaving he keeps thinking about her. They keep in touch because she is going to illustrate some children's poems of his, and at some point during their correspondence, he realizes that he is in love with her. They are married in January 1918, when she is eighteen and he is twenty-two.

Nancy is a strict feminist, according to Graves. She retains her own name and gives their daughters the last name Nicholson, while their sons have the last name Graves. When he rejoins the war, she is the inspiration for his poetry. After the war, they live in several locations□first Harlech, where his parents live, then Oxford, then Islip□with

Graves writing and Nancy giving birth to babies and tending to them. She has four children with him in five years. At Oxford, it is Nancy's idea to open a little shop, like one that her old nurse opened in Devonshire. When it turns out that the shop is not only keeping her away from painting but also from raising the children properly, Nancy makes the decision to sell it, six months from when it opened. During the four years they spend at Islip, Graves is content to stay at home, but, at Nancy's request, they periodically take a borrowed vehicle and go on short trips, traveling without any plan, meeting interesting characters. The book does not mention it, but the trip to Egypt at the end included not only the Graves family but also Laura Riding, who was along, officially, as a secretary to Graves. By the time they returned to England, Graves was involved with Laura Riding, with Nancy's knowledge and consent, a relationship that is not mentioned in the book and is only hinted at in the "Dedicatory Epilogue" of the 1929 edition.

Laura Riding

Though she is not mentioned within the text of the book and is not mentioned at all in the revised 1957 edition, *Good-Bye to All That* has Riding's influence all over it. The original 1929 book uses a poem of hers, "World's End," as an epigraph, and the book ends with a "Dedicatory Epilogue" addressed to her.

Riding was Robert Graves' mentor, his instructor in poetry, and, finally, his mistress. She traveled with the Graves family to Cairo when they went, turning their marriage into a threesome. When they returned to England, she took on another protege, a handsome young writer named Geoffrey Phibbs. When he left her, she drank disinfectant and then jumped out of a window, a fact referred to in the 1929 epilogue. Her life was saved, but she was an invalid, and she and Graves were together for another ten years after that.

Raymond Rodakowski

Raymond is a boy at Charterhouse who befriends Graves when he joins the Poetry Society. He is the one who recommends that Graves take up boxing, which he does with great success. At school Raymond stops associating with Graves because he is "a complete and ruthless atheist," and Graves begins thinking about religion while preparing for his confirmation. He mentions in passing that he went to see Raymond once, years later, when they were both in the army, and that still later he heard that Raymond was killed at Cambrai.

Siegfried Sassoon

Sassoon, one of the most influential poets to come out of World War I, served with Graves in the same battalion in the war. After Graves has been sent home with permanent disabilities, he keeps up correspondence with Sassoon, who stays in the battle even after being injured and submits his poetry to pacifist publications. In 1917, Graves receives a newspaper clipping in the mail, an article that Sassoon has

published, called "Finished With The War: A Soldier's Declaration." The argument that it makes against the "political errors and insincerities" that caused the war is enough to have Sassoon court-martialed. To save his friend, Graves calls acquaintances in the army chain of command, using whatever connections he has to make them overlook Sassoon's treason on the grounds of his recent injury. Sassoon is sent to a home for neurasthenics, where his influence convinced Wilfred Owen, one of the most-read war poets of all time, to start writing poetry.

Robert von Ranke Graves

Nancy Nicholson

Rosaleen Graves

Clarissa Graves

Charles Graves

John Graves

Jenny, David, Catherine, and Sam

George Mallory

Captain Thomas

Buzz Off

Siegfried L Sassoon

Objects/Places

Charterhouse School

Charterhouse School is an English independent school in the county of Surrey. It was founded on the site of an old Carthusian Monastery, and for this reason, pupils are referred to as Carthusians and alumni as Old Carthusians. It was one of the original English public schools created by the Public Schools Act of 1868. Robert Graves completed most of his primary education at Charterhouse. His description of it presents it as a tradition-bound school where hazing was common and students' lives were often unpleasant.

Royal Welch Fusiliers Regiment

The Royal Welch Fusiliers Regiment, or 23rd regiment, is the regiment to which Graves is assigned. It is a component of the 7th Division of the British Expeditionary Force. The regiment is composed, initially, of three battalions, 1st through 3rd (the first two battalions are the 'regular' battalions, and the third battalion is a militia, or special, battalion); each battalion composed of four companies, 'A' through 'D'. Each company is composed of approximately four platoons. Each battalion, usually the largest tactical unit considered by Graves, is composed of about 800 men at full strength; thus, at the beginning of the war the regiment would have perhaps 2,400 men at full fighting strength—later in the war, additional battalions were added to regiments, however. Each company would have perhaps 200 men at full strength and each platoon would be composed of about fifty combat-effective soldiers. Due to rapidly swelling numbers in the British army, freshly arriving units were sometimes over-strength—this was nearly universally offset, however, by the atrocious casualty rates suffered in trench warfare. At times, Graves reports his battalion to consist of perhaps 200 effective combatants. A regiment would usually be commanded by a colonel, a battalion by a lieutenant-colonel or a major, and a company by a major or a captain. Lieutenants led platoons. Because casualties among officers were particularly high, units were often commanded, temporarily at least, by men without the normal rank. For example, Graves relates one company being commanded briefly in battle by the attached Catholic chaplain. Regimental members were recruited from specific geographical areas and therefore were the fundamental units of morale and *esprit de corps* in the British Expeditionary Force.

Cambrin Trenches

The Cambrin trenches were part of a vast network of static defensive trenches stretching across France during World War I. The trenches arose because rapid improvements in firepower had not been matched by improvements in mobility and communications; thus, mobile and offensive warfare were severely limited. The trench

warfare on the Western Front of World War I is widely regarded as the worst of static warfare bloodshed and brutality. The Cambrin trenches were typical in most regards and are thoroughly described in the text. Graves spent several months moving in and out of the Cambrin trenches. The Cambrin trenches were about six feet deep, fairly narrow, and full of mud, lice, and rats.

Cuinchy Brick Stack Trenches

The Cuinchy trenches were part of a vast network of static defensive trenches stretching across France during World War I. The trenches arose because rapid improvements in firepower had not been matched by improvements in mobility and communications; thus, mobile and offensive warfare were severely limited. The trench warfare on the Western Front of World War I is widely regarded as the worst of static warfare bloodshed and brutality. The Cuinchy trenches were atypical because the local water-table was only three feet below the surface. Thus, the trenches were dug down only a few feet and then fortified with packed earth walls to make up a full-height trench—a style of trench known as a 'high-command' trench. The area of Cuinchy was littered with huge brick stacks, apparently the remains of some type of extensive and massive brick structures with deep foundations; the trenches also were notably twisted and, at some points, were as close as thirty yards to the German trenches. As usual, rats, lice, mud, and corpses were a constant aspect of trench life at Cuinchy. The fighting around Cuinchy was always intense and casualties were very high. Graves spent several months moving in and out of the Cambrin trenches.

No Man's Land

No Man's Land was the appellation given to that area of the battlefield that existed between the English and German trenches. It was typically a field of destruction, primarily composed of mud, pieces of corpses, barbed wire, shell holes, and unexploded ordnance. Entering No Man's Land during the day was suicidal, but on a continual basis, small patrols of two to eight men would climb over the trench parapets at night and go exploring through No Man's Land. Missions included the rescue of wounded, the cutting of enemy barbed wire, and the scouting of enemy trenches and machine-gun emplacements. Nighttime small-unit firefights between patrols in No Man's Land were common.

Loop Hole

The static trenches of World War I were often very close to enemy fortified positions, and snipers—particularly German snipers—were common. To expose one's self, even for a brief moment, above the trench parapet was nearly suicidal. Yet the need to watch the enemy trenches and, if opportunity arose, fire at them was constant. One solution involved the emplacement of loop holes—thick plates of steel with a small viewing or firing aperture. Usually the aperture was shuttered so the loop hole could be entirely

closed when not in use, and the loop hole was always heavily camouflaged. Graves' unit periodically employed a so-called 'elephant gun' to shoot at and through the loop holes of German snipers; such a tactic was also used against the English.

Asphyxiating and Poison Gasses

Various poison gasses were widely used in World War I, and soldiers were particularly afraid of gas attacks that could be very debilitating or fatal. As early as 1914, the French and German army used various irritant and lachrymatory gasses that caused skin and eye irritation, and reduced victims' combat effectiveness. Lachrymatory gasses continued in use on both sides throughout the war, though other, lethal, chemicals largely replaced them. In 1915, the German army began to make large scale use of poison gas, using various tear gasses and, on several occasions, chlorine gas. The first large-scale use of poison gas by the British, largely ineffective, was at the Battle of Loos, where chlorine was utilized. In late 1915, both the French and German armies employed phosgene and mixtures of phosgene and chlorine. The most effective gas of World War I was mustard gas; it was introduced by Germany in mid-1917 and was thereafter widely used by all combatants. Various other poisonous gasses were used to lesser extents. Initial poison gasses were simply released from pressurized cylinders and the gas was carried on the wind. Later refinements included loading the gasses into special artillery shells, which could be targeted on enemy positions.

Even as poison gas weapons were refined and used in ever-greater quantities, their effectiveness diminished as counter-gas measures, largely gas-masks and chemical suits, were developed and soldiers were instructed in viable gas-avoidance techniques. Throughout the whole of World War I, Britain suffered an estimated 8,000 gas fatalities and somewhat less than 200,000 gas casualties.

Stokes Mortar, Rifle Grenade, Bayonet, 'Cosh', Etc.

The Western Front of World War I was dominated by a massive and static network of trenches that were dug into the rock and mud. The trenches offered the only available defense against massed machine guns and unending artillery barrages, and thus were the sites of nearly all of the combat between England and Germany.

After some spectacular failures in assault, the war consisted of a series of battles which were designed to win through a strategy of attrition; in other words, the English and French military leaders aimed to win the war by killing German soldiers and destroying German materiel faster than they could be replaced. Much of this fighting was confined to the trenches where pre-existing weapons of war were not generally suitable for use.

Soldiers quickly learned that rudimentary and improvised weapons were highly effective at close-quarters combat in the confined areas of the trenches. The German army came to prefer a bayonet or large knife as the personal weapon of choice, and the English soldiers settled on the cosh—essentially a weighted club. Thus, as the Germans slit throats, the English smashed skulls. Later in the war these improvised weapons were

augmented with weapons designed around static trench warfare such as the Stokes Mortar and rifle grenades. Both of these weapons projected a time-fused explosive device in a high parabolic arc that could reach from one's own trench across No Man's Land into the enemy's trench. For example, the Stokes Mortar could fire up to twenty shells a minute to a horizontal range of approximately 1,000 yards.

Battle of Loos

The Battle of Loos was one of the major offensives mounted in 1915 by the British. Graves describes the offensive in Chapter 15 and characterizes it as bungling and confused. It resulted in limited success, which the British could not exploit due to poor planning and shortages in materiel. During the attack, the British released chlorine gas with limited success—Graves describes how the gas drifted back into the British lines, causing confusion and numerous casualties. Graves dates the Battle of Loos as September 24 through October 3, 1915. At the end of the battle, the British had retreated to their starting positions. During the battle, the British suffered about 50,000 casualties among six divisions and the Germans approximately 25,000 among an unknown number of defending divisions.

Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest continual engagements of World War I, beginning in July of 1916, and continuing until mid-November of that year. Graves participated in the early stages of the English attack but was severely wounded in late July. During the battle, the British and French suffered over 600,000 casualties among ninety-nine divisions and the Germans over 400,000 among fifty divisions. On the first day alone, the British suffered nearly 60,000 casualties which included nearly 20,000 dead, resulting in the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army. Although the Battle of the Somme was a marginal strategic victory for the British and French Armies, the cost in terms of casualties and material was devastating.

Themes

Coming of Age

The early chapters of *Good-Bye to All That* are spent establishing the background from which Robert Graves came. His mother's family, the von Rankes, is described as having been pastors, historians, and intellectuals, whereas the Graves side of his forebears, well-established in Great Britain, were important Protestant figures: rectors, deans, and bishops. A child of such an austere background has his position in the world already established, with social and religious standards to be met. Life among members of his family, including both his immediate family and the extended families in Ireland and Germany that he visits, is a matter of quietly finding out what is expected of a Graves. What makes the book interesting in these early chapters is to see how young Robert Graves is able to cope with the expectations that are put upon him.

It is when he goes away to school that Graves starts to come into his own as a person. The first of his boarding schools meets with disapproval from Graves' father. This is one of the only times in the book that the father shows a distinct personality, and his decision, as an "education expert" (as the book makes sure to point out) seems to establish a strain of individualism in the son. Graves does not adapt to school well, forbidden by a doctor from participating in football and becoming the subject of bullying.

His own individual personality comes together at Charterhouse, the last boarding school he attends. He finds companionship in the school poetry club and self-esteem by becoming an accomplished boxer. He develops a sense of independence from the strict code of the school's caste system when he sees two other boys ignore the rules of appropriate dress without any consequence. When one of the instructors tells him to end his romantic relationship with Dick, he is not intimidated but calmly goes about blackmailing the teacher. In the final years before joining the army, he develops a sense of self-assurance that is independent of history and army rules so that he can report to the regimental tradition of the Royal Welch Fusiliers with a sense of detachment.

Fatalism

There is a sense of impending doom throughout Graves' stay in the army. This seems like an obvious turn of events, given the carnage and doom that surround a battle zone, but the structure of this memoir builds up his sense of fatalism even more than the war setting requires. Before being sent to France to fight in the trenches, while he is still guarding prisoners in England, the specter of his own death is already clearly present. He is well aware of the deaths of others who were in the exact same situation as he. He discusses his contemporaries being sent to France to fill the places of officers who have been killed and foreshadows the battle carnage with anecdotes about schoolmates that end with information about their eventual deaths in the war. He begins his account of being sent to war by saying that he first wrote that account two years after it happened,

when he was recovering from being wounded at the Somme. The first dead body that he sees in the war zone is a young man who has committed suicide, a chilling reminder of the psychological pressure that was to weigh on Graves (and a fact mirrored years later when the last body he sees in the war is also that of a suicide).

It is obvious to readers that Graves will, in fact, survive the war, not just because he is the one telling the story but because he is able to capture some of the soldier's sense of battlefield fatalism. One method that he uses is the erratic appearance of death. George Mallory, for instance, comes through the war unscathed only to die five years later on Mount Everest. Nancy's mother hangs on to life in order to see her son, Tony, on leave, and Graves adds in parentheses when the story is all through that Tony died two months later. On the other hand, there are cases like that of Siegfried Sassoon, who takes a bullet through the head with little more effect than if he had broken his leg.

The true fatalism in this story is that Graves will go mad after all that he has seen. The story slips from a sense of old English order to the chaos of war, (concurrent with the deterioration of Graves' mental stability). It seems that eventual madness, or at least a loss of a sense of reality and propriety, is the fate of anyone who does not die in battle. Even from the first, there is no pretense that the person telling this tale has come through the war without mental damage, and the final chapters, containing less and less detail, fall apart as the destruction that war foretold comes to pass.

Class Conflict

Almost any story about the British upper class in the early part of the twentieth century is bound to touch upon the discomfort with the class system that was growing at the time, and a war story is even more likely to recognize this problem because the structure of the military throws members of different classes into close proximity with each other. *Good-Bye to All That* starts by establishing Graves' social standing, and throughout the book, readers can see his faith in the class system slipping. In the second chapter, he broaches the subject of class with an interest that would continue through adulthood: "I have asked many of my acquaintances at what point in their childhood or adulthood they became class-conscious, but have never been given a satisfactory answer." His own story involves the children that he meets while in the hospital with a case of scarlet fever: in the hospital, they all wear standard-issue nightgowns, but outside it is evident from the different styles of clothes who is from which class. "I suddenly recognized with a shudder of gentility that there were two sorts of people□ ourselves and the lower classes." This episode presages the experience of war, in which uniformity of dress and behavior is stressed almost fanatically to erase individual identity.

Graves' wartime experience has the effect of teaching him respect for men of the lower classes and a corresponding dislike for those in fortunate positions higher up the social ladder. He is confident of his own ability as an officer and is not intimidated by the fact that he has to give commands to men twice his age, but at the same time he learns to be impressed with the natural intelligence of uneducated, poor men who are in the war

simply for the money. He draws an implied comparison between the army regulars who enlist and reenlist and those who join with schemes of working themselves up to high offices. After the war, trying to raise his family on a military pension, he has no qualms whatsoever about opening a store, an activity that another gentleman of his class might have felt beneath him.

War

The text's dominant theme—and the dominant theme of Graves' early life—was war. Not simply combat, though clearly a substantive element of war, but war. Graves' early school life was influenced by the anticipation of a war with Germany, which seemed inevitable and romantic. When that war erupted, along with countless other English lads, he volunteered for military service. Many would die, many would be physically maimed, and all would be mentally scarred by their experiences. Throughout the war Graves served in various capacities; from a junior platoon officer in the combat trenches to musketry training officer in rear areas to logistics coordinator at the home front. He was both combat participant, decorated and wounded, and later a convalescent veteran. His friends were killed, wounded, and damaged by their collective, generational, experiences. After the cessation of hostilities, the entire country was dominated by the artifacts of war; from the collapsing economy to the social upheaval to the momentary predilection for poetry with exposed the truth of the horrors of war—all too soon replaced by an insipid predilection of poetry exulting in the romantic glory of bloody victory.

Graves' autobiography is thus dismembered by war's effects even as his life was inextricably linked with his military service. Instead of moving directly from Charterhouse to Oxford, instead of pursing the normal development of the life of a gentleman, Graves instead became a soldier. Braver than some, more frightened than others, and yet one who survived although horrible wounded and psychologically maimed. Moreover, one with the literary skill and drive to set down his personal wartime experiences in a memoir that is both accessible and truthful. Graves' autobiography, like his early life, is dominated by World War I.

Education and Experience

Graves' pre- and post-war life focused on obtaining a formal education. His adolescent years were spent at Charterhouse School, selected by his father, and his university education was obtained at St. John's College, Oxford, where he completed a bachelor's degree in literature, though he took considerably longer to do so than most. This formal academic education was interrupted by Graves' military service. Like nearly all soldiers, Graves' military service began with basic education in the craft of war. He spent many days in seemingly pointless drill and musketry exercises that seemed completely divorced from any application in combat. Later, Graves would teach these same classes and argue with other instructors about the efficacy of drill and the rationale behind marching, musketry, and etiquette training. When Graves returned from the war and

completed his university education he worked—briefly—as a university professor of literature.

Like any competent instructor, Graves' education did not make him efficient or even capable of offering instruction. Instead, Graves was capable of instructing others because of his experience. For example, his basic training in infantry drill did not qualify him to teach infantry drill to others—it was his combat experience in the trenches that qualified him to instruct others. Graves indicates throughout the autobiography that education must be braided with experience; book learning is tempered by life-experience in an individual, leading to a balance that cannot be achieved in any other way. On the other hand, experience alone does not qualify one to instruct—the experience must be earned against a backdrop of education that allows an individual to perceive and appreciate a vision beyond the personal.

The End of the 19th Century

Any autobiography can be interesting if it is well written and concerns a person of merit. *Good-bye to All That* is more than an interesting autobiography. Not only was Robert Graves an excellent writer, he lived an interesting life full of experience, scholastic achievement, and academic successes. He was also an eyewitness to and participant in the single greatest historical event occurring at the boundary of the 19th and 20th centuries—World War I. The war was global in scale, with most of the military conflict taking place in Europe between 1914 and 1918. The Allied Powers, including France, Russia, the British Empire, Italy, and the United States of America, defeated the Central Powers, including Austria-Hungary, the German Empire, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. At the outbreak of war, the outcome was uncertain; at the war's conclusion, the Central Powers were shattered, their economies devastated, and their politics ruined. Many of the Central Powers ceased to exist as national entities, and many of the Allied Powers suffered irreversible declines in economics, politics, and global influence. Millions of people had been killed, many millions more physically maimed, and tens of millions more emotionally scarred. The war created a decisive break with the old world order that had emerged after the Napoleonic wars. The Treaty of Versailles was concluded on terms that virtually guaranteed future wars: new national identities emerged from the shattered remnants of the Central Powers, and the entire world suffered a sort of collective trauma. The optimism of the 19th century evaporated into a new social order and Europe began a period of prolonged mourning and reconstruction.

Robert Graves was insightful enough to realize that many of the social aspects of the war would far outlast the physical trauma. He returned from the front to an England that was in economic decline. Powerful elements in politics emerged with self-interest as their primary motivation. Pro-German and anti-French sentiment swept the countryside. Along with his personal innocence of childhood, Graves records the end of an age on the world stage. The end of the 19th Century—the end of all its promise—is chronicled in Graves' autobiography. The book is therefore of lasting social importance and has an impact and significance far beyond simply chronicling the life of one man.

Style

Chronicle

A chronicle is usually a record of events, in chronological order, without any commentary from the writer about them. For the most part, *Good-Bye to All That* takes the tone of a chronicle, with Graves presenting facts from his life dispassionately, as if he were a disinterested third party. The whole book is presented using the pronoun "I," so there is no pretense that the author is separate from the person whose life is recorded, but he does not give much sense of how he feels about the events recorded in the book. Even when he records events that obviously mean much to him, such as his relationships with Dick or his children or Laura Riding, he tells them as factually and unemotionally as possible, to let the details of the story speak for themselves. The fact that the information is presented chronologically, from his birth to the time of writing it, serves to assure readers that he does not want this story to be interesting because it is *his* story but that it is interesting in itself and does not have to be magnified with stylistic tricks.

Irony

Ironic language says one thing with words while conveying the opposite meaning with the way the words are arranged. In the case of *Good-Bye to All That*, irony is easy because the author's natural British English is elevated and formal, better designed for describing proper social behavior than for capturing the horrors of war. Graves makes use of the verbal skills of the English to point out the strangeness of mixing gentlemen of leisure with the crudeness of the battlefield. There is a politeness in referring to unintelligent students as "dull" in a sentence like "Many dull boys have brief brilliant military careers, particularly as air-fighters, becoming squadron and flight commanders," and this politeness thinly masks the implied fear that the fate of the war is in the hands of unqualified people whose careers, if surprisingly brilliant, are bound to be brief. The greatest moments of elevated language seeming out of place in the war are reserved for the officers whom he quotes directly, such as the doctor who patronizingly tells Siegfried Sassoon, while giving him a shot, "Toughest skin of the lot, but you're a tough character, I know." Readers can tell that Graves loves such inflated language□that as a gentleman he feels most comfortable with language that serves to cushion people from unpleasantness□ but they can also tell that he is aware of the irony of bringing genteel sensibilities into war.

Epilogue

One of the strangest things about *Good-Bye to All That* is the "Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding," which accompanied the 1929 edition but was removed from Graves' 1957 revision. The epilogue that was added in its place is not much to speak of, a quick

list of what happened over time to some of the people and places described in the book. The 1929 epilogue, however, shows Graves exercising his poetic power to evoke the sort of life he wanted to build for himself, even as he was dismissing the military and academic lives that he had tried and found wanting. The fact that it is an epilogue at all is artistically innovative: normally, a dedication like the one he gives to Riding would have come at the beginning of the book, but Graves breaks convention because, as he explains to her, he wants to think of the book as a beginning of his life with her, looking "forward from where I was instead of backward from where you are." The language that he uses in this epilogue is airy, mysterious, like a private language that he shares with her, as opposed to the thick, rich language that comprises the substance of the book. He repeats the phrase "After which" eight times, four of them as lonesome sentences in freestanding paragraphs, which gives the epilogue a thoughtful, almost inarticulate tone the voice of a serious artist. Riding was Graves' collaborator and his mentor in poetry, but she was also his lover, and this dedication, with its brief mention of her jump from a fourth-story window and her subsequent spinal disfigurement, tells the story behind the story, giving readers of the 1929 edition a glimpse at his frame of mind while he was writing the book. The Laura Riding epilogue was deleted from the 1957 edition, as were all mentions of Riding, apparently because they stopped seeing each other in 1940, but that does not diminish the understanding that this epilogue can offer about what *Good-Bye to All That* meant to Graves as he wrote it.

Perspective

Robert Graves, the author, presents his autobiography of experiences through early life to the age of about thirty-three. The text was written shortly after the latter events described but was heavily edited and revised some twenty-eight years later. Thus, the revised text demonstrates a maturity of years and a distance of vision and emotion, which are both convincing and authoritative. Graves was a professional author and poet and published dozens of books of non-fiction; the current text was his first major literary effort of non-fiction. The author participated in World War I as an infantryman on the Western Front. As a combat veteran who received severe wounds but survived, Graves' opinions are obviously convincing and his mastery of literary conventions is beyond reproach.

The text is directed at a literary audience. Graves expects the reader to possess at least a passing familiarity with literary figures of the inter-war era. Indeed, several chapters deal nearly exclusively with the description of events concerning a handful of literary figures such as Siegfried Sassoon, T. E. Lawrence, and Thomas Hardy. Nevertheless, one not familiar with the English poets of the 1920s can understand the book.

In some respects, the text is intended as an apology for Graves' voluntary expatriation from England. After witnessing first-hand the massive destruction and loss-of-life caused by England's participation in World War I, Graves returned home to discover a rising pro-German sentiment, social upheaval, and a collapsing economy. This was all bad enough, but the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919 and ratified by the newly-formed League of Nations in 1920, seemed to Graves to virtually guarantee a

future war which would once again envelop England. He thus anticipated that the vast expenditure in life and material was perhaps only a prelude to an even more-costly misadventure. History, unfortunately, was to prove Graves correct.

Tone

The text is related in the first-person point of view and is subjective; Graves relates his autobiography on his own terms. As such, events of importance in his personal opinion are given extensive treatment in the text. Graves does provide some objective information about individuals or particular events, but also provides his subjective interpretation alongside. The autobiography is simultaneously personal and informative.

Because of the nature of Graves' experiences in World War I, the autobiography had a markedly depressing tone. It is difficult to read of 10,000 young English soldiers loosing their life in a few hours without a sense of despondency and macabre fascination. Graves often manages to couple essentially horrifying experiences such as these with a sense of imperturbable humor. For example, he relates an anecdote about a newly-arriving officer who is nearly incapacitated by the sight of two rats quarreling about which shall make a meal of a severed human hand on the officer's assigned bunk. What makes the anecdote notably interesting is the casual humor that Graves manages to inject into the writing.

Later sections, post-War, of the book are generally softer in tone and easier to read. Graves typically treats friends with gentleness and glosses over the poor behaviors and boorish traits of others. He presents throughout the narrative several scenes that he labels 'caricature scenes'; they are, for Graves, moments in his life that are ridiculous and yet symbolic of a point in time. Graves' 'caricature scenes' usually feature the author in some outlandish but appropriate attire performing a function or duty that he finds both unpleasant and silly. Indeed, the gentle tone and constantly pleasant humor of the author, combined with the gritty realism of war, combine to make the book truly enjoyable and enduring.

Structure

The 347-page book, originally published in 1929, is divided into thirty-two enumerated chapters. The 1957 revised edition includes a brief prologue and epilogue, and includes various major and minor textual revisions. A concise summary of notable revisions is offered by the author in the added prologue.

The autobiography can be divided into four major sections. Chapters 1 and 2 detail the author's ancestors and provide basic demographic data about his birth and so forth. Chapters 3 through 9 present the author's early school life through to his graduation from Charterhouse. Chapters 10 through 26 form the bulk of the autobiography and are, by far, the most compelling reading. They detail the author's personal experiences as an infantryman in the trenches on the Western Front during World War I. The final section of the text, Chapters 27 through 32, detail the author's post-war life; he completed his

University education, married, fathered children, and pursued a career as a poet and writer.

In general, the text is presented in a chronological order and is very accessible. One notable exception to the chronology involves Chapters 24 and 25, which cover the same period as described in Chapter 23 but in greater detail. The writing is concise and professional and the text is enjoyable and informative. The autobiography is frequently cited as one of the best non-fiction books of the 20th century. The book, published in England, uses English spelling and phraseology throughout. Much of the slang used is now dated, as are also some typographical conventions employed.

Historical Context

Britain's Entry into World War I

The start of World War I in 1914 was a result of tangled diplomatic efforts and treaties that bound some countries to aid others, drawing most of Europe into a war that was only remotely relevant to its citizens. The main aggressors in the war were situated in central Europe, east of France, but the sprawl of alliances quickly spread it far from its center. As in most cases of war, the roots of the conflict can be traced to historical causes decades before the event itself. One of the most significant of these was the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, in which Germany gained a large part of land from France, the Alsace-Lorraine. Always wary that France would try to take this border area back, Germany formed treaties with Austro-Hungary and Russia, to come to each other's defense in times of war. The Russians soon became uninterested, especially when Great Britain helped them through an economic crisis, and so Russia, France, and Britain ended up in a new alliance. In 1908 the Austro-Hungarian empire annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, a situation of military occupation that many Bosnians resented.

The event that led to war was the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a member of a radical underground group while he was visiting Serbia. The Austro-Hungarian Empire held the Serbian government responsible for the assassination, and, when the strict demands that they made from Serbia were not met, they declared war. Russia moved its troops to the Austro-Hungarian border and to the German border; Germany declared war on Russia, and, to prevent French involvement, Germany attacked France, going through Belgium to come from a side that the French had not defended. Great Britain, in support of Belgium, declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.

Modern Warfare

The defense line along the French border spread, reaching from the North Sea to Switzerland, and was known as the Western Front (as opposed to the war along the Russian border, which was the Eastern Front). Both sides dug miles and miles of trenches so that their soldiers could move around underground, out of sight of the enemy. The area between the trenches, where a person walking could be easily seen and shot, was referred to as No-Man's Land. For the entire the war, the trench network stayed in place, keeping combatants near each other but hidden.

Because both sides were literally rooted in the ground, the war did not show much prospect of nearing any sort of progression, much less a resolution. Both sides tried to find an advantage that would shift the tide of battle over to their side. On April 22, 1915, at the French town of Ypres, the German army ushered in a new, modern age that changed the face of combat, and of modern sensibilities in general, by introducing the use of poisonous chlorine gas into the theatre of battle. Past civilizations had

considered gas, but the idea of spreading poison into the air where it would affect so many non-combatants was generally considered too barbaric, even in warfare. As recently as 1899, an International Declaration signed at The Hague addressed the issue specifically, recognizing that warring factions had considered gas since ancient times and had always found it to be too torturous to its victims and too uncontrollable to be considered a legitimate tool of war. The German gas attack at Ypres caught French and British troops by surprise, killing anywhere from a few hundred to fifty-nine thousand men. Over the whole war, chemical weapons are thought to have killed at least a million people. After Ypres, gas masks became standard issue for soldiers, although most masks, as Graves explains, offered minimal protection.

World War I also introduced new, portable, lightweight machine guns into the arsenal of war. Airplanes, which were a fairly new development since the Wright Brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903, were originally used for observation, but during the course of the war, pilots started to combine flight and machine gun technology to strafe enemy lines from above. Previous battle techniques of moving troops around in groups to shoot at one another gave way to destruction on a greater and greater scale.

Modernism

When the war was over, artists who had participated in it returned home with a different perspective on life than they had when leaving home. Many, like Graves, had been enthusiastic schoolboys, trained in literary traditions that spanned back to ancient Greece by schools that only admitted members of privileged social classes. In the war they saw death and mutilation affect anyone, rich or poor, crude or well-mannered, educated or ignorant. They learned that traditional expectations could not be counted on, that the rules of social behavior that had been taught to them could be erased within a couple of years. Artists and writers who had been in the war applied this lesson to their views of artistic tradition. "Modernism" is the word that is used to describe the change that swept over the arts in the 1920s. It was not a movement in the sense that members thought of themselves as belonging to something, but it was a philosophical outlook that came to dominate all of the arts from the end of World War I to the 1960s.

The modernist ethos, as summed up in an oft-quoted line by poet Ezra Pound, was to "Make it new." In fact, modernist art went to any extremes to defy tradition, to flaunt artistic freedom, to offend the expectations of audiences who thought that they knew what art was supposed to be. Audiences had a difficult time knowing how to deal with such forms of modernism as cubism in painting and imagism in poetry, because the works created under these beliefs had no point of reference outside of themselves and certainly no tradition. *Good-Bye to All That* is a modern piece in its rejection of traditional war narrative and its willingness to examine the dark, gruesome realities of war.

Critical Overview

Good-Bye to All That has been regarded, since its first publication in 1929, to be one of the most sincere books written about the Great War. Its sincerity, though, is an artistic sort of sincerity that was not always appreciated. As Steven Trout put it in an essay comparing Graves' form of "truth" with Daniel Defoe's nearly two hundred years earlier, critics judged books about the war "according to their perceivable 'facts'—whether a writer had accurately related the details of a particular battle, for example, or whether he had presented a supposedly isolated incident, such as drunkenness among officers, as a common occurrence." By these standards, *Good-Bye to All That* was a weak and deeply-flawed narrative. The 1920s were a time of artistic revival, though, with literary theorists recognizing the fact that pure objectivity is nearly impossible. The writer is not a camera, and a work is going to reflect its author's personality. Critics who did not look to Graves' book for facts about the war but for a sense of what it was like were impressed with what he managed to convey. Paul O'Prey wrote of Graves' using his writing as "a form of therapy" after the war, and the critics who recognized this element in the disjointed style of *Good-Bye to All That* knew how it helped make the soldiers' experience more vivid.

In fact, the public taste for literature expanded so much curing the 1920s that Graves' erratic structure was not just good for intellectuals and artistic theorists. According to Wolfgang Saxon's obituary when Graves died, the book "made an enormous impact on a reading public that was just beginning to come to grips with the realities of the war." Richard Pearson credited the book with creating Graves' "reputation as a writer of the first rank."

Graves continued his literary career for more than fifty years after publishing *Good-Bye to All That*. He considered himself primarily a poet, and those who took him seriously as a writer thought of him that way too: "Graves is first and last a poet," wrote Randall Jarrell, himself a poet of some repute, "in between, he is Graves." Jack Skow gave an even more lighthearted dismissal of Graves' non-poetic career in *Esquire* when he credited him with being "famous as a poet and as a literary buccaneer." Though most critics acknowledge that Graves is known to the public for his autobiography and his novels, they have generally been willing to take him at his word, while respecting his prose works, and regard him primarily as a poet.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of creative writing at several colleges in Illinois. In this essay, he looks at Good-Bye to All That *as a satire of warfare and British formality.*

We all know that there is nothing funny about war and that death brings nothing but sorrow, especially when it comes to young men who are struggling to make the world a better place. On the other hand, even though we know this so well, there is no denying that the world has a rich tradition of war comedies. Robert Graves' autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That*, falls into this comedy tradition, although contemporary readers never seem to get the joke.

Comedy works best when it has some serious-minded opposition trying to suppress it. Background circumstances dictate how much an act can make people chuckle: the coarsest group of oil-riggers would turn away embarrassed when one of their group tries making a vulgar sound for a laugh, but the same sound in the hushed sanctity of a cathedral can make a bishop burst out in a chuckle.

A satire, if it is going to work at all, has to look reasonably like the thing that it is satirizing in order to draw attention to the flaws of the original. Silliness itself is not satire; a satiric work needs to surround itself with a context that is to be its victim.

The strongest aspect of *Good-Bye to All That* is its ability to satirize the situations that Graves found himself in during the early parts of his life, before he could arrange his life as he wanted it. Unfortunately, that element is the last one that contemporary students grasp. Because they are seldom very aware of what was going on in Graves' time, readers are faced with understanding his world through the events depicted in the book. Many readers take the book as a history lesson about World War I, reading it for information rather than style. The problem with this is that satirists feel no responsibility for telling the truth, or even for adhering strictly to any standard of honesty, just as long as they can draw attention to the dishonesty of others. Graves' book is useful as a history lesson only to the extent that a comedy skit from television can tell us something about how people of its time felt about a subject, but it is unreliable about what they actually did.

For today's student, there is little way of discerning the satiric element of the work just from looking at the text. The somber elements of a serious war story are all there, from sudden bloody deaths to slow and pointless losses, from sadness to madness, all seeming to be ennobled by the author's urge to write poetry, which itself is, today, taken to mark one a serious thinker. The separate elements each sound serious enough, as does Graves' elevated, Edwardian-era diction. The book has all of the elements that readers are used to seeing from important, weighty writers, and that apparent severity is what makes it able to make fun of other war stories.

The book does have its farcical element, which is an aspect that few readers fail to notice. There is no shortage of self-important officials where wise father figures should

be, or of bullies in place of comrades, or dumb educators, sneaky bureaucrats, cruel lovers, and even inarticulate poets. The least one can say is that it is a war story spiced with the satirical parts running through it. It is only when one buckles down to the task of appreciating the book's tone in every little place□a task that most students never get around to, as most of them are kept busy simply trying to figure out what is going on□that it becomes clear just how little this book is serious about *anything*. Graves delivers all of the details with a monotonous deadpan, as if all were equally important, from the snipers to schoolboys' uniforms. Without variance of tone to guide them, it is difficult for readers to know which is more important□the fact that trout come out of an underground stream near a German castle "quite white from the darkness, enormous of size and stone-blind " or that Siegfried Sassoon left the army after being shot through the head. The reason that old men often wink when they tell tall tales to children is to let them know that they are not serious; Graves' prose never winks.

There are dozens of episodes in the book that can be seen as setting the satiric tone, most of them taking place away from the war zone, in England. It almost goes without saying that the vague bumbling of everyday life will always seem meaningless when held up to the hideous rigors of the battlefield, which is why traumatized soldiers have such a hard time readjusting to peace. Graves establishes the pointlessness of home life so subtly that readers are, unfortunately, less likely to pick up on the satiric tone of his war descriptions than they would be if the book were about the trenches alone. The beginning ten chapters, taking the story up to the point at which war is declared, are generally forgotten in summaries of the book, considered to be just necessary background but not very important to the main focus, which is the war and its effects. They serve a much more important function, though, in adjusting readers' expectations. The placid social backgrounds of the English and German households of Graves' youth and the preparatory schools' obsession for making all things seem important all hope to lower readers' expectation, so that nothing said during the war, even in the midst of death, seems too surprising. The war stories that Graves tells lose their impact because the overall presentation is so droll.

The place where readers can check whether Graves' tone is actually satirical, and whether this book of horrors is actually being played as a comedy, is in the pieces from other writers that he includes. When other voices are brought in, there is some perspective, allowing an opportunity to tell whether the narrative is progressing straight, crooked, or in circles. For instance, he writes of the inanity of the school system with a well-chosen example from a textbook, in which the question, "Why were the Britons so called?" is answered with "Because they painted themselves blue." Readers can clearly see the fun in pointing out the foolishness involved, if such an exchange ever did appear in any textbook. (Many critics, such as Paul Fussell, have cast severe doubts on Graves' factual accuracy.) Less easy for readers to spot if they are not on the lookout for irony is the juxtaposition of two concepts, just a few lines after the "Briton" example, that do not belong together but that are given to the reader as simple natural facts. Graves tells of how poorly he fit in at King's College, Wimbledon: "I was just seven, the youngest boy there, and they went up to nineteen. I was taken away after a couple of terms because I was found to be using naughty words." It is not unusual for a seven-year-old to be punished at school for obscene language, but implied in the way this is

phrased is that he was considered a threat to the older boys, by a school system that considered the word, not the child.

Once readers have become accustomed to being told outrageous facts in this dry tone, Graves can get away with practically anything. Some of his war stories are just obvious tall tales. He explains, for instance, about a corpse with spread arms being kept in the trench, with soldiers squeezing past him or shaking his hand. The story is gruesomely funny, but it makes no sense: why would they keep a corpse in the trench? to protect it from snipers? Another example, which Fussell draws attention to, is the obvious canard of Burford and Bumford, age sixty-three and fifteen, respectively, who serve in the same battalion. Graves gives us explicit details about their backgrounds and situations, but he does so for the sheer love of storytelling. He cannot for a moment expect readers to believe that such a pair actually existed, with their perfectly polar situations and symmetrical names. Throughout the book, there are examples like this of outlandish fabrication, and once one begins unraveling the validity of the most broadly humorous stories, it becomes more and more evident that mockery is the book's main thrust.

Satire usually loses its punch as time passes; much depends upon readers' knowledge of the events being satirized and on the author's ability to play off prevailing attitudes. In the case of *Good-Bye to All That*, Graves worked mainly with a subject□war□that will always be somewhat of a self-contradiction as the most uncivil of civilization's pursuits. The problem modern readers have with the book is that they too often swallow his outrageous statements hook, line, and sinker, in a way that Graves surely never intended. The book is not meant to be misleading but enlightening, but its light can only shine if readers are willing to admit that horror can be attacked with humor.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *Good-Bye to All That*, in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Fussell examines human caricature in Good-Bye to All That, *asserting that "ninety percent of the characters" are "knaves" or ' fools."*

Of all memoirs of the war, the "stagiest" is Robert Graves's *Good-bye to All That*, published first in 1929 but extensively rewritten for its reissue in 1957. Like James Boswell, who wrote in his journal (October 12, 1780), "I told Erskine I was to write Dr. Johnson's life in scenes," Graves might have said in 1929 that it was "in scenes" that he was going to write of the front-line war. And working up his memories into a mode of theater, Graves eschewed tragedy and melodrama in favor of farce and comedy, as if anticipating Friedrich Dürrenmatt's observation of 1954 that "comedy alone is suitable for us," because "tragedy presupposes guilt, despair, moderation, lucidity, vision, a sense of responsibility," none of which we have got:

In the Punch-and-Judy show of our century ... there are no more guilty and also, no responsible men. It is always, "We couldn't help it" and "We didn't really want that to happen." And indeed, things happen without anyone in particular being responsible for them. Everything is dragged along and everyone gets caught somewhere in the sweep of events. We are all collectively guilty, collectively bogged down in the sins of our fathers and of our forefathers ... That is our misfortune, but not our guilt... Comedy alone is suitable for us.

And in Graves's view, not just comedy: something close to Comedy of Humors, a mode to which he is invited by the palpable character conventions of the army, with its system of ranks, its externalization of personality, its impatience with ambiguity or subtlety, and its arcana of conventional "duties" with their invariable attendant gestures and "lines." "Graves," says Randall Jarrell, "is the true heir of Ben Jonson." Luxuriating in character types, Graves has said few things more revealing about his art than this: "There is a fat boy in every school (even if he is not really very fat), and a funny-man in every barrack-room (even if he is not really very funny).

In considering *Good-bye to All That*, it is well to clear up immediately the question of its relation to "fact." J. M. Cohen is not the only critic to err badly by speaking of the book as "harshly actual" and by saying, "It is the work of a man who is not trying to create an effect." Rather than calling it "a direct and factual autobiography," Cohen would have done better to apply to it the term he attaches to Graves's Claudius novels. They are, he says, "comedies of evil." Those who mistake *Good-bye to All That* for a documentary autobiography (Cohen praises its "accurate documentation") should find instructive Grave's s essay "P.S. to *Good-bye to All That*," published two years after the book appeared. Confessing that he wrote the book to make "a lump of money" (which he did□he was able to set himself up in Majorca on the royalties), he enumerates the obligatory "ingredients" of a popular memoir:

I have more or less deliberately mixed in all the ingredients that I know are mixed into other popular books. For instance, while I was writing, I reminded myself that people like

reading about food and drink, so I searched my memory for the meals that have had significance in my life and put them down. And they like reading about murders, so I was careful not to leave out any of the six or seven that I could tell about. Ghosts, of course. There must, in every book of this sort, be at least one ghost story with a possible explanation, and one without any explanation, except that it was a ghost. I put in three or four ghosts that I remembered.And kings ... People also like reading about other people's mothers ... And they like hearing about T. E. Lawrence, because he is supposed to be a mystery man... And, of course, the Prince of Wales.People like reading about poets. I put in a lot of poets ... Then, of course, Prime Ministers ... A little foreign travel is usually needed; I hadn't done much of this, but I made the most of what I had. Sport is essential... Other subjects of interest that could not be neglected were school episodes, love affairs (regular and irregular), wounds, weddings, religious doubts, methods of bringing up children, severe illnesses, suicides. But the best bet of all is battles, and I had been in two quite good ones□the first conveniently enough a failure, though set off by extreme heroism, the second a success, though a little clouded by irresolution.So it was easy to write a book that would interest everybody ... And it was already roughly organized in my mind in the form of a number of short stories, which is the way that people find it easiest to be interested in the things that interest them. They like what they call "situations."

Furthermore, "the most painful chapters have to be the jokiest." Add "the best bet of all is battles" to "the most painful chapters have to be the jokiest" and divide by the idea of "situations" and you have the formula for Graves's kind of farce. The more closely we attend to Graves's theory and practice, the more we can appreciate the generic terminology used by "Odo Stevens," in Anthony Powell's *Temporary Kings*. Stevens was one who "hovered about on the outskirts of the literary world, writing an occasional article, reviewing an occasional book ... [He] had never repeated the success of *Sad Majors*, a work distinguished, in its way, among examples of what its author called 'that dicey art-form, the war reminiscence.'"

"Anything processed by memory is fiction;" as the novelist Wright Morris has perceived. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes puts it this way: "Imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers considerations hath divers names." And in *An Apology for Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney apprehends the "poetic"□that is, fictional□element not just in all "history" but specifically in history touching on wars and battles:

Even historiographers (although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads) have been glad to borrow both fashion and perchance weight of poets ... Herodotus... and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles, which no man could affirm, or ... long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.

We expect a memoir dealing with a great historical event to "dramatize" things. We have seen Sassoon's memoir doing just that. But with Graves we have to expect it more than with others, for he is "first and last," as Jarrell sees, "a poet: in between he is a Graves." A poet, we remember Aristotle saying, is one who has mastered the art of telling lies

successfully, that is, dramatically, interestingly. And what is a Graves? A Graves is a tongue-in-cheek neurasthenic farceur whose material is "facts." Hear him on what happens to the wives of brilliant mathematicians:

Mathematic genius is ... notoriously short-lasting□ it reaches a peak at the age of about twenty-three and then declines□and is as a rule colored by persistent emotional adolescence. Since advanced mathematicians are too easily enticed into the grey political underworld of nuclear physics, a remarkably high percentage of mental breakdowns among their wives is everywhere noted.

Asked by a television interviewer whether his view that homosexuality is caused by the excessive drinking of milk is "based on intuition or on what we would call scientific observation," Graves replies: "On objective reasoning." His "objective reasoning" here is as gratuitously outrageous as the anthropological scholarship of *The White Goddess*, the literary scholarship of his translation (with Omar Ali Shah) of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, or the preposterous etymological arguments with which he peppers his essays.

But to put it so solemnly is to risk falling into Graves's trap. It is to ignore the delightful impetuosity, the mastery, the throw-away fun of it all Graves is a joker, a manic illusionist, whether gaily constructing flamboyant fictional anthropology, rewriting ancient "history," flourishing erroneous or irrelevant etymology, overemphasizing the importance of "Welsh verse theory," or transforming the White Goddess from a psychological metaphor into a virtual anthropological "fact." And the more doubtful his assertions grow, the more likely he is to modify them with adverbs like *clearly* or *obviously*. Being "a Graves" is a way of being scandalously "Celtish" (at school "I always claimed to be Irish," he says in *Good-bye to All That*"). It is a way□ perhaps the only way left□of rebelling against the positivistic pretensions of non-Celts and satirizing the preposterous scientism of the twentieth century. His enemies are always the same: solemnity, certainty, complacency, pomposity, cruelty. And it was the Great War that brought them to his attention.

Actually, any man with some experience and a bent toward the literal can easily catch Graves out in his fictions and exaggerations. The unsophisticated George Coppard explodes one of the melodramatic facilities in *Good-bye to All That* with simple common sense. Graves asserts□it is a popular cynical vignette□that machine-gun crews often fired off several belts without pause to heat the water in the cooling-jacket for making tea. Amusing but highly unlikely□Coppard quietly notes that no one wants tea laced with machine oil. Another of Graves's machine-gun anecdotes collapses as "fact" upon inquiry. At one point he says,

There was a daily exchange of courtesies between our machine-guns and the Germans' at stand-to; by removing cartridges from the ammunition belt one could rap out the rhythm of the familiar prostitutes' call: "MEET me DOWN in PICC-a-DILL-Y," to which the Germans would reply, though in slower tempo, because our guns were faster than theirs: "YES, with-OUT my DRAWERS ON!"

Very nice. But the fact is that if you remove cartridges from the belt the gun stops working when the empty space encounters the firing mechanism. (These stories are like the popular legend that in a firing squad one man is given a rifle secretly loaded with a blank so that no member of the squad can be certain that he has fired one of the fatal bullets. But attractive as this is as melodrama, there's something wrong with it: the rifle containing the blank is the only one that will not recoil when fired, with the result that every man on the squad will end by knowing anyway. The story won't do.)

But we are in no danger of being misled as long as we perceive that *Good-bye to All That* is no more "a direct and factual autobiography" than Sassoon's memoirs. It is rather a satire, built out of anecdotes heavily influenced by the techniques of stage comedy. What Thomas Paine says of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* applies exactly: Burke, says Paine, makes "the whole machinery bend to produce a stage effect." No one has ever denied the brilliance of *Good-bye to All That*, and no one has ever been bored by it. Its brilliance and compelling energy reside in its structural invention and in its perpetual resourcefulness in imposing the patterns of farce and comedy onto the blank horrors or meaningless vacancies of experience. If it really were a documentary transcription of the actual, it would be worth very little, and would surely not be, as it is, infinitely rereadable. It is valuable just because it is not true in that way. Graves calls on paradox to suggest the way it is true:

The memoirs of a man who went through some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities. High-explosive barrages will make a temporary liar or visionary of anyone; the old trench-mind is at work in all over-estimation of casualties, "unnecessary" dwelling on horrors, mixing of dates and confusion between trench rumors and scenes actually witnessed.

In recovering "the old [theatrical] trench-mind" for the purposes of writing the book, Graves has performed a triumph of personal show business.

He was in an especially rebellious mood when he dashed off the book in eight weeks during May, June, and July of 1929 and sent the manuscript to Jonathan Cape. His marriage with Nancy Nicolson had just come apart, he owed money, he had quarreled with most of his friends, his view of English society had become grossly contemptuous, and he was still ridden by his wartime neurasthenia, which manifested itself in frequent bursts of tears and bouts of twitching. His task as he wrote was to make money by interesting an audience he despised and proposed never to see again the minute he was finished. Relief at having done with them all is the emotion that finally works itself loose from the black humor which dominates most of the book.

The first nine chapters detail his prewar life. He was, he says, a perceptive, satiric, skeptical infant, from the outset an accurate appraiser of knaves and fools, including Swinburne, "an inveterate pram-stopper and patter and kisser." His Scotch-Irish father was a school inspector, but also a composer, collector, and anthologist of Anglo-Irish songs. In addition, he was a popular dramatist, one of whose plays ran for two hundred performances. His first wife, who was Irish, died after bearing five children, and he then married a German woman who bore him five more, including Robert, born in 1895. The

family lived at Wimbledon in ample, literate middle-class style while Robert attended a succession of preparatory schools and spent summers roaming through the romantic castles near Munich belonging to relatives of his mother's. At fourteen he entered Charterhouse School, which he despised. He was humiliated and bullied, and saved himself only by taking up boxing. He mitigated his loneliness by falling in love with a younger boy, "exceptionally intelligent and fine-spirited. Call him Dick." (The name Dick was becoming conventional for this sort of thing. Sassoon' s *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, with its "Dick Tiltwood," had appeared a year before Graves wrote this.) Graves's devotion to Dick and his friendship with one of the masters, the mountaineer George Mallory, were about all he enjoyed at Charterhouse. Before he could go on to Oxford, the war began, and he enlisted immediately. He was nineteen.

In this nine-chapter prologue Graves practices and perfects the form of the short theatrical anecdote or sketch which he will proceed to impose upon the forthcoming matter offered by the war. His wry anecdotes take the shape of virtual playlets, or, as he is fond of calling them, especially when he is one of the players, "caricature scenes." They are "theatrical" because they present character types entirely externally, the way an audience would see them. The audience is not vouchsafed what they are or what they think and feel or what they were last Thursday, but only visible or audible signs of what they do and say, how they dress and stand or sit or move or gesture. Their remarks are not paraphrased or rendered in indirect discourse: they are presented in dialogue. Many of these playlets have all the black-and-white immediacy of cartoons with captions, and, indeed, Graves's skill at writing pithy "lines" will suggest the dynamics of the standard two-line caption under a cartoon in *Punch*. It is a model that is always before him. In 1955, ridiculing Yeats' s shrewd irrationalism, he dramatizes Yeats' s reliance on his wife as a medium whose maunderings can be turned into salable poems:

UNDERGRADUATE: Have you written any poems, recently, Sir?YEATS: No, my wife has been feeling poorly and disinclined.

One can see it as on a stage and hear the burst of laughter at the end.

Whatever material they embody, the effect of Graves's "caricature scenes" is farcical, and they rely on a number of techniques associated with comic writing for the theater. Some depend upon astonishing coincidences. Some deploy the device of climactic multiple endings□the audience thinks the joke is over and is then given an additional one or sometimes two even funnier lines. Some expose the disparity between the expected and the actual. Some offer bizarre characters borrowed from what would seem to be a freak show. Some, like sketches in music hall, present comic encounters between representatives of disparate social classes. Some involve the main character's not knowing some crucial fact. And some, more melodramatic, depict rescues or salvations in the nick of time. All operate by offering the audience a succession of little ironies and surprises. By the time we have reached the fifth paragraph of *Good-bye to All That*, we are convinced that we are in the hands of a master showman who is not going to let us down. "My best comic turn," says the author, "is a double-jointed pelvis. I can sit on a table and rap like the Fox sisters with it." Indeed, so extraordinary is this

puppet master that, as he says proudly, "I do not carry a watch because I always magnetize the main-spring."

Graves had been in the Officers Training Corps at Charterhouse, and when he presented himself at the regimental depot of the Royal Welch Fusiliers at Wrexham, he was commissioned after a few weeks' training. His account of his early days in the Army is full of caricature scenes. One of the funniest, the grave judicial inquiry into the "nuisance" deposited by Private Davies on the barrack square, Graves introduced into the book only in 1957. In 1929 he said, "I have an accurate record of the trial, but my publishers advise me not to give it here." It is a perfect Jonsonian comic scene, each man in his humor, and it is ready to be staged by a cast of six:

SERGEANT-MAJOR (*offstage*): Now, then, you 99 Davies, "F" Company, cap off, as you were, cap off, as you were, cap off! That's better. Escort and prisoner, right *turn*! Quick *march*! Right wheel! (*Onstage*) Left wheel! Mark time! Escort and prisoner, *halt*! Left *turn*!
COLONEL: Read the charge,Sergeant-Major.
SERGEANT-MAJOR: No. 99 Pte. W. Davies, "F" Company, at Wrexham on 20th August: improper conduct. Committing a nuisance on the barrack square. Witness: Sergeant Timmins, Corporal Jones.
COLONEL: Sergeant Timmins, your evidence.
SERGEANT TIMMINS: Sir, on the said date about two p.m., I was hacting Horderly Sar'nt. Corporal Jones reported the nuisance to me. I hinspected it. It was the prisoner's, Sir.
COLONEL: Corporal Jones! Your evidence.
CORPORAL JONES: Sir, on the said date I was crossing the barrack square, when I saw prisoner in a sitting posture. He was committing excreta, Sir. I took his name and reported to the orderly-sergeant, Sir.
COLONEL: Well, Private Davies, what have you to say for yourself?
99 DAVIES (*in a nervous sing-song*): Sir, I came over queer all of a sudden, Sir. I haad the diarrhoeas terrible baad. I haad to do it, Sir.
COLONEL: But, my good man, the latrine was only a few yards away. 99 DAVIES: Colonel, Sir, you caan't stop nature!
SERGEANT-MAJOR: Don't answer an officer like that! (*Pause*)
SERGEANT TIMMINS (*coughs*): Sir? COLONEL: Yes, Sergeant Timmins?
SERGEANT TIMMINS: Sir, I had occasion to hexamine the nuisance, Sir, *and it was done with a heffort, Sir!*
COLONEL: Do you take my punishment, Private Davies?
99 DAVIES: Yes, Colonel, Sir.
COLONEL: You have done a very dirty act, and disgraced the regiment and your comrades. I shall make an example of you. Ten days' detention.
SERGEANT-MAJOR: Escort and prisoner, left *turn*! Quick *march*! Left wheel! (*Offstage*): Escort and prisoner, *halt*! Cap on! March him off to the Guard Room. Get ready the next case!

Despite such moments, Graves was proud to be in so self-respecting a regiment as the Royal Welch Fusiliers, a mark of whose distinction was the "flash" a fanlike cluster of five black ribbons attached to the back of the tunic collar. The Army Council had some doubts about permitting the regiment this irregular privilege, but the Royal Welch resisted all attempts to take it away. Graves's pride in it is enacted in this little bit of theater, warmly sentimental this time, set in Buckingham Palace:

Once, in 1917, when an officer of my company went to be decorated with the Military Cross at Buckingham Palace, King George, as Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment, showed a personal interest in the flash ... The King gave him the order "About turn!," for a look at the flash, and the "About turn!" again. "Good," he said, "You're still wearing it, I see," and then, in a stage whisper: "Don't ever let anyone take it from you!"

That is typical of Graves's theatrical method: the scene is a conventional, almost ritual confrontation between character types representative of widely disparate classes who are presented externally by their physical presence and their dialogue. We feel that the King would not be playing the scene properly if his whisper were anything but a *stage-whisper*: after all, the audience wants to hear what he's saying.

Posted to France as a replacement officer in the spring of 1915, Graves disgustedly finds himself assigned to the sad and battered Welsh Regiment, consisting largely of poorly trained scourings and leavings. His platoon includes a man named Burford who is sixty-three years old, and another, Bumford, aged fifteen. These two draw together with a theatrical symmetry which might be predicted from the similarity of their names: "Old Burford, who is so old that he refuses to sleep with the other men of the platoon, has found a private doss in an out-building among some farm tools ... Young Bumford is the only man he'll talk to." We are expected to credit this entirely traditional symmetrical arrangement with the same willing suspension of disbelief which enables us to enjoy the following traditional turn. Two men appear before the adjutant and report that they've just shot their company sergeant major.

The Adjutant said: "Good heavens, how did that happen?"
"It was an accident, Sir."
"What do you mean, you damn fools? Did you mistake him for a spy?"
"No, Sir, we mistook him for our platoon sergeant."
Punch again.

After some months in and out of the line near Béthune, Graves finally joins the Second Battalion of his own regiment near Laventie, and his pride in it suffers a sad blow. He is horrified to find the senior regular officers bullies who forbid the temporary subalterns, or "warts," whiskey in the mess and ignore them socially for a period of six months except to rag and insult them whenever possible. He is humiliated by the colonel, the second-in-command, and the adjutant just as he had been humiliated by the "Bloods" at Charterhouse. But he finds one man to respect, Captain Thomas, his company commander. It is he who must direct the company's part in a preposterous attack, which begins as farce and ends as Grand Guignol.

The operation order Thomas brings from battalion headquarters is ridiculously optimistic, and as he reads it off, Graves and his fellow officers including a subaltern called "The Actor"can't help laughing.

"What's up?" asked Thomas irritably.
The Actor giggled: "Who in God's name is responsible for this little effort?"
"Don't know," Thomas said. "Probably Paul the Pimp, or someone like that." (Paul the Pimp was a captain on the Divisional Staff, young, inexperienced, and much disliked. He "wore red tabs upon his chest, And even on his undervest.")

Thomas reveals that their attack is to be only a diversion to distract the enemy while the real attack takes place well to the right.

"Personally, I don't give a damn either way. We'll get killed whatever happens."
We all laughed.

The attack is to be preceded by a forty-minute discharge of gas from cylinders in the trenches. For security reasons the gas is euphemized as "the accessory." When it is discovered that the management of the gas is in the hands of a gas company officered by chemistry dons from London University, morale hits a comic rock-bottom. "Of course they'll bungle it," says Thomas. "How could they do anything else?" Not only is the gas bungled: everything goes wrong. The storeman stumbles and spills all the rum in the trench just before the company goes over; the new type of grenade won't work in the dampness; the colonel departs for the rear with a slight cut on his hand; a crucial German machine gun is left undestroyed; the German artillery has the whole exercise taped. The gas is supposed to be blown across by favorable winds. When the great moment proves entirely calm, the gas company sends back the message "Dead calm. Impossible discharge accessory," only to be ordered by the staff, who like characters in farce are entirely obsessed, mechanical, and unbending: "Accessory to be discharged at all costs." The gas, finally discharged after the discovery that most of the wrenches for releasing it won't fit, drifts out and then settles back into the British trenches. Men are going over and rapidly coming back, and we hear comically contradictory crowd noises: "'Come on! "Get back, you bastards! "Gas turning on us! "Keep your heads, you men! "Back like hell, boys! "Whose orders? "What's happening? "Gas! "Back! "Come on! "Gas! "Back!"' A "bloody balls-up" is what the troops called it. Historians call it the Battle of Loos.

(A word about the rhetoric of "Impossible discharge accessory." That message falls into the category of Cablegram Humor, a staple of Victorian and Georgian comedy. Graves loves it. Compare his 1957 version of Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" in Cable-ese: "SOLITARY HIGHLAND LASS REAPING BINDING GRAIN STOP MELANCHOLY SONG OVERFLOWS PROFOUND VALE.")

As the attack proceeds, farce gradually modulates to something more serious but no less theatrical. One platoon officer, attacking the untouched German machine gun in short rushes, "jumped up from his shell-hole, waved and signalled 'Forward!'"

Nobody stirred.
He shouted: "You bloody cowards, are you leaving me to go on alone?"
His platoon-sergeant, groaning with a broken shoulder, gasped: "Not cowards, Sir. Willing enough. But they're all f□ ing dead." The ... machine-gun, traversing, had caught them as they rose to the whistle.

At the end of the attack Graves and the Actor were the only officers left in the company.

After this, "a black depression held me," Graves says. And his worsening condition finds its correlative in the collapse of his ideal image of Dick, at home. The news reaches him that sixteen-year-old Dick has made "a certain proposal" to a Canadian corporal stationed near Charterhouse and has been arrested and bound over for psychiatric treatment. "This news," says Graves, "nearly finished me. I decided that Dick had been driven out of his mind by the War ... with so much slaughter about, it would be easy to think of him as dead." (The real Dick, by the way, was finally "cured" by Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, Sassoon's and Owen's alienist at Craiglockhart.) This whole matter of Dick and his metamorphosis from what Graves calls a "pseudo-homosexual" into a real one lies at the heart of *Good-bye to All That*. Its importance was clearer in the first edition, where Graves says,

In English preparatory and public schools romance is necessarily homo-sexual. The opposite sex is despised and hated, treated as something obscene. Many boys never recover from this perversion. I only recovered by a shock at the age of twenty-one. For every one born homo-sexual there are at least ten permanent pseudo-homo-sexuals made by the public school system. And nine of these ten are as honorably chaste and sentimental as I was.

In 1957 Graves deleted one sentence: "I only recovered by a shock at the age of twenty-one." The shock was his discovery that he had been deceived by pleasant appearances: a relation he had thought beneficially sentimental now revealed itself to have been instinct with disaster. It was like the summer of 1914. It makes a telling parallel with Graves's discovery□"Never such innocence again"□that the Second Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, a few company-grade officers and men excepted, is a collection of bullies, knaves, cowards, and fools.

He is delighted to find himself transferred to the more humane First Battalion in November 1915. There he meets Sassoon, as well as Sassoon's "Dick," Lieutenant David Thomas. The three become inseparable friends while the battalion begins its long rehearsals for the breakout and open warfare it assumes will follow the Somme attack in the spring. Life in billets offers opportunities for numerous caricature scenes. One takes place in the theaterlike setting of a disused French schoolroom, where the officers of the battalion are addressed by their furious colonel. He has noticed slackness, he says, and

as he designates an instance of it, he falls naturally into the Graves mode of theatrical anecdote, complete with a consciousness of social distinctions and the "lines" appropriate to different social players:

I have here principally to tell you of a very disagreeable occurrence. As I left my Orderly Room this morning, I came upon a group of soldiers ... One of these soldiers was in conversation with a lance corporal. You may not believe me, but it is a fact that he addressed the corporal by his Christian name: *he called him Jack!* And the corporal made no protest... Naturally, I put the corporal under arrest... I reduced him to the ranks, and awarded the man Field Punishment for using insubordinate language to an N.C.O.

Listening to this as a member of the "audience," Graves is aware of the "part" he himself is playing in this absurd costume drama:

Myself in faultless khaki with highly polished buttons and belt, revolver at hip, whistle on cord, delicate moustache on upper lip, and stern endeavor a-glint in either eye, pretending to be a Regular Army captain.

But "in real life" he is something quite different, "crushed into that inky desk-bench like an overgrown school-boy."

Back in the line again in March 1916, the battalion has three officers killed in one night, including David Thomas. "My breaking-point was near now," Graves recognizes, and he speculates on the way his nervous collapse, when it comes, will look to spectators. His view of it is typically externalized, the telltale gestures visualized as if beheld by someone watching a character on stage: "It would be a general nervous collapse, with tears and twitchings and dirtied trousers; I had seen cases like that." His transfer back to the hated Second Battalion is hardly a happy omen, and in early July 1916, he finds himself in incredible circumstances near High Wood on the Somme. On July 20, his luck runs out: a German shell goes off close behind him, and a shell fragment hits him in the back, going right through his lung. He is in such bad shape at the dressing-station that his colonel, assuming he's dying, kindly writes his parents, informing them that he has gone. As a result his name appears in the official casualty list: he has "Died of Wounds."

A few days later Graves manages to write home and assure his parents that he is going to recover. There is some discrepancy about dates here: for symbolic and artistic reasons, Graves wants the report of his death to coincide with his twenty-first birthday (July 24), although his father remembers the date as earlier. "One can sympathize with Graves," says George Stade, "who as a poet and scholar has always preferred poetic resonance to the dull monotone of facts; and to die on a twenty-first birthday is to illustrate a kind of poetic justice.

Back in hospital in London, Graves is delighted by the combined comedy and melodrama of a clipping from the Court Circular of the *Times*: "Captain Robert Graves, Royal Welch Fusiliers, officially reported died of wounds, wishes to inform his friends that he is recovering from his wounds at Queen Alexandra's Hospital, Highgate, N." Almost immediately, he quotes another funny document, the infamous propaganda

pamphlet containing a letter by "a Little Mother" reprehending any thought of a negotiated peace and celebrating the sacrifice of British mothers who have "given" their sons. It is sentimental, blood-thirsty, complacent, cruel, fatuous, and self-congratulatory, all at once, and ("of course," Graves would say) it is accompanied by a train of earnest illiterate testimonials from third-rate newspapers, noncombatant soldiers, and bereaved mothers, one of whom says: "I have lost my two dear boys, but since I was shown the 'Little Mother's' beautiful letter a resignation too perfect to describe has calmed all my aching sorrow, and I would now gladly give my sons twice over."

It is at this point in *Good-bye to All That* that we may become aware of how rich the book is in fatuous, erroneous, or preposterous written "texts" and documents, the normal materials of serious "history" but here exposed in all their farcical ineptitude and error. Almost all of them—even Sassoon's "A Soldier's Declaration"—have in common some dissociation from actuality or some fatal error in assumption or conclusion. Their variety is striking, and there are so many that Graves felt he could cut one entirely from the 1957 edition, the priceless letter at the end of chapter 2 from an amateur gentlewoman poet, instinctively praising Graves's very worst poem and at the same time slyly begging a loan with a long, rambling, self-celebrating paranoid tale of having been cheated of an inheritance. There is the "question and answer history book" of his boyhood, which begins

QUESTION: Why were the Britons so called?
ANSWER: Because they painted themselves blue

There are the propaganda news clippings about the priests of Antwerp, hung upside down as human clappers in their own church bells. There is the laughable Loos attack order, and the optimistic orders, all based on false premises, written on field message forms. There is the colonel's letter deposing not merely that Graves is dead but that he was "very gallant." There is the erroneous casualty list and the Letter of the Little Mother. There is the farcical mistransmission in Morse code that sends a battalion destined for York to Cork instead. There is an autograph collector's disoriented letter to Thomas Hardy, beginning

Dear Mr. Hardy,
I am interested to know why the devil you don't reply to my request.

There are the lunatic examination-papers written by three of Graves's students of "English Literature " at the University of Cairo. And in the new epilogue, written in 1957, there is the news that one reason Graves was suspected of being a German spy while harboring in South Devon during the Second War is that someone made a silly, lying document out of a vegetable marrow in his garden by surreptitiously scratching "HEIL HITLER!" on it. The point of all these is not just humankind's immense liability to error,

folly, and psychosis. It is also the dubiousness of a rational—or at least a clearsighted—historiography. The documents on which a work of "history" might be based are so wrong or so loathsome or so silly or so downright mad that no one could immerse himself in them for long, Graves implies, without coming badly unhinged.

The Letter from the Little Mother is the classic case in point and crucial to the whole unraveling, satiric effect of *Good-bye to All That*. One of Graves's readers, "A Soldier Who Has Served All Over the World," perceived as much and wrote Graves:

You are a discredit to the Service, disloyal to your comrades and typical of that miserable breed which tries to gain notoriety by belittling others. Your language is just "water-closet," and evidently your regiment resented such an undesirable member. The only good page is that quoting the beautiful letter of The Little Mother, but even there you betray the degenerate mind by interleaving it between obscenities.

A pity that letter wasn't available to be included in *Good-bye to All That*. It is the kind of letter we can imagine Ben Jonson receiving many of.

By November 1916, Graves is well enough to put on his uniform again—the entry and exit holes in the tunic neatly mended—and rejoin the Depot Battalion for reposting. He is soon back with the Second Battalion on the Somme, where he is secretly delighted to find that all his enemies, the regular officers, have been killed or wounded: it makes the battalion a nicer place and fulfills the angry prophecy Graves had uttered when he first joined and had been bullied in the Officers' Mess at Laventie: "You damned snobs! I'll survive you all. There'll come a time when there won't be one of you left in the Battalion to remember this Mess at Laventie." But the weakness in Graves's lung is beginning to tell, and he is returned to England with "bronchitis." He finds himself first in the hospital at Somerville College, Oxford, and then recuperating anomalously and comically at Queen Victoria's Osborne, on the Isle of Wight.

It is while at Osborne that he sees Sassoon's Declaration. He is appalled at the risk of court martial Sassoon is taking and distressed by Sassoon's political and rhetorical naivete: "Nobody would follow his example, either in England or in Germany." The public temper had already found its spokesman in the Little Mother: "The War would inevitably go on until one side or the other cracked." Graves gets out of Osborne, rigs Sassoon's medical board, and testifies before it. He bursts into tears "three times" and is told, "Young man, you ought to be before this board yourself." His dramaturgy is successful, and Sassoon is sent to Craiglockhart for "cure." Graves tells us that there Sassoon first met Wilfred Owen, "an idealistic homosexual with a religious background." At least that is what he wanted to tell us in the American edition (the Anchor Books paperback) of the 1957 reissue. The phrase was omitted from the British edition at the request of Harold Owen, and it was subsequently canceled in the American edition. It does not now appear in any edition of *Good-bye to All That*. Just as Graves always knew they would, respectability and disingenuousness have won. Just as Graves learned during the war, written documents remain a delusive guide to reality.

He is now classified B-l, "fit for garrison service abroad," but despite his hope to be sent to Egypt or Palestine, he spends the rest of the war training troops in England and Ireland. In January 1918, he married the feminist Nancy Nicolson: "Nancy had read the marriage-service [another funny document] for the first time that morning, and been so disgusted that she all but refused to go through with the wedding":

Another caricature scene to look back on: myself striding up the red carpet, wearing field-boots, spurs and sword; Nancy meeting me in a blue-check silk wedding dress, utterly furious; packed benches on either side of the church, full of relatives; aunts using handkerchiefs; the choir boys out of tune; Nancy savagely muttering the responses, myself shouting them in a parade-ground voice.

The news of the Armistice, he says, brought him no pleasure; rather, it "sent me out walking alone . . ., cursing and sobbing and thinking of the dead."

Demobilized, he instantly catches Spanish influenza and almost dies of it. He recovers in Wales, where for almost a year he tries to shake off the war:

I was still mentally and nervously organized for War. Shells used to come bursting on my bed at midnight, even though Nancy shared it with me; strangers in daytime would assume the faces of friends who had been killed. When strong enough to climb the hill behind Harlech ..., I could not help seeing it as a prospective battlefield. I would find myself working out tactical problems, planning ... where to place a Lewis gun if I were trying to rush Dolwreiddiog Farm from the brow of the hill, and what would be the best cover for my rifle-grenade section.

Some legacies of the war ran even deeper, and one, perhaps, has had literary consequences: "I still had the Army habit of commandeering anything of uncertain ownership that I found lying about; also a difficulty in telling the truth." His experience of the Army had ratified his fierce insistence on his independence, and he swore "on the very day of my demobilization never to be under anyone's orders for the rest of my life. Somehow I must live by writing." In October 1919, he entered Oxford to study English Literature, living five miles out, at Boar's Hill, where he knew Blunden, Masefield, and Robert Nichols. There he and Nancy briefly ran a small general store while he wrote poems as well as his academic thesis, brilliantly titled□the war had certainly handed him the first three words□ *The Illogical Element in English Poetry.*

"The Illogical Element in the Experience of Robert Graves" might be the title of the episode that closes *Good-bye to All That*. He takes up the position of Professor of English Literature at the ridiculous Royal Egyptian University, Cairo. The student essays are so funny and hopeless that as an honest man he can't go on. After saying that "Egypt gave me plenty of caricature scenes to look back on," he approaches the end of the book in a final flurry of anecdotes and vignettes, most of them farcical, and concludes with a brief paragraph summarizing his life from 1926 to 1929, which he says has been "dramatic," with "new characters [appearing] on the stage." All that is left is disgust and exile.

Compared with both Blunden and Sassoon, Graves is very little interested in "nature" or scenery: human creatures are his focus, and his book is built, as theirs are not, very largely out of dialogue. And compared with Sassoon, who is remarkably gentle with his characters and extraordinarily "nice" to them, Graves, who had, as Sassoon once told him, "a first-rate nose for anything nasty," sees his as largely a collection of knaves and fools. Almost literally: one can go through *Good-bye to All That* making two lists, one of knaves, one of fools, and the two lists will comprise ninety percent of the characters. As a memoirist, Graves seems most interested not in accurate recall but in recovering moments when he most clearly perceives the knavery of knaves and the foolishness of fools. For him as for D. H. Lawrence, knavery and folly are the style of the war, and one of the very worst things about it is that it creates a theater perfectly appropriate for knavery and folly. It brings out all the terrible people.

If Graves, the scourge of knaves and fools, is the heir of Ben Jonson, it can be seen that Joseph Heller is the heir of Graves. And, the very theatricality of *Catch-22* is a part of what Heller has learned from *Good-bye to All That*. *Catch-22* resembles less a "novel" than a series of blackout skits, to such a degree that it was an easy matter for Heller to transform the work into a "dramatization" in 1971. Another legatee of Graves is Evelyn Waugh, whose *Sword of Honor* trilogy does to the Second War what Graves did to the First. Waugh's book is made up of the same farcical high-jinks, the same kind of ironic reversals, all taking place in the Graves atmosphere of balls-up and confusion. Indeed, both Graves and Waugh include characters who deliver the line, "Thank God we've gotaNavy." IfLoosis the characteristic absurd disaster to Graves, Crete is Waugh's version. Waugh's sense of theater is as conspicuous as Graves's, although it tends to invoke more pretentious genres than farce. During the rout on Crete, a small sports car drives up: "Sprawled in the back, upheld by a kneeling orderly, as though in gruesome parody of a death scene from grand opera, lay a dusty and bloody New Zealand officer." Both Graves and Waugh have written fiction-memoirs, although Graves's is a fiction disguised as a memoir while Waugh's is a memoir disguised as a fiction. To derive Waugh's trilogy, one would superadd the farce in *Good-bye to All That* to the moral predicament of Ford's Tietjens in *Parade's End*: this would posit Guy Crouchback, Waugh's victim-hero, as well as establish a world where the broad joke of Apthorpe's thunder-box coexists harmoniously with messy and meaningless violent death. And both Waugh and Heller would be as ready as Graves to agree with the proposition that comedy alone is suitable for us.

Source: Paul Fussell, "The Caricature Scenes of Robert Graves," in *Robert Graves*, Modern Critical Views, Chelsea House, 1987, pp. 111-127.

Quotes

"There I learned to keep a straight bat at cricket, and to have a high moral sense; and mastered my fifth different pronunciation of Latin, and my fifth or sixth different way of doing simple arithmetic. They put me into the top class, and I got a scholarship—in fact, I got the first scholarship of the year. At Charterhouse. And why at Charterhouse? Because of *??????* and *????*. Charterhouse was the only public school whose scholarship examination did not contain a Greek grammar paper and, though smart enough at Greek unseen and Greek composition, I could not conjugate *??????* and *????* conventionally. But for these two verbs, I would almost certainly have gone to the very different atmosphere of Winchester." (Chap. 3, p. 21)

"Three sayings and a favourite story of my mother's:

"'Children, I command you, as your mother, never to swing objects around in your hands. The King of Hanover put out his eye by swinging a bead purse.'

"'Children, I command you, as your mother, to be careful when you carry your candles upstairs. The candle is a little cup of grease.'

"'There was a man once, a Frenchman, who died of grief because he could never become a mother.'

"She used to tell the story by candle-light:

"'There was once a peasant family living in Schleswig-Holstein, where they all have crooked mouths. One night they wished to blow out the candle. The father's mouth was twisted to the left, so! and he tried to blow out the candle, so! but he was too proud to stand anywhere but directly before the candle, so he puffed and he puffed, but could not blow the candle out. And then the mother tried, but her mouth was twisted to the right, so! and she tried to blow, so! and she was too proud to stand anywhere but directly before the candle, and she puffed and puffed, but could not blow the candle out. Then there was the brother with mouth twisted upward, so! and the sister with the mouth twisted downward, so! and they tried each in turn, so! and so! and the idiot baby with his mouth twisted in an eternal grin, so! At last the maid, a beautiful girl from Copenhagen with a perfectly formed mouth, put it out with her shoe. So! Flap!'" (Chap. 5, pp. 31-32)

"Raymond had not been confirmed, and astonished me by admitting, and even boasting, that he was an atheist. I argued with him about the existence of God, and the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of the Trinity. He said, of the Trinity, that anybody who could agree with the Athanasian Creed that 'whoever will be saved must confess that there are not Three Incomprehensible but One Incomprehensible' was asserting that a man must go to hell if he does not believe something that is, by definition, impossible to understand. His own respect for himself as a reasonable being forbade him to believe such things. He also asked me: 'What's the good of having a soul if you have a mind? What's the function of the soul? It seems a mere pawn in the game.'

"Because I loved and respected Raymond, I felt bound to find an answer to this shocking question. But the more I considered it, the less certain I became of my ground. So in order not to prejudice religion (and I set religion and my chances of salvation before human love) I at first broke my friendship with Raymond entirely. Later I weakened, but as a complete and ruthless atheist he would not even meet me, when I approached him, with any broad-Church compromise. For the rest of our time at Charterhouse I kept my distance. Yet in 1917, when he was with the Irish Guards, I rode over to his billets one afternoon, having by then become a complete agnostic, and felt as close to him as ever. He got killed at Cambrai not long after." (Chap. 8, pp. 47-48)

"In the first Battalion Orderly Room that I attended, a case went like this:

"SEARGEANT-MAJOR (*off stage*): Now, then, you 99 Davies, 'F' Company, cap off, as you were, cap off, as you were, cap off! That's better. Escort and prisoner, right *turn*! Quick *march*! Right wheel! (*On stage*) Left wheel! Mark time! Escort and prisoner, *halt*! Left *turn*!

"COLONEL: Read the charge, Sergeant-Major.

"SEARGEANT-MAJOR: No. 99 Pte W. Davies, 'F' Company, at Wrexham on 20th August: improper conduct. Committing a nuisance on the barrack square. Witnesses: Sergeant Timmins, Corporal Jones.

"COLONEL: Sergeant Timmins, your evidence.

"SERGEANT TIMMINS: Sir, on the said date about two p.m., I was hacting Horderly Sar'nt. Corporal Jones reported the nuisance to me. I hinspected it. It was the prisoner's, Sir.

"COLONEL: Corporal Jones! Your evidence.

"CORPORAL JONES: Sir, on the said date I was crossing the barrack square, when I saw prisoner in a sitting posture. He was committing excreta, Sir. I took his name and reported to the orderly-sergeant, Sir.

"COLONEL: Well, Private Davies, what have you to say for yourself?

"99 DAVIES (*in a narrow sing-song*): Sir, I came over queer all of a sudden, Sir. I haad the diarrhoeas terrible baad. I haad to do it, Sir.

"COLONEL: But, my good man, the latrine was only a few yards away.

"99 DAVIES: Colonel, Sir, you caan't stop nature!

"SEARGEANT-MAJOR: Don't answer an officer like that!

"(*Pause.*)

"SERGEANT TIMMINS (*coughs*): Sir?

"COLONEL: Yes, Sergeant Timmins?

"SERGEANT TIMMINS: Sir, I had occasion to hexamine the nuisance, Sir, *and it was done with a heffort, Sir!*

"COLONEL: Do you take my punishment, Private Davies?

"99 DAVIES: Yes, Colonel, Sir.

"COLONEL: You have done a very dirty act, and disgraced the Regiment and your comrades. I shall make an example of you. Ten days' detention.

"SEARGEANT-MAJOR: Escort and prisoner, left *turn*! Quick *march*! Left wheel!

"(*Off stage*): Escort and prisoner, *halt*! Cap on! March him off to the Guard Room. Get ready the next case!" (Chap. 10, pp. 77-78)

"On arrival in France, we six Royal Welch Fusilier officers went to the Harfleur base camp near Le Havre. Later it became an educational centre for trench routine, use of bombs, trench-mortars, rifle-grenades, gas-helmets, and similar technicalities. But now we did a route-march or two through the French countryside and that was all, apart from fatigues at the Le Havre docks, helping the Army Service Corps unload stores from ships. The town was gay. As soon as we arrived, numerous little boys accosted us, pimping for their alleged sisters. 'I take you to my sister. She very nice. Very good jig-a-jig. Not much money. Very cheap. Very good. I take you now. Plenty champagne for me?' I was glad when we got orders to go 'up the line', though disgusted to find ourselves posted not to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, but to the Welsh Regiment." (Chap. 12, p. 91)

"Two officers of another company had just been telling me how they slept in the same room with a French woman and her daughter. They had tossed for the mother, because the daughter was a 'yellow-looking scaly little thing like a lizard.' The Red Lamp, the Army brothel, was around the corner in the main street. I had seen a queue of a hundred and fifty men waiting outside the door, each to have his short turn with one of the three women in the house. My servant, who had stood in the queue, told me that the charge was ten francs a man—about eight shillings at that time. Each woman served nearly a battalion of men every week for as long as she lasted. According to the Assistant Provost-Marshall, three weeks was the usual limit: 'after which she retired on her earnings, pale but proud.'" (Chap. 14, p. 122)

"After this I went on patrol fairly often, finding that the only thing respected in young officers was personal courage. Besides, I had cannily worked it out like this. My best way of lasting through to the end of the War would be to get wounded. The best time to get wounded would be at night and in the open, with rifle-fire more or less unaimed and my whole body exposed. Best, also, to get wounded when there was no rush on the dressing-station services, and while the back areas were not being heavily shelled. Best

to get wounded, therefore, on a night patrol in a quiet sector. One could usually manage to crawl into a shell-hole until help arrived.

"Still, patrolling had its peculiar risks. If a German patrol found a wounded man, they were as likely as not to cut his throat. The bowie-knife was a favourite German patrol weapon because of its silence. (We inclined more to the 'cosh', a loaded stick.) The most important information that a patrol could bring back was to what regiment and division the troops opposite belonged. So if it proved impossible to get a wounded enemy back without danger to oneself, he had to be stripped of his badges. To do that quickly and silently, it might be necessary first to cut his throat or beat in his skull." (Chap. 14, p. 131)

"It had been agreed to advance by platoon rushes with supporting fire. When his platoon had gone about twenty yards, he signaled them to lie down and open covering fire. The din was tremendous. He saw the platoon on his left flopping down, too, so he whistled the advance again. Nobody seemed to hear. He jumped up from his shell-hole, waved and signalled 'Forward!'

"Nobody stirred.

"He shouted: 'You bloody cowards, are you leaving me to go on alone?'

"His platoon-sergeant, groaning with a broken shoulder, gasped: 'Not cowards, Sir. Willing enough. But they're all f—ing dead.' The Pope's Nose machine-gun, traversing, had caught them as they rose to the whistle." (Chap. 15, pp. 155-156)

"There was a daily exchange of courtesies between our machine-guns and the Germans' at stand-to; by removing cartridges from the ammunition-belt one could rap out the rhythm of the familiar prostitutes' call: 'MEET me DOWN in PICC-a-DILL-Y,' to which the Germans would reply, though in a slower tempo, because our guns were faster than theirs: 'YES, with-OUT my DRAWERS ON!'" (Chap. 16, pp. 170-171)

"I have kept a Battalion Order issued at midnight: To O.C. 'B' Co. 2nd R.W.F. 20.7.16 Companies Will move as under to Same positions in S14b as Were to have been taken Over from Cameronians aaa A Coy. 12.30 a.m. B Coy. 12.45 a.m. C Coy. 1 a.m. D Coy. 1.15 a.m. At 2 a.m. company commanders will Meet C.O. at X Roads S14b 99 aaa Men Will lie down and get Under cover but equipment will Not be taken off aaa "S14b 99 was the map reference for Bezentin churchyard. We lay here on the reverse slope of a slight ridge, about half a mile from the wood. I attended the meeting of company commanders; Colonel Crawshay told us the plan. 'Look here, you fellows,' he said, 'we're in reserve for this attack. The Cameronians and the Fifth Scottish Rifles are going up to the wood first; that's at 5 a.m. The Public Schools Battalion are in support, if anything goes wrong. I don't know whether we shall be called on; if we are, it will mean that the Jocks have legged it.' He added: 'As usual.' This was an appeal to prejudice. 'The Public Schools Battalion is, well, what we know it is; so if we're called for, that will be the end of us.' He said this with a laugh, and we all laughed." (Chap. 20, pp. 216-217)

"Bertrand Russell, too old for military service, but an ardent pacifist (a rare combination), turned sharply on me one afternoon and asked: 'Tell me, if a company of your men were brought along to break a strike of munition-makers, and the munition-makers refused to go back to work, would you order the men to fire?'

"'Yes, if everything else failed. It would be no worse than shooting Germans, really.'

"He asked in surprise: 'Would your men obey you?'

"'They loathe munition-workers, and would be only too glad of a chance to shoot a few. They think that they're all skrimshankers.'

"'But they realize that the War's wicked nonsense?'

"'Yes, as well as I do.'

"He could not understand my attitude." (Chap. 23, p. 249)

"All fit men of the Third Garrison Battalion were ordered to move at twenty-four hours' notice to York. A slight error occurred, however, in the Morse message from War Office to Western Command. Instead of dash-dot-dash-dash, they sent dash-dot-dash-dot, so the Battalion was sent to Cork instead; where, on second thoughts, it seemed just as much needed as in York—so there is stayed for the remainder of the war." (Chap. 25, p. 270)

"Dr. Gilbert Murray, lived there too, gentle-voiced and with the spiritual look of the strict vegetarian, doing preliminary propaganda work for the League of Nations. Once, as I sat talking to him in his study about Aristotle's *Poetics*, while he walked up and down, I suddenly asked: 'Exactly what is the principle of that walk of yours? Are you trying to avoid the flowers on the rug, or are you trying to keep to the squares?' My own compulsion-neuroses made it easy for me to notice them in others. He wheeled around sharply: 'You're the first person who has caught me out,' he said. 'No, it's not the flowers or the squares; it's a habit that I have got into of doing things in sevens. I take seven steps, you see, then I change direction and go another seven steps, then I turn around. I consulted Browne, the Professor of Psychology, about it the other day, but he assured me it isn't a dangerous habit. He said: "When you find yourself getting into multiples of seven, come to me again."'" (Chap. 27, p. 294)

"Every Saturday during the winter months I played football for the village team. We ex-soldiers re-introduced the game at Islip after a lapse of some eighty years. The village nonagenarian complained that football was not so manly now as in his boyhood. He pointed across the fields to a couple of aged willow trees: 'Them used to be our home goals,' he said. 'T'other pair stood half a mile upstream. Constable stopped our play in the end. Three men were killed in the last game—one kicked to death; t'other two drowned each other in a scrimmage. Her was a grand game.' I found Islip football, though not unmanly, ladylike by comparison with the Charterhouse game. When playing centre-forward I often got booed for charging the goal-keeper as he fumbled with the shot he had saved. The cheers were reserved for my inside-left, who spent most of his

time stylishly dribbling the ball in circles round and round the field until robbed of it; he seldom went anywhere near the goal. But the football club was democratic, unlike the cricket club. I played cricket the first season, but resigned because the team seldom consisted of the best eleven men available; regular players would be dropped to make room for visiting gentry." (Chap. 29, pp. 313-313)

Adaptations

In 1985, Books on Tape, Inc., released an unabridged audio version of *Good-Bye to All That* in eight cassettes.

A 1990 audiotape version of *Good-Bye to All That* is available from Isis Audio Books of Oxford, England.

Fans of Robert Graves can find out more about him at the Robert Graves Trust, Society, Journal and Archive home page at http://www. robertgraves.org (March 2001), with links that will lead students to related sites.

Topics for Further Study

Read Siegfried Sassoon's recollections of service in the war, and point out ways in which they differ from Graves'.

Before World War II, the war that Graves served in was known as the Great War and the War to End All Wars. Make a chart of things about that war that were different from anything people had experienced before.

Get recordings of the music that people listened to during the war, and explain how the popular songs reflected ideas referred to in *Good-Bye to All That*. Explain why jazz music flourished during the 1920s, a period known as the Jazz Age.

Read some poetry by Laura Riding, and compare it to some of Graves's poetry. Was he right to look on her as his mentor? Explain why or why not.

Compare the gas used by Iraq during the Persian Gulf War to the chlorine gas and mustard gas used during World War I. Report on what defenses modern troops have against chemical warfare.

Graves describes his wife, Nancy Nicholson, as a feminist. Describe what the feminist movement was like in England in the 1920s. What were the key issues? Who were the important figures?

Compare and Contrast

1929: The horrors of the Great War are unprecedented in world history, leaving a generation disillusioned and cynical.

Today: After the vast international scope of World War II and the televised mayhem of Vietnam, politicians are only likely to commit to wars that can be waged with computers and longdistance missiles.

1929: The stock market crash of October 29 plunges the United States into the Great Depression, and other world economies soon follow.

Today: Because of advances in travel and communications, the economies of separate nations are more dependent on each other than ever before.

1920s: Modernism, the artistic movement that turns away from traditional forms, brings thrilling new possibilities to painting, literature, and music.

Today: After post-modernism, which reflected art's awareness of its own techniques, artistic theories have become divided so that no particular school dominates artistic thought today.

1929: "Feminism" is seen as a rare, exotic political stance taken by women who are considered troublemakers.

Today: After tremendous gains for women's rights in the past few decades, the word "feminism" is still used often in the negative sense to brand its adherents as complainers and troublemakers.

1929: Cairo is seen by Europeans as mysterious and frightening, prompting T. E. Lawrence to comfort Graves by explaining that "Egypt, being so near Europe, is not a savage country."

Today: Television satellite feeds from all over the world have reduced stereotyped images about other cultures.

What Do I Read Next?

Robert Graves' best-known work is his novel *I, Claudius* (1934). It is told through the eyes of the Roman emperor and is considered to be not just educational but a fast-paced, fun read. Graves followed his story with a sequel, *Claudius the God and His Wife Messalina*.

The Things They Carried, by Tim O'Brien, is a highly biographical 1990 novel about the Vietnam War, with anecdotes about war's insanity that match those that Graves discussed decades earlier.

Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) is a classic of British literature, and, though out of print in America, still is available through many libraries. Sassoon offers a different perspective on life in the first battalion than what Graves describes.

A Selection of the Poems of Laura Riding, edited by scholar Robert Nye, offers the best that Riding produced in her long lifetime and shows her talent, not just during the time of her relationship with Graves but for decades beyond. It is currently available from Persea Books in a 1997 paperback edition.

One of the great novels to come out of World War I was by a German soldier, Erich Maria Remarque. His novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928) examines the insanity and horror that pits young men of different countries against one another and is generally considered a literary classic.

Graves will always be associated with T. E. Lawrence because of the biography that made him famous, *Lawrence and the Arabs* (1927). Lawrence tells his own story in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (1926), available in paperback.

Paul Fussell's book *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) won the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, and it was recently named one of the one hundred best non-fiction books of the twentieth century by the Modern Library. It contains a lengthy examination of *Good-Bye to All That*.

Geoffrey Wolff's *Black Sun: The Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby* (1976) gives the story of a decadent literary life in the 1920s that sounds like the kind of unorthodox situation that Graves might have imagined when he tried to establish a three-person marriage after the war. It is, in fact, the story of the whole postwar counterculture movement in Paris.

Further Study

Bell, Clive, *The English Poets of the First World War*,Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1981.

This book puts Graves in context with his peers, some of whom are mentioned in his autobiography (Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg) and many of whom are not (Gurney, Sorley, West, etc.).

Cohen, J. M., *Robert Graves*, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1967.

This small book, written with Graves' approval, gives more background about his publishing history during the war years than is covered in the autobiography.

Ellis, John, *Eye Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

This historian's perspective of life in the trenches lacks the authenticity of Graves' autobiography but makes up for it with a wider range of stories to tell.

Hoffman, Daniel, "Significant Wounds," in *Barbarous Knowledge: Myth in the Poetry of Yeats, Graves and Muir*, Oxford University Press, 1967.

This chapter shows the links between war, mythology, and art in Graves' poems.

Snipes, Katherine, *Robert Graves*, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979.

Good-Bye to All That only figures into a brief early chapter on "biography," but this book is useful for a quick overview of Graves' entire career.

Winter, Denis, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War*,Penguin USA, 1993.

Winter recreates the experience of British soldiers on the front from sources like those that Graves used, getting deeper into the common soldier's perspective.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Nonfiction Classics for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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