The Great White Hope Study Guide

The Great White Hope by Howard Sackler

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Contents

Introduction

The Great White Hope won three of the most important awards on Broadway—the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and a Tony—a phenomenal achievement in the history of twentieth-century theatre. The play is based on the life of black boxer Jack Johnson. When white American fighters refused to compete with Johnson, he traveled to Australia and defeated Tommy Burns in 1908, becoming the first black Heavyweight Champion of the World. Sackler's work explores with deep consideration the consequences of Johnson's achievement in a climate of deep racial unrest.

Curiously, Sackler's original work was meant to be a musical, more lighthearted than tragic. He eventually abandoned his plans and completed the play in 1967. *The Great White Hope* opened in December of that year at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. Although the work is fictional, many of the events of the play, such as Jack's arrest, actually happened to Johnson at some point in his life. Thematically, the play also explores, with depth, perceptiveness, and brutal honesty, the nature of racism and racial conflict in American society. The voices of Sackler's characters, black and white, offer a colorful collage of insights. In examining the motivations of these characters, the audience gains exposure to a wide range of perspectives and, by extension, a much greater understanding of the issues surrounding them.

Author Biography

Howard Sackler was born on December 19, 1929, in New York City, although he spent much of his early childhood in Florida. He attended Brooklyn College, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950. He began his writing career as a poet under the guidance of W. H. Auden. In addition to his poetry, Sackler wrote a verse drama in the tradition of T. S. Eliot, a one-act play titled "Uriel Acosta." In addition to these achievements, Sackler also wrote the screenplays "Desert Padre" (1950), "Fear and Desire" (1953), and "Killer's Kiss" (1955) for director Stanley Kubrick. All of these accomplishments were realized before he reached the age of twenty-five.

Sackler also founded and became production director for Caedmon Records, a production company engineering the recording of over two hundred well-known plays, read by England's most respectable actors and actresses. The list of actors and actresses includes Paul Scolfield, Sir Ralph Richardson, Rex Harrison, Margaret Leighton, Dame Edith Evans, Claire Bloom, Albert Finney, Julie Harris, and Jessica Tandy.

His work at Caedmon Records took him away from the business of writing. It would not be until 1961 that Sackler would decide to put pen to paper and write *A Few Enquiries,* a collection of four one act plays, as well as screenplays. Among these titles are "The Nine O'Clock Mail" (1965) and "Mr. Welk and Jersey Jim" (1970).

His major achievement would come in the form of *The Great White Hope*. Sackler was intrigued by the story of Jack Johnson, the first black Heavyweight Champion of the World. Initially, his vision was to create a musical version of the play, but the author soon abandoned the idea in favor of drama. The great success of this play came with the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Antoinette Perry Award in 1969. Sackler also received other grants and awards as a writer, including a Rockefeller Foundation grant (1953), a Littauer Foundation grant (1954), the Maxwell Anderson Award (1954), and the Sergel Award (1959).

Throughout the remainder of his career, Sackler continued to work at Caedmon, while also continuing to direct for the stage, film, and television. Sackler died at his home in Ibiza, Spain, in 1982, leaving several plays unfinished, including "Klondike," based on the Alaskan gold rush. While his unfinished plays have never been produced, other works, like *The Great White Hope*, continue to appear in England as well as America.

Plot Summary

Act 1, Scene 1

The play opens on Brady's farm in Parchmont, Ohio. There is a discussion between Brady, identified as "the heavyweight champion"; Fred, his manager; Cap'n Dan, "a champion of earlier days"; Smitty, "a famous sportswriter"; and several members of the press including photographers. Goldie, Jack Jefferson's manager, is also present. The group, with the exception of Goldie, is encouraging Brady to re-enter the ring in reaction to the recent performance of black athlete Jack Jefferson, who is a serious boxing contender. Cap'n Dan pitches to Brady, "You're the White Hope, Mr. Brady!" He shares his fears with the heavyweight, asking how he can let the whole country down, how he can live with a reputation that "he wouldn't stick a fist out to teach a loudmouth nigger, stayed home and let him be Champion of the World."

The scene ends with a flurry of negotiations after Brady agrees to fight Jefferson. The terms are 80-20 in favor of the promoter, the location is Reno, as suggested by Cap'n Dan, who believes it is necessary to avoid big towns and the likelihood of having "every nigger and his brother jamming in there." Goldie departs for the train, leaving Brady to pose for photos with members of the press.

Act 1, Scene 2

The action shifts to a small gym in San Francisco, California, where Jefferson is shadowboxing in the presence of his trainer, Tick, as Eleanor Bachman watches. Jack and Tick are working on a strategy for the upcoming fight when Goldie arrives.

Jack relays to Goldie that he met Eleanor on a boat from Australia and that Eleanor is from Tacoma, Washington. When Goldie asks Eleanor to leave because the press is coming, Jack says, "she stay where she is." Goldie knows he can protect Jack from some adversaries, "guys who want to put dope in your food there, a guy who wants to watch the fight behind a rifle." He is not prepared to deal with the racist backlash of those unsympathetic to Jack's involvement with a woman outside his race.

Act 1, Scene 3

Outside the arena in Reno, the day before the fight, Jack calls out to his "homefolks" and moves to their group in the back of the room. When a member of this group of black men tells him they are rooting for him because they believe that his victory will instill in them a sense of pride, Jack responds, "Well, country boy, if you ain't there already, all the boxin' and nigger-prayin in the world ain't gonna get you there."

In a personal moment, Cap'n Dan shares with the audience his fears about a possible victory for Jack. He confides that, unlike being the world's best engineer or the world's

biggest genius, to Cap'n Dan, the possibility of Jack becoming the heavyweight champion makes the world seem "darker, and different, like it's shrinking, it's all huddled down somehow."

Act 1, Scene 4

Jack is hosting the Grand Opening of the Café de Champion in Chicago and has decided to use the event to openly announce his engagement to Ellie. He is suddenly confronted by the Women's League for Temperance, whose members are protesting the opening. Jack's reaction to the crowd is to offer them chairs and refreshments outside of the café, an act that serves to disperse the crowd. The conflict is diminished by the arrival of Mrs. Bachman, Ellie's mother, who has come with an attorney to entice Ellie to leave the festivities.

Act 1, Scene 5

Cameron, district attorney for the city of Chicago, is meeting with several civic leaders and Smitty, a detective, among others, to discuss the incident outside the café, during which Clara, Jack's common-law wife, fired a shot at her "husband." As a group, they determine that Jack "personifies all that should be suppressed by law" and agree to work towards such lawful "suppression." Smitty and Cameron then proceed to interview Ellie, hoping she will say something to incriminate Jack. She repeatedly declares her love for the prizefighter. When their harassment causes Ellie's hostile departure, Cameron admits defeat, exclaiming "Nothing! Seduction, enticement, coercion, abduction, not one good berry on the bush!"

Act 1, Scene 6

Jack is arrested after he is discovered vacationing with Ellie in a cabin in Beau Rivage, Wisconsin. Federal marshals burst into the cabin with lanterns to discover the two romantically snuggled up in bed. Jack's crime is that he drove Ellie over the Wisconsin state line and "proceeded to have relations with her," apparently "illegal under the Mann Act."

Act 1, Scene 7

After his arrest, Jack visits his mother while he's out on bond. His punishment is a $20,000 fine and three years in Joliet prison. Jack tells Mrs. Jefferson that he plans to disguise himself as one of the Detroit Blue Jays, members of a Negro League who assist him in his escape out of the country. He answers his mother's objections, saying, "Ah got my turn to be Champeen of the world an Ah takin my turn! Ah stayin whut Ah am, wherever Ah has to do it! The world ain't curled up into no forty-eight states here!"

Act 2, Scene 1

The scene is London in the home office of several city officials. Jack's status as an alien is being questioned after an arrest for "using obscene language" and another for "causing a crowd to collect," among other offenses substantiated by Inspector Wainright and several other individuals present. At the completion of the meeting, Sir William, the individual overseeing the meeting, trivializes the charges. Despite Sir William's position, Jack chooses to abandon the proceedings in disgust.

Act 2, Scenes 2-3

Jack's arrival in France is celebrated, and the action quickly moves to Vel d'Hiver arena in Paris. His competition is, according to Jack, a "fifth-rate" fighter in contrast to his past experiences. Smitty appears next to Ellie as she watches the fight. The sportswriter engages Ellie with a series of probing questions about her life plans with Jack. Noticing Ellie's increasing agitation, Smitty remarks, "Living like this . . . has to burn you out . . . you're not as tough as he is, you know, you can't just go on." Jack's bloodstained appearance and shouts of "assassin" from angry spectators suddenly interrupt their conversation. The scene ends with Jack, Tick, and Ellie's hasty departure from the arena.

Act 2, Scene 4

Fred, Pop Weaver, a promoter, and Cap'n Dan are previewing film footage of what they believe to be the next "Great White Hope." They hope to strike a deal with Jack. Their plans are to drop Jack's prison sentence if he agrees to fix the fight. At first, there is some resistance from Pop and Fred; both object to the illegal activity. To Cap'n Dan, Jack's freedom is a small price to pay for a "white" victory, something that eventually all can agree on. The success of blacks in American society, that is, Jack, is threatening to men like Mr. Dixon, who enters into the discussion claiming, "we cannot allow the image of this man to go on impressing and exciting these people [blacks]."

Act 2, Scene 5

In his search for work, Jack is unsuccessful in Germany. According to Ragosy, Jack "will not divert" or get any attention unless he fights. Goldie offers up information concerning a possible fight in Chicago, stating that "Fred's got this kid" who wants to fight Jack. The profits involve "10 G's guaranteed" and a reduced prison sentence of six months for Jack. When Jack objects, Goldie, seeing the futility of the situation, tells Jack he will be returning to the States.

Act 2, Scene 6

The scene shifts to Cabaret Ragosy in Budapest. It appears that Ragosy finally has convinced Jack, Ellie, and Tick to act in a dramatic performance based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* They must stop the show after the crowd becomes more hostile, booing them off the stage.

Act 2, Scene 7

In the train station in Belgrade, Jack, Ellie, and Tick meet up with Smitty, who relays to them that Jack's mother is ill. He then offers Jack the chance to fight in the States, which Jack immediately refuses. When Smitty responds, asking, "What is it," is it that he wants to "stay the champ and keep the belt a bit longer," Jack replies, "Champ don mean piss-all ta me man. Ah bin it, all dat champ jive been beat clear outta me."

Act 3, Scene 1

The scene is a funeral procession on a street in Chicago, given for Jack's mother. Tensions in the crowd heighten as Clara soulfully speaks of the dead woman's tribulations. When Goldie expresses his sympathy, Clara responds, "you an dat white b—an de whole pack a ya—come on ovah to de box here, sugah, see how good y'all nail de lid down." Her statements provoke the crowd's anger towards Goldie, and there is great confusion as violence erupts and fists and billy clubs fly.

Act 3, Scene 2

Back in Pop's office in New York, Pop, Smitty, and Cap'n Dan are heatedly discussing Jack Jefferson. The group speculates on how best they can defame Jack, and they come up with an idea to manipulate his future, to bribe his trainers to abandon him, and to bribe officials so there are no exhibition matches or competitions open to Jack. The goal is to entice Jack to return to the States to fight their most promising young fighter, their "Great White Hope." Says Cap'n Dan, "we're gonna squeeze that dinge so . . . hard soon a fix is gonna look like a hayride to him!"

Act 3, Scene 3

Jack has switched training locations to a disused barn in Juarez, Mexico. "Well, you kin work wid da heavy ones, time bein. Bettah fo ya, anyhow," replies Tick, when Jack says he's going to sell his boxing gloves for cash. Everyone involved in Jack's training must catch the train, leaving Ellie and Jack alone to talk.

"Jack, it's slow poison here, there's nothing else to wait for, just more of it, you've had enough—please, you're being paralyzed," pleads a discouraged Ellie. Jack responds

that it is Ellie who is dragging him down and that, for him, refusing to give in is a matter of self-respect. Angrily responding to a lack of support, Jack asks Ellie to "get out." Ellie begs him to reconsider only to be met with a hurl of insults. He blames Ellie for his failure, stating, "evvy time you pushes up dat pinch-up face in fronna me, Ah sees where it done got me."

Ellie exits, and Jack finds himself in the company of Goldie, El Jefe, Dixon, and another government agent. The agent answers Jack's protests, stating, "it is perfectly legal" to "request cooperation of the parties in charge" in Mexico in an effort to apprehend him. At that moment, Jack learns of Ellie's suicide, her body presented to him "mudsmeared and dripping." When Goldie asks Jack how he can help, Jack cries, "Set dat . . . fight up!"

Act 3, Scene 4

Jack's black supporters spiritedly rally around him in the streets somewhere in the United States.

Act 3, Scene 5

The final scene of the play takes place at Oriente race track, Havana. Jack has been sparring in the ring with a young white fighter for ten rounds. To the wonderment of Pop and Smitty, Jack refuses to go down, even after Smitty says he has "given the high sign two rounds ago." Ultimately, Jack is defeated in the final round. When he is repeatedly asked why he has lost the fight, Jack replies, "Ah ain't got dem reallies from de Year One . . . An if you got'm, step right down and say em," resigning to a state of racial inferiority.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

This play is the epic story of Jack Jefferson, a black boxer in pre-World War I America, and his journey from the top of the sporting world down to the bottom and back to the top. Partly because of his intimate relationship with a white woman and partly because of societal resentment of blacks in general, Jack encounters considerable obstacles in his journey, including a trumped-up criminal charge and the deterioration of his own sense of who he is. By the end of the play, he has triumphantly regained his personal integrity on his own terms, and while he is no longer a world champion boxer, he has become a champion human being.

The play begins with an argument over whether Brady, the current white heavyweight boxing champion, should fight an up-and-coming black boxer. Brady at first rejects the idea but faces intense pressure from Fred, Cap'n Dan, and in particular, from Smitty, who describes how the black boxer didn't fight "like a man" in a match in Australia, smiling all during the match, taunting his opponent, and "making smart ass remarks to the crowd." Another reporter comments that Brady is the White Hope, saying that every paper in the country is calling him that. At the same time Cap'n Dan tells Brady the whole country is going to feel let down if Brady continues to refuse. Brady confesses he feels too old to fight, but Cap'n Dan and Fred say he'll be just fine, with Cap'n Dan then telling Brady his wife has a letter from Washington to show him. Brady goes in to read it.

Goldie comes forward and asks whether the fight is set, saying he needs to catch a train. He and Fred discuss the terms of the fight, naming Cap'n Dan referee and arguing over where it's to be held. Cap'n Dan refuses to have it in any large cities because "every nigger and his brother" will be there. They agree on Reno, Nevada, and as they're talking about how Brady will benefit from the high altitude and dry air, Brady returns, carrying his championship belt, saying that he'll do the fight, and posing for photographs. Goldie and Fred shake hands as Brady makes racist comments about how he's looking forward to a win. Fred takes Goldie aside and reassures him that Brady doesn't mean them, adding that he's making them just to attract a crowd.

As Goldie exits, Cap'n Dan tells the reporters he wishes they wouldn't refer to Brady as a hope, and then he asks for a comb and stands with Brady to have his picture taken.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

The action of this play is driven by several tensions in American culture and society. The most apparent of these is racial, with the deep-seated suspicion and conflict between the races dramatized through the central, extended metaphor of boxing. In other words, the physical fight between black and white boxers represents the cultural fight between the black and white races, with the description of Brady as a "White Hope" embodying

the hope of a significant number of whites of the time that black people would remain subservient. This hope is dramatized in several ways in this scene, in everything from the comments about the potential black audience for the fight in big cities to the racist, and probably exaggerated, descriptions of the behavior of the black fighter (Jack), to the way the terms of the fight are consistently unfavorable to him. It's important to remember that this play is set in the years before World War I when the racially oriented changes brought about by the American Civil War were still being strongly resisted by the majority of Americans, and the civil rights movement of the 1960's had yet to be imagined. This means that Cap'n Dan's comment about the country's feeling let down if Brady doesn't fight is not that much of an exaggeration. It also means that Brady, in all likelihood, means his racist comments, and that Fred's assurances to Goldie that he doesn't are likely manipulations to ensure that the fight does, in fact, go on.

At the same time, Cap'n Dan's comments at the end of the scene suggest he's concerned that being called a White Hope will put too much pressure on Brady. This idea is discussed directly and in more detail in the following scene, in which the question is raised of whether a similar hope expressed by the black community for a victory by Jack puts pressure on him. The action of the play later reveals that this is definitely how he experiences that hope, meaning that Cap'n Dan's comments here foreshadow both Jack's discomfort and the tension that arises when he refuses to accept the responsibility that comes with embodying that hope. All in all, this idea that being the object of hope is, in fact, a responsibility becomes an aspect of the play's theme, which relates to the idea that true hope comes from living and acting from a place of personal integrity and inspiration rather than from being inspired and driven by the actions and ambitions of others.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

As Jack shadow boxes, he's watched by Tick, his black trainer, and Ellie, his white girlfriend. Tick shouts directions and questions, Jack shouts back comments and answers, and then abruptly stops, concerned that watching him is too rough for Ellie and calling her his Lady Luck. When Ellie says she can leave if Jack wants her to, Tick tells her to stick around since Jack is much happier when she's near.

Goldie enters without noticing Ellie, and after making sure Jack is taking care of himself, reveals that the fight with Brady is set for Reno on the Fourth of July, that the press is calling it the fight of the century, and that trains are being scheduled from all over the country because so many people want to watch. As Jack asks what kind of odds the bookmakers are giving, Goldie notices Ellie and asks what she's doing there. Jack says he likes to show off for the women, introduces Goldie and Ellie, and reveals that she was on the same boat as he was when he came back from Australia. Goldie asks her to excuse them because reporters are about to arrive. Jack says she's going to stay where she is, and he argues that who he's with is nobody's business but his. Goldie tells him it's okay for people to hate him because he's black and hate him because he's a good fighter, but adds that even though feeling hated is good inspiration, knowing Jack is involved with a white girl is going to generate hate that will drive people crazy. As Jack is saying angrily that he's not going to sneak around with her, the reporters knock at the door. Goldie pleads with Jack not to throw his relationship with Ellie in their faces, a proposal Ellie agrees with, saying that she'll go along with anything that will make Jack more successful. Goldie tells her to sit to one side and then tells Tick to let the reporters in.

As Tick opens the door, Smitty and several other reporters enter. Jack greets them and the questions start, with Smitty asking whether Jack really thinks he can win. Jack says he hasn't figured out how to win in a way that won't get everybody angry at him, but is convinced that win he will. Another reporter asks why Jack smiles all the time when he fights, and Jack says he always smiles when he feels good. After a few questions that only thinly conceal the reporters' racist agenda, Smitty asks about Ellie, whom he recognizes from the boat from Australia. Goldie says she's his secretary. Smitty seems to find that unbelievable, but before the conversation goes any further, Tick says it's time for Jack's rubdown. The reporters prepare to leave, but one of them has a final question, mentioning that Brady is being called the "White Hope" and asking Jack whether he's the Black Hope. At first Jack makes a joke, comments on his worry that some black people might suffer as a result of his victory, but then says he's not fighting to redeem anybody, joking that Abraham Lincoln already did that and that's why he was shot.

As the reporters laugh, Clara enters in a rush and attacks Ellie. As Tick restrains her, Goldie tries to get rid of the reporters but they don't move, watching as Clara shouts at

Ellie to leave her man alone. Goldie continues to try to get the reporters out as Clara shouts that she's Jack's common-law wife. Jack says he ended their relationship when she ran off with another man, but she pleads for another chance, calling him "Daddy." Jack tells Tick to buy her dinner and a train ticket home. Tick drags her out, Jack checks to make sure Ellie is all right, and Goldie asks the reporters to say nothing about what happened, saying if word gets out about Jack and Ellie the resulting uproar might cause the fight to be canceled. The reporters reassure him, and he takes them out for a drink. Jack angrily hits the punching bag as Ellie asks whether there's anything she can do to make this easier for him. Jack tells her to never call him "Daddy."

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

Several important dramatic and thematic elements are introduced and developed in this scene. Most important of these are the characters of Jack and Ellie, whose perspectives as individuals and whose relationship as a couple provide the foundation for much of the play's conflict. Jack comes across as simple and straightforward, uneducated but not unwise. He knows what he wants, and perhaps more important, believes he has a right to have it, an aspect to his character dramatized in his insistence that Ellie be allowed to remain when the reporters arrive and by his statement that his relationships are nobody's business but his. At the same time, he's not so self-righteous or determined to achieve that he's unwilling or unable to take into account the realities of the world in which he lives and fights. This is demonstrated by his awareness that his winning might make people angry and that things might become difficult for other black people. This awareness, however, doesn't prevent him from experiencing racist reactions to him and his relationships, as the attacks on him at the end of Act 1 indicate.

Ellie at this point is somewhat less defined as a character. We learn more about her later in the play, particularly in Act 1, Scene 5, when it becomes clear just how much strength and courage and vulnerability she has. For now, she comes across as loving and supportive, which is exactly what Jack both needs and wants her to be at this point in his career and in their relationship.

Also in this scene, a significant development in the play's dialogue comes into focus. Jack's dialogue, and that of most of the black characters, is written phonetically, coming across as informal and uneducated. As such, it helps define the larger cultural and societal differences between the two races. At the same time, there are points at which despite his apparent lack of learning, Jack's observations and comments land with the powerful impact of a left hook, making the point that even though he might not have fancy words he's still able to see what's around him, understand it, and explain it. Sometimes this is conscious, as in the point where he talks about how his victory will affect other black people, and sometimes it's unconscious, such as his comments to Tick at the beginning of the scene. Specifically, this refers to his comment that he's trying to "wake ... up" his opponent, which can be seen as representative of what he's trying to do to white people as a whole.

The key thematic element developed in this scene is the previously discussed idea of Jack's being the embodiment or representative of the hopes of black people across America. His comments on the subject make clear his perspective that he's not fighting for anybody but himself, and that he feels the kind of pressure Cap'n Dan was worried that Brady would feel in the previous scene, a pressure Jack encounters directly throughout the play. One question that is raised at this point and throughout the play, is whether he's right or wrong to resist this pressure and whether he's being selfish by focusing so exclusively on himself and what he wants. This possibility is suggested by his comment about smiling when he feels good and by his antagonistic relationship with Clara, one of several characters who represent the anger and frustration of people whose hopes Jack seems to be denying. In the bigger picture of the play as a whole, however, because its story is essentially one of a man's struggle to hold on to his sense of personal integrity, it would seem that the resentment of Clara and the other black characters isn't a comment on Jack's attitude so much as it is a reaction. In other words, the play isn't making a statement, the characters are. It must be remembered that in addition to being the focus of hope by black people Jack is also the focus of hatred by whites. This element is developed throughout the first act, climaxing with his conviction on trumped up, racially motivated criminal charges. The point here is this: both manifestations of societal or community feeling provide obstacles for Jack to overcome, challenges he faces in his struggle to preserve his personal integrity. This struggle is the core element of the play's conflict, anchoring both its action and its central theme.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Outside the arena in Reno, where Brady and Jack are going to be weighed in before the fight, several things are going on: a dice game, bets on the outcome of the fight, and a performer in blackface performing for a group of fans unable to get into the arena itself. The performer jokes about how he hopes he's not the only black person around, saying he won't be able to bury Jack after he's defeated all by himself. As the crowd around him laughs, he jokes about delivering the sermon over his body, misquoting the Bible and singing a racist song about a "coon" wishing he was white.

A group of rangers arrives and announces that all weapons are to be confiscated. Amidst protests from the crowd, weapons are collected, and the blackface performer runs off. A moment later the crowd cheers as Brady arrives, followed by Cap'n Dan, Fred, and several reporters. After Brady is weighed, he tells the reporters he's there to defend his title at the request of the public, that he'll do his best, and that he's sure he's not going to disappoint anybody. Jack arrives, followed by Goldie and Tick. There are no cheers as he appears, a fact he comments on as he greets Cap'n Dan as the referee. Ignoring racist comments from the crowd, Jack steps on the scale and greets Brady as a friend. After his weight is announced, Jack makes his statement to the press, thanking Brady for the opportunity to take a shot at the title and saying he's glad that after all the negative talk, everything comes down to just a plain fight.

The white people in the audience remain silent, but there is the sound of a few people clapping. The white people move aside and reveal a small group of black people. Brady prepares to leave, and the white crowd urges him on to victory. As Brady exits, followed by Cap'n Dan, Fred, the press, the rangers and the crowd, Jack speaks to the black people, one of whom is a Deacon who tells Jack they're all going to be praying for him and that he's fighting for all of them. Jack turns to one of the young men with the Deacon and asks what winning is going to do for him directly. When the young man can't answer, the Deacon says Jack's winning will give him self-respect. Jack says if he doesn't have it now, all the boxing and all the praying in the world won't help him get there. As Tick tries to get him to leave, the Deacon accuses him of not "thinkin' cullud." (colored). Jack angrily says he "thinks colored" all the time, but not the same way the Deacon and the others do, suggesting that they see themselves as victims.

One of the rangers re-enters and calls Jack into the ring. After he exits, the Deacon prays aloud for Jack's victory, for white people to take a lesson from it, and for Jack to find the strength to fight for his people. They sing a spiritual. Lights change, and Cap'n Dan stands alone in a spotlight. In a poetically written speech he talks about how dangerous it will be if Jack wins, saying it's all right to have colored people excel in other areas but not as a World Heavyweight Boxing Champion. He also says that if Jack wins, everybody has to look for another White Hope, and another and another until white domination is restored.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

Several firsts happen in this scene: black directly confronts white and vice versa, Jack directly confronts those who see him as more than just a fighter, and in a non-story-related development, a character confronts the audience. Several characters have spoken a single line or two on several occasions, but this is the first time the device of direct address is expanded into a soliloquy or a speech in which a character speaks at length about his or her innermost feelings. This device is used several times throughout the play, generally to provide deeper or alternative perspectives on the action. It serves to involve us in the action directly, rather than leaving us simply as observers. The purpose of this particular soliloquy is to illuminate the way racism works, setting limits on the success of black people. An interesting point to note is that other soliloquies in this play function to challenge the audience's perceptions of themselves, meaning that there's some possibility that Cap'n Dan's soliloquy is challenging the audience to ask whether they themselves put boundaries around black people, defining and even limiting how and where their success manifests itself.

Jack's confrontation with the Deacon and the Young Man directly states Jack's perspective, and the play's theme, for the first time: integrity and self-respect have to come from within rather than an outside source. It could be argued that this philosophy is an unspoken but implied component of the so-called American Dream, that every citizen has the right to be a successful, fulfilled individual. This idea is supported by the reference in Act 2, Scene 5, by the Young Black German to how life in America must be good. This means Jack's story and this play ultimately are about the living of that dream, an ironic proposition given that in the time the play was set, black opportunities to live the dream were severely limited in the ways just defined by Cap'n Andy, among others. Nevertheless, it's a proposition supported throughout the play by Jack's actions and passions, his conviction that black people, any people, have the same rights as whites. His confrontation with the Deacon dramatizes the way they differ on how such equality is to be realized. Jack is clearly determined to fight for it, while the Deacon seems to expect other people to win equality for him. The play clearly makes the point that ultimately, Jack's way is better, truer, and more rewarding.

Blackface was, and on rare occasions still is, a style of makeup in which white people darkened their skin and exaggerated their features to satirize, or mock, black stereotypes, culture, and beliefs. It was most common in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the earlier part of the twentieth, was found most often in so-called minstrel shows, and disappeared from popular culture when its intolerance and racist perspectives became too apparent to be ignored. The comments and actions of the blackface performer in this scene are typical of the so-called "humor" of similar performers, and symbolizes the hate and fear white people generally had, and even today continue to have, of black people, reactions all too apparent in other aspects of this scene and other scenes throughout the play.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

A large crowd of black people is gathered outside a building that has the sign *Cafy de Champion* on it. A band plays and a barker shouts into a megaphone, inviting the people of Chicago to the cafy's opening. The crowd cheers as Jack enters in an expensive white car accompanied by Ellie, Tick, and Goldie. The band becomes quiet as Jack tells the crowd he's proud and happy to be making Chicago his new home. A man in the crowd jokes about Brady's head being mounted on the wall inside. Jack says it's not there but talks about the decorations that are. He then introduces Ellie as his fiancy, Goldie, and Tick, who holds up the championship belt. The crowd cheers, the band plays, and Jack leads Ellie and the other black people into the club. The police disappear, and Goldie and Tick are left alone. They talk about their concern about Jack calling Ellie his fiancy, referring to states in which mixed marriages are illegal.

Smitty appears, and Goldie tells Tick to take the belt into the cafy. After Tick has gone, Smitty warns Goldie about some approaching protesters. Goldie tells him to fetch some police, Smitty tells him the police will show up unbidden, Goldie comments worriedly that there will be a riot, and Smitty, probably ironically, says he never thought of that. A moment later a crowd of marchers enters, carrying placards that denounce the cafy. As Jack and the black people enter from the club, the police arrange themselves to keep order. The marchers begin to preach and the black people begin to become angry, Jack tells them to let the marchers finish, the black people urge him to fight back, and all the while the marchers' protests are escalating in intensity. At one point one of the black people rushes at the marchers, but Jack holds him back. He tells the marchers to sing their hymns if they want, and requests one in particular. The black people laugh, the marchers say it's not a joking matter, and the black people complain about always being persecuted, but Jack says that the marchers protest against everything, adding it's a good thing that he and the other black people are actually being included in something. He then instructs the black people to bring chairs out of the club so they can sit and listen in comfort to the marchers, who begin to move off when they see they're not getting the reaction they'd planned.

Donnelly and Mrs. Bachman enter and introduce themselves. Another white man enters with them, watching in silence as Jack invites them into the cafy, and Mrs. Bachman refuses, asking whether Ellie is inside. When Jack says she is, Donnelly goes in. Jack invites Mrs. Bachman to sit down and suggests that Ellie will be glad to see her. Long silences greet both his comments. Donnelly comes back out, saying Ellie is refusing to come out. Mrs. Bachman bursts into tears, and Donnelly starts to move her away. Jack says he'll bring Ellie out, Goldie asks where Donnelly can be reached, and Jack says he'll make sure Ellie gets over there to see him. Donnelly advises him to send Ellie home. The marchers follow him, Mrs. Bachman, and Dixon out. Alone with Jack, Goldie comments they're living in lively times and goes into the cafy.

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

The first important thing to note about this scene is the way in which what happened at the boxing match is revealed. Rather than by making an outright announcement or by showing us the immediate aftermath of the fight, this scene picks up the action at a point that must be at least several weeks after the fact, letting us know what happened through a combination of comments or incidents. This technique of releasing information a piece at a time to reveal a truth is an effective way of building suspense and keeping us engaged, creating a mini-climax within the scene as the emotions of Jack and the crowd reach the highest, most intense point of the play so far as Tick holds up the belt.

Aside from proving Jack's earlier point about how winning will probably make things more difficult for him and for other black people, the appearances of the marchers and particularly of Mrs. Bachman function as important turning points in the plot, sending it in a new and different direction. While the potential danger of the marchers is quickly defused by Jack's charm and his clever manipulation of the situation, the confrontation with Mrs. Bachman and Donnelly is much less easily resolved, foreshadowing the central conflict in the latter half of this act, defined by Jack's relationship with Ellie. This conflict is also foreshadowed by Goldie's comments to Tick about the illegality of mixed-race marriages, and Goldie's final ironic comment about living in lively times.

Throughout this scene a key aspect to Jack's character is reinforced, the way that he simply is who he is, just a man, not a symbol to anyone, enjoying his professional success and his relationship with a pretty girl, living honestly and directly without anger. All these aspects of his personality are challenged throughout the rest of the play. Sometimes he meets those challenges successfully, and other times he fails, but all the way through his struggle and his success come from the same place, his fight to be himself and simply live his life on his terms. This scene finds him at his strongest, a point to which he returns at the end of the play. In between, however, are some dark times, beginning with events set in motion in the following scene.

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

District Attorney Cameron is confronted by several people demanding that Jack be arrested. These include a man outraged at the fact that Jack's involved with a white woman, a woman complaining that Jack was involved in a shooting, and an extremely well-spoken black man who says that Jack's behavior is a disgrace to all colored people. Cameron's response to these complaints is that both Jack and Ellie are of legal age to do what they please, that Jack was the victim of the shooting (an attack by Clara), and that the well-spoken black man has a good point. He promises not to let the matter rest and ushers the three complainants out.

Three people who have been listening to the confrontation come forward: Smitty, a detective, and the man who accompanied Donnelly and Mrs. Bachman when they came to the cafy, Dixon. After talking about how a good White Hope could resolve the situation, Cameron tells the detective to bring Ellie in. After he exits, Smitty suggests that there are a number of charges that could be brought against Jack, but Cameron says they're all relatively minor and adds that people want Jack's "head on a plate."

The detective enters with Ellie and moves away with Dixon and Smitty. Cameron then begins an interrogation, which leads Ellie to explain that she was in Australia to get a divorce and that she met Jack on the boat on the way back after asking the Captain to introduce them. Cameron's questions about how they behaved on the boat suggest that he's trying to get her to say he got her drunk, drugged her, or gave her money or gifts. Ellie answers calmly, replying in ways that Cameron says deflect his questions very well. Ellie says she didn't come to tell lies, and agreed to come, even though Jack was against it, because she wanted to head off any attempts to get at Jack through her. After she admits to loving him, to finding him physically attractive, and to being proud that he feels the same way about her, Ellie suddenly asks why people can't leave them alone and starts to cry. Cameron suggests there's no reason to be ashamed of what she's doing but Ellie says she's not, angrily protesting that she's crazy about him and that she's discovered the joy of sexual passion. When Cameron suggests that some of what she's done might seem unnatural, Ellie's tears suddenly turn to anger. She swears at him in a way that stage directions describe as having "Negro inflections" and exits.

Smitty, the Detective, and Dixon come forward as Cameron comments that there's no evidence from Ellie that Jack did anything illegal to win her over. He turns to Dixon, asking whether there's anything in federal law he can use. Dixon says he needs to do some research, but he adds that there's a possibility of using a law called the "Mann Act." Cameron says that law is used to control prostitution, but Dixon tells him it's defined as transporting a person across a state line for immoral purposes. Cameron says he's going to have Jack watched, and Dixon tells him not to bother because his men have been doing it all along.

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

The action of this scene is built around a general desire to bring Jack down, a desire that seems to be fueled by his not behaving in the way black people are apparently supposed to behave. This holds true not only for most of the white people in the scene, but also for the one black man, whose appearance at this point in the play is a powerful contrast to that of the other black characters and to Jack in particular. The most obvious component of this contrast is the way he speaks, with a breadth of vocabulary and clarity of thought that's not only completely different from every other black character in the play, but also more sophisticated than many of the white people. He actually sounds artificial, giving rise to the impression that he's trying too hard to fit in, while his ideas indicate his belief that other black people should be like he is and conform with what they think are white standards of behavior. All this couldn't be more different from Jack, who simply is who he is, speaks as he speaks and does what he does in the apparent belief that he doesn't have to work to fit in. In other words, the black man in this scene presents an image of a man who feels that just being himself isn't enough, whereas for Jack it is. This apparent difference in attitude reinforces the value of personal integrity, developing another facet of the play's central theme.

The desire to bring Jack down is very much in evidence throughout the play's second and third sections, in which Cameron's questions and plans are clearly defined by the same agenda as the complainants had in the first section. Ellie's defense against that agenda is extremely effective with her forthright responses to Cameron's questions indicating that she, like Jack, is simply being honest with and about herself. This is true not only of the manner in which she answers, but also of the content of those answers, with the story of how she asked to meet Jack, in particular, defining her as someone who knows what she wants and sees no reason that she shouldn't have it. She, too, is clearly living and acting from a place of personal integrity, and in so doing presents another way in which the play's central theme is dramatized. All this is not to say that she's without vulnerability. Her tears at the climax of her confrontation with Cameron indicate not only that she feels the attacks and resentment of society more deeply than Jack, but is also more emotionally involved in the relationship than he seems to be. Her weeping foreshadows her deepening despair throughout the play and also her eventual suicide.

At the end of the scene it becomes clear that the societal net is closing around Jack, and that white society is going to get what it seems to want. The White Hope, for control and domination over black people, is going to appear not in the form of another boxer, but in the form of Dixon, who in his own way, will send Jack down for the count.

Act 1, Scene 6

Act 1, Scene 6 Summary

Late at night in a hotel room in Wisconsin, Jack and Ellie sit in bed. Jack tries to get Ellie to go for a late night swim with him, but she refuses. He tries to tickle her into agreeing but she tells him to stop, saying he's hurting her sunburn. He tries to soothe her pain by pouring champagne on her, and then tries again to get her to go swimming with him. She asks whether he feels all right, saying he looks a little strange. Jack realizes she's talking about how he looks when he's sunburned, and they laugh about how they react differently to the sun. Jack comments that many people look better in the shade.

After talking about having to leave the next day, and after Jack reassuringly answers Ellie's questions about whether he's tired of her, Jack turns down the kerosene lamp and the two of them prepare to go to sleep. As Jack softly sings a verse of a blues song, Ellie sleepily imagines staying out in the sun so long that her skin darkens, coloring her hair, becoming somebody new, moving in with Jack and nobody ever knowing she's actually white. Jack says it wouldn't work, calling her honey and saying that everybody knows he's "gone off colored women." This leads him to talk about how he never calls Ellie by her name because honey just seems to fit and in a poetically written speech about how he used to play with and taste honey when he was a child. As he tells her, Dixon and five white men burst in, and, after a scuffle, arrest Jack for violating the Mann Act. As Ellie and Jack get dressed, Jack asks how much prison time he's facing and whether Ellie will be charged. Cameron tells him the charge carries 1 to 3 years' imprisonment, and Ellie is clear.

As Dixon and the other men lead Jack and Ellie off, a bizarrely dressed black man named Scipio appears. In a long speech written both crudely and poetically, he talks angrily about black people trying to be white, using Jack as an example of how black people want success on white men's terms and saying that living that way is another form of slavery. He urges black people to be themselves, live according to their rich heritage, and accept their own power.

Act 1, Scene 6 Analysis

The key element in this scene is the creation of contrast, a story-telling technique generally used in one of two ways, to define an aspect of character or story by showing its opposite, or to make a dramatic or thematic point. Both uses of the technique appear in this scene.

The first contrast is visual and would be both stark and effective when seen onstage, the contrast between Jack and Ellie's skin color. This is, in fact, part of a larger contrast that makes the dramatic point about their feeling the same in spite of appearing to be so

different. They're comfortable with each other, unafraid of revealing themselves, and honest about confronting the sometimes napve but always genuine questions about who and what and why they are. In other words, we see again how they're both living in a place of personal integrity.

Another contrast is the way the gentle intimacy of the conversation between Ellie and Jack is so clearly different in tone and energy from the violence they face at the hands of Dixon and his men. This dramatizes the play's central dramatic tension between black and white, but also the thematic tension between the peace and integrity possible when people are living according to their own sense of self and the anger of people who believe that a different kind of behavior should be the rule. This same contrast is dramatized, albeit in a jarringly dissimilar way, by the appearance of Scipio, whose stark and vitriolic anger about black people trying to be white turns everything we've believed and understood about Jack on its ear. As a result of this speech we're forced to ask ourselves whether Jack really is living according to his own devices and desires, or whether he really is being the kind of slave that Scipio describes. We're also forced to ask ourselves whether our expectations of people's behavior are appropriate or even necessary.

Scipio's speech is another example of the play's use of soliloquy, first discussed in relation to Act 1, Scene 3. Its power lies in its uneducated poetry and its use of harsh language and visceral imagery, most particularly that of the iron collar around the necks of black people, shockingly evocative of slavery. While this language provides an effective contrast to the much more educated but similarly articulate speech of the black man in Act 1, Scene 5, the two men are essentially delivering the same message. This is, in turn, the same message that the white men are conveying with their actions in arresting Jack, and that the Deacon and the Young Black Man conveyed in their conversation with Jack before the boxing match. They all speak and act according to how they think other people should behave from a place of expectation. Jack is one of the very few characters in the play who neither speaks nor acts according to that belief. Ellie is another. Neither cares how people think they should behave, and it even seems as though they don't really have any opinions on how they should act, either, aside from treating him with respect. Again and again, in words and in actions, they prove that all they want to do is live in the way they believe they were meant to live. In other words, it's the American Dream: to live free and true, to succeed, and to be left alone. Again, the irony is that it's a black man struggling to live this dream, which in the play is held to be the sole right of whites, a belief that dominated America for decades and which continues in some parts of the country even today.

One last important contrast can be found in the way that Jack responds to being arrested as opposed to the act of arrest itself. His fighting back when he is first attacked is purely instinctive, but when the lights come on and he realizes what he's faced with, both in terms of the actual number of men present and the societal influence they represent, he acts in the same way as he did when previously confronted with the protestors--with patience and perspective. This is demonstrated by the way he quietly goes along with what's happening, when he expresses his concern about Ellie, and when he asks the somewhat surprisingly practical question of how long a prison term

he's facing. This aspect to his character, this sense of perspective, has played a key role in helping him live the thematically important philosophy of staying true to himself, but it becomes more and more difficult for him to connect to as the action of the play continues.

Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 7 Summary

At her home in Chicago, Mrs. Jefferson waits for news from Jack's trial. Waiting with her are Clara and a small choir, quietly singing a hymn as a Pastor prays. As he finishes and as the choir stops singing, Mrs. Jefferson apologizes for not being able to offer much hospitality. As Clara exits to make a pot of coffee, Mrs. Jefferson tells her to look to see whether anybody's coming with news. Clara looks out the window, says all she sees is a group of men getting ready to play baseball and then goes into the kitchen.

As the Pastor comments on how lucky Mrs. Jefferson is to have Clara taking care of her, Mrs. Jefferson worries about how long it's taking to get news from the courthouse and then reminisces about Jack as a child. She recalls how hard it was to teach him the right way to behave, how he was always determined to do things his own way, and how she tried to punish him physically, saying if she'd tried harder they might not be in this situation today. At a knock on the door everybody prepares for bad news, but they relax when Rudy and three other young black men enter, wearing baseball jackets and caps and carrying suitcases. As Clara enters, Rudy explains that they got a message to come by and that they're friends of Jack. Clara is immediately suspicious, but then Tick enters with the news that Jack has been fined $20,000 and sentenced to 3 years in prison. As Mrs. Jefferson reacts with shock and Clara reacts with anger, Tick explains that Jack has a week left on bail and the right to appeal. Clara angrily talks about wanting to take revenge on Ellie for doing this to Jack, but Mrs. Jefferson tells her Ellie isn't so bad, explaining that Jack brought her to visit once and suggesting that they might even love each other. Clara exits, ridiculing that idea.

As Mrs. Jefferson apologizes for Clara's behavior, Jack and Goldie enter. Jack and Mrs. Jefferson reassure each other that they're all right, with Mrs. Jefferson promising to visit in prison both soon and often. Clara re-enters running and embraces Jack, saying she's not going to let him go to jail. Jack tries to get rid of her, she insists, Mrs. Jefferson supports her, and it looks as though an argument's about to start when Tick, standing at the window, signals to Jack. As Clara goes to the window to see what Tick is looking at, as the Pastor worries that Jack is about to make things worse, and as Goldie comments nervously, Jack explains his plan. Putting on Rudy's coat and shirt, he says there are police detectives outside, adding that he's planned to escape to Canada disguised as a member of Rudy's baseball team, and that once he's there he'll get on a boat for England. The Pastor reminds him jumping bail is a serious offense, but Jack angrily says he's worked too hard to lose 3 years of his life in jail and end up broke. He talks about wanting to live like he's got to, about taking his turn as champion of the world, and about how the world isn't just the 48 states.

Mrs. Jefferson shouts out her thanks to God for delivering her son from jail as Rudy urges Jack to hurry. Clara begs to go with him. When Jack refuses, she realizes Ellie is going to meet him in England and starts to run out the door to tell the detectives what's

going on. Members of the choir hold her back and sing loudly to drown out her shouting, waving as Jack says his goodbyes and exits with the other baseball players.

Act 1, Scene 7 Analysis

In this scene we learn, through Mrs. Jefferson's reminiscences, that Jack has always lived according to his own mind, heart, and desires no matter how hard she tried to convince him how dangerous that could be. Her memories simultaneously reiterate previous developments in the play's theme and foreshadow both Jack's planning to escape jail and his speech to the Pastor, with memory, action, and conversation combining to reinforce the thematically relevant idea that Jack lives according to his own drives and desires and his personal sense of integrity. This idea is present throughout the play but is most dramatically active in this scene, the high point of Jack's confrontation with white authority so far and, therefore, the climax of the act.

Jack's comment about the world's not being limited to the US foreshadows the conflict to come in the second and third acts as Jack roams the world in search of welcome for him and Ellie, for his career, and for his philosophy, a search that proves essentially hopeless as the action of the rest of the play dramatizes.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

In a diplomatic office in London, England, Jack, Ellie, Tick, and Goldie attend an immigration hearing supervised by Sir William. Coates is the first of several witnesses to object to Jack's presence in England, but his complaints are rebutted by Treacher, Jack's British lawyer, and tactfully evaded by Sir William. The second witness is Mrs. Kimball, who makes racist remarks as she complains about the parties, noise, and destructive behavior that took place in the apartment that Jack and Ellie rented from her. . Treacher tells Sir William that Mrs. Kimball has been fully compensated for the damage and inconvenience, leading Sir William to call the next witness, Inspector Wainwright, who details charges and fines levied against Jack. Jack tries to explain the circumstances of one charge, Treacher explains that another has been dropped, and a witness named Bratby appears as a witness to a third, explaining what happened when he refused to arrange a match for Jack. Coates talks at length about how society has been disrupted, ignoring Sir William's attempts to keep order.

Jack is finally allowed to speak, saying it's taken him a long time to get used to living in a different country, and that he's sorry for all the problems he's caused as a result. He adds that he hasn't had many matches, but now that one has been arranged for him, he's sure there will be no problems. Sir William says Jack's crimes in America are none of England's concern, and that while he may have a certain lack of moral character, until he commits a serious crime of some sort--but then he's interrupted by Coates. He prompts Bratby to reveal that the match promised Jack has been canceled because the local council has refused to issue a license. Coates then says that because Jack's stated intention in coming to England was to have a career as a boxer, and because there's evidently no possibility that that will be allowed to happen, there's no reason for him to remain in England. Jack seems about to speak in response, but Sir William says that anyone living in England is free to change his means of earning a living if he wants. Jack gets up to go, followed by Goldie, Tick, and Ellie. He thanks Sir William for supporting him, says goodbye to Treacher, and agrees when Coates assumes he's leaving the country.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

This is the first in a series of scenes portraying the difficulties of life for Jack as he tries to pursue his American Dream elsewhere in the world. First stop is England, where he faces the same kind of resentment that he did back home. Only in the case of Mrs. Kimball is it clear that that resentment is racially motivated, but it's equally clear that Jack suspects similar motivations behind the actions of Coates, Bratby and even the well-meaning politeness and diplomacy of Treacher and Sir William.

In the middle of all of this, there are indications that Jack's sense of patience and perspective, clearly in evidence during many of the confrontations of the first act, are beginning to wear thin. This scene marks the first of a series of situations, first discussed in the context of Act 1, Scene 6, in which it becomes difficult for him to restrain himself and to view his circumstances with a degree of objectivity and realism. In other words, his temper begins to get the better of him, a process that builds to the tragically climactic confrontation with Ellie that results in her suicide.

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3 Summary

Scene 2--A Polish boxer arrives at an airport in France where he's met by a group of reporters who ask him, in French, how he feels about his impending fight with Jack. The fighter responds in French, bragging about how quickly he's going to win.

Scene 3--Before the fight with the Polish fighter, Tick tapes Jack's hands and fusses about keeping him calm. Ellie watches as Jack responds with increasing impatience, and asks Goldie when he enters how many people are there to watch. Goldie says it's a full house and asks Jack how he's doing. Jack angrily asks Tick to get him some water, and as Tick struggles to find the right way to communicate with a French assistant, Jack tells Goldie he's fine. Tick gets the water and gives it to Jack, who drinks and spits, saying he's got a bad taste in his mouth. Tick tries to get him to warm up, but Jack says he'll warm up in the ring, angrily saying that he doesn't need to warm up when he's fighting some "fifth rate geechee."

A French Promoter enters, saying it's time for the fight to begin. Ellie says she's going to her seat, but Jack asks her to stay behind, saying he doesn't want her to see what's about to happen. The Promoter reminds Jack to smile, and Jack says he's got it with him. As they exit, Tick comments that they won't be long.

Ellie waits, listening as the crowd roars and an announcer's voice is heard. After a few moments Smitty enters, reminds Ellie who he is, and asks how Jack is doing, saying he heard he's a little moody and urging Ellie to not take it personally, he'll settle down once they find a place to call home. As the crowd roars in the background, Smitty asks whether they're considering settling in France, since it seems that the French like Jack. When Ellie doesn't respond, Smitty suggests that having no plans must be hard on her, and implies that she's expecting a baby. Ellie tells him to leave, he pushes to find out whether it's true, and Ellie refuses to answer, covering her ears as the roars of the crowd get louder. Smitty tries to reassure her that it's because Jack's winning and not because he's losing, but she gets more and more upset. Finally, Smitty asks her how long she can take this kind of pressure, saying she's not as strong as Jack is.

The roaring from the crowd has turned to angry booing and shouted comments. Jack, Tick, Goldie, and the Promoter rush in, with Jack covered in blood and everybody hurrying to get him and Ellie out of the building. The conversation hints that Jack lost his temper and the Polish fighter has been seriously hurt. As they all exit, Jack tells Ellie he's sorry.

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3 Analysis

These two scenes dramatize another encounter Jack has with life outside the 48 states. Scene 2 indicates how he and his accomplishments are perceived by Europeans, and

Scene 3 defines his reaction to that perception. Specifically, his reactions to Goldie and Tick demonstrate his growing frustration, while the offstage reactions of the crowd and his apparently relentless beating of the Polish fighter combine to indicate that that anger is close to the surface, volatile, and ready to explode. This scene again points out how Jack's patience is wearing thinner and thinner, with the way he returns from the fight covered in blood symbolizing both the emotional and physical blood he sheds as it becomes harder and harder for him to retain his self-control. He's operating less and less from a place of self-integrity, and more and more from a place of feeling persecuted, resentful, and deeply angry. His reference to having a bad taste in his mouth indicates that on some level, he's aware this is happening to him. It's possible that at this stage Jack's feelings are intended to represent similar feelings in black people as a group, the communal fury of being repressed for so long. If that is indeed the case, it's at this point that the idea that Jack is less of an individual and more of a symbol begins to take more concrete form, an ironic aspect to the story given that the idea has been rejected by Jack himself throughout the entire first act.

In the middle of all this, the conversation between Smitty and Ellie functions mostly to develop the character of Ellie, defining who she is becoming in response to Jack's increasingly volatile behavior. The possibility of a pregnancy seems to be just that, a possibility. Never mentioned in the play again, the idea seems to have been invented by Smitty in response to Ellie's listlessness, which, in fact, comes from a source that Smitty doesn't invent but that he perceptively and accurately defines: the fading of Ellie's courage. This scene makes us aware of this stage of Ellie's journey as a character, a stage that foreshadows her increasing vulnerability and eventual suicide. Once again, the contrast here is both vivid and purposeful, illustrating how Jack externalizes his anger and frustration while Ellie internalizes hers. At the same time, the audience is shown that both responses are the result of losing the ability to live from a place of integrity and, therefore, of losing faith in oneself, one's choices, and one's beliefs.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

Fight promoter Pop Weaver, Cap'n Dan, and Fred watch film of a fighter they all believe could be the next White Hope. After the film breaks and as they wait for it to be repaired, they discuss the possibilities of grooming and training him and the means of promoting the fight. After Fred expresses doubts that the fighter they've just been watching can do it, Cap'n Dan calls in Dixon, who explains that his office has been keeping an eye on both Jack and the black population at large, which he says is close to becoming economically and socially powerful. In carefully worded language, he suggests that if Jack were to come back to America, take on this fighter, and deliberately lose, there might be the possibility that his criminal sentence might be reduced and the threat of increased black power and frustration would be reduced.

Fred says the new White Hope can beat Jack fair and square, and he also says that he doesn't believe in fixed fights. Cap'n Dan says he doesn't like it, but argues that the current situation calls for bending belief systems a little. When Fred protests that the White Hope would never go for it, Cap'n Dan explains that he doesn't have to know about it, adding that because Jack's down and out, because he gets his freedom sooner rather than later, and because his mother's ill, he'll take the deal. Weaver asks whether Dixon can put the deal in writing, but Dixon says this meeting never actually happened. Eventually, Pop, Fred and Cap'n Dan all agree to the match, with Pop saying that the fight probably won't happen right away. Dixon says the country can probably afford to wait a while, and then he turns to the audience. In a short soliloquy, he talks about how people seem indignant about this kind of plotting, but then suggests they reconsider their indignation when they're out walking alone one night. He turns back to the other men, says goodnight, and exits.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

This scene essentially functions as another turning point, sending the plot in a new direction and defining its central focus from this point in the play to its conclusion. It also serves to reinforce the premise that the idea of a White Hope is not just connected to issues of boxing, but the societal issue of white control over blacks. The parallel is never clearer than in this scene, in which the symbolic value of the White Hope's victory over a black fighter is literally defined by Dixon as a victory of the white race, white society, and white values over those of black people.

Act 2, Scene 5

Act 2, Scene 5 Summary

This scene takes place in a sidewalk cafy in Germany, and begins with Jack arm-wrestling a drunken German soldier. As other German soldiers cheer, jeer and comment from the sidelines, Jack slowly presses his opponent's arm to the table. The Germans drink a toast with beer to him, and go out in search of a suitable memento for him. After they've exited, Tick and Jack wonder about how Germans make their beer, with Jack's referring to how it makes him sleepy, Tick's saying that a nap after lunch is the way they do things there, and Jack's saying he's mixing Germany up with someplace else.

Ellie enters with Ragosy, a theatrical producer. Jack tries to figure out which of several people who wanted to use him to promote their businesses he is. Tick finally reminds him, Ragosy exits to buy champagne, and Jack asks Ellie why she didn't send him to Goldie, who he says would have gotten rid of him. Ellie says Goldie went out to meet Smitty, and then as Jack and Tick discuss what Smitty might have wanted, Ragosy re-enters, pours champagne, and tries to convince Jack to join his show as a song-and-dance man. As Jack gets up and starts to sing, Ellie tries to get him to stop, saying they're in the street. Jack tells her he does what he wants when and where he wants, rapidly losing his temper and complaining about how she doesn't like anything anymore, about him or their life together. Ellie exits, Jack shouts at her to come back, Tick goes after her, and Jack tells him to bring Goldie. After he's gone, Jack toasts Ragosy and they drink to happy days.

The German officers re-enter, dragging with them a Young Black German Man, who, in broken English with a heavy German accent, demands to be let go. Instead, the officers present him to Jack as his "suitable memento." When he sees that the Young Man is becoming angry, Jack tells him to stay calm and asks where he's from. The Young Man explains he's from Africa, and the German officers point out scars on his face that he explains are tribal markings. He again begins to get angry with the Germans, but Jack pushes him into a chair and convinces the Germans to leave. He makes a joke about how he and his fellow "darky" can get acquainted by "chomp[ing] a few bananas," and the Germans exit, laughing loudly.

Jack sits and pours drinks for himself and the Young Man, who recognizes him and asks whether life in America is good. Jack says it is sometimes, adding that he hasn't been there in a while. The Young Man comments that it's a good skill to have, making people laugh, and adds that it must hurt Jack to be away from his home so long. Jack says it does and that it must hurt the Young Man to be away from his home, but the Young Man explains that he's in Germany studying so he can go back, adding that after the coming war he'll be free to have more influence. He compares what he's going to do with what Jack has already done, getting away from slavery and becoming "ser bekinnink-man" (the beginning man). Jack says he hasn't tried to begin "nothing," but then the Young Man laughs and says when he goes back to Africa, he should start so much nothing.

Goldie enters running, looking for Jack, and the Young Man gets up to leave, offering Jack a token of respect from his father that he says is protection from evil spirits. Jack accepts it and wishes the Young Man all the best. The Young Man exits, saying goodbye and referring to Jack by the name "Boxer."

Jack turns to Goldie, who says they've been offered a match. He starts to explain the circumstances, but Jack forestalls him by asking how much he gets for losing it, saying he just had a feeling that that was going to be the way things were. Goldie tries to explain what Smitty told him about how the deal came about, but Jack asks again about the money. Goldie explains that he's guaranteed $100,000 and a reduction of his prison sentence to 6 months. After talking about which round Jack is meant to take the fall in, Jack tells Goldie to send Smitty a bottle of champagne. Goldie angrily asks how Jack plans to pay for it, which leads to an argument over whether Goldie should continue as Jack's manager. As the German officers re-enter with a rope, Jack says it's time for Goldie and him to go their separate ways. Goldie tries to backtrack, but as Jack takes one end of the rope and the Germans the other, Jack tells Goldie to take as much money as he needs to get home, and then he begins a tug-of-war with the Germans. Goldie tries to warn him, but Jack says it's the best he can do right now. The Germans pull him offstage.

Act 2, Scene 5 Analysis

This complex scene functions on two levels that at first seem to be exploring opposite points but which, in fact, function in the same capacity, inspiring Jack to move forward.

The first level of function is to show how low Jack is sinking. This isn't his lowest point (that happens in the following scene), but for now it seems that his sense of integrity, spirit, perspective, and love for Ellie have all disappeared, leaving him with a desire for booze, naps, and the occasional arm wrestle. Life is becoming a wasteful, lazy blur, a situation indicated by Jack's comment that Tick is thinking of someplace else, which suggests they've been in similar drunken situations in so many different places it's becoming difficult to tell them all apart. Ragosy's offer and Jack's response are further illustrations of how low Jack has fallen, with his transformation into a song-and-dance man both foreshadowing his professional appearance in a similar role in the following scene and also clearly echoing the foolish, racist antics of the Blackface Performer in Act 1, Scene 3.

Jack's joking with the German officers reinforces the idea that he's becoming a clown, as does the Young Man's comment about Jack's making people laugh. However, this is the only occasion in their scene together that functions on this level. The rest of their conversation operates on the scene's second level, reminding Jack of who he truly is, what he's accomplished, and why it's important. In other words, in character and perspective, the Young Man is a clear parallel to Jack, in everything from the way in which they are both relatively inarticulate to their mutual determination to escape the shackles of slavery to the Young Man's reference to them both being "beginning" men. This is a reference not only to Jack's earlier success and apparent leadership of the

black cause, but also one of the final lines of the play in which Jack refers to himself as "new," or beginning. At that point he really is starting a new life. At this point, however, the old life is still in control. Also on this level, the reference to slavery echoes Scipio's similar reference at the end of Act 1, Scene 6, but in this situation reminds Jack that his triumph as a boxer is, in fact, an escape from slavery and a triumph of individuality and of personal integrity. This idea is reiterated by the Young Man's using the word "boxer" instead of Jack's name, indicating that that's his identity, that he's meant to be a boxer, and that in living as a boxer he's living from a clear sense of identity and integrity.

The Young Man's message, both to us and to Jack, is clear. What's just as clear is that Jack is unready and/or unable at this point in the play to hear it. This is indicated in several ways, including his previously mentioned laziness and the tug of war at the end of the scene, a visualization of the way he's being pulled into the darker, more-volatile, less-motivated side of himself. This situation is dramatized further by his reaction to Ellie, which also shows how close to the surface his anger and frustration are and serves to move Ellie further along the path of disillusionment and sadness that eventually leads to her suicide.

Jack's unreadiness to hear the Young Man's message is also indicated by the ease with which he accepts the offer to throw the fight, something he never would have done in Act 1 when he was fully and honestly living according to his true sense of who he was. As previously mentioned, his lowest point is yet to come, but the Young Man has planted a seed, the possibility of Jack's future redemption. The flower grown from that seed, however, doesn't blossom until the end of the play. First, some more manure's got to be thrown on the ground of Jack's soul in which it's been planted.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

This scene takes place on the stage of Ragosy's cabaret. After a juggler finishes his act, Ragosy enters and, speaking in Hungarian, introduces a scene from the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, played out by Ellie as Little Eva and Jack as Uncle Tom. As Jack/Tom sings a spiritual about the Spirits Bright, the audience begins to moan and boo. The song stops, Jack looks at the audience uncertainly, and then Ellie/Eva sees a friend coming, and Tick appears as Topsy. Tick/Topsy and Eva/Ellie perform another short scene from *Uncle Tom*, Tick/Topsy sings and dances, Jack/Tom joins him, and for a while the audience seems to be enjoying themselves, but then the booing starts again, louder this time. Ragosy appears and tries to calm the audience, eventually pulling Tick from the stage and leaving Jack and Ellie to go on. They play Eva's death scene. The audience becomes more restless and angrier. Jack glares at them, and Ragosy again enters and tries to calm them. This time it doesn't work. Ellie runs from the stage, the music stops, and the lights go out.

Mrs. Bachman, Ellie's mother, enters on the opposite side of the stage, speaking about how everybody deep in their hearts is afraid of "blackness," describing all the dark and evil and frightening things the word "black" invokes. She says she hates what she's saying and wishes it wasn't that way. She adds that the people in the audience can go ahead and hate her if they want, but then she suggests that they won't understand that what she's saying is true until what's happening to her and to Ellie happens to them.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a novel written in the 1850's by Harriet Beecher Stowe in which the black characters are portrayed as illiterate, foolish slaves and clowns, both adoring of and subservient to their white masters, particularly the childlike Little Eva. From a contemporary perspective, the book's views are deeply racist to the point of being offensive, which means that having Ellie, Tick, and especially Jack play out scenes from the book is an extremely powerful illustration of how far Jack has fallen from his ideals, his goals, and his sense of integrity. This scene follows through on the foreshadowing in both the scene with the Blackface Performer and Jack's singing and dancing with Ragosy in the scene immediately preceding this one, illustrating how Jack has become a clown, a parody of his former self. The booing of the audience is another manifestation of this idea, contrasting vividly with the cheering with which he was greeted earlier in the play. This is the lowest point for Jack in the play so far, and as such, it marks the climax of the second act, moving him closer to the simultaneous anger and desperation that fuel his eruptions of rage and frustration that, in turn, conclude both the third act and the play.

Mrs. Bachman's soliloquy follows the pattern established in Cap'n Dan's, Scipio's, and Dixon's earlier soliloquies, all of which challenge the audience to look deep within themselves and examine their own feelings, experiences and prejudices. There are a few differences: Scipio is clearly challenging the black people in the audience, Dixon and Mrs. Bachman are challenging the whites, and Cap'n Dan challenges everybody. Also, Dixon's and Cap'n Dan's language is relatively polite, while Mrs. Bachman's is more confrontational, and Scipio's is extremely raw. Ultimately, however, the purpose of all three soliloquies is the same, which is to force the audience into experiencing the play and its story in a personal way, not by just watching it, but by defining, and perhaps even changing, their perspectives on race.

Act 2, Scene 7

Act 2, Scene 7 Summary

Jack and Ellie wait on a train platform. Tick enters and tells them there might be a train later that evening. Ellie asks Jack what they're going to do, but he speaks sharply with her and tells Tick to keep her occupied. Smitty comes in and gives Jack a telegram, saying his mother's ill, suggesting Jack should go back to America right away, and saying there might be a chance of a deal with the legal authorities. Jack doesn't appear to be paying attention, so Smitty tries more urgently to persuade him to go. Jack tells him to go away, and Smitty starts to leave, but then he turns and asks Jack why he's being so stubborn, asking whether it's all about keeping the championship title a little longer. Jack says the championship means nothing to him, saying it's something he's stuck with, and demanding a chance to fight the new White Hope. He says he's going to go to Mexico and wait there for the match, speaking in language that sounds as though he's daring the authorities to set it up. He then crumples the telegram, saying the match is all he's got left and referring to how his life took too much out of his mother. He angrily strikes himself on the forehead and Ellie tries to comfort him, but he tells her to leave him alone.

Act 2, Scene 7 Analysis

The beginning of this scene, with Jack and Ellie waiting for a train that they aren't even sure is coming, is symbolic of the state of Jack's life at this point, lacking direction, focus, and definition. The arrival of Smitty then functions on two levels, with the news about his mother defining yet another way in which Jack has become lost and the conversation about the fight defining the only way Jack can think of to find himself again. It doesn't matter that the fight Smitty's offering is actually a rigged fight; all he wants to do is let go of his past and move on with his life, something that he apparently thinks will happen after his fight with the new White Hope. The scene's final moments, in which Jack literally and physically attacks himself, visualize and symbolize the way he's been attacking himself throughout the act by drinking, losing track of his character, abusing Ellie, and enslaving himself to the perceptions of other people.

Act 3, Scene 1

Act 3, Scene 1 Summary

The funeral procession for Mrs. Jefferson enters, attended by a crowd of black people, press, and policemen. In the procession are Goldie, acting as a pallbearer, Clara, and the Preacher, who quotes the Bible and then leads the congregation in passionate prayers for Mrs. Jefferson's eternal peace. As Clara starts to cry, photographers try to take her picture. Clara becomes angry, and Goldie and the Pastor try to calm her, but Clara becomes hysterical, shouting that Ellie is to blame for Mrs. Jefferson's death by causing Jack to run away with her. A woman in the crowd slaps her, Clara falls onto the coffin calling out to Mrs. Jefferson, and the Pastor shouts to the crowd that feelings like Clara's are the work of the devil, and they have to beware of him. Scipio emerges from the crowd, shouting down the Pastor and saying that following white man's religion is another way that black people are perpetuating their slavery. He urges them to look in a mirror and see themselves, not the mirror of white men's eyes, seeing themselves on their terms. The Pastor calls for an officer to quiet him, and some of the other black people come to his aid. The police scuffle with them, and the crowd scatters.

Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis

This scene is a dramatization and representation of comments made by Dixon earlier, in Act 2, Scene 4, about increasing black power and frustration, with power represented by Scipio and frustration by Clara. Taking the point further, the confrontation between the black people and the police represents how black people are becoming less willing to accept the restrictions placed on them by white society and power structures. The tensions portrayed here increase the pressure on the white promoters, as portrayed in the following scene, and on Jack, as portrayed in subsequent scenes, to stage the fight with the White Hope sooner rather than later.

Act 3, Scene 2

Act 3, Scene 2 Summary

Cap'n Dan, Smitty, Pop Weaver, and Fred enter, commenting on newspaper articles about Jack and saying all the publicity he's getting is making it more possible than ever to promote the fight successfully. Pop suggests they try to convince him to retire instead, saying they'll still get the belt back, but Cap'n Dan says they can't let "a coon champ retire undefeated." Cap'n Dan talks about how bad he looks, having promised a fight and not being able to deliver. Fred tells him they should just go ahead and have it, talking about how their White Hope is in great shape but adding saying there's only one sure way they can win--wait long enough for Jack's legs to weaken. Cap'n Dan realizes that's a couple of years away, but Pop reminds him that making the agreement for the fight in the first place was a mistake while Smitty and Fred try to come up with ways to explain the continued delay. Finally, Cap'n Dan asks how broke Jack is, saying that any source of money can be cut off and anybody he's training with can be made to back off, suggesting that anything that can be done will be done to get Jack to agree to the fight. The four men exit, with Smitty, Fred, and Pop all arguing that the time isn't right and Cap'n Dan wondering which venue will be the right one for the fight.

Clara enters in a spotlight, urging in a soliloquy that the fight happen soon and saying there are black women rejected by Jack, black men and white men jealous of his success, and all kinds of people eager to see him brought down. She talks hopefully about the empty track of life ahead of him once he loses.

Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis

On a technical, storytelling level, this scene moves the plot further toward the climactic confrontation between Jack and the White Hope. On a symbolic level, the frustration of Cap'n Dan represents the frustration of racist white society with their lack of success in keeping black society in what is believed to be its place, an attitude that is summed up in Cap'n Dan's comment about "a coon champion." Also, on a symbolic level, Clara's soliloquy comments on the action from a different perspective than the other soliloquies. As opposed to challenging or confronting the audience, Clara's soliloquy echoes and reinforces the views of the white characters that it's time for Jack to be put in his place. This similarity of attitude proves the point made by Scipio in the previous scene, that Clara is seeing black people through white eyes, making her in this scene a symbol of the self-hatred Jack is fighting to overcome. This idea is reinforced by the juxtaposition of this scene with the visual image that starts the next: Jack's attacking a punching bag. The fact that he tires soon after the scene begins suggests that he's not yet ready to fight the fight in the way he has in the past. It takes a shocking, emotionally devastating catalyst to get him ready, the circumstances of which are the narrative focus of Act 3, Scene 3.

Act 3, Scene 3

Act 3, Scene 3 Summary

Coached by Tick, Jack spars with a punching bag, steadied by a Mexican named Paco. Jack tires quickly and ends the session, arranging with Paco, who calls him "Campeon" (Champion), to be there early the following morning for their next session. Tick takes off Jack's gloves and rubs him down, chatting about the new White Hope. Jack tells him to be quiet, but then he asks how much money Tick thinks he could get if he sold his gloves.

Dogs bark offstage as Ellie enters, wearing sunglasses and carrying a tray of food. As Tick talks about how well Jack is doing, Jack asks Ellie whether there have been any cables for him or any money coming in. When Ellie says there haven't, Tick tries to reassure Jack that everything will be fine. Jack tells him again to be quiet and just rub him down. As Paco exits, Ellie urges Jack to eat and suggests that Jack go in and wash. Jack asks whether she thinks he smells, and Ellie says that's not what she means, saying she wants to talk with him. Jack tries to get Tick to take her for a walk, but Tick says he's not walking around alone with a white woman in that part of the world, and he exits.

Jack tells Ellie to take off her sunglasses, saying he can't see her. Ellie comments that she didn't think he wanted to, and then she tries to talk him into going ahead with the rigged match with the White Hope, saying that things can't get much worse for them and that he's not "his own man anymore." As Jack mocks what she's saying, she tells him that by staying there in awful conditions he's living on the terms of other people, even more so than he would be if he deliberately lost the fight. After mocking her about her hopes for a nice home, he tells a story in soliloquy about his childhood, about visiting a traveling fair, getting into the ring with an old boxer, getting in a few good punches, and then being repeatedly maneuvered into a corner, hit with a piece of wood and knocked down. He says that's how life goes, talking about no matter what he does, how polite and respectful he is, life is always going to hit him on the back of the head. He then shouts that he doesn't want Ellie around, telling her to catch the 10 o'clock train. Ellie pleads, Jack threatens her, Ellie refuses to go, and finally Jack tells her he's completely turned off by just looking at her, blaming her for where he's gotten to in his life. Ellie says she despises him, and Jack says she's just like other white people. Ellie asks him whether he really means it, and Jack tells her to look into his eyes. She does and says, "You win, daddy," and she exits.

After she exits, Jack takes a drink from his water bottle, rinses and spits, and then starts to jab at the punching bag. El Jefe enters, and at first, Jack doesn't notice him, but then he realizes he's there and stops. El Jefe explains that he heard Jack shouting and didn't come in, offers Jack a drink that he refuses, and after Jack asks several times what he's there for, refers to Jack as a kind of angel, helping his black brothers. Jack begins to lose his temper, and El Jefe says he feels sorry for Jack. He says that he loves Mexico

even though he's had hard times there, but Jack doesn't love his country, and his country doesn't love him, adding that situations like that only create bad dreams for everybody.

A voice outside asks El Jefe in Spanish how it's going, and he says it's all right to come in. Dixon, Goldie and a Government Agent enter, Jack says simply that he's listening, and Goldie explains the new terms of the fight: a suspended sentence after fighting in Havana. It seems there's more, but Goldie can't go on. Dixon explains that there are now other charges facing Jack, including jumping bail. Jack comments on how US law can't touch him in Mexico, but the Agent says that it's possible for countries to work together to capture wanted criminals. El Jefe urges Jack to take the fight, and Goldie says if he doesn't, he'll end up an old man in prison Jack answers that it can't be much worse than ending up the way he already has. As he starts to leave, El Jefe pulls a gun, leading Jack and us to understand that he's a Mexican lawman. He and Jack face each other down, and Jack goes for the door. El Jefe prepares to shoot, Dixon tells him to aim for Jack's leg, and then Jack suddenly stops, moving backwards as Tick and two Mexicans enter, carrying Ellie's body. They explain that she threw herself into the well and broke her neck. Jack calls her "Honey," talks incoherently about what he did to her, and what "they" did. When Goldie asks whether there's anything he can do, Jack tells him to set up the fight because he's ready to take it.

Cap'n Dan enters and delivers a soliloquy about the fuss the press is making about the fight, how posters of the White Hope are up everywhere, how Brady is refereeing, and how neither he nor the White Hope is in on the arrangements for Jack to lose. He concludes by discussing how Jack will have to pass the belt publicly to a white fighter, where it belongs.

Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis

At the core of the various actions, reactions, and confrontations of this scene is a central point, which is to define who Jack is at this moment, essentially a man at rock bottom. Ellie sums it up when she says he's not his own man anymore. Physically, he's out of shape, and emotionally, he's frustrated and angry. Financially, he's been reduced to trying to sell the very tools he needs to make money, and spiritually, he's been defeated. Politically and racially, he's now nothing more than a tool for white power brokers. There's nothing left of the affable, confident, proud, self-defined and powerful individual he was at the beginning of the play. In boxing terms, he's down for the count, beaten not so much by the Great White Hope as he is by white intolerance, which in this play happens to be exactly the same thing.

Jack's anger at Ellie is simultaneously tragic, misguided, and essential. It is tragic because it leads to the death of the one source of unconditional love and support Jack ever had and misguided because Jack wrongly uses her as a scapegoat for his anger at all white people. It's essential for Jack because without a sudden shock like Ellie's suicide, it's doubtful that Jack would ever return to being the man he was. The confrontation with El Jefe suggests that if Ellie's body hadn't been brought in at exactly

that moment, Jack would have ended up imprisoned and he would have remained at rock bottom for the rest of his life. Instead, as the result of the profound awakening that is Ellie's death, an equally profound process of transformation begins, ending with the fight that also ends the play.

In the midst of all this are several small but very telling details. Paco's and El Jefe's reference to Jack as "campeon" (champion), which serves essentially the same function as the Young German Man's reference to him as "boxer" in Act 2, Scene 5, serves here to remind Jack of his true identity. The hungry barking dogs heard offstage and referred to by Ellie function as symbolic foreshadowing of the arrival of Dixon, Goldie, and the Agent, as well as the appearance by Cap'n Dan at the end of the scene, all hungry human dogs eager for the political and financial food Jack's fight with the White Hope will bring them. The fact that Dixon urges El Jefe to shoot Jack in the leg suggests that he still hopes the fight can and will go ahead, since there's little political value in having Jack appear to be a martyr, who was killed fighting to be a free black man. Finally, Cap'n Dan's comment, in a soliloquy that is essentially expository, that Brady is going to be refereeing the match, provides the finishing touch to the picture of complete manipulation, humiliation, and exploitation that Jack is facing.

Perhaps the most significant of all these small details is the fact that Ellie calls Jack "Daddy." She clearly and angrily chooses this word carefully, given that it so vividly echoes Clara's first appearance, in which she accused Jack of using her and throwing her away. By calling Jack Daddy, Ellie accuses him of using her in the same way, and in doing so raises an interesting question. If Jack has, in fact, used her, a white girl, has he therefore been doing what Scipio and others have suggested he's been doing all along, which is doing his best to be white and NOT living according to his own sense of self? This question is answered definitively in the play's climax, in which Jack fights the fight with the Great White Hope and loses, but does so on his own terms.

Act 3, Scenes 4 and 5

Act 3, Scenes 4 and 5 Summary

Scene 4 - To the accompaniment of a marching band, a group of black people collects signatures and money for a telegram of good wishes to be sent to Jack. The text of the telegram suggests that they're all fighting with him.

Scene 5 - As the black people exit, a crowd of white men enters, fighting to hear the narration of the fight from another white man standing atop a pillar and looking into the ring. A banner hangs over the scene, showing stylized representations of a black and white fighter in combat. Comments reveal that the fight has gone 10 rounds so far, and Jack still hasn't gone down.

As victims of the heat and excitement are taken away for medical treatment, and as a black boy offering water is angrily chased away by a white man, Pop and Smitty enter, coming out for air. Their exhausted conversation reveals that Jack and his team got the sign for him to fall two rounds ago, but Jack is still fighting. Fred enters, saying he warned everybody that this might happen, and that Jack's willfulness is creating the problem. Fred exits into the arena, the next round begins, the crowd comments on the action, and the Agent enters and has a whispered conversation with Pop.

Racist comments, along with narration of the fight, are heard from the crowd as Smitty enters with Rudy, the baseball player Jack traded places with earlier. The Agent tells him to change his shirt like he did before, get to the ring, and tell Jack to lose the fight like he agreed to. As Rudy exits into the arena, commentary from the crowd reveals Jack is beating the White Hope badly. The round ends, another man climbs up onto the pillar, and Pop tells Smitty to go to the ring and tell Fred (the White Hope's trainer) to throw in the towel (a signal in boxing that a fighter concedes defeat). The Agent tells Smitty to stay where he is as bets are taken in Jack's favor. Goldie is carried out by ambulance attendants, and the next round begins.

As commentary from the crowd continues, Goldie tells the Agent and Smitty he pleaded with Jack to stop the fight but he refused to listen. The commentary reveals that Jack is on the attack, and the White Hope is staggering, but then there's a switch and Jack is described as being "punched out," and giving ground. As the White Hope swings wildly with more and more punches hitting home, Jack staggers and finally falls. The roars from the crowd inside and outside the arena blend, the man on the pillar counts along with the referee, and, finally, Jack is counted out. As the crowd of white men celebrates, the Agent slips away, and Pop exits inside with Smitty. The crowd rushes into the arena, leaving the Negro boy who was earlier pushed away alone. He climbs onto the pillar to look in as security guards enter with Jack, followed by Goldie, Tick, and a pack of reporters.

Jack stands still, listening to the announcement of the White Hope's victory. After it's finished, the reporters ask him what happened, and Jack simply says he lost. The black boy on the pillar spits at him and runs off. A reporter asks him what "really" happened, and Jack jokes about how he never understood what was "really" about anything. Jack then turns to the audience and says if we have any "reallies," any explanations, that we should come forward and offer them. As a drum roll begins, he changes his mind, saying we're as new as he is. He tells everyone to step aside as a procession from inside the arena enters. The White Hope, his face battered and bloody and almost unrecognizable, is carried out on the shoulders of a crowd of cheering white men.

Act 3, Scenes 4 and 5 Analysis

The first thing to note about these two scenes is the visual contrast between the two crowds: the black crowd in Scene 4 and the white crowd in Scene 5. The second thing to note is the way that the black crowd in Scene 4 again suggests that Jack is fighting for an entire people, not just himself. Jack himself would probably continue to deny this is the case, but the story of this final climactic scene and the last image of the play confirm once and for all that in terms of the play rather than the character, that's exactly what's been going on.

The action of the fight symbolizes the struggle of black people as a race, a culture, and a community. The narration of that action performs the same function, which is the reason the scene has been written the way it is. The fight is not actually seen, but it is narrated instead. Specifically, the racist comments of the members of the white crowd, the way the black boy is chased off, and the way the Agent categorically refuses to let the trainer for the White Hope throw in the towel all represent the resentment of white society of the black race's fight and its determination to keep black people subservient. This technique creates the opportunity for dramatizing the societal perspective on what's going on, which is particularly important since the examination of societal perspectives on the race question is essentially the whole point of the play.

This point is further defined by what happens at the end of the fight. What the white crowd clearly sees as a victory, as symbolized by the final triumphant procession, is clearly intended to be perceived by the audience as a defeat. The White Hope is described as being battered to the point of being almost unrecognizable, representing the way that racist attitudes can be overcome if black people fight the way Jack fought, on their own terms and with a clear sense of personal integrity and truth. The point here is not that Jack lost, but that he lost fighting the way he wanted to, the way he always knew he could, as the "Boxer" and "Campeon" defined by the Young Man and El Jefe, with the clear sense of identity and purpose that made him, as Ellie says, "his own man."

As previously discussed, this climactic scene answers the question raised by Ellie's reference to Jack as "Daddy." Jack is not trying to be white, he is proudly and thoroughly himself, a black man who has fought the best fight he could on his own terms. He did not lose because he was told to, although it could be argued that the fact

that he loses after Rudy goes in to talk to him makes the opposite point. He did not lose because a fellow black man told him to, an idea that refers back to Scipio's points about black self-hatred. It has to be remembered, however, that we don't know what Rudy said or whether he even got to Jack at all. For all we know, he could have been like the black people in Scene 4 and told him to keep fighting. On the other side of the coin is the boy who spits at Jack and perhaps thinks he lost on purpose. In any case, Jack's manner as the play draws to its close and his reference to his being new just like us, present the definitive answer. Whatever the circumstances, he clearly defines his loss as a success. This idea is supported by his comments about "reallies," which suggests that every event is open to interpretation and his interpretation is that on some level, he won.

To look at this climactic moment of the play in another way, what needs no interpretation is that a new life is clearly beginning for Jack, the new beginning foretold in his conversation with the Young Man. Where interpretation does come into play is whether his new beginning as an individual also symbolizes a new beginning for black people as a community, a possibility that, if true, illustrates a secondary thematic point. This is the idea that fighting for one's rights, one's freedom, and one's sense of integrity can be perceived as success, and that the ability to struggle, and even the struggle itself, can be defined as a victory. If we accept the idea that Jack, as a character, is a symbol of his community, then this thematic point becomes valid. It indicates that his story is relevant not only to black people, but to anyone in any community fighting to live with integrity, dignity, and a desire to live the true American Dream: liberty and justice for all.

Characters

Eleanor Bachman

Eleanor (Ellie) is Jack's white girlfriend and love interest. After meeting Jack on a boat returning from Australia, she follows Jack to San Francisco rather than returning to her home in Tacoma, Washington. She is good-natured and supportive but not a bit naïve about interracial relations. Ellie is aware of the challenges Jack faces as a black man and is fiercely protective of him. Volunteering to be interviewed by Cameron, Ellie tells him her reasons for participating, saying, "I wanted to head off any notions you have of getting at him through me."

Contrary to the opinions of those opposing her relationship with Jack, Ellie truly loves him and has no desire other than to be with him. She suffers the scrutiny and judgment of others, only to face disbelief and disrespect rather than support and acceptance. At one point during her interview with Cameron, she is driven to tears, pleading, "why can't they leave us alone, what's the difference?"

Mrs. Bachman

Mrs. Bachman's objective is to get her daughter out of arm's reach of Jack. Although she appears infrequently during the course of the play, she surfaces to deliver an important dramatic monologue. Her speech is revealing-it helps the audience to understand her motivations concerning Ellie as well as those of other characters in the play. Her fear, her ingrained loathing for what she calls blackness, is described by association, "the black hole and the black pit, what's burned or stained or cursed or hideous, poison and spite and the waste from your body and the horrors crawling up into your mind."

Brady

Brady is the former Heavyweight Champion of the World and a possible contender chosen to win the title back from Jack.

Cameron

The district attorney for Chicago, Cameron is behind the efforts of Cap'n Dan and others, but for professional reasons rather than personal ones. He indicates this in a conversation about Jack, stating, "You know . . . if a good White Hope showed up and beat him it would take the edge off this." It would certainly take the edge off Cameron, who recognizes that revoking the fighter's privileges or charging him with a dozen misdemeanors would not help because "they want [Jack's] head on a plate."

Clara

Clara is a former lover of Jack's who has surfaced in his life to rekindle their relationship. Although she claims to be his common-law wife and that Jack is dishonoring her, Jack has a different story to tell. Clara does not deny Jack's accusations—that she left him for a pimp named Willie or that she sold off his clothes, ring, and silver brushes. She is determined to win Jack back, which can be witnessed in her saying, "you ain't closing up the book so easy, Daddy."

Clara cannot be silenced. The mistrust and jealousy she harbors for Ellie has become a personal crusade against her. To Clara, Jack is at Ellie's disposal. Ellie maintains Jack in her life simply for the purpose of her own amusement. Clara's anger towards Ellie is really a vehicle for social commentary. Ellie is, as Clara sees it, the force behind her oppression, merely on the basis of her color. Clara believes Ellie to be a catalyst for Jack's arrest and Mrs. Jefferson's death.

Cap'n Dan

He is described simply as a champion of earlier days. Cap'n Dan is the main force behind the group of white fighters, sportswriters, and promoters who would like to see Jack lose his title. He expends a great deal of energy and effort to make his dream a reality. For Cap'n Dan, Jack's victory is a threat not only to his social status and his reputation as a fighter but also to his white lifestyle. He sees Jack, and black citizens in general, as inferior. Jack's status as champion is more than a victory; it is an affront, an attack on his core belief system. Says Cap'n Dan:

I hold up his hand, and suddenly a nigger is Champion of the world. Now you'll say, Oh, that's only your title in sports—no, it's more. Admit it. And more than if one got to be world's best engineer, or smartest politician, or number one opera singer, or world's biggest genius at making things from peanuts.

Jack's victory has a profound effect on Cap'n Dan precisely because he feels a sense not only of superiority but of entitlement as a white individual. The idea that a black man attained the same success and status as Cap'n Dan is a threat to him. He has, in a sense, failed to live up to the white standard he has imposed on himself and to a belief system that says he is better than any black male, regardless of talent or ability.

Dixon

Offering his expertise as a federal agent, Dixon provides professional support in assisting the district attorney of Chicago in his apprehension of Jack. He suggests the use of the Mann Act, which leads to Jack's successful arrest.

Dixon also has a personal interest in seeing Jack brought to justice after he flees the country. In a meeting with Cap'n Dan and others, he states "When a man beats us out

like this, we—the law, that is—suffer in prestige, and that's pretty serious." And like Cap'n Dan, Dixon believes that he cannot "allow the image of this man" to impress and excite "millions of ignorant Negroes, rapidly massing together."

Ellie

See Eleanor Bachman

Goldie

He serves as Jack's manager as well as his friend. Goldie is aware of the challenges Jack faces as a black fighter and is very supportive and protective of Jack. When negotiating the terms for Jack's fight with a promoter, Goldie is quick to point out the inequity of the situation, saying, "my Jackie would fight for a nickel, tomorrow. But it wouldn't look nice for you to take advantage, so you'll offer me low as you can get away with and I'll say OK."

Goldie is also a father figure to Jack. When he finds out that Jack is seeing a white woman, he says in dismay, "Last night in my head it's like a voice-Dumbbell, go home quick, somethin's goin on with him!" This statement is followed by a stern lecture not only about the dangers of being a black man dating a white woman but also about those inherent in just being a black heavyweight champion. The audience comes to see Goldie not only as a manager but as a family member and friend when he chooses to support Jack in his flight from justice and then participates in Mrs. Jefferson's funeral on Jack's behalf.

Jack Jefferson

Jack is more than a heavyweight fighter; he is a top-notch athlete, fiercely devoted to his sport. Jack is also unwilling to succumb to the demands society places upon him, both as a black man and as a black athlete. Despite Goldie's repeated warnings that dating a white woman would hurt his career, Jack insists on announcing his engagement to Ellie publicly, at the grand opening of a café in Chicago.

His fighting ability is also challenged strictly on the basis of his color. Cap'n Dan and others insist Jack defend his title on their terms, hoping he will eventually lose. Jack, however, does not feel an obligation to Cap'n Dan, nor does he give in to the harassment and enormous pressure put on him by white society. Jack refutes any pressure or suggestion from the group, stating, "Ah got my turn to be Champeen of the World an Ah takin my turn! Ah stayin whut Ah am, wherever Ah has to do it!"

This defiance is characteristic of Jack's behavior throughout the work. He repeatedly insists on maintaining personal autonomy and self-respect among whites and blacks alike, even if it means risking incarceration or his own life. Jack will go to any extreme to preserve his identity, becoming a fugitive on the move for almost the entire play.

Mrs. Jefferson

Jack's ailing mother is a troubled, God-fearing woman who deeply loves her son, despite his shortcomings. She also feels a sense of responsibility for what is happening to her son, pleading, "Lawd fogive me not beatin on him young enough or hurtin him bad enough to learn him after, cause ah seen this day comin." Mrs. Jefferson does not blame Ellie for Jack's troubles, nor does she question Ellie's affections for her son. When Clara attacks Ellie, Mrs. Jefferson defends her, replying, "could be she do love him, Clara." More important, her death serves to heighten racial tensions among the black characters of the play who blame Jack's arrest for her death.

Pastor

The audience is introduced to the activities of the pastor as he interacts with Mrs. Jefferson. He is a mediator attempting to soothe tense, racially charged moments with church rhetoric. He provides opportunities for social commentary from Scipio, Clara, and others. When the pastor tries to calm the angry crowd during Mrs. Jefferson's funeral, Scipio responds sarcastically, "Dass right, chillun, suffer nice an easy—school em on it, boss!" Scipio's comments eventually insight a riot. For Scipio and others, the church represents another part of white culture that has been imposed on blacks to subdue them.

Ragosy

Ragosy is the Hungarian impresario who encourages Jack to give up any ideas he may have of fighting in Germany to join his Cabaret. The engagement is short-lived, however, when Jack and Ellie's performance ends abruptly after a disastrous reception.

Scipio

A street philosopher, Scipio appears during several moments in the course of the play to illuminate or explain the nature of the white institutionalization he and others of his race have been subjected to. His perspectives amplify the sentiments of those African Americans who are no longer content to "just get along," to be passive as well as complacent in the context of a society controlled by whites.

Smitty

The famous sportswriter seems always to be lurking in the shadows of Jack's life. At the opening of the play, he is a witness to the fight between Jack and Clara and is one of the first people to learn of Jack and Ellie's relationship. He is also behind the scenes, privy to the efforts of Cap'n Dan and others to dethrone Jack as World Heavyweight Champion.

At every turn in the play, Smitty is present, asking questions of Ellie, Jack, Cap'n Dan, and others. His probing interviews also function to give the audience a different perspective into the motivations of many of the characters. At a railway station in Belgrade, Smitty attempts to advise Jack, urging him to surrender and return to the United States to defend his title. He tells Jack that he'd "rather have [the fight] straight," if he "weren't so good." This comment betrays Smitty's true feelings, and as the play wears on, the audience discovers that Smitty is not just an ambitious journalist, but an informant for Cap'n Dan.

Tick

Loyal to Jack as his trainer, Tick never really leaves his side throughout the play. He is a silent man. More than a trainer, he is a steady, trustworthy, and supportive companion to Jack.

Pop Weaver

The promoter from New York behind the Havana fight, Pop Weaver works with allies Cap'n Dan and Fred to plan Jack's defeat by introducing some young raw white talent. When he learns the fight will be fixed, he is quick to offer up his objections. Eventually, he agrees to go along with the plans stating, "We'll balance it out on the one after this. Everything back on the gold standard, right?"

Themes

Racism and Racial Conflict

The Great White Hope is a title reflective of the racism and racial conflict present throughout the work. There is an air of superiority, a notion among several white characters in the novel that they are better than their black neighbors. The rights and privileges of black members of such a society are defined by white interpretation. Cap'n Dan feels that Jack's status as a boxer is wrong and should be corrected. He says at the outset of the play that Jack has no right to think he can be a champion. This notion is reflected in Cap'n Dan's statement when he asks Smitty:

How're you going to like it when the whole . . . country says Brady let us down, he wouldn't stick a fist out to teach a loudmouth nigger, stayed home and let him be Champion of the World?

Blacks themselves also define their place in step with white perceptions. A black man, only identified as "Negro," comments on the threat Jack poses to the community, stating, "For the Negro today, the opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory should appear to be worth infinitely more than the opportunity of spending that dollar in emulation of Mr. Jack Jefferson."

Racial conflict is an outgrowth of these prevailing white attitudes represented throughout the work. In one scene, Clara uses Mrs. Jefferson's funeral as a forum for protest. She singles out Goldie to express her outrage at whites. When the preacher condones her behavior, one of the participants exclaims, "Shame on me, shame on alla us, for BEIN de oppressed, an bein it, an bein it!" This comment and others move the crowd to engage in a violent struggle, black against white.

Black Identity

The spirit of those behind Jack in his quest for victory is guided by their need to foster some sense of identity. Sackler captures this spirit in the voices of his black characters, using them to comment on the cultural oppression of black America for the sake of white ideals. Such ideals have meant involuntary conformity, assuming a position of inferiority, and a loss of cultural identity for black Americans.

Some characters see championing the white culture as a means of earning their respect. To Jack's black supporters, his victory represents not only a triumph for the entire black race but also a chance for them to redeem themselves as individuals.

Jack has a different response to the question of black identity. He sees a characteristically undesirable mentality, a "cullud" mentality, among his supporters. Jack demonstrates this idea when he expresses to the group that he doesn't have to earn or prove his need for self-respect because he already has it. When a young man states,

"Ah be proud to be a cullud man tomorrow," Jack replies, "Well, country boy, if you ain't there already, all the boxin and nigger-prayin in the world ain't gonna get you there." He refutes the belief that his victory represents one for his race, further maintaining that such beliefs constitute "cullud" thinking, beliefs that ultimately limit, rather than foster, achievement. If one thinks "cullud," then all one will ever do is live inside the box, that is, be "cullud."

Scipio sympathizes with Jack's views on identity, perhaps more profoundly, stating in his monologue that it's "time again to make us a big new wise proud dark man's world." He sees freedom from oppression in regaining self-respect, as well as self-love, by celebrating his own heritage. "Learn brothers, learn! Ee-gyp!! Tambuctoo!! Ethiopya!! Red'n goldin cities older den Jeruslem."

Interracial Relationships

The issue of interracial relations is a prominent theme within the context of the play. Time and time again, blacks and whites alike challenge Jack and Ellie's relationship. The controversy begins immediately when Jack is asked to hide his white girlfriend from the unsympathetic eyes of the press. Ignoring Goldie's requests, Jack asks:

Whut Ah s'pose to do! Stash her in a iddy biddy hole someplace in niggertown an go sneakin over there twelve o'clock at night, carry her roun with me inside a box like a pet bunny rabbit or somethin?

Ellie has to endure the intense scrutiny of others concerning her relationship with Jack. In the Chicago district attorney's office, her feelings for Jack are repeatedly questioned during an increasingly probing, intensely personal interview. Cameron insists at several points with Ellie that she is lonely, unhappy somehow, in an attempt to explain what he infers is an "unnatural" relationship. He has an agenda. Like other characters, he cannot accept Ellie's affection for Jack—to him, her feelings aren't just impossible; they aren't right. Cameron's ideas only mirror the sentiments of other characters in the play whose belief systems are challenged by Jack and Ellie's relationship.

When Jack goes to jail for taking Ellie across the Wisconsin state line, Clara is quick to offer her opinion. She blames the situation on Ellie and is ready to "smoke her out." What Clara recognizes is Jack's liability in the affair. When Ellie and Jack are caught together, it is Jack who suffers the arrest rather than his white girlfriend. She questions Ellie's claim to love Jack when her presence repeatedly compromises his life.

Free Will and Determinism

The catalyst for Jack's troubles is his demand for autonomy and self-respect as a black man in a racially unjust environment. His insistence on crossing the boundaries of what is socially acceptable to realize personal achievement is a futile endeavor in the context of the racist society of which he is a part. While Jack is struggling to achieve his own personal goals as an athlete, the white power structure is trying to tear him down.

Specifically, there are whites that would like to see him lose his title less for an appreciation of boxing than for their own supremacist satisfactions. Goldie is the first to warn Jack he's in over his head in dating a white woman, stating, "a white girl, Jack, what, do I have to spell it on the wall for you, you wanna drive them crazy, you don't wanna hear what happens."

Instead of earning the respect of his contemporaries for being a great athlete, he is pursued by them as if his talents are criminal. About to be arrested, Jack questions the credibility of being apprehended outside of his own country. The agent is quick to answer, offering, "It is perfectly legal once we've ascertained where a wanted man is, to request cooperation of the parties in charge there." The reality of Jack's life is that no matter where he travels to escape the limitations imposed on him by white society, whether Canada or Europe, he can never truly realize freedom and autonomy as a black man.

Style

Foreshadowing

Elements in the plot that create expectation or help to explain later developments are represented in dramatic monologue. These moments occur in boldface within the text of the play, functioning either as part of a larger dialogue or within a dramatic monologue. When the press discovers that Ellie is dating Jack, for example, Goldie turns to the audience mid-dialogue and says, "if it gets out, God knows what could happen." The warning to the audience proves true later in the play, when Jack is arrested for taking Ellie on a weekend getaway.

Mrs. Bachman's dramatic monologue also foreshadows the tragic events of the play's climax. White, pained, and haggard, she appears to the audience later in the play to express her sorrow over her daughter's involvement with Jack. She sends the audience a warning, stating, "I know what Black means . . . wait until it is your every other thought, like it is theirs, like it is mine. Wait until it touches your own flesh and blood." Her monologue is prophetic because her daughter Ellie's involvement with Jack ultimately causes Ellie to kill herself. To Mrs. Bachman, the very idea of what it means to be touched by "blackness" brings up all kinds of horrifying associations.

Dramatic Monologue

Many of the secondary characters give a speech to the audience during the course of the work. These monologues, in addition to foreshadowing upcoming events, provide the audience with insight into personal motivations for a character's actions. Cap'n Dan's motivations to defame Jack, while shortsighted, are not fueled by ill intent. In a dramatic monologue, he reveals his fear about Jack's success, exclaiming, "I really have the feeling it's the biggest calamity to hit this country since the San Francisco earthquake." To him, Jack's victory, if unchallenged, will cast a dark shadow across the world. Cap'n Dan fears the kind of change that will bring equality, a force he admits he can't even understand.

Other monologues serve as insight into the motivations of those oppressed. Scipio's role is a perfect example of dramatic monologue used to illuminate the black perspective. Addressing the woeful singing in response to Jack's arrest, Scipio takes the moment to address the audience. In a moving monologue, he condones the spirit of passivity plaguing the black man in America. Scipio states:

Oh mebbe you done school youself away frum White Jesus—but how long you evah turn you heart away frum white! How you lookin, how you movin, how you wishin an figgering—how white you wanna be, that whut Ah askin!"

Scipio's speech offers a perspective not unlike Jack's. Like Jack, he advocates that the black man regain his identity, find his self-respect by exploring his roots and taking pride

in his heritage as a person of color. He makes a compelling point as well: "Five hundrid million of us not all together, not matchin up to em, dat what harmin us!"

Point of View

The work is operating in the third person omniscient point of view. This claim is substantiated particularly by the use of dramatic monologue that often provides insight into the motivations or feelings of many characters of the play, as opposed to being relevant only to those actions of the speaker. Not only does it predict a character's movements, but this insight also draws the audience in, giving them a variety of perspectives from various characters of various races. Scipio's monologue, for example, is a deeper exploration into Jack's views of what it means to operate as a "cullud" rather than as an individual. Statements made by Jack, which came off as callous or harsh, now take on a nobler meaning in light of Scipio's remarks.

Other insights change or transform perceptions of a character's motivations completely. Clara, for example, is presented as someone spurned by love and driven simply by jealousy, after Jack rejects her for a white woman. During Clara's monologue, she pleads to the audience, "drag him on down. Oh won'tya, fo me an mah momma an evvy black-ass woman he turn his back on, for evvy gal wid a man longside dreamin him a piece a what he got." Clara's dialogue is revealing. She is no longer simply a crazy, money-grubbing ex-girlfriend. The audience sees Clara's deeper motivations. She is a victim, seeing herself as one of many black women rejected by men of her own race who seek to aspire to white values, men who voluntarily put the love and support of those black women behind them for the sake of personal gain.

Rising Action

The rising action is marked by the overseas travels of Ellie and Jack. The change in the tenor of the plot begins when Jack encounters some trouble in England and chooses to walk away from further conflict. This conflict only increases, however, as Jack and Ellie move from country to country, putting a strain on their already fraying relationship. Finally, at the moment before his arrest, Jack tells a pleading Ellie to leave him be.

The climax, or the turning point in the plot where the action is at its greatest intensity, occurs during Jack's arrest. Up until this moment, he is resistant to offer himself to the authorities. When Ellie's mud-smeared and dripping body is presented to Jack, he surrenders to the authorities, realizing, "what Ah done to ya, what you done, honey, honey, whut dey done to us." This single event is a turning point in the play. Jack recognizes the futility of his actions, implicit or obvious in his willingness to fight in Havana.

Colloquialism/Colloquial Speech

Colloquial or informal speech patterns give life to the voices of black characters appearing throughout the work. Words such as "dat," "cullud," and "dere" are just a few examples of the use of colloquial language to differentiate characters by race.

Historical Context

Jack Johnson, Heavyweight Champion of the World

The Great White Hope is a work of fiction based on a historical figure, a black American prizefighter named John Arthur "Jack" Johnson. Not unlike Sackler's fictional Jack Jefferson, Johnson aggravated white America by refusing to behave in a passive, submissive fashion expected of blacks at that time. In 1908, he traveled to Sidney, Australia, to fight and defeat Tommy Burns and became the first black Heavyweight Champion of the World. Public outrage and disbelief over the victory were catalysts for the match between former champ Jim Jeffries, "*The Great White Hope*," and Johnson. On July 4, 1910, Johnson defeated Jeffries after fifteen rounds.

Johnson later married two white women in the years following the victory. He was also arrested in the company of his white fiancée in 1912 in accordance with the Mann Act. He escaped incarceration, fleeing to Canada and Europe, where he continued his career as a fighter. Havana led to a fixed fight with Jess Willard in exchange for Johnson's freedom. Although he did lose after twenty-six rounds, his charges were never dropped. An eventual surrender led to a year in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1920. After his release, Johnson worked for carnivals and as a vaudeville performer.

LBJ's "Great Society"

The era leading up to the publication of Sackler's work was a time characterized by great social conflict and upheaval. After John F. Kennedy's death, a grieving nation was left to struggle with civil rights issues and the Vietnam War. Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the role of president of the United States, fully committed to JFK's liberal program of social reform in an effort to meet such challenges.

Johnson had a vision of what he called a "Great Society," and he was determined to realize this goal through liberal social policy. This vision led to several social programs, including the creation of Medicare in 1965, to assist citizens over sixty-five pay for medical treatment, as well as Medicaid, to help welfare recipients meet medical costs. Educational policy was also enacted in the creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act. As a result of such policy, government funding was provided so that poorer students would realize an education reserved traditionally for the middle class. The "War on Poverty," as Johnson called it, also resulted in additional social policy and the creation of community programs like the Job Corps, Project Head Start, and the Food Stamps program.

Racial Unrest

Racial and ethnic tensions blemished the character of American life during the 1960s. This tension was mirrored in the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The legislation

forbade segregation and discrimination in public accommodations such as restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, and theaters. Critical citizens, blacks and whites alike, believed morality could not be legislated. Optimistic citizens believed that such legislation was a step toward rectifying the inequities of the past based on the legacy of slavery.

White society did not realize or adopt a spirit of cooperation with their black neighbors. Urban areas suffered the sting of white flight, the mass exodus of whites to suburban areas. Urban blacks felt betrayed by such movement. This migration hurt the lifestyles of those blacks that had become dependent on white businesses to employ them, as well as to support their neighborhoods by providing goods and services at reasonable prices. The result of this flight amounted to greater urban decay and the rise of the inner cities or ghettos.

The enactment of the Civil Rights Act was not an end to violence perpetrated against blacks as a result of racial tension and unrest. After countless acts of terror perpetrated by white segregationists, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or SCLC, staged a march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, the state capital, on March 7, 1965. The marchers never made it to their destination but instead were attacked by police, succumbing either to the sting of tear gas or the blow of a billy club. James Reeb, a northern white minister active in the Civil Rights movement, was also murdered that Sunday evening by white segregationists. The day went down in history as "Bloody Sunday," prompting LBJ to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which protected black America's right to vote.

Vietnam

Johnson was determined to move forward with the Vietnam conflict. He proved this with the enactment of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The report of two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin provided the opportunity for Johnson to satisfy his desire to expand the war effort. In reality, only one destroyer, the Maddox, had actually been attacked in error as South Vietnamese attempted to seize the northern coast of Vietnam. At this point Johnson chose to gradually escalate the war effort with a vision of eventual occupation. This approach only served to prolong the conflict: however many troops LBJ sent, however much ground he managed to gain, was only lost to the Viet Cong, outsmarted by their political infiltration and military strategy.

Critical Overview

Perhaps it is fitting that Howard Sackler achieved such high acclaim with the success of *The Great White Hope*. Critics were quite impressed when the young playwright produced his treatise on racial hatred, characterizing the plot as a rather fastmoving, yet smoothly flowing entity as it seamlessly transitions from one scene to the next. The work is crafted in the tradition of a great Shakespearean play, the text written in flowing verse, the main character firmly grounded, central to all of the action swirling around him. Every event in the play either directly or indirectly relates to Jack's life. In *Western Humanities Review,* Marion Trousdale comments on this centrality, calling it "irreducibly dramatic." States Trousdale, "[the play] did what Aristotle said a play should do, and what few playwrights know how to do—it imitated an action by means of an action." Therefore, the critic adds, the play has a "histrionic heart."

While many readily accept such glowing comparisons, John Simon, critic for the *Hudson Review,* has a different perspective on the play. He responds to Sackler's work, stating, "How nice if Sackler, who had the good sense to use Shakespeare and Brecht as his models, had come up with something worthy of them." He continues, claiming that Sackler's writing is functional rather than fantastic, simply "overambitious middlebrow stuff."

Sackler's work also betrays a penchant or preference for the historical. His sense of history lies at the thematic core of most of the author's works. Such structure lends itself to a certain dynamism, in setting, in characterization and dialog, as well as in mood, traits which are viewed as functioning to strengthen the work as a whole. Trousdale offers that the performers are also "noisy and loud and unabashedly theatrical," which serves to strengthen the play, and are simply an "outward form of the 'invisible currents that rule our lives.'" Structurally the play follows the classical model. But in consideration of dimension, space, and a certain dynamism inherent in the work, the play clearly takes on a modern feel.

Later works by Sackler, although not having as profound an impact on his career, mirror the poetry and sheer artistry to some degree that many have admired in *The Great White Hope*. More recent efforts, such as "Goodbye Fidel," inspire the same feelings of passion and excitement as does his Pulitzer Prize-winner.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Kryhoski is currently working as a freelance writer. In this essay, Kryhoski considers Sackler's use of contrasts as well as his historical consideration of the work.

The Great White Hope is a story of contrasts, of black versus white, or the dark versus the light. Two of Sackler's white characters, Cap'n Dan and Mrs. Bachman, use these contrasts in their own dramatic monologues to express their feelings about Jack Jefferson. Their feelings are a function of their own ignorance. For these characters, their ignorance serves as an impetus or as a reason for exercising racism. It is these voices, of both Cap'n Dan and Mrs. Bachman, that Sackler employs to illuminate belief systems fueling racism. Through both voices, the author is able to capture, with amazing historical accuracy, the current of prejudice running through white America at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Cap'n Dan describes Jack Jefferson in terms of darkness. In the beginning of the play, he reveals his feelings about Jack's victory on a personal level, stating, "it feels like the world's got a shadow over it." He goes on to explain a "darker, different, shrinking," world, that it's "all huddled up somehow." For Cap'n Dan the world, as he has come to understand it, is getting smaller and becoming increasingly unfamiliar to him. Further, he admits feelings of powerlessness, even to the point of intimidation, and these feelings are preventing him from any sort of protest or retaliation. He expresses these sentiments as if dark clouds are rolling in over his life, "You want to holler, what's he doin up there, but you can't because you know . . . that shadow's on you, and you can feel that smile." As curious a proposition as it seems, one man, Jack Jefferson, has the ability to turn Cap'n Dan's life upside down.

His monologue betrays uneasiness rooted in a struggle to preserve identity. The darkness permeating Cap'n Dan's psyche can be explained simply by the words "darker, different, shrinking." A black fighter, for the first time in the history of the sport, has earned a title reserved only for white males. Cap'n Dan feels the world is "shrinking" or "all huddled-up somehow"; he feels intimidated because he too is a former champion. The victory attacks his value system, one embracing a belief in white superiority. On a more personal level, Jack's victory raises questions about Cap'n Dan's own abilities. The world "shrinks" as black men intrude gradually on Cap'n Dan's world, the world of the professional white boxer.

"I know what Black means," exclaims Mrs. Bachman, and for dramatic effect Sackler stages a blackout before she appears to the audience. Stepping out into the light of the stage, she expresses great despair over her daughter's choice of love interests. "Blackness" sets off something in Mrs. Bachman's heart. She shares her negative, heartfelt associations with blackness: "pitch black, black as dirt, the black hole and the black pit, what's burned or stained or cursed or hideous, poison and spite and waste from your body and the horrors crawling up into your mind." Her feeling is that God, if responsible for a meeting of the races, black and white, used the opportunity as an expression of hate rather than one of love.

These descriptions form a rather curious collection of sentiments about what it means for Mrs. Bachman to be in the presence of someone "black"—this is what she "knows." For her, black is unclean and filthy but, curiously, involves spite and waste from her own mind and body. It is as if in the meeting of the races, she has somehow been exposed to some horrible contaminant. More curiously, she concedes or surrenders to the possible reactions of the audience, sharing with them an understanding that her thinking may be flawed. To say that she "knows what black means" outside of the context of her daughter's involvement is to say that she is just as, if not more, concerned about how Jack's presence in her life will impact herself as her daughter. Again, as with Cap'n Dan, Mrs. Bachman feels a sense of encroachment or intrusion upon her world, that somehow her life has been violated merely by Jack's presence. One could also infer that her comments betray her real fears—she is quick to deny or submerge any feelings of guilt or remorse she has concerning the legacy of slavery and her responsibility to a disenfranchised black America.

Sackler draws on the feelings expressed by both Cap'n Dan and Mrs. Bachman to convey with historical accuracy the social climate of the early 1900s, the backdrop for his play. What characterizes America at that time, what has been characterized as a "key theme" during this time period, is the desire to live life against nature. Historian Dr. Alan Axelrod, in his *Complete Idiot's Guide to Twentieth Century History,* expands on the idea, stating that the theme is identifiable "in the work of Freud (who sought to illuminate the dark places of the mind)" and also "in the electric light of Edison (who sought to illuminate dark places, period)." He also points to the influences of imperialists in Great Britain, who wished to bring the "light" of civilization to such "dark places" as Asia and Africa. Joseph Conrad's novel, aptly titled *Heart of Darkness,* touched on the same theme. Published in 1902, the novel was the product of Conrad's travels to the Congo, a target of imperialism for King Leopold II of Belgium. The protagonist or leading character of the story, Marlow, travels deep into the Congo (the heart of darkness) on a riverboat in search of a missing white trader, Kurtz—eventually becoming part of the darkness. Adopting the role of chieftain, Kurtz decorates the outside of his hut with the skulls of his adversaries.

Axelrod's ideas are evidenced in the dialogue of the play. Cap'n Dan, for instance, believing Jack's victory is a "calamity," adds, "Oh, I don't think all the darkies'll go crazy, try to take us over, rape and all that." The statement is riddled with negative associations directed towards blacks. In his off-handed comment, Cap'n Dan shares his impressions of black America. He characterizes blacks as being savage, uncivilized, and hard to control. During the course of the play these concerns of possible retaliatory acts of savagery are consistently raised by Cap'n Dan and other white males closely associated with his plan to upset Jack's boxing career. Calling blacks "darkies" serves to reinforce the idea of the black fighter casting a dark shadow over Cap'n Dan's life. The question for Cap'n Dan, then, becomes one of far greater significance—if it is possible for an uncivilized, savage individual to achieve what he has achieved, how valid or important is such a title?

The use of dark and light is not only apparent in the dialogue of characters like Cap'n Dan and Mrs. Bachman, but such contrast is also used for dramatic purposes. Both

characters appear after a blackout occurring during the play; both figures come into the light to reveal their inner feelings to the audience, truths driving the action of the work. Consequently, the substance of such heartfelt, personal monologues enlightens the audience. Clara also comes into the light to reveal what she believes to be true about the relationship between Jack and Ellie. Ceremoniously holding up an excrement-and blood-stained garment to the light, she cries out for justice in the death of Mrs. Jefferson, believing that Jack's affair with Ellie has killed her, also hoping it will kill him.

Sackler's play on contrasts is a natural consequence of the work's subject matter. To experience Sackler's play, even by today's standards, involves facing the often jolting perspectives of America, black and white, to understand the shades of racial conflict present within the work. The conclusion Sackler reaches in *The Great White Hope* is perhaps best expressed by Joseph Conrad's narrator Marlow, who believed that the "conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it."

Source: Laura Kryhoski, Critical Essay on *The Great White Hope*, in *Drama for Students,* The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following review-essay, Trousdale provides an overview of the initial productions of The Great White Hope, *examining the play's "profound histrionic sensibility."*

The theatre's name like its shape is as self-defining and as functional as the new apartment buildings surrounding it in Washington's Southwest are meant to be. It calls itself Arena Stage, and it is octagonal without as within to provide seats for the spectators who, arena-fashion, both enclose and participate as audience in the performance that takes place below. It was here in winter 1967 under the direction of Edwin Sherin that Howard Sackler's *The Great White Hope* was first staged. The play later opened in New York, under the same director and with almost the same cast, where its success story by now is well-known. In their reviews of October, 1968, *Life* magazine and the *New Yorker* agreed that the play is spectacular and a hit: to *Life* its dramatic sensationalism is a virtue; its anonymous review remarked that the play is startingly contemporary, a "visceral interpretation" of "the tragic and gaudy life of the first black heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson." And as evidence Pete Hamill, New Yorker fashion, accompanied Muhammad Ali to the Alvin Theatre and watched him watch the play. "Hey," Hamill says Ali said, "This play is about me! Take out the interracial love stuff and Jack Johnson is the original me!" *The New Yorker's* Edith Oliver does not deny the play's contemporaneity; she calls it a highly effective tract. But she complains that the play's "tumultuous, irresistible avalanche" of action that "hurls itself from the stage" is a kind of theatrical *trompe d'oeil*. Behind the "deafening and bedazzling blows in the face," she remarks, lies a work of little literary merit, an "oddly insubstantial affair."

Both reactions say more about the New York version than they do about the play as played at Arena Stage. In New York Sherin by reducing Sackler's text has made the play more brash, more arrogant, more "militant"; like the stage on which it is performed it now has only one dimension, that of its "message," and that message extends beyond the play's hero, whom Sackler calls Jack Jefferson, to include not only Muhammad Ali but the play's star as well, James Earl Jones. At the end of the ecstatic curtain calls he walks toward the audience and, pulling the blood-soaked rag from around his neck, drops it defiantly on a nude stage. Edith Oliver's description is both damning and accurate: she calls the play a "sad, cautionary tale of a good black man betrayed by a handful of evil Negrohating white men," and she remarks that because "the play's heart is so evidently in the right place and because we wish our hearts to be in the right place as well, we allow the play to take away our judgment along with our breath." Such criticism, if true, must serve as last rites for anything that purports to be more than spectrally dramatic. Other things might have been said of the play in Washington; it ran for some three and a half hours and Clive Barnes, among others, found it a sprawling chronicle. But it was not a tract, nor do I think tract an accurate tag for Sackler's text. The play is filled with a kind of ticker tape immediacy and hence popular in the worst sense of the word, and what is popular in it—its race message—has been exploited with box office success in New York. But as played at length in Washington's Arena the action of the play was not didactic. Rather it was irreducibly dramatic. It did what

Aristotle said a play should do, and what few playwrights know how to do—it imitated an action by means of an action. The play had, in short, an histrionic heart.

Both the Washington success and the New York failure say a great deal about the nature of theatre. But of the two the Washington achievement is the more notable, if only for its suggestion of an idea of theatre that renders the American experience in a viable dramatic form. The quest for such a theatre, as for the "great American novel," seems omnipresent; it is too much to say that Sackler has discovered it. But in *The Great White Hope* he has formed at least a partial mirror at the center of our culture, and at "the center of the life and awareness of the community." The phrase is Francis Fergusson's; he is describing what he calls the symbolic stage of the Elizabethans. As he notes such a mirror is rarely formed. More recently Peter Brook has joined in the conscious search, although he, like Fergusson, seems to feel that such a theatre is possible only in a more ceremonious age. The artist in an age in which tradition has vanished, he remarks, "imitates the outer form of ceremonies, pagan or baroque, adding his own trappings. Unfortunately the result is rarely convincing." If Sackler has in his text managed in Brook's words to "capture in his art the invisible currents that rule our lives," then his achievement is worth examining in detail. It may tell us something about the nature of ritual and about the nature of that mirror a player holds up when he plays on a stage.

The plot is quite obviously the corruptible center of Sackler's play. As *Life* indicates, his story loosely follows the life and times of Jack Johnson, called by Sackler Jack Jefferson, who in 1908 by defeating an Australian, became the first Negro heavyweight champion of the world. The phrase "white hope" came to mean any possible white fighter who might beat Johnson and carry on his shoulders the hopes of the white race. The play begins with the first white hope, Frank Brady, ignominiously defeated in the third scene. It ends with the second white hope, the Kid, who defeats Jefferson in a fair fight that was meant to be fixed. Thus Sackler has taken as his hero not only, in the play's language, a dinge, but an initially successful dinge whose position as black champion wins him all of the culturally induced, cliche-ridden reactions, both black and white, to a black man's making it in a white man's world. At the beginning he is triumphant, at the end defeated. Therein lies the shape of the cautionary tale.

What keeps such a fable from being text for a sermon and makes of it instead an imitation of an action is in part its form, and it may well be that this particular form can not be made to work effectively on a traditional stage. Sackler presents his story by a series of scenes suggestive of Brecht, and the difficulties of a Broadway production can be seen even from the program. In Washington the three acts had respectively seven, eight, and five scenes, and a straight listing of place suggests the disembodied geographical sense of an airline official: Parchment, Ohio; San Francisco; Reno; Chicago; Beau Rivage, Wisconsin; then on to the Home Office in London, Le Havre, Paris, New York, Berlin, a cabaret in Budapest, a Belgrade railway station; then back once more to Chicago and on to New York and Juarez, Mexico, to end finally at the Oriente Racetrack in Havana where the hero loses his heavyweight championship to the all-American Kid. The word act, is, in fact, a misnomer. Theatrically the fabric of the play depends upon the uninterrupted sequence of these scenes that occur in rapid,

almost kaleidoscopic succession to create the play's irrefutable surface of dramatic tension. Sackler's virtuosity can be seen in the way in which they vary greatly one from the other in texture, in pace, in composition; but they are also highly stylized, having about them in some respects the sharply edged lines of burlesque. It is yet another indictment of the New York version that Edith Oliver should have remarked of Jane Alexander as Jefferson's white mistress that "unlike most of the other characters . . . she has the advantage of being seen to alter radically," and that the rest of the huge cast consisted of stereotypes, as though she were criticizing the reality-making apparatus of the play.

I give one extended example of the play's composition from the middle of the first act: After Jefferson has beaten Brady, the first "white hope," and celebrated by opening a Café de Champion on Wabash Avenue in Chicago, there is a scene set in the District Attorney's office in which some of the establishment's reactions to Jefferson both as champion and as Negro acting champion are dramatically realized. The scene begins with a group of the morally militant demanding the hero's arrest for the flagrantly immoral act of sleeping with a white girl; it ends with the District Attorney himself diffidently leading this same white girl, Eleanor Bachman, into a frank avowal of amorous pleasure with Jefferson in the hope of trapping her into an admission of unnatural acts. The reflectors of the action in this instance include the so-called civic leaders, a distinguished looking "Uncle Tom," a Federal agent, the District Attorney and the white girl herself; what they reflect are the personal and social nuances of a black man sleeping with a white girl. The scene is followed by a bed somewhere with the two lovers, one black and one white, talking of swimming and making love. Ellie imagines lying in the sun until she has become very dark and then appearing with Jefferson as a different woman whom no one would notice. But with that comic book sense of caricature of himself Jefferson tells her it wouldn't work. "Evvybody know ah gone off cullud women," he tells her. "Ah has, too," he adds, "'cept for ma momma," and he sits up in bed, his black bare chest shining, and grins at her and then around at the audience with what a reporter earlier in the play has described as his big banjo smile. Jefferson is playing the music-hall Negro for his sweetheart, for the audience, and for himself and relishing every minute of it. The love-making ends abruptly as a group of "Keystone Cops" arrive to arrest the fighter under the Mann Act for illicit relations. The scene, as any scene must, advances the plot. But more interestingly it reflects from yet a different angle the same underlying action as the previous scene. Neither the meeting in the district attorney's office nor the love-making is presented in realistic terms. Rather what is created by a seemingly haphazard cascade of vignettes is a highly structured pattern of dramatic action; it is this that keeps the play, at least in its shape, from being yet one more thinly masked polemic about race. It is possible, in fact, to say of the play's structure what Fergusson said of *Hamlet;* he was attempting to determine what it meant to imitate an action, and he observed that in *Hamlet* "the moral and metaphysical scene of the drama is presented only as one character after another sees it and reflects it; and the action of the drama as a whole is presented only as each character in turn actualizes it in his story and according to his lights."

Scenes, alone, of course, do not make a play, and Sackler's episodic structure which has offended some critics might be seen only as tiresomely derivative were it not for

what I can only inadequately term his profound ludic sense. Joan Littlewood once remarked that theatre ought to be like a circus or a fair which takes over a town and everybody comes and dances in the street. *The Great White Hope* is that kind of theatre. To watch it as played out in the heart of the audience at Arena was to participate in a kind of communal celebration that must have been commonplace in Elizabethan England but is rare on our stage. For some critics such a celebration can only mean a condemnation of the play, for it is in its way a condemnation of the ways and means that as a community we celebrate. The performers are noisy and loud and unabashedly theatrical like the cheer leaders at a local football game. But therein lies the play's strength. It is the outward form of the "invisible currents that rule our lives" that Sackler has uncovered. He has discovered the emblematic nature of our rituals, such as they are, and his large cast celebrates them with an audience who participates in the performance. As they are public rites, not private, an audience is necessary. And so the audience becomes an integral part of the play.

The structural importance of obviously public ceremonies can be seen again from a list of scenes. On three different occasions newspaper reporters formally interview a famous boxer. The play's ceremonies include as well a formal police arrest, an organized protest march, a prayer meeting, a funeral and three fights. These fights, the play's essential "act," are all seen from the wings where the onstage public's participation in the ceremony of the match is the mirror by means of which the match is shown. The last one ends with a flagwaving crowd spilling out onto the stage where the blare of trumpets and the chalk-faced victor on their shoulders create the ironic ambiance for the jubilant, ragged formation of their victory parade. There are lesser rituals as well—the blackfaced minstrel amusing a white crowd before the first fight; the black betting scenes before the last; the training sessions; a business meeting in a sports promoter's office—that invite by their style the word caricature. In a play that uses as vehicle public forms, neither slapstick nor melodrama are ever far from the surface, and the importance of this essential banality can be seen in the individual characters as well as in the public rites. It is not that the characters are stereotypes by default; rather they are stereotypes by design. It is as public performers in social pageants that they are important. The dramatic force of the play comes not from its realistic apprehension of psychological complexity but from the ways in which social cliches are used to reflect the complexity of that experience which they both structure and obscure. Both the cliches of character and the cliches of language by means of which American experience is known—both a kind of social posturing—become on stage ironic devices that reveal rather than conceal. And in this revelation, as in the celebration, the audience exists at the center of the play.

The use of verbal cliche as an ironic device can be seen most obviously in the kind of speech that Cap'n Dan makes in Pop Weaver's office when they are trying to convince one of their party, Fred, of the necessity of fixing the fight. He remarks:

I don't have to make anybody no speech here about how good I feel working something crooked! None of us like it—*we wouldn't be the men we are if we did, or be where we are! I know it's lousy!*

The italicized portion is spoken directly to the audience, and brings a laugh, as it was meant to do. The audience understands the language and is quite aware of the moral duplicity. They sit as judge. But more often Sackler manages a collusion of audience and actors in that kind of social posturing against which the force of the play moves. Dixon, the federal agent, for instance, at the end of this scene addresses the audience directly, remarking that they seem to be indignant at what has just taken place, and he advises them, "Give it some thought, next time you're alone on the streets late at night." Scipio, the juju man, preaches at the few of his kind whom he claims to see "out there"; "How much white you wanna be?" Clara, Jefferson's commonlaw black wife, sees them as the enemy. "Who set him runnin," she asks, "Who put de mark on him? Dem," she says, at Arena, looking up, "dem, dem, dem." By means of such direct address Sackler makes of his playing space literally an arena in which the spectators are the true center of the play's contests. Like the spectators on stage who watch the fights, they are used as reflectors of the stage action. They both celebrate and, like the onstage performers, are judged. But the extent to which the play's profound ludic sense is inseparable from its use of social myth can best be seen in Sackler's handling of his hero. Jefferson, as the other characters in the play, defines himself by means of cultural cliches, but unlike the other characters he uses these cliches to show what he is not. In essence he stages his own rituals, and they are the basis more often than not of a kind of racial pun. When a reporter remarks that Jefferson's only worry seems to be when in the fight to take Brady, Jefferson replies,

Yeah, an dat take some thinkin, man!
If Ah lets it go too long in dere,
juss sorta blockin an keepin him offa me,
then evvybody say, "Now ain't dat one shif'less nigger,
why dey always so lazy?" An if Ah chop him down quick,
third or fourth roun, all at once then dey holler,
"No, t'aint fair,
dat po 'man up dere fightin a gorilla.'

The same kind of idiom structures the sequence in which he changes places with one of the Detroit Bluejays in order to jump bail. Mrs. Jefferson worries that he will be caught, but with great deliberateness he first removes his jacket to reveal a raspberry-colored shirt and then he stands by the window where the police will be able to see him. When his stand-in begins to peel off his jacket and jersey, Jefferson says wryly,

He look mighty fine, ole Rude here, don' he!
Not pretty is me, but he near is big
an just a half shade blacker an—
Oh, mercy, he got dat shirt on too!

and as he puts on Rudy's cap and jacket he adds, "You hear that sayin how all niggers look alike!" When it suits his purpose he plays the white man's "nigger" and the black man's, but the key word is *plays.* "But you, Jack Jefferson," one of the reporters says before the first fight, "Are you the Black Hope?" "Well," he replies laconically, "Ah'm

black and Ah'm hopin." It is the same thing that he says just before jumping bail. "Ah stayin whut Ah am, wherever Ah has to do it'."

What he *is* ultimately defines the dramatic nature of Sackler's play. In the most obvious sense he is an American pop hero. Plot drips off of him as it drips off of Raskolnikov, only the violence is American violence and it pours out like sweat from every pore. Like some roaring Western his story bounds from crisis to crisis with each more soulcrushing than the last. Apprehended while making love with his white girl, given the maximum penalty under the Mann Act, kept from fighting a decent match in England, in France, in Germany because he is a dinge, he is reduced to acting out Uncle Tom's Cabin with a vaudeville troupe in Budapest and betrayed finally in Juarez, Mexico, by the local gun-toting chief who hands him over to the American authorities. As his trainer Tick remarks, he turns mean as a red hyenna and as stinking, and before his arrest he lashes out at Ellie with all of the rage of injustice behind him. In a scene that drives her to suicide he identifies her, now ugly with slum squalor, with his own "white" misery. It is melodrama purely and simply, the melodrama of Jack Armstrong, of Little Orphan Annie, of Helen Trent. But if it sometimes veers toward bathos, still the center holds. It holds because our rituals, aided by Elizabethan scene technique, ironically reflect the complexity of the situation they attempt to structure. Jefferson in the simplest terms is a black man who is wronged. But in his own terms he is a man who is black and who is wronged and wrongs in turn. The fragmented social images of his situation are presented as scene follows scene: in one a white man in blackface amuses a white crowd by pretending to read a sermon over the hopefully defeated Jefferson; in another a piously sedate Negro preacher prays with the hero's mother; in a third the juju man preaches at the audience, "So all you black flies, you light down together an hum pretty please to white man's Jesus." Cap'n Dan near the end of the play says of Jefferson: "We're gonna squeeze that dinge so goddam hard soon a fix is gonna look like a hayride to him," damning the establishment. But his words echo the prayer of Jefferson's black commonlaw wife: "Drag him on down. Oh won'tya, fo me an mah momma an evvy black-ass woman he turn his back on," she says, "offa dat high horse an on down de whole long mud-track in fronna him . . . limpin an slippin an shrinkin an creepin an sinkin right in." The cliches of our culture appear on stage as mimetic action and as mimetic action they reflect, to use Fergusson's language, "from several angles and with extraordinary directness the moral and metaphysical scene of the play."

It is this profound histrionic sensibility which makes *The Great White Hope*, even in its failures, an important play. It distinguishes it, in the first instance, from other recent plays which appear to use a similar technique. I am thinking particularly of the Peter Brook production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/ Sade* where again an almost bewildering variety of dramatic actions makes the play, in Brook's words, dense in experience. But the word dramatic here is accurate only in its attention-creating sense. Weiss's actions are dramatic, even melodramatic. The central action in which insane people act out a play has a Brueghelesque grotesqueness about it that can be both jangling and theatrically effective. Brook claims that Weiss forces us to "relate opposites and face contradictions. He leaves us raw." Possibly. Certainly the play is well got-up by a playwright wellversed in the liberal dialogue and in contemporary theatre. As Brook points out Brecht, Beckett, Genet all play their part. Hence Roux can say at the end of

Act I, "Woe to the man who is different," and the Herald can announce to the audience that it is a play, "not actual history," that "our end which might seem prearranged/ could be delayed or even changed." But this theatrical self-consciousness is not basically histrionic, and the result is dialectic rather than mimetic. Weiss searches for meaning. He does not imitate an action. Sackler, too, draws heavily upon culture, but it is the popular culture that for better or worse is in our bones. His sources are those artifacts on which we were weaned: comic books, soap operas, Westerns, the Saturday afternoon baseball games, the cheer leaders, the American Legion, Ovaltine. By means of these Sackler has found a way to take the violence that lies at the center of our culture and make it theatrically viable on stage. Brook in his explicit search for ritual has most recently staged Seneca's Oedipus at the National Theatre in London. With an anonymous chorus beating gilded bongo boxes, a seven-foot phallus, and rock 'n roll revels he tries to artificially recreate that sense of ritual which he feels the theatre has lost. His production seems only to demonstrate what he himself says in *The Empty Space:* ritual cannot be artificially staged. But he is wrong in his belief that true rituals are no longer at our disposal. Rather, as Sackler seems to show, ritual as a pattern of feeling continues to structure our society and, once perceived, can still provide an authentic means of dramatic action. As Fergusson suggests, it underlies the verbal. As a pattern of feeling ritual remains the primary source of theatre as a mimetic art.

The extent of the New York betrayal is most apparent in the last scene. Down and out as any depression bum, squeezed to his last self-assertive act under the threat of extradition and with the still dripping corpse of his drowned sweetheart stretched out on the table before him, Jefferson has agreed at last to the fixed match with the Kid, only to refuse to throw it once he is in the ring. In the last scene we see him re-enter to face the press, a blood-smeared hero, his mouth swollen to balloon proportions. They want to know why he was beaten, and in a mumbled roar he answers, "He beat me, dassall. Ah juss din have it." It is the voice of Jack Jefferson, prize fighter, beaten at last on his own terms when his own terms are no longer enough. It is the voice as well of the first white hope and of Cap'n Dan and of the fight fans who just before have reported on the fight's progress by a series of sportcaster-like commentaries from a ladder where one of them can see the fight off stage. "Christ, the nigger's all over him, pile-driven, whalin at him" is followed by "The coon's given ground," "Smell him out Kid," and finally, "The nigger can't do it, he's hitten but he's outa juice! He's punched out." He is, of course, punched out. That's what Jefferson himself says. And what saves him dramatically is that he says it not with that corrupting twang of self pity that Jones in New York has allowed into the play but with that histrionic sense of complexity that keeps him from seeing himself as the Black Hope. There is no literalness to this play and there is no "message." Rather Sackler exploits all of the verbal and visual nuances the subject of black and white in America has to offer to hammer out its identity. Like his hero he refuses to simplify, and he makes that refusal dramatically feasible. In so doing he seems to have found again at least fragments of that mirror with which Hamlet's players showed the very age and body of the time its form and pressure. Therein lies the great hope of this play.

Source: Marion Trousdale, "Ritual Theatre: *The Great White Hope*," in *Western Humanities Review,* Vol 23, No. 14, Autumn 1969, pp. 295-303.

Critical Essay #3

In the following review excerpt, Gilman praises The Great White Hope for, among other things, its energy and message, but feels that in the end the work lacks "final authority."

Howard Sackler's *The Great White Hope* is so pertinently addressed to our present concerns, makes such intelligent use of so many stage resources, possesses such fine energy in places and offers so many superior moments that I wish I could embrace it wholeheartedly and not feel, as I do, that something central hasn't been accomplished, something remains below the mark. The mark I have in mind is that line which nobody can or would want to fix with precision but that is there anyway, separating the plausible and welcome from the conclusive and inimitable. This play about the first Negro heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson, is distinguished, in other words, by everything except final authority, unassailable rightness.

Sackler has taken a history and a legend and animated one while revising the other. I remember the legend from the time in my boyhood when I became interested in boxing: Johnson was a great fighter but a dissolute character who ostentatiously surrounded himself with white women, lived high, fell abjectly and imposed on the black race a profligate image it took Joe Louis' clean, "inspiring" one 20 years later to cancel. A famous photograph stands out: Johnson in a huge polo coat, fedora tipped back, big cigar jutting out, his arms around two blond showgirl types, his black moon face glistening. I think it was taken on shipboard, which contributed to my thinking of Johnson as the oddest kind of man of the world. Jack Johnson did indeed like to live well, and may have overcome it in the kind of excessiveness sudden wealth can bring about, but the decisive truth—and it's the informing one of Sackler's play—was that he was significant, in his day and in our imaginations now, as a victim, a man whose reality was almost wholly shaped by external pressures. His flamboyance was at least partly a slap at the whites who bitterly resented his being champion, his wanderings were the outcome of his having been blacklisted in America, his predilection for white women must have had a large element of defiance in it. He stood at a point in our national experience when a black man was a dramatic and not a typical figure if he defied mores and broke stereotypes.

The play begins with Johnson (or Jack Jefferson, as he's for some reason renamed; why not stay with the evocative archives?) challenging for the heavyweight title in 1908 (he is to win it later that year) and ends with his defeat in Havana by Jess Willard in 1915. During those seven years he is relentlessly ground down, squeezed into the tightest physical and moral corners. The fact that a black man has won the championship inspires an almost mystical horror in whites. "It feels like the world's got a shadow across it," an ex-champion who is instrumental in the machinations against Johnson says: "Everything's—no joke intended—kind of darker, and different, like it's shrinking, it's all huddled down somehow, and you with it, you want to holler 'What's he doin' up there'. . . "

He has made a public liaison with a white girl, and this is the first ground on which he is cut down. Arrested on a trumped-up charge of violating the Mann Act, Johnson is sentenced to three years in prison, but slips out, flees with the girl to Canada, then England. There bigots and prudes prevent him from fighting; he goes to France, then Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia, finding it harder and harder to get matches, being reduced to exhibitions, then to nightclub appearances, turning more and more resentful, violent and determined to hold out.

Going to Mexico, he trains in a barn in Juarez for the fight he insists they have to give him. But "they" are implacable; what they offer him is a fight on one condition—that he throw it. For their search for a "white hope" has turned up nobody they can feel confident about against Johnson, even in his present slack shape. At last, nearly penniless, harassed from every side, his girl a suicide after a violent quarrel with him, Johnson agrees to the fix. The fight with Willard ends with the white hope's ambiguous victory; the question remains whether or not Johnson actually threw the fight, though the play implies that at the last moment he refused and went down to a bloody defeat by a man he could in even reasonable shape have easily beaten.

In taking hold of these events Sackler moves throughout to establish a two-fold dramatic actuality: that of Johnson's own beleaguered, far from simple being and that of American racial consciousness and bad dream, for which he is both instigator and innocent occasion. The material calls unmistakably for some sort of "epic" treatment, but Sackler's choices aren't fully assured or in coherence with each other. Wavering among Brecht, topical revue and a sort of historical pageantry for his main structural lines, he has also to try to make space and atmosphere for his protagonist's private experiences. The failure quite to bring this off is responsible, I think, for the curious intermittent sagging of our interest, a curious thing because so much of the time we're being vigorously and adroitly solicited and because the raw stuff of the drama is so high in natural energy.

Separating the play's three acts and twenty-odd scenes by blackouts, bridging them aurally with musical passages that are sometimes enormously effective—ominous drums and cymbals, violent brasses—and trying always to maintain a nervous, quick-footed, *contemporary* pace, the direction by Edward Sherin nevertheless frequently has an effect of occlusion: too much is being done to too much material, a superfluity of possibility from time to time stops us in our enthusiasm. One example of what I mean is this: a gnarled, Tiresias-like Negro appears sporadically to deliver prophetic, and anachronistic and barely relevant, tirades against black involvement with American values: "How much white you up to? How white you wanna be?" Another is this: the funeral of Johnson's mother, a minor matter at best, becomes a full-scale independent production, full of "colorful" black rhythms and gestures; it seemed to me to be there for the sake of that picturesqueness and also for the purpose of getting-it-all-in. Finally, having the characters periodically address the audience (in which Sherin simply follows the text's direction) is a Brechtian device that lacks Brecht's intellectual and aesthetic reasons for using it.

Beyond this, there is the problem of Sackler's language. A case could be made for its doing the job, for its adequacy and general appropriateness. Yet if this is true, and I think it is, if Sackler seldom over-writes (a line like this is rare: "Time again to make us a big new wise proud dark man's world") it remains true, too, that he's done very little more than the job; he hasn't lifted this splendid material into any kind of irrefutable new statement. The point has nothing to do with a failure to be sufficiently "literary" but simply with Sacklers inhibitions (as I see them) in the face of history, which seems to demand restraint, a colloquialism designed to protect its "human" quality by adhering to the clichés and inadequacies of actual speech. But history is only ransomed by speech other than its own, by amazing utterance, and Sackler's gifts are clearly not for that.

. . . Any number of moments stay in memory: Johnson thigh-slappingly answering the questions of newsmen about his popularity among blacks:

"Man, ah ain't runnin' for Congress! Ah ain't fightin' for no race, ain't redeemin' nobody! My momma tole me Mr. Lincoln done that—ain't that why you shot him?"

The champion reduced to playing Uncle Tom in a Hungarian nightclub, standing in mysterious silence and slowly taking off his grey frizzly wig while the audience covers him with execrations. Johnson mourning his dead lover: "Honey, baby, please, sugar, no!—whut Ah—whut Ah—whut Ah—baby, what Ah done to yo, whut you done, honey, honey, whut dey done to us. . ." The end of the Willard fight and of the play, Johnson standing with a towel swathing his puffed and bloody face and saying, "Come on Chillun, let em pass by" as the winner, even more terribly marked, is carried on men's shoulders in a triumphal procession so painful, ironic and ill-begotten as to constitute the emblem of a disaster. . .

Moved directly by Johnson-Jefferson who is really *there,* really suffering and being shamefully whittled down, we lose sight of history—the present in preparation—which remains, for all the epic dramaturgy, outside the play's hold on the inevitable, so that we have constantly to be reminded of it by hints and references to the present day—unsafe streets, black power, and so on.

What this means is that for Johnson to have been what he was, to have had happen to him what did, and for us to be what we are now are never reconciled or merged dramatically, which is what I meant at the beginning of this review by the play's ultimate lack of impregnable authority. And this accounts, I think, for the reaction, which has made itself apparent, to *The Great White Hope* as a splendid liberal occasion, an opportunity for selfcongratulation on the part of whites, a species of theatrical *Nat Turner* in which we look back and see how we done them wrong. The play is more than that, but it does contain the materials for its own misreading.

Source: Richard Gilman, "Not Quite Heavyweight," in *New Republic,* Vol. 159, No. 17, October 26, 1968, pp. 36-39.

Adaptations

The Great White Hope was made into a movie in 1970 by Twentieth Century Fox.

Topics for Further Study

Compare the structure of Sackler's play to a Shakespearean play of your choosing. In what ways do both works mirror or match each other structurally? Thematically?

Study the life story of Jack Johnson. Take note of any differences between Sackler's work of fiction and the reality of the events that touched Johnson's life. Does the author's representation at all compromise the play?

Consider Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in light of the white characters in the play. How do the feelings of characters like Mrs. Bachman and Cap'n Dan compare with the overall mood of Conrad's work?

Choose a historical figure, event, or aspect of the play and investigate the significance of it. Explain how that figure, event, or aspect had an impact on society during the time in which the play takes place, as well as the author's time.

Compare and Contrast

1902: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is published, a story about a dangerous riverboat journey into the heart of the Congo in search of a missing white fur trader.

Today: A television show called *Survivor* airs for the first time, pitting teams of contestants against each other in perilous, jungle-like conditions for one million dollars in prize money.

1908: Jack Johnson defeats Tommy Burns in fourteen rounds to become the first black heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

Today: Laila Ali, daughter of Muhammad Ali, fights Jacqui Frazier-Lyde, daughter of Joe Frazier, in the boxing ring. After a seven-round slugfest, Ali is declared the winner.

1965: Lyndon Baines Johnson passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to protect the right to vote of all citizens "without distinction of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. . . ."

Today: Thousands of liberal voters in Dade County, Florida, cry foul to the use of hard-tounderstand or faulty ballots during the U.S. presidential election, claiming their vote did not "count."

1965: The country goes through a wave of social reform as Lyndon Baines Johnson increases spending to create Medicare and Medicaid as well as the Higher Education Act, among other programs.

Today: George Bush announces a large tax cut, distributing surplus revenue among all Americans in the form of a tax refund.

What Do I Read Next?

Dreaming in Color, Living in Black and White: Our Own Stories of Growing Up Black in White America, by Laurel Holiday (2000), is a collection of stories of young black Americans' experiences in a racist society.

Hurricane: The Miraculous Journey of Rubin Carter, by James S. Hirsch (2001), is the story of a black prizefighter who spends years in jail for a crime that he did not commit.

In *W. E. B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (2000), David Levering Lewis recounts the words and life of one of the most prominent leaders of the black community in the twentieth century.

Want My Sheperd: Poems is a collection of poetry published by Howard Sackler in 1954.

Further Study

Funke, Lewis, *Playwrights Talk about Writing: 12 Interviews with Lewis Funke,* Dramatic Publishing, 1975.

This collection contains an interview with Howard Sackler and other notable authors.

Gottfried, Martin, "Introduction," in *A Few Inquiries*, Dial, 1970.

This prefaces *A Few Inquiries* and provides, through critical analysis, additional insight into the collection of plays.

Sackler, Howard, A Few *Inquiries*, Dial, 1970.

This is a collection of one-act plays by Sackler, including "Sarah," "The Nine O'Clock Mail," "Mr. Welk and Jersey Jim," and "Skippy."

Trousdale, Marion, "Ritual Theatre: *The Great White Hope*," in *Western Humanities Review,* Autumn 1969, pp. 295-303.

This book is a thorough exploration into and examination of the structure and integrity of Sackler's work.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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