The Heidi Chronicles Study Guide

The Heidi Chronicles by Wendy Wasserstein

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Introduction

Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* is her best-known play. It was first produced Off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons, December 11, 1988, running for three sold-out months, before moving to the Plymouth Theater on Broadway on March 9, 1989. The play averaged 90% full houses during its run and, in 1989, garnered numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for drama as well as the Antoinette Perry (Tony) and New York Drama Critics' Circle awards for best play. Other honors include the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Dramatists Guild's Hull-Warriner Award, and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award for women playwrights.

Following its debut, critical reaction to *The Heidi Chronicles* was mixed. Many praised Wasserstein for her unflinching portrayal of the Baby Boom generation's coming of age. Heidi is a character typical of many women born in the post-World War II era: she is intelligent, well-educated, and attempting to make it in a society dominated by men. While many critics admired the events Wasserstein depicts, some faulted her for undermining the play's serious issues with sitcom humor, half-baked characters like the indecisive Susan Johnston, and a contrived ending.

Many feminists also found fault with *The Heidi Chronicles*. While some were happy that a play with strong feminist themes was a mainstream success, they were displeased with Wasserstein's negative comments (primarily through the voices of her male characters) on the woman's movement. The title character Heidi is often a mute observer, dominated by her two male friends, Scoop and Peter. Feminists believed that Wasserstein blames the women's movement for the fact that women are trivial and men more serious.

Despite such complaints, *The Heidi Chronicles* is largely seen as a success in the subgenre of feminist theatre. The play distinguished Wasserstein as a significant dramatic voice of the Baby Boom generation. Political/gender issues aside, most critics and viewers found the play to be entertaining and few could deny Wasserstein's facility with comedic dialogue. Moreover, many women *did* relate to Heidi's search for her own identity and the anguish she suffers as a woman in modern society.

Author Biography

Wendy Wasserstein was born in Brooklyn, New York, on October 18, 1950. Her parents were Jewish immigrants who came to America from Central Europe as children. Her father, Morris, was a prosperous textile manufacturer. Her mother, Lola, was a homemaker and a nonprofessional dancer. To compete for attention in her large family Wasserstein developed a sharp, unique sense of humor that would later become a hallmark of her writing. Her mother, described by the playwright as a flamboyant, larger-than-life figure, introduced her to the theater as a child, and Wasserstein recognized the dramatic genre as an outlet for her creativity. While her colorful family served as inspiration for many of her plays, especially *The Sisters Rosensweig* (1992) Wasserstein also felt she could never meet their high expectations. When the family moved to Manhattan, the thirteen-year-old Wasserstein experienced feelings of alienation at school as well.

Wasserstein pursued higher education at Mount Holyoke College, taking her first playwriting class at nearby Smith College. Though her instructor encouraged her gifts, she still searched for an identity. Wasserstein's talents are widely thought to have come of age in the late-1960s, when she discovered the women's movement, a key aspect of *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988) and a concept that has informed all of her work.

Following her graduation in 1971, Wasserstein moved back to New York City. There, she earned an M.A. from the City College of New York, studying under such literary notables as playwright Israel Horovitz *(The Indian Wants the Bronx)* and novelist Joseph Heller *(Catch-22)*. Still uncertain of what course to take in life, Wasserstein applied to both the Yale School of Drama and the Columbia Business School. After being accepted by both, Wasserstein decided to go to Yale. Though she initially felt isolated and lost as the only woman among a dozen men in the program, Wasserstein eventually came to recognize her own place and the unique manner in which she could theatrically give voice to women's issues.

At Yale, Wasserstein studied the plays of Anton Chekhov *(The Cherry Orchard, Uncle Vanya)*. She was impressed with the Russian playwright's balance between sympathy and ridicule for his characters. Inspired by Chekhov, Wasserstein modeled several of her early plays on his style. Other great playwrights she studied, however, offered stereotypical women, female characters greatly removed from Wasserstein and her peers. At Yale, Wasserstein began work on the one-act *Uncommon Women and Others* (1975), a comedic social commentary based on her experiences at Mount Holyoke. The play received significant praise when a revised and enlarged (Wasserstein expanded the original text to a two-act) version of the play was produced Off-Broadway in 1977.

During the 1980s Wasserstein worked to establish herself as a professional playwright, achieving moderate success. In 1988, she wrote *The Heidi Chronicles,* a work that is generally considered a high water mark and one of her most challenging plays. The play was first produced in a workshop at the Seattle Repertory Theater in 1988 and subsequently premiered Off-Broadway at the Playwrights Horizon that same year. *The*

Heidi Chronicles debuted on Broadway at the Plymouth Theater in 1989 and received numerous awards and honors, including the Pulitzer Prize, a Drama Desk Award, and the Antionette ("Tony") Perry Award for best play of the year.

While *The Heidi Chronicles* cemented Wasserstein's dramatic reputation, she has had continued success with plays such as *The Sisters Rosensweig* and 1997' s *An American Daughter*. She also wrote the screenplay for the film adaptation of Stephen McCauley's novel *The Object of My Affection,* starring Jennifer Aniston. Like Heidi Holland in *The Heidi Chronicles,* Wasserstein has considered adopting a child as a single parent.

Plot Summary

Act I, prologue

The Heidi Chronicles opens in a lecture hall at Columbia University in 1989. Heidi Holland, a forty-year-old art history professor, delivers a lecture on three women artists, Sofonisba Anguissola, Clara Peeters, and Lilly Martin Spencer. She points out that while these women were either highly regarded in their time and/or extremely talented, they are virtually unknown today.

Act I, scene 1

The year is 1965, the setting a high school in Chicago. Sixteen-year-old Heidi attends a dance with her friend Susan Johnston. When the scene begins, Heidi and Susan look out at the dance floor singing along to "The Shoop Shoop Song." A boy, Chris Boxer, asks Heidi to dance, but she declines, telling him she doesn't want to leave her friend. When a ladies' choice dance is called, Susan hikes up her skirt and runs out on the floor to ask a boy she likes to dance, leaving Heidi alone. Heidi sits down and pulls out a book, *Death Not Be Proud*. A boy named Peter Patrone approaches her, complimenting her with "You look so bored you must be bright." They talk, and Peter teaches her a dance.

Act I, scene 2

It is now 1968, and Heidi attends a dance in Manchester, New Hampshire, for the volunteers and supporters of presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy. Heidi lingers near the food table and is approached by Scoop Rosenbaum. Scoop is overbearing, cutting down her every opinion. Heidi tries to evade him by saying her name is Susan Johnston, until he points out that she is wearing a nametag. Scoop tries to impress her with his intelligence, his work as a journalist, and his well-read opinions. Although he is derogatory toward her, he admits that he wants to have sex with Heidi. At the end of the scene, they passionately kiss.

Act I, scene 3

This scene takes place in 1970 in a church basement in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Jill, a forty-year-old mother of four and Fran, a thirty-year-old lesbian feminist, lead a women's consciousness-raising group. Among the attendees are Becky, a seventeen-year-old abandoned by her parents and living with an abusive boyfriend, Heidi, and Susan. Susan is now a law student, while Heidi attends graduate school at Yale. The group is concerned with empowering themselves. As they sit in a circle and talk, Heidi tries to not make waves by keeping her opinions and feelings to herself. Heidi finds herself drawn into their dialogue, and she talks about her relationship with Scoop. She reveals that

she drops everything to see him, realizing that she lets him define how she feels about herself. The scene ends with the group singing a camp song.

Act I, scene 4

Heidi and Debbie, a new friend, protest the lack of women artists included in exhibits at the Chicago Art Institute in 1974. They plan to march on the curator's office. Peter enters and chants sarcastically, making fun of the protestors. Debbie leaves to look for other supporters. Peter, now doing his medical internship, chides Heidi for not visiting him while she is in Chicago. The two friends share their sexual secrets: Heidi stills sees Scoop but only to sleep with him; Peter reveals is he is homosexual. Their discussion is interrupted by Debbie, who will not let Peter accompany them inside to talk to the curator. Debbie goes ahead, and Heidi and Peter eventually go in together.

Act I, scene 5

It is 1977, and Heidi, Peter, Susan, and Molly attend Scoop's wedding to Lisa Friedlander at the Pierre Hotel. Having abandoned her law career and a prestigious Supreme Court clerkship, Susan now lives with a women's collective in Montana, and Molly is a friend from there. Scoop and Heidi discuss their lives. Heidi reveals that she is seeing an editor. Scoop says that he is going to give up practicing law to start a magazine called *Boomer*. Scoop also explains that he could not have married Heidi because she would have been competing with him. However, he says that he still loves her. The scene closes with them dancing to "You Send Me."

Act II, prologue

A return to the same lecture hall from the first act's prologue. Heidi lectures on Lilla Cabot Perry and compares her to Lily Martin Spencer. Heidi points out that the women in both artists' paintings are separate from the situations in which they are depicted: outsiders in their own pictures.

Act II, scene 1

Heidi attends a baby shower for Lisa in 1980. Susan is also present as well as Lisa's sister Denise. Susan has been attending business school in New York and announces that she has just accepted a vice president position at a Hollywood production company.

Heidi has just returned from England, where she almost married, to accept a position as an art historian at Columbia. Before coming to the shower, she had been in Central Park, mourning the death of John Lennon. When Lisa leaves the room for a moment, Heidi tells the others about seeing Scoop with another woman there; he told Lisa he was at a conference in Princeton.

Denise works as a production assistant on a show called *Hello New York,* and invites Heidi to appear on the show to talk about her book about women and art, *And the Light Floods in from the Left*.

Act II, scene 2

Two years later, in 1982, Heidi appears on the show with Scoop and Peter, who is now an immensely successful pediatrician. Before the taping, Denise instructs them on the topics□ranging from turning forty to sex and relationships. April Lambert, the host, is extremely perky, and while she directs questions to Heidi, Peter and Scoop continually interrupt with their own opinions before she can get more than a few words in. After the taping, Heidi fumes. Scoop uses the opportunity to invite April to lunch because her husband owns a significant chunk of Manhattan real estate.

Act II, scene 3

Heidi meets Susan for lunch at a trendy New York restaurant in 1984. Heidi and Susan talk a bit about Heidi's life□she was dating a lawyer for a while. Heidi reveals she called Susan to talk, but Susan turns the lunch into a business meeting.

Denise joins them because she now works as a story editor for Susan. Susan and Denise want to develop a television show about single women in the art world in Houston, and they want to hire Heidi as a consultant. In the course of the conversation, Susan disavows her feminist political past. Heidi grows uncomfortable throughout the lunch, and tells Susan she cannot help them.

Act II, scene 4

Heidi addresses a high school alumnae luncheon at the Plaza Hotel in 1986. Heidi tells the audience she is doing her speech off the cuff. The topic was supposed to be "Women, Where Are We Going?," but Heidi talks about something that happened to her the day before. After teaching, she went to an exercise class and found herself totally out of sync with the other women in the locker room. Their concerns did not relate to hers yet she found herself envying them. Just when she was about to leave the locker room, she tripped and fell into the group of other women. She imagined what they must think of her, and she told the exercise instructor she could not go to class because she was too unhappy. Referring to the women's movement, she tells the audience: "I thought we were all in this together." Shaken and clearly disturbed, she quickly exits the stage.

Act II, scene 5

It is nearly midnight, Christmas Eve, 1987. Heidi shows up at a hospital children's ward carrying boxes of donations. Peter cannot believe she has showed up out of the blue

with such gifts. He tells her he does not want to hear about her problems. She tells him that she's moving to Minnesota tomor row and has come to say good-bye. He becomes angry because many of his friends are dying of AIDS, and he regards her unhappiness as trivial and a "luxury." He tells her that he feels his life growing smaller. She decides to stay for him.

Act II, scene 6

Heidi has just moved into a new, still empty apartment. It is 1989. Scoop enters, and tells her that he just sold his magazine. He expresses anxiety towards his uncertain future. Heidi tells him that she is not always going lend a sympathetic ear to his troubles; she has her own life to lead. After discussing their past, Scoop reveals that he knows about her adopting an infant from Panama. Heidi has named the baby Judy. Scoop gives Heidi a silver spoon for the baby. Heidi brings her out. After Scoop leaves, Heidi sings "You Send Me" to her. The last image of the play is a photo of Heidi and the baby in front of a banner announcing a retrospective of Georgia O'Keefe, a significant female artist.

Prologue to Act 1

Prologue to Act 1 Summary

In a lecture hall in New York, 1989, Heidi Holland is speaking to her art history class, reviewing material for an upcoming midterm exam. Her specific subject is the great art of women, none of who are represented in her students' art history textbooks.

Specifically, Heidi introduces her students to three artists. Sofonisba Anguissola, a 16th century portrait painter who was an equal to Titian. Heidi considers Clara Peters the greatest artist, male or female, of the 17th century. Finally, Heidi confidently criticizes the 19th century American genre painter, Lily Martin Spencer. In discussing one of the paintings, Heidi says it reminds her of a high school dance, where "you hang around … waiting to see what might happen."

Prologue to Act 1 Analysis

The prologue introduces the reader to Heidi Holland on her own turf. Heidi is a funny, literate, and confident feminist. When she makes mention of her high school dance, she reveals that she was not always so confident and proactive. This last statement segues well into the first scene of Act 1. It also tells a little about Heidi's journey into feminism. She began that journey as a passive creature, waiting to see what might happen to her in life.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The "Shoop Shoop Song" plays in the background as Heidi and her best friend, Susan Johnston, arrive at a high school dance in 1965. Susan's reason for being there is to meet a boy, and she finds one that can smoke and dance the twist at the same time. As she prepares, by shortening her skirt, to meet this boy, Susan instructs Heidi not to make it look like she wants to hang out with her (Susan), but also not to look desperate to meet a boy, either. Heidi rebels against this advice. When a boy named Chris asks her to dance, she says she cannot leave Susan. Susan tries to pretend they just met, but Chris walks off.

When the song "Satisfaction" begins to play, the dance is a Ladies' Choice, meaning the girls are allowed to ask the boys to dance. It is assumed that in all the rest of the dances, boys are expected to choose their partners, rather than the other way around. Taking advantage of her one opportunity, Susan goes to ask the twisting smoker to dance, leaving Heidi to find her own way home.

Heidi sits down to read, and Peter approaches. They become friends almost immediately, trading jokes and pretending to be on a cruise. When the "Shoop Shoop Song" plays again, they share the final dance as the scene closes.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

From the first scene, one sees the how music is used in this play to convey the chronology of Heidi's journey as a feminist. The "Shoop Shoop Song," which is all about how to know if a boy loves a girl, gives a quick snapshot of the culture Heidi finds herself in as a 16-year-old. Later, the song "Satisfaction" is employed, during the Ladies' Choice dance, as a metaphor for the discontent growing among women and girls.

All throughout this play, Heidi's friendship with Susan will symbolize her relationship to other women in her generation. Susan tries to teach Heidi to have a good time by following certain rules for interacting with boys. However, since Susan has been trained that her job is to attract and retain a boy for herself, she thinks nothing of leaving Heidi all alone, especially after Heidi rebels against these rules. The playwright here illustrates that women in the mid 1960s often felt alone and isolated from each other, in their competition to win the attention of men, the dominant social group in their culture.

By her rebellion, Heidi may seem uninterested in the dance. One might think she only came so that Susan would not have to walk in alone. However, the reader knows from the Prologue to Act 1 that Heidi showed up to see what might happen to her. She was willing to come to the dance, but it does not occur to her to ask anyone to dance. However, she at least is determined not to follow silly rules to get someone to dance

with her. In being true to herself, she is available to meet Peter, who not only dances with her, but also becomes a lifelong friend.

This play raises an important question. Is a platonic relationship less valuable than a romantic relationship? From the first, Heidi and Peter connect because neither of them fits into the culture represented by the high school dance. Heidi does not fit, because she will not make a game of catching boys by acting in ways that do not feel true to her. She will find, out later in the play that Peter does not fit, because he is a homosexual.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Three years later, Heidi, now a college student campaigning for Eugene McCarthy, arrives at another dance. This time, she comes alone. Someone offers her a marijuana cigarette, but she shakes her head. Janis Joplin can be heard singing, "Take a Piece of My Heart."

It is at this party that Heidi meets Scoop Rosenbaum. Right away, Scoop offers Heidi his opinions about her, and then says she has an inferiority complex, because she lets him voice those opinions. He not only judges her, but also he assigns a grade to everything he sees and hears, including the band, the potato chips, and even his own appearance. Scoop is the editor of the Liberated Earth News, yet teases her for being a true believer in the liberal cause. Scoop calls her a serious good person, and says he is only there to have a look around.

Heidi tries to get away from him by giving him a fake name, Susan's name. However, he already knows who she is. His newspaper did an article on her. Scoop keeps the conversation going with his jokes and arrogance. Finally, Heidi gets mad enough to say that he is irritating her, which Scoop congratulates as her first honest statement. Amazed by his confidence, Heidi wonders aloud, "What [do] mothers teach their sons that they never bother to tell their daughters?"

After scolding her some more for not speaking up for herself, Scoop asks Heidi to go to bed with him. He predicts that when they are both older, living separate suburban lifestyles, he will remember when he thought he could fall in love with her. As he turns to go, Heidi checks her watch, and leaves with him. Scoop clenches his fist in conquest.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

In many ways, Scoop Rosenbaum illustrates why women in the 1970s needed liberation. He is a metaphor for patriarchy itself. He moves through life labeling things and people, like Adam naming animals and trees in the Garden of Eden. Heidi is so used to this sort of arrogant behavior that it takes an enormous amount of it to make her speak up about it.

Before Heidi and Scoop exchange their first words, though, the playwright has shown that Heidi is, as Scoop says, a true believer. She is not interested in the drug scene, but instead seeks to work with others who, like herself, believe that all people should be allowed to fulfill their potential. The question then becomes, "Why would someone like Heidi be interested in someone who does not seem to take her or her ideals seriously?" In fact, the larger question of the play may be why any woman who takes her life and ideals seriously allows herself to become involved with someone who does not.

The secret to Heidi's attraction to Scoop may be that she is as fascinated by his arrogance as she is repelled by it. She wonders how men get that kind of confidence. Perhaps, on some level, she hopes that by being close to Scoop, she will come to understand it or even attain some of it for herself. Another issue for Heidi, and indeed all people, is that even people with very high ideals are human and need human companionship.

Meanwhile, Heidi is still at odds with women. She speaks as if Scoop's excessive confidence and her own lack of confidence are the fault of women. She wonders aloud what Scoop's mother (rather than his father or the larger culture) taught him that her mother (rather than her father or the larger culture) did not teach her. When people are oppressed, the playwright seems to say, they often blame themselves and cannot see the whole picture.

Scoop seems to be as fascinated by what he calls Heidi's goodness, as she is by his arrogance. It would be easy to say that he saw her only as a sexual conquest. He certainly does see her that way, but there is more to his attraction to her. He admires her sincerity, even as he is unwilling or unable to be serious himself.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

In 1970, a small group of women holds a consciousness-raising rap (i.e., discussion) session in a church basement. The music that opens this scene is "R-E-S-P-E-C-T."

Two women are setting up for the meeting. Jill is a 40-year-old neatly dressed suburban housewife. Fran is a 30-year-old lesbian in Army fatigues. A 17-year-old named Becky joins them for the first time, wearing jeans and a poncho. Fran and Jill hug her immediately.

Susan and Heidi arrive. Susan is a member of this group, and Heidi is visiting her in Ann Arbor. All the members welcome and hug, but when they all sit, Heidi keeps her chair a little outside the circle. When Heidi explains that she is just visiting, the outspoken Fran challenges her to show up as a sister to the group, not just a visitor. Heidi agrees to do so, and the discussion begins.

Susan shares that she has decided to take a position at the Law Review, instead of starting her own journal devoted to women's legal issues. She says she made this decision to "work within the male establishment power base to change the system." Fran loudly challenges this as rationalization, but Susan does not seem to mind Fran's outburst. In fact, she professes to love Fran. Throughout this meeting, the women say they love each other, whether they know each other well or not.

Becky's parents have separated, taken off on their own adventures, and left her home alone. She shares that she asked her boyfriend to move in with her until she finishes high school. However, it has quickly become an exploitive, and possibly abusive, arrangement. She cooks, cleans, and tries to be as nice as she can. He yells and uses drugs.

Jill offers to share her home with Becky. Becky questions this, because earlier she heard Jill say that she intends to take care of herself. Jill amends that to say women have to take care of people who appreciate it, rather than the people who expect it.

Fran invites Heidi to share, rather than to judge. At first, Heidi either misunderstands or rebels against what is being asked of her. She shares her opinions, rather than herself. Fran pushes Heidi to share something of her own struggle as a woman. Heidi insists that it is personal. Jill explains that the word personal has been used to keep women isolated from each other. She then tries a little reverse psychology and suggests that maybe Heidi is not "at the same place" the rest of them are, although clearly, each of the women there is in a very different place from the others.

Heidi insists that she is where they are, because she believes that all people deserve to fulfill their potential. Fran challenges her again, arguing that Heidi, too, deserves to fulfill her potential, but that she will not get anywhere if she does not value herself enough to

reach out for support. Heidi finally opens up slightly, and Susan fills in the details, to expose Heidi's pain and embarrassment over her continuing involvement with Scoop. Her relationship with him is very unsatisfactory. She drops whatever is going on in her own life to see him when he calls her every few weeks, even though she knows that he is dating many other women. Her struggle is that she feels this relationship is wrong for her, but she continues to participate in it, anyway. She finishes her sharing by voicing a heartfelt wish that the next generation of women will feel much more worthwhile. All the women in the circle profess love for Heidi. Jill tries to lead the group in a camp song, but Fran nixes that idea and plays Aretha Franklin's song, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" again as the scene closes.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

In 1970, popular music no longer asked, "How can you tell he loves you?" Instead, women's voices were raised in a demand for respect. However, this scene comically illustrates how difficult it sometimes was for women of that time to give respect to themselves and to each other.

The consciousness-raising groups that were such a part of second wave feminism provided a forum for women to share experience, strength and hope with each other. For the first time, large numbers of women exposed to each other what was really going on in their lives, their hearts and their homes.

Even during the 1970s, there was more than one way to be a feminist, and this gathering of women illustrates that. There is Fran, who wants nothing to do with men at all. There is Jill, who wants to bring equality into her relationships with her husband and children, rather than to dissolve those relationships. There is Becky, still just a child, who has lost her parents, attached herself in desperation to a very negative man, and is in need of guidance. However, women of that time sometimes failed to respect each other's right to decide exactly what was in their own best interests, as if there was just one way to be a feminist. Fran, with her frequent assertion that either you shave your legs or you do not, is a symbol of that.

Susan, the metaphor for the function of other women in Heidi's life, has changed roles. Instead of supporting patriarchy by enforcing the rules of boy catching, she now holds Heidi accountable to tell the truth about her life. Now, instead of being expected to catch a boy, Heidi is expected to be independent of men and seek her support from other women. She is even expected to profess love for a group of women she has never met. Just as Heidi failed to stand up to Scoop in the previous scene, in this scene she agrees under pressure to present herself as a sister to a group of strangers.

Heidi does experience a type of conversion to the feminist idea that the personal is political; that is, her choices as a woman help shape the lives and futures of other women. Sharing her truth with this sisterhood does not set Heidi free of her unsatisfactory relationship to Scoop, but it does seem to clarify for her the root of her problem, which is that she does not feel worthwhile. Moreover, it gives some focus to

her desire to improve things for the next generation of women. After this meeting, the play will show that Heidi's work as an art historian shifts from art history as defined by patriarchal institutions to a specifically feminist art history. From this point on, Heidi's mission is to teach that women have always made important and worthwhile contributions to the world of art.

Act 1, Scene 4

Act 1, Scene 4 Summary

In 1974, Heidi and her colleague, Debbie, stand outside of the Chicago Art Institute, speaking to an audience of two other women. They are protesting because the Institute's Age of Napoleon exhibit includes no women artists. Heidi's friend Peter arrives and seems to be making fun of the protest. Debbie is disgusted and leaves the scene with the two other women to check on plans to walk on the curator's office.

Peter is doing a medical internship in Chicago and has come to the protest to see Heidi, who had phoned him to say she would not have time to visit with him while in Chicago. He asks about Scoop, rather sarcastically, and learns that Scoop and Susan clerk for the same Supreme Court Judge. Heidi claims that she just likes to sleep with Scoop, but that she is otherwise not involved with him.

Peter complains that he feels distant from Heidi, because they have not seen each other in eight months. Heidi protests that she had been working on her dissertation and starts talking about finding Peter a girlfriend. Finally, Peter tells her he is gay. He has to say it several times before Heidi even begins to understand. Peter finally gets so frustrated that he launches into a speech, saying that his liberation and the liberation of men like him is as important as women's liberation. He demands Heidi's equal time and consideration in her life.

Just then, Debbie returns to fetch Heidi, because it is time to march on the curator's office. When Peter wants to join them, Debbie will not allow it, so Heidi chooses not to march after all. After Debbie leaves, Heidi and Peter have a pretend fight, hitting each other on the arm to punctuate the difficult things they say to each other.

In this playful manner, they clear the air between them. Heidi is resentful, because she thinks Peter has the luxury of a small and personal world, whereas she feels obligated to make her life resonate for generations. It bothers Peter, on the other hand, that Heidi seems to think her liberation is more important than his is, and that she seems to agree with her colleague Debbie that his tone is paternal and caustic. Finally, although she has always rejected the idea of being involved with him romantically, Heidi is annoyed that Peter is gay and not in love with her. He, in turn, hits her for making him feel guilty and for not remembering the anniversary of their friendship.

The two friends hug, and Heidi asks to meet Peter's boyfriend. However, Peter has already arranged for Mark to meet him here for lunch. When Mark arrives, Heidi is clearly embarrassed to see them embrace. However, she invites Peter and Mark to join her in marching on the curator's office, in spite of Debbie's objections, and they do, closing the scene by chanting, "Women in Art! Women in Art!"

Act 1, Scene 4 Analysis

In this scene, Heidi finds herself faced with the questions that the entire women's movement faced in the 1970s and that feminism still faces today. To what degree is feminism about women's equality to men, and to what degree is it really about social justice for all? Heidi, who in this scene was converted from a humanist interpretation of art history to a clearly feminist study, now faces these questions.

During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, feminists had worked for the civil rights of black men, but this did not translate into justice for women. Many women were, and are, like Heidi's colleague Debbie, who felt that women's energies should be used exclusively to help women. Yet there were, and are, women like Heidi, who did not want to exclude anyone.

In the last several years, Heidi has earned her Ph.D., but her continued involvement with Scoop is still as unfulfilling as ever, even though she tries to make it sound unimportant. Scoop continues to call when he does not have someone else to sleep with, and she continues to drop her life to see him. With Peter, though, she has been able to put her own life first. She did not even see him while she finished working on her dissertation. This illustrates that, even for many feminist women of the 1970s, the needs of a romantic partner still triumphed over those of a friend or one's own career.

Peter raises an interesting question about relationships. Though he has not been, and never will be, Heidi's romantic partner, he wants equal time and attention. He wants Heidi to remember the anniversary of their friendship and treat it as special. This may be because he is a man who was raised in the 1960s. As such, he expects to be a woman's priority, even if she never will be his.

On the other hand, it may be that Peter suggests a whole new paradigm for relationships between men and women. For him, the relationship he shares with Heidi is important, not in spite of a lack of sex, but indeed because there is no sex. In Peter's case, sexual relationships are far more casual than his friendship with Heidi. In this paradigm, Heidi is a priority to Peter, though they will never sleep together.

Heidi learned as a girl that a heterosexual man was a woman's priority. Even though she appeared to reject that training when she was a young girl, it has still had a powerful negative effect on her life. She accepts Peter and Mark into her own feminist march, as many in the women's movement did. Perhaps she feels she will not be liberated from her second class status in society, so long as homosexual men are seen as second class in her own life and in the life of society.

In this scene that raises such different viewpoints, there is no music playing in the background. There no single song that gives voice to a unified message, except for the closing chant, Women in Art!

Act 1, Scene 5

Act 1, Scene 5 Summary

Three years later, in 1977, Heidi and her friends attend the wedding of Scoop Rosenbaum to Lisa Friedlander, a young woman from "the best Jewish family in Memphis." The scene takes place in the anteroom of the Pierre Hotel ballroom. Heidi and Peter, Susan and Molly come in to take a break from the reception. Susan has been living on a sheep ranch with Molly in the West. Peter is now a pediatrician with a thriving practice.

When the scene opens, Heidi is defending Lisa from the snide gossip of the rest of the group. Apparently, she is the only woman in the room who still holds the ideal of treating all women as sisters. When Scoop enters, he meets Peter for the first time. Scoop still insists on calling Heidi "Heidella," which means Heidi-girl.

Susan and Molly leave the room to go dance. Soon, Lisa comes in to look for Scoop, who lies by introducing her to Peter Patrone and his fiancée Heidi. It turns out that Lisa is a children's book illustrator, and Peter, as a pediatrician, is both familiar with and impressed by her work. When it becomes clear that Scoop is not anxious to go dance with her, Lisa tactfully saves face by inviting Peter to dance with her. She playfully pretends that she is doing this to make Scoop jealous, and that Heidi is in on the joke.

As soon as Scoop and Heidi are alone, Scoop starts talking about how unhappy he is, while blaming Heidi for letting him marry. Next, he tries to interrogate Heidi about her love life. Finally, he explains himself by saying that he married Lisa, because if he had married Heidi, they would be competing with each other for self-fulfillment. He claims that if Heidi had made other choices, had not been so ambitious perhaps, they be married today.

When the Master of Ceremonies in the ballroom next door announces Lisa and Scoop's favorite song, Scoop starts to go dance with his wife. Heidi sits down and cries. Scoop comes back in to kiss her and says he loves her. Her only reply is to shake her head, as they end the scene dancing to Sam Cooke's 1958 song, "You Send Me."

Act 1, Scene 5 Analysis

Scoop has done just as he predicted when he first met Heidi in the second scene. He has married a wife who will put up with him, rather than someone he sees as his equal. The music that closes the scene is symbolic of Scoop and Lisa's 1950s style marriage. Rather than move forward with Heidi to create a new kind of marriage, Scoop has chosen to go back to an old familiar model of marriage. He says he wants a wife that would not compete with him for self-fulfillment.

Ironically, Lisa would be a wonderful example of someone who is actualizing her potential, were it not for her tendency to diminish herself in the presence of men. Lisa is successful in her own work, but Scoop somehow seems to feel decorated by her accomplishments, rather than threatened by them. Also, Lisa has voiced a desire to raise children, while Heidi told Scoop, the very first time they met, that it would not be fair to expect a well-educated woman to set aside her life to raise his children.

Heidi and Lisa's different perspectives on motherhood reflect feminism's ambivalence on the subject of children. Feminism has advocated for the rights of both women and children, but it has not always done a good job of reaching women like Lisa, who want to care for their own children full time. The snide attitude about Lisa, from Susan and her friend Molly, give a clue as to why women who want marriages and children might have felt left out of the feminist movement in the 1970s.

However, a lack of interest in children does not make one a feminist, as the reader learns from comparing the attitudes of the men in this play. As a symbol of patriarchal culture, Scoop mirrors a lack of respect for children, as well as for women. Scoop does not feel threatened by Lisa, because her accomplishments are artistic, rather than intellectual, and are for children, rather than adults. Peter, the man who considers himself a feminist, and who cares for children in his professional life, shows great respect for Lisa and her work.

Scoop does to Heidi what feminism says patriarchy has always done to women. He treats her as a child, yet blames her for not preventing him from marrying Lisa. Scoop claims that Heidi should have made different choices, so that she could play the role that Lisa is playing today. He does not seem to realize that this would only mean he would have as little respect for Heidi as he does for Lisa.

Scoop is selfish, yet the playwright still succeeds in creating a sympathetic character. The audience recognizes Scoop's frail ego and his genuine distress. Scoop is as rigid as Fran was in the third scene. He thinks there is only one way to be married, just as Fran thought there was only one way to be a feminist. That is what prevents him from the fulfillment of being married to someone he considers an equal partner.

Prologue to Act 2

Prologue to Act 2 Summary

Once again, Heidi is in a lecture hall at Columbia University, lecturing to her women's art history class. In her discussion, she praises one portrait-painter's use of light and color, but criticizes the same artist for "copping out" by delineating the head in traditional male portraiture. Heidi prefers that an artist be willing to lose her edges in favor of paint and light. In pointing out the similarities between two paintings, Heidi describes them as uniquely female, because the women depicted are slightly removed from the action of the painting, yet are watching closely while easing the way for other participants to join in the action.

Prologue to Act 2 Analysis

This second lecture foreshadows the conclusions Heidi comes to on her journey through the 1980s. She is critical of a feminism that thinks like patriarchy, that values what patriarchy values. The reader will see this theme developed more fully in the second act.

Heidi's discontent with the direction of feminism in pop culture is symbolized by her criticism of a female artist who fell back on traditional lines when drawing the head of a portrait. Rather than seeking traditional forms of intellectual success, Heidi practices her feminism as a woman who watches society closely and makes the way easier for her students, and all women of future generations, to participate in it.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

It is now 1980. John Lennon's song, "Imagine," plays in the background. Denise Friedlander, Lisa Rosenbaum's sister, is throwing a baby shower for Lisa. Their friend Betsy is there, and so is Susan, with her lover Molly. Heidi arrives a little late, having gone first to John Lennon's memorial service in Central Park.

A lot has happened since Lisa and Scoop's wedding. Heidi went to Europe for several years and has published a book of essays, *And the Light Floods in from the Left, and Other Overcommitments,* which is getting great reviews. She became engaged to a man while overseas, but when the art history job opened up at Columbia University, he chose not to come with her to the States. She chose to take the job, and so they have just broken off their engagement.

Susan moved back to New York from Montana to go to business school while Heidi was away. Now, she is finished with school and preparing to move to Los Angeles to take a job as executive vice president for a production company that targets films to the 25-29 year old audience. Although Heidi says nothing critical, Susan seems to feel the need to justify her choice to Heidi, as if to say that she has not left feminism.

Scoop's magazine, *Boomer*, is very trendy and successful. He and Lisa are about to have their first baby, but Scoop is still a philanderer. Peter Petrone was featured in the magazine recently as the Best Pediatrician in New York less than 40 years old.

Lisa's sister, Denise, provides a comic moment when she curses upon learning that Peter is gay. She says there is just nobody who is not either married or gay, and this frustrates her, because as soon as she feels her career is in place, she wants a family. Heidi says she wants a family, too.

Betsy tells Heidi that she loved her book of essays. Denise, who is a production assistant on a popular morning television show, mentions that the show's host, April, would like to have Heidi on the show to talk about her book.

Scoop told Lisa he was participating in a panel discussion at Princeton. He phones to say he will be later than he thought. As soon as she leaves the room to take the call, the women start discussing whether Lisa knows Scoop is cheating on her. Heidi, for one, just saw Scoop and his younger lover at the John Lennon memorial. Denise says that Lisa's overly cheerful manner means that she does know what is going on. When Lisa rejoins the group, she grows tearful for a moment, but quickly puts on a smile and refuses to talk seriously. The other women drop the subject and drink a toast to the Beatles to end the scene, with Heidi's hand on Lisa's arm.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

The death of John Lennon was, for many Baby Boomers, the symbol for the death of their dream of a world changed by their revolution. It has been said that Lennon was especially gifted in transforming his private pain and struggle into a public voice. About the same time of his death, this scene illustrates, many of his generation seemed to give up on working for high ideals such as peace and justice, and began to work instead just to make money. Scoop, who claimed never to be serious, anyway, makes his money publishing a stylish magazine. Susan, whose priorities vacillate with the times, is on her way to making stylish television shows. Money is in, and ideals are out of fashion.

During this period of history, the idea of planning careers and family became very popular among young educated women. Rather than build careers and families at the same time, women who practiced this type of sequencing sought to avoid either extreme from sacrificial motherhood to cold careerist. Lisa's sister Denise is an example. She had decided that the solution was to establish a career first, as indeed Lisa had, and then to start a family. The drawback was that, by the time careers were established, a number of childbearing years had passed. Women who wanted families began to worry about what was called the biological clock.

At the end of the previous act, the reader was left wondering if Heidi would still be involved with Scoop, although he had married. In this scene, it is clear that Heidi avoided further involvement by leaving the country. While in England, she met and loved someone enough to become engaged; yet, he was not willing to move with her when her work brought her back to the United States. Her choice to live alone, rather than to give up on her ideals, stands in sharp contrast to the choices of her peers, particularly Lisa. Lisa pretends to believe lies and to be happy, rather than to risk being alone by challenging her husband's infidelities. Though Heidi represents Lisa's exact opposite, Heidi is the one woman who is most able to empathize with Lisa, because she knows what it's like to be involved with Scoop.

Act 2, Scene 2

Act 2, Scene 2 Summary

Almost two years later, Heidi is finally interviewed on the popular morning television show, *Hello, New York*. She is one of three guests that were invited to the show to discuss the past, present, and future of the Baby Boomer generation. The other two guests are Peter and Scoop.

During the interview, the listener learns that Heidi is not only an author and professor, she is also the director of Women's Art, a group dedicated to the recognition of American women artists. Peter continues to be a successful and popular pediatrician, and the host asks him to hint at the fact that he is gay. Scoop speaks as though he were the quintessential family man. He is now the father of two children, and he mentions how proud he is that his wife Lisa has illustrated another children's book. His magazine, *Boomer*, continues to be very trendy and influential.

Although April, the host of the show, throws a number of questions to Heidi, Peter and Scoop both steal the show. They interrupt her shamelessly. Peter and Scoop weigh in with their opinions on a woman's biological clock, as well as whether women have to compromise on equality if they want to have families. While April continues to address questions to Heidi, she seems unable to maintain control of the interview. The whole segment turns out to be a competition between Peter and Scoop.

Afterward, Heidi is quite angry with both men and says so, but she does not stay to argue about it, because she has work to do. She leaves to meet a painter for lunch. Scoop, still feeling philosophical, turns to try to talk to Peter, but Peter cuts the conversation short and leaves. Scoop is left alone on the set as the scene ends.

Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis

Through this scene, the playwright seems to suggest that, although women and their accomplishments are more a part of public dialogue than before the women's movement, their voices still go unheard, all too often. Logically, April questioned Heidi about women's roles and how they were evolving in the early 1980s, but the two men easily out-talked the two women, even though April was supposedly the star of the show. Rather than voice anger at how Peter and Scoop ran over Heidi and herself during the show, April spoke as if they had done a wonderful job, because in television, what matters is to keep the discussion fast and clever-sounding. Being friendly with the trendsetter, Scoop, is more important for ratings than the content of the interview itself. This is a symbol of how April stays friendly with patriarchy, rather than confront it, so that she keeps the appearance of having an important role.

Heidi, on the other hand, has known these two men for years and is not impressed by their cleverness. She is hurt and angry that even Peter was more interested in the male

competition than in hearing her voice. She is frustrated, because the show could have been a wonderful opportunity to educate and enlighten people about the role of women in art and society. Instead, it trivialized women, their accomplishments, and their concerns.

Lisa's ability to continue her illustrations while raising a family, for example, could have provided wonderful fodder for that conversation. When does she get work? Does she have either household help or childcare? Is illustrating children's books a compromise in Lisa's mind, or does she consider that as important as the more traditional art that Heidi promotes? It would have been interesting to hear Lisa and Heidi discuss that issue, but while Heidi's voice was interrupted, Lisa's voice was not heard at all.

By this, the playwright shows how the explosion of media outlets in the 1980s, which had the potential to make all people heard, has actually been used to silence women, even as it makes them more visible. Heidi's solution to that problem is to stay in the background and keep doing her work. She does not do lunch with the television people. Instead, she goes to meet an obscure painter whose work deserves a showing.

Peter, who earlier in the play sought to be heard by Heidi, is now being heard, but in a very distorted way. The playwright seems to suggest that while gay men gained visibility from the feminist movement, their voices began to be heard only in very stereotypical ways. The television audience may enjoy a bit of controversy or titillation when Peter plays to the stereotype and hints at his sexuality, but it does not hear Peter's true voice. Just as April plays to patriarchy to keep her job, Peter plays for acceptance and popularity.

Scoop says more than once during the interview that having children has changed him. It is not yet clear how that is so. He still seems arrogant and opinionated, and there is no reason to think that he has learned to be faithful to his marriage. He does seem to begin to ask some questions, though, a bit more seriously than before. Peter is impatient and does not want to hear it, but Scoop may indeed ask himself about his choices. Why, for instance, does someone who wants to date a lot of women get married at all? The lip service he gives to the importance of his children provides a clue as to his motivation. Women are not the only people who want children, or who think about the meaning of life, and Scoop reminds the audience of that.

Act 2, Scene 3

Act 2, Scene 3 Summary

It is 1984, and Heidi is having lunch with her old friend, Susan. Heidi wants to have a sincere talk. Susan, however, is busy working the room the entire time. She is looking for famous people and trying to network. Susan seems to be speeding, in fact. She is talking fast, and her thoughts jump from one thing to the next, but there is no direct mention of her using drugs of any sort.

She may just be nervous, because she does not want Heidi to bring up anything painful. Heidi is still teaching at Columbia, writing a bit, and putting on art shows through Women's Art. She has no significant other, and seems to be lonely. It sounds like Susan may be dating a married man, but she will not discuss this. Heidi is surprised and disappointed to learn that Susan has invited Lisa's sister Denise to join them for lunch. Denise is now Susan's assistant.

It seems as though Susan has invited Denise to avoid a serious conversation with Heidi, but she has another agenda as well. Susan and Denise have an idea for a television show, and they want to hire Heidi as a sort of expert consultant. The show is about single women and whether they regret their choices. Their tone suggests that the women's movement has ended and that it was possibly a mistake because it has left women lonely. Heidi rejects this view and has no interest in the show.

Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis

From Heidi's point of view, Susan is like the artist that Heidi criticizes in the Prologue to Act 2. Susan has given up on feminist thinking. She has become just as acquisitive and exploitive as the patriarchal system she used to protest. Her life's work is about creating something that will sell. That Susan may not be completely at peace with this is illustrated by her inability to sit still and have a conversation with Heidi.

Heidi is doing work that she believes in, but finds that work is not enough to fulfill her potential. Heidi is still very committed to her ideals. Although she has questions about how her life is going, she knows that money, networking, and prestige are not the answers to her loneliness. She is not willing to settle for a partnership that is not equal, and she is shocked when Susan suggests that maybe staying single for the sake of that idea is a mistake. Heidi still believes that her career is important for the contribution she can make, but she seems to wonder if she will ever have more than a career in her life.

The difference between these two women was foreshadowed at the beginning of the play, when they were just 16 years old. Heidi has always been able to reject what does not feel honest to her. Susan, on the other hand, changes with the fashion of the times. Now, she seems to view feminism as outdated as smoking and doing the twist. Just as

she once did at the high school dance, Susan has left Heidi alone to find her own way home.

Act 2, Scene 4

Act 2, Scene 4 Summary

At the Plaza Hotel in 1986, Heidi is the featured speaker at a luncheon of the alumni association of her private high school. Her talk is supposed to address the topic, "Women: Where Are We Going?" First, Heidi starts with a comical and irreverent description of the woman who does it all, to make the point that she is not that woman. Then, she tells a poignant story of comparing herself to other women at an exercise class. It is an honest description of her ambivalence toward other women, with whom she constantly competes, and by whom she constantly feels judged. She closes her talk by admitting that she feels stranded. She had thought that the point of feminism was that no woman would ever have to feel stranded.

Act 2, Scene 4 Analysis

Ever the renegade, Heidi does not give the nice, polite talk that the alumni association was expecting. Her talk is painfully honest, even if it is funny at times. Heidi's adult life has been spent trying to make the world a better place for women, and it hurts to feel so disconnected from the people she works to serve. This period of despair, however, serves a useful function in her development as a person. Through it, Heidi lets go of her naiveté.

No human being can escape the need for connection to other human beings. Women of earlier generations may have attempted escape through a form of marriage that erased them and made them one with their spouses. Heidi, her talk reveals, had hoped to escape loneliness through solidarity with other women. The problem is that women often try to form solidarity by pretending that there are no tensions or differences between them. They are as isolated from each other in the 1980s as they were in the 1960s. Heidi realizes that she will have to acknowledge that, if she is to find a way to meet her need for human connection.

Act 2, Scene 5

Act 2, Scene 5 Summary

On Christmas Eve, 1987, Heidi comes to a hospital ward for children with AIDS, with a donation of old books and albums. She is preparing to move to the Midwest, where she has accepted a teaching position. She has come to tell Peter goodbye.

Peter is very upset by this and reacts angrily at first. His relationship with a long-time lover just ended, and he has watched too many of his friends die of AIDS. He simply does not want to lose another loved one.

However, Peter is upset, not only by Heidi's goodbye, but also by her explanation for leaving. She feels she has no reason to stay, no life in New York, simply because she does not have a romantic interest here. Peter, on the other hand, thinks of Heidi as one of the few constants in his life, as a member of his family, and it hurts him that she does not see him that way, too.

Peter's response moves Heidi to say she will postpone leaving indefinitely. She initiates a nostalgic conversation, the one they shared at their high school dance, pretending to be passengers on a cruise ship. Peter is emotionally exhausted and tearful. Heidi begins singing the "Shoop Shoop Song," and they dance as the scene closes.

Act 2, Scene 5 Analysis

The music, at the closing of this scene, is the first music heard in this play since the day of John Lennon's memorial. From the time Heidi left her fiancée in England, until now, her loneliness and sadness has been symbolized by this lack of music. Her sadness had become so profound that she was willing to throw away the career in New York that had been the reason she left England. Suddenly, through the discovery that she does have vital emotional connection in her life, Heidi seems to recover her music.

Though she does not have a romantic partner, Heidi does have love in her life. She does have someone who does not want to lose her. It may seem ironic that she is willing to stay in New York for Peter, when she did not stay in England for her fiancée, but the difference is that by staying in New York, she is not giving up on something she wants. She has realized that she already has what she wants, both the career and someone to love.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

In 1989, Heidi has just taken a new apartment. She is dating an editor who she likes very much, but they are not serious yet. She sits in a rocker, which is the only piece of furniture in the room, proofing her latest book galley.

Scoop comes by to ask Heidi if she is happy, and to tell her that he sold *Boomer* magazine two hours ago. He has decided to do something more with his life than influence Baby Boomer fashions. He is going into politics. Scoop says he was inspired to follow this dream, when he heard that Heidi had adopted a daughter. He has decided that if Heidi can have everything she wants out of life, maybe he can, too, even if it means taking the risk of being seriously committed to something. After seeing the baby, Scoop leaves to go watch his son perform in a school play.

Heidi sings, "You Send Me" to her daughter, as the scene ends. As the audience leaves the theatre, they view one last slide. It is a photo of Heidi, holding her daughter triumphantly, her hope for a better world intact.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

At the end of the last scene, Heidi had realized that her life was whole. That realization gave her the power in this scene to do something she had wanted to do for a long time. She quit waiting for a family to happen to her. Heidi added to her family by adopting a daughter.

When he learned what she had done, Scoop realized that he had been wrong. He did not have to choose between providing for a family and being committed to his ideals, just as Heidi did not have to choose between her ideals and raising a family.

Though it may often seem that feminism is in opposition to men, this scene illustrates the playwright's belief that when a woman lives her life to the fullest, it frees the men in her life to do the same. Feminism may be in opposition to patriarchy, but it is not in opposition to men. At its best, feminism is liberating for both women and men.

Characters

Denise Friedlander

Denise is Lisa's sister. She works as a production assistant on a show called *Hello, New York*. Susan Johnston hires her as her assistant when she becomes a Hollywood executive.

Lisa Friedlander

Lisa Freidlander marries Scoop Rosenbaum and works as an illustrator of children's books. She accepts the role of housewife and mother to Scoop's children. She is always cheery and sweet, despite the fact that her husband is cheating on her. She and Scoop have two children, Maggie and Pierre.

Heidi Holland

Heidi is the woman around whom *The Heidi Chronicles* is constructed. Over the course of the play, episodes of Heidi's life are depicted, from the 1960s to the 1980s, from ages 16 to 40. As an adult, she is an art historian; it is through a series of art lectures that her story unfolds. Two of her lectures describe overlooked female artists who remained on the periphery of the art world, artists whose works are notable for their observational nature.

Like the artists she describes, Heidi is often a spectator in her own world. As the play advances chronologically, she becomes increasingly disillusioned with her role in the world. She also becomes disenchanted with the women's movement, the men in her life, and her own quest for happiness; she laments her lack of identity. Despite attaining independence and professional distinction she finds her life empty. At the end of the play, she hopes to find fulfillment when she adopts a baby from Panama.

Huron Street Ann Arbor Women's Consciousness-raising Rap Group

This women's group includes Jill, a housewife with four children; Fran, a lesbian physicist friend of Susan's; and Becky Groves, a seventeen-year-old high school student who live with an abusive boyfriend. The group is influential in Heidi's emergence as a feminist.

Susan Johnston

Susan is Heidi's best female friend. She changes careers and political leanings as the times dictate. She goes to law school only to quit a Supreme Court clerkship to move to a woman's collective in Montana. She then goes to business school, ostensibly for the collective, but, upon graduation, is offered a job in Hollywood as an executive for a new production company that wants to target a young, female audience. She rationalizes that she is taking the job for the good of all women, so that someone who isn't sensitive to women's issues won't take the job. Yet she turns into a stereotypical dealmaker, bent on greed and power. She boredom and discontent are luxuries. When she announces her intentions to leave New York City, Peter talks Heidi into to staying for him.

Scoop Rosenbaum

Scoop Rosenbaum is another friend of Heidi's and her former lover. They first meet at a political fundraiser for Eugene McCarthy. From the beginning, he is arrogant, glib, and self-assured, though not without charm. He is Heidi's intellectual equal. He has a habit of grading or assigning points to everything, from cookies to songs to experiences.

Scoop works primarily as a journalist, starting his own newspaper after dropping out of Princeton. He briefly becomes a lawyer before starting a magazine targeted at Baby Boomers titled *Boomer*. Scoop marries Lisa, who he knows will stay home, have his children, and be a devoted wife□he cheats on her while she is pregnant. Though she is essentially his soul mate, he does not marry Heidi because she would compete with and challenge him.

Themes

Success and Failure

Underlying much of the tension of *The Heidi Chronicles* is how success differs for men and women. Though it is known from the prologue of the first act that Heidi has a successful career as an art historian, the play focuses more on her success as a feminist and autonomous person; unlike the male characters, career success for Heidi does not equal a fulfilled life.

As Heidi's generation demanded, she became an independent woman in a male-dominated world. Yet this success seems hollow to Heidi near the end of the play. She hoped that feminism would provide solidarity with her fellow women and offer significance in society, but her reality has proven this false. Her women friends have bought into superficial happiness and material success: Susan Johnston changes identities frequently, going from an idealistic law student to a feminist to a Hollywood power broker; she ultimately becomes disenchanted with the feminist cause and insensitive to her friend's problems. Heidi also has little luck with men, sustaining no real lasting relationships and ultimately having her life choices shaped by them. Only in her decision to adopt a child does Heidi achieve an independent success.turns a lunch in which Heidi wants to talk about personal matters into a business deal.

April Lambert

Hello, New York, the show on which Peter, Scoop, and Heidi appear to talk about their generation. She is married to an important real estate magnet, David Lambert, with whom Scoop wants to do business.

Peter Patrone

Peter is one of Heidi's best friends, a caustic cynic. He meets her at a high school dance and is impressed by her boredom. Over the course of the play, Peter reveals to Heidi that he is homosexual. Following college, he becomes a successful pediatrician living in New York City. When Heidi complains about her unhappiness, he tells her that he is tired of his friends dying of AIDS and that her From the play's male perspective, Scoop and Peter are successful in a more traditional sense. Scoop has a long-term marriage, two children, a promising career as a lawyer and later as a publisher. The magazine he starts is wildly prosperous. Though by the end Peter finds many of his friends dying, he is a highly regarded pediatrician in New York City who has successful relationships with men. Because society is male-dominated, the standards by which these men are judged are far less strict than those applied to women. To exemplify

themselves, women in Wasserstein's world (as well as the real world) must often work twice as hard as men.

Identity

One primary theme that Heidi is concerned with is the search for her own identity. In the first two scenes of the play, she is young, sixteen- and nineteen-years-old, but she is sure of her intellect and her belief in women's causes. Her allegiance to feminism is illustrated in the women's consciousness-raising group scene. Heidi commits to other women, promoting their equality in art and in life.

Yet this identity undergoes rigorous tests, such as Scoop's wedding reception, during which he tells Heidi that he could not have married her because she would have wanted to be his equal. His statement is a harbinger for future disappointment in her life. Throughout the second act, she finds herself out of step with other women, at a baby shower, at the gym, and even at a friendly lunch gathering. Her friend Susan reflects these changes. Susan begins as a feminist lawyer but ultimately renounces her ideals. Near the end of the second act, Heidi decides to go to Minnesota to reinvent herself, but Peter convinces her to stay because *he* needs her near. Until she chooses motherhood, Heidi's identity is pushed and pulled by those around her.

Coming of Age

The Heidi Chronicles shows the evolution of its title character, depicting her awkward teen years through her adult life. The backdrop is the mid-1960s to the late-1980s, when the United States underwent profound political and social changes such as the Vietnam War, the rise of feminism, and the threat of the AIDS virus. As she matures, Heidi finds herself caught up in the politics of the moment, first in the Eugene McCarthy for President movement ("clean for Eugene"), then the burgeoning feminist movement. While the latter gives her an identity and purpose□Heidi protests the lack of women artists exhibited at the Chicago Art Institute□it is not everything she expected. When Heidi realizes how out of step she is with other women□a feeling personified by Susan□and unexpectedly announces it to a roomful of fellow alumnae from her high school, she has accepted her reality. Near the play's conclusion, she decides to move to Minnesota but ends up staying in New York City and adopting a child. While the other events in her life have shaped her maturity, it is her individual decision to care for another life, the choice of motherhood, that ultimately reflects her coming of age.

Friendship

Almost every relationship depicted in *The Heidi Chronicles* is a friendship. Friendships sustain each of the major characters. Heidi's closest friendships are with two men, Peter and Scoop, who, for a time, also functions as her lover. While Susan is a close friend in

the first act—she takes Heidi to the Eugene McCarthy party and the women's consciousness-raising group—her defection to traditional society and values alienates Heidi. Women's solidarity is supposed to be the point, in Heidi's mind, and this betrayal upsets Heidi's sense of the world.

Heidi's friendship with Scoop is also troubled. Scoop flirts with her at the McCarthy party, while simultaneously undermining her beliefs; he reveals his belief that women exist for the pleasure of men, not as intellectual equals. When they are sexually involved, she puts aside everything to see him. Heidi and Scoop's breaking point comes at his wedding, when he admits he could not marry her because she would compete with him. After that, they remain friends but are no longer close. In the last scene, he reflects on this fact and is jealous of the closeness that she and Peter share.

Peter and Heidi are friends from the first scene. Though they bicker—and he frequently trivializes her concerns—they are devoted to and respect each other. Heidi stays in New York City for him in the second-to-the-last scene, instead of moving to Minnesota as she had planned. While Peter and Scoop are similar characters, the large distinction is Peter's homosexuality, which allows his friendship with Heidi to function on a level removed from the sexual tensions that exist between her and Scoop. Peter also accepts Heidi as a complete person and a relative equal, status that Scoop's worldview prohibits him from bestowing.

Style

Setting

The Heidi Chronicles is a comedic drama that spans the years 1965 to 1989 and employs numerous locations for its setting. The play is framed by two scenes that open each of the acts. These are set in the present in a lecture hall at New York City's Columbia University where Heidi teaches. While these scenes frame and define the action, the main body of the play is told through a series of flashbacks that span Heidi's adult life.

In Act I, locales include a high school dance at Miss Crane's School in Chicago in 1965; a party for Eugene McCarthy in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1968; a church basement in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where the women's group meets, in 1970; outside of the Chicago Art Institute in 1974; and the anteroom to the Pierre Hotel in New York City where Scoop has married Lisa Friedlander in 1977.

Act II takes place entirely in New York City. The first scene occurs in Scoop and Lisa's apartment in 1980. The next scene shifts to 1982 and a television studio where the show *Hello, New York* is taped. Susan, Denise, and Heidi have lunch in a trendy restaurant in 1984, and two years later, Heidi gives an address to a luncheon at the Plaza Hotel. Heidi visits Peter in the children's ward at a hospital in 1987. The final scene takes place in Heidi's new, unfurnished apartment in 1989.

By spreading the play across some twenty-five years, Wasserstein is able to illustrate the development of her protagonist. The time span and the often shifting locations lend the play an epic feel that recalls such classic works as Homer's *The Odyssey,* in which the exploits of a heroic character are charted over a great period of time. While *The Heidi Chronicles* is not a narrative on the scale of Homer's work, it is presented as a sort of epic for modern women. By taking Heidi through several eras and social/political movements, Wasserstein attempts to illustrate the life of a typical late-twentieth century woman.

Point of View and Narrative Structure

The Heidi Chronicles is told from the point of view of Heidi Holland, primarily in episodic flashback. In three scenes, Heidi directly addresses the audience with monologues: a prologue opens each act while in Act II, scene 4, Heidi addresses a group at a luncheon. In the rest of the play, Heidi is present in every scene, primarily reacting to the characters and events around her. Such a technique enables Wasserstein to direct the audiences' attention to what is occurring in Heidi's life. By showing the various struggles and triumphs from the point of view of her lead character, Wasserstein is able to show the audience what a feminist might go through in attempting to build an independent life.

Symbolism and Imagery

Wasserstein uses symbolism in several ways in *The Heidi Chronicles*. She frequently uses popular songs to link scenes, emphasizing their symbolic meaning. For example, the tone for the women's group scene is set by Aretha Franklin's "Respect," a song about a woman demanding better, equal treatment from her man. Heidi admits her relationship with Scoop is not good for her, and she, in fact, deserves respect. The women's solidarity is solidified when they sing a campfire song together. To emphasize the point, the scene closes with a reprise of "Respect."

At the end of Act I, Heidi dances with Scoop to the romantic song "You Send Me," which speaks of a love that elevates a person, taking them above the trivial concerns of the world. In this context the song is bittersweet. Scoop and Heidi still love each other, but they know they cannot have a lasting relationship. At the end of Act II, Heidi's life changes again when she adopts a daughter and moves into a new apartment. She rocks her daughter, singing "You Send Me" to her. In this scene, the song represents Heidi's love for her new baby; the song now symbolizes a much purer love, one that is based in nurture rather than romance.

More literal symbolism is found in the art Heidi describes in the lecture scenes. The women artists she discusses are ignored by much of the mainstream art world. Heidi sees their value, describing two works in particular, Lilla Cabot Perry's "Lady in Evening Dress" and Lily Martin Spencer's "We Both Must Fade." Heidi sees that the women in both paintings are spectators in their own pictures, helping others ease in. Heidi's life is similarly spent reacting to others and aiding them. This comes to a head in the television interview scene, when Heidi sits crunched between Peter and Scoop, unable to speak more than a few words. Her thoughts are never complete but merely give the men a point from which to expound on their own opinions.

The art symbolism also extends to Lisa, Scoop's wife. She is an under-appreciated artist like the women Heidi discusses, an award-winning illustrator of children's books. Only Peter recognizes the value of her art because he is a pediatrician and his patients like it. Scoop approves of his wife's career because she does not compete with him□in fact, he chooses to think of it as more of a hobby than a career.

Historical Context

Women's Issues

As the 1980s came to a close, conservative forces remained in control of the White House and other aspects of American society. Republican George Bush assumed the presidential office in 1989, following eight years of conservative rule under President Ronald Reagan. The largely conservative U.S. Supreme Court upheld state restrictions on access to abortions. Though this ruling did not overturn Roe v. Wade, the case which legalized abortion in America, the ruling was seen as a victory for pro-life activists. Another victory came when President Bush vetoed a bill that would allow the federally-funded Medicaid to pay for abortions for women who were victims of rape or incest.

It seemed that the pro-life movement, often regarded as the antithesis to the women's movement, was gaining in power and prestige because of these important political victories. Still, the women's movement, which was primarily pro-choice, did not take this assault on what they regarded as a woman's fundamental right without a fight. They also demonstrated and supported political candidates that were pro-choice. One of the largest rallies they held was in Washington, D.C., in 1989, when approximately 600,000 women marched on the Capitol.

Despite such activity, feminism and the women' s movement was on the decline in the late- 1980s. After the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed addition to the Constitution that would have barred discrimination based on sex, was defeated in 1982, feminism lost much of its former power. Many felt that what remained of the women's movement was out of touch with the lives of most women in the United States.

Instead of having it all□something the female characters in *The Heidi Chronicles* discuss□an article in the *Harvard Business Review* claimed that women in managerial positions have two choices: career and family (also known as the mommy track) or career-primary. Some women claimed that raising children and staying at home were legitimate career choices. The number of single parents also rose throughout the 1980s. Wasserstein seems to endorse these choices when Heidi adopts a child at the end of the play. Many women still worked while raising a family, however, and day care became an important issue.

Art in America

Of the major art exhibits that opened in 1989, none were centered around female painters. This inequality is central to Heidi's career as an art historian. The arts came under fire, in part because of controversy over an exhibit, partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), of work by Robert Mappelthorpe, whose photography was thought by many conservatives to be pornographic. Legislation was proposed in Congress to prevent funding of "obscene" art by the federally-funded NEA.

Health Crises and the Rise of AIDS

The number of AIDS cases was on the rise in 1989, and only one drug, AZT (zidovudine or retrovir), was approved for treatment of the disease in the United States. There was no cure or vaccine. While knowledge about the disease increased, nearly 2.5 million people in the Western Hemisphere (approximately 1 to 1.5 million Americans) became infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. AZT was also being used, somewhat successfully, to delay development of full-blown AIDS in people with few or no symptoms of the disease. Many of Peter's friends died of this disease, and the overwhelming grief associated with the constant lost affects him deeply in the play's later scenes.

Critical Overview

Critical reaction to *The Heidi Chronicles* has been mixed since its debut in 1988. Many feminists critics applauded the fact that a play about women and women's issues was such a smashing success. The depiction of a modern woman living an anxiety-filled life was a concept with which many women identified. But some such critics believed this success came at a price, complaining that Heidi and the other female characters are not as well-rounded as they could be. Heidi merely reacts to what is going on around her, while the male characters tend to dominate the action. Gerald Weales wrote in *Commonweal* that "Heidi is so muted in her behavior that she serves as a little more than a foil for the more animated characters□a kind of wall on which Wasserstein can hang her snapshots."

Many critics debated the strength of the characters in *The Heidi Chronicles,* with criticism focusing on the fact that they are at once complex and oversimplified. They have a self-depreciating sense of humor and are aware of their faults, yet can question others. Some critics felt that Heidi is too self-aware and unbelievable. Other critics disliked the way Heidi's friend Susan is little more than a recurring punchline, an indecisive wanderer who drifts toward whatever trend is in vogue at the time. A feminist critic, Gayle Austin writing in *Theatre Journal,* stated: "Wasserstein portrays Heidi's women friends as trivial and her men friends as serious and has Heidi blame the women's movement for that situation." Indeed, Wasserstein's chiding of the women's movement is not always appreciated, especially by feminist critics. Still, Moira Hodgson in the *Nation,* commented, "The most moving insight comes when Heidi, who feels betrayed by the women's movement, says, 'I was a true believer who didn't understand it was just a phase.'"

Wasserstein often plays such differences for their humor, which many regard as her strong point. But some critics argued that her humor in *The Heidi Chronicles* can be ill-timed and is not up to the standards of her previous work. They believed that her humor weakens the potency of the timely topics she addresses. While Robert Brustein, writing in the New Republic, said, "Wasserstein has a wry, self-deprecating humor that helps her avoid self-righteousness without losing her sting," later in his review he stated "Their [the characters'] weakness for wisecracks makes them seem shallower than intended and undercuts the seriousness of the work."

Another facet of the play that was received with mixed praise are the scenes in which Heidi directly addresses the audience, lecturing about lost women artists. Several reviewers pointed out that Heidi's unprofessional behavior, especially her titters and jokes, perform a disservice to the message. They argued that Wasserstein makes fun of such lectures when their point is highly relevant to her play.

The construction of the play itself also came under critical fire. Some critics believed that the episodic nature of the plot weakens the impact of *The Heidi Chronicles*. Some also argued that the ending seems contrived and does not fit with the tone of the rest of the play. Feminist critics, especially, saw Wasserstein's conclusion as a cop-out rather

than true closure because Heidi's adoption of a baby girl seems to replace all her other relationships, especially with women. Still, Cathleen McGuigan in *Newseek* wrote: "Wasserstein sometimes can't balance savagery and heart, but her satire is never empty; she has a strong point to make about lost values."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

In this essay, Petrusso discusses the weakness of the female characters and the dominant role of the male characters in Wasserstein's play; this unbalanced power structure is reflective of traditional views of male/female roles in society.

Despite its reputation as a feminist play, the male characters and their values dominate *The Heidi Chronicles*. In a review of the original Broadway production, Cathleen McGuigan said in Theatre Journal called Heidi passive and claimed the play "gives them [men] all the best lines." Many of Heidi's choices are made for and defined by men. Indeed, her role in many scenes is limited to a reactive one; she responds to the sentiments of her male counterparts. Save Heidi, the women in the play are reduced to stereotypes: aggressive businesswomen, single-minded feminists, doting wife and mother. They are often regarded as the weakest part of the play.

The problem with the female characters is embodied in Susan, Heidi's best female friend. Susan has no real depth, none of the heart and self-awareness that Scoop and Peter frequently display. Wasserstein emphasizes Susan's shallowness by having her change careers and attitudes with the trends of the times. She goes from being a law student to a feminist collective member to a business school grad working as a power-hungry Hollywood executive. In her last appearance on stage, Susan even states: "By now I've been so many people, I don't know who I am. And I don't care."

Susan also shows disregard for the well-being of her fellow woman in two key scenes. In Act One, scene one, the teenaged Heidi and Susan attend a high school dance. Susan abandons Heidi to dance with a boy who can twist and smoke at the same time (a superficial attraction that reveals much about Susan's attractions later in life). This occurs after Heidi has refused to dance with a boy because she didn't want Susan to feel left out. In Act Two, scene three, when Heidi invites Susan to lunch to talk about personal matters, Susan, in her Hollywood dealmaker persona, turns the friendly get-together into a business meeting and tries to convince Heidi to help her with the development of a television series. She pitches it as a project that will benefit Heidi, but it is clear that Susan cares little for her friend's well-being; her intentions are only for her own success.

In Heidi's climactic monologue, Act Two, scene four, Heidi sighs, "I thought the point was that we were all in this together," the "we" meaning women. This is clearly not the case with Susan and Heidi's relationship. Even Heidi's own support of other women is, at times, questionable. When Heidi and her colleague Debbie stage a protest outside of the Chicago Art Institute lamenting the lack of women artists, Heidi abandons Debbie to be with Peter. Debbie says, "God, I despise manipulative men." Peter can't resist responding, "Me, too." He should know. Both Peter and Scoop undermine Heidi's relationships with women□and her feminist allegiances□from the first scene of *The Heidi Chronicles*.

As the primary male characters in Wassersteins's play, Peter Patrone and Scoop Rosenbaum are portrayed as opposite sides of the same coin. Peter is a gay pediatrician with a ready wit. He practices a traditional, hallowed profession, which gives him a certain status in society. Scoop also has a pithy sense of humor and makes commonly accepted choices. He is a lawyer and a journalist. He marries well, expecting his wife to have a career that is not as important as his so that she can rear their children (Lisa's career as an illustrator of children's books is portrayed as more of a hobby than an occupation; she is primarily Scoop's wife and the mother of his children). These male characters are shown to have lives beyond their careers, they are not ruled by trends. In contrast, Susan is nowhere near as well-rounded as either man. But there are similarities in the way these three characters respond to Heidi's needs. While both Scoop and Peter can be supportive, they, like Susan, show little regard for Heidi and her choices.

Peter regularly insults Heidi's female friends. Heidi meets Peter at the same high school dance that she attended with Susan. After Susan leaves her, Heidi pulls out a book and begins to read. Peter approaches Heidi, complimenting her by saying: "You look so bored you must be very bright." Peter proceeds to cut down Susan, sarcastically calling her an "unfortunate wench." He then teaches Heidi a dance. Heidi learns something from him, not another woman. A few scenes later, during the protest, Peter also insults Debbie's name and her feminist attitude. Such comments, while presented as humor, undermine Heidi's relationships with women, they erode her respect for feminist ideals. Peter can be an equal opportunity prig, however. He also insults Scoop and his overbearing personality.

Peter also makes Heidi feel guilty in a number of scenes. In the protest scene, Peter berates her for not calling him while she was in Chicago. He happens across her because he is meeting someone. But when she tries to express what she is feeling, Peter turns the tables and says that she made him feel guilty about his homosexuality. In the second to the last scene of the play, Heidi visits Peter at his hospital ward late at night on Christmas. She has been, unsuccessfully, trying to reach Peter all week. She intends to say goodbye to him and move to Minnesota the next day. But Peter dismisses her problems and the unhappiness that has prompted her decision to relocate, calling her "insane." When the discussion is about Peter□especially the overwhelming emotional pain he feels as many of his friends die of AIDS□Heidi is supportive. Having turned the focus from Heidi to himself, Peter convinces her she is a bad friend for leaving him in his hour of need. Heidi decides to stay in New York for Peter, saying "I could become someone else next year." For the most part, however, her feelings are of little interest to Peter.

While he is in many ways her soul mate, Scoop is even more manipulative of Heidi and repeatedly illustrates his insensitivity to her needs□and those of all women. While Peter does show his support for Heidi at key moments (at Scoop's wedding reception, for example), Scoop is too self-absorbed to notice when he is hurting her. Scoop tells Heidi at one point: "Why should you like me? I'm arrogant and difficult. But I'm very smart. So you'll put up with me." And she does. Like Peter, Scoop insults Susan. At the time of the wedding reception, Susan is living in a women's collective in Montana after abandoning

a prestigious Supreme Court clerkship. Of this choice, Scoop says: "She could have been brilliant," implying that an allegiance to the women's collective somehow diminishes Susan's intelligence. Heidi defends her friend, who is standing right there, but Scoop gets away with it. When Susan walks away, he further ridicules her beliefs, calling her "a fanatic" and "crazy."

In comparison to Scoop's treatment of Heidi, however, Susan gets off relatively easy; Scoop continually undermines Heidi's sense of herself. At their initial meeting, a dance for college students working for the Eugene McCarthy presidential campaign, Scoop questions everything Heidi does or says in a manner that makes him seem intelligent and reduces her to a stereotypical woman with little social merit. Heidi tries to be polite, asking him questions about himself. He responds with "Did they teach you at Vassar to ask so many inane questions in order to keep the conversation going?" He scorns her career choice of art historian as "suburban."

Scoop's final affront, the one that rings throughout the play, is a condemnation of Heidi's feminist ideals. He dismissively tells her: "You'll be one of those true believers who didn't understand it was all just a phase." In Wasserstein's world, a female character like Susan is never this insightful about herself or another woman. At the end of the scene, Scoop admits he is trying to "go to bed" with Heidi. Heidi allows him to passionately kiss her before he leaves, and they eventually become romantically involved.

Scoop eventually marries Lisa because she fits his ideals for wife and mother. Still, he manipulates Heidi's emotions at his own wedding reception, telling her he couldn't marry her because of her ambition and her need to be an equal partner in a marriage. While Scoop talks about his own unhap-piness to Heidi, he chooses not to be his wife's partner for her first dance at their wedding. Scoop wreaks havoc on these two women's lives, then has the impudence to ask Heidi "Why did you let me do this?," implying that Heidi somehow is responsible for his decision.

Wasserstein allows men to have a measure of control over Heidi's life and emotions. Scoop goes on to be right about the women of Heidi's generation□especially Heidi, telling her, "you 'quality time' girls are going to be one generation of disappointed women. Interesting, exemplary, even sexy, but basically unhappy." Scoop does attempt a halfhearted apology by the end of the wedding scene, however.

Heidi stands up to Scoop in the last scene, after she has adopted her baby. Scoop continues to ridicule her, calling her "prissy" but then says she's important to him. He is in turmoil because he has sold his magazine and is uncertain about his future; he looks to Heidi for comfort and assurance. Heidi tells him, "Don't look at me with those doe eyes and tell me how spoiled you are. Next thing I know, you'll tell me how you never meant to hurt me." This is a small victory and an encouraging show of independence. It is noteworthy that Heidi's new resolve occurs following her adoption of a child, a life-changing choice.

The depth of male dominance in *The Heidi Chronicles* is exemplified by the two scenes in which no men appear. In the women's consciousness raising group in Ann Arbor,

Heidi admits she will drop everything just to be with her then-boyfriend, Scoop. She does not say that he drops everything to see her, but she admits he is really only attentive when she tries to leave him. Heidi calls him "a creep," qualifying her insult by adding: "But he's a charismatic creep." Though the women bond over her breakthrough, it only emphasizes the relative importance of the men in *The Heidi Chronicles*. The same thing happens during Lisa's baby shower scene. Much of the conversation revolves around Scoop, Peter, and other men. Lisa believes her husband is at a conference in New Jersey. But Heidi has seen him in Central Park with another, younger woman who works at his magazine.

Heidi makes only two significant choices for herself in the course of *The Heidi Chronicles:* her career choice and adopting the baby. Nearly every other action is influenced by or dictated to her by the other characters. And, almost always, these other characters are Scoop and Peter. To say that *The Heidi Chronicles* is a feminist play is incorrect. While Heidi has a career, Heidi becomes exactly what traditional (male-dominated) society defines as the ultimate female role: a mother.

Source: A. Petrusso, for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

In this mixed review of The Heidi Chronicles, *Weales praises the performances but complains that the play "has no dramatic center" in its title character. He criticizes Wasserstein for providing a protagonist who is little more than a foil for the supporting characters.*

Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* began as a workshop production at the Seattle Repertory Theatre; then, shepher ded by the Seattle Rep's Daniel Sullivan, it moved to a well-received off-Broadway debut and then to Broadway; it has now been blessed by the Pulitzer Prize committee. It is a typical American-theater success story of the 1980s, but I have trouble working up much enthusiasm for its triumphant journey.

The Heidi of the title is an art historian, a presumably intelligent and sensitive woman who moves from 1965 to 1989, picking her way through the ideational thickets of those years, only to find that the goal of her generation, to become an independent woman in a male world, brings emptiness with it. The audience follows Heidi's progress in brief scenes that teeter on the edge of broad satire and sometimes, as in the consciousness-raising meeting, fall over completely. Heidi remains pretty much the same throughout the fifteen years□concerned, but a little cold, a little distant, her involvement tinged with self-irony. On her stroll down memory lane, she is accompanied by the two men closest to her□a homosexual doctor who remains her best friend (and incidentally provides an excuse to bring in AIDS as an item in Wasserstein's cultural catalogue) and a fast-talking charmer, sometimes her lover, an intellectual conman who plays the main chance and persists in confusing the fashionable with the significant. Heidi's oldest woman friend, the only other important character in the play, is a Wasserstein joke, a chameleon who becomes whatever the moment requires: a ditsy sexpot, a jargonesque feminist, a member of an ecological commune, a power-lunch paragon in the entertainment business.

The chief weakness of the play is that it has no dramatic center. Heidi is so muted in her behavior that she serves as little more than a foil for the more animated characters□a kind of wall on which Wasserstein can hang her snapshots. Joan Allen is one of the finest reactors among American performers (consider last year's Tony-winning performance in *Burn This),* but however fascinating it is to watch Allen work, Heidi remains flaccid. We are supposed to understand the distress within the character, which surfaces primarily in runs of nervousness and in one unlikely overt moment in which she turns a speech at an alumnae gathering into a high whine of generational regret. At the end of the play, she has adopted a child and the suggestion is that she has found a certain solidity as a single mother, but nothing in the play or the character makes motherhood look like anything but an occasion for Heidi's next disappointment. The ending is as arbitrary as that of Wasserstein's earlier hit, *Isn 't It Romantic,* in which the heroine decides for no very clear reason not to marry the man she loves; perhaps she had been to see *My Brilliant Career* at her local moviehouse.

If Heidi as activist and Heidi as unrealized lover are a bit difficult to accept in her *Chronicles,* Heidi as art historian is impossible. She is supposes to be an expert on female artists, correcting the sexual imbalance in the history of art, and we see her in lectures at the beginning of each act. Her manner is oddly frothy, her disclosure decorated with what I think of as wee academic jokies. The wee academic jokie, of which there are far too many on campuses, is not funny if it sounds as though it were written into the lecture, if it is taken out of the classroom context, if it makes the speaker sound as though she were apologizing for her subject matter. So it is with all of Heidi's jokies. Her lectures diminish the whole enterprise of rethinking the female presence in art. In part, that is a product of the unanchored Heidi described in the paragraph above. In part, it grows out of the play's tendency to trivialize the genuine concerns of women in particular, radicals in general, by emphasizing the fashionable patina on social change. As a comic writer, Wasserstein can see what is ludicrous in the convoluted social history of the last fifteen years. On the serious side, *The Heidi Chronicles* is one of those gee-it-didn' t-turn-out-the-way-we-expected plays, another offspring of *The Big Chill*.

Source: Gerald Weales, "Prize Problems" in *Commonweal,* Vol. CXVI, no. 9, May 5, 1989 , pp. 279-80.

Critical Essay #3

In this review of The Heidi Chronicles's *Broadway debut, Simon finds that the play is more effective than it had been in its previous, Off-Broadway setting. While he still has complaints about certain aspects of the plot notably the title character's unconvincing career he finds the production to have considerable merit.*

Having been less enthusiastic than other critics about Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* Off Broadway, I hasten to point out that, reversing the pattern, it looks and plays better on. Thomas Lynch has skillfully adapted his tongue-in-cheek scenery, Pat Collins has made her good lighting even more evocative, and the bigger space allows more room for the play's grand ambition to portray two decades of change in our society. A school dance looks more like a school dance, a pediatrics ward is more up to the old pediatrics, etc. And it's nice to bask in oversized slide projections in the hall where Heidi Holland□Wendy Wasserstein transmuted into a feminist art historian□lectures on women in art, even if the splendid Joan Allen mispronounces Sofonisba Anguissola as no art historian should.

The play chronicles Heidi's progress from a frightened but fast-quipping wallflower at a 1965 Chicago high-school dance, through becoming a timid onlooker at a New Hampshire Eugene McCarthy rally (1968), to being a Yale grad student in fine arts visiting a friend in Ann Arbor and shyly observing her consciousness-raising group in session (1970), then to a women-in-art protest march on the Chicago Art Institute (1974), and so on through thirteen scenes□all the way to 1989, when Heidi moves into a commodious New York apartment and adopts a baby girl. Cautiously, she does not name her Sofonisba, Artemisia, or even Angelica, after one of her beloved women artists.

Here the first problem surfaces: the inconsistencies in Heidi's character. In contrast to her feminist and postfeminist friends, Heidi remains an almost Candide-like innocent, despite one of the sharpest and fastest tongues this side of the Pecos. When she lectures, however, her humor changes from vertiginous epigrams to patronizing down-home jokiness. Further, she seems to have an ample and diversified offstage sex life with one editor or another, yet is involved on stage with only a couple of unlikely men throughout.

There is Scoop Rosenbaum, a dazzling opportunist who goes from liberal journalism to putting out *Boomer,* the slickest of slickly upward-mobile magazines, and thence (as I understand it) into politics. Heidi has an off-and-on affair with him, but he wenches around and finally marries an intellectual 6 (instead of her 10)□a wealthy young woman who becomes a leading book illustrator, which is not bad for a 6. And there is Peter Patrone, as cynically scintillating at repartee as Scoop; he, however, becomes an earnest and distinguished young pediatrician. We follow him, a homosexual, through a number of liaisons with men; as far as I can tell, he never sleeps with Heidi. But she is, for obscure reasons, enormously important to him as, in the end, we see him bitterly grappling with AIDS among both his special friends and his child patients.

Now, there are in life beautiful women who have weird problems with men, and witty women who are nevertheless shy; but to make them credible on stage takes a heap more than we are accorded here. When Miss W. had herself portrayed on stage by the portly, ethnic Alma Cuervo, she automatically spoke a good part of the truth; belief boggles at the elegant, glamorous Joan Allen in that role. Equally hard to take are the smart-aleck rapid-fire epigrams from almost everyone; this fits into the unrealistic, stylized milieus of Wilde, Coward, and Orton, but clashes with W.W.' s naturalistic ambience. Finally, the play is a mite too much of a survey course in women's studies; or, to put it bluntly, a check, or even laundry, list. All the same, it is clever and funny and sometimes even wise, and there is, under Daniel Sullivan's direction, good acting from all, and much more than that from the subtly complex Miss Allen, the trenchantly ebullient Peter Friedman and Boyd Gaines, and the especially cherishable Joanne Camp.

Source: John Simon, review of *The Heidi Chronicles* in *New York,* Vol. 22, no. 13, March 27, 1989, pp. 66-67.

Critical Essay #4

Characterizing The Heidi Chronicles *as Wasserstein's "best work to date," Kramer offers apositive review of the play's Off-Broadway debut. Praising the playwright for avoiding moralizing in her work, the critic assesses that "Wasserstein's portrait of womanhood always remains complex."*

At the emotional turning point of *"The Heidi Chronicles,* " Wendy Wasserstein's manless heroine Heidi Holland (Joan Allen), an essayist and art-history professor, is supposed to deliver a speech at the Plaza Hotel. The occasion for the speech is an alumnae luncheon, the topic "Women, Where Are We Going?" We've seen Heidi speak in public before□in the classroom sequences that, prologue-like, begin each act□and we've grown familiar with the mock girls'-school bonhomie she exhibits toward the women painters who constitute her particular area of expertise. Ordinarily, the public Dr. Holland is a model of wry composure. On this occasion, however, instead of giving a speech (she hasn't prepared one) Wasserstein's heroine gets up and extemporizes. She begins by sketching a fictional portrait of herself as an "exemplary" New Woman, whose busy and full life□complete with ideal husband and children□would excuse her showing up speechless at a luncheon where she herself was the featured event. Then, in an apparent non sequitur, she tells a story about going to the health club and being too much affected by the other women in the locker room to go through with the exercise class she had planned to attend. Wasserstein never makes the connection between the two halves of the speech; she leaves it to us to infer that Dr. Holland was "too sad" to produce a speech for the Miss Crain's School luncheon, just as she had been "too sad to exercise" that day. Moreover, the cause of Heidi's depression□her manlessness□is never alluded to. Instead, Wasserstein duplicates that feeling in us by having Heidi describe the women in the locker room: two girls discussing "the reading program at Mary mount nursery school"; a woman her mother's age complaining about her daughter-in-law; another older woman "extolling the virtues of brown rice and women's fiction." She imagines the young mothers thinking that women like her "chose the wrong road": "'A pity they made such a mistake, that empty generation.' Well, I really don't want to be feeling this way about all of them.... It's just that I feel stranded. And I thought the whole point was that we wouldn't feel stranded, I thought the point was we were all in this together."

"The Heidi Chronicles, " which opened last week at Playwrights Horizon in a bangup production directed by Daniel Sullivan, is actually a very funny play. The scene at the Plaza is a tour de force: it justifies the whole play, yet nothing in the play has prepared us for it. We have never been told that the heroine is to make a speech; we have never heard of the Miss Crain's School. We arrive at the Plaza not by any dramaturgical route but by a device of Thomas Lynch, the set designer. That we are able to feel, once we're there, that this scene is where Wasserstein's play has been leading all along is a mark of her artistry.

"The Heidi Chronicles" is probably Wasserstein' s best work to date. What distinguishes it from her earlier plays is that it actually says something. It's one thing to be able to

record an experience or capture the spirit of a time—to write bittersweet autobiography about the bright, promising people one knew in college *("Uncommon Women and Others"*) or how hard it is to grow up and break free of overprotective parents *("Isn't It Romantic")*— and quite another to send us out of a theatre feeling that we see something in a different light. *"The Heidi Chronicles"* is autobiographical only in the most interesting way: Wasserstein's heroine is, like Wasserstein herself, a student of other women— particularly women engaged in creating images of womanhood. It's significant that the women we see Heidi lecturing on belong to another time: it suggests that Wasserstein's subjects—the young men and women who came of age in the sixties and dropped out to work on radical newspapers or in women's collectives—stand somehow outside the purview of her own and her heroine's experience. Wasserstein wants Heidi to be not an advocate of the women's movement but one of its victims—a vessel carrying around the ideals and experiences of her time. Throughout the play, Heidi remains mostly mute and passive, aloof from the proceedings. That's one of the reasons it's so good to see Miss Allen in the role—of all our younger actresses the most eloquent in silence or repose. "You're the one whose life this will all change significantly," warns a charismatic pseudo-radical young man Heidi meets at a McCarthy rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1967, and we see his prophecy fulfilled. At a consciousness-raising session in Ann Arbor in 1970, Heidi is an interloper, forced by feelings and circumstances into "sharing" with the other women and surrounded by them, at the end of the scene, in an uncomfortable embrace. We witness Heidi's seduction by the women's movement just as we witnessed her seduction by Scoop, the charismatic young man in the scene before—one of that horde of clever, intense young men who knew how to badger women into profound conversations and shallow beds by making astute personal remarks. It's one of the clevernesses of Wasserstein's play that she makes Scoop (Peter Friedman) a *pseudo-radical.* "You'll be one of those true believers who didn't understand it was just a phase," she has him say. Twenty years later, a routine philanderer and the editor of his own lifestyle magazine, Scoop will be thinking of going into politics, and Heidi will be adopting a baby. We'll never find out exactly what makes Heidi tick, but then we never really find out what makes Isabel Archer tick.

This moving-snapshot style of theatre, in which the progress of a particular character is charted through a succession of years in different towns and cities, is popular among playwrights of Wendy Wasserstein's generation and is most often used to chronicle their disillusionments and disappointments, as Wasserstein uses it here. The danger inherent in such an approach—one that has to go so far afield in space and time in order to make a point—is that what the playwright has to say may turn out to be either trivial, as in the case of Michael Weller's "Loose Ends," or untrue, as in the case of David Hare's "Plenty." Freed from the necessity of discerning some *pattern* of truth in human action, one can, after all, say anything.

Like the health-club speech, Wasserstein's entire play is a tour de force: it mimics the faults of her generation's style of theatre yet manages to transcend them. It spans twenty-three years and rockets us back and forth in time and place. And though it tracks the main characters from the sixties to the present there isn't a single scene in which anything that anyone does has consequences in a later scene. That the play manages

to seem economical can only be attributed to some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing; the Chekhovian fabric of the dialogue□the degree to which characters' ways of talking differ from one another or change over time□creates a Stanislavskian offstage life, so that to witness one conversation between Scoop and Heidi is to know what their subsequent relationship as lovers will be like. Wasserstein never states anything that can be inferred; it's one of the ways she keeps her heroine free of righteousness and self-pity. We aren't shown Heidi's disappointment when her charming, self-effacing friend Peter (Boyd Gaines) announces that he is gay, just at the moment when we're wondering why Heidi doesn't settle down with him (the way we keep wondering why Isabel doesn't settle down with one of the nice young men in "Portrait of a Lady"); instead, we feel disappointed ourselves.

There's generosity in the writing, toward the characters, certainly, not one of whom is made to seem ludicrous or dismissible, but also toward the performers, who get to engage in a delicious brand of highly specific character acting: Mr. Gaines and Mr. Friedman, irresistible as the two principal men; Drew McVety, making frequent cameo appearances (as a preppie, a bullied waiter, a pediatric resident); Ellen Parker, Anne Lange, Joanne Camp, and Sarah Jessica Parker, playing a host of different women of such varying degrees of liberatedness and niceness that Wasserstein's portrait of womanhood always remains complex. She is herself too much a lady to moralize. She condemns these young men and women by simply capturing them in all their charm and complexity, without rhetoric or exaggeration. They are measured and found wanting. Her final comment on the me generation is contained in Heidi's wish for her daughter: that no man should ever make her feel she is worthless unless she demands to have it all.

Adaptations

The Heidi Chronicles was adapted into a television movie for Turner Television Network (TNT) in 1995. The production stars Jamie Lee Curtis as Heidi, Peter Reigert as Scoop, and Tom Hulce as Peter.

Topics for Further Study

Research the paintings that Wasserstein mentions in *The Heidi Chronicles*. Discuss the parallels between them and the events depicted in the play.

What is the role of feminism and other women in Heidi's life? Are her male friends ultimately more important? Is *The Heidi Chronicles* truly a feminist play?

Compare and contrast *The Heidi Chronicles* and *The Big Chill*, a movie about the same generation. Do both groups of characters share similar problems and concerns?

In *The Heidi Chronicles,* Heidi says "Have you ever noticed that what makes you a person keeps you from being a person?" What do you think Wasserstein meant by this comment?

Compare and Contrast

1989: There are many unknowns about the AIDS disease, its causes and cures. The number of deaths from AIDS is on the rise.

Today: The number of deaths from AIDS has stabilized. Much is known about the disease and there are a number of drugs to treat symptoms of AIDS on the market. While there is still no cure, these new treatments have proven to retard or halt the disease's progress and thus prolong and improve victims' lives.

1989: George Bush enters the White House, following the two-term reign of Ronald Reagan, insuring twelve years of Republican rule in America. The Democratic control of Congress makes for considerable gridlock in the legislative process.

Today: Democrats control the White House, in the form of two-term President Bill Clinton. The Republicans now control Congress and partisan politics still make for lethargic policymaking.

1989: The Women's Movement is on the decline in the United States as many find the goals and ideals of feminism out of step with their reality.

Today: In a post-feminist society, women's organizations regroup to address concerns of many women. The National Council of Women's Organizations (representing 6 million women) draft potential legislation for the National Women's Equality Act, calling for the end of sex discrimination, in 1998. The threat of losing abortion rights has also galvanized many women (and men) into political action.

1989: Pro-life activists win important political victories in restricting access to abortion.

Today: President Clinton refuses to sign legislation banning partial-birth abortions, a controversial procedure whose abolition is a cornerstone of the pro-life movement.

What Do I Read Next?

Eastern Standard is a play by Richard Greenberg written in 1989. The play concerns several professionals living in the 1980s and finding their Yuppie lives meaningless. One character, a writer, suffers from AIDS.

Isn't It Romantic, written by Wasserstein in 1984. Like *The Heidi Chronicles,* it employs an episodic structure and music to set the tone of the play. The plot centers around two women and the choices they make for personal fulfillment.

In the Company of Woman: Voices from the Women's Movement (1998), edited by Bonnie Watkins and Nina Rothchild, is a collection of essays. They tell the stories of eighty-three women and their experiences in the women's movement from the 1960s to the present.

The AIDS Crisis: A Documentary (1998), edited by Douglas Feldman and Julia Wang Miller, is a comprehensive study charting the history of the disease.

The Guerilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art, published by The Guerilla Girls (a group of women artists). This book is a feminist history of art and includes many women artists.

Further Study

Ciociola, Gail. *Wendy Wasserstein: Dramatizing Women, Their Choices, and Their Boundaries,* McFarland, 1998.

This book discusses several of Wasserstein's plays in depth, including *The Heidi Chronicles.* Ciociola often relies on a feminist perspective.

Franklin, Nancy. "The TimeofHer Life" in the *New Yorker,* April 14, 1997, pp. 63-71.

This article discusses Wasserstein's life and background, as well as the subjects that inform her plays.

Keyssar, Helene. "Drama and the Dialogic Imagination: *The Heidi Chronicles* and *Fefu and Her Friends"* in *Modern Drama,* March 1991, p. 88.

This academic article discusses *The Heidi Chronicles* in terms of the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, a philosopher-critic.

Shapio, Walter. "Chronicler of Frayed Feminism" in *Time,* March 27, 1989, pp. 90-93.

This article discusses Wasserstein's background, family, and career.

"Wendy Wasserstein: The Art of Theater XIII" in *Paris Review,* Spring, 1997, pp. 164-88.

The article provides a brief overview of Wasserstein's life and an in-depth interview with the playwright. She discusses her career, inspirations, and plays.

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Project Editor
David Galens

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Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

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

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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.

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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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Editor, Drama for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535