Indian Ink Study Guide

Indian Ink by Tom Stoppard

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Introduction

Tom Stoppard is a leading British playwright of the twentieth century. His two-act play *Indian Ink* (1994) is based on his earlier radio play *In the Native State* and was first performed in London in 1995.

Indian Ink takes place in two different locations and time periods: India in 1930, during the struggle for national independence from British colonial rule, and England in the mid-1980s. The action shifts back and forth between these two settings without major set changes or clearly indicated transitions. The action in India concerns Flora Crewe, a British poetess, whose portrait is being painted by an amateur Indian artist. The action in England concerns the efforts of a scholar of Flora Crewe's work to gather information for a biography. Flora's surviving younger sister, Mrs. Swan, is visited first by this English scholar, and then by the son of the Indian artist. The central enigma is the question of whether or not the Indian artist painted a nude portrait of Flora, and whether or not the two had an "erotic relationship."

This play is concerned primarily with the historical and cultural struggles in India to gain independence from British Imperial rule. Indian and English characters discuss their differing perspectives on the history and meaning of British colonization of India. The play addresses themes of Empire, cultural imperialism, and nationalism.

Author Biography

Tom Stoppard was born Tomas Straussler, on July 3, 1937, in Zlin, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). He was the second son of Eugene and Martha Straussler. His father was a company physician for a Czech shoe manufacturer, which relocated the family to Singapore in 1939. Just before the Japanese invasion of Singapore, Tom was evacuated with his mother and older brother to Darjee-ling, India. His father, who stayed behind, was killed in 1941, after the invasion. In 1946, Tom's mother married Major Kenneth Stoppard, a British army officer who was stationed in India. The family relocated to England, where Kenneth worked in the machine-tool business. After several moves throughout England, the Stoppards settled in Bristol in 1950, during which time Tom attended Dolphin preparatory school in Nottinghamshire, and then Pocklington School in Yorkshire. In 1954, when he was seventeen years old, Stoppard quit school to work for the *Western Daily Press,* a Bristol newspaper. After four years at the Western Daily Press, Stoppard worked as a reporter for the *Evening World,* another Bristol newspaper, from 1958 to 1960. In 1960, he moved to London, where he worked as a freelance reporter until 1963. During this time, Stoppard began writing plays, and was commissioned to write several radio and television dramas.

In 1966, his first major play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* was performed in England, garnering immediate critical acclaim and audience popularity. In 1968, he received a Tony Award and a New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best new play for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.* Stoppard has continued to be a leading playwright, and has since written numerous stage plays, radio and television dramas, and screenplays. In 1991, he wrote and directed the film version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead.* In 1965, Stoppard married Jose Ingle, with whom he has two children, Oliver, and Barnaby, and from whom he was divorced in 1972. In 1972, he married Miriam Moore-Robinson, with whom he has two sons.

Plot Summary

Act I

In Act I, the British poetess Flora Crewe arrives in Jummapur, India, in 1930, and is greeted at the train station by Coomaraswami, the president of the local Theosophical Society. Flora is taken to stay at a guesthouse complete with a veranda and an Indian servant, Nazrul. Flora's experiences in India are narrated as a series of letters written by her to her sister Eleanor Swan, in England. Mrs. Swan sits in her garden over tea and cake in the mid-1980s with Eldon Pike, a scholar of Flora Crewe's poetry and editor of the *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe*, who is gathering information for a biography. After Flora gives a talk and answers questions for the Theosophical Society, she meets Nirad Das, an amateur artist who asks to paint her portrait while she writes. As Das paints her portrait, Flora writes poetry and letters, and the two begin to discuss the struggle of Indians to gain national independence from British colonial rule. In the 1980s setting in England, Das's son Anish Das has come to visit Mrs. Swan in her garden over tea and cake to discuss his father's portrait of Flora, which he recognized from the book cover of the *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe.* Mrs. Swan and Anish come into some conflict in discussing their differing perspectives on British colonization of India, but they remain polite and respectful of one another. In India in the 1930 setting, David Durance, a British official in the colonial government, rides up to Flora's guest house on a horse and asks her to join him at his Club. In a 1980s setting in India, Pike arrives at the hotel where Flora had stayed, to gather more information for his biography. In the 1930s setting in India, Flora and Das continue to discuss art, politics, and culture, while Flora sits for the portrait Das is painting. One day, overcome by the heat, Flora goes into her bedroom, takes off her clothes, and gets into bed nude, covered only by a sheet. She asks Das, who is embarrassed by her nudity, to sit by her in a chair in her bedroom.

Act II

In Act II, in the 1930 India setting, Flora attends a dance at the Jummapur Cricket Club with Durance, and the two discuss the politics of British colonial rule over India. Their discussion continues as they go horseback riding together; Durance then asks Flora to marry him and she refuses. In the same setting, but in the 1980s, Dilip, an Indian man who brings him information about Flora from various sources, aids Pike. In the 1930 setting in India, the Rajah invites Flora to admire his vast collection of automobiles. The Raja then offers to make Flora a gift of a painting. In the 1980s setting in India, Pike is introduced to the grandson of the Rajah, also referred to as Rajah. The Rajah shows Pike a thank-you note from Flora for his grandfather's gift of a classic Indian nude painting. In the 1980s setting, in Mrs. Swan's garden, Anish looks at the watercolor nude from the Rajah, which Mrs. Swan has shown him, while Mrs. Swan looks at the watercolor nude of Flora, painted by Das, which Anish has shown her. In the 1930 India setting, Flora returns from the dance with Durance to learn from Das that the Theosophical Society has been suspended due to the political unrest and riots. Before

leaving, Das shows Flora the miniature watercolor nude he has painted of her. In the 1980s England setting, Mrs. Swan sees Anish off, and they both agree not to tell Pike about the nude portrait of Flora painted by Das. In another flashback to India, Mrs. Swan (Nell) arrives at Flora's graveside, aided by Eric, an Englishman (whom Nell later marries).

Act 1 Part 1

Act 1 Part 1 Summary

In 1930s India, Flora is on a train. She narrates the journey in the form of a letter, concluding by describing the way in which she was met in a town called Jummapur by the president of the local Theosophical Society, Mr. Coomaraswami. As he shakes her hand and welcomes her, the action moves continuously to the cottage in which Flora is to live, and where Mr. Coomaraswami welcomes her again then quickly leaves, saying she needs some rest. He promises to take her on a picnic the following day.

As Flora describes the cottage, still in the form of a letter, her elderly sister Mrs. Swan and her biographer, Pike, read the letter. Their world takes place in the 1980s, and exists alongside Flora's world in the past. Flora's description of the cottage includes a reference to a servant, Nazrul, and an incorrect reference to the type of cottage she's living in. Mrs. Swan comments on the mistake, and the action smoothly shifts into the modern area.

Mrs. Swan and Pike sit at an outdoor table and chairs, reading Flora's letters. Their conversation reveals that Pike is an American academic researching Flora's life, that Flora was a famous writer in the early part of the twentieth century, and that Pike is putting together a book of her *Collected Letters*. Pike talks about how the most exciting part of his work is creating the footnotes to the letters and explaining what things really mean.

As Pike and Mrs. Swan continue reading this particular letter, Flora narrates what happened at the picnic she was taken to by Coomaraswami. She refers to the way he carried a parasol over her the entire time, how she felt like a parade float symbolizing "The Subjugation of the Indian People," and comments that Coomaraswami was the least subjugated person she'd ever met. She also refers to "Herbert," and Mrs. Swan tells Pike that she means H.G. Wells, implying that he and Flora had an affair shortly before Flora left for India. When Pike becomes excited about learning more details like this about Flora's life, Mrs. Swan tells him sternly that he's not to write a biography, saying that it is a sure way of getting a person's life wrong.

The two continue reading Flora's letter. Flora narrates what happened when she did a lecture and answered questions from the audience. When she was done, she was asked a question about H.G. Wells that she was afraid was going to be personal but turned out to be about the kind of pen he wrote with. She talks about being afraid to be asked about Gertrude Stein, and Pike interjects one of his footnotes that comments on how Flora and Stein hated each other. Flora then narrates how she met "her painter," a man named Das. In a conversation with Flora that refers to Virginia Woolf and George Bernard Shaw, Das presents her with a pencil sketch he did during her lecture and asks permission to paint her in the same way as her writing painted a picture for him of life in London.

Pike asks whether the sketch still exists. Mrs. Swan tells him it wasn't in her suitcase, the only personal item of Flora's that she and her husband Eric inherited. She then talks about the way that she and Eric "shed" things in all their years of traveling. Pike takes that to mean she doesn't have the suitcase, and Mrs. Swan doesn't correct him, asking why, if Flora was so important, nobody paid any attention to her sixty years ago.

Act 1 Part 1 Analysis

This play is an excellent example of the way that narrative technique, how a story is told, can make a thematic statement. Specifically, the way the action moves between the past and present dramatizes the play's core idea that the relationship between history and today is simultaneously ironclad and changeable. The relationship is ironclad because both large scale events like the British governance of India and the various Indian rebellions and small scale events such as those described in Flora's letters and represented by various paintings and sketches, are factual matters of historical record. They simply happened, or they simply exist. It's the subjective interpretation of those events and artifacts, in the past by Das and Flora and in the present by Pike, Mrs. Swan, and later Anish Das, that gives the past meaning, and very often different meanings depending on who is doing the interpreting. This idea of contradictory interpretations plays a key role in much of the conflict throughout the play, and also forms the core of a key thematic statement, which is that events have no meaning other than that we place on them.

There are other aspects to the play's examination of interpretation. On one level, the way that Flora's actions, as well as Das's, are interpreted by the society in which they live is a main foundation of the action and conflict later in the play. On another level, both Flora and Das are artists, poet and painter respectively, meaning that the nature of what they do is interpretation, portraying the way they see and experience and interpret the world. This means that Pike searches for Flora's letters and Das's paintings in the hope of learning their interpretations of what happened, which he hopes will guide him to a more complete interpretation himself. The conversation between Pike and Mrs. Swan explains the importance of interpretation, while the frequent interjections of Pike's footnotes throughout the play illustrate the point in a more theatrical fashion.

The several famous names that are mentioned in this scene, including H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, and George Bernard Shaw, are clearly intended to define Flora as someone in the forefront of the radical intellectual and artistic movements in England in the early twentieth century. Wells, Woolf, and Shaw were all active writers and critics, members of a loose circle of colleagues and friends committed to changing the society and culture of both Great Britain and the world, moving it towards a more humanist and liberal perspective. Flora's membership in this circle implies that she shared this perspective, which explains her comfort with the emotional intimacy that springs up between her and the painter Das throughout the play, something that conservatives in both India and England would find appalling and completely inappropriate.

There are a few instances of foreshadowing in this scene. These include the reference to Nazrul, who plays a minor role in later conflicts, and Flora's comment about feeling as though she represents the Subjugation of India, which plays a role in both her relationship with Das and the play's larger cultural conflict between England and India. A third piece of foreshadowing is the passing reference to Mrs. Swan's husband Eric, who shows up in person at the end of the play as a young man who visits Flora's grave. A fourth is the reference to Flora's suitcase, which represents Flora's history and which plays a key role in the relationship between Mrs. Swan and Anish Das, who appears later in this act.

Act 1 Part 2

Act 1 Part 2 Summary

Das arrives on his bicycle carrying his painting gear as Flora comes out in a blue dress. She sits down to write a letter as Das sets up his gear. Pike puzzles over what Flora means in a letter by a reference to a smudge of paint, and of Flora wondering if her portrait will look like the mythic figure of Radha. Mrs. Swan cuts Pike's questions short, revealing that there's an oil painting that she says looks like an Indian movie poster upstairs. When Pike becomes excited and comments on how it's the only portrait that exits, Mrs. Swan says that it's the second one, the first one having been done in Paris by Modigliani before he was famous. It was burned to ashes in a bathtub in the Ritz Hotel. She and Pike go off to get the painting.

Flora's pre-recorded voice is heard reading the poem she's working on, which contains images charged with sexual innuendo. As she writes she changes her position, meaning that Das has to stop work because she's no longer in the pose he's painting. She realizes what she's done but Das says it's all right, because he was going to stop and ask her a question anyway. As Flora resumes her pose, Das asks what her poem is about and she tells him it's about heat, making comments that hint at her active sexual history, which Das doesn't seem to understand. As Pike and Mrs. Swan get back to work in the modern area, a young Indian man comes into the garden and waits.

Flora starts to ask Das what she calls a delicate question. He responds with over-enthusiastic happiness, and she asks him to be less Indian, likens him to an eager dog, and says she wants to be able to talk with him as if she was herself an Indian. He becomes upset and she apologizes, slipping again into innuendo. Das says he wants to work in silence. Flora puts down her pen and becomes still. Das paints.

Mrs. Swan comes out with tea things on a tray and greets the young man. Their conversation reveals that his name is Anish, that he's Das's son, that he's a painter like his father, and that he's come looking for her because he recognized his father's work when it was published as the cover art on Pike's book. He also mentions that his father was put in prison, saying it was "by you." Mrs. Swan is confused for a moment, then understands that he means by the English in general. Anish says that his father was imprisoned for demonstrating against the British rule over India, and Mrs. Swan says that if that's the case, he deserved it. As they settle down to tea, they talk about the circumstances of Das's arrest, and it becomes clear that it happened when Flora was in Jummapur or slightly afterwards.

Flora asks Das to write something on the pencil sketch he gave her. As Nazrul brings them lemonade, Das gives Flora a copy of *Up the Country,* a book written by an English woman about her journeys through India. He says he will sign that, and will include a little sketch of her.

Anish tells Mrs. Swan about his father's background, saying he was a widower when he met Flora and hadn't yet met the woman who would become Anish's mother. He also explains that Das had had a British education and liked to read British literature, commenting that he was loyal until the first War of Independence, which Mrs. Swan refers to as "the Mutiny." This leads them to argue about whether England was conqueror or civilizer, and whether India was backward or rich in culture when England took over. Eventually Anish apologizes for being rude and Mrs. Swan calms down, but is surprised when she hears that Anish considers England home and has married an English girl. He says they met in art school, but that he no longer paints her because his work is, as he calls it "deconstructive." He offers to sketch Mrs. Swan, and she accepts.

Act 1 Part 2 Analysis

The reference to "a smudge of paint" in the letter read by Pike in the beginning of this section is in fact from Flora's last letter to her sister. The reference, therefore, foreshadows the end of the play and Flora's shift in perspective.

The parallel conversations in this scene define the play's historical context in terms of both facts, as debated by Mrs. Swan and Anish, and interpretation, as played out in both conversations. The facts are that the British governed India for several years through a system that attempted to impose English laws, religion, and culture on the population. The British perspective was that Indians were uncivilized, uncultured, obsequious to the point of foolishness, and ungrateful. These are the attitudes that both Mrs. Swan and Flora, for all her supposed liberality, display towards their respective Das's. The story of the play illustrates how Flora in particular, and Mrs. Swan to a lesser degree, change their perspectives as the result of their experiences with the Das's.

Another fact is that Indians eventually became restless, fighting to regain control of both their land and society. From the perspective of the British the Indians were rebels, from the perspective of the Indians they were soldiers of freedom. In short, in this section we see a conflict between two societies and cultures played out in miniature, and as a result we see another aspect of the way the play suggests that history is shaped through personal interpretation. This idea is supported by the way that Anish refers to his artistic style as "deconstructive," a word that also applies to his view of Mrs. Swan's take on history.

Another name is dropped in this scene, placing Flora yet again in a personal historical context. Modigliani was a portrait painter with an eccentric way of elongating his subjects, stretching their likenesses long and thin. On one level this reference is the first piece of the complex puzzle of what makes Flora tick, with the final piece only falling into place in the play's final moments. On another level, the fact that Flora had a portrait painted by Modigliani foreshadows the way that her experience and understanding of life in general, and Indians and love in particular, are stretched and challenged by her relationship with Das.

Other foreshadowing can be found in Flora's poem about heat and her repeated innuendoes and the mention of Radha, both of which refer to the intimacy that develops between Flora and Das and also an important piece of art that appears in the play's second act. Foreshadowing can also be found in the mention of the book *Up the Country*, which itself plays a role in the action of the rest of the play.

Act 1 Part 3

Act 1 Part 3 Summary

Flora and Das sit at the table, drink lemonade, and play a word game. Flora wins, then Das talks about how he learned English, saying that English was the one way that all the tribes of India, who each spoke a different language, could be united. This leads Flora to ask him whether he's a Nationalist, someone who believes in freeing India from British rule. Das evades the question and prepares to go. Flora asks whether she can see what he's done so far, but Das says no. Flora refers to how the man who painted her portrait earlier felt the same way about showing her his work, and Das comments that he had the feeling she'd been painted before. Flora comments that she might have married the painter and that he died soon afterwards.

A man is heard riding up on a horse and shouting a greeting. Das tells Flora it's Captain Durance, and as Durance comes in he says he recognizes Das. When Das comments that they've never met, Durance says that nevertheless he's known. Das quickly goes out, leaving the portrait covered with a drape. Durance says he's come by to find out whether Flora needs anything. Their conversation reveals that Durance works for the chief British administrator in the area, that Flora came to India because a friend of hers, Joshua Chamberlain, recommended it, and that she's got letters of introduction from him to friends throughout the country. They also talk about whether Chamberlain's a Communist, whether Flora would be welcome at the English club in the area, and how Durance goes about making sure that the Indian tribal rulers don't "get up to mischief." This makes Flora call him a kind of policeman, and Durance just laughs. They make plans to go to the English club the following Saturday evening, and Durance goes out.

In the modern area, as Anish is sketching Mrs. Swan, they're evidently still talking about Indian history as she reminds him that Jummapur was run by the Indians, which means that it was his countrymen who put Das in jail, not the British. She talks about how rebellious Indians saw going to prison as a badge of honor, proof that they were truly fighting for their homeland, and refers to how her husband forestalled that by only fining the rebels and sending them on their way. She then refers to her husband having been posted to Nepal, which leads Anish to refer to the tray on which the fancy cake has been served, which Mrs. Swan says came from there. She comments on how she had an English tea service in India, and now that she's in England she has an Indian tea service.

Mrs. Swan then asks whether Anish's paintings are artistic in the same way as the cake. He says his paintings are all much the same, and then shows her the sketch of her that he did. She compliments it, hands it back, and changes the subject, asking what she and Anish are going to tell Pike about Das. She says she knows he's writing a biography even though she doesn't want him to, and comments on how she dislikes the number of footnotes that he's put into the collected letters. She becomes teary as she talks about the injustice of Flora having missed the interest that's being taken in her, saying that

nobody cared for her while she was alive except for wanting to get her panties off. Anish asks to see Das's portrait of Flora, and Mrs. Swan leads him into the house.

Act 1 Part 3 Analysis

Aside from offering additional insight into the relationship between Flora and Modigliani, who is clearly the portrait painter referred to in the conversation between Flora and Das, and also the first glimpse of how Mrs. Swan truly feels about her sister, the main point of this section is to illuminate what happened to Das. First there is the way that Das evades Flora's question about being a Nationalist, then there's the way that Durance says he recognizes Das even though they've never met, which combine to suggest that Durance and his office suspect him of having rebellious sympathies. Also, the information that Flora is friends with a suspected communist, and is in fact in India as a result of that friendship, clearly leads Durance to be, if not suspicious, certainly wary of Das's association with her. Since we already know that Das was arrested for being a rebel, we know that Durance's suspicions are justified. Finally, the first part of the conversation between Mrs. Swan and Anish illuminates the reasons Das rebelled.

The conversation between Mrs. Swan and Anish about tea things and cake functions on a couple of important symbolic levels. The tea things represent the way that in spite of their mutual antagonism, the English and the Indians both came away from their historical relationship changed by the other. This cultural alteration is paralleled on the personal level by the way Mrs. Swan and Anish change each other's perspectives in this scene and throughout the play. More importantly, it's also paralleled by the way Flora and Das are both changed by their relationship with each other in ways that are revealed at the play's conclusion. Meanwhile, the special cake is also a symbol of that change, representing the way that in both relationships the participants come to see each other as unique individuals. The comparison of Anish's painting to the cake represents the way that Anish has lost a degree of his specialness, of his identity as an Indian, which digging into his father's history helps him to recover.

Act 1 Part 4

Act 1 Part 4 Summary

Back in the past Flora poses for Das, but stops because she's getting frustrated with her work. She calls Nazrul out, and asks him in English to bring some pate. Nazrul responds in Hindi, Das talks with him, Flora tries to interrupt, but Nazrul goes out having paid no attention to her. Das explains that Nazrul was telling him that the pate has been stolen, and when Flora tells him that only Nazrul had a key to the locked icebox, Das says ironically that it's a great mystery. Flora tells him that she hopes that Nazrul will be all right, commenting that the pate contains a large proportion of pork, which Hindus don't eat because it's a sin. This leads Das and Flora into a conversation about God, what God will forgive, and which God was in India first, the Christian god or the Hindu god. As part of this conversation Das refers to Radha, a beautiful married woman who fell in love and ran off with the god Krishna. They talk about the sculptures of the gods that Flora saw on her trip with Coomaraswami, how she admired the way that the women in those sculptures were portrayed as being full figured, and how Das's wife was slightly built like Flora.

Nazrul comes in with tea and two kinds of cake. As he goes, Flora and Das talk about the difficulty Flora is having with her work. She says that it just doesn't have the right kind of energy and tries to describe the kind of thing she's looking for. Das says she's talking about *rasa*, a Hindu term describing the kind of emotional or spiritual energy a thing has. When Flora confesses that her poem is sexual in content, Das unhesitatingly tells her the qualities of the sexual *rasa*. Flora tells him that he's finally starting to sound like himself and not the kind of Indian found in novels like E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*. She describes a character in that book as not having a sense of self worth. She asks Das his opinion of the book, he asks whether that's the delicate question she wanted to ask him earlier, and they laugh happily.

Act 1 Part 4 Analysis

The focus of this brief scene is the growing intimacy between Flora and Das. They share an intellectual and philosophical intimacy as represented by their discussion of God, and emotional intimacy as represented by Das's comments about his wife, which are the first about her that we've heard from him. Those comments also suggest the beginnings of sexual intimacy, since Das's reference to his wife having the same kind of body as Flora indicates the possibility that he just might find her sexually attractive. Sexual intimacy is also the subtext of their conversation about *rasa*, which on one level arises as a result of the creative intimacy that can spring up between two artists but is full of hints that Das and Flora desire each other on a sexually intimate level as well.

The dangers of this desire are represented by the comments about *Passage to India*, a novel in which an Indian man goes on trial and is nearly executed because he's

suspected of inappropriate desire for a white woman. The implication of the reference is that the relationship between Das and Flora is a factor in the suspicions that Durance and his superiors have of Das.

The growing intimacy between Das and Flora is contrasted by the brief conversation in Hindi between Das and Nazrul, which suggests that no matter how close Das and Flora get there is still a large part of Das's world (i.e., India) that Flora will never know and understand. The converse is also true, that Das will never completely fit with Flora's world, represented by Nazrul's appearance with two different kinds of cake illustrating the point of their two different worlds even further.

Act 1 Part 5

Act 1 Part 5 Summary

Pike arrives, wearing clothes and accompanied by a soundscape that suggests he's in India. As he looks around, Flora sits at her table and Das paints. Flora narrates a letter to Mrs. Swan, whom she calls Nell, that explains if ever anyone sees a painting of her in a blue dress, she's writing this letter while the painting is being done. She refers to someone called "the enemy." Pike explains in a footnote, which he narrates, that the enemy was a critic with whom Flora had had a disagreement and whose head she poured beer over in a pub one night.

Pike's guide Dilip arrives, and tells him that they're at exactly the spot where Flora's cottage was all those years ago. Pike recognizes the site from a nearby tree, referred to in one of Flora's letters. As Dilip and Pike take pictures of each other they discuss possible ways of getting more information about Das and possibly even finding him, since he might still be alive. Pike refers to a missing watercolor of Flora, referred to in one of the letters and painted by Das. Dilip goes off to try to get a photograph of Pike from the roof of a nearby building.

Flora continues narrating her letter, saying that she can't be expected to provide information about the goings on in India since her sister probably hears more news than she does. Pike interjects another footnote. Flora goes on to talk about the party she's going to with Durance that evening and refers to a party she attended in England. Pike inserts yet another footnote. Flora talks about how her poem about heat isn't finished and how she should be heading off to the North Country, but is just waiting for her portrait to be finished. She refers to a family doctor, Pike inserts a footnote, and Flora says shut up. It seems as though she's talking to Pike but in reality she's shouting at a nearby dog who's barking a lot. Das is also distracted by the dog and stops work, saying he had the right *rasa* yesterday but doesn't today. Flora says she's having the same problem with her poem, and they both stop work and smoke.

Mrs. Swan opens a cupboard and takes down a rolled canvas to show Anish. When he sees it he's overcome by emotion and begins to weep, he's so moved by seeing his father's work. He tells Mrs. Swan that the painting is unfinished, referencing the tree also referred to by Pike and Flora, saying that he would have finished the background once he finished the central figure. He then explains that his father worked instead on another painting, tells Mrs. Swan he has it, and shows it to her. She comments that it's just like Flora. We understand it to be the missing watercolor Pike referred to a few moments previously.

Act 1 Part 5 Analysis

This brief transitional section serves mostly to establish elements of plot that play an important role in the action later. These include Pike and Dilip's search through India for references to Flora, Das, and their lives, a reminder of the party that Flora's attending with Durance, and the watercolor referred to as missing by Pike but which is revealed to be found when Anish shows it to Mrs. Swan. Anish's comments at that moment hint at something important in Das's life that made him stop work, foreshadowing the intimacy between Flora and Das in the second act. This is also foreshadowed by Mrs. Swan's response when Anish shows her the picture; when she says it's just like Flora, Anish understands her to mean that she thinks it's a good likeness, but the way Mrs. Swan says again that it's just like Flora indicates that she means that something about the picture suggests a way that Flora behaves. From the repeated comments about Flora's active sex drive and her tendency to speak with flirtatious innuendo, it's easy to suspect that there's something very sexual, or *rasa*, about that painting, a suspicion that grows even stronger as a result of the events of the following scene.

Act 1 Part 6

Act 1 Part 6 Summary

As Flora and Das smoke they discuss her sister, whom we know has become Mrs. Swan. They discuss how she's much younger than Flora, and how fascinated Das is with English culture and history. He becomes very excited when he discovers that Flora's sister lives on the same street that Charles Dickens lived on when he wrote *Oliver Twist*. Flora comments that her sister works for a newspaper called *The Flag*, which Das read when he was given a copy by Flora's friend Chamberlain. They discuss Chamberlain's socialistic theories, and Das comments that the Theosophical Society to which he belongs was shut down because Chamberlain came and lectured to them. Flora mentions that her sister is Chamberlain's mistress, and Das comments on how her reputation will be ruined. An argument develops over which is the more moral culture, Indian or British. As the argument intensifies, Das packs up to leave, reacting angrily when he finds out that Flora has had a look at the canvas. He says he may not come back to work to work at all. Flora angrily suggests he's not really an artist, Das sarcastically calls himself a hack, and he rips up the sketch of Flora he did at the lecture.

As Das tries to take his canvas and leave, Flora physically tries to stop him, but suddenly runs out of breath and almost collapses. As Das helps her into a chair, she explains she's suffering from water in the lungs, which she came to India to try and cure. She goes inside to change her clothes. Das goes out to tell Nazrul to make some tea. Flora peels off her clothes and goes out to take a shower, but Das comes in announcing that Nazrul's gone and there's no hot water for a shower. Flora comes back in, completely naked, saying that she has to lie down. Das is shocked by her nudity and tries to leave, but Flora insists that he stay and pour the drinking water from the jug over her. He does, then wraps her in a towel and helps her into bed. As Das he goes out to fetch some soda water from the store, Flora reveals that the delicate question she wanted to ask him before was whether he wanted to paint her in the nude. She says that she preferred posing that way, saying that it had more ... and she can't remember the word. Das supplies it: *rasa*.

Nazrul returns, he and Das have a brief argument, Nazrul goes out, and then quickly returns with soda water from the icebox, which Das takes to Flora. He tells her that Nazrul was delayed by a riot in town. As they discuss whether Nazrul is telling the truth, the fan above Flora's bed begins to move, and Das tells her he found a boy to operate it for her. He asks whether Flora's all right and she says she's fine.

Das prepares to leave, warning Flora that servants can be awful gossips and confessing that it's the first time he's ever been alone with an Englishwoman. Flora says that if he's going to be a true artist he has to face criticism and rumors, referring to a bad review that she got from a critic and how she once poured beer over his head in a bar. She also encourages him to be a truly Indian artist, as opposed to someone who does

everything the English way. Das responds by saying that the British have destroyed Indian art, and Flora adds that the British have destroyed India.

Das lights a cigarette and talks about the culture that India had before the British arrived, painters and writers and poets that created masterpieces centuries before Shakespeare. He speaks of one poem in particular that told the epic story of Radha and Krishna. Just then the electric fan starts working. Flora says she feels better, and will probably have a nap since she's invited to Durance's party that evening. As Das gets up to go, Flora tells him to tip the boy operating the fan. Das says he'll be careful how much he gives, saying that too much could upset the economic balance. He goes, and Flora stays in bed.

Act 1 Part 6 Analysis

Flora directly challenges Das in several ways in this scene. Overtly she challenges him to be a true artist and create art out of what he feels instead of what he thinks he should. For essentially the same reason, she challenges him to be an Indian and live according to the needs and drives of his own society instead of according to the rules imposed by the British. On a less direct level she challenges him to be a man. It may be that she doesn't intend to, but by appearing nude in front of him without being self-conscious or coy she's challenging him to accept both her sexuality and his, confront their attraction, and if not act on it at least become more comfortable with it. All three challenges are intertwined, essentially defying Das to be who he is, living according to a personal sense of truth and integrity as opposed to the way society thinks he should behave. Das staying and keeping Flora company, even though she's nude and even though there might be rumors, illustrates that he's beginning to do exactly that, with the action of the second act charting the way in which he moves even further in that direction.

This section also foreshadows several important plot elements. The passing mention of the riot in town, the references to Chamberlain's socialism and to the Theosophical Society, another reminder about Durance's party, the reference to the boy operating the fan, and, perhaps most importantly, the reference to Radha and Krishna all foreshadow key plot and thematic elements that appear in the second act.

Act 2 Part 1

Act 2 Part 1 Summary

In the modern area, Pike sits waiting. In the historic area, Flora and Durance dance at the club. Two other English couples are also dancing, and they banter with Flora about other famous poets, other English parties, and how the Rajah of Jummapur has a collection of exotic European cars. One of the other men asks Flora to dance but she says she needs some air, and goes outside with Durance.

In the modern area, Dilip arrives with a borrowed jacket and tie for Pike to wear when he goes into the club. As Pike puts them on, Dilip tells him that he knows the name of the man who painted Flora's portrait, since the man he borrowed the clothes from was the boy hired by Das to work the fan on the day Flora fell ill. Pike wants to meet him right away but Dilip urges him to be calm and do things his way. Pike agrees, and Dilip goes into the club to make arrangements for them to dine.

Flora narrates a letter to Nell, interspersed with "footnotes" from Pike, in which she describes her dinner and the disorganized way in which the country is run, saying that she's heard that England's governance of the area is going to fall apart sooner rather than later. She also refers to a house in England in which she lived for only six months, which Pike explains in a footnote was abandoned by the family when Flora's mother ran off with a man and sailed to America with him ... on the *Titanic*. Dilip comes back and takes Pike into the dining room.

Durance asks Flora whether it's true she came to India for her health, and comments that the English cemetery is full of British who died out there from various tropical diseases. Flora tells him that her doctor advised a long sea voyage ending in somewhere warm, saying that she wanted to come to India and so chose to end up there. They discuss the political situation, and Durance confirms that the end of British governance is beginning, saying that there are Indian-born officers in the army now but adding that they're not allowed into the club. He changes the subject, saying that he wishes Flora were staying longer but adding that they should go inside, since gossip is likely to spread about them. He mentions that one of the English wives referred to a scandal that Flora was involved in. Flora angrily tells him that she was once in court as a witness, but that she said something about sex that she shouldn't have and as a result now has a reputation. She suggests they go inside, but Durance asks her to stay.

Flora asks him about the riot earlier in the day. Durance tells her that it wasn't against the British; it was Hindu against Muslim, a local skirmish in a larger national cultural and religious conflict. He and Flora climb up onto two practice polo ponies, dummies that move like horses, and go for a "ride", and Durance talks about how India runs much better now after two hundred years of British rule.

The light changes. Flora and Durance are still riding, but we understand they're now riding real horses through the countryside. As Durance gives Flora instructions he starts to ask a question, but Flora asks him one first, wanting to know how Durance knew that she was in India for her health, saying that the only person she told was Das. Durance says that Das, like all Indians, can't help gossiping. Flora angrily says that Das wouldn't do that and that Durance and his superiors must have known from some other source. Durance doesn't answer. Flora apologizes. Durance asks her to marry him. Flora says no. Durance says it was love at first sight. Flora apologizes. Durance apologizes. They ride home.

Act 2 Part 1 Analysis

The unexpectedly moving reference to Flora's family background perhaps explains why Flora tends to move from man to man or relationship to relationship. The implication of the story is that having lost faith in stability and family at a young age, as an adult Flora became involved in situations in which there was no possibility for stability, no chance of being hurt in the same way she must have been when her mother left her life. This doesn't mean that there is no pain for her in short term, unstable relationships, but the pain is short term as well, at least in relation to the deeper pain of losing a long term relationship. Fear of such pain is perhaps one reason for her refusal of Durance's proposal of marriage.

There are other reasons as well, primarily Durance's attitudes towards India and Indians. Durance sees nothing wrong in the discrimination that Indians face, both institutional, as represented by their not being allowed into the club, and individual, as represented by his personal attitude towards Das. Once again in this play the attitudes of a society are revealed through the attitudes of an individual, illustrating the way that in this play, personal conflict is a manifestation of larger, societal and cultural tensions.

The mention of Flora's childhood home and the *Titanic* also illuminate another aspect of the play's theme relating to the tension between fact and interpretation. Nell, the recipient of Flora's letter, would know the context and meaning of her remark about the family house because she was there, but an ordinary reader of the letter wouldn't. Pike's footnote therefore illustrates the idea sometimes facts need to be interpreted in order for their full meaning to be understood.

Elements of foreshadowing in this section include the reference to the Rajah's collection of cars, which Flora visits, and Flora's questioning of Durance about how he knew why she was in India, which foreshadows the explanation that Flora gets later and which troubles her so much.

Act 2 Part 2

Act 2 Part 2 Summary

A conversation between Mrs. Swan and Anish about gin-and-tonic leads Mrs. Swan to comment that her husband died of a stroke in the middle of umpiring a cricket match, and Anish to reveal that his father (Das) died on Christmas Day while he (Anish) was in England. He talks about how he went home for the funeral, opened the trunk that his father had left him, discovered a newspaper account of Das's arrest, and the small watercolor portrait of Flora. Mrs. Swan refers to the way he painted Flora realistically and the rest of the painting in a flatter, Indian style. Anish explains that Hindus like his father painted in the language of symbols, referring to the open book on Flora's bed as a symbol of who Das thought she was, and the tree with falling leaves as a symbol of how Das knew that Flora was dying. Mrs. Swan says that all the symbolism is rubbish, saying that anybody can see is a book called *Up the Country*, which Flora would have naturally been reading since she herself was heading up the country.

Pike, at the club, interjects a footnote about the book, commenting that *Up the Country* consisted of hundreds of letters written by an English woman to family and friends documenting a journey that history indicates laid the groundwork for a military and political disaster. Dilip comes back, and Pike talks about his encounters with India's numerous beggars. Dilip tells him that begging is a way of life and that beggars provide a service to people who need to do something good for their souls. They banter about whether that's an aspect of Hindu philosophy, about the way so many philosophical aspects of life in India sound so Indian, and how Indians are still caught up in the British way of life. An example of which is boys wearing blazers and ties to school, fifty years after achieving independence. Their discussion concludes with Dilip commenting that the present India was not the India that Das was fighting for in his acts of rebellion. This leads Pike to ask whether Dilip thinks that Das and Flora had a relationship. Once Dilip figures out that Pike means an intimate relationship, he says that it simply wouldn't be possible. A note arrives, saying that the Rajah is coming down to meet Pike. Dilip leaves.

Flora narrates a letter that tells how she had a day full of India, which started with riding in the morning with a man she refers to as her suitor. A footnote from Pike indicates that she probably means Durance, who was killed in a rebellion in 1944. Flora then narrates how she's started working again, and Pike inserts a footnote saying where the poem she mentioned was published. Finally, Flora narrates how she was invited to lunch by the Rajah of the time, who kisses her hand.

Act 2 Part 2 Analysis

Gin-and-tonic is a drink that originated in India. Tonic water contains a medication called quinine, which, when mixed with gin, provided a kind of vaccination against a mosquito-spread disease called malaria.

Anish's reference to discovering his father's effects in a trunk echoes the way that Mrs. Swan had a similar experience, discovering what was left of Flora's effects in a suitcase. Their conversation about symbolism simultaneously illuminates how perceptive Das was and the shallow-mindedness of Mrs. Swan, who herself represents British society's general attitude towards India and its culture. Again, we see how the attitudes of an individual represent the attitudes of a society, and a microcosm of cultural conflict in the tensions between two people.

Cultural conflict, manifesting more in differences than in tension, also plays a key role in the conversation between Dilip and Pike. On the one hand is Indian-sounding philosophy, which from the discussion can be understood to be fatalistic, pragmatic, and joyful all at the same time, and less about the way things appear and more about the way life is lived. On the other hand is the British sense of propriety, the insistence upon doing things the way they ought to be done and on appearances, represented by the reference to jackets and ties. At the conclusion of the conversation, however, Dilip ironically reveals that in some ways, Indians are as British as the British when he suggests that a relationship between Flora and Das would simply not be possible. This makes the secondary thematic point that in spite of often significant cultural differences, human nature is essentially the same, that no matter what the culture, what should not be should not be done, and human desires must be confined by rules.

Act 2 Part 3

Act 2 Part 3 Summary

The Rajah offers to have his collection of exotic European automobiles driven past Flora. When Flora says she can just walk past them, the Rajah says that that will deny them their identity, suggesting that if cars do not move they are not cars. Flora comments appreciatively as the cars pass in procession, but then becomes angry when the Rajah initiates a conversation about her health. Flora complains that everybody knows her business, and the Rajah changes the subject, referring to a house party where he and Winston Churchill were both guests. The Rajah and Flora argue politely about whether Churchill was right to suggest that the loss of India would reduce England to a smaller power, and whether Independence will mean the end of both the Rajah's rule and England's.

During a break in the parade of cars, refreshments are served. The Rajah offers to show Flora his art collection, all but the erotic paintings, which are believed to be too stimulating for women. Flora hints that she will insist upon seeing all the paintings, she and the Rajah banter comfortably, and then more cars appear. As they watch, the Rajah agrees to show Flora all the paintings, on the condition that she accepts one as a gift. A car passes that Flora recognizes, and she asks the Rajah to make the driver stop. Flora narrates a letter that tells the story of the car, a story that Pike picks up in a footnote. It was the car owned by Flora's fiancy at the time that the Modigliani portrait was painted, the car in which the fiancy took the painting back to his room at the Ritz where he burned it, and the car in which Flora broke off her engagement. The footnote also reveals that Flora planned to sit for Modigliani again, but he died before the sitting could take place.

The Rajah leaves Flora and joins Pike. Pike refers to the Rajah as "Your Highness," but the Rajah tells him that he is merely a politician and thanks Pike for sending him a copy of Flora's *Collected Letters.* He then reveals that his grandfather (Flora's Rajah) donated his collection of cars to the war effort, adding that the collection had been depleted by that point because of his grandfather's tendency to give gifts to his lady friends. He tells Pike that there is no record in the visitor's book of Flora visiting his grandfather, but has found a thank you card that she sent him for a painting he gave her. He also says that they've been able to identify the painting, a miniature. Pike describes the painting he's looking for, a nude woman painted to represent Radha. The Rajah says that that was the subject of the miniature, and hints that knowing the kind of man his grandfather was, a painting that hints at sexual intimacy would have been right for the occasion. He presents Pike with a copy of the letter and Pike thanks him effusively. The Rajah leaves saying farewell to Pike in Hindi. Pike asks whether what the Rajah just said is his Christian name, but the Rajah says he's not a Christian and bids farewell in Hindi again.

Act 2 Part 3 Analysis

The way that the Rajah moves between the play's two time frames makes a key point about the nature of the relationship between India and England. At the beginning of this section, in the conversation with Flora, it's clear that to a significant degree the Rajah has accepted and even indulged in English and European culture. By the end of the Rajah's scene with Pike, however, the Rajah clearly makes the point that he is Indian, which means that because the two characters are played by the same actor, he represents the way that that India is still India in spite of adopting British attitudes and behaviors. This idea is reinforced by the comment made by the Rajah at the beginning of the scene with Flora, in which he refers to the cars as needing to be what they are, needing to act according to their identities. This is a key thematic point that can also be seen as referring to Flora, who has been established as a very sexual human being, who right from the beginning is clearly flirting with the Rajah, and who by the end of the play seems to be living close enough to her true nature to become intimate with Das.

Winston Churchill was a long serving British politician who entered Parliament in the late nineteenth century during the reign of Queen Victoria and served through to the end of the Second World War. He has been called one of England's greatest prime ministers, and governed the country throughout the period in which Indian independence took place.

Flora's anger at again having the state of her health known by someone who shouldn't foreshadows the discoveries she makes about the role of the police in her visit to India later in the act, while the conversation about the miniature painting foreshadows the importance it plays in the symbolism of the play's final moments.

Act 2 Part 4

Act 2 Part 4 Summary

Das and Coomaraswami are waiting for Flora when she returns from her visit with the Rajah. Flora says she'll call Nazrul to bring them some refreshments, but Das tells her that Nazrul is out. Coomaraswami apologizes for coming to visit her unannounced, but Flora reassures him that he is welcome as her friend. As Coomaraswami and Das make small talk about Flora's visit to the Rajah, Flora repeatedly asks why they've come to see her. When they repeatedly avoid her question Flora begins to lose her temper, but then Coomaraswami apologizes for any trouble that the Theosophical Society may have caused between her and the Rajah. Flora says that the Society never came up in their conversation, but then asks whether her lecture to the Society has created any trouble. Coomaraswami goes out, and repeatedly shouts for Das to join him as Das hurriedly explains to Flora that the Society's activities have been suspended because of the riot.

As Das quickly gathers up his painting gear, Flora says it might be a good time for her to take her trip "up the country," and Das agrees. As Flora asks whether Das told anybody about her illness, Coomaraswami is heard driving off. Das says he'll walk home, Flora repeats her question, and Das tells her that everybody knew before she even arrived, saying that any letters written to Coomaraswami from England would have been opened. Flora begins to cry and Das offers her his handkerchief. As she wipes her eyes Das brings out his canvas. Flora says she'd like to keep it, even if it is unfinished. Before Das can go in to find some scissors to cut the canvas off its stretcher, the electric power goes out.

As they say their farewells in the dark, both wondering if they'll ever meet again, Das gives Flora a watercolor portrait he did of her. She says it's beautiful, a real Indian painting by a real Indian artist, and tells him it has powerful sexual *rasa*. After a moment of silence, Flora's poem about heat is heard. Lights fade to black.

Act 2 Part 4 Analysis

The Indian fight for independence plays a key role in this section. On a cultural level that fight is represented by the references to the riot, which even though it was between Hindus and Muslims represents the way that Indians are restless and angry about being confined and defined by British rule. On a level that is simultaneously personal and symbolic, Das is fighting for his own personal independence both within society and artistically. His Indian-influenced art shows how his spirit is breaking free from the confines of the definitions imposed by British culture and by British-influenced Indian culture, a freedom also illustrated by the implied sexual intimacy between him and Flora, which in turn is suggested by Flora's completion of her poem about heat. The completion of the poem also suggests that Flora has herself found a similar spiritual and emotional freedom, which means that the relationship between Flora and Das makes

the thematic point that true cultural and spiritual independence comes, as the Rajah suggests, being true to one's own identity and desires, which cannot be governed by imposed rules of behavior.

Why does Flora cry? The evidence of the play as a whole suggests that one of the reasons she came to India was to escape the notoriety and reputation she had in England. Finding out that such escape has proved impossible upsets her deeply since all she clearly wants to do, again as the Rajah suggests, is to live her life according to who she is, not by what people think of her.

Act 2 Part 5

Act 2 Part 5 Summary

It is dawn in both eras. In the past, Flora lies nude on her bed, while in the modern area, Dilip and Pike come in, a little drunk and singing happily. As they talk about how frustrated their search for Flora's past is becoming, Flora gets out of bed. Pike talks about how the search cannot and will not come to an end, referring to his discovery that Das had a son.

In the past, Durance arrives to take Flora for a spin in his car. As Flora hurriedly gets dressed Durance talks about having passed Das on the road, saying he was surprised when Das turned his back to him. He discovers that Flora is reading *Up the Country*, and then finds the miniature she received from the Rajah. He says he feels awkward, explaining that such a gift implies a forbidden intimacy. He goes on to explain that Flora is politically sensitive because of her connections with Chamberlain, but before he can explain any further Flora tells him that she doesn't care what anybody thinks of her. She rushes him out to the car so they can see the sunrise.

In the modern area, Mrs. Swan walks with Anish. She gives him Flora's copy of *Up the Country,* saying that it had been his father's gift to Flora. She tells him that he doesn't have to tell Pike about the watercolor if he doesn't want to, and Anish says that his father would have wanted to keep that part of his life private. Mrs. Swan says that there are things she hasn't told Pike either, and walks Anish to the gate. Anish thanks her for the cake, and Mrs. Swan refers to all the fruit she has yet to pick, adding that she loved the fruit trees at home. We, and Anish, understand her to mean India. Mrs. Swan reminisces about the blossoms on the fruit trees, saying there was a drift of them in the cemetery when she visited the graveyard.

A young woman appears, accompanied by a young man. As she reads the inscription on Flora's grave, her conversation with the young man reveals that she's Flora's sister Nell, Mrs. Swan's younger self, and that the young man made the arrangements for Flora's burial and gravestone. He talks about how he was at a reading that Flora once gave, Nell begins to cry, and the young man offers her a handkerchief, and she blows her nose. As they talk further, it's revealed that the young man is Eric Swan, the man who became Nell's husband. As they leave, Eric refers to a cricket match that "we" are playing in. When Nell asks him who he means by we, Eric says India. As they go out, Pike appears and looks down at the grave.

In the cottage, Flora packs the rolled up canvas and her blue dress. As she narrates her final letter, Nell opens a duplicate of the suitcase, unrolls a duplicate canvas, looks at it, and glances briefly at a duplicate of the dress. Flora refers to having just had an experience that she says has finally made her feel better about arriving too late in Paris to save Modigliani's life, an incident that she describes as a sin that will blot her soul for the rest of her life. As she takes her suitcase and climbs onto her train, she refers to

having left a piece of her soul behind "as a smudge of paint on paper," the part of her that is Radha, "undressed for love in an empty house."

Flora gets on her train, takes out her copy of *Up the Country*, and starts to read. At the same time Nell looks through a duplicate of *Up the Country*, taken from the duplicate suitcase, finds the Rajah's miniature, puts it back, and starts to read. In the same way as it was when she was reading her poetry, Flora's voice is heard reading from the book. The passage describes a dinner party attended by a group of British, contains comments on superficial conversations, and places them in contrast to the beauty of nature and the age of the Indian culture. The passage concludes with an expression of surprise that the natives don't cut off the heads of the British and be done with it.

Act 2 Part 5 Analysis

At the end of the play questions remain about what happened to the miniature given to Flora by the Rajah and the watercolor portrait painted by Das. The miniature is last seen being looked at by Nell and replaced in the book which itself was replaced in the suitcase. This means that the book and the miniature have been in the suitcase in the same way as the unfinished portrait. Because neither Mrs. Swan nor Anish mention the miniature, it's possible to understand that when Mrs. Swan refers to things she hasn't told Pike, the existence and location of the miniature are among them. It's possible to believe that she's keeping it for herself as a memento of her sister.

In terms of the watercolor, it's last seen being handed to Flora by Das. We know, however, that Anish discovered it in Das's trunk. This means that somehow Das got it back, and that that must have happened before Flora left, because otherwise it would have been in her suitcase with the other paintings. We can deduce from these facts that Flora gave Das the portrait as a memento of their time together, which makes sense because she had the large canvas. The way that what happened to both the watercolor and the miniature remain unclear illuminates another aspect of the central theme discussed earlier, whether history is interpreted or not, the truth of what actually went on can still remain hidden.

Another piece of deduction we can make involves Das and his reasons for becoming involved with acts of revolution. There are indications throughout the play that through his relationship with Flora, he has been inspired to be a true Indian, to claim his identity and be his true self. This means that we understand that as a result of this transformation he feels both the courage and the anger to fight for the kind of social and cultural freedom he has experienced in terms of the emotional and creative freedom he encountered with Flora. In other words, he wants to be as much an Indian politically as he is artistically.

The fact that so much of what happened to and with these characters is left for the process of deduction again makes the play's thematic point, that both events and contexts in history have to be interpreted for meaning to be interpreted. Who knows,

however, whether we're right? This, again, is an aspect of the play's point in reference to the value of interpretation, that mystery will always exist.

The last few moments in the play, however, clear up several of the play's other mysteries, such as the question of what lives at the core of Flora's heart and philosophy. The experience that Flora refers to in her final letter is clearly her encounter with Das. This, juxtaposed with her comment about Modigliani, and within the context of the play as a whole, we can interpret her to mean that because she was openly and honestly and intimately herself with Das, she has forgiven herself for not being open and honest and intimate enough with Modigliani soon enough to save his life. Her comments about leaving a piece of her soul behind refer to this version of herself, the sexually open, loving, inspiring piece of her soul represented by the image of Radha that she couldn't quite connect with through her affair with Modigliani. In other words, she's found her spiritual home, an idea reinforced by the way that a few moments previously, the fiercely pro-English Mrs. Swan unexpectedly referred to India as "home." This means that we can interpret the facts of the play as defining how the process of cross-cultural transformation inspired Das, softened Mrs. Swan, and healed Flora, bringing them all in touch with, again as the Rajah suggests, their "essential" being. The way they have each interpreted India has become a fact of their lives.

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Characters

Coomaraswami

Coomaraswami is the president of the Theosophical Society in Jummapur, India. He greets Flora upon her arrival at the train station in 1930.

Flora Crewe

Flora Crewe is an English poetess who travels by herself to India in April 1930, presumably for her health, to live and write. In India, she encounters Nirad Das, an amateur artist who paints her portrait while she writes. Flora learns from Das about the struggle among Indians for independence from British colonization. Flora's interactions with Das take on an erotic tone when, one day, overcome by the heat, she lies naked in her bed while talking to him. While in India, Flora is also courted by the British official, David Durance. Flora dies and is buried in India in June, 1930. Over fifty years later, in the mid-1980s, the scholar Eldon Pike, who has published *The Collected Letters of Flora Crewe,* is collecting information for a biography he plans to write about her. Pike attempts to determine whether or not Flora had a "relationship" with Das, and whether or not a nude painting of Flora by Das actually existed. After Das's death, Nirad Das, his son, finds the nude watercolor miniature in a trunk of his father's belongings.

Anish Das

Anish Das is the son of Nirad Das. In the mid-1980s, Anish visits the home of Mrs. Swan, Flora's sister, in England, to learn more about his father's portrait of Flora. Anish had seen the reproduction on the cover the of *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe,* and recognized the style as his father's. Anish tells Mrs. Swan that, after his father's death, he had found a watercolor nude portrait of a European woman, who turns out to be Flora Crewe.

Nirad Das

Nirad Das is an Indian man who first meets Flora after her lecture to the Theosophical Society in India, in 1930. Das is an amateur painter and asks to paint a portrait of Flora as she sits writing her poetry. During these painting sessions, Das and Flora discuss the politics of Indian colonization by the British Empire. Das is at first overly polite and subservient to Flora, but she encourages him to be his "Indian" self in her presence, and speak to her more naturally. During one painting session, Flora, overcome by the heat, ends up lying naked in bed under a sheet while Das sits uncomfortably in her bedroom. Over fifty years later, it is discovered that Das did, indeed, paint a watercolor miniature nude portrait of Flora, in addition to the portrait which appears on the cover of the published *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe.* In 1930, Das was arrested for throwing

a mango during a riot in protest of British rule over India. After his death, Anish Das, Das's son, discovers the nude portrait among his father's belongings.

Dilip

Dilip is an Indian man who attends to Pike at the hotel in India, and helps him track down information about Flora.

David Durance

David Durance is a British official in India who briefly courts Flora. He asks her to marry him, but she refuses, and it is unclear whether she chose to have an affair with him.

Nazrul

Nazrul is the servant at the home in India where Flora stays.

Eldon Pike

Eldon Pike is a scholar of Flora Crewe. He has edited the *Collected Letters of Flora Crewe* and, in the mid-1980s, is gathering research for a biography of Flora. As part of his research, Pike first visits Eleanor Swan, Flora's younger sister, and then the hotel in India where Flora stayed. Pike, while well intentioned, is thoroughly absorbed in his scholarly perspective on Flora; he continually cites facts about her life, and persistently attempts to ascertain the truth about Flora. Pike is especially interested in tracking down various paintings of Flora by various artists, famous and unknown. He is also especially interested in determining whether or not Flora had a "relationship" with Das, and whether or not she posed for a nude portrait by the amateur Indian painter.

Eleanor Swan

Eleanor Swan is Flora's younger sister. In the mid-1980s, Pike, who is gathering information for a biography of Flora, visits her at her home in England. She is then visited by Anish Das, the son of Nirad Das, who wishes to learn more about his father's painting of Flora. Eleanor, called Nell in her younger years, continually offers tea and cakes to her guests. She is skeptical about the value of Pike's research on her sister, but is more receptive to Anish. After Flora's death, Eleanor had traveled to India to visit her sister's grave, where she met Eric, whom she subsequently married (but who is deceased during the "present" time of the action).

Themes

Empire

Perhaps the central theme of Stoppard' s play is the historical, social, and cultural significance of the British Empire. Half of the play is set in India in 1930, during a period of social unrest among Indians struggling for national independence from British colonial rule. Much of the play involves two characters, one Indian, one British, in dialogue over the issue of India as a British colony. For instance, the Indian characters refer to the "First War of Independence," of 1847, an historical event that the English characters know as the "Mutiny." Various English characters represent different English attitudes about the politics of India. Flora, the most open-minded English character in the play, is often very aware of her presence in India as a representative of British Imperial power; in a letter to her sister describing a sight-seeing tour during which she was escorted by Indian members of the Theosophical Society, Flora employs a wry sense of humor in describing her status in India: "I felt like a carnival float representing Empire or, depending how you look at it, the Subjugation of the Indian People." David Durance, a British government official in India, as well as his fellow members of the Jummapur Cricket Club, express arrogance and disdain for Indians, which is typical of imperialist attitudes toward the people they have colonized. For instance, in the opening lines of Act II, a member of the club named only as an "Englishman" praises the writer Kipling, who was known for his racist, pro-imperialist social, and political attitudes.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism refers to the phenomenon by which, when one culture conquers and subjugates another, the indigenous culture is decimated, and the dominant culture is imposed upon the subjugated people. In the case of the British colonization of India, the British imposed, among other things, an English educational system upon the Indian population. Educated Indians subsequently became learned in English art and literature, perhaps more so than in the literary and artistic traditions of their own culture. In many exchanges between Flora and Das, Das expresses his love of English literature; Flora questions these values on the basis that he should take more pride in his own culture and less in that of the culture that subjugates him. In an exchange between Anish and Mrs. Swan, Mrs. Swan compares the colonization of India by Britain to the conquest of Britain by the Romans and subsequent imposition of Roman culture upon British culture. Anish, however, corrects this comparison, based on the argument that India was already a highly developed culture before the arrival of Europeans: "We were the Romans! We were up to date when you were a backward nation. The foreigners who invaded you found a third-world country! Even when you discovered India in the age of Shakespeare, we already had our Shakespeares. And our science architecture our literature and art, we had a culture older and more splendid, we were rich!" Anish ends with the assertion that Britain plundered Indian culture because of its wealth: "After all, that's why you came."

Nationalism

The sentiment that inspired Indians to struggle for national independence was one of strong "nationalism." This sentiment refers to the sense of pride in Indian culture, history, and national identity. The Indian characters in Stoppard's play exhibit various degrees of nationalist pride, and an attitude of rebellion against British imperialism. The Theosophical Society, of which Flora and Das are both members, was a significant influence in the development of Indian nationalist sentiment, because of the reverence theosophy holds for traditional Indian spiritual beliefs. Flora attempts to instill in Das a sense of nationalism during her discussions with him. She tells him, "If you don't start learning to take you'll never be shot of us.... It's your country and we' ve got it. Everything else is bosh." And Das does eventually engage in an act of nationalist rebellion when he is arrested for throwing a mango during an anti-British riot.

Style

Setting

The two historical and geographical settings in Stoppard's play are central to the meaning of the play. One of the settings is Jummapur, India, in 1930, during a time of active rebellion among Indian nationalists against British imperial powers. Parts of the play are also set in this exact same location, but over fifty years later, during the mid-1980s. Throughout the play, characters refer to significant events in the history of Indian nationalist struggles. The other setting is in the private garden of an English woman in London. Setting is central to the structure and staging of the play as well, since the two main historical/geographic sets are often juxtaposed almost simultaneously. The stage is set so that the play unfolds as a series of "flashbacks" from the 1980s to 1930. Dialogue and scenes between characters in the 1980s often leads in to, is juxtaposed against, or even interspersed with, dialogue and scenes between characters in 1930.

Dialogue

Stoppard employs a variety of dialogue techniques in this play. Each scene is based primarily on dialogue between two characters, one Indian, and one English: Flora and Das, Mrs. Swan and Anish, Pike and Dilip as well as between the two English characters Pike and Mrs. Swan. Some of the dialogue, however, is presented as Mrs. Swan, in England in the 1980s, reads various letters Flora wrote her from India in 1930. For example, the play opens with Flora sitting on a train; Flora's words open the play, but they are presented on stage as the character of Flora quoting from her own letter to her sister, even though she is not shown actually writing the letter during this sequence. In a film, the quotation of a letter over the action of the character who has written the letter would be presented as a "voice-over." Stoppard uses clever staging techniques to achieve on the live stage an effect similar to that of the cinematic voice-over. In other scenes, a character's voice is actually prerecorded, and played over the action to create an effect closer to the cinematic voice-over. Stoppard also employs unique staging of dialogue during scenes in which characters in a 1980s setting seem to be in direct dialogue with characters in a "flashback" 1930 setting. In other scenes, the dialogue of Pike, the literary scholar who is researching Flora's stay in India, functions as a series of "footnotes" to the action in a flashback. In these scenes, the action and dialogue in a 1930 setting unfolds while Pike interjects with a series of facts or explanations about Flora's life that are meant to explain what is transpiring in the "flashback."

Allusions

Stoppard's characters make reference to many historically real literary and artistic figures and works of literature and art. The list of writers includes H. G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, George Bernard Shaw *(Pygmalion),* Robert Browning, Tennyson, Dickens *(Oliver*

Twist), Macaulay *(Lays of Ancient Rome),* Agatha Christie *(The Mysterious Affair at Styles), E.* M. Forster *(A Passage to India),* Shakespeare, Chaucer, Rudyard Kipling ("Gunga Din"), Ovid, and Virgil. A familiarity with these writers and their works provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the significance of these references to central themes of Stoppard's play.

Historical Context

Colonization and Independence of India

Stoppard's play takes place during a period of intense struggle on the part of Indians to gain national independence from British Imperial rule. India was a colony of the British Empire for almost a century, from 1858-1947. The history of India during this period, therefore, is one of expansion of British power in conflict with organizations, protests, rebellion, and terrorist activism among the peoples of India. Before 1848, India had been colonized and ruled by the East India Company, but power was transferred to the British crown in 1858. In 1876, Queen Victoria of England took on the additional title of Empress of India. Rebellion on the part of the Indians against European colonization was waged off and on throughout India's history of colonization. However, the first nationally organized Indian effort at achieving independence was formed in 1885, with the first meeting of the Indian National Congress. Nevertheless, Britain continued to expand its region of power in the area. In 1886, the British conquered Burma, which it added to its Indian territory. In 1906, the British government instituted a series of reforms ostensibly to increase Indian political influence. With the advent of World War I in 1914, many Indians willingly fought on the side of the British, with the expectation that their loyalty in war would result in further concessions of British power to Indian self-rule; the disappointment of this expectation following the war only served to spark further protests. Throughout the inter-war years, Indian resistance to British rule continued, with the Indian National Congress inspired by the leadership of Gandhi. In 1947, when the British Parliament voted in the Indian Independence Act, British rule was finally ceded to Indian self-rule.

Religions in India

In Stoppard's play, the Indian characters attempt to explain elements of the Hindu religion to the British characters. Das explains to Flora some of the stories and mythology of Hinduism, as well as describing to her some of the classic Indian art that illustrates these stories. The major religions of India are Muslim and Hindu. During the years of protest against British rule, particularly in the inter-war period, Indians were internally divided in their political goals along these religious lines. Gandhi worked hard to unify the two religions in the cause for independence, but his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. Thus, when the British ceded power in 1947, India was divided into two countries Pakistan was to be Muslim, while India (to be called the Republic of India) would be Hindu. However, the process of instituting this national division was wracked by bloody civil war between Hindus and Muslims.

Languages of India

At various points in the play, Indian characters speak to one another in Hindi. At one point, an Indian character says something to a British character in Hindi, which he completely misunderstands. With the achievement of national independence in 1947, India officially recognized 14 different languages and dialects throughout the nation, but designated Hindi as the national language, while also maintaining English as the lingua franca for government transactions.

Critical Overview

Stoppard is one of the leading playwrights of the twentieth century. Anne Wright, in *the Dictionary of Literary Biography,* asserts that Stoppard "ranks as a dramatist of brilliant and original comic genius." Wright succinctly captures the scope and success of his career as a dramatist, stating that "His first major success established him as a master of philosophical farce, combining dazzling theatricality and wit with a profound exploration of metaphysical concerns. His output through more than three decades has been extensive and varied, including original plays for radio and television, screenplays for television and film, adaptations and translations of works by European dramatists, several short stories, and a novel." Wright notes that Stoppard's plays "have been heralded as major events by both audiences and critics. He is now a playwright of international reputation in Europe and the United States.... His popularity extends to both the intellectual avant-garde and the ordinary theatergoer. Since the 1960s his work has developed in other areas, from absurdist or surrealist comedy to political and even polemical drama." Wright maintains that Stoppard's "career to date confirms his importance, not merely as a theatrical phenomenon, but as a major contemporary playwright."

The work for which he is best known and most widely celebrated is the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstem are Dead* (1964-5), which was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1966, and then by the British National Theater in 1967. Rosencrantz and Guildenstem are two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* whom Stoppard develops as his central characters. An introduction to the printed version of the play explains its central themes and major stylistic elements: *"Rosencrantz and Guildenstem* depicts the absurdity of life through these two characters who have 'bit parts' in a play not of their own making and who are capable only of acting out their dramatic destiny. They are bewildered by their predicament and face death as they search for the meaning of their existence. While examining these themes, Stoppard makes extensive use of puns and paradox, which have since become standard devices in his plays." Stoppard received several awards for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* including best new play in 1967, the Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Award for best new play in 1968, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play in 1968, as well as the Grande Prize at the 1990 Venice Film Festival for the film *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* which Stoppard both adapted and directed.

Indian Ink (1995) was adapted by Stoppard from his original radio play, *In the Native State,* which was broadcast by the BBC in 1991. The play was first performed at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford, England, and then opened at the Aldwych Theatre in London in 1995.

Stoppard's other major plays include *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *The Real Thing* (1982), *and Arcadia* (1994). Stoppard has also written several highly successful screenplays, such as *Brazil* (1985, co-written with Terry Gilliam), for which he received an Academy Award nomination and the Los Angeles Critics Circle Award for Best Original Screenplay. Subsequent screenplays include *Empire of the Sun* (1987, adapted

from the novel by J. G. Ballard), *The Russia House* (1989, adapted from the novel by John le Carre), and B*illy Bathgate* (1991, adapted from the novel by E. L. Doctorow).

Stoppard also wrote the screenplay for the 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love,* which swept the Academy Awards, garnering seven Oscars, including Best Picture. *Shakespeare in Love* was directed by John Madden, and stars Gwenyth Pal trow, Joseph Fiennes, Geoffrey Rush, Ben Affleck, and Judi Bench.

Criticism

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

Critical Essay #1

Brent has a Ph.D. in American Culture, specializing in film studies, from the University of Michigan. She is a freelance writer and teaches courses in the history of American cinema. In the following essay, Brent discusses cultural and historical references in Stoppard's play.

Stoppard's 1994 play Indian Ink, set primarily in *India in* 1930 during a period of intense struggle between Indian nationalists and British imperialists, makes reference to several significant historical and cultural phenomena of India and England during this period. These references include the Indian uprising of 1857, the Theosophical Society, the Bloomsbury group, the English novelists E. M. Forster and Rudyard Kipling, and the Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani. A better understanding of these references will further illuminate significant themes of the play.

In Act I, Anish Das, a young Indian man educated and residing in England, is visiting with Mrs. Swan, an elderly English woman, in her garden. In the course of their conversation, Anish mentions "the first War of Independence," to which Mrs. Swan responds, "What war was that?" Anish replies, "The Rising of 1857," to which Mrs. Swan responds, "Oh, you mean the Mutiny." In Act II, a similar exchange occurs between Flora and the Rajah. He proudly informs her that "my grandfather stood firm with the British during the First Uprising." Flora, has no idea to what he is referring, until he mentions "1857," at which points she realizes he is talking about "The Mutiny." Although they refer to it in different terms, reflecting their differing political perspectives on Indian colonial history, they are both talking about what is now referred to as the "Mutiny" or the "Great Revolt" of 1857-9. This bitter rebellion of Indian troops and citizens against the British colonial forces occupying India started on May 10, 1857. The original source of discontent among Indian soldiers in the British army was over the grease used on rifle cartridges that soldiers were required to bite in order to open; the grease was made up of a mixture of pork and beef, which was prohibited by both Hindu and Muslim religious belief. But this initial protest took on greater implications as it became a struggle for Indian national independence and gained the support of many Indian citizens. This rebellion became an all-out military revolt, during which Indian troops took control of significant sectors of the country. The British, however, ultimately defeated the Indians on June 20 of 1859. The Indian and English characters in Stoppard's play represent the different historical perspectives on this event, the English regarding it as a "mutiny" against their sovereignty in the region, and the Indians considering it the "first War" in a century-long struggle for national independence.

In the opening scene of Stoppard's play, Flora Crewe, a British poet, is greeted at the train station by the president of the local Theosophical Society, to which she later gives a talk. In Act II, Flora learns that, due to riotous rebellion in the area, the local Theosophical Society has been "suspended," presumably for its political leanings. Theosophy is a religious philosophy based on "the mystical premise that God must be experienced directly in order to be known at all," according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Theosophy became internationally popular in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Perhaps the most significant figure in the spread of Theosophy was Helena Blavatsky, who, along with Henry Steel Olcott, founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. In 1878, they moved the center of the Society to India, from which their ideas spread throughout India and Europe. Blavatsky's most influential writings include the multi-volume publications *Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). Theosophy draws extensively from many Eastern religions, but especially from Indian mystical thought. In Stoppard's play, the Indian man Dilip explains to the English scholar Pike that, "Madame Blavatsky was a famous name in India, she *was* the Theosophical Society." Theosophy became important in India as a means of establishing national pride and contributing to the nationalist sentiments, which in part inspired the struggle for Indian national independence.

During a conversation with Coomaraswami, Flora mentions "Bloomsbury." She is referring to the Bloomsbury group, an unofficial affiliation of writers, intellectuals, and artists who gathered regularly in private homes located in the Bloomsbury district of London, between 1907 and 1930. According to *Encyclopedia Britannica,* the Bloomsbury group's "significance lies in the extraordinary number of talented persons associated with it." Several famous writers of the Bloomsbury group, including Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster (1879-1970), are mentioned in Stoppard' s play. References to Forster are particularly significant, as he is known for his writings on India. In a conversation between Flora and Das, Flora compares Das to a character in Forster's famous novel *A Passage to India,* and later asks his opinion of the novel. Forster wrote A Passage to India after having visited India in 1912-13 and again in 1921. In addition, he wrote a nonfiction book, *The Hill of the Devi* (1953), about his experiences in India. Forster is also known for his novels *A Room with a View* (1907), *Howard's End* (1910), and *Maurice* (1971), which was published posthumously. The reference to Forster is significant to Stoppard's play as it invokes the literary history of English colonial fiction set in India.

In the opening scene of Act II, Flora is attending a dance at the Jummapur Cricket Club, to which she has been invited by Durance. An Englishman mentions Kipling, and recites a quote from the author: "Kipling there's a poet! 'Though I've belted you and flayed you, by the living Gawd that made you, you're a better man than I am Gunga Din!'" This reference is significant to Stoppard's play because the world best knows Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) for his pro-imperialist writings regarding the colonization of India. Kipling was born in Bombay, India, into a British family that sent the young Kipling to school in England during much of his childhood. In 1882, Kipling moved back to India, where he worked as a journalist for the next seven years. Shortly after his return to England in 1896, Kipling was hailed as a leading British writer, and in 1907 he was the first English writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. His notoriety increased with the publication *Barrack-Room Ballads,* which included the poem "Gunga Din." Kipling is perhaps best known for his children's stories, *Kim* (1901) and *The Jungle Books* (1894-5), which take place in India. Stoppard's play is clearly anti-imperialist in sentiment, and the praise of Kipling by a character identified only as an "Englishman" is meant to indicate the pro-imperialist stance of the members of the Jummapur Cricket Club. These English characters, particularly Durance, function as a counterpoint to the character of

Flora, a radical thinker who, despite the fact that she is English, is a supporter of Indian nationalism and a critic of British imperialism.

Although Stoppard' s character of Flora Crewe is fictional, a number of references are made throughout the play that indicate that she is personally acquainted with several internationally renowned artistic, literary, and intellectual figures of her day. Flora is perhaps most closely affiliated with the modern Italian painter and sculptor Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920). Modigliani was born in Italy, of Jewish parents, but moved to Paris as a young man in 1906 to pursue the study of art. Although he is now known as one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, Modigliani was not recognized outside of his Parisian circle of artists until after his death. In Stoppard's play, it is mentioned that Flora posed for a nude portrait by Modigliani. This portrait was later purchased and destroyed by a suitor of Flora's in a fit of jealousy, when he burned it to ashes in the bathtub of a Ritz hotel. The fictional Flora's relationship to Modigliani may be intended to refer to a real affair between Modigliani and the British poet Beatrice Hastings, between 1914-1916. The reference to a nude painting is significant to Modigliani's oeuvre, in that he is best known for about thirty large female nude paintings, which he completed between 1916-1919. His work has especially been noted for the sense of personal intimacy between the artist and his subject that is captured in his paintings. In Stoppard's play, the scholar Pike explains that Flora attended "Modigliani's first show, in Paris." This refers to the first, and only, one-man showing of Modigliani's work during his lifetime, exhibited by Berthe Weill in her gallery in Paris in 1917. This show was immediately controversial, however, because of the nude female subjects, and was closed down by the police. Reference to Modigliani as a master painter of the nude female form in Stoppard's play is significant to a central motif of the drama, which is the relationship between Flora and Das as he eventually paints a miniature nude portrait of her. Flora had made plans to sit for another nude by Modigliani, but arrived in Paris on January 23, 1920, after he had been taken to the hospital, about a week before he died of tuberculosis. (In historical reality, Modigliani's lover, the painter Jeanne Hebuterne, who was pregnant with their child, killed herself the day after his death by jumping out of a window.)

Stoppard makes a number of historical, literary, and artistic references within the dialogue of the play, each of which adds depth as well as historical and cultural relevance to his central thematic concerns regarding empire, cultural imperialism, Indian nationalism, and artistic creation.

Source: Liz Brent, in an essay for *Drama for Students,* Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

Hamilton is an English teacher at Gary Academy, an innovative private school in Gary, North Carolina. In this essay, she explores the interwoven themes of propriety and possession as they are expressed in Tom Stoppard's Indian Ink.

In a 1995 interview with Mel Gussow, Tom Stoppard called his play *Indian Ink* "a very cosy play" but perhaps "worryingly cosy sometimes." His comment refers primarily to the play's setting in which characters interact over tea, or while having portraits made. Stoppard also implies that the seriousness of the play might be lost in coziness. Personal and political conflicts in *Indian Ink* are brought up obliquely, politely, and without being resolved. However, by interweaving three separate but related scenarios that span a critical juncture in the political relations between India and Britain, Stoppard's cozy play demonstrates how these matters inflect personal relationships. The three scenarios form a theatrical triptych that allows the viewer to see all of the action at once, in collapsed time and space. This element encourages comparison with the result that the slow subtle shifts of history appear startling and sudden. *Indian Ink* reveals a cultural shift from a society obsessed with personal propriety, overtly concerned with how people may act, to a society obsessed with possession, concerned about who may own what.

The first scenario takes place in 1930 in India between poet Flora Crewe and Indian artist Nirad Das, the second portrays a visit to her aging sister by Das's son, and the third regards the annotation of Flora's posthumous letters by Eldon Pike. The mystery of whether or not Flora and Das had an affair complicates the relationships in all three scenarios, and also affects the true ownership of certain paintings that came into Flora's possession, including the one on the cover of her *Collected Letters.* Three interrelated variations of the theme of propriety appear in the three scenarios: a theme of social propriety pervades the scenes between Flora and Das, while a theme of possession pervades the scenes between Mrs. Swan and Anish Das, and these issues merge in the theme of interpretation as Flora's biographer Eldon Pike stumbles through his investigations of her life. All three themes ultimately deal with what is proper behavior, and the events that illustrate them all stem from the initial scenario of Flora and Das.

A writer juxtaposes parallel events or relationships to draw attention to what has changed and what has remained the same. Sixty-five years separate the events narrated in *Indian Ink,* an interim that saw the decline of the British Empire, the independence of India (in 1945), and the partition of India and Pakistan (1947). These changes followed hundreds of years during which India tolerated encroaching European oppression, a cultural phenomenon at which Emily Eden expressed amazement in 1839: "I sometimes wonder they [the Indians] do not cut all our [the Europeans'] heads off and say nothing more about it." Stoppard closes his play with Eden's comment, along with a description of her party's "polite amusements" in front of "at least three thousand Indians who looked on" and who "bowed to the ground if a European came near them." Including this actual firsthand account, the timeline of Indian-European relations portrayed in the play encompasses over 150 years, from the golden age of

British imperialism in India to its gradual exit. Momentous changes took place on the heels of Flora's visit, representing a critical juncture in Anglo-Indian relations, and, finally, in the relations between British and Indian society. The theatrical triptych in *Indian Ink* conveys how these changes inevitably affected individuals.

Two of the triptych panels comprise a parallel set of personal relationships, each being a scenario between a memsahib (the respectful term used by Indians for a white, European woman) and an Indian man. Flora Crewe, a poet traveling in India in 1930 for her health shares an intimate relationship with Nirad Das, an Indian artist with an affinity for all things British. Flora had led a scandalous life in Europe, but she is not so free in India, where strained political relations between colony and colonizer are kept under control by strict social prohibitions against interactions between whites and natives. As Dilip remarks years later about the possibility of Nirad having painted a nude portrait of her, "In 1930, an Englishwoman, an Indian painter ... it is out of the question." Intimacy between Indian and European carries the power to disrupt the fragile political equilibrium. Flora and Das must neither respond to each other as man and woman, nor as artist and model, nor even as one human to another Das's assistance at Flora's attack of breathlessness would certainly be misinterpreted by gossips. Nevertheless, drawn perhaps by the same curiosity about Indians that drove Miss Quested in *A Passage to India,* Flora risks her reputation by seeing Das alone, and Das flirts with social suicide by telling her of his nationalist sympathies. In this part of the triptych, with its theme of the propriety of personal relations, everyone, from their contemporaries to Flora's biographer, misunderstands Flora and Das's real relationship, and in the restrained social climate, they themselves misunderstand each other's intentions. By never revealing whether or not they had an affair, the scenario asks whether it is proper to proscribe how two people may conduct a relationship.

The second scenario takes place in 1985, between Flora's aging sister Mrs. Swan and Das' s son, Anish Das. Though political tensions remain, the passage of time has loosened the rules of propriety that restricted Flora and Das. In the liberated 1980s, Anish Das not only has publicly painted a nude British woman, but also has married her; and he not only mentions his political sympathies, but he also openly accuses the British for incarcerating his father for his nationalist views. He is free to discuss his views; as he explains to Mrs. Swan, "my father was a man who suffered for his beliefs and I have never had to do that." But despite the new liberalism, Anish cannot broach with Mrs. Swan the subject of the ownership of the portrait his father made of Flora. He verbalizes only excitement about his father's work being published, exclaiming, "But replication! *That* is popularity! Put us on book jackets calendars biscuit tins!" Questions about who receives the royalties for the image and whether the painting is properly attributed to his father's name remain unstated, but come quickly to mind to audiences familiar with contemporary debates over copyright ownership. Furthermore, the audience is prepared for this topic by the brief mention of a Modigaliani nude of Flora destroyed by a jealous boyfriend, an instance of prudish propriety overriding legitimate ownership.

Another question of legitimate ownership arises when Mrs. Swan and Anish Das show each other the paintings they have inherited. Anish has kept the nude portrait of Flora

left him by his father, although it seemed valueless to him, and Mrs. Swan has held onto the erotic eighteenth-century painting of the *Gita Govinda,* her gift from the Rajah. Although neither Anish nor Mrs. Swan properly interprets or values their own inherited pictures, they each have a reason to value the one the other owns. Mrs. Swan recognizes that Eldon Pike would want the nude Flora, though she would want to hide it from him, while Anish might well understand why the Rajah's son bemoans the loss of the *Gita Govinda,* a national Indian treasure and part of a priceless and incomplete series. Under the prevailing mood of regret for imperialist transgressions, the audience might well consider it wrong not to return the painting to India. Likewise, Mrs. Swan would probably want to own the nude of Flora, to keep it out of the public eye. The Swan-Anish panel of the triptych raises but does not resolve questions of possession and legitimate ownership, nor does it resolve who should own artifacts.

In the third panel of the triptych of *Indian Ink,* Flora's former possessions filter down to new owners. The bulk of her poems and letters go to the literary bounty hunter Eldon Pike, who gobbles them up like the notoriously ravenous fish of his surname. Eating slice after slice of Mrs. Swan's cake, he easily obtains the rights to her sister's letters and her portrait, "a treasure" that will earn him money and fame in the literary world. Mrs. Swan withholds the erotic *Gita Govinda* from him, however, out of family modesty. Thus, the third scenario raises issues of epistemological stability, indicating how easily truth is muddied up, here, by self-interest. In addition, Pike conducts his search with the narrow aim of a speargun, missing artifacts a wide net might catch, and he fabricates the truth as he guesses what he should look for. His Indian assistant Dilip mocks Pike's quest to find the nude Flora picture, saying "you are constructing an edifice of speculation on a smudge of paint on paper, which no longer exists." The Pike-Dilip triptych panel treats the postmodern mania for information, and its inherent problems of gathering and interpreting it, asking the question whether it possible to understand the past completely.

The interplay of dialogue and content across the three scenarios of *Indian Ink* imposes another complexity to the play, but also offers further insights. Glaring errors in Pike's footnotes and Mrs. Swan's obfuscation of the truth are part of a Stoppardian subtext of epistemological uncertainty. The play's many contradictions first one perspective, then immediately another accord with Stoppard's 1972 statement that "I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting myself. ... I put a position, rebut it, refute the rebuttal, and rebut the refutation." *In Indian Ink* he poses many competing ideologies about personal and political propriety, and about the legitimate possession of things and of ideas, without really privileging any of them; the audience is left to make up its own mind. He remains true to his reputation for raising and not resolving the big questions, such that critic Michael Billington defines the adjective "Stoppardian" as "a wariness of commitment and a distrust of fixed ideologies." Although *Indian Ink* may seem "cosy" and polite, it leaves the audience troubled by important and pertinent questions about proper behavior questions that remain as troubling today as they did sixty-five years ago when Flora did or did not have an affair with her Indian portraitist.

Source: Carole Hamilton, in an essay for *Drama for Students,* Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #3

Presley has an M.A. and specializes in Germanic languages, literature, and history. In the following essay, Presley discusses history, memory, and the interpretation of evidence in Tom Stoppard's Indian Ink.

Tom Stoppard has earned the reputation for being a playwright of wit and intellect, even though he has never gone to university. In *Hapgood* (1988), for example, he experiments with applying quantum physics to human behavior. *In Arcadia* (1993), he cleverly mixes literary history with mathematical chaos theory. For his next play, Stoppard revisited the material of an earlier radio play, *In the Native State* (1991), and rewrote it as the stage play *Indian Ink* (1995). *Indian Ink* does not deal explicitly with the mathematical and scientific theories that play such a large part in *Hapgood* and *Arcadia,* but Stoppard does retain the philosophical implications these theories have on the "soft sciences" of history, literature, and sociology. Mary A. Doll, in *British and Irish Drama Since 1960* (1993), wrote about the influence of modern scientific thought on Stoppard's work: "Instead of a Newtonian universe, where problems can be solved, Stoppard ascribes to what post-modern science calls 'chaos theory.' Gaps, punctures, and breaks in sequence sabotage every logical attempt to formulate a hypothesis. Indeed, Stoppard's greatest contribution to theatre may be his concept of the indeterminacies of what it is 'to know' as a hired professional, a spectator, or even as an ordinary human being."

In *Indian Ink,* this postmodern complicating of "what it is 'to know'" takes the form of a conflict between the rigidity of academic history and the flexibility of human memory as preserved by art. Academic history, which pretends to be objective but is actually flawed by human interpretation, can offer facts, but then Stoppard calls into question the certainty of having facts at all. Stoppard suggests then that it is our duty to question our conclusions and to allow for multiple interpretations of the evidence. Memory and art allow for these multiple interpretations, and then complicate history by competing against it for popular acceptance. History strives to solve mysteries, while memory is tantalized when mysteries are left unsolved. History, as represented by the character Eldon Pike, is "accurate," public, and dry. In contrast, memory, as represented by Mrs. Swan, is imperfect, private, and alive.

Indian Ink, like *Arcadia,* is a literary mystery in which past and present coexist on stage, much like the past still exists as an underlayer of memory in the present. Stoppard often employs the convention of a mystery to demonstrate the inadequacy of human perception in interpreting evidence. Within the first minutes of the play, the American literary historian, Eldon Pike, finds a sentence in one of Flora's letters that will lead him on a hunt to India: "Perhaps my soul will stay behind as a smudge of paint on paper ... like Radha who was the most beautiful of herdswomen, undressed for love in an empty house." Pike, as a scholar who takes the written word literally, reads "a smudge of paint on paper" as proof that a nude painting of Flora exists. He is right. But he meets opposition to this theory from Mrs. Swan, Flora's sister. After reading the sentence, Pike asks, "What do you think it means?" Mrs. Swan's response, "As much or as little as you

like," shows an impatience for the literal interpretation of words that can lead to wrong conclusions.

Indian Ink is obsessed with the interpretation of the past through scraps of evidence on paper: Flora's letters and poems, a watercolor, an oil painting, a newspaper clipping. As Flora writes her letters, the moment passes and becomes history. Her letters become documents, evidence to be interpreted by the future. The play's title reminds us of the problem of interpretation. Ink is merely a liquid with the potential to convey meaning. The lines that ink forms on paper have no meaning in themselves either, but require the human brain to make sense of them.

As an example of how historical facts can be differently interpreted and remembered by different cultures, consider the conflicting vocabulary used by the Indians and the English in describing the same historical event now known as the Sepoy Rebellion. Stoppard mentions the event only briefly, but significantly he mentions it twice. Both times, the English women remember the event simply as "the Mutiny" while the Indian men refer to it either as "the first War of Independence," "the Rising of 1857," or "the First Uprising." In British history, the Indian soldiers' violent protest against British rule is interpreted as a "Mutiny," a traitorous rebellion against legal authority. Indian history, on the other hand, refers to the same event as an "Uprising," a word that holds heroic connotations of revolt against a repressive authority. Far from being an exact science, Stoppard shows how history, depending on human interpretation of so-called facts, is colored by the interpreter's cultural background, which is only one of many subjective factors that can distort a person's objectivity.

If large-scale events can be differently interpreted and remembered, how then the very private events in one woman's life? Indian Ink deals with history on a large scale but mostly the play is concerned with history on a very personal level. As Stoppard said in a 1995 interview with Mel Gussow, *"Indian Ink* is actually a very intimate play. It's a play of intimate scenes." Details of Flora's sex life become the mystery Pike wants to solve. If he finds the watercolor, he can prove that a relationship existed between Flora and Nirad Das, thus expanding the borders of Flora Crewe scholarship. But Mrs. Swan, as guardian of her sister's memory, tells Pike that he is "not allowed to write a book ... biography is the worst possible excuse for getting people wrong." Mrs. Swan would rather allow her sister's poems to stand on their own and offer themselves for multiple interpretations, rather than limit them to Pike's sole interpretation. Later in India when Pike wonders whether Flora and Das had a relationship, Dilip also cautions Pike against overinterpretation. "Well, we will never know," says Dilip. "You are constructing an edifice of speculation on a smudge of paint on paper, which no longer exists."

Pike's footnotes are a running joke in the play, bridging that divide between past and present, history and memory. Pike intrudes on Flora's voice with unnecessary detail. The footnotes, which rely on Mrs. Swan's memory, pass into academic history and dissect Flora's letters. Pike strives to give Flora's words extra meaning but often only succeeds in creating confusion. Laurie Kaplan in her article in *Modern Drama* calls this "the kind of over-interpreting (which leads to misinterpreting)." For example, when Flora mentions having a dream about the Queen's Elm, Pike says, "Which Queen? What

elm? Why was she dreaming about a *treel* So this is where I come in, wearing my editor's hat. To lighten the darkness." Mrs. Swan informs Pike that the Queen's Elm is a bar, and we see that Pike's literalness threatens to pervert the intended meaning. Stoppard often makes buffoons of those characters who are rigid and overconfident in their interpretations. It is ironic that Pike, who is right about the existence of the watercolor, misinterprets the clues from the Rajah so that he will never find what he seeks.

Das explains an Indian theory of art that will hold much resonance for the play. When Flora complains that the poem she is writing holds no inspiration that day, Das tells her about rasa: "Rasa is juice. Its taste. Its essence.... Rasa is what you must feel when you see a painting, or hear music; it is the emotion which the artist must arouse in you." All works of original artistic genius have rasa. Das's oil portrait of Flora has no *rasa,* no true artistic genius, because he attempts to copy the English style instead of painting from his heart. The nude watercolor has *rasa,* however, as Flora herself notices, inspired as it was by sexual attraction. It is, ironically, this true piece of art that will be hidden from Pike.

Memory and art have *rasa,* while Pike's academic history does not. Academic history is unoriginal, as Pike himself admits when he says: "This is why God made poets and novelists, so the rest of us can get published." History is a public, "accurate" record, devoid of rasa, while memory is private and changeable, filled with so much rasa that it is fluid and blurred, but cherished for that imperfection nonetheless. Scholarship reduces the *rasa* of human life to dry facts. As Mrs. Swan explains to Anish, "Mr. Pike teaches Flora Crewe. It makes her sound like a subject, doesn't it, like biology."

At the play's end, Mrs. Swan and Anish agree to protect the personal memories of their relatives by keeping the nude watercolor a secret. They do not want this private event between their families entering into the public space, represented by Pike, whose footnotes suck the *rasa* out of art. As Mrs. Swan says about the *Gita Govinda* miniature, "I didn't tell Eldon. He's not family." In *In the Native State,* Anish says he will not lock the watercolor away, but display it, "on the wall at home, and I'll tell my children too." The painting and the memory of Flora Crewe will become part of the personal history of the Das family, to be passed on like an oral legend. But even Anish will want to interpret the watercolor to prove that a relationship existed between Das and Flora. *In In the Native State,* he even uses the word "evidence" to introduce the painting. Anish interprets the vine that wraps around the tree to be proof of a sexual relationship. Mrs. Swan cautions, "Now really, Mr. Das, sometimes a vine is only a vine," paraphrasing the famous Freudian quote "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." Mrs. Swan lives comfortably with the uncertainty of memory, while Pike seeks to solve the uncertainties in the name of scholarship.

A feeling of mourning pervades the play as memory and history compete for recognition in the present. The duality of loss and recovery is at the heart of human obsession with the past. Humans construct history to recover lost objects, to discover what really happened and preserve that truth for future generations. This reconstruction takes place on a national as well as a personal level. In complicated ways, both the Indians and the

British romanticize and mourn the passing of the British Empire. Mrs. Swan keeps Indian souvenirs on her windowsill and pines for the fruit trees "at home" in India. The retired Indian soldier, "Subadar Ram Sunil Singh the toilet cleaner," keeps his British military medals on his jacket. Even on a personal level, the characters in *Indian Ink* are in mourning. Anne Wright, in her entry on Stoppard in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* discusses this elegiac quality: "The themes of memory, loss, and bereavement resonate at the personal level, in Anish's loss of his father and in Nell's grief for Flora and for her own dead baby, yet they connect too with the broad sweep of history in a play which is deeply nostalgic and elegiac, yet with a sharply ironic perspective on its subject." Anish's and Nell's personal losses are made more poignant by the juxtaposition on stage of past and present. While Anish and Nell mourn and remember, their dead relatives are playing out their lives just a few feet away, and yet separated from them by a gulf of time. Furthermore, while Flora mourns the loss of the Modigliani portrait, Pike mourns his inability to find the "lost" nude water-color. For all his buffoonery, Pike's motives are not entirely self-serving, but actually touching. So enamored is he of Flora that he is excited to have his picture taken with the tree that stands where her razed bungalow once stood. He wants to recover and preserve Flora Crewe, even if this preservation threatens to make a stuffed museum piece out of her. He improvises a song based on Louis MacNeice' s "Bagpipe Music," mourning the loss of evidence: "It's no go the records of the Theosophical Society, it's no go the newspaper files partitioned to ashes.... All we want is the facts and to tell the truth in our fashion." Pike represents all traditional historians who mourn the loss of objective truth.

Significantly, it is art with *rasa* that is eternal, not history. As Das says philosophically, "Well, the Empire will one day be gone like the Mughal Empire before it, and only their monuments remain .... Only in art can empires cheat oblivion, because only the artist can say, 'Look on my words, ye mighty and despair!'" History will be forgotten, but great art endures and reminds humanity of what was lost. In the final ironic moments of the play, Pike pays his respects at Flora's grave, while simultaneously, we see and hear Flora, full of vitality, reading her letter to her sister. Memory of Flora Crew is preserved in her art, even if her "true" biography and the "real" interpretation of her words will always remain a mystery.

Source: Daniela Presley, in an essay for *Drama for Students,* Gale Group, 2001.

Adaptations

Indian Ink is adapted from Stoppard's original radio play *In the Native State,* which was broadcast by the BBC in 1991.

Topics for Further Study

This play takes place in the historical and cultural context of the Indian struggle for independence from British colonial rule, a struggle that dates back to the 1800s. Learn more about the history of Indian colonization by Britain and the struggle for national independence, which took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What were some of the key events in the history of this struggle?

Stoppard has been compared to such notable playwrights as Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter. Learn more about one of these great playwrights. What are his major works? How do critics characterize his dramatic style? Are his works associated with any particular school of dramatic style?

Characters in Stoppard's play discuss classic works of Indian art, including paintings and sculpture. Learn more about the art history of India. In what ways has Indian art been influenced by religion? What have been the major trends in twentieth-century Indian art?

Stoppard's characters mention several great European painters of the twentieth century, including Modigliani, Picasso, Matisse, and Derain. Learn more about the works of one of these artists. What style or school of painting is he associated with? What are some of the key elements of his artistic style? What are some of his major works?

Indian characters in Stoppard's play attempt to explain elements of the Hindu religion to the European characters. Learn more about Hinduism. What are the central tenets and beliefs of Hinduism? What is the history of the Hindu religion?

What Do I Read Next?

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1966) by Tom Stoppard. This comedy is Stoppard's most celebrated play, based on two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

Jumpers (1972) by Tom Stoppard. Stoppard's most spectacular dramatic production, this play features a troupe of gymnastic philosophers, among other zany characters.

Arcadia (1994) by Tom Stoppard. This Stoppard play is set simultaneously in three different time periods: 1809, 1812, and the present.

The Real Thing (1982) by Tom Stoppard. This piece is one of Stoppard's most celebrated plays. It is structured as a play-within-a-play.

Travesties (1974) by Tom Stoppard. This Tony Award-winning play takes place in Zurich in 1917, where three famous revolutionaries the Marxist leader Lenin, the British writer James Joyce, and the dadaist poet Tristan Tzara all lived simultaneously.

Conversations with Stoppard (1995) by Tom Stoppard. This text is a collection of interviews between Stoppard and New York Times critic Mel Gussow.

Further Study

Beckett, Samuel, *Waiting for Godot,* Grove, 1954.

This play is one of Beckett's most well-known plays. Beckett is considered by many to be the master of the theater of the absurd. Stoppard has been compared many times in style and approach to Beckett.

Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet,* Signet Classic, 1998.

Stoppard's famous play *Rosencrantz and Gildenstern are Dead* is based on two minor characters within this famous Shakespeare tragedy.

Shaw, George Bernard, *Candida,* Penguin, 1964.

Candida is a masterpiece by the famous British playwright. Stoppard's concern for humanistic themes has often been compared to that of Shaw's.

Stoppard, Tom, *Tom Stoppard in Conversation,* University of Michigan Press, 1994.

This book is an interesting and illuminating collection of interviews with Stoppard.

Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Ernest,* Avon, 1965.

The Importance of Being Ernest is a widely popular play by the famous nineteenth-century playwright. Stoppard has been likened to Wilde for their mutual use of a quick and acerbic wit.

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Doll, Mary A., "Stoppard's Theatre of Unknowing," in *British and Irish Drama Since 1960,* edited by James Acheson, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993, pp. 117-29.

Gussow, Mel, "Happiness, Chaos and Tom Stoppard," in *American Theater,* Vol. 12, No. 10, December, 1995.

Kaplan, Laurie, "In the Native State/ Indian Ink: Footnoting the Footnotes on Empire," in *Modern Drama,* Vol. 41, Issue 3, Fall, 1998.

Stoppard, Tom, *Conversations with Stoppard,* Grove Press, 1995, pp. 1-9, 117-130.

Wright, Anne, *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* Vol. 13: *British Dramatists Since World War II,* edited by Stanley Weintraub, Gale, 1982, pp. 482-500.

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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