I Stop Writing the Poem Study Guide

I Stop Writing the Poem by Tess Gallagher

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Introduction

"I Stop Writing the Poem" is written as if Tess Gallagher were talking to herself in an attempt to console the pain she is feeling at the loss of her husband, Raymond Carver, the famed short story author. The poem is as much about their relationship as it is about Gallagher's sense of loss. In fact, the entire collection in which this poem is included, *Moon Crossing Bridge* (an American Library Association Notable Book in poetry, 1993), is about the life and love of Gallagher and Carver, as seen through Gallagher's mourning.

Gallagher wrote an essay in 1984, which she called "The Poem as a Reservoir for Grief." In the essay, she refers to her belief that poems are the best way to confront grief. The essay was written several years before Carver died and before Gallagher began writing her way through her sorrow. However, in an interview with Katie Bolick for the *Atlantic Monthly*, Gallagher says, "although I didn't know it at the time, much of what I was writing in that essay was preparatory to those poems" in *Moon Crossing Bridge*. In the same *Atlantic Monthly* article, she continues, "that book was written partly in order to sustain the grieving process long enough for me to absorb the loss." She says she realized through writing her poems for this collection, "all the different inflections in the process of grieving." She further describes the process of writing this group of poems as "discovering a form" that she could use to "move *with* the experience."

In a review of *Moon Crossing Bridge* in *Publishers Weekly*, some of the poems in this collection are described as affecting the reader "more because of what lies behind them than because of what shows through." This sentiment sums up "I Stop Writing the Poem," in which Gallagher writes about continuing the mundane chores of life while the reader feels the grief behind the ordinariness of these activities.

Author Biography

Tess Gallagher was born on July 21, 1943, in Port Angeles, Washington, to Leslie (a logger and longshoreman) and Georgia Bond. Gallagher received her bachelor's and master's degrees in English from the University of Washington, where she studied poetry under the guidance of Theodore Roethke, a National Book Award-winning poet. She went on to earn a master of fine arts degree in poetry from the University of Iowa in 1974.

While she was teaching English at St. Lawrence University in New York, Gallagher published her first collection of poems, *Stepping Outside* (1974). The following year, she began teaching creative writing at Kirkland College, also in New York, and would eventually publish her second collection, *Instructions to the Double* (1976), which is often referred to as her best-known work. She would go on to publish six more poetry collections, as well as teach at various other colleges, and marry three times before publishing her book *Moon Crossing Bridge* in which "I Stop Writing the Poem" (1992) appears. This entire collection is devoted to Raymond Carver, the well known shortstory writer, with whom Gallagher lived and whom she married shortly before Carver's death.

Gallagher's other publications include *Owl- Spirit Dwelling* (1997), a collection of poems; *At the Owl Woman Saloon* (1997), a collection of stories about living in the Pacific Northwest; *My Black Horse* (2000), a poetry collection introduced by an essay written by Gallagher that details events in her childhood; and *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray* (2001), in which Gallagher relates some of the more interesting moments she shared with her famous husband.

Gallagher has also written two screenplays, one of them with Carver. She also conferred with Robert Altman for his 1993 film adaptation of Carver's short-story collection called *Short Cuts*. Equally comfortable writing poetry and prose, Gallagher compared the two forms in an interview for the *Atlantic Monthly*. If writing poems, she said, is like "deep-sea diving," then "writing fiction is foraging." She has won several awards for both styles of writing, including two from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976 and 1981), another from the Guggenheim Foundation (1978-1979), and several Governor's awards from the state of Washington (1984, 1986, and 1987). She lives in her hometown of Port Angeles, where she writes (with the same special pen she has had since the publication of her second collection of poetry) from her Sky House, a home she designed and built for herself.

Poem Text

to fold the clothes. No matter who lives
or who dies, I'm still a woman.
I'll always have plenty to do.
I bring the arms of his shirt
together. Nothing can stop
our tenderness. I'll get back
to the poem. I'll get back to being
a woman. But for now
there's a shirt, a giant shirt
in my hands, and somewhere a small girl
standing next to her mother
watching to see how it's done.

Plot Summary

Lines 1-2

The way "I Stop Writing the Poem" is written, the title works as the first line, with the actual first line completing the sentence that the title began. In setting the poem up in this manner, the author emphasizes the reason behind why she has stopped writing. The reader of the poem is forced to go back and reread the title, so that there is a full understanding that something very serious has disturbed the poet's life. Upon rereading the title and the phrase that follows in the first line, the reader is struck with both the ordinariness of the action of folding clothes as well as the seeming absurdity of a poet interrupting her writing in order to take care of laundry chores. Readers also note that the title is ironic because obviously she has not stopped writing poems.

The second half of the first line offers a hint as to the real reason behind the poet's suspending her art. The phrase "no matter who lives" ends the first line without punctuation, leading the reader to believe that a counter-statement is about to be given, which it is, in the second line. The speaker is now assumed to be the one who continues to live, and the reader can deduce from all that has already been written that someone close to the speaker has died. However, the last phrase on the second line is a bit ambiguous as well as somewhat misleading. Gallagher writes, "I'm still a woman." Is she referring here to the chore of ironing? Or is something else going on with this statement? She may be suggesting another aspect of loss that a woman might feel upon losing her husband. Implied in this phrase is the sense of her husband having taken a part of her with him. At this point in the poem, the reader can only guess at the obscured meaning.

Line 3

In the third line, Gallagher clears up the mystery of the second line. She ties together her statement of being a woman together with the household chores she finds herself compelled to do. On first reading, it seems as if the speaker cleans the house and does the laundry to keep herself busy enough not to get lost in her oppressive moods. This could be partly true. Physical action can dispel certain aspects of depression. However, is this all that Gallagher is saying here? Or is she speaking in an ironic tone? Through her use of irony, she might be trying to fool herself. Someone might use busy work to keep them from thinking, but eventually that person will tire of the activity and have to sit down. Gallagher knows this because she is a poet and is used to writing about her experiences. She might be temporarily at a loss of poetic expression, but that does not mean that she has stopped thinking. As a poetess, a major part of her normal activity is to write and think. All the other activities are substitutes, and she is aware of this. So no matter how busy she keeps herself, she is always conscious of the reason behind her focused attention on the trivial things of life.

Lines 4-6

The image of line four is a return to the clothing that the speaker is folding. This is no ordinary piece of laundry. The shirt is (or was) his shirt. It embodies him. It contains his smells and a memory of his shape. Following his death, it becomes him, in spirit. The reader can imagine the speaker's gaze as she looks at the shirt. Her eyes are fixed on it in a way that goes beyond her seeing the material, the buttons, the collar and sleeves. Also implied in this image is the way the speaker handles the shirt. Her hands touch it as if it were alive. She writes: "I bring the arms of his shirt / together." This break in the line offers a double image. At first it sounds as if she is folding the shirt. However, Gallagher imbues this image with a deeper meaning. Is she folding the shirt, or is she wrapping the arms of the shirt around her, as if in an embrace? The phrase following this image is Gallagher's statement that "Nothing can stop / our tenderness," which reinforces the likelihood that the speaker has either wrapped the shirt's arms around her or, in the least, thought about doing so, remembering how he had once worn the shirt while hugging her. The "nothing" she is referring to could be interpreted as the speaker implying that even death will not stop them from being close to one another. The previous use of the word "together" emphasizes their union, both before and after his death.

Lines 7

In these lines, Gallagher somewhat contradicts herself. Here she states, "I'll get back to being / a woman." In line two she had already said she was "still a woman." Is she confused? Well, maybe she is not confused. Maybe she is just trying to convince herself. She is definitely struggling with the concept, though. Did death rob her of some underlying concept of herself by taking away the man she loved? She knows that she is having trouble expressing herself through poetry, so death has stripped her of at least one of her basic perceptions of herself.

If poetry is gone, what else might have been taken? The speaker touches on this issue as if she is only slightly aware of the complications of loss. It is not only that someone she has loved is gone. There are pieces of her missing also. She is aware of this, but she does not want to think about it for too long. It is too frightening at this point in her mourning. The emotions are too raw. She has enough to do to keep herself from missing him. She is not yet ready to face all the missing pieces of her own selfhood. At times as powerful as those that she is facing, emotions rise and fall without much reason. In the beginning of the poem, she might have felt stronger. As she was beginning the laundry, she might have seen the clothes just as pieces of material. Possibly, as she picked up his shirt, her confidence waned. All the memories and the pain came rushing in on her. At that moment, she began questioning if she really could claim that she was "still a woman."

Lines 8-10

"But for now / there's a shirt," Gallagher writes, taking the reader back to the first line, again, turning the emotions away from the memories of who used to wear the shirt, making the shirt just an object that needs cleaning and folding. Then she adds a new dimension. This shirt is huge, "a giant shirt." Why does she mention the size? Carver was a large man, but these words seem to imply more than that. By citing the enormous size of the shirt, Gallagher could be reflecting on the depth of her pain, the vast sense of her loss. Then, she ends line ten with the concept of a "small girl," juxtaposing the huge dimension of the shirt with the diminutive size of the girl. She is also contrasting the former mention (and questioning) of the idea of woman with the image of a small child. In doing so, Gallagher exposes her inner feelings. She is a woman old enough to have lived with a man, and yet, at the moment of this poem, she feels like a child. She is confused and frightened. She feels weak and, therefore, vulnerable. Just as the little girl is no match for the giant shirt, the speaker believes that she is no match for the emotions she is experiencing.

Lines 11-12

In the last two lines of the poem, Gallagher weaves together a double image. She has the small girl "standing next to her mother," implying that the child is watching her mother do the laundry, fold the clothes. Of course, this is too simple a meaning for these closing lines. The child is obviously the speaker, feeling as a child, possibly turning to her mother, who may have also lived through the death of her husband. At least, this is what is implied. There is something that the mother has endured that has given her a strength that the speaker hopes to learn from her. If the speaker feels that she has lost "being a woman," then the natural place for her to turn would be to her mother, who was the first woman that she knew.

Themes

Loss

Not only the single poem "I Stop Writing the Poem" but the entire collection from which this poem was taken deals with loss. In questioning whether or not the speaker is still a woman, the poet is also concerned with a loss of identity. It could be argued that the speaker had created a large portion of her sense of identity through her relationship with her husband. Even if the reader has no idea about the background of the poet and her relationship with Raymond Carver, in most relationships when one member of that relationship dies, the surviving partner must reestablish himself or herself in terms of being a single person. The dreams they might have created together for the future no longer can survive. The person left behind in a relationship must create new dreams to follow, which entails creating a new reality, a new identity. So, the immediate loss might be felt as a loss of a friend or partner, but, upon deeper inspection, it is as if one has also lost a part of oneself.

The speaker's initial statement, referred to in the title of the poem, suggests that she has also lost her creativity. She is incapable of putting her feelings into a poem, and so her poetry has stopped. The emotions are too large for her to comprehend. She has lost her capacity to see the wholeness of her experience and capture it in a poem (although, she has, ironically, done just that by writing the poem).

Strength and Weakness

Throughout this short poem, the speaker expresses both her weaknesses and her strengths. She has the strength to work. She knows that if she does not work, she will become consumed by her emotions. However, in stating that she will also find things to do, she contradicts the initial sentiment of this poem, which is that she has stopped writing. She is not yet strong enough to embrace and examine the emotions that she is experiencing. Her creativity is blocked by her mental state, which she expresses as being vulnerable.

As the poem continues, the speaker demonstrates strength in her statement "Nothing can stop / our tenderness." She defies death in this way, taking a stand that despite her husband's passing, she will find some way to remember their embraces, to remember the love that she shared with him. She will not let death take away her memories of him. She also realizes that despite the weakness she is feeling at the moment, she is strong enough to know eventually she will regain her strength. She will one day get back to a stronger position in which she will be capable of writing. She also demonstrates her strength by knowing that even if she has lost her prior definitions of who she is as a woman, she will discover new definitions.

At the end of the poem, the speaker also demonstrates both her strength and weakness. She feels like a small child who does not know how to go on living. She feels lost and confused. Her strength comes through in the fact that she knows where to go to regain her confidence. She will not remain ignorant of life's lessons. She knows that she needs a mentor, and she is willing to find someone who will lead her out of her misery.

Womanhood

Gallagher explores the sense of womanhood in this poem in various ways. She uses female language in the sense that she exposes her emotions in this poem through the language of a traditional female environment. At a moment in her life when she is confused by a definition of what it means to be a woman in general, or what it means to be a specific woman (namely Tess Gallagher, the poet and wife), she turns to the traditional images of woman as homemaker. Although she has lost her husband, she continues to care for his clothes. By using the image of the speaker as a young child watching her mother also taking care of a home, she reinforces this traditional role of womanhood.

Gallagher does not, however, imply that homemaking is the only role for women. She is a writer who has learned not only to express her emotions through poetry but has also earned her living doing so. She is a contemporary woman who works both inside and outside of the home. The fact that she has lost her ability to write poetry is shocking, in the same way that the loss of her role of wife is distressing. She had identified her sense of the feminine through both her poetry and her love of her husband. Having lost both, she has trouble identifying what it is inside of her that now makes her a woman. It is in an attempt to find a new definition of womanhood that she turns back to the basic, traditional role.

Relationships

There are many different types of relationships embedded in this poem. First, there is the most obvious, the relationship of the speaker with the person in her life who has died. She must remember their connections even though the memories are now painful. She must also redefine their relationship on new terms. Although he is not physically present in her life, she needs to find some way to include him in her present situation.

There is also the relationship between the speaker and her sense of self, including her connection to the outside world in terms of her having to adjust to the role of widow. On a physical and psychological level there is a need for her to redefine her relationship to womanhood. She is not the same woman she was while her husband lived. She is alone. She does not have her lover to reflect back to her the concept of femininity. On a spiritual and creative level, she must also come to terms with her relationship to her work. She formerly defined herself as a poet. Since she finds that she cannot write, she must discover a way to relate to her creative self that will allow her form of expression to flow out of her.

Finally, she also mentions her interactions with her mother. She first visits her mother by returning to the relationship that they once had, while she was still a child. However, things have changed. The speaker implies that now the mother and daughter share a new experience. It is possible that both have lived through the death of a loved one. This newly shared experience now means that the daughter and mother must also redefine their relationship.

Death

Although the theme of loss and the theme of death are closely related, there are some contrasts. Death is permanent. There is no hope of that which is lost returning. The speaker senses that the loss of her creativity and expression, as well as her sense of being a woman, will eventually return, even if they are altered by the experience. However, her husband is gone forever. All that remains are the abstractions of him: the speaker's memories of him, his clothes, and the feelings of his embrace and tenderness. There may be a pause in her writing, but his departure is forever.

Style

Irony

The irony in Gallagher's poem begins with the title. She obviously has not stopped writing the poem since she has produced one. There is also subtle irony in the overall tone of this poem. The speaker waivers back and forth between indicating that she is doing well despite the trauma obvious to her and her reader and that she is suffering. In this way, Gallagher uses irony by choosing words that sometimes suggest meanings opposed to her thoughts. Examples of this are her reference to "I'm still a woman," which she later admits was not correct by stating, "I'll get back to being a woman." She also writes, "No matter who lives / or who dies," which also contains a touch of irony, because she would not be having trouble writing a poem if it did not matter that she experienced the death of a loved one. Another example is offered in her statement, "I'll always have plenty to do." Here, the speaker is trying to convince herself that doing the laundry will take the place of writing poetry.

Form

Gallagher's poem has no formal structure in either meter or rhyming pattern. Her form is fluid and reads like a lyric verse or like free verse in that it expresses a single emotion in a style that reads almost as prose. There is a rhythm in her poem, but it is imposed not by a set number of beats per line but rather by the arrangement of words often constructed in enjambments, such as the title of the poem running into the first line of the poem and the first line then running into the second line, and so on. In other words, the line stops before the thought is completed. For example:

I bring the arms of his shirt
together. Nothing can stop
our tenderness. I'll get back
to the poem. I'll get back to being

There are also echoes present in her poem in the repetition of certain words. The word "woman" is repeated (line two and line eight) as well as the phrase "I'll get back to" (line six and line seven). The word "shirt" is repeated three times. In using an echo, the writer emphasizes the importance of the word. The emphasis on the word "shirt" reminds the reader that the shirt is all that the poet has left of her husband. The shirt is empty now, also emphasizing her loss. By repeating the phrase "I'll get back," Gallagher implies she knows she is not where she wants to be. The word "woman" is emphasized because Gallagher is struggling to redefine what it means to be a woman in her new state of widowhood.

Images

The strength of Gallagher's poem is based on the images she creates. These images are both physical ones that the reader can visualize, such as the woman folding laundry, as well as more abstract or emotional images, such as the image of the pain the woman is suffering while she folds the shirt of her dead husband. In creating these images Gallagher touches upon universal themes, pictures to which many readers can relate. Anyone who has suffered a loss probably has little trouble imagining what the speaker of the poem is feeling when she envisions the arms of the shirt wrapping around her. The material things left behind remind the bereaved person of the precious moments he or she once shared with the person who is now gone.

Gallagher's images are simple on the surface. They take on complexity as the poet moves forward in her writing. The woman doing the laundry becomes a woman in pain, a woman suffering a loss, a woman who is confused and vulnerable like a child. The picture of the woman folding the shirt is carried through the entire poem and finally transferred to an image of the woman's mother folding a shirt. At this point, the image is not only transferred, it is transformed to take on not so much a woman completing some mundane household chore but rather a woman coming to terms with death.

Historical Context

Raymond Carver

Raymond Carver (1938-1988) was a famed American short-story writer and poet. Gallagher met Carver at a writer's workshop in Iowa, and they began a friendship that would last a decade and would color both Gallagher's life and her writing. Before meeting Gallagher, Carver had turned to alcohol to ease the distress of a failed marriage, several unfulfilling jobs, and a lack of the kind of success in writing that he was craving. In 1977, Carver quit drinking and coincidently met Gallagher. They lived and worked together for ten years. A few months before he died of cancer, Carver and Gallagher were married.

As a cultural figure, a famous writer, and a lover and friend, Carver significantly influenced Gallagher. His writing, which has been credited with bringing the short story back into American literary culture, became more focused and more widely read during the time of his relationship with Gallagher. His stories contain ordinary people doing ordinary things, but his writing style was anything but ordinary and has become a model for most contemporary short story writers. His short story "Cathedral" is considered a classic work.

Carver began his writing career as a poet, but it was through his association with Gallagher that he returned to poetry in his last years. Gallagher was responsible for collecting his poetry and finding a publisher. His *All of Us* was finally set to print in 2000.

In her book *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray* (2000), Gallagher makes a reference to the poems contained in *Moon Crossing Bridge*. She writes that this collection was "the first stage in the reintegration of Ray into my inner life. . . . The cargo of those poems forged a word-bridge across which I felt I could move back and forth to Ray." Although the poems in this collection helped Gallagher invent a new way to communicate with Carver, she also realized that she would never again enjoy "the reciprocal nourishment, the almost intrapsychic way Ray and I had collaborated and inspired each other."

Since Carver's death, Gallagher has taught a course on his works at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. She also helped to bring to- gether the book *Carver Country: The World of Raymond Carver* (1994), a collection of his works together with photographs of the environment that inspired his stories. Gallagher collaborated with filmmaker Robert Altman on a 1993 movie called *Short Cuts* based on Carver's short stories.

L'Ecriture Feminine

The term *l'ecriture feminine* was coined by French playwright and feminine theorist Helene Cixous in the 1970s to encourage women to find a new form of language not

driven by male-oriented vocabulary, style, and subject matter. The theory has influenced the study of literature, especially that written by women during the past thirty years. This theory has yet to find a clear definition, but it relates to the role of women's voices. Cixous defines this term as the process and journey a woman takes in order to write. She encourages women to ask themselves questions, such as how do they react to situations differently than men? Then she suggests women try to figure out why men and women react differently. What can women learn from an analysis of these differences? Through this process, Cixous believes that women will come to a different kind of writing, one that comes from their personal experiences rather than trying to duplicate experiences men have. She refers to this process as writing from the body. This type of writing is not limited to women, but it does come forth more from the emotions and the subconscious, typically female-oriented sources of strength. By creating this language, she and other feminists hope that women's reactions to life's experiences as expressed in their creative works will take on a legitimacy that has heretofore been relegated mainly to male artists.

In trying to grasp the concept of *l'ecriture feminine*, some colleges offer literature courses that look at definitive works by women writers. Authors most often studied include Kate Chopin (*The Awakening*, 1899); Virginia Woolf (*To the Lighthouse*, 1927); Adrienne Rich (*Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972*, 1973 and *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977*, 1978); and Toni Morrison (*Sula*, 1982).

Confessional Literature of the 1980s and 1990s

The influence of the feminist movement of the 1960s was eventually felt in the literature that women published in the 1980s and 1990s. Literature written by women was often eclipsed by works written by men in college courses prior to the 1960s. As women gained a more powerful voice and a more liberal standing in the major publishing houses, their works eventually made it to bookstores in increasing numbers.

More personal as well as more confessional, the literature of women writing during these two decades often reflected the inner life, or the emotions, that the female author had experienced. Some theorists point out the very obvious appearance of the narrator in the form of the pronoun *I* that appeared in the very popular memoirs of that period, as well as in fiction, essays, and poetry. Poets who wrote in the earlier part of the twentieth century and who influenced this type of writing in more recent years include Anne Sexton, Lucille Clifton, and Rita Dove.

Critical Overview

Most literary critics agree that Gallagher's *Moon Crossing Bridge*, the collection from which "I Stop Writing the Poem" is taken, was a difficult project to undertake. The emotions entailed in pursuing the grief and sense of loss after experiencing the death of a loved one are often so overwhelming that there can be a tendency for the author to become excessively sentimental. Although critics have found that flaw in some of the poems in Gallagher's collection, most have also found gems. There were, in fact, so many gems, that the American Library Association named the collection their 1993 Notable Book in poetry.

In spite of the flaws, several literary magazines responded to this collection favorably, commending the collection for its lyrical style, one of Gallagher's strongest expressive forms. A reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* writes that the best poems in this collection "evoke the ambiguous life of the survivor," who must find some way to continue along her own path and "go on charting a life." Likewise, Margaret K. Powell, writing in *Library Journal*, concludes that despite the difficulty in finding the correct language to convey her feelings, Gallagher creates "a luminous and important book that well repays careful attention."

In a review for *Choice*, H. Susskind finds that the whole collection reads like "one long elegy. As such, it takes its place among the very best." Anthony Flinn, a reviewer for the *Seattle Times*, describes Gallagher's writing in this way: "Never morose, sentimental or embittered, Gallagher opens herself to the intricate miseries and mysteries of love in poems that are worthy of the Pulitzer Prize." Flinn later notes, "much of the beauty in these poems comes from their heroism." He believes that Gallagher wrote this collection by exploring "her loss with such exquisite care that she reveals the very viscera of love."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Hart has degrees in English literature and creative writing and is a published writer of literary themes. In this essay, Hart studies Gallagher's poem in light of the poet's own reflections that it was written to help her form a new language.

Tess Gallagher and short-story writer and poet Raymond Carver were intricately linked not only as husband and wife but also as colleagues, helping one another bring forth their artistic expressions. When Carver died, Gallagher fell into a six-month silence in terms of her creative writing. When the silence was broken, she returned to poetry, slowly forming a new voice. The creation of this new voice, the author claims, was captured in her poems collected in *Moon Crossing Bridge*, which includes "I Stop Writing the Poem." Studying what Gallagher was trying to do in this collection gives the reader an opportunity to rethink the images and language contained in her work and thus come to a more valued understanding of the poem.

The first and probably most natural impression one might take upon reading Gallagher's poem "I Stop Writing the Poem" is that the speaker is struggling over the loss of a loved one, that the poet wrote the poem to help her get over the pain of death. According to Gallagher in her book *Soul Barnacles: Ten More Years with Ray*, that was indeed part of the process. She emphasizes this point in her memoir with her statement that she visited Carver's grave every day for two and a half years. The loss must have been devastating for her. However, she elaborates further, writing that most people mistakenly defined all the poems in *Moon Crossing Bridge* "as simply artifacts of mourning." Gallagher clarifies her actual intent for writing these poems by stating, "These poems [were written as] the replenishment of self, and of the beloved, to fertile inner ground." In other words, Gallagher was searching through her writing for a new form or a new language with which she could continue communicating with herself, her emotions, and Carver despite the fact that he was gone. "The poems melded what had been parted," she writes, "as the new form took hold, the distance between us dissolved."

So, what does Gallagher mean when she says she wanted to create a new form of language, and how does this language dissolve the distance between the lovers, one of whom no longer exists on the physical plane? Gallagher gives the reader a hint of the first step in her process in the opening lines of the poem "I Stop Writing the Poem," in which the speaker stops writing in order to take care of mundane household chores. By stopping her writing and moving on to an everyday kind of task, the speaker has changed her focus from the abstract process of creativity to the more physical aspects of daily life. Gallagher does not write that she takes a break from her writing or that she pauses, both of which connote that a return is inevitable; rather, she uses the word "stopped," which, of course, conveys a cessation or discontinuance. In choosing the word "stopped," Gallagher creates a gap between the worlds of the imagination and the corporeal. She implies that one world must end before the other can begin. There is no bridge connecting the two.

This is the same feeling she experienced when Carver died. The physical world and the unknown world to which he departed appeared to her as being disconnected. In life, the lovers identified one another through physicality, but upon death, his body decayed, and, therefore, the lovers no longer could communicate, or that is what she believed at first. In the same way as the act of writing a poem is separated from the performance of chores, so too are the two lovers separated by death. These are the impressions given in the beginning of Gallagher's poem, reflecting the initial understanding she must have had upon losing her husband.

With the poem out of her mind, the speaker focuses on the tangible. She leaves her writing to go do the laundry. However, despite the fact that she has stopped writing, the speaker has not stopped thinking about her loss, nor has she stopped feeling the pain. She soon realizes that delving into the world of the ordinary does not relieve her. Although she conceives that the world of her imagination is unconnected to the world of the ordinary, she finds that the same concept does not apply to her sense of self.

The poet has been marked by the loss of her husband, and, no matter what she does, the memory of his death lingers in her thoughts. It affects everything she does, no matter how mundane the task. Anger rises in her as she attempts to ignore her feelings. "No matter who lives / or who dies, I'm still a woman," Gallagher writes. The speaker is angry that her lover is not there but pretends that it does not really matter. She then tries to grab onto a stable definition of herself. In using the phrase "I'm still a woman," she implies she is unaffected by the death. She was a woman before he died, and she remains a woman after his death. The next line in the poem declares, "I'll always have plenty to do." This, too, is written in a somewhat angry, or defiant, tone. So what if he is gone and I cannot do the things we used to do together, the speaker seems to be saying. Buried beneath this phrase is also the declaration that the poet does not really mind that she had to stop writing□there are always other things to do, like laundry. However, immediately following these lines, the speaker takes on a different attitude.

While folding her husband's shirt, the speaker softens her tenor. As she brings the arms of the shirt together (a symbolic representation of bringing their two worlds together), she begins the process of building a bridge. In remembering his physicality□ his arms around her, the feeling of his body close to hers□she begins to realize that even in death, he is not so far away. The memories of his touch are safely stored in her thoughts and on her skin. Upon this realization, she states, "Nothing can stop / our tenderness."

Immediately following this thought, Gallagher inserts the lines: "I'll get back / to the poem. I'll get back to being / a woman." In creating a link to her husband, the speaker suddenly understands that she can also create a link between her former self and the self she has become. She now senses that she can build a connection between the poet that she was before his death and the poet who is to come. Likewise, she comprehends that she can also create a link between the woman she was when Carver loved her and the woman she has become since his departure. In stating that she will "get back," she is saying that even if at that moment she has not quite figured out how to do it, somewhere deep inside of her, she feels it is possible.

Although the speaker realizes that she must find some way to connect the different aspects of herself, she remains focused on completing her chores. She is not yet capable of returning to her poem. Instead, she holds the shirt before her and notices how big it is. In contrast to the size of the shirt (as well as the size of the problem she is dealing with), she feels small. In the sense of her diminished form, the speaker returns to her childhood. By doing so, crossing from the present moment of womanhood to that of the past, she completes another step in the process of creating a new form for herself. Establishing a link between the present and the past is not as difficult for her as building a bridge to the future. In her time of need, she easily crosses over to her youth to be comforted and guided by her mother. Although the image that Gallagher presents, that of a "small girl / standing next to her mother," the "watching" she does is not done through the eyes of the young child. The speaker looks at her mother through a newly achieved, heightened awareness of suffering. The poem implies the speaker knows the mother has suffered, too. When she looks at her mother, she is watching to see how her mother created a bridge, how her mother found a way through the suffering, how her mother recreated herself.

In reading the poem in this way, it is easier to understand what Gallagher means about creating a new language, a new form, in order to meld what had been parted. She found a way to see the worlds of abstraction and concreteness, as well as the worlds of the living and the dead, as two aspects of one thing. Routine chores, such as doing the laundry, she decides, can inspire the poet in her as much as a meditation at dawn inspires her. A husband who has passed on to a spiritual state can still love and encourage her. If these worlds can be bridged, then Gallagher realizes through the poem that maybe all the worlds she once thought to be estranged can also come together. She does not have to give up either her writing or her definition of womanhood. The world of her past is intertwined with who she is now in the midst of her suffering, and who she will soon become.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on "I Stop Writing the Poem," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

Blevins teaches writing courses at Roanoke College. In this essay, Blevins suggests that Gallagher's poem ultimately fails because Gallagher "does not sufficiently enhance her discursive statements with images and other figures of speech or with unexpected shifts in sentence type and syntax."

Poetry, like all forms of art, is so fully constructed out of a marriage between content and form that it is impossible to talk about a poem's subject without investigating its technique. Tess Gallagher's "I Stop Writing the Poem" explores the conflict between domestic labor and literary work in discursive lines that are completely free of im- ages and other figures of speech. While the poem's content is interesting because it is shyly ironic, suggesting that the domestic work that is the poem's central action is a woman's "true" work while simultaneously suggesting that a woman poet's writing is also important and "true," the poem ultimately fails because it does not complicate or enrich its content with its form. In other words, because Gallagher does not sufficiently enhance her discursive statements with images and other figures of speech or with unexpected shifts in sentence type and syntax, she fails to make her poem as energetic□ and therefore convincing□as it could be.

By saying that even a literary woman's work must include laundry and by subtlety celebrating domestic labor in lines that imply a sensual relationship between the speaker and the shirt she's folding, Gallagher explores old ideas about the division of labor in American households. "I Stop Writing the Poem" comes very close to suggesting that laundry is more important to a woman's emotional life than poetry, and therefore teeters on the edge of violating politically correct constructs about the kind of work women should do. Yet, because the poem is *a poem* (and not a folded shirt), "I Stop Writing the Poem" does suggest that it is appropriate for women to write. That a twelve-line poem could produce such ambiguity at the content level is impressive. Yet "I Stop Writing the Poem" pushes the boundaries of the flat, discursive line. The questions the poem forces readers to ask about the ways discursive statements in poetry risk both monotony and emotional barrenness if they are not countered with images and other figures of speech or with surprising shifts in sentence type and syntax systems ultimately reveals that complex content will never alone a poem make.

The poem's lyric strategy of condensing language□ of saying a good bit in a small artistic space□can be seen in its first lines. "I Stop Writing the Poem" begins when the speaker tells readers that she stops writing to fold clothes. In other words, by the time one has read the poem's title and its first line, one is immediately located in a central activity and conflict. Readers understand that the speaker is straddling two kinds of work, and, furthermore, that the domestic work of doing laundry seems to be taking precedence, for the time being, over the literary work of poem writing. The poem's second sentence□"No matter who lives / or who dies, I'm still a woman"□suggests that being a woman automatically involves "[folding] the clothes." But the poem's third sentence, "I'll always have plenty to do," obscures that idea by moving the poem's focus away from the particular work of laundry to the general idea of how busy women are. In

other words, "I Stop Writing the Poem" very quickly moves readers from its title, which stops the action of writing, to three lines that locate the speaker in the act of folding clothes, to more general statements about what it means to be a woman. In this way, Gallagher reveals the effectiveness of lyric condensation.

When the poem returns to the action of laundry in "I bring the arms of his shirt / together," one finds the poem's emotional center. The personal pronoun "his" in this line is significant, since it reveals that the speaker is folding a man's shirt, rather than her own or a child's. If "I Stop Writing the Poem" can be said to have any emotional heat, it must be located here, in the way Gallagher *sensualizes* the folding of a man's shirt in "Nothing can stop / our tenderness." This line reveals an emotional motivation for the speaker's shirt folding, further complicating the idea of what it means to be a woman. Although the speaker is only folding a shirt, her feelings about the person who wears the shirt seep into the poem in her description of this action, suggesting that doing the laundry evokes "tenderness," if not love. This line also helps readers realize that it is not just laundry that compels the speaker to stop writing. It is, rather, the "giant shirt / in [her] hands," and, further, the man who wears it.

The poem's complexity becomes more apparent when it moves away from the speaker's shirt folding in the next sentence to statements that further complicate the speaker's stance about the work she is doing. The speaker says: "I'll get back / to the poem. I'll get back to being / a woman." The idea that being a woman *really* involves writing contradicts what the speaker says in her first two lines and thereby reveals the poem's irony: the speaker seems here to be suggesting that being a woman means both doing the laundry and writing. Thus, "I Stop Writing the Poem" straddles the fence between traditional notions of women's work and more contemporary attitudes.

Yet, if the poem has been in the act of exploring the conflict between the two kinds of labor that are demanding the speaker's attention, suggesting that both kinds of work are "suitable" for a woman, the poem chooses, "for now," the work of laundry, resting on the idea that the "tenderness" between the speaker's hands and the unnamed man's shirt is a kind of sensuality. The poem chooses to celebrate domestic work. That choice is reinforced in the poem's last sentence, which moves readers out of the speaker's particular act to an imagined scene in which "a small girl / [is] standing next to her mother / watching to see how it's done." This statement could suggest that girls learn how to do the laundry by watching their mothers do it, but because the pronoun "it" is grammatically ambiguous, the statement could also be suggesting that girls learn how to be women by watching their mothers do everything they do. Yet, because the speaker imagines a girl watching her mother do the laundry, rather than watching her write a poem, "I Stop Writing the Poem" does seem to favor domestic work over literary.

However, the poem's final irony is the poem itself. Although the poem itself chooses laundry over writing, the poem does get written, suggesting that the speaker did forsake laundry for writing at some point. It can be said that "I Stop Writing the Poem" ultimately straddles the conflict between a life in the domestic realm and a life of letters celebrating the potential "tenderness" of domestic work in a speech act that is not domestic but literary. That the poem could commingle such opposing forms of work

without choosing one over the other saves it from being overly agenda driven at the content level.

Despite its complexities at this level, "I Stop Writing the Poem" is technically barren, since it fails, in the end, to violate the pattern established by the discursive line with image and other figures of speech or sentence and syntax systems. The poem enjambs its title with its first line. This strategy helps the speaker express the poem's central conflict immediately and reveals that the poem is going to be constructed out of plain-style, discursive statements and hard enjambments. A generally enjambed lineation will increase a poem's speed and power to surprise; certainly, there is excitement and suspense in lines that do not end at grammatically foreseeable places. To avoid the risk of monotony□an especially potential risk in discursive poems that do not rely on images□any pattern that is established in a poem will need to be violated or complicated in some way. The hard enjambments between the poem's title and first line and between the poem's first line and its second are countered by three end-stopped lines. These lines, since they violate the expected pattern of hard enjambment, take on special weight. Notice how much longer one rests on the end-stopped lines ending in "woman" and "do" than on lines like "I'll get back to being / a woman" and "But for now / there's a shirt." Gallagher's ability to counter her hard enjambments with strategically placed end-stopped lines does enrich her poem's rhythmical power.

It is odd, then, that Gallagher does not choose to vary her discursive strategy at all. The poem's discursive approach is established early on: the enjambed title and first line construct a basic statement□" I Stop Writing the Poem / to fold the clothes." This statement is followed up with seven very similar statements. "No matter who lives / or who dies" shares the tone and simple sentence structure of "I Stop Writing the Poem / to fold the clothes," which shares the tone and simple sentence structure of "I'll always have plenty to do." It is important to note□again□that there are no images or other figures of speech in these statements. The poem's final four lines, constructing the last sentence, is the only compound sentence in "I Stop Writing." So, while Gallagher juxtaposes endstopped lines with enjambed lines in "I Stop Writing the Poem" and so avoids monotony at the end of the line, she fails to violate the discursive strategy with images and other figures of speech or different sentence and syntax systems. This oversight ultimately undermines the poem's power to convince and enlighten, since it drains the energy out of the poem's subject-level complexity by maiming the marriage between content and form. "I Stop Writing the Poem" fails to persuade that choosing domestic work over literary work is a good idea because Gallagher was either unwilling or unable to use the many formal techniques available to her. If the speaker had chosen to keep writing rather than fold a shirt, maybe she would have found a way to make a complex statement about the nature of women's work aesthetically pleasing as well as rhetorically interesting.

Source: Adrian Blevins, Critical Essay on "I Stop Writing the Poem," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Adaptations

Gallagher has made several audio tapes. Two of them were produced by American Audio Prose Library and can be downloaded from the Amazon bookseller web site. Their titles are *An Interview with Tess Gallagher* (1994) and *Tess Gallagher Reads: Prose and Poetry from the "Lover of Horses," "Moon Crossing Bridge," "Portable Kisses," "Amplitude"* (1994).

Topics for Further Study

Critics have found that some of the poems collected in Gallagher's *Moon Crossing Bridge* to be overly sentimental, a negative attribute as they see it. Research the criticism of sentimentality in writing. What does it mean? Find poems in the collection that you think contain this characteristic and compare them to "I Stop Writing the Poem." Which style do you find more appealing? Why?

If you have experienced a great loss, take that experience and write a poem about it. Use a strong but ordinary image in your daily life as a metaphor through which you come to terms with that loss.

Some theorists believe that our common language is dominated by male-oriented vocabulary. Phrases such as "the war on poverty," using a reference to battle, or purely rational expressions that eliminate emotions are defined as male language. Write a speech on a specific topic of your choice, first as if it were written by a woman and then as if written by a man. Then, analyze the two speeches and prepare a short report on the difficulties you may have encountered in writing them, as well as a brief study of the differences in word choices.

Research the concept of death as professed by various world religions. Look for diversity in your search by reading about philosophies held by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus, as well as indigenous beliefs found in Native American cultures, African tribal beliefs, or tribes in New Guinea or Australia. Outline your findings in a detailed paper.

What Do I Read Next?

Gallagher wrote a collection of essays on the art of poetry. To gain a deeper understanding of her philosophy of poetry and writing, read *Concert of Tenses: Essays on Poetry* (1986).

No More Masks: An Anthology of Twentieth- Century American Women Poets (1993) offers the reader a wide expanse of writing through which the transitional changes of language can be explored. This collection contains over one hundred poets, including the works of Rita Dove and Anne Sexton.

Anne Sexton's *The Complete Poems* (1999) demonstrates the progression of women's language through the years and the writing of a single author. Sexton's poetry centers on the personal issues of her life. Her language is honest, and she writes with unusual courage.

Rita Dove, a U.S. poet laureate (1993-1995), writes about the daily lives of ordinary people in accessible language in *Selected Poems* (1999). She explores the loves and hopes of the people around her and thus touches on universal themes to which anyone can relate.

In *Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977* (reprint, 1993), Adrienne Rich, acclaimed as one of the most influential female American poets, explores language as she looks for a more feminist vocabulary and form of expression in her writing.

Lucille Clifton makes reading poetry fun. In her *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969-1980* (1989), she writes about topics as diverse as eccentric family members and matters of spirituality. Her language is carefully chosen to give a feminine slant to her poems.

Sula (1989), a novel by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, not only tells a fascinating story about people living in a small Midwestern town but also conveys a unique language. The book is especially useful for a study in the art of using vocabulary to create fresh images.

Raymond Carver's *Cathedral* (reissued in 1989) contains his most famous short story (for which the collection is named), as well as eleven other classics. For a stunning insight into the genius of this writer, this book is a good place to start.

Carver's poems were collected in his *All of Us: Collected Poems* (2000). This collection provides a good sample for comparing Carver's poetry to Gallagher's.

The Newly Born Woman (1986), by Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement, is a landmark feminist text, exploring the concept of *l'ecriture feminine* (the ways in which women's language and writing is shaped by their sexuality).

Further Study

Cixous, Helene, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Columbia University Press, 1994.

This book is not light reading; however, it is refreshing material for anyone interested in developing their art of writing. Cixous, a playwright as well as a feminist theorist, does not present theories filled with academic jargon. She takes her thoughts and applies them to her own writing, giving other writers deeper insights into their own art.

Elgin, Suzette Haden, *Native Tongue*, Feminist Press, 2001.

Elgin's science fiction thriller takes on the topic of the power of language. The setting is the twenty-second century, during which time women's legal rights have been repealed. Most of the female population are bred to become linguists and translators. In an attempt to win their freedom, they create a new language. This book won critical praise when first published in the 1980s.

Lewis, C. S., *A Grief Observed*, Harper, 2001.

C. S. Lewis, the famed British author, fell in love late in life and later lost his wife to cancer. In this book, he discusses how humbling this experience was. This book is an excellent view from a male perspective on the loss of a loved one.

Richard-Allerdyce, Diane, *Anaïs Nin and the Remaking of Self: Gender, Modernism, and Narrative Identity*, Northern Illinois University Press, 1997.

Richard-Allerdyce traces the development of Nin's theories of gender and the creative self through her experimental writing. Nin is considered one of the earliest women writers who tried to find a feminine language form.

Rinpoche, Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Harper, 1994.

Offering a different understanding of death, Rinpoche has translated many of the Buddhist beliefs about life, death, and the hereafter. Also contained in

this book is a survey of the concept of death as taught by all the other major religions.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) 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, PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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 PfS 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

PfS 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 Poetry 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 PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS 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 Poetry for Students

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry 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 PfS, 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 Poetry 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 PfS, the following form may be used:

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry 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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