Kim Study Guide

Kim by Rudyard Kipling

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Introduction

Rudyard Kipling was one of the most popular writers of his era, and his novel *Kim*, first published in 1901, has become one of his most well-known non-juvenile works.

The novel takes place at a time contemporary to the book's publication; its setting is India under the British Empire. The title character is a boy of Irish descent who is orphaned and grows up independently in the streets of India, taken care of by a "half-caste" woman, a keeper of an opium den. Kim, an energetic and playful character, although full-blooded Irish, grows up as a "native" and acquires the ability to seamlessly blend into the many ethnic and religious groups of the Indian subcontinent. When he meets a wandering Tibetan lama who is in search of a sacred river, Kim becomes his follower and proceeds on a journey covering the whole of India. Kipling's account of Kim's travels throughout the subcontinent gave him opportunity to describe the many peoples and cultures that made up India, and a significant portion of the novel is devoted to such descriptions, which have been both lauded as magical and visionary and derided as stereotypical and imperialistic.

Kim eventually comes upon the army regiment that his father had belonged to and makes the acquaintance of the colonel. Colonel Creighton recognizes Kim's great talent for blending into the many diverse cultures of India and trains him to become a spy and a mapmaker for the British army. The adventures that Kim undergoes as a spy, his endearing relationship with the lama, and the skill and craftsmanship of Kipling's writing have all caused this adventurous and descriptive□if controversial□novel to persist as a minor classic of historical English literature.

Overview

Kipling's Kim recounts the story of a young person's growth to maturity.

Through a series of adventures in India, the young Irish orphan Kim develops an enlightened understanding of himself and his world. The book also depicts the full religious development of an old man, a Buddhist lama. The close relationship between Kim and the lama shows how a young person's growth can be influenced by the wisdom of an older person. But Kim is also an adventure story with an exciting plot involving spies and war, mystery and intrigue. The narrative sweeps the reader into Kim's adventures as he lives by his wits in a land of warring cultures.

Kim also has a historical dimension.

Kipling vividly presents the diversity of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian cultures in British India. He also shows the geographical significance of Afghanistan to Russia. In the course of the story the Russians try to gain political control in Afghanistan but are stopped by the British (with Kim's help).

Author Biography

Poet, novelist, and short story writer Rudyard Kipling, the first English writer to receive the Nobel Prize in literature, was the most popular literary figure of his time. He was born December 30, 1865, in Bombay, India, to John Lockwood Kipling and Alice MacDonald Kipling. John Lockwood Kipling, who was an anthropologist and curator, inspired the character of the Keeper of the Wonder-house in *Kim*.

Kipling spent his early childhood in India and was cared for by a Hindu nanny; as a young child he spoke Hindi. However, as was the custom of the time, at the age of six Kipling was sent to boarding school in Britain where he unfortunately was subjected to severe strictness and bullying. His poor eyesight kept him from advancing into a military career, so at the age of sixteen Kipling returned to his parents in Lahore, India, and began his career as a journalist, first at the *Civil and Military Gazette* (1882—1887) and then as a worldwide correspondent for the *Pioneer* (1887—1889). He became quite popular for his work, especially for his satirical and humorous verse. When he returned to England in 1889 at the age of twenty-four, he was already regarded as a national literary hero.

In 1892, Kipling married the American Caroline Balestier and moved to Vermont. Their two daughters, Josephine□who was to die at the age of six of pneumonia□and Elsie, were born here. The Kiplings returned England in 1896; their only son, John, was born later that year. The Kiplings remained based in England and traveled regularly around the world.

Although Kipling did not live for a long period of time in India after his childhood and his early adult years, his love of India and interest in the subcontinent and his memories of the India of his childhood figured greatly in his writing. Kipling is best known for his works about India, most notably *Kim*, a novel that covers all corners of the continent and in which Kipling lavishly describes the many different cultures and native peoples of the empire. Published in 1901, *Kim* is widely regarded as his most mature and polished work.

Kipling was a prolific writer, and his skill at storytelling, his immensely readable and songlike verse, his refusal to mince words, and the strong sense of British patriotism that characterized his work made him immensely popular with the common readership. However, his receipt of the Nobel Prize in 1907 was met with disapproval from other literary critics and writers, who considered him vulgar and lacking in craftsmanship.

The death of his son, John, during World War I, combined with failing health, affected Kipling's writing deeply. His output decreased dramatically after this period. He died on January 18, 1936, and is buried at Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Among Kipling's other most well-known works are *Captains Courageous* (1897), *The First and Second Jungle Books*, and the poems "If," "White Man's Burden," and "Recessional."

About the Author

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, India, on December 30, 1865.

His father, John Lockwood Kipling, had gone to India to teach at the Bombay School of Fine Arts and later became curator of the Lahore Museum. His mother, Alice Macdonald, was one of five sisters in a prominent British family.

When he was six, Kipling and his sister were taken to England to attend school.

There the two children spent five unhappy years living in a foster home. In 1878 Kipling went off to boarding school at the United Services College, an inexpensive and inferior school for children of the military and civil service. He was later to recount his school experiences in his novel Stalky & Co.

Young Kipling returned to India in 1882 and began a career as a journalist, working for the Indian newspaper of Lahore, Civil and Military Gazette. Over the next seven years Kipling devoted his energies to writing poetry and short stories, as well as journalism. His reputation as a writer grew quickly following the publication of collections of poems, Departmental Ditties and Other Verses (1886), and stories, Plain Tales from the Hills.

In 1889 he left India on a trip that took him through Asia and the Pacific, across the United States, and finally to London, where he quickly became part of the city's literary scene. The novel The Light that Failed (1891) and the poems in Barrack Room Ballads (1892) made him famous throughout England.

In 1892 Kipling married Caroline Balestier, the sister of the American writer Charles Balestier, with whom he had collaborated in writing a novel, The Naulahka (1892). The couple moved to America and settled in Brattleboro, Vermont. There Kipling wrote The Jungle Books and other famous short stories.

However, stormy relations with the American press, disagreements with neighbors, and a public argument with Mrs. Kipling's brother drove the Kiplings back to England in 1896.

By this time, Kipling was internationally famous as a writer. He returned to journalism and traveled extensively, covering the Boer War in South Africa.

In 1902 Kipling returned to England, where he settled at Burwash, Sussex. He had published his finest novel, Kim, the year before and over the next three decades continued to write children's books, poetry, and stories.

Through the early years of the twentieth century, Kipling became the literary champion of British imperialism.

In 1907 he was the first British writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. He died in London on January 18, 1936.

Because of his close association with colonialism, Kipling is not read as often today as he once was. Still, his best books (most of them suitable for young readers) celebrate the dignity of the human spirit more than they champion British colonialism.

Plot Summary

Chapter 1

The novel *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling takes place in British India in the 1880s and 1890s. The novel opens with the introduction of the title character: Kim is a thirteen-year-old boy of Irish heritage who has been orphaned in India and raised by an opium den keeper in the city of Lahore, amid the myriad cultures of India. Because of the ability he has developed to blend in seamlessly among many different cultures through language and his broad knowledge of customs, Kim is known to his acquaintances as Friend of All the World.

Kim meets a Tibetan lama□a Buddhist□who has come to India in search of the Holy River that sprang from the arrow of the Buddha and which promises Enlightenment to its believers. The River proves elusive; even the learned museum curator at Lahore knows nothing of its location. Kim learns that the lama is traveling alone, as his *chela*, or follower and servant, died in the previous city. Seeing that the lama is an old man in need of assistance, Kim, dressed in the manner of a Hindu beggar child, agrees to be the lama's new *chela* and accompany the lama on his quest. He informs his friend and sometime guardian, Mahbub Ali, a well-known Afghan horse trader, that he will be leaving Lahore with the lama, and he agrees to carry some vague documents from Ali to an Englishman in Umballa as a favor. However, later that night Kim observes two sinister strangers searching Ali's belongings. Realizing that his favor to Ali smacks of danger, he and the lama, who remains ignorant of Kim's secret dealings, depart early for the road.

Chapter 2

On the train to Umballa, Kim and the lama meet a Hindu farmer and several other characters all representing an array of customs, languages, and religions from all over India, illustrating□as Kipling will often make a point of doing□the diversity of peoples that make up India's native population. Upon arriving in Umballa, Kim secretly seeks out the home of the Englishman□whom he discovers to be a colonel in the army□and delivers Ali's documents. He overhears word of an impending war on the border and realizes that Ali's documents were directly related to this development.

Chapters 3—4

The next day, Kim and the lama proceed to the outskirts of Umballa in search of the River, where they accidentally trespass in a farmer's garden. He curses them until he realizes that the lama is a holy man. Kim is angry at the farmer's abuses, but the lama teaches him not to be judgmental, saying, "There is no pride among such who follow the Middle Way." In the evening they are entertained by the headmaster and priest of a village. Kim, who loves to play jokes and games, pretends he is a prophet and "forsees"

a great war with eight thousand troops heading to the northern border, drawing on what he had heard in Umballa. An old Indian soldier, who had fought on the British side in the Great Mutiny of 1857, calls Kim's claims to question until Kim makes an accurate description of the colonel□which convinces the soldier of his authenticity.

The old soldier, with renewed respect, accompanies Kim and the lama the next morning to the Grand Trunk Road. During their journey, the lama preaches to the soldier the virtues of maintaining detachment from worldly items, emotions, and actions in order to attain Enlightenment; however, when the lama goes out of his way to entertain a small child with a song, the soldier teases him for showing affection. It is the first evidence of the lama's truly human struggle with maintaining distance from his human emotions.

Eventually, the small party comes upon the Grand Trunk Road, a fifteen-hundred-mile-long route constructed by the East India Company that connected east Calcutta, East Bengal, and Agra. A vivid, detailed description of the masses of travelers is given, including descriptions of several different religious sects, including Sansis, Aklai Sihks, Hindus, Muslims, and Jains, as well as the various wedding and funeral processions marching along the road. This section provides yet another instance of Kipling's travelogue-type digressions to paint a vivid picture of India for his British and American readership. Kim is utterly delighted by the masses of people traveling before his eyes. The lama, however, remains deep in meditation and does not acknowledge the spectacle of life surrounding him.

In the late evening, Kim, utilizing his sharp wit and cunning, procures the aid of a rich old widow from Kulu, herself of a sharp and salty tongue, who is traveling in a royal procession from the northern lands to her daughter in the south. She offers food, shelter, and care for the lama in exchange for the holy man's charms and prayers interceding for the birth of many future grandsons for her.

Chapter 5

While resting along the Grand Trunk Road, Kim comes upon an English army regiment, which bears a green flag with a red bull on it. Since he was a young child, Kim had been told by his guardian that his father□a former soldier□had said that a red bull in a green field would be Kim's salvation. With excitement at having found the sign of the bull, he sneaks into the barracks to find out more information, only to be captured by the Protestant chaplain, Mr. Bennett. Together with Father Victor, the Catholic chaplain, he discovers the personal documents that Kim carries with him everywhere, which reveal him to be not a Hindu beggar but an Irish boy□and the son of Kimball O'Hara, who himself had been a member of this same regiment. Seeing that he is white and the son of a soldier, the chaplains do not allow Kim to continue on as a servant to a Buddhist monk. Kim stays reluctantly with the regiment, and the lama takes his leave abruptly, saying only that he must continue on his Search.

Chapters 6—8

Kim is put under watch of a drummer boy, who, having been born and raised in England, holds Kim and everything having to do with India in contempt, and subjects Kim to verbal and physical abuses. Kim, nevertheless, manages to easily outsmart the boy and procure a letter-writer to send word to Mahbub Ali of his whereabouts. Later, Father Victor shows Kim a letter from the lama indicating that he will pay for Kim's education at the Catholic school of St. Xavier's□a school for Sahibs, or white men. Kim is inconsolable at the thought of the lama traveling without him and fending for himself.

Mahbub Ali comes to Kim after receiving his letter. Seeing the good in Kim's future schooling, he tries to convince Kim that is it for the best, for, as he says to Kim, "Once a Sahib, always a Sahib," indicating that he should not only learn the ways of his own people but take advantage of the privilege that being a Sahib has to offer.

Colonel Creighton, the English colonel whom Kim first secretly encountered in Umballa, shows up. After conversing with Ali about Kim's peculiar history, he shows an interest in Kim's welfare and schooling. He accompanies Kim to Lucknow□the location of St. Xavier's□and gently plies Kim with questions, revealing indirectly that he has a keen interest in ascertaining Kim's suitability for future employment as a spy.

Upon arrival at St. Xavier's, Kim encounters the lama, who says that he is staying at a Jain temple in Benares and that he is helping Kim financially in order to acquire spiritual merit. His voice, however, betrays feelings of tenderness.

Kim's first year at St. Xavier's is skimmed over in the narration. The scene quickly skips to summer vacation, during which Kim has decided, against Creighton's wishes, he will take to the road. He dons the disguise of a Hindu beggar child and eventually meets up with Mahbub Ali, who takes him in as an assistant. Kim reveals to Ali his knowledge that the documents he had delivered to Creighton in Umballa had directly related to the war at the northern border. They reach an unspoken understanding between them that Ali serves as a spy for the British Army in what he calls the Great Game and that Kim is in training to become such a spy. Historically, the Great Game was a colloquial term for the espionage network across British India working to protect the northern border from invasion from Russia.

Later in the horse camp, Kim overhears two strangers looking for and plotting against Mahbub Ali. Kim proceeds to warn the horse trader, saving his life.

Chapters 9—10

Kim is sent, per Creighton's instructions, to the home of the antiques and jewel dealer, Lurgan Sahib, who is another "player" in the Great Game. Lurgan Sahib is a hypnotist and a master of disguise. He, along with his servant, a small Hindu boy, teaches Kim to master many mind games to train his powers of quick observation, in preparation for his future work as a "chain-man" in the spy network. Another key chain-man, the Bengali

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, visits Lurgan Sahib and Kim and approves of Kim's potential and progress in his training. Mookerjee returns Kim to Lucknow and presents him with the gift of a medicine toolkit.

Kim completes his next year at St. Xavier's with great success as a student. He spends his summer holidays working as an assistant to Mahbub Ali and his Christmas holiday continuing his training with Lurgan Sahib.

After Kim returns for his third year of school, Mahbub Ali and Lurgan Sahib convince Creighton that Kim is ready, at the age of sixteen, to be discharged from school and put into chain-man training directly in the field. After he is discharged from school, Kim is taken to Huneefa, a blind prostitute and a sort of sorceress, who puts him in an authentic disguise as a young Buddhist priest and places a charm against devils upon him. Kim is also provided with all of the trade tools of a chain-man, and Mookerjee informs him of the secret code for recognizing another chain-man, or "Son of the Charm." Kim has officially been initiated into the network.

Chapters 11—12

Kim, now completely alone and having been schooled as a Sahib but then thrust into the world in the guise of a Buddhist priest, begins to question what his identity is and where he belongs, asking, "Who is Kim□Kim□Kim?" a question that will remain with him. Kim travels to Benares to meet his holy lama. On the way, he encounters a Punjabi farmer who, seeing Kim in the guise of a priest, begs help for his sick child. Kim cures the child with medicines from his kit. Upon reaching the temple where the lama is lodging, he is ecstatic to be reunited with the lama and to continue upon the quest for the Holy River. The lama shows Kim a piece of artwork that has been occupying his time: the Wheel of Life, an intricate, complex chart he has drawn in great detail, illustrating the cycle of life that traps the soul. The lama, ever intent upon attaining Enlightenment and thus escaping the Wheel of Life, carries the chart with him constantly.

On the train, Kim encounters E23, a chain-man in the disguise of a Mahratta, who, having intercepted enemy documents, is under hot pursuit. Kim puts his training as a master of disguise to use and, in order to protect E23, transforms him into a Saddhu□a member of a sect of ascetic priests. The lama, who knows nothing of Kim's training as a spy, believes that Kim has acquired the ability to cast spells and charms, and he warns Kim against using his powers for prideful reasons. Kim and the lama enter a discussion about the virtues of action versus inaction. While the lama advises Kim to abstain from "Doing" except to acquire merit towards Enlightenment, Kim responds that "to abstain from action is unbefitting a Sahib." The lama answers, "There is neither black nor white. . . . We be all souls seeking to escape."

The old woman whom Kim and the lama had previously encountered on the Grand Trunk Road hears of the lama's proximity and summons him to her home to request further blessings from the lama for her grandchildren. Here, Kim finds Mookerjee waiting

for him in the guise of a hakim, or healer. Mookerjee reveals to Kim the details of the spy mission that has been occupying the Great Game for the past few years: the northern border is being jeopardized by five kings who rule over the independent regions bordering British India and are believed to be allying with the Russians, thus creating a significant security hazard for the British Empire. Mookerjee has been enlisted to intercept two Russian spies in the northern hill country and relieve them of their documents. He asks Kim to help him. Kim, eager to participate in the Great Game, convinces the lama to travel to the northern countries.

Chapters 13—14

Finally having reached the northern lands, Kim finds the cold, wet weather and the dramatically hilly landscape difficult to travel; however, the lama is happy to be back in a region and environment familiar to him. All the while, Mookerjee has been stalking the two enemy spies, who turn out to be a Frenchman and a Russian. He eventually crosses their path and introduces himself to the spies as a welcoming emissary from the Rajah of Rampur, offering them his services and hospitality as a guide through the hill country. His true aim, of course, is to knock the spies off their course and relieve them of their secret documents before they are delivered into enemy hands.

Mookerjee leads the spies as if he is a travel guide and happens upon Kim and the lama, who is expounding on his Wheel of Life. One of the spies demands that the lama sell him his drawing of the Wheel. When the lama refuses, the spy reaches out to grab the paper and rips it, much to the chagrin of the lama, who in anger rises and threatens the spy with his lead pencase□inciting the Russian spy to punch him full in the face. Kim immediately tackles the Russian spy and beats him, while the spies' servants□who are Buddhists and therefore enraged at the attack on a holy man□drive away the French spy and run off with the luggage.

Kim, leaving the spies to the care of Mookerjee, convinces the servants that the luggage, being the possession of two evil men, is cursed. He obtains the package with the secret documents and heads to Shamlegh-under-the-snow for shelter, where they stay with the Woman of Shamlegh.

The lama, meanwhile, is shaken at his inability to resist his passions and at his gross display of attachment to his artwork and to his emotions. The excitement and worry have made him ill. In his illness he spends much time in meditation and, after a few days, informs Kim that he has seen "The Cause of Things": his bodily desire to return to the hills caused him to abandon his search for the River; his act of giving into his desire led him to further give in to his passions and attack the spy□thus moving farther and farther from his quest on the Way to Enlightenment. Having come to this conclusion, the lama demands that he be taken back to the lowlands of India to continue his search for the Holy River.

The woman of Shamlegh, in spite of receiving gentle rebuke from Kim for her attempts to seduce him, provides a litter to carry the lama back through the hills and food for their

journey. Kim kisses her on the cheek at his departure and, as a gift to her, reveals that he is not a priest but a Sahib. Kim and the lama, who is now ill, continue on the road, Kim with the intercepted documents hidden in his luggage.

Chapter 15

Kim and the convalescent lama travel for over twelve days and return to the home of the old woman of Kulu, where Kim collapses into a feverish illness. The old woman nurses him out of his illness, for which he is grateful. Having acquired many father figures throughout his journeys, he has now acquired a true mother figure. Mookerjee, hearing that Kim is awake and well, relieves him of the secret documents and proceeds to deliver them to the Colonel.

Coming out of his fever and suddenly relieved of the burden of the secret documents, Kim is overcome by a sense of displacement that has visited him several times throughout his travels. He repeats to himself, "I am Kim. What is Kim?" At this point, he experiences an epiphany of his existence. Having previously seen himself as detached and somewhat alienated from the world, he comes to a feeling of utter belonging among all people.

Meanwhile, during Kim's illness, the lama, having foregone food for two days and nights in the pursuit of meditation, has attained the Enlightenment he has been seeking. He relates to Kim how his soul released itself from his body, how he flew up to the Great Soul to meditate upon The Cause of Things. However, a concern came to him suddenly regarding Kim's well-being, and so, for Kim's sake, his soul returned to his body and landed, headlong, in the Holy River of his seeking. He declares his Search is over and that he has attained Deliverance from sin for both himself and his beloved *chela*.

Characters

Abdullah

The son of the local sweetmeats seller, Abdullah is one of Kim's playmates in Lahore.

Mahbub Ali

Known throughout India as the most famous horse trader, Mahbub Ali, characterized by his red beard and his quick temper, is a devout Muslim from Afghanistan and a close friend to Kim. It is he who bestowed Kim with his moniker "Friend of All the World." While in public Ali is a horse trader, in secret he is a chain-man, or a spy, who works in close collaboration with Colonel Creighton in what he calls the Great Game□the intricate system of espionage the British government used to maintain the security of British India's northernmost borders. At the opening of the novel, Ali entrusts a packet of secret documents to Kim for delivery to Colonel Creighton. It is this action that starts Kim in the direction of becoming a chain-man himself. During Kim's vacations from school, he works as an assistant to Mahbub and apprentices with him in the ways of espionage. Like many of the other male characters, Mahbub Ali is a surrogate father figure to Kim.

The Amritzar Girl

A courtesan whom Kim and the lama encounter on the train to Umballa, she graciously pays for their ticket fare, ensuring them safe passage.

The Arain Farmer

Kim and the lama accidentally trespass on his land as they leave the town of Umballa. His coarse treatment of them, and Kim's subsequent judgment upon him, leads the lama to one of several important sermons on Buddhist practice.

The Babu

See Hurree Chunder Mookerjee

Reverend Arthur Bennett

The Protestant chaplain for the Maverick Irish regiment in India, Mr. Bennett discovers Kim snooping around the barracks and uncovers his identity as the son of a deceased fellow soldier, Kimball O'Hara. Kipling's unsavory portrayal of Mr. Bennett, who is coarse

and ignorant of the customs of India, represents his lifelong disapproval of Christian missionary work in India.

Colonel Creighton

Colonel Creighton is a British officer of the army and the supervisor of the "chain men" who work as spies along British India's northern border. Creighton sees that Kim has potential as a spy, and he takes a keen interest in procuring education and training for the boy.

The Curator

The kindly British keeper of the anthropological museum in Lahore, the Curator is also called the "Keeper of the Wonder House." The lama comes to him for guidance in finding the Holy River; he is unable to give guidance but presents the lama with an indispensable pair of reading glasses.

The Drummer Boy

Described as a fat boy of fourteen years with freckles, the drummer boy of the regiment has the job of keeping Kim from running away from the army barracks. He is ignorant of the ways of the native people of India and has a hatred for the country and its people, and he refers to them in derisive language.

E23

Kim encounters E23, a chain-man, on a train being hotly pursued by enemies. Kim uses his spy training to disguise E23 as a Saddhu, thus saving the man's life and acquiring his first taste of life as a spy.

The French Spy

The French spy accompanies the Russian spy on a mission to deliver enemy documents, only to be waylaid by Kim, the lama, and Mookerjee.

The Hindu Farmer

A kindly farmer from Umballa, he offers Kim and the lama lodging and food during their stay in his town.

Hindu Servant

When Kim initially arrives at Lurgan Sahib's home for his apprenticeship, Sahib's young servant boy grows jealous and attempts to harm Kim. Later, he becomes Kim's tutor in mastering various aspects of the craft of espionage.

Huneefa

A blind prostitute, Huneefa is also an expert in disguise as well as a sort of soothsayer. At Mahbub Ali's behest, she outfits Kim in his first chain-man disguise as a Buddhist monk, and she casts several good luck spells over him.

Kim

Kim is the title character of the novel. Born in Lahore, India, Kim is orphaned as a baby after his Irish mother dies in childbirth and his father, a soldier in an Irish regiment, slowly dies of an opium addiction. He is raised by the keeper of an opium den in the streets of Lahore. Kim is characterized by a sharp tongue, a tireless wit, a powerful sense of observation, and a keen sense of humor, as well as an untiring appetite for playing pranks and games of wit and trickery. Although he is a white child, he grows up as a "native," with the uncanny ability to blend in to any of the many cultural and religious groups that make up the Indian population□an ability that earns him the moniker "The Friend of All the World." This uncanny ability, together with his sharp, conniving nature, makes him a prime candidate for becoming a spy for the British government.

The novel develops along two interconnecting threads of Kim's life from age thirteen to seventeen: his adventures as he traverses India both as the servant of Teshoo Lama, a Tibetan monk, and as a spy-in-training for the British government, and his eventual hand in saving British India from a Russian invasion; and his conflicted identity as both a "Sahib"□a member of the white ruling class in India□and a child born and bred as an Easterner. This sense of displacement and identity loss comes to Kim when he is removed from the company of Indians whom he has known all his life and placed for three years in a Western, Catholic school, where he masters the culture, academic knowledge, and language of the British rulers.

This sense of displacement overcomes Kim several times throughout the novel; however, the novel concludes with Kim's experience of an epiphany: Having previously seen himself as detached and somewhat alienated from the world, he comes to a feeling of belonging among all people.

Chota Lal

Chota Lal is one of Kim's playmates in Lahore, prior to his departure as a servant of the lama.

Teshoo Lama

Teshoo Lama, the second most important character of the novel, is Kim's master, guardian, father figure, and companion throughout most of the novel, who both cares for Kim and is cared for by Kim. A Buddhist abbot from Tibet, he has come to India in search of the Holy River that sprang from the arrow of the Lord Buddha. Kim accompanies him as his servant throughout the whole of India. While Kim is constantly enchanted by the myriad of people they encounter in their travels, the lama remains fixedly detached from any interest in humanity or the machinations of human life. He spends his time in meditation, and he interacts with his fellow travelers only to preach the ways of Buddhism to them: specifically, that all souls are equal, that all souls are trapped in the cycle of life, and that the only way to escape the cycle of life is through detachment from all things worldly. However, although he strives for utter detachment, the lama occasionally slips and reveals his true affection for his servant, Kim, who likewise adores his master.

The lama carries with him an intricately drawn chart mapping of the Wheel of Life□a symbolic representation of the cycle of life that, according to Buddhist teaching, all souls strive to escape from in order to be reunited with the Great Soul. However, the lama struggles throughout his pilgrimage to remain on the path to Enlightenment and to let go of the attachments of the world, specifically his emotions and bodily desires. The climax of the novel is reached when a Russian spy, desiring the lama's Wheel of Life, rips it from his hands and incites the lama to violence. These actions lead the lama to the absolute realization that he is not free of the emotions of pride and desire. Through this realization, he attains the Enlightenment he has been so strenuously seeking.

In a twist of spiritual irony, his love for Kim leads him not to escape to the Great Soul but to selflessly remain with Kim until his well-being is assured.

Lispeth

See The Woman of Shamlegh

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee

Also known as The Babu, Mookerjee is a Bengali and a chain-man in the Great Game. He holds several Western degrees and is an anthropological expert. When he is not explicitly performing spy work, he collects information on various cultural and religious practices across India, for the purpose of anthropological study.

Mookerjee assists in Kim's training as a chain-man throughout the novel and officially initiates him into the brotherhood of the Sons of the Charm. When it is discovered that Russian spies are attempting to organize a breach of the northern border, it is Mookerjee who, with the help of Kim, intercepts their documents and thwarts their mission.

Kimball O'Hara

O'Hara is the deceased father of Kim, previously a soldier in an Irish regiment in India and the victim of a debilitating opium addiction. Upon his death, Kim is orphaned and left to the streets of Lahore.

The Old Soldier

Kim encounters the old soldier outside of Umballa. A retired soldier who commands the respect of the local Sahibs for his service in the Great Mutiny of 1857, he serves as Kim and the lama's guide to the Grand Trunk Road.

The Old Woman of Kulu

Kim and the lama first encounter the old woman on the Grand Trunk Road. She is a wealthy widow from the hill country. A salty-tongued character, she is taken by Kim's ability to match her wit. Kim and the lama are the recipients of her hospitality on numerous occasions. When Kim falls ill, she nurses him back to health, becoming not just a benefactress but a mother figure to the orphaned Kim.

The Opium Den Keeper

After the death of Kimball O'Hara, the woman who kept the opium den where he met his demise was left to care for young Kim from the age of three to thirteen.

The Punjabi Farmer

Kim, disguised as a Buddhist priest, is begged by the Punjabi farmer to heal his sick child. Kim uses his medicine kit to cure the child, thereby earning the gratitude of the farmer. In thanksgiving, he serves as Kim's companion for a brief time.

The Russian Spy

One of two spies who breach the northern border in order to deliver enemy documents, the Russian spy picks a fight with the lama after he refuses to sell him a precious

drawing. During the ensuing fight, Kim and Mookerjee manage to procure the enemy documents.

Lurgan Sahib

Lurgan Sahib is a "half-caste" and a chain-man in the Great Game. He is a jeweler, an antique dealer, and a master of hypnotism and disguise. Kim is sent to Lurgan Sahib as an apprentice in order to learn the craft of espionage.

Father Victor

The Catholic chaplain of the Maverick Irish regiment in India, he is instrumental in obtaining an education for Kim at St. Xavier's school.

The Woman of Shamlegh

The Woman of Shamlegh takes Kim and the lama into her home after they are attacked by the Russian spies. She makes a failed attempt to seduce Kim. Like most of the women portrayed in *Kim*, Lispeth presents a dual nature: both caretaker and temptress.

Setting

The novel begins in the Indian city of Lahore. The time is the late nineteenth century and the British are in political control of India. Kim, a boy of twelve, is a street urchin. He is an Irish orphan, now living with a poor Indian woman.

Kim's father, a British soldier, left his regiment to work for the railroad. His mother died of cholera, and a few years later his father died from alcoholism and opium addiction. Around his neck Kim wears an amulet containing his father's papers and his own birth certificate.

Before his death, his father told him that these papers would one day make his fortune by identifying Kim to his father's old regiment. The emblem of this regiment, a red bull on a green field, signifies protection for the son of the former soldier. Thus, a strange kind of prophecy hangs over Kim's future.

Social Sensitivity

Kipling delicately treats the theme of religious growth through the lama's quest for salvation through Buddhism.

Kipling is respectful of Buddhism, and much of Kim's wisdom comes from his relationship with the lama. Kipling also suggests that some of the finest Christian ethics of love and nonviolence are also characteristics of Buddhism. Kipling pokes gentle fun at the differences between Anglicanism and Catholicism; but he depicts both priests favorably.

Readers come away from Kim with a sense of how major religions compare.

There is only slight violence in the novel and Kipling always uses it to a purpose. Kipling does have an unfavorable view of Russians, seeing them as the cause of much trouble in Europe.

Kim is the story of a young boy going through puberty and reaching physical maturity.

Literary Qualities

Kim has an exciting plot filled with suspenseful incident. Kim's fortune depends on the prophesy that he will find protection from a red bull on a green field, but he does not discover what this means until well into the book. Similarly, the River of the Arrow that the lama seeks remains a mystery until the very end when he realizes that the river is a spiritual one, only found when one has reached perfection. Kim's future is also in suspense until the very end. It takes all of his experience to help him understand that he is British and Christian but will follow the example and values of both Mahbub Ali, a Moslem, and his lama, a Buddhist.

Kipling uses the theme of initiation in developing Kim's growth, for Kim is gradually introduced to various forces in his world in order to grow into a mature human being. Kipling uses the Buddhist symbol of the wheel to develop this theme. Kim's life turns like the wheel through the various experiences and phases of life.

Kipling excels in picturing the diversity of Indian culture as he shows the growth of his main characters. He adds a Moslem viewpoint in his sympathetic portrait of Mahbub Ali. And in Kim's travels, Kipling portrays a cross-section of Indian society. He is quite effective, too, in showing how Indian women have a subsidiary role in Indian culture but at the same time exhibit a stoical wisdom. The soldiers and the Anglican and Catholic chaplains add the perspective of British colonial culture. Kipling's understanding of the complexity of colonial India is matched by few other British writers.

The key literary qualities which Kipling uses are a well-constructed and suspenseful plot; strong thematic continuity; the use of a symbol (the wheel) to develop the themes of the novel; and excellent characterizations that vividly portray the diverse cultures of colonial India.

Themes

Equality and Unity

The ideal of the equality and unity of men echoes across several motifs in *Kim*, most notably through the Buddhist teachings of Teshoo Lama. He tells Kim, "To those who follow the Way there is neither black nor white, Hind nor Bhotiyal. We be all souls seeking to escape." This ideal of the equality and unity of men transcends the stringent caste, or class, distinctions of the predominantly Hindu society that Kim has known.

The lama carries with him a diagram called the Wheel of Life, which is a symbolic representation of the Buddhist doctrine that all lives are equally bound in the cycle of life and that all souls seek release from this cycle by attaining Enlightenment. The numerous references to the Wheel of Life throughout the novel serve to reinforce the message of equality and unity. The lama's teachings and his quest for Enlightenment are never the subject of Kipling's criticism, as are other religious beliefs presented in *Kim*; rather, the resolution of the novel includes the lama's triumphant attainment of Enlightenment, which serves to authenticate, rather than disprove, the doctrine of equality and unity echoed throughout.

Kipling also uses the theme of unity to portray an ideal India that is not divided by imperialism but rather is unified under it. This is especially evident in the relationships between the characters who participate in the Great Game: Mahbub Ali, an Afghan; Lurgan Sahib, a person of "mixed" race; Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, a Bengali; and Colonel Creighton, an Englishman, an officer, and therefore a member of the ruling class. Despite their disparate backgrounds, all these characters are united in a tight brotherhood of espionage that functions specifically to protect the interests of the British Empire in India. It is especially significant that Kipling shows both British and Indian characters alike operating on an equal basis for the good of the empire. This serves to promote an idealized, unrealistic portrayal of a specifically united, inclusive British India.

Imperialism

John A. McClure writes in his essay "Kipling's Richest Dream," "In *Kim* . . . brotherhood and despotism keep uneasy company." In other words, the finely crafted portrayal of unity and equality Kipling develops between "native" and "Sahib" conflicts with the unavoidable fact that the British are the governing class, and the Indians are the governed. Kipling, however, presents the imperialist presence in India as unquestionably positive. This is done most effectively through the main plot of the novel□the endeavors of Indian and British spies to protect the northern border of British India from the encroachment of Russia, thus protecting the imperial interests of the British Empire. It is especially significant that Indian spies are shown protecting British interests. In this way, Kipling constructs an India in which the native population supports the British Empire and thus presents Britain's imperialist presence as a positive good.

Orientalism

In recent years, orientalism has come to be defined as the knowledge and beliefs about the peoples of "the Orient"□that is, of the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia□as constructed and imposed by their Western European colonizers. Many of the observations of Indian life presented in *Kim* as fact are derogatory stereotypes, derived from such orientalists' beliefs.

For example, Edward Said writes in his introduction to *Kim*:

Sihks are characterized as having a special 'love of money'; Hurree Babu equates being a Bengali with being fearful; when he hides the packet taken from the foreign agents, the Babu 'stowed the entire trove about his body, as only Orientals can.'

These derogatory ethnic stereotypes are sharply contrasted with Kipling's portrayals of the British and British culture as more advanced. For example, when Lurgan Sahib attempts to hypnotize Kim, Kim recites the multiplication tables he learned at English school to resist□sharply symbolizing Kipling's belief in the advancement of British law over the superstitious ways of the Asians. Such contrasts throughout *Kim* serve to support and justify the rule of the "more capable" British over the Indian people.

Identity

The character of Kim is placed in a predicament of identity: Kim, an Irish orphan, grows up in the streets of the Indian city of Lahore and adapts to the culture and languages of India□so well, in fact, that he can pass himself off as a member of almost any religious or cultural group of India. He is at once a Sahib and, by virtue of his upbringing, a part of the colonized society.

Kim, who is known as "Friend of All the World" and includes "this great and beautiful land" as all his people, begins to undergo a crisis of identity when he is first made to go to school to become a Sahib.

This question of identity and belonging plagues Kim throughout the novel, leaving him with a feeling of loneliness. Although Kim's conflict of identity is brought about by being suddenly thrust into the British culture, it is significant that Kipling does not make Kim's identity crisis one in which he must choose between living as a Sahib□the member of the governing class□and as a "native□a member of the governed. Through Kim's eventual ability to reconcile both, Kipling symbolizes his larger ideal of a unified British India.

Religion

One of *Kim*'s major plotlines is the quest for Enlightenment undertaken by Teshoo Lama. While the lama faces both external and internal obstacles to fulfilling his quest,

the novel culminates with his triumphant attainment of his goal. The novel is threaded throughout with the lama's Buddhist spirituality and teachings; and while many of the characters, including Kim, question and are mystified by his philosophies, the lama's success at attaining Enlightenment at the end of the novel serves to validate the authenticity and truth of his messages.

In marked contrast to the validation of Buddhism in *Kim* is a censure of Christianity, as represented by Father Victor and the Reverend Bennett. Unlike the lama, who inspired Kim's complete adoration, the Christian chaplains are portrayed as ignorant and undignified, therefore inspiring Kim's disgust. Although the chaplains try to convert Kim to Christianity, he remains devoted to his Buddhist master. This symbolic "defeat" of Christianity can be read as evidence of Kipling's lifelong loathing of Christianity and missionary work in India.

Women and Treachery

Kim is a markedly male story, featuring an all-male cast of characters and focusing on traditionally male relationships: that of Master and Student and the initiation of Kim into a brotherhood□the Sons of the Charm. The women characters factor mostly as plot devices. The old woman of Kulu provides a place for Kim and the lama to rest, as does the Woman of Shamlegh.

However, even though women play a very minor role in the novel, the representation of women denotes a regard for women as treacherous obstacles to the goals of men, be they spiritual pursuits or political games. For example, the lama complains that the old woman of Kulu has derailed him from his Search: "Take note, my *chela*, that even those who would follow the Way are thrust aside by idle women!" Kim is likewise warned of the machinations of women by his other father figure, Mahbub Ali, during his training as a spy: "Mahbub was exact to point out how Huneefa [a prostitute] and her likes had destroyed kings."

The absence of women from most of the novel, therefore, not only creates a sense that spiritual quests and adventures in travel are the realm of men but that it is an absolute necessity for the success of the male characters in being successful in their goals.

Style

Epigraph

An epigraph is a piece of writing that is used at the beginning of a work to set the tone of that work or to highlight thematic elements. Each chapter of *Kim* opens with an epigraph. Kipling prefaces each chapter with an excerpt of verse, many of which are taken from his own works. For example, chapter 5 is the chapter in which Kim is reunited with his father's army regiment and therefore with his own people. The chapter is prefaced by an excerpt from the poem "The Prodigal Son":

Here I come to my own again

Fed, forgiven and known again

Claimed by bone of my bone again,

And sib to flesh of my flesh!

The fatted calf is dressed for me,

But the husks have greater zest for me . . .

I think my pigs will be best for me,

So I'm off to the styes afresh.

The excerpt tells of a person who is not at home with his own people and thus sets the tone for the chapter in which Kim struggles with the alien British language and culture.

Travelogue

Kim's plot, based on a pilgrimage, a quest, and the adventures of international espionage, by nature encompasses a vast geographic setting; almost the entirety of the Indian subcontinent is covered. Kipling uses Kim's vast travels to provide his readership with detailed descriptions of the widely varied landscape of India, as well as of the native inhabitants. His numerous digressions into travelogue-type accounts reveal a narrative voice aimed at a specific audience: that of the English in Great Britain. India was the largest and most lucrative possession of the British Empire, and the British in England remained fascinated with exotic portrayals of the subcontinent, which Kipling provides with the expert eye of a former resident.

Epiphany

An epiphany is a sudden revelation experienced by a character, often representing resolution of an internal conflict. Kim, plagued throughout the novel by a feeling of displacement and a confusion of identity, has an epiphanic moment at the end of the novel as he is coming out of illness:

With almost an audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock anew on the world without. Things that rode meaningless on the eyeball an instant before slide into proper proportion. . . . They were all real and true . . . clay of his clay, neither more nor less.

This sudden sense of understanding□his epiphany□helps Kim come to a sense of belonging, thus resolving one conflict presented in the plot.

Another epiphany occurs when a Russian spy rips the lama's Wheel of Life from his hands, which incites the lama to violence. Because of these actions, the lama comes to the absolute realization that he is not free of the emotions of pride and desire. This realization helps him to attain the Enlightenment he has been so strenuously seeking.

Historical Context

British Imperialism in India: Its Intellectual Roots and the Role of Orientalism

When *Kim* was published in 1901, the British Empire was still the most powerful empire in the world. The Indian subcontinent was one of the most important parts of the empire, which thousands of "Anglo-Indians," like Kipling himself, called home.

Imperialism was not just the practice of the British Empire's acts of colonization of other lands and people; imperialism was a philosophy that assumed the superiority of British civilization and therefore the moral responsibility to bring their enlightened ways to the "uncivilized" people of the world. This attitude was taken especially towards nonwhite, non-Christian cultures in India, Asia, Australia, and Africa.

This driving philosophy of moral responsibility served to rationalize the economic exploitations of other peoples and their lands by the British Empire and its subsequent amassing of wealth and power. It was nevertheless, during Kipling's time, largely embraced and unquestioned by the worldwide British population, and Kipling, being no exception, reflected this philosophy of cultural superiority and patriotism in much of his writing.

The acquisition of knowledge of the people that they governed, and the dissemination of this knowledge, was key to the formulation of the ingrained Western notion of superiority and their belief in the inferiority of Eastern peoples. The Western scholars who studied the customs and peoples of the East were called orientalists and their studies orientalism. While many of their works brought valuable translations of Eastern literature to the West□the most famous and influential of which is Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *The Arabian Nights*□orientalism also had the unfortunate effect of creating the ethnic stereotypes that caused the nonwhite, colonized peoples to be generalized as weak, conniving, and immoral□and therefore very much in need of British law, rationale, and morality. Such descriptions that were brought back and perpetuated by orientalist "scholarship" have been ingrained into the Western psyche. The greatest evidence is Kipling's own derogatory descriptions found in *Kim*: Bengalis are cowardly, all Asiatics are superstitious, and Kim himself had the ability to "lie like an Oriental."

The Great Mutiny of 1857

Edward Said calls The Great Mutiny of 1857 "the great symbolic event by which the two sides, Indian and British, achieved their full and conscious opposition to each other," and he states that "to a contemporary reader [of *Kim*] 'The Mutiny' meant the single most important, well-known and violent episode of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian relationship." During the Mutiny, Indian soldiers who served the British government under white, British officers captured the city of Delhi. The Mutiny eventually became

part of the larger Sepoy Rebellion (1857—1859) against the British government. While their efforts were eventually squelched, it was the first and one of the most violent acts of rebellion of Indians against the forced rule of Great Britain. The Indian National Congress, a party made up of Western-educated Indians whose aim was to acquire independence from Britain, was formed in 1885; so when *Kim* was published only fifteen years later, the political landscape of India was characterized by a tension between the Indians who wanted independence and the British who struggled to remain in control. It is of marked interest to note that Kipling largely ignores this tension between Indian and English in *Kim* and portrays all of his Indian characters as being pro-British□certainly not accurately reflecting the true political landscape of India at the time, which was instead characterized by growing discontent and the desire for Indian independence.

The Great Game

The Great Game referred to in *Kim* was the colloquial term for the British government's Survey of India, which began in 1767 and continued until India's independence in 1947. The players in the Great Game were trained surveyors who worked undercover for the British government. It was especially dangerous in the northern parts of the region, particularly Tibet, which was not under the jurisdiction of the British Empire; and thus surveyors sent out to map such forbidden areas were sent in disguise. It was this type of espionage work for which Colonel Creighton was training Kim.

The espionage work of the Great Game extended beyond mapmaking to collecting counter-intelligence against the Russians immediately to the north. In particular, the British aim was to keep the independent regions of modern-day Afghanistan, Tibet, and Nepal from allying with Russia, in order to protect the security of their empire. The climax of *Kim*, in which Kim, the lama, and Babu Mookerjee effectively disarm and rob two Russian spies, is a direct reference to the threat that the British felt from the Russian presence.

Critical Overview

Although Kipling was one of the most popular writers of his time, his work was often met with sharply differing criticisms by the literary establishment. His work previous to *Kim*, which included more verse, political essays, and children's stories than longer works, was often met with contempt and scorn; indeed, his receipt of the Nobel Prize in 1907 was criticized by the literary establishment, who viewed him more as a popular writer than a true artist, a writer of verse rather than a poet, and who disapproved of the often coarse nature of his political writings.

When *Kim* was first published in 1901, however, it was largely met with praise both from the press and the general readership; most critics agreed that it was Kipling's most polished work to date. J. H. Millar wrote in *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1901, that "Mr. Kipling has decidedly 'acquired merit' by this his latest essay. There is a fascination, almost magic, in every page of the delightful volume, whose attractiveness is enhanced by . . . superlative excellence." William Morton Payne, writing on recent fiction in *The Dial* in November of that same year, called *Kim* "singularly enthralling" and said that "few Europeans understand the working of the Oriental mind as Mr. Kipling understands them, and far fewer have his gift of imparting the understanding to their readers." While *The Bookman* ran a piece calling *Kim* "mediocre and meaningless," it seems that they were equally enthralled by Kipling's riveting and enjoyable descriptions of life in India. The article states, "The author would be applauded for his very minute and exact knowledge of Asiatic life and Oriental superstition." While Kipling's contemporary critics discussed and argued his merit as an artist, it appears that the most praiseworthy item they agreed on in *Kim* was Kipling's vivid descriptions of Indian life and India's native peoples.

Throughout his career, Kipling wrote many works of fiction and nonfiction that gave strong voice to and supported the imperialist efforts of the British Empire, especially its governance over India. While the idea of imperialism was popular and well supported by the intellectual community during the first part of Kipling's life, by the 1920s□after Britain had fought a major world war and was struggling with more difficulty to maintain its enormous empire□the romance of colonization had been replaced by world-weariness, and Kipling's work suddenly came to be viewed as utterly old-fashioned, if not incorrect and vulgar.

It was not, however, until the school of thought known as postcolonial studies emerged in the 1960s that criticism of *Kim* was taken up again in a whole new light. Postcolonial study concerns itself with the effects and methods of subjugation and colonization on a subordinate people. In other words, postcolonial studies see imperialism from the point of view of the colonized. Most notable in postcolonial criticism of *Kim* is Edward Said, whose groundbreaking work *Orientalism* explores how Western concepts of the colonized peoples of the East created unflattering, generalizing, inaccurate stereotypes□such as the Asian as a liar, the Asian as conniving, and the Asian as superstitious and irrational, which contributed greatly to the rationalization for the imposition of Western rule. Said has edited an annotated edition of *Kim*, in which he

writes in the introduction: "*Kim* is a major contribution to [the] orientalized India of the imagination, as it is also to what historians have come to call 'the invention of tradition. . . . Dotting *Kim*'s fabric is a scattering of editorial asides on the immutable nature of the Oriental world . . . for example, 'Kim could lie like an Oriental.'" What Said points out is that the "exact knowledge" of Asiatic life so extolled as by Kipling's contemporaries were not accurate at all, but were myths that Kipling and his Western contemporaries not only bought into, but perpetuated.

Kim has not received only negative criticism in recent years, however. The reintroduction of Kipling's work through the growing popularity of postcolonial studies has brought about a renewed interest in the novel, especially its role in and its use of historical occurrences of British India, from interest in the Great Game of espionage between Russia and Britain to examinations of how Kipling portrayed The Great Mutiny of 1857. Today, *Kim* is still considered a minor classic, more for its historical interest than for its artistry.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Fernando is an editor and writer based in Seattle, Washington. In this essay, Fernando argues that Kipling misrepresented the political environment of late-nineteenth-century India in order to promote the validity of British imperialism.

Much of Rudyard Kipling's writing, both fiction and nonfiction, focuses on India. Kipling himself an Englishman born in Lahore, who lived and wrote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at the height of the British Empire was known as one of the most vocal proponents of his time of British rule in India. His writing reflected the largely common belief held by Britain that the Western world had a moral obligation to provide the Eastern, nonwhite world with what they saw as their superior political and intellectual guidance. This complex of superiority was coupled with the largely held and promoted stereotypical portrayals of the Asiatic person as weak, immoral, and incapable of independent advancement. Of course, hand in hand with this sense of moral obligation to impose British government on the "dark races" of the world was the amassing of economic and global power for Britain itself, the largest empire the world had ever seen. Thus, the maintenance of the sense of moral obligation in India was a significant part of the ideology behind the economic welfare of the empire.

Kipling's nonfiction work was bluntly polemical, but a pro-imperialist message pervades his fiction as well. Even though the novel *Kim*, with its vibrant descriptions of the geography and cultures of India, seems to be a celebration of the subcontinent and its native peoples, it nevertheless is structured as a pro-imperialist work. Specifically, Kipling creates a very particular portrayal of the political environment of India that pointedly ignores the growing conflict between the native Indians and their British rulers. His constructed misrepresentation of the Indian political environment serves to maintain the strength and validity of the British presence in India.

One of the most telling scenes in *Kim* is in chapter 3, when Kim and the Tibetan lama come upon an old soldier who had fought on the British side in The Great Mutiny of 1857. The mutiny was the first and one of the most violent uprisings of Indians against their colonizers, in which Hindu and Muslim soldiers, who vastly outnumbered their British superiors, stormed and took over the city of Delhi. It is recognized historically as a starting point for the division between Anglos and Indians and as a starting point for the push for Indian independence (which would come almost one hundred years later, in 1947). Edward Said writes in his introduction to *Kim*: "For the Indians, the Mutiny was a nationalist uprising against British rule, which uncompromisingly re-asserted itself despite abuses, exploitation and seemingly unheeded native complaint." The British, on the other hand, saw the mutiny as an act of irrational and unwarranted aggression.

The language that Kipling uses to describe this mutiny is markedly from the British point of view, so it is significant that the account comes not from a British soldier but from an Indian:

A madness ate into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill the Sahibs' wives and children. Then came the Sahibs from over the sea and called them to most strict account.

The Indian soldier describes the cause of the mutiny as "madness" that made the soldiers turn against the officers. That Kipling characterizes an uprising based on resentment towards imperialist rule and the attempt to resist this rule as merely "madness" reduces the Indian nationalist cause to irrationality and, therefore, to meaninglessness. Because there is no rational reason for the uprising, the murder of officers□the most egregious act of disloyalty□is cast as "evil." And while the murder of civilians, especially women and children, is deemed universally unacceptable, that the soldier chooses to focus on this aspect of the mutiny serves to further demonize the actions of the Indians and invalidate their nationalist cause and the reality of their discontent.

Furthermore, the Indian soldier frames the British in a pointedly paternalistic light in describing the British retaliation against the Indian mutineers: The Sahibs "called them to most strict account" for their actions. This particular choice of phrasing casts the governing British in a parental role; the British counterattack and squelching of the insurgency□and all of the brutality likely thereafter□is cast as a just punishment that brings the unruly back to their rightful order. And that rightful order, of course, is to remain the governed, rather than the governing. Through the language he gives the soldier, Kipling frames the mutiny not as a group's legitimate attempt for independence and nationalization, but as an unjustified, irrational, and isolated act of brutality, thus not only ignoring but invalidating the existence of legitimate conflict.

While the mutiny is largely regarded by historians as the turning point in Anglo-Indian relations and the true first attempt by Indians at retaliating against the British colonizers, the future of the independence movement in India was not characterized by violence, but was instead orchestrated politically through the growing British-educated Indian middle class. The regime of Britain in India was not one of intellectual oppression□indeed, the British saw it as part of the white man's moral obligation to educate the Oriental in ways of Western morality and rationality, and so Indians were not denied, but encouraged to obtain, a British education. Nevertheless, many British did not regard the Indian, even a British-educated Indian, to ever be able to govern himself. Blair B. Kling writes in the Norton critical edition of *Kim*: "To the British in India the Bengalis might be English educated, but they were still racially inferior and did not have the moral fiber, manliness, or common sense to warrant more than subordinate administrative appointments." This wide-reaching British sentiment towards the educated Bengali class is specifically reflected in Kipling's characterization of Hurree Chunder Mookerjee.

The character of Mookerjee in *Kim* is one of the educated Bengali class to which Kling refers. Indeed, Kipling does portray Mookerjee as highly educated and extremely competent in his work as a spy in The Great Game, especially in his heroic, skilled, and dangerous success at the climax of the novel, in which Mookerjee, with the help of Kim,

tricks the Russian spies out of their goods and leads them astray. He is extremely competent at his work, even described, when he is in the midst of his anthropological studies, as a "sober, learned son of experience and adversity." However, as learned as Mookerjee may be, Kipling treats him not as an equal to the British whom he emulates, but rather as a caricature. This is especially evident in the way that Kipling has rendered his English speech patterns. Mookerjee's English speech is liberally peppered with highly British expressions, such as in a conversation with Kim: "By Jove . . . why the dooce do you not issue demi-offeecial orders to some brave man to poison them . . . That is all tommy-rott."

No other character in Kipling uses such a highly concentrated smattering of idiomatic expressions. Kipling also renders Mookerjee's English in an unorthodox spelling□such as "dooce" for "deuce"□to highlight the Bengali's non-British accent. This has the effect of portraying Mookerjee's English as not "true" English, but almost as a dialect. The dialect-type spelling, together with the almost laughable, exaggerated use of British figures of speech, has the effect of making Mookerjee's speech a caricature of the English language□the opposite of authentic English language. Said writes of Kipling's cartooning of Mookerjee: "Lovable and admirable though he may be, there remains in Kipling's portrait of him the grimacing stereotype of the ontologically funny native, hopelessly trying to be like 'us.'"

This parodying of Mookerjee devalues him□and, by extension, the educated Indian class to which he belongs□and places him on a field unequal to the British, thus rendering the Indian educated class□and therefore their cause for independence□impotent.

The misrepresentation of the Indian historical and cultural experience in these two specific instances is tantamount to Kipling outright ignoring that a very real conflict of interests existed in the Anglo-Indian relationship. The very absence of conflict between the Anglo and Indian characters in *Kim* is in fact not limited to specific instances, but is intrinsic in the plot of the novel, the centerpiece of which is The Great Game. The Great Game was the complex espionage operation that the British government used to collect information about the northern borders of the Indian Empire and the independent regions bordering on it□such as Afghanistan, Nepal, and Tibet□chiefly to protect their northern border against the threat of the Russians.

The main action of the plot of *Kim* involves the participation of Mahbub Ali, Colonel Creighton, and other key characters□including, of course, Kim himself□in a dangerous game of espionage against what remains a largely vague and unnamed enemy throughout the book. It is not until chapter 12 that the enemy is finally given a concrete identification: They are Russian spies, and the climax of the novel involves Mookerjee and Kim successfully disarming and derailing the spies from their mission. Thus, the main action of the plot of the novel results in nothing less than the preservation of the British Empire.

In addition to the Indian characters working actively as supporters of the British government is the complete absence of any Indian characters who were working in

opposition to the imperial presence and for independence. Kipling would have been quite aware of the very real and vocal organizational work of the educated Indian elite to challenge British rule and bring about independence. So it is of great significance that Kipling not only completely leaves out any characters representing the independence movement, but also puts the preservation of the British Empire directly in the hands of Indians. The absence of dissension, coupled with the complete devotion of the Indian characters to the British cause, works towards a representation of India that completely denies any conflict in the Anglo-Indian relationship. Kipling, by extension, therefore denies any validity to the very real independence movement. The fact that Kipling portrays the Russians as the sole threat to British sovereignty also denies that the independence movement posed a real threat to British sovereignty. The act of completely ignoring Indian national movements on Kipling's part symbolically invalidates it and renders it harmless.

Kipling's purposefully constructed misrepresentation of the political environment of India thus leaves the reader, in the end, with an image of an India not divided by conflict, but happily united under the British Empire. Even the spiritually transcendent closing scene of the novel reflects Kipling's aim in portraying an utterly unified India: The book closes with the Tibetan lama attaining Enlightenment after finally finding the Holy River of his pilgrimage□and even in the description of the lama's Enlightenment, Kipling manages to make a final, overreaching impression of an India not divided by strife, but unified in harmony:

Yea, my soul went free, and, wheeling like an eagle . . . my Soul drew near the Great Soul which is beyond all things. At that point, exalted in contemplation, I saw Hind [India] from Ceylon in the sea to the Hills, and my own Painted Rocks at Such-zen; I saw every camp and village to the least, where we have ever rested. I saw them at one time and in one place, for they were within the Soul.

Source: Tamara Fernando, Critical Essay on *Kim*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

Kim was adapted as a film in 1950. Directed by Victor Saville, it starred Errol Flynn as Mahbub Ali and Dean Stockwell as Kim. It was released as a VHS recording in 1996 and on DVD in 2003.

In 1984, a made-for-television movie adaptation of *Kim* was released in the UK, starring Peter O'Toole as the lama and directed by John Howard Davies. It was released as a VHS recording in 1996.

An unabridged audio recording of *Kim* is available through Audible.com. It is read by Margaret Hilton and was originally recorded in 1988.

Topics for Further Study

Modern readers of *Kim* will find many of the descriptions of the Indian people throughout the novel grossly stereotypical. In Kipling's day, it was deemed factual and common knowledge by Westerners that Asiatic peoples were, on the whole, lazy, superstitious, and conniving, and these myths are repeated and perpetuated throughout *Kim*. Although our modern society is much more sensitive to the inaccuracies and harmfulness of cultural and racial stereotypes, there still persist stereotypical representations of Asians in popular culture. What other examples of racial or cultural stereotyping can you identify in our culture?

Many scholars argue that *Kim* is a novel motivated by masculinity: All of the main characters are male, and females show up largely as plot devices. How do the male characters in *Kim* regard women? How are women portrayed? What do you think Kipling's portrayal of women in *Kim* reflects about his attitudes towards women?

India is the location of the origin of many of the Eastern world's major religions. India is also home to numerous religious sects, many of which are mentioned in *Kim*. Choose a sect with which you are unfamiliar, and research the history and primary beliefs of this sect.

Much of *Kim* is set along the Grand Trunk Road, which was a main highway that crossed the Indian subcontinent. This highway has played a major role in the history of India. Research the history of the Grand Trunk Road. Where did it come from? What importance has it played over the centuries?

Compare and Contrast

1890s: English readers were fascinated by portrayals of "exotic" British colonies like India, written primarily by British writers such as Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forster, which offered depictions of India from the perspective of the British colonizer.

Today: Ethnic Indian writers and novelists writing in English, such as Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, offer today's English-language readership award-winning work portraying the life and culture of India from an Indian perspective.

1890s: The practice of British imperialism reflects a racist belief of white, British superiority over the non-white nations of the world, rationalizing their government-sanctioned conquest and rules of other races. A need for knowledge about the peoples that Britain was governing led to the study and classification of the non-Christian, nonwhite races governed under the British Empire. Such studies offer the West a wealth of translations of writings from India and knowledge of religious practices; but it also has the effect of lumping together diverse groups of people into a generalized, homogenous group that was characterized as "needing" governance.

Today: In 1978, the scholar Edward Said named the definitions, generalities, and stereotypes placed by the imperialistic West on the diverse cultures and peoples of the East□from the Middle East to the Far East□"Orientalism." Said's breakthrough studies on the objectification of Eastern lands and cultures by the imperialistic West are part of the pioneering efforts of sociological scholarship and theory today known as postcolonial studies, which have made lasting inroads into recognizing, and thereby dismantling, harmful, inaccurate generalizations that persist in Western culture about Asiatic peoples.

1890s: England commands the largest worldwide empire, spanning the globe, of which India is one of the largest and most important components. However, despite Britain's attempts to keep control over the vast subcontinent, army mutinies and the growing educated class of Indians create more and more opposition to British rule.

Today: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, formerly the Indian Empire of Great Britain, are each independent, self-governing nations. Strong influences of British rule remain, including forms of government and the adoption of English as an official national language.

What Do I Read Next?

Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling's Great Game (1999) is a historical analysis written by Peter Hopkirk. Hopkirk explores the real history of the Great Game, which was Britain's quest to map the entire Indian subcontinent in an effort to control the region as well as to keep it out of the hands of the Russians. His specific focus is on the real people upon whom Kipling based many of his characters, such as Muhbub Ali, Lurgan Sahib, and Colonel Creighton.

Midnight's Children, first published in 1980 and awarded the Booker Prize in 1981, is Salman Rushdie's complex, brilliant novel that uses magical realism to explore the sociological and political issues created in newly independent, postcolonial India. Rushdie, who is a Muslim Indian, is one of the most important writers from India today.

Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* was published one year after *Kim*, in 1902, and is set in colonial Africa. Conrad's writing style is markedly different from Kipling's, and *Heart of Darkness* remains a classic of English literature. It is a good example of writing on imperialist themes contemporary with *Kim*.

A Passage to India, a novel by English writer E. M. Forster, was first published in 1924 when India was still a part of the British Empire. The novel, although written from a distinctly British colonial point of view, explores the controversies surrounding relationships between the different races. It offers another comparable version of India through colonial eyes.

Orientalism, a work of criticism by the postcolonial theorist Edward Said, first published in 1978, is a seminal criticism of British imperialism and its aftermath. In particular, Said concentrates on the use of literature by Victorian Britain to promote colonization and the exploitation and oppression of other races.

Topics for Discussion

1. Kim, like a number of novels for young adults, is a story about a boy living by his wits. How has Kim managed to survive with a guardian who is poor and an opium addict?

2. Kipling clearly has great respect for Buddhism as an alternative to the two other major religions of the region, Hinduism and Islam. Why is Kim willing to travel with the Buddhist lama through India?

3. India is one of the important subjects of the novel. Kipling used India as the setting for much of his writing, and Kim was his last piece set in that country. What is it that Kim learns about India as he travels on the road with the lama?

4. Mahbub Ali is clearly one of Kim's mentors, but he is not a completely good force the way the lama is. How does Kipling show both the good and the bad sides of Mahbub Ali?

5. We assume that the lama is very poor, since he is begging throughout his journey. Explain how he is able to pay for Kim's expensive schooling.

6. What kind of rebellion might the Indian princes engage in? Why is such a rebellion a threat to British rule?

7. Kim is a complex character with many sides. His lama clearly realizes that he must be educated befitting his ancestry. Why, then, is Kim unhappy at school?

8. Kim is a novel of education for both Kim and the lama. What does Kim learn in his time with Sahib Lurgan?

9. Kipling completes his notion of education through the character of the lama. What has the lama learned by the end of the novel about his search for the River of the Arrow?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Compare Kim with one or two other well-known novels of a young person's education, such as Treasure Island, Huckleberry Finn, or Tom Sawyer.

2. Kim is a novel detailing the qualities of four major religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Discuss the qualities of these religions as presented by Kipling.

3. The wheel is an important symbol in the novel. Discuss how the lama sees the wheel as a religious symbol and how Kim sees the wheel as a symbol of his own education.

4. Despite his colonialist thinking about other races and groups different from the white Britisher, Kipling is very much a believer in the dignity of all people. How does he show the innate worth of all people in Kim?

5. Many women appear in Kim. Discuss what Kipling sees as the fundamental role of women in India.

Further Study

Cain, Peter, and Tony Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688—2000*, 2d ed., Longman, 2001.

When this comprehensive history of the British Empire was first published, it was received with critical acclaim. It has since been updated to relate imperialism to modern-day international politics.

Gilmour, David, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.

Kipling's legacy has endured a long history of vilification, but this biography offers a fresh, early-twenty-first-century perspective on his life and ideologies.

Mallett, Phillip, *Rudyard Kipling: A Literary Life*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Another very recent biography on Rudyard Kipling, this work concentrates especially on Kipling's writing life and family life.

Wilson, Angus, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, House of Stratus, 2002.

An older biography of Kipling first published in 1977, Wilson's work on Kipling concentrates on his personal life and its relationship to his work.

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McClure, John, "Kipling's Richest Dream," in *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling, edited by Zohreh T. Sullivan, W. W. Norton, 2002; originally published in *Kipling and Conrad: the Colonial Fiction*, Harvard University Press, 1981.

Millar, J. H., "A 'New Kipling,'" in *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling, edited by Zohreh T. Sullivan, W. W. Norton, 2002; originally published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1901.

Payne, William Morton, "Mr. Kipling's Enthralling New Novel," in *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling, edited by Zohreh T. Sullivan, W. W. Norton, 2002; originally published in *Dial*, November 16, 1901.

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Vintage, 1979.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) 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, NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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 NfS 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

NfS 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 Novels 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 NfS series.

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

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

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

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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 NfS, 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 Novels 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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