Luther Study Guide

Luther by John Osborne

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

John Osborne's *Luther*, which debuted in London in 1961, is a drama with a historical setting and a timeless theme. As Osborne told an interviewer in 1961 (as quoted in Alan Carter's *John Osborne*), "I wanted to write a play about religious experience and various other things, and this happened to be the vehicle for it. . . . I hope that it won't make a difference if you don't know anything about Luther himself, and I suspect that most people don't." He added his belief that "the historical character is almost incidental." The play focuses on Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century monk who publicly spoke out against age-old practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, thus beginning the Protestant Reformation. Osborne, however, focuses on Martin Luther's intensely personal reaction to his religion, his faith, and his God; the transformations he wrought in Europe exist more as an aside in this drama.

As he did in earlier works, such as his groundbreaking *Look Back in Anger*, Osborne profiles an individual in conflict with authority, which in Martin Luther's case is the vast authority of the Roman Catholic Church. In posting his 95 theses, Luther risked inevitable excommunication and brought the wrath of the highest church leaders, including Pope Leo X, upon him. He did this despite his uncertainty about what would come next, for, as he tells Cajetan at the Diet of Worms (a city in Germany) about the Roman Catholic Church, "A withered arm is best amputated, an infected place is best scoured out, and so you pray for healthy tissue and something sturdy and clean that was crumbling and full of filth." Osborne dramatically depicts how Martin Luther followed his convictions in the face of great doubts, and so transformed Christianity forever.

Author Biography

Osborne was born December 12, 1929, in London, England. His childhood was marked by personal poor health and poverty, the latter a condition that worsened after his father's death in 1941. Osborne attended day schools as well as St. Michael's College until he was about eighteen, but that was the extent of his formal education.

Osborne briefly worked in journalism but soon drifted into the theater by accepting a job as a tutor for child actors who were touring with a company. While a failure as a tutor, Osborne did well at his next job with the theater company: assistant stage manager. He eventually began acting, making his on-stage debut in Sheffield in 1948.

Osborne's first play was *The Devil Inside Him*, produced in 1950, which he wrote with his friend and mentor, Stella Lindon. Over the next few years, Osborne wrote several more plays, none of them successful. In 1956□the same year that he first appeared on London's stage□Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* was produced. Focusing on a young man frustrated by his economic chances in Britain, it helped give rise to the Angry Young Man school of literary writing. The play was an enormous success, winning Osborne the Evening Standard Drama Award for most promising young British playwright, propelling him to fame, and casting him as a voice of his generation's attitudes toward modern society.

In the 1960s, Osborne turned from contemporary society to history as a source for his plays. *Luther* (1961), an epic play about the leader of the Protestant Reformation, quickly became an international success; after being produced in America, it was voted the best new work of the 1963—1964 season by the New York Drama Critics Circle and won the Tony Award for best play in 1963.

Over the course of his career, Osborne produced numerous plays as well as movie and television scripts. His adaptation of Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones* for the 1963 film of the same name won him an Academy Award. He also wrote his autobiography; the first volume is *A Better Class of Person* (1981), and the second volume is *Almost a Gentleman* (1992). In the first volume, Osborne attacked the mediocrity of lower-middle-class English society.

Osborne died of heart failure and diabetes on December 24, 1994, in Shropshire, England. His lasting legacy to the English theater is bringing to it the realistic drama of contemporary British life.

Plot Summary

Act 1

Luther is set in Germany during the 1500s and follows several important events in the life of Martin Luther, the religious reformer, instigator of the Protestant Reformation, and founder of the Lutheran faith. Act 1 opens at the convent of the Augustinian Order of Eremites in Erfurt, Germany, in 1506. In the presence of the other members of the convent and his disapproving father, Luther is received into the order. After the oath has been sworn, Luther's father, Hans, complains of his son's choice. Later, after his father has left, the monks gather for their meal; Luther has the job of waiting on the others. A reader lectures the men on their duties to God, doing His good works, and the rules they must follow. The men then make their confessions, but while most of the monks confess to trifling sins, Luther continually castigates himself harshly, calling himself a "worm," and sharing visions that are filled with images of sex and violence. At the end, Luther has a fit and has to be dragged away by two other monks.

Scene 2 takes place one year later as Luther is about to perform his first mass. Beforehand, he talks with Brother Weinand about his doubts, revealing that he still feels envy and impatience, and that he believes that God hates him. Weinand says it is not God who is angry with Luther but Luther who is angry with Him.

Scene 3 focuses on the meeting between Luther and his father, Hans, following Luther's mass. Hans still cannot understand why Luther would give up earthly pleasures such as fortune and family life to become a monk. Hans suggests that Luther only became a monk through fear, the result of a promise made during a thunderstorm.

Act 2

Act 2 opens at the marketplace in Jûterbog in 1517, where John Tetzel is selling indulgences. Scene 1 is Tetzel's monologue exhorting people to buy the indulgences and ensure their swift assent to heaven.

Scene 2 shifts to the Eremite Cloister in Wittenberg, where Luther talks with his mentor, Johann Von Staupitz. Through the conversation, Luther's scholarly success (he has earned a doctorate in theology) is revealed, as are his continuing doubts and discontent. Luther has become obsessed with the rules of his order, according to Von Staupitz, because it protects him from admitting that he cannot submit to anyone's authority but his own. Stauptiz points out that Luther demands from himself an "impossible standard of perfection" and notes that he has been unable to keep all his vows but that God should still grant him salvation because of his love of Christ. Von Staupitz also talks about the Duke's annoyance with Luther's sermons against indulgences.

Scene 3 shows Luther arriving with his 95 theses at the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In a monologue, he gives a sermon to the crowds, telling the common people there is no security in the purchase of indulgences and repudiating the idea that doing good works leads to personal salvation. "The works are just if the man is just," he says. "If a man doesn't believe in Christ, not only are his sins mortal, but his good works."

Scene 4 takes place at the Fugger Palace in Augsburg in October 1518 as Cajetan, a church leader, confronts Luther about his actions. Cajetan explains to Luther the pope's three demands: he must retract his sermons, not spread his ideas in the future, and stop causing disturbances among the church. Despite Cajetan telling Luther that his actions threaten the unity of Christendom, Luther will not retract. Cajetan has no choice but to refer this difficult matter to the pope.

Scene 5 takes place in a hunting lodge in northern Italy in 1519. Pope Leo X reads a letter he has received from Luther in which Luther says he will not retract his theses. The pope sends a letter to Cajetan that excommunicates Luther and banishes him from Germany.

Scene 6 takes place at the Elster Gate in Wittenberg in 1520. In this brief monologue, Luther reveals that he has been served excommunication papers. He burns this paper, called the papal bull.

Act 3

Act 3 opens on April 18, 1521, at the Diet of Worms, where Germany's Christian princes have called Luther to ask if he will retract the beliefs he espouses in his books dissenting with church doctrine. Luther explains that his writings fall into three categories: the first deal with certain values of faith and morality that both his supporters and his enemies agree are harmless; the second group attack the power that has tyrannized Germany; the third criticizes the enemies of his religion, even if they are "holy" individuals, and defends the teaching of Christ. Luther declares that he cannot retract any of these works, for to retract the first group would be to condemn the things that those in favor and those against Luther agree upon; to retract the second group would be to invite more tyranny on Germany; to retract the third group would be to allow such situations to continue. Luther asks if anyone can expose his errors through Scripture; if this can be done, he will retract his books. Von Eck refuses his proposal. "Do reasons have to be given to anyone who cares to ask a question?" he asks. "Why, if anyone who questioned the common understanding of the church on any matter he liked to raise, and had to be answered irrefutably from the Scriptures, there would be nothing certain or decided in Christendom." Von Eck further points out that Luther's disobedience threatens the stability of the church by casting doubt upon it, yet Luther refuses to recant.

Scene 2 takes place in Wittenberg in 1525. Luther and the Knight speak of the Peasants' Movement, a revolt which had begun the previous year and which was quickly suppressed. The peasants had been encouraged by Luther's ideas of

independence, but the Knight's speech reveals that Luther opposed the peasants. The Knight tells Luther that he could have brought freedom and order if he had stood on their side, but Luther explains his lack of involvement because "[T]here's no such thing as an orderly revolution." The Knight accuses Luther of siding with the princes and killing the spirit of independence he had helped foster. Luther, growing angry, says that the peasants deserved to die because they ignored authority. At end of the scene, with the Knight watching, Luther marries former nun Katherine Von Bora.

Scene 3, the final scene of the play, returns to the Eremite Cloister, twenty-four years after Luther joined the order. It is no longer a monastery but Luther's home, where he lives with his wife and six children. Von Staupitz joins them for a meal, and the two men discuss all that has happened since Luther posted his theses: the development of Germany and the German language, and the accessibility of Christianity to the common people. After hearing Luther's repudiation of the Peasants' War, Von Staupitz asks Luther not to believe that he is the only one who is ever right. Von Staupitz departs, and Katherine enters the room, carrying their young son, Hans, and Luther takes him from her.

Characters

Cajetan

Cajetan, Cardinal of Don Sisto, General of the Dominican Order, is a distinguished Italian theologian and the pope's highest representative in Germany. He is about fifty years old in 1518, when he meets with Martin Luther to try and persuade him to retract his 95 theses. In their discussion, Cajetan expresses his belief that Luther's actions threaten to destroy the unity of Christendom, and he accuses Luther of being led by self-doubt. When Luther refuses to retract, Cajetan releases Luther from his order and declares his intention of referring the matter to the pope.

Thomas de Vio

See Cajetan

Knight

The Knight is a choral figure announcing the time and setting of each scene. The Knight also appears in scene 2 of act 3, representing the peasants who rebelled in the Peasants' War. He was inspired by Martin Luther's spirit of independence in speaking up against church leaders. Now, like his compatriots, the Knight feels betrayed by Luther; he verbally attacks Luther, angrily telling him that had Luther supported the peasants' cause, instead of opposing it, he could have brought greater freedoms and less violence.

Pope Leo X

Pope Leo X is a "*cultured, intelligent*," seemingly worldly man. Angry at Martin Luther's failure to recant and insistence on placing himself above the highest religious authority, the pope excommunicates Luther and orders him cast out of Germany.

Hans Luther

Hans Luther is Martin Luther's father. He is a prosperous miner who once had great dreams for his son. He saw that his son was well educated, hoping that he would become a lawyer or some other well-respected professional. He is very disappointed in Luther's decision to enter the monastery and believes that Luther only did so out of fear of the real world. After Luther's ordination and his first mass, Hans ridicules certain religious beliefs, both to his son and the other members of the order. While he openly criticizes and questions his son, at the same time, Hans is proud of him and his intelligence. He also loves his son, although he does not readily show this emotion.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther is the main character of the play. He is the monk who began the Protestant Reformation with his open questioning of church practices and beliefs. The Martin Luther that Osborne portrays is the private man wracked with self-doubt and uncertainty but who feels compelled to act nonetheless.

From his first days in the monastery, Luther is different from the other monks; his sins are greater, as are his self-degradations. He also is unsure if he has made the correct decision in fulfilling his vow to join the order. Throughout Luther's years in the monastery, he becomes more convinced that beliefs and practices of the church are wrong, and eventually, he posts his 95 theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, publicly proclaiming his belief that salvation is based on faith and faith alone, a belief strongly at odds with the church. Despite this public event and his ensuing refusal to recant his views, both of which must have required great courage and fortitude, Luther is never certain of his actions. As he tells Von Staupitz twenty-four years later, about his hesitation in answering the questions put to him at the Diet of Worms, "I listened for God's voice, but all I could hear was my own." In his later years, Luther becomes increasingly conservative, turning against the peasants and their rebellion, although his protest against the church was their inspiration.

Luther's actions bring about great personal change□he is excommunicated, forced into hiding for a period, and even marries□as well as change to his people and country. In the words of Von Staupitz, "[Y]ou've made a thing called Germany; you've unlaced a language and taught it to the Germans, . . . You've taken Christ . . . and put Him back where He belongs. In each man's soul."

John Tetzel

Tetzel is a Dominican priest and, as the play's notes read, the "*most famed and successful indulgence vendor of his day*." His speech to encourage people to buy indulgences at Jûterbog more closely resembles the words of a carnival huckster than a man of God. Tetzel is also present at Cajetan's confrontation with Martin Luther.

Katherine Von Bora

Katherine, or Katie, is the former nun who marries Martin Luther in 1525. They raise six children together.

Johan Von Eck

Von Eck is the secretary of the archbishop of Trier. He conducts the business at the Diet of Worms of asking if Martin Luther will retract his books about faith. He upholds the sanctity of the church, its laws, and its councils. He tells Luther that the church does not

have to prove why it is right and Martin is wrong. He also asks Luther not to throw doubt on the church.

Johann Von Staupitz

Von Staupitz is the Vicar General of the Augustinian Order. In his late middle age, Von Staupitz serves as a mentor for Martin Luther; Von Staupitz recognizes the younger priest's superior insight and sensitivity. Von Staupitz councils Luther to stop demanding perfection from himself. He serves as a voice of conscience for Luther in both practical and personal matters; he warns Luther that his sermons against the selling of indulgences are making powerful church and political leaders unhappy, but he also has lengthy discussions with the younger man about his anger toward God and the church. Von Staupitz also reminds Luther to have humility: "In spite of everything," he says, "everything you've said and shown us, there *were* men, *some* men who did live holy lives here once. Don't□don't believe you, only you are right."

Brother Weinand

Brother Weinand is a member of Martin Luther's order. He encourages Luther to overcome his doubts and stop being obsessed with all the world's evils, but he is unsuccessful. Luther reveals to him that all he feels is "God's hatred."

Themes

Loss of Faith

Martin Luther's religious crisis and the resulting Protestant Reformation stemmed from his loss of faith in the teachings and practices of the church. Osborne does not analyze the social, political, and economic causes of the religious reformation that swept Europe in the 1500s; instead, he focuses on Luther's personal struggle. Luther takes action, posting the 95 theses, that makes him the first protestant, but even before this, his doubt is evident. The man who joins the monastery is prone to despair, histrionics, and self-castigation. His anxiety arises from his uncertainty about the vows that he upholds. Eventually, Luther's doubts about Roman Catholic doctrine, as well as his disgust for the moral laxity of church leaders, lead him to reject both. Yet, even when doing so, Luther is not certain of his actions. As he reveals to Von Staupitz decades later, he waited a day to answer the questions posed at the Diet of Worms because he was not sure: "I listened for God's voice, but all I could hear was my own."

It is important to remember, however, that Luther's rejection of the church does not equate with a rejection of God. When called to the Diet of Worms to recant his beliefs, Luther refuses to do so because his "conscience is captured by God's own word." Upon receiving the papal bull excommunicating him, Luther asks God for help. "I rely on no man, only on you," he says. "My God, my God do you hear me? Are you dead? Are you dead? No, you can't die. You can only hide yourself, can't you?" Luther's doubts in God's ability to help him in his isolation are clearly expressed here as are his belief in God's eternal presence.

By the end of the play, which takes place toward the end of Luther's life, Luther demonstrates far less doubt about his relationship with God. In sharing the story of Isaac and Abraham, he emphasizes man's obedience to God. In a conversation with Von Staupitz regarding the rebellion of the Peasants' War, he declares, "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth that power, resisteth the ordinance of God." In these words, Luther implies more certainty than in previous years, for if he had actually showed the obedience that he exalts, he never would have rebelled against the church and its practices and leaders.

Father-Son Relationships

Martin Luther's relationships with the various father figures in his life each present their own set of complexities. His attitude toward these ties is best summed up by his words in act 1: "I suppose fathers and sons always disappoint each other." His father, Hans, is a driving force in his life. The play suggests that one reason that Luther became a monk was to get away from his father's domination. Hans wanted his son to become a lawyer or a magistrate, anything but a priest, a profession that takes him away from the

material world. Hans believes that his son chose to become a monk because he has given up and needs to run away from life. Luther, however, tells his father, "All you want is me to justify *you*," clearly showing that he feels like a pawn for his father, one with the purpose of fulfilling the older man's expectations. This relationship remains difficult throughout Luther's life; as he reveals to Von Staupitz in the final scene, "He [Hans] was never pleased about anything I did. . . . Only when Katie and I were married and she got pregnant. Then he was pleased." This revelation suggests that Hans is also concerned with the continuation of his family line, which can only be carried on by Luther since his other two sons died in the plague.

Luther's relationship with his spiritual Father is as difficult if not more so. At various points throughout the play, Luther entreats God for guidance and casts himself as a helpless child. After his excommunication, Luther sees himself as a lost child, a stillbirth, and pleads with God to "[B]reathe into me, . . . yes, my mighty fortress, breathe into me. Give me life, oh Lord. Give me life." In this instance, God takes on the role of the father, creating the son. At other times, Luther rebels against God, much as he rebels against his earthly father. To this Luther, God is an angry being, one who "demanded my love and made it impossible to return it."

Another father figure exists for Luther: Von Staupitz. Like a father, the older theologian tries to set Luther on an easier path than the one he consistently seeks for himself. By the play's final scene, Luther openly refers to Von Staupitz as "Father" and asks questions that children are likely to ask of their parents, such as "Are *you* pleased with me?" The play ends on yet another representation of the father-son relationship: Luther is holding his young son, appropriately named Hans.

Resistance to Authority

As Luther resists the authority of his father, he also resists the authority of the church but with far greater consequences. The church leaders, parroting the beliefs of the pope□the highest religious authority□expect complete allegiance; Luther must not question church doctrine. "I ask you:" says Von Eck at the Diet of Worms, "don't throw doubt on the most holy, orthodox faith, . . . This faith has been defined by sacred councils, and confirmed by the church. It is your heritage, and we are forbidden to dispute it by the laws of the emperor and the pontiff." While in earlier scenes, Luther has been seen adhering *too* strictly to the rules of his order, as Von Staupitz points out, in the words of Herbert Goldstone writing in *Coping with Vulnerability*, Luther "actually ridicules authority to set himself up as the only authority capable of determining his relationship to God." In doing so, Luther challenges the church hierarchy that forces regular people to deal with God through the mediation of a priest; in the case of a priest, the pope and other high church officials are the mediators.

In his letter to Pope Leo X, Luther shows his own sense of self-importance when it comes to religious matters. Luther alone dares protest the complaints that the German people hold about the "avarice of the priests." While everyone else is too filled with terror at the pope's reaction, Luther strives to protect the glory of Christianity by

publishing his 95 theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg. "And now, most holy father, the whole world has gone up in flames," he writes, but, a mere few lines later, Luther asks the pope for his help because Luther is "far too insignificant to appear before the world in a matter as great as this." Luther's words are seemingly disingenuous, particularly so for a man of his superior intellect and sensitivity, as he has recently elected him as the one person to stand up and defend God and His purity.

Luther grows more conservative in his views, particularly by 1525, when he critiques the failed Peasants' War, which his religious rebellion helped spark. However, he still flouts the authority of the clergy by marrying, notably, a former nun. He also nostalgically looks back on his former actions, telling his young son, "You should have seen me at Worms. . . . 'I have come to set a man against his father,' I said, and they listened to me."

Style

Epic Theater

Most critics agreed that *Luther* aimed at being epic drama along the lines of the work of German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Epic theater is a form of drama that presents a series of loosely connected scenes. Often, a narrator figure will address the audience with analysis or argument. As practiced by Brecht, epic theater sought to use "alienating" effects to cause the audience to think objectively, not emotionally, about the play and its characters. In technique, *Luther* shows a strong Brechtian influence, notably, that of his play *The Life of Galileo*. Like Brecht's drama, *Luther* is a series of short scenes, most of which could function as stand-alone units. The stage decorations, which Osborne clearly describes, are evocative and imbued with symbolism and iconography. A choral figure, in this case the Knight, announces the time and setting of each scene and narrates background details particularly concerning Luther's role in the Peasants' War. Osborne, like Brecht, also wanted to portray contemporary social problems and realities on stage; in *Luther*, the title character is the Angry Young Man of 1960s British society, a young man who feels rage at the established sociopolitical system in which he lives.

While many critics saw *Luther* as epic theater, scholar Simon Trussler staunchly disagreed with this assessment. In his *Plays of John Osborne*, applying Brecht's criteria that epic theater appeals "less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason," he contended that the play is "dramatic" rather than epic, for *Luther*'s "primary appeal is indeed emotional rather than rational."

Symbolism

Perhaps the most notable symbolism that Osborne uses in *Luther* is Luther's poor physical health. He suffers from seizures, insomnia, boils, and chronic constipation. His pains express his mental battles, and his inability to purge himself bodily represents his difficulty breaking free from the church's beliefs. Luther himself views his religious upheavals in terms of the physical body. For example, in his discussion with Von Staupitz, just before he posts his 95 theses, Luther likens himself to "a ripe stool in the world's straining anus, and at any moment we're about to let each other go." When he finally formulates his own doctrine (that salvation is based only on faith in God and not on good works), it is while experiencing another bout of constipation; with the realization that "The just shall live by faith," Luther recalls, "[M]y pain vanished, my bowels flushed and I could get up."

On another level, however, as Alan Carter pointed out in *John Osborne*, "To show Martin's constipation, his indigestion, his excessive perspiration, is to show him as an ordinary human being. A man who would appeal to the earthy German peasantry, and who would be able to incite them to action. He is a direct contrast to the effeminate, sophisticated Latin churchmen of the period." This "common folk" appeal is important

for, as the Knight points out, Luther helped the people begin to believe in an image as Christ "as a man as we are, . . . that His supper is a plain meal like their own . . . a plain meal with no garnish and no word."

Narrative

Luther does not have a strong narrative drive in the traditional sense; encompassing several decades, it does not tell the complete story behind Luther's protest. Alan Carter wrote in *John Osborne* that because Osborne is "weakest as a story-teller," he "makes the play resemble a medieval historical pageant, full of vivid theatrical moments." The play in its entirety shows explicit change in Luther's development of a more personal relationship with God and implicit change in the references to the transformation his beliefs have brought to Germany. The narrative drive focuses more on Luther's interior battles with his own lack of faith than exterior battles with church leaders.

Historical Context

Germany and the Holy Roman Empire

In 962, the Holy Roman Empire was revived. Its territory included Germany and northern Italy, but ongoing disputes between the pope and the emperor prevented any strong central government from developing. Over time, the Holy Roman emperors gave up most of their power to German princes, who ruled their own territories, in exchange for military support. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, Germany, although making up the core of the Holy Roman Empire, included about three hundred independent states.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was born in the mining town of Eisleben in Saxony (Germany) in 1483. His parents were prosperous and able to provide Luther with a good education. Following his father's wishes, he began to study law at the University of Erfurt, but, after a pledge made during a terrible thunderstorm, he entered the Reformed Congregation of the Eremetical Order of St. Augustine at Erfurt in 1505. He was ordained a priest in April 1507 and performed his first mass that May. A gifted scholar, Luther was chosen for advanced theological study. In 1510, Luther journeyed to Rome, where he was shocked by the levity and spiritual laxity he found among the Roman clergy. In 1512, Luther earned his doctorate in theology and became a professor at the University of Wittenberg.

Luther was increasingly plagued by anxieties about his own salvation. He turned to the Scriptures, where he found a loving God who bestowed the gift of salvation upon faithful people, even sinners; Luther came to believe that only faith in God could bring about salvation. As a result of his new convictions, in 1516, Luther began protesting the dispensation of indulgences guaranteeing salvation. On October 31, 1517, he posted his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In 1520, Luther wrote three publications that further explained his ideas for church reform and advocated German control of its own religious matters; he also appealed to German princes to help bring about a reformation in Germany. In 1521 Holy Roman emperor Charles V ordered Luther to the city of Worms to appear before the Imperial Diet, a council of rulers in the empire. When Luther refused to recant his writings, he was excommunicated and banished from the empire. However, he had the support of many German princes, and his patron, Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony, hid him in the Wartburg, a castle in southeastern Germany.

Luther spent most of the rest of his life translating the Bible into German thus ensuring that ordinary people would be able to understand the Scriptures and developing and spreading his new gospel, known as the "priesthood of all believers," which stated that an individual did not need the help of a priest or anyone else to have a relationship with

God. This doctrine was profound because it meant that there was no need for a priesthood or a church hierarchy. Luther also established the Lutheran Church, which kept religious practices as simple as possible. Lutheran clergy, called ministers, were less important than Catholic priests; they merely guided their congregations to true faith. The Lutheran Church only permitted baptism and communion instead of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Soon Lutheranism was the state religion of most of northern Germany. In 1525, Luther married Katherine von Bora, a former nun. He became more conservative in his later years and complained that his protest had resulted in the destruction of the unity of Christendom. Luther continued to write essays and pamphlets until his death in Eisleben in 1546.

The Protestant Reformation

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, a group of European thinkers and scholars, led by the renowned biblical scholar Erasmus, were openly complaining about corruption and lax morality in the Roman Catholic Church. They also feared and resented the power of the pope, who used his authority to raise armies and conquer territory. Another concern was the church's efforts to raise money through the selling of indulgences. These were pardons issued by the pope that people could buy to ensure they did not have to spend much time in purgatory, which was the halfway point to heaven where people worked off the sins they had committed while they were alive. When Pope Leo X approved the sale of indulgences in Germany in order to raise money for the construction of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg Castle. In his theses, he challenged the sale of indulgences and other papal practices and stated his own views that Christian practices must come from the Bible and that all other practices should be abolished. His action began the Protestant Reformation, which saw Europeans protesting the practices of the Catholic Church.

The Reformation spread rapidly through northern Europe. However, though people broke free from church doctrine and practices, some reformers held differing views from Luther's. As a result, many Protestants began to form their own sects, each of which had its own ideas about salvation. For example, Calvinism, which first developed in Switzerland, believed in predestination, or the idea that God knew who would be saved even before a person was born.

By 1560, England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, and parts of Germany, France, Poland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands all had large Protestant populations. Church leaders launched a reform movement of their own, the Catholic Reformation, also known as the Counter-Reformation. By the mid-1500s, the sale of indulgences and church offices had been banned, and new rules for the conduct of the clergy had been put in place. The church, however, rejected the Protestant emphasis on self-discipline and the belief that an individual could find faith without the intermediary of a priest.

The Church of England

In the 1500s, England also saw a protest against the Roman Catholic Church but for different reasons. King Henry VIII had defended the church against Luther; however, in 1529, he asked the church to grant him a divorce from his wife, who had failed to produce a male heir. When the pope refused this request, Henry rejected papal authority and proclaimed himself head of the Church in England. He forced the English bishops to grant his divorce. The new Church of England made little attempt to alter the practice of Catholic rituals, but England's break with Rome was essentially ensured when Henry, in need of funds, closed England's monasteries and convents and sold most of these estates to English nobles.

The Peasants' War

The Peasants' War, which was an uprising of German peasants and other poor classes of town dwellers, broke out in 1524. Sparked by Luther and his reforms, these peasants came to believe that they might be able to bring about reform in their own lives, including the right to choose their own pastors, pay fewer tithes and taxes, not serve as serfs, and face fair courts. While other Protestant leaders supported the revolt, Luther did not. His condemnation of the peasants contributed to their eventual defeat in 1526; some 100,000 peasants were killed.

The Wars of Religion

Tensions between Catholics and Protestants erupted throughout Europe. In 1545, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V attacked Protestant strongholds in Germany. Protestant princes and free cities joined together for protection, but, in 1547, Charles defeated them in battle; however, he was unable to break their power or the power of the Lutheran Church. In 1555, Charles and the Protestant princes signed the Peace of Augsburg, allowing each prince to choose the religion of his territory; the majority of princes in northern Germany selected the Lutheran Church. Bloody civil wars also took place throughout the 1500s in the Netherlands and France. And in 1588, Spain launched an unsuccessful invasion of England in an attempt to depose the Protestant monarch.

Critical Overview

Luther was Osborne's second consecutive historical play, and English audiences who had, for the most part, failed to respond to the first (*A Subject of Scandal and Concern*) were very curious to see how it would fare. For the most part, it was declared a success by the public and the critics alike, creating as much of an impact as *Look Back in Anger* had. Kenneth Tynan, writing for *The Observer* (quoted in Alan Carter's *John Osborne*), described the play as "the most eloquent piece of dramatic writing to have dignified out theatre since *Look Back in Anger*. While some reviewers contended that the play was not historical enough, other critics welcomed Osborne's more universal portrayal of Luther as a rebel to whom audiences of any period could relate. Carter, as well, wrote in his study *John Osborne* that while *Luther* had a historical setting, its theme was quite modern. In 1963, *Luther* went on to a welcoming reception in the United States, where it was widely hailed and appreciated for its universal themes. It won several awards, including a Tony for best play of the 1963—64 season. *Luther* also solidified Osborne's international reputation.

Since its debut, and as Osborne's stature continued to rise, many scholars have examined *Luther* with regard to how it fit in with themes and characters in the playwright's body of work. Herbert Goldstone wrote in *Coping with Vulnerability* that *Luther* "presents still another variation on success-failure" as seen in one of Osborne's earlier plays, *The Entertainer*. He also compares Luther to Jimmy Porter, the hero of Osborne's pivotal *Look Back in Anger*, in both characters' need to be different from others. However, Goldstone also pointed out that, unlike Osborne's earlier characters, Luther attempts "to cope with his feeling of helplessness and despair in realizing himself . . . openly and forcefully, both privately and publicly." Katharine J. Worth wrote in her 1963 article "The Angry Young Man" that Luther was also the "first of Osborne's heroes to be shown in conflict with his intellectual equals." She forecast that the play "marks a new phase in Osborne's dramatic art. Its increased range and flexibility suggest interesting possibilities for his future development."

In 2001, *Luther* was re-produced on the London stage; even forty years later, Osborne's words were stirring and powerful. "This is a big, angry, eloquent play," wrote John Peter in the *Times* (London). "Seeing it again after so long, what impresses me is how deeply Osborne had immersed himself in his subject without making his play ponderous." Like their predecessors, several critics also noted the timelessness of the piece, which showed that Osborne was, in the words of Michael Billington writing in the *Guardian*, "far more than a chronicler of contemporary anger."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, Korb explicates the sequence of scenes in Osborne's play and discusses how they relate to the overarching theme of the play.

Osborne's *Luther* is a series of connected scenes, most of which highlight important episodes in the life of sixteenth-century religious reformer, Martin Luther. The play does not attempt to develop the entire story of his monumental decision to protest the practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church nor the theological reasonings that he put forth. Such intellectual arguments, as several critics have noted, are not the stuff good drama is made of. Instead, Osborne focuses on Martin Luther's personal trials with his faith and his God.

Osborne opens his play as Martin Luther takes his monastic vows and, even more significantly, as the prior performing the ceremony reminds Luther that "once you have committed yourself, you are not free, for whatever reason, to throw off the yoke of obedience, for you will have accepted it freely, while you were still able to discard it." Of course, only a few years later, Luther will choose to disobey the prior's words and his own vows when he openly rebels against the church, thus causing, as he writes in his letter to Pope Leo X, the "whole world" to go "up in flames."

The first act of the play focuses on Luther's inner psychological world. The three scenes all demonstrate some of the numerous anxieties he feels about his relationship with his father or about his religious doubts. In scene 1, the audience meets Luther's father, Hans, who resents the path Luther has chosen because "[H]e could have been a man of stature." Hans's evident bitterness sets up the ongoing conflict between the two men that will persist throughout their lives. It also sets forth the idea that one reason Luther joined the church was to get away from his domineering father; however, what he found in the monastery was an authority of even greater magnitude. Scene 1 also shows Luther's self-castigating, doubtful nature; it culminates with Luther experiencing a dramatic seizure and having to be dragged away by his fellow monks. In the words of Alan Carter writing in *John Osborne*, the final bit of dialogue in this scene, Martin's disjointed protest, "Not! Me! I am *not*!" show Luther's "realisation of God's task for him" and his "protest at being selected for special victimisation."

Scene 2 marks the event of Luther's first mass but, as importantly, it introduces the audience to the idea, put forth by Brother Weinand, that Luther is a young man angry with God, an understandably difficult position for a man of the cloth. In scene 3, which takes place after mass has ended, Hans and his son meet. Their interaction is filled with ambiguous messages. While Hans is concerned over Luther's ill appearance, he still takes the opportunity to belittle his son for almost failing to complete the religious ceremony. "I thought to myself," he reports with some amount of relish, "'he's going to flunk it, he can't get through it, he's going to flunk it.'" As Luther reveals, however, he does know the words for the ceremony flawlessly, but "[W]hen he entered the

monastery, I wanted to speak to God directly." The elaborate ritual that is part of Catholic rites prevents this one-to-one closeness between a person and the divinity; it is this type of direct and personal relationship with God that Luther will advocate in his 95 theses and other writings and that will become essential to the Lutheran Church and other Protestant sects.

Scene 3 also shows a significant act of foreshadowing: Hans, awaiting his son, asks Brother Weinand if "one bad monk" could get his entire order "liquidated." Brother Weinand answers that "the Church is bigger than those who are in her" and that people have tried, unsuccessfully, to discredit it. However, the situation alluded to between Hans and Brother Weinand is what will come to pass: Luther, the possessor of one small voice in a world that is very large, will bring down the hegemony of the church.

Act 2 shifts the play to the world's stage—the one in which Martin Luther's personal uncertainty will unfold into public rebellion—and this transformation is marked by an abrupt change of pace: a monologue given by John Tetzel, as he sells indulgences in the market place at Jûterbog. The play's notes explain that Tetzel has "*the powerfully calculating voice, range and technique of a trained orator*," and the speech he makes is filled with propaganda to convince people to buy the indulgences. He uses religious imagery such as the cross and symbols of the pope. He refers to sacred icons, such as the apostles, martyrs, and popes, as well as Moses' burning bush. Most importantly, however, he appeals to his audience's fear of spending time in purgatory after death. Through his speech, Tetzel clearly equates salvation with money: "As soon as your money rattles in the box and the cash bell rings, the soul flies out of purgatory and sings!" This scene, while not a part of Luther's life proper, shows some of the reasons that he was driven to take such drastic steps against the church.

Scene 2 again delves into Luther's psyche, but the conversation between Luther and his mentor, Johann Von Staupitz, helps explain Luther's drive to make his personal beliefs about faith and God known to the rest of the world.

According to Von Staupitz,

[Y]ou think you admire authority, and so you do, but unfortunately, you can't submit to it. So what you do, by your exaggerated attention to the Rule, you make the authority ridiculous. And the reason you do that is because you're determined to substitute that authority with something else—yourself.

If he makes the church's faith and beliefs unworthy of respect, Luther can allow himself to reject them and replace them with his own religious faith and beliefs.

He shares these beliefs for the first time in scene 3, sermonizing while he posts his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. He begins with a weighty premise: "We are living in a dangerous time." He goes on to explain the doctrine that would cause the greatest break from the Catholic Church: "The just shall live by faith alone." This scene parallels scene 1 in structure, but whereas Tetzel appealed to the common folk by offering them a better reward, Luther denigrates them should they

believe such propaganda. Holy relics that are really "trinkets" are just "empty things for empty men."

In scene 4, Luther is called before Cajetan, the highest church authority in Germany, and he refuses to recant his theses. Like Von Staupitz, Cajetan sees through Luther's psyche: Luther is "a man struggling for certainty, struggling insanely like a man in a fit, an animal trapped to the bone with doubt." When he questions Luther, "How will men find God if they are left to themselves each man abandoned and only known to himself?" Luther's answer is telling: "They'll have to try." In a sense, Luther is inflicting upon the followers of the church the same trials he has been through with his loss of faith. Since he worked his way through this difficulty without the "comfort" the church offers, so can others.

The final two scenes of act 2 focus on a pivotal point in Luther's life: his break with the church. Pope Leo X, who sees only that Luther has placed himself above church authority, orders Martin Luther's excommunication from the church and banishment from Germany. When Luther receives these orders, he responds with harsh language, calling Rome "that capital of the devil's own sweet empire" and likening papal decrees to "the devil's excretals." Despite his disgust for the papacy, Luther's actions once again affirm his belief and faith in God, for the second half of the monologue radically shifts in tone as he pleads to God for help. Thus in this short scene, Osborne juxtaposes the two very different images of God that are presented in this play: the God of the corrupt Catholic Church and the God that Luther loves.

Act 3 of the play comprises three scenes that show the aftermath of Luther's actions. In scene 1, at the Diet of Worms, political and religious leaders again try to convince Luther to recant his heresy, but again he refuses. This is the third scene in which Luther is asked to recant; that so many scenes concern this issue emphasizes the fact that Luther's ideas about faith were the cause of great commotion throughout the Holy Roman Empire, even if the play does not talk about ensuing problems or conflicts. Luther's theses, and his refusal to reject them, throw "doubt on the most holy, orthodox faith," but Luther must continue to do so "since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor honest."

If Luther's motivations seem pure based on his reactions at the Diet of Worms, act 3, scene 2 questions that assumption. Taking place four years later, after the failed Peasants' War, this scene depicts Luther on the side of law, opposing free thought and independence. The Knight recalls how he felt at the Diet of Worms, hearing Luther speak of personal faith and belief: "But he fizzed like a hot spark in a trail of gunpowder going off in us, that dowdy monk, he went off in us and there was nothing we could do, any of us, that was it. I just felt quite sure, quite certain in my own mind nothing could ever be the same again, just simply that." However, Luther failed to live up to his perceived promise, and though he was "the only one who could have ever done it . . . brought freedom and order in at one and the same time," he chose to oppose the peasants because they "kicked against authority, they plundered and bargained," all using the name of God as their justification.

The play's final scene takes place twenty-four years after Luther took his orders. It is a quiet, thoughtful scene that focuses on a conversation between Luther and Von Staupitz. Luther tells the older man, "Seems to me there are three ways out of despair. One is faith in Christ, the second is to become enraged by the world and makes its nose bleed for it, and the third is the love of a woman." By the end of his life, Luther has tried all three of these antidotes, but the question remains: did he ever find a way to break free from his uncertainty? Perhaps the best answer is his reply to Von Staupitz about why he needed an extra day at the Diet of Worms to refuse to retract his writings since he had his answer for months: he wasn't certain of his response; "I listened for God's voice, but all I could hear was my own."

Source: Rena Korb, Critical Essay on *Luther*, in *Drama for Students*, Gale, 2004.

Adaptations

Luther (1974) was filmed in America. It starred Stacey Keach as Luther and was directed by Guy Green. The film was adapted by Edward Anhalt.

Topics for Further Study

Conduct additional research on Martin Luther. Do you find Osborne's portrayal of him to be historically accurate? Explain your answer.

Conduct research on the Protestant Reformation. Write a report analyzing its causes and its effects on Europe.

Read Erik Erikson's psychobiography *Young Man Luther*. Compare Erikson's Luther with Osborne's Luther and the Luther of historical imagination.

Read Bertolt Brecht's *The Life of Galileo*. Write an essay comparing the two plays. Pay close attention to theme, conflict, and structure.

Choose one of the scenes from the play and represent it in a piece of artwork.

Examine artwork depicting religious themes from the period before and after the Reformation. Are religious images presented differently in these works of art? What do these works of arts tell you about the time period in which they were created?

Compare and Contrast

1500s: In the 1500s, the Roman Catholic Church in Europe falls into disunity due to the Protestant revolt, led by Germany's Martin Luther, France's John Calvin, and England's King Henry VIII. With the exception of Henry (who split with the church to secure a divorce from his wife), Protestants want to restore the Christian faith described in the Bible. They succeed in weakening the hold of the Roman Catholic Church in all of northern Europe, parts of central Europe, and in England and Switzerland.

Today: The Roman Catholic Church falls prey to scandal as revelations come out about child abuse committed by priests. Amid calls for reform, church leaders call a historic meeting in Rome to address these issues.

1500s: Prior to the Protestant Reformation, western Europeans, including German-speaking peoples, follow the Roman Catholic interpretation of Christianity. While the pope, residing in Rome, is titular head of the church, his power is diluted by cardinals, bishops, and local nobles. Many of the popes are noted for their corruption, extravagance, and moral laxity.

Today: There are more Roman Catholics in the world than there are followers of any other religious tradition. At the beginning of the 1990s, the church's membership is about 995.8 million, or 18.8 percent of the world population. The church's greatest numerical population lives in Europe and Latin America. However, Lutherans still outnumber Catholics in Germany. In 1995, just under 41 percent of all Germans were Lutheran, compared to just under 34 percent who were Catholic.

1500s: Germany, which is part of the Holy Roman Empire, consists of about three hundred independent states, which are ruled by Christian princes. Their representatives participate in the Diet, the legislature of the Holy Roman Empire, often dominating it.

Today: Germany is a federal republic with a chancellor sitting as head of the government.

What Do I Read Next?

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, first performed in 1957, established the playwright and ushered in a new movement in British drama focusing on realistic, often squalid portrayals of working-class life. It features "angry young man" Jimmy Porter who stands at the threshold between lower class and middle class but sees his upward climb threatened by those with greater privilege.

The structure and style of *Luther* takes its shape from German playwright Bertolt Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* (1943). Renaissance scientist Galileo is forced to recant his theories that the earth revolves around the sun rather than the reverse. The play explores the conflict between scientific truth and religious authority.

George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan* (1923) chronicles the life of Joan of Arc: her leadership of French troops in victory against the English invaders; her capture by the English and conviction of heresy; and her burning at the stake. The play's epilogue focuses on the church's overturning of the heresy conviction in 1456 and her canonization in 1920.

Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, translated by C. M. Jacobs and published by Fortress Press in 1957, includes an introduction that summarizes Galileo's main points and explains the circumstances under which Luther posted the theses.

Ronald Herbert Bainton's *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (1995) is a readable, authoritative biography of Luther.

A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions (1999), edited by Denis Janz, collects nearly one hundred documents, including personal narratives and letters, of the Protestant Reformation and related topics, such as medieval Europe, the Counter-Reformation, and the English Reformation.

Further Study

Chadwick, Owen, *The Reformation*, Viking, 1990.

Chadwick explores major personages and events of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and the resulting Counter-Reformation.

Erikson, Erik, *Young Man Luther*, Norton, 1993.

Originally published in 1958, psychologist Erikson's psychobiography of Luther centers on his search for identity, his conflict with his father, his decision to become a monk, and his troubled conscience.

Hinchliffe, Arnold P., *John Osborne*, Twayne Publishers, 1984.

This is a thorough overview of Osborne's work and the criticism it has drawn.

Osborne, John, *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography: Vol. II, 1955—1966*, Faber and Faber, 1992.

This is the second of the two volume set that makes up Osborne's autobiography.

□□□, *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography*, Dutton, 1981.

This is the first of the two volume set that makes up Osborne's autobiography.

Schwarzbart-Walliser, Eileen, *Luther: Man between God and Devil*, translated by Heiko Augustinus Oberman, Image Books, 1992.

This definitive biography of Luther, originally published in German, puts forth the idea that Luther saw the world as a cosmic battleground between God and the devil.

Wager, Walter, ed., *The Playwrights Speak*, Dell Publishing, 1967.

This volume collects in-depth interviews with eleven of the decade's most distinguished playwrights, including Osborne.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Drama for Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

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